

# THE



# OSPREY

Newsletter of the

Monmouth County Audubon Society

Over 50 Years of Birds and Conservation

www.monmouthaudubon.org



## The World Series of Birding!

### (Monmouth County Parks Mudbats recap)

by Rob Fanning

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### In this issue...

**World Series of Birding recap by the Monmouth County Parks Mudbats** 1

**From The Editor** 2

**"Little Sit" returns to Sandy Hook - Join us!** 3

**Noteworthy Bird Sightings** 6

**County Park Spotlight Tatum Park** 7

**Coming Up** 8

On May 13th, 2023, 3 current and 1 former Monmouth County Parks employees participated in the 40th annual installment of the World Series of Birding, with a goal of raising funds for the Friends of Monmouth County Parks. Here is a synopsis of our day in the field, which started at 3AM and ended around 9:30PM (18.5 hours in the field!)

This year's team consisted of Paul Mandala (Naturalist), RJ Curcio (Environmental Specialist), Sam Skinner (Retired Senior Naturalist), and myself, Rob Fanning (Environmental Specialist)

We started out at 3AM at the Hartshorne woods maintenance area, where we met Paul who was already on site, whistling in an Eastern Screech Owl, which we soon heard ourselves for the first bird of the day! We also heard Brant honking along the nearby river. 2 birds just past 3 AM, not a bad start!

We then attempted to hear Barred owl and Great Horned Owl, but had no luck with either, as is often the case on "Big Day". We cut our losses and headed to Sandy Hook while it was still dark, as we had more nocturnal birds to find before darkness turned into first light.

At Sandy Hook, we positioned ourselves to listen for the Chuck-will's-widow, a nocturnal bird in the nightjar family which is closely related to the Whip-poor-will. Both are named after their distinctive, somewhat haunting calls. Sure enough, we heard the Chuck-will's-widow right where they traditionally nest at the hook. Happy with that, we tried another nearby area for the Whip-poor-will, and as luck would have it, it was singing away. This was the first Whip-poor-will I had ever heard at Sandy Hook, and it saved us from having to hustle out to Turkey Swamp later in the day. As darkness faded to light, the resident songbirds started to sing, and we also saw several Common Nighthawks, the 3rd member of the nightjar family that we tallied for a clean sweep!



A House Finch rests on a branch as a blaze of foliage sets the tone.

Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning

Continued on page 4

## Monmouth County Audubon Society

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The Osprey is published 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: monmouthaudubon@gmail.com

## ► FROM THE EDITOR

As the days get shorter, and the nights arrive earlier and earlier, we are reminded that the year cycles on.

Shorebirds and songbirds have already begun their journeys southbound. Monarch butterflies are beginning to gather in the dunes to make their treks to Mexico as well.

Additionally, the autumn constellations are rising, and the Milky Way setting. Though they all seem like separate events, they are all connected. Part of the rhythm of time.

I love to remind people to take your binoculars or scopes out around the full Moon, or even just listen to the birds “chipping” overhead as they migrate nocturnally .

This summer, I had the pleasure of monitoring an Osprey nest on the Bayshore. They fledged two young, who have since departed. These simple moments remind us to appreciate all that the world around us has to offer.

We hope you will join us this year for one of our events. We are also pleased to announce the return of the “Little Sit” at Sandy Hook (see page 3 for more details.) Join us for as long as you like, or just stop by and say “hello.” Let’s share all that nature has to offer us.

Wishing you clear skies, and good birding!  
-Lisa Ann

*“My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the Earth seeking the successive autumns.”*  
- George Eliot



Let’s not forget about the pollinators also migrating during the fall.  
Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning

## ►“Little Sit” Returns to Sandy Hook

It's back!!!! Please join us for the MCAS Fall Migration “Little Sit”

Join us in search of as many species of birds as we can find...

**Sunday Oct 15, 2023**

**Stop by anytime between 8AM - 5PM**

**Spermaceti Cove, Sandy Hook**

No registration necessary, stay as long as you like.

**Monmouth County Audubon Society**

# “Little Sit”

How many species  
of birds can we find?

**Join us!**

**Spermaceti Cove  
Sandy Hook**

**Sun, Oct 15, 2023**

**Stop by anytime between**

**8AM - 5PM**

## ► World Series (continued from front page)

In migration, wind direction is a very important factor, and fortune was in our favor as the winds continued to blow from the Southwest for the 3rd night in a row, the perfect recipe for migration at Sandy Hook. We headed towards the northern tip of the hook, where we spotted a Black-crowned Night Heron at first light, followed by the more rare Yellow-crowned Night-Heron! We were on a roll, and we continued to the northern tip to experience the morning flight of songbirds coming in from a night of migration.

We were not disappointed. Birds were pouring in from the ocean and bay, most only briefly stopping for a second or two before moving on. We tallied 20 species of warblers, the crown jewels of spring migration and an important group of birds to target on WSB day, as most of the warblers seen in Monmouth county during May are simply passing through on the way to breeding grounds in New England and Canada. We had good looks at almost all of the warbler species, highlighted by stunning gems such as Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Black-throated Green, and Black-throated Blue Warblers. I heard a Hooded Warbler, quite rare in the county, which only one team member saw, but heard only birds count for this event, and we all heard the loud songster well. We stayed at the hook longer than we normally would, trying for some other rare species reported. Naturally, we missed most of them, but that's the nature of the game, and overall our extra time was well spent. We left Sandy Hook late morning with 115 species already tallied. But we had more birds to go find...



A team on a mission: in search of birds  
Photo by Rob Fanning

Our next stop was Conaskonk point, but by getting there a bit too late we did not pick up any significant species. The day before we had seen Pipit, Turnstone, and Harrier there, but it was not meant to be on this day. Sadly it was not a productive spot, so we cut our losses and moved on.

We headed over to Big Brook Park, which has had a good number of migrants this year. We added several new species here including our last 2 warblers of the day, the Blue-winged and Tennessee.

Next up was Thompson Park, where we added Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, and after a bit more searching than we had hoped for, Purple Martin and Eastern Bluebird.

Our next destination was Dorbrook park for grassland birds and shorebirds. We were delighted to find our target birds: Grasshopper Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlarks. We had seen Bobolinks at Sandy Hook earlier, but had even better looks here. We then walked out to the large vernal pond, where we found a Solitary Sandpiper. But while searching for this bird, we found the bird of the day. I saw an odd shorebird hiding in the muddy margins of the pond, and immediately recognized it as a Wilson's Phalarope!

## ► World Series (continued)



Wilson's Phalarope  
Digiscope'd by Rob Fanning

This is a rare spring migrant in NJ, and a bird that none of us expected to see on this day. The bird had a needle-like bill with a black eye mark, and a hectic feeding motion. It had just a bit of color on its neck, indicating a male (Phalaropes are one of the few species where the female is more colorful than the male.) We took a few documentation photos, and got the word out to the birding community so that others could enjoy our find. I think it's safe to say that this sighting was the highlight for all of us on this day. One of the joys of birding is the unexpected, and that's what we had just found. But...it was time to move on to the next stop.

We headed to Lake Takanassee, where we found our next target bird, the Cliff Swallow. This is normally a very tough species to find in the county, but they seem to be slowly expanding their range, and may possibly be nesting there. Still without a Mute Swan, our worries ended when we saw quite a few at Wreck Pond. We then went over to the National Guard training center pond, where we did not find the hoped for Glossy Ibis, but instead found a Bonaparte's Gull, another unexpected find. We walked the nearby beaches there hoping for a Piping Plover. No Plover, but a flyover Merlin and a Common Loon were welcome additions to our list.

With time starting to run out, we decided to give Manasquan Inlet a shot, where we added some late-lingering Purple Sandpipers. With sunset and darkness coming soon, we decided to once again try Hartshorne woods to try to hear a Barred owl. After some imitations of the call, we did get a reply of a partial Barred owl call, for our last bird of the day, at around 9:30 PM.

We were happy to close out the day with a team total of 149. (1 bird, a Sora, was seen by Paul only, so did not count towards our official team total.) Because of our very high county "par", we did not win our LGA category, but we were very satisfied with our effort and day in the field. We ended up raising over \$1,000 for Friends of Monmouth County Parks, who was our sponsor for this event. Our team would like to thank all those who graciously donated for our fundraiser. The funds raised will go towards creating more bird and wildlife habitat and houses for our feathered friends!

*"The favorite, probably like everyone else, was the sighting of the Wilson's Phalarope. Secondly, being at the Hook and witnessing the sky filled with birds. This annual sight never gets old"... "The birding programs started by Bob Henschel are continuing and being expanded. Monmouth County's experienced birders and novice birders all can draw from the wealth of avian knowledge available for the foreseeable future."*

*- Sam Skinner, Team Member*

## ► Noteworthy Bird Sightings in Monmouth County

by Rob Fanning

- Caspian Tern: 8/1 Belford (5); 9/18 Bayshore Waterfront park (2)
- Gull-billed Tern: 8/9 Fisherman's Cove; 8/28 Sandy Hook (4)
- Black Tern: 8/14 Manasquan (2)
- Sandwich Tern: 9/13 Sandy Hook
- Lesser Black-backed Gull: 9/18 Bayshore WP (4 ad)) 9/20 Bayshore WP (2, 1 ad, 1 sub ad)
- Piping Plover: 9/15 Bayshore Waterfront Park
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper: High 6 on 9/2 + 9/12 Herbert Rd Sod Farm; 9/13 Thompson park fields (1)
- American Golden Plover; several reports first was 8/27 Reed Sod farm
- Upland Sandpiper: 8/28 thru 9/2 Herbert Rd Sod Farm
- Baird's Sandpiper: 9/10 S Hook; 9/11 Wreck pond
- Pectoral Sandpiper: High 20 on 9/22 Herbert Rd Sod
- Red Knot: 8/14 Sandy Hook
- Western Sandpiper: 9/12 Herbert Rd Sod
- White Ibis: 2 at Sandy Hook 8/13 thru at least 8/23
- Com. Nighthawk: 8/22 Turkey Swamp
- Horned Lark: Imm. Bayshore waterfront park 8/25
- Pileated Woodpecker: Allaire SP 8/1
- Western Kingbird: 9/19–9/21 Sandy Hook
- Olive-sided Flycatcher: 9/21 Big Brook
- Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: 9/15 Bayshore waterfront park
- Wilson's Warbler: 9/12 Freneau Woods
- Bay-breasted Warbler: 9/20 + 9/21 Bayshore waterfront park
- Connecticut Warbler: many reports at Sandy Hook starting 9/10
- Lincoln's Sparrow: 9/19 Thompson park (2); 9/21 Bayshore waterfront park
- Lark Sparrow: 8/11 + 9/15 Sandy Hook
- DE Junco: 9/19 Sandy Hook (early)
- Dickcissel: 9/19 Sandy Hook

*Most of these sightings were posted to the Monmouth Audubon GroupMe text group.*

### Did you know?



*A Connecticut Warbler handled by  
a licensed bander Sept. 2015  
Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning*

#### **Connecticut Warblers -**

“Migrants enter and leave our area mostly via Florida, moving north-northwest in spring toward Great Lakes, moving south in fall mostly along Atlantic Coast. Migrates relatively late in spring and early in fall..”

Source: Audubon.org

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SPOTLIGHT

## ➤ Tatum Park

### Location:

151 Red Hill Road  
144 Holland Road  
Middletown, NJ 07748  
732-671-6050

Information from: <https://www.monmouthcountyparks.com/page.aspx?id=2538>

Restrooms available.

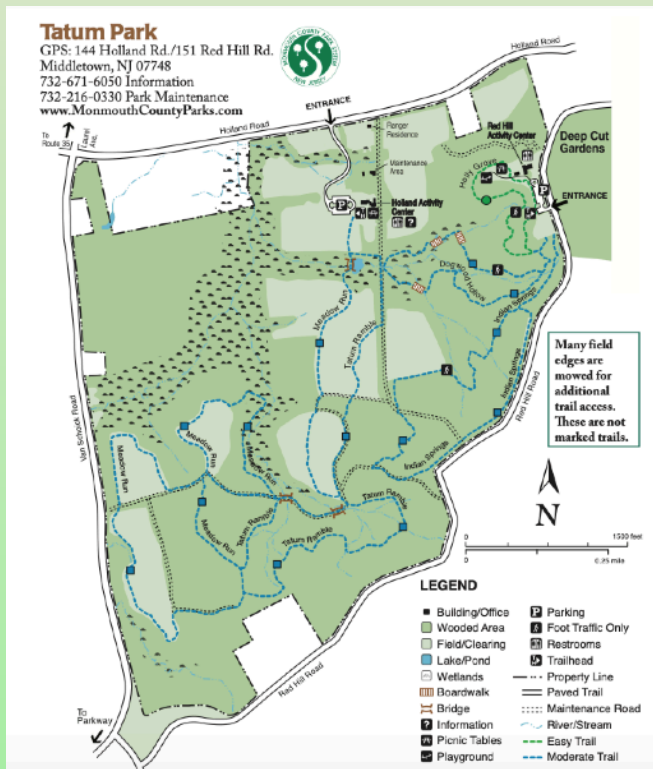
Park opens at 7 a.m. daily, year round.  
Closing time is 8 p.m. through September 17;  
7:30 p.m. September 18-October 8; and 7  
p.m. October 9-November 4.

Acreage: 366 acres  
Habitat(s): Fields and Woods

**E-Bird Stats:** 113 species & 64 checklists.  
*\*as of September, 2023*

Tatum Park has 366 acres of rolling hills, open fields and bird-filled woods, as well as two Activity Centers, a playground and miles of scenic trails, for area residents to enjoy. The park is named for the Tatum family, who donated 73 acres of property to the county in 1973. Additional land was purchased with Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds and assistance from the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.

Walkers, runners, bicyclists and equestrians can watch the colors change each season on winding paths through stands of tulip trees, and red and chestnut oaks. Or, enjoy the quiet landscape on trails through beautiful fields and meadows. Cyclists and equestrians are restricted to the west side of the service road. Old farm roads at the southwest end of the park are great for mountain bicycles. Enter from Red Hill Road or Holland Road. (6.3 miles of trails)



One of the wooded trails at Tatum Park  
Photo Credit: Monmouth County Parks

## ► Coming Up (see website for more details)



### **VOLUNTEERS URGENTLY NEEDED!**

There are currently several openings for members of Monmouth Audubon's Board and for other volunteer positions within our organization. Please consider volunteering your time to keep MCAS a vital organization, taking pride in knowing that you've made a difference to the community – and the birds!

*Visit our Facebook page*



*[www.facebook.com/Monmouthaudubon](https://www.facebook.com/Monmouthaudubon)*

*"Like" us for special messages and updates.*

### ***Programs -***

*Please check the MCAS website for program descriptions & details.*

**Wednesday Dec 13, 2023 - 8 PM**

Birding Belize

Join Susan Puder on a trip to the Central American country of Belize.

**Wednesday February 14, 2024 - 8 PM**

Capt Alex Majewski of the American Littoral Society will speak to MCAS about the oyster reef restoration projects around New Jersey.

### ***Field Trips***

*Please see our website or Facebook to learn how to register via Eventbrite.*

*Bring binoculars, water and bug spray.*

**Sept 23, 2023**- 10am Tatum Park - Holland Rd Entrance - Butterfly and Bird walk

**Oct 15, 2023**- "Little Sit" Sandy Hook - Spermaceti Cove - Stop by anytime between 8AM and 5PM

**Nov 18, 2023** - 8am - Old Visitor Center - Fall birding at Sandy Hook

**Dec 9, 2023** - 10am - Old Visitor Center - Late Fall birding at Sandy Hook.

Check Facebook and our Website for updates!

#### **HOW TO REGISTER FOR FIELD TRIPS:**

Our field trips are free and open to all, but we do require registration to manage group sizes and communications in the event of a change of plans due to weather or other issues. View and register for events here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/monmouth-county-audubon-society-mcas-47703834603>

#### **STAY TUNED FOR MEETING DETAILS**

Meeting logistics are posted on our website and Facebook page.