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Wind Is For The Birds

By Caroline McDonald, RAS Board Member

Because of new federal goals to generate 20% of electricity from renewable energy in the United States by 2030, the number of wind turbines is expected to increase dramatically. In 2009 there were about 35,000 wind turbines in operation, representing more than 25 gigawatts (GW) of installed capacity. By the end of 2012 there were 69,000 units. To meet the goal of production capacity of 300 GW by 2030, 100,000 turbines will be needed, the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) reported.

Wind power is believed to be clean energy, safer for the environment than alternatives such as coal, oil and natural gas, but it is not without its own risks. For one thing, wind turbines in these anticipated numbers are seen as an issue because of the drastic changes they would make to the landscape. The projected growth will require almost 20,000 square miles of land—greater than the combined areas of New Jersey, Connecticut, Delaware, and Rhode Island—as well as more than 4,000 square miles of marine habitat, according to the American Bird Conservancy (ABC).

Some habitats in areas where wind farms would be most effective—both on land and at sea—are critical to threatened and protected animals and plant life. Wind turbines are, out of necessity, built in high-wind areas that often coincide with the migratory routes of birds, including protected Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles and endangered Whooping Cranes. Birds passing through the rotor area of moving wind turbines may be at risk of being killed or injured.



San Geronio Pass Wind Farm, Riverside County, CA © Alan W. Wells

Numerous studies of avian fatality have found that high numbers of hawks, eagles, kestrels, owls as well as non-raptors are killed annually in turbine-related incidents. Many of these species are protected by federal and state wildlife legislation. The varied estimates of birds that are killed in these incidents have been controversial. According to ABC, about 573,000 birds and 888,000 bats die annually because of wind turbines.

In response, the AWEA notes that older turbines that are shorter, more numerous and faster-rotating are being replaced with taller, less numerous, slower-rotating turbines that pose fewer risks to birds. Also, as sites are chosen based on more data, eagle fatalities are being reduced by about half.

Future wind projects will need to perform broad due diligence and a critical assessment of a project's impact to birds to avoid possible future criminal enforcement, warned Matthew Ahrens, who heads the environmental practice for Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy.

Comprehensive pre-construction and post-operation studies are more often undertaken for wind projects, but until the legal requirements become clear, "Developers bear a burden to determine what needs to be done to comply with the law even when a high priority is placed on minimizing any adverse wildlife impact," he warned.

Federal oversight of wind energy's adverse effects on birds and other wildlife has increased as a result of two recent developments: the first criminal enforcement action under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the pending first program take permit under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA).

In November 2013 Duke Energy Renewables Inc. was charged by the Department of Justice for the death of 149 migratory birds and 14 Golden Eagles at two wind facilities in Wyoming. It was the first criminal enforcement action against the wind industry for avian fatalities under the MBTA. The action was taken even though Duke had promptly reported the fatalities to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and worked with the organization to reduce future fatalities.

Duke was placed on five-year probation and must pay \$1 million in fines. It also is required to implement an environmental compliance plan that could cost up to \$600,000 per year, Ahrens said. Going forward, the effect of the Duke settlement is still unclear, he said, adding that future enforcement against other wind developers is likely and more action will be necessary to mitigate any adverse impact to avian wildlife.

Wind turbine developers also have new options to avoid such penalties. On Dec. 9, 2013, the FWS issued new final guidelines extending the maximum term permits for killing or "taking" (defined as wounding, killing, molesting or disturbing) Bald and Golden Eagles from the current five to 30 years, as the life of a wind project typically extends beyond five years. The final rule became effective on Jan. 8, 2014.

To obtain an Eagle Take Permit, project developers must follow the new guidelines that include reducing take to the maximum extent possible and conducting adequate monitoring of the sites. The FWS has not granted any such permits so far, but the first is likely to be issued soon.

Some environmental groups, however, believe that this isn't enough and that the 30-year take rule is not acceptable. ABC said the number of birds taken annually by wind energy facilities could exceed 1.4 million by 2030 if there is no change in U.S. policy.

A lawsuit filed by ACB charges the DOI with violating several protection statutes and asks that the five-year requirement remain. The move comes on the heels of a call by more than 70 conservation organizations, which includes dozens of Audubon chapters, for the DOI to identify locations for wind energy development, as well as regions where such projects should be avoided because of wildlife concerns and sensitive habitats.

While debates over the correct level of government enforcement and regulation continue, impacts to Bald and Golden Eagles, migratory birds and other federally protected species are playing an increasingly significant role in decisions on siting, construction and operation of wind projects.

Life Goes On After Clausland Mountain Fire

By Peter Johnson, RAS Board Member

After the fire that swept through our beloved Clausland Mountain parkland last fall, I anxiously waited for spring to see how, and if the forest would rebound from the destruction caused by the blaze. I returned seven times throughout the spring. The first thing that struck me was the absence of many sounds. While there was a good amount of bird song, almost all of the underlying forest sounds were missing. Many of the sounds that make up the symphony of nature that is part of the experience of walking in the woods were gone.

I realized one casualty from the fire I had not thought about—Wood Frogs. Only two days before, on the north side of the mountain, which had not been touched by the fire, in all the little ponds the frogs were making a racket. As I walked back behind the Nike base towards the Long Path in late March, however, I noticed a strange silence. The spring-fed pond at the top of the mountain—one of the sources of the Sparkill Creek—was without a single frog. It was still and deadly quiet.



Wood Frog © Alan W. Wells

In the bird world, however, life was in full swing. There was a fresh Pileated Woodpecker hole in an oak tree. I heard and then saw a number of birds, including a Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Northern Flicker. There were many American Robins, Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Northern Cardinals and Dark-eyed Juncos. But of course, the birds have wings and were able to fly away as the fire approached. The Wood Frogs could not, however. This made me wonder about the snakes and turtles as well. I will try to check back this summer to see what else, good and bad, has come from the fire.

In early June, the flora was returning and the trees were budding out. The first things to turn green were three invasive plants: Garlic Mustard, Japanese Barberry and Multiflora Rose, which were all coming in strong.

By mid-June, the trees were vibrant green, and the forest was moving from spring to summer as it has for years past. A visitor to the area would have to look hard to see the remnants of the fire. While I am reluctant to say it out loud, the fire was in some respects a good thing. It cleared away much dead brush that has made way for new growth. But

one pays a price for the other. This has been a good lesson for me--watching how Mother Nature takes care of herself.

The Early Bird

By Vicki Beaumont, RAS Board Member

You should get out early in the morning for good birding. This is just what Carol Weiss and I did recently when we went birding in Central Park and it was well worth the effort. Just as anglers know, many fish are more likely to bite in the morning. Likewise, birds are also more active early. They are seeking food, nesting material, or a mate, and are most likely to do so shortly after leaving their previous night's roosting spot. Another good reason for going early is that fewer people are out and about in the morning.

That morning there were already birders everywhere, eager to see whatever was there. I have found that birders are a generous group and are perfectly willing to share sightings with others. For those who wish to learn more about birds, there are many birding groups and it is easy to join one if you are so inclined.

Spring is an ideal time in Central Park, which is an oasis in a concrete jungle. There are also several ponds that are a big attraction to waterfowl. In one section, "The Ramble," several feeders have been installed, including one that holds fruit. These feeders attract seed-eaters and the fruit attracts other species such as orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.

All-in-all, our birding excursion to Central Park was very successful. We were rewarded for our efforts with 42 species in two hours, including Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-billed Cuckoo and Louisiana Water Thrush.

Just imagine if our forebears had not had the foresight to designate and protect open space for all of us to enjoy. There is much to be found in these spaces to appreciate—birds and other wildlife, insects, trees, and meadows.

A bonus to our day was that the nearby New-York Historical Society was exhibiting Part Two of a three-part series of watercolors by John James Audubon, titled, "*Audubon's Aviary: Parts Unknown*." This exhibit was the perfect ending to an exciting morning of birding.

Here's something to keep in mind if you are thinking about a future excursion to Central Park: next spring the museum will feature Part Three, the final exhibit of Audubon's work. And if you do go, keep in mind that the early morning hours are best.

One Yard At A Time

By Vicki Beaumont, RAS Board Member

Some years ago I learned that, environmentally speaking, America's green lawns are a disaster. They are monocultures that require the support of fertilizers and weed killers—which are noxious to birds, bees and other wildlife.

Accordingly, I created a perennial bed that took up the majority of my front lawn, not because I was planning to replace all of the grass, but rather, because that was the sunniest spot for flowers. As the flower bed grew and grew, the lawn became smaller. By leaving the seed heads on the flowers in the fall, I have been rewarded by flocks of American Goldfinches. The flowers that attract the bees and butterflies, such as *Crocasmia*, *Monarda*, *Caryopteris* and *Heuchera* also provide nectar over the course of several months for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

I would like to think that I have led by example in my neighborhood, because a few years later a nearby neighbor did the same thing, turning the entire front lawn into a flower garden. Similar to my yard, their plantings have grown. A vegetable garden replaced their side lawn and this year the other side yard became a fruit tree orchard and dwarf fruit trees take up little space.

The good news is that this neighbor's philosophy tends towards using natural products, which I believe extends to their yard. I use only organic fertilizers (like bone meal) and never use herbicides or pesticides, as I subscribe to the theory that for every pest infestation, there is a predator or insect that will come along and resolve the problem—just a little patience is required.

So it seems that without having to lecture anyone, several properties on my street have become more diverse. As these yards become more attractive, they are also providing food sources for birds, bees and humans as well!

Fishing Line Recycling Project: An Update

Seventeen fishing line recycling containers have now been installed at a number of Rockland County locations. They include Bowline Town Park, Camp Addison Boyce (Girl Scout Camp), Demarest Mill County Park, Flat Rock County Park, Ramapo River (near Seven Lakes Drive in Sloatsburg), Kakiat County Park, Piermont Pier, Rockland Lake State Park, and Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site. When fishing at any of these locations, please deposit all discarded monofilament line into one of these containers for recycling. The wildlife and other people visiting these sites will appreciate your efforts!



RAS Board Members Peter Johnson (left) helped place the receptacles and Ron Conzo (right) constructed and placed them. © Caroline McDonald

68th Christmas Bird Count

By Carol Weiss, RAS Member

On Sunday, Dec. 14, RAS members will be counting birds! From dawn to dusk, teams of counters will cover nine areas of Rockland County, enumerating the birds of each species that they see. This data is sent to National Audubon Society to be compiled and compared to other national and international counts. If you would like to participate in the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) for the first time, or if you were unable to count last year, please contact Carol Weiss at [845-358-3659](tel:845-358-3659) or cweiss1124@optonline.net. If you counted in 2013, you will be contacted.

If you can't spend the entire day outdoors, volunteer to watch your bird feeders on Count Day, Dec. 14. Feeder watchers should submit the highest number of individuals seen *at one time*. For example, if five titmice are seen at 9:00 a.m. and three at 10:00 a.m., the number reported should be five—not eight. Feeder counts are very important as sometimes a species is seen only at someone's feeder on count day. The form to compile and report your feeder watch data is below.

The day-long CBC ends with a potluck dinner and a countdown of the day's sightings. Della and Alan Wells of Tomkins Cove will host the supper, and both field participants and feeder watchers are invited. Call Alan or Della Wells at [845-942-5751](tel:845-942-5751) to let them know what you will bring to the pot luck: main dish, salad, dessert, appetizer or drinks. Driving directions will be sent or emailed to participants.

To see previous year's results, visit this link: http://www.rocklandaudubon.org/ras_cbc.htm

Rockland Audubon Feeder Count: *Sunday, Dec. 14, 2014*

- _____ Wild Turkey
- _____ Sharp-shinned Hawk
- _____ Red-tailed Hawk
- _____ Rock Pigeon
- _____ Mourning Dove
- _____ Eastern Screech-Owl
- _____ Red-bellied Woodpecker
- _____ Downy Woodpecker
- _____ Hairy Woodpecker
- _____ Northern Flicker
- _____ Pileated Woodpecker
- _____ Blue Jay
- _____ American Crow
- _____ Black-capped Chickadee
- _____ Tufted Titmouse
- _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ White-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ American Robin
- _____ Gray Catbird
- _____ Northern Mockingbird
- _____ Brown Thrasher
- _____ European Starling
- _____ Eastern Towhee (Rufous-sided)
- _____ American Tree Sparrow
- _____ Field Sparrow
- _____ Fox Sparrow
- _____ Song Sparrow
- _____ White-throated Sparrow
- _____ White-crowned Sparrow
- _____ Dark-eyed Junco
- _____ Northern Cardinal
- _____ Red-winged Blackbird
- _____ Common Grackle
- _____ Brown-headed Cowbird
- _____ Purple Finch
- _____ House Finch
- _____ Common Redpoll
- _____ Pine Siskin
- _____ American Goldfinch
- _____ Evening Grosbeak
- _____ House Sparrow
- _____ Other - please specify _____
- _____ Other - please specify _____
- _____ Other - please specify _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail: _____

Ways to report your feeder count (within one (1) week of the count, please!):

1. Come to the Countdown Potluck Dinner
2. E-mail your numbers: awells@bestweb.net
3. Mail to Alan Wells, 9 Dunderberg Rd., Tomkins Cove, NY 10986-1003
4. Phone in your results: 845-942-5751

President's Message

Hello Fellow Birders! Welcome to Rockland Audubon Society's 2014-2015 season.

This year, two of our members rolled off the Board after many years of service. Thank you to Jim Previdi, our previous President and Julia Warger, the previous Program Chairperson, for their valuable contributions.

Please welcome the current Board of Directors:

President – Karen D'Alessandri

Vice President – vacant

Treasurer – Vicki Beaumont

Recording & Corresponding Secretary – Elyse Fuller

Programs – Judith Malo

Field Trips – Alan Wells and Della Wells

Education – Lorrie Pallant

Outreach – Joanna Galdone and Joyce Greenwald

Conservation – Vicki Beaumont and Elyse Fuller

Hospitality – Peter Johnson

Publicity & Flyers – Caroline McDonald

Membership – Della Wells

Newsletter (*The Observer*) – Caroline McDonald, Della Wells, and Alan Wells

Rockland Audubon Phone – Ron Conzo

Website – Alan Wells

Last year, your board members successfully implemented a wide variety of projects: we maintained a butterfly garden at Kennedy Dells; we offered more than 40 field trips – all of them free of charge and open to the general public in venues in and around Rockland County; we offered 10 Friday evening programs, also open to the public and free of charge (although we must admit – we do solicit donations!); we published a newsletter, we maintained a website which is full of interesting and useful information; and, we provided educational programs throughout the county. With a generous grant from the Toyota Green collaborative funding project sponsored by Audubon New York we have installed and are maintaining a number of fishing line recycling containers (see above); we have set up educational and outreach tables at Bear Mountain Earth Day fair. We also sponsor and maintain a number of Eastern Bluebird nest boxes around the county, just to name a few!

To continue this ambitious agenda, help is needed. If you would like to increase your participation in RAS there are many ways to volunteer--we can always use extra hands. Likewise, contact us if you have a suggestion, compliment or (dare we say) even a complaint.

Our lines of communication are open and available 24 hours-a-day, every day:

Phone – 845-639-9216

Snail Mail – P.O. Box 404, New City, NY 10956-0404

Website: www.rocklandaudubon.org

Happy Birding!

Karen D'Alessandri

Welcome New and Returning Members!

Jean M. Arcieri, Emil Bahary, Makram Boulos, Michele Brisson, Eric D. Campbell, Barbara H. Cane, Murry Cohen, Bobbi Curti, Ellen De Rubba, Chris Distefano, Ann Ellis, Paul J. Earnest, Janice Florence, Deborah L. Fox, Kathleen Gibber, Marion Greenwald, Sally Hannon, Susan Hostetler, Kevin Kilner, John Lauder, Roger & Jeanne Lehman, Gloria Lobman, Patrick Massaro, Catherine Parker, Lydia Pyun, Bernard M. Quade, Nancy Rattner, Carole Rickard, Teresa Rose, Paula Simmonds, Thomas St. John, B. Weber, Karyl Welkis-Katz, Phyllis Werner

Notes and Sightings: March – May 2014

Compiled by Carol Weiss

Thanks to all who sent in reports this spring. This is an interesting compilation of observations and comments. Please send your sightings for June to August 2014 to cweiss1124@optonline.net or call at [845-358-3659](tel:845-358-3659).

March 4: Female and male Hooded Mergansers paddled in the oxbow across from ShopRite (West Nyack.). A Great Blue Heron looked like a weird statue and I wondered what it was standing on and staring at. Then I noticed a tiny hole at its feet as its target. *Sarah Johnson*

March 10: A Red-shouldered Hawk visited my yard in Hillcrest for several minutes. I suspect this is the same bird I saw briefly on two prior occasions but did not identify. Perhaps it wintered in the area. It is the first Red-shouldered Hawk I've seen here in more than 20 years. *Pat Murray*

March 13: Spring Valley. Three Fox Sparrows visiting my yard today were mixed in with White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos. *Pat Murray*

March 15: I have two Fox Sparrows in my backyard in Stony Point. They have been here since Tuesday (3/11). *Doris Metraux*

March 17: Tallman Mt. State Park. On the Long Path I came across a number of sparrows—one American Tree Sparrow, four White-throated Sparrows, and a dozen Fox Sparrows. Several of them were singing. It was quite a sight! *Carol Weiss*

March 24: One of our prettiest ducks, the Ring-necked Duck, can be found on Lake Tappan today. I saw them yesterday and estimated 150. Today I returned and counted more than 200 on either side of Convent Road. This is the highest number ever recorded for Rockland County, and an unusual location. I do not recall ever seeing them before on Lake Tappan. There were other ducks—about 500 Common Mergansers, a couple Canvasbacks and a pair of Bufflehead. I checked on the Bald Eagle's nest south of Veteran's Memorial Drive and saw no activity there, but two immature Bald Eagles were flying nearby. *Carol Weiss*

March 31: Along the edge of the Piermont Marsh were a Short-eared Owl and a Horned Grebe. *Drew Ciganek*

April 3: A March report. A Common Woodcock was preening and displaying at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. I first noticed it on March 28, which seemed late, and then heard him again on the 31st. *Sarah Johnson (Compiler's Note: This is not a late date for American Woodcock in Rockland County.)*

April 3: Palisades, N.Y. (Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory) I had just parked my car when a female Wood Duck flew from the deep end of the marsh and landed in a dead tree in the nearby woods. I grabbed my binoculars and as I tried to locate the female from a distance, the male flew from the marsh and over the woods. I returned to search for the female, but could not immediately locate her. As I lowered my binoculars, however, she flew from the tree and returned to the marsh. A closer look at the far side of the tree revealed a hole towards the top, where I assume she had been hiding. *Linda Pistolesi*

April 3: A walk this morning around Rockland Lake State Park revealed:
American Robins, European Starlings, two Red-bellied Woodpeckers, one Wild Turkey, Canada Geese (too many), Tree Swallows, Mallards, about a dozen Bufflehead, about a dozen Common Mergansers, four Double-crested Cormorants, four Ring-billed Gulls, Red-wing Blackbirds, several Mute Swans and four Gadwall. Alas, no Wood Ducks! *Donna Nye*

April 5: I happened to look out a window and saw a four-foot tall Wild Turkey advancing up my driveway. It crossed into the next yard and started climbing diagonally up the vertical bank beyond. Out of nowhere my neighbor's small cat appeared and began to stalk the large bird. Suddenly, the fearless feline shot up the steep slope at incredible speed. When the cat appeared to be within 10 feet, the turkey kicked off the ground, burst through the shrubbery and sailed away. *Gene Brown*

April 7: Nyack Beach State Park. A male Horned Grebe swam and dove close to shore. It was in transitional plumage of brown, tan, and straw-color. The dagger bill was diagnostic. *Gene Brown*

April 7: Piermont: Three Glossy Ibis flying from the north were spotted on the pier today. *Evan Mark*

April 8: Rockland Lake State Park: This morning I had a quick, distant, tantalizing view of a half-dozen smallish ducks flying over Rockland Lake. They could have been Blue-winged Teal, but there was not enough evidence to claim a sighting. *Gene Brown*

April 8: Piermont. Are these Caspian Terns? Ron Conzo (*Note: Yes, and this is a new early date for Caspian tern in Rockland County.*)



Caspian Tern © Ron Conzo

April 9: On just a chance, four of us set out to look for a rumored Bald Eagle sitting on a nest along the Hudson River near Rockland Lake. The brief directions told us to walk 45 minutes north and to look downhill to the east. They did not specify who had counted the 45 minutes. Was it a 25-year-old, or someone closer to our ages, 60s and up? Initially the trail -- the Long Path -- heads uphill. From steep it goes to steeper. The first section must have taken us up 200 ft. Then, as always when walking hills, we lost three-fourths of the elevation we gained only to regain it going up the next hill. An hour-and-a-half of walking and no bird yet. We had just crested what seemed to be hill number-six when Ron stopped to catch his breath. He looked towards the river and said, "I got it." Boy, did that sound great. This is a first for me, looking down on a nesting Bald Eagle. In the group were Alan Wells, Dan Albantides, Ron Conzo, and me. By the way, the walk back was much easier. *Peter Johnson*

April 10: Blue-gray Gnatcatchers arrive at Iona Island. *Carol Weiss*

April 13: On the RAS Palm Sunday walk at Lake Welch, the best birds were seen on Lake Welch: One Common Merganser, one Common Loon, and two Horned Grebes. The grebes were in near-breeding plumage and were close to the shore. *Carol Weiss*



Horned Grebes © Alan W. Wells

May 3: Today I saw my first Ruby-throated Hummingbird (male), a Black-throated Blue warbler, a Great Egret flying up West Nyack Rd. and also heard a Wood Thrush singing. The Gray Catbird is back in the yard, too. *Beverly Simone*

May 4: This morning I watched an Eastern Kingbird waiting for his chance to get some ivy berries, but the Northern Mockingbirds and American Robins were making it difficult. I also saw the first butterfly of the year (besides a Cabbage White), which appeared to be a Meadow Fritillary. *Beverly Simone*

May 4: I was thrilled when I returned home this afternoon and got out of the car to hear a Wood Thrush calling in the yard! *Stephanie Garber*

May 5: Yesterday my family and some friends went birding for the first time in years. We took the kids to the sawmill picnic area in Tallman Mt. State Park. Ramona and her friend Sawyer were into it for about 15 minutes. The rest of us remained focused on the birds and saw or heard Black-throated Blue (which we all saw well, even the kids), American Redstart, Magnolia, Blue-Winged, Yellowthroat and Black-throated Green Warblers; a Red-eyed Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole, nuthatches, Tufted Titmouse, and others. It was a nice day. *Jamie Ross*

May 5: This morning, warblers were flitting about the trees and shrubs in a swampy area near the Lamont-Doherty parking lot. There were Black-and-white, Common Yellowthroat, male American Redstart, male and female Yellow-rumped, Northern Parula, and a striking Magnolia. Nearby a female American Robin was adding to an already sizable nest and Barn and Tree Swallows cruised the marsh across the road. *Linda Pistolessi*

May 6: When I opened the blinds early this morning I was pleased to see a beautiful male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in the hopper feeder right outside the window. I grabbed the camera just as a squirrel chased him out of the feeder. *Caroline McDonald*

May 7: Besides two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, today we saw an Indigo Bunting, new to our feeder, among the many White-throated Sparrows and House Finches. *Lorrie and Stan Pallant*

May 7: A single male Bobolink was on the lawn at the south end of Rockland Lake. *Note: This species was once fairly common in Rockland County.* *Carol Weiss*

May 9: Three White-crowned Sparrows were on the sports field in Sloatsburg, two more above Spring Pond in Harriman State Park, and another 11 on Ironwood Drive near Sterling Forest State Park in Orange County. *Carol Weiss*

May 11: Gene Brown reported 10 warbler species on the top level of Buttermilk Falls County Park. The best was a Bay-breasted Warbler, only three feet away from him.

Week of May 11: I saw so many birds at Kennedy Dells—a little flock of Bobolinks, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great-crested Flycatcher, and many more, including warblers I've never seen before. *Don DiBenedetto*

May 17: Have I told you about our Red-bellied Woodpeckers? There are several that sit in a tree in front of our balcony and call. When I go out, I throw an unshelled peanut up in the air. They are such acrobats! They catch it mid-air about 70% of the time. I think the ones that miss are inexperienced young. I always say the same thing before I toss the peanut—don't know if that helps prepare them or not. I call the bird 'Red,' and I say: "Hey Red. Ready? Ready? Here we go!" and then I toss the peanut. I think they know my voice by now, and they might recognize me, too. Before Red came, I tossed peanuts in the air for the Blue Jays and one would catch it mid-air. No more, though, since Red learned the trick. *Colleen Leidy*

May 22: This evening I heard an unfamiliar thrush singing near the Pascack Brook outside my apartment in Spring Valley. It started with a few short notes, then an ascending spiraling sound. I listened to the song of the Swainson's Thrush on my Sibley's app and it seems to be spot-on. *Linda Pistolessi*

May 23: This morning I observed three Cliff Swallows, with Barn Swallows, on the wires above the Iona Island causeway. Close to the railroad tracks on the north side, where the vegetation is very thick, I heard an Alder Flycatcher. When I played the iPhone call to him, he moved into view and responded to the call by singing again. I believe this is an unusual sighting in Bear Mountain State Park. *Carol Weiss*

May 23: I went to Piermont Pier today and had a few interesting sightings. At the small pool bordering the ball field and the marsh I saw a Least Bittern. I was trying to spot one of the several singing Marsh Wrens and out of the corner of my eye I saw something fly out of the left side of the pool. Since it is a rather clumsy flyer, I had time to watch as it disappeared over the tops of the *Phragmites*. Unfortunately, I never saw the Marsh Wrens. At the first clearing in the marsh near the sewage structure, walking along the exposed mud was a lone Bonaparte's Gull in non-breeding plumage. Is it late in the year for this plumage? A half hour later, I wondered about other possibilities and Black-headed Gull came to my mind. When I returned to the spot, it was no longer present. Since it was alone it was tough to judge the size without any other "reference birds." Also, there were two Forster's Terns. *Kevin Quill*

May 25: Yesterday I went to Piermont again to try to get a glimpse of those Marsh Wrens. While looking into the *Phragmites* from one of the dirt piles near the ball field, I saw a Least Bittern fly up at about 100 feet into the marsh with nesting material in its mouth. It flew for about 50 yards to the left, low over the *Phragmites* and then disappeared into them. Probably has a nest there! I still couldn't get a view of the singing Marsh Wrens! The rest of the pier was rather uneventful with a few gulls and no shorebirds. *Kevin Quill*

May 27: I heard two Kentucky Warblers in Doodletown, one on Lemmon Road and one on Pleasant Valley Road. Only the second bird was close enough to see. *Carol Weiss*

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 Gilchrest Road, Congers, N.Y., 10920. Meet at 7:00pm for refreshments and conversation, with a one-hour nature program beginning at 7:30 p.m. 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!

Sept. 5, 2014 *NOTE EARLIER START TIME: 6:30 p.m.*****

Meet Atka, the Arctic Gray Wolf



Atka © The Wolf Conservation Center

Speakers: Representatives of Wolf Conservation Center

The Wolf Conservation Center in South Salem, N.Y., will introduce Atka for an awe-inspiring, up-close encounter. Learn about the history of wolves in the United States. Find out about this important but misunderstood predator, the necessity of wolves for a healthy ecosystem, and the efforts being made to save these magnificent creatures for future generations. This is an excellent program for children and young adults.

Suggested donation: \$5, \$2 for children 10 and under

Oct. 10, 2014 *NOTE DATE CHANGE (SECOND FRIDAY)*****

Flora and Fauna of the Hackensack River Watershed



Great Egrets, Hackensack River © Paul Cahan

Speaker: Captain Bill Sheehan of Hackensack Riverkeeper

The Hackensack River originates here in Rockland County and is home to a diverse range of living things. Captain Sheehan's program on the flora and fauna of this watershed is suitable for all ages, so we encourage our young folks to join us and bring lots of questions.

Nov. 7, 2014

"The Magic of the Snowy Owl" Film Screening



Snowy Owl © Alan W. Wells

The Snowy Owl, an iconic creature of the Arctic, has been known to visit our area. You may also know one of them as Harry Potter's companion, Hedwig. This documentary film chronicles how this majestic, intelligent bird makes a home and raises a family in some of the harshest terrain on the planet.

Dec. 5, 2014

A Panamanian Canopy Adventure



Keel-billed Toucan, Panama © Alan W. Wells

Speakers: Alan & Della Wells

Panama is unique among the world's countries in that it forms a nexus between east and west, north and south, and the past and present. The Panama Canal not only provides easy east-west trans-oceanic passage for enormous container ships, but also allows a pathway for the exchange of flora and fauna between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Additionally, the narrow Isthmus has, throughout geologic history, provided a north-south corridor for the exchange of organisms between North and South America. And there are few places in the world where ultra-modern skyscrapers are practically next door to the primitive thatched roof huts of the indigenous people. Alan and Della spent ten days exploring this area from the relaxed atmosphere of Canopy Tower and the more luxurious Canopy Lodge. They then spent another seven days visiting the newest addition to the Canopy Family, Canopy Camp. This camp was opened only about six months ago and is situated in the heart of Darien Province, one of the most undeveloped regions of the country. Canopy Camp provides a more primitive, safari-like experience with many unusual birds, butterflies, flowers, and contact with the local Embera and Kuna tribes. Alan and Della will share photographs and stories from their experience at all three locations.

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!

SEPT. 7 (SUN) – First Sunday Walk at Piermont Pier

Meet Peter Johnson at 8 a.m. at the parking lot by the ball field at the Piermont Pier entrance. 914-261-2895

SEPT. 13 (SAT) – Hudson River Birding Ramble at Stony Point Battlefield (Audubon in the Parks)

Co-sponsored with Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site. Meet Alan and Della Wells at 8 a.m. in the main parking lot at the end of Battlefield Rd., accessed from Park Rd. off Route 9W in Stony Point. Take an early fall stroll through this historic site on the Hudson River. 845-942-5751, Park Phone 845-786-2521

SEPT. 14 (SUN) – Kakiat County Park

Meet Carol Weiss at 8 a.m. in the Kakiat parking lot, off Route 202 in Montebello (park entrance is directly opposite drive to Viola School.) Stroll through the park looking for migrating and resident bird species. 845-358-3659

SEPT. 21 (SUN) – Hook Mountain Hawk Watch (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Jim Previdi at 9 a.m. by the flagpole at the Executive Golf Course, Rockland Lake State Park South. Walk to the top of Hook Mt. to view migrating hawks. Bring hat, binoculars and water. Bring food if you wish to stay all day. 914-656-2509

OCT. 5 (SUN) – First Sunday Walk at Piermont Pier

Meet Peter Johnson at 8 a.m. at the parking lot by the ball field at the Piermont Pier entrance. 914-261-2895

OCT. 10 (FRI) – Doodletown (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Carol Weiss at 8 a.m. at the parking area on Route 9W, opposite the Doodletown historic marker. We will take the old road, stopping to bird as we go uphill. There should be hawks and passerines migrating southward. The trip will take from three to four hours. Bring a beverage and a snack. 845-358-3659

OCT. 19 (SUN) – Trees of Tallman Mt. State Park (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Matt Beckerle at 10 a.m. at the south entrance of Tallman Mountain State Park to learn about the trees of the park and view the fall foliage. 845-735-5411 or 914-656-2509

OCT. 26 (SUN) – Piermont Pier for Beginners

Meet Della and Alan Wells at 8 a.m. at the parking lot by the ball field at the Piermont Pier entrance. Practice bird ID and binocular use on ducks and other birds. 845-942-5751

NOV. 1-2 (SAT & SUN) – Fall Migration at Brigantine and Cape May

All-day trip Saturday to the Brigantine Unit of Edwin B. Forsythe NWR, N.J. Meet Jim Previdi at 6:30 a.m. at the Commuter Parking Lot, Route 303 North, West Nyack. If desired, continue on to Cape May for an overnight stay, and then bird on Sunday with Alan and Della Wells. 914-656-2509 or 845-942-5751

NOV. 9 (SUN) – Second Sunday Walk at Piermont Pier

Meet Carol Weiss at 8 a.m. at the parking lot by the ball field at the Piermont Pier entrance. 845-358-3659

NOV. 28 (FRI) – Leader's Choice Field Trip

Contact Jim Previdi a few days in advance to find out the details of the day-after-Thanksgiving field trip. 914-656-2509

DEC. 7 (SUN) – First Sunday Walk at Piermont Pier

Meet Ron Conzo at 8 a.m. at the parking lot by the ball field at the Piermont Pier entrance. 914-393-5053

DEC. 14 (SUN) – Annual All Day Christmas Bird Count & Potluck Dinner

Join a team for our 68th Christmas Bird Count. Check www.rocklandaudubon.org or call Carol Weiss 845-358-3659

Chapter Financial Report for FY'14

2014 CHAPTER FINANCIAL REPORT
National Audubon Society
Chapter Name: Rockland Audubon Society, Inc.
Chapter Code: R06

Balance Sheet and Statement of Revenues and Expenses
for the 12-Month Period, July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

REVENUES

Audubon Society Net Payment	2,286.75
Additional Membership Revenues	230.00
Bequests	
Collaborative Funding	1,000.00
Contributions	472.66
Educational Events	725.00
Field Trips	
Fundraising Events	4,049.00
Grants	
Interest and Investments	
Program Meetings	
Sales, Store, Videos	
Other, Miscellaneous	5.66
Total Income	\$8,769.07

EXPENDITURES

Administration	2,026.62
Newsletter/Postage/Mailing	190.20
Educational Events	1,699.33
Fundraising	597.57
Regional/State Offices/State Council	1,082.00
Grants Contributions to Others	200.00
Collaborative Funding Project	961.68
Memberships	60.00
Other	
Total Expenditures	\$6,817.40

NET INCOME (OR DEFICIT) IN OPERATING FUNDS

1,951.67

BEGINNING BALANCE

\$11,770.24

ENDING BALANCE

\$13,721.91

ASSETS

Cash and Equivalents (Checking Account, etc.)	13,520.04
Miscellaneous, Petty Cash	36.00
Accounts Receivable (Owed to Chapter)	
Other (Videos, Store Goods)	165.87
Net Fixed Assets (furniture, equipment, not including value of land or buildings)	
Total Assets	\$13,721.91

LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCES

Liabilities

Accounts Payable (owed by chapter)	
Unearned Income (not credited in this fiscal year)	
Other	

Total Liabilities

0

Funds

Restricted (Endowments, Scholarships, etc.)	
Reserved (Committed to Special Programs)	
Unreserved (Not Committed)	

Total Fund Balances

\$13,721.91

Special Announcement:

Upcoming Presentation

Lorrie Pallant, RAS Education Chairperson, presents "Birding by Ear" on Oct. 14 (2 p.m.) at Palisades Free Library.

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.

Board of Directors and Committee Members

Officers

President: Karen D'Alessandri
Vice President: <open>
Secretary: Elyse Fuller
Treasurer: Vicki Beaumont

Committee Members

Conservation: Vicki Beaumont, Elyse Fuller, Joanna Galdone
Education & Outreach: Joanna Galdone, Joyce Greenwald, Lorrie Pallant
E-contacts: Della Wells
Field Trips: Alan Wells, Della Wells
Fundraising: <Open>
Hospitality: Peter Johnson
Hotline Phone: Ron Conzo
Membership: Della Wells
Newsletter: Caroline McDonald
Programs: Judith Malo
Publicity: Caroline McDonald
Webmaster: Alan Wells

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

Editing Caroline McDonald
Layout Della Wells
Copyediting Alan Wells
 Della Wells

Newsletter submissions welcome!

Please send your contributions for *The Observer* to Caroline McDonald at carolinem38a@gmail.com. The editor reserves the right to edit any copy for clarity, accuracy and space requirements.

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