

ORANGE FEATHER

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2023



Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club - Orange County, New York

mearnsbirdclub.org

Orange Feather Newsletter - Spring 2022

Greetings to All!

We have all welcomed in the New Year by now and hope for it to be a good one for our personal lives, while also wishing for those special moments when a rare bird is located in Orange County. We did have some rarities toward the end of 2022 and an example was the Yellow-throated Warbler in Middletown, NY. I unfortunately “missed the boat” on that bird, since it flew before I got there along with fellow member Mary Buskey. We searched bushes, ditches, trees etc. for a few hours.. oh well!

The Mearns Bird Club Audubon Christmas Count went well thanks to member participation. The down side, as noted by Karen Miller’s 2022 compilation compared to 2021, there was a significant drop in the number of individuals within some species of birds that normally appear in our Christmas Count area. Examples of this decline were American Robin, Common Grackle and Brown-headed Cowbird (which was a no-show for 2022). Could it be weather, environmental conditions or avian disease? Whatever the cause, we hope this decline doesn’t continue. (I know the crow population has not suffered in the Middletown, NY region.)

Have you explored our Mearns Bird Club files for information lately? Carlotta Shearson has recently organized our records by category into folders, and she continues to make other improvements! Take a look via: MearnsBirdClub@groups.io. Another improvement is that the current Checklist of Orange County Birds can now be accessed via a link on the mearnsbirdclub.org home page, underneath the photo of participants on a Cape Ann trip (click on the gray box labeled “Checklist of Orange County Birds”). You may print this list out for personal use.

Don Aitchison, Program Chair has lined up some presenters for our upcoming club meetings at the Blooming Grove Sr. Center. Below are the topics for the next 3 months - mark your calendars!

- March 13th: “*Exploring the Hudson River*” - presented by Scott & Denise Stoner
- April 10th: “*Birding NYC*” - Presented by Deborah Allen
- May 8th: “*Constitution Marsh Audubon Sanctuary*” - Presented by Rebecca Schultz

Upcoming Mearns Bird Club events to look forward to:

- The **Annual ‘Break 100’** will occur on Saturday, May 20, 2023 and, for the first time ever, the Break 100 Countdown Potluck will occur the next day on Sunday, May 21, 2023 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Blooming Grove Sr. Center. (We are trying this new schedule to alleviate the stress of Members having to get food ready immediately after the count).
- Lastly, before our summer recess, the **Mearns Club Annual Picnic** will occur in June. The date is TBA but it may occur around June 10th, with a rain date of June 11th at Winding Hills Park, Montgomery, NY. Stay tuned for updated information!

Good Birding! - Joyce Depew, President - Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club

Cover Photo: Nashville Warbler at Newburgh Waterfront - by Karen Miller

Club Membership:

Receiving this newsletter is a benefit of membership! Annual membership in the Mearns Bird Club is \$20 for an individual, \$30 for a family, and \$8 for a student.

To Join or Renew: Please send your name, mailing address, e-mail address, phone number (for club contact ONLY), and a check payable to "Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club" via US Mail to: **Linda Stroll, Treasurer, 8 Park Road, Salisbury Mills, NY 12577-5028**
You may use the membership form on the back cover (last page) of this newsletter.

New Members:

Kyle Knapp, Warwick, NY
Brenda Jordan, West Point, NY
Suzanne Kavic, Ossining, NY
Maria Loukeris, Glenwood, NJ
Matthew Loewenstein, Montgomery, NY
John Loewenstein, Montgomery, NY
Stella Miller, Pomona, NY

Treasurer's Report for FY-2022

Beginning Balance - January 1, 2022:	\$2,901.85
2022 Income (Dues, Donations, Interest)	\$1,991.30

2022 Expenses:

NYSOA, Inc. Speaker, Wendy Tocci	\$125.00
NYSOA, Inc.	\$30.00
NYSYBC (Young Birders Club)	\$25.00
Orange Feathers (Feb. \$140.06, Aug. \$116.72)	\$256.78
Ravenbeard Wildlife Center, Speaker	\$125.00
Stamps (\$11.60 and \$12.00)	\$23.60
Finch International Research Network, Speaker	\$150.00
Blooming Grove Senior Center, donation	\$100.00
Hudson Highlands Nature Museum, donation	\$100.00
Young Birders Club, Speaker	\$100.00
Picnic	\$30.00
State Farm Insurance	\$479.44
Bashakill Area Assoc. (in memory of Paula Medley)	\$50.00
Carlotta Shearson (computer web hosting)	\$226.51
Richard Guthrie, Speaker	\$175.00
2022 Total Expenses:	\$1,996.33

Ending Balance in Checking Account	\$802.23
Ending Balance in Savings Account	\$2,094.59
Total Ending Balance - December 31, 2022:	\$2,896.82

New York State Young Birders Club

By Tracy Patsch

In 2008 the New York State Young Birders Club was started under the sponsorship of New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA). The Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club was one of the first Partner Organizations. We have led field trips for them each year to Doodletown, Liberty Loop, Black Dirt, Winding Waters and more. Students (ages 12-19) show up with their parents and a NYSOA coordinator. Many of them are excellent birders with their sharp eyes and ears. Their enthusiasm is contagious. Trips have been led by Bob Slechta and Gerhard Patsch with assistance from Joyce Depew, Barry Babcock and Dennis Murphy.

If you would like to help by leading a Young Birders Club trip this year to Liberty Loop or Winding Waters, please contact Bob Slechta (mrbnmse@verizon.net). We are also looking for a volunteer to serve as the Mearns Bird Club coordinator. If interested, please contact Gerhard Patsch (gerapa2001@yahoo.com).

To find out more about the New York State Young Birders Club you may visit www.nysyoungbirders.org

Dusk at the Shawangunk Grasslands

Grasshopper sparrows and bobolinks
settle quietly into the deep grass,
day drifts off to sleep.
In lowering light, short-eared owls

pop up silently, swoop over the vast field,
sky dance together, dodge northern harriers,
drop down out of sight.

Nervous vole quivers
between timothy stalks,
softly jostles crisp dead blades of grass,
unwarned by twilight shadows,

the weight of death on its tiny back.



Poem by Diane Bliss

Northern Harrier (male) by Karen Miller

How to See Snow Geese in the Snow

You should come around dusk, or early morning
before they pull themselves up on wings
to dissolve in the pink dawn.

Dress warmly against the harsh wind
over the flat white fields, stubbled with corn stalks,
where Canada geese gather.

Stand at the edge of the snowy field,
letting the whiteness fill your eyes,
slowly scan left to right;

see right through the brown bodies
and black heads of the Canadas,
thousands of them now, black necks bent.

Look for white on white, the hint
of movement, or the delicate touch of black
at the tips of their folded wings,

or the orange upper bill
and that stark onyx gem of an eye
floating in white of field and feathers.

You may see only one or two,
or a whole angelic flock as it takes wing,
their calls softer-pitched than Canadas,

more like the conversation of long-time friends.
And when you see snow geese in the snow,
stand still in belief and disbelief, call back to them.

Meet those black-gem eyes with yours.
Feel your heart pump like wingbeats.

Poem by Diane Bliss



Snow Geese by Karen Miller

RESULTS: 2022 Eastern Orange County Christmas Bird Count - Dec. 17, 2022
Data provided by Karen Miller, 2022 CBC Coordinator

SPECIES / TEAM	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	TOTAL
Snow Goose										CW (1)
Canada Goose	563		263	414		338	181	67	197	2023
Mute Swan			15			24	2			41
Wood Duck									5	5
Northern Shoveler										CW (3)
Gadwall			7			5				12
American Wigeon						2				2
Mallard	2	10	165	54		64	23	4	7	329
American Black Duck		9	12		2	4			12	39
Northern Pintail										CW (1)
Green-winged Teal			3							3
Ring-necked Duck			1		80	100				181
Lesser Scaup			1							1
Bufflehead			1			6				7
Common Goldeneye			2							2
Hooded Merganser			62		2	30				94
Common Merganser	1	15	82			13	7	2	12	132
Ruddy Duck			33			31				64
Wild Turkey					1				25	26
Rock Pigeon	21	35	35	110		3	32	16	70	322
Mourning Dove	45	10	19	21		24	43	15	5	182
American Coot										CW (1)
Killdeer			2	1						3
Ring-billed Gull		70	613		3	4	26		32	748
Herring Gull		5	651						1	657
Iceland Gull (Kumlein's)			1							1
Great Black-backed Gull			5							5
Great Cormorant									1	1
Great Blue Heron			3	1		2	2			8
Black Vulture			6	4		2	2	2	7	23
Turkey Vulture			4	1		1	4		1	11
Northern Harrier							1		2	3
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1			1		1				3
Cooper's Hawk	4		1		1		2	2		10
Bald Eagle			1	1		2	5		7	16
Red-shouldered Hawk	4					4	2			10
Red-tailed Hawk	9	6	2	16	11	4	14	8	4	74
Great Horned Owl									2	2
Barred Owl				1						1
Belted Kingfisher	1		1	1		2	3		1	9
Red-headed Woodpecker							1			1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	10	2	1	14	11	8	17	5	8	76
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	2	1			1	1	1	1		7
Downy Woodpecker	8	6	6	3	20	5	11	12	13	84
Hairy Woodpecker	1		1		3			3	2	10

Northern Flicker	2			2	4	1	3		2	14
Pileated Woodpecker		1	1		1	2	1			6
American Kestrel							1	2		3
Blue Jay	47	10	7	29	48	19	54	30	24	268
American Crow	26	19	8	265	3	9	42	17	29	418
Fish Crow		1		1						2
Common Raven				1			2	2		5
Horned Lark					3					3
Black-capped Chickadee	25	7	9	10	26	17	20	19	17	150
Tufted Titmouse	22	13	11	9	22	17	21	17	27	159
Red-breasted Nuthatch						2				2
White-breasted Nuthatch	18	14	7	6	12	10	22	10	17	116
Brown Creeper									1	1
Winter Wren		1								1
Carolina Wren	5	4	5	2	7	6	3	2	6	40
Eastern Bluebird	28	1	4	10	5	13	34	2		97
American Robin			1		370		1		8	380
Gray Catbird									1	1
Northern Mockingbird	9	1	4		3	5	4	1		27
European Starling	277	245	240	276	700	52	106	124	117	2137
Cedar Waxwing									13	13
House Sparrow	119	18	62	11	30	4	16	36	1	297
House Finch	13	7	6	4		8	13	13	2	66
American Goldfinch	6	5	2	3	6	3	4	19	10	58
American Tree Sparrow	1	1	3	3						8
Field Sparrow			1							1
Song Sparrow	3	2	21	5	1		3		8	43
Swamp Sparrow			1		1					2
White-throated Sparrow	33	4	9	23	32	5	8	5	21	140
Dark-eyed Junco	78	44	26	86	56	23	77	69	100	559
Red-winged Blackbird		4			30		2			36
Rusty Blackbird					2					2
Common Grackle				40	30		24			94
Northern Cardinal	17	8	8	7	10	8	10	9	2	79
Rare / Unusual Species:										
Red-breasted Merganser										CW (1)
Ruffed Grouse								1		1
Orange-crowned Warbler										CW (1)
Lesser Black-backed Gull			1							1
Vesper Sparrow	1									1
TOTAL BIRDS COUNTED	1402	581	2436	1436	1537	884	850	515	820	10461
TOTAL SPECIES	33	33	52	35	34	43	43	30	40	79
Team A: Bill Fiero, Jane Fiero, John Haas.										
Team B: Karen Miller, Don Aitchison, Jeff Goulding										
Team C: Bruce Nott, Scott Baldinger.										
Team D: Karen Maloy Brady, Kevin Brady, Mary Buskey										
Team E: Bob Slechta, Carlotta Shearson										
Team F: Linda Strohl, Joyce Depew, Betsy Hawes, Al Strohl (feeder watch)										
Team G: Jan Fitzpatrick & Fitz, Amy Greher, Joe & Peter Cherek; Rosemary Cella (2 feeder watch)										
Team H: Gerhard Patsch, Dave Baker; Rich Pillar & Linda Rohleder (feeder watch)										
Team I: Yahvey Hoffman, Chris & Desly Fryer; Elaine Frost (feeder watch)										

RESULTS: 2023 New York State Winter Waterfowl Count - Jan. 13, 2023
Report & data provided by Bob Slechta, Coordinator

This year's Orange County count was quite different in that our marshes and lakes were not frozen for a change, thanks to the mild winter we've had. As a result, we had more variety and higher numbers with 17 species and 16,488 individuals! Of course those results are not the sole function of our weather but also the superb field work of the eleven Mearnsers who spent the day running around Orange County in search of any waterfowl they could find. And find them they did, as shown on the table below.

In addition, 14 Ruddy Ducks and 2 American Coot were spotted on Washington Lake during the count period (but not the count day) to start the 2023 birding year off on the right foot! - Bob

SPECIES / TEAM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL
Snow Goose							5615	5615
Canada Goose	643	896	354	478	227	685	2642	5925
Cackling Goose							2	2
Mute Swan			25	12	4		2	43
Northern Shoveler				1				1
Gadwall			2	15	20			37
American Wigeon				3	2			5
Mallard	30	5	283	159	129	48	31	685
American Black Duck	4		4	25	6		13	52
Northern Pintail			2					2
Green-winged Teal				1				1
Redhead			7					7
Ring-necked Duck			65	14				79
Bufflehead			5	2	15		1	23
Hooded Merganser		3	40	47	11			101
Common Merganser	8	34	388	73	3121	282	3	3909
Red-breasted Merganser			1					1
TOTAL BIRDS COUNTED	685	938	1176	830	3535	1015	8309	16488
TOTAL SPECIES	4	4	12	12	9	3	8	17
Team 1: Joyce Depew, Karen Miller								
Team 2: Bill & Jane Fiero								
Team 3: Bruce Nott								
Team 4: Bob Slechta								
Team 5: Rich VanTieghem								
Team 6: Gerhard & Tracy Patsch								
Team 7: Linda Scrima & Matt Zeitler								

**Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge Trip Report
(Orange County, NY & Sussex County, NJ)
August 20, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Joyce Depew**

There were 9 participants on this outing which included Mearns Bird Club members and one guest, named Russ, who came from Rockaway Beach. Due to weather conditions near 90 degrees and the anticipated high humidity, I decided to shorten this event by one hour. All totaled, we had 18 species at the platform on Oil City Rd, NY within an hour. A special sight were 2 fledged young Virginia Rail which were darting in and out of view in the marsh grasses and a Green Heron that landed on a post near the platform.

We then drove to the Owens Crossing area on the Sussex County, NJ side of this refuge. Along this walk we also had a Rat Snake which was picked up by James Van Gelder and it was not pleased! I took photos of this. As we continued through the wooded area along the walkway, we heard the calls of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo! That was a treat!

In spite of the lack of the higher water levels of previous years, we had plenty of Great Egrets (which decorated the trees), Great Blue Herons and a variety of shorebirds. To my disappointment, the Sandhill Crane and Little Blue Heron did not show up for us today. They had been seen by birders who reported them on the "What's App" alert a few days prior to this outing. Also seen were groups of fledged immature birds such as Eastern Kingbird, Common Gallinule, Eastern Phoebe and Red-winged Blackbirds. My thanks to all who brought along their scopes! Mine was out of commission! The scopes certainly helped us to identify those shorebirds and eclipsed ducks that were a distance from us out in the refuge! Our species total in NJ was 38!

- Oil City Platform, Orange County, NY species: Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Mourning Dove, Virginia Rail, Common Gallinule, Lesser Yellowlegs, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Green Heron, Northern Harrier, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, Northern Mockingbird, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Bobolink.

- Owens Station to the end of Liberty Loop, Sussex County, NJ species: Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, American Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Gallinule, Semipalmated Plover, Killdeer, Least Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black Vulture, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, American Goldfinch, Song Sparrow, Bobolink, Baltimore Oriole, Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting.

By removing repeats of same species in NY and NJ, our total Species for the entire trip was 43.

Black Dirt Region (Orange County, NY) Trip Report
September 8, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Bob Slechta

Even though we are experiencing one of the most severe droughts I can remember, things still looked green in the Black Dirt region as the farmers were able to make use of water from the Wallkill River. Regardless, the dry conditions did not help the ten of us in our search for shore birds like American Golden-Plover and Buff-breasted Sandpiper (one each had been reported, but they were gone when we got to their location).

Outside of numerous Killdeer and a small flock of Horned Lark, the Raptors and Falcons were the birds of the day. We had one Merlin, two Peregrines, eight Kestrels, two close at hand Red-shouldered Hawks, one Broad-winged Hawk, two Northern Harriers, a Cooper's Hawk, and many Red-tailed Hawks.

We made the Oil City Road platform our last stop to beef up our sightings list, and we finished the day with 42 species. Notable additions are - Common Gallinule, Solitary Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Eastern Phoebe, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireo, Tree and Barn Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Common Yellow-throat. A few 'wet' spots on the turf would have been helpful today. Maybe next year.



Eastern Screech-Owl at the Bashakill by Scotty Baldinger

Kenridge Farm Trip (Orange County, NY) Trip Report
September 10, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Amy Greher

Eighteen Mearns birders enjoyed a late summer field trip to Kenridge Farm in Cornwall, New York on September 10th. The property is also known as the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum. The weather was cooperative, with the temperature starting in the mid 60's and reaching a high of 77 degrees when we ended the trip at noon. We observed a total of 48 species.

Gone were the Swallows and Chimney Swifts and missing just for the day were the Eastern Bluebirds and our ever present Great Blue Heron. Both had been spotted the day before the trip so we knew that they were still around. We did however see 5 of the 6 species of Woodpecker that appear in the Hudson Valley.

We observed numerous Northern Mockingbirds, Eastern Phoebe, and Gray Catbirds on the property. A family of 7 Wood Ducks entertained us on the main pond, followed by a very cooperative Green Heron. We were also fortunate enough to observe 2 Scarlet Tanagers; both sporting their yellow bellies and olive wing pattern.

We had hoped to see a fair amount of early warblers and were rewarded with a few American Redstarts, one Hooded Warbler and one Nashville Warbler. At the tail end of the trip, a Magnolia Warbler appeared in the dog park lot. A full list of the birds is on E-bird. Kenridge Farm is just a great place to bird and all who participated in this trip enjoyed a wonderful day birding. Can't wait to see what we find there in October.



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at the Bashakill by Joyce Depew

**Winding Waters Trail - Wallkill NWR (Orange County, NY) Trip Report
September 17, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Bob Slechta**

The migration has been a bit on the slow side this September for Orange County, and today was no exception. Six of us walked the entire Winding Waters trail loop today with vast stretches of quiet punctuated by pockets of activity. As usual, due to the many eyes and ears we managed a respectable count of 46 species, plus many unidentified Empidonax.

Two species stand out for today's trip a nice pair of Lincoln's Sparrows hanging with a House Wren that everyone got good looks at, and this trip's hoped for bird - Connecticut Warbler. It was only seen by Yahvey who thoughtfully recorded the bird's 'call' which we all agreed was that of a Connecticut Warbler. Other mentionable sightings for today's trip are - Killdeer (heard), Solitary Sandpiper, Great Blue Heron, Osprey, Northern Harrier, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos, Common Raven, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Gray Catbirds galore, Cedar Waxwings, Field Sparrow, Bobolinks and Indigo Buntings in the fields, Scarlet Tanager, and for Warblers- Common Yellowthroat, Blackpoll, Parula, and Palms. It's too bad that the Connecticut Warbler is not a more cooperative bird !

**Six ½ Station Road Sanctuary (Orange County, NY) Trip Report
September 24, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: David Baker**

16 members of the Mearns Bird Club gathered at the Six ½ Station Road Sanctuary in Goshen, NY to kick off the 2022 Fall Birding season. The weather had decidedly turned autumnal but the skies were generally clear and the birding was not adversely affected by the moderate winds that we encountered. The best numbers of migrants we encountered were the Blue Jays (50 +) which were streaming overhead throughout the morning. Nice groups of Cedar Waxwings were also seen perched en masse as they love to do. As for the migrant hawks, we did have good looks through the scopes at a couple of Cooper's Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks; both in flight and at rest.

Warblers were small in number but we did manage to spot 8 species which included Northern Waterthrush (nice looks!), Common Yellowthroats, Blackpoll, Palm, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, American Redstart, and Maggie. Of course one of the main attractions of the Six ½ Station Road Sanctuary is the assemblage of waterbirds. Among those spotted were the Great-blue and Green Heron. Five Common Gallinule were also seen, along with Green-winged Teal, Blue-winged Teal, Wood Ducks, Mallards, and one lone American Black Duck.

By the end of the trip, we had amassed a nice tally of 47 species. As is generally the case, a good time was had by all. It was a beautiful day to be out in a beautiful Orange County birding gem with our fellow birding enthusiasts.

**Stony Kill Farm, Wappingers Falls, NY (Dutchess County) Trip Report
September 28, 2022. Trip Leader: Bruce Nott. Reporter: Bob Slechta**

Bruce did a great job of corralling the eleven of us and pointing us all in the right direction when needed. We started off birding the 'community gardens', then the wooded edges of the fields before finishing up at the Mansion. As it was last year, there were lots of House Finches and Sparrows in the gardens, with Starlings everywhere. What we did not get this year were any White-crowned Sparrows and only a few Savannah Sparrows compared to the 25+ last year. We compensated by finding many more species ... 60 this year vs. 49 last year.

Birds of note today were - Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Flicker, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least Flycatcher, Blue-headed, Red-eyed, and Philadelphia Vireos, Blue Jay (35), Common Raven, House and Carolina Wrens, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Blue Bird, European Starling, Cedar Waxwings, Goldfinch, Chipping, Song, White-throated, Field, Savannah, and Lincoln's Sparrow (6), Black and White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Magnolia, Yellow, Blackpoll, Palm, Yellow-rumped, and Black-throated Green Warblers, plus Scarlet Tanager and Indigo Bunting. A pretty impressive list if I say so!



Tricolored Heron - Wellington FL by Rich VanTieghem

Kenridge Farm (Orange County, NY) Trip Report
October 8, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Amy Greher

A dozen Mearns birders met on October 8, 2022 in an attempt to find as many birds as possible on the Kenridge Farm property also known as the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum (in Cornwall, NY). The trip started at the dog park parking lot at 8:30. The temperature was a cool 46 degrees. What else would you expect on a fall morning? It was sunny and we had little or no wind to contend with.

Kenridge once again did not disappoint us. We observed 50 species of birds within a 3 1/2 hour time span. The number of species was 2 more than our trip in September. The temperature that day only reached a high of 49 degrees so in essence we had a larger number of bird species than the temperature on the thermometer.

When comparing this trip to the September trip, we saw 2 more species of birds on this trip and we counted a much larger number of individual birds. Noted were a dozen Eastern Phoebes, way more Blue Jays with a high count of 50, and more Chickadees than we have ever seen on the property - numbering 12. Missing were the Wood Ducks and the Green Heron seen last month on the main pond. We still had a Nashville Warbler and a Common Yellowthroat but no Tennessee Warblers. Instead we counted a dozen Palm Warblers. There were probably more on the pond with the sugar shack but they were all over the place and hard to count so we stuck to the conservative number of 12. Two Brown Creepers (one at the dog park) and a most cooperative Brown Thrasher were the highlights of our trip.

White-throated Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows and Juncos were observed in the tall grass by the parking lot. We had to estimate their numbers. Lots of activity there but little visibility. We often neglect looking in that direction; we were rewarded today by doing so. We all enjoyed a cold but profitable day at Kenridge Farm. Johanna kept a list of all the birds seen that day which can be found on E-bird.



American Redstart (female) at the Bashakill by Joyce Depew

Walden-Walkill Rail Trail Pop-Up (Orange County, NY) Trip Report
12 October 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Bill Fiero

On a spectacular autumn morning, 8 Mearnsers met at the Kimball Parking lot on Lake Osiris Road to bird the Walden-Walkill Rail Trail. This paved trail connects the villages of Walden and Wallkill and passes through varied habitats including farm field scrub, secondary growth and mature forests, offering easy birding and chances for a number of both resident species and migrants.

As the sun got higher, birds became more active, and we had good views of both Kinglets, Purple Finch (both female), Song Sparrows, and many White-throated Sparrows that have been arriving in recent days. Two late-season Eastern Towhees, and a cooperative Blue-headed Vireo were welcome sights.

As usual, American Goldfinches were present, along with lingering Gray Catbirds and resident Northern Cardinals, White-breasted Nuthatches, Downy Woodpeckers, Eastern Bluebirds, Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice. It was also fun to see an adult Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Half-hardy Red-winged Blackbirds and American Robins were present, but the warbler count was low, yielding only a few Yellow-rumpeds. Two Belted Kingfishers were heard, presumably drawn by the farm pond along the trail. No flycatchers were seen.

All in all, 28 species had been seen by the time we left after a fun morning in the autumnal sun.



Evening Grosbeaks at the feeder by Scotty Baldinger

**Wallkill River NWR (Orange County, NY & Sussex County, NJ) Trip Report
October 15, 2022. Leaders: Don Aitchison and Bob Slechta (Reporter)**

Six male members of Mearns met at 8:30 AM and made the three plus mile journey around the Liberty Loop on Oil City Rd this past Saturday. Led by Don Aitchison and later by Bob Slechta, the group was rounded out by Rich VT, Zenon, Joe T and Tom Milard. Weather conditions were ideal with full sunshine, a light wind and temps in the 45-58 degree range. We saw or heard the following species:

Red-winged Blackbirds, Mute Swans, Field Sparrows, a solitary Northern Harrier, American Goldfinch, American Wigeons, Ruddy Duck, American Coot, Eastern Bluebirds, Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, Song Sparrow, Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Mockingbirds, Northern Pintails, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Eastern Towhee, American Robin, Palm Warbler, Red-tailed Hawk, Green winged Teal, Gallinule, Northern Flicker, American Black Duck, American Crow, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle (adult), Cooper's Hawk, 3 Greater Yellowlegs, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets, European Starling, Savannah Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, 1 Eastern Phoebe, Canada Geese, Mallards, White-throated Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows and Tree Swallows.

Most numerous today were: White-throated Sparrows, Yellow-rumps, Canada Geese, Mallards, Swamp Sparrows, and Tree Swallows. A total of 45 species were accomplished by the group, mostly by the five seasoned birders, sans its leader who had to depart at 10:20.

**Croton Point (Westchester County, NY) Trip Report
October 22, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Bob Slechta**

'Yellow-rumps' with a side of 'White-throats'. An appropriate lunch order for us today with easily 50+ of each as we traversed Croton Point and the Croton Arboretum. The three of us had a nice day of birding with nice looks at many of the birds under blue skies, mild temperatures, and best of all, NO WIND.

44 species was a nice reward set against a back drop of trees with varying shades orange, yellow, and red to highlight our day's adventure.

Highlights were Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, House and Carolina Wren, Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Bluebirds, American Robins, Gray Catbird, Chipping, Field, White-throated, Savannah, Song, and Swamp Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat, Palm, and Yellow-rump Warblers. A nice mix of birds on a beautiful Fall day!

Black Dirt Region (Orange County, NY) Trip Report
November 12, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: David Baker

13 members of the Mearns Bird Club gathered at The Jolly Onion parking lot to begin our birding into the Black Dirt farms of Orange County on this blustery but not too chilly morning. As winter approaches, this area is often productive for birds such as American Pipits, Horned Larks, and Snow Buntings. The fact that we had substantial rainfall the previous evening raised our hopes of finding migrating shore birds as well.

While we did not get the hoped-for shore birds, the number of Horned Larks was more than impressive. Flocks of 40+ were constantly zipping through the skies above Skinners Lane. It is amazing how so many birds can land in a plowed field and simply disappear from sight. Finally, we did locate an area where nice clear looks at many of these handsome winter birds were available. Among the Larks, we eventually spotted several Snow Buntings as well as one lone Lapland Longspur.

As we drove down through the Sunflower Farm area, we found our usual Northern Harriers cruising over the fields as well as Red-tailed Hawks and literally hundreds of American Crows. From here, we continued down to our most productive area as far as numbers were concerned, at Turtle Bay Road. White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, a nice close Hairy Woodpecker, Juncos, White-breasted Nuthatches, Tufted Titmice, and Black-capped Chickadees were all present in good numbers. By the end of our birding, we had tallied 29 species.

We finished our time together with the traditional stop at the Harvest Restaurant where we all reminisced about our dear friend and fellow birder Dennis Murphy and his fondness for chicken-noodle soup, a roll, and his orange soda. So many fond memories are made birding with our fellow Mearns members. We look forward to seeing how the assemblage of birds in the Black Dirt area will change as we move into winter....Short-eared Owls, Rough-legged Hawks, and perhaps even a Snowy Owl or two. Time will tell.



Red-breasted Merganser by Gerhard Patsch

**Eastern Orange County Lakes Trip Report
November 19, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Bob Slechta**

Thirteen bundled up and hearty souls showed up for the Eastern Orange Lakes trip on a decidedly cold and windy day. While our starting spot at Walmart was frozen and only Ring-billed Gulls were seen at Washington Lake, the Union Hall just down the road (Little Britain Rd) had nice close views in good light of: Gadwall, Hooded and Common Mergansers, Mallards and a very active Belted Kingfisher.

Next we checked the 'causeway' at Brown's Pond and hit the Jackpot, with good numbers and looks of Ring-necked Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Ruddy Ducks, Bufflehead, Mallards, Double-crested Cormorants, and a lone American Coot.

The remainder of the trip was not too productive due to chop and glare but we did pick up a Pied-billed Grebe on Orange Lake and more Ruddies. Other birds worth mentioning are - Canada Goose (lots!), Mute Swan, Great Blue Herons, Bald Eagle, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Common Raven, Eastern Bluebird, and Juncos.

Not bad for an unusually chilly day in November!

**Shawangunk Grasslands NWR (Ulster County, NY) Trip Report
December 5, 2022. Trip Leaders & Reporters: Tom and Jane Crepet**

The weather was terrible but it did not deter eight other Mearnsers –bringing the total to ten- from attending the field trip. The clouds were low and thick and there were bouts of rain but we still got to see the target bird of the trip. Most of us stayed near the north end of the parking lot but at least one of the group got to the platform.

Two Short-eared Owls were seen from the parking lot and one more was seen from the platform, totaling 3. Six Northern Harriers were seen in various locations. We added Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, House Finch, Mourning Doves, Northern Cardinal and Red-Tailed Hawk to our list.

While waiting for more birds, the skies cleared and we had a grandstand seat for a non-birding, astronomical experience. It was a string of planets and the Moon arrayed in front of us. Mars was just rising in the east, then the almost full Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn at the other end. We looked at Jupiter and saw the 4 largest moons, then Saturn with its rings. To top it all off we saw a very bright, fast moving object that we thought at first was the ISS, but it turned out to be the Chinese Space Station. It was ID'ed by Carlotta using her App.

Cape Ann, Massachusetts Trip Report
December 9-11, 2022. Trip Leader & Reporter: Jodi Brodsky

The annual weekend trip began with the traditional lunch at the Causeway. Our first stop was at Jodrey State Fishing Pier. It was fairly quiet with only a few Common Eider and Double-Crested Cormorants, plus the usual gulls. After that we went to Halibut State Park. There we were met by former Mearns member Greg Prelich. It was not as cold as past weekends, but very windy. There was a lot of action on the water, but it was challenging to stay on the birds and even more challenging to see a bird and then get others to see it as well. A few of us were fortunate to see at least one Dovekie and a few (3 for me) Razorbills. Long-tailed Ducks and Harlequin Ducks were much closer and more cooperative. Our last stop of the day was to Granite Pier. As soon as we arrived we found a fairly close Dovekie that one of the Westchester folks was able to photograph. A few more Razorbills were seen here as well.

Saturday morning began at the Fisherman's Monument where everyone got close looks at Common Eider and a Common Loon. Then we followed the loop around the cape stopping at all of the hot spots. This time when we stopped at Jodrey State Fishing Pier a Razorbill came in close so everyone was able to admire and photograph the bird. I trekked out to the dog bar at Eastern Lighthouse Point and was rewarded with a Black Guillemot.

By the end of the weekend, 11 people including three newcomers from Westchester and former Mearns member Greg Prelich tallied close to 47 species and had a great time.



Cape Ann , MA Trip - Group Photo by Johanna Bloomfield

**Hudson River Bald Eagle Trip 1 (Westchester County) Report
January 28, 2023. Trip Leader & Reporter: Gerhard Patsch**

Over the years we have learned that when there is no ice on the Hudson River we have fewer eagles in the Hudson Highlands. Due to warmer than average temperatures this winter, we have had very little snow and no river ice at all. Therefore, we did not find the touted 100+ Bald Eagles, but only 20 eagles that were sighted by 18 participants on Saturday's Hudson River Bald Eagle Trip. I had scouted out our area several days prior to our field trip and had only found 8 eagles, so, frankly, I did not expect, nor was I disappointed that we only spotted 20 eagles this time. Most were observed between Bear Mountain and Charles Point, along with the expected Great Cormorants at Peekskill Bay.

We also found 10 species of waterfowl, including Ruddy Duck, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Hooded Merganser, and 2 Red-breasted Mergansers found by sharp-eyed Bruce Nott. Our best viewing and most variety was had from the Croton Reservoir Dam, from which we also observed a nice raft of Ring-necked Ducks and a Pied-billed Grebe. Some other notables included: American Kestrel, Cooper's Hawk, Common Ravens and Great Blue Heron. Our land bird sightings were very sparse and we wondered why. Nevertheless, at days end we tallied 41 species.

It was wonderful to be out birding with friends on a March-like January 28 when the temperature reached 51°F!



Hudson River Eagle Trip I - Group Photo by Gerhard Patsch

**Black Dirt Region (Orange County, NY & Sussex County, NJ) Trip Report
February 11, 2023. Trip Leader & Reporter: Bob Slechta**

Outside of having to nail our shoes to the road to avoid being blown away, it was a fairly productive trip for the 15 hardy souls who partook in today's adventure. While our tally only came to 32 species, we had some nice sightings like the two dark phase Rough-legged Hawks that circled over our heads, Horned Larks walking on a side road providing great views, and of course the 3,000+ Snow Geese viewed from Missionland Road that were kind enough to give us all a thrill by lifting up all at once for a truly great spectacle.

We started today's trip on Missionland Rd., then Oil City Rd., then Owens Station after which we went to Skinners Lane, Turtle Bay Rd., Breeze Hill Rd., and Lynch Ave. where we finished our trip at 2 PM.

Other highlights for today's trip are - plenty of Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers, a nice Red-shouldered Hawk close at hand, a kiting American Kestrel, a Bald Eagle, some White-crowned Sparrows, a raft of Ring-necked Ducks with two American Wigeon and one each of Common Merganser and Redhead, plus an awesome aerial display by 100+ Red-winged Blackbirds that pirouetted back and forth in unison, flashing their red epaulets all at once while trying to avoid a hawk. As you can see we had fairly productive day; if only we could have turned off the wind!



Snow Geese near the Oil City Road Platform by Scotty Baldinger

UPCOMING MEARNS BIRDING TRIPS - April thru September 2023

April 1, Sat. - **Shawangunk Grasslands NWR** with Tom and Jane (845-443-5440). Be at the refuge at 7 PM to watch and hear displaying Woodcock.

April 8, Sat.- **Long Island Sound** with Bob Slechta (845-541-8210). (Give Bob a call or text if going) Meet at 'Playland' in Rye at 8:30 AM for Egrets, Grebes, Loons, Long-tailed Ducks, Purple Sandpipers, etc.

April 15, Sat. - **Wallkill River NWR** with Liz Mcknight (201-400-1428). Be at the Oil City Rd. platform at 8:30 AM and with luck we'll see Blue-winged Teal, Sandhill Crane, and Rusty Blackbirds.

April 22, Sat. - **Six and 1/2 Station Rd. Sanctuary** with Don Aitchison (845-281-3220). Meet at 8:30 AM where the Heritage Trail crosses the road for Ducks, Swallows, Kinglets, and Yellow-rump Warblers.

April 29, Sat. - **Wawayanda State Park NJ** with Rich VanTieghem (201-370-2721). Meet Rich at at 8 AM at the Rt 94 edge of the Warwick Shop Rite parking lot (which is located southwest of the Village of Warwick) for a trip we haven't run in many years as the spring migration heats up. Possible views of the recently active Bald Eagle nest.

May 3, Wed. - **Stewart State Forest** with Bob Slechta (845-541-8210). Meet at the Barron Rd. North parking area at 8 AM for an easy walk and a good mix of migrants and local breeders.

May 6, Sat. - **Bashakill** with Joyce Depew (845-978-9952). Meet at the Stop Sign Trail parking area at 8 AM for a phenomenal morning of birding with at least 60 species.

May 10, Wed. - **Vassar Farm** (Poughkeepsie NY) with Ernie Welch (845-518-8441). Drive in and back to the Education Center and Barn to park and meet Ernie at 8 AM and explore a new birding venue for our club.

May 13, Sat. - **Kenridge Farm** with Amy Greher (845-774-9399). Meet at the 'Dog Park' at 8 AM for good mix of birds - Warblers, Thrushes, Warblers, Sparrows, and more.

May 19-20 , Fri - Sat. **'Break 100'**. Form a team (minimum of 2 required) and see how many species you can identify in Orange County from 4PM Friday to 4PM Saturday, followed by a count-down get together and 'eat' at 2PM Sunday May 21 at the Blooming Grove Senior Center (on RT 94). If interested contact Karen Miller - 845-381-3203 . Join the FUN !

May 27, Sat. - **Shawangunk Grasslands NWR** for grassland birds like Grasshopper Sparrow and Bobolink. Meet Tom and Jane (845-443-5440) there at 8 AM.

May 31, Wed. - **Wallkill River NWR** with Rich Van Tieghem (201-370-2721). Be at the Oil City Rd. platform at 8 AM for Rails, Gallinules, Marsh Wrens and more.

June 10, Sat. - **Mearns Club Picnic** (tentative date) at the Winding Hills County Park in Montgomery NY. More details to come as the date approaches. Watch groups.io for updates.

Aug 19, Sat. - **Wallkill River NWR**. Meet Johanna Bloomfield (541-778-1754) at the Oil City Rd. Platform at 8 AM for migrating shore birds and local breeders like Common Gallinule and with luck Sandhill Crane.

Sept 2, Sat. - **Black Dirt Region**. Meet Dave Baker (845-440-4030) at the Jolly Onion in Pine Island at 8:30 AM to search for Buff-breasted Sandpipers and American Golden-Plovers.

Sept 9, Sat.- **Kenridge Farm**. Meet Amy Greher (845-774-9399) at 8 AM at the 'Dog Park" and see what we can find at this always productive site as the Fall migration picks up.

Sept 16, Sat. - **Winding Waters Trail** (just West of the Oil City Road platform). Meet Bob Slechta (845-541-8210) there at 8:30 AM for a good mix of birds and hopefully a Connecticut Warbler.

Sept 20, Wed. - **Stonykill Farm** (Wappingers Falls, NY). Meet Bruce Nott (845-542-0583) there at 8:30 AM and see if he can top last year's tally of 60 species. A good place to see Lincoln's Sparrow.

Sept 30, Sat. - **Six and 1/2 Station Road Sanctuary**. Meet Don Aitchison (845-281-3220) at 8:30 AM where the Heritage Trail crosses the road and see what fall migrants we can turn up in the marsh and in the trees and brush bordering it.

Notes:

The trip leader's phone number is included so that you can call the night before or the morning of the trip if you have any questions. You can also check the Mearns Groups.io site for any last minute changes.

If you lead a trip, then you are responsible for sending a write-up (for inclusion in the next Orange Feather newsletter) to Rich VanTieghem at rich.w2vt@gmail.com

Happy Birding!

Sincerely, Rich VanTieghem - Orange Feather Editor

On the last page: Meeting locations and dates; Membership form - New or Renewal



Mearns Bird Club - Meeting Location

Meetings are held at the Blooming Grove Senior Center at 4 Horton Road in Blooming Grove, NY. The senior center, and its parking lot, are located behind the Blooming Grove Police Department.

Meeting Dates

General meetings of the Mearns Club are held at **7:00** pm on the second Monday of every month from September through May (**except February**). At club meetings, a club member or an outside speaker gives a presentation about his or her birding travels or studies. The popular December meeting is a "Share-a-thon", where members can present their bird-related photos or artwork.

Membership Form (New or Renewal):

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____ PHONE: _____

MEMBERSHIP TYPE (Circle One): NEW RENEWAL

Annual membership is \$20 for an individual, \$30 for a family, or \$8 for a student.
Mail this form along with a check payable to "Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club" to:

Linda Strohl, Treasurer
8 Park Road
Salisbury Mills, NY 12577-5028
