



# THE OSPREY

January/February 2018 — Vol. XLIII, No. 1

## Long Island’s Bird of the Century

**Byron Young**

This story could have been and should have been a celebration of a very rare visitor to our shores. Unfortunately the discovery of a rare Corn Crake along Ocean Parkway near Cedar Beach ended sadly. This US Life List bird for nearly every birder delighted the folks that were fortunate enough to see the bird before it was struck and killed by a passing car. Based upon the autopsy conducted by the American Museum of Natural History the bird was a juvenile male, which explains a lot, and was underweight for its age.

We have been blessed with a couple of neat rare birds this fall. The first is the Brown Booby found in Lake Montauk

after Hurricane Jose. This bird received a great deal of attention remaining around Lake Montauk for several weeks. The bird was still being reported in early November.

Next up were the Hudsonian Godwits feeding in the rainwater pools at Heckscher State Park for several days in early November. The warm weather and easy access to these birds was extraordinary. The birds provided close-up looks as they fed on earth worms.

Much to the delight of enthusiastic birders and photographers, these “very rare visitors” were replaced by an “extremely rare individual”, one that has been observed along the eastern United

States only 15 times in the past century and a half. The last reported observation was one shot dead in a remote rye field, I believe on Long Island in 1963, prior to that the last one reported on Long Island was at Camp Hero in Montauk on November 1, 1888.

The bird is the Corn Crake (*Crex crex*), which is a bird native to Europe and Asia as far East as western China migrating to eastern Africa during the winter. The Corn Crake is a member of the rail family, however, unlike its relatives this bird prefers an upland habitat rather than the marshy environment enjoyed by other rails. The preferred habitat for the Corn Crake is tall pastures and meadows, including hay fields, both dry and wet, with a preference for cooler and damper habitats with dense grass and herb cover.

Linnaeus first described the Corn Crake in 1758. After a couple of name changes to its scientific nomenclature the Latin name *Crex crex* was established based upon its loud and distinctive (*kek kek*) call. Researchers use this loud and distinctive call when conducting population assessments across its range.

The Western European population has been in a steep decline recently due to changes in farming practices causing habitat loss. Because the bird has a large

*continued on page 8*



BYRON YOUNG

**It’s time to renew your membership.**  
**All memberships now run from**  
**January to December.**  
**There is a form on the backcover.**

**See page 3 for programs, See page 4 for nature walks**

## The President's Corner

# Looking ahead to the New Year!

### Byron Young

I trust Santa was good to everyone and that the New Year's celebrations were memorable. It is now time to look ahead to our upcoming birding adventures for 2018, yes, 2018, it seems like just yesterday that we were passing the year 2000.

Eastern Long Island Audubon will commence its monthly members meetings on Monday, February 5, 2018. Generally, our monthly meetings are the first Monday of each month unless a Holiday falls on or near that day. It looks like only September will be affected this year. Our Program Chair is busy looking for interesting and entertaining speakers for our meetings. If you have any suggestions for a topic, a speaker, or if you would like to make a presentation yourself please contact Suzie Stewart with your suggestions. We are always looking for speakers and topics.

We will continue our monthly bird walks, visiting all of the usual locations, however, we might find a new location just to mix things up. The winter trips will include Montauk Point, and the Lakes around Patchogue. Once winter relaxes its grip and the early spring migrants begin to return we will seek them out with walks to Hunters Garden, Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge, and of course the Quogue Wildlife Refuge. Of course the Month of May will see weekly walks seeking the migrating warblers. These walks will be followed by visits to Dune Road and the Cupsogue tidal flats looking for shorebirds and finally, our fall walks looking for migrants leaving for warmer climates and those leaving colder climates to overwinter on Long Island. Please join us on one or more of our walks and bring along a friend.

Eastern Long Island Audubon will continue to manage two Bluebird nesting box trails and are working with the Town of Brookhaven to establish a third on a piece of property on Ridge Road

in Shoreham. If anyone is interested in helping monitor one of these locations please let us know.

We will continue to keep up with local environmental issues such as Plum Island and EPCAL along with development proposals that affect our open space. We continue to advocate for the birds and wildlife of eastern Long Island with local, county, state and federal entities.

Many Long Island Chapters have turned to publication of electronic Newsletters; we will continue to publish a printed Newsletter. On the subject of the Newsletter, we are always looking for interesting articles about birds, birding, or stories from your birding travels. Here again, if you have something on your mind that you feel is appropriate for the Newsletter let us know.

ELIAS will continue to participate in the Earth Day Celebration at the Quogue Wildlife Refuge; volunteers to help are always welcome. In addition, our Annual Dinner Committee will begin to plan for our 2018 Annual Dinner. They have their

work cut out for them to improve over last year but I know they are up to the challenge. Finally, we will again join with the Quogue Wildlife Refuge in the Annual Bird Seed Sale in early November.

Our membership numbers have been slowly climbing over the past couple of years, which is great. We are always seeking new members so if you know anyone who might be interested please invite them to one of our meetings, walks or other events. It is through the support of our members that we can continue the programs that we offer each month, purchase supplies and materials necessary to run our chapter and to support educational opportunities for young people.

Thank you all for your support.

Good Birding! 

## WATERFOWL CENSUS

January 14-22, 2018 (target date - Sunday, January 15, 2018)

If you would like to participate in the Waterfowl Census, a project of New York State Ornithological Association, please contact one of the organizers:

### **Smith Point to Shinnecock Inlet**

Contact Jay Kuhlman at sjkuhlman@aol.com or 631.878.4461


### **Yaphank to Peconic Bay**

Contact Rosemary Valente at 631-882-2464 or hobbessmom4ever@gmail.com

### **Montauk to Shinnecock**

Contact Frank Quevedo at 631.537.9735 or sofoexdir@optonline.com

### **Reeves Bay to Noyack Bay and Fresh Pond to Sag Harbor**

Contact John McNeil at 631.281.2623 or mcneil.jp@gmail.com 

# February Meeting

Monday, February 5, 2018

## The Goatsuckers of Long Island

John Turner

John will focus on the goatsucker species found on LI. They include the Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, and Chuck-will's-widow. He will include a broader discussion of their adaptations and where they fit into the bigger family of birds that include Potoos!

John Turner is well known LI naturalist and birder. He is the author of *Exploring the Other Island, a seasonal guide to nature on Long Island*. He was one of the creators of the legislation that protects the Pine Barrens. He has taught, worked in government, and is frequently consulted for his expertise on legislative matters. He is a board member of Four Harbors Audubon, and frequently works with Seatuck in Islip. Currently he is working on establishing a regular count for the Night Hawks that fly over Melville Park in the fall. Plum Island is also on his radar.

🐦 **Please note: There is no January meeting!** 🐦

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge  
3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY.  
Directions are on the website.  
[easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org](http://easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org).

Meetings are open to the public, there is no charge.

Check Facebook for a GoPro movie about the Quogue to Watermill Christmas Bird Count. The short video was created by Linda Sullivan.

Posts



**Eastern Long Island Audubon Society**  
December 19 at 4:09pm · 🌐

⋮

Ever wonder what a Christmas Bird Count is like? It started with coffee at Starbucks and ended with compiling the lists at Panera over soup. Special thanks to Linda Sullivan for documenting this part of the Quogue to Watermill Count. (There was one snowy owl on the count.)

<https://quik.gopro.com/v/ZFOsOb7ueb/>



**2017 Christmas Bird Count**

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[QUIK.GOPRO.COM](http://QUIK.GOPRO.COM)

## Snowy Owl Viewing — *Observe without Disturbing*

From New Hampshire Audubon

Snowy Owls are magnificent birds, and attract considerable attention when they visit in the winter. Enthusiastic observers and photographers need to remember that these birds are already stressed by hunger and cold temperatures, so it is important to resist the temptation to get too close for a clearer look or better picture.

Snowy Owls, often inexperienced young birds that hatched the previous summer, wander south during the winter months when food is scarce in their Arctic habitat. The southward journey and cold temperatures require a lot of energy, as does finding prey in unfamiliar territory. Human disturbance can add significantly to their energy demands. The effects of disturbance can be obvious – causing a bird to “flush” or leave its perch – or invisible – making a bird too nervous to leave the safety of a high perch to pursue prey, or increasing metabolism and stress hormones. While a single incident may not be life threatening, the cumulative effect of repeated disturbances, which are likely to occur when an owl perches in highly visible, public locations, reduce the likelihood that they will survive to return north to breed.

Observers and photographers should practice good ethics by keeping a respectful distance from any bird. In general, if the bird reacts to your presence, you are too close. When the bird starts staring at you, you're close enough and it's time to back up. For birds on the ground this is about 100 feet. Flushing the bird is direct interference with its roosting and foraging behavior, and deprives others of the opportunity to observe the owl.

An automobile makes an excellent blind, so watch from your car if possible. If this isn't practical, approach the owl with the wind in your face. Owls take off into the wind, and if the bird chooses to fly while you are approaching it will not want to fly toward you. Always give the bird room and back up as soon as it responds to your presence.

Don't get carried away by excitement – always respect private property and area-closed signs. Snowy Owls at the coast often roost in fragile dune habitat, which is closed to foot traffic.

It is possible to love owls to death. Flushed birds have collided with stationary objects and once airborne they attract the attention of crows, gulls and hawks, which will pursue and harass them, reducing opportunities to hunt. Be responsible, and give owls the privacy they need.

Seeing a Snowy Owl is a rare privilege. Set a good example for others by following and sharing these guidelines, and have a wonderful Snowy experience! 🐦

# Nature Walks

**Saturday, January 6, 2018, meet at 9 am**

## Lakes Around Patchogue

**Leader: John McNeil**

Meet at the parking area at the corner of Lake Drive and East Main Street in East Patchogue by the side of Swan Lake. We will check out Swan Lake and then visit several other spots for a look at the bountiful water birds that flock to LI in the winter. Hopefully a surprise or two will be waiting for us. Contact John McNeil at 631.281.2623 or mcneil.jp@gmail.com .

**Snow date: Saturday, January 13, 2018**

**Saturday, Feb. 10, 2018, meet at 8 am**

## Montauk Point

**Leader: Eileen Schwinn**

Meet at The Point/Lighthouse parking lot (Voted Warmest Rest Rooms in Winter, Suffolk County!) Dress appropriately!! Expect the worst and hope for the BEST!!! **Seabirds galore**, we will visit the Point, Camp Hero, Montauk Lake, Ditch Plains, The Ranch, TR Campground and any place birds may be reported!

**March, date to be TBA, meet at 8 am**

## Elizabeth Morton NWR

**Leader & date : to be announced**

This is always a special walk. Just at the edge of winter, you will be greeted by lots of hungry birds, that eat right out of your

## Bird Walk at Hallock Museum Farm

**November 18, 2017**

**By Sally Newbert**

About 28 people joined in on this walk led by MaryLaura. We started at the Museum, then through the fields where a flock of American Pipits were feeding. Then into the new Hallock State Park Preserve and up the hill that overlooks Long Island Sound. With bad weather coming it seemed that the flocks of Robins and Cedar Waxwings that flew overhead were all looking for a safe havens. In all 33 species were tallied.



hand. Frequently there are pockets of over-wintering birds. Great photo ops as you are close to the birds. Meet at the Refuge parking lot at 8 am. It is roughly a 2 mile walk to the beach and around the refuge. Dress warmly and appropriately. Bring binoculars! Bird seed will be provided.

**Special Trip to Plum Island Scheduled for Fall 2018**

## Plum Island

Sometime in the Fall of 2018 ELIAS will be putting together a trip to Plum Island. This trip is offered by Plum Island, the date will be established in early 2018. Unlike our other trips, you will need to make a reservation. There is space for up to 35 people.

**You must be pre-registered to participate!!!**

Plum Island, now a property of Homeland Security has strict requirements for visitors. The trip is open to US Citizens only. You will need to supply your date of birth, Social Security number, home address, and phone number (which must be provided), Possibly other information, more to come on that. Information is needed 60 days before the trip. Photographs, as far as we know, are prohibited. Details will be in future Newsletters. Eileen Schwinn will be taking names on a first come/first serve basis. You will be contacted to supply the information that Plum Island security needs. 🐦

## Bird walk at William Floyd Estate

**November 19, 2017**

**By MaryLaura Lamont**

The weather was wild and windy so not too many birds were sighted at the WFE. Drizzling rain in the morning led to 40 mph winds very soon so most birds were hunkered down when it finally cleared. The most astonishing bird seen, and one seldom ever seen at the Estate property or even near it in Moriches Bay, was an immature Great Cormorant, sitting on a log! What was unusual in this sighting is that the bird was high up Home Creek near the headwaters where the fresh water starts mixing with the salt from the Bay. To find a Great Cormorant in so unusual a setting was worth the trip, despite the falling tree limbs and wild wind. In this area the creek is highly treed and quite narrow so much to my surprise it was the bird of the day. I suppose the bird just wanted some peace and quiet or perhaps it was not well. That's hard to say but the only other unusual sighting for the day was Bob Gunning's wild bird pants!!! They were life pants for me!!!

## In Memorium

# Eric Salzman

### Eileen Schwinn

*Hey, Lorna – “Can Eric come out and play?” Lorna Salzman always said yes, and Eric and I would be off – for a couple of hours or for most of a day – looking for birds.*

I met Eric Salzman in 2006, and the influence he had on my life ever since that day, was life changing. He taught me about birds – their looks, habitats, behavior and sounds. Eric spent every morning walking around his wonderful Shinnecock bay-front “yard”, in East Quogue, visiting pond, marshes, oak woods and pine woods. He and Lorna would arrive in April from their home in Brooklyn, and depart usually around Halloween each year – sort of like migrating birds themselves. The Dawn Chorus overlooking the marsh at sunrise, was indescribable, with Eric calling out the names of all the singers! He would write about his observations – the birds, the flowers, the mushrooms, the critters – in a near-daily blog, subscribed to by hundreds of Long Island and NYC birders. As any reader of that blog would know, I was lucky enough to spend many, many hours in the company of this wonderfully talented man. We would go to Maple Swamp and Hunters Garden, Cupsogue and Pikes Beach on ELIAS Field Trips, and Montauk, Orient Point, Wainscott Pond and EPCAL, Dune Road, and countless other little nooks and crannies here in Suffolk County where Eric would softly call in locally breeding birds. Since the Statute of Limitations has expired, I can now admit that Eric and I frequently trespassed on private lands! We would also frequently stop, and hop out of the car, if a Wood Mushroom or other edible fungus was spotted. Eric would carefully remove it from a tree or log, and place it on the back floor of my car, or in his pocket – a tasty addition to the Salzman Dinner that evening!

I can't even begin to list the birds I first saw in Eric's company – but two particularly come to mind. We traveled

to Wainscott Pond to the only known Long Island breeding flock of Bobolink. A dozen or so birds, males, would pop up in the un-cut weedy field, visible to us only through our bird scopes. Eric called the bird, Robert of Lincoln, after the William Cullen Bryant poem. Sadly, the field has not supported this nesting bird in the last three or so years. Another Lifer for me, in Eric's company, was seen after bush-wacking through Maple Swamp (pre-tick-phobia days), on an ELIAS Field Trip (in May 2006). We finally came upon The Pond. There, in the tangle of over-grown water's edge, was my first Prothonotary Warbler. An unbelievably tiny, bright yellow flash of wonder! Who would ever know such a beauty existed! We all got great views, thanks to Eric leading us to the right spot!

Eric passed away, unexpectedly, from a heart attack shortly after returning to their Brooklyn home, on November 12, 2017, at the age of 84. In addition to being a birder, Eric was a noted author, book reviewer, and professional composer. More importantly, a devoted husband, father of twin girls, and the happy grandfather of Juliette.

An event is being planned by South Fork Natural History Museum in July, 2018, in Eric's memory.

By the way, on Dec. 1st of this year, while birding at the Suffolk County Farm in Yaphank, a bright yellow flash of wonder appeared – an unexpected and not shy Prothonotary Warbler!! (See page 9).

Thank you, Eric, for one last bird! I am going to miss you, my friend. 🐦



*Eric and Eileen at Westhampton Dunes Overlook, June 2016*

*May, 2010 - Pikes Beach – hundreds of shorebirds on sand and in air.*



## In Memorium

## Remembering Don Spates

MaryLaura Lamont

This little note about Don Spates, beloved husband of long time ELIAS member and former Director of Quogue Wildlife Refuge Gigi Spates should bring a smile to people's faces. It is a fond remembrance of how I knew Don.

Once while shopping in the Riverhead Waldbaum's in the meat aisle, out of the corner of my eye I caught sight of a man all bundled up and walking very fast next to my shopping cart. I thought this odd because he rushed by fast but what was even odder was this unknown fellow dropped into my cart the most disgusting gross meat package I had ever seen. That I remember it was white and I think it was cow intestines, or something like that. Horrified, I followed this fellow who disappeared really fast into one of the aisles. In that aisle I discovered Don and Gigi Spates laughing up a good one! Don said he had done this before to friends he spied in food stores, sometimes unbeknownst to the "friend." When the hapless friend got up to the counter and the cashier was ringing them up people would either pay for the disgusting entrails they didn't know they even had or argue with the cashier that it wasn't theirs! So it was a good one on me but was I glad I found him out before paying for cow guts!

Another time was our discussion of how specific world cultures either respected

or trashed their environments. Only Don could ask me "What planet are you from?" and I not be offended!! That was Don!

Fondly I remember Don and Gigi coming to our house when I was compiler of the Orient Christmas Bird Count. On Count Day I would host a big dinner for all the participants after birding the day. We would then go over the results after dinner. When my kids were really small Don would pretend to be a big monster to scare them and chase them up the stairs to their rooms, which they just delighted in! Someone was finally paying attention to them and not just discussing birds! What could be better for little ones? Well one time one of my dear little ones kept having "accidents" when Don chased them up the stairs—they were so afraid but happy and "unrestricted" shall I say? After I had to change one of their clothes not once but twice that night, during the compilation, Don decided he better stop that for the time being. Don profusely apologized about it and he was embarrassed! My kids still remember that to this day! So do I! We all have a good laugh about it.

Lastly, a wonderful moment in time we spent with Don and Gigi was when they came over to see the dance of the woodcock. We had just moved into the house and there were woodcock down the road in an old fallow field. Don had never seen the courtship – flight



Don and Gigi Spates on a cold spring morning in May 2016 on the trails at Quogue Wildlife Refuge.

display-peenting behavior of the little male woodcock in March so we had a wonderful successful birding adventure watching Woodcock do his thing. I remember Don saying "Where is it? It's so dark out. That tiny thing up in the air is the woodcock?" "Yes, that's it—over there—see it?..... "Listen!...there!" "That thing?" Well, we all it saw it ..... I'm pretty sure Don did too!

There were some good, fun times and nice remembrances. And this is how I remember Don Spates and this is my "ode to Don."

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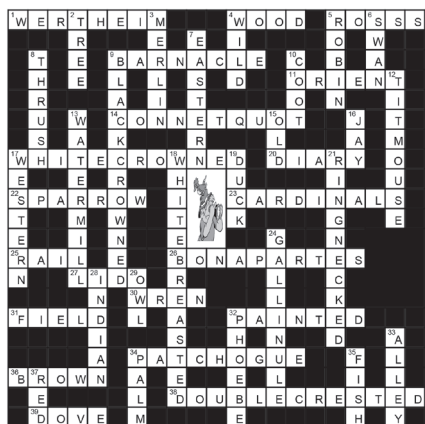
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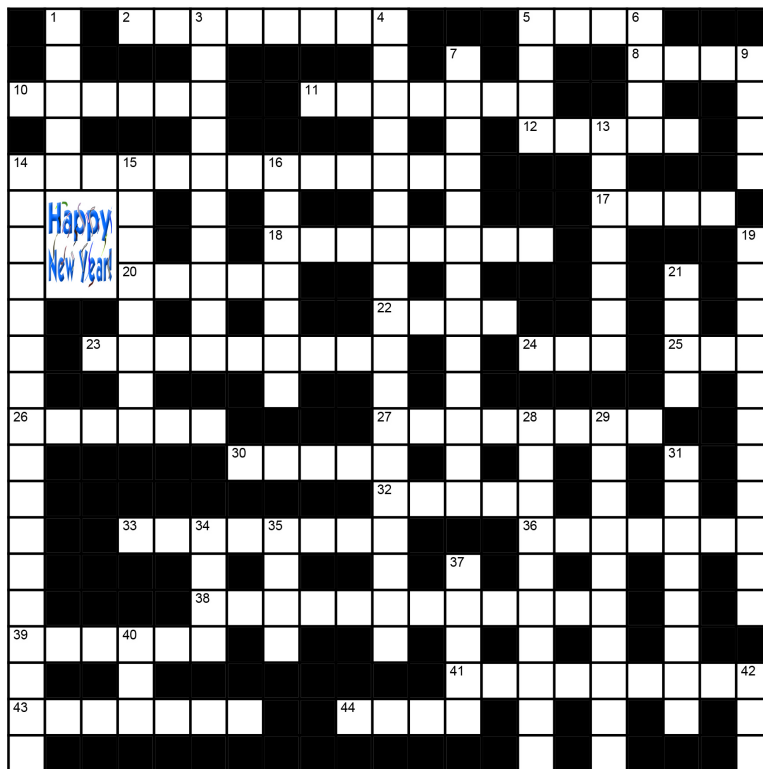
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### Answers to November/December puzzle Late Fall Birding! by Tom Moran



## Happy New Year Tom Moran



**Across**

- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, think Feb 12
- 5 Why or Red \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 Clapper or Virginia
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ Plover, don't even think of driving on the beach during breeding season!
- 11 Point \_\_\_\_\_, good winter shorebird spot, Nassau County
- 12 Great, Snowy or Reddish
- 14 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, winter bird, 2 words
- 17 Mourning \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, look for the yellow in front of eye
- 20 Common \_\_\_\_\_, uncommon sighting off Montauk Point
- 22 Horned or \_\_\_\_\_ Bunting
- 23 Ruddy \_\_\_\_\_
- 24 \_\_\_\_\_ Farms, places in Riverhead good for grasspipers
- 25 Hopefully, something you got to participate in this winter
- 26 \_\_\_\_\_ Point, not Montauk
- 27 Smaller than a hero, type of tern
- 30 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow or wet place to bird
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_ Flycatcher, not to be confused with Willow
- 33 \_\_\_\_\_ State Park, good for puddle migrators, like Hudsonian Godwits this fall
- 36 \_\_\_\_\_ Point, not Orient
- 38 \_\_\_\_\_ Warbler, at Yaphank County Farm this fall
- 39 Baltimore \_\_\_\_\_
- 41 \_\_\_\_\_ Morton NWR, go hand feed a bird!

- 43 Tree, Barn, or Cave \_\_\_\_\_
- 44 \_\_\_\_\_ Petrel, pelagic bird (possessive)

**Down**

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Point, check out the FINS tower for ocean birds
- 3 Yellow or Black-Crowned \_\_\_\_\_ (2 words)
- 4 Some little brown jobs do not have long tails and are referred to as (3 words, singular)
- 5 Mississippi \_\_\_\_\_, 2012 sighting at Sterling Forest
- 6 American \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ Kinglet (2 words)
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ tailed Duck, *yow-owdle-ow!*
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ (2 words) Vireo
- 14 Greater \_\_\_\_\_ Belmont Lake SP sighting this fall (three words)
- 15 Tufted \_\_\_\_\_
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_ Spoonbill, colorful Florida sighting
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Woodpecker, not to be confused with the rarer Three-Toed Woodpecker (2 words)
- 21 Dabbling, Diving or Whistling \_\_\_\_\_
- 28 \_\_\_\_\_ Warbler, yum! (2 words)
- 29 Yaphank \_\_\_\_\_, Prothonotary Warbler sighting location this fall (2 words)
- 31 \_\_\_\_\_ Estate, haunted house location, good warbler location overlooking Mt. Sinai Harbor
- 34 \_\_\_\_\_ May, NJ hawk watching mecca in the fall
- 35 \_\_\_\_\_ Bunting, check I Down parking lot
- 37 \_\_\_\_\_ Beach, West End
- 40 Long-eared \_\_\_\_\_ spotted at 37 Down Jan 2017
- 42 Common Gallinule, formerly know as Common Moor \_\_\_\_\_

continued from page 1

range across the European and Asian continents with stable populations in Russia and Kazakhstan the population does not appear as a species of concern. Also the population in China appears to be stronger than thought, conservation efforts in some counties have facilitated an increase in the population.

After breeding season Corn Crakes migrate mostly to eastern Africa, but there are sparse records covering most of the continent and vagrants have been found in Tibet, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Australia. Likewise vagrants have been found across the Atlantic in North America and on Bermuda.

Reports of the Corn Crake in the United States are rare, there are only 15 since 1857. These observations have generally been reported from coastal states. There are a couple of exceptions, a bird reported on January 8, 2016 from Wayne Pennsylvania and the second a bird reported from Green Island, NY on November 6, 1883 in a report by the US Department of Agriculture. An examination of the readily available observations reveal five recorded Corn

Crakes observed on Long Island, three during the period of 1880 to 1888, one recorded in 1963 and the recent find By Ken and Sue Feustel on November 12, 2017 on Fire Island.

A further examination provides a clue as to the potential movements of these vagrant birds.

1. There is one report of the Corn Crake in Iceland, though no details of the observation could be found.
2. Greenland was mentioned in the 1916 *Bulletin* of the US Department of Agriculture Report has having been visited several times. No details were provided in the report.
3. Newfoundland with three recorded observations (1859, 1928 and 2002) was next as we move progressively south along the North American coastline.
4. There has been one report from Nova Scotia, October 1874.
5. Two Corn Crakes have been reported from the State of Maine one from Falmouth on October 14, 1889 and the most recent one found on Monhegan Island on October 5, 2014.
6. It was surprising to find no records of the Corn Crake for Massachusetts.

7. There was one reported observation for Rhode Island in Cranston during 1857.

8. Connecticut has two reported observations, one in Old Saybrook on October 20, 1887 and the second in Orange near New Haven on October 19, 1943.

9. New York leads the list with six reported observations:

- A. Oakdale, November 2, 1880;
- B. Green Island (near Troy), November 6, 1883;
- C. Amagansett, August 15, 1885;
- D. Montauk Point, November 1, 1888;
- E. Unknown location, 1963 mentioned in a recent Audubon article about the most recent Corn Crake report; and
- F. Fire Island, November 12, 2017.

10. The Corn Crake has also been reported in New Jersey several times:

- A. Salem, New Jersey during the Fall of 1854,
- B. Bridgeton, New Jersey in June of 1856, and
- C. Dennisville, New Jersey on November 11, 1905.

11. Finally there is one record of the Corn Crake in Maryland found in Stockton Maryland on November 28, 1900. Stockton is located near Ocean City Maryland on the Delmarva peninsula.

It appears from these records that there is a small group of western European Corn Crake that like to defy convention and migrate west rather than east. If the biological data relative to the latest find is any indication, it is juvenile individuals that may become confused or are just adventurous looking for a new route to southeastern Africa. Another possibility is a bird being blown off course by a passing storm that carries it out over the ocean and away from the European continent. We may never know for certain given the extremely rare observations from Iceland west and south along the North American shoreline.

A new vagrant location was added on September 28, 2012 with the first report

Hudsonian Godwit at Heckscher, it fed in a large puddle next to Field 7. Allowing close views and many photo ops.





of the Corn Crake in South America on an island 250 miles off Brazil. The author of the report suggested that this bird may have been aided in its oceanic migration by shipping traffic which is certainly a possibility.

While it is interesting to speculate about the migratory adventures of these vagrant wanderers we may never fully understand how or why some birds appear hundreds of miles outside of their normal range. Unfortunately most succumb to the rigors of their wayward movements or to the unexpected crush of another unknown habitat.

It certainly was a great treat for those fortunate enough to observe this extremely rare visitor to our shores. The bird certainly became a North American life list bird for every person who observed the bird. For those adventurous birders who would like to add the Corn Crake to their world life list, you might try Scotland next spring listening for the *krex krex* mating call. If that fails, then one should travel east across the European Continent and into Asia if necessary in their search for the Corn Crake. On the other hand, given the number of recent observations of the Corn Crake in North America keep a sharp eye out when traveling Dune Road or the Ocean Parkway for a quail sized bird, that resembles a Clapper Rail. In fact, it might be wise to give every Clapper Rail you find a very careful examination as they are similar in size and coloration to the Corn Crake. The bill of the Corn Crake is shorter and flesh colored where as the Clapper Rail has a longer heavier bill.

It is important to remember when out birding, especially after a major storm to keep your eyes open for potential vagrants, one never knows what will pop up along our shores. 🐦



EILEEN SCHWINN

*Prothonotary Warbler at the Suffolk County Farm in Yaphank.*

## One more unusual late fall visitor

Eileen Schwinn

**P**ROTHONOTARY WARBLER – so named after officials in the Roman Catholic Church, the Protonotarii, or court clerks, who traditionally wore bright orange-yellow robes. (The word Notary also comes from this root).

First reported on November 24, 2017, at the Suffolk County Farm and Education Center, in Yaphank. With the last eBird posting of the bird on December 7, 2017, usually, this shockingly bright, yellow bird with blue-black wings is encountered while it hides near water sources – ponds, streams, creeks – AND in the Springtime. The Prothonotary Warbler is an insect eater, which breeds in mid-western states and along the Eastern Seaboard south of Pennsylvania.

How did this bird get to Yaphank? We will never know! It may have gotten hooked up with the wrong migrating flock, been blown off course by storms in late summer or early fall, or just mixed up his north with his south – the proper direction for migration. Usually shy and rather reclusive, this particular bird – seen here and photographed on Dec 1, 2017 – was just the opposite! Hunting insects among farm equipment, animal waste piles, and an empty building, it frequently was reported as flying around human observers' feet, and clinging to walls.



EILEEN SCHWINN

*The Prothonotary Warbler was not shy and reportedly flew around observers' feet.*

What will happen to it? Again, we will never know – hopefully, one morning he will realize he doesn't belong in our cold climate, and he will continue to head to the species wintering grounds in Florida, Louisiana and the Gulf Coast, where bugs are plentiful!! 🐦



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# The Great Backyard Bird Count

Join this Citizen Science Count

from Friday, February 16 through Monday, February 19, 2018

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 21st annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19, 2018. Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

“This count is so fun because anyone can take part—we all learn and watch birds together—whether you are an expert, novice, or feeder watcher. I like to invite new birders to join me and share the experience. Get involved, invite your friends, and see how your favorite spot stacks up.” -Gary Langham, Chief Scientist

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2014 GBBC data highlighted a large irruption of Snowy Owls across the northeastern, mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes areas of the United States. The data also showed the effects that warm weather patterns have had on bird movement around the country. For more on the results of the latest GBBC, take a look at the GBBC Summary, and be sure to check out some of the images in the 2017 GBBC Photo




## Contest Gallery.

On the program website participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during and after the count. Be sure to check out the Explore a Region tool to get an idea of what you can expect to see in your area during the next GBBC.

For questions and comments, please contact the National Audubon Society or Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

National Audubon Society  
[citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org)

Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Inside the US: (800) 843-2473  
Outside the US: (607) 254-2473  
[gbbc@cornell.edu](mailto:gbbc@cornell.edu)

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from Wild Birds Unlimited. 

Visit the official website at  
**[birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org)**

for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

# The **OSPREY**

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