

ORANGE FEATHER

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2025



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

mearnsbirdclub.org

Cover Photo: Winter Wren by Gef Chumard

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.

Dues for all current members are due in January each year.

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 last page of this newsletter.

Welcome to New Members:

Genie Abrams
Timothy Riss
Chava Sandman
Kevin McDonald

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President's Letter:

Greetings to All Members:

Happy New Year 2025! Beginning in December, many club members formed a total of nine teams (and four more members participated as Feeder Watch participants) for the Edgar A. Mearns Eastern Orange County Audubon Christmas Bird Count ("CBC") on December 14, 2024. Some members like myself participated in other CBC counts in various regions. The last count day was January 4, 2025 which was the Minnewaska - Shawangunk Circle. This is one way to chase the winter blues! Another count opportunity for Mearns members was the NYS Waterfowl Count which occurred January 18, 2025.

What makes the Waterfowl Count and the Christmas Count interesting to me is that it connects me with the health and well-being of our region while keeping me in touch with climate changes and habitat changes in winter from year to year. Birds and other wildlife are impacted by all of this and now we all are under the threat of the avian virus. This virus has reportedly jumped from birds to bovine species in the western USA. Scientists are still studying this.

Just lately, we are witnessing mile upon mile of fire destruction of human habitat and wildlife habitats in California creating a new face to homelessness! We also had some fires in Orange County in 2024 while the environment became extremely dry during Fall 2024. Thankfully, while the plants and trees are dormant, we are getting rain and snow to replenish the soil and waterways. In a nutshell, if the living conditions are not good for birds and other wildlife, it IS not good for us either. We need to be vigilant as to how we as a society care for our world.

Our club meetings will begin again on the March 10, 2025 at the Blooming Grove Senior Center at 7 pm. For now we have the same location reserved for us. Our meeting spot will move at some point, however, I have no further information until the Town of Blooming Grove notifies us about vacating our current meeting place and if we can use the new Senior Center. Stay tuned to club notifications and consider coming to a meeting! We have a nice line-up of educational presentations for this spring!

I'm looking forward to another year of birding! You never know what rarity could be flying into a neighborhood near you!

Sincerely,

Joyce Depew

Treasurer's Report:

Balances as of 1/1/2025:

Checking account	\$1,211.06
Savings account	\$2,267.41

2024 Club Expenses:

NYS Young Birders Club donation	\$25.00
Spring 2024 Orange Feather newsletter	\$165.34
Bashakill Program (speaker Patrick Dechon)	\$100.00
Flowers for speaker (in lieu of payment)	\$32.43
Paper for Orange Feather	\$11.34
Club picnic	\$35.67
State Farm insurance	\$428.96
Fall 2024 Orange Feather newsletter	\$157.64
Dr. Coby Klein, speaker	\$475.00
Blooming Grove Senior Center	\$100.00
Pizza for Christmas Bird Count	\$64.38

Announcing the 2025 NYSOA Annual Meeting and NY State Birders Conference:

The 78th annual New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) conference will be held in Ithaca, New York, and will be hosted by the Cayuga Bird Club, a NYSOA member club. The conference brings together birders from across the state and beyond, who come to develop new birding friendships, renew old ones, hear excellent speakers, and explore birding opportunities away from their home turf. The conference weekend offers attendees various social, educational, and birding activities, including a papers session, NYS Young Birders Club ID Challenge, field trips, vendors, a silent auction, and a banquet dinner.

Friday's welcome reception will be followed by a presentation by Adriaan Dokter, Cornell Lab of Ornithology Center for Avian Population Studies, titled "BirdCast: A Large-Scale Perspective on Bird Migration".

On Saturday, Peter Kaestner will give the Keynote address, titled "In Search of the Orange-tufted Spiderhunter" about his quest to find 10,000 different bird species, the first person to reach this milestone. Peter has traveled all over the world during his career as a diplomat, birding everywhere he's been. A highlight of his birding journey was his discovery of a new species of antpitta in Colombia, subsequently named after him, the Cundinamarca Antpitta (*Grallaria kaestneri*). Peter has also been an active bird conservationist and was recently awarded the American Birding Association's Roger Tory Peterson Lifetime Achievement Award.

NYSOA 2025

New York Ornithological Association Conference - 2025

- Dates: September 19-21, 2025
- Location: Ithaca Downtown Convention Center
- Hosted by the Cayuga Bird Club
- Keynote Speaker: Peter Kaestner, "In Search of the Orange-billed Spiderhunter"
- Friday Night Speaker: Adrian Dokter, on BirdCast
- Field Trips to Area Hotspots
- Afternoon Papers Session
- And more!
- Registration opens April 1, 2025
- Visit the conference website for more details: <https://www.nysoa2025.org/>

Note: The Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club is a member organization of NYSOA.

Mearns Club supports Audubon's 125th Christmas Bird Count

By Karen C. Miller, Christmas Bird Count chair

On December 14, 2024, nine teams of Mearns birders scanned eastern Orange County for all birds within our Christmas Bird Count circle. At the end of the day, we had identified 73 species and 15,341 individual birds.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was started on Christmas Day in 1900 by a group of conservationists. The first count began as an alternative to a traditional bird shoot, so rather than focusing on hunting birds, the focus was on counting birds. Over the past 125 years this program expanded to more than 2,600 locations in 20 countries in the western hemisphere. Tens of thousands of birders volunteer for the count over a two-week period each year.

Today, the CBC is organized by Audubon and billed as community science and is a favorite event of birders in our country and many others. With the count results online, the data is available to individuals and for scientific research, and allows everyone to see trends of winter birds.

Every group or organization works with Audubon to develop its own circle. Each circle is 15 miles in diameter. The goal is to put together teams that will count every bird within your circle and to repeat that task every year using the same circle. Any bird species that are missed on count day can be reported if they are seen three days before count day or three days after. These sightings are listed as 'count week' birds, but do not add to the count day totals.

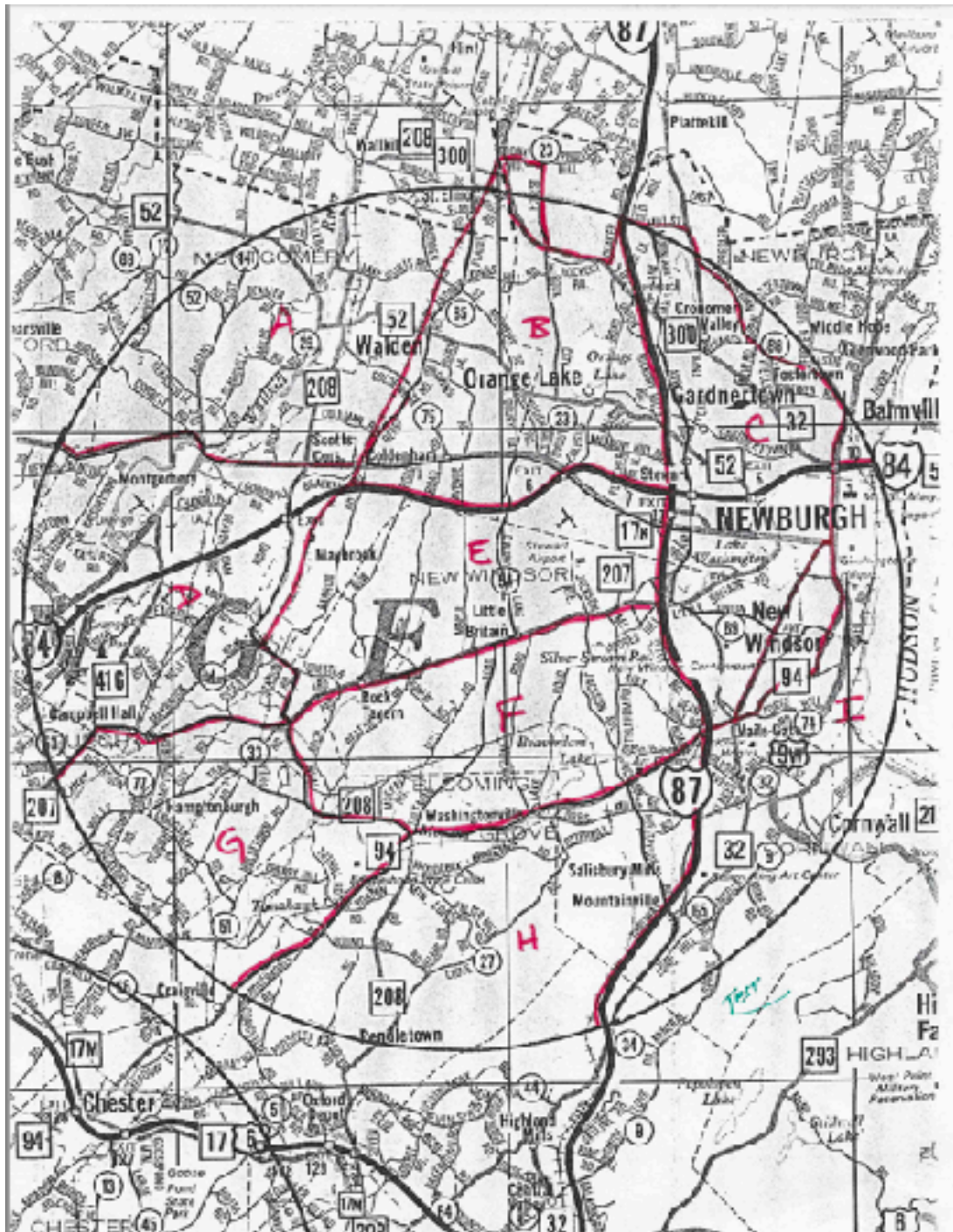
Our circle at the Mearns Club is New York Eastern Orange (NYEO), starting at the Hudson River in Newburgh and coming west to the Campbell Hall, Montgomery, and Walden areas. Our circle is divided into 9 sectors, covered by Teams A, B, C through Team I.

We recently completed our 46th year that Mearns participated in the CBC. The CBC count dates are always December 14 – January 5 each year. The Mearns Club usually schedules count day for the first Saturday within this time. Thank you to the 17 Mearns birders who spent the day on December 14th counting birds.

It's important that we continue our participation in this citizen science initiative. We can always use more help. We have some terrific birders who are dedicated to this project. However, for us to continue our support of the Christmas Bird Count, and to keep Orange County birds represented in the count, we must get more people involved. Please think about it and consider joining us in December 2025.

Next page: Map of the "*New York Eastern Orange*" count circle.

“New York Eastern Orange” Count Circle Map, with 9 Sectors:



New York State Winter Waterfowl Count / Orange County, January 18, 2025

By Bob Slechta

The 2024 Winter Waterfowl Count was a great success and I'd like to congratulate all of the club members who participated for their efforts.

This year's Waterfowl Count results are quite impressive when you consider our very cold winter this year with several snow events, and our lakes basically being frozen - as were our rivers. Even so, we still managed a good variety and number this year, matching the all time high of 18 species on the 2024 count and only topped by the 2023 & 2024 counts in the number of individuals, coming in with 13,778 this year.

Our diligent members searched out all exposed grass and crop fields while zeroing in on what open water was available like the Warwick Town Hall ponds or the Wallkill and Hudson Rivers.

Following is a list of waterfowl that were found during this year's count:

3 Snow Geese
12,817 Canada Geese
1 Cackling Goose
44 Mute Swans
12 Gadwalls
1 Eurasian Wigeon
55 American Wigeons
81 Black Ducks
529 Mallards
3 Green-wing Teals
2 Redhead Ducks
16 Ring-necked Ducks
4 Buffleheads
16 Hooded Mergansers
178 Common Mergansers
2 Red-breasted Mergansers
2 Ruddy Ducks
and 12 American Coot.

Pretty impressive Yes ?

Mearns Bird Club Trip Reports:

TRIP REPORT: 8/24/2024 - Wallkill River NWR - Leader: Johanna Bloomfield

A total of six Mearnsers came out today to a lovely warm and sunny end of summer trip starting at the Oil City Road platform. It was relatively quiet all around, but we got views of some female Wood Ducks, plenty of Tree Swallows, 4 Common Gallinules, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Northern Harrier, one Common Yellowthroat, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Red-winged Blackbirds.

We continued to Owens Station Road where we were excited to see a group of rare ducks including Green-winged Teals...however, after noticing they were rather stationary we realized that they turned out to be decoys for a duck hunting course that was taking place at the pond by the parking lot!

As we continued to the Liberty marsh, we were surprised to see that the NJ pond where we normally get shorebirds and waterfowl was completely overgrown and dried up. We still managed to see some early warblers including Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and a female Common Yellowthroat. We added Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Kingbird, Warbling Vireo, Chipping Sparrows, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, Carolina Wren, Cedar Waxwing, and a Red-tailed Hawk to name a few. The trip totaled 35 species between NY and NJ.

TRIP REPORT: 9/7/2024 - Black Dirt Area - Leader: David Baker

On Saturday, September 7th, 8 Mearns members ventured out to the Black Dirt area in search of early fall migrating sandpipers and plovers as well as larks, buntings, pipits, etc. The weather was overcast and the threat of rain was with us throughout the morning, but the precipitation held off and the temperatures were quite pleasant. While the target birds failed to appear, we did get some nice sightings of other quality species.

Northern Harriers were found in virtually every area we birded. Along Skinners Lane and Turtle Bay, we found both the brown female birds as well as several "Gray ghosts" skimming over the onion and turf fields. One of the highlights of our trip was finding more than 300 Tree Swallows picking through the turf along Skinners Lane, occasionally all lifting up in flight in unison. Other birds of note included Indigo Bunting, Northern Flicker, Bald Eagle, Common Raven, several Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons, and a number of Chipping Sparrows.

In all, we tallied 34 species before ending up as tradition would dictate at the Harvest Restaurant for our count. We are looking forward to revisiting the area later in the season as more migrants and winter visitors will gradually return to occupy the Black Dirt.

TRIP REPORT: 9/14/2024 - Bashakill WMA - Leader: Joyce Depew

With a foggy start to this trip, 9 persons attended this outing: Johanna, Judy, Len, Liz, Joe, Linda, Rich, Tom and Jane. Thanks Rich for bringing the spotting scope! The areas covered were: Bird Blind Trail, Haven Road to the Causeway Bridge, The Stop Sign driveway, South Rd. Boat Launch, Horse Shoe Trail (South), and the Deli Fields. I must say that due to early hunting season for bear, we encountered hunters on the Stop Sign Trail and the Deli Fields. So I had to cautiously avoid some areas where we would normally explore for birds. We were in high hopes that a warbler fallout would occur, but no....

We did have a rare appearance of an immature Red-headed Woodpecker! A female Black-throated Blue Warbler and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were notable sightings along the Stop Sign Drive and at the end (near Haven Road) was a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. I wish to mention here that Yellow-throated Vireo was heard and so was the "Tweeeet" call of an Eastern Towhee.

A Bald Eagle was spotted across the marsh from the Causeway Bridge area and another was seen later on flying over the Deli Fields. We had good sightings of: Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawk, Osprey (at the Main Boat Launch) Red-shouldered Hawk (in the Deli Fields) and Northern Harrier (at the Haven Rd. Marsh). The Deli Fields also had a nice group of Eastern Bluebirds of all ages. It was fun to watch the various stages of feather development of the juveniles.

Our trip total was **40 Species!** Thanks for all eyes in the field!

TRIP REPORT: 9/21/2024 - Wallkill River NWR - Leader: Johanna Bloomfield

Six Mearnsers attended the Wallkill NWR trip that was originally scheduled to occur at Winding Waters, but due to hunting restrictions, was moved to the Oil City Rd Platform.

It was a sunny warm day that started off strong when we caught a rare appearance of 3 Sandhill Cranes flying closely overhead, followed by 2 more shortly after. We had some nice sightings at the pond of Green-winged Teals, Common Gallinules, Wood Ducks, Northern Shoveler, Great Egrets, Great Blue Herons, Tree Swallows, American Kestrel, and Northern Harriers. We also had Common Yellowthroats, Savannah, Song and Swamp Sparrow, American Goldfinch, House and Carolina Wrens and Cedar Waxwings.

We continued over to Owens Station, but were disappointed to see that the back pond was still mostly overgrown vegetation with almost no visible water, so we didn't get the usual waterfowl in this area. We did pick up Black and Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Common Ravens, Eastern Phoebe, an abundance of Tree Swallows and Red-winged Blackbirds. In all, we totaled 44 species for the day.

TRIP REPORT: 10/2/2024 - Stony Kill - Leader: Bob Slechta

Saturday's trip to Stony Kill went well for the 10 of us, with an overcast sky, no wind and comfortable temps to help us attain a tally of 47 species. We hit the public garden plots first which were productive as usual, then finished up at woodlands trail by the main house.

Birds of note were - Killdeer, 6 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireo, Brown Creeper, House and Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, lots of Goldfinches, Chipping, White-throated, Savannah, Song, and Lincoln's Sparrow, Towhee, Black-and-White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and numerous Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers. In all, it was a very rewarding trip!

TRIP REPORT: 10/6/2024 - Kenridge - Leader: Amy Greher

Traveling to Kenridge in the fog on Sunday, October 6th, I wondered (considering the weather and the change from our usual Saturday bird walks to Sunday) whether I would be birding by myself or just how many of us would show up. Fourteen birders met me at the dog park parking lot at 8:30, anxious to explore the Kenridge campus and locate as many birds as possible. The temperature when we started was 46 degrees but it warmed up to 70 degrees when we ended the trip.

Near the dog park, we were greeted by a Lincoln's Sparrow, at least 10 Cedar Waxwings, 2 White-throated Sparrows, one Northern Mockingbird, and a Carolina Wren. Traveling down the road to the main campus, we passed a flock of American Robins, more Cedar Waxwings, and a pair of Downy Woodpeckers.

The campus parking lot produced a Red-tailed Hawk sunning himself in a leafless tree, as well as a handful of European Starlings and a very chatty Northern Mockingbird. We scoured the lower trails near the barn in an effort to find more Sparrows. We identified another Lincoln's Sparrow as well as Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, Song Sparrows, a Yellow-rumped Warbler and heard a Goldfinch calling.

We explored all 3 ponds. A pair of Mallards, a couple of Great Blue Herons, a lone Canada Goose and a Kingfisher were the only water-related birds in sight. Additional birds of note were a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglets and one Golden-crowned Kinglet. Included in the warbler category were a Palm Warbler, a number of Yellow-rumped Warblers and a single Common Yellowthroat. Flocks of American Robins were everywhere, often feeding on berries. Numerous Northern Mockingbirds were also seen and often heard.

A complete list of the 43 species can be found on E-Bird. A profitable day once again at Kenridge.

TRIP REPORT: 10/12/2024 - 61/2 Station Rd, Goshen , NY - Leader: Liz McKnight

About a dozen Mearnsers turned out on this beautiful, sunny Fall day at 61/2 Station Rd in Goshen, NY. The day began right at the meeting spot with hundreds of European Starlings intermittently perched (on nearby power lines), and flocking and flying together. At one point they were chasing a Red-tailed Hawk, which settled itself near them on the power lines. We also saw quite a few Turkey Vultures, as well as at least one Black Vulture before we officially got started.

We then started down the Heritage Trail. At first it was not as “birdy” as I expected it to be, although we were seeing a lot of Yellow-rumped Warblers and some quick moving sparrows - but we were hearing other birds, including American Robin, which we were able to see later.

Then things started to pick up – especially where we came across (poison ivy) vine-covered trees where several of the birds like to feed. Along the trail we had House Sparrow, American Crow, American Goldfinch, Tufted Titmouse, and a female Wood Duck that quietly slipped away in the channel of water to our right. Then there was Red-winged Blackbird, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Phoebe, and several White-throated Sparrows. We also had White-breasted Nuthatch, Cedar Waxwing, and an Eastern Bluebird was heard .

We then got to the point where we were getting looks at the marsh where we had Downy Woodpeckers visiting a dead tree stump, more Yellow-rumped Warblers, Blue Jays, and another group of White-throated Sparrows flitting about the bottom of a dead tree. We were hearing Carolina Wren as we started seeing waterfowl, including Wood ducks (including males in their beautiful plumage), Mute swans, Canada Geese, Mallards, and Green-winged Teal in good numbers. There were several Great Blue Herons; we watched as one heron swallowed a HUGE Sucker fish! Amazing! There were also a Double-crested Cormorant, Gadwall and Ring-billed Gull. After much discussion, we agreed that our one shorebird of the day was a Lesser Yellowlegs.

We also had Tree Swallows, more White-throated Sparrows (singing), Tufted Titmice, and Black-capped Chickadee. The waterfowl were flushed suddenly by a female Northern Harrier. The group dispersed for a short time and some members got good looks at a Cooper’s Hawk, while another member spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Lastly, another member had a quick look at what was ultimately decided to be a Swainson’s Thrush. There was also Northern Cardinal, Pileated Woodpecker, 2 Common Grackles, and an immature Bald Eagle.

Other interesting sights, besides the beautiful colors of the changing Fall leaves, were lots of painted turtles and one member mentioned seeing a Red-banded Hairstreak butterfly. The trip was a success – ending with 37 species thanks to all the good spotting by the group participants. The European Starlings were the species with the highest number, with Yellow-rumped Warblers coming in second place.

TRIP REPORT: 10/20/2024 - Croton Point - Leader: Zenon Bachir

Nine birders met at Croton Point Park on Sunday Oct 20, 2024. The weather was sunny and it was warm for October. It was very dry – we had no rain for weeks.

After a short meet at the Main Office, we drove out to the campground parking lot and headed to the meadow (the former garbage dump - which has been converted to a grasslands environment). Some notable birds were: American Pipit, White-crowned Sparrow, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Coopers Hawk and a lone Tree Swallow.

We next moved on to the lower road to the campground. Here we saw a Brown Creeper, lots of Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Towhee, and some members were treated to a late Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Additional species included: Canada Goose, Ring-billed Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Fish Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, House Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Northern Cardinal.

TRIP REPORT: 10/27/2024 - Wallkill River NWR - Leader: Rich VanTieghem

Eight birders participated in the Oct. 27th birding tour at Wallkill River NWR (in both NY and NJ). We enjoyed cool but pleasant weather as we birded from the Oil City Road platform and along the Northern and Western trail sections of Liberty loop.

42 bird species were identified. Our finds included Northern Shoveler, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Mallard and Canada Goose. Shorebirds seen were Wilson's Snipe (with nice viewing from the platform), Pectoral Sandpiper and Killdeer. We had 5 Sandhill Cranes with very easy viewing from the Western trail. Also seen were Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

We had 5 Sparrow species (White-throated Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco), as well as Northern Harriers, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk and Turkey Vulture. Additional finds included Purple Finch, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Belted Kingfisher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Yellow-rumped Warbler, Blue Jay, Northern Cardinal, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch and Red-winged Blackbird.

Nice weather and a nice group of birders made for a very pleasant morning trip.

TRIP REPORT: 11/2/2024 - Black Dirt Region - Leader: Dave Baker

On Saturday, November 2nd, eight Mearns members ventured out to the Black Dirt region of Orange County in the hopes of finding early winter visitors such as Snow Bunting and Horned Lark among the other denizens of the fields. The day began with rather cool temps but rapidly warmed up to close to 60. A steady breeze more than likely kept some of our birds hunkered down, but all-in-all, it was a comfortable morning for us.

While we did not have much luck in finding our target birds in any numbers, it was a rewarding day in that we did find good numbers of songbirds as well as a few raptors. Our “birds of the day” would include a lone small flock of Horned Larks, Pipits and Killdeer on a freshly furrowed field, and nice extended views of Golden-crowned Kinglet.

We also bore witness to a territorial “battle” between a Black-capped Chickadee and a White-breasted Nuthatch, and we had several nice Red-tailed Hawk sightings. Also of note was a beautiful Bald Eagle flying over Lynch Ave. and numerous White-throated Sparrows. We eventually tallied 30 species before ending the morning as tradition would dictate at the Harvest restaurant for our official count. As always, it was a wonderful day with our fellow Meansers.

TRIP REPORT: 11/24/2024 - Eastern Orange Lakes - Leader: Robert Slechta

Before the eight of us checked our first lake, we decided to bird the stream and woods behind the mall, and were rewarded with Cedar Waxwings, Robins, Eastern Bluebirds, Great Blue Heron, Pileated Woodpecker, Common Raven, Juncos, and Carolina Wren.

From there we went to Beaver Dam Lake and had our first ducks of the day with 100 plus Ruddy Ducks, Mallards, Black Ducks, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Greater Scaup, Canada Goose, and Mute Swan.

Brown's Pond was next, where we found more of the same plus a nice pod of 50 plus Ring-necked Ducks and a Pied-billed Grebe.

We then checked out Washington Lake and Stewart State Forest to no avail.

Other notable birds seen today were: both Vultures, Northern Harrier, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, and Brown Creeper. We ended our trip with 37 species.

To top off our day of birding we had a nice lunch at the local Diner.

TRIP REPORT: 11/30/2024 - Shawangunk Grasslands NWR
Leaders: Tom & Jane Crepet

We arrived at a nearly full parking lot at 3:30pm, with partly sunny skies, wickedly windy weather, and a temperature of 35 degrees or less. In other words, it was freezing! Yet, both ramps were full of folks anxiously waiting for the stars of the show to appear! At this time, one other Mearns member (Gino) greeted us, who had never been to Grasslands before. He had already collected an impressive check list. Gerhard & Tracy joined us shortly thereafter.

We walked toward the newest ramp. A number of Northern Harriers were flying swiftly over the grasses & it was impressive how fast they could cover the grounds. The seemingly tame Red-tailed Hawk now known by locals as "Millie" was perched in the dead tree near the ramp & would fly off periodically when these birds seemed to be pestering her!

We caught sight of 2 gray ghosts, (male adult Harriers), and followed them with binoculars & cameras. They stayed somewhat distant.

Finally, at about 4:20pm, the Short-eared Owls made their appearance. They flew in fairly close, barked, & did acrobatics in the sky, over the dead tree, chasing Millie off. 3 Short-eared Owls were seen by the group. So Gino got to see the short eared owls at the Grasslands! This season, the owls have been appearing earlier in the day and we were afraid the wind was going to keep them at bay the entire time.

As we were returning to our cars (so as to avoid turning into ice cubes), we heard & saw many Canada Geese in flight from the direction of Blue Chip farm, and saw a beautiful rose sunset.

While driving out, a Great Blue Heron flew over us on the road, and a small flock of Blackbirds flew into the fields.

6 species were seen by the leaders.

TRIP REPORT: 12/6 - 12/8, 2024 - Cape Ann, MA - Leader: Jodi Brodsky

Our annual trip to Cape Ann was loads of fun with a few unexpected avian surprises. On Friday it was very windy so we skipped Halibut Point and spent the afternoon birding Cathedral Rocks, Granite Pier and Andrew's Point. We had great winter ducks including all of the scoters, Common Eider and the crowd favorite Harlequin Ducks.

On Saturday we started out at Ipswich River Audubon to look for the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher that had been reported. We walked around the property for a bit with no sign of our target bird. Michael and I were hand feeding a few very friendly Black-capped Chickadees when my phone rang and I saw Karen waving to me. As we started back toward the parking area I could see the STFL perched low in the field. Keith was the first to spy him by the parking lot. Typical... we were all looking out at the field and the bird was behind us. I'm sure there's a cartoon out there just like that. Anyway, he flew back, landed for a minute and then flew farther away. Everyone was able to get a great look at him and his flattering tail.

Our next stop was a little farm a few miles before Parker River to look for a Lazuli Bunting. Sadly we spent 45 minutes walking around the area with no luck. However, we were treated to not one but two Eastern Screech Owls; the first was a red-phased sleeping in a tree on the way in, and the second was a gray-phased sleeping not far from the other.

Parker River was loaded Red-throated Loons along with a few Red-necked Grebes, Horned Grebes and a Razorbill. We stopped at all of the main areas. Liz found a Hermit Thrush off the trail at hellcat.

On the last day we birded around Gloucester. All of the typical birds and winter ducks were around, but nothing newsworthy. Our last bird of the day is one of my personal favorites, a Black Guillemot seen by the Elks club. In total our small but mighty group of six tallied 61 species and had a wonderful weekend.

TRIP REPORT: 1/25/2025 - Eagle Viewing along the Hudson River Leader: Gerhard Patsch

Ten participants enjoyed a sunny winter day with freezing temperatures in the 20's F and, fortunately, almost no wind. Ice is nice and we had plenty of it on the Hudson River, giving us a good concentration of Bald Eagles, which we have not had in recent years. We tallied 143 Eagles for our trip! Most of the Eagles were observed between Peekskill Bay and Georges Island.

Other highlights included hundreds of Common Mergansers, a dozen Great Cormorants, Ravens, a Red-shouldered Hawk, and a gray morph Eastern Screech Owl!

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY BY MEARNS BIRD CLUB MEMBERS:

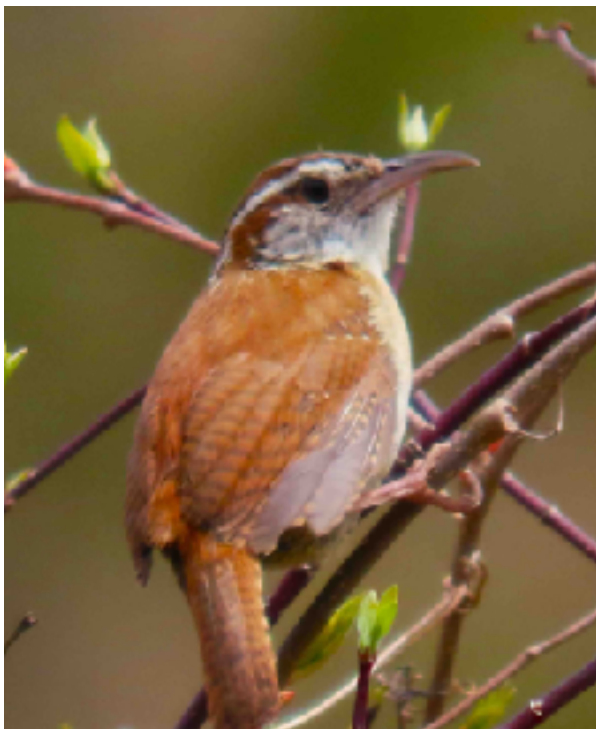
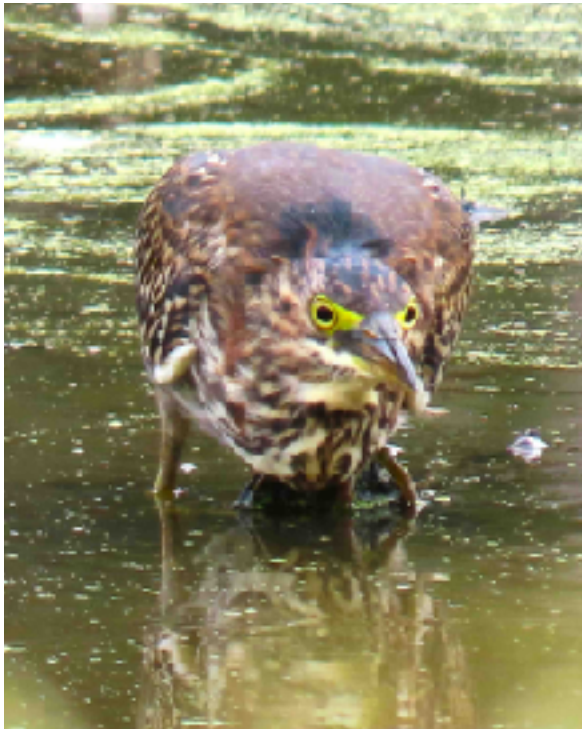
Jody Brodsky: Photos from Cape Ann, MA Trip:
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Red-throated Loon,
Eastern Screech Owl (red-phased) and Eastern Screech Owl (gray-phased).



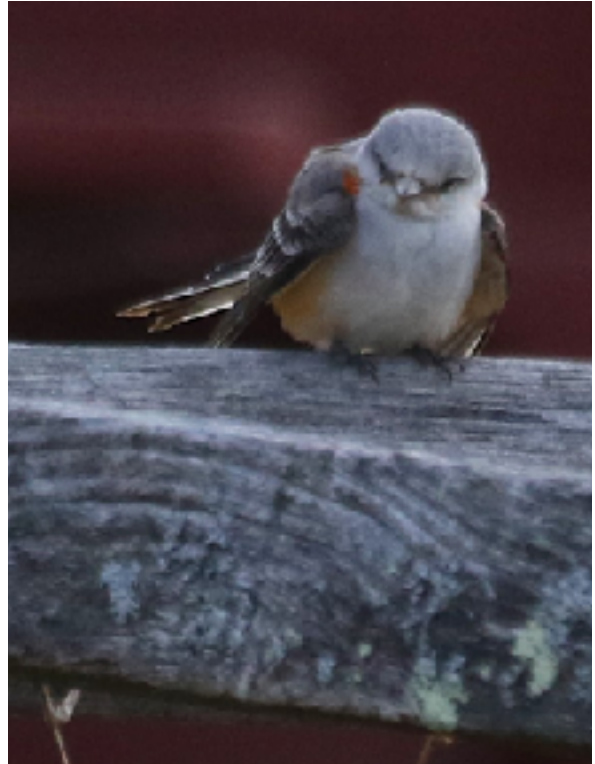
Maryangela Buskey: Short-eared Owls at Shawangunk Grasslands NWR



Joyce Depew: Green Heron and Carolina Wren (Orange County)



Karen Miller: Ross's Goose (Breeze Hill Pond, Nov 2024), Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (Cape Ann Trip), and White Ibis (Forsythe NWR, Sept 2024).



Gef Chumard:

Red-tailed Hawk & Winter Wren (Fancher Davidge Park).

Black Skimmers (Cape May, NJ).



UPCOMING MEARNS FIELD TRIPS: February thru September 2025

February 22, Saturday, 9:00 am, Black Dirt Region, Orange County, New York with Joyce Depew (845-978-9952). Meet in the parking lot of the Jolly Onion restaurant in Pine Island, NY. We'll search for wintering Larks, Buntings, Rough-legged Hawks, and maybe some Snow Geese.

March 1, Saturday, 9:00 am, Rye, New York (and nearby areas) with Zenon Bachir (845-202-0302). Meet at the North end of the Playland parking lot for Long-tailed Ducks, Loons, Purple Sandpipers and Grebes.

March 15, Saturday, 9:00 am, Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, Oil City Road (southwest of Pine Island, New York) with Johanna Bloomfield (541-778-1754). Meet at the Oil City Rd. platform for lots of ducks and hopefully some Sand Hill Cranes.

March 23, Sunday, 9:00 am, Eastern Orange County Lakes, New York. Meet Bob Slechta (845-541-8210) at the Station Rd. Square mini-mall in Salisbury Mills, NY (near the intersection of Route 94 and Orrs Mills Rd) for a relaxing day of chasing down some ducks and other waterfowl.

April 6, Sunday, 9:00 am, Long Island Sound with Jodi Brodsky (845-282-1058). Meet at the Playland Parking lot at 9 AM for Loons, Grebes, Long-tailed Ducks and Purple Sandpipers. Let Jodi know if you're going.

April 12, Saturday, 8:30 am, Wallkill River NWR with Rich Van Tieghem (201-370-2721). Meet at the Oil City Rd. platform at 8:30 am for Blue and Green-winged Teal, Egrets, Gallinules, and Sandhill Cranes.

April 27, Sunday, 8:30 am, 6 1/2 Station Road with Liz McKnight (201-400-1428). Meet at the junction of 6 1/2 Station Rd and the Heritage Trail. Ducks, Swallows, Kinglets and Yellow-rumps.

April 30, Wednesday, 8:30 am - Stewart State Forest with Bill Fiero (845-728-5208). Meet at the North Barron Rd. parking area as Gnatcatchers, Kinglets, and early Warblers etc. start to show up.

May 3, Saturday, 8:00 am - Bashakill with Joyce Depew (845-978-9952). Coming from Rt 209 meet at the first (DEC) parking lot before you get to the Kill and see if 70 species can be identified today.

May 7, Wednesday, 8:00 am - Stewart SF with Bill Fiero (845-728-5208). Meet at the North Ridge Rd. parking lot. Anything is possible as the Spring Migration heats up - White eyed Vireo, or Chat maybe?

May 10, Saturday, 8:00 am - Kenridge Farm with Amy Greher (845-774-9399). Meet at the Dog Park and see if Amy can find us a Mourning Warbler or a Cape May!

May 14, Wednesday, 8:00 am - Goose Pond Mountain State Park with Bob Slechta (845-541-8210). Meet next to the Chester McDonalds and see what we can turn up.

May 16-17, Friday & Saturday - BREAK 100. See how many birds you can identify in Orange County! Pick any contiguous 24 hour period Friday-Saturday that your team (minimum of 2 people) prefers. Contact Karen Miller (845-381-3203) for details and keep an eye on [Groups.io](https://groups.io) for updates.

May 24 Saturday (or May 25 Sunday) - Destination to be determined. Watch [Groups.io](https://groups.io) for details.

May 31, Saturday, 8:30am - Shawangunk Grasslands with Tom and Jane (845-443-5440). See grassland species like Bobolink, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Savannah Sparrow.

June 14, Saturday - Mearns Club Picnic (tentative date) at the Winding Hills County Park. Watch groups.io for details as the date nears.

Aug 23, Saturday, 8am - Black Dirt Plus with Dave Baker (845-440-4030). Trip will start at the Oil City Rd. And then move on to the Black Dirt for shore birds hopefully.

Sept 6, Saturday, 8am - Kenridge Farm with Amy Greher (845-774-9399). Be at the Dog Park at 8 am for a rewarding day of birding as the Fall migration starts up.

Sept 13, Saturday, 8am - Bashakill with Joyce Depew (845-978-9952). Meet her at the first (DEC) parking lot as you come in from Rt 209 and before you get to the Bash. Philly Vireo and Gray Cheeked Thrush maybe.

Sept 24, Wednesday, 8:30am - Winding Waters with Rich Van Tieghem (201-370-2721). This is a tentative trip as the Refuge has played around with access to this location in the Fall. Watch [Groups.io](https://groups.io) for any changes to this Connecticut Warbler Hot Spot.

Sept 28, Sunday, 9am - 6 1/2 Station Rd with Liz Mcknight (201-400-1428). Meet at the intersection of the Heritage Trail and 6 1/2 Station Rd. to bird here during Fall Migration.

TRIP NOTES:

Trip participants can look for field trip changes via mearnsbirdclub@groups.io email notices.

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 watch [Mearnsgroups.io](https://mearnsgroups.io) emails for last minute changes.

Field trip leaders are responsible for:

- 1) Sending out trip cancellation notice via Mearnsbirdclub@groups.io email service, or notify Bob Slechta 845-541-8210 or Joyce Depew at 845-978-9952 and we can send out the notice.
- 2) Sending written trip reports via email **and** most importantly send directly to Rich VanTieghem for the inclusion in the next Orange Feather: rich.w2vt@gmail.com

Happy Birding! Sincerely, Rich VanTieghem - Orange Feather Editor

On the last page: Meeting location and dates and 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
