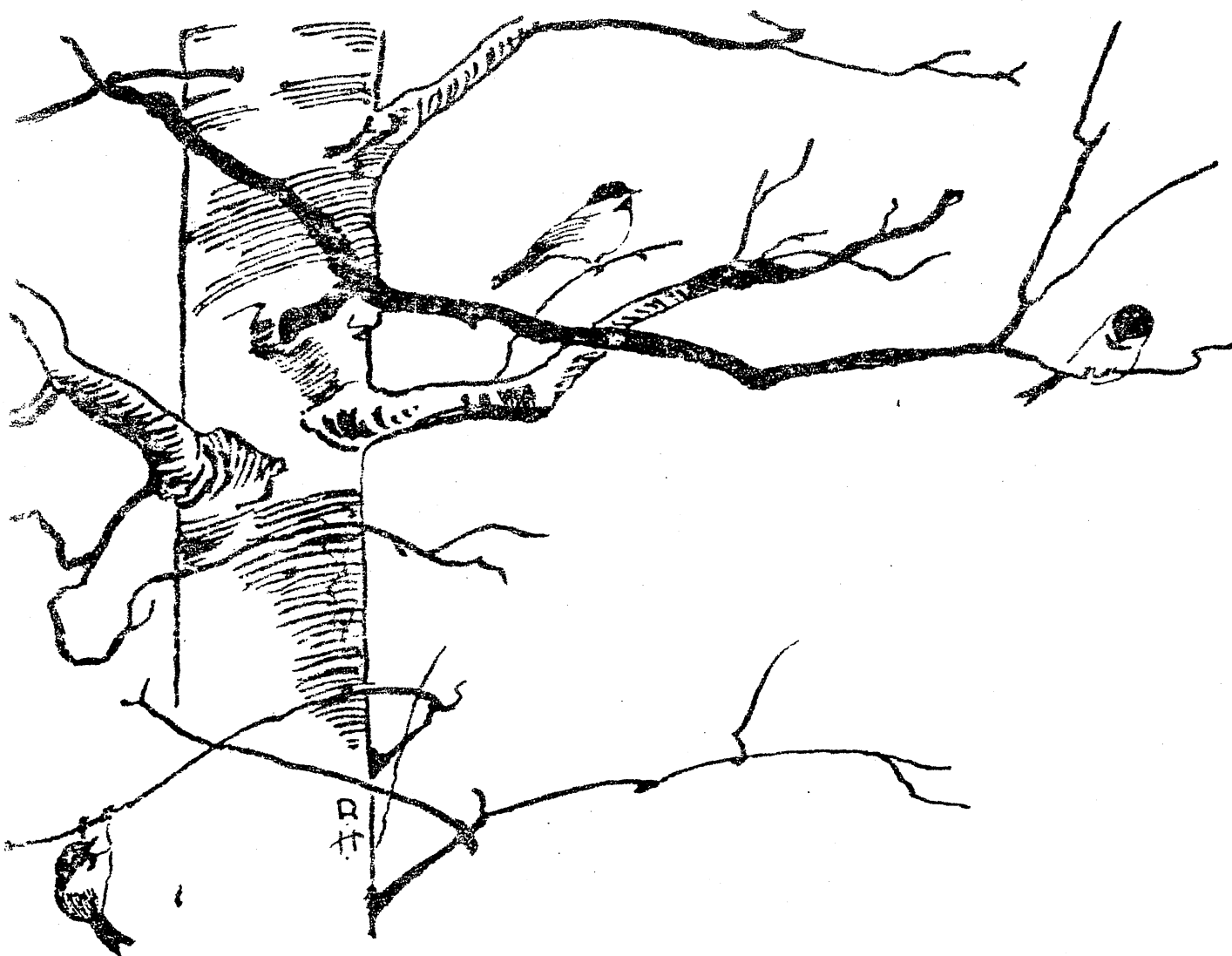
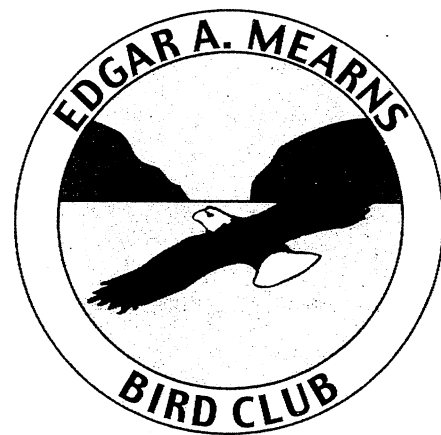


THE ORANGE FEATHER



Orange County, New York

Fall – Winter 2020

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club

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President's Message

July 2020

Hello, everyone! This year could be called the Year of Change. Everything seems to be different. No matter where I go, I need to consider if I need a mask or gloves and what new procedures I must follow.

As I traveled around the Hudson Valley, I noticed these changes, and others, that affect our birding.

I was surprised to see a sign posted on the gate at Glenmere Park that says "PRIVATE ... Open to residents and guests." The park was closed for the past several months and recently reopened. Someone stationed at the gate is a new occurrence. Kathy Ashman and others have birded the trails in the park and many of us have relied on the lake for all kinds of terrific birds. I was also hoping we could do our Big Sit again here in October. This morning (7/8) I spoke with the guard on the gate and he let me know that all Town of Warwick parks are currently open only to town residents due to the coronavirus. He also let me know that some other towns have also closed their town parks to non-residents. Let's hope this will only be temporary and that things look up.

Two of my favorite birding spots are Lynch Avenue and Indiana Road in the Black Dirt Region. In both locations some of the areas with low bushes have been cleared, apparently to make room for more plantings. These are areas where I would check for sparrows, Indigo Buntings and other passerines. There are still birds there, but the loss of this vegetation is disappointing.

On the positive side, the City of Middletown has opened eight and a half miles of woods, roads and trails in the area of the three reservoirs. I have not been there yet but have received good reports and see a lot of activity in the parking areas at the trail heads. Google *Middletown Reservoir Trails* for more information.

My point is that as we adapt to these changes and find other good spots where the birds congregate, let's share that information with each other, not only for our own enjoyment but also so we continue accurate reporting of the birds in the county.

I hope that everyone who volunteered for the Breeding Bird Atlas is enjoying this important initiative. I hear a lot of buzz about the birding blocks from other birders and I commend you all for your efforts.

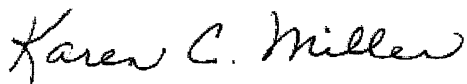
Special recognition is extended also to these Mearnsers for stepping up to ensure that our birds are protected during this breeding season.

- **Joyce Depew** is again monitoring the pair of Yellow-crowned Night Herons on Van Burenville Road in Middletown. We are still hopeful that the breeding efforts will be successful. Joyce is impressive with her commitment of time observing the behavior of these birds and posts detailed reports in eBird.
- **Rich Van Tieghem** worked with the Orange County Audubon Society to ask the Orange County staff to delay mowing a field at the Warwick County Park until August 1 to protect the nesting area of Bobolinks.
- **Bill Iannone** reported finding a Great Blue Heron roost with 11 juveniles in a boat launch and parking area near the intersection of Route 17A and old Route 17 going east into Harriman State Park on Route 106. Green Herons, warblers and Indigo Buntings are present also.

Despite all the change around us, one thing remains constant and that is the beauty of the birds and the enjoyment we experience in their presence. Enjoy your birding!

Thank you, as always, to **Jan Fitzpatrick**, for compiling this edition of the *Orange Feather*.

Happy summer,



Karen C. Miller

MEETINGS

As of this writing (July, 2020) the status of fall meetings is “up in the air”! Information on fall meetings will be posted on the Mearns sites, so stay tuned! Let’s hope we can all get together soon.

FIELD TRIPS PAST

Black Dirt – February 22 – Karen Miller, Leader – Once again we gathered for our Black Dirt outing at the Jolly Onion Inn. With 16 birders we headed to the platform at Liberty Loop, where I always like to start our birding. The Loop did not disappoint! The sky was full of Canada Geese as they flew from the direction of the Black Dirt Region and over the Liberty Loop. The line of geese stretched all the way across the sky and soon split into many smaller V-formations. A small number of geese (300) landed in the water in front of us. Scanning the marsh we found Mallards, Northern Pintails and American Wigeons. Next on our agenda was a quick stop at Owens Station Road where we found three Greater White-fronted Geese on the ice across the pond. These were a nice addition to our list as they are listed as a rare species. It was the consensus of the group that we should leave the Black Dirt for a few minutes and run to Westtown to see the Redheads that had been on Lockenhurst Pond for several days. These are great birds and we wanted to ensure that everyone saw them. It was worth the detour as we had eight Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks, Common Mergansers and other waterfowl. Our final spot was my favorite Lynch Road back in the black dirt. There were several birders scanning the sky for a Golden Eagle or two. There were lengthy discussions and long looks at Red-tailed Hawks and other raptors in the sky. I'm not sure if the Golden Eagles were present or not, but it was interesting trying to follow the conversation as they looked for markings and behaviors to identify the birds. After this ordeal, we were ready for lunch and compiling our checklist of only 26 species, but more than three hours of good birding with friends.

Rye Playland – March 7 – Bob Slechta, Leader – What would an early March Rye field trip be without a strong north wind as we had today! As usual we managed to find protected spots where we could scan the waves for ducks, with Brant and Greater Scaup the most abundant, followed by Bufflehead. In addition to Playland we birded Greenwich Point after which the remaining of us did some birding in Westport, CT topping out at 43 species. In addition to the already mentioned birds we managed nice looks at: Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, American Black Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted and Hooded Mergansers, plus a handful of Horned Grebes and both Common and Red-throated Loons. Other birds of note were: Lesser Black-backed Gull, Killdeer, Bald Eagle, lots of Fish Crows and the best bird of the day, Ruddy Turnstone! We had about 40 of them close at hand picking through the rocky shoreline at Greenwich Point the highlight of the day.

Black Dirt – March 14 – Karen Miller, Leader – It was a sunny, cold and windy day but six brave birders showed up to scout out the Black Dirt Region again. The Liberty Loop platform had nine species of waterfowl. The ducks were in! Northern Shovelers, Gadwall, American Blacks, Northern Pintail and teal got us off to a good start for the day. Four Horned Larks, an American Kestrel and a Cooper's Hawk were the highlights of our birding Skinners Lane. A Northern Harrier was worth the drive to the Florida area. I've grown very fond of the Pine Hill Road Pond and an assortment of 14 species included two Gadwall, 30 Green-winged Teal, three Killdeer and three Common

Mergansers. Onion and Lynch Avenues were quiet so we wrapped it up and headed to the Harvest Restaurant for lunch and a checklist of 37 species.

All other late winter and spring field trips were cancelled.

MEMBERSHIP

Well, this has been the strangest few months of our lives! Among other changes, our birding opportunities have been limited to going by ourselves or in small impromptu groups. We look forward to birding together again and meeting our newest members when life returns to somewhat "normal".

At this time we wish to extend a warm welcome to the following new Mearns Bird Club members: Stacy Monakey, Salisbury Mills; Tara Berchielli, New Windsor; Philp and Anne Ribolow, New York City; and Dr. Chris Kostek, Fishkill. We know you will enjoy the field trips and meetings when they resume.

As of this writing our Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club membership stands at 101 unique and interesting members.

If you are not up to date on your 2020 dues please send your dues ASAP. Annual membership is \$20.00 for an individual, \$30.00 for a family and \$8.00 for a student. **Dues are renewed in December.** To join/renew please send you name, mailing address, e-mail address, phone (for club contact ONLY) and check payable to Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club to Linda Strohl, Treasurer, 8 Park Road, Salisbury Mills, NY 12577. Thank you!

Linda Strohl and Della Wells

The Mearns Bird Club and the NYS BBA 2020

The NYS BBA III and Me

My Involvement with the BBA

Take your pick for a title. The second one has a catchy ring though grammatically incorrect.

Liza and I joined the club in the late 1990s and I don't remember hearing the term Atlas or reading about it in The Orange Feather. The first time I heard the term Atlas was when we wanted to update the club's Orange County Checklist and we organized a mini Breeding Bird Survey in 2018, and while reading about how to use breeding bird criteria I found out that there had been two previous atlases in 1980 and 2000!

Early this year I spoke to an excellent birder from another county who told me that on the last NYS BBA 2000 "It was almost impossible to get anyone from the Mearns Bird Club to volunteer for the Atlas."

I decided for myself that I would not let this happen during this Atlas.

I found out that Jodi, Gerhard, John Haas, Renee Davis, Alan and Della, and Carol Weis were volunteers in 2000; that Bob Slechta did for the first Atlas in 1980, and that Jan Fitzpatrick was a Regional Coordinator for the first Atlas.

Early this year I posted detailed information on our io website for Mearns members, and offering to teach them eBird; then sent individual personal messages to all the best birders of the Mearns Bird Club suggesting that they join the NYS BBA III.

Bill Fiero agreed immediately and has been extremely actively productive.

Matt Zeitler was hesitant initially because of work commitments and limited free time, but after my reassurances has been very active too.

I was surprised that most of the others ignored my suggestion.

I cajoled Gerhard (after all, he was one of the birders who attended a tutorial I gave in August 2019 on using eBird and the eBird app) and after a lot of resistance from him to the point that I finally gave up (I felt like a nag), surprisingly he began Atlasing.

Liza convinced Bob Slechta that his birding skills should not go to waste, and though he was extremely reluctant to use a computer (he carries the mantle of the club Luddite after Dennis died -- second only to Joe Cullen). We taught him how to use eBird on his home computer, instructing him over the phone (because of COVID-19) and he caught on really fast and is extremely busy entering eBird Atlas checklists now.

While doing the Hook Mountain spring hawk watch we met Renee Davis looking for butterflies. We got to talking about the BBA and she bemoaned that there were no paper checklists accepted this time, and that she had tried to use eBird, unsuccessfully. I offered to teach her "on any rainy day." She called me a few days later and we spent an hour on the phone and she is able to use the eBird app on her smart phone.

There is an eBird page devoted to Orange County New York and on the overview I can see all the checklists which have been submitted daily, and noted that quite a few Mearns Bird Club members used eBird but were not using the NYS BBA III Portal which was the only way data was to be entered into the NYS BBA III (if you look at the top left-hand corner of any checklist it will say either eBird or New York State Breeding Bird Atlas). I emailed a

number of these birders suggesting that they use the NYS BBA Portal, giving them detailed instructions. Some of them changed to the portal, others ignored my suggestion continuing to use only the eBird portal (their data will not show up on the Atlas).

I noted that a frequent eBird user in Orange County who seemed to be a member of the Bruderhof based on his birding location was not using the Portal, perhaps because he didn't know about the Atlas. I didn't know him or have his email address, so I wrote to the main Bruderhof office requesting them to forward my email to him. He promptly replied that he didn't have any time to bird in the mornings but could only bird for 15-30 minutes in the afternoons. I reassured him that his contribution would be valuable any time of the day, and compared his potential contribution to "the widow's mite" a parable from the Bible. Subsequently he is one of the top Orange County Atlasers to date!

I attended one of the first BBA workshops in Cold Spring with Julie Hart the BBA Coordinator which was excellent. I learned a lot, never having been involved an Atlas. Subsequently I attended another one which we organized in February at the Cornwall Public Library for the Mearns Bird Club led by Wendy Tocci who is one of two regional coordinators for Orange County, New York, and 11 birders attended. After that I have attended 2 online "Town Hall meetings" organized during the COVID-19 pandemic and each time learning valuable birding and Atlasing information.

There is an excellent NYS BBA website showing all the results of the 96 New York State Breeding Bird Atlas blocks in Orange County on one page. It has the names of all the blocks listed. If you click on any block you can see the status of breeding birds on that block, whether Possible, Probable or Confirmed, as well as the number of hours birded - both daytime and nocturnal.

<https://ebird.org/atlasny/county/US-NY-071/regions?atlasPeriod=EBIRD ATL NY 2020&m=>

Because of the advantage in using eBird to document breeding (rather than paper forms as on previous Atlases), while we have about 37 Mearns Club or io members participating in the Atlas as of June 30, 2020 there are actually 126 Atlasers to date in Orange County (since anyone can add breeding data to any breeding block), with 80/96 blocks (83.3%) with some breeding data, 29/31 priority blocks (93.55%) with data, 171 species coded with 145 in priority blocks, with 98 species (57.31%) confirmed, and 79 species confirmed in priority blocks (54.48 %). 2714 checklists have been submitted since January 1, 2020.

Since the Port Jervis Watershed Park was a poorly birded area and on the 2000 New York State Breeding Bird Atlas had few observations, and since Liza and I have a fondness for this area following our success with the mini Breeding Bird Surveys of the past two years finding breeding Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and probable Northern Parula Warbler, even though it takes me an hour to drive to the area, I chose one priority block Port Jervis North_CE, as well as the 3 adjacent non-priority blocks CW, SW and SE blocks as my responsibility. In addition I found that no one had birded Rio Dam Road and the south end of Rio Reservoir and that block included a beautiful trail for high-altitude species such as Black-throated Green and Blackburnian Warblers, as well as Winter Wren along the west shore of Rio Reservoir in adjacent Sullivan County but included in the same block called Pond Eddy_NE that we birded. Another block I adopted was the one that includes major part of the Black Rock Forest -- Cornwall on Hudson_SE which is close to home, an area I know well. I also Atlas in Cornwall on Hudson_CW which includes Schunemunk Mountain trails, and the West Point_CW block which includes the peak of Storm King Mountain.

I find I'm learning more about the areas I am birding as well as improving and getting more confident in my visual and auditory bird identification skills, gaining knowledge about various species and habitats, now coming across a specific habitat and expecting and finding specific species. Other Atlasers -- experienced birders have told me they are having a lot of fun with their first BBA.

In subsequent years we will be birding other blocks as well, after our initially chosen blocks reach the 50% of species seen classified as Confirmed Breeders when the block will be deemed to be "Complete."

Here is the list of Mearns club or io group members actively involved with the BBA (in no particular order, and I apologize if I left out anyone's name) 37 in all. Congratulations and thanks to all of them for their dedication:

Kathy Ashman	John Cavalari	Bob Slechta
Curt McDermott	Will Test	Gerhard Patsch
Liza Antony	Ajit Antony	Don Aitchison
Bruce Nott	Jodi Brodsky	Carlotta Shearson
Rick Hansen	Joyce Depew	Jan Fitzpatrick
Linda Scrima	Linda Rohleder and Rich Pillar	Carol Weis
Bill Iannone	Bill Fiero	Gef Chumard
Richard VanTieghem	Joseph Chernek	Mary Buskey
Judy Cinquina	Chris and Desly Fryer	Matt Zeitler

Liz Jamison

Elyse and Tom Fuller

John Haas

Scott Baldinger

Alan and Della Wells

Renee Davis

Enjoyable and productive Atlasing.

Ajit Antony

AN INTERESTING SIGHTING

While hiking at the Warwick County Park in early June, I was surprised to hear Bobolink calls coming from a tree in the middle of the large hay field (just south of the baseball area). I watched as several males flew from the tree to an area near the far edge of the field. The County was notified (via Orange County Audubon Society) and was asked to delay mowing until August 1st. On the morning of June 18th I returned to the park and was pleased to find tall grass and at least 6 male Bobolinks!

Rich Van Tieghem

FALL & WINTER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE – E.A. MEARN'S CLUB

September trips: See the previous Orange Feather and the Mearns io site to be sure September field trips are being held as scheduled.

October 3– Kenridge Farm – Meet Amy Greher (783-6363) at the Dog Park at 8:00 AM. Palm Warblers and Lincoln's Sparrow are expected.

October 10 – Big Sit! – Kathy Ashman is the coordinator (294-6140). Stop by and depart any time you like and enjoy the fun of this national event. Watch the Mearns io site for updates.

October 11 (Sun) – Storm King Art Center – with Bob Slechta (541-8210). Be there by 8:30 AM (admission free) to bird this unique sculpture garden.

October 17 – Croton Point – Jodi Brodsky (282-1058) is the leader. Meet at the RR station "boat launch" at 8:30 AM to bird this fall migrant trap.

October 24 – Oil City Road – with Joyce Depew (978-9952). Be at the platform at 8:30 AM. Maybe we'll find another LeConte's Sparrow this year!

November 7 – Black dirt – Meet Karen Miller (381-3203) at the Jolly Onion at 8:30 AM and we will look for Horned Larks, Snow Buntings and maybe a Lapland Longspur.

November 14 – Eastern Orange lakes – with Bruce (542-0583) and Carlotta (234-8314). Meet at the NW corner of the Newburgh Walmart at 8:30 AM and plan on seeing a good mix of ducks.

November 21 – Southern Orange lakes – with Kathy Ashman (294-6140). Meet at the strip mall next to the Chester McDonald's at 8:30 AM and plan for a "ducky day"!

November 28 – Shawangunk Grasslands – with Tom and Jane (255-0565). Be there at 5:00 PM for Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls.

December 5-6 – Cape Ann, MA – with Jodi Brodsky (282-1058). Contact her for details about this fabulous trip....alcids, grebes, loons, winter duck, etc.

December 19 – Eastern Orange Christmas Bird Count – If you've never participated and want to, contact Bob Slechta (541-8210) for more information.

January 16 – NYS Winter Duck Count – If interested contact Bob Slechta (541-8210) for details.

January 30 – Eagle Trip I – Meet Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) at the Rte. 202/6 "Goat Trail" Iona Island overlook at 8:30 AM and see if we can spot 100+ Bald Eagles.

February 13 – Black Dirt I – with Karen Miller (381-3283). Meet her at the Jolly Onion Inn in Pine Island at 8:30 AM to look for larks, buntings, Rough-legged Hawks, etc.

February 20 – Eagle Trip II – Meet Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) at the Goat Trail overlook at 8:30 AM and see what's changed on the river since the last trip.

March 6 – Rye/Greenwich – Meet Bob Slechta (541-8210) at the Playland parking lot at 9:00 AM to look for winter ducks, loons, grebes, and more.

March 13 – Back Dirt II – Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) at the Jolly Onion Inn at 8:30 AM to see what winter birds are still around as blackbirds start showing up in numbers.

March 20 – Oil City Road – for ducks galore! Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at the Refuge platform at 8:30 AM. Depending on Covid issues bring something to eat as after Oil City she will check on some the lakes in that area of Orange County.

March 27 – Eastern Orange Lakes – Meet Bruce (542-0583) and Carlotta (234-8314) again. Be at the NW corner of the Newburgh Walmart parking lot at 8:30 AM and plan on seeing lots of waterfowl.

Keep an eye on the Mearns io site for any updates or cancellations of field trips due to the Coronavirus.

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 include the number of species seen, number of participants, weather conditions and highlights of the trip. If you post the trip on-line please send me an expanded report fleshing out the details of the on-line posting. Thank you!
