



Orange Feather

SPRING 2021

Hello, everyone! When many people are staying at home during the pandemic, birders venture out to see what species may have dropped into our local area. In my ten years of birding this Ferruginous Hawk is getting more attention than any bird I can remember... more than the Snowy Owls, more than the Eurasian Widgeon, more than the Dickcissel and the Henslow's Sparrow (but maybe not more than the Short-eared Owls).

It is always fun to meet new and old friends as we search for a target bird. The excitement spreads through the group when the bird shows itself. The Ferruginous Hawk can be tough as it covers a large area. Birders set up their scopes from Cedar Swamp Road to Celery, Onion and Lynch avenues and beyond. I saw one eBird Rare Bird Alert with 68 entries of FEHA sightings. That's a lot of cars driving around this farm area and I'm glad the farmers aren't working the fields.



Bob Slechta and I had a conversation with a Town of Goshen police officer who was kind and welcoming to our visitors. He asked for a photo of the hawk (thank you, John Haas) that he posted on the Police Facebook page to inform the residents what was causing all the excitement.

Corey Finger from the metro area set up a WhatsApp group called "FEHA search party" where birders could post information for others. I think that is helpful for anyone traveling to Orange County from out of the area.

In response to the questions that we all received regarding public and private property John Haas posted the following information on his daily blog: *There have been issues with birders/photographers trespassing on private land in the Black Dirt Region. Like Sullivan County, all land in the grassland areas is private property. Remain on the road and make sure the road is a public road. If you have any questions as to the status, stay off the property. Many of the dirt roads in that region are owned and maintained by the farmer and you should not go on them. If a road has a green sign, it is public, if it has a blue sign it is private, if it has no sign it is also private. Please behave as if this was your own back yard you are birding in.*

Thank you to everyone who helped make this a good experience for all birders and I hope that you saw this beautiful bird. More information about the Ferruginous Hawk is included in this edition of the Orange Feather. Great job by our editor, Rich VanTieghem!

Karen C. Miller

Karen C Miller, President
Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club

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Membership Update - Linda Strohl

Happy New Year! At this time we have a total Mearns Club membership of 120. And here are our newest members:

- Peggy Cadigan, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ
- Ron and Ronnie DiLorenzo, Pine Bush
- John and Abby Dux, Millbrook
- Yahvey Hoffman, Cornwall
- Kara Mason, Pleasantville
- Karen VanDyk, Unionville
- Matthew VanDyk, Huguenot
- Alayna Vreeland, Warwick

We warmly welcome each one of you! In the days ahead let's enjoy some memorable birding trips together and perhaps make many new friends.

2020 Financial Report - Linda Strohl

Beginning Balance - January 2020	\$ 2,821.54
Income: Dues, donations and savings account interest	\$ 959.38
Sub-Total	\$ 3,780.92
Expenses:	
Orange Feathers: Feb. \$108.94, Aug. \$63.44	(\$ 172.38)
State Farm Insurance	(\$ 477.97)
NYSOA-Young Birders	(\$ 25.00)
Total Expenses	(\$ 675.35)
Ending Balance in Checking Account	\$ 1,110.37
Ending Balance in Savings Account	\$ 1,995.20
Total Ending Balance - December 2020	\$ 3,105.57

- 2021 Membership dues have been suspended for all paid-up 2020 members. Collection of dues will resume in 2022.

- In-person meetings have been suspended due to COVID-19.

Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*)

New Hampton, Orange County, NY - January 2021

Congratulations to **Linda Scrima** on finding and reporting this rarity!

Ferruginous Hawk is normally found in prairies, deserts, and open range of the West. Many Mearns members have been able to view this beautiful bird in New Hampton.

Here is Linda's description of discovering and identifying the hawk:

While surveying this sector for the NY Waterfowl Count, I noticed this lighter hawk perched in the distance. I snapped a few photos, trying to accurately photograph this hawk. Wasn't sure at the time, but thought that I could be a leucistic RTHA. I was rushing from where I just counted geese at a roost, and I wanted to get to the next waterfowl "hotspot" (the river) before the roosting geese flew in and thus have the potential problem of recounting the same geese and skewing my data for the waterfowl count. In retrospect, I wish that I spent more time on this hawk, lol. I arrived home at dinner time, uploaded the photos and that is when I was taken aback by this hawk's eyes, shape and markings. I looked up Krider's RTHA hesitantly, as I have seen Krider's in Florida, and this did not match. I looked up Ferruginous, and it did not look like an adult. I had difficulty trying to learn juvenile markings while making dinner (my son's girlfriend was coming for dinner!). And Ferruginous seemed a little out of range to jump to that conclusion. I posted the following photos on the Facebook Raptor ID page. Please do not roll your eyes. I truly respect the moderators on this page, as they have been kind enough to walk me through my current birding interest:



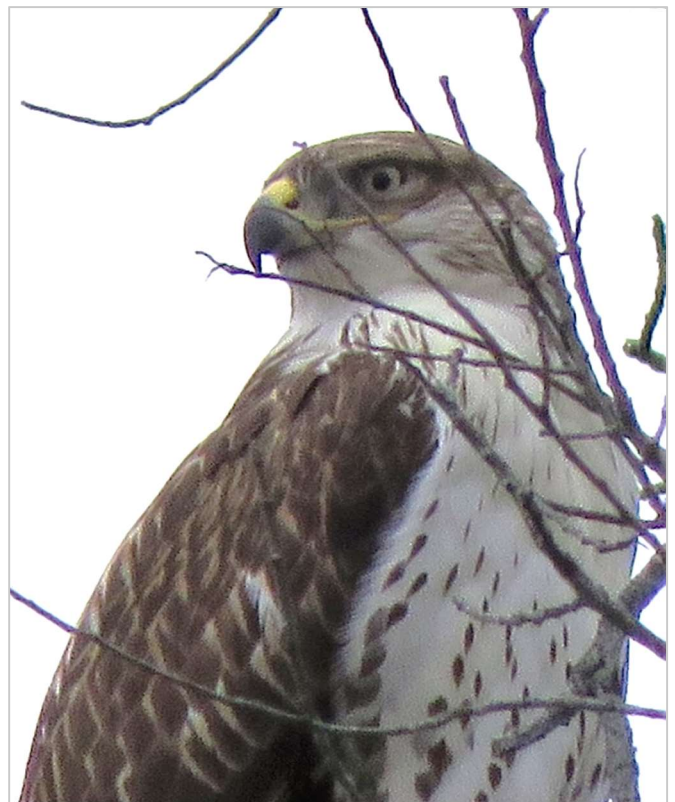
monitoring and documenting "Northern" Abietcola RTHA migrating through this area. They are kind enough to review and discuss my photos, so that I can differentiate the difference between "Northen" Abietcola and the more heavily marked "Eastern" RTHA. The first commenter on my post was confident that it was a Ferruginous! Then he deleted his comment. Ugh. Cathy Sheeter then responded: "Field marks are the pale grayish head with darker eye stripe, pale belly, monochromatic tones, bulky body and large gape. We can also slightly see feathered tarsus". First commenter said that he looked up Ferruginous Hawk for this area, and then wanted to be more cautious, and deleted his comment. It was now late at night and texted photos to some local birders (that have more experience with hawks from outside the east coast) and discussed hawk for a while. It was well after midnight and I couldn't concentrate anymore, so writing this report before sunrise this morning. To all those who private messaged me/commented on post/texted me asking for location, please forgive me that I was not able to respond to you individually, and hopefully you will understand why this report went out the next morning. Regarding photos: taken from inside my car at a far distance as not to disturb hawk. At first I wondered if I photographed hawk too bright (I am a birder, and not really a photographer). I then tried to take photos darker, so that I can be sure that it was truly the coloring of the hawk, and not my amateurish photography skills- taking photos in the dark/overcast/rain has been proving challenging for me. I never saw hawk fly, and did not want to disturb it. It was there when I left.

Ferruginous Hawk Photos:

Linda Scrima took these 3 flight photos on a subsequent day following the initial discovery:



Maryangela Buskey provided the two nice FEHA photos shown below:



Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – August 22, 2020
Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge: Liberty Marsh, both in Orange County
from the platform on Oil City Rd., NY and then from Sussex County, NJ
entering from Owens Station to South Pond of impoundment.

Trip Leader: Joyce Depew Photos by: Joyce Depew

Eleven members of the Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club joined me today! This outing had special significance in that it was the first outing of our late summer season and the first allowable outing since the Covid-19 Pandemic began in March 2020. We had been prevented from having outings like this and club meetings since the pandemic began. Our club also was not able to have its Annual Break 100 count for 2020.

It was great seeing all that came to this outing and uplifting to say the least! I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to EVERYONE in this group and it made me feel proud to be a part of this club! They all respected the rules of mask wearing and social distancing thereby making it as safe as possible for all participants!

Orange County, NY – Platform area: 15 Species observed - Canada Goose, Wood Ducks, Mallards, Mourning Doves, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Killdeer, Northern Harrier, American Crow, Barn Swallows, House Wren, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Song Sparrow, Bobolink (Flock), Red-winged Blackbird (Flock)

Sussex County, NJ notes: 43 Species of birds were observed by our group. We had several rare/infrequent species of birds that showed up on the New Jersey side of the refuge today. They are: Little Blue Heron (juvenile), Glossy Ibis, Snowy Egret and American Pipit.

The amount of Common Gallinules that were visible this year is unlike any I have seen since coming to this area in 2008. We had many looks of fledged juvenile chicks that were very small, black with red from bill to crown. Older juveniles were adult sized sporting grayish brown plumage. The rest of the count included: Canada Geese, Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Green-winged Teal, American Coot, Killdeer, Least Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Bittern, Great Blue Herons (1 Juvenile present), Great Egret, Common Gallinules, Green Herons, Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Great Crested Flycatcher (juveniles), Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Baltimore Oriole (juveniles), Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak (juveniles) and Indigo Bunting.



Glossy Ibis



Least Bittern



Song Sparrow with Caterpillar

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – August 29, 2020

Black Dirt Area

Trip Leaders: David and Sharon Baker Photos by: David Baker

In spite of some forecasts foreboding less than ideal birding conditions, 6 intrepid Mearnsers met at the Jolly Onion Inn parking lot in the hopes of finding some early shorebird migrants in the Black Dirt Region. We began by padding our count with a number of birds spotted from the parking lot. Among the more notable were a Northern Flicker and a Baltimore Oriole (or perhaps two?).

We departed for Skinners Lane where we would spend the next hour and a half scoping out the onion and sod fields. Sadly, the rain that I was hoping would saturate the fields and form some puddles to attract the shorebirds never really amounted to anything. Many of the fields are covered with sod and unpicked onions, so the furrows of the muck that the shorebirds love are in short supply right now. As such, our shorebird sightings were limited to a number of Killdeer. That did not stop us from enjoying a number of sightings of Harriers and Kestrels. Interestingly, every Kestrel we had today involved a pair.

Our circuit today took us from Skinners Lane, to Mission Land Road, down to the Pine Island Nursery where we spotted the two OC Sandhill Cranes, down to Turtle Bay and eventually to Lynch Lane. Our final tally for the day was 32 species with the Cranes being the bird of the day by consensus. While a bit more rain would have been welcomed as far as bringing in more birds, the lack of said precipitation did make for a very enjoyable morning of birding weather-wise. A fine time was had by all.



Red-tailed Hawk



Sandhill Cranes



Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – September 12, 2020

Black Dirt Region

Trip Leader: Karen C. Miller Photos by: Karen C. Miller

Weather: Clear and 71 degrees

I always like to start our Black Dirt outings at the platform on Liberty Loop. On this morning however, I decided to drive down Mission Land Road, mostly to see the American Kestrels there.

I'm always happy to bird with Jodi Brodsky and today was no exception when she spotted an American Golden Plover in a field of Killdeer. It took quite a while for Jodi, Joshua Malbin (guest birder from Brooklyn) and others to finally agree on the identification and in that time the bird ventured away from the field's edge and into the center where we got better looks. Our start at the platform was delayed by nearly an hour but it was worth it, and we got the Kestrels, too.

Twenty minutes on the platform did not bring the large flocks of Bobolinks that we wanted but we did see three Bobolinks and 13 other species. From there we made a stop at Winding Waters where the Connecticut Warbler had been reported, but no luck for us with that skulker.

The Pine Island Turf Nursery offered looks at a pair of Sandhill Cranes and a group of five Turkey Vultures feeding on the sod field. We wrapped up our outing on Turtle Bay Road and Lynch Avenue. Our total count was 32 species with the American Golden Plover and the Sandhill Cranes as the best birds of the day.

Thanks to everyone for showing up and for following our "Be a Safe Birder" guidelines!



American Golden Plover



Sandhill Crane



Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – September 19, 2020

Bashakill

Trip Leader: Scotty Baldinger Photos by: Maryangela Buskey

11 members were on hand for Saturday's Bashakill Field Trip. We met at the Deli Fields at 8:30 am. Weather was on the cool side with a temperature of 44 degrees with wind from the northwest at 7 mph.

The Deli Fields were active and we picked up one of our target birds Lincoln's Sparrow at this location. Other highlights included Osprey, Northern Harrier (flying right by us while standing at boat launch) and Blue Jays mobbing a young Cooper's Hawk. Other sightings included male and female Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, several Northern Flicker, Scarlet Tanager, the first of what would be several Swainson's Thrush (another of our target birds), Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, Eastern Bluebird and Cedar Waxwing.

Our next stop was the Nature Trail. Highlights included Ruby-throated Hummingbird, several Rose-breasted Grosbeak and White-throated Sparrow (by the boardwalk), a mixed fallout at the sandpit featuring Nashville Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Eastern Wood Peewee, and Red-eyed Vireo.

On the loop part of the trail good views at a couple of Great Egret on the kill, adult Bald Eagle (from observation stand), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ovenbird, and 4 more Swainson's Thrushes.

Our last stop was at the orchard and Haven Road. Highlights included a Wilson's Warbler (just inside the Stop Sign trail gate), Magnolia Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, Swainson's Thrush (parking area), Northern Harrier and American Kestrel (viewed on kill from Haven Road duck blind), and opposite the DEC parking area, a Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, three more Scarlet Tanager, and Cedar Waxwing.

We finished with an excellent mix of 57 species including all six area woodpeckers, three species of vireo, twelve species of wood warbler, and six raptor species. Checklist with some photos can be viewed at: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S73790324>

Good birding!
Scotty



American Kestrel



Scarlet Tanager



Ovenbird



Yellow-throated Vireo

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – September 26, 2020

Wallkill River NWR-Winding Waters Trail

Trip Leader: Kathleen Ashman

Photos by: Joyce Depew

Despite the dense fog conditions, eleven members of the club met to look for Fall Migrants on the last weekend of September. Between the persistent dense fog and face masks, the viewing conditions were very poor throughout almost the entire trip. Although we could hear and see the birds, determining the coloration was hard making identification difficult at best. We missed out on many ID's because of this.

We managed to identify only a disappointing 7 species of Fall Migrating Warblers: Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Cape May Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Palm Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Black-throated Green Warbler.

Sparrows are beginning to appear: Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow.

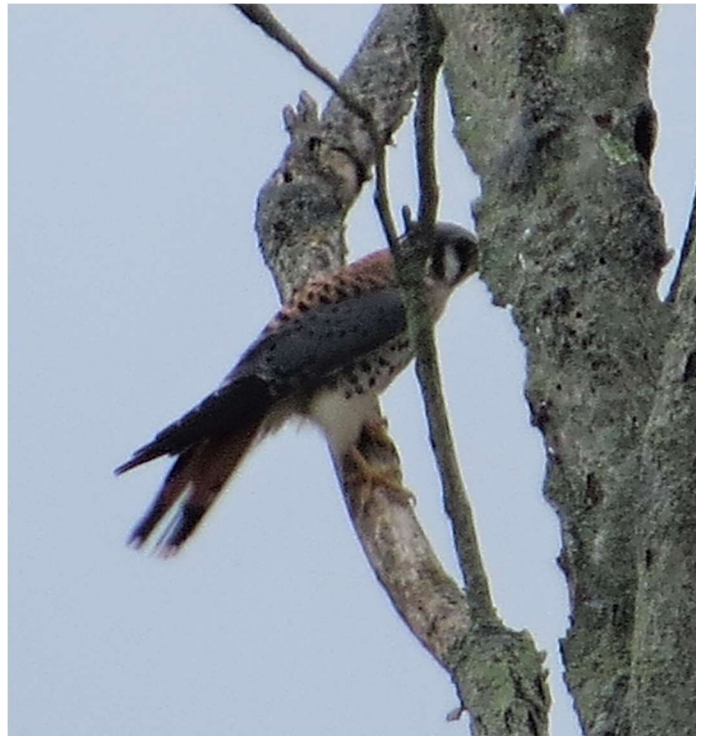
Other excellent finds on the trip were Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, and Northern Harrier. Red-shouldered Hawk was heard, but not seen.

The fog did not die off until well after 10am. We managed to see only 47 species of birds, with the highlight being the Northern Waterthrush. Compared to previous years, we were down by about 20 species for the outing. Weather conditions at 7:30am start: Temperature 54F, winds calm, dense fog. Weather conditions at 11:30am finish: Temperature 64F, winds calm, overcast.

Checklist with photos can be found on eBird at <https://ebird.org/atlasny/checklist/S74130693>



Savannah Sparrow



American Kestrel

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – September 30, 2020

Stewart State Forest

Trip Leader: Bill Fiero

With the overnight rain and forecast for more, it was far from certain that our Stewart State Forest walk would even come to pass, but two intrepid birders showed up at Ridge Rd north for our semiannual foray. Bob Slechta and I did a three plus mile walk from the parking lot first down Maple Lane, then down Ridge Rd to scout out the different habitats.

Since the DEC's draining of the wetland along Maple Lane, bird activity has been slowed, but we had Song Sparrows in the marsh and abundant Cedar Waxwings feeding in the Red Cedar trees. Catbirds, American Robins and Blue Jays were common throughout.

Along the walk down Ridge, we heard Common Raven, which is now regular in the park, with the usual interspersed Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Downy Woodpecker. Carolina Wrens have been common throughout the area this year, and we came up with 4 individuals this morning.

The warbler movement is winding down this year, but we found a small flock containing American Redstart, Black-Throated Green, Blackpoll, and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

White-throated Sparrows have returned, with 9 seen along the way, along with 2 lingering Eastern Towhees.

A highlight of the trip was seeing 4 Common Pheasants, possibly released for hunting, walking in the road in front of us.

We totaled 30 species on an active, pleasant morning of birding; all in all a good day to be on the trail.

Bill Fiero

EBIRD CHECKLIST:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S74249773>

Species list for the trip:

Mallard	Blue Jay	American Robin
Ring-necked Pheasant	American Crow	Cedar Waxwing
Mourning Dove	Common Raven	American Goldfinch
Turkey Vulture	Black-capped Chickadee	White-throated Sparrow
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Tufted Titmouse	Song Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	White-breasted Nuthatch	Eastern Towhee
Northern Flicker	House Wren	American Redstart
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Carolina Wren	Blackpoll Warbler
Eastern Phoebe	European Starling	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Blue-headed Vireo	Gray Catbird	Northern Cardinal

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – October 3, 2020

Kenridge Farm

Trip Leader: Amy Greher Photos by: Amy Greher

Thirteen birders began the Kenridge Farm trip on October 3rd at the dog park located just after the turn from Angola Road to the farm. The farm is actually one of two sites for The Hudson Highlands Nature Museum. We would normally car pool from here except we have COVID 19 to deal with. This spot is often a good place to pick up birds while we wait for the group to assemble. We did find 2 Carolina Wrens (one deep in song), a small flock of Cedar Waxwings, a Catbird and a Yellow-rumped Warbler. A Sharp-shinned Hawk flew in as we took off.

Since the group's number exceeded 10, we split into 2 groups. Bob Slechta led one group that drove down to the farm to bird from there. I took a second group down to the farm, birding as we walked the winding road. Noted on our walk were more Cedar Waxwings and Robins feeding in the field on berry bushes. Two Northern Flickers flew across the road. We also saw a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds as we approached the pond area and a flock of Starlings. Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in a tall bush off the road were the highlight of our walk.

When we met the other group by the main pond, they informed us that a Pied-billed Grebe had just been located by the lookout station on the smaller pond. We too located him and enjoyed viewing a bird that is not often seen here. Splitting up the group did allow us to see more birds but not everyone saw every bird.

The temperature started a bit on the cool side but then became quite comfortable rising from the mid 40's into the mid 50's. Bright sunshine followed us throughout the morning. Our numbers grew as the trip continued and by the end of the trip 17 Mearnsers were in attendance.

Highlights included two Solitary Sandpipers (if they were truly "solitary", there should have been just one). They entertained us by chasing each other around and around the small island located on the back pond by the sugar shack. They settled on the shore right in front of us for good viewing. The Pied-billed Grebe, seven Ruby-crowned Kinglets, three Tennessee, two Nashville and three Northern Parula warblers were also exciting to see. A total of 56 species were recorded. We were out in the field for 3 1/2 hours. A complete list can be found on eBird.

A thank you to all who attended and added their bird expertise to the trip. Birding keeps me active and sane. I assume most of us feel the same. Kenridge remains one of my favorite spots for birding.



Tennessee Warbler



Solitary Sandpiper

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – October 10, 2020

Goosepond Mountain State Park

Trip Leader: Kathleen Ashman

This field trip was held in lieu of the Big Sit due to COVID-19 restrictions and the closure of Glenmere Lake Park to all but Florida residents.

We birded Goosepond Mountain Lazy Hill Rd. Trail off LaRoe Rd. and Trout Brook/Goosepond Mountain South Trail off Bull Mill Rd. The weather was beautiful with temperatures ranging from 54 to 66F, winds from the south at 4mph and increasing to southwest winds at 9-14mph, skies clear.

Nine members of the club participated, but maintaining social distancing on a narrow trail made group birding difficult. It made it hard to get everyone on the birds. Yellow-rumped Warblers were plentiful, but we also managed to see Palm and Black-throated Green Warblers. We got to see some excellent Thrushes: Eastern Bluebird, Swainson's, Hermit and American Robins.

Raptors seen were Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk and Red-tailed Hawk. Common Ravens were both heard and seen. Both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets were present.

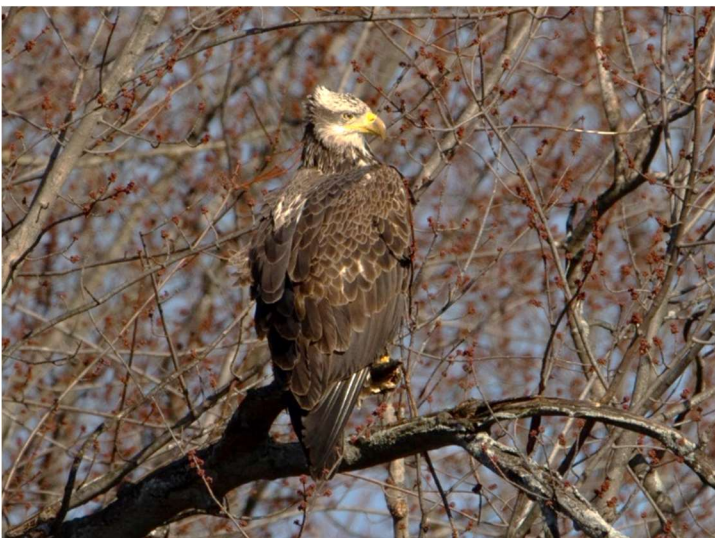
Sparrows were numerous at Goosepond Mountain South where we picked up Eastern Towhee, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow. Other excellent finds were Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

It was a wonderful 3 hour outing. Start time was 8:30 am, ending time was 11:40 am. Checklists can be seen at the following two links:

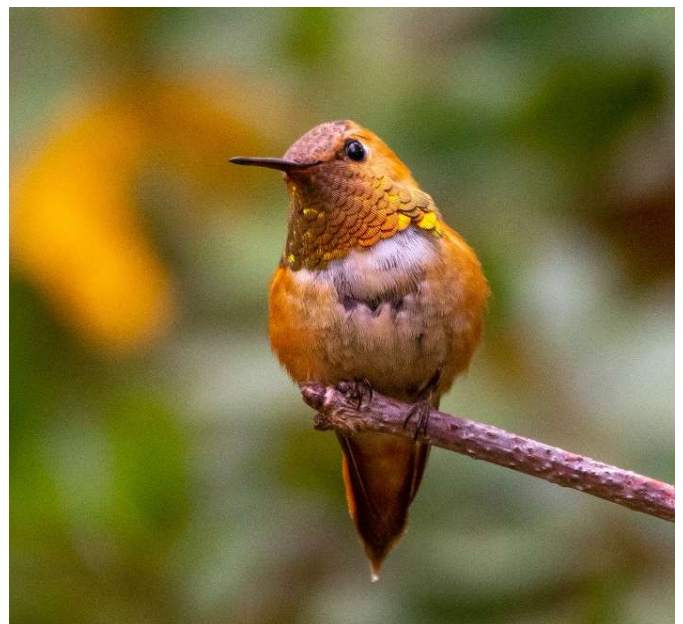
<https://ebird.org/atlasny/checklist/S74678182>

<https://ebird.org/atlasny/checklist/S74678142>

Two photos from new EAMBC Member
Alayna Vreeland:



Bald Eagle, Black Dirt Region



Rufous Hummingbird, Greenwood Lake NY

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – October 17, 2020

Croton Point, NY

Trip Leader: Jodi Brodsky Photos by: Karen C. Miller

The group first visited the Croton Railroad Station area where 20 Species and 71 individual birds were observed.

The following Species were found at the Croton RR Station area:

Killdeer, Ring-billed Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Black-capped Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, European Starling, Northern Mockingbird, House Sparrow, House Finch, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Palm Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Northern Cardinal.

The group then explored Croton Point Park where 43 Species and 512 individual birds were seen and noted.

The following Species were found within the Croton Point Park:

Canada Goose, Mourning Dove, Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle (2 immature birds), Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel (Qty. 7), Merlin, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, American Pipit (Qty. 86), American Goldfinch, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird (Qty. 90), Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Blackpoll Warbler, Palm Warbler (Qty. 35), Yellow-rumped Warbler (Qty. 40) and Northern Cardinal.



Brown Creeper



Palm Warblers



Blue-headed Vireo

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – October 24, 2020

Liberty Marsh (NY and NJ)

Trip Leader: Joyce Depew Photo by: Rich VanTieghem

11 Participants: Joyce Depew, B. Slechta, K. Ashman, R. Conzo and friend, Don Atchison, Rich VanTieghem, Zenon Bachir, Joe Cullen, Joe Trapani, A. Greher

Fall is upon us, with shorter daylight hours (soon to be even shorter). It was cloudy and cool most of the day with some threat of rain which never occurred. Temperatures were in the mid to upper 60s. We started this walk from the Platform on Oil City Rd. and commenced to walk the loop after our review of birds in the water in front of the platform.

We had some nice immature White-crowned Sparrows and various waterfowl such as Northern Pintail, Canada Geese and Mallards. I've noticed that male Mallards appear to be out of the eclipse stage and exhibiting bright green heads which sometimes in sunlight will even show up as purple at different light angles. There were also a few immature Common Gallinules seen on the Sussex County end of the marsh which I have seen 2 times this week when I did a preview walk on Thursday, Oct. 22, 2020. Sandhill Cranes also made a brief appearance and we witnessed a Sharp-shinned Hawk showing some aggression towards a Northern Harrier in the air.

All in all a happy, enthusiastic crew came today and everyone continuing to wear their masks the entire time we were together. Thank you! This effort makes it possible for us to continue our club walks!

Our bird count today totaled 58 Species: Canada Geese, Mute Swan, Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, American Widgeon, Mallard, American Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Common Gallinule, American Coot, Sandhill Cranes, Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Great Egret, Turkey Vultures, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Coopers Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, White-throated Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird, Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal, Northern Pintail, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Northern Mockingbird, Pine Siskin, White-crowned Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Common Yellowthroat.



Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – November 7, 2020

Black Dirt Region

Trip Leader: Karen C. Miller Photos by: Karen C. Miller

Weather: Sunny and 70 degrees

Our first stop on this day was Skinner's Lane since it had been the location of several sightings of Plovers over the previous week. That was not to be for us, however we did have large flocks of American Pipits flying over and feeding on the black dirt fields. These birds kept us entertained for quite some time, along with some Horned Larks and a flock of American Robins.

We finally turned down the road that runs parallel to the creek and stopped at a tree that was full of American Goldfinches and Pine Siskins! This was an exciting find. The creek always attracts a lot of birds and we ended the Skinner's Lane area with 19 species, which included four Northern Harriers and five Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Pine Island Turf Nursery was next on our route and we were pleased to see that the farmer waved us through with a big smile... so nice to be welcomed at his farm. We missed the Sandhill Cranes, but had good looks at a Northern Harrier hunting over a nearby field. A large flock of American Goldfinches were feeding in the back field.

We crossed the New Jersey state line to check out Owens Station. By then it was noon and several birders left us, but Joyce Depew, Zenon Bachir and I walked the trail that leads along the edge of the pond. We were happy to get good shots of a Golden-crowned Kinglet that was foraging in the bushes and 11 other species on this short walk.

We ended the outing with 32 species and I think we would all agree that the Pine Siskins were a big surprise. We enjoyed listening to them singing in the trees and moving about with the goldfinches. Thank you to everyone who joined us for a few hours of birding!



Pine Siskin



Golden-crowned Kinglet



American Pipit

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – November 14, 2020

Eastern Orange County Lakes

Trip Leaders: Bruce Nott and Carlotta Shearson

On a sunny but chilly Saturday morning, ten masked Mearnsers met in the Newburgh Walmart parking lot for the start of this year's fall Eastern Orange lakes outing. We were pleased to have new member Yahvey Hoffman join us for his first trip with the club.

By the time the rest of us arrived, Bruce had already scoped out the waterfowl on the pond: Canada Geese, Mallards, Gadwall, Green-wing Teal, American Widgeon, Bufflehead, a Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintails, and several gorgeous male Hooded Mergansers displaying for a lone female. We had good looks at a young Red-shouldered Hawk perched in the trees near the Thruway. A couple flocks of blackbirds flew over, and we hoped that some were Rusty Blackbirds; however, inspection of Bruce's photos revealed them to be Red-winged Blackbirds. (Yahvey did report a Rusty at this location on Sunday though.) Club members Tom Crepet and Jane Vecchione, who stopped at the pond after we had left, reported a Cape May Warbler.

Across Route 300 at Washington Lake, we picked out a Herring Gull among the Ring-billed Gulls, as well as Double-crested Cormorants and Mute Swans. There were many more Swans (20+) on Browns Pond, along with Ruddy Ducks, Bufflehead, a Pied-billed Grebe, a Common Merganser, a Belted Kingfisher, and a second Red-shouldered Hawk. During a quick stop at Crestview Lake, we had two more Kingfishers, a Cooper's Hawk, and 106 Ring-necked Ducks in the glare on the far side of the lake.

In the mud at the south end of Orange Lake, we picked up some very well hidden Wilson's Snipe and two American Pipits, but we were unable to locate the Pectoral Sandpiper that Bruce had seen on previous days. A Bald Eagle was perched in a tree at the north end of the lake. From the Lakeview House on the east side of the lake, we watched a Common Loon diving, and on the west side, Tom and Jane had Lesser Scaup.

After a quick stop at the marsh on Gardnertown Road, our trip ended at noon, with a total of 44 species for the day.

RUN FOR COVER

By C.S. Perretti
2020

Setting the table
A field cloth whips in place.
It covers an eclipsing day,
Glimmering on ice and snow.
Candles are lit in spreading gloom.

The world becomes mute.
An owl rises in the silken blush
Of the fading sky's kimono,
Flap-flapping in the folds,
Weaving moth-like
In the somber winter web.

It cruises the sea of grass,
Orca of rolling fields,
Sharing the hunt with others
In smoking dusk.
It haunts, it hounds
A hot breathless meal.

Trip Report - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Outing – November 21, 2020

Southern Orange County Lakes

Trip Leader: Kathleen Ashman

Ten members of the club convened at the parking lot next to the Chester McDonald's at 8:30 am. Starting temperature was 39F, southwest winds at 4-6mph and mostly cloudy skies. Ending temperature was 55F, west winds at 11-16 mph and cloudy skies.

Although this trip is normally meant to be in search of waterfowl, we were sadly disappointed.

Lakes/water bodies visited were Pine Hill Rd. Beaver Pond, Wickham Lake, Kayak Launch on Old Dutch Hollow Rd. Greenwood Lake, Walton Lake, Round Lake, and Six-and-a-Half Station Rd.

We managed to travel 39 miles by car during the trip and saw 33 different species.

Waterfowl seen were Canada Geese, Mute Swan, Gadwall, American Black Duck, Mallard, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Ruddy Duck and Pied-billed Grebe. We picked up 6 American Coots at 6 ½ Station Rd to our delight.

After we disbanded, Bob Slechta drove over to Tomahawk Lake where he had about 80 Common Mergansers. Other good birds seen were Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier and Belted Kingfisher.

In general the outing was disappointing and did not begin to compare with the number and diversity of waterfowl seen in previous years. The trip ended officially at 12:15 pm, lasting about 3hrs 45min.

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Event – January 16, 2021

2021 Winter Waterfowl Count – Orange County

Coordinator: Bob Slechta

Ever since 2016 our tally of individuals has gone up every year, topping out at 10,953 this year. The main driver has been more people in the field finding more Canada Geese whose numbers have gone from 4,309 to 9,326! As long as there is exposed grass or corn stubble to feed on and a place to hang, like the slow sections of the Wallkill and Moodna Rivers (as our lakes and ponds are pretty much always frozen) they will be around for us to count. In fact this year as in past years the bulk of the Geese were found in the Wallkill Valley from the fields of the Black Dirt to the slow sections of the river around Montgomery and Walden. As for the other species of waterfowl, their numbers tend to fluctuate more from year to year as a result of the weather leading up to the count and its effect on our lakes and ponds I suspect. Ring-necked Duck numbers for example were in the single digits for four years, and then over 100 the past two years. So if some numbers seem low this year, wait and see how the next few years turn out.

This year's numbers are:

Snow Goose - 2, Canada Goose - 9,326, Mute Swan - 82, Gadwall - 17, Widgeon - 1, Black Duck - 16, Mallard - 628, Ring-necked Duck - 106, Bufflehead - 37, Hooded Merganser - 70, Common Merganser - 663, Ruddy Duck - 4, Coot - 1 (one less species than last year).

I'd like to thank all who participated on the count and am looking forward to next year's Waterfowl Count adventure. BOB

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Event – January 30, 2021

Hudson River Bald Eagle Trip I

Trip Leader: Gerhard Patsch Photos by: Chrisann Senerchia

We had excellent winter weather for our annual Hudson River Eagle trip. It was a cold day (14-31 F), but fortunately, the wind was light and it was sunny. Several cold days and nights earlier in the week brought some ice to the coves and bays along our route. Inland ponds and lakes were starting to freeze and this brought more Eagles to our area than I had expected.

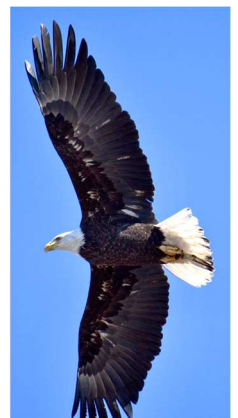
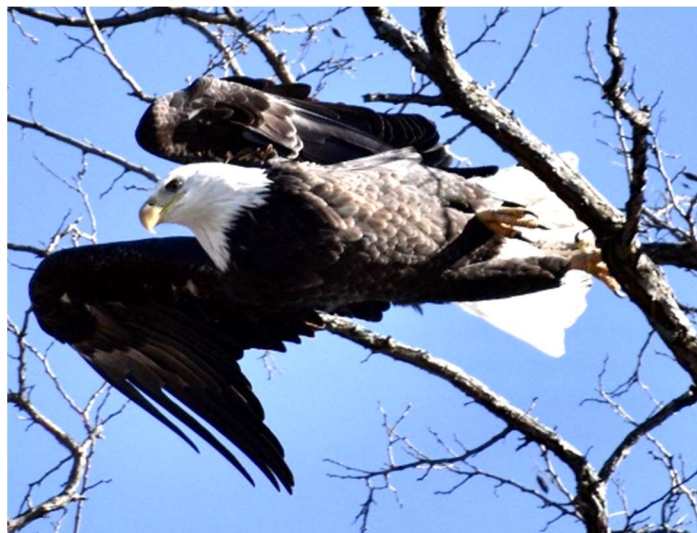
We went to all of our favorite locations between the Bear Mountain Bridge and Croton Point Park. We found Eagles at all our usual stops, but not as many as in past years when there was more ice.

Steamboat Park in Verplanck had the most Eagle activity and we were thrilled to see an adult Bald Eagle snatch a large fish right in front of us! Five Great Cormorants showing their white hip patches and many Common Mergansers were also observed from this location.

At our last stop of the day, the Croton Reservoir Dam, we found a very nice variety and collection of ducks. In good light we enjoyed seeing Hooded Mergansers, Common Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, Buffleheads, Gadwalls, Black Ducks, Mallards, American Widgeon, Common Goldeneye, along with Pied-billed Grebes and many Swans and Coots, and four more Eagles. Other highlights included a Hermit Thrush, Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Sparrows and Raven.

On our way home, after the field trip was over, five of us sighted the Golden Eagle perched in his favorite tree on Storm King Mountain. And so ended a nice day of winter birding.

Thirteen masked members and friends tallied 44 species with 49 Bald Eagle sightings.



Hermit Thrush



Hooded Merganser

Check List Committee Report

By Bob Slechta

With the close of 2020 a new check list upgrade is in the works and is probably already out on Groups.io while you read this. There are quite a few seasonal occurrence changes and two major species changes - the moving of Clay-colored Sparrow from accidental to 'e' (extra-ordinarily rare) spring and fall, and the addition of Black Rail to the accidental list.

On May 30, 2020 the word went out of a Black Rail in the NE corner (NY) of the Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge (on the south side of Oil City Rd.). Outside of Curt McDermott catching a quick glimpse of the bird, the rest of us had to make due with identifying the bird by call alone. Thankfully the bird called often and there were several individuals (club and non-club) present that were familiar with the bird and its calls to confirm the identification.

As for the Clay-colored Sparrow, its third sighting (three needed to be taken off the accidental list) was made by Bruce Nott (with photos) and seen by others at the Pine Island Turf Farm October 1, 2020. Other notables regarding the check list are the confirmation of Osprey breeding in Orange County just north of Plum Point/Kowawese Unique Area, our second sighting of Franklin's Gull (with 'e' bird photos) at Cornwall Bay By Matt Zeitler 7/10/2020, and our second Barnacle Goose for the county spotted by Bruce and seen by many this past November-December at the Camel Farm.

Ferruginous Hawk will be added to the accidental list with the sighting by Linda Scrima on 1/16/21 in the Black Dirt region and seen by many people during the next days with some nice photos on Ebird of the first year Light juvenile.

In closing I'd like to thank all you Mearnsers out there in the field keeping track of birds in Orange County and special thanks to Ajit Antony for putting together our checklist for all to use and enjoy!

2020 Eastern Orange Christmas Count

by Bob Slechta, Compiler

Another Christmas Count is under our belts, and what a toughie it was this year. What with Covid protocols, 12 inches of snow on the ground and few places to park, and on top of all that our lakes were frozen! Despite all that and generally lower numbers for many birds, we still managed to attain a tally of 68 species with Junco being the only bird to have higher numbers than usual. I attribute it to their fondness of feeding in the exposed grass along the edge of the road in these situations, plus they are easy to identify when they take flight.

Species whose numbers dropped the most are Ring-billed Gull, Turkey Vultures (but not Black Vultures), Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Robin (only 1!), House Finch, and Cowbird. All other species' numbers are in range of their normal fluctuations. We had similar numbers in 2013 and 2016 as a result of snow. In fact the snow was such an issue this year I abandoned area E altogether being mostly un-plowed dirt roads in the Stewart State Forest Buffer Lands.

68 species doesn't look so shabby in retrospect - eh? Add in the 9 count week birds we could have had if our lakes hadn't frozen a mere 2 days before the count, and things would have looked even better. Even so there are always a few unexpected gems to be encountered on every count like this year with - Merlin, Catbird, Hermit Thrush, Fox and Field Sparrow, Red-

breasted Nuthatch, and Pine Siskin. So hopefully, ever so hopefully next year Covid will not be an issue, our lakes will be open, and there will be NO snow on the ground, alright maybe 2 inches is okay. Thanks to all for their efforts and to Ajit for putting together the count tally sheet and posting it on groups.io. 2020 CBC Details are provided below.

Christmas Bird Count Details - Saturday December 19, 2020

SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL
Snow Goose	0	Turkey Vulture	7	Ruby-Crowned Kinglet	0
Canada Goose	1626	Northern Harrier	CW	Eastern Bluebird	23
Mute Swan	25	Sharp-Shinned Hawk	1	Hermit Thrush	1
Wood Duck	0	Cooper's Hawk	6	American Robin	1
Northern Shoveler	1	Bald Eagle	8	Gray Catbird	1
Gadwall	1	Red-shouldered Hawk	7	Northern Mockingbird	20
American Wigeon	CW	Red-tailed Hawk	58	European Starling	694
Mallard	247	Rough-legged Hawk	0	Cedar Waxwing	8
American Black Duck	33	Eastern Screech Owl	0	House Sparrow	656
Northern Pintail	0	Great Horned Owl	0	American Pipit	0
Green-Winged Teal	CW	Barred Owl	2	House Finch	64
Canvasback	0	Short-eared Owl	0	Purple Finch	8
Ring-Necked Duck	46	Belted Kingfisher	4	Common Redpoll	0
Lesser Scaup	CW	Red-headed Woodpecker	0	Pine Siskin	7
Greater Scaup	CW	Red-bellied Woodpecker	44	American Goldfinch	103
Long-tailed Duck	0	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	14	Snow Bunting	0
Bufflehead	1	Downy Woodpecker	73	Eastern Towhee	0
Common Goldeneye	CW	Hairy Woodpecker	8	American Tree Sparrow	22
Hooded Merganser	42	Northern Flicker	11	Field Sparrow	1
Common Merganser	381	Pileated Woodpecker	7	Savannah Sparrow	0
Ruddy Duck	CW	American Kestrel	0	Fox Sparrow	2
Ring-necked Pheasant	0	Merlin	1	Song Sparrow	141
Wild Turkey	27	Peregrine Falcon	2	Swamp Sparrow	CW
Pied-Billed Grebe	CW	Eastern Phoebe	0	White-throated Sparrow	487
Rock Pigeon	242	Northern Shrike	0	White-crowned Sparrow	0
Mourning Dove	223	Blue Jay	114	Dark-eyed Junco	2293
American Coot	0	American Crow	604	Red-winged Blackbird	0
Killdeer	0	Fish Crow	37	Eastern Meadowlark	0
Wilson's Snipe	0	Common Raven	8	Rusty Blackbird	6
Ring-billed Gull	249	Horned Lark	105	Common Grackle	1
Herring Gull	22	Black-capped Chickadee	127	Brown-headed Cowbird	3
Iceland Gull (Kumlein's)	0	Tufted Titmouse	111	Yellow-rumped Warbler	0
Great Black-backed Gull	11	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2	Northern Cardinal	142
Common Loon	0	White-breasted Nuthatch	71		
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Brown Creeper	1		
Great Cormorant	0	Winter Wren	0	TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	9416
Great Blue Heron	6	Carolina Wren	53	TOTAL SPECIES	68
Black Vulture	62	Golden-crowned Kinglet	0	COUNT WEEK SPECIES	9

UPCOMING TRIPS:

Here are the trips that are planned thru Sept. 2021 (see "Notes" section below)

February 13, Sat - Black Dirt region I - Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) in the parking lot of The Jolly Onion restaurant in Pine Island, NY, at 8:30 AM to look for Larks, Buntings, Rough-legged Hawks, more.

February 20, Sat -Eagle Trip II- Meet Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) in the parking lot of the Iona Island overlook on Route 202/6 ("the Goat Trail") at 8:30 AM. We'll see what's new on the river since January.

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

March 13, Sat - Black Dirt region II - Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) in the parking lot of The Jolly Onion restaurant, Pine Island, NY, at 8:30 AM to see what winter birds are still around as Blackbirds start showing up in numbers.

March 20, Sat - Oil City Road - Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at the Wallkill River NWR platform at 8:30 AM for ducks galore! Bring a lunch if you want to join Kathy for an afternoon of checking some of the lakes in that part of the County.

March 27, Sat - Eastern Orange Lakes - Meet Bruce Nott (542-0583) and Carlotta Shearson (234-8314) at the northwest corner of the Newburgh Walmart parking lot (Rte 300) at 8:30 AM and plan on seeing lots of waterfowl.

April 3, Sat - Rye - Meet Bob Slechta (541-8210) at the Playland parking lot at 9:00 AM for Grebes, Loons, Egrets, Oystercatchers, and more.

April 10, Sat - Oil City Road with Joyce Depew (978-9952). Be at the Platform at 8:30 AM for shore birds and waterfowl - our target being Blue-winged Teal

April 21, Wed - 6 1/2 Station Road - Meet Amy Greher (783-6363) where the Rail Trail crosses the road at 8:30 AM and get your first Yellow Warbler of the season.

April 24, Sat - The Basha - Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Basha just as the spring migration is heating up. Be at the Stop Sign Trail at 8:30 AM

April 28, Wed - Chadwick Lake - Check out the Lake with Bob Slechta (541-8210) and see what we can find.

May 1, Sat - Stewart State Forest - Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at the North Ridge Road parking lot at 8:00 AM for early arrivals and White-eyed Vireo perhaps.

May 5, Wed - Glenmere Lake - This location has been very productive in the past. Meet Kathy Ashman (421-5478) at the town park at 8:00 AM. Watch for possible change in venue due to Covid.

May 8, Sat - The Basha - This is the place to be in early May! Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) at the Stop Sign Trail at 8:00 AM.

May 14-15, Fri-Sat – Break 100 - See how many birds you can identify from 4:00 PM Friday to 4:00 PM Saturday in Orange County. Keep your eyes open for details; the event may be in flux due to Covid.

May 16, Sun - Kenridge Farm - Meet Amy Greher (783-6363) at the Dog Park at 8:00 AM and see if we can get more than 60 species!

May 19, Wed - Ironwood Road, one of the last locations for Golden-winged Warbler - Meet Dave Baker (446-4030) there at 8:00 AM.

May 22, Sat - Goosepond - Meet Bob Slechta (541-8210) at the mini mall next to the Chester McDonalds at 7:30AM. Mourning Warbler is possible.

May 29, Sat - Shawangunk Grasslands for grassland species at their best! Meet Tom Crepet and Jane Vecchione (255-0565) there at 8:00 AM

August 21, Sat - Wallkill N.W.R. - Meet Joyce Depew (978-9952) at the Owen's Station Road parking area at 8:00 AM for Egrets, Ibis, Least Bittern, and who knows what else.

August 28, Sat - Black Dirt region - Be at the Jolly Onion in Pine Island at 8:00 AM and hopefully Karen Miller (381-3283) will find us some Buffed-breasted Sandpipers.

September 11, Sat - Stewart State Forest - Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) again at the North Ridge Road parking area of Stewart State Forest at 8:00 AM. Perhaps a Yellow-breasted Chat?

September 18, Sat - Winding Waters - Meet Kathy Ashman (421-5478) there at 8:00 AM and maybe we will be lucky with a Connecticut Warbler.

September 25, Sat – The Basha - Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Deli Fields at 8:30 AM. Philly Vireo and Gray-cheeked Thrush are likely!

NOTES:

- The phone number given for each trip leader is there for you to call the night before or the morning of if you have any questions. You can also keep an eye on the Mearn's Groups.io site for last minute changes.

- If you lead a trip you are responsible for sending a write-up to Rich VanTieghem at rich.w2vt@gmail.com

- Remember - Covid is still likely going to be an issue so we will continue to social distance, wear masks, avoid carpooling and sharing of optics, and break up into smaller groups if there are too many of us on a trip. **Otherwise let's do some birding!** – Bob Slechta, Trip Coordinator

Editor's Note:

Thank you to all of the members who contributed articles, trip reports, data, poetry and the more than 30 photographs for this newsletter. Happy birding in 2021! - Rich VanTieghem
