



THE OSPREY

November/December 2018 — Vol. XLIII, No. 6

A Memorable Evening!

On October 17th ELIAS held its Annual Dinner at Rock Hill Golf and Country Club. The evening featured Kimberly Durham of Atlantic Marine Conservation Society as the speaker, an expert on marine mammals, seals, turtles and whales. It was a surprise to learn how many seals and turtle species are in our waters. I think the biggest surprise – did you there were three beluga whales spotted in Long Island Sound last year? Fortunately they were able to identify them and they were spotted back in the arctic a few months later.

She also stressed that her organization would like to know if you see a whale, dolphin, porpoise or sea turtle. The sightings can help them learn more about local marine populations. You will find a form on their web site to fill out. If you have photos, please send them to sightings@amseas.org.

If you are walking on the beach and spot a sea turtle along the shore this time of year it may be suffering from cold-stunning. Sometimes, even if they look dead, Kim stressed the importance of calling for help. Many times they can be saved. To report a stranding, please call the Riverhead Foundation at the 24-hour hotline: 631.369.9829.

Suzi Stewart won the Osprey Award given to the ELIAS member who has contributed to the goals of ELIAS. Suzi is now in charge of planning our monthly programs. She has always cheerfully taken on other projects that have been asked of her.

Rock Hill prepared many appetizers and a hardy and generous buffet. The raffle table was overflowing. A big thank you to all the donors. More pictures are posted on Facebook. 🐾



Kimberly Durham spoke about Conservation, Awareness, Research, Education & Stewardship.



Sally Newbert presents the Osprey Award to Suzi Stewart

PHOTOS: LEON GURINSKY



Raffle prizes were donated by Talmage Farm & Garden Center, South Fork Natural History Museum, Eastport Feed, Hank's Farm Stand, Hurricane Grill, Shirley Feed, Long Island Maritime Museum, Hidden Ridge Nursery, Atlantis Aquarium, Sea Cove Restaurant, Westhampton Performing Arts Center, Briermere Farms, Quogue Wildlife Refuge, Panera, Lillian's Hair Salon, both Byron Young and Bob Adamo donated photographs and Gigi Spates and Eileen Schwinn who are both leading tours. Thank you. to all!

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

ELIAS Birding Photographers!

Byron Young

I wanted to express thanks to the ELIAS birder/photographers who submitted a total of 79 photographs for consideration in the 2019 edition of our Chapter's Calendar. With this outstanding collection of photos in hand the task of selecting a cover shot, and the twelve monthly pages and new this year a small selection of photos for the back page became an exciting and slightly stressful task. Individual submissions ranged from one to a high of seventeen photographs.

The first cut reduced the number of photographs to just over thirty, attempting select from as many photographers as possible. Once this was completed the selection was shared with an ad hoc committee to review the selection and begin selecting the finalists. Once this task was completed a final draft was prepared for one more review by the committee to check on spelling and page set-up. Upon completion of the final draft the product was submitted to the printers in Chanhassen, Minnesota, and, where is Chanhassen, Minnesota you ask. This small town is located SW of Minneapolis in what appears to be some very fine pothole country.

It is hoped that ELIAS Chapter members enjoy submitting their photos for consideration in our Chapter's Calendar especially to those who have their

work on display. Please remember that even if your photo did not get selected your contribution to the process is greatly appreciated. Please keep taking photographs of our local birds and consider submitting for future iterations of our Calendar. We would like to hear from Chapter Members about the Calendar. Suggestions for improvements are always welcome.

Respect Those Wintering Birds

On another, note, as we enter the Fall Season many of our overwintering migrants will be stopping for a visit, like the Snowy Owl, the Short-eared Owl, several Raptors, and if we are lucky some irruptive Boreal forest birds. Although some birds elicit great excitement and thus increased pressure on them it is important to keep human induced stresses to a minimum. Following is a statement that I found on the New York City Audubon website, "I would like to encourage all of our members whether they are strictly birders or both birders and photographers to behave ethically. We should make every effort to reduce the disturbance our presence causes the birds. This is especially true when a bird of special interest appears. Try to maintain some respectful distance, for example, do not climb through the dunes to get a better angle on a Snowy Owl or remove vegetation for a clearer view. For more details on ethical birding, view

American Birding Association Code of Birding Ethics. For photographers, visit the Nature Photographers Network Code of Conduct."

Practice patience while out in the field, let the subject get comfortable with your presence, approach cautiously, and if the subject demonstrates signs of stress back away. This is especially important with birds that have migrated long distances to overwinter here. Sometimes the excitement of finding that new bird or animal causes us to press our opportunity too far which can stress out our subject in search of the perfect photograph. Given the cameras of today, one does not have to be right on top of the subject to obtain a very fine quality photograph. Some of the best photos submitted for this year's calendar were taken with relatively simple point and shoot cameras that have the capacity to zoom out and bring the subject closer.

Again, thank you to everyone who submitted photographs and I hope you all keep seeking those outstanding pictures for future iterations of our Chapter's Calendar. For the non-photographers in the group I hope you enjoy the Calendar and the efforts of your fellow Chapter Members.

If you would like to purchase a calendar, they will be available at meetings and there is an order form on page 4. 

It's time to renew your membership.

**All memberships now run from
January to December.**

Please renew for the new year!

Many thanks to those that renewed with their dinner reservation.

November & December Meetings

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2018 AT 7:15 PM

Adventures from Hog Island

with Katie Kleinpeter & Barbara LaGois

Hog Island Audubon Camp in Bremen, Maine, is an Audubon owned and operated property for adults and kids in the summer months. Each year campers are delighted to learn about all things bird related. Come hear about the adventures of one of their most popular camps for adults, the Joy of Birding, to see why anyone interested in this fabulous pastime should consider going to Hog Island oneself or with a birding friend!

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018 AT 7:15 PM

Owl Be Home For Christmas

As the days get shorter and the long cold winter sets in, many Long Islanders' head in to their cozy warm homes. And... Birders do a little happy dance, bundle up and head outdoors to find all of our new cold weather visitors. Winter is a great time for birding with the arrival of geese, seabirds, ducks, winter finches, and the most exciting... **Owls!!**

Come enjoy an evening of winter birding excitement. We will share sightings, enjoy some snacks & watch the PBS movie "Magic of the Snowy Owl" that follows a pair of snowy owls as they raise their family in the brutal Arctic tundra.

Owl attire & fuzzy slippers welcome.



Please note there is no January members meeting.

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

Audubon NEW YORK



Audubon's Long Island Climate Conference

**Saturday, November 10, 2018
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM**

Cost is \$12 which includes a vegan lunch.

Sisters of St. Joseph, 1725 Brentwood Rd, Brentwood, NY.

David Ringer, Chief Network Office, will be delivering the keynote address on how Audubon is crafting a bipartisan movement throughout National Geographic's Year of the Bird. Featured speakers will cover strategic conservation partnerships, effective lawmaker outreach, advancing clean energy solutions, mitigating sea level rise and more.

For more detailed schedule and a link to register - please go to:

<http://ny.audubon.org/events/audubons-second-annual-long-island-climate-conference>

Photo: Oystercatchers/Nick Palmieri/Audubon Photography Awards

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Order your 2019 ELIAS Calendar

The calendar makes a wonderful holiday gift.

All the photos were taken right here on the East End of Long Island by members of ELIAS.

Please send me _____ ELIAS Calendars @ \$10 each. _____ .

Shipping is \$5.00 for one to three calendars _____ .

I would like to renew my membership _____

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East Quogue, NY 11942-0206**

November Walks

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2018 • MEET AT 9 am

Autumn Birding at Hallockville & Hallock State Park

Leader: MaryLaura Lamont

Sponsored by the Hallockville Museum Farm this walk is about two miles and goes through fields and into the woods of Hallock State Park. We will be looking for a variety of migrants, and wintering birds. Bring binoculars. Dress for the weather. There is a \$7 charge for this walk, \$5 for members of Hallockville Museum Farm. The fee benefits the Museum's education fund. Please call the Museum for reservations, 631-298-5292

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2018 • MEET AT 9 am

Old Mastic Autumn Bird Walk at The William Floyd Estate

Leader: MaryLaura Lamont

The William Floyd Estate has a variety of habitats featuring fields, creeks, woods and marsh so it brings in a rich variety of birds as they migrate through the 613 acres. Situated on beautiful Moriches Bay we can observe shorebirds, ducks, hawks and possibly Bald Eagles as well as sparrows, woodpeckers and some warblers. Join us for this late autumn bird walk of about 3 miles. Please use the main Entrance Gate at 245 Park Drive, Mastic Beach Call 631-399-2030 for more info or directions. No reservations necessary. 🐦

Spotted in Montauk!



This beautiful little bird, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, was seen in Montauk in the horse pasture across from Deep Hollow Ranch on October 20th and 21st. It was found by Joe Giunta, and reported to ebird alerts by Pat Lindsay. It brought birders from all over, and led to speculation that it might be the same bird that was seen in the Albany area. 🐦

December Join a CBC (Christmas Bird Count)

There are no ELIAS December Field Trips – instead, you are invited to participate in the Christmas Bird Counts. There are three established territories in our region. You may participate in one or all, just contact the leaders.

It has been a long-established tradition that each year, thousands of bird lovers world-wide take to the field to do a little “snapshot” counting of the birds that are found within a defined count circle. Locally, there are a number of teams which head out – some beginning in the predawn hours and wrapping up at sunset, while other participants count from their kitchen windows throughout the day! Everything contributes to the most comprehensive observation of birds – species and numbers – around!

A number of count circles have been established and counted for over 50 years. And a great deal of information – and details – can be learned by looking at: www.audubon.org and following the links to the CBC. Learn which Count may be of interest to you – and where the Count Circles are located. Everyone is welcome to participate – **any level of birder is welcome. For more details, please check the information below:**

Quogue-Water Mill CBC

Sunday, December 16, 2018

Contact Steve Biasetti

sbiasetti@eastendenvironment.org or

Office: 631-765-6450 x205, Home: 631-874-4684

Central Suffolk

Thursday, December 27, 2018

Contact Eileen Schwinn at beachmed@optonline.net

Orient Count

Saturday, December 29, 2018

Contact: John Sep at JohnSep@optonline.net

WATERFOWL CENSUS

January 19 – 21 (target date – Sunday, January 20)

Each January, the NYSOA (New York State Ornithological Society) waterfowl census begins the Saturday before Martin Luther King Day, members visit lakes, rivers and shorelines to count waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans, loons, grebes, etc.)

In most years, more than a quarter of a million birds are tallied. In addition to being an enjoyable outing, DEC has acknowledged this to be a useful survey for long-term monitoring of waterfowl populations.

Check the web site in December for more information. We will also send out an email notice with more information. 🐦



Giant tractor wider than trails



Breached silt fence, but project deemed complete

Destruction of North Fork County Park (aka North Fork Preserve) by Suffolk County Department of Parks

MaryLaura Lamont
October 2018

It is hard to believe that in this day and age, with all we know about rare communities and rare plants, pristine freshwater breeding ponds for frogs and salamanders, peak nesting season for birds, particularly declining neo-tropical species such as Wood Thrush and warblers, that a unique and rare freshwater swamp and old growth forest has just been devastated by Suffolk County. Oh...and with full permission by New York State DEC! As unbelievable as this is, it happened – just go and see the devastation in the northern part of the park’s “natural” area.

Starting in June 2018 the Suffolk Co. Dept. of Public Works, with carte blanc approval from Suffolk Co. Dept. of Parks, altered and manipulated thereby devastating and destroying (with their huge machines and bulldozers) many pristine natural areas of the North Fork County Park, all on the designated passive recreation northern section, that is located between Sound Ave. and Sound Shore Rd, in Riverhead. Many of us know this park well because it is an excellent birding spot, full of wetlands and old forests. It is a very important area for migrating bird species going north or south across Long Island Sound in their yearly journeys.

It is a well-documented fact that this park-preserve harbors the largest population in New York State of an extremely rare freshwater plant known as Featherfoil (*Hottonia inflata*) It also harbors old growth forests of swamp maple and tupelo as well as a very rare forest community in New York State called a swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) forest. The Long Island Botanical Society along with State Natural Heritage people who mapped, located and identified these areas were never consulted before the destruction began.

This all started with some beach people complaining about storm water runoff onto their beach properties along the Long Island Sound when severe heavy rains occur. Storm water overflow has flowed onto the beach in several spots since the days of glaciation. So the

County decided to put in 3 mega sumps, to contain storm water runoff, along the northern part of the park property on Sound Shore Rd. Only problem was they started in June during peak bird nesting season. People observed American Redstarts, Wood Thrush and Catbirds desperately trying to defend their nests with young but all were bulldozed into oblivion. It made no difference that Redstarts as well as Wood Thrush are declining neo-tropical species. They were just “made more in decline by the bulldozing.” Frogs were crushed as well as snakes. The night before the bulldozing started gray tree frogs were still calling from the little seeps and runoff areas in and around these sump areas.

What is the most devastating of all was the destruction of so many of the interior wetlands that were bulldozed,



Featherfoil (*Hottonia palustris*)

Featherfoil is a water violet. It has a stem reaching up to 2.5' in height. Its basal roots are buried in the underlying mud while other silvery, shiny roots dangle freely in the water. The leaves are deeply divided as far as the central vein, like the teeth of a double comb, and are completely submerged, but if there is a drastic fall in the water level they can surface. The leaves are alternate or connected to the stem in more or less regular whorls. Flowers from May to June. *From Wikipedia*



Heavy rains breached the fence depositing silt in pond. Photo by Caleb Lamont.

and so many of them had nothing at all to do with the water flow onto peoples beaches during severe storms. These were the areas where the rare Featherfoil plant grew, and rare old growth swamp white oak forests exist, and frogs and salamanders breed. Certain environmentalists tried in vain to get some of these wetlands spared from bulldozing, rechanneling and total destruction. Most of these wetlands are vernal ponds – they dry up in the summer. Because of all the bulldozing, reconstruction, impoundments, mega-ditches and what should have been illegal work... pristine freshwater ponds have been negatively impacted, compromised and silted in. What that means is frogs, salamanders and Featherfoil can't grow in them anymore. Old dirt trails have been widened into boulevards in several areas plus they have been raised, they are now 5 to 8 feet higher than normal grade.

Project now completed Oct 2018 – sump, giant channel, huge boulevard



This itself is very odd and completely unnecessary but they have been raised up with the excavated clay soils they got from the sumps which were dug down at least 20 feet into the earth. On top of the raised mega roads they have put compacted crushed stone and what looks like cement materials. They are so hard compacted that heavy army tanks, if they wanted to, can now traverse the high tops of these trails. Even in areas where there no wetlands, old trails have been raised at least 4 feet with clay and aggregate hard packed substances. Why on earth was this done and why did Suffolk County approve this devastating project in the natural areas of the Park?

The County Parks Department has truly destroyed one of their most natural and beautiful parks by allowing the County Dept. of Public Works in and NO environmental impact statement was ever required for this project! This is unfathomable and defies reason and law. How is it that the DEC allowed this and issued the permits without an environmental impact statement in freshwater wetlands that harbor rare plants and rare communities?

Nothing environmental is sacred anymore, and we all thought that freshwater wetlands and everything associated with them, are protected!

There is so little open space left on Long Island, and the few areas we fought so hard to save and protect are being altered, manipulated and destroyed without regard for the whole environment. At one of



Raised road with aggregate directly on top of the wetland area

the half dozen meetings held about the destruction in the park the engineering expert with the County Public Works Department admitted "we don't know what this will do to the hydrology of the area." Nor it seems do they care.



Wetland being comprised – Featherfoil pond now silted as water went though and underneath fencing

If this proves anything it shows individuals and groups can never let their guard down when it comes to protecting the environment. If we don't protect the environment then no one else will. It is up to you to not be complacent.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Please look, or go there yourself to see what they have done. 🐦

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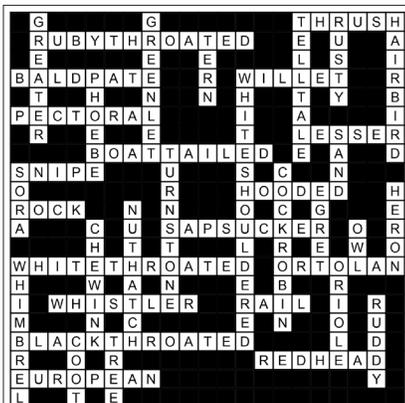
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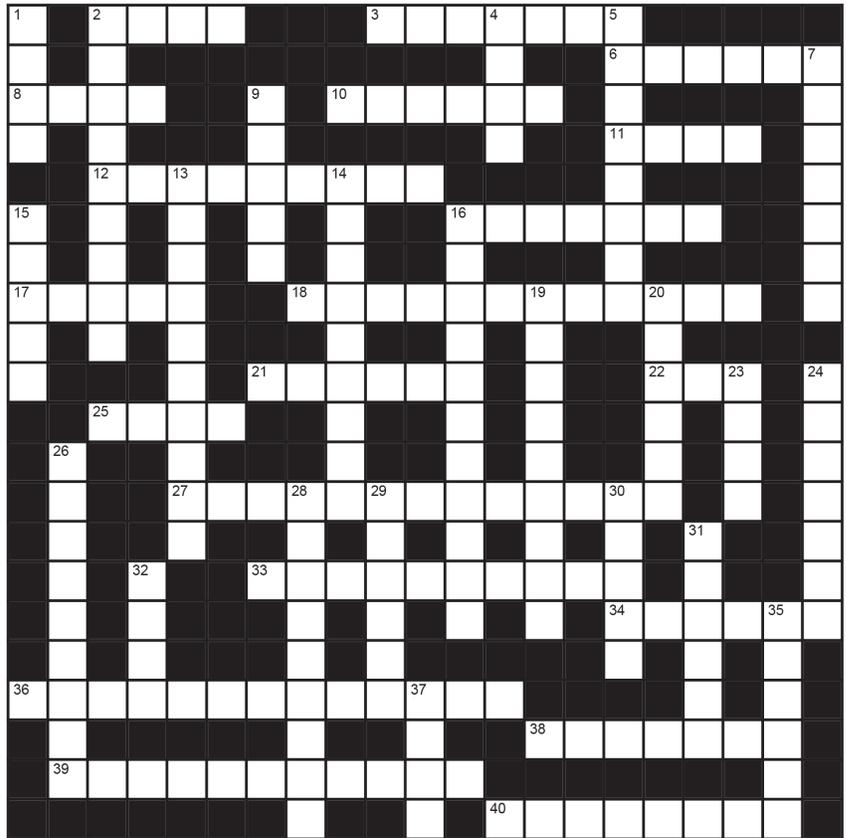
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Bird Names: Past & Present

*Answers to Sept/Oct puzzle
by Tom Moran*



Late Fall Sightings Tom Moran



Across

- 2 ____ Warbler, a tail pumper
- 3 Clay-colored _____, for example
- 6 Bald or Golden _____ (plural)
- 8 ____ Sparrow, or something done for fun on an impulse
- 10 Shorebird with a downward droop towards the end of the bill
- 11 Green-winged or the less common Blue
- 12 Hmmm, Solitary or Spotted
- 16 American or Least
- 17 ____ Point Park, use the FINS tower for an ocean watch
- 18 Common warbler (2 words)
- 21 A falcon that can be seen harrassing other raptors just for the fun of it
- 22 ____ World Sparrows, House, for example.
- 25 Carolina, House, Winter...
- 27 American _____, shorebird with flamboyant red bill
- 33 Small fresh water or bay duck
- 34 Great, Snowy...(plural)
- 36 _____ Nuthatch
- 38 Previously called an American Pochard, not a Canvasback
- 39 _____ Hawk, light or dark morph?
- 40 _____ Chickadee, but south of here

Down

- 1 Something a bird eats with and you get after eating out
- 2 _____ Jaeger, often chases terns to steal their food.
- 4 Clapper _____
- 5 _____ National Wildlife Refuge, Shirley NY
- 7 Pine _____ (plural) a winter irruptive
- 9 American _____, check farm fields, but look closely
- 13 Black or Yellow-crowned (2 words)
- 14 _____ Falcon, look for a strong mustache
- 15 _____ Goose, possessive (add the extra s) smaller than a Snow Goose and no grin patch
- 16 _____ Cowbird
- 19 _____ Grebe
- 20 American Golden _____, seen at East Moriches sod farm this fall
- 23 Ruddy _____
- 24 Streamlined raptors with pointed wings and longish tails
- 26 Long or Short-billed _____
- 28 Think Louis Armstrong of swans
- 29 _____ Hummingbird, a rare visitor
- 30 King _____, seen at Shinnecock East this summer
- 31 _____ Sandpiper, or _____ Rain, 6th studio album by Prince.
- 32 Red _____, shorebird seen during migration
- 33 _____ Swan, winter visitor
- 37 American _____ Sparrow, rusty cap, clear breast with dark central spot



Waiting for the Cuckoo to appear in Central Park

Field Trip to Central Park

Katie Kleinpeter

September 22, 2018, brought beautiful temperatures and nine birders to The Ramble in Central Park. It was quite different to bird here in the fall rather than in the spring. Birders are calmer, not running around in a frenzy. They enjoyed the weather, the sights and sounds along with whatever birds might cross their paths. Birds seemed calmer, too, as they hunted quietly for insects and preened in the shadows and sunshine. They are not mightily singing from snags, perches, and tops of trees, which ultimately makes them harder to spot. The first bird of the day (if you don't count Rock Doves and House Sparrows) was a juvenile Bald Eagle flying in circles over The Lake with a large eel. Highlights of the day included excellent low views of American Redstarts, Magnolia, Northern Parula, Prairie, Ovenbird, Black and White, and Black-throated Green Warblers.

We waited for 20 minutes for a rumored Yellow-billed Cuckoo and he eventually gave us a great show as he preened at the top of a sun-kissed Catalpa tree. Several Common Nighthawks buzzed over the treetops while flocks of Blue Jays and several Broad-winged Hawks headed south. We had great views of a Wood Thrush and a half dozen Red-breasted Nuthatches. The non-birding highlights of the day included eating brunch at the Boathouse, the train ride with friends, ice cream at Penn Station, and a celebrity sighting of actress Jane Lynch. 🐦



LEON GURINSKY

Field Trip to Fire Island Lighthouse

Sally Newbert

We started our trip on a somewhat overcast day, hoping for those magical northwest winds that would bring many migrating hawks, that just did not happen. We did see several Merlins and Northern Flickers going through. The best bird of the day was a Lincoln's Sparrow spotted when the song just didn't sound right for a Song Sparrow. Good catch for Pat Aiken! Quite a few Yellow-rumped warblers were spotted. They are the only warbler that winters in this area, able to switch their diets from insects to berries. By the end of the day we logged 28 species.

Many thanks to Leon Gurinsky, Lighthouse Volunteer who gave us an impromptu tour of the Boat House and the old-fashion lifesaving equipment exhibited there. The ropes, carts, and strange looking metal shuttle saved thousands from the ship wrecks off Fire Island. Leon also took a few hardy members up to the top of the lighthouse for an unforgettable view. 🐦



What would a visit to Fire Island be without a visit from a nice buck?

The Seatuck Environmental Association Birding Challenge

An Epic Adventure

Katie Kleinpeter

Different birding adventures require different strategies. Attending a birding field trip led by others requires one mindset while leading the same field trip requires a completely different mindset. Participating in Christmas Bird Counts requires one to record all species plus individuals. A bird challenge requires that a team count only the total species for the day in a specified amount of time. I enjoy all of these experiences, most recently Seatuck's 2018 Birding Challenge on Saturday, September 15, 2018.

The Plan is Hatched: I heard about Seatuck's bird challenge a year ago and was intrigued. This year upon getting the email, announcing the date and format of the challenge, I asked around to several



The Bird Brainz team: Suzi, Ro, Katie, Barbara and Robin - up early and out the door to find the birds.

ELIAS birding buddies to see if they were interested in participating in the challenge. I got some quick replies. Our team was assembled!

Plotting the Course: We decided, (Ro, Barbara, Robin, Suzi & I), as Suffolk County birders, we would leave the glamorous allure of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Jones Beach West End, Greenwood Cemetery, Alley Pond and Forest Parks to the other teams. We know this county, we bird here often and we know, more or less, what to expect here. A route is unique and specific to all teams and while we will share generalizations of our course, we probably won't divulge too many specifics! Over pizza and ice cream, we had The Route planned out.

The Dry Run, September 11: It was rainy. It was cold. Suzi and I had one really birdy spot that included a Blue Grosbeak, a House Wren and several species of warblers and sparrows all on private property. We headed down to the beach finding it completely socked in with fog. The road was flooded. Did we have birds? Yes, and boy did we work hard for them. Based on this tricky birding, we hoped for a sunny day on Saturday.

The Big Day, 4:40 am: Our excited team assembled at our starting point. We had calling Screech Owls as we loaded optics and food into the car. But not at 4:50. Not at 4:55. And certainly not at 5 am or after. The official start was at 5. No

Screech Owl for our list!

What's that bird calling? Oh, it's the blinker.

We nabbed our next target bird, a Lincoln's Sparrow, quickly and easily. Savannah Sparrows and Meadowlarks were fast and furious. Just as a possible Field Sparrow crossed in front of the path, a police car pulled up to say hello. Good morning, Officer! We are birding today! We showed off our binoculars and off we drove, the sparrow gone.

Is that a Merlin? Nope, Mourning Dove.

The really birdy private property held precious little now, probably due to a Peregrine Falcon zipping around. We did manage to hear and glimpse a Brown Thrasher lurking, making its loud smack call from the underbrush.

MODO (Mourning Dove), shocking.

My car doors must open fairly quietly, because I didn't even hear Robin jump out when we paused to look at a bird. Luckily we just rolled a few feet before I heard shouts from the back seat. Lesson learned! Apologies, Robin!

Where's that breeze coming from? The car door is open!

Zippering here and there, our list grew steadily all morning. A single Common Eider was spotted far out on a sandbar at Shinnecock, but the King Eider eluded us today. It was so sunny and warm that all the loafing Lesser Black-backed Gulls we had in the parking lots at the beach during

the Dry Run were out to sea, looking for brunch. This Birding Challenge is tough stuff!

Who is that bird? He's so cute I want to own him!

The Hampton Bays Ravens weren't at home when we came knocking, but the Red-headed Woodpecker family was at Connetquot. A lovely female Rose-breasted Grosbeak sat neatly on a dead tree, giving us wonderful views. A sleek Solitary Sandpiper hungrily ate lunch at a very close distance while we debated other small peeps a mere 5 feet away, all as a Clapper Rail clucked around a corner. A nice surprise was a Baird's Sandpiper in Lucky Field 7 at Hecksher at the end of the day. We did unfortunately scrap on the Buff-breasted Sandpiper that made an appearance earlier at Field 8, probably due to the miniature planes flying overhead.

What's that bird out there in the field? Oh wait, it's a turd pile.

We arrived at Seatuck at 4:30, giving ourselves time to do a little more birding

and hand in our checklist at the finish line. As the teams trickled in we saw faces we recognized all looking a little bit like we felt. We were exhausted but happy. We exchanged greetings in the parking lot while we changed our shoes and put on clean shirts. Resisting the urge to say, How many species did you get? We knew that was still top secret information and the numbers would be revealed soon enough.

What are we looking for anyway?

Seatuck did a wonderful job of providing us with food, drink, and conversation at the Scully Estate in Islip at the conclusion of the challenge. Teams had the opportunity to introduce themselves and share birding highlights. Everyone was very friendly and we all had our unique stories and tales. We shared snippets of our route without divulging too many details. Our team was quite happy with our bird count that totaled 81 species for the day. The winning team had an impressive 121 species.

The best part of the birding day for me? Well, I certainly was happy that no one

suffered any injuries as a result of my driving. I'm thrilled with the birds that we saw and I'm not worried about birds we missed. Most importantly, we were all still friends at the end of the day. The pressure to see as many birds as possible didn't cause us to lose our cool with one another. The back seat birders sure were a lot friendlier than at the beginning of the day, with their common desire for salty chips and Stella D'oro cookies in the late afternoon hours!

As we got in the car one last time together as a team, we started talking about strategy for next year. I think this means we will be back in 2019, Seatuck. Watch out, other teams! We're coming for ya! It was a wonderful way to spend the day, seeing (or not seeing) all kinds of birds, with terrific friends all while raising money for the environment. It's the only one of its kind on Long Island. Wouldn't it be fun to have an organization host a spring migration bird challenge? Sign me up! Robin put it perfectly: It was a Epic Adventure of a day! 🐦



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