

# the osprey

Monmouth County Audubon Society

www.monmouthaudubon.org

Over **50 Years** of Birds and Conservation

Volume 53, #1

August / September 2017

## In this issue...

MCAS awards scholarships.....	1
World Series of Birding.....	2
Special thanks.....	2
Membership survey.....	2
MCAS programs 2017-2018 .....	3
MCAS field trips 2017-2018 .....	4
Focus on conservation .....	5
Dickcissel nesting at Dorbrook	
Coming up.....	6

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## ➤ MCAS awards scholarships to two worthy Monmouth County students

*Finnerty, Rademacher are newest recipients*

by Harden Fowler

**M**onmouth County Audubon Society is delighted to announce that two Monmouth County high school graduates recently earned the 2017 Ted Engberg Wildlife Conservation Scholarship for their commitment to conservation and academic excellence.

This ongoing scholarship, named in the memory of a longtime supporter of MCAS and a former Board member, is an important way for MCAS to carry out its mission, "to promote the awareness, appreciation and conservation of natural resources through activism and educational outreach."

Since 2006 MCAS has awarded a total of 24 scholarships totaling \$33,500 to incoming college freshmen majoring in the field of conservation. And thanks to your donations to our World Series of Birding Team, MCAS will be able to continue the scholarship program in 2018.

Our Scholarship Committee reviewed applications from students throughout the county and found that Mary Finnerty and Laura Rademacher demonstrated an outstanding commitment to conservation through activities, goals and academic excellence, putting them at the top of the list this year. Each has received a Scholarship Certificate and a \$1,500 check to be used toward their college education.



**Mary Finnerty** (above), a graduate of High Technology High School, will attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute this fall, majoring in Environmental Engineering in order to specialize in conserving wildlife and habitat. Her conservation activities included Monmouth County Parks trail crew, March for Science on Earth Day, joining the environmental club and volunteering with NJ Baykeepers and Bayshore Regional Watershed Council.

**Laura Rademacher**, who graduated from Raritan High School, will attend Rutgers University this fall, majoring in Entomology to conserve wildlife. Her conservation activities included planting gardens throughout her home town,

(continued on Page 5)



**Monmouth County Audubon Society**

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*First Vice President*

Stuart Malmid

*Second Vice President*

Robert Henschel

*Treasurer*

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*Conservation*

Harden Fowler, Chairman

*Programs*

Wendy Malmid, Chairman

*Field Trips*

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*Publicity*

Dena Temple, Chairman

*Hospitality*

(vacant)

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*Website*

Dena Temple, Chairman

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Directors at Large**

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**Newsletter Staff**

Editor .....Dena 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 125 species of birds in the 24-hour competition. This is lower than average, but the event was held one week later than usual, which impacted the migration numbers, and windy, drizzly conditions made the birds less than cooperative.

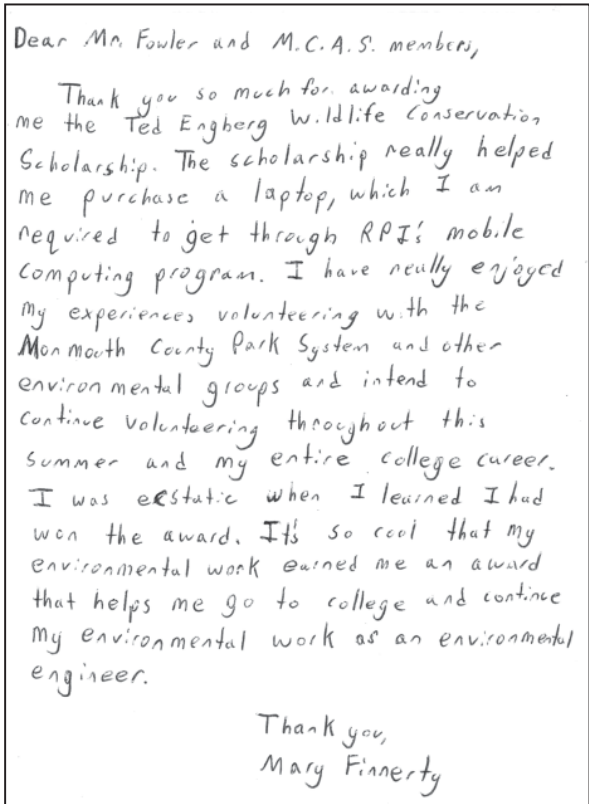
Highlights from this year's competition were a Whimbrel at Shark River; nesting Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Keyport; and Pileated Woodpecker in Allaire State Park.

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 around \$2,200 for our scholarship fund.

The team's day ended around 10 pm, and our total wasn't enough to capture a win, but as always, a fine time was had by all, and we're already planning for 2018!

**Many thanks...** We are happy to have several people to thank this month for special donations. Our thanks go to: Caroline Huber, Kathleen Kerbs, the Garden Club of Fair Haven, Katharine McCleary, Barbara Potter, Ruth Barker, and Joan & Bob Aufderhar.

Also, special thanks to all of our members and friends who supported our team in this year's World Series of Birding. We appreciate your ongoing support!



Thank you note received from scholarship recipient Mary Finnerty.

➤ **MCAS membership survey**

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.

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

This time, we would like you to complete the survey online. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and the link will be live for approximately 30 days. Results will be tabulated automatically, and we will report on the findings in a future issue of *The Osprey*.

Please take a few minutes to help steer the future of MCAS, so that we can serve our members and the community more effectively. Here is the link to the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H2KRKTR>



# MCAS Programs 2017-2018

Wednesday, Sept. 13 8:00 pm  
**NJ Audubon's Quail and Golden-winged Warbler Restoration Project**, John Parke and Don Donnelly

Wednesday, Oct. 11 8:00 pm  
**NJ Bald Eagle Project**, Robert Somes



Wednesday, Feb. 14 8:00 pm  
**American Kestrels**, William Pitts, NJ Fish & Wildlife

Wednesday, April 11 8:00 pm  
**My Journey with a Pair of Great Horned Owls**, Pamela Dimeler



Wednesday, Nov. 8 8:00 pm  
**Return of the Raven**, Rick Radis

Wednesday, Dec. 13 8:00 pm  
**Avian Rehabilitation – or How to Live with a Loon in Your Bathtub**, Giselle Smisko

Wednesday, Jan. 10 8:00 pm  
**Travels in Peru**, Kevin Watson



Wednesday, Mar. 14 7:00 pm  
**FAMILY NIGHT!**  
**Back Into Nature Wildlife**, Rizzo's Wildlife Discovery  
*(please note early start time)*



Wednesday, May 9 8:00 pm  
**The Impact of Habitat Loss on Avian Biodiversity, from the Amazon to the Eastern United States**, Jacob Socolar



*Family Night Fun*



*Travels in Peru*



*Avian Rehabilitation*

# MCAS Field Trips 2017-2018

Thurs., August 24 6 pm  
**Evening bird walk at Sandy Hook;** meet in meet in "M" lot (northernmost parking area)

Sat., September 16 10 am  
**Butterflies and Birds of Tatum Park, Middletown;** meet in main parking area, Holland Road

Sat., December 9 10 am  
**Late fall birding at Sandy Hook,** meet in old Visitor Center parking lot, 1.3 miles north of park entrance

Sat., October 7 8 am - 5 pm  
**Sandy Hook "Big Sit,"** Migration Watch platform near North Pond, Parking Lot "M"

Sat., February 10 10 am  
**Winter birds of Sandy Hook,** meet in old Visitor Center parking lot, 1.3 miles north of park entrance

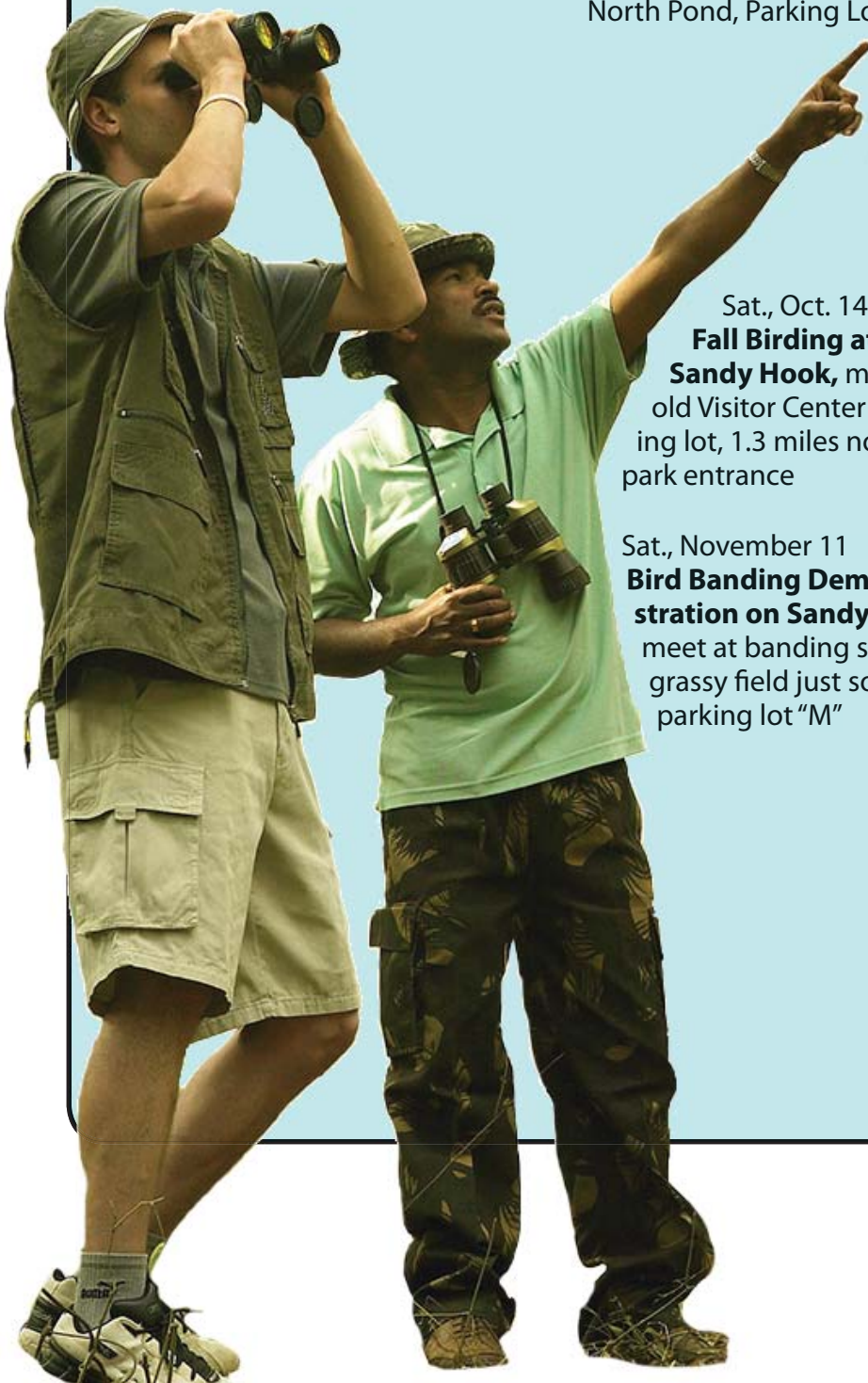
Sat., March 10 5:30 pm  
**"Timberdoodle Walk" (for American Woodcock) at Big Brook Park,** Rte. 520, Marlboro; meet in main parking lot

Sat., Oct. 14 10 am  
**Fall Birding at Sandy Hook,** meet in old Visitor Center parking lot, 1.3 miles north of park entrance

Sat., April 14 10 am  
**Spring migration at Sandy Hook,** meet in old Visitor Center parking lot, 1.3 miles north of park entrance

Sat., November 11 8 am  
**Bird Banding Demonstration on Sandy Hook;** meet at banding station, grassy field just south of parking lot "M"

Sat., May 5 8:15 am  
**Spring migration-palooza at Allaire State Park,** meet in main parking area (by historic village)



*Bird banding demonstration*



## ► **Dickcissel nesting at Dorbrook**

### *Improved habitat management attracts rare “invader” to breed*

For the first time, a pair of Dickcissel nested in Dorbrook Recreation Area, a Monmouth County park, this summer. The Dickcissel is a sparrow-like bird that typically breeds in the Central prairie states. The male is striking, having a yellow breast with a black “V” in the center, a yellow stripe above the eyes, and a rusty patch on its shoulders. The female has a more muted yellow breast and eyestripe, and rusty shoulder patches. A breeding male will sing loudly and continuously from prominent perches in its territory.

While each year small numbers of the species are found in New Jersey, breeding birds are rare in this state. However, the Dickcissel has a reputation for being nomadic and in some years will wander well beyond the prairie. According to the American Birding Association, 2017 is one of those years, with a surge of Dickcissel reports during June from regions outside its core summer range.

New Jersey experienced the Dickcissel “invasion,” with multiple birds found here in June. Reports stretched from agricultural areas of Salem and Burlington Counties to a semi-industrial area of Bayonne, Hudson County.

With Dickcissels on my mind, I explored a field that is part of the Dorbrook Recreation Area in Colts Neck, located on the south side of Route 537 west of the main park entrance. Since 2010, this field has been managed by the Monmouth County Park System as habitat for grassland birds, butterflies and other pollinators. Grasshopper Sparrows were found at this field in 2013 and have nested in recent years.

Last summer the MCAS board was alerted to a change in mowing practices at this location, which raised concerns about the nesting Grasshopper Sparrows.



*Male Dickcissel at Dorbrook Rec. Area*

MCAS contacted the MCPS by letter, and board members attended a Park Commission meeting to express our concerns. In response to our concerns, the Park System this year changed their mowing practices, cutting less trails and mowing earlier in the season, resulting in a more contiguous, robust grassland.

The resulting habitat abounds with beautiful wildflowers, shrubs and tall grasses. It proved to be an inviting spot for a pair of roaming Dickcissel, which I found there on June 26, 2017. The adult male was singing when I arrived and continued to sing from various perches around the field, marking his territory. I saw a female nearby, carrying nesting material. Other birders who visited the park also saw the female Dickcissel with nesting material and saw and heard the male singing.

Several weeks later, the female Dickcissel was observed carrying food to the area where she had been seen building her nest. This was a good sign that the

pair had bred and was feeding young birds. On August 2, I returned to the field and saw the adult female perched up and calling. A minute or so later, a juvenile Dickcissel flew in to the female. The juvenile had the same stout bill of the parents, with fine streaking on the breast and a hint of the yellow plumage of an adult.

This is the first breeding pair of Dickcissel recorded in Monmouth County in recent memory and the first ever at this location. MCAS congratulates Senior Park Manager Ken Thoman and his staff at the Monmouth County Park System for their successful management of this habitat for grassland birds. Grasshopper Sparrows also bred in this field again this year. Ordinarily that would be a headline, but this year the beautiful and rarer Dickcissels were the stars. Let’s hope they come back to Monmouth County again.

## **Scholarships (continued)**

supporting the Monmouth County Park System and joining the environmental club, all fueled by her strong interest in the study of insects.

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

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** Our treasurer, Howard Mason, recently ran into the mother of one of our 2013 scholarship recipients, Emily Casper. Emily graduated from Fordham University in June with a degree in Environmental Science and has received a full scholarship for graduate study.

So if you’ve ever questioned whether your donations to MCAS or our World Series of Birding team are worthwhile, here’s proof that you’ve had a major impact on someone’s life.



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## ➤ **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** (*payable to MCAS*)
- \$20 **Chapter Sustaining member** - all funds stay in our area, helping us to support local efforts and provide services here in Monmouth County. (*payable to MCAS*)
- \$20 **National Audubon Society member** - includes Chapter membership (rate for new members only; renewable at \$35; *check payable to National Audubon Society*)
- 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**C7ZQ040Z**

Please return your check (see above) along with application to: Monmouth County Audubon Society, P.O. Box 542, Red Bank, NJ 07701.

**Membership questions?** Email us at [info@monmouthaudubon.org](mailto:info@monmouthaudubon.org).

## ➤ **coming up**

Thurs., Aug. 24 6:00 pm

**Evening bird walk at Sandy Hook;**  
meet in meet in "M" lot (north end)

Wed., Sept. 13 8:00 pm

**NJ Audubon's Bobwhite and Gold-  
en-winged Warbler Restoration  
Project,** John P. Parke / Don Donnelly

Sat., Sept. 16 10:00 am

**Butterflies and Birds of Tatum Park,  
Middletown;** meet in main parking  
area, Holland Road

Sat., Oct. 7 8 am - 5 pm

**Sandy Hook "Big Sit,"** Migration  
Watch platform near North Pond,  
Parking Lot "M"

Wed., Oct. 11 8:00 pm

**NJ Bald Eagle Project,** Robert Somes

Sat., Oct. 14 10:00 am

**Fall birding at Sandy Hook,** meet in  
old Visitor Center parking lot, 1.3 mi.  
north of entrance