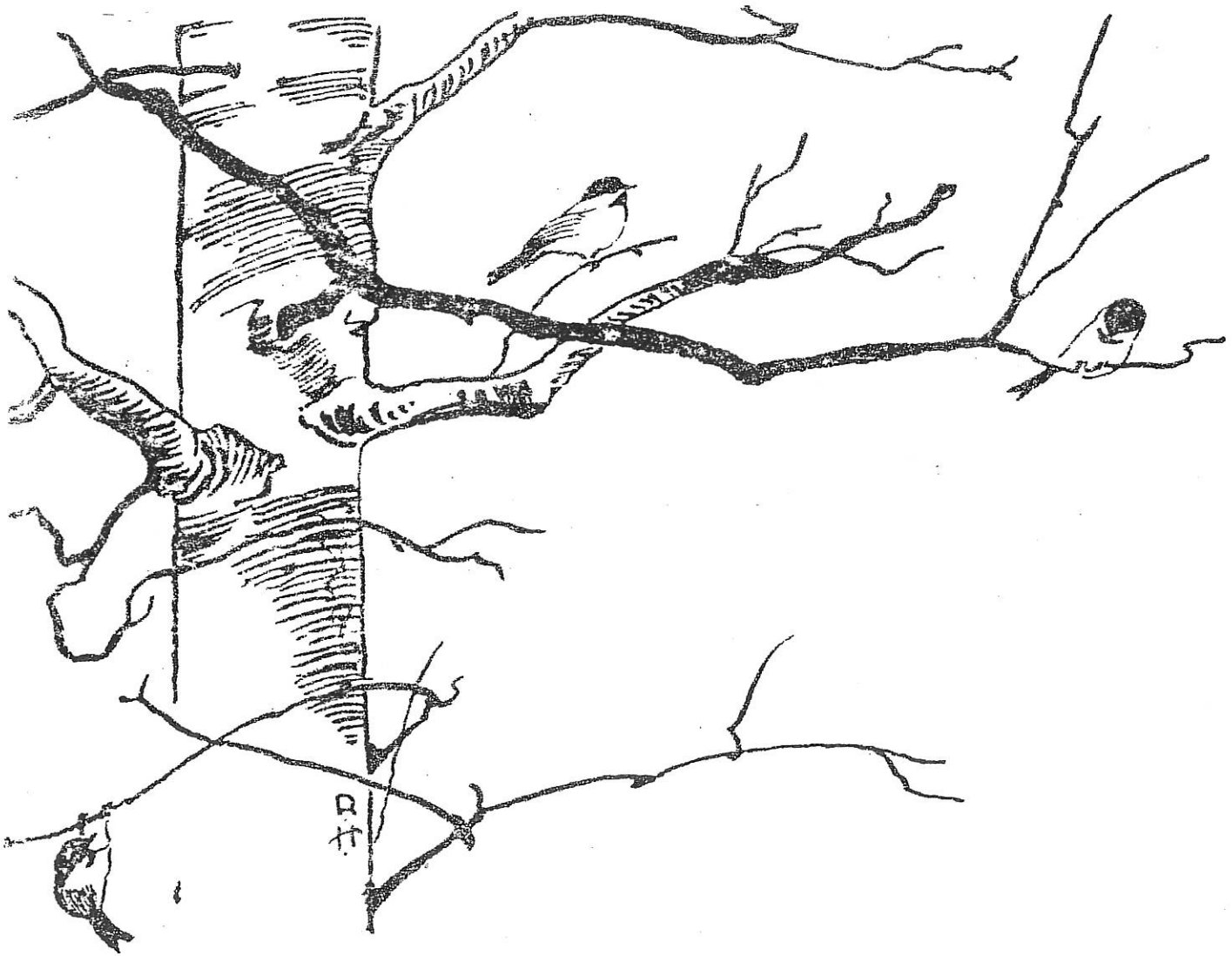


THE ORANGE FEATHER



Orange County, New York

Spring – Summer 2020

February, 2020

THE ORANGE FEATHER

A publication of
EDGAR A. MEARNS BIRD CLUB
Orange County, New York

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club

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President's Message

February 2020

Hello, everyone!

As I write this we are mid-winter and working hard to find interesting birds while we wait for spring weather to hit the Northeast. Winter birding can often be a challenge, but brings rewards of its own.

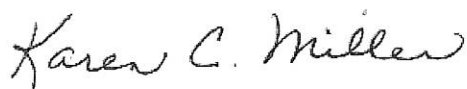
Today was a reminder for me of how fulfilling the winter season can be for birders when we watched a flock of 5,000 Snow Geese take off from a cornfield in the black dirt. Only an hour or two later Bruce Nott and I watched a Golden Eagle fly over the marsh at Middletown's Fancher Davidge Park. That was two very different, but equally rewarding experiences for this birder!

No matter the season, I am always impressed with the dedication and efforts put forth by our Mearns members serving as advocates for the world's birds. Here are some Mearnsers who have gone above and beyond recently and deserve recognition.

- **Ajit Antony** did a herculean job transitioning our Mearns Club from the Yahoo group site to Groups.io. I recognize that it took him hours and hours to move our data and email files to the new site. The result is a better communication tool for us to share information within our group. Thank you, Ajit, for an amazing job!
- **Bob Slechta** seems to be continually working on a Mearns project. His main responsibility is filling our field trip calendar with outings and leaders. Additionally he coordinated our Christmas Bird Count and our Waterfowl Count. When I received copies in the mail of maps, instructions and spreadsheets of final results, it was again apparent that Bob is a valued member of our Club. Thank you, Bob, for making it possible for us to offer many diverse birding opportunities.
- **Curt McDermott** recently took on the responsibility as eBird Reviewer for Orange County. This is an important role that impacts all eBird users in our county. Curt will ensure that our reports are accurate and included in Cornell's database of bird sightings. He confirmed that if you have any questions regarding your checklists, you may contact him by calling 845-549-5596 or by email at Curt@birding.com. This is great news and we look forward to having Curt work with us. Good luck and thank you, Curt!
- Congratulations to **John Haas** on his appointment as the Region 9 Editor for **The Kingbird**. Published quarterly by the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA), Inc., **The Kingbird** is a peer-reviewed journal that furthers the study of bird life and documents the ornithology of the ten regions in the state. John has responsibility for compiling and recording the birding activity in Region 9, which includes seven counties in the Hudson-Delaware area (Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester). John took on this role in April 2019 and is doing a commendable job for NYSOA, in addition to excelling with his own birding.

Thank you to everyone for all that you do as a Mearns birder. As always, we are grateful for **Jan Fitzpatrick**, our editor of the *Orange Feather*.

I hope you look forward to spring migration. I will see you out there. Enjoy your birding!



Karen C. Miller

FALL/WINTER FIELD TRIPS PAST

Black dirt – August 31 – Karen Miller, Leader – Thirteen birders met at the Jolly Onion Inn to scour the black dirt region in search of good birds and experience good birding. Our group included birders from Orange, Dutchess, Ulster and Sullivan Counties. When the dependable Bruce Nott showed up, he announced that he had just seen American Golden Plovers at the Pine Island Turf Nursery. Right off the bat the route that I had tentatively mapped out was changing. As we pulled into the Turf Nursery drive we could see a flock of 30+ Killdeer, joined by 6 American Golden Plovers. It was worth the change in plans already! We got great looks at these birds before a Peregrine Falcon flew in. From this vantage point, we could also see two Sandhill Cranes across the fields. Our outing was off to a great start! We finally headed into the farm in search of Savannah Sparrows, which we had with Bobolinks, several raptors and other birds. Skinners Lane was next on our route, but not particularly productive. We DID have a couple of Northern Harriers and three American Kestrels. From there I wanted to try the Pine Hill Road Pond in Florida since Matt Zietler had reported a full checklist the night before and I also had good birding there a week earlier. It was the right decision. The pond was host to many waterfowl species including Blue-winged Teal, Wood Ducks, Mallard and American Black Ducks. Also present were Great Blue and Green Herons and a Great Egret. Most exciting were the shorebirds. As we pulled into the parking lot we spotted Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and a Solitary Sandpiper. We had one “mystery” shorebird that caused lots of study and discussion between several in our group. It went on for about 20 minutes and still there was no complete consensus. After the outing Anthony Macciarola sent his photo to a bird ID app and it came back 97% confidence that it was a Stilt Sandpiper. I then sent it to John Haas for another opinion and he ID'd it as a Stilt immediately. I then posted it on WhatsApp so others could see it. Tom Burke and Gail Benson were birding in Orange County and were able to see this bird and agreed that it was definitely a Stilt Sandpiper. That was quite a process, but we got a rarer bird for the county. Our last stop was at Glenmere Lake where there were four Great Egrets and two Double-crested Cormorants. The trees around the parking lot gave us a few regular birds, as well as a Yellow-throated Vireo. Our final tally showed 44 species and we had some great birds! It was a fun and enjoyable outing on a beautiful almost-fall morning. Thank you to all who participated!

Doodletown – September 7 – Alan and Della Wells, Leaders – Doodletown Walk or “Time to Review our Confusing Fall Warblers”. It was a perfect day for birding for the 12 Mearns Club participants and the two leaders. Skies were clear blue, the air temperature just right, the humidity low, and the winds light from the WSE. To top it off, the showy Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*) was in full bloom! Despite the gorgeous day, the birds were not especially cooperative. We ended the day with an overall count of 40 species (thanks to Carlotta for the addition of #40, the eight Wild Turkeys she spotted as she walked back to her car). The total count included seven warbler species: Black and White, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green and Canada. This latter bird provided spectacular views to most of the members before disappearing deep into the vegetation. Later in the day we could see a few small thermals building so we cast our gaze skyward looking for migrating Broad-winged Hawks and other raptors. No luck with the Broad-wings, but we did

spot Turkey and Black Vultures, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk and Peregrine Falcon. Ajit provided a lesson on how to determine the age class of Turkey Vultures: adult birds undergo a fall molt so are frequently missing flight feathers at this time of year; first year birds molt into their post-juvenile plumage during summer giving their feathers a fresh look during the fall. There were a number of surprising misses. Among the most notable were White-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Flicker, Song Sparrow, Warbling Vireo, Indigo Bunting Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Mourning Dove and Northern Mockingbird. Conspicuously missing from the Doodletown Bight were Canada Goose, Ring-billed Gull and Double-crested Cormorant. To end the day, we found four Mallards in Doodletown Brook near the Route 9W crossing. To celebrate the day several members retired to the Barnstormer in Fort Montgomery where we thoroughly enjoyed the BBQ.

Black dirt – September 14 – David Baker, Leader – Nine birders gathered at the Jolly Onion Inn at 8:30 in anticipation of adding shorebirds to our lists of fall migrants. The influx of these southward bound travelers has been somewhat slow this year, so we did not know quite what to expect. There had been several recent sightings of Buff-breasted Sandpipers which would have been lifers for a couple of our number, but we were realistic in noting that there has been no sightings in recent days. But one never knows....We began our route by heading down Skinners Lane. An American Kestrel perched high in the bare branches of a nearby tree greeted us as we entered onto the lanes bisecting the sod fields, many of which are now growing hemp for the booming CBD markets. We really don't know what the actual medicinal benefits of the oil are, but it didn't serve as an attractant for migrating shorebirds, that's for sure! The prime sightings through Skinners were a nice female Northern Harrier, a distant Red-tailed Hawk resting on a branch adjacent to the far side of the field and many Brown-headed Cowbirds (mostly juveniles) along with large numbers of migrating Tree Swallows. As we rounded the corner to follow the river channel we came across another group of young cowbirds and one lone Mockingbird. Getting the picture? Our luck changed as we crossed over the bridge onto the Waywayanda Sunflower Farms (aka Warren Sod Farm) where preparations were being made for a music festival being held Saturday and Sunday. Despite all the commotion from the gathering, we had very good luck spotting close to 30 American Golden Plovers, numerous Killdeer, two Merlin, a Horned Lark and more Tree Swallows. Next stop was the Pine Island Turf Nursery where once again we were welcomed by the management. We check into the office each time we visit and they are always very receptive to having us on the property. The birds were once again pretty sparse, but we did get our two Sandhill Cranes which have become very reliable this summer. The only other bird of note was a Savannah Sparrow flitting through the dry vegetation near the sod fields. We continued on to Missionlands Road with the hopes of refinding the Buff-breasted Sandpiper seen earlier in the week. Alas the only birds working the field were a handful of Killdeer. The rain that was forecast for the late morning began to gently fall, so we decided to run down to the platform at Oil City Road. Here we found some new species to add to the list: Mallards, American Black Ducks, some gorgeous drake Wood Ducks with their "spouses", several Common Gallinules with some young ones in the mix, Great Egrets and perhaps the best bird of his site-2 American Wigeons. After our traditional repast at the Harvest (can't go here without thinking of Dennis ordering his orange soda, chicken soup and hard roll), several of us continued onto the Pine Hill Road Beaver Pond to see if we could add any shorebirds to the list.

We did in fact have some nice sightings on Semipalmated Sandpipers, both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and two Green Herons to add to the list. Our list capped out as 38 species for the day....a decent day with good friends and fellow birders as well as two new guests from Sullivan County. Wonderful outing.

Hamptonburgh Preserve – September 18 – Bob Slechta, Leader – What a pleasant surprise the Hamptonburgh Preserve trip turned out to be. It's a simple well mowed trail through a long narrow goldenrod infused meadow bordered by a line of trees on both sides. As we lazily strolled up the trail we would bump into knots of bird activity especially very and numerous American Goldfinches, that would fly back and forth between the meadow and the trees. It was amongst this goldfinch activity that we were able to spot ten species of warbler: Black and White, Tennessee, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Cape May, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, and Black-throated Green. Best of all, they were at eye level and not a strain to look at! Other birds of note today getting us 52 species were: Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Great Blue and Green Herons, Broad-winged Hawk, two Pileated Woodpeckers right over our heads, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Least Flycatcher, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, House and Carolina Wren, American Robins, many Gray Catbirds, Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Towhee, Field, Song and Swamp Sparrows, Red-winged Blackbirds, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting. It was a very nice trip for the seven of us, especially as it was a gorgeous sunny fall day.

Bashakill – September 21 – Scott Baldinger, Leader – 24 members were on hand for today's 4 hour field trip. We had a diverse list of 54 species today. Of note were two wood warbler fallouts this morning. There was a modest fallout at the Deli fields boat launch and a more sizable one on the Nature Trail loop. 11 species of warblers seen included: Black and White (10), Tennessee (2), Nashville, Common Yellowthroat (12), American Redstart (6), Northern Parula (8), Magnolia (8), Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided (6), Black-throated Blue (2) and Black-throated Green (10). Also of note were 2 Yellow-billed Cuckoos at the Nature Trail, one flyover Greater Yellowlegs and 2 Lincoln's Sparrows (Deli Fields). Raptors today included Cooper's, Red-tailed and Broad-winged Hawks and Bald Eagle. Vireos found included Yellow-throated, Blue-headed and Red-eyed. Woodpeckers found at the Bash included: Red-bellied, Downy, Pileated and Northern Flicker. Today's wading birds were Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets. Olive-sided Flycatcher and Eastern Phoebes were seen along with House Finches and American Goldfinches. We also had Song and Swamp Sparrows plus Carolina and House Wrens. Some additional species included Belted Kingfisher, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Wild Turkey and Common Raven.

Chadwick Lake – September 25 – Bruce Nott and Kathy Ashman, Leaders – Eight members came out to participate in our first field trip after the Autumnal Equinox. We could not have asked for better weather, and our hopes were high for some excellent birding since the radar was very active overnight indicating good migration movement. On the lake, Bruce located three Ring-necked Ducks on the far shore. After surveying the lake we began the 4 mile trek around the lake. We encountered periodic mixed species fallouts throughout the park, with Maryangela Buskey and Bruce having the best one on the far side of the lake with about 50 birds in a feeding

frenzy. Due to the length of the walk and prior commitments some of our group had to depart along the way. We had many Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos mixed in with the warblers. Mary Lou Van Aken (on her first field trip with the Mearns Club) and I got separated from Bruce and Maryangela because I was on a deadline. We happened upon a group of mixed thrushes and managed to pick up Grey-cheeked and Wood Thrushes foraging with some American Robins. Raptors seen were Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks and an adult Bald Eagle. Two Cooper's Hawks were flying together in the woods and we managed to get our eyes on a beautiful adult bird. Bruce got to witness the Bald Eagle chase a Belted Kingfisher away so it could have its perch. We were able to identify 8 species of warbler: Black and White, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll and Black-throated Green. There were probably more species present, but the birds were moving fast as they foraged for insects and caterpillars in the treetops. The only sparrow species we had for the day was Eastern Towhee. Our last find of the day was a solitary Ring-billed Gull sitting on a rock in the lake. Though it was a very long walk, it was a wonderful outing with perfect weather. We ended up with a total of 49 species. We started birding around 8:45 and finished up about 2:00 PM. Temperatures ranged from 52 to 70 degrees with a west breeze of 8 mph and clear skies. Checklist with photos can be viewed at: <https://ebird.org/vies/checklist/S60112361>.

Winding Waters – September 28 – Bob Slechta, Leader – What a gorgeous day for a bird walk at the Winding Waters Trail under sunny skies and with temperatures in the 60's to 70's, and late September is the time to be here and 15 Mearnsers agreed! We took our time and only walked a little past the bend in the river just past the usual Connecticut Warbler spot, but no luck today. However there was good bird movement all along our walk picking up our best bird of the trip just before we headed back: a very cooperative Philadelphia Vireo that was easy for all to see as it stayed put in the shrub feeding away. Other notables on our walk were: Chimney Swift, Lesser Yellowlegs, Tree Swallows with a few Barns, Great Blue and Green Herons, Great Egret, Red-shouldered Hawk, Hairy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed and quite a few Red-eyed Vireos, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robins, plenty of Gray Catbirds, a Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwings, Chipping, Song, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, and nine species of warbler. They were: Nashville, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue and Green and Palm. Since we finished up at 11:00 AM some of us stopped at the Oil City platform where we added six more species: Mallard, Greater Yellowlegs, Common Gallinule, Northern Harrier, American Crow and Red-winged Blackbird. In all it was a pretty good tally for morning's work.

Cape May – October 1-3 – Warren Cairo, Leader – see separate article

Kenridge Farm – October 2 – Amy Greher, Leader – Eight Mearnsers and one visitor (hopefully becoming a new member) scoured the trails, ponds and fields at Kenridge Farms this morning. The temperature ranged from 70 degrees when we started at 8:00 to 80 degrees when we concluded the trip around 10:45. It was humid with clouds increasing as the morning progressed. It felt more like a July day. Crazy weather! A total of 38 species were seen by most

of us. Highlights were 4 Lincoln's Sparrows. One was super cooperative and offered us the chance to really study the bird. Eastern Phoebe were everywhere. Our number indicating 15 birds might be conservative. A Red-eyed Vireo and 2 Blue-headed Vireos located in one of the fields were also special. Last, but not least, a Northern Mockingbird was spotted at the dog park. We don't often see this once common bird. A big thank you to Bruce and Bob who came equipped with scopes and made the viewing that much better.

6 ½ Station Road – October 5 – Carlotta Shearson, Leader – Fifteen Mearnsers birded 6 ½ Station this morning. It was a spectacularly crisp, cloudless fall day (not gray and dreary like Storm King tomorrow). After the obligatory grouching about the cold (it was 35 degrees when we arrived) we headed down the trail on the east side of the road. We didn't encounter a large variety of birds (lots of Blue Jays and American Robins) but we had some nice looks at a pair of Hairy Woodpeckers chasing each other up, down and around the trunk of a small tree. We also enjoyed the relatively close views of three Great Blue Herons in flight over the trail and the pond. While we warmed up in the sun at the far bench, a Pied-billed Grebe was spotted on the north shore of the large pond, along with a beautiful drake Wood Duck. A Green-winged Teal was seen on the small pond to the south, in the company of some Mallards. The arrival of a noisy flock of Canada Geese, accompanied by a lone white barnyard goose looking clumsy and out of place, gave us a laugh. Back at the parking lot, some of us had a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. We then headed up the road to the sanctuary parking lot for a quick loop around the trail, which was quiet except for the Blue Jays. As we thawed out in the sun, watching a couple of Turkey Vultures and a Common Raven circling over the jail, one, two and then three adult Bald Eagles came into view, and we enjoyed watching them spiral higher and higher until they disappeared into the blue. Notables not mentioned above include: Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Cedar Waxwings, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows and Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Our total for the morning was 38 species over approximately three hours.

Storm King Art Center – October 6 – Bob Slechta, Leader – Today was Opposite Day! Yesterday's 6 ½ Station Road trip was sunny but cold. Today was cloudy and mild and what a difference. Our first hour and a half was abuzz with activity as we walked along the entry road near the old 1700's house, and there were only five of us to enjoy it! I, for one, was very happy to be able to leisurely watch the birds instead of shivering, unable to hold my binocs still. We had many nice close views today of both kinglets and a Palm Warbler that we didn't need binoculars to enjoy. Other notable birds in the first hour and a half were: both accipiters, at least three Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Northern Flickers, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed and Red-Eyed Vireos, plenty of Blue Jays, American Robins, Gray Catbirds, Cedar Waxwings and American Goldfinch, White-throated Sparrows, Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Bunting, American Redstart, Cape May, Northern Parula, Magnolias and Yellow-rumps. After that first stretch of road the wind picked up as we trekked across the fields impairing the birding for the remainder of the trip. We did, however, manage to find at least twelve Eastern Bluebirds, a lone Chipping Sparrow and lots of Canada Geese with several skeins flying south overhead. We ended our morning at 11:30 with 41 species plus an enjoyable stroll amongst the fantastic sculptures at the art center.

Big Sit! – October 12 – Kathy Ashman, Coordinator – Our second annual Big Sit! was once again held at Glenmere Lake Park in Florida. The day began at 7:00 AM as soon as the gates to the park were unlocked. Five of us were on hand to set up the 17 foot diameter observation circle. Our circle was set up in nearly the same location as last year, allowing for views of the lake, sky, trees and surrounding grassy area near the shore. We began the count even as we were setting up the circle, and within the hour had spotted a total of 21 species. The lake always has the most birds early in the morning or late in the evening. Waterfowl for the day included: Mute Swans, Canada Geese, Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, Wood Ducks and Pied-billed Grebes. We even had a few shorebirds: Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs and Killdeer. Raptors included Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Red-shouldered, Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks. Although the day started off with a bang, it dwindled down to only two to three new species per hour until 5:00 PM. All of a sudden we had a flurry of activity. The birds were very agitated: calling, sparring and flitting from branch to branch. In the crowd were Downy Woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Pine Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebirds and Cedar Waxwings. Woodpeckers are always numerous at Glenmere, and today was no exception. In addition to the Downy and Pileated we had Hairy, Red-bellied and Northern Flicker. Other birds of note during the day were a distant flock of Brant, Belted Kingfisher and Common Ravens. Eighteen of our members participated at intervals throughout the day, coming and going as their schedules allowed. Temperature at the start was 48 degrees with northeast winds at 7 mph. At the close of our day the temperature was 64 degrees with northeast winds at 7-10 mph. The high for the day was 68 degrees. Unlike last year, we did not get rained on and had partly cloudy skies. We ended the day with a total of 44 species, and everyone who came seemed to enjoy the day. Looking forward to our next Big Sit! on October 10, 2020.

Goosepond – October 14 – Bill Iannone, Leader – The usual cool fall morning turned into a pleasantly warm day with no wind but plenty of sunshine. A week before the trip we looked at the boardwalk area from Route 17M but could not see it because the weeds were 5 or 6 feet high. So Bob and I flexed our muscles to clear the path for the Mearn's trip and the Young Birders trip scheduled the previous day. Eight members and one guest took advantage of the open path. The good bird activity made it a pleasant trip but with a limited numbers of species at 37. At the boardwalk a Carolina Wren greeted us along with Song, Field and White-throated Sparrows and Eastern Bluebirds in the distance. Northern Flicker, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers represented the woodpeckers. We got some of the usual flyovers of Wood Ducks, Turkey Vultures, Cooper's and Red-tailed Hawks. At the Bull Mill Road trail we arrived to see a Purple Finch in the distance and the usual large flock of White-throated Sparrows with Lincoln's and Savannah's along the way. There were a number of Hairy Woodpeckers during the trip with a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker included. Then we ventured to our third stop on Lazy Hill Road which gets into the heart of Goosepond Park. In the fall there is always a good crop of berries on the vines to attract the birds. A large flock of Cedar Waxwings indulged themselves along with Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers and a Scarlet Tanager as a bonus. A Brown Creeper and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet is always a nice surprise along with a small flock of Swamp Sparrows. We can always count on singing Eastern Towhees along the road. It was another pleasant day of birding which we should not take for granted.

Croton Point – October 19 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – We began our sunny fall day at the train station. Eleven members along with a few photographers that heard about the trip started birding at the point passed the Croton-Harmon Train Station. A flock of 50 Brant were seen on the far side of the train tracks. We also had 1 Bonaparte's Gull hanging out with a group of Ring-billed Gulls. Other notables were a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks, a Savannah Sparrow, two Bald Eagles, one of which was carrying a snake or an eel. Croton Point Park was packed with scouts enjoying their annual gathering. It was a lovely day for a walk but not birdy. Highlights were a Brown Creeper and a Killdeer in the parking lot. The landfill was mostly mowed. According to Della and Alan, the plan is to plant native grasses.

Oil City Road – October 26 – Joyce Depew, Leader – It is good to see that after the dry spell from mid-summer to early fall, water is returning to the marsh again making it more suitable for water birds and waders, but not enough to discourage shorebirds from appearing. I've made 2 curious observations over the past few years of birding which are these: 1. at some point in the early fall of the year Red-winged Blackbirds disappear for a short period of time and seem to show up again after a frost. 2. in mid-fall the Red-winged Blackbirds and Song Sparrows sing out loudly as though the spring season has returned! This occurred on the outing this year and also helped to ID a bird with leucistic characteristics! Today it was a well-attended outing with approximately 15 members and 2 guests. Welcome to Carlotta's mother Roberta Shearson and my grandson, Benjamin (who was responsible for locating the Yellow-crowned Night Herons in Orange County this year!). Thanks also to our members for being so welcoming and helpful to these guests. I know Ben really enjoyed the outing! We started from the platform and spent good half hour observing birds in that area and then proceeded to walk around the loop. There were 5 "gold star" highlights that were located on the New Jersey side (so sorry that I couldn't place them all on the New York side but perhaps they crossed over the next day LOL!) These birds were: **2 Long-billed Dowitchers (photographed by K. Ashman for id purposes), 1 Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 3 Sandhill Cranes, 13 Pectoral Sandpipers and 1 leucistic Song Sparrow (these were photographed by me).** This was definitely worth the 3 mile walk around the loop and I have photographed four of these birds. There was a total of 56 species. Several members also tried out the Dennis Murphy Memorial Bench this day. Good birding with great people!

Kenridge Farm – November 2 – Amy Greher, Leader – 15 Mearns members returned to Kenridge today. The temperature at the start of the trip was a chilly 31 degrees. The temperature rose into the mid-40's by the end of the trip. While the sun tried to warm the day, considering the warmer fall weather we had been experiencing, this fall day was cold! A light frost covered most of the plants and grasses giving the day a frosty appearance. The group decided to take the sunniest path possible which initially led us past the buildings and then into the open fields. Tracy Patsch and I broke away from the group and proceeded to bird on the road that leads to and from the main campus. Bob Slechta took over my role as leader but I promised to write this report. Tracy and I enjoyed watching about 50 American Robins feeding in the fields on berries. We also observed about a half dozen Cedar Waxwings who were also eating berries. We watched a female (we believe) Sharp-shinned Hawk hunting in another field. Returning to the parking lot, we were delighted to see 5 Eastern Bluebirds flying to and from the

bushes near the main buildings. A lone Dark-eyed Junco was also spotted in the brush sharing the space with White-throated and Song Sparrows. The remaining 13 birders with Bob continued on the marked trails stopping at some of our favorite spots. They observed 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a single Northern Mockingbird, 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers and lots of Song and White-throated Sparrows. The highlight of their walk was a Merlin. After regrouping in the parking lot close to noon the group reviewed the birds seen by both groups then dispersed leaving just three stragglers. Just because we often look up at the sky (we are birders) we spotted and then watched a pair of Bald Eagles circling lazily in the sky. Great way to end the morning of birding. A total of 39 species were recorded. A big thank you to Bob for his leadership. A thank you to Kathy Ashman for posting the report and photos on eBird.

Black dirt – November 9 – Karen Miller, Leader – A small group of only 4 birders met at the Jolly Onion Inn to search the black dirt region for raptors and any other birds that might still be in the area. We guessed the forecast for very cold weather might have kept some birders away, but the temperature wasn't too bad. Joe Cullen, Bob Slechta and I were especially happy to welcome new Mearns member Chris Alwang. Skinners Lane was our first stop and was quite a surprise for us. Two of the new hemp fields were full of birds, mostly American Pipits, but we also had eight Vesper Sparrows. We spent a lot of time watching these birds and other sparrows. We wondered if the plants of this new product would be a positive sign for more birds in the future. Apparently the plants have a lot of seeds that were attracting birds. Something to watch as we visit this area! When we finally left Skinners Lane we headed for Pierce Circle, Lynch Avenue and Turtle Bay Road. We were rewarded with a flock of at least 10 Northern Cardinals, which reminded me of the flock of 19 cardinals last year on Onion Avenue that stayed around for several days. Two beautiful White-crowned Sparrows were favorite finds of the morning for us. Before we stopped for lunch we made a short stop at the platform on Oil City Road. I had been looking for a Northern Harrier and was happy to see two flying over Liberty Marsh. Our final tally showed only 25 species, but we had some good birds and great experiences! It was a fun and enjoyable outing on a beautiful fall morning. Thank you to my fellow birders!

Southern Orange lakes – November 16 – Kathy Ashman, Leader – 15 members of the Mearns Club gathered on a beautiful but breezy morning at the Chester McDonald's to explore the lakes for waterfowl. We first traveled to Florida's Glenmere Lake Park via Black Meadow and Pine Hill Roads. Waterfowl were scarcer than we had hoped, but we did manage to pick up Mute Swan, Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Merganser, a solitary Ruddy Duck, and 4 Pied-billed Grebes. Other birds of note were Red-shouldered Hawk and House Finch. Our next destination was Wickham Woodlands Park in Warwick. Though it was windy we did manage to pick up more waterfowl at the lake. Present were Canada Geese, Gadwall, Mallard, American Black Duck, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal, Common Merganser and Pied-billed Grebe. Other good finds were Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Common Raven and White-throated Sparrow. All in all we had 18 species at Wickham Woodlands. From there we pressed on to Greenwood Lake Waterfront Park and the kayak launch area on the east side of town. We didn't pick up any new species of waterfowl, but we did manage to pick up Eastern Bluebird and Dark-eyed Juncos. Leaving Greenwood Lake we drove to Round Lake and Walton Lake in Monroe. At Round Lake we picked up Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Northern Shoveler and 54 Ruddy

Ducks. Walton Lake only produced Canada Goose and Hooded Merganser, but we did get another Bald Eagle to add to our total for the day. We finished the day with 14 species of waterfowl and a total of 33 species. Temperatures ranged from 28 to 46 degrees with scattered clouds and northeast winds ranging from 10 to 17 mph. Several of us had lunch together at the Chester Diner to close out our day of birding at 1:45PM.

Eastern Orange lakes – November 23 – Karen Miller and Bruce Nott, Leaders – 18 birders started this trip at the Newburgh Walmart looking from the back parking lot to the marsh below in hopes of finding some great waterfowl. It wasn't meant to be so we left with only six species recorded. (Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee, Carolina Wren, House Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos) Orange Lake was next on our list and more productive. Scanning the lake we spotted Mute Swans, Hooded and Common Mergansers, Ring-billed Gulls, a Double-crested Cormorant, a Great Blue Heron and a Carolina Wren. The best bird was a Common Loon that was swimming reasonably close to us, but then disappeared for several minutes and showed again much further out. Chadwick Lake was a great birding spot. The sun was shining and it was much warmer! Canada Geese, Mute Swans, Ring-necked Ducks, Buffleheads and Hooded Mergansers kept our attention on the water, but the birds of the day were five stunning Common Goldeneye. What a treat! Rounding out our list for this hot spot were Ring-billed Gulls, a Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied and Hairy Woodpeckers, American Crows, a White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter and Carolina Wrens and Eastern Bluebirds. Our final stop was Brown's Pond to look for the Great Cormorant and the Surf Scoter. The scoter was not to be found but Bruce spotted the Great Cormorant perched on a log as we were leaving the area. A handful of birders were able to swing back around and get this rarity. There were many birds on the pond including Canada Geese, many Mute Swans (19), Wood Ducks, Mallards, American Black Ducks, Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, Ring-billed Gulls, Double-crested Cormorant and a Great Blue Heron. We ended the day with 46 species on our checklist for our Eastern Orange lakes outing. Thank you to everyone who joined us in our quest for great birds. We enjoyed your company. Any morning spent birding is a good morning!

Shawangunk Grasslands – November 30 – Tom and Jane, Leaders – After a change in the original meeting time (it would have been nearly dark otherwise) 11 Mearns members gathered for the trip. Some arrived earlier than the new scheduled time and were treated to a Bald Eagle. Others arrived nearer to the new time, but some early arrivers-Karen, Alan and Della-saw flying Short-eared Owls. My first birds were 23 Canada Geese. We scanned the far reaches of the refuge and spotted owls flying in the distance near the Futia Farm's red barns. Occasionally they would land in leafless trees. We got lucky and one owl came fairly close and interestingly it clapped its wingtips three time on a down stroke. Another nearby owl got in a hassle with an incoming Northern Harrier. We saw a total of 3 harriers, on of them was a Gray Ghost. Our final birds were huge, but very distant, flock, unidentifiable, but probably a mixed flock of blackbirds.

Cape Ann, MA – December 7-8 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – The annual Cape Ann Weekend began at the Causeway Restaurant for lunch. Our first official stop was to Halibut Point to look for the previously reported Townsend's Solitaire. I'm sorry to say that we were unable to find the bird

in spite of giving it our best effort. We did enjoy 42 Harlequin Ducks as well as the usual Common Eider, Black and White-winged Scoters. The weather was not our friend and the snow fall made it difficult to continue. We headed over for a quick stop at Granite Pier and picked up Great Cormorant before checking in to our hotel. On Saturday we spent most of the day birding Parker River Wildlife Refuge in Newburyport. The group got to see 2 shrikes, a Rough-legged Hawk, Horned Larks and one lone, late Tree Swallow. There was also an impressive number of American Black Ducks (308). We ended our day at Salisbury State Park. There we were treated to a mixed flock of Horned Larks, 2 Lapland Longspurs and 3 Ipswich Savannah Sparrows. For our last day we all agreed to give the Townsend's Solitaire another try. We gave it a gallant effort but were unsuccessful. The American Robins ruled the skies often filling the trees to the point it looked like a Christmas tree complete with red baubles. Michael was so determined to find the solitaire he ended up spying an immature shrike! Our trip ended at Bass Rocks with lots of winter ducks, grebes, loons, and my favorite, a Black Guillemot. Thanks to all who attended. It was a wonderful weekend.

Eastern Orange Christmas Count - December 21 – Bob Slechta, Compiler – Outside of the cold December this year with temperatures on count day starting out at 14 degrees, it was another well run Christmas Count by the Mearns Club. Special thanks to Bill and Jane Fiero for hosting our always scrumptious countdown pot-luck dinner, and to Ajit Anthony for providing his technical services with his computer. Numbers this year were not too unusual outside of being on the low side for species (70) and individuals (9750) thanks to our lakes and ponds being frozen (i.e. few ducks) and there being ground cover of 1 inch of crusty ice and snow, plus the 10+ inches of snow in early December which was most likely responsible for our low Canada Goose tally and possibly affecting European Starlings as well. The other big decline in the past few years is for both crows ever since the demise of the Newburgh roost, with numbers going from 3500+ American Crows and 300+ Fish Crows to 698 and 2 respectively this year. Ring-billed Gull numbers were down for what reason I can't guess, as were Tufted Titmice and Black-capped Chickadees, both of which seemed scarce all year on field trips. Otherwise, our numbers were within normal range of fluctuation over the past ten years. As to sightings of note, there were: 2 Snow Geese, a record 14 Bald Eagles and 14 Red-shouldered Hawks, whose numbers keep going up, 1 Iceland Gull at the Newburgh waterfront, 1 Northern Shrike on Day Road, 3 Eastern Meadowlarks 4 Rusty Blackbirds, 2 Chipping Sparrows (photos on 12/21 eBird by Bruce Nott or Scott Baldinger). One Greater Scaup was seen count week and was new to the list (photo on 12/13 eBird by Alan Wells). The complete checklist can be seen later in this Orange Feather or online on the Mearns Groups io site.

Duck Count – January 18 – submitted by Bob Slechta – Bitter cold, and a pending snow storm...what more could we ask for! Most everyone decided to go with the original date anyway as it's always hard to reschedule, and after all, there was no snow cover on the ground, the big lakes were still open and the snow was forecast to start early afternoon giving everyone at least 4-5 hours to search the county for ducks. And look we did, producing a good mix of ducks for the middle of January with impressive numbers of Canada Geese, Mallards and Common Mergansers. Having more people in the field in more teams played a big roll, I'm sure, in this year's results and the 9,647 individuals counted. Seen this year were: 1 Snow Goose, 7183

Canada Geese, 38 Mute Swans, 1 Wood Duck, 1061 Mallards, 2 American Wigeon, 76 American Black Ducks, 24 Bufflehead, 63 Hooded Mergansers, 1066 Common Mergansers and 1 Ruddy Duck. Pretty good and hats off to everyone who took part in the NYSOA Waterfowl Census at a time of year when Canada Geese and Mallards are what you are most likely to find. It's rewarding in its own way and a good reason to be out exploring the county looking for birds.

Eagle Trip – January 25 – Gerhard Patsch, Leader – We spotted only 37 Bald Eagles on this year's annual eagle trip. Last year, you may recall, we had over 150+ sightings! It has been a relatively mild winter with little snow and no river ice, therefore, we did not get our usual high concentration of eagles in the lower Hudson River Valley. Mild temperatures and hardly any wind did, however, make for a very pleasant day in the field. Hundreds, well over a thousand, Common Mergansers were observed far out on the Hudson River between the Bear Mountain Bridge and Croton Point. Buffleheads, Mallards and American Black Ducks were also spotted along our route. After a nice lunch, we drove to the Croton Reservoir Dam where we found one Red-breasted Merganser along with several Hooded Mergansers and many more Common Mergansers. Some small areas of the reservoir did have a very thin layer of ice, and we watched with amusement as three immature eagles landed on the thin ice, slid and crashed through the ice. Other notables included a Brown Thrasher and two Gray Catbirds found by Bob Slechta and Joe Cullen at George's Island. Barry Babcock spied a Red-shouldered Hawk at Verplank, Bruce Nott found a Peregrine Falcon at Croton Point Park. Carlotta showed us 20 Great Cormorants near Stony Point, at a location we have never seen them before, and Ajit, who was doing a separate raptor survey, counted 67 raptors! At the conclusion of the field trip eleven participants had tallied 39 species.

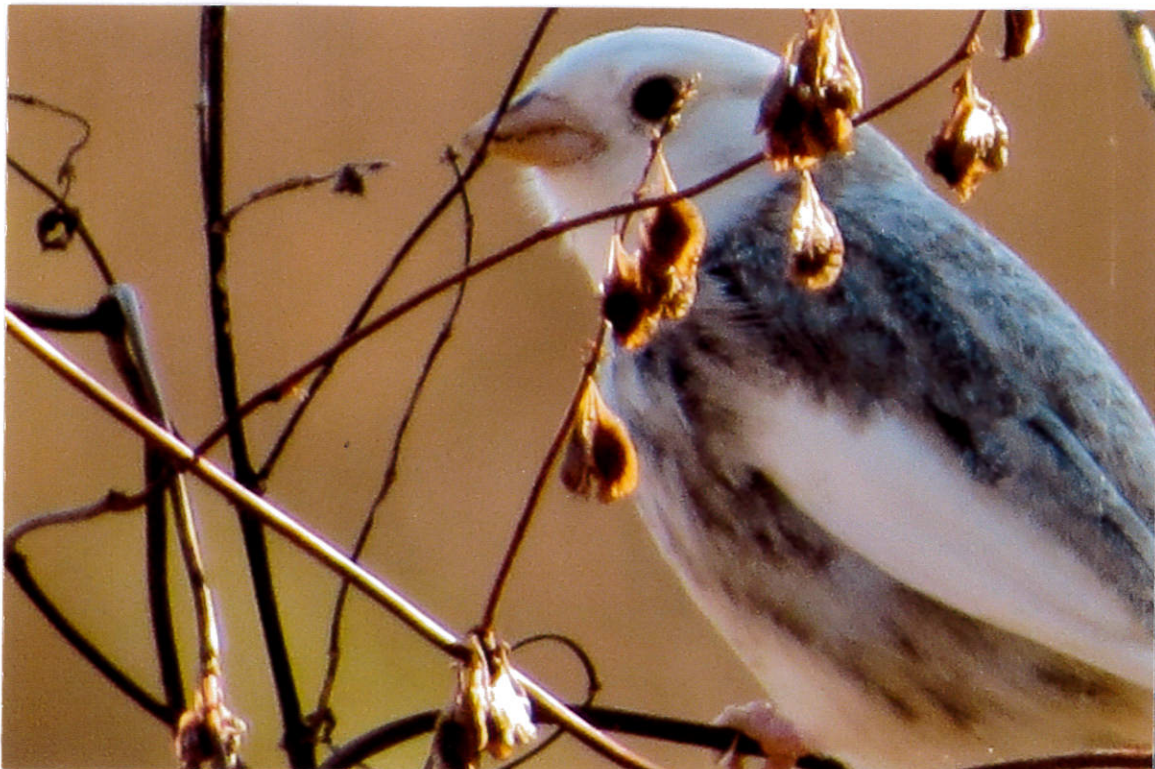
Editor's Note: As I typed the field trip reports I kept typing Bald Eagle over and over again. I counted up and Bald Eagle was seen on 11 of 23 trips. I think that is worth a smile! Jan



Black Dirt Field Trip 9/14/19



Leucistic Song Sparrow - 11/28/19 - photos by Joyce Depew



Mearns Club Outing

Cape May in the Fall

October 1-3, 2019



Pop-up Fall birding trip to Cape May, NJ

So here we go again! It's been a while since we have done a Mearns Fall Cape May trip. For many years this was a regular trip and hopefully we can make it a more regular event especially since Cape May has been designated by National Geographic as one of the world's premier birding locations year round.

This year's trip was a little unusual for a fall trip. Our second day, and only full day, it was sunny all day with temperatures in the high eighties with southerly winds. Not exactly 'fall' weather and Cape May fall birding is at its best with northerly winds.

Our small but dedicated group, Liza & Ajit Anthony, Della & Allen Wells, Claudia Burns and I persevered and over the 3 days were able to identify and report 92 species with some really large numbers of individuals.

We started on Tuesday Oct 1st mid-day, meeting for lunch and a visit to the Cape May Hawk Watch. Our first rare sighting was of Steve Bauer, a Hudson Valley birder who has migrated to Cape May for the fall season. In addition to Steve we did have some great looks at Merlins zooming past at very close range, as well as Peregrines, Kestrels, Coopers & Sharp-shinned Hawks. Thanks to Della, we had some super looks at a Drake Eurasian Wigeon among the American Wigeons along with over 60 Blue-winged Teal. Detracting from the scene were over 60 Mute Swans which are an invasive species.

Wednesday Oct 2nd, our only full day, we got off to an early start by going to the morning flight site at Higbee Beach for sunrise. It's always fun trying to ID flying warblers in the morning sun. Northern Waterthrushes are a bright yellow. Had great looks at Northern Parula, Red-eyed Vireos and American Redstarts and Cedar Waxwings. A walk around Higbee was fairly quiet (South winds) so after a brief stop by Lake Lily and spectacular views of a cooperative Philadelphia Vireo we moved on to Stone Harbor. Our first stop was at the Wetlands Institute ponds where we saw over 30 Western Willets with a couple of Short-billed Dowitchers mixed in. In the same area we had 5 Tricolored Herons. Stone Harbor Point was great, especially considering the weather and many people enjoying the beach and surf (water temps are still in the mid 70's).

We arrived near high tide and many of the shore birds were clustered together allowing us plenty of time to scope and study them. We estimated a couple thousand Sanderlings, with many Dunlin and some Red Knots mixed in the flock. Groups of Semi-palmated Plovers and Western Sandpipers were huddled together within 25 yards of us, giving us the opportunity to study them closely. Ajit was able to locate and scope a juvenile Western Sandpiper and we were able to appreciate the beautifully fresh plumage. Flying around us were Caspian, Royal & Forster Terns at very close range. Next we drove out Nummy Island

which is usually good at high tide and we had more Tricolored Herons, Ospreys, and a perched Bald Eagle - but the 185 Oystercatchers stole the show until we noticed the 8 or so Marbled Godwits among them. We then proceeded north, making a stop at one of the wet woods just behind the dunes and the Avalon Sea Watch which was pretty quiet, so we called it a day.

Thursday October 3rd we started at the Coral Ave dune crossing where we could scan an area called locally as the 'Rips,' which is the area where the Delaware river/bay meets the Atlantic Ocean. This sometimes turbulent meeting causes nutrients to be brought to the surface which bring fish, and in turn, birds. We had many Osprey, hundreds of Laughing & Herring Gulls, Great Black-backed and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, Forster, Royal and Caspian Terns and among these feeding flocks flew a few Parasitic Jaegers. A few Merlins zooming around the dunes, a bald eagle stealing a fish from an Osprey in mid-air, a flight of 7 Great Blue Herons trying to get up the courage to make the crossing to Delaware against South winds, and some smaller unidentifiable passerines zipping by, all added to the spectacle.

After Coral Avenue we made a brief stop at the CMBO Northwood center and were rewarded with Blackburnian and Yellow-rumped Warblers, American Red-starts and Northern Parula. We then headed to the Miss Chris Marina for a Back Bay birding trip aboard the Osprey.

The boat trip did not disappoint. We saw many Osprey, Oystercatchers, Terns, Ruddy Turnstones (38 with very close views), over 3000 Tree Swallows, and a few Least & Semi-palmated Sandpipers and Black-bellied plovers. Because it was high tide we could go into some areas we normally can't reach and we were rewarded with close looks at Clapper Rails and startled an American Bittern that was just a few feet from the front of the boat that we didn't see until it flushed. Still great looks and watching it vanish again into the grasses right before our eyes.

We returned to the dock around noon thus ending another enjoyable Cape May Birding adventure. Thanks to those that came (Thanks Alan for some great photo's) and I'm looking forward to seeing other Mearns members on future trips.

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Eastern Orange Christmas Count - Countdown Sheet
December 21, 2019

SPECIES	TEAM A	TEAM B	TEAM C	TEAM D	TEAM E	TEAM F	TEAM G	TEAM H	TEAM I	TOTAL
Snow Goose	1			1						2
Canada Goose	980	-	112	183	-	147	423	63	413	2221
Mute Swan	-	-	12	-	-	6	-	-	-	18
Wood Duck										
Northern Shoveler										
Gadwall			1							1
American Wigeon										
Mallard	24	-	51	40	1	12	84	27	44	283
American Black Duck	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	3
Northern Pintail										
Green-Winged Teal									1	1
Canvasback										
Ring-Necked Duck			CW							CW
Lesser Scaup										
Long-tailed Duck										
Bufflehead										
Common Goldeneye										
Hooded Merganser	4	-	10	2	-	-	-	-	-	16
Common Merganser	3	-	243	5	-	-	2	3	9	256
Ruddy Duck										
Ring-necked Pheasant										
Wild Turkey	8	-	-	42	-	-	47	20	-	117
Pied-Billed Grebe										
Rock Pigeon	87	-	25	172	-	-	25	-	160	469
Mourning Dove	42	56	8	12	15	18	51	30	31	263
American Coot										
Killdeer										
Wilson's Snipe										
Ring-billed Gull	2	30	196	-	-	2	-	-	11	241
Herring Gull	-	5	37	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
Iceland Gull (Kumlein's)			1 ^{mm}							1
Great Black-backed Gull	-	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	1	7
Common Loon										
Double-crested Cormorant										
Great Cormorant										
Great Blue Heron	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Black Vulture	-	1	42	-	-	14	12	-	17	86
Turkey Vulture	-	14	2	1	-	2	2	-	1	22
Northern Harrier				1						1
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2
Cooper's Hawk	-	3	-	2	-	-	4	3	2	14
Bald Eagle	1	1	3	3	-	-	2	2	2	14
Red-shouldered Hawk	5					2	7			14
Red-tailed Hawk	13	9	1	25	13	5	17	18	10	111
Rough-legged Hawk										
Eastern Screech Owl										
Great Horned Owl									1	1
Barred Owl				1	2					3
Short-eared Owl										
Belted Kingfisher							1			1
Red-headed Woodpecker										
Red-bellied Woodpecker	11	9	12	10	14	7	16	14	20	113
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	1	3	-	-	2	6	1	5	19
Downy Woodpecker	8	21	7	3	21	7	16	7	12	162
Hairy Woodpecker	3	1	2	1	9	1	1	1	4	23
Northern Flicker	2	6	7	1	5	1	2	1	2	27
Pileated Woodpecker	-	2	-	-	1	3	1	3	-	10
American Kestrel				2			1			3
Merlin										
Peregrine Falcon										
Eastern Phoebe										
Northern Shrike							1			1
Blue Jay	36	38	10	21	30	43	50	60	30	318
American Crow	27	44	12	510	12	24	28	25	14	696

SPECIES	TEAM A	TEAM B	TEAM C	TEAM D	TEAM E	TEAM F	TEAM G	TEAM H	TEAM I	TOTAL
Say's Phoebe										
House Wren										
Wood Thrush										
Varied Thrush										
Brown Thrasher										
Pine Grosbeak										
White-winged Crossbill										
Lapland Longspur										
Chipping Sparrow	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Lark Sparrow										
Harris's Sparrow										
Yellow-breasted Chat										
Brewer's Blackbird										
Baltimore Oriole										
Common Yellowthroat										
Wilson's Warbler										
Evening Grosbeak										
TOTAL COUNTED	1834	714	1155	1601	469	536	1247	866	1337	9750
TOTAL SPECIES	35	40	39	42	29	32	41	34	42	70

OBSERVERS:

A: Bill & Jayne Fiero, John Haas, Pat Henigan
 B: Bruce Nott, Scott Baldinger
 C: Kathy Ashman, Liz McKnight
 D: Karen & Kevin Brady, Mary Busky, Scott Graber
 Pat Jansen, Pete Salmonson
 E: Bob Slechta, Joe Cullen, Don Aitchison
 F: Linda Strohl, Joyce Depew, John Gebhard, Betsy Hawes
 G: Jan & Fitz Fitzpatrick, Karen Miller,
 Kathy Hranowsky, Jodi Brodsky, Eva Amir (F)

WEATHER:

Cloud Cover: mostly cloudy
 Temperature Low: 14°F
 High: 29
 Wind: 0-3 mph N
 Snow Cover: 1" snow-ice crust
 Water (percentage frozen):
 Still: 99%
 Moving: 60%

Time - 0730 - 400 AM
 unusually cold prior
 to count

H: Gerhard & Tracy Ratsch, Allan & Della Wells
 Dave & Sharon Baker, Joe Trapani

I: Ajit & Liza Antony, Chris & Desly Fryer
 Carlotta Shearson (F) Elaine Frost (F)

(F) Feeder Counter

37 Participants

3

1

2

3rd New York State Breeding Bird Atlas 2020

Dr. Shaibal Mitra had remarked in his talk at our club dinner in 2019 that all the information we have about species of birds increasing or decreasing is from birders.

Birders come to the fore again for the 20-yearly Third 5-year New York State Breeding Bird Atlas which began January 1st 2020 and is a way for scientists to detect changes in breeding bird populations.

You can get all the information you need at:
ebird.org/atlasny/about

You can look at all the blocks at:
lab.nynhp.org/bba/

The blocks that are already taken are in yellow. Purple ones are priority blocks. The non-priority blocks are clear/ colorless.

On our mini BBS 2018, Linda Scrima Confirmed breeding of Grasshopper Sparrow. The NYS BBA 2000 had only 2 Possible blocks in NY along the NJ border, and 2 Probable blocks in Orange County with no Confirmed blocks Great!

On our club mini BBS 2019 Kathleen Ashman Confirmed breeding of Least Bittern. On the 2000 Atlas there were no blocks where it was even observed in the County. Wonderful!

On our club mini BBS 2018, Liza and I with Matt Zeitler found evidence for Confirmed breeding of Ruffed Grouse in Black Rock Forest where it hadn't been documented in the 2000 Atlas in that block or any other block around, with only 2-3 confirmed blocks in the entire county.

On our club mini BBS 2019, Liza and I also found Confirmed breeding of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. On the 2000 Atlas there were only 2 blocks with confirmed breeding in the county.

So we as a club can make a difference.

Many of our club members have already volunteered for the BBA III.

Liza has taken one priority block and 1 non-priority block. I have chosen a priority block on Boxbum Road and 4 adjacent non-priority blocks, as well as Black Rock Forest - a non-priority block. This is our first atlas and we already have Probable Great Horned Owl S7+ (calling more than one week apart) in 1 block already.

Curt McDermott has 2 priority blocks and presumably 1 non-priority block which is part of Stewart State Forest which is adjacent to one of his blocks.

Ken McDermott has 1 priority block.

Don Aitchison who started birding only in 2019 has taken 1 priority block!

Will Test, a club member and a hawk watcher at the Mount Peter Hawk Watch has taken 2 priority blocks and presumably the 1 non-priority block between them.

Jan Fitzpatrick is doing a block or more around her home.

Jodi Brodsky has 2 priority blocks in Putnam County.

John Haas has 5 priority blocks in Sullivan County.

Alan Wells has 2 blocks in Rockland County.

Bill Fiero has a priority block around his home, and a part of Stewart State Forest - a nonpriority block

There are many priority blocks left in Orange County and many more non-priority blocks.

In the last two Atlases, only one person had a block and he/she was responsible for all birds detected in the block and the reports were paper ones. This time and with the advent of electronic data entry there are no paper forms and all data is to be entered on eBird, so anyone can help any block by entering their sightings in any block on eBird.

Even if you don't take responsibility for a block, you can help by entering your eBird data on the NY State BBA portal of eBird, and would be helping it the Atlas effort.

To change the portal on the eBird app:

Click on the three horizontal bars (Menu) on the top left of the main page. Click on Settings. The last choice is Portal. Click on this and click on New York State Breeding Bird Atlas.

To change the portal on "online" eBird:

Go to the checklist that you want to add to the BBA III and open it. On the top right there is a blue box with a pencil and an arrowhead. Click on this. The 6th choice is Change Portal. Click on this and the drop-down menu. Click on New York State Breeding Bird Atlas.

For those who don't use eBird yet nor the eBird app, in August 2019 I had given a hands-on tutorial on the use of these tools. If you are interested in learning about them, email me at the aiantony@earthlink.net and we can have another workshop.

Ajit I. Antony

AN EXCITING FIND

This morning (September 29, 2019) Kathleen Ashman found a LARK SPARROW near the entrance to the Heritage Trail on 6 ½ Station Road Sanctuary. This medium sized sparrow breeds from British Columbia, Saskatchewan and northern Minnesota, south to California, northern Mexico, Louisiana and Alabama. It spend winters from southern California to Florida and southward. Preferred habitats include grasslands, semi-open scrublands, sagebrush and pinyon-juniper woodlands in lowlands and foothills.

Congratulations to Kathleen on a terrific find for our area. Additional photos can be viewed at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S60214671>. (Editor's note: I believe this bird was seen by several other club members throughout the day)

Scott Baldinger



EDGAR A. MEARNS BIRD CLUB
Financial Report 2019

INCOME:

Beginning Checking Account Balance-January 2019	\$ 823.94
Dues, Anniversary Dinner, Club Logo Items, and Donations	4,966.70
Total Income:	\$5,790.64

EXPENSES:

Orange Feathers: Feb-\$130.43 Aug-\$102.70	233.13
Club Meeting Speakers: Max Garfinkle	100.00
Kathryn Schneider	50.00
Dr. Shai Mitra	250.00
Club Logo Items	572.22
Delaney's	1870.00
Dinner and dues refunds	95.00
Donations: NYSOA 2019 and 2020	100.00
NYSOA Young Birders	25.00
Art fee for Club Pin Set-up	54.07
Extension Cord	17.21
Postage	14.90
State Farm Insurance	477.97
Website hosting-3 years	215.64
The Dennis Memorial Bench and security	715.83
Total Expenses:	\$4,790.97
Ending Checking Account Balance-December 2019	999.67
Plus Savings Account	1,821.87

ENDING BALANCE- December 2019 \$2,821.54

Linda Strohl, Treasurer

A PELAGIC ADVENTURE

Liza and I had gone on our first winter pelagic trip with Sea Life Paulagics from Cape May in February 2016, the trip yielding many Razorbill, a few kittiwakes and Northern Fulmars, 160 Dovekies and a Great Skua. The day after, we went to the Cape May Bird Observatory and bought Steve Howell's book Petrels, Albatrosses and Storm-Petrels of North America. This year (2019) we decided that there was no point having such a wonderful book without going for another pelagic trip, this time to look for summer species. We studied the birds we were likely to see from the book as well as Peterson's Reference Guide to Seawatching by Behrens and Cox.

We wanted to go on an 18 hour trip which would allow time to get to the continental shelf (which would increase our chances of seeing the less often seen species) and which is about 75+ miles away in the northeast, but were apprehensive about going overnight which we had never done before, so by the time we decided, their trip out of Brooklyn was already waitlisted, so we decided to go on their Cape May trip which left on August 11th at 10:00 PM. We had enough space to spread our sleeping bags in the cabin. We had taken, at their suggestion, eye masks and earplugs to deaden the engine sound to better sleep.

We planned to wake up before sunrise in order to see Leach's Storm-Petrel. We woke at 5:30 AM and saw a number of Wilson's and Band-rumped Storm-Petrels and we could appreciate the differences in structure and flight style. (<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S58960594>)

There were a number of leaders in attendance from the Cape May Birding Observatory (in addition to Paul Guris, the owner of Paulagics and his wife Anita) who were instrumental in spotting birds and answering questions. It was a very warm and windless day, which made spotting birds difficult as they tended not to fly without any wind. There were periods of time when birds were few and far between, but moments of excitement when there were thousands of Wilson's Storm-Petrels in an area where we saw a female and juvenile Humpback Whale near us. Evidently the birds feed on whale feces. Paul suddenly shouted that there was a White-faced Storm-Petrel and we could all see it bouncing along the water among the Wilsons'. To see one on a pelagic trip is excellent, but Paul and the leaders found us 10 in all. Paul was screaming in delight. The bird is their company's emblem. Most of the White-faced were fairly close, one being so close that I could even take a video using my cell phone! If you want to see it, ask me. Here was one advantage of the previously thought disadvantage, namely the lack of wind. All these birds could be seen easily without any wave troughs to hide them. We were told that they usually scoot behind the wave troughs and fly away and only a few participants get to see them. The White-faced Storm-Petrels have a unique bouncing feeding technique. I guess it is analogous to land birds hopping, and why shouldn't they since they all arose from a common ancestor!?

By the end of the day we had seen 2 Leach's Storm-Petrels, 22 Band-rumped, 15,000 Wilson's, 3 Cory's Shearwater, 1 Great Shearwater, 2 Audubon's Shearwaters and a Bridled Tern sitting on some flotsam and 5 Red-necked Phalarope feeding near Sargassum weed.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S58960576> is one of the eBird checklists with photographs. We also saw many Pilot Whales, Spotted Dolphin with young swimming along the boat, Rizzo's

Dolphin with tall thin dorsal fin, a few Ocean Sunfish with their strangely flapping dorsal fin, and schools of mahi-mahi. One leader saw 2 Fin Whale. The journey back was birdless for hours, but about 150 yards from shore and close to two boats one of the leaders found a spouting Humpback Whale.

While studying the birds at home before the trip I made three spreadsheets to focus on what to look for in petrels, shearwaters and jaegers, and skuas. These were originally uploaded to the file section of the Yahoo site. I have now transferred them to the io site. They can be found at the following link: <http://groups.io/g/MearnsBirdClub/files>.

The trip was well planned and run and I would recommend Paulagics.com highly.

Ajit Antony

CLUB MEETINGS

March 9 – Lee Hunter will speak about Birding in Ethiopia.

April 20 (third Monday) – Scott Craven will speak on the history of Croton Point and its avian fauna.

May 11 – Alan Wells will discuss large wading birds of North America.

June- date to be determined – Club Picnic

Meetings are held in the Library of Washingtonville Middle School at 7:00 PM.

MEMBERSHIP

Happy New Year! We have two new club members for 2020. Welcome to Holly Conklin from Putnam Valley and John Cavalari from Newburgh. We know you will enjoy our club's many interesting field trips, meetings and this year's picnic. We look forward to birding with you soon.

Linda Strohl

SPRING & SUMMER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE – E.A. MEARNS CLUB

March trips (see last Feather for details): 3/7 Rye/Greenwich; 3/14 Black dirt; 3/21 Oil City Road; 3/25 Southern Orange lakes; 3/28 Eastern Orange lakes; 3/28 Shawangunk Grasslands.

April 4 – Rye Playland – Meet Bob Slechta (541-8210) at the Playland parking lot at 8:30 AM for Osprey, egrets, loons, grebes, Long-tailed Ducks, Purple Sandpipers, Palm Warblers and more.

April 11 – Oil City Road – Meet Carlotta Shearson (234-8314) at the platform at 8:30 AM. There should still be ducks, especially Blue-winged Teal plus Wilson's Snipe, swallows, some warblers and hopefully Sandhill Cranes.

April 18 – 61/2 Station Road – Meet Carlotta Shearson (234-8314) at the Audubon parking lot at 8:30 AM for early warblers, kinglets, swallows, ducks and sparrows.

April 25 – Bashakill – Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Stop Sign Trail at 8:00 AM for a rewarding day at this renowned birding Hot Spot as migration starts heating up.

May 2 – Glenmere Lake – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at the park at 8:00 AM. Last year's trip was very rewarding for variety and numbers at this interesting location.

May 6, Wednesday – Kenridge Farm – with Amy Greher (783-6363), Leader. Be at the Dog Park lot at 7:30 AM for what should be a very birdy day.

May 9 – Bashakill – Meet Joyce Depew (978-9952) at the Stop Sign Trail at 7:30 AM for a stupendous day of birding, 70 species minimum and lots of warblers!

May 13, Wednesday – Goosepond – Meet Bill Iannone (783-7467) at the Route 17M Boardwalk trail at 7:30 AM. Goosepond has turned out to be a very productive birding location over the years.

May 15 & 16 – Break 100!! – Countdown Pot Luck at the Fitzpatrick's (496-7718) at 5:00 PM Saturday. Let them know who is coming and what you are bringing. Create a team or join one and see how many birds you can ID in Orange County from 4:00 PM Friday to 4:00 PM Saturday. Ask around for more information.

May 20, Wednesday – Stewart State Forest – Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at the North Ridge Road parking lot at 8:00AM. White-eyed Vireo or Mourning Warbler, perhaps?

May 23 – Ironwood Road – Meet Bob Slechta (541-8210) at the end of Ironwood Road (Sterling Forest area) at 8:00 AM. We'll look for Golden-winged Warbler and other goodies.

May 23 – Oil City Road – Meet Bob again but at the platform at 4:00 PM to see what we can turn up late in the day.

May 30 – Shawangunk Grasslands – Meet Tom and Jane (255-0565) at 7:30 AM for grassland birds and hopefully a Henslow's Sparrow.

June ?? – club picnic - More information to follow. Check the Mearns io site.

August 22 – Oil City Road – Joyce Depew (978-9952) will be at the platform at 7:30 AM. Least Bittern ? There will be lots of egrets for sure.

August 29 – Black dirt – Meet Dave Baker (446-4030) at the Jolly Onion Inn at 8:30 AM and scour the turf farms for Buff-breasted Sandpipers and American Golden Plovers.

September 11 – Black dirt II – Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) at the Jolly Onion Inn at 8:30 AM for another chance at Buff-breasted Sandpipers and American Golden Plovers and open land birds.

September 19 – Bashakill – Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Deli Fields at 8:30 AM. We hope for Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrush and Philadelphia Vireos.

September 26 – Winding Waters – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at 8:00 AM and see if we can find a Connecticut Warbler or Dickcissel.

September 30, Wednesday – Stewart State Forest – Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at the North Ridge Road lot at 8:00 AM. Little Blue Heron? Lincoln's Sparrow? Yellow-breasted Chat?

FIELD TRIP NOTES

The phone number is given for each leader. If you have any doubts about a trip happening due to weather CALL, either the night before or in the morning (the leader will be up checking the weather too, so CALL!). You can also keep an eye on the Mearns Yahoo site for trip cancellations or changes.

If you lead a trip you are responsible for sending a write up to Jan Fitzpatrick, 1 Keith Place, Campbell Hall, NY 10916 or fjfitz@frontiernet.net. Please do this soon after you lead the trip. Please include the number of species seen, number of participants, weather conditions and highlights of the trip. If you post the trip online, please send an expanded report fleshing out the details of the online posting. A complete listing of species seen is not necessary. Thank you!
