

# THE



# OSPREY

Newsletter of the

Monmouth County Audubon Society

Over 50 Years of Birds and Conservation

www.monmouthaudubon.org

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## ➤ MCAS "Little Sit" Returns to Sandy Hook

by Lisa Fanning

After a pandemic-induced hiatus, MCAS' "Little Sit" has returned to Sandy Hook. The event is modeled after the "Big Sit."

"The Big Sit! is like a Big Day or a Bird-a-thon. Individuals or teams find as many species as possible in 24 hours. There is one critical difference – all observations must be made from within a circle no more than 17 feet (5.2 meters) in diameter."<sup>1</sup>

Sandy Hook has hosted a "sit" event from 2015 - 2019 in a much more "relaxed" fashion (less than 24 hours, and participants could come and go as they please.) Although the 17 foot diameter "circle" has always been observed. In 2020, ever-changing Pandemic rules and trends made events difficult to plan, and this continued through the next few years. But in 2023, Field Trip Coordinator, Paul Mandala brought back the event, much to many people's delights.

This year's sit was held on Sunday October 15, 2023 between 8AM and 5PM at Spermaceti Cove, Sandy Hook.

The day yielded 77 species, an all-time high for the location. But most importantly, there were many smiles, and laughs and good times by participants who stopped by to participate in the event!

Traditionally, Big Sits are held in the Fall, but keep your eyes open for information about a Spring event coming in May!

**For a complete list of species observed on the big day, see page 6.**



White-throated Sparrow - one of the many beautiful harbingers of Winter  
Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thebigsit.org/about>

## Monmouth County Audubon Society

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Lisa Ann Fanning, Editor

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

WINTER! For many, the word conjures up thoughts of darkness and cold and no opportunities for fun... but have you stopped to think about how nature lovers have so many things to look forward to!

Our Arctic visitors arrive and join us at our feeders - Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, and Finches keep us entertained. For those willing to brave the elements, ducks begin to populate our ponds and shores in their finest!

For me, Winter is a chance to slow down a little bit, but still appreciate what is around us.

Winter also brings different opportunities to get involved in nature!

December - Christmas Bird Counts (Monmouth County has three alone (Assunpink, Sandy Hook and Long Branch) <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

February, the Great Backyard Bird Count is for the feeder lovers! Submit your own totals or join us at an event... <https://www.birdcount.org/>

In the night sky, Orion rises and sets, giving watch over us. The "Summer Triangle" gives way to the "Winter Hexagon" and the rhythms of nature continue. Besides, without winter, maybe we wouldn't appreciate Spring as much as we do!

So grab your cup of cocoa, light the fireplace and watch those feeders. Cheers! To those who appreciate Winter!

Wishing you clear skies, and good birding!

-Lisa Ann

*"Nature is full of  
genius, full of divinity;  
so that not a  
snowflake escapes its  
fashioning hand."  
- Henry David Thoreau*



Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning

## ► IN THE NEWS

# American Ornithological Society Will Change the English Names of Bird Species Named After People

Scientists Will Establish a New Multidisciplinary Naming Entity and Seek Public Input, Beginning with 70–80 Bird Species in the U.S. and Canada

(November 1, 2023)—Today the American Ornithological Society (AOS) announced that in an effort to address past wrongs and engage far more people in the enjoyment, protection, and study of birds, it will change all English bird names currently named after people within its geographic jurisdiction. The AOS will also change the process by which English names are selected for bird species. The effort will begin in 2024 and will focus initially on 70–80 bird species that occur primarily within the U.S. and Canada.

“There is power in a name, and some English bird names have associations with the past that continue to be exclusionary and harmful today. We need a much more inclusive and engaging scientific process that focuses attention on the unique features and beauty of the birds themselves,” said AOS President Colleen Handel, Ph.D., a research wildlife biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey in Alaska. “Everyone who loves and cares about birds should be able to enjoy and study them freely—and birds need our help now more than ever.”

Ornithologists have long grappled with historical and contemporary practices that contribute to the exclusion of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, including how birds are named. For example, in 2020, the AOS renamed a small prairie songbird found on the Great Plains to “Thick-billed Longspur.” The bird’s original name—honoring John P. McCown, an amateur naturalist who later became a general in the Confederate Army during the U.S. Civil War—was perceived as a painful link to slavery and racism.

Today, the AOS is taking decisive action to reframe the issue of birds named after people altogether. Specifically, the scientific society is announcing three changes to the way it and its predecessor organizations have operated since the 1880s:

- The AOS commits to changing all English-language names of birds within its geographic jurisdiction that are named directly after people (eponyms), along with other names deemed offensive and exclusionary, focusing first on those species that occur primarily within the U.S. or Canada.
- The AOS commits to establishing a new committee to oversee the assignment of all English common names for species within the AOS’s jurisdiction; this committee will broaden participation by including a diverse representation of individuals with expertise in the social sciences, communications, ornithology, and taxonomy.
- The AOS commits to actively involving the public in the process of selecting new English bird names.



## ► IN THE NEWS (Con't)

“As scientists, we work to eliminate bias in science. But there has been historic bias in how birds are named, and who might have a bird named in their honor. Exclusionary naming conventions developed in the 1800s, clouded by racism and misogyny, don’t work for us today, and the time has come for us to transform this process and redirect the focus to the birds, where it belongs,” said Judith Scarl, Ph.D., AOS Executive Director and CEO. “I am proud to be part of this new vision and am excited to work in partnership with a broad array of experts and bird lovers in creating an inclusive naming structure.”

North America has lost nearly 3 billion birds since 1970. Says Scarl, “To reverse these alarming bird population declines, we need as many people as possible to get excited about birds and unite to protect them.”

Since 1886, the AOS and its predecessor, the American Ornithologists’ Union, have maintained a list of official English-language names for birds in North America (and more recently, South America). These names are widely used by schools and universities, government agencies, conservation organizations, the news media, artists and writers, birders and photographers, and many other members of the English-speaking public worldwide. These English names are often updated as scientists discover new information about the ecology and evolution of these birds.

In addition to their official English names, birds, like all living things, have a two-part scientific name that scientists use to communicate among themselves across languages and nationalities. For example, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* is the scientific name for the Bald Eagle. Scientific names will not be changed as a part of the AOS English bird names initiative, but they are regularly reviewed and updated by the AOS’s North American and South American classification committees in response to new scientific research and following the naming rules of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

The AOS will conduct an open, inclusive, and scientifically rigorous pilot program in 2024 to develop its new approach to English bird names in the U.S. and Canada. Additionally, the AOS has come to see its authority over the English names of Latin American birds in a new light and has committed to engaging in a broader set of conversations with ornithologists and organizations in Latin America before proceeding with Latin American name changes. Interested parties are invited to follow this initiative’s progress at [www.americanornithology.org](http://www.americanornithology.org) and @AmOrnith on major social media platforms over the coming months and years.

REPRINTED FROM: <https://americanornithology.org/american-ornithological-society-will-change-the-english-names-of-bird-species-named-after-people/>



AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Advancing scientific knowledge  
and conservation of birds

# ►MCAS Conservation Grant Program Returns

## Applications Due December 31, 2023

The Monmouth County Audubon Society (MCAS) is pleased to announce the return of a new grant program to promote bird conservation in Monmouth County.

The Monmouth Audubon Bird Conservation Grant Program will award a maximum of \$3,000 in grants in early 2024. The maximum amount provided per proposal will be \$1,500 (\$150 is the minimum). All nonprofit 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4) organizations as well as any of Monmouth County's municipal environmental commissions are eligible to apply and are welcome to apply for, and receive, more than one grant per cycle. Projects must be located within the County and environmental commissions are only eligible if they represent a municipality within Monmouth County, NJ and have been established by ordinance.

Examples of eligible projects include habitat creation or enhancement projects, such as:

- Installation of nesting platforms for osprey;
- Creation of hummingbird gardens with native plants;
- Installation of nest boxes;
- Native tree/shrub plantings

**MCAS is seeking applications for the new grant program by December 31, 2023.**

MCAS, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, is dedicated to the enjoyment and study of nature, wildlife conservation, habitat protection and education and is based in Red Bank, NJ. MCAS is a volunteer-run non-profit which hosts many programs and field trips to benefit the community and the environment. To learn more about MCAS, please visit the organization's website at: [www.monmouthaudubon.org](http://www.monmouthaudubon.org). For information specific to the Bird Conservation Grant, please visit: [Bird Conservation Grant — Monmouth County Audubon Society](#)



## ► “Little Sit” Returns to Sandy Hook

Sun 15 Oct 2023 8:00 AM    9 hr, 14 min    77 Species

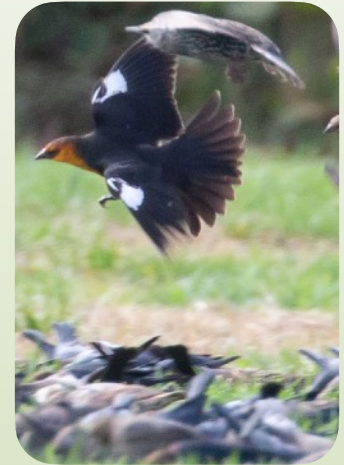
### Sandy Hook. Stationary @ Spermaceti Cove - THE “LITTLE” SIT

|                            |                          |                        |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Snow Goose                 | Herring Gull             | Fish Crow              |
| Brant                      | Great Black-backed Gull  | Common Raven           |
| Canada Goose               | Royal Tern               | Tree Swallow           |
| American Wigeon            | Common Loon              | Ruby-crowned Kinglet   |
| American Black Duck        | Double-crested Cormorant | Golden-crowned Kinglet |
| Northern Pintail           | Great Blue Heron         | House Wren             |
| Green-winged Teal          | Great Egret              | Marsh Wren             |
| Surf Scoter                | Snowy Egret              | Carolina Wren          |
| Red-breasted Merganser     | Black Vulture            | European Starling      |
| Pied-billed Grebe          | Turkey Vulture           | Northern Mockingbird   |
| Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) | Osprey                   | Hermit Thrush          |
| Mourning Dove              | Northern Harrier         | Cedar Waxwing          |
| Clapper Rail               | Sharp-shinned Hawk       | House Finch            |
| American Oystercatcher     | Cooper's Hawk            | American Goldfinch     |
| Black-bellied Plover       | Bald Eagle               | Dark-eyed Junco        |
| American Golden-Plover     | Red-tailed Hawk          | White-crowned Sparrow  |
| Semipalmated Plover        | Belted Kingfisher        | White-throated Sparrow |
| Ruddy Turnstone            | Red-bellied Woodpecker   | Song Sparrow           |
| Red Knot                   | Downy Woodpecker         | Swamp Sparrow          |
| Sanderling                 | Northern Flicker         | Red-winged Blackbird   |
| Dunlin                     | American Kestrel         | Brown-headed Cowbird   |
| Least Sandpiper            | Merlin                   | Tennessee Warbler      |
| Semipalmated Sandpiper     | Peregrine Falcon         | Common Yellowthroat    |
| Greater Yellowlegs         | Eastern Phoebe           | Pine Warbler           |
| Laughing Gull              | Blue Jay                 | Yellow-rumped Warbler  |
| Ring-billed Gull           | American Crow            |                        |

## ► Noteworthy Bird Sightings in Monmouth County

by Rob Fanning

- American Kestrel: 2 on 10/16 @ Chestnut point field, Manasquan Reservoir.
- ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: Sandy Hook 11/3 and 11/12 (likely different birds)
- BLACK GUILLEMOT: Sandy Hook 11/30
- EARED GREBE: continuing at Manasquan Reservoir 10/17 through at least early Nov.
- Eastern Meadowlark: High of 21 @ Dorbrook Park on 11/6
- Harlequin Duck: pair at Sandy Hook 11/4 through 11/11
- **\*\*LIMPKIN\*\***: **FIRST RECORD FOR NJ!!**: present in residential neighborhood in Wall Township from 11/12 through 11/16 (when it was taken to rehab)
- Little Blue Heron: 10/14 though at least 10/16 @ Manasquan Reservoir.
- Orange-crowned Warbler: 10/16 at chestnut point, Manasquan Reservoir
- PAINTED BUNTING: Green-type @ Sandy Hook 11/19 to 11/20
- Pine Siskin: 10/16 at Chestnut point, Manasquan Res + other scattered reports.
- Red-headed Woodpecker: Manasquan Reservoir (Winter Run section) on 10/16
- Sora: Chestnut point, Manasquan Reservoir 10/22 through at least 10/24
- TRUMPETER SWAN: returning pair to Assunpink arrived on 11/26
- Tundra Swan: 2 at Manasquan Reservoir on 11/21
- Virginia Rail: Heard at Chestnut point field, Manasquan Reservoir from 10/16 through at least 10/24.
- Vesper Sparrow: Sandy Hook 10/17
- Western Cattle Egret: National Guard Training Center, Manasquan 11/14 to 11/15; Colts Neck 11/15
- WESTERN FLYCATCHER: Sandy Hook 10/23 through 10/28. \*2nd Monmouth co Record\*
- Western Kingbird: Thompson Park 11/20
- Yellow-headed Blackbird: male at Bayshore Waterfront Park on 10/31



Yellow-headed Blackbird in flight - an uncommon visitor to NJ and a first for Bayshore Waterfront Park  
Photo by Paul Mandala

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

## Did you know?



*New Jersey's first ever Limpkin was spotted in Wall Township in November 2023.  
Photo by Lisa Ann Fanning*

There has been an explosion of Limpkin sightings throughout North America, well out-of-range from its usual Florida and points south. In addition to Florida, the species has been sighted in at least 26 US States plus 2 Canadian Provinces. (SC MS MD NC TN VA OH OK TX AL AR MN IL CO OK KS NE IA WI IN KY GA WV PA NJ MI and NS ON)

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PARK SPOTLIGHT

## ➤ Union Transportation Trail

### Location:

609-259-5794 - Ranger Station (at Crosswicks Creek Park)

### Parking Lots at:

70 Herbert Road Upper Freehold, NJ 08514 - Sharon Station Road parking lot (intersects with Herbert Road)

314 Route 539 Upper Freehold, NJ 08514 - Upper Freehold Municipal Building parking lot

114 Jonathan Holmes Road, NJ Upper Freehold 08514

8 Millstream Road Upper Freehold, NJ 08514

Information from: <https://www.monmouthcountyparks.com/page.aspx?ID=3777>

See website for amenities and hours

Acreage: 115 acres

Habitat(s): Trail and Field Views

### E-Bird Stats:

Millstream Rd to Burlington Path:  
80 species / 61 checklists

Sharon Station: 133 species / 220 checklists

*\*as of November, 2023*

“The Union Transportation Trail is the County's second rail-trail; ideal for equestrians, hikers, walkers, joggers and bicyclists. The first two miles of this gravel trail, opened in 2010, include a rehabilitated historic wood trestle bridge over Lahaway Creek, which is one of the few physical remnants of the old railroad. Two parking lots and access points are available at Millstream Road, Rt. 537 and Jonathan Holmes Road.

Miles three and four of this trail (from Jonathon Holmes Road to Davis Station Road) opened in 2011. This linear section of trail crosses Miry Run Creek, via earthen berm, and offers vistas of fields and rural scenery. The Park System continued to open sections of the trail as work was done until the last section of the trail was finished in January 2017. Now complete, the Union Transportation Trail runs nine miles. The park totals 115 acres.”



Photo/Graphics Credits: 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 (& more programs too!)*

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

Birding Belize

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

**Wednesday January 20, 2024 - 8 PM**

"Winter Seabirds Demystified" with Amy Davis. "We can only sense that in the deep and turbulent recesses of the sea are hidden mysteries far greater than any we have solved" (Rachel Carson). Drift away on the gray-green winter sea. Eiders, alcids, gulls, and loons are beckoning. Learn to decipher common winter pelagic birds and mammals of the Atlantic. Bundle up and come aboard for "Winter Seabirds Demystified" with Amy Davis.

**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.*

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.