



# The Osprey

Our 46th Year!

Newsletter of the Monmouth County Audubon Society

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## Message from the Board

### Winter birding

by Colette Buchanan  
Membership chairman

The first time I heard a friend say that he liked birding in winter, I thought he was crazy. At that time, I did not go birding in the winter. I hate the cold; my hands and face freeze, and my feet are always cold. I was not a winter birder. Or so I thought.

Living along the northern coast of Monmouth County not far from Sandy Hook, I soon discovered that the birding around here in winter is marvelous. Raritan Bay, Sandy Hook Bay and the Shrewsbury and Navesink Rivers are a favorite winter home of Atlantic Brant. These attractive and gregarious geese arrive early and stay late, so if you don't get out this winter, you can see and hear them well into the spring.

Monmouth County's rivers and bays, along with the Atlantic Ocean, are a winter home for many species of waterfowl that breed farther north. Common Loon, Red-throated Loon, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Lesser and Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, plus Redhead, Horned Grebe, and occasionally Red-necked Grebe winter here in our area search of open water and food.

This winter the ocean along the North Shore has held large flocks of White-winged, Black and Surf Scoters. On the 2009 Sandy Hook Christmas Bird Count the number of these diving ducks was well over a thousand. Common Eider and King Eider can also be found off the shore this winter, along

*“Living along the northern coast of Monmouth County, I soon discovered that the birding around here in winter is marvelous.”*

with Razorbill, a large seabird that breeds in the North Atlantic. Standing on the beach, peering through a spotting scope with a cold wind blowing off the water may not sound like fun, but once you see that Razorbill or a Pacific Loon, it is well worth it.

Surrounded by an abundance of ducks, loons and grebes on the coastal waters of Monmouth County, one can't help but succumb to the pleasures of winter birding. But winter also is good for seeing land birds. Songbirds are easier to spot in the leafless trees of winter than they are in leafed-out trees in spring and fall. The more common winter residents such as Northern Mockingbird, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, White-throated Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Carolina Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch and Cedar Waxwing can be seen on a walk through Hartshorne Woods, the Manasquan Reservoir or Sandy Hook, to name a few favorite spots. And while walking through the woods, keep your eyes and ears open in case a rare visitor, such as a Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin or other winter finch, is around.

Winter is also a great time for watching birds at feeders. If that is how you prefer to see birds in winter, think

about joining Project Feederwatch, coordinated by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. You can register and report your sightings and help them track the locations of bird species in winter. For more information go to <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>.

Also be sure to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count, which takes place February 18-21. The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across North America. You can join MCAS and staff at their count at the Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center. The center has great feeders outside, so you can count birds while staying warm inside. More information on this event can be found on Page 2.

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Join MCAS for the Great Backyard Bird Count  
February 18-21

The 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is coming up over Presidents Weekend, February 18-21, 2011. The four-day event is free and is open to bird watchers of all ages and skill levels. Participants watch birds for any length of time on one or more days of the count and enter their tallies at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species. The GBBC is a joint project of the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada.

Again in 2011, MCAS will be at the Manasquan Reservoir Environmental Center all weekend counting birds, meeting the public and answering questions about the event, birds of our area, bird feeders and the like.

The 2010 GBBC was another record-breaker, with more than 97,300 bird checklists submitted by an estimated 63,000 volunteers from across the United States and Canada.

From reports of rare species to large-scale tracking of bird movements, the GBBC provides insight into the lives of bird populations. Some insights from the 2010 GBBC:

- A massive roost of nearly 1.5 million American Robins was reported in St. Petersburg, Florida.
- The invasive Eurasian Collared-Dove keeps expanding its range. It was reported in 39 states and provinces during the 2010 GBBC.
- Tree Swallows showed dramatic increases in numbers during the last count, possibly because of warmer temperatures and earlier migration.

Mid-February is chosen as the time for the Great Backyard Bird Count because it offers a good picture of the birds typically found throughout the winter months. It also coincides with migration for some species, such as the Sandhill Crane. That window of transition affords an opportunity to detect changes in timing for northward migration.

On the [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) website, participants can explore real-time maps and charts that show what others are reporting during the count. The site has tips to help identify birds and special materials for educators.

GBBC participant surveys have shown that people really enjoy exploring the data and say they learn more about their local birds. "I looked at data with my 9-year-old son to help him learn about birds in our area," wrote one parent. "We talked about migration, bird flyways and compared bird counts for our area (coastal South Carolina) with where his cousins live (Wisconsin and Alabama)."

Participants may also enter the GBBC photo contest by uploading images taken during the count. Many images will be featured in the GBBC website's photo gallery. All participants are entered in a drawing for prizes that include bird feeders, binoculars, books, CDs, and many other great birding products.

For more information about the GBBC, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by generous support from Wild Birds Unlimited.



*Northern Cardinal by  
Heather Taylor, MD*

by Harden Fowler

## Climate Change: It's Real

In early November, Governor Christie stunned many in the scientific community when he stated at a "town hall" meeting that he was skeptical about the reality of global warming and its relation to industrialization throughout the world. This debate/denial of "global warming" has gone on for over two decades, with leadership at all levels often putting immediate economic concerns ahead of a long-term goal of reducing emissions and re-forestation.

Scientists quickly contacted the Governor with the facts supporting this very real worldwide problem. In December a group of environmentalists held a "Climate Change 101" symposium with a team of scientists from Rutgers and invited the Governor to attend; he sent a member of his staff. In their presentation scientists pointed out that since 1850, when our use of fossil fuel and industrialization began, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has more than doubled and is continuing to increase at an alarming rate. They pointed out the earth's average temperature has increased more than one degree in the last fifty years and is continuing to rise, changing weather patterns, melting glaciers and endangering wildlife, agriculture and mankind.

At the December UN Climate Change conference of 193 nations a Green Fund was approved, but much more needs to be done. Please contact your representatives in Trenton and the new Congress in Washington to let them know that environmental protection is important to you and needs to be addressed in their legislation.

Hopefully, the Governor and the rest of our elected leadership will start listening to and acting upon reducing our negative effects on the environment.

## Binoculars: A clear choice

The National Audubon Society has a brochure, "The Audubon Guide to Binoculars," stating the importance of "bird-worthy" binoculars to fully enjoy your birding experience. It reviews the important features of good birding binoculars and how to select good binoculars in several price ranges. The brochure reviews definitions of binocular features, including magnification, field of view, and focal distance. It discusses compact vs. mid-sized vs. full-sized binoculars, benefits of non-fogging and waterproof glass, cleaning and care. Let's summarize a few of these important topics.



*Nikon Monarch 8X42s are a popular mid-level birding binocular.*

Binoculars are listed by configuration. A configuration of 8X42, for example, means that the glasses magnify an object by 8 times, and the objective or far lens is 42 millimeters in diameter. Since this lens lets in light, the larger the diameter of the lens, the brighter the image. A range of 6X-8X magnification and an objective lens

## Binoculars

*(continued from first column)*

in the 32-44 range are good for birding, with mid-sized (lighter) or full-sized (heavier) binoculars being more suited than compact ones.

Field of view is the widest dimension you can see. A wide-field binocular is desirable for observing at close quarters in deep woods or picking up anything that is moving quickly across your viewing area, like a bird. 340 or more feet is considered good for birding. However, the field of view decreases as magnification increases.

The benefit of binoculars that are waterproof and/or non-fogging are obvious, especially because birding is an all weather, all temperature activity.

For easy focusing, a large center focus wheel that adjusts both lenses is best, with individual eye adjustment to fine-tune any differences in your vision. Folding eye cups are important for glasses-wearers - including those who wear sunglasses.

Never buy binoculars without trying them first, to make sure they fit well in your hand and aren't too heavy.

For more comprehensive information and tips, visit places that sell birding optics, such as the Sandy Hook Bird Observatory or Wild Birds Unlimited in Middletown. Let them know you are an Audubon member who shares their interest in bird watching - then enjoy the viewing.



## Join the MCAS eGroup!

An eGroup is a bulletin board just for MCAS members. You will receive information on upcoming trips, local conservation news, bird sightings, etc. We also use this system to announce the availability of the newsletter online.

To subscribe, send an e-mail to [mcas\\_newslet-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:mcas_newslet-subscribe@yahoo.com).

*(continued next column)*



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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
- \$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.

*Membership questions? Call us at 732-USA-BIRD.*

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coming up

Wed., Feb. 9 . . . . . 8:00 pm	<b>“Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles,”</b> Halley Martinez
Feb 12, 2011 . . . . .	This field trip has been cancelled
Wed., March 9 . . . . . 7:00 pm	<b>Family Night: “Penguin Pointers,”</b> Jenkinson’s Aquarium <i>(note early start time)</i>
Sat., March 12 . . . . . 10:00 am	<b>North Shore Ponds,</b> meet at brick building in Belmar Marina, Route 35, Belmar

\* Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month Sept.- May at Church of the Nativity, Ridge Road, Fair Haven. Meetings are open to the public, and refreshments are served.

Check our website or call (732) USA-BIRD for more details on field trips, activities or cancellations due to weather. This is a 24-hour message line.