



THE OSPREY

July/August 2015 — Vol. XL No. 4

May Madness 10 walks, lots of participants! Here's the run down

Wertheim NWR, May 2
By Byron Young, leader

On a glorious May morning 17 birders meet in the parking lot of the Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge in search of early spring migrants. Our group included several seasoned veterans of ELIAS bird walks, a couple of new birders from as far away as Port Washington and Hampton Bays and a young birder with Osprey sharp eyes. The weather could not have been better high bright blue skies, light winds and a moderate temperature.

As the group went along the White Oak Trail past the old Refuge Headquarters 33 species of birds were encountered including Yellow Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Pine Warbler, Ovenbird, Kingbird, Towhee

"Its right there, it's the bright yellow bird"
at Wertheim NWR.



BYRON YOUNG



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBIN ROBINSON

Cardinals are common in the northeast now, but originally were limited to the southeastern U.S. It is the state bird of seven states.

Want more birds? Native plants in the yard attract bugs & birds

Bob Duchesne

From the column *Good Birding* that appears in the *Bangor Daily News, ME.*

I was very young when I first tasted spinach, but I had enough sense to spit it out. In fact, I let it drool down my bib and I threw it off the edge of the high chair so that my mother would fully understand my displeasure. At the time, I was equally distrustful of strained peas.

That's just about how native insects react to non-native plants, with equal parts of suspicion and revulsion. The more we learn about nature, the more we look back and regret what we used to do. It turns out that our penchant for planting non-native flora has made our backyards both attractive and sterile. Most bugs won't eat the unfamiliar vegetation.

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Continued on page 4

The President's Corner

What is Your Ecological Footprint?

Byron Young

The ecological footprint is a measure of human demand on the Earth's ecosystems. It is a standardized measure of demand for natural capital that may be contrasted with the planet's ecological capacity to regenerate.

I was thinking about this the other day and decided to take a few of the web based ecological footprint tests and was shocked by the results. I always thought that I was good to the earth, but the results of my tests showed me that I could do better, much better in fact. The results of the first quiz that I took showed that if everyone on earth lived my life style it would take 3.19 planet earths to support us all. This is not good for planet earth.

Not being satisfied with that result I took a second quiz that showed me that the average person requires 3.62 city blocks of land to support their ecological footprint but I needed 12.38 city blocks to support mine. Again this is not good for planet earth.

I decided to try one more quiz to see if the results would be any better. The results of the third try were not any better. This quiz measured the number of basketball courts it would take to support a person's ecological footprint. The average was 55 basketball courts or 6.07 acres per person. I came in at 15.9 acres or 144 basketball courts. Wow and I thought that I was green.

If you have some time and want to check your ecological footprint check out some of the ecological footprint quiz's available on the web. I sure have some work to do to improve my ecological standing.

So now that I have figured out that I am not a good steward of planet earth what can I do to improve?

- Buy locally grown products to save on transportation impacts.
- Plant a garden (by doing this it reduces pollution from shipping, fertilizers, packaging, and your food will be fresher).
- Buy and eat fewer processed foods.

- Turn off the lights when not in use.
- Turn off or turn down air conditioners and heaters at night.
- Get outside! Outside activities take less energy.
- Buy products with the least amount of packaging possible (buy in bulk or in big boxes rather than in individually wrapped containers).
- Recycle as much as possible
- Watch the amount of water being used.
- Drive less, and consolidate trips.

The above are but a few of the things that I can do. Some of the suggestions were far more dramatic. However, these were the ones that I felt I could improve on.

After all of this I still think that I am green, not Kermit the Frog green. Oh yes, there is room for improvement. The statement "Think globally but act locally" is very true when considering ones ecological footprint. By reducing our own ecological footprint, educating our neighbors on how to reduce theirs, working with groups that educate larger audiences, working on local habitat improvement projects we begin to make improvements to the local ecology, which leads to improvements on a larger scale.

I will have to retake these ecological footprint quizzes in a few months after making some changes in my life style to see if my ecological footprint has been reduced

Summer Field Trips

The warblers off to their nesting territory. (Hope you saw some this spring!) The trees are all leafed out making it difficult to see the nesting birds. That means its time for SHOREBIRDS. Great because some are larger and easy to ID, and for those that like a challenge, the peeps are hard to tell apart and present the birder with a new set of challenges. Look at the size, shape of the beaks, behavior and sometimes leg color can be crucial.

These walks have been scheduled to catch the low tides. In order to do that, they are not the first Saturday of the month, as we try to do, but scheduled to catch low tide and the most birds. Surprisingly, the shorebirds are usually finished breeding by the time the August walk comes around and they are on their way back to the south by, stopping by our area on the way to gain the energy they need to get to their winter homes.

Eileen Schwinn, ELIAS field trip chairperson, is leading both of these beach trips. If you need more information, please contact her at beachmed@optonline.net or 516.662.7751.

Saturday, July 18, 2015 at 8:00 am

Tiana Beach to Pikes Beach along Dune Road

Trip Leader: Eileen Schwinn

Meet Eileen at 8:00 am in the bay-side parking lot of Tiana Beach. This has been the new HOT SPOT for all sorts of shorebirds from rails to Oystercatches. Then we will drive along Dune Road heading west to Pikes Beach for shore birding and maybe some sparrows along the way. On this field trip, ELIAS will provide temporary parking passes for those who need them.

Saturday, August 8 at 8:00 am

Cupsogue and the Islands of Moriches Inlet

Trip Leader: Eileen Schwinn

We try to catch the wave of shorebirds passing our area on their migration. Meet Eileen at 8:00 am at the far end of the Cupsogue Beach parking lot. We will bird the bay-side shoreline and wade across the shallow water to the exposed flats. Be prepared to get wet. Please wear appropriate foot wear, bathing suits and/or shorts that can get wet. **Don't forget the sunscreen and head gear.**

ELIAS Meetings

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge, 3 Old Country Road. Quogue, NY.
All are welcome, there is no charge.

Monday, July 13th, 2015, at 7:15 pm

The Virginia Tech Shorebird Program on Long Island

Audrey DeRose-Wilson

Audrey DeRose-Wilson works for the Virginia Tech Shorebird Program as project leader on the Long Island project. She monitors the Piping Plover population response to new habitat created by Hurricane Sandy, and subsequent anthropogenic habitat modifications on Fire Island and Westhampton Island, New York.



Banding the Plovers from the website vtshorebirds.fishwild.vt.edu/

work and talk about Piping Plover nest and chick survival on Fire Island. She will also touch on some of the most interesting findings from Virginia Tech's Piping Plover banding projects on the Atlantic Coast, Missouri River, and Plover wintering grounds.

Audrey has worked on research projects studying everything from butterflies, to snakes, to hyenas, before getting hooked on shorebirds. She received her M.Sc. from Virginia Tech in 2012, for work evaluating demography, habitat use, and effects of military overflights on Wilson's plover on a North Carolina barrier island.

She will give us a presentation on Virginia Tech's post-Sandy monitoring

Monday, August 3rd, 2015, at 7:15 pm

Bald Eagles Nesting on Long Island

Michael S. Scheibel

The return of the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) as a nesting species in the Long Island region and throughout NYS is one of the most successful wildlife restoration stories of our time. Presented here is the history and current status of Bald Eagle nesting on Long Island & NYS, reasons for decline, natural history information on nesting behavior, food preferences and longevity. Also discussed is the very successful thirteen year (1976 -1989) restoration project using a process known as "hacking" undertaken by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and led by Peter Nye (Endangered Species Unit Leader). Today over three hundred active nesting territories are known within NYS, a remarkable recovery from just one remaining nest near Rochester during the 1970's.

Michael S. Scheibel is the Natural Resources Manager for The Nature Conservancy of Long Island, at the Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island, NY. He received his B.S. degree in Wildlife Science from Cornell University in 1971, worked for nearly 20 years as a Senior Wildlife Biologist for NYSDEC specializing in endangered species projects on Long Island. Mr. Scheibel helped develop the Long Island Colonial Waterbird Survey in the early 1980's and collected data which led to the listing of the Piping Plover and the Least Tern as "endangered" in NYS. He has studied Ospreys on Long Island for over 35 years, conducting annual nesting surveys and has authored several publications on Osprey distribution and productivity. He also served as the NY representative on the federal Roseate Tern Recovery Team from 1988 – 1999. He is a hunter, fisherman and avid birder; married to Lynne, has two children and two beautiful granddaughters and lives in the hamlet of Brookhaven.

S•A•V•E T•H•E D•A•T•E

Wednesday Evening

October 14, 2015 for the

ELIAS ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF BIRDING

Plans are being made for the ELIAS Dinner.

Please be sure to save the date and look for the details in the next issue of *The Osprey*.

Hope to see you there!

MAY MADNESS

continued from page 1

and numerous Blue-Gray Gnatcatchers. A few birders spotted a Common Yellowthroat and a Vesper Sparrow. We were fortunate to find a Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher nest, and what appeared to be a White-breasted Nuthatch and a Red-bellied Woodpecker building nests.

Everyone participated in finding interesting sightings. Bob Gunning took the lead taking great photos of the birds seen, especially the first of the season Kingbird in the grassy area around the Refuge maintenance area. The new birders found several life list species, while the rest of us had several first of the season birds. It was a great day for birding. Thanks to all who participated.

Maple Swamp, May 3
by Eric Salzman, leader

Spring may be here in some places but it had barely touched Maple Swamp. This morning's ELIAS walk in that fabled location was mainly notable for a plethora of ticks but few birds.

Only 30 species (counting some heard only). 6 warblers but two weakly heard. No orioles, no tanagers, no vireos.

Still it was a gorgeous day for a walk.

Hunters Garden, May 6 by Bob Adamo

On May 6, I led the walk to Hunters Garden. There were 9 of us, who, at 7 am wondered what the day would bring (bird & weather wise). It was raining lightly, as we headed into this NYSDEC property.

While the rain did stop, it stayed a gray/dull day, with the bird counting slow, although we did get a number of "bright"



At Hunters Garden

SUZI STEWART



At the William Floyd Estate

SUZI STEWART



At Quogue Wildlife Refuge

SUZI STEWART



At Hallockville & Hallock State Park

SUZI STEWART

species, which kept the morning moving. Among them were: a number of Scarlet Tanagers and Baltimore Orioles. The highlights included one or possibly two Blackburnian Warblers, two Northern Parulas, a Great-crested Flycatcher., Eastern Towhee, House Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Chipping Sparrow.

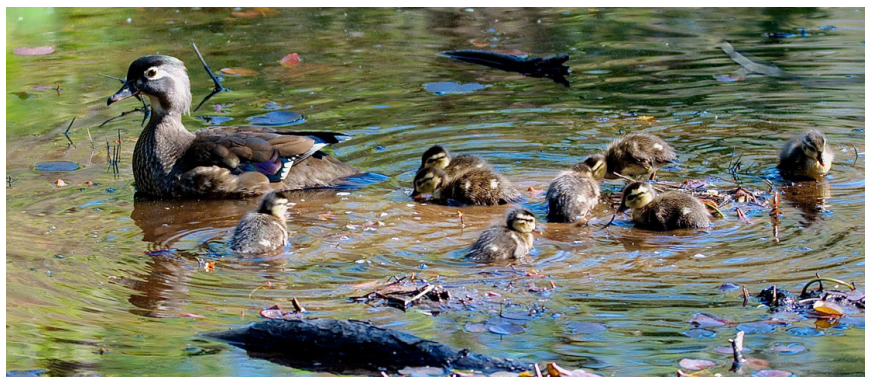
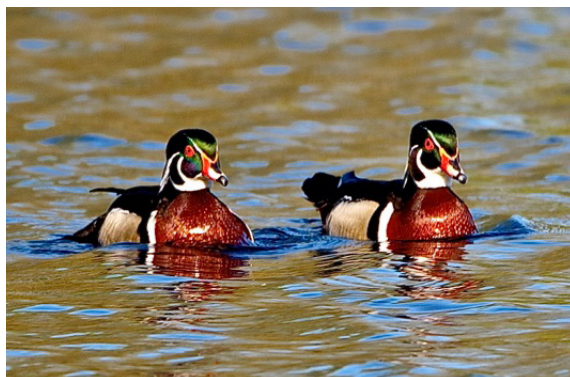
We then decided to see if the Bald Hill Area (also on the west side of RT. 51, but about 1/2 mile to the north) was busier than Hunters Garden. It has a large wet area, but the short answer was no. Pine Warbler was the lone addition to the day's tally.

William Floyd Estate, May 9
by MaryLaura Lamont, leader

On May 9, International Migratory Bird Day, over 20 folks walked around the William Floyd Estate searching for goodies. While not a "bumper day" for migrants good highlights were watching a pair of Blue-grey Gnatcatchers make a nest, finding several Eastern Bluebirds on their nest boxes, as well as Tree Swallows on their nest boxes. Pine Warblers and Ovenbirds were also observed and the last wonderful highlight was observing the William Floyd Estate's first baby eaglet in it's nest with the parents in about 70-80 years!

Wood Ducks, who are usually quite secretive, were easily seen in the pond at Quogue Wildlife Refuge the males near the enclosure area and the female and her babies in a swampy area just before the bridge that crosses the pond..

WOOD DUCK PHOTOS BYRON YOUNG





SUZI STEWART



BOB GUNNING



BOB GUNNING

Some of the birds seen: American Redstart at Hunters Garden, Yellow Warbler at Wertheim, Palm Warbler at North Fork Preserve and a Eastern Kingbird at Wertheim NWR

Quoque Wildlife Refuge, May 14
by Sally Newbert

Eileen Schwinn led this walk around the Old Ice Pond. Our treat this morning was finding Momma Wood Duck and her babies in a swampy area before the bridge. She posed beautifully and, at least for me, it was the first time I could see a few of the beautiful, colorful feathers on her side. We spotted about 15 species. The highlight a Magnolia Warbler along the boardwalk on the way back.

Hunters Garden, May 15
by Eric Salzman, leader

Hunters Garden is undoubtedly the best spring birding site on the East End these days. A few years ago, I would have said Maple Swamp but that area has lost some of its birding allure since the outbreaks of canker worms which devastated its oak trees a few years back and — as everyone knows — oak trees and spring warblers go together. The biggest problem with Hunters Garden today is the lack of standing ground water; usually there's still quite a bit at this time of the year and that helps attract birds.

In any case, this morning's walk started slowly and looked to be a bust but it eventually picked up quite a bit. I would say the best birds of the day were Blackburnian Warblers (everyone's favorite) and Bay-breasted Warbler (never a common bird out here). A Veery appeared at one of the damp spots but, try as I might, I didn't see or hear either Hermit or Wood Thrushes. We spotted about 29 species in all.

Right, at Terrell River, May 17, highlights included Indigo Bunting, American Redstart and a Blackpoll Warbler.

Hallockville & Hallock State Park, May 16
by MaryLaura Lamont, leader

We had a great day on May 16, the Hallockville-Hallock State Park Bird walk and we finally hit into a decent wave of neotropical migrants. Even though we had gentle rains on and off 17 people decided to come along and we were rewarded with many highlights including Orchard Oriole, Indigo Buntings, several Black-throated Blue warblers, Chestnut-sided Warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Prairie Warblers, Black and White warbler, American Redstarts, Yellow Warblers galore, Blue-winged Warblers and some of us found an elusive Wilson's Warbler. Common Terns were on the Sound as well as a Common Loon while Bank Swallows buzzed above us.

South Fork Natural History Museum June 6
by Eric Salzman, leader

Saturday, June 6 was the now annual SOFO/ELIAS walk around the edge of the meadow behind the SOFO (South Fork



BOB GUNNING

Natural History Museum). The morning started clear but overcast with warm sunshine later in the day. There was a good turnout from both organizations. The date was a bit earlier this year than in the past and, as a result, there were a lot of birds singing, hawking insects, etc. Forty species were seen or heard. There is a very active Purple Martin colony in gourds at the back of the SOFO building. Among the highlights: Bluebirds, Indigo Bunting singing from the treetops, and Orchard Orioles.

Eric Salzman, who led 3 walks for us this spring, writes a blog about his birding experiences on Long Island. If you would like to receive it, email him at eric.salzman9@gmail.com.



SUZI STEWART

“Basking” in Birds, Fish...& Sunshine

Bob Adamo

What's it like to go on an overnight pelagic trip? Bob Adamo, ELIAS board member and experienced birder, took up the challenge and went on an overnight pelagic trip out of Brooklyn. He shares his experience. Meanwhile, on land we were in the midst of some very unpleasant, but much need rain. Here's Bob's report. Sally

On May 31 forty intrepid birders departed from Sheepshead Bay for an overnight trip on board the Brooklyn VI. This trip came to fruition, under the banner of See Life Paulagics, led by Paul Guris, Doug Gochfeld and Sean Sime.

We left the dock at ~ 8:30 pm, after a real downpour, which had started about 6:30 and continued to be with us as we headed toward the Hudson Canyon, a distance of ~ 100 nautical miles (110 land miles). The storm made the ride out (at least up to midnight) rough. Thankfully, the vessel proved to be quite seaworthy!

At about 5 am while I was sleeping, I heard someone yell “Leach’s Storm Petrel”. Since this was one of my target birds, I jumped up and being fully clothed, raced outside, only to find the bird had moved on. My reaction to this was one of despair...had I just missed the only Leach’s Storm Petrel we would come in contact? All gloom & doom, to the 10th power! Well, was I wrong with this species, and although I don’t have the exact figure for the day, we must have seen at least 8...a very good number for this Storm Petrel! In contrast to the only other Storm Petrel we saw on the trip, the Wilson’s (common on pelagic trips, and sometimes viewed from shore) which, was probably in the hundreds.

From that point on, most on board continued to bird, and reluctantly stopped, 2, or 3 hours later for a quick breakfast. Some of us did both simultaneously. I had a peanut butter and jelly hero and a tasty, albeit, ground-up oatmeal raisin mix, that had started out as cookies, but was in a bag that I had been using as my pillow during the night.

An almost “perfect storm” ensued. The rain stopped, the sun was out and strong, the chum slick (“heavy on the oil”) was constant, the birds responded and the birders reaped the benefits... and the joy of beating the elements, while following a strategy designed to get to warm water! In fact, adhering to this principle, we even traveled out another 20 nautical miles to keep the action going!

The species seen, some spectacularly, were: Cory’s Shearwater, Greater Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, Audubon’s Shearwater, Sooty Shearwater, Wilson’s Storm-Petrel, Leach’s Storm-Petrel*, Long-tailed Jaeger*, Pomarine Jaeger, South Polar Skua, Arctic Tern, and finally, a single, determined, but seemingly obtuse, Barn Swallow. I say this due to the swallow not landing on the boat, after he so valiantly over-took the boat, while battling a fierce head wind ~ 100 ft. to the rear of the boat. How it got to this spot is unknowable, but he was in trouble and the most viable way out was to become a “stowaway”!

I believe high numbers were recorded for Manx and Audubon’s Shearwaters, Leach’s Storm-Petrel, and South Polar Skua, with the latter species, in my mind, putting on the most exciting show of the avian species assembled! Seen singularly, in pairs, and in groups of 3’s and 4’s separately, flying near, and then in, the chum slick, as well as circling the boat, at close distances. This proximity made for glorious views of their plumage’s, huge bodies and powerful bills.

Other exciting wildlife seen included Risso’s Dolphins, Giant Sun Fish, Portuguese Man of War (Jelly Fish), and, for me, the most notable experience of the trip (including the 2 life birds I saw, was the breaching Basking Shark, which was just sensational! While it can grow to 20-26 ft., it is not the largest fish in the world, as I erroneously told some nearby folks! That distinction falls to the Whale Shark, with the largest specimen measuring 41.5 ft.

The return leg of the trip was fairly birdy, at least until we entered the rainy zone, causing most of the birders to seek shelter in the cabin..

**DID YOU TAKE A
GREAT PHOTO
THIS YEAR?**

**PLANS
A FOOT FOR
CALENDAR 2016!**

**FEATURING
LOCAL BIRDS &
MEMBERS PHOTOS**

**If you have photos to submit
please send them to:**

eliasosprey@optonline.net

Deadline September 1!

Staying in touch!

We would like to stay in touch with you! ELIAS is now using Constant Contact in addition to Facebook to remind our members and friends about meetings and walks. If you have joined recently and included your email, you should be on the list and be receiving notices. If your email has changed recently or if you did not include your email with your membership and would like to be on the list, please send your email address to ELIASosprey@optonline.net and you will be added to the list. Just to cover all the bases, it is easy to unsubscribe if you wish.

A Young Birders Big Day, Montauk, NY

By Hannah Miranda

This year, I decided to try my luck at my first Big Day. A big day is when a person attempts to identify as many bird species as possible within a twenty-four hour time frame. I picked the Montauk/Napeague area because that is where I live and am most familiar with. I started on May 15 which is near the peak of bird migration season.

I belong to the New York State Young Birders Club, which helps to bring together young birders from across the state to learn about birds. We often gather for joint field trips in which we visit popular birding destinations or educational functions. In fact, recently I was able to attend an excellent lecture by Tom Stephenson, author of *The Warbler Guide*, with the group. To support the club and its scholarship program, many of its members take part in the World Series of Birding in Cape May, New Jersey. I decided to help the club by doing a big day in my local area.

Montauk is a unique place with diverse habitats and environments. The low sandy areas of the Napeague isthmus provide ideal habitat for shorebirds, gulls, and terns, many of which nest there. Traveling east, deciduous forests such as

Hither Woods supply ample resources for migrating warblers and forest birds. The combination of fresh water ponds and ocean allow a wide variety of ducks and waterfowl to live here during the wintering months. Pelagic birds and alcid that are usually only seen off shore can be viewed from a fairly close proximity at Montauk Point. Fortunately, birding in these unique environments is easy because the Montauk and Napeague areas are full of parks and reserves where birds and other wildlife can safely inhabit. These places also serve as birding hotspots, making Montauk a popular and exceptional area for birding.

Starting at five p.m. on May 15, 2015 and ending at that same time the following day, I attempted to identify as many bird species as possible, whether by sight or sound. Although it was a bit rainy in the morning, I was able to bird for most of the twenty-four hours in fair weather. Birding in locations such as Montauk Point State Park, Camp Hero, Theodore Roosevelt County Park, Hither Woods, and Lazy Point, I was able to tally 69 species in total. The highlights of the day included an immature Blue Grosbeak on the north side of Montauk Point, a Common Nighthawk at Lazy Point, and a beautiful Scarlet Tanager in Hither Woods. In the early morning I listened to the Whip-Poor-Wills, and tried for Woodcock at night to no avail. I spotted six warbler species, with American Redstart being the most abundant. Yellow Warbler was second. I did however miss a few of the usual species such as Belted Kingfisher and the



Hannah at Hither Woods.

bulk of the local woodpeckers. In fact, the only woodpecker spotted, a Downy, was sighted in the last few minutes of the day!

Overall, it was a wonderful experience and I learned so much about birds and the local environment. Next year I hope to improve my count by attracting more birds in my own backyard and spotting some that I missed this year. I have raised \$189 which will support a worthy cause. Thank you to my family and all who have supported me. I look forward to another big day next year!

Hannah Miranda is a freshman at East Hampton High School and has been birding since she was five years old.

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renewable in January.
Please renew your membership
to keep our club strong.**

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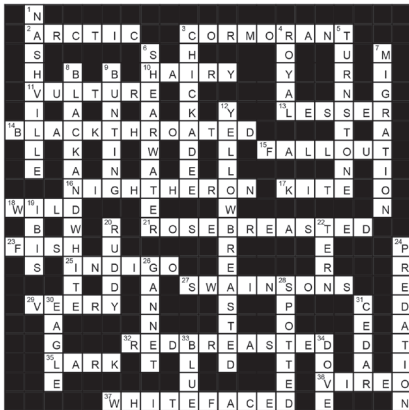
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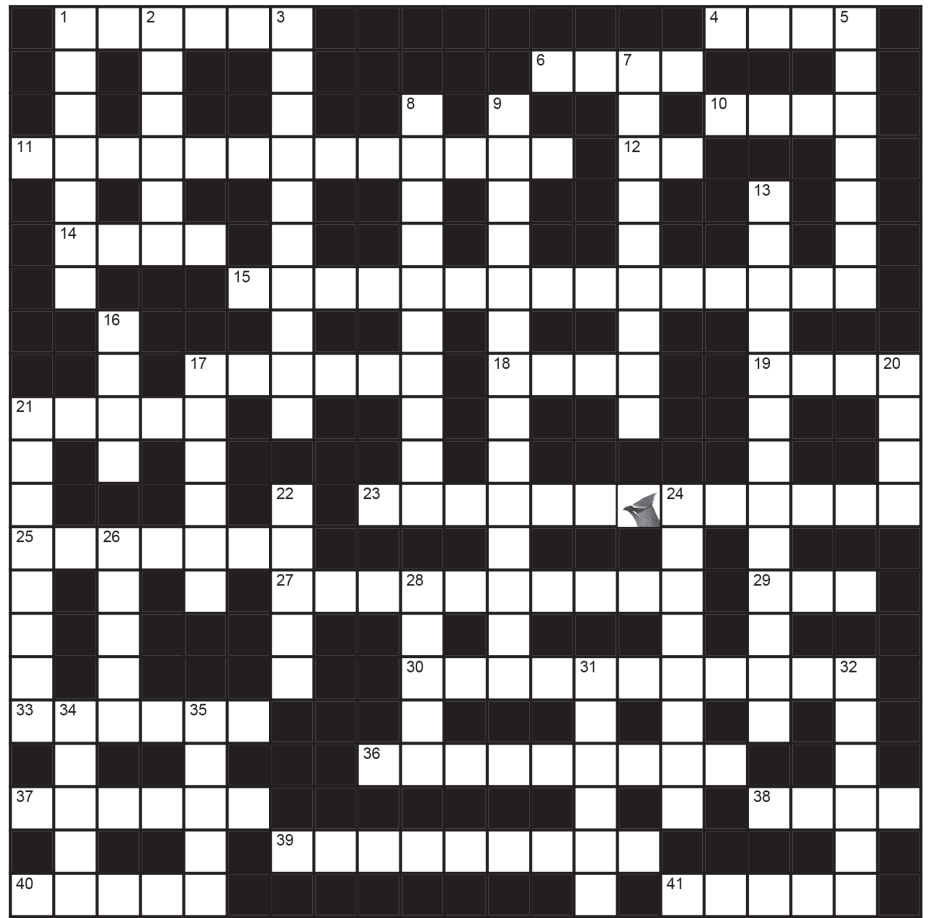
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Answers to last issue's puzzle Spring Birds by Tom Moran



Summer Sightings Tom Moran



Across

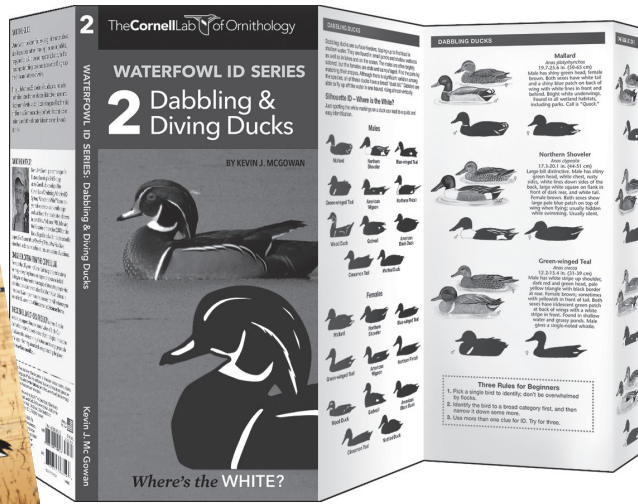
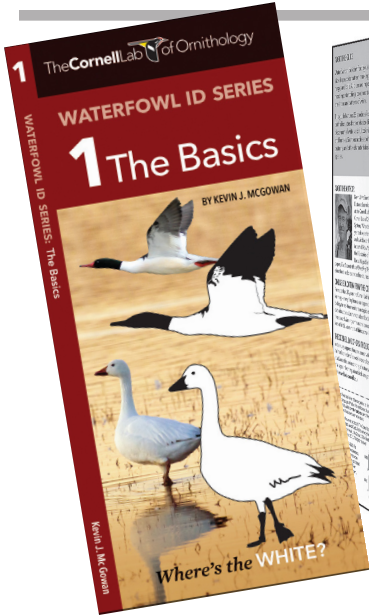
- 1 _____-winged Warbler, maybe at Sterling Forest
- 4 _____ Warbler, a tail bobber
- 6 _____ Swan, currently very concerned about DEC plans!
- 10 Tundra _____, seen 11/13 at Hook Pond
- 11 _____ Sparrow, a winter visitor (2 words)
- 12 Dune ____, local birding location (abbr)
- 14 House, Winter, Sedge, Carolina...
- 15 Cupsogue _____, the sandbars are great for shorebirds (3 words)
- 17 American _____
- 18 Roseate _____
- 19 Red _____ eats horseshoe crab eggs
- 21 Carmen's _____, you might see an Eagle there
- 23 _____ Bog, Adirondak birding location, continued at 24 across
- 24 See 23 across
- 25 _____ Sparrow, dark with a yellow spot over eye
- 27 _____ River State Park
- 29 Common Moor _____, aka Common Gallinule
- 30 _____ Merganser (2 words)
- 33 Bicknell's _____, possible seen on 36 Across
- 36 _____ Mountain, good place to see 33 across
- 37 _____ River, Eagles can be seen on ice flows here in the winter
- 38 Green-winged _____
- 39 Short- or Long-billed _____

40 You can get one for your thoughts

41 Snowy _____ frequently seen along the shore

Down

- 1 Northern _____, seen at Jones Beach this winter
- 2 _____ Egret, rare sighting this May at Gardiners County Park
- 3 Black- or Yellow-crowned _____
- 5 _____ Point, The End
- 7 Ruddy _____
- 8 Northern _____, small bird with a repetitive too call
- 9 _____ Warbler, good views were had at Valley Stream State Park this spring
- 13 _____ Warbler, not to be confused with a Blackpoll
- 16 Mourning _____
- 17 _____ Tern, this one has short legs, short, red bill
- 20 _____ Sparrow or Swallow...
- 21 American _____
- 22 _____ Bay, good birding location at the end of Flying Point Rd
- 24 White-breasted _____, likes suet
- 26 _____ Flycatcher, or was it a Willow?
- 28 _____ Fork, find Orient Point at the end
- 31 _____ Grouse
- 32 Lake _____, picturesque lake upstate
- 34 _____ Wren or Sparrow
- 35 _____ Owl, a winter highlight



A New Way to Look at Waterfowl

By Sally Newbert

Most Long Island birders have been to Montauk Point and environs. Looking out from the restaurant overlook or from the cliffs of Camp Hero, their first reaction was probably a sense of delight at the sheer magnitude of the flocks of birds that were flying along the ocean. Then, the frustrating realization came, they were just too far off to figure out what they were. All those birds, and no way to know what they are. Granted, a good powerful scope would be some help. But wait, here is a new way of looking at all these flying mysteries. Ask yourself: **Where's the white?**

In these new guides put out by Waterford Press and written by Kevin J. McGowan of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology you will find a new way of looking at all these birds. It is kind of the reverse of the way we usually look at waterfowl. By looking at the pattern of the white, you have a good chance of making an ID. All the ducks and other waterfowl have a different pattern of white so if you can match the white pattern using the guides the ID may not be easy but may be possible.

The guides show species in full color and also as black and white silhouettes. The location of patches of white on the bird's

body and its overall shape offer clues to its identity. Other identifying factors, size, shape, color pattern, markings, behavior, habitat, range and some information on their calls are also included.

It is an interesting new approach and one I look forward to using come this winter. It should make a winter trip to Montauk and all the other spots frequented by the wintering ducks and waterfowl a good deal more interesting.

The guides are laminated making them great for the field. They are compact, the 6 panels fold down to 3.75" x 8.25". There are three guides in this Waterfowl ID Series. The first one is The Basics, describing the theory, the second gives details on Dabbling & Diving Ducks and the third gives you the details on Sea Ducks & others. They are priced at \$7.95 each.

The writer is Kevin J. McGowan is project manager for Distance Learning in Bird Biology at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, The Lab helped in the creation of these guides, published by Waterford Press. On the Waterford press website you can find a retail store near you: www.waterfordpress.com or order directly at 1-800-434-2555. They publish a variety of other guides so you might like to check out the website.

Duck trivia - Male ducks are usually silent, the females are the ones that are doing all the calling

Introducing Merlin Bird Photo ID

By Sally Newbert

Cornell Lab of Ornithology has been working on a new feature for the Merlin app. Right now, the beta version is available only on a computer with recent versions of Chrome or Safari. When fully available it will work in conjunction with the Merlin app for tablets and mobile devices.

Is there a birder out there who has not come up with a mystery bird (or two)? Now, if you can get a picture of it you can upload the photo and get an ID. Go to merlin.allaboutbirds.org. Once you find the photo ID section, upload your photo, indicate where and when you saw the bird, draw a box around the bird when prompted, mark the bill, the eye and the tail. After a few seconds of analyzing the photo, up pops the answer. I uploaded a Horned Grebe and a Horned Lark, both photos I had taken last winter. And bingo, they were IDed immediately. I also tried it on a Redstart, a photo from the spring. That one was right on too. It currently recognizes 400 common North American bird species. It is powered by machine learning techniques, it gets "smarter" the more people use it so you can help the Lab improve the accuracy and one day they will add it to the Merlin app!

The original Merlin app is probably worth having on your phone now. "It knows which birds are most likely to be within a 30-mile radius of where you saw the bird—at the time when you saw it," said Jessie Barry at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The popular iPhone version of the app, has been downloaded more than 230,000 times and has helped people identify more than 700,000 birds. The app includes more than 1,000 bird sounds, 2,000 images, ID tips, and range maps for North America's 400 most commonly encountered bird species. It is also a free app.



Musing on Changing Avian Populations

By Larry Penny

In the first week of June I went with Karen Blumer and Victoria Bustamante to the "Native Plants in Landscaping" conference at Millersville University in southwestern Pennsylvania. All three of us are big on identifying birds and road kills through the windshield, and there isn't a tree native to the Northeast that Vicki can't identify to species while steering and traveling at 60 mph and more.

On the New Jersey turnpike and highways leading off it in the 635 plus mile journey to and from Millersville, we saw the usual Red-tailed Hawks, Crows, Rock Doves, lots and lots of Starlings, Robins, Grackles and a few accipiters and falcons.

Going we saw very few road kills, a couple each of deer, squirrels, woodchucks and opossums and only a few vultures. Skunks, which you don't have to see to know you're passing a dead one, were totally absent.

Coming back on Saturday the 6th was a totally different story. We saw no less than 10 fawns strewn along the same highways leading to the Verrazano Bridge from Millersville, and a slew of vultures, at least 30 circling overhead. A few of them were Black Vultures, but most were of the common Turkey Vulture variety. Most of these in groups, in pairs or groups totaling as many as six, were circling overhead in the vicinity of these deer kills.

I couldn't help thinking of these days on Long Island when a buzzard overhead on the LIE or Sunrise Highway is as common as a Red-tail roosting in a roadside tree. In the 1940s and 1950s growing up on the North Fork of Long Island a vulture was a great rarity to behold, one could go years without seeing a single one.

On my way back and forth to Cornell University in the middle 50's I would see a few circling over NY State Route 17. It was always a thrill seeing one which can't be mistaken for a large hawk or eagle because of the way it glides and circles on its extended upturned wings. At Cornell I took ornithology and discovered that while most birds don't smell, vultures have a highly refined sense of smell. It has even

been postulated that the smell of the CSA soldiers and those from the North lying dead on the battlefields during the Civil War—especially at Gettysburg—extended the vulture's range northward.

In the new millennium the Turkey Vulture is seen on Long Island almost year round. Two summers ago I saw one by the side of Cox's Neck Road in Mattituck feeding on a dead raccoon. As I drove past, it continued to feed. Eight years ago or so, a pair bred and raised young in an abandoned concrete outbuilding left from the World War II years off Navy Road in Montauk. I was able to take a picture of the two advanced young without getting spit on.

It's the delicate noses and the road kill deer, but also the sharp eyes that, I've been told, are responsible for the recent

influx of vultures and other carrion feeders such as the Raven. Then again, a host of southern birds—Carolina wren, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Fish Crow, etc.—have established themselves here, why not vultures and ravens?

I've been keeping track of road kills while driving on Long Island since 1981, there are big years and poor ones regarding their numbers. With each new year the number of vultures seen overhead and occasionally on the ground feeding increases. In the not-to-distant future they will be as common as Ospreys, perhaps, even, Red-tailed Hawks. As long as there are cars, trucks, buses and the Long Island Railroad moving back and forth, there will be more and more vultures around to clean up after them.

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Want More Birds?

Continued from page 1

Perhaps that's a good thing. But if there are no bugs, there are no birds.

Maybe it's the approach of gardening season that has made me sensitive to the topic. A few weeks ago, Dick Andren of Dixmont sent me a column from the New York Times. Dick is a board member for Hirundo Wildlife Refuge in Old Town. The column was the work of Douglas Tallamy, an entomologist and wildlife ecology professor at the University of Delaware.

Tallamy cited eye-popping research that 96 percent of terrestrial birds in North America feed on insects at some point. Even birds that typically dine on seeds and berries will seek out insects for their young because fledglings need the extra protein to develop. Chickadees are seed-eating champions, but it is estimated that they need 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to feed one clutch of nestlings.

That's the kind of abundance that is not found in exotic gardens. In one backyard, observers counted 410 caterpillars of 19 different species in a native oak tree. A native black cherry harbored 239 caterpillars from 14 different species. A nearby non-native Bradford pear had only one species on it — an inchworm.

A healthy, native tree will contain lots of insects. It's a natural battle between long-time adversaries that has been going on for eons. Native plants have their own

defenses, and they have allies. Yards with insects are yards with birds. They often devour the pests as fast they reproduce. Native insects do not defoliate native plants. Everything is in balance. Nature only gets out of balance when non-native species are introduced. These can be exotic, inedible plants or voracious, not-too-picky Japanese beetles.

A yard with flowers is beautiful.

A yard with flowers, birds, and butterflies is more beautiful.

This probably wouldn't be a major problem except for another change that has happened since I started spitting out baby food. In my time on Earth, the U.S. population has doubled. Suburbia has gobbled up woods and fields, and we often view our yards the way most of our immigrant forebears did. It is a European trait, particularly English, to view nature as something that needs taming. We crave the orderliness of manicured lawns.

Furthermore, trimmed grass and neat flower beds were considered signs of wealth and social status. Old cultural habits die hard. If you lined up all of the lawns in America, they would cover eight New Jerseys. Small wonder that the population of bird species is declining about 1 percent per year.

I used to think that humans came to dominate the Earth because of superior intellect. Now I think it is more likely due to having opposable thumbs. We always seem to be in a race to correct our mistakes before they overwhelm the planet. Such is the case with a new trend in gardening called "yardening."

Gardening is the top outdoor leisure activity in the United States, according to many surveys. A subset of gardeners has taken up the challenge of returning yards to a more natural condition, emphasizing native plantings and habitat diversity. They are being rewarded with the return of birds and wildlife. It turns out that it is not that hard to share the planet with other species.

Some communities are taking the trend to a whole new level. Entire neighborhoods have assumed the challenge of making their yards into a contiguous bird-friendly habitat. When habitat is fragmented into small pieces, nothing good happens. But when full neighborhoods go native, the native birds and butterflies return.

A yard with flowers is beautiful. A yard with flowers, birds, and butterflies is more beautiful. Now, please pass the spinach.

Bob Duchesne serves as vice president of Maine Audubon's Penobscot Valley Chapter. Bob developed the Maine Birding Trail, with information at mainebirdingtrail.com. Bob can be reached at duchesne@midmaine.com.

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