

the osprey

Monmouth County Audubon Society

www.monmouthaudubon.org

Over **50 Years** of Birds and Conservation

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THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD: Mute Swans may be beautiful, but this non-native species drives off native waterfowl, can be aggressive to humans, and can damage the pond environment.

► Mute Swan: The Boss of the Pond

excerpted from an article in the Two River Times by Joseph Sapia

EARLIER THIS MONTH on the Shrewsbury River at Monmouth Beach, two large white swans, along with their two cygnets, casually approached two boats.

"Somebody must be feeding them," said someone on the boat.

In the outdoors world, that may be one of the tamer comments made about Mute Swans – the swans seen on fresh or brackish local bodies of water.

A serious birdwatcher may call them "harbor hogs" or "pond pigs," reflecting the dislike birders have for them, said Pete Bacinski, an Atlantic Highlands resident who is a member of the state Waterfowl Advisory Committee and the retired director of New Jersey Audubon's Sandy Hook Bird Observatory.

Hoggish and piggish because they are a non-native, invasive species that disrupts the natural world around them.

Sam Skinner, a Monmouth County Park System naturalist, allows that Mute Swans are "beautiful birds," but...

"They pretty much take over, they're the boss of the pond," said Skinner, who is based at Huber Woods Park in Middletown. "They deplete the vegetation. They discourage other waterfowl – (and) not just waterfowl.

"They attack humans," Skinner said. "Give you a mean little bite, whack you with their wings."

"They are nasty to people," Bacinski said. "They can literally take a finger off."

"Mute Swans are a very polarizing issue," said Dena Temple, public relations chair for the Monmouth County Audubon Society. "People think they are beautiful – but they are a non-native species, and they disrupt the balance of the environment."

"All of the Mute Swans in North America descended from swans imported from Europe from the mid-1800s through the early 1900s to adorn large estates, city parks and zoos," according to the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology website, allaboutbirds.org.

They may live 19 or 20 years and their cygnets – mostly two, sometime three – have a "75 to 80 percent survival rate because their parents are so protective," Skinner said.

New Jersey has two native swans – tundras and trumpeters, which are winter species in New Jersey. In the Two River area, they are basically migrants, Bacinski said.

(continued on Page 3)



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EditorDena Temple

The Osprey is published 5x per year 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: info@monmouthaudubon.org

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➤ **Items of note - local tidbits of interest**

World Series of Birding results... Our official team, Cheep Trills, competed in the 33rd annual World Series of Birding back in May, and the winner is... Monmouth County Audubon Society! Our team spotted a total of 143 species of birds in the 24-hour competition. This is about average in recent years, but it was 30 species higher than last year, when fog and rain ruined the team's chances for a good score.

Highlights from this year's competition were a pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos at Assunpink; a Screech Owl in Huber Woods; and a Sora at Lake Assunpink.

Special thanks to Tom's Ford of Keyport for loaning us a Ford Flex to use during the event, and to all of the team's sponsors, who helped Cheep Trills raise over \$2,200 for our scholarship fund.

The team's day ended early because of heavy rain, and the 143 total wasn't enough to capture a win, but as always, a fine time was had by all.

Many thanks... We are happy to have several people to thank this month for special donations. Our thanks go to: Barbara Potter, the Garden Club of Fair Haven, Rocco and Cathy Dimeo, and Richard Coplon. We also received several donations in memory of Else Maertens from Barbara & David Elmendorf and Michele & Jim Dempsey.

Thanks one and all — we appreciate your ongoing support!

We want to know what you think! Some time later this year we will undertake a survey of our members. We want to know who you are, what you like to do, how involved you are in birding and conservation, and what you think of our organization and the job our volunteers are doing.

When we last circulated a survey back in 2000, it provided us with a lot of interesting feedback on our programs, field trips, newsletter, website and other features. And based on that feedback, we did make a number of changes.

That early survey was distributed by mail to our members, and in turn, members were expected to mail them back. Once received, they were manually tabulated - a very labor- and time-intensive project. This time, we will be posting a link in the newsletter and asking you to access the survey online. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and the link will be live for approximately 30 days. Results are tabulated automatically, and we will report on the findings in a future edition of *The Osprey*.

When the link is posted, we hope you'll take a few minutes to help steer the future of MCAS, so that we can serve our members and the community more effectively.

New neighbors... Residents of Union Beach couldn't help but notice their new neighbors - a pair of Bald Eagles built a nest atop the cell tower next to Natco Lake. The birds, easily viewed from the Henry Hudson Trail, became the worst-kept secret on the Bayshore, as residents marveled at their nest-building and anxiously awaited the arrival of chicks. At least one chick has been seen.



Cheep Trills team members (r-l) Dena Temple, Debbie Stewart, Rob Fanning and John Temple look and listen for birds at North Pond, on Sandy Hook. Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning.

MCAS Programs 2016-2017

September 14, 2016, 8:00 pm
"The Physics of Flight, Part 2,"
Tom Reider

October 12, 2016, 8:00 pm
"NJ Bald Eagle Project," Robert
Somes, NJ Division of Fish
& Wildlife

November 9, 2016, 8:00 pm
"Yellowstone: Land of Fire
and Water," George Nixon

December 14, 2016, 8:00 pm
"Birding by Impression,"
Kevin Karlson and Dale
Rosselet

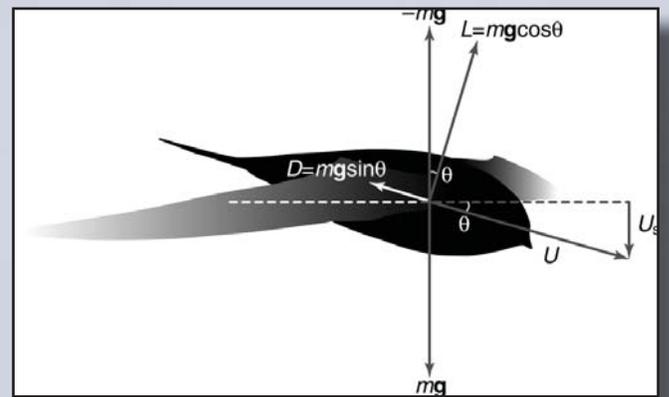
January 11, 2017, 8:00 pm
"Hurricanes and Beach-nest-
ing Birds: More than Meets
the Eye," Christina Davis, NJ
Division of Fish & Wildlife

February 8, 2017, 8:00 pm
"Restoring Ecological Rela-
tionships Within NJ's Forest-
ed Ecosystems,"
Emile DeVito, Ph.D., NJ Con-
servation Foundation

March 8, 2017, 7:00 pm
"Family Night: The Lizard Guys"
(note early start time)

April 12, 2017, 8:00 pm
"Understanding the Silent
Flight of Owls," Justin
Jaworski, Lehigh University

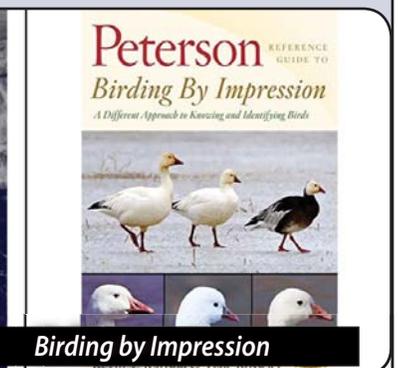
May 10, 2017, 8:00 pm
"Return of the Raven,"
Rick Radis, NJ Audubon
Society



Lizard Guy



Hurricanes and beach-nesting birds (NASA)



Birding by Impression

MCAS Field Trips 2016-2017

Sunday, September 18 8:00 am
In search of sparrows with Rob Fanning at Big Brook Park, 521 Route 520, Marlboro; meet in parking area



Carolyn Amesen

Saturday, December 10 10:00 am
Late fall birding on Sandy Hook with Stuart Malmid; meet in old Visitor Center parking lot

Sunday, April 30 10:00 am
Shorebirds of 7 Presidents Oceanfront Park with Harden Fowler; meet in the skate park parking lot

Saturday, February 11 10:00 am
Winter birding on Sandy Hook with Linda Mack; meet in old Visitor Center parking lot

Saturday, May 6 8:15 am
Spring Migration at Allaire State Park with Dena Temple; meet in main parking lot

Saturday, October 15 10:00 am
Fall birding on Sandy Hook with Linda Mack; meet in old Visitor Center parking lot

Saturday, March 13 5:30 pm
Evening Woodcock walk at Big Brook Park with Rob & Lisa Fanning; meet in main parking lot

Saturday, November 12 8:00 am
Bird Banding on Sandy Hook with Tom Brown; meet at Lot M (Fisherman's Pavilion lot)

Saturday, April 15 10:00 am
Early Spring Migration at Sandy Hook; meet in the old Visitor Center parking lot



Arthur Melville Pearson

John van Dort



➤ **Caitlin Loh, Gillian Natanagara awarded 2016 wildlife conservation scholarships**

We are delighted to announce that two Monmouth County high school graduates were awarded the Ted Engberg Wildlife Conservation Scholarship this June for their commitment to conservation and academic success. This ongoing scholarship in the memory of Ted is an excellent way for MCAS to carry out our mission, "to promote the awareness, appreciation and conservation of natural resources through activism and educational outreach." Since 2006 MCAS has awarded a total of 22 scholarships totaling \$30,500 to incoming college freshmen majoring in the area of conservation. Thanks to your donations to our World Series of Birding team, MCAS will continue the scholarship in 2017.

Our Scholarship Committee reviewed the applications from throughout the county and agreed Caitlin Loh and Gillian Natanagara demonstrated an outstanding commitment to conservation through activities, goals and academic excellence, putting them at the top of the applicants this year. Each has received a Scholarship Certificate and a \$1,500 check to be used toward their college education.

Caitlin Loh will attend

Johns Hopkins University this fall, majoring in Molecular Biology toward her conservation goals. Caitlin feels this major will present her with "endless opportunities" to conserve wildlife.

Gillian Natanagara will attend the University of Vermont this fall, majoring in Environmental Studies geared toward conservation. Gillian hopes to share her environmental education, inspiring others to protect habitats.

MCAS hopes the enthusiasm of these two students and the knowledge they gain will protect our wildlife and environment in the years to come. The Board wishes Caitlin and Gillian continued academic success pursuing a college degree. We look forward to receiving an update on their conservation education and accomplishments.

Audubon Society
 Thank you so much for awarding me the Ted Engberg scholarship. Ever since I was in kindergarten and my grandma - an Audubon member - would take me bird watching on sandy Hook, I have loved the natural world above all else. I will use this scholarship towards my education, which I expect will provide me with the knowledge and experience to be one of the next generation's leaders in advocating for conservation.
 Fondly, Gillian Natanagara

Swans (continued)

"In the case of the mute swans, when a mute swan moves into an area pond, it's a case of 'there goes the neighborhood,'" Temple said. Being a very large bird, they eat a lot and can decimate the aquatic vegetation in a pond, leaving little food for other birds," said Temple.

North America had an estimated 9,000 birds five years ago, according to the Atlantic Flyway Mute Swan Management Plan, an American-Canadian report released in 2015.

The Management Plan calls for such things as educating the public on Mute Swans, reducing the population to less than 2,000 by 2025, and maintaining Mute Swans at an ecologically manageable level.

"With regard to eradication, this is very polarizing," Temple said. "On one hand you want to restore the balance of the pond, but on the other hand, there is the humane treatment of a living creature.

"So what do you do with the swans? Relocating them only compounds the problem by introducing them into areas where they didn't exist before. Killing eggs has been shown to be ineffective in reducing the population because of the birds' tremendous reproductive capacity."

"I don't like to see a slaughter," Bacinski said. "Most states will shoot them when they show up if they have not been established there."

Bacinski's feelings on mute swans?

"They're dreadful," Bacinski said. "When I see them, I sort of ignore them."



A Bald Eagle soars over its nest in Union Beach; attend a field trip this fall; watch for the MCAS membership survey, coming later this year.





**Monmouth County
Audubon Society**
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CURRENT RESIDENT OR

➤ **Membership Application**

Please enroll me as a member of the Monmouth County Audubon Society (Q04) and/or the National Audubon Society. My check is enclosed for:

- \$10 **Regular Chapter** member
- \$20 **Chapter Sustaining member** - all funds stay in our area, helping us to support local efforts and provide services here in Monmouth County.
- \$20 **National Audubon Society** member - includes Chapter membership (rate for new members only; renewable at \$35)
- Please contact me regarding volunteer opportunities.
- Do not add my name to the mailing list; I will read the newsletter online.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

E-mail _____

C6ZQ040Z

Please make checks payable to MCAS and return along with application to: Monmouth County Audubon Society, P.O. Box 542, Red Bank, NJ 07701.

Membership questions? Email us at info@monmouthaudubon.org.

➤ **coming up**

- Wednesday, Sept. 14 8:00 pm
"The Physics of Flight, Part II,
Tom Reider
- Sunday, Sept. 18 8:00 am
Searching for Sparrows at Big Brook Park; meet in parking lot on Rte. 520, Marlboro
- Wednesday, Oct. 12 8:00 pm
"NJ Bald Eagle Project," Robert
Somes, NJ Div. of Fish & Wildlife
- Saturday, Oct. 15 10:00 am
Fall birding on Sandy Hook; meet in
old Visitor Center parking lot

* Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month September-May at the Knights of Columbus hall, 200 Fair Haven Road, Fair Haven. Meetings are always open to the public, and refreshments are served.

Check our website for updates on field trips, activities or cancellations due to weather.