



The **OSPREY**

May/June 2014 — Vol. XXXIX No. 3

***Let's go Birding!* ELIAS Field Trips for May & June**

John McNeil

Sunday, May 4th at 8:00 am

Historic Maple Swamp

Trip leader: Eric Salzman

Eric Salzman will guide you into one of nature's wonderlands. Maple Swamp has been one of the best warbler spots on Eastern Long Island (along with Hunters Garden). It is like a catch basin for spring migrants and has been a breeding ground for many warblers and vireos. We will surely see many local breeders like the Scarlet Tanager, Ovenbirds, Blue-winged Warbler, Wood Thrush and perhaps a Golden-Winged Warbler. Please wear appropriate clothing because of ticks. Eric will meet you at the entrance to Maple Swamp on Pleasure Drive just southeast of the entrance to the old Graphics of Peconic. There is a dirt road leading to a pasture and we will park and wait there a few minutes before 8:00 am. You can contact Eric at his e-mail address: es@ericsalzman.com. if you would like additional information.

Friday, May 9th at 8:00 am

Hunters Garden

Trip Leader: Bob Adamo

Come one, Come All, for the Grand Tour of "Hunters Garden" at the peak of bird migration! Wear appropriate clothing-long sleeved shirts, long pants and wear your best walking/hiking shoes. If you use tick spray, be sure to bring it along with you and perhaps a snack and water bottle as well. We will spend a few hours looking for all sorts of species: thrushes, vireos, tanagers warblers and other special ties

of the season. Lets all meet at the clearing within Hunters Garden, the gate should be open. For additional information you can contact Bob Adamo at: rada-mo4691@gmail.com or at 631.369.1958.

The entrance to Hunters Garden is on the southbound side of Route 51. If you are coming from Sunrise or Montauk, look for the Northampton sign and a U-turn lane. Drive across the southbound lanes and into the woods marked by a yellow gate. Drive in on the dirt road until you reach the circular clearing.

Saturday, May 10 at 9:00 am

William Floyd Estate, Mastic

Trip leader: MaryLaura Lamont

In honor of International Migratory Bird Day the William Floyd Estate and Eastern Long Island Audubon Society will conduct a bird walk through the Estate's historic grounds of fields, woods, creeks and marshes. Bring binoculars for this 2-mile

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Changes to our newsletter mailing

With the next issue of *The Osprey* we will be mailing only to our current members so, *please, please, please* check the mailing panel and be sure your membership is current. Otherwise this will be the last issue you receive. We will also be working toward making our memberships go from January to January to get everyone on the same schedule. We love having you as a member and want you to continue to receive *The Osprey*.



Woodhull Dam in Riverhead provides an Osprey with a alewife. It is a veritable Osprey take-out when the alewives come in and fun to watch them diving and flying away with lunch or dinner.

The President's Corner

Too many Ospreys?

Byron Young

The Ospreys have returned to the Peconic River alewife buffet again in numbers this year. However, I think there may be a crowding problem. How many Ospreys are too many? On a recent visit to the pool below Woodhull Dam three Osprey were perched in the tree over the pool scoping out brunch, that is if Osprey do brunch. A fourth Osprey was circling waiting for a branch to open up over the pool.

I have been monitoring the returning alewife population since the installation of fish passage during the winter of 2010 at Grangebel Park in Riverhead. Ospreys have always been seen feeding along the Peconic River in the early spring. The installation of the fish passage allowed the alewife to move further up into the Peconic River where they school in large numbers below the Woodhull Dam. This pool can have as many as 10,000 alewives present providing a ready source of food for Osprey, Great Egrets, Black-crowned Night Herons, and Great-blue Herons, along with raccoons.

There is limited access to the site but using your car as a blind you can obtain some great views of feeding Osprey. Once you get over the thrill of seeing an Osprey sitting on a branch less than 50 feet away you begin to notice the subtle movements that the bird takes as it stalks its next meal.

I have not figured out how they decide who goes first when there is more than one Osprey perched in the tree, maybe the branches are numbered or there is a pecking order within the local Osprey population. The Ospreys do communicate with each other but I do not have a clue what they are saying and there does seem to be a pecking order with the larger birds dominating the smaller birds.

It is very interesting to watch a single bird eyeing the pool, while keeping a weary eye on the sky for competition and the interloper sitting on top of the dam. Once it quarry is spotted the Osprey leans forward on, and begins to flex its legs adjusting its grip on the branch. Once the fish is in position the bird launches itself off the branch some 40 feet in the air and in less than one second hits the water with a huge splash. What happens next is quite amazing, the bird pops back to the surface and lifts itself by wing out of the water usually, holding its meal and flies of up over the dam or occasionally down stream through the trees.

It is very rewarding to see the positive results of an environmental restoration effort directed toward renewing access for spawning alewife resulting in the unintended consequences of aiding our local Osprey population upon its return in the spring. During the past two years the

Osprey have appeared very shortly after the first alewife are spotted in the Peconic River. What drives the timing of the alewife and the Osprey, it certainly is not temperature based upon 2014. Is it photoperiod, or do the Ospreys simply move up the coast with the spawning alewives as their spawning advances from south to north.

No matter how these birds work out their feeding patterns and interactions with neighbors it is always a great sight to see an Osprey dive into the water and come out with a meal. It is also especially rewarding when man's activities have assisted in some way to improve the availability of food for these magnificent birds.

How many Ospreys are too many, that is a rhetorical question and one that we need not ponder at this time. It is great that our local environment can support a large population of these birds and that the alewife remains a viable food source for early returning Osprey. With alewife restoration efforts ongoing around Long Island we should be afforded many more encounters with Osprey feeding along local streams looking for that early spring meal.

Good Birding! I hope you will join some of our walks as we try to find the spring wood warblers as they arrive in our area.

Let's go Birding

continued from page 1

round trip walk to catch a glimpse of the early spring migrating birds. Use the Main Entrance Gate on Park Dr., Mastic. Call 631-399-2030 for further information. Program ends by about noon.

Sunday, May 11 at 8:00 am

Terrell River County Park

Trip leaders:

Jay Kuhlman and Beth Gustin

The varied habitats of Terrell River County Park make for some great birding. Join Jay Kuhlman and Beth Gustin as we search for spring migrants and nesting species in the forest, marsh, and along the beach. Indigo Bunting, Black and White Warbler, Pine Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Common Yellowthroat, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Glossy Ibis, and Great-crested Flycatcher are just a few of the species we hope to see. The walk is about 3 miles and should take us 2-3 hours. Meet at 8:00 am at the trail head, located in Center Moriches on the south side of Montauk Highway, across from Kaler's Pond Audubon Center and the Flight 800 Memorial Park. Call Beth at (631) 848-9883 for details or more information.

Friday, May 16 at 7:30 am

Trip Leader: John McNeil

Sunday, May 25 at 8:00 am

Trip Leader: Byron Young

Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge

The Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge on the south shore of Long Island is one of the last undeveloped estuary systems remaining on Long Island. Approximately half of the refuge consists of aquatic habitats including bay with marine sea grass beds, intertidal salt marsh, high salt marsh, freshwater marsh, shrub swamp, and red maple swamp. The Refuge's salt marshes, combined with the adjacent New York State-owned salt marsh, form the largest continuous salt marsh on Long Island.

The refuge's wildlife populations are quite diverse. About 300 species of birds have been documented at Wertheim. The refuge winters up to 5,000 waterfowl, the majority being black ducks. The coastal location also makes this refuge an excellent migration corridor for shorebirds, raptors and songbirds.

Long Island Expwy. (I-495), Exit 68S, or Sunrise Hwy. (Rte.27), Exit 58S, to the William Floyd Pkwy. (CR46S). From the junction of William Floyd parkway and Montauk Highway (Rte. 27A/CR80) proceed west on Montauk (CR 80W) for approximately one mile, turn south onto Smith Road. Go 1/4 mile to the refuge entrance on the right. We will meet in the parking lot for about a 3 hour bird walk through the varied habitat trying to spot or hear some of the Spring Migrants as they pass our area.

Thursday, May 15 at 8:00 am

Quogue Wildlife Refuge

Trip leader: Eileen Schwinn

Join your field trip leader for a early May morning walk around the Quogue Wildlife Refuge to catch some of the spring migrants as they flutter about. Walking shoes, water bottle and binoculars will be needed. Meet your field trip leader at 8:00 am at the parking lot of the Refuge for the refreshing spring walk.

Saturday, May 17 at 9:00 am

Bird walk to Hallock State Park

Trip leader: MaryLaura Lamont

Traverse the varied habitats of the New Hallock State Park during the peak migration time for neotropical species such as thrushes, vireos, warblers and more. Come join MaryLaura for a morning outing to catch the wave. There is a \$6 charge for this walk to benefit the Hallockville Farm Museum Educational Programs. Please call 631-298-5292 for reservations, parking is at the Hallockville Farm Museum.

Sunday June 8 at 8 am

Birds of the Meadow and Woods

Leader: Eric Salzman

This walk is jointly sponsored with the South Fork Natural History Museum (SoFo). Expert birder, composer, author, and SoFo board member, Eric Salzman will explore the avian life of the meadow behind the SoFo Museum and the adjacent Greenbelt woodlands and wetlands. This walk will provide an opportunity to see and hear some locally breeding birds. The two-hour walk will be followed by short discussion and light refreshments. Meet at the Museum, 377 Bridgehampton/ Sag Harbor Turnpike, Bridgehampton, NY. Please call the museum for reservations. at 631-537-9735. There is no charge for this event.

Saturday, June 14th at 7:00 am

Birding at Hempstead Lake State Park

Trip Leader: John McNeil

Please join me for a birding experience at Hempstead Lake State Park. This park is an IBA (important bird area) that supports large numbers of fly-catchers, warblers, tanagers and a mix of other birds from mid April to late May and into early June. We will meet at the park-and-ride lot off of Route 112 in Patchogue, just east of the new ShopRite at 7:00 am (this was Home Depot). Contact John McNeil at 631-219-8947 or birdwchr@gmail.com for additional details. If you would like to drive yourself the directions are: Southern State Parkway west to Exit 18 (Eagle Ave.) and proceed south to the 2nd parking lot.

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Bluebird Populations

Larry Penny

It was a sunny, but cool day in early April 1950 when I found my first bluebird nest in Mattituck. As I was walking through the treed pasture of the North Fork's last working dairy farm owned by Ralph Tuthill, Sr., a male Bluebird flew out of a head-high hole in an oak tree. It was a surprise to me because at 15 years of age I had seen only a handful of Bluebirds in my short lifetime and didn't know that Bluebirds were the only North American thrushes that nested in tree cavities. To this day I don't know whether this early nest was successful or not.

The South Fork Natural History Museum and Nature Center (SoFo) while just getting underway in the late 1980s made bringing the Eastern Bluebird back in the Hamptons a major objective. A small group of us led by Karilyn Jones began putting up Bluebird boxes built locally by the late Kim Hicks in his Montauk home shop. The ones put up in Hither Woods and the East Hampton Airport were immediately successful.

For several years Karilyn and a cadre of volunteers tended them, cleaning them out after each season, trying to keep House Wrens and predators out. At a time when Karilyn's energies were waning, young Joe Giunta came along and took over the leadership reins greatly expand-

ing the number of Bluebird trails and incorporating raccoon guards on each nest box post.

The number of Bluebird pairs nesting and fledging young grew from five or six pairs and a handful of fledges at the very beginning of SoFo's efforts to more than fifty pairs and a record 143 fledges by the end of the nesting season in 2012. Bluebirds like open glades with nearby trees in which to nest, so the bluebird trails were established at the edge of grassy fields including the golf courses at Barcelona east of Sag Harbor and the Montauk Downs.

In the last nine years, at least 624 bluebirds have fledged from these boxes according to Mr. Giunta's seasonal reports. One might say that the efforts to bring back bluebirds on the South Fork have even proved more successful than the ones started at about the same time here to bring back Ospreys.

Not only Eastern Bluebirds fledged from these boxes, but four additional species used the boxes to bring up their young. From the get-go as many Tree Swallows as Bluebirds used them to rear young. In 2013 there were 249 tree swallow fledges, a welcome finding with respect to our spring-summer mosquito population. If they could, House Wrens would occupy every single bluebird box, as is their penchant to build fake nests in cavities to

keep down the competition. In 2013 175 House Wrens fledged. Chickadees also use the boxes on occasion but they went "hitless" in 2013.

A great surprise, however, in 2013 was the fledging of two Great-crested Flycatchers from a box at the East Hampton Airport. When Joe opened the box he found a strip of coiled plastic, a snakeskin substitute? The Great-crested Flycatcher is famous for draping shed snake skins from their nests in what appears to be an attempt to keep away potential predators.

Why the turndown in Bluebird fledges last year after the record number in the previous one? It's hard to say. In 2008 after a steady year-to-year buildup, 78 bluebirds fledged, but then in 2009 the number plunged to only 41, a reduction of almost 50%. In 2013 the reduction from the record high of 143 the year before was more than 50%, the number of fledges dropped to 67. We know that the helicopter landings and takeoffs at the East Hampton Airport have steadily increased in this millennium. Could it be that the Eastern Bluebird doesn't like helicopters any more than we do? Ospreys have also shown helicopters to be repugnant.

Fewer helicopters, more Bluebirds and Ospreys. I'll bet on that.



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Come to an ELIAS Meeting!

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

Monday, May 5, 2014 at 7:15

A HISTORY Natural History of the Brookhaven National Laboratory Site

Tim Green

The 5,265 acre DOE Laboratory sits on top of Camp Upton and has been in Federal ownership since 1917. It is within the Central Pine Barrens of Long Island and hosts a diversity of plants and wildlife. The long Federal ownership and land use prior to Federal ownership will be discussed.

Tim Green is the Natural and Cultural Resource Manager for Brookhaven National Lab. He is a certified wildlife biologist with more than 20 years experience in natural resource management and brings a historical perspective to managing the BNL property.

Monday, June 2, 2014 at 7:00 pm

Shinnecock Bay Restoration Program: Turning the Brown Tide Blue

Christine Santora, Coordinator of the Shinnecock Bay Restoration Program

Christine Santora, Program Coordinator, will be speaking and presenting a wonderful variety of photos showcasing Shinnecock Bay and the work of the Shinnecock Bay Restoration Program. The program uses Research, Restoration, and Community Outreach to improve water quality and shellfish populations in the bay. For years, scientists have understood that water quality is deteriorating, and a team of scientists at Stony Brook University came up with an "in the water" plan to restore the bay based on their research and expertise. Restoring eelgrass, hard clams, and oysters to the bay will improve water quality and lead to a more thriving, healthy marine ecosystem for future generations. The program also has public event and "citizen science" opportunities. More information is available at <http://shinnecockbay.org>.

This program jointly sponsored with the Quogue Wildlife Refuge.

At The North Fork Preserve



Sally Newbert

On April 12 an ELIAS group, led by MaryLaura Lamont, explored the North Fork Preserve. It was a beautiful, breezy day and it seemed everyone was grateful to be out enjoying some sunshine after a this long winter. As we passed the first pond, we started to hear some Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and finally found them. Both Kinglets were playing hide and seek on the tops of some pines trees. As we approached a vernal pond that had many fallen branches it seemed like we found the mother lode of Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers all flitting around.

Near the end of the walk we enjoyed views of a Great-horned Owl in a nest, only those big tufts were visible.

I recorded 36 species for the day on ebird and hope remembered all the species we saw. Good birding.

The Year of the Snowy Owls, Plum Island

**MaryLaura Lamont,
Compiler, Orient Bird Count**

The annual Orient Christmas Bird Count this year was held on a good fair weather day, Saturday December 28th, 2013. It will go down in count and bird history as the year of the great snowy owl invasion. All Counts had record sightings of the great white visitor from the far cold northlands, and the Orient Count was no exception. Plum Island provided 2 of the 5 found on the count day, and that's a record in the Count's 109 year old history! I'd like to share an incredible story about the white owls on Plum this year. Towards the ending of the day we suspected, and were correct in that assumption, that if we were to find a snowy it would be over at Piney Point, the southwest corner where the beach sands meet the rolling maritime grasslands. As soon as we pulled up you could see him, or her. Regardless it was a youngster of the year, an immature. The owl was sitting on a bump of sand, near some washed up debris with beach grass behind it, and it was looking into the fast moving waters of the Plum Gut. It was my first Plum Island snowy owl, after 20 years of counting birds on this island. It's amazing how far owls can turn their heads around to stare at things, this time looking at us. It's hard to describe what it's like looking into the huge yellow eyes of a snowy owl in its element of open lands, dunes and beach grass, but it doesn't get much better than that if you're a birder. It transcends time and space, and we could have been in the true Arctic those few minutes we stared each other down.

There was this constant screeching and annoying sound coming from nearby too. We looked up, and on the Osprey stand was a female peregrine falcon, screaming her heart out at the snowy owl! She was sitting next to a male peregrine falcon too, but she was "calling" all the shots. The size difference between the two was perfect to observe-he is smaller than she is, and quieter, as least for this duration of time. She was really carrying on, and both of them were dive bombing something else in the dunes by the beach. I knew it had to be another big predator they were harassing, and it was- another snowy owl sitting

just down the way. So we had two in our sights at the same time. The peregrines were relentless in their attacks on the one owl. The owl we were quite close to had enough of us and her screaming, so it took off for Gardiner's Island, flying low over the water with its huge wings. I felt bad about annoying the bird to make it leave the security of its daytime home. The female peregrine then attacked it relentlessly over the water and the owl, despite all its acrobatic manoeuvring, couldn't shake the peregrine from the attack. The owl also couldn't make much headway as the strong southwest winds that day were not in its favor, plus it had an irate Peregrine attacking its head and back. Eventually, the big white phantom sailed back over to the southeast shore, where it settled into a new spot. Female peregrine flew away (finally)-I'm sure she had a sore throat by now. The male peregrine

left earlier, after she started dive bombing the one who flew over the water. Perhaps he had had enough of such a raucous time. So for now our two snowy owls were left in peace.

I've birded for 40 years plus on Long Island. To see two rare visitors from the Arctic at the same time is one thing, but then to see two other rare visitors attacking the first rare visitors is an unbelievable sight for anyone to observe. To see it here on Plum Island, at that point, at that minute in time, was quite spectacular. Not many birders have ever heard the agitated cries of a peregrine falcon also. I actually felt as if I was watching Nature on PBS but here it was, right in front of me. So, I must say, after watching and observing and counting birds for years, this one will go down in my mind, and notes, as one of the wildest, and certainly one of the best!



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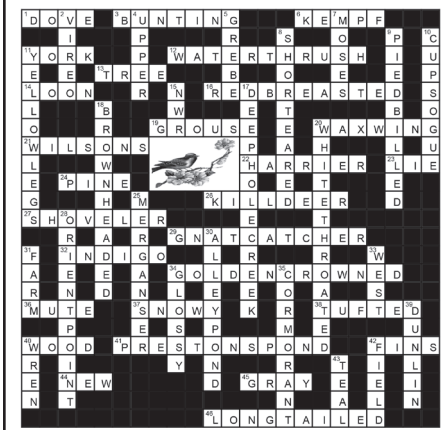
Homemade Weed Killer

If you don't want to use Roundup-like products and are looking for a more natural solution try this:

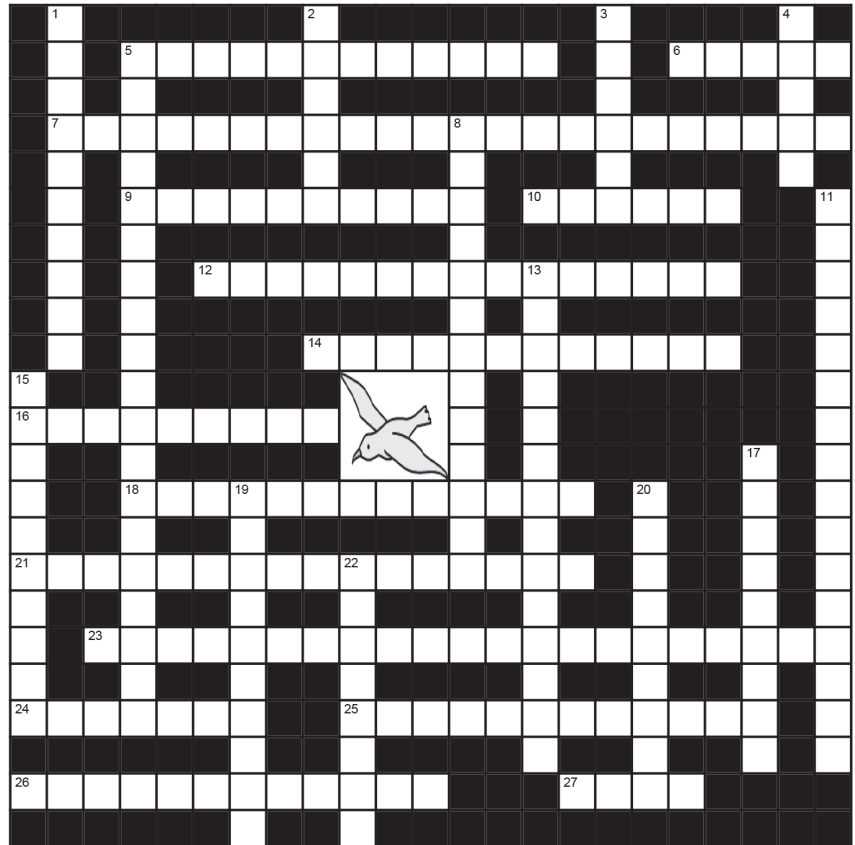
- 2 cups vinegar
- 1 tablespoon liquid soap
- 1 tablespoon or more salt

Mix and spray on weeds in driveways or paths.

Answers to last issue's puzzle Spring Sightings & Places - Tom Moran



Spring Birding Tom Moran



Across

- 5 Go to Cupsogue to see this large black and white bird fly low over the water with its lower mandible in the water (2 words)
- 6 A thrush without a strong eye ring and least spotted
- 7 Migrates in large irregular Vs (2 words)
- 9 Marsh wader with decurved bill (2 words)
- 10 A sandpiper that sometimes has a black belly
- 12 Pelagic bird with black cap (2 words)
- 14 Smaller than a Rock Dove, voice is 3 coos (2 words)
- 16 Large water bird with an orange bill (2 words)
- 18 Good place to bird or lounge by the shore at the end of Dune Rd. (2 words)
- 21 Smaller than a Phoebe but also has a phonetic name (3 words)
- 23 Male has a black cap, climbs down trees head first (3 words)
- 24 _____ River County Park, a good place to see warblers
- 25 Small nuthatch that is more common in southern states, they climb up the bark of one tree and start at the bottom of another (2 words)
- 26 Not House, Winter; Marsh... (2 words)
- 27 _____ Road, Snowy Owls were seen along this ocean front road this winter

Down

- 1 Possibly named for early shipping of the bird through this country, instead of the bird's country of origin (2 words)
- 2 Symbol of Eastern Long Island Audubon
- 3 _____s Road, across from Artist Lake, dead ends at a path into Rocky Point DEC from the south
- 4 Small black necked goose with streaks of white on neck
- 5 Small bird with thin bill, sometimes cocks its tail (3 words)
- 8 Larger than an Eastern Woods Peewee, but also has a phonetic name (2 words)
- 11 A small quail also phonetically named (2 words)
- 13 Scaup like with a vertical white stripe before wing (3 words)
- 15 Large white bird with yellow bill and black feet, not the Snowy (2 words)
- 17 Uncommon, dark water bird, occasionally seen at Cupsogue (2 words)
- 19 Entertaining to watch this bird charge and then retreat from the surf
- 20 Small water bird with yellow bill and splash of white on forehead
- 22 Song is an emphatic teacher, teacher, teacher

Conservation Column

Helping make your backyard a good place for birds

“Nobody can do everything but everyone can do something”

Beth Gustin

Loss of natural habitat continues to be a major cause of decline for many bird species and creates great challenges for birds and other wildlife. We can help reduce some of these challenges by making our own yards more suitable for wildlife habitation.

Regardless of how small or large your yard is, you can help provide some of the following basic habitat needs for birds, mammals, bees, butterflies, snakes, and toads.

Food

- Natural sources of food include flowering plants and trees—especially natives. These plants provide nectar, pollen, seeds and berries.

- Leafy trees like oaks and maples are also a great source of food for migrating songbirds as the trees are filled with caterpillars and other insects in the spring.

- Supplement natural food sources with seed feeders and nectar feeders.

Water

- Birdbaths

- Ponds, fountains, drippers, and misters

Shelter

- Brush piles provide essential cover for birds.

- Stone walls or stacks of bricks and stones are good habitats for toads and snakes.

- Brushy hedges, understory, and evergreen trees

Places to raise young

- Trees, shrubs, and hedgerows provide places to build nests

- Dead standing or fallen trees provide opportunities for cavity nesters

- Nest boxes and bat boxes

Although these efforts may not satisfy all of the needs of species that have suffered from habitat loss, they can help those species that nest in or migrate through our area.

The National Wildlife Federation has a program where you can certify your yard

as a wildlife habitat (<http://www.nwf.org>). Providing even just a few of these habitat needs can be fun and rewarding as you watch the wildlife in your own backyard.

An Important Reminder

Beth Gustin

There are some great birding apps out there that many of use. On the Sibley app it states “Please consider the birds and other birders before playing audio recordings in the field.”

When using apps that provide sound recordings it is important to remember that these sounds may be detrimental to birds, especially during breeding season. It is also illegal to use audio recordings in the field for endangered species and in some National Parks. And very important—not all birders and other people enjoying the outdoors want to hear your app! So use the other features in the field but please save the sound recordings for later.

A Weekend Escape to Cocoa Beach

Beth Gustin

On a quick weekend trip to Cocoa Beach to escape the cold, Beth Gustin found Laughing Gulls, Royal Terns and Sanderlings all waiting to come north.



Hawks find their food feeding at your feeder

Bob Duchesne

This week's column is a command performance. I have been commanded to write about hawks at the bird feeder. This came about because I was coaxed into offering myself up as an auction item to support the Orono Bog Boardwalk. Jim and Mary Bird outbid all others to earn the right to select a column topic, and they have chosen a challenging subject.

Yes, hawks raid the feeder. No, there's not much you can do about it.

Hmmm, only 650 more words to write on a subject that doesn't lend itself to long-windedness.

It's a simple matter. Some birds eat other birds, and if you collect small birds in one place, larger birds are going to visit the buffet.

Accipiters are a woodland family of hawks notorious for staking out bird feeders, especially sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks. The much larger northern goshawks also prowl feeders occasionally. Accipiters are stealthy raptors, built for maneuverability in the forest, unlike speedy falcons that are built for chasing down prey in the open. Falcons include American kestrels, merlins, and peregrines.

Buteos are slow hawks, likely to perch and wait for an unwary meal or dive from a height on an unsuspecting rodent. Broad-winged, red-shouldered and red-tailed hawks are in this family.

In most cases, the culprit snatching a meal from your feeder is an accipiter. With shorter, rounded wings and a longer tail, these hawks can better swerve around obstacles while chasing down prey. Typically, they will cruise along the tree line or along a natural corridor in the woods, such as a logging road or a railroad track. In this way, they sneak up on their meals, suddenly flashing into sight. They rarely dive from a height.

Accipiters are not averse to sitting within view of a feeder and waiting for lunch to show up. Songbirds make up roughly 90 percent of a sharp-shinned hawk's diet, though they relish an occasional rodent or grasshopper. Cooper's

hawks are larger than sharpies and show a preference for larger meals. Hence, a raptor that snatches a mourning dove or blue jay near the feeder is more likely to be a Cooper's, and they can prey on chipmunks and squirrels. The two hawks are similar in appearance and hunting style.

But times are a-changing. For several decades, biologists have noticed a decline in sharp-shinned hawks at migration points such as Cape May, N.J. The decline may not be worrisome. Christmas bird counts are showing that more sharpies simply are lingering in the north, perhaps because of bird feeders, perhaps because of a warming climate. Cooper's hawk populations increased in Maine in the 1980s and '90s as they became more comfortable with a diet of city pigeons and suburban birds. Cooper's hawks are seen in winter much more often than they once were. I recall one that used to roost under the eaves of the Bangor Auditorium.

At best, there are roughly three strategies for dealing with hawks at the feeder. The first and best is acceptance. Hawks are part of nature, often taking birds that are weakened by age or illness, and the removal of sick birds can improve the overall health of the songbird population.

Furthermore, the hawk success rate is painfully low.

The second strategy is removal. Taking down the feeders for a little while will cause the hawk to look for greener pastures. Meanwhile, the feeder birds will be able to find enough natural food while waiting out the hawk. Songbirds appreciate feeders but are not reliant on them.

The third strategy is more complicated. By placing feeders near bushes and thick foliage, songbirds have a better chance of spotting trouble and hiding. Just make sure that the foliage isn't directly under the feeder, lest you be providing cover for lurking cats. Some feeders are surrounded by cages. While these are intended to keep the squirrels out, they can thwart a hawk ambush, too. You can imagine how surprised both the chickadee and the hawk would be when the latter's stealth attack clangs against the cage.

Now there's a story the chickadee can tell his grandchildren.

Bob Duchesne serves as a Maine Audubon trustee and vice president of its Penobscot Valley Chapter. Bob developed the Maine Birding Trail, with information at www.mainebirdingtrail.com. Reach Bob at duchesne@midmaine.com.



A sharp-shinned hawk holds its wings in canopy fashion over a European starling. While this may be an attempt to hold its struggling victim, many species use this behavior to shield their meals from the view of any predator that might come along and try to take it.

Its Spring

VITO GENTILE

FIFTY
POEMS
ABOUT
SPRING



What makes trees green

Birds whistle

Dogs bark

Sheep flock

Girls blush

Boys fight

Cars squeak

And poets dream?

Spring!

Vito Gentile

Vito Gentile, who contributed the article about Charlie the Wood Pigeon in the January/February issue of *The Osprey*, has a new book due out this spring. *Fifty Poems About Spring*.

During his near fifty-year writing career, Vito Gentile has written more than thirty plays, screenplays, and teleplays, as well as non-fiction books, numerous articles for periodicals, textbooks, and seventeen (and counting) volumes of poetry. Vito has worked in both the United States and England. He also taught dramatic writing at New York University for several years.

At present, Vito, a resident of East Quogue, is working on a musical, "The Ghost on St. Martin's Street" with John Lunn, the Emmy award-winning composer for his work on "Downton Abbey."

Middle-aged, female, well-educated and well-off, looking for companion with feathers, beak and wings. Send inquiries to.....

Birding in the United States: A Brief Demographic and Economic Analysis

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services recently reported an Addendum to the 2011 *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*. This report concluded in Dec. 2013. Just recently released, it was exclusively dedicated to the identification of birders, where they live, how avid they are, and the economic impact birding can have.

In 2011, there were 47 million birdwatchers over the age of 16, in the U.S. — approximately 20% of the population. The vast majority of those watching birds do it around their home — 88%. Another 38% of those who were surveyed, travel at least one mile away from home, for the specific purpose of observing birds. Obviously, the overlap in percent is the result of many of those who travel to bird also observe in their own yards. "The average birder is a female, 53 years old, likely to have a better than average income and education. She is most likely to be white and probably lives in a Southern, urban area. But like all generalizations, the description of an "average" birder does not reflect the variety of people who bird — with millions falling outside of this box!", states the report.

NY State reflects the national average of 20% of resident participation, although a much higher percentage of the population in the south east (from Texas to Virginia, and south) call themselves bird-watchers. But looking at and for birds within your home state is only part of the story — many travel specifically to states rich in varied avian offerings. And this is probably where the economic impact of bird-watching and birding is most easily seen. As a destination, Hawaii tops the list (73%), with Alaska and Wyoming (69%) and Maine (63%) following closely. Travel to bird in New York is only done by approximately 7% of destination visitors.

Economically, the impact of birding is felt not only in small-ticket purchases, such as bird houses, feeding stations, and seed, but in big-ticket items as well — optics, cameras, special clothing, shoes, field guides and books. The biggest ticket items include travel expenses — food, lodging, and transportation. The study offers the following: trip-related expenditures — \$14.9 BILLION. equipment expenses — \$26.1 BILLION. That, my friends, is a LOT of birdseed!

The primary purpose of this report, I believe, is to illustrate just how many birders there are, and what buying power and potential they have. We may sort of look like Miss Hathaway (of Beverly Hillbillie fame), but we certainly have the buying power of the Clampett's next-door neighbor, and local bank President, Milburn Drysdale! Birding not only is an active, healthy hobby, but one that promotes a strong and healthy economy, both locally and in our travels.

(for the complete report, please contact Allison Vogt, Bird Conservation and US NABCI Coordinator, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 444 North Capital Street, NW, Suite 725, Washington, DC 20001, (email: AVogt@fishwildlife.org) and request a copy of *Birding In The United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis*).

Feeder Survey

John McNeil

The Survey will be conducted the first full week of the month starting on Sunday and ending the following Sunday. This survey takes place from October to June.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEEDER SURVEY

- Define an area containing feeders that you can see all at once from a window. The area should be one you glance at frequently during your daily routine.
- Don't include birds seen off premises.
- Predators perching in or swooping through the count area (not just flying over) may be counted if you feel that they were attracted by the birds at the feeder.
- Record the largest number of each species that you see in your count area during the eight-day count period.
- Do not add counts from previous days together. Be specific with the species name, e.g. we can't use just the name Sparrow, Blackbird or Gull.
- At the end of the count period, record your final tallies and send in the form immediately.

Personal observations and comments are welcome as are suggestions to improve the surveys and reports.

Please send your report to:

John McNeil
168 Lexington Rd
Shirley NY 11967-3212



Survey Dates:

Sun., May 4 to Sun., May 11

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

Phone _____

- _____ Mourning Dove
- _____ Northern Cardinal
- _____ Blue Jay
- _____ House Finch
- _____ Black-capped Chickadee
- _____ Tufted Titmouse
- _____ Downy Woodpecker
- _____ White-throated Sparrow
- _____ Dark-eyed Junco
- _____ House Sparrow
- _____ White-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Song Sparrow
- _____ Red-bellied Woodpecker
- _____ American Crow
- _____ European Starling
- _____ Common Grackle
- _____ Carolina Wren
- _____ Northern Mockingbird
- _____ American Goldfinch
- _____ Red-winged Blackbird
- _____ Hairy Woodpecker
- _____ Common Flicker
- _____ Rufous-sided Towhee
- _____ American Robin
- _____ Brown-headed Cowbird
- _____ Sharp-shinned Hawk
- _____ Rock Dove (pigeon)
- _____ Gray Catbird
- _____ Yellow-rumped Warbler
- _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Other

Survey Dates:

Sun., June 1 to Sun., June 8

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

Phone _____

- _____ Mourning Dove
- _____ Northern Cardinal
- _____ Blue Jay
- _____ House Finch
- _____ Black-capped Chickadee
- _____ Tufted Titmouse
- _____ Downy Woodpecker
- _____ White-throated Sparrow
- _____ Dark-eyed Junco
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The **OSPREY**

Published by
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society
P.O. Box 206
East Quogue, NY 11942-0206

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 3
Center Morices, NY 11934

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