

the osprey

Monmouth County Audubon Society

www.monmouthaudubon.org

Over **50 Years** of Birds and Conservation

Volume 51, #3
December / January 2016

In this issue...

Updates, Trivia and FAQs.....	1
Items of note	2
Christmas Bird Count; birding research; Women in Wildlife Awards	
Special thanks.....	2
Focus on conservation	3
Binoculars, the perfect Holiday gift	
Coming up	4

Visit our Facebook page



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!



LEFT: Black Skimmers are an uncommon sighting along the North Shore, but this fall a large flock congregated on the Belmar beach. RIGHT: Black Skimmer flock in Belmar.

Bob Henschel

► Updates, Trivia - and FAQs

by Bob Henschel

There are some curiosities and concerns about nature in Monmouth County that people seem to bring up almost every year at meetings, field trips and general get-togethers.

This past winter it started out with why robins in JANUARY were so numerous. The short answer is that American Robins move; sometimes south, sometimes east depending on where they might find a consistent winter food source. For Monmouth County that includes groves of American Holly and Red Cedars. Visit Sandy Hook and our southeastern coastal towns where both trees thrive and you'll encounter many more robins in winter than you'll ever see there in the summer. "But don't they get cold?" someone will usually ask. Naturally, the birds know it's cold, but like chickadees, cardinals and other year-round regulars, they're equipped to handle it. Robins can deal with temperatures as low as -30 degrees while still staying a toasty 104° beneath their feathers.

A "wishful thinking" kind of question asked by many around New Year's Day 2015 is whether or not large numbers of Snowy Owls would be making an encore appearance in New Jersey. As we found

out, the answer to that was, unfortunately, no. At our October meeting Dr. J.F. Therrien, senior research biologist at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, explained how seeing an unprecedented number of these Arctic visitors during winter 2013-2014 may have been a once-in-a-lifetime experience. They'll still drop in now and then, but not to the extent they did two years ago. (It all has to do with lemmings.)

While at the beach this summer, I sort of fell into a discussion of whales in New Jersey and whether or not you could ever see one from the beach. The answer to that, as most of you shore fans know, is "sure." In fact, if you look at the NJ State Mammal list, you'll find several species of whales recorded, including the Blue Whale which not only qualifies as the New Jersey's largest animal (no surprise), it's also the largest animal in the world AND the largest animal that ever existed! Unfortunately, the possibility of seeing one is fairly slim. But you will have a better chance of seeing a Fin Whale (also known as the Finback Whale) near shore. I've seen a few over the years just from the boardwalk. This little guy is number two in size compared to the Blue, but still can weigh in at

(continued on Page 3)



Monmouth County Audubon Society

Officers 2015-2016

President

Robert Henschel

Vice President

Colette Buchanan

Treasurer

Howard Mason

Recording Secretary

Liz Doerning

Committees

Membership

Colette Buchanan, Chairman

Conservation

Harden Fowler, Chairman

Programs

Wendy Malmid, Chairman

Field Trips

Lisa Fanning, Chairman

Education

(vacant)

Publicity

Dena Temple, Chairman

Hospitality

Liz Doerning, Chairman

Social Media

Lisa Fanning, Chairman

Website

Dena Temple, Chairman

**Elected Directors /
Directors at Large**

Peter Bacinski, Scott Barnes, Michael Casper, Scott Elowitz, Rob Fanning, Robert Henschel, Donna Juettner, Linda Mack, Stuart Malmid, Wendy Malmid, Janice Mason, Debra Stewart, John Temple, Dena Temple, Ken Thoman, J. Randolph Walton

Newsletter Staff

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

Printed on Recycled Paper



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

It's time to... Sign up for a Christmas Bird Count! On Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman initiated a new holiday tradition – a “Christmas Bird Census” – that would count birds during the holidays rather than hunt them. That first year, 25 counts were held across North America, and 90 species were tallied.

From December 14 through January 5 each year tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in the effort. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action. You can participate, too, in one of three counts held in Monmouth County: Assunpink, Long Branch and Sandy Hook. Birders interesting in participating in a CBC can sign up through the Audubon website.

Birders of all skill levels needed... Vanderbilt University is looking for birders of all levels of experience to participate in a project examining how perception and memory for birds differs between beginners and experts. These online experiments measure your ability to remember and identify birds and sometimes other animals or objects. The experiments are fairly short. To participate, visit <http://expertise.psy.vanderbilt.edu>. Once you register and complete a short survey of your birding expertise, you can participate in any experiments that are available. This editor took the test (for research purposes, of course, not for fun) and scored an overall 81%; not bad. See how you do! For more information, contact Prof. Thomas Palmeri at Vanderbilt University, thomas.j.palmeri@vanderbilt.edu.

Honoring women & wildlife... On October 28, keynote speaker Governor Christine Todd Whitman helped the Conserve Wildlife Foundation honor three women for their outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation. These honorees helped to make New Jersey a leader in bringing key species back from the brink of extinction – species such as the Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and Osprey.

MacKenzie Hall, Inspiration Award winner, began as a wildlife biologist for the Conserve Wildlife Foundation in 2004 and has supported and participated in bat research projects throughout the state. With many bat colonies suffering the effects of White-nose Syndrome, she went above and beyond her duties by launching the “Bats in Buildings” program, offering NJ homeowners bat-friendly “eviction” resources, as well as free bat houses for displaced colonies.

Leadership Award winner Pat Hamilton has worked for the NJDFW Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries since 1980 and has become a leader in managing and conserving coldwater fisheries throughout the state. She is considered the champion for Eastern brook trout, the state’s only native salmonid, and a species once extirpated from over 50% of its historical habitat due to human impacts.

Schools across NJ are incorporating environmental education into their curriculum, a movement inspired by a growing awareness of environmental issues and our shared role in understanding and resolving them. This movement owes its success to Tanya Oznowich, Environmental Education Supervisor of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, who has championed environmental education. Since joining the NJDEP in 1988, she has dedicated herself to integrating environmental science into New Jersey’s classrooms, from kindergarten to college. She was honored with the Conserve Wildlife Foundation’s Education Award.



We are happy to have several people to thank in this issue. Our thanks to Claudette Lupton, David Saidnaway of Wild Birds Unlimited, Debra Stewart, Katharine McCleary and Jeanne Isoldi for their donations over the past few months. We appreciate your support!

160,000 pounds.

Switching gears, throughout the late summer I noticed a steady number of Black Skimmers heading south; I later realized that they were gathering in large numbers just a quarter-mile south on the Belmar side of the Shark River. A number of fishermen and beachgoers around the inlet asked me what they were, having never seen them before, let alone in such numbers. In mid-September I counted 106 with a mix of adults and juveniles, plus an unexpected five fuzzy chicks which had hatched there well after the usual nesting window. By mid-October the group, still numbering about 40, shifted their gathering point a bit south on the Belmar beach.

And, before I forget, I feel it's my responsibility to inform you that our "Birds of Monmouth County" checklist, completed just a year or two ago, is now officially out-of-date... But, unlike most things that fade into obsolescence, that's not bad news at all! In fact it was something we hoped would happen the day we got them back from our printer. The New Jersey Bird Records Committee recently approved two new additions to our checklist, rounding up our total to 390 species. Even better news is that we had left some blank lines on the bottom of the card for write-ins. So when you have a chance please add, in ink, White-faced Ibis and Crested Caracara. Both naturally are in the R+ category which we all know stands for really REALLY hard to find.

➤ Binoculars, the perfect Holiday gift

New birders often try to view birds through a pair of poor-quality optics designed more for casual viewing. If they join a group on a field trip, the experienced birders will often let others check out their optics. That's when they realize the difference good binoculars can make in the enjoyment of birding. Next comes the question, "Which binoculars should I buy?"

A brochure from the National Audubon Society entitled "The Audubon Guide to Binoculars" by Wayne Mones reviews what to look for and how to pick your new binoculars in several price ranges. It stresses the importance of "bird-worthy" binoculars to fully enjoy your birding experience and explains the different types of binoculars, from compact to mid-sized to full-sized. It explains the binocular buzzwords: magnification, field of view, focal length, non-fogging and waterproof; and covers cleaning and care.

Let's summarize these important areas. Binocular size is expressed as two numbers, for example, "8X42." In this example the 8 refers to the magnification, and the 42 is the diameter in millimeters of the objective or far lens, which lets in light. A range of 6-8 magnification and objective lens in the 32-44 mm range are good for birding, with mid-sized (a little lighter) to full-sized (a little heavier) binoculars being more suited than the compact ones. Field of view is the area that you see from left to right at a distance of 1,000 yards, with 340 or more feet being good, since the birds are moving through your field. For focusing, a large center focus wheel that adjusts both lenses is best, not zoom or quick-focus. Focal length is how close an object can be and still be in focus; a lower number makes the binoculars suited for close-up looks at butterflies. Adjustment to fine tune any differences in your vision and folding eye cups for glasses on/off viewing are other features to look for. In all price ranges, look for binoculars that are non-fogging and waterproof, which is important because birding is an all-weather, all temperature activity.

With proper cleaning and care, your binoculars can last for decades. After blowing off any dust or debris, use only lens-specific cleaners with care and wipe only with a soft cloth. Never use strong glass cleaners or paper wipes. Keep your binoculars around your neck, cover the lenses when not viewing, and keep them in the case when not birding.

There is nothing like a hands-on trial to find the binoculars that not only check all the boxes on your wish list, but also fit and feel good in your hands. A trip to any NJ Audubon center allows you to test-drive binoculars before you buy; it's mileage and time well spent. And it's not a bad thing to support a worthwhile organization while treating yourself to a new "toy."



Just because binoculars are popular doesn't make them right for you. Be sure to try out the binoculars you want to make sure they fit your hands, feel comfortable, adjust easily, are bright and clear, and aren't too heavy for you.



**Monmouth County
Audubon Society**
P.O. Box 542
Red Bank, NJ 07701

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Red Bank, NJ
Permit No. 212

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 _____

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

C6ZQ040Z

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

Please check our website for updates on possible program cancellations due to weather.

➤ **coming up**

- Saturday, Dec. 5 10:00 am
Late fall birding on Sandy Hook with Stuart Malmid; meet in old Visitor Center parking lot
- Wednesday, Dec. 9 8:00 pm
"When Good Birds Go Bad: Human/Bird Conflict in Residential Landscapes"
Rob Fergus, Ph.D.
- Wednesday, Jan. 13 8:00 pm
"Iceland," Phil and Becky Witt
- Wednesday, Feb. 10 8:00 pm
"Winter Pelagics in the Mid-Atlantic: Putting the BRRR in Birding," Paul Guris
- Saturday, Feb. 13 10:00 am
Winter birding on Sandy Hook with Linda Mack; 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.