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65 Years in Rockland County

In this issue of *The Observer*:

- 2012-2013: Our 65th Season!
- Christmas Bird Count – 2012 Results
- Osprey Numbers Rise Nationally
- Why I Love Feeding My Backyard Birds
- Irene Taketh, Sandy Returneth
- President's Message
- Welcome New and Returning Members!
- Notes and Sightings: September – November 2012
- Upcoming Nature Programs
- Upcoming Field Trips
- Announcements & Special Events

2012-2013: Our 65th Season!

Rockland Audubon Society became a chapter of the National Audubon Society in June 1947, making 2012-2013 our 65th season. We hope you, our members and friends, will come to a program or join us on a field trip and help us celebrate this milestone.

Christmas Bird Count – 2012 Results

By Alan Wells, CBC Compiler & RAS Webmaster

The 66th Annual Rockland County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was conducted on December 16, 2012. Thirty-nine field counters covered eight of the nine sub-regions within the count circle. Air temperatures remained near 40°F with a light to moderate rain persisting throughout much of the day. All water bodies were open and ice-free.

Field observers counted a total of 13,837 individual birds, representing 87 species. Feeder counters at three locations added an additional 383 individuals of 21 species, all of which were also observed by the field counters. One additional species, American Wigeon, was reported during count week (three days before and three days after count day).

Overall, the number of species counted (88) is typical of recent years. The total number of individuals, 14,220, was the lowest recorded since 1976. However, the missing counts from Area 2 account for much of the undercount. (*Note: During 2007-2011 Area 2 averaged 1,812 individuals. Adding this number to the 2012 total brings the count to 16,032, a value still on the low side.*) The top five species—**European Starling** (3,568), **Canada Goose** (3,207), **Ring-billed Gull** (1,403), **Common Merganser** (840), and **Mallard** (718)—made up 68% of the total number observed. The full count is posted, along with past years, on www.rocklandaudubon.org. The highlights are given below.

Increases

Northern Shoveler – 2012 was the highest recorded count, 133 compared to the previous high of 94 in 2011.

Great Blue Heron – the 2012 count of 53 surpassed the previous high of 42 in 1999.

Bald Eagle – the 2012 count of 44 individuals (18 juveniles and 26 adults) topped the old record of 29 established in 2007.



<< Bald Eagle © Alan W. Wells

Decreases

Canvasback – continues to decline; only 16 seen in 2012 compared to the average 181 (1947-2011).

Herring Gull – seven seen in 2012 compared to the average 914 from 1947 through 2011. Numbers have declined substantially since about 2000, likely the result of capping and other waste management practices at the Clarkstown and Haverstraw landfills.

American Crow – 260 seen in 2012. This was the 12th lowest count since 1947 and the lowest count since 1970.

Red-winged Blackbird – 26 seen in 2012. The average for the entire 1947-2011 period is 678.

Common Grackle – 40 seen in 2012 compared to the 1947-2011 average of 360. The large roosting flocks typically found in Piermont Marsh were not evident.

Canvasback © Alan W. Wells >>

Misses

Yellow-rumped Warbler – seen in 51 of 65 years; none in 2012.

Field Sparrow – seen in 55 of 65 years; none in 2012.

Swamp Sparrow – seen in 58 of 65 years; none in 2012.

Purple Finch – seen in 58 of 65 years; none in 2012.

Other Counts of Note

Brant – four seen at Haverstraw Bay County Park. This is only the third time since 1947 that Brant have found their way onto the Rockland count.

Red-throated Loon – the three seen in 2012 (one in Haverstraw Bay and two near Piermont) equal the total number seen in the previous 65 years (one in 1952, one in 1970, and one count week bird in 2006).





Wilson's Warbler – single individual seen on count day as well as on the two days preceding the count. Present in the backyard of a private residence near Piermont. This species is rare in Rockland even in the Spring and Summer, but there is at least one record from Rockland County as late as December 19 dating back to 1961.

<< Wilson's Warbler © Elda Dow

Most Disappointing Find

Barred Owl – a freshly killed individual found on the road near Haverstraw Bay County Park. This species was previously unknown from this area of the County.

In closing, Gene Brown, who has participated in 64 of the 66 RAS CBCs submitted his original watercolor of a Red-breasted Nuthatch, along with this quotation from *Birds Over America* by Roger Tory Peterson (1948): "...the Christmas Bird Count will continue to give us clues. But even though there are many nuggets that ornithologists can mine from this rich load of information, to me and to my friends it is our way of celebrating the holidays, an ornithological ritual that has come to represent Yuletide more than Santa Claus or the Christmas tree."



Red-breasted Nuthatch (watercolor) © Eugene Brown

Osprey Numbers Rise Nationally

By Caroline McDonald, RAS Board Member

The annual Hook Mountain Hawk Watch is never a disappointment. While last year's highlight was the thousands of Broad-winged Hawks counted in a single day, this year the Ospreys were a standout and quite entertaining. Many were seen flying overhead with a large fish in tow, freshly caught out of the Hudson River.

And while the number of migrating Ospreys didn't come close to the amount of Broad-winged and other hawks, Osprey numbers were up this year. Hook Mountain counters reported (Hawk Migration Association of North America; <http://www.hmana.org/>):

- In September, 315 Ospreys were counted, compared to 261 in September 2011.
- In October, 89 were counted, compared to 34 in 2011.
- In November, 2 were counted, compared to 1 in 2011.

In fact, according to media reports, Osprey are making a comeback nationally. An online search turned up these headlines: in July 2012, "Volunteers Help the Osprey Stage a Comeback in New Jersey"; April 2012, "Osprey Comeback Complete on [Chesapeake] Bay"; July 2012, "Ospreys Make a Comeback on Southern Michigan"; and in August 2012, "Osprey Making a Big Comeback in Ohio."

Rockland's Hook Mountain counts also reflect this trend. Since 1970 there has been a slow but steady increase in the number of migrating Osprey (Figure 1) over the Hook. Historically, Osprey did nest in our area. *Bull's*

Birds of New York State (1974) noted nesting near Croton Point in the 1890s and near West Point in the 1870s. Unfortunately, despite efforts to attract them, nesting in recent years has been largely unsuccessful. The 2000-2005 NY Breeding Bird Atlas lists one confirmed and one probable nesting location along the Hudson River bordering Rockland.

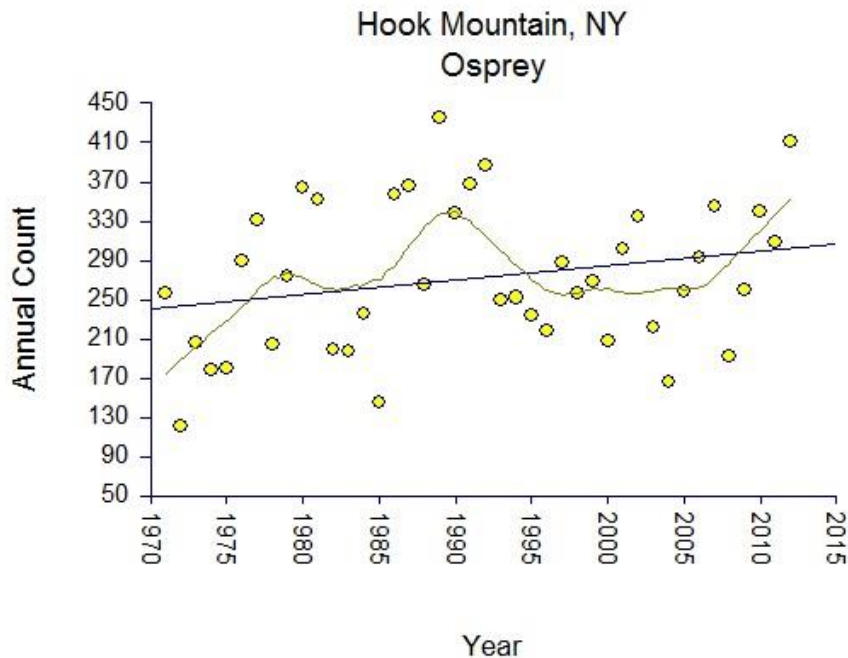


Figure 1. Annual Osprey Fall migration counts for Hook Mountain, Rockland County, N.Y. Data from <http://www.battaly.com/hook/>

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) naturalist and *Hudson River Almanac* editor Tom Lake tells *The Observer*, “For many, many years we had no confirmed nesting along Hudson tidewater but in the last 4-5 years it appears we have had one or two successful nestings, the most obvious one on a light tower in the Tappan Zee Bridge.”

Osprey populations declined by 90% between 1950 and 1970, when nesting pairs plummeted from more than 1,000 pairs to about 100 pairs. The insecticide DDT caused egg shell thinning in Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Brown Pelican and other birds. Banning DDT in 1972 has contributed to the rebound of Osprey populations, according to National Audubon.

The NYSDEC says the breeding population in New York declined from an estimated 1,000 active nests in the 1940s between New York City and Boston, to an estimated 150 nests in 1969. Since the ban of the insecticide DDT in New York in 1971 – and in the rest of the country in 1972 – the NYSDEC reports the population has been making a slow comeback. In 1995, there were 230 breeding pairs on Long Island alone. In 1983, the osprey was downgraded to “Threatened” from its 1976 listing as “Endangered,” and in 1999 it was downgraded from “Threatened” to “Special Concern.”

Ospreys have benefited from active management, including artificial nesting platforms and reintroducing birds into areas where the species had been decimated, National Audubon says. Audubon also reports that the global population of the birds is now 460,000, with 211,500 in the Continental U.S.

New Jersey has made a big effort to bring the birds back. Its Endangered and Nongame Species Program reports that the State’s Osprey population had “another great year,” even after strong storms hit during nesting season. An average of 1.81 young per active nest was reported, down only slightly from last year’s record high of 2.07. New Jersey’s statewide census has not been conducted since 2009, when 486 nesting pairs were documented, but the State estimates the population is well above 500 nesting pairs. In 1984 there were about 101 nests compared to 486 in 2009, and current estimates are now more than 500 Osprey nests in New Jersey.



A few interesting Osprey fishing facts from National Audubon:

- Ospreys are great anglers, successful in one out of four dives for fish
- Ospreys are the only raptor whose front talon can pivot backward.
- Bald eagles and Great Black-backed Gulls chase Ospreys, forcing them to drop their prey (eagles sometimes catch the stolen prey in mid-air)
- Ospreys are known as "fish hawks" because 99.9% of their diet is live fish (they also eat small mammals, snakes, turtles, frogs, sandpipers, and ducks, perhaps when fish are scarce)
- After snagging fish with their talons, Ospreys shake excess water in mid-air and minimize drag by arranging the fish head first
- The largest Osprey catch on record is four pounds, but most fish caught are 1-2 pounds

<< Osprey © Alan W. Wells

Why I Love Feeding My Backyard Birds

By Caroline McDonald, RAS Board Member

Everyone who enjoys watching birds has moments they will never forget. Sightings that are surprising or even magical. The birds in my yard are special and I look forward to seeing them as the seasons change. And it's nice to know that, according to Audubon and other sources, the same birds often return annually.

Knowing the Gray Catbirds and the House Wrens – that have nested and raised their young in and around my yard – will be leaving is easier, because the White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos will soon be making their annual appearance.



Red-breasted Nuthatch © Caroline McDonald

Then there are the surprises, such as the pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches that showed up in October and have stayed. It was the suet cakes that enticed them and that have made them residents. And the magical moment, when I glanced out of the window in November after Superstorm Sandy, and could not believe I was looking at a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The bird stayed at the feeders for two days and then was gone. I took a picture to prove it – as well as photos of the nuthatches and a juvenile Cooper's Hawk that shows up every so often.

Then there was the Eastern Screech-Owl – red morph, to be exact. In November, one day when I was working at home, I became aware of the constant scolding of several Blue Jays in the yard. I also noticed they were flying at the back of the big Silver Maple. I went to investigate with my binoculars and discovered the owl, sound asleep in a hole in the tree, in plain view of the jays. I also recalled seeing Northern Cardinals last summer flying at that same place on the tree. Got a photo of the owl, too. The very latest visitors are a pair of Common Redpolls and a Pine Siskin.

There are also many other visitors: the Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Mourning Doves, Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Carolina Wrens and Red-tailed Hawks to name a few.

These are some of the reasons why I feed the birds all year-around. There is always sunflower and millet seed, thistle seed (Niger) and a few suet cakes in the back and side yards – and I make sure the feeders are squirrel-proof. I also have two good-sized cherry trees in the back, which attracted flocks of Cedar Waxwings last summer.

Now I have eight to ten Northern Cardinals coming to the feeder on any given morning. They have raised their young here, which I have witnessed begging their parents for food at the feeders. The cardinals appear to be an extended family and happily there is enough food to support them. In fact, for the last Backyard Bird Count I reported 17 species and the year before that, 20. Not bad for a fifth-of-an-acre.

But is it good for the *birds* to feed them? As much as I have enjoyed having them visiting my yard, I also want to do the best thing for them, so I did some research. Studies have shown that wild birds can survive just fine without feeders, as seed from feeders makes up only about 25% of their diet. They still eat seeds from other plants and insects to make up most of their diet. So there is no worry about them maxing out on any given commercial bird seed. They also will quickly replace feeder offerings if taken away. This isn't to say that feeding them and providing fresh water doesn't help them get through tough times, such as when the ground is covered with snow and ice. The most important part is that if I didn't feed them, I wouldn't have the joy of observing them.

As I see it, birds have survived on the planet longer than we have, and most likely have better sense than we do about what to eat. In fact, I don't remember ever seeing an overweight bird. Feeding them is my pleasure and I'm glad they choose to indulge in the "Audubon Park" seed that I put out for them. *For information on backyard birding visit National Audubon's website:* <http://athome.audubon.org>

Irene Taketh, Sandy Returneth

By Alan Wells, RAS Webmaster

When long-standing RAS Board member Marianne Jenkins passed away in February 2007, RAS friends and family thought a memorial placed at one of her favorite birding spots would be a fitting tribute. Since she loved Piermont Pier, a natural wood bench that the Town of Piermont agreed could be placed midway along the south side of the pier near some mulberry trees (another favorite of Marianne's) was purchased. A small brass plaque inscribed with the words "Family and Friends Remember Marianne Jenkins" was set into the topmost slat of the backrest. On a cold, but sunny day in December 2009, family and RAS friends gathered for an informal dedication ceremony. Throughout the following year and much of the next, the bench was a popular spot to take in the panorama and escape the travails of modern life.



Friends and family dedicate bench in memory of Marianne Jenkins at Piermont Pier, December 2009 © Alan Wells

In late August of 2011, Hurricane Irene slammed into New York, bringing 60 mph winds and extreme high tides. The lower Hudson Valley took a direct hit and storm surges were estimated at approximately 4 to 8 ft. In the aftermath, Marianne's bench had disappeared and was presumably lost to the sea.

Fourteen months later, the lower Hudson Valley was hit by yet another hurricane, this time by the name of Sandy. We were spared a direct hit, but the storm still produced winds up to 75 mph and a storm surge of

approximately 14 ft. Low-lying areas of New York City and the Hudson River Valley were devastated. The town of Piermont was especially hard hit. The extent of the damage was chronicled in Robert Nahoum's 10-minute YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RW8j2CQSCig&feature=player_embedded.

A few days after the storm, a close friend of Marianne's, Carol Weiss, was reviewing the video and at 7:52 minutes in, noted amongst the debris a familiar-looking object. Several of us reviewed the photographs from the dedication ceremony and were able to confirm that Marianne's bench had indeed returned, albeit about 200 yards from its original position. It appears that Sandy had caused the sea to disgorge our long lost bench! A few days later, when Carol called the Town of Piermont to try to retrieve the bench, it was unfortunately nowhere to be found, so it was assumed that it had been removed as part of the cleanup effort.

We had given up hope of ever seeing Marianne's bench again, thinking that it had probably been sent to that giant mulch pile in the sky. But then on a fog-shrouded day in mid-January, we noticed that the mysterious disappearing bench had inexplicably reappeared. Not only had it reappeared, but it was back in its original mid-pier location. While we are still not exactly sure how this happened, we are grateful this remembrance of our dear Marianne has found its way home. Hopefully the bench can be refinished and once again provide a small island of respite in a busy world.



Marianne's Memorial Bench Returns! Piermont Pier, January 2013 © Alan Wells

President's Message

We are all here because of a common love, but do we ever stop to consider the most significant fact about birds? Am I talking about their color, their song, their diversity or the fact that they are among the accessible forms of wildlife for us to enjoy? No, but all of these attributes are a function of the one central fact about birds – they fly.

It's true that other life forms fly and equally true that there are flightless birds, but the fact that the vast majority of birds have powers of flight has everything to do with their presence in almost every habitat on earth and our ability to enjoy them.

Flight gives birds the ability to occupy a habitat in a three dimensional way that most other creatures can't. The diversity of birds in a particular habitat is attributable to the fact that they are not bound to the earth and can fill niches on a vertical plane as well as a horizontal one. Furthermore birds can wander far and wide in search of food, water, shelter and nesting sites. Flight allows birds to follow the availability of their preferred food to other locations, even other continents. Combined with exceptional vision, another important characteristic of birds, it enables them to survey vast expanses of territory in search of their needs.

Many birds have evolved to use bright color and song for their own reproductive purposes. A side effect of this is that we have grown to appreciate their beauty and seek to preserve them. Without flight to allow escape, however, bright colors and loud vocalizations would be non-adaptive – attracting every predator in the neighborhood.

Humans have always envied this special power of the birds. I hope I've provided you some food for thought on what that power means – both to birds and humans.

Jim Previdi

Welcome New and Returning Members!

Warren Adis, Janet F. Avery, C. Baver-Sorenson, Mildred Bernstein, Glenn Bloomfield, Dawne Bradford, Anthony Burlesco, Carolyn Charney, Elaine Chesnin, Jim Cinelli, Stephanie Cummins, Poppy Jack Galgano,

Matthew Gilson, Charlene Hicks, William Hochhausen, Bill & Marina Kaplan, Joel Kaplan, Renee Kramer, Jolie Lampkin, Linda Levin, Pearl Lewis, Elizabeth Lund, Sue Martin, Sheila Mc Combs, Liz Moazakitis, Barbara Napolitano, Bette A. Nussbaum, Kevin O'Connor, Patricia A. Palko, Carolyn Pascarella, Thomas Patton, James A. Pusch, Barbara S. Quinn, James Ramsey, David Robinson, Jean Satawa, Tillie Schwartz, Dennis Scott, Stanley Taylor, Carol Treglia, Raleigh Tozer, Paul Valerio, Ann Wheeler, Margaret Winter, Angela Yanette, Rose Yannuzzi

Notes and Sightings: September – November 2012

Compiled by Carol Weiss

Section 1: You should have been there

Sept. 1: While letting his boat drift into the Crumkill Creek in the Piermont-Tallman Mtn. marsh, Drew Ciganek caught a glimpse of an elusive Sora.

Sept. 3: Nine hummingbirds, 80 to 100 Chimney Swifts, and 18 Cedar Waxwings were spotted winging their way south, as well as 24 Osprey – all unusual numbers for Labor Day. Hummingbirds continued to cross the top of Hook Mtn. in September, with seven on the 10th and five on the 17th. Carol Weiss and others

Sept. 17: Elda and I went to Piermont Pier at about 5pm. Chris had been out earlier with his dad and spotted a Snowy Egret. We saw the egret and a Golden Plover on the flats north of the pier when the tide was very low. Tom Dow

Sept. 28: Entering Kennedy Dells Park around 9am, I was surprised to see an adult accipiter standing on a picnic table beyond the parking area. As I watched from the pavilion, the bird took wing, making two unsuccessful passes at a squirrel in the ball field. The second pass ended face to face, with the bird's outstretched talons striking ground several inches from the outstretched paws of the rattled, indignant squirrel, indecisive as to where to run next. The bird flew over to a fence, landing on a top rail next to a post. Squirrel followed suit, climbing the opposite side of the post, eye-level with the hawk. There it made a show of pretending it hadn't a care in the world. The bird stared at the squirrel's every move, while the squirrel never acknowledged the hawk's presence. This endured for five minutes, after which the hawk flew to another rail and finally into an adjacent conifer. Squirrel casually made its way along lower rails to the cover of trees. Given the lack of cover in the ball field this daring ploy may have been its best bet. It worked! The bird had "differentiating" field marks of both the Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. It was hunting in the open and did attempt to take the squirrel – more typical of a Cooper's Hawk, but I couldn't call it. Pat Murray

Sept. 22: Frank Bonanno reported a Ruby-throated Hummingbird at his feeder and a Common Nighthawk that flew over his house in Congers. *(If anyone had a later date for hummingbird this year, please let me know.)*

Sept. 30: About 5pm there were two American Golden-Plovers on the mud flat north of Piermont Pier. And in the weedy corner of the ball field, an interesting assortment of sparrows: Song (of course), Swamp, Savannah, and Lincoln's. Carol Weiss

Oct. 1: I had missed a good sighting of a favorite warbler, the Black-throated Blue, on spring migration. But at dawn this morning, two bright males were plucking yew berries just five or six feet from my bedroom window. Gene Brown

Oct. 4: In the early afternoon of this damp day I had at least 50, possibly more, very hungry Cedar Waxwings in my backyard. They were spread out all over my junipers, feeding on the berries. The whole flock took off after a half-hour. It stirred my blood! Doris Metraux

Oct. 11: From the Bear Mtn. overlook, 100 snow geese! And several hawk watchers, including myself, saw a Merlin chasing a bat – or was the bat chasing the merlin? Carol Weiss

Oct. 17: Palisades, N.Y. (LDEO). Leaving my building at work this evening, I saw a large bat and heard a distant Easter Screech-Owl repeatedly whinnying. Linda Pistolesi

Oct. 14: As I watched Great Egrets, I wondered if they wondered where all the fish or all the water had gone. Perhaps they were just thinking how good they looked reflected in Lake Tappan. Peter Johnson

Oct. 18: I work in NYC on the 8th floor. I just looked out of the windows to check the weather and sunset, and I saw what I thought was a swallow. It turned out to be a little bat, circling around and around above 66th Street. Does anyone know anything about bats and their migration? I thought they were all gone by now. Beverly Simone

Oct. 26: There is a Red-breasted Nuthatch in my yard helping itself to suet! It turns out there is a pair of the nuthatches, and as of today, Dec. 23, they are still in residence here. Caroline McDonald

Oct. 29: Common Mergansers on Lake Tappan in Blauvelt. I thought I might have seen a few yesterday, but they were too far away to say for sure, so I went back. Sure enough, I saw about 60 of them. Looking south from Blauvelt Rd., they were in the northeast corner of the lake. Peter Johnson



Nov. 3: I was stunned to see a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in my yard at the feeder yesterday. It was still in the yard today, flying back and forth between feeders for sunflower seeds. I took a photo through the window. I also had a juvenile Cooper's Hawk in the yard, but the Grosbeak was left unscathed. Caroline McDonald

<< Rose-breasted Grosbeak © Caroline McDonald

Nov. 6: Three Blue Jays were loudly squaking in my back yard and appeared to be attacking a large silver maple. When I went to investigate I was surprised to see a very visible red-morph Eastern Screech-Owl taking a nap in a cavity in the tree. The Blue Jays harassed the owl for the rest of the afternoon. Caroline McDonald

Nov. 14: Photographed a Hermit Thrush today in an area with a few small shrubs near the skating rink at Rockefeller Center in NYC – I work across the street. Caroline McDonald



Female Lesser Scaup © Alan W. Wells

Nov. 15: Two female Lesser Scaup on the ice-cutting pond, Rockland Lake; five Hooded Mergansers – four females and one male on Congers Lake; an adult Bald Eagle on Lake Welch; another feeding on a deer carcass just north of Lake Sebago. Carol Weiss

Nov. 18: Drew Ciganek watched and photographed a young Rufous Hummingbird feeding on the pineapple sage in his yard in Piermont. This is a second Rockland record!

Section 2: Non-raptors seen at Hook Mountain

Sept. 1: 106 Monarch butterflies

Sept. 10: 80 Double-crested Cormorants

Sept. 14: 6 Chestnut-sided Warblers

Sept. 17: Red-breasted Nuthatch

Sept. 24: White-throated Sparrow

Sept. 26: Blackburnian, Black-throated Green (several), Palm, Black-and-white, and Blackpoll warblers: all in a small flock, a few feet down from the summit

Sept. 27: Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Oct. 2: Common Nighthawk

Oct. 5: Bobolink, Indigo Bunting, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Palm Warbler

Oct. 7: Great Egret

Oct. 8: 200 Double-crested Cormorants, 600 Brant; 300 Canada Geese; 15 Tree Swallows

Oct. 12: 5000 - 10,000 Brant (Jim Previdi & Ron Conzo)

Oct. 13: 500 American Robins, 500 Yellow-rumped Warblers, Magnolia Warbler, Red Crossbill (immature male, or female), and Evening Grosbeak were just part of Tom Fiore's day list

Oct. 15: Red-throated Loon, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins

Oct. 21: Red-headed Woodpecker

Oct. 22: A single Horned Lark landed and stayed a while, feeding on grasses; 4 Purple Finches, 12 Pine Siskins

Oct. 25: Short-eared Owl

Oct. 27: Hermit Thrush

Nov. 5: Vesper Sparrow; Snow Bunting – 3 birds, or one bird seen three times

Section 3: New Rockland Records

First Rockland Record: Wilson's Storm Petrel, Oct. 30, 2012

Nov. 3: Just got my power (& computer) back. On Tuesday Oct. 30 as Superstorn Sandy was petering out, I saw a Wilson's Storm Petrel off the end of the pier. I also noted two White-winged Scoters, a Snow Bunting and Pipits, as well as some Brant. The day after, I watched a Dunlin there, when suddenly a Merlin dashed down and snatched it. I got pictures of the Merlin on top of a post feasting on his catch. Tom Dow

Two new 'late date' records

Nov. 5: Nyack Beach State Park. The first birds I met on the zig-zag path to the plateau were Yellow-rumped Warblers. It seems that these birds are more numerous, and their span of migration is longer than usual this year. I was startled by a spark of blue in the grass, which is strewn with storm wreckage. A tiny bird flitted there keeping low. There was a blob of yellow-green on its back and a coppery dab across its chest: a Northern Parula. Audubon called the species the Blue Yellow-back Warbler. Parulas keep their spring colors, so this was a beautiful sight in the fall landscape, at a rather late date. [Note: *The previous late date was Nov. 1, recorded in 1955.*] Turkey Vultures and Black Vultures soared above the Plateau. Some of them landed on the cliffs as a Peregrine Falcon sailed past. The vultures returned to the air, rising above the cliffs. The Peregrine returned and seemed to make a game of aiming toward one, then another, then another vulture in turn. The jest finished, it left the scene and the gliders continued their circling above the mountain. Gene Brown

Nov. 20: Blue-headed Vireo with gorgeous colors of white, green and blue at Hook Mountain. Jim Previdi and John Phillips. [Note: *This is a new late date for this species, surpassing Nov. 12, 2005 and Nov. 7, 1937. John took this picture in 2010.*]



Blue-headed Vireo © John Phillips

*Please continue to send in your observations of birds, especially those in an unusual place, an unusually high number spotted and counted, or an unusual time. These comments and observations will be in the next **Notes and Sightings**. Contact me by phone, 845-358-3659 or email cweiss1124@optonline.net.*

Upcoming Nature Programs

These programs are made possible through generous donations from our members and friends! Thank you!

Unless otherwise noted, **Nature Programs** are held on the first Friday of each month, September through June, at the **Community Center, Congers Lake Memorial Park**, located at 6 Gilcrest Road, Congers, N.Y., 10920. Meet at 7pm for refreshments and conversation, with a one-hour nature program following, beginning at 7:30pm. There is plenty of parking near the building, and it is handicap accessible. All RAS programs are open to the public and donations are greatly appreciated to help cover costs. If you would like to contribute a sweet or savory treat for the refreshments table, please add your name to the sign-up sheet at the meeting!

Feb. 1, 2013

Black Bears and How to Live with Them



Black Bear © Donald "Doc" Bayne

Speaker: Doc Bayne

Join educator and photographer Doc Bayne to learn about the life of the Black Bear and why we should be concerned about them and their habitat. Understanding the bears is essential to your safety, as well as theirs...learn what to do and what NOT to do should you encounter a bear!

Mar. 1, 2013

Investing in the Hudson's Future



Hudson River © Alan W. Wells

Speaker: Steve Stanne, NYSDEC

The DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, created in 1987, protects and improves the natural and scenic Hudson River watershed. Long taken for granted, ignored, abused and polluted, in recent decades the Hudson has been re-born, thanks to concerned citizens, advocacy groups and government. To continue this progress and address remaining problems, a new generation must be educated to take over as river stewards. The Hudson River Estuary Program lends critical support to this task, working with community-based non-profit groups, classroom teachers and government agencies.

Apr. 5, 2013

Tracking the American Crow



American Crow © Alan W. Wells

Speaker: Dr. Doug Robinson, Mt. St. Mary College, Newburgh, N.Y.

Dr. Doug Robinson has studied the American Crow as an on-going post-doctoral research project. Crows make an excellent study animal because of their social nature, longevity, and intelligence. Learn how Dr. Robinson and his students tag, band nestlings, and track and study crows in the mid-Hudson Valley. By having individuals marked, the study can gain insights into where the crows live, their interactions, and lifespan.

Please Note: At each of our programs, RAS is hosting a monthly **FOOD DRIVE** to help People to People help our neighbors!

Please bring some **non-perishable** food items to be donated to People to People!

Shopping List: cereal & oatmeal, canned juice & juice boxes, canned vegetables, canned tomatoes & tomato sauce, canned chili & beef stew, fruit cups (applesauce, peaches, etc.), soup (dry & canned), beans (dry & canned), macaroni & cheese (boxed), any kind of boxed pasta, flour, rice, sugar, canned tuna, mayonnaise (plastic jars please!), cooking oil (plastic bottles please!), peanut butter, jelly/jam, boxed and powdered milk.

Note: Hygiene items (diapers, toothpaste, toothbrushes, toilet paper, tissues, shampoo & conditioner, feminine hygiene products, deodorant, hand/body lotion) are also gratefully accepted! THANK YOU!

Upcoming Field Trips

Note: Please call the trip leader 24 hours ahead if you plan to join the group at the field trip site, rather than the designated meeting place!

Please check <http://www.rocklandaudubon.org/> for updates!

Audubon in the Parks is an initiative with Audubon New York and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation to advance bird conservation in State parks. To highlight this partnership, RAS is proud to offer an **Audubon in the Parks** series of walks!

FEB. 3 (Sun)

First Sunday Walk, Kennedy Dells County Park

Meet Carol Weiss at 8am in the Kennedy Dells parking lot, North Main Street, New City. Stroll on graveled paths, looking for both resident and migrating bird species. Trip will run 2-2.5 hours. Call for directions. 845-358-3659

FEB. 9 (Sat)

Winter Birding in Orange County

Meet Jim Previdi at 2pm at the Commuter Parking Lot, Route 303 North, West Nyack, for carpooling. See raptors and field birds; Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls are usually sighted just before sunset. Should return by 6:30pm. 914-656-2509

FEB. 15 (Fri)

Owl Prowl at Stony Point Battlefield (Audubon in the Parks) PLEASE NOTE: Reservations are required!

Search for the resident Great Horned and Screech Owls as you walk along the roadways and paths at the Stony Point Battlefield with group leader Jim Previdi. **You must have an advance reservation to attend this very popular program.** To reserve a space, please call the Battlefield office: 845-786-2521, Monday-Friday between 10am-4pm.

FEB. 24 (Sun)

Birding Tallman Mtn. State Park (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Carol Weiss at 8am in the main parking lot of Tallman Mtn. State Park for a stroll through the picnic and swimming pool areas. This is a good time to find Fox Sparrows there. 845-358-3659

MAR. 3 (Sun)

First Sunday Walk, Kennedy Dells County Park

Meet Veronika Krause at 8am in the Kennedy Dells parking lot, North Main Street in New City. Stroll on graveled paths, looking for both resident and migrating bird species. Trip will run 2-2.5 hours. Call for directions. 845-359-9294

MAR. 16 (Sat)

Woodcocks at Kakiat County Park

Meet Jim Previdi at 5:30pm at the Kakiat parking lot, Route 202 opposite Viola Elementary School, Suffern. Bring a flashlight. 914-656-2509

MAR. 24 (Sun)

Palm Sunday Walk at Lake Welch (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Carol Weiss at 10am at the entrance to Lake Welch in Harriman State Park, off Route 106. An easy walk around the lake along roadways, but could be several hours long. May find unexpected birds, as well as sparrows, woodpeckers, thrushes and some early migrants. Bring a drink and snack. There is a hiker's service (ecumenical) at 3pm nearby at St. John's in the Wilderness church and a lunch for hikers following the service, in the nearby barn. RAS members may choose to participate. 845-358-3659

APR. 7 (Sun)

First Sunday Walk, Kennedy Dells County Park

Meet Peter Johnson at 8am in the Kennedy Dells parking lot, North Main Street in New City. Stroll on graveled paths, looking for both resident and migrating bird species. Trip will run 2-2.5 hours. Call for directions. 914-261-2895

APR. 14 (Sun)

A Spring Stroll at Mt. Ivy Swamp

Meet Veronika Krause at 9am at Pomona Middle School parking lot on Pomona Rd. Look for Marsh Marigolds and Chipping Sparrows along the railroad embankment. Over by noon. 845-359-9294

APR. 20 (Sat)

The Celery Farm, Allendale, N.J.

Meet Peter Johnson at 8am at the Celery Farm parking lot on Franklin Turnpike, Allendale, N.J. Great for beginners, may be wet underfoot. Look for waterfowl and very early spring migrants. Over by noon. 914-261-2895

APR. 26 (Fri)

A Weekday Walk at the Elk Pen (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Elyse Fuller at 9am at the parking area for the Elk Pen section of Harriman State Park off Arden Valley Rd., 0.3mi east of Route 17. Eastern Bluebirds, Prairie Warblers, and Field Sparrows are possibilities at this unique field habitat. Over by 11am. 845-351-2893

Announcements & Special Events

Birds in Winter - Presented by Lorrie Pallant, RAS Education Chairperson

Finklestein Memorial Library at 10:30am on Tuesday Feb. 19, 2013

Birds of Rockland - Presented by Lorrie Pallant, RAS Education Chairperson

Suffern Library at 7pm on Tue Mar. 19, 2013

Audubon's Aviary: Part 1 of The Complete Flock - Mar. 9 to May 19, 2012

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West @ 77th Street

Visit <http://www.nyhistory.org/exhibitions/audubons-aviary> for more information (admission charged)

Mission of Rockland Audubon Society

An all-volunteer chapter of the National Audubon Society, Rockland Audubon Society's mission is to promote environmental conservation and foster an appreciation of birds and nature through education programs and activities.

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Membership

To join, send a \$20 check payable to **National Audubon Society** to:

Della Wells, RAS Membership Chairperson
9 Dunderberg Road
Tomkins Cove, NY 10986-1003

Allow 4 to 8 weeks for delivery of *Audubon Magazine* and *The Observer*.

The Observer

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Layout Della Wells
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