



THE OSPREY

Fall/Winter 2020 — Vol. XLV, No. 4

The Bald Eagle

Byron Young

The Bald Eagle is our majestic national symbol. With its white head and tail and dark body, it is truly a memorable experience to see one of these regal birds. Do you remember your first encounter with a Bald Eagle? Mine was in 1968 or 1969 on the Penobscot River in Maine. The Bald Eagle population was at a very low ebb during that time period. Yet a small group of surviving Bald Eagles would congregate on the winter ice flows above the Vezzie Dam in Bangor, Maine to feed

pairs in the lower 48 States. The Bald Eagle's remarkable recovery is due to its protection under the Endangered Species Act and controls placed on hazardous chemicals that adversely affected their ability to reproduce successfully. During the last century, reproductive impairment from pesticides (especially DDT) and heavy metals were responsible for the virtual elimination of the Bald Eagle throughout much of its range. The persistent and toxic compounds would accumulate in fish. When the Bald Eagles feed upon these contaminated fish the chemicals would build up to high levels in the Eagles' bodies. The higher concentrations of chemical contaminants would interfere with the deposition of calcium in their eggshells, making the eggshells soft and easily broken as the parents attempted to incubate them.

DDT, the main culprit in this decline, was banned in 1972 providing Bald Eagles and other fish-eating birds of prey an opportunity to purge their systems of these toxic chemicals and to again successfully reproduce. In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was implemented to protect the Bald Eagles and other birds of prey.

The Bald Eagle was practically extirpated in New York during that period of time. In order to restore the Bald Eagle population, New York State began a Bald Eagle Restoration Project in 1976. This program was an attempt to reestablish a breeding population of Bald Eagles through hacking (hand rearing from nestlings to independence) Bald Eagles. Over the next thirteen years 198 nestling Bald Eagles were collected (mostly from Alaska), transported and released in New York.



Photo: Janis Hurley

on the Bufflehead and Golden Eye ducks that overwintered in the open water above the dam. It was always exciting to observe these magnificent birds as they hunted, feed or loafed on the ice.

At that time, the 1960's, the Bald Eagle population had an estimated nesting population of 417 pairs. Today that number has risen to over 9,700 nesting

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Moving Forward

Byron Young

We hope this issue of our newsletter finds all our members and their family and friends staying well!

The ELIAS Board of Directors has been safely meeting throughout the summer, primarily to develop a timeline in hopes of resuming the activities we offered pre-Covid. On the plus side – *The Osprey* has returned! We hope you've enjoyed receiving it in your mailbox! The Annual Seed Sale, in cooperation with Quogue Wildlife Refuge was held in November, with ordering and pick-up modified for safety reasons. Field Trips have resumed – with modification – for October, November and January. Christmas Bird Counts will take place mid-December, and the Annual Water Fowl Counts are being planned for January. Be sure that we have your email address on file – Our Newsletter Editor frequently sends Constant Contact notices out between *Osprey* issues. If you are not on our email list — go to our web site and sign up. She also posts information on our website and FaceBook page to update and remind.

Unfortunately, some of our events are not able to resume at this time: Our monthly Members Meetings are not

resuming until at least Spring 2021. We are exploring ways to “meet” via virtual methods, and we'll keep you posted! Our Annual Fundraising Dinner, usually held in October, has been canceled for 2020. We all miss the social aspect of ELIAS and we thank you all for your patience and support during this unique time. We wish we all could get together – and we will as soon as possible!!

On another note, please remember that the Fall hunting will begin on October 1st and run through the end of February. Archery season begins on Oct. 1st. Further information on locations and seasons can be found on the following websites:

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8373.html>

<https://suffolkcountyny.gov/Portals/0/formsdocs/parks/Maps/ARCHERY%20INFO%202020-2021.pdf>

Stay Safe and Best Wishes to All!



Participants are always welcome at the Christmas Bird Counts

Christmas Bird Counts are going ahead, but it is up to each leader to determine if and how the count is to be conducted. Here are the leaders and the dates of the planned counts..

To participate please contact the leaders of each count:

Quogue-Water Mill CBC Sunday, December 20, 2020

Contact Steve Biasetti
sbiasetti@eastendenvironment.org

Central Suffolk Sunday, December 27, 2020

Contact Eileen Schwinn
beachmed@optonline.net

Orient Count Saturday, December 26 2019

Contact: John Sep at
JohnSep@optonline.net

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Bald Eagles *Continued from page 1*



Photo: Janis Hurley

NESTING FACTS

- Clutch Size: 1-3 eggs
- Number of Broods: One brood
- Egg Length: 2.3-3.3 in (5.8-8.4 cm)
- Egg Width: 1.9-2.5 in (4.7-6.3 cm)
- Incubation Period: 34-36 days
- Nestling Period: 56-98 days
- Egg Description: Dull white, usually without markings
- Condition at Hatching: Covered with light-gray down; eyes brown; gape, legs, and skin pink.

The hacking project ended in 1989, when the program accomplished its goal of establishing ten breeding pairs primarily in upstate New York. Since then the Bald Eagle program's focus has now shifted to finding and protecting nesting pairs in New York State, and monitoring their productivity. Bald Eagles continue to do well; in 2010 New York had 173 breeding pairs

which fledged 244 young. Each year, New York's Bald Eagles fledge about 10 percent more young eagles than the year before.

Bald Eagles build some of the largest and heaviest of all bird nests, some weighing hundreds of pounds. The nests are typically 5 to 6 feet in diameter and 2 to 4 feet tall although a few have reached the depth of eight feet. The shape ranges from cylindrical to conical to flat. The nest is usually located high in a tall, live white pine tree near water. Both sexes bring materials to the nest, but the female does most of the placement. They weave together sticks and fill in the cracks with softer material such as grass, moss, or cornstalks. The inside of the nest is lined first with lichen or other fine woody material, then with downy feathers and sometimes sprigs of greenery. Near the coastlines, ground nests are built of whatever is available, including kelp and driftwood. Nests can take up to three months to build and may be reused with additions and redecorating each year.

The largest Bald Eagle nest on record, in St. Petersburg, Florida, was 2.9 meters in diameter and 6.1 meters tall. Another famous nest—in Vermilion, Ohio—was shaped like a wine glass and weighed almost two metric tons. It was used for 34 years until the tree blew down.

The Bald Eagle is a long-lived bird, with a

life span in the wild of more than 30 years. The Bald Eagle mates for life, returning to nest in the general area (within 250 miles) from which they fledged. Once a pair selects a nesting territory, they use it for the rest of their lives. The oldest record of 38 years of age is for a New York Bald Eagle tagged in 1997 and unfortunately hit by a car in 2015.

Hopes are high that Bald Eagles will continue to expand in New York and elsewhere, repopulating areas from which they have disappeared. In the meantime, our challenge is to secure sufficient suitable habitat and to limit human disturbance within these habitats, allowing the species to continue to live and expand in New York. I contend that the Eagles have decided that there is suitable habitat in areas that do not fit the model of ideal habitat. Let's take a look at Long Island recent Bald Eagle recovery. Yes, there is suitable habitat on Long Island for nesting pairs of Bald Eagles, however, such habitat would not rank high on the any listing for preferred Bald Eagle nesting habitat.

The first reported Bald Eagle nesting on Long Island, since pre-industrial revolution days, was from a large parcel of private land on Eastern Long Island around 2008. Since then successful nests have been spotted in more urban areas around central and western Long Island. It still requires a bit of luck, patience, and skill to find one of our resident Bald Eagle pairs. If one checks Cornell University's eBird website, you can find information on recent observations which might help you locate one of these magnificent birds.

Focusing on Long Island, a search of the Cornell University eBird annual observational data, provided an interesting picture of the Bald Eagle's observations around Long Island. Please note that each observation does not indicate the level of the Long Island population. While the data does show tremendous growth in the Long Island Bald Eagle population, it

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The Bald Eagle

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Figure 1. Bald Eagle reported observations from Suffolk County during the year 2000.

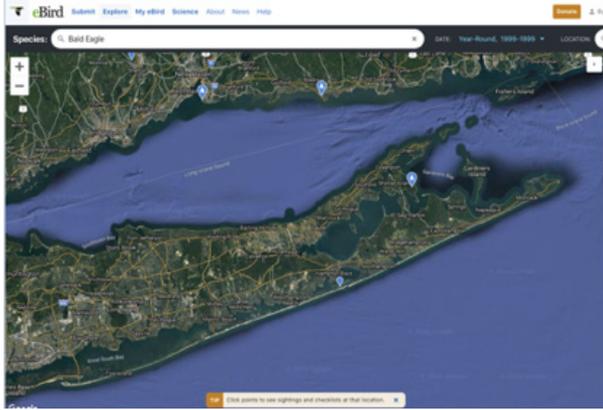


Figure 2. Bald Eagle reported observations from Suffolk County during the year 2009.

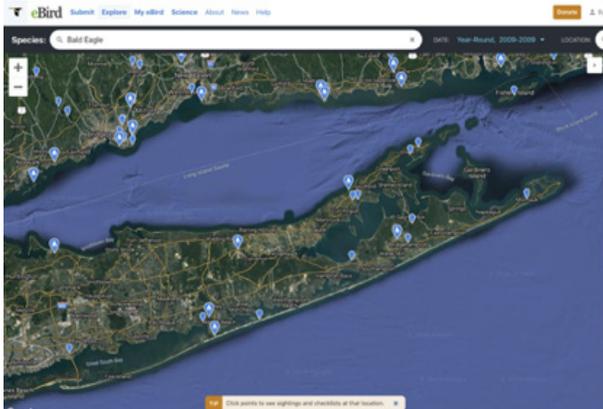
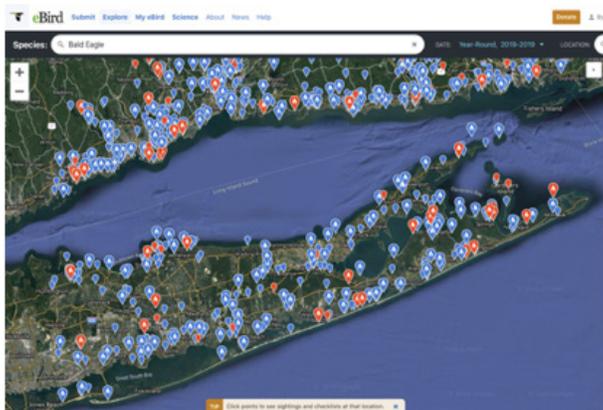


Figure 3. Bald Eagle observations reported from Suffolk County during the year 2019.



does not provide us any direct population levels. The three maps (Figures 1, 2, and 3) demonstrate the bald eagle observations for the years 2000, 2009 and 2019.

This remarkable increase in the reported observations over the past twenty years is a direct result of the restoration efforts by New York and neighboring states. Moreover, these images demonstrate the Eagle's ability to adapt to a more urban environment. While Long Island does have some very large tracts of land where Bald Eagles can nest and raise their young, several nests

are very close to human activity. One western Suffolk County nest in particular is adjacent to a motel parking lot and readily visible. These birds apparently have adapted to the gathered photographers and birders who visit them almost daily.

Most of the nesting Bald Eagle pairs on Long Island are in areas (private property, federal, state or county parks) where human activities can be controlled during critical nesting and fledging periods. However, recently Bald Eagle pairs have been seen checking out cell

phone towers along the South Shore of Long Island as potential nesting locations. They will, however, have to contend with the Osprey who hold the nesting lease atop these cell phone towers.

The Bald Eagle was adopted as the symbol of the United States because of its independence and strength. One of the largest birds of prey (raptors) found in North America, Bald Eagles stand about 30 inches

high, have a wingspan of 72-84 inches, and weigh between 8 and 14 pounds.

This majestic bird is easily identified in adult plumage by its unmistakable brown body set off by a white head and tail and bright yellow bill (male and female eagles look identical, except that the female is usually about one third larger and heavier than the male, as is typical in birds of prey). Sexual maturity and the characteristic white head and tail are achieved at five years of age. The word bald in the Eagle's name comes from a word in Old English that means white headed.

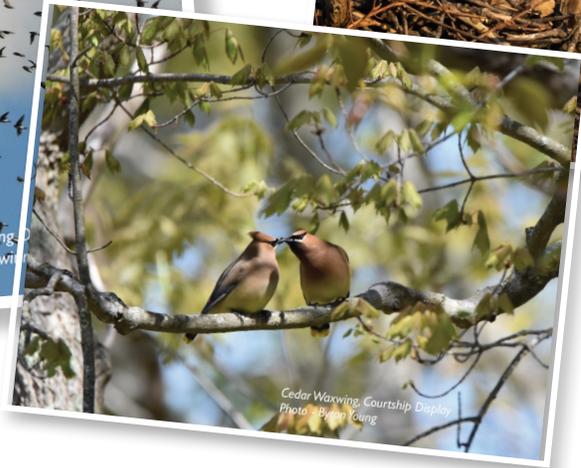
Immature Bald Eagles lack the white head and tail. They are mostly chocolate brown with varying amounts of white over the body, tail, and underwings. Juvenile Bald Eagles are often mistaken for immature Golden Eagles, which are much rarer in New York.

Despite their fierce image, Bald Eagles are actually quite timid and opportunistic. Since their primary prey is fish, Bald Eagles are sometimes called sea eagles, though they will take some mammals, waterfowl, seabirds, and carrion, especially during winter.

Bald Eagles' aerial courtship is an amazing display of avian abilities. The pair soars high in the sky, begins a dive, and interlocks talons while descending in a series of somersaults. Bald eagles produce only one or two offspring per year, rarely three. In New York, the young fledge by mid to late summer at about 12 weeks of age. By 20 weeks they are largely independent.

Bald Eagles are wholly North American, and currently are found in every state except Hawaii, as well as throughout Canada. Eagles prefer undisturbed areas near large lakes and reservoirs, marshes and swamps, or stretches along rivers where they can find open water and their primary food, fish.

Eagles will often south in winter to areas where water remains open. Prior to the 1900s, they used as many as 80 nest sites



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NEWSLETTER

The Bald Eagle

Continued from page 4

in New York, primarily in the northern and western parts of the state.

Wintering grounds are from southern Canada south, along major river systems, in intermountain regions, and in the Great Plains. Many hydroelectric plants, including some in New York, provide suitable wintering habitat for Bald Eagles.

Bald Eagles have always been seen as competitors with humans for important wild food sources and as threats to farm animals – at one time, bounties were even offered for killing them.

Rather than do their own fishing, Bald Eagles often go after other creatures' catches. A Bald Eagle will harass a hunting Osprey until the smaller raptor drops its prey in midair, where the Eagle swoops it up. A Bald Eagle may even snatch a fish directly out of an Osprey's talons. Fishing mammals (even people sometimes) can also lose prey to Bald Eagle piracy.

Had Benjamin Franklin prevailed, the U.S. emblem might have been the Wild Turkey. In 1784, Franklin disparaged the national bird's thieving tendencies and its vulnerability to harassment by small birds. "For my own part," he wrote, "I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen the Representative of our Country. He is

a Bird of Bad Moral Character. He does not get his living honestly. ... Besides he is a rank Coward: The little Kingbird barely bigger than a sparrow attacks him boldly and drives him out of the District."

Sometimes even the national bird has to cut loose. Bald Eagles have been known to play with plastic bottles and other objects pressed into service as toys. One observer witnessed six Bald Eagles passing sticks to each other in midair.

Immature Bald Eagles spend the first four years of their lives in nomadic exploration of vast territories and can fly hundreds of miles per day. Some young birds from Florida have wandered north as far as Michigan, and birds from California have reached Alaska.

Bald Eagles occasionally hunt cooperatively, with one individual flushing prey towards another.

It is always exciting to see the white head and tail of the Bald Eagles soaring above you. Eagles usually keep their wing board straight so keep your eyes out Long Island, and enjoy the sight. 

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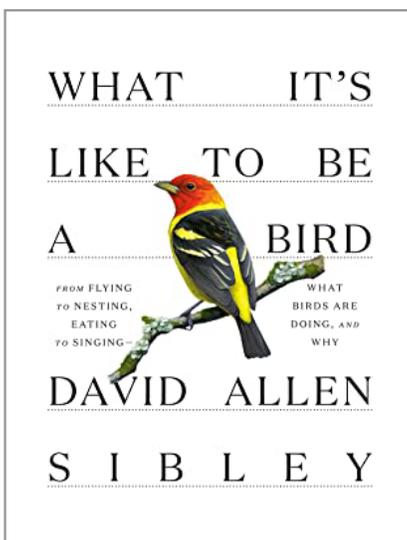
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Why's that bird doing that?

Reviews by Eileen Schwinn

With the Holiday Season quickly approaching, and the current health situation somewhat restricting most of our normal activities, here are a few book suggestions you might wish to consider – as gifts for others or for yourself!



What It's Like To Be A Bird – from Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing – What Birds Are Doing, and Why

By David Allen Sibley.

Known for his outstanding area Field Guides, Sibley provides a beautifully illustrated volume which focuses on familiar backyard birds that can be easily identified and observed by all. Originally, Sibley started this project as a children's book, however he soon found it moving into a greater field of appeal. The text is written for adults but its non-technical approach make it an easy sharing experience for the whole family – parents and grandparents, and children – to enjoy. Eighty-four birds are life-sized illustrated

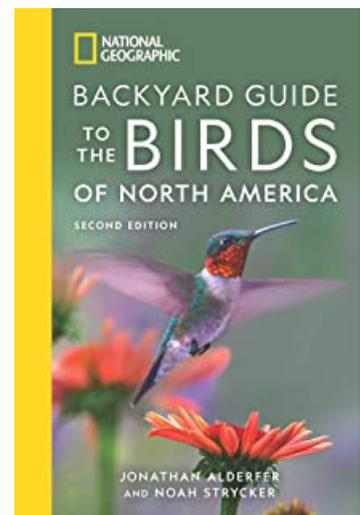
– including a Bald Eagle (head and talon only!!) – with some behaviors, nests, and habitats filling in the two page spread for each species. New bird watchers and grizzly, long-time birders can learn something new here! And you'll hopefully be able to answer those constant questions of “Why's that bird doing that?”



“I Love Birds” – Fifty-two Ways to Wonder, Wander and Explore Birds with Kids

by Jennifer Ward.

Divided by the four seasons, there are indoor and outside activities, all designed to promote creativity, encourage exercise, and in some cases, to facilitate relaxation. Most of all, it's designed to encourage stewardship for living things. Not a field guide, the illustrations are pretty basic. This is a wonderful book to share with any elementary school aged child or grandchild who enjoys looking at birds! The activities can fill 15 minutes, or a few hours. Who knows – combined with a basic field guide, you might really kick-off what could become a life-time of birding awareness and enjoyment.



Backyard Guide to the Birds of North America

A National Geographic book authored by Jonathan Alderfer and Noah Strycker.

The second edition, published in 2019, covers 150 birds most likely seen in most backyards. OK, OK, the chances of a Chestnut-backed Chickadee showing up at my backyard feeder are practically zero, but it's nice to know there are more than the also illustrated Black-capped Chickadees in this world! A really nice companion to the “I Love Birds” book, this book is useful from inside cover to back cover. With maps for location, ID hints, food choices, and a really fine Basics introduction, the authors’ “field guide” section arranges the bird families in the same layout as the usually accepted traditional field guides do. Geese and ducks at the beginning, Cardinals and Tanagers at the end. Great practice for finding “your bird” as you – or your protégée – progresses. It's small size make it perfect for sitting by the window or walking in the yard. Various bird “tidbits” are sprinkled throughout, as are occasional photographs, making this an interesting book to just sit down and read! 🐦



Of course, any birder is happy to receive a birding book during the Holiday Season. Hopefully any or all of these will not only become a welcome addition to your own shelf, they might even help form a lasting bond between a friend or relative to the Wonderful World of Birds!!

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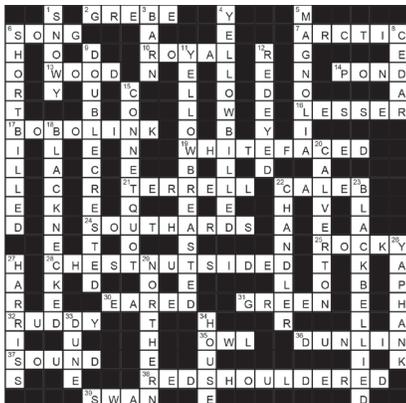
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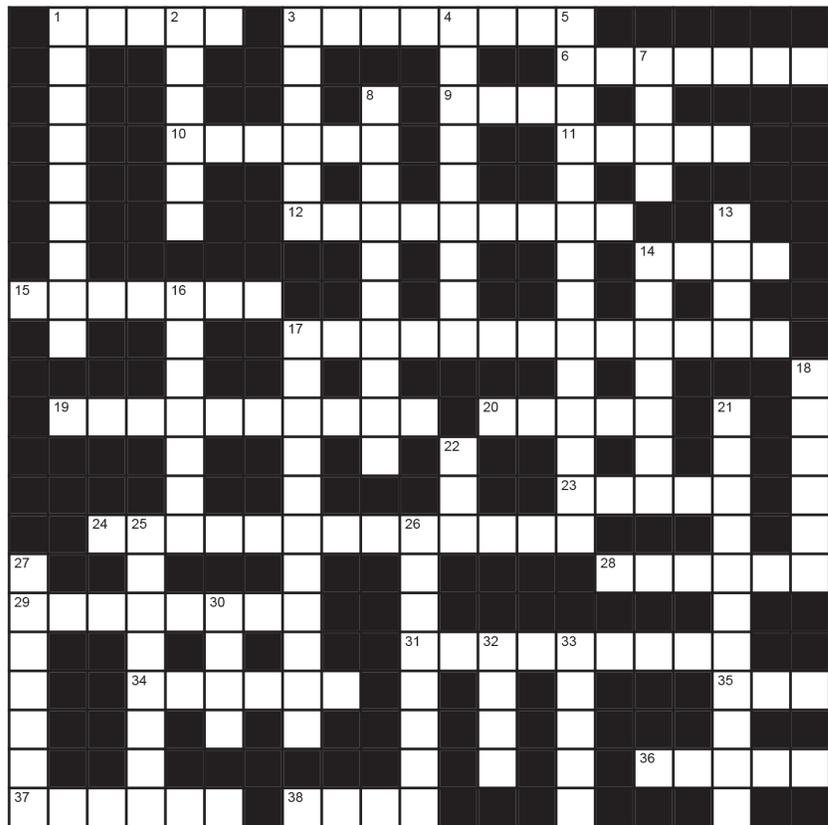
Our mission is to be an inspiration to those who feel a sense of kinship with Long Island by encouraging an appreciation for the natural world and a commitment to the environment.

Places to Bird

Answers to Summer puzzle by Tom Moran



Something to do while social distancing? Tom Moran



Across

- 1. _____ 23 Across, or _____ Black-backed Gull, Gray Owl, Crested Flycatcher, you get the idea.
- 3. A good thing to be when birding while social distancing, or a Sandpiper, not Spotted.
- 6. _____ Long Island Audubon Society
- 9. 14 Down _____
- 10. Black or Yellow-billed _____, or someone who claims to see an Ivory-billed one
- 11. _____ Sandpiper; very small with yellow legs
- 12. Try the Stone Bridge Watch in Setauket for the Common _____
- 14. Common or Fish
- 15. Yellow-shafted here
- 17. _____ Sparrow. I prefer *Oh, Canada, Canada* over *Old Sam Peabody*.
- 19. _____ Grackle. not Great-tailed of the south.
- 20. _____ Sparrow. A regular at Arshamomaque this season
- 23. 1 Across _____
- 24. _____ Sapsucker. Used by Yosemite Sam to insult Bugs Bunny!
- 28. _____ Sandpiper. Seen at Oregon Rd with a Buffy this summer.
- 29. _____ Golden 34 Across, thin billed, check the sod farm at CR 51 and 111 in Sept.
- 31. 29 Across _____. Yellow and black, favors thistle.
- 34. 29 Across Golden _____
- 35. _____ and Wilson's Phalarope in area this September.

- 36. _____ Staub, a popular NY Mets ball player or a type of blackbird.
- 37. Northern _____.
- 38. _____ Sparrow.

Down

- 1. Purple _____ uncommon in Florida, but... Say no more.
- 2. 29 Across _____. Last September at Mecox.
- 3. Pine _____
- 4. Ruddy _____
- 5. _____ Warbler or Vireo.
- 7. _____ Song, a Led Zeppelin tune.
- 8. _____ Duck, formerly an Old Squaw.
- 13. 17 Down _____
- 14. _____ 9 Across. The salt water one
- 16. 29 Across _____ Grumman Grassland is a good place to look spring through fall.
- 17. _____ 13 Down
- 18. _____ Hummingbird, 2017 Aquebogue
- 21. Northern or Louisiana _____
- 22. *Who cooks for you* is an example of one species' call
- 25. _____ Starling.
- 26. _____ Gull, a real jokester.
- 27. Cedar or Bohemian _____
- 30. You old _____.
- 32. _____ Sparrow. An August/September bird at Jones Beach West End
- 33. _____ Sparrow, falling ping pong song.

SHELLEY VAKAY REMEMBERED

by

Bob Adamo

Sue Benson

MaryLaura Lamont

and

Gigi Spates



Shelley Vakay, photo supplied by the family

ELIAS was saddened to learn that Shelley G. Vakay died in May at the age of 86. Although she had not been active lately many members remembered her spirit and enthusiasm and love of birding. Some remembrances follow.

From MaryLaura Lamont

If there was ever a saint who walked among us it was Shelley Vakay. Not a stranger herself to some awful hard times that life can throw at you, she always remained graceful, kind, compassionate, funny, giving, and sharing in light of her own misfortunes. So I used to think her a saint. I'll never forget on a Christmas Bird Count we went to an old woman's house someplace on the south fork to count birds about her yard and surroundings. Shelley knew the lady so she let all of us in to warm ourselves from the cold. The older woman had recently had a great loss in her life and she started crying so Saint Shelley sat with her, held her hand, and listened with compassion and brought comfort to that lady while the rest of us excused ourselves to go outside. It was a personal moment and that was Shelley Vakay — always giving and being a compassionate friend to someone in need.

Shelley Vakay was one of the very first people to warmly welcome me into her group of birder friends, the old Moriches Bay Audubon Society. It was about 1980 and she had come over to Sailors Haven, Fire Island with an adult environmental group outing that had been prearranged by Carl and Alta Mae Helms of Quogue Wildlife Refuge. As the ranger there I was to give them a good natural history tour/talk on the famous Sunken Forest. Half way through the tour I knew this would be a great group of people to join when, as I was babbling on at some stop on the boardwalk I was also keeping my eye on a black and white warbler that was right behind the group. I said "there's a black and white warbler right behind you all as I was talking and....." That's all I had to say! The whole group

turned so fast I thought half of them would fall off the boardwalk! That was the very beginning with my friendship with Shelley. I remember saying to her "Wow...this is a serious birding group to get such a good quick response to a migrating Black and white warbler!" She said "why don't you come to our meetings at Quogue Wildlife Refuge when you get off Fire Island for the winter"? I did and from then on Shelley was a good friend and companion bird partner. We would go birding together in various spots, or sometimes go botanizing, as she was also into wildflowers. She had me over several times to check out her flowers in her yard or she would come over to my place to see wildflowers in my woods. She gave me turtleheads one year and they flourished in those woods until finally either rabbits or deer consumed them.

She was always ready to take positions for Moriches Bay Audubon and was always one of the first to volunteer to head up and organize a worthwhile project, like the huge undertaking of hosting a NYState Bird Federation meeting, with hundreds from all over the state attending. Shelley was funny too. Once at an Audubon monthly meeting someone in the audience had said he had seen "2 immature eagles mating, an unusual occurrence surely because they were not adults yet." Shelley remarked out loud "oh-you know how teenagers are"!! The audience roared with laughter!

One winter's day she had me over to see a Dickcissel at her feeder. It was the first and only one I have ever seen to this day. The first bald eagle I ever saw on Long Island (an immature-probably one of those teenagers she earlier remarked about) was at the Eastport pond right next to her house, and she was there with me when we saw it. She would come over our house with gifts for my kids and in those days they used to call her Aunt Shelley. She would bring some botany books for us adults as well. You know what was the true and best gift of all? It was Shelley herself, and now a light has gone from this world, and it makes it darker for us who knew and loved her. Rest in peace..... good Shelley Vakay. She was the best of us.

MaryLaura Lamont

From Sue Benson

I was lucky to have started my official (Christmas Bird Counts) birding with Shelley. She was everything you could wish for in a companion, very funny, kind and knowledgeable. She taught me about having a good time birding and also sticking to rules, accurate and honest counting, staying in our territory and all the while enjoying every minute. Lucky to be with her for counts, big day events and a garden club trip to Chelsea Flower Show. Shelley, her sister Kathy and I were the only birders on that trip. Life birds and endless guffaws. I will miss you Shelley and thank you for all you gave me.

Sue Benson

From Gigi Spates

Shelley, I am sitting outside to write this piece to honor the outdoor woman that you were! You lived across a then-quiet road from the eastern Eastport Pond and kept track of its feathered inhabitants the year round. At your home you maintained multiple bird feeders and observed them eagerly from multiple windows. You both led and followed in birding walks and bird counts, willingly and enthusiastically sharing your knowledge. You knew your botany too, viewing and discussing plants on many a field walk. You had great humor yet poignancy—even anger—about human-caused loss of habitat, an example of which is your across-the-street pond accommodating less and less water birds as the growing neighborhood created more and more disturbance with lights, sounds and traffic.

For me, Shelley was a role model of quiet tenacity. She was a highly skilled female birder among almost all male birders, men, many of whom at the time only reluctantly acknowledged her abilities. In that way she became a link between an older generation of women “standing behind their man” and a younger generation of women as equals in bird identification, and more importantly as “standing on their own two feet” — and without arrogance.

Thank you, Shelley, for of this and more, like your homemade chocolate cakes, your will-to-live, and certainly your *joie de vivre*.

Gigi Spates

From Bob Adamo

Shelley Vakay spent 86 years on this earth, and is now spending eternity with her Lord, along with deceased family and friends...and no one deserves this reward more than Shelley. Her life span was filled with works of love, understanding, consideration and charity. She always put others needs before her own, and did so without hesitation. Her smile never faltered and her words always helped – no matter the subject, or the situation at hand.

Shelley was an Eastport girl her whole life. Born there, schooled there, and after graduating from it's high school, took her first job at the Adelwerth's Bus Company, which is still in business at the same Eastport location. While working there, she met Jack Vakay, a fellow employee, who would become her future husband. Jack, along with some of his friends, built the house on East Pond Lane, which was home to Shelley, Jack, and their 3 children, Brenda, Scott and Neal.

Shelley had many interests that kept her busy, She was a member of the Eastport Bible Church for over 50 years, and took part in the many services it provided to the community. As a church Steward for many years, she provided food for church events, organized and planned social events, and delivered meals to the sick.

Shelley had a very strong affection for the natural world, which fostered her support for many wild-life organizations throughout her life. She was a longtime Audubon member with the Moriches Bay Audubon Society, which is now the Eastern long Island Audubon Society. She was a strong supporter of the Quogue Wildlife Sanctuary, as well as a much respected board member of the Southampton Town Conservation Committee.

Shelley was also one of 3 parents who were responsible for establishing the first Cub Scout Troop in Eastport.

I was one of Shelley's birding friends, and spent many cherished moments with her, both in the field and at social events...some of which were made more enjoyable, when they entailed her baking a "sweetening agent" for the occasion.

While writing about her home above,

in my mind I was back in her kitchen looking out at one of the neat birds that were constantly being attracted to her bountiful feeders. Through the years Shelley provided many avian thrills for our birding community, along with expanding her neighbors knowledge of the bird world. She, of course, was the first person they would call if they needed help in identifying the mystery bird that was visiting their own feeders.

The earliest memory I have of Shelley is from 1982, when MBAS hosted the Annual Meeting of the Federation of N.Y.S. Bird Clubs, which since, has experienced a name change to the N.Y.S. Ornithological Association. Gil Raynor was the person most influential in our club volunteering for this huge job, and he did so knowing Shelley was his ace in the hole! He knew her gifts and talents, and his confidence in Shelley gave us all the motivation to believe our small club could successfully accommodate this large statewide organization. Through Shelley's constructive and warm disposition, her ability to match the correct member to a specific task, and her calmly keeping the schedule always moving ahead, she pulled it off in grand style! Her choice of Dennis Puleston as Banquet Speaker was perfect, with his presentation on Antarctica being simply, superb! Shelley then put the cherry on the cake, by giving each attendee a 4" high plush Penguin as a “favor” to commemorate this 3 day celebration!

Some other wonderful memories I have including Shelley are from the trips a number of MBAS members took to the Connecticut Lakes area in New Hampshire. These lakes are about 30 miles south of the Canada border in the town of Pittsborough, N.H. John Ruscica was the one responsible for organizing these great trips, which meant arranging for accommodations, hiring a bird guide, and offering the use of his very large van so we could all travel together. These trips took place in June of 1991, 1992 and 1993, with Shelley and her sister Kathy being an integral part of this happy group of birders. The rest of the crew was made up of Jim Clinton, Sr., myself, John, of course, and possibly Jim Clinton, Jr. and others, whom I can't think of now. We never tired of returning to this heavily wooded area, which produced many boreal breeding species, such as Black-backed Woodpecker,

Boreal Chickadee, Ruffed Grouse and Mourning Warbler. We also looked forward to our nightly excursions to the salt licks outside of town to see moose of all sizes and ages, getting their fill of this needed mineral...the orangey tan coats of the smaller juveniles are memorable. One sighting in particular that thrilled Shelley and me was of a pair of Evening Grosbeaks, who were "gritting" along the side of a country road. They were both in "high" breeding plumage, which meant their bills were covered in an intensively bright chartreuse color. Neither of us had ever seen this plumage in the field, due to the time of year they normally migrate through Long Island in the spring and the fall. We found this field mark illustrated in our bird guides, along with an explanation of this adaptation...amazed to have never noticed it before.

Conversely, like life, all our birding trips were not successful. I'm reminded of the short trip Shelley and I took down to Dune Road, in the hope of finding the Northern Shrike that had been reported earlier in the day. As we waited in the Tiana Beach parking lot for the bird to appear, we caught up on life. While the Shrike didn't return, the original finder of this "good" bird did, and this is how we met Orhan Birol. Orhan, originally from Turkey, and just retired from Wall Street, was new to birding. We found him to be a friendly and enthusiastic fellow, and stayed on after he left to see the bird for ourselves... but it wasn't meant to be. What was meant to be was the time Shelley and I spent together hoping for an unusual bird, getting shut out on that level, but still being very thankful to be in the moment. I miss those moments with Shelley!

It was Shelley's wish to be cremated. She had asked her son Neal to make an urn out of Wormy Chestnut wood to hold her remains. Jack created a work of art, using a number of woods, topping it with a carved 3 dimensional Black-capped Chickadee, which is a work of heart!

A memorial service was held at Eastport Bible Church on October 3rd.

I wish to thank Shelley's son Neal, his wife Stephani, and her longtime friend Helen Tuttle for being most helpful to me in writing this tribute. 

Bob Adamo

Field Trips this Fall



NORTH FORK COUNTY PARK Although greatly curtailed this year on Sept. 20 ELIAS sponsored a trip to North Fork County Park. To keep the groups small, three groups headed out in different directions. The park being big enough to allow this. Everyone enjoyed coming across flocks of Cedar Waxwings and a few warbler species moving around.



ROBERT MOSES & THE FIRE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
On October 10 it was off to Robert Moses and The Fire Island Lighthouse. It turned into a windy blustery day. Some hawks were flying. A few Merlins flew by, along with a Peregrine Falcon, an Osprey and a Northern Harrier. The group was on the lookout and found Red-breasted Nuthatches and Pine Siskins, two of the irruptive species this year. Many Yellow-rump Warblers (above) kept the group busy.

Masks and social distancing, oh yes!

Trips were announced via our Constant Content list. If you would like to be on the list, please sign up on our website. 

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COMMITTEES/PROJECTS

Field Trips: Eileen Schwinn 631-728-8342

Programs: Suzi Stewart 516-443-4906
and Bob Adamo 631-369-1958

**Conservation &
Bluebird Restoration:**
Gigi Spates 631-765-1436

Education: Evelyn Voulgarelis 631-727-0417
& Suzi Stewart 516-443-4906

Newsletter Editor & Publicity:
Sally Newbert 631-281-6008
eliasosprey@optonline.net

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