FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Our Spiritual Connection to the Birds

For the last month or so my birding has been confined to what I can see from the chair on my deck. My recent surgery has kept me from getting out to the fields and meadows that I have enjoyed since childhood. My feeling of loss, even though thankfully temporary, has taken more from me than just seeing what birds might be visiting my favorite haunts but has seemed to have deprived me of my much needed emotional and spiritual connection to the outdoors and our birds. Maybe much more than we can understand, at least just speaking for myself, nature keeps me more focused and renews my resolve to face the challenges of the day. Nature can do that, and for the folks that remain close to the natural world, it plays an important part of our everyday lives.

Ever since man first beheld birds flying high in the heavens there has been a special connection to our winged wonders of the skies. Mythological fables regarding birds blend through every culture, every religion and always have a parable which includes a spiritual link with birds, e.g. from the many Biblical stories involving the Dove to the timeless unique Native American sacred connections to birds such as the Eagle. Man has evolved accepting and understanding that the sighting of birds at important times could have significant personal meaning which may help them receive a message, guide and direct them throughout difficult times in their lives or connect to the memory of a loved one long gone.

But not everyone gets the message and somewhere along life’s arduous journey they seem to have lost their way. Maybe because we have begun to lose our feeling of interconnection with the natural world around us or possibly because we have just chosen to ignore the signs that nature expresses to us. It seems that less people are feeling that closeness of nature and may be missing that extraordinary experience that only being part of the natural world can give us. Most birders, I believe, have not lost that special connection with nature though they may not talk much about it to each other or find the need to express it that often. Yet when the Red-tailed Hawk soars overhead or a Great-Blue Heron stands majestically on the shore they don’t need to say anything, you can just see it in their faces there is something special happening. There is that unexplainable bonding, an ancient linking with nature that has united them with the spirit of the birds forever and then there is no longer need for words.

Many birders have their own “special” bird that has a deep personal meaning to them. When they cross their bird’s path, it can bring back fond or even sad memories of days gone by—they may feel a connection with a loved one or even feel they are being guided on the right path. Birders just don’t walk outside look at birds and forget about them, there is something that touches them deep in their soul that stays with them for a lifetime.

Sitting on my deck I have once again realized there is still magic even in the Starling with all its whistles and squeaks, as well as the much maligned House sparrow with its chirps, fluttering and its constant search for its place in the environment. Our connection with nature runs deep. There is something we may never fully understand and may have lost touch with, but in our hearts we know we are as much a part of the natural world as the Robin or the Wood Thrush. If we are honest with ourselves there is no denying it, we are part of the environment, connected through eons of living side-by-side with nature. The only question is if we will learn to hear its message.

DON TORINO
HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM 2020 BCAS BOARD MEMBERS.

From top across: Julie McCall, Marilyn Sadowski, Karen Nickeson, Chris Takacs, Don Torino, Patrice Torino, Joe Koscielny, Dave Hall. Front row: Peggy O’Neill, Nancy Hall, Nancy Salvati, Marie Longo.
SECOND ANNUAL BCAS DICK ENGSBERG TEACHER APPRECIATION AWARD

This award has been created to honor the memory of a beloved former board member, longtime avid birder, educator and mentor to many. Do you know of a teacher who goes above and beyond to connect their students to nature and the environment? Why not nominate them for our Second Annual BCAS Dick Engsberg Teacher Appreciation Award. Nominations accepted beginning 2/1/20, deadline for nominations 3/31/20, winner announced 4/15/20. The award will be presented to the winner at our June chapter meeting on 6/17/20.

Please submit nominations to Marie Longo, P.O. Box 235, Paramus, NJ 07653 or MLongo8383@aol.com. Nominations should include teacher name, school, grade(s), teacher phone number and email address and reason(s) you are nominating them.

NEW NATURE DISCOVERY KITS FOR 2020!

We have a limited number of Nature Discovery Kits that we are offering free to schools and nature centers in our area. Any of them would be a great addition to your classroom, nature center or after school environmental club: we are currently offering a bald eagle kit or an owl kit. Our butterfly and bird nature discovery kits are still available as well. One kit per classroom/nature center, suitable for grades K-5.

To place your order, contact Marie Longo, MLongo8383@aol.com.


23RD ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 23nd Annual GBBC will be held on Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17, 2020. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources. Come count with us at Teaneck Creek Conservancy in Teaneck on Sunday, February 16, 2020 at 9:30 AM. Hope to see you there!

CONSERVATION

"You are capable of more than you know." -- E. O. Wilson

Last year a dear friend gave me a signed copy of The Home Place. The author, Drew Lanham, fixes in print the complex and powerful memories of the rural South Carolina land that nurtured his deep connection to the natural world. He is correct, I believe, in claiming that we all have a “home place.” Mine will always be eastern Connecticut where, as a girl, I roamed cow fields bounded by stone walls. I now live in Bergen County where I learn from those like Don and others who grew up here and value these lands as their home place.

Lanham cites Aldo Leopold and his A Sand County Almanac as a catalyst in forming his commitment to the study of wildlife ecology. He also reveres E. O. Wilson, conservation biologist, who introduced the modern scientific world to the benefits of biodiversity. These were the visionaries who guided him and should inform us as we take action to preserve our environment. This is not a book report. This is just to say that these celebrated conservationists illustrate the power of observing the best conservation practices and honoring our home place, despite the challenges we see before us. You are capable of more than you know.

In that frame of mind, I wish to thank all those who work in this spirit to benefit our environment and wildlife, including Tammy Laverty, Pat Knight, Dee De Santis, Chris Takacs, Jim Macaluso, Scott Fallon, Jim O’Neill, George Rekakis, the Weed Warriors, members of the Board, and many, many others who contribute by conserving habitat and wildlife throughout our home place.

I wish you a good year in these pursuits!
THE TENTH ANNUAL HAROLD FEINBERG CONSERVATION AWARD

This award is named in honor of Harold Feinberg, our longtime member and field trip chairman for many years. Harold has been a mentor and an enthusiastic supporter of our endeavors and has always given freely of his expertise with a combination of patience and knowledge that few possess. These unsung heroes have given of themselves with little recognition and often with personal sacrifice. So it is in their honor that we are proud to announce our winners of the 10th Annual “Bergen County Audubon/Harold Feinberg Conservation Award” to:

Canco Park Conservancy, Dee De Santis and Michele Gillies

CANCO PARK. (Shown l-r Irene Stamos, Kevin Link, Dawn Giambalvo flanked by Don Torino and Karen Nickeson.)

Dawn Giambalvo, Kevin Link and Irene Stamos have created green space in a very urban, diverse neighborhood where there once was an empty lot. Canco Park Conservancy strives to maintain a healthy environment for wildlife and humans by keeping the park pesticide and herbicide free. Their mission is strongly based in education, restoration and conservation of open public green space, while encouraging healthful living, and fostering an interest in nature. Their efforts extend beyond the garden at Canco Park into holding plant swaps, working in community gardens, fundraising on behalf of the Conservancy and hosting public events that introduce the public to Canco Park and engage the community.

For the last 3 years DEE DE SANTIS has dedicated herself to the protection and preservation of the Ridgefield Park eagles’ nest. As the official observer for NJDEP, Dee spends almost everyday from December through June, to be sure our eagles are safe. She reports any encroachment on the nest to the proper authorities and documents all their behaviors such as egg laying and fledging times which greatly helps scientists at the DEP learn about eagles in urban areas. Dee also documents our eagles with her impressive photographs, some of which have been used by Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey to help people see how successful our local eagles have become. We're so proud to have Dee on our team of Conservation volunteers. Our Eagle Lady is the perfect example of what one person can accomplish in protecting wildlife. Shown l-r Dee DeSantis, Karen Nickeson, Don Torino.

MICHELE GILLIES is a familiar face in any water cleanup in northern NJ. Out of 52 weeks in a year Michelle is at a river cleanup 48 of them: in a canoe, on land or wading into the water. Michele’s cleanups include Liberty State Park with the Friends of Liberty State Park, Bayonne Nature club cleanups, and Raritan River cleanups with Save the Raritan, Hackensack River cleanups in Bergen and Rockland Counties, Newark waterfront cleanups, NY-NJ Bay-keeper cleanups, and Passaic River cleanups, as well as spontaneous random trash and plastic cleanups. Michele is considered a hero and a staple volunteer among all the nature group water cleanups. She is an example for everyone who is concerned with the environment and nature. She epitomizes the example of an unsung hero who has dedicated her life to a better environment. Shown l-r Don Torino, Michele Gillies, Karen Nickeson.

NEW JERSEY STATE MUSEUM HELPS TO FURTHER THE ECOCLOGICAL ROLE OF BIRDS.

Fine Feathered Friends - Birds as Mainstay and Muse at New Jersey State Museum, 205 West State Street Trenton, NJ -- From January 4 to September 13, 2020

Bring birdwatching indoors with a visit to the New Jersey State Museum for a FREE exhibition about the role of birds as an ecological mainstay and a source of inspiration for craftspeople in American decorative arts.

Exhibition highlights include the porcelain bird sculptures of Trenton ceramist Edward Marshall Boehm, hand-carved duck and shorebird decoys, and embroidered needlework samplers with design elements inspired by birds. These historical collections are exhibited side-by-side with scientific study skins and taxidermy mounts of the same species. Also included are original John James Audubon prints from the Havell double-elephant edition of Birds of America. Most notable is the Osprey, a species that Audubon observed in Great Egg Harbor, New Jersey, in the summer of 1829.

For more information, visit https://www.state.nj.us/state/museum/
71ST ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

MISTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT YIELDS MEMORABLE SUCCESS

Undeterred by the weatherman’s dire warnings, our BCAS volunteers came out in force to search out Bergen County’s winter birdlife on December 14. The 71st annual Hackensack/Ridgewood Christmas Bird Count was a resounding success. Although limited visibility kept some birds out of sight all day, and reduced our chances to count them in full, our valiant members surpassed all expectations.

We tallied 94 species, plus another six “Count period” birds to achieve one of the best results of all time. The total number of birds counted was nothing special, but the variety was exceptional. Raptors failed to take flight, and no waterfowl were seen in migration, so many species were hard to find in high numbers. But with some persistent searching, superb birds were found.

I want to commend those members who searched for birds in advance of the date, as we knew that Count Day was going to be difficult. They were able to spot many rarities earlier in the week, helping to spur our teams to find those species on Count Day in the same locales. We had more teams searching the best locales more thoroughly, which made a difference. Almost every group added something significant to the final result. Raptors failed to take flight, which limited our counts for any Vultures or Eagles. Some bodies of water were wrapped in fog, which lowered our counts for waterfowl and gulls. Last winter’s Crow roost was disrupted by the fire at the Marcal plant, pushing their night-time roost out of our Count Circle this winter. The general decline in bird numbers attributed to Climate Change was probably affecting many smaller species. But when you view the full list on page 7, you will be surprised by the great wintering birds that still come to Bergen County.

Overpeck Park was one spot with amazing birds, including Greater White-fronted Goose, American Pipit, Cackling Goose (CP), and Eastern Meadowlark. The Oradell Reservoir area was wonderful as usual, with the most Bald Eagles, plus Snow Goose, Pied-billed Grebe, many Common Merganser, and an immature Northern Goshawk. The woodlands near Oradell also yielded a Saw-whet Owl, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin and the only Red-breasted Nuthatch. Lake Tappan had a Common Loon during Count Period. The Palisades region held the only Vultures, plus Hermit Thrush and Wild Turkeys.

Many thanks to all of our volunteers who made this event possible.

Dave Hall

FUNDRAISING- DONATIONS, TRIBUTES AND MEMORIAL GIFTS

Following our spring count our members proved their generosity again and BCAS is greatly appreciative, making it possible for us to continue our mission to protect the wildlife of Bergen County with a total of $5,381.00 (Sept.-Dec.).

BCAS thanks the following donors:

Kurt Muenz - in honor of 50th wedding anniversary of Jeff & Janet Holyhead.

MEMORIAL GIFTS - Amy Wilkinson and Regina Ryan in memory of Carroll Pickens.
Claudia Coniglio, Rare Book Studio, Jeffrey & Cynthia Forester, Gary Ostroff in memory of Mark Fischer.

I apologize for any mistakes, notify us and we will correct.

Peggy O’Neill. Fundraising
2020 FIELD TRIPS - WINTER/SPRING - FEB. MARCH-APRIL

Unless noted, all field trips are rain OR shine. For last minute changes due to inclement weather or other conditions, please notify trip leader. For additional information on trip locations, go to www.bergencountyaudubon.org.

To make suggestions for field trips, please contact Chris Takacs at 201-207-0426 or americanchris22@gmail.com.

(If not noted  Contact Info for Don Torino  201-230-4983  Email: greatauk4@gmail.com)

February 2 (Sun) 10:00 AM Richard DeKorte Park. Super Bird Sunday!.  Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com

February 4 (Tues) 9:30 AM Teaneck Creek Conservancy. Wintering birds. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983, greatauk4@gmail.com

February 16 (Sun) 9:30 AM Great Backyard Bird Count at Teaneck Creek Conservancy. Help count the wintering birds. Contact: Don Torino. 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com

February 18 (Tues) 10:00 AM Mill Creek Point / Schmidt's Woods. Meet at MCP, ducks, raptors, wintering birds. Contact: Don Torino.

February 22 (Sat) 8:30 AM Hatfield Swamp. Footing may be wet. Wintering birds, sparrows, possible owls. Meet: Stop & Shop, 875 Bloomfield Avenue, West Caldwell. Contact: Dave Hall 973-226-7825 david.hall@einstein.yu.edu

March 1 (Sun) 10:00 AM Mill Creek Marsh. Ducks, wintering birds. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com.


March 5 (Thurs) 8:45 AM Weequahic Park, Newark. Wintering Ducks, early migrants. Meet at Meeker Ave and Empire St. Contact: Dave Hall 973-226-7825 david.hall@einstein.yu.edu.

March 14 (Sat) 9:00 AM Hilltop Park. Sparrows, Early migrants. Meet at Mountain Avenue and Courter Lane, North Caldwell . Contact: Dave Hall 973-226-7825 david.hall@einstein.yu.edu.

March 15 (Sun) 10:00 AM Losen Slote Creek / Mehrhof Pond. Wintering birds. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983, greatauk4@gmail.com

March 17 (Tues) 10:00 AM Harrier Meadow. Meet at Harrier gate, Disposal Rd. Early Spring migrants, ducks. Contact: Don Torino.

March 19 (Thurs) 10:00 AM Celery Farm - First Day of Spring Walk. Early spring migrants, waterfowl and raptors. Meet at Green Way. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com

April 5 (Sun) 10:00 AM Mill Creek Marsh. Spring migrants, ducks. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com

April 7 (Tues) 10:00 AM Losen Slote Creek / Mehrhof Pond. Spring migrants. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com

April 9 (Thurs) 8:00 AM Becker Tract. Sparrows, Early migrants. Meet at Essex County Environmental Center, 621 B Eagle Rock Ave. Roseland Contact: Dave Hall 973-226-7825 david.hall@einstein.yu.edu

April 12 (Sun) 10:00 AM Richard DeKorte Park - Easter Sunday Bird Walk. Spring Migrants, waterfowl and raptors. Contact: Don Torino

April 18 (Sat) 9:00 AM Garret Mountain Reservation. Meet at 3-tiered Parking Lot. Spring Migrants, raptors. Contact: Don Torino.

April 21 (Tues) 10:00 AM Harrier Meadow. Meet at Harrier gate, Disposal Rd. Early Spring migrants, ducks. Contact: Don Torino.

April 22 (Wed) Earth Day Walk. TBA. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com.

April 26 (Sun) 1:00 PM Birding For Beginners at NJ Botanical Gardens, Ringwood. Introductory class with Don, followed by a walk. Contact: Don Torino 201-230-4983 greatauk4@gmail.com

April 28 (Tues) 10:00 AM Frank Chapman Trail. Meet at Riverview Ave., Teaneck. Spring Migrants, raptors. Contact: Don Torino.

April 30 (Thurs) 8:30 AM Branch Brook Park. Spring migrants. Meet Cherry Blossom Visitor's Center, Park Drive north of Heller Parkway. Contact: Dave Hall 973-226-7825 david.hall@einstein.yu.edu.
Common Loon CP
Pied-billed Grebe 1
Dbl-erst. Cormorant 98
Great Blue Heron 38
Mute Swan 2
Snow Goose 3
Canada Goose 5451
Cackling Goose CP
Greater White-fr Goose 1 !
Wood Duck 3
Green-winged Teal 11
Am. Black Duck 55
Mallard 1186
Northern Pintail 1
Northern Shoveler 28
Gadwall 68
Am. Widgeon 6
Canvasback 2
Ring-necked Duck 51
Greater Scaup CP
Lesser Scaup 60
Bufflehead 45
Hood Merganser 326 High
Com Merganser 1930 Low
Red-br Merganser 1
Ruddy Duck 1804
Turkey Vulture 1
Black Vulture CP
Bald Eagle 20
Sharp-shin. Hawk 2
Cooper's Hawk 7
Northern Goshawk 1 !
Red-shldrd. Hawk 3
Red-tailed Hawk 39
American Kestrel 2
Merlin 3 High
Peregrine Falcon 2
Wild Turkey 34
American Coot 7
Ring-billed Gull 2907
Herring Gull 35
Gr.Bl.-Bckd Gull 15
Rock Dove 607
Mourning Dove 387
East. Screech Owl 9
Great-horned Owl 7
Nor Saw-whet Owl 1 !
Belted Kingfisher 20
Red-hd Woodpecker 1
Red-bel. Woodpecker 221
Yellow-b. Sapsucker 4
Downy Woodpecker 102
Hairy Woodpecker 29
Northern Flicker 30
Pileated Woodpecker 9 High
Blue Jay 401

Common Raven 5
American Crow 312
Fish Crow 138
Bl-cap Chickadee 77
Tufted Titmouse 85
Red-br. Nuthatch 1
White-br Nuthatch 66
Brown Creeper 4
Carolina Wren 63
Winter Wren 6
Golden-crd Kinglet 21
Ruby-crd Kinglet 8
Eastern Bluebird 2
Hermit Thrush 1
American Robin 59
N. Mockingbird 32
Brown Thrasher 2

American Pipit 1 !
Cedar Waxwing 28
Eur. Starling 3235
Palm Warbler CP
Yellow-rmp Wblr 2
Northern Cardinal 140
Ruf-sided Towhee 10
Am Tree Sparrow 3
Chipping Sparrow 3
Field Sparrow 1
Savannah Sparrow 2
Fox Sparrow 22
Song Sparrow 131
Swamp Sparrow 8
White-thr Sparrow 891
Dark-eyed Junco 612
Snow Bunting CP
Red-winged Blackbird 42

Eastern Meadowlark 1 !
Rusty Blackbird 7
Common Grackle 123
Purple Finch 9
House Finch 146
Pine Siskin 3
Am. Goldfinch 240
House Sparrow 601
Monk Parakeet 17 Low

94 species plus 6 Count Period species.
24,239 birds in all

NR (New Record) are all time records for this count.
!! = Unusual species
As Members of Bergen County Audubon Society, we share a love for birds and a concern for the environment. Our mission is to promote and protect wildlife in their natural habitat by providing opportunities for observation and conservation.

All field trips and programs are open to the public and free of charge.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2020

Please enroll me as a member of the Bergen Audubon Society and/or the National Audubon Society. My check is enclosed for:

Chapter Sustaining Member. $20.00 - Single or $35.00 for Family Membership. All funds stay in our area, helping us to support local efforts and provide services in Bergen County. Make check payable to Bergen County Audubon.

$20.00 - National Audubon Society Member. (1st year rate for new NAS members only). Includes Chapter membership. Make check payable to National Audubon Society.

Name: ___________________________________________________________________________________________
Address: ________________________________________________________________________________________
City:_______________________________________________________ State:____ Zip:___________
Phone: (____)_______________________________________________
E-mail (I would like to be notified of upcoming events online and receive the newsletter electronically.)
________________________________________________________________________________________________

Please mail to: BCAS Membership Chair, PO Box 235, Paramus, NJ 07653-0235

Volunteer opportunities in local chapter activities or committees are available. Please circle the following and mail with your subscription or see any officer or chair at one of the meetings.

__ Conservation  __ Membership  __ Publicity  __ Field Trips  
  __ Education  __ Newsletter/Website