



SPRING/SUMMER 2020

Volume LXXVI
Issue 2

From the Presidents Perch

Dear Bergen County Audubon Society members and friends,

Sadly due to COVID-19 BCAS will be suspending all programs, events, and walks till further notice.

Bringing everyone the love and enjoyment of nature is at the heart of what Bergen County Audubon has done for many years, and it saddens us not to be able to meet and walk with all of you at our favorite birding locations. So please take care of yourselves, and you can be sure we will be back out there with you at our weekly events as soon as we are able.

In the meantime, be assured BCAS will be there working on all our conservation projects, protecting and monitoring endangered species, working to preserve and protect natural open space and maintaining our butterfly gardens as usual. Please get outside and enjoy the outdoors as best you can.

Nature improves our health and nourishes our souls - and remember we are here with any questions or help you need concerning our birds and wildlife. One important thing we can all do is remember that wildlife still needs our help and creating a BCAS Certified Wildlife garden at home is a great way to do that .

Please keep in touch. Let us know what birds you see, what plants are growing in your gardens, and when the first Monarchs arrive. Hope to see and talk with you all very soon.

Contact- Don Torino, President - greatauk4@gmail.com 201-230-4983

Don't forget to see us on our website and on Facebook - links below.

DON TORINO

As we stay close to home, here are a few things to keep you going and keep nature in your hearts.

- Live [Eagle cam](#) at Duke Farms
- Create a [BCAS Certified Wildlife Garden](#) at home - it's fun and free!
- Help birds with [native plants](#)
- Clean your birdfeeders. See page 5 for "how to" steps.
- Check into our website or Facebook for updates on new dates for events and field trips.
<http://bergencountyaudubon.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Bergen-County-Audubon-Society-347938436300/>
- A good link to make bird safe windows at home
https://pa.audubon.org/sites/default/files/static_pages/attachments/birdsafehomwsbrochure_26june2019.pdf
- A wonderful book by Julie Zickefoose that I am sure everyone will love - [Saving Jemima: Life and Love with a Hard-Luck Jay](#)

BERGEN COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY—

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Send articles to PO Box 235, Paramus, NJ 07653-0235 or email editor, Nancy Salvati at nancys@nj.rr.com.

CANCELLED BCAS BUS TRIP TO SAGAMORE NATIONAL PARK.

As you may know, this bus trip has been cancelled.

Nancy Hall has been trying to reach people and send them refund checks. Anyone who paid for the trip but has not yet received a refund should e-mail or phone Nancy with their street address.

You can email her at: nancyrhall71@gmail.com or call at 973-226-7825

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Joe Koscielny

First of all, I want to thank all of you for your continued support. Without you we would not be able to continue to run our programs and field trips for free.

Secondly, if you are not receiving our current e-mail reminder alerts about upcoming events, field trips and programs, it is important that you go to our website <http://bergencountyaudubon.org/>.

Click on the EMAIL LIST tab and fill out required info.

This way, not only will you receive reminders but also information on any changes such as cancellations and rescheduling. This is especially important because of the current pandemic restrictions. Thank you and be safe.

IN MEMORIAM *Memories shared by two of our members*

Peg Dalton, a long time BCAS member, passed away March 29th after suffering a stroke. Those who recall Peg will remark that she was always smiling, always laughing. I remember her as endlessly curious and adventurous. In my bird outings with her, there was never a 'no trespassing' sign that she was able to comprehend. And when she was caught, she was able to disarm the meanest property guard. She was a keen birder, ready at the earliest hour, make-up and earrings on, thermos in hand, always good company. There was delight in every discovery.

Peg loved her BCAS community and contributed wherever she could. She thrived on learning and expanding her world. On her last healthy day, she was exploring Facetime in order to join a class remotely. She prodigiously loved her family and friends. I will always admire her valiant spirit.

-Karen Nickeson

When Peg Dalton comes to mind I smile. Whether on a walk with Bergen County Audubon, Greenbrook, or at Cape May, she always had a ready smile. I especially recall her dedication to the Christmas Count!! In December 2013 very few people showed up at the Overpeck Park; Peg did. It had snowed the night before, and unbeknownst to us the parking lot had frozen over with a thick sheet of ice. All we saw was a deceivingly beautiful freshly falling layer of snow covering the parking lot. Peg and I walked across that empty lot to better observe something with feathers. BAM! POW! We both slipped on the hidden ice, went up in the air and down again, landing flat on our backs. Once we realized we were both OK we laughed hysterically and hoped we would be recognized for our dedication to citizen science and the Bergen County Christmas Count!

-Brenda McIntyre

The Board of BCAS shares in these wonderful memories and wants to express its deepest sympathies to Peg's family.

* * * *

To read the entire obituary and if you want to post a tribute, please go to <https://frankpatti.com/tribute/details/773/Margaret-Dalton/obituary.html>

The “Goldilocks” Bird -- Is it Just Right?



Next time you visit Overpeck, take a look to the east as you pass the rotary with the flagpole. You will observe a splendid new array of Purple Martin houses waiting for residents to move in. Purple Martins are notoriously tricky to attract. If you build it, they still may not come. Proximity to human-built structures is a positive. Habitat for predators will spook them. So will trees taller than the nesting structure. The most critical element is timing. Martins tend to develop site fidelity, returning to the same location each spring. New nesting structures attract subadult birds who have never established a colony. First-time nest builders typically arrive 4-5 weeks after the mature birds and their “scouts.”

The art of timing involves knowing when to open the entrance to the gourd-shaped nest. As I write this, the nest openings are closed with tape. This is to prevent House Sparrows and other birds from claiming the houses before the arrival of the Martins. If the openings remain closed too long, we miss the young birds that are cruising for new homes. Fortunately, the Purple Martin Conservation Association records migration sightings at *purplemartin.org*. If you visit the website you will be treated to delightful NestCam footage of these charismatic birds, the history of human nest management, and the up-to-date mapping of their migration.

So please, as you pass the Martin houses, do a little welcome dance, prayer, incantation of your choice in hopes of seeing these beautiful creatures move in.

Acknowledgments: BCAS purchased the nesting structure with the help of membership contributions.



Thanks to Mike Mongone, Certified Grounds Manager, along with his crew, including Andrew Forester, Trevor Williams, and Omar Perkins for their help in this and all our Overpeck projects.

If you see any one of them working around the park, please give them a wave and thanks. Jim Macaluso is generously donating his time and labor to manage the project. He devoted days altering the gourds to make them starling proof, assembling the structure, and adding the mechanism to raise and lower the pole. Jimmy and Andrew did yeoman’s work erecting the structure on the tough remediated surface.

More Conservation projects:

BERGEN COUNTY GOLF COURSE BLUEBIRD PROJECT



Our partnership with Bergen County Parks is continuing this Spring as we monitor and install more nest boxes on our County golf course . Golf courses are some of the last habitats in the county for the Eastern Bluebirds and providing nesting places for them is critical to maintaining their population in our area. Many thanks to Chris Takacs and Rich Greendyk for taking charge of this important conservation project.

2020 BCAS BACKYARD SPRING COUNT ON MAY 9

ENJOY SPRING MIGRATION AT HOME!



Bergen County Audubon Society has conducted a spring bird count for the past 25 years, coinciding with International Migratory Bird Day. The current turmoil caused by COVID-19 requires a change of plans. We still hope for our members and friends to appreciate the spring bird migration, but in a safe manner.

On Saturday May 9 we ask you to get outside and to monitor the birds locally, in your own yard or local neighborhood. Please obey the guidelines for social distancing. We encourage you to either post your list to eBird. For those new (<https://ebird.org/about/resources/sharing-your-sightings-on-ebird>). Or send back your observations to David Hall by email.

We can send you a tally list by email if requested. As in previous years, we hope to monitor which species, and how many birds for each species, are present in our region on May 9, 2020.

- We are interested in birds in all of Bergen County and in any other localities nearby. When you send back your list, please let us know what town you live in. We do not need your address, just the town. I will compile a complete list of all the species that our members and friends find on that day. Based on that number, we will ask for donations to BCAS, making this event a **“Bird-a-thon”** on behalf of our chapter.

We cannot be sure what the weather will bring on May 9, but the event is ON, rain or shine. Hopefully this activity can bring some joy to our lives, despite the difficult circumstances.

Have fun out there, and please stay safe!

DAVID HALL david.hall@einsteinmed.org

BERGEN COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY
SPRING BACKYARD BIRD COUNT
Sunday May 9, 2020
 Enjoy Spring Migration from Home!

PLEASE
 Use social distancing
 and monitor the bird
 species and numbers
 in your own
 backyard!

**Please make a pledge and help raise
 money for conservation and education!**

Bergen County Audubon Society
 LOCAL CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

In recognition of these challenging times, please note the guidelines above from Dave Hall. You may pledge "X" amount per species and your donation will be multiplied by the total number of species seen on that day, or you can pledge/donate a fixed amount. Your donation is fully tax deductible. Checks should be made payable to Bergen County Audubon Society.

1. Mail form/check to BCAS Spring Fundraiser
 P.O. Box 235
 Paramus, NJ 07653-0235 or
2. Use the donate button at www.bergencountyaudubon.org.

We appreciate any donation you can make and if your financial situation is limited we appreciate that too, but hope you can still go birding and help with the data collection and enjoy the spring migration .

Pledge- per species amount _____
 or check amount _____

Name _____

Address _____

Tel. # _____

Contact Peggy O'Neill at (201)868-5829 for questions

MAKING A DIFFERENCE – *A column dedicated to all those member volunteers who in some way have enhanced, preserved, conserved, protected, educated or elevated our experiences of those things we love, the beauty of the natural world. The Editor.*



Thanks to Volunteer, ALEXA FANTACONE.

She joined Teaneck Creek as the Executive Director in June 2015. She is responsible for volunteer management, recruitment and outreach, physical oversight of the 46 acres, program and event development, the organizations fundraising and finances, and all of the Conservancy's communication and social media. Her accomplishments at Teaneck Creek include the Rain Barrel Water Harvest System, various new art installations at the park, and concept design for great new successful programs (like Bats and Brews and the home-school trifecta program). *Photo of Alexa teaching in the Labyrinth*

The Home-school trifecta is a cooperative program with Flat Rock Brook (FRB) and Tenafly Nature Center (TNC). It's a homeschool program for kids 6-12 on various topics.

Alexa explains the Trifecta this way. "Home-schooled students aged 6-8 and 8-12 are welcome to join educators from **Tenafly Nature Center, Flat Rock Brook, and Teaneck Creek Conservancy** as we introduce your home school explorers to a plethora of plants and the interesting world of insects. Each month explorers will discover a new locale that is a part of beautiful Bergen County and explore the hidden gems within. Topics will range from basic botany to identifying aquatic macro-organisms and will feature hands-on/minds-on exploration perfect for a budding to intermediate naturalist. Meet other home school families while kids strengthen their knowledge and appreciation for the environment."

In her spare time, Alexa is an aviary volunteer at Flat Rock Brook Nature Center, chairs the Nature Program Cooperative, and has been a part of several national demonstrations for a healthy planet (March on Climate, DC; March on Climate, NYC; Keystone XL, DC).

DEAR BCAS BIRDLOVERS. There are a few things we can do outside to occupy us while we wait out this terrible virus and stay home. **We can clean our feeders.**

I usually wait till our BCAS June Cleaning at Wild Birds before checking mine but recently my finch feeder had a whitish film around the inside bottom of it. I immediately took it down and proceeded to empty it and soak in a soapy pot then dunked in a 1-9 bleach solution.



Some of the more common diseases that birds can spread through feeders include house finch eye disease (the colloquial name for mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, which can infect more than just the bird for which it's named), salmonellosis and aspergillosis (a fungal respiratory disease), and avian pox..

To prevent the spread of illness in the birds that frequent your seed buffet, try these three steps:

1. Clean feeders regularly. Rinse the feeder well with soapy water, then dunk it into a bleach-water solution. "A monthly cleaning with a nine-to-one water-bleach solution will deter bacteria in plastic, ceramic, and metal feeders. "A dilute vinegar solution (three-to-one) or non-fragranced biodegradable soap should be used on wood to minimize fading." Dry out the feeder before hanging it back up. Double the frequency of cleaning if you suspect disease a-lurking.

2. Tidy below the feeder. This can mean raking or shoveling up feces and hulls (seed casings)—particularly those that are moldy, wet, or spoiled—and throwing them out, "Bird food scattered on the ground also can attract rodents."

3. Share the wealth. Spread out food among a couple feeders so there's less opportunity for sick birds to touch and contaminate each other. "Crowding only expedites the spread of disease," the Audubon guide reads, "so give the birds variety and plenty of room."

*Let me know how it goes, Nancy Salvati,
email nancys@nj.rr.com*

Audubon Adventures-Welcome to our newest school, Wildwood Elementary School in Mountain Lakes. They have also requested an Owl Nature Discovery Kit.

Monarch Butterfly-Last season (2019-2020), the monarch populations reported in Mexico were down 53% as compared to the previous season. The monarch populations reported in Mexico (2018-2019) were considerably higher than the previous season (2017-2018) and it seemed the population was on the rebound. Habitat loss, climate change and illegal logging in Mexico all contributed to the decline. This only proves that we must do all that we can to support these remarkable creatures and not take a "good" year for granted.

Planting native milkweed plants, native nectar sources and especially late blooming native nectar sources can make all the difference for the monarch. If each person planted just one milkweed plant, whether it be in a pot or a garden bed, imagine the impact we could have on the population of these marvelous butterflies. Plant milkweed!

During this stressful, unsettling time, I encourage you to get outdoors. Whether it be in your backyard or local park, nature can make all the difference in the world. Migration is underway, creatures are emerging from their winter hibernation and signs of spring are all around us. Get outside and enjoy the beauty of nature unfolding.

BIRDS, BEES AND BUTTERFLIES, OH MY!! IT'S TIME TO CERTIFY

During these uncertain times, there is one certainty; migration is underway, spring has sprung and signs of life are everywhere. Birds, bees and butterflies are appearing in our area and Bergen County Audubon Society welcomes the opportunity to help you make a difference by certifying your garden.

BCAS has certified 147 gardens thus far. Homeowners, schools, businesses, places of worship, nature centers, apartments, parks/communities are all invited to participate in this free program. Our Certified Wildlife Garden Program is based primarily on the number of native plants in your garden, but we also ask that you also provide:

- water sources-important for drinking and bathing
- cover-provides shelter from inclement weather and predators
- places to raise young-for courtship behavior and to safely raise young
- feeders (optional)



Simply put, native plants provide the basic foods for wildlife and create better biodiversity, invasive plants destroy habitats and spread. You may visit the National Audubon Society native plant database to learn which native plants are recommended for planting in your area.

Visit the native plant database at: audubon.org/plantsforbirds.

Butterflies, bees and wildlife populations are suffering due to the lack of habitat. Our goal is to create stepping stones in between the vast landscape of homes, shopping malls, corporate buildings and asphalt.

Applications and additional information can be found on our website: bergencountyaudubon.org/cwg/

Questions? Contact: Marie Longo (201) 498-0809 MLongo8383@aol.com
Don Torino (201) 230-4983 greaauk4@gmail.com
Karen Nickeson (201) 304-3575 knickeson@hotmail.com.

There is no better place to restore your spirit and nourish your soul than being outdoors!!

A GRACKLES STORY

By DON TORINO



It seems that the only time I hear comments concerning the Common Grackle is when the evening news portrays them as swarming hordes of creatures bent on pecking your eyes out like from an old Alfred Hitchcock movie or when I get calls from home owners that are feeding the birds and want to know how to make them just go away and stop eating all their bird food. Well let me just start off by saying I LOVE GRACKLES! Yes, I said it! I really do love the Common Grackle. Despite all their negative PR I relish the days when the Grackles covered my backyard, flocks descended upon the forests filling it with the loud buzzing calls and yes, even those upset phone calls when I got to tell folks that grackles are so very Cool and they should be enjoyed.

Now I am not going to try to win you over by telling you how beautiful the Grackle really is with their wonderful glossy-blue iridescent colors and Golden eye which gives them a very cool intense look or tell you about some of the very unusual things they eat like crayfish, leeches off of turtles, frogs, mice and much less popular other birds (pretty neat depending upon who you are). But what I am going to tell you is my own personal Grackle story that I hope will make you see Grackles in a new and better way from now on:-

It was a beautiful sunny Mother's Day afternoon in the backyard of my Wife Pat's family home in Oakland. As everyone sat there talking about the family news of the day a Grackle flew into a nearby cedar and as grackles do started to sound off loudly. But this grackle seemed much more distressed, its cries were loud enough to bring it to the attention of even the many non-birders that relaxed on the deck trying to talk over the now louder cries of this big black bird. "Don, what's that bird want?" someone asked me as if I could wave my hand and quiet it down. So now my curiosity made me approach the bird closer as I knew just from its erratic unusual call something was not right but as soon as I got close the bird flew across the street to a nearby pond. Ok I said to myself that is that, the bird is gone which now would just leave me guessing to the grackles situation. But no sooner did I sit back down the same grackle retuned calling out even louder this time to the attention of everyone at our Mother's Day celebration. So once again at everyone's urging -as if I am the bird whisperer- I again approached the bird calling from the cedars. But again as I approached it flew from the tree across the street to the pond while still calling and crying away. And now for the second time I sat back down more puzzled than ever. What did that bird want? I looked for a nest in the cedar tree that I thought it may be protecting but nothing there and now totally puzzled I sat back down and tried to enjoy the sun and the family talk but that did not last long.

Now for a third time the Grackle returned, screaming, wings flapping with a sound of more desperation recognizable to the birder and the non-bird lover alike and again as I approached it made a beeline across the street and to the pond. This time I decided to follow this poor bird as best I could to maybe see what the worry and fear that seemed to grip this creature was all about.

The continued cry of the grackle went nonstop as I crossed the street to the pond but now suddenly I heard two birds one seeming higher pitched but just as desperate and frantic as the first. It was then I realized what the alarm and panic was all about. There hanging upside down by one foot from a chain link fence was a baby grackle. Flapping and flailing away as the adult bird continued its raucous calls. I walked closer and gently flipped the little bird's foot from the joining link in the fence careful not to break or injure the tiny leg of this fearful thrashing baby who was trying even harder to get away from me. No sooner as I successfully flicked the little one from the fence the adult bird who now I recognized as the mother began following the baby along the ground trying to get some food in its mouth. As I watched them scurry along the fence and then into the shrubby area of the pond and finally out of sight, my common sense mind was not sure what I had just witnessed? Was this bird asking for help? Was it trying to get someone to follow it the way a dog does in a movie? I looked around partly in disbelief but mostly in total amazement. I shook my head and then returned to the family gathering across the street. I sat down quietly trying over and over to process what I just experienced. Then someone asked "What did that darn bird want?" "Needed someone to help its baby" I quietly and reluctantly replied. I remember just getting some laughs and giggles and then the conversation turned to the Yankees and how lucky we were to have such a nice day.

Till this day I try to process the events of that special Mothers Day, still in some way attempting to be sure I saw what I really saw and, if I did, then from that day on it would change everything as I understood it, as of course it has. We need to forever discard any beliefs that wild animals are not highly intelligent or don't have feelings or emotions the way we as humans know them. Needless to say, although I've loved birds from childhood, I now know what I have always felt in my heart-- that all life is special no matter how rare or common and wildlife want nothing more than to protect their family even if it means getting a human to help on occasion.

So next time you see a reporter on the news acting as if a flock of grackles is something to fear, I hope you will recall my story and remember that the Common Grackle is not so common after all and that all wildlife needs a helping hand every once in a while, even if it interrupts a family gathering and especially a Mother's Day now and then.

BERGEN COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY



A CHAPTER OF THE
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 235
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www.bergencountyaudubon.org

**Dated Material
APRIL 2020**

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 (Q07) and/or the National Audubon Society.

My check is enclosed for

() **\$20 Individual** or () **\$35 Family Chapter Sustaining Member**. 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 - 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.)

BlueJay will be mailed to you unless you request online version.

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 your interest and mail with your subscription or see any officer or chair at one of the meetings.

Conservation Membership Publicity Field Trips

Education Newsletter/Website Gardens/Events Other _____