

THE



OSPREY

Newsletter of the

Monmouth County Audubon Society

Over 50 Years of Birds and Conservation

www.monmouthaudubon.org

► Keeping Feeder Birds Safe This Winter

by Lisa Ann Fanning

Volume 58, #2 Winter 2022

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Winter is a time for relaxing and watching your bird feeders for many people. But with talk of Bird Flu, what can you do to ensure you don't put our feathered friends at risk?

The 2022 strain, H5N1, has largely affected poultry, but also waterfowl, raptors and some species of shorebirds across the United States and Canada. It should also be noted that transmission to humans is very rare with only one documented case.

Here are some recommendations about feeder hygiene:

- The National Wildlife Disease Program (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/programs/nwdp>) offers **no official recommendation to take down feeders unless you also keep domestic poultry** since there is higher risk to domestic poultry.
- **Bird feeders and birdbaths should always be cleaned regularly**
 - Clean seed feeders every two weeks, or more often during times of heavy use or during warm and damp conditions.
 - Scrub feeders and soak for 15 minutes in one part bleach to thirty parts water or one hour in a vinegar solution.
 - Take feeders apart and wash with soap and boiling water to kill mold and other contaminants.
 - To scrub, use a bottle brush or you can wash in a dishwasher on the hot setting.
 - Allow feeders to dry before refilling.
- Also remember to clean the ground below your feeder to avoid attracting rodents.
- It is also recommended you wear gloves and wash your hands when handling feeders or food.

These general guidelines are good to follow not just during times of spread of the Bird Flu, but in general because there are bacteria, such as avian conjunctivitis, and other viruses that may affect other birds, as well as humans and other wildlife.

Just a simple act of keeping feeders clean can keep these diseases at bay, and help us enjoy our feathered friends more.



Rusty Blackbirds breed in the boreal regions of Canada and are one of the most steeply declining species (approximately 90% decline in 40 years) in North America, making it a species of special concern- more on page 4.

Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning



Avian conjunctivitis is a highly infectious bacteria common in finches that is easily spread across bird feeders.

Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning

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The Osprey is published by the Monmouth County Audubon Society, local chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our mission is to promote the awareness, appreciation and conservation of natural resources through activism and educational outreach, and by representing the National Audubon Society in Monmouth County, NJ. Inquiries concerning the organization, newsletter, letters to the editor or material submitted for consideration are encouraged and may be sent to: P.O. Box 542, Red Bank, NJ 07701 E-mail: monmouthaudubon@gmail.com

► FROM THE EDITOR

Many folks dread the winter. Early darkness, long nights, the cold, and snow. It happens to be my second favorite season (behind Autumn) because of all the unique opportunities it presents.

To me, winter is a time to rest and recharge. An opportunity to view the crystal clear night sky (at a reasonable hour, I might add.) Not to mention all the wonderful winter avian visitors we can observe at our feeders, while cozy under your favorite flannel blanket, while sipping cocoa.

For the brave, hearty types who love to get outside, it's a chance to see all the beautiful ducks that visit us from up north! Just think of all those beautiful Goldeneye, Harlequins, Eiders and Scoter who for them are on "vacation" from points north!

Don't forget to check out our field trip schedule and join us on a winter adventure!

I've included an article in this edition about some of the unique opportunities that exist during these cold winter months to hopefully get you excited about winter (well, as much as possible, anyway!) See page 3 for some "outside the box" ideas for all to enjoy.

Of course, if you are able to have feeders at your residence, don't forget to keep an eye out for those special winter visitors, as the winter finches are moving south this year. Evening Grosbeak, Pine Siskin, Common Redpolls, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finches and more have been reported as moving in numbers!

However it is you decide to enjoy the season, I hope you find much peace and joy in nature!

-Lisa Ann



*A single snowflake stuck in time on a metal screen.
Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning*

"To us snow and cold seem a mere delaying of spring. How far we are from understanding the value of these things in the economy of Nature."

- Henry David Thoreau,
March 8, 1859, in his Journal

► Winter Birding Ideas

Audubon's 123rd Christmas Bird Count

Held annually from Dec 14, 2022 to January 5, 2023

“Prior to the turn of the 20th century, hunters engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt." They would choose sides and go afield with their guns—whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages in that era, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census" that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them.”

For more info or to find a count near you, visit <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

Project FeederWatch (Cornell Lab of Ornithology)

“The FeederWatch season begins on November 1 and runs through the end of April. The last day to start a two-day count at the end of each season is April 29.

FeederWatch count days are two consecutive days when you count the birds at your feeders. Count days always come in pairs. Pick days that will maximize the time you have to count birds. Schedule your count days in advance, if possible. We recommend that you pick no more than one set of count days per week and leave at least five days when you do not count between your counts. Do not change your count days just because you see remarkable numbers or kinds of birds. Doing so would bias your data. If you are unable to count during a particular week, that’s okay. The more often you count, the more valuable your data becomes, but there is no minimum required number of counts, and your data are valuable even if you are only able to count on a few occasions.”

There is a small fee to register (Lab of Ornithology members receive a discount) <https://feederwatch.org>

Feeder Cams

Too cold to go outside? Consider staying in and watching feeder cams from various places:

- Cornell FeederWatch Cam <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N609IoYkFJo>
- Ontario FeederWatch Cam <https://youtu.be/3JphXZPvhJA>

Wishing for warmer climates?

- West Texas Feeders <https://youtu.be/fDUk9goEs>
- Panama Fruit Feeders <https://youtu.be/WtoxxHADnGk>

Watch birds from inside the **Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center** - the center has multiple bird feeders, partial reservoir views and a Bald Eagle Cam (seasonal) which can be observed from inside. See page 6 for an overview of the park. **Join the Great Backyard Bird Count for MCAS February 17-20, 2023 at the Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center**, and be a part of citizen science! Watch Facebook and our website for more details.

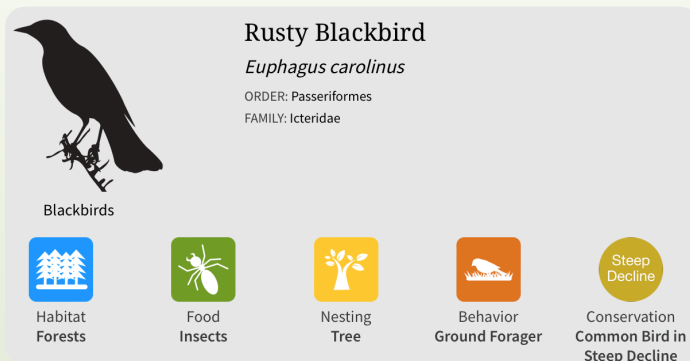
Did you know?

It is tradition in Scandinavian countries to spread birdseed outside your doorstep on Christmas morning for good luck in the new year.



➤ Species Feature: Rusty Blackbird

Source: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Rusty_Blackbird/



Rusty Blackbird
Euphagus carolinus
 ORDER: Passeriformes
 FAMILY: Icteridae

Blackbirds

- Habitat: Forests
- Food: Insects
- Nesting: Tree
- Behavior: Ground Forager
- Conservation: Common Bird in Steep Decline

“Rusty Blackbird is one of North America’s most rapidly declining species. The population has plunged an estimated 85-99 percent over the past forty years and scientists are completely puzzled as to what is the cause.”

“The Rusty Blackbird has undergone one of the sharpest and most mystifying recent declines of any North American songbird. The [North American Breeding Bird Survey](#) estimates that populations declined by nearly 3% every year, resulting in a cumulative decline of approximately 75% between 1966 and 2019. [Partners in Flight](#) estimates a global breeding population of 6.8 million and rates them 12 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score, indicating a species of relatively low conservation concern. However, Rusty Blackbird is listed as a [Common Birds in Steep Decline](#) for species that are still too numerous or widely distributed to warrant Watch-List status but have been experiencing troubling long-term declines. If these declines continue, the population will be halved again in less than 20 years. Low densities and remote breeding habitat (in the boreal forests of the far north) make clear determination of trends difficult. Scientists have formed the [Rusty Blackbird Working Group](#), which tries to get a better handle on populations by organizing birders to look for and report Rusty Blackbirds during specific dates during the year, particularly spring migration. It's not clear what has caused the population declines, but loss of wet woodland habitat through drainage, clearcutting, and conversion to agriculture is a possibility—particularly in the southeastern U.S. where some 80 percent of the population winters. The severe hunting of beavers across North America for hundreds of years may also have reduced habitat for Rusty Blackbirds by reducing the number of beaver ponds; the resurgence of beaver populations may be restoring some of this habitat. Rusty Blackbirds from northeastern North America have been recorded with unusually high mercury contamination and could be contributing to their decline in this region.”



Male Rusty Blackbirds at Turkey Swamp Park.
 Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning

► Noteworthy Bird Sightings in Monmouth County

by Rob Fanning

- American Coot: 70 on 11/30/22 Manasquan Reservoir
- Black-Headed Gull: 10/23/22 Manasquan Inlet
- Bobwhite: 11/4 thru 11/6/22 (likely a released bird) Huber Woods
- **Brewer's Blackbird: 11/13/22 Sandy Hook
- Cattle Egret: 10/23 thru 10/25/22 Reed's Sod Farm
- Clay-colored Sparrow: 10/15/22 Sandy Hook
- Connecticut Warbler: Late birds 10/15 Dorbrook + 10/17 Sandy Hook
- Evening Grosbeak: 11/18 Sandy Hook
- **Hammond's Flycatcher (probable): Sandy Hook 10/28
(1st NJ record pending acceptance by NJRBC)**
- Lapland Longspur: 11/19 Sandy Hook
- Lark Sparrow: 10/15 to 10/17 Sandy Hook
- Lesser Black-backed Gull: (3) 10/15/22 Sandy Hook
- Nelson's Sparrow: 10/21/22 Sandy Hook
- Orange-crowned Warbler: 11/27/22 Big Brook
- Parasitic Jaeger: 10/23/22 Manasquan Inlet
- Pied-billed Grebe: 9 on 11/30/22 Manasquan Reservoir
- Pine Siskin: (heard only) 11/28/22 Big Brook
- Prairie Warbler: (late) 11/6/22 Sandy Hook
- *Red Crossbills: (6) 11/14/22 Sandy Hook
- Red-breasted Nuthatch: many reports
- Saltmarsh Sparrow: 10/21/22 Sandy Hook
- Scarlet Tanager: (late) 10/23/22 private residence
- *Sedge Wren: 10/17/22 Freneau Woods*
- Snow Bunting: 65+ 11/29/22 Sandy Hook
- Snowy Egret: (late) 11/6/22 Sandy Hook
- *Trumpeter Swan: (2) Returning 11/22/22 Assunpink
- Wood Duck: (6) 11/30/22 Manasquan Reservoir



*This Empid flycatcher has since been identified as a probable Hammond's Flycatcher (a Western species.) If accepted by the New Jersey Bird Records Committee (NJBRC), it will be a first record for NJ!.
Photo by Paul Mandala*



This Brewer's Blackbird, typically found in open habitats of the West, was a one day wonder at Sandy Hook. Photo by Mike Heine



*There have been many reports of Red-breasted Nuthatch throughout Monmouth County and NJ - this is an irruption year for the species, so keep an eye out at your feeders!
Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning December, 2022*

*Most of these sightings were posted to the Monmouth Audubon GroupMe text group.
To be added contact Rob Fanning (bobolink0210@yahoo.com)*

MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SPOTLIGHT

➤ Manasquan Reservoir

Location:

Visitor Center - 732-919-0996

311 Windeler Road, Howell 07731

<https://www.monmouthcountyparks.com/page.aspx?ID=2531>

Environmental Center - 732-751-9453

331 Georgia Tavern Road, Howell 07731

<https://www.monmouthcountyparks.com/page.aspx?id=2627>

Restrooms available.

Acreage: 1348 acres

Habitat(s): Mostly woodland, Reservoir

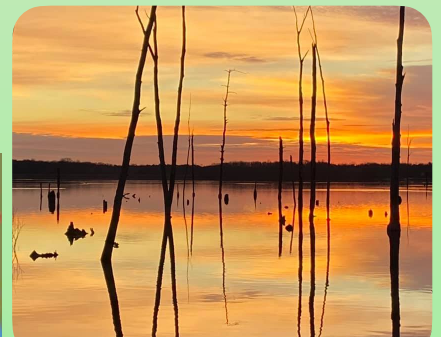
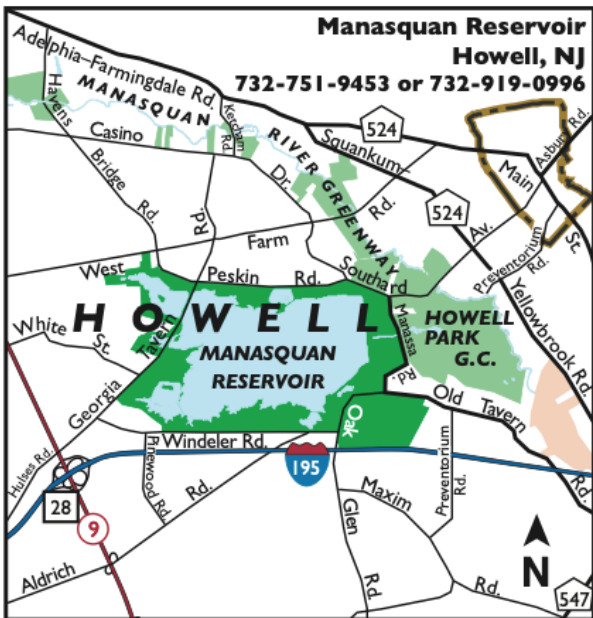
E-Bird Stats*: 238+ species & 2500+ checklists. (Three hotspots combined)

**as of December 1, 2022*

The Manasquan Reservoir is a source of water for municipalities and utilities. The Reservoir is also a natural setting for recreational activities and outdoor pursuits. The 770-acre Reservoir is part of a larger 1,348 acre site that include woods and wetlands, a 5-mile perimeter trail, fishing and boating areas, and a Visitor Center. A bicycle repair station with a tire pump and tools has recently been added by the main trailhead kiosk near the Visitor Center.

The site also features an Environmental Center, dedicated to providing experiences of learning and discovery related to wetlands ecology and wildlife and habitat protection through interactive exhibits, multi-media presentations, educational activities for schools and community groups, and wildlife observation areas.

Designed to connect visitors with their natural world, the Environmental Center highlights the importance of water. One exhibit features fish found in the Reservoir outside. Another traces the journey of a raindrop as it travels through the watershed to the Manasquan River and, eventually, reaches the ocean. Some exhibits reveal what is not readily visible, such as nocturnal animals that call the Reservoir home. Another exhibit compares the effects of a town with unmanaged growth to one that has chosen to establish practices that protect the environment.



The Great Backyard
Bird Count

Join MCAS February 17-20, 2023 at Manasquan Reservoir



➤ **Coming Up (see website for more details)**

Programs - Please check the MCAS website for program descriptions and access details. (We are currently evaluating the possibility of resuming "in-person" meetings in the spring!)

Wed., January 11, 2023 8:00 pm
"Marine Mammals of NJ"
Jacalyn Toth Sullivan, Adjunct
Professor of Marine Science at
Stockton University

Wed., March 8, 2023 8:00 pm
**"Gardening For Birds and
Other Native Wildlife"**
With Jason Goldman, Park
Naturalist / Garden Designer
NJ Flower To The People

Check Facebook and our Website for updates!

Volunteers urgently needed! There are currently several openings for members of Monmouth Audubon's Board and for other volunteer positions within our organization. Please consider volunteering your time to keep MCAS a vital organization, taking pride in knowing that you've made a difference to the community – and the birds!

Field Trips -

Please see our website or Facebook to learn how to register via Eventbrite.

Bring binoculars, water and bug spray.

Sat., December 10, 2022
10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Sandy Hook Bird Walk

Sun, January 22, 2023
10:00 am - 12:00 pm
Manasquan Reservoir

Join our 2-hour walk in search of birds migrating south to winter along our coast. We will look for waterfowl, hawks, sparrows and more!

Shake off the winter doldrums and join us for a winter bird walk at Manasquan Reservoir!

Check Facebook and our Website for updates!

Visit our Facebook page



[www.facebook.com/
Monmouthaudubon](http://www.facebook.com/Monmouthaudubon)
"Like" us for special
messages and updates.

amazonsmile

You shop. Amazon gives.

**Every dollar you spend at
Amazon.com can benefit MCAS!**

Amazon has a program called AmazonSmile. Instead of logging in at www.amazon.com when you shop, enter smile.amazon.com. You will be asked which organization you want to benefit – just select us. This small change in your routine offers big benefits – 0.5% of every purchase you make goes back to MCAS in the form of a donation! It costs you nothing to participate, so why not Smile!

The Great Backyard
Bird Count



Join MCAS February 17-20, 2023 at Manasquan Reservoir

2023 Calendar of Events

<https://www.monmouthaudubon.org/programs>

<https://www.monmouthaudubon.org/field-trips>



January

Program:

"Marine Mammals of New Jersey"

Wednesday, January 11, 2023 8:00 PM 10:00 PM

Virtual Program via Zoom - see website and Facebook events for details

Field Trip:

MCAS January Field Trip - Manasquan Reservoir

Shake off the winter doldrums and join us for a winter bird walk at Manasquan Reservoir!

Sunday, January 22, 2023 10 AM - 12 PM - see Eventbrite for details

February

Field Trip:

MCAS February Field Trip - Sandy Hook

Join us at Sandy Hook for a brisk February walk in search of winter birds!

Sunday, February 11, 2023 10 AM - 12 PM - see Eventbrite for details

March

Program:

"Gardening For Birds and Other Native Wildlife" with Jason Goldman

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 - 8:00 PM 10:00 PM

STAY TUNED FOR MEETING DETAILS - we are currently evaluating the possibility of resuming "in-person" meetings in the spring!

Field Trip:

MCAS March Field Trip - Big Brook Timber Doodle Walk

Join MCAS for an evening at Big Brook Park Saturday, March 11, 2022 to observe the ritual/display flight of the American Woodcock.

Saturday, March 11, 2023, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM - see Eventbrite for details

April

Program:

"Birding Garret Mountain" with Carole Hughes

Wednesday, April 12, 2023 - 8:00 PM 10:00 PM

STAY TUNED FOR MEETING DETAILS - we are currently evaluating the possibility of resuming "in-person" meetings in the spring!

Field Trip:

MCAS April 2023 Field Trip - Sandy Hook

Join this two-hour walk to look for osprey, herons, egrets and arriving spring migrants. Remember to bring binoculars.

Sunday, April 16, 2023, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM - see Eventbrite for details

May

Program:

National Moth Week with Elena Tartaglia, Ph.D

Wednesday, May 10, 2023 8:00 PM 10:00 PM

STAY TUNED FOR MEETING DETAILS - we are currently evaluating the possibility of resuming "in-person" meetings in the spring!

Field Trip:

MCAS May 2023 Field Trip - Allaire State Park

It's back!! Join us for a walk at Allaire SP in search of Warblers & other migrants!

Sunday, May 14, 2023, 8:00 AM – 11:00 AM - see Eventbrite for details

Summer - Stay tuned to our website and Facebook page for more info on our Summer field trips!!

HOW TO REGISTER FOR FIELD TRIPS:

Our field trips are free and open to all, but we do require registration to manage group sizes and communications in the event of a change of plans due to weather or other issues. View and register for events here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/monmouth-county-audubon-society-mcas-47703834603>

STAY TUNED FOR MEETING DETAILS

We are currently evaluating the possibility of resuming "in-person" meetings in the spring! Meeting logistics will be posted on our website and Facebook page.