



THE OSPREY

May/June 2015 — Vol. XL No. 3

MAY MADNESS Warblers Arriving! Field Trips a Plenty!!

Eileen Schwinn

Here's a way to spend most of your Merry Month of May out of doors! No reservations are necessary, and there are no fees to attend most of our field trips. If there is a fee, it is noted in the description. All walks are easy strolls, lasting approximately 3 hours. Please dress for the weather. Bring binoculars and water. Be sure to study up on warblers and other song birds to make your trip more enjoyable!

Saturday, May 2nd at 8 am

Leader: Byron Young
(631-821-9623)

Wednesday, May 13th at 8 am

Leader: John McNeil
(631-219-8947)

WERTHEIM NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Wertheim NWR, located at 340 Smith Road in Shirley, NY, is one of the last undeveloped estuary systems remaining on Long Island. About half the refuge consists of water habitats, salt marsh, high salt marsh, freshwater marsh, shrub swamp, and red maple swamp. Over 300 species of birds have been documented at Wertheim, and it's coastal location makes this refuge an excellent migration corridor for shorebirds, raptors and songbirds. Meet at the main parking area lot. Dress appropriately for a springtime walk along waterways and woodlands.



The male Eagle lands on the nest at the William Floyd Estate, the white head and tail indicate he is at least a 4-year bird. Photo by Mari Michaels..

The Long Journey Home

by **MaryLaura Lamont**
March 2015

A pair of Bald Eagles has decided to make the William Floyd Estate, in Mastic Beach, their new home. Actually it's a great place for Eagles. The Estate is closed on many days which gives the Eagles a chance to do their thing without people getting in the way. The nest is also a good distance away from the visitor parking lot so when the Estate is open many sightseers are deterred by the long walk. It is a tick haven as well, so even if you wanted to hike you would have to go prepared for

those blood suckers. So, they picked a pretty good place in my estimation.

Last November of 2014 a young female Bald Eagle decided to over winter at the Estate. We had seen her flying about the lower acreage near Moriches Bay on some of the multiple of nature walks I offered to the public. Many times when we would see her she would leave and head towards the Forge River and Center Moriches. It was easy to identify her because she was a 3rd year bird, not yet a mature female. It takes Bald Eagles 4 years

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The President's Corner

Unexpected Birding Encounter

Byron Young

During the fall of 2014, I received a call from a friend of mine reporting that a Leather-backed turtle had washed up on the beach west of the Ranger Station at Smith Point. Being curious, I took the hike to find the washed up sea turtle, one of two that had washed up that week. It might be a bit ghoulish but I did want to see the Leather-backed turtle. I was not sure what to expect and was saddened when I spotted this massive creature washed up on the beach west of Smith Point. The staff at the Riverhead Foundation did pick the animal up to conduct a detailed necropsy in hopes of determining the cause of death.

The Leather-backed turtle was quite visible in surf line and had several gulls looking to claim ownership of this meal. The gull taking primary ownership of the turtle, a juvenile Greater Black-backed Gull had a surprise for me.

As I approached the turtle, I noticed that the Juvenile Greater Black-backed gull was banded. Taking care to focus on the tags I was able to obtain a clear view of one of the tag numbers (8Y2). Armed with this information I contacted the US Geologic Survey Bird banding website (<http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbl/>) to report my observations. It is always exciting to find a banded bird and be able to report your observations.

It takes some time to comb through the banding records to find the correct information as researchers all over North America and the western Hemisphere are banding birds which we may encounter while birding. This Greater-black Backed Gull, 8Y2 was banded by Dr. Sara Morris of Canisius College and the team from Shoals Marine Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire and Tufts University on July 17, 2014 in York County Maine near Portsmouth, New Hampshire. They banded

the bird prior to fledging. My encounter with the bird on October 9, 2014 was about a mile west of the Ranger Station at Smith Point on the south shore of Long Island.



Thus this gull in less than three months had traveled a minimum of 200 miles in a straight line south to Long Island. I suspect that this bird wandered a few more miles than that if it followed the coastline from southern Maine to Long Island. Did the bird visit Boston Harbor for a time or spend some quality time on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard or did it take a shortcut through the Cape Cod Canal and visit Newport and the eastern Connecticut shoreline before crossing over to Orient Point. Maybe it traveled via Block Island to Montauk and along the south shore.

Being curious where 8Y2 might have been spotted prior to being spotted at Smith Point last fall and after I contacted Dr. Morris at Canisius who suggested that I contact Dr. Julie Ellis at Tufts University. Contact has been made with the researchers at Tufts and the Shoals Marine Lab to see if 8Y2 has been observed elsewhere. At this point in time I have not heard from the primary research team.

Dr. Ellis initiated the gull-banding program during the summer of 2004 on Appledore Island along the Maine/New Hampshire



BYRON YOUNG

border. During the first year they banded 30 Herring Gulls and 60 Greater Black-backed Gulls. Since then they have banded over 1000 gulls (chicks and adults). Gulls banded by this program have been observed from New Hampshire to Florida. So when you are looking at that flock of gulls, spend a bit of time looking for colored leg bands, you never know.

Editor's Note: Dr. Sara Morris was one of the instructors at the Hog Island Audubon Camp when I went there in 2012. One morning, before breakfast, she did a bird banding demonstration. She set up mist nets and caught a Song Sparrow. She was hoping to catch one of the nesting warblers, but the Song Sparrow had to stand in as she discussed the procedure. At one point she blew on the breast of the Sparrow and revealed the brooding patch, a patch of bare skin that keeps the eggs and nestlings warm. The bird was released, quickly, unharmed. Sally



Dr. Morris reveals the brooding patch of a Song Sparrow at a bird banding demonstration at Hog Island Audubon Camp.

MAY MADNESS*continued from page 1***Sunday, May 3rd, 8 am****MAPLE SWAMP****Leader: Eric Salzman**
(es@ericsalzman.com)

Maple Swamp, located in Flanders, has historically been a wonderful catch basin for spring migrants, and a local breeding ground for warblers and vireos. Hopefully, we will see Scarlet Tanager, Ovenbirds, Blue-winged Warbler, Wood Thrush and maybe Golden-winged Warbler. Last year, a Hooded Warbler was one of the highlights. This area can be home to many ticks as well, so please dress/spray appropriately. We will meet along the northern end of Pleasure Drive, about half to a mile from Route 24. Look for the cars parked along the side of the road.

Wednesday, May 6th at 7am**HUNTERS GARDEN****Leader: Bob Adamo**
(631-369-1958 or
radamo4691@gmail.com)**Friday, May 15th at 8 am****Leaders: Eric Salzman and**
Eileen Schwinn (516-662-7751 or
beachmed@optonline.net)

Located on the west side of Route 51 in Northampton (border of Brookhaven and Southampton Townships, just north of Sunrise Highway), Hunters Garden is a DEC managed area which is truly unique. Vernal ponds and dirt trails lead us in a rather hilly section of the South Shore. Cuckoo, Scarlet Tanager, Vireos, Wood and Hermit Thrush, Gnat-catchers, as well as many different warblers, are likely to be seen. Dress for ticks, and bring a snack/water. We will meet at the clearing at the end of the dirt road (which will have an open yellow gate), approximately one mile from the Route 51 "entrance".

Friday, May 8th at 8 am**NORTH FORK PRESERVE****Leader: Eileen Schwinn**
(516-662-7751 or
beachmed@optonline.net)

Located on the north side of Sound Ave.

in Jamesport (Clearly marked with a sign, "North Fork Preserve", follow the long, paved driveway to the former hunting lodge parking area), we will visit vernal ponds, meadows and wooded areas. Each day is different in this relatively new Town of Riverhead/Suffolk County Parkland, but we have the opportunity to see visiting migrants and nesting warblers, raptors, and thrushes. Dress for ticks, however, we will be on mowed paths for most of the walk.

Saturday, May 9th at 9 am**WILLIAM FLOYD ESTATE****Leader: MaryLaura Lamont**
(631-399-2030)

We will meet at the Main Entrance Gate on Park Drive, in Mastic, to catch a glimpse of various migrating birds – and maybe a few surprises! The Estate has a variety of habitats. Woods, fields, creeks and marsh offer a host of choices for the birds to settle in for a day of resting and feeding on their migration north. Cleared pathways are the majority of walking areas for us, but ticks may be anywhere on Long Island – and this is no exception!

Thursday, May 14th at 8AM**QUOGUE WILDLIFE REFUGE****Leader: Eileen Schwinn**
(516-662-7751 or beachmed@
optonline.net)

Our Eastern LI Audubon Home is also home to many nesting birds and ducks. Our morning walk along well-groomed trails will take us past ponds, streams and both pine and oak woods. We will meet in the parking lot of the Refuge, located at 3 Old Country Road in Quogue.

Saturday, May 16th at 9 am**HALLOCKVILLE FARM MUSEUM & HALLOCK STATE PARK****Leader: MaryLaura Lamont**

The Hallockville Farm Museum and State Park is located at 163 Sound Ave, in Riverhead. During peak migration, we have a good chance to see thrushes, vireos, warblers and more, on this walk past farm fields, woods leading up to views of Long Island Sound. There is a \$6 per person charge for this walk, which benefits the

Hallockville Farm Museum Educational Program. Please call the Museum for information and a for a reservation at 631-298-5292.

Sunday, May 17th at 8AM**TERRELL RIVER COUNTY PARK****Leaders: Jay Kuhlman &**
Beth Gustin (contact Beth at 631-
848-9883 for more information)

Meet at the trail head, on the south side of Montauk Highway in Center Moriches. The parking area is directly across from Kaler's Pond Nature Center. The forest, marshland and bay beach provide habitat for Indigo Bunting, Black and White Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Saltmarsh Sparrow and Great-crested Flycatcher.

June Field Trip**Saturday, June 6th at 8 am****SOUTH FORK NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (SoFo)****Leader: Eric Salzman**
(contact the museum for
reservations - 631-537-9735)

A jointly sponsored walk, with SoFo, we will explore the bird life of the meadow and wetlands behind the Museum building, located at 377 Bridgehampton/Sag Harbor Turnpike, Bridgehampton. Eastern Bluebirds, Vireos, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Kingbirds and perhaps a raptor or two will, hopefully, be among the highlights. We will have the opportunity to hear and see many local breeding birds on this trip.

Native Plant Sale**June 5 & 6 and**
June 12 & 13, 2015
from 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**Suffolk County**
Community College
Eastern Campus Greenhouse
121 Speonk-Riverhead Road
Riverhead, NY 11901Sponsored by
Long Island Native Plant Initiative
www.linpi.org for more information

ELIAS Meetings

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge,
3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY.
All are welcome, there is no charge.

Monday, May 4, 2015 at 7:15 pm

Nature: A Gift From Our Creator

We are pleased, once again, to have John Brokos as our guest speaker. John is an accomplished nature photographer, whose work we have had the pleasure to view on at least 5 occasions in the past 20 years. This presentation deals with nature in general, and includes close-up work of mammals, birds, reptiles and other animals, as well as some of the flora found in our area.

This program will start after the nature chat and before the meeting.



Monday, June 1, 2015 at 7:15 pm

Up Close on African Safari

Gigi and Don Spates share 8 days on safari in South Africa. Their morning and evening drives in a completely open Land Rover brought them in close contact with wildlife large and small.

Learn How You Can Help Nesting Birds

Watching birds at the nest is fun—and fuels bird conservation

Ithaca, N.Y.—Springtime is nesting time, and that means another season of beautiful birdsong, colorful eggs, and downy nestlings. Spring also brings another season of NestWatch, a free citizen-science project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Volunteers have been helping the Lab monitor nesting birds for 50 years, keeping tabs on open-cup nests and actively putting out the welcome mat for species that prefer a cozy cavity.

“Even those who already have birds nesting nearby can support more birds by putting up a nest box, or by landscaping for nesting birds,” says NestWatch project leader Robyn Bailey. “Supplying nesting materials, like wool, cotton, or pet fur is another great way to encourage more birds to take up residence.”

NestWatch provides an intimate glimpse into the lives of nesting birds but it is much more. NestWatch data have been used in more than 130 scientific studies, yielding valuable information for scientists and land managers, such as:

- When, where, and how many eggs are laid by certain species across a wide range

- How to minimize the effects of forestry and agricultural practices on nesting birds

- Revealing that some species, such as Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds, are nesting earlier as spring temperatures have risen.

These discoveries and others are made possible by people who simply enjoy watching birds in their backyard or local park.

“I find observing the behavior of the natural world endlessly fascinating,” says participant Kate Lowry. “NestWatch offers me the chance to channel my efforts into this more organized method that can provide information to real scientists who, in turn, use the data in their studies.”



Blue Jay with nestlings. Photo by Dave Magers

“Even after five decades there’s a lot to learn,” says Bailey. “For example, data on the Eurasian Collared-Dove, a relative newcomer to North America, remains sketchy. We still don’t know how its presence affects our native Mourning Doves, or even how many times they can nest in one year.” Scientists need more data to understand how and why species respond differently to large, continent-level changes in the environment.

NestWatch can be a wonderful learning experience for the whole family. Find out more about the project, sign up, and learn how to locate and monitor nests at [#](http://NestWatch.org)

An Unusual Visitor to a Nest Box Trail

By William E. Zitek, DVM,
Long Island Area Coordinator,
New York State Bluebird Society

It is that time of year again and before the Eastern Bluebird nestlings leave their nest we place bands on them whenever the weather permits and just before the “No-Check” date, which is 5 days before they fledge. On May 6, 2013, I opened a nest box which had had five Bluebird nestlings which to that point were doing very well. The box was a rather old traditional type box with a very short roof overhang and was a very popular nesting site for this pair over the past three years. Actually it was this box that got me to start banding. I place a BirdCam (see NYSBS News, VOL. XLVII, “Long Distance Learning: Use of the BirdCam..... Winter 2012-2013, P.10) , at this nest box each time there is a Bluebird nest in it as has been the case for the last 3 years. Each week, along with monitoring, I change the SD cards in the cameras and review the pictures to learn many things about the activity at and around the nest box. Since the camera turns on with first light in the morning then, turns itself off at dark and is activated by motion around the nest box, I am able to “keep an eye” on what goes on when I am away from the nest box. This gives me a weekly review of activity.

Reviewing the pictures in 2011, (there can be 1000+ in a week), revealed that the female had a band on her right leg. The fact that all previous banding had been done by capturing all species of birds in a mist net and placing the band on their left leg seemed to indicate that she had come from another site. Unsuccessful in catching her to read the band, we were able to catch the male and band him on the left leg. Subsequent photos showed the same pair occupying this nest box for two consecutive years; she, showing a band on the right leg and he, on the left. This year there is a different female as she has no band on either leg.

When I opened the nest box that Monday, there at the front edge was a dead nestling probably 8 days old. Two other nestlings sat at the back of the nest and two were missing. I examined the dead nestling and found a tiny wound in the left axilla

(arm pit) and hemorrhage at the base of the heart. I banded the two remaining nestlings. What had caused the disappearance of the two nestlings and the death of the third? The post on which the box is mounted has a very effective predator guard which keeps ground based predators from getting to the box. The box is at least 75 feet from the forest edge. No trees overhang the site. No brush or bushes around the nest box site. No scratches on the predator guard which is tightly sealed across its top.

The meadows in which our nest boxes are placed are surrounded by a 1500 acre oak-hickory maritime forest so there are plenty of birds of all kinds at the site from Osprey to Egrets, Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, etc.; in all, 215 bird species have been seen and 79 nest here. There are also raccoons, squirrels, foxes, and snakes. Most boxes are paired and Tree Swallows occupy them. An occasional House Wren gets to nest also.

The following Thursday, our usual day to monitor, it was raining so we delayed our trip until Friday, a beautiful day. I changed the SD card and brought it home to review the photos taken over the past week. Much to my surprise, I found the answer to the puzzle of the lost nestlings.

A photo taken at 6:47 pm, one day before we visited the nest box to band the nestlings, showed that a Red-tailed Hawk had attacked the nest box and taken out two of the nestlings. When the third was injured and died I am not sure. At 6:55 pm of the day I banded the remaining nestlings the hawk is seen returning again. two days later, he returns again, at 7:30 pm.

Apparently, his modus operandi was to return just as the sun dropped in the west in the evening. This nest box is one of our oldest boxes which can be seen in the picture as the hawk grasps the nestlings. It has a very short roof and unlike previous years, this female built a nest which reached almost to the nest box opening. This box has now been replaced by a newer type with an extended roof and greater distance to the floor.

The hawks which do have a nest about



400 yards away from this nest box have been there for years and I do not recollect any predation by them in the 13 years that I have been monitoring. Kestrels are often seen early in the season but have never been a problem. It will be interesting to see if this hawk has developed an appetite for nest box birds. He will however, find (I hope) it more difficult to get into that nest box the next time. All the other boxes in that meadow and adjacent meadows have elongated roofs which make an approach from any angle more difficult except for the Bluebirds and Tree Swallows.

What caused this hawk to start attacking the nest box and go after Bluebirds? Perhaps it spied the adult going back and forth to the nest box. Obviously it was hungry. It had been a colder winter. Mange had reduced the fox population to almost nothing so that when we spied two kits on our rounds this spring it was big news. There are rabbits and chipmunks and squirrels aplenty. In any event we have the photos which catch the Red-tailed Hawk “red taloned” –an interesting but, sad day on the trail.

The last two nestlings fledged in the afternoon on May, 16th. This was four days after the estimated fledge date. No further signs of the hawk were apparent. The nest box has been changed to one with an elongated roof which, hopefully, will deter this type of attack. The male Bluebird was looking the new box over when I left the site. He has fathered quite a few Bluebirds in this nest site. I hope he keeps on.

Post Script: The Bluebird pair moved into the new box immediately and raised a second successful clutch which were all banded and have fledged. No sign of the Red-tailed hawk.

At The Elizabeth Morton National Wildlife Refuge

We were so fortunate to go out on a beautiful sunny day right before the snow melted and became a soggy mess. Saturday March 7 was, of course, cold, but sunny and the light was spectacular. A thick snow pack kept us to the trails. It was good day to enjoy what, I hope, we will look back on as one of the last days of this snowy and cold winter.

The birds were waiting for us as we arrived in the parking lot. As we proceeded around the park, a flock of turkeys followed us, a bit wary but they enjoyed picking up the seeds we left behind. and would sometimes take seed from our hands.

Eileen Schwinn led the walk. I don't think there was a birder there that did not enjoy seeing those little birds land on our hands and take a few seeds. A photographer, not with our group, set up a log with some seed which brought the birds in to be photographed in a natural setting. For the most part, the expected birds were there. But a Fox Sparrow came in, as did a Rufous-sided Towhee. Later I saw on ebird, Eileen and part of the group encountered a Red-breasted Nuthatch.

Sally Newbert

All memberships are now renewable in January. Please renew your membership to keep our club strong.



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The Long Journey Home

Continued from page 1

to develop their typical breeding plumage. In other words she didn't have a white head or white tail or the blackish colored body. As Eagles develop they go through several phases of plumage. For example birds just born the previous spring are very dark all over so we would call that a 1st year bird. Third year birds have much white feathering throughout their streaky brownish colored body but they start to develop the yellow colored beak of an adult. Most birding experts agree that a 3rd year female may play at the fine art of housekeeping a nest but it is highly unlikely she would have eggs and a mate at that point in her life. They usually wait till they look like the typical breeding adult we all know as this nation's iconic symbol. Well, that didn't happen here, which makes it all the more exciting to document the behavior and report it.

Our young girl was sighted this winter plucking ducks off the water for her meals. In February 2015 our girl was seen, at an old Osprey nest with a full adult plumaged male! You could tell who was who because the females are bigger than the males, and when they went off, cavorting together, she was much bigger than he. Wow, I thought-that's interesting! The male was breaking off tree branches nearby and bringing them into the old Osprey nest. He diligently arranged them about the nest, while she sat right next to the nest and watched him intently! Then they would fly away, locking talons (part of courtship behavior) and twist and spiral with one another. He would come back to nest while she flitted (if an Eagle can flit) away towards the Forge River. She found her man. I then remembered my old friend Shelley Vakay. We were on a Moriches Bay Audubon Society field trip in perhaps 1981 or 1982 and we stopped at a pond along Montauk Highway in I think Eastport. We saw 2 Bald Eagles and they appeared to be mating, although both birds were certainly immature. When Shelley reported about the trip at the Society's meeting the next week I remember we were all commenting about how odd it was that immature Eagles would be mating, or at least practicing it. Shelley announced "well, you know

The young female soars over the Estate, she has only a few of her distinctive white adult feathers.

Below, bringing a fish into the nest.



MARI MICHAELIS

teenagers!" Of course the audience roared with laughter.

That's exactly what we have here at the William Floyd Estate, except only one bird is an immature. We have a young female paired with a full adult male, and I am delighted to tell you they are on eggs (possibly hatched young?) at this time of writing (March 24, 2015). Over this winter, she has developed a white tail but still has no white "bald" head or blackish body or a full yellow beak. He is a very good father and when she leaves the nest he comes in and very carefully looks and then settles down very slowly in a waddle like fashion on what I can only assume to be eggs or young. Eagles would not do this unless they had something in the nest. What makes this nest all the more special is she is not a full breeding plumaged female, and that is extremely unique among Eagles. Eagles are very early nesters, and this nest is now tied with one other site as Long Island's 4th known Eagle nest. Bald Eagles are making an excellent comeback from the time when they were considered an endangered species. Sometimes they confiscate old Osprey nests while other pairs make their own nest. The nests are huge because Eagles are so huge.

Since she is a young first time mother she doesn't have the experience yet that older birds have, and she appears to be very skittish about the nest. There is a strong chance she may abandon it because of her age inexperience but we can only hope this does not happen. She does leave when someone approaches but then the older male takes over and he seems to be a bit more tolerant of intruders. So, the whole area is now roped off to visitors and that is in keeping with United States Fish and Wildlife Rules and Law for this species. Eagles like their peace and quiet. Even noise can disturb them – particularly new inexperienced Eagles. We want this



LORI SHOURROT

nest to be successful so even something like chain sawing of the pitch pine trees in the area (for southern pine beetles) will be hopefully curtailed if not stopped completely.

This is the first documented Bald Eagle nest for the William Floyd Estate and Fire Island National Seashore, which the Estate is a part of since it became Federal government land. The property was given to the National Park Service in 1976 by the Floyd-Nichols family to preserve and protect it. In a way, it is a very long, long return home for Bald Eagles here. That famous naturalist, John Treadwell Nichols, who lived on site because he married a Floyd woman named Cornelia, wrote about Eagles nesting on the property in I think the 1930's. I must re-find that reference again in the archives but it may be the first Eagle nest here in about 70 to 80 years. Regardless, it's been a long time, and the Eagles have returned home, finally. John and Cornelia Nichols have been here too waiting for them to return. I'm sure that the entire family is now more than ever pleased with preserving this land. The family members all still reside on site in the little "green acre in the woods", not far from where the Eagles are now. It is because of people like them, as well as a host of others who fought for Eagles and other wildlife, that the Eagles have been able to finally make their long journey home...

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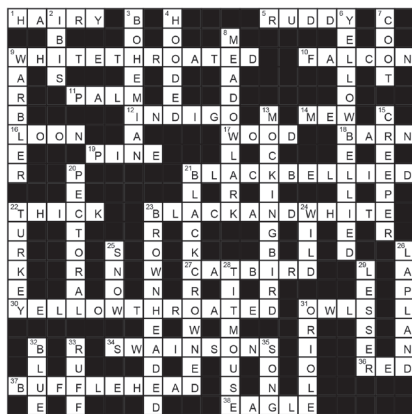
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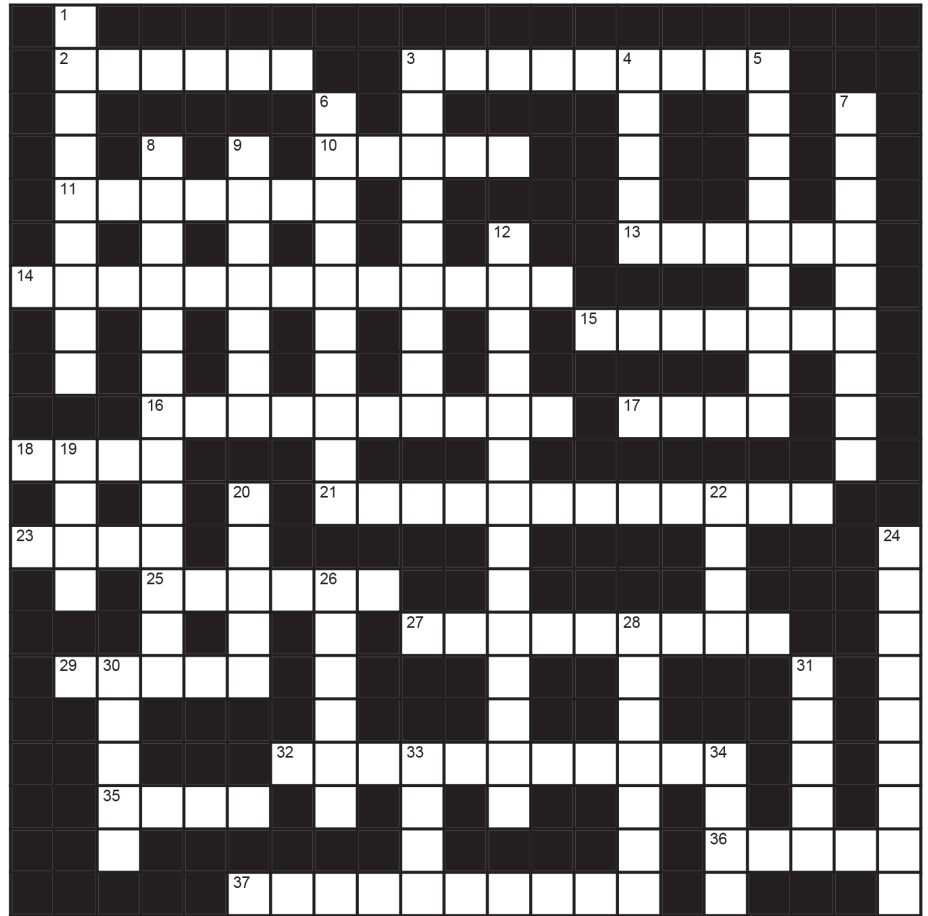
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Answers to last issue's puzzle Winter Visitors by Tom Moran



Spring Birds! Tom Moran



Across

- 2 _____ Tern, more gray below than Common
- 3 Double-crested or Great _____
- 10 Not the near look alike Downy
- 11 Black or Turkey
- 13 Not Greater Yellowlegs
- 14 _____ Warbler, not the Blue, Gray or Green (2 words) in breeding plumage, that is
- 15 Bad weather causes a large number of diverse species to stop migrating
- 16 Black or Yellow-crowned
- 17 Mississippi _____, seen last May at Jamaica Bay
- 18 _____ Turkey
- 21 _____ Grosbeak (two words)
- 23 _____ Hawk, aka Osprey
- 25 _____ Bunting
- 27 _____ Hawk, seen last May at the Montclair Hawk Watch
- 29 A thrush but not in name
- 32 _____ Merganser (two words)
- 35 Go birding on a whim, or Horned _____
- 36 Family of birds with short, sturdy bills, closely related to Shrikes
- 37 _____ Ibis, seen at Captree last year about this time

Down

- 1 _____ Warbler, likes country music
- 3 Black-capped here, not Carolina
- 4 _____ Tern
- 5 Ruddy _____
- 6 Seen afar from shore or on a pelagic trip, Cory's, Sooty, Greater...
- 7 The regular movement of some birds between their breeding and wintering locations.
- 8 _____ Warbler, not a Blackpoll
- 9 Painted _____ (you will have to go to Florida if you want to see them).
- 12 _____ Chat, seen at Cedar Beach Marina, this January
- 19 Glossy _____
- 20 _____ Duck, a small duck seen here in the winter, blue bill, tail usually sticks up
- 22 Foster's _____
- 24 Migrating birds that nest in the tropics often have a much higher rate of nest _____ than temperate zone nesters.
- 26 Northern _____, crashes into the ocean to catch fish
- 28 Heavily _____ breast helps identify this Thrush whose numbers may be falling due to Cowbird nest parasitism
- 30 Bald _____
- 31 _____ Waxwing, not the *bon vivant*
- 33 Eastern _____ bird, try at Grumman Rd
- 34 Mourning _____

Harbingers of Spring

Larry Penny

Well, sure enough, March came in like a lion and it's no lamb going out. Nonetheless, all of spring's feature players are back as usual. Ospreys, Killdeers, Robins, Grackles, Red-wing Blackbirds, Alewives, Spring Peepers, Vultures, you name it, they are all here once again and assuming their characteristic roles and special places in nature's pantheon.

We don't know this for sure and despite the fact they are all infrahumans*, I suspect that they all wonder if we'll be here when they arrive each year before they start their annual trek up or in, now that we don't kill them on their return, but honor them as we honor the shads, dogwoods, and beach plums when they begin to pop out. In the case of the Spring Peepers now chorusing nightly, they merely come up from some underground hiding place, no big deal, unless they emerge too soon. In case of the Alewives they come into the bays and inlets from the sea and head upstream to find their traditional breeding grounds in a freshwater pond such as Big Fresh Pond in the hamlet of North Sea.

Yes, like clockwork, and we strongly believe that its been going on annually without fail long before white humans from Europe settled here. We are the newcomers, so to speak, and we have almost learned to accept that fact and honor those that came before us as they return to their resident habitats each year.

The local Native Americans appreciated their returns and the beginning of spring just as much as we do now. Hunting and fishing were used to provide food for the family, they were not at all considered sports. Hopefully, the rationale of "sport" in the taking of wildlife, will become passé in America the way that lynching, pirating, fur trapping, witch burning are already out of style here. Hunting is sure to die out in the same way.

That these harbingers of spring come back to the same place, in most cases to the spot of their own birth each year says a lot about their intelligence. They are not "dumb bunnies" as the idiom goes. In the past lots of city people have complained to me about the racket that the spring peepers make throughout the night. As the years go back and those same people come back year after year as second homers or as bona fide residents, the racket turns to music.

If by chance one of these superorganisms were not to return each spring, some nasty thing would be afoot. In the "Sixties" when Ospreys stopped showing up here, naturalists looked for a cause. They found it—DDT! If the peepers are silent, it means we are in the depths of a serious drought, not good for us or the rest of

nature. We all rely on fresh water as much as we rely on food. If the Alewives fail to appear, we know that their breeding ponds are too low to overflow into their sluiceways, another sign of serious droughty conditions.

We humans have two calendars, one that hangs on the wall or is carried in our pockets, one that is situated deep in the brain. If the one in the brain is out of whack, the paper one is of little use. The one in the brain is fine tuned by the daily rise and fall of the sun, the tides, the phases of the moon, and most assuredly by the annual and seasonal comings and leavings of the birds and the bees.

Oops, a Chipmunk just appeared on the ground for the first time this year outside my window and my internal calendar is adjusting accordingly.

**Just in case you didn't know – it means – less or lower than human.*



A Killdeer hunts for food in Sagaponack field

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Seven Tips for Backyard Bird Photography

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1 Keep a journal.

Log which feathered friends come and go—and when. This helps you learn not only when you can photograph the subjects you seek and when they engage in their most action-packed behaviors, but also what type(s) of food to serve (see Tip #2).

2 Feed them right.

Avoid seed mixes containing high amounts of red millet. Most birds spurn it; however, House Sparrows, which you probably don't want to attract, readily chomp on it. Instead, offer those eats favored most by the subjects you seek. For example, here at Red Belly Ranch, Painted Buntings get white millet (which I have to special order, but it's worth it!). Black-oil sunflower seeds and raw peanuts also tend to attract wonderful winged subjects.

3 Water them well.

Attract a larger variety of birds by providing three distinct water sources: a bird bath, a hanging waterer, and a drip system. When selecting a bird bath veer away from fancy, image-cluttering models (see Tip #4). The movement and sound created by a drip system grabs the attention of migrants that might not have otherwise noticed your tweet-retreat.

4 Mind that background!

Since you're in charge of where feeders and water sources are placed, think in terms of images with solid, smooth backgrounds. Position feeders far enough away from foliage to create a nice background blur, while also keeping an eye out for eye-attracting bright spots (e.g. sunshine through leaves) or other distracting elements. IMPORTANT! Place feeders at least 25-feet from windows to avoid strikes, and 12-feet from trees or structures that provide pouncing places for predators (see Tip #6).

5 Put in a pretty perch.

When picking a piece of wood for a perch choose one that compliments the size of the bird you want to photograph. Make it photo-worthy by adding lichen, native foliage, or berries. Birds appreciate perches

near feeders because they provide places to pause and check out the scene before digging in for a meal. And perches provide you with great chances to get keepers—sans feeder.

6 Put some light on the subject.

Position feeders and water sources so that you get front light on the birds (rather than side or back lighting). Also, watch for nearby objects that cast unwanted shadows during your sweetest light (early-morning and dusk). If you can, set up two areas—one for morning shooting and another for evening.

7 Keep Kitty indoors.

Indoor cats average 15-17 years of life, significantly longer than the 1-5 years that kitties that get to go outside typically get. And, not only are indoors-only cats

healthier, but, studies show that when kept properly stimulated, they're happier, too. That's good news for cat and bird lovers both! Even when Kitty wears a bell, birds don't always get enough notice before she pounces. In addition, social dynamics tend to distract birds when they collect at feeders, which makes escaping predators even more problematic (see Tip #4)

* * * * *

Award-winning photographer, Jeff Parker, leads friendly and informative tours and workshops focusing on the flora and fauna of North, Central, and South America.

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Feeder Survey for May and June

This survey has been done for full week of each month from October to June

John McNeil

The Survey will be conducted the first full week of the month starting on Sunday and ending the following Sunday. This survey takes place from October to June.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEEDER SURVEY

- Define an area containing feeders that you can see all at once from a window. The area should be one you glance at frequently during your daily routine.
- Don't include birds seen off premises.
- Predators perching in or swooping through the count area (not just flying over) may be counted if you feel that they were attracted by the birds at the feeder.
- Record the largest number of each species that you see in your count area during the eight-day count period.
- Do not add counts from previous days together. Be specific with the species name, e.g. we can't use just the name Sparrow, Blackbird or Gull.
- At the end of the count period, record your final tallies and send in the form immediately.

Personal observations and comments are welcome as are suggestions to improve the surveys and reports.

Please send your report to:

John McNeil
168 Lexington Rd
Shirley NY 11967-3212



Survey Dates:

Sun., May 3 to Sun., May 9

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

Phone _____

_____ Mourning Dove

_____ Northern Cardinal

_____ Blue Jay

_____ House Finch

_____ Black-capped Chickadee

_____ Tufted Titmouse

_____ Downy Woodpecker

_____ White-throated Sparrow

_____ Dark-eyed Junco

_____ House Sparrow

_____ White-breasted Nuthatch

_____ Song Sparrow

_____ Red-bellied Woodpecker

_____ American Crow

_____ European Starling

_____ Common Grackle

_____ Carolina Wren

_____ Northern Mockingbird

_____ American Goldfinch

_____ Red-winged Blackbird

_____ Hairy Woodpecker

_____ Common Flicker

_____ Rufous-sided Towhee

_____ American Robin

_____ Brown-headed Cowbird

_____ Sharp-shinned Hawk

_____ Rock Dove (pigeon)

_____ Gray Catbird

_____ Yellow-rumped Warbler

_____ Red-breasted Nuthatch

_____ Other

Survey Dates:

Sun., June 7 to Sun., June 13

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

Phone _____

_____ Mourning Dove

_____ Northern Cardinal

_____ Blue Jay

_____ House Finch

_____ Black-capped Chickadee

_____ Tufted Titmouse

_____ Downy Woodpecker

_____ White-throated Sparrow

_____ Dark-eyed Junco

_____ House Sparrow

_____ White-breasted Nuthatch

_____ Song Sparrow

_____ Red-bellied Woodpecker

_____ American Crow

_____ European Starling

_____ Common Grackle

_____ Carolina Wren

_____ Northern Mockingbird

_____ American Goldfinch

_____ Red-winged Blackbird

_____ Hairy Woodpecker

_____ Common Flicker

_____ Rufous-sided Towhee

_____ American Robin

_____ Brown-headed Cowbird

_____ Sharp-shinned Hawk

_____ Rock Dove (pigeon)

_____ Gray Catbird

_____ Yellow-rumped Warbler

_____ Red-breasted Nuthatch

_____ Other

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