

THE



OSPREY

Newsletter of the

Monmouth County Audubon Society

Over 50 Years of Birds and Conservation

www.monmouthaudubon.org

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► A Birding Year at Bayshore

by Rob Fanning

I started full-time at Bayshore Waterfront Park in Port Monmouth, late Jan. 2023. Being a long-time avid birder, I was curious to see what birds I could see here during the year, and was also excited to add to the “official” e-bird list for the site, which at the end of 2022 stood at just 50 species. Many of the birds I encountered were seen or heard while doing daily litter pickups/beach sweeps. The newly-restored Maritime trail was a huge factor in adding many new species. I’d like to give a huge THANK YOU to the wonderful maintenance crew who helped clear and maintain the trail, which is a wonderful addition to the park.

My first day recording birds was on January 24. I ended the month with a modest 22 species tallied, adding some loons, sea-ducks, and other common winter birds. By the end of Feb I had 46 species tallied, with one new addition for the park list, a fly-by LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. Other highlights were PEREGRINE FALCON, and early returning KILLDEER at the end of the month.

By the end of March and the beginning of Spring, I had 64 species, adding 4 new birds for the park list: RED-SHOULDERED HAWK, FOX SPARROW, AMERICAN PIPIT, and an early migrant BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER. By the end of April my year list jumped to 94 species, with 9 new additions to the park list, including both Kinglets, MERLIN, PINE WARBLER, BONAPARTE’S GULL, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, and EASTERN BLUEBIRD. I saw a total of 78 species here in April.

May is the peak of spring migration in NJ, and it did not disappoint, as I saw or heard 85 species for the month, bringing my year list total up to 129 while adding 21 new species to the all-time park list!



A Cedar Waxwing enjoys a berry during an early March day at Sandy Hook. Photo by Aubrey Merrill

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**

This edition's "From the Editor" is an invitation!

Spring Migration is on its way! The early migrants are returning, the Osprey are calling, Phoebes are wagging their tails and Tree Swallows are beginning their aerial acrobatics.

I hope you can join us for a first ever SPRING "Little Sit" at Spermaceti Cove Boardwalk at Sandy Hook for birds and fun.

Come and go anytime you like between 7AM and 2PM and celebrate the spring migrants with us!

See you out there!

-Lisa Ann



HOW MANY BIRD SPECIES CAN YOU SEE SITTING IN ONE SPOT?

Join MCAS for
The Spring "Little Sit"
at Sandy Hook
(Spermaceti Cove Boardwalk)

Sunday, May 5, 2024

7:00 AM 2:00 PM



► CONSERVATION NEWS

MCAS Awards Two Conservation Grants for 2024

The Monmouth County Audubon Society (MCAS) is pleased to announce the award of two grants to promote bird conservation in Monmouth County.

For information specific to the Bird Conservation Grant, please visit: [Bird Conservation Grant — Monmouth County Audubon Society](#)

*Congratulations
Recipients*



Hummingbird Habitat at the Howell Community Wildlife Habitat

Howell Environmental Commission

The Hummingbird Garden will be part of the Howell Community Wildlife Habitat that is located on a 2-acre Howell Township Open Space property. The Open Space area provides access to wetlands along with a wooded buffer.

A Bird-Friendly Littoral Society Headquarters and Demonstration Native Plant Garden

American Littoral Society

The garden will be located at the headquarters of the American Littoral Society, located at 18 Hartshorne Drive, Highlands, NJ on Officer's Row in the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area.

The Littoral Society will plant native plants around their office. Plants will be selected based on their suitability for bird nesting and/or foraging.

The purpose will be two-fold: to provide additional nesting/foraging habitat for birds along a major migration stop-off point through the Atlantic Flyway and to educate Littoral Society members and bird walk participants on how they too can plant native plants in their yards to help birds.

► **A Birding Year at Bayshore (Con't)**

Highlights were a STILT SANDPIPER in a small puddle that lingered for about 5 days, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (Heard only), a female SCARLET TANAGER, INDIGO BUNTING, ORCHARD ORIOLE, 7 new warblers (BLACK-AND-WHITE, OVENBIRD, PRAIRIE, MAGNOLIA, NASHVILLE, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, WILSON'S, and CHESTNUT-SIDED,) ALDER FLYCATCHER (heard), WOOD THRUSH (heard), LINCOLN'S SPARROW, and the highlight bird of the spring, a male SUMMER TANAGER, calling and quickly moving around the Maritime trail for about 10 minutes. The Summer Tanager is a very uncommon to rare bird in Monmouth County. It nests in small numbers in south Jersey. What a wonderful surprise!

Migration comes to a screeching halt by Mid June, but I was still able to add 6 more birds including a late (heard only) BLACKPOLL WARBLER on 6/12. The summer doldrums continue in July, with only 4 additions, but a flyby group of WHIMBREL was another new park bird. 5 more birds were added in August, highlighted by a young HORNED LARK along the beach, another park addition.

Finally, fall migration is back in full swing by September, which added 10 more species to the year tally (154), highlighted by YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER and BAY-BREASTED WARBLER, both new for the park list. October brings possibilities of unusual/rare species, and it did not disappoint, as I was able to add 8 more species, including BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER and ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER during one of my registered bird walks, some distant BROWN PELICANS loafing on the pipes out on the bay, and a heard only PINE SISKIN flyover. But by far my highlights of the fall, and my birding year at Bayshore Park, was finding a stunning male YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD on 10/31, in a mixed blackbird flock of cowbirds and starlings. This bird was on my radar here as I've seen cowbird flocks here off and on, and this species from the West tends to show up within these flocks when they occasionally show up in NJ. I was sitting in my office and glanced outside, and to my amazement there was the Yellow-headed, feeding on the lawn with the cowbirds, sticking out like a sore thumb in the sunshine. I quickly got word out to the local birding community, and others were able to arrive in time to enjoy this special visitor before it disappeared. This was my long-awaited 1st sighting in Monmouth County (there are a few other records, mostly from Sandy Hook.) What a thrilling Halloween treat this was! My list was now up to 162 species.

By November, fall migration starts to slow down, although rare and late-lingering species are often found during this month. I was able to add 4 more species during the month, including an AMERICAN WOODCOCK flushed along the Maritime trail, a BROWN CREEPER, a WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW, and LONG-TAILED DUCK. December produced an additional 3 species, highlighted by a flock of roving SNOW BUNTINGS which I saw here frequently, a flyover, calling PURPLE FINCH, and an AMERICAN TREE SPARROW, to close out the year at 169 species.

Overall, I added over 100 species to the official bird checklist for the park, which currently stands at 187 species. My personal park list is now 171 species. It's always a lot of fun building up a bird list for a particular site, especially one that was so previously under-birded at Bayshore but clearly had the potential. I look forward to seeing what shows up here in 2024 and beyond!

► Noteworthy Bird Sightings in Monmouth County

by Rob Fanning

- American Oystercatcher: Returned to Sandy Hook 3/8
- Baltimore Oriole: Feeder reports from Farmingdale, Little Silver, Shrewsbury, and Upper Freehold
- BLACK GUILLEMOT: Shark River Inlet 1/15 through at least 2/19
- Black-headed Gull: 1/6 Belmar
- Cackling Goose: 2/11 Thompson Park
- Clay-colored Sparrow: Big Brook continuing to at least 1/18
- DOVEKIE: Manasquan Inlet 1/12, 1/15, and 1/19
- EARED GREBE: continuing from fall at Manasquan Res. to at least 1/4
- Eastern Phoebe: Heard 3/13 near Freneau Woods
- Eastern Meadowlark: High of 12 on 3/3 at Dorbrook
- Glaucous Gull: Sandy Hook 1/5
- Gray Catbird: Heard 2/24 Sandy Hook
- Greater White-fronted Goose: Buck's Mills Rec. Area, Colts Neck 1/2 through at least 1/10
- Harlequin Duck: High of 9 at Manasquan Inlet on 2/2
- Iceland Gull: 2 at Shark River on 1/17
- KING EIDER: 1st-year Drake at Belmar 2/10 through at least 2/19
- Lapland Longspur: Sandy Hook 1/8
- Merlin: Bayshore Waterfront Park 3/13
- Northern Pintail: Thompson Park 1/29
- Osprey: Sandy Hook 3/9
- Peregrine Falcon: Sandy Hook 3/3
- PINK-FOOTED GOOSE: Thompson Park and vicinity 1/9 through at least 3/12
- Purple Finch: Male at a Marlboro Township yard on 3/4
- Purple Sandpiper: 107 at Manasquan Inlet on 2/2
- Razorbill: High of 11 at Manasquan Inlet on 1/12
- ROSS'S GOOSE: Imlaystown area 2/28 to 3/2
- SANDHILL CRANE: Flock of 8 flying over Hazlet on 2/27
- WESTERN TANAGER: at least 2 individuals continuing at Sandy Hook thru at least Jan.
- Wilson's Snipe: 3 at Dorbrook park 3/1

*Most of these sightings were posted to the Monmouth Audubon GroupMe text group and/or eBird.
Review list species are CAPITALIZED*

Did you know?



*Osprey are returning to the Jersey Shore.
Many nest sites can be found in Monmouth
County. Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning*

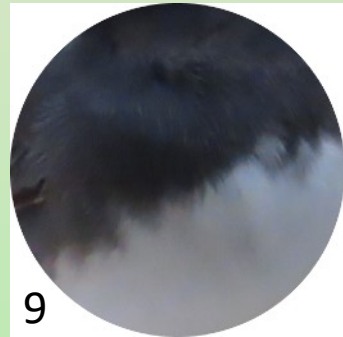
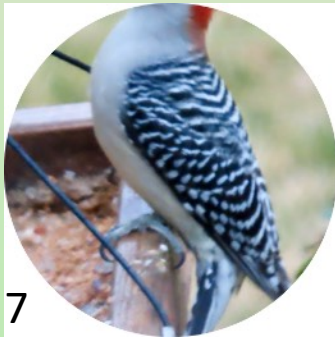
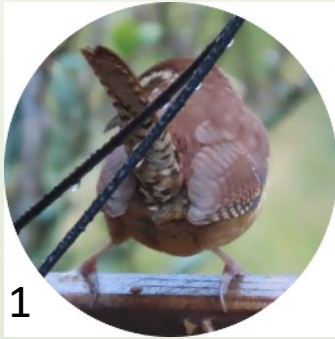
The “Aerial Sky-Dance” Display of male (Osprey was) described in detail in Cramp and Simmons 1980. May begin and end at (the) nest site; more often as male flies back to nest from foraging. Generally seen during courtship period and early in incubation. In this dramatic display flight (sometimes called “fish flight”), male dangles legs (often clasping a fish or nesting material) and proceeds in slow, undulating flight over nest site, usually high overhead giving Screaming calls repeatedly.”

Source: The Birds of North America, No. 683, 2002
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
& The Academy of Natural Sciences

➤ Bird ID Challenge

by Lisa Ann Fanning

Many times, we glance out the window towards the feeders and something catches the corner of our eyes... but we don't get to see the full bird. Or maybe the branch is in the way, and we see that familiar pattern, but exactly what is it? Or that lighting just isn't quite right today. Being familiar with the little intricacies of patterns or textures might come in handy. Test your ID skills on these local feeder birds. Answers at the bottom of page 9.



Bonus: There are two birds in this photo



MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SPOTLIGHT

➤ Fisherman's Cove Conservation Area

Location:

Activity Area:

383 Third Avenue, Manasquan, NJ 08736

Parking Area:

391 Third Avenue, Manasquan, NJ 08736

Information from: <https://www.monmouthcountyparks.com/page.aspx?id=2521>

See website for amenities and hours

Acreage: 55 acres

Habitat(s): beach

E-Bird Stats:

240 Species on 724 Checklists

**as of March,, 2024*

This 55-acre site, the last undeveloped tract on the Manasquan Inlet, is a great place to fish, walk on the beach, or go sunbathing. Dogs must be on leash at all times while at this park.

The Activity Center hosts a variety of nature programs with limited street parking. Please be aware NJ anglers age 16 and up are now required to register with the NJ Saltwater Angler Registry (for free) to fish in marine and fresh tidal waters of NJ.

The Board of Recreation Commissioners is continuing to implement a plan to provide greater opportunities for visitors at Fisherman's Cove Conservation Area. As the site's beach grew in popularity with dog owners, as well as other users including kayakers, fishermen, and wildlife enthusiasts, the Board approved a plan in 2015 to accommodate all visitor interests. A portion of the beach is designated as dog free. Dog owners can enjoy the front (east) portion of the beach while the back (west) portion of the beach is preserved for other beach activities.

This delineation of beach activities is in effect year round, all daylight hours. Signs are posted so that visitors will know which portion of the beach is designated for dog access. The leash rule remains in effect and will be enforced by the Park Rangers to ensure the safety and well being of all visitors.



In accordance with New Jersey's Smoke Free Air Act, all Monmouth County parks are tobacco free. The ban applies to cigarettes, pipes, cigars, e-cigarettes, and vaporize cigarettes, as well as smokeless tobacco such as snuff and chew.



Text/Photo/Graphics Credits: Monmouth County Parks



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

"Like" us for special

messages and updates.

Field Trips

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

Bring binoculars, water and bug spray.

Check Facebook and our Website for updates!

Programs -

Please check the MCAS website for program descriptions & details (& more programs too!)

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.

Answers to Bird ID Challenge:

1. Carolina Wren 2. House Finch 3. Song Sparrow 4. Mourning Dove 5. European Starling
6. Downy Woodpecker 7. Red-bellied Woodpecker 8. Blue Jay. 9. Dark-eyed Junco
Bonus: American Goldfinch and Northern Cardinal