

the osprey

Monmouth County Audubon Society

www.monmouthaudubon.org

Over **50 Years** of Birds and Conservation

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Some of the birds seen in Monmouth County in 2015 by Rob & Lisa Fanning (l-r): White-winged Dove; Bohemian Waxwing; and Pink-footed Goose.

► A Monmouth County Big Year

by Rob Fanning

My wife Lisa and I challenged ourselves to a Monmouth Big Year for 2015, with a fairly modest goal of 250 species for the county. We thought 250 would be challenging but attainable, given the diverse habitat that Monmouth offers.

We kicked off on New Year's Day by attending a field trip at Sandy Hook. We tallied 57 species, including Red-necked Grebe, Tree Swallow and Common Raven. The next day we enjoyed an inshore pelagic trip which delivered Common Murre, Razorbill and Black-legged Kittiwake. The following day we added 16 more species – we were off to the races with 76 species by Day 3! We ended January with an impressive 109 species, including Eurasian Wigeon, Lark Sparrow, Pink-footed Goose, Cackling Goose and Trumpeter Swan!

February provided few additions but did include Vesper Sparrow, Great Horned Owl, and a gorgeous Bohemian Waxwing.

March highlights included some returning migrants, plus American Woodcock (displaying in our yard) and a flock of Rusty Blackbirds. We headed into spring with 140 species.

April added another 20 species highlighted by a Greater White-fronted Goose and a rare (for Sandy Hook) Louisiana Waterthrush, which Lisa spied bopping

around one of the gun batteries.

It was a fairly poor spring migration with few good waves of migrants. But May is still May, and we racked up a total of 69 additional species including a perched American Pipit, Chuck-Will's-Widow, Summer Tanager, Lincoln's and Grasshopper Sparrow, and Red Knot. Highlights were Common Nighthawk (from our front yard) and a rare-for-NJ White-winged Dove at Sandy Hook. We ended May with 229, before the summer doldrums set in.

The summer yielded only 10 new species, including Bank Swallow, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Bobolink. We were at 239 species heading into fall migration.

The normally excellent fall migration was perhaps even poorer than the spring. September/October yielded only 8 new species, highlighted by American Golden-Plover, Dickcissel, Common Gallinule and three Red-necked Phalaropes, found during the strong Nor'Easter of Oct. 3rd.

A splendid LeConte's Sparrow in mid-November and Saw-whet Owl a week later brought us to the brink of our goal.

#250 for Lisa turned out to be Virginia Rail at Sandy Hook's North Pond. My 250th species came a day later on a NJ Audubon field trip – a Cave Swallow.

(continued on Page 3)



Special
Thanks

We are happy to have several people to thank

in this issue. Our thanks to Caroline Huber for her very generous donation. We also thank Kathleen Kerbs, Dana Flynn and Judy Blair for their donations since the last issue. We appreciate your support!

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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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➤ **Great Backyard Bird Count - Join us!**

When hearing the term “citizen scientist,” your first thought might be of highly experienced, intensely motivated individuals. But that’s certainly not the case with the “Great Backyard Bird Count” (GBBC), where enthusiasts of all ages, ability, mobility and availability can participate.

The GBBC is a collaborative project involving both scientists and volunteers from around the world. You create your own territory, spend as much time as you like searching for birds, then report back what you observed. You will need a computer or tablet, or a friend or relative to enter the data for you. It is easy: just go to <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started> and they’ll walk you through the process.

The best part is that you can participate from your living room, back porch or during a walk through the neighborhood. Explore a particular park or take a stroll on the boardwalk. Visiting a boring relative? Bring your binoculars, then excuse yourself for a while to participate in this once-a-year project. (The optics add credibility.)

Get the whole family involved; even the younger set can learn to recognize the more common birds: cardinal, jay, chickadee, junco, house finch, etc. Let them count the birds and write the names on a checklist. A camera can be useful if you see a bird you can’t readily identify. Likewise, if you’ve sighted what you believe to be a rarity, by all means try to document it. Remember, even a poor photo is better than none at all.

Complete results of the GBBC are posted shortly after the weekend is completed. Last year, birders from more than 100 countries submitted a record 147,265 checklists that included 5090 different birds—more than half the known species on the planet! Once the results are posted you can search specific locations as well as individual species to see where they were found.

If you’re suffering from cabin fever, you can join Monmouth County Audubon volunteers inside the Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center in Howell 10am-3pm over the four-day count weekend, Feb. 12-15. We’ll have binoculars and scopes to use, a big tally board to list our sightings, and panoramic views of the lake and feeders.

Last winter was a definite challenge since the reservoir was almost entirely frozen. Nevertheless, observers managed to log 36 species (below average) including bluebird, Pine Siskin, Hairy Woodpecker, and Bald Eagle. Statewide, the four day total was an impressive 163 species.

Chances are this year’s count will be quite different from 2015, considering that we’ve just experienced the mildest December in our lifetime. Warm weather birds may linger, and the waterfowl that winter here may have cancelled their reservations. The best way to find out is to join us!

How many birds will you find?

19th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count
February 12–15, 2016

Join in! Count birds in your backyard, local park, or wherever you spot a bird, and submit your observations online.

birdcount.org

VISIT MCAS AT THE
MANASQUAN RESERVOIR
ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER
Presidents Weekend - Feb. 12-15
10 am - 3 pm

Audubon | The Cornell Lab of Ornithology | Sponsored in part by | Gold Bank of New Jersey

by Harden Fowler

► Birding Ethics

A few years ago on a bird walk I picked up the U.S. Fish & Wildlife bird list. On the back there was a message from the American Birding Association (ABA) about "Birding Ethics." As birders and environmentalists, we should feel a sense of stewardship for the areas we enjoy, both public and private. We all know that we must protect the environment, and to that end I think that the ABA message is worth sharing.

"The American Birding Association believes that all birders have an obligation at all times to protect wildlife, the natural environment, and the rights of others.

1. Birders must always act in ways that do not endanger the welfare of birds or other wildlife. In keeping with this principle, we will:
 - Observe and photograph birds without knowingly disturbing them in any significant way;
 - Avoid chasing or repeatedly flushing birds; keep an appropriate distance from nests and nesting colonies so as not to disturb the birds or expose them to danger; disturb wintering wildlife as little as possible, particularly during critical feeding and resting periods. They need all of their energy reserves to withstand the stresses of harsh weather and migration.
2. Birders must always act in ways that do not harm the natural environment. In keeping with this principle, we will stay on existing roads, trails and pathways whenever possible to avoid trampling; leave all habitat as it was found. Many birds die when they become entangle in discarded fishing lines, 6 pack rings and other trash, or when they mistake garbage for food.
3. Birders must always respect the rights of others. In keeping with this principle, we will:
 - Respect the privacy and property of others by observing "No Trespassing" signs;
 - Observe all laws and the rules and regulations that govern public use of birding areas;
 - Always behave in a manner that will enhance the image of the birding community in the eyes of the public."

By following these simple principles, we can continue to enjoy the wonders of birds, and nature can continue to thrive undisturbed. Whenever you have a specific concern about protecting the environment, whether it is unwise construction, protecting endangered species or endangered areas, the threat of global warming or anything else, please take stewardship to the next level and contact your elected officials. If enough people express their concerns, they may just join your conservation effort. For information on how you can contact our leaders, please go to the MCAS website at www.monmouthaudubon.org and click on Conservation Articles.

Big Year (continued)

We were not done! On Dec. 20 our team was tallying waterfowl on the Navesink as part of the Sandy Hook Xmas Bird Count. I spotted three AMERICAN WHITE PELICANS flying toward the Oceanic Bridge! Eventually the entire team got to see them as they circled and landed by the bridge – a first-ever sighting on the Sandy Hook count!

I finished with 251 species, while Lisa tallied 252 – not bad for someone battling Lyme disease! We could not have done this without the help of some great birders/friends, especially those who assisted in finding the birds mentioned in this article – Scott Barnes and NJAS, Tommy Boyle, Tom Brown, Allison Coffin, Joe Demko, Eleanor Swanson, Linda Mack, Sam Skinner, See Life Paulagics, Susan Treesh, and Chris and Paula Williams.

We can't wait to see what surprises 2016 brings. Yes, we plan on doing this all over again!

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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!





**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 _____

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

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

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

➤ **coming up**

- 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 lot
- Wednesday, March 9 7:00 pm
Family Night: **"Hawks: The Wind Masters,"** Giselle Chazotte Smisko (early start)
- Saturday, March 12 5:00 pm
Woodcock walk at Big Brook Park with Rob & Lisa Fanning; meet in parking lot
- Wednesday, April 13 8:00 pm
"Ospreys: Studies of Local Ecology & Migration," Rob Bierregaard
- Sunday, April 17 10:00 am
Shorebirds of 7 Presidents Oceanfront Park with Harden Fowler; meet in the skate park 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.