



THE *OSPREY*

July/August 2018 — Vol. XLIII, No. 4

I Want You!

*A strategy for recruiting
the next generation of birders*

Jeff R. Manker

Taken from an article that appeared in April 2018 issue of Birding, a publication of American Birding Association (ABA). Used with permission.

It is the oft-stated goal of the ABA to bring more birders into the ranks. The purpose is ultimately to add more people to advocate for conservation, which saves more birds, which in turn leaves us with more birds to watch. This is a goal I support as well.

Birders of a certain age may remember the Uncle Sam “I Want You for U.S. Army” posters. That campaign effectively brought shy recruits out of the shadows and into the induction centers. Instead of going directly to the average man or woman on the street with posters to enlist birders, I believe there is another way: **education.**

I believe ornithology should be taught in U.S. high schools because I believe high school ornithology can save the world. I have been teaching the subject in my own high school for the past five years. I created the class myself, and I believe there are thousands of other biology and life science teachers out there, birders like me, who could do the same in their schools.



As far as I know, I teach the only year-long high school ornithology class in California and possibly the U.S. (I would love to hear from you if you teach it, too.) I want to change that. I want to see more schools expand their repertoire to include ornithology.

I think ornithology can save the world because I interact with young people who are on the cusp of figuring out who they are and what they want to do. They can become conservation-minded citizens. I am convinced that high school ornithology is an excellent way to achieve that goal.

The problem is that almost no one teaches it. Most schools focus on chemistry, biology, and physics for their science offerings. But if there is room in the curriculum for electives, then why not ornithology? Ornithology is an elective class at our school.

Students have to first pass biology, but most come in knowing next to nothing about birds except that they can fly, that they have feathers, and that they lay eggs.

The majority are not taking advanced physics or chemistry. They have a casual interest in science and need something to fill out their graduation requirements, so they take the unpronounceable elective with the teacher they heard wasn't too

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Gravity Hurts and other Adventures at Hog Island Audubon Camp

**By Katie
Kleinpeter
with pictures by
Barbara LaGois**



*Barbara and Katie
ready to take
on that Maine
weather.*

I never attended camp as a child. Scared of being away from home and out of my comfort zone, I watched in horror as cousins were dropped off and left for a week away from their own bed, Mom's cooking, all the while having to share a bathroom with complete strangers, not to mention bunk beds in a room with 8 or more sleeping kids! When I heard of Audubon camp for adults, the thought of birding with famous instructors, wearing binoculars for 14 hours a day, not having to cook or even brew my own coffee, not having to clean the bathroom or empty the garbage, and only sharing a room with one other individual of my choice, was music to my ears! Luckily, when I investigated the camp session The Joy of Birding, there were still a few spaces available for Barbara and me.

Similar to camp as a child, I can only imagine, were mosquito bites and bumps and bruises. Luckily, no ticks or poison ivy disturbed our stay. Those mosquitos in Maine are hardy, as they were out looking for a meal in 45 degree weather at 6 a.m. We campers were called hardy, too, by the staff as the first several days and nights hovered

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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Respect, Please!

Byron Young

Ana Paula Tavares the new Executive Director of Audubon New York and Audubon Connecticut posted an article in the latest "News from the Nest" reminding us of simple ways that we can help protect beach-nesting birds during the upcoming nesting and fledging season. In brief, she reminded us to respect protected areas and signs. Birds, eggs, nests and chicks are well-camouflaged and disturbance by people and their pets can cause birds to abandon their eggs and young. Groups of birds that are disturbed take flight, call loudly or act agitated which means that you are too close. If you own a pet, make sure that it does not run free through bird nesting areas or feeding areas. The birds perceive people and pets as predators. Finally, she reminded us to not leave trash on the beach.

I would like to focus on the first word in Ana's message "Respect". While birding during May I witnessed several disrespectful acts by birders and photographers seeking their quarry. It is understandable for folks to get excited when a new rare bird makes an appearance on Long Island. I must admit that I do chase some of these rare visitors. However, I try to demonstrate some constraint when approaching a group watching the bird or animal. I do like to add a new species to my life list and if possible collect a nice photograph or two. After collecting my observations, I am always very happy when I can leave the bird or animal doing exactly what is was doing when I arrived.

On two occasions this month, I witnessed folks demonstrate a complete lack of respect for a bird (the Ruff found at Heckscher State Park) and the people watching or photographing the bird. In one instance a group of people were watching the bird in the median strip of the parks roadway when an excited viewer slammed the car door causing the bird to flush. This resulted in an angry exchange of words and ill feelings. The second example was a driver who had observed the Ruff and decided it was time to exit driving rapidly past the feeding bird causing it to flush. Both of these acts display a complete lack of common sense and respect for others including the bird.

I suspect that I am preaching to the choir here and possibly repeating myself on this subject. However, I do feel that this is an important topic.

Our feathered and four-legged friends are much more aware of the world around them than we are. Generally, they see us before we see them.

Please when observing wildlife try to leave them where you found them, try not to flush them. While this is not always possible, enjoy them while they present themselves. Exercise patience when viewing your quarry.

They are preparing for or taking care of themselves and/or their young. We are the interlopers into their daily lives. Likewise, be courteous to fellow birders, photographers and folks enjoying the outdoors. In summary, please respect the wildlife, respect the environment, and respect your neighbors both avian or human. 

Long Island welcomed a few unusual visitors this spring



BYRON YOUNG

On May 23 a Ruff, an Old World species, was found in the puddles at Field 7 at Heckscher Park. On June 4th a Wilson's Phalarope, a bird usually found in the middle of the country, was spotted in the same puddles. Both were originally found by Pat Lindsey. Earlier in the season, Pat Lindsey also found a Wood Sandpiper at Timber Point, a bird that breeds in northern Eurasia and occasionally on the outer Aleutians.

Another rarity showed up at a pond off Randal's Road in Ridge, a South African Shelduck. Was it an escapee or was it blown here? I guess we will never know. It was found by Byron Young and only stayed for a day.



SALLY NEWBERT



SHAI MITRA



EILEEN SCHWINN

July & August Meetings

Monday, July 9, 2018 at 7:15 pm

Trashed Nests, Poisoned Bellies & Entangled Wings:

A Bird's Eye View of Plastic Pollution

Erica Cirino

Like modern humans, today's birds encounter plastic on a near-daily basis. They see it, they build with it, they eat it and feed it to their young. This is especially true of birds living in the plastic-strewn marine environment. This has resulted in more than 90% of the world's seabirds having consumed plastic at some point in their lives.

Science writer, poet and artist **Erica Cirino** has sailed the Pacific Ocean and traveled the world to document plastic pollution. She has found all this plastic has come at an enormous cost to birds survival on earth. In this presentation you'll learn more about the threats plastic poses to avian wildlife and what you can do to help.



Monday, August 6, 2018 at 7:15 pm

The Plight of Long Island Butterflies

Jeffry Petracca

This program will examine the biology of the monarch butterfly in detail, using it as a case study to explore the factors that threaten all Long Island Butterflies. We will discuss what other butterflies one can find on Long Island and steps the average person can take to help conserve these species for generations to come.



Jeffry Petracca is the Curator of Entomology at the Long Island Aquarium's Butterfly Exhibit and Insect Zoo, which displays over 100 different species of butterflies, insects and spiders from around the world. He earned his B.S. in entomology from Cornell University in 2011, and researched the ability of monarch butterflies to use Earth's magnetic field to navigate during their migration. Jeffry has spent nearly his whole life on Long Island raising butterflies and moths, and studying local insects and spiders!

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge, 3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY
 Directions are on the website: www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org
 Meetings are open to the public, there is no charge

SAVE THE DATE  SAVE THE DATE  SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, October 17, 2018

for the ELIAS ANNUAL DINNER

More information to come in the next issue!

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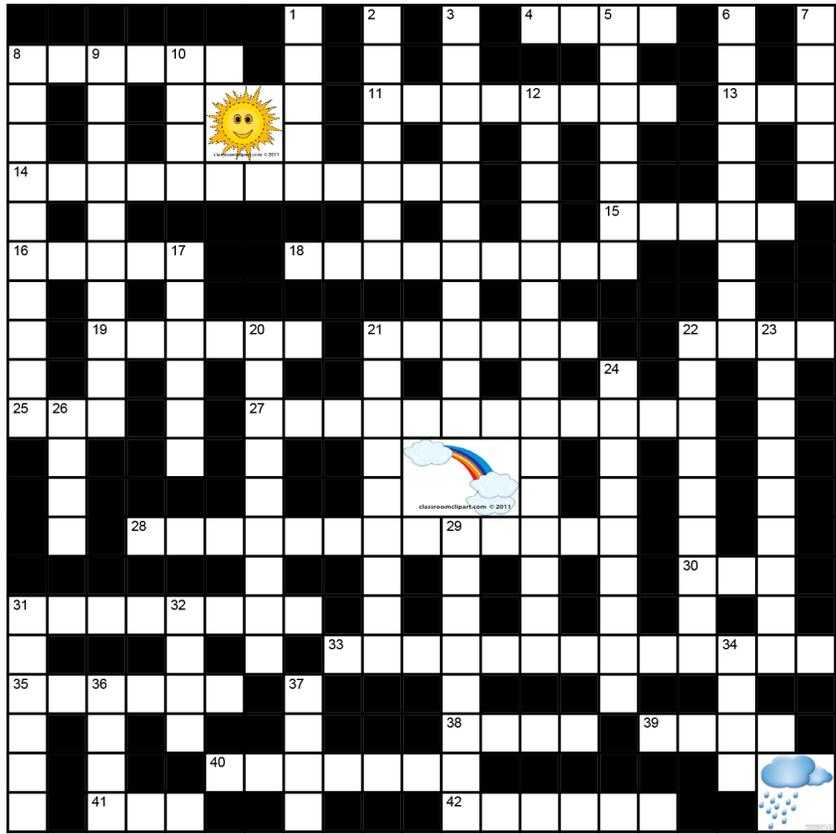
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**Be Sure to Like
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on Facebook!**

Answers to May/June puzzle Sightings Past, Present and Places by Tom Moran



Something to do on a rainy day... Tom Moran



Across

- 4 Often seen mobbing Red-tailed Hawks
- 8 _____ Moses State Park, check out the hawk watch platform in September
- 11 Group for the East End has a walk to find these each spring...peent
- 13 Rail to trail bike path in the Catskills with good sightings, middle letter is a symbol for "and"
- 14 _____ Warbler
- 15 American _____, a sign of spring
- 16 _____ Sandpiper or Tern – white forehead.
- 18 _____ Grebe (2 words), uncommon. Might be a hillbilly?
- 19 Bicknell's _____, a high mountain bird
- 21 Hudsonian or Marbled _____
- 22 Swallow with a chest band or place to put money
- 25 ____ (abbreviation) Path, good place to look for grasspipers
- 27 _____ Vireo, all things considered, W. C. Fields would rather be here
- 28 _____ Warbler, similar in behavior to a Brown Creeper (3 words)
- 30 Barred, Great Horned, Screech, Saw Whet...
- 31 Long, curved bill on this shorebird, maybe see one at Jones Beach, Cupsogue and Cedar Beach County Park and elsewhere
- 33 _____, hyphenated, with 20 down
- 35 _____ Blue Heron, seen along with Tricolored Heron, at Smith Point Marina this spring
- 38 Glossy _____
- 39 _____ Warbler, yellow breast with wing bars, don't confuse song for Chipping Sparrow
- 40 _____ River CP Center Moriches

- 41 ____ York, sounds so nice, they named it twice
- 42 _____ Yellowlegs or Black-backed Gull

Down

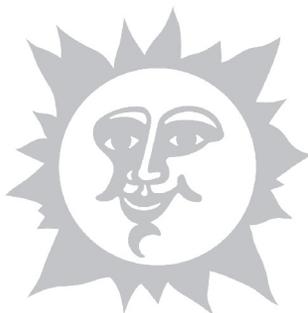
- 1 Peconic, Carmans or Forge _____
- 2 & 3 a nest predator that most people don't like, so the answer is not in the right order
- 5 Darker chest than Baltimore
- 6 Good place for supplies in the Catskills, you can try whitewater tubing here
- 7 Not Hairy
- 8 Not Red-headed (2 words)
- 9 _____ Gull but tern like
- 10 ____ Dove
- 12 Heard in Quogue this spring
- 17 Wild _____ or _____ Vulture
- 20 See 33 Across _____
- 21 Common _____, in Florida but not here
- 22 Warbler with black cap and white cheeks
- 23 _____ Warbler, likes country music
- 24 _____ Vireo, little yellow, wing bars and spectacles
- 26 Briefly seen at Hecksher puddles this spring
- 29 Town where the Shawangunk Grasslands is located
- 31 Western or Eastern?
- 32 ____ Eagle
- 34 Monastery established in 563 by St. Columba, or wetland near Doodletown
- 36 Streamlined water birds, that unlike gulls, don't swim (singular)
- 37 ____ Scoter, two white patches on male head

Summer Bird Walks

**SATURDAY, July 21,
Meet at 8 am**

DUNE ROAD Exploration

Leader: Eileen Schwinn



MEET AT TIANA BEACH BAY SIDE PARKING LOT, in Hampton Bays. Since Super Storm Sandy, the Tiana Beach bay side has been a very welcome stop for resident birds, as well as early southward-bound migrating shore birds. Join us for a long stay at low tide, and perhaps, an exploration along other Hot Spots of Dune Road. Bring sunscreen, water, and a hat (although there is a covered pavilion to view from, if necessary). Town of Southampton Temporary Parking Permits will be available to non-residents. For more information, please contact Eileen Schwinn at beachmed@optonline.net or call: 516-662-7751 the day of the Field Trip. Rain or shine!

MONDAY, August 20, Meet at 8 am

CUPSOGUE Mud & Sand Flats

Leader: Eileen Schwinn

MEET AT THE WESTERN END OF THE CUPSOGUE PARKING LOT, Westhampton Dunes. A refreshing walk of about a mile, along the sand road, then shoreline, of this lovely Suffolk County Park will bring us to an easy crossing to the popular hang-out of gulls, terns and shorebirds. A rail or two, and possibly all the "local" heron species are likely to be seen, as well as the marshland sparrows, along the way. Be prepared to walk in the shallow water to the Island. Barefoot is fine, although hot sand to the shore is likely to be encountered! Bring water, a light snack (if you wish), plenty of sun block, a hat, and perhaps insect repellent – we will be arriving at the crossing point prior to dead low tide at about 11 am. We will bird the flats, and return before the tide get too high. Apologies for this being a mid-week walk – the tidal pattern for this August prevents a weekend visit. There is an entrance fee for Cupsogue, however, arrival prior to 8:00 am will probably allow you to bypass paying anything! Contact Eileen Schwinn at beachmed@optonline.net for more information. Call: 516-662-7751 the day of the Field Trip. Rain or shine – but canceled if a thunder storm!! 



Piping Plover: CHAUDESIUS MELANOTUS (Linn., 1758)

Be a Good Egg

Share the shore with nesting birds and their young.

The goal of the Be a Good Egg project is to help people learn more about birds like Least Terns, Piping Plovers, and American Oystercatchers that nest and rest on the beaches of New York every spring and summer. From April through August, thousands of birds nest on the bare sand on many of New York's beaches and inlets. These hardy little birds are threatened by predators, extreme weather conditions, and humans. When a person or dog walks through a nesting area, the adults run or fly off in fear. During the nesting season, this exposes the eggs or chicks to fatally high temperatures and drastically increases the risk of predation. In the spring and fall, many other shorebirds migrate through New York and New Jersey on journeys that can be as long as 9,000 miles, stopping on our beaches to rest and refuel.



Audubon New York and our partners are reaching out to people and asking them to take a pledge to "be a good egg" and share the beach with birds. As part of this project, volunteers are helping reach out to people at beaches where Audubon is working with the local community to protect hundreds of nesting and migrating birds. We want this message to reach anyone who visits a beach in New York or New Jersey. These birds are found along the entire coastline.

Partial program support comes from PSEG Long Island and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

With your help, we can protect New York's beach-nesting birds and their young.

"Be a Good Egg" is an outreach initiative that strives to reduce human disturbances to beach-nesting and migratory shorebirds. This program was designed to change beach-goers' behavior through education and social marketing. Audubon New York, New Jersey Audubon, and New York City Audubon worked together to launch the program in New Jersey and New York in 2013. Since then, under the guidance of Audubon New York, the program has expanded in NY to include new partners, including the Four Harbors, Huntington Oyster Bay, North Shore, and South Shore Audubon societies, Group for the East End, and others. Working together allows us to make the program as impactful as possible. 



It wouldn't be Hog Island without a trip to Eastern Egg Rock to see the Atlantic Puffins reintroduced by Stephen Kress in the 70's.

Gravity Hurts *and other* Adventures at Hog Island Audubon Camp

Continued from page 1

around 50 degrees, with overcast drizzle. Wearing every scrap of clothing we brought, and sitting in programs with wool blankets, we still shivered!

Being out on an island, far from cellular phone service and hospitals, one might think about the medical training of the staff at Hog Island. I can assure you, however, that they are quite well trained in emergencies and first aid as I needed it on day 1, before I even stepped foot onto the boat ferrying us to the island. After dropping off luggage and Barbara down at the dock, I drove my car back up the hill to park. Walking back, the view was simply breathtaking, with hints of the rugged Maine coastline, surrounded by a meadow full of wildflowers, butterflies, and birds. As I cheerily walked down the dirt path, swinging my arms and gazing at the blue sky and silvery clouds, I found myself suddenly flat on the ground, arms straight out in front of me, glasses having popped clean off of my face. My clumsy feet, it seemed, had squarely tripped over a 4" tall black rubber barrier that stretched over the length of the dirt road to collect run-off. How, might you ask, had I not seen this? Well I did, upon driving into the area, wondering if they might be reminders to slow down or to help with erosion. They turned out to be both of those things, but on that beautiful day, they served to be a reminder that gravity can truly hurt, and prove that the staff at Hog Island will clean off your knees, elbows, and palms and very professionally tidy you up so that you can enjoy your week birding. Growing up, my Dad always reminded me to walk with my hands out of my pockets. If you fall, he said, you won't plant your face into the ground. Thanks, Dad! I'm glad I was following your advice when gravity took over!

Food was plentiful, fresh, and delicious, prepared by two chefs and served up family style by generous volunteers. Dessert, to my delight, was served not only at dinner, but with lunch, too. Birds and Beans shade grown and Smithsonian-certified coffee, was always hot and ready to drink. And if you were still hungry, snacks could be found in between meals.

Just in case you needed some shopping therapy, Juanita, the President of the Friends of Hog Island, was a delight and eager to help in the well-stocked gift shop. Everyone wanted to go home with Puffin paraphernalia!

Our instructors for the week were Pete Dunne, Wayne Peterson, Laura Erickson, Kathy Horn, Charles Duncan, and Don Freiday. Each of them was extremely passionate, friendly, funny, approachable, prompt, and professional. Not only did they lead bird walks, but gave lectures, panel discussions with advice and tidbits on becoming a better birder and nature lover. Campers' knowledge ranged from beginner to advanced, and no matter what skill level they had at birding and birds, instructors generously shared their combined knowledge of 287 years experience. Each day was packed with extremely well-rounded programs and trips, including the "mystery of the day" where they gave a series of questions that campers could answer to increase their knowledge of birds. The instructors and staff were so professional, however, that we never felt rushed, hurried, micromanaged, or overwhelmed with information.

We visited Eastern Egg Rock, the famed island that Stephen Kress courageously sought to bring a breeding colony of Atlantic Puffins back to in the 1970s-and succeeded. We saw over 30 puffins in flight, on the open water and resting on the island. Hundreds of Common Terns nest on the island, as well as Roseate and Arctic Terns. Common Eiders patrolled the edges of rocky island while Double-crested Cormorants stood guard. Today, countries



Katie with birding legend Pete Dunne

around the world use Kress' methods for restoring seabird colonies. Reading *Project Puffin* by Kress, then hearing him speak one evening about making his dreams a reality and conservation efforts with scientists worldwide was simply awe-inspiring and humbling.

Visiting the visually stunning Harbor Island, we picnicked on the beach and hiked the perimeter of the rocky coastline. Taking a detour through the woods, Swainson's Thrushes burst into song along the trail. Ravens called overhead as we made our way back in a dory to the boat, the Snowgoose III. We got to peek in a lobster trap and saw a female lobster with a few eggs still attached to her abdomen. A small "V" was cut into her tail fan to mark her as a breeding female, just in case she was trapped without eggs. She could therefore be returned to the sea to lay more eggs. It was clear that Maine "lobstah" men and women take great pride in their craft and care deeply about the sea and creatures within.

On serene Hog Island, we listened and watched nesting species with celebrated author and former Cape May Bird Observatory director Pete Dunne. He shared the species of the island with us, including Black-throated Green, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Parula, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, Hairy and Downy Woodpecker, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Common Tern, Black Guillemot, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Laughing Gull, Surf Scoter, Common Loon and Common Eider. Sitting quietly for a few minutes by the gurgling stone fountain was usually rewarded with sights of songbirds dropping in for a bath or drink, then being chased away by one of the many adorable Red Squirrels. As we hiked around the island we



A banded Purple Finch alights on the rocks. Right: A Piliated Woodpecker feeds its young (there were 2 nestlings) seen on the land birding trip to Damariscotta.

were serenaded by Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Hermit Thrush.

Visiting the “Maine” land one day for a field trip yielded Bobolinks, a mother Pileated woodpecker feeding two hungry nestlings, Alder Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Virginia Rail, Sora, Chestnut-sided, Yellow, and Pine Warblers, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Common Yellowthroat, Swamp and Chipping Sparrows, Tree, Barn, and Cliff Swallows, Chimney Swift, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron and Belted Kingfisher. The amazing day concluded with a visit to Round Top Ice Cream. That day was a 3-dessert day. We were in birding and sugar heaven!

As if it couldn't get any better, an Artist-in-Residence began her stay on Hog Island the week we were in attendance. Jennifer Anderson shared her wonderful drawings, watercolors, and

prints with campers. Growing up, her family was friendly with the Puleston family. Jennifer was pen pals with Dennis, and would share sketches back and forth. Growing up, her family never went outside without binoculars, and today her art features many species of birds. Her elegant and breathtaking works of art can be viewed at www.ravenpressart.com.

Learning a little of the history, I think, we all felt a debt of gratitude to the Todd family who saved the island from being logged and whose daughter, Millicent Todd, donated the island to Audubon in 1935.

The mission of Hog Island, upon creation in 1936, was simple and true; to have educators come stay and learn in a beautiful and peaceful environment, to have fun while doing so, so that they may further inspire others. Eighty-two years later, Hog

Island is doing just that, plus much more. Many world-class scientists, ornithologists, teachers, writers, and artists have come to this island to share their passion, and we felt honored to be there to learn, be inspired, and awed.

Thank you Hog Island Audubon staff and volunteers, and to ELIAS for making this unique place so special and rewarding!

More information is available on these web sites:

www.hogisland.audubon.org

Hog Island Camp offers programs for adults, families, and teens.

www.fohi.org

Friends of Hog Island

www.projectpuffin.audubon.org

for information on Project Puffin. 

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Lawsuits Seek To Restore Protections For Migratory Birds

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 24, 2018) A coalition of national environmental groups, including American Bird Conservancy, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, National Audubon Society, National Wildlife Federation, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, filed litigation, *National Audubon Society v. Department of the Interior*, in the Southern District of New York challenging the current Administration's move to eliminate longstanding protections for waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).

In a legal opinion issued December 2017, the Administration abruptly reversed decades of government policy and practice — by both Democratic and Republican administrations — on the implementation and enforcement of the MBTA.

The Act's prohibition on the killing or "taking" of migratory birds has long been understood to extend to incidental take from industrial activities — meaning unintentional but predictable and avoidable killing. Under the Administration's revised interpretation, the MBTA's protections will apply only to activities that purposefully kill birds. Any "incidental" take — no matter how inevitable or devastating the impact on birds — is now immune from enforcement under the law.

The risk of liability under the MBTA has long provided the oil and gas industry, wind energy development companies, and power transmission line operators with an incentive to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to minimize bird deaths. For example, in an effort to protect migratory birds and bats and avoid potential MBTA liability, the wind industry, conservation groups, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service worked to develop comprehensive guidelines aimed to ensure best practices for siting and developing wind farms. The Administration's new policy eliminates this incentive for industries and individuals to minimize and mitigate foreseeable impacts of their activities on migratory birds, putting already-declining populations of our nation's songbirds and other migratory birds at risk.

The MBTA also protects birds from fossil fuel development. Oil pits kill hundreds of thousands of birds — if incidental take liability is eliminated, industry need no longer take measures to protect birds from these hazards. In addition, when the

2010 BP Deepwater Horizon disaster spilled more than 210 million gallons of oil in the Gulf of Mexico more than one-million birds were killed in the four years following the blowout. BP paid \$100 million in fines under the MBTA. The fines supported wetland and migratory bird conservation. The new interpretation would bar the federal government from seeking such

mitigation under the MBTA for devastating oil spills in the future.

(The American Bird Conservancy, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife and National Audubon Society are being represented in the litigation by the public-interest law firm of Meyer Glitzenstein & Eubanks LLP.) 

Bird Cams *Online at Explore.org*

Can't get out to go birding? Is it raining? Or maybe you just need some downtime. This time of year you can watch and get some up close looks at what really goes on in a Puffin burrow or high atop a pole in an Osprey nest.

Log on to explore.org for Puffins, Osprey and more.



Seal Island, Maine Atlantic Puffin Burrow Webcam

Get an intimate view inside a puffin burrow—and even glimpse a young puffling while you're at it.

Atlantic Puffins nest in burrows tucked between large boulders, where predators have trouble reaching them. They raise one puffling (as puffin chicks are called) each year. As sea level around Seal Island rises volunteers are using decoys to try to encourage the birds to nest in burrows at higher elevations to avoid having their burrows flooded.

The cam is monitored by volunteers at Hog Island Audubon Camp and hosted online by Explore.org.



Hog Island, Maine Osprey Webcam

Hog Island's nest cam overlooks Rachel and Steve, a pair of Ospreys now in their fifth year of nesting on the island. The webcam offers an intimate view of their private life and all its drama, including fighting off nest predators and nurturing young chicks. And even though it's billed as an Osprey cam, occasionally other species stop by for their 15 minutes of fame.

The cam is also monitored by volunteers at Hog Island Audubon Camp, and hosted online by Explore.org.

Wild Turkeys

Making a Strong Comeback

Larry Penny

At the beginning of 1992 while serving as the Natural Resources Director of East Hampton Town, I got a call from Mark Lowry of the New York State DEC, he had a bunch of turkeys captured in Upstate New York that he wanted to release in Hither Hills State Park in Montauk. This would be the second attempt to resurrect the Wild Turkey population on Long Island by the state in the latter half of the 20th century. I said yes, of course, and accompanied Mark and his team to Hither Woods in mid-January to a point near Fresh Pond in the state park and witnessed the release of more than 20 bona fide Wild Turkeys.

Wild turkeys were once indigenous to Long Island but were hunted to extinction by the mid-1980s. In fact, they almost disappeared from America by the early part of the 20th century, in a period that also saw the passing of the Heath Hen and the Passenger Pigeon, once common on Long Island, into extinction. However, a fair number of Turkeys survived in the Alleghenies of New York and Pennsylvania, and began to expand east and north from that base after a hunting ban was enacted. Interestingly, Gardiners Island in East Hampton Town situated in the Peconic estuary between the North and South Forks had Wild Turkeys that would show up on each year's annual Christmas Count for Montauk long before 1992, but their authenticity as native birds was always in doubt.

Would these Montauk Turkeys survive or fail as in the other attempts to bring back a species lost to Long Island? They not only survived, they thrived.

Hither Woods was an Eden, it was populated by oaks, hickories and beech, sources of the mast which would get Turkeys through each winter. The pine barrens of central Long Island were scarce in hardwood nuts, and if let go there, they probably wouldn't have made it.

At the same time, another group of upstate Turkeys were released by the DEC in South Havens County Park in Brookhaven Town. This group also did well extending north to Brookhaven National Laboratory in a matter of years and northwest into Calverton, easterly into western Southampton Town. By 2016 there were so many wild turkeys on Long Island that the DEC opened a hunting season on them.

Not everyone appreciates the newcomer!

As the South Fork Turkey population expanded, not everyone appreciated them. Males while courting and guarding their females can be very pugnacious chasing anyone who came near the chicks. Turkeys also roost on perches above the ground at night, mostly in trees but also on roofs, another irritant for people from the city who moved to the country for peace and quiet.

Males court females by ritually spreading the feathers of their tail and strutting around in front of females they way Peacocks do. They also sport a feathered beard hanging from their chest and bright red fleshy wattles on their necks. This or that tom is finally selected by a group (harem?) of females and the reproduction process begins. The hens lay their eggs on the ground as do Quail, Pheasants and Grouse, and take very good care

of the chicks after incubation. Leading them on foraging expeditions so that the chicks can gorge themselves on insects and vegetative sprouts, earthworms, and, even, salamanders. Turkey chicks are even said to eat ticks, plucking from stems along paths where they lie in wait for passerbys, i.e., deer, fox, humans and the like.

I have been keeping records of road kills on local Long Island roads since 1980, more than a decade before Turkeys were released here. I have tallied very few road kill Turkeys during miles and miles recording. You may have noticed the reason why. Turkeys with their chicks often march around in packs, the females alert to possible dangers such as passing vehicles. They don't try to run across ahead of cars and trucks the way deer often do. They are not on the roads at night as are raccoons, fox and opossums, they are roosting in a safe place.

They do have natural enemies, but if you have ever encountered an ornery tom Turkey in the wild, you might think twice before further antagonizing it. One local area where you can always find a rafter of Wild Turkeys is Morton Wildlife Refuge on Little Peconic and Noyac Bays in Noyac, Southampton Town.

Remember this, before you curse that Turkey attacking its image in your sliding glass patio door, the very honorable Benjamin Franklin, suggested that the national bird of the United States should be the Wild Turkey, not the cowardly Bald Eagle, both of which almost became extinct in the 20th century, but given proper protection, are now making a strong comeback. 

Who is the fairest of them all? This Wild Turkey hen will have to decide.





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I Want You! *A strategy for recruiting the next generation of birders*

Continued from page 1

hard. In the end, the class reignites their curiosity for nature and may even put them on a path to become a science major in college.

I am continually amazed by the diversity of students who catch the birding bug. Athletes, cheerleaders, stoners, wannabe gang members, special education kids, African Americans, indigenous Americans, Euro Americans, Asian Americans, rich kids, poor kids, quiet kids and loud kids, fashionistas, drama queens, hunters, vegetarians, LGBTQ kids. I have seen birds take over the lives of every kind of student.

Most of what they know of science when they enter my class is cold, hard laboratory facts about atoms, macro- molecules, DNA, and genetics. I turn this around and get them outside looking at birds. On Tuesdays, we are out the door by 8:05 a.m. with binoculars, field notebooks, smart-phones, and field guides—and we're looking for birds. The rest of the week we are learning about the mechanics of flight, how dinosaurs developed feathers, metabolism, digestion, nest building, egg production, and more.

Students learn critical thinking. And grit. Much of what they discover in the classroom they can see in the birds all around them. When they leave my class, most will be birders for life. They have picked up a hobby—in some, a full-on passion—that makes them look up from their phones, pull over to the side of the road, and stop in mid-sentence at lunch when they notice a silhouette overhead, hear a song, or see a flash of color in the bushes.

Planning the program

I did some long-range planning with the fine people who run the BirdSleuth K–12 program at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology a few months ago, and an idea that kept recurring is that birding is a natural gateway to conservation. If you love birds, you pay attention to what is going on with the environment, and you are more likely to become involved.

When I go to birding festivals, bird walks, and bird talks, I see mostly gray heads—mine included. That worries me. We are not engaging kids in outdoor pursuits like we used to. Our recruitment rate, to use the biological term, is below the threshold needed to sustain the population of engaged and conservation-minded citizens. So what do we do? My suggestion is to go to where young people are: high school. College may be too late. It is well known that many people form their opinions of

the world at a young age; if Americans dismiss or are unaware of the natural world by the end of their teens, they may never change. If we get them interested in birding in their teenage years, they will probably continue with it. I have students from my first year of teaching ornithology, five years ago, who still let me know about the cool birds they saw or ask for help with identification.

I recently found out about another high school teacher clear across the country in Massachusetts who teaches an 18-week ornithology course. He and I are as rare as a Spix's Macaw. I wish we were more like European Starlings. I think more teachers who are birders would pick up teaching this class if they knew it was already being taught by someone. I threw caution to the wind and created the class, but I would hate for it to go extinct when I retire later this year.

Can you imagine if every high school across the country taught ornithology? Think about it for a minute. High school graduates would not only know birds, but would also be more aware of the native plants, insects, fish, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians that inhabit the woodlots, grassy fields, sea cliffs, and other habitats around their homes. They would know the local streams, lakes, and marshes. They would care about land-use decisions involving urban sprawl, agriculture, transportation, waste disposal, pollution,



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deforestation, invasive species, climate change, and even population control.

How do we get there? My class is a start, but we need more teachers to join in. We need an appropriate curriculum and textbooks. We need districts and parents asking for ornithology in their schools. You can help make this happen by calling your local school or district office; tell them about the school in California that is teaching ornithology and ask why your school doesn't have it. Biology teachers could be especially valuable in this effort. All I did was ask, and the ball started rolling. Now my principal brags about this class.

A big component of my class is taking students birding one day every week. The rest is biology: evolution, flight, feathers, taxonomy, ecology, and cardiovascular, digestive, musculoskeletal, and reproductive systems. Throw in some conservation, and you have a class.

During my whole career as a teacher, I have had the partly hidden agenda of turning my students into environmentalists. Because I teach science, it has been easy to mention deforestation, overfishing, and pollution in the context of a regular life science or biology class. But as instructional standards and frameworks became more standardized and centralized, biology became more about medicine, microbiology, and genetic engineering. I fought to retain the last shreds of botany, ecology, and life forms and conservation, but bigger forces were at work. As our state standards for high school biology have changed, we have lost the common connection to nature that would benefit all high school graduates.

Birders alert scientists to population fluctuations that may signal disruptive changes in the environment. Students in my class learn how their observations are part of a world-wide upsurge in "citizen science" that has become the eyes and

ears of environmental scientists all over the globe.

While this class focuses on birds, students also pick up some botany, geology, hydrology, forestry, fisheries, meteorology, and wildlife management. They learn the names, habits, and importance of local animals and plants. There are thousands of careers that study, manage, and utilize organisms from the natural world, and this class provides an overview of such careers.

Over the years, as high school instruction shifted away from natural science and into the laboratory, science students lost the thread that connected biology to the world outside their door. Luckily, along came a fellow teacher who proposed teaching a marine science class and wanted my help to get it off the ground. It was an instant hit with students..

After helping to create marine science, I was ready to tackle ornithology. The first step was convincing my principal. It was surprisingly easy. With his permission, I began the research to see if anyone else had taught the subject. I found one private school in San Francisco that had a semester class which had previously received state permission, known in California as "UC approval," referring to the University of California's recognition of a class as sufficiently rigorous to qualify as "college prep." When I contacted the school, I found out the teacher had retired and the class was no longer offered. Undeterred, I tracked down the teacher and got his syllabus and some lessons.

My district required science classes to be year-long. After working out the extended curriculum, I sought approval from the University of California, and was "UC-approved" on the first try!

Next was the school board. Lucky for me, the superintendent and one of the board members were birders.

Students enroll in ornithology with little prior knowledge of the world of birds—although all are required to have completed a year of biology. Here they are on the campus of Gilroy High School, looking at a pair of Red-tailed Hawks roosting on the stadium lights above the football stadium.

Another board member was sympathetic. I only had to convince one more to tip the balance on the seven-member panel. With the unflagging support of my principal against the opposition (one board member called it "just a subset of a subset of biology"), the class was approved.

Getting binoculars was a hurdle, but I got over it. Textbooks do not exist for high school ornithology, so I cobbled together lessons and references from multiple sources, especially from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology—a great partner in helping me get this fledgling off the ground.

Birding biology teachers out there: I Want You!

We can do this. Teaching this class is a blast. The students are curious. They connect to the real world. They are engaged in lifelong learning. This class has critical thinking, grit, citizen science, Next Generation Science Standards, and Common Core State Standards all rolled into one package.

Birders who are parents: I Want You! Lobby your local school and school board to get this class in your high school. Let administrators and officials know that birding is one of the fastest-growing hobbies in the country—and that the chances of success are high.

We can't save the world without awareness of the world's problems. High school ornithology can reach a huge audience and create a connection to the natural world perhaps unlike any other class.

Can we work together to spread the word? 

THE OSPREY

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