


Fyke Nature Association Summer Newsletter

Vol. 66 — No. 2 — 2020
www.fykenature.org

Calendar of Events

Since mid-2015 Fyke's monthly speaker costs have been funded by a generous grant from the Winifred M. and George P. Pitkin Foundation.

Fyke meeting and events have been postponed due to Corona virus restrictions. Please check our website and emails for updates on rescheduling of Fyke's events.

If you have not signed up for our e-mail list, and if you are a Fyke member in good standing (i.e. Sept 2019 thru Aug 2020 dues paid), please send an email to fykenature+owner@groups.io including your name and you will receive an invitation email. Accept the invitation to join the group.

Stepping Up For The Celery Farm is presently still scheduled. You can still pledge a donation for the Celery Farm even if this event has to be postponed.

May 2, 2020 — Stepping Up For The Celery Farm and Pollinators.
Rain date May 3, 2020

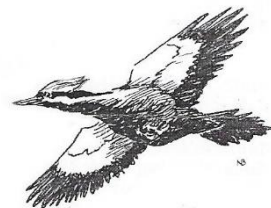
Fyke teams will be birding the Celery Farm from dawn to dusk in two-hour shifts; you can sign up for as many shifts as you'd like. As citizen-scientists, we are conducting an inventory of all the bird species seen that day.

To register a team or to sign up for a time slot, contact Gabriele Schmitt, gaby413@aol.com.

To make a donation or to pledge a per-species amount, please see the pledge form on page 6.

Many of you know that Stepping Up is The Celery Farm's "Big Day", as well as our annual fundraiser that helps support the Celery Farm and Pollinators. In May 2019, more than 35,000 people participated in Global Big Day, in fields and forests around the world, reporting more than two-thirds of the world's bird species in a single day!

Pledges this year will support The Celery Farm and Pollinators. Funds raised will be used for the continued maintenance and enhancements at Celery Farm. Please bear in mind that Fyke/The Celery Farm does not receive any funding from the Borough of Allendale. We depend on membership fees and donations.



With your help (financial and volunteer time) we will be able to:

1. Continue our pollinator support efforts at our lovely Butterfly Garden and the meadow, planting more Mountain Mint and Milk Weed.
2. Keep up our ongoing efforts to control invasive plant species, including Eliminating Multiflora roses to make way for Swamp roses, whose rose hips are a more desirable food source for birds and whose flowers are butterfly and bee magnets. And, cutting Porcelain Berry and other invasive vines to keep them from strangling trees and shrubs.

**June 2020 — Celery Farm Bird Walk
To be scheduled if restrictions lifted**

This walk is for nature-lovers and birders of all levels. We'll look for butterflies, bugs, weird plants and our feathered friends. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Greenway. Wear long pants and socks; bring water and bug spray!

**July 2020 -- Our Tom Burr Memorial Butterfly Walk at the Celery Farm
To be scheduled if restrictions lifted**

Our annual Celery Farm Butterfly Walk is held in memory of Tom Burr, the late Fyke member, naturalist, photographer, and friend. Meet at the end of Green Way at 10:30 a.m. for a 90-minute stroll. Dress for bright sun. Bring water and sunscreen. Rain cancels this walk.

September 1, 2020 — Mt. Peter Hawk Watch begins

Fyke members are invited to help with the count or just to visit and give us your support. More details in the next newsletter. The watch begins September 1, 2020 and continues daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. until November 15. Any hawk watch is a great place to practice social distancing. Contact Judy Cinquina at judycinq@optonline.net to volunteer or for more information.

Saturday, August 29, 2020 – Mt. Peter Clean-Up.

Rain date, Sunday, August 30, 2020

Our annual Clean-Up is scheduled for Saturday, August 29, 2020 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Rain date is Sunday, August 30, 2020. Contact Judy Cinquina at judycinq@optonline.net to volunteer or for more information.



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**2021 Celery Farm Calendar**

Photos taken at the Celery Farm by Fyke members are being accepted now for the 2021 Celery Farm calendar. There is a limit of 10 photos per person. The photos should be landscape format. Non-cropped photos work best with the software used for the calendar.

Please send your photos as an .jpeg email attachment to [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com) by July 15, 2020. Thank you in advance for your support of Fyke Nature Association!

**Field and Feeder Notes**  
**By Judith Cinquina**

*Some black ducks  
were shrugged up  
on the shore,  
It was snowing*

*hard from the east  
and the sea  
was in disorder.  
Then some sanderlings*

*five inches long  
with beaks like wire,  
flew in,  
snowflakes on their backs,*

*and settled  
in a row  
behind the ducks--  
Whose backs were also*

*covered with snow--  
so close  
they were all touching,  
they were all but under*

*the roof of the ducks' tails,  
so the wind, pretty much,  
blew over them.  
They stayed that way, motionless,*

*From In the Storm by Mary Oliver, THIRST 2006*

We have but to keep our eyes open to the world, and we will see amazing things. The Hour on the Tower crew witnessed an interesting behavior on March 1 at the Celery Farm (CF). The temperature was 26° F, and Lake Appert was frozen. The Bird of the Day, according to Charley West, was a Swan trio asleep on the ice. "With the entire lake available," Charley wrote, "a Ring-billed Gull chose to land in the three-foot space between two of the sleeping Swans." He continued, "After twenty minutes, one Swan awoke and changed position, and immediately the gull began to drink the liquid water created by the Swan's body heat." A little patience, an open mind and an inquisitive nature is all you need to open your eyes to this wonderful world of ours. Who knew that a Ring-billed Gull could make a plan and carry it out with patience and a stoic belief that a drink of water would be the reward? As Mary Oliver later states in her poem, "If someone you didn't know/told you this, /would you believe it?" She further resolves "to live with my eyes open." So glad Charley and the Tower crew kept their eyes open. That said, we might not want to keep our eyes open for this next Tower report. On March 2, Lake Appert was largely open except for some patches of ice. Charley reported that about a dozen Herring and Ring-billed Gulls were catching small Sunfish and then carrying them onto the patches of ice "where," Charley wrote, "the coup-de-grace was administered and breakfast served." He continued, "It was not done neatly, however, the victims' entrails were scattered hither and yon."



A Red-headed Woodpecker spent this fall/winter season at the Ridgewood Duck Pond. It was an adult bird, and Lisa Potash posted photos of it, November 20, 2019 on eBird, where the pond is called the Saddle River Duck Pond. Barbara Dilger found it still hanging around the public restrooms there on February 8. In the Spring 2007 issue of the Fyke Newsletter, Carol Flanagan informed us that this species had wintered there previously for many years, and when the dead trees they depended on for roosting and storing acorns were scheduled to be cut down, someone spoke with the parks department and many of the trees were spared. Most wintering Red-headededs are solitary and are unpredictable at best. An amazing 46 was counted in the Great Swamp during the winter of 2004-2005. Our largest woodpecker, the Pileated, has certainly become more common, probably because our suburbs offer enough old mature trees that they prefer. The Tower crew was rewarded with a scope view of this Woody Woodpecker look alike, February 23. Their scope was focused on a Cooper's Hawk, but when the hawk flew, the Pileated took its place and the entire crew enjoyed the close encounter. Brian Kenney noted a Pileated at Oradell

Reservoir, February 25, and Maryann Fahey photographed a male at Halifax in Mahwah, March 18. It is encouraging that we encounter them as often as we do, because they require very large territories, at least five square miles.

A single Snow Goose hung out with 300 Canadas on Oradell Reservoir, February 25, according to Brian Kenney. Doug Morel found another in Westwood, March 6, while thousands were overwhelming the Black Dirt area in Orange County, NY this winter. Doug also counted 250 Canvasback Ducks at DeKorte in Lyndhurst, February 16. This large flock was a treat, after years of low numbers overwintering in NJ. Most usually overwinter in Chesapeake Bay, but not this year. Overall, their population seems to be declining. Maryann Fahey counted 120 Northern Shovelers also at DeKorte, March 9. Bill Boyle writes in his *Birds of New Jersey, 2011*, “Concentrations at one place rarely exceed 200.” Shovelers are surface feeding ducks and lack the body shape to dive and obtain prey underwater, but when prey is below the surface, they sometimes are innovative. With their heads under the water, they sometimes hunt cooperatively, each one following in the wake of another. The entire group may whirl like a merry-go-round, creating a vortex that causes currents to bring prey up from the depths, while they sieve out insects and tiny crustaceans with their shovel shaped bills.

Birds we usually don't see in the Fyke area in winter appeared here and there. Gaby Schmitt's Tower crew list included Field Sparrows on January 26. And Jim Wright found two Winter Wrens at the CF, on the 31st, and on February 6, he added a female E. Towhee to his year list. Normally, northern NJ is covered with snow, and the world is frozen tight up here and these species are south of us. The first signs of spring migration appeared in Westwood where Doug Morel encountered 2 Rusty Blackbirds, March 2. Doug seems to have a Rusty Blackbird magnet in his pocket, for he found another two at Halifax, on the 14th. Mike and Sara Buckley reported the first Phoebe of the season at the CF, on the 15th. Three more were counted at Ringwood Manor by Loren Anderson on the 20th. A very early White-crowned Sparrow turned up in Westwood, March 11, Doug reported, and another joined a cacophonous chorus of Song Sparrows, Cardinals and others at Walker Ave. in Wayne the next day. Years ago, one of my mentors pronounced that White-crowns appeared when dandelions bloom, but that relationship seems off kilter today. The first Fox Sparrow, noted again by Doug in Westwood, appeared right on time, March 12. Michael and Sara Buckley spotted the first Yellow-rumped Warbler at the CF, on the 21st near the Warden's Watch.

The annual Woodcock show is in full swing. Mike and Sue Limatola had “great views” of Woodcock on the ground and in flight at Halifax, March 20. Mike wrote that one bathed in a large puddle before shaking itself off and moving to a strip of mud and feeding, its long bill going deep into the ground. They also enjoyed courtship flights which included much peenting and a few good flight displays. Loren Anderson had two peenting and displaying there on the 14th. “We had the best looks I have ever had,” she wrote. Yet another at Walker Ave in Wayne was flushed from the side of a trail by a Red-tailed Hawk that flew into a nearby tree, on the 12th.



Vultures are here year-round, which was unusual decades ago. Barbara Dilger had a Black Vulture over her Westwood neighborhood, March 2. She reminisced about a Black Vulture she “lifed” at Sandy Hook years ago and how excited she had been. Dave Kaplan reported a mixed roost of about 100 Black and Turkey Vultures in Upper Saddle River, on the 3rd. Another species that has increased in our area is the Common Raven. Gaby Schmitt hopes to spend her social confinement spying on Ravens constructing a nest next to her Bergenfield home. Over the weekend of March 14 and 15, she observed them in flight, carrying sticks. “They are nesting in a large pine tree behind my garage,” she wrote. But the local Fish Crows “don't think it's cool,” she continued. She explained that a dozen of them were flying around the pine yelling, but the Ravens were “unimpressed” and kept on carrying sticks into the tree and flying out to search for

more. It wasn't that long ago when you had to go to the High Point area in Sussex County to see a Raven in NJ.

Seven or eight Cardinals visited Tim Tedesco's feeders in Oakland on February 20. Tim wondered if anyone else had such a large number. He didn't know that Lisa Potash, also from Oakland, counted 19, her "highest yard count" on snowy January 19. Two days later, Loren Anderson wrote that she had a male Cardinal "incessantly" flying at her living room window and that it had been going on for about a week. He would fly feet first towards the window and hit it lightly, she explained. He didn't seem very aggressive. Loren's husband attached strips of aluminum foil on the outside of the window, and the Cardinal seemed to lose interest.

Although I've been working on this and watching snow fall this late March day, spring is creeping in. Soon the spring migration will be in full swing and a way to keep ourselves busy and our minds sane as we wait out our confinements. Please share whatever you find with our discussion group at [fykenature@groups.io](mailto:fykenature@groups.io) where many of the reports for this column originated. Or send your observations to me at [judycinq@optonline.net](mailto:judycinq@optonline.net).



**“SPLAT!”**  
**By Judith Cinquina**

I like spiders. I find their infinite patience inspiring and permit them to overwinter in my house. Somehow they find enough to munch on, so I figure they're doing me a favor getting rid of insects too small for me to detect. If they get in my way during other seasons, I gently escort them out the door. House Wrens practice my spider philosophy and welcome them into their homes in season. While nest building, they nab spider egg sacs and scatter them among their nest materials. When the tiny spiders hatch and emerge, they devour nest parasites that would feed on and weaken the baby wrens.

Spiders were mentioned for some reason during lunch at my son's home recently. I was startled when an authoritative little voice declared, "Spiders – splat!" as a hand slammed down on the table. I objected immediately. "But Tommy, Grandmom likes spiders." Unmoved, the adamant three-year-old repeated, "Spiders -, " and his little hand, fingers spread, came down again on the table, "Splat!" I know this cutie pie is afraid of strange things like spiders, so I don't think his neighborhood spiders have anything to fear.

But spiders do have to be on the lookout for avian predators, especially during nesting season. A large variety of birds feed their youngsters spiders to ensure they grow up to be brave and intelligent adults, according to Kathryn Arnold, an ornithologist at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. Arnold found that spiders contain large amounts of taurine, an amino acid that affects a nestling's development, leading to increased intelligence, less anxiety and better eyesight. Long lists of birds, from Bluebirds, sparrows and crows to Brown Creepers, waxwings and warblers, take advantage of this ready source of amino acids.

Spiders produce a variety of silk using water as a solvent in the open air. In the end it becomes a stable, water-resistant web of great strength. In fact these threads have a breaking strength greater than steel. A female spider may employ up to two types just to make a cocoon to protect her eggs. She may also employ other kinds of silk in a web to capture prey. Spider and caterpillar silk enable birds to anchor nests far out on a branch where predators can't reach. The silk can be lashed repeatedly around the base of a nest cup or can offer support for a hanging nest. Birds use a variety of silk but seem to prefer the cribellate silk. Like Velcro, this silk can

fasten leaf edges and other nest material together and can be repeatedly adjusted during nest building without losing its effectiveness.

Cribellar threads have a tacky property that insects can't easily escape. For quick bites to go, spider webs offer a variety of captured insects that birds can steal. And that same silk can be filched to build secure, strong and flexible cribs for bird nestlings. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, a chickadee-sized bird shaped like a miniature Mockingbird, depends on spider silk to anchor and camouflage its walnut-size nest. The Gnatcatcher's nest is placed on a horizontal branch and secured with spider silk. A coating of the fine and sticky cribellate silk is applied to the outside walls so the bird can festoon it with hundreds of blue-green tree lichens for camouflage. When completed, the nest resembles a natural knob on the branch and is easily overlooked. Cowbirds often parasitize Gnatcatchers. A cowbird, even in nestling form, is huge compared to a Gnatcatcher. How does such a monster nestling survive in so tiny a nest? If you've ever been caught up in spider webbing you know how difficult it is to extract yourself. The silk is extremely flexible and strong. It enables a Gnatcatcher's nest to stretch and accommodate the monster within, or under normal circumstance, allows many bird nests to grow with their precious cargo and to withstand all the gymnastics performed by nestlings while fighting over food and stretching their wings.

According to Michael Hansell in *Secondhand Silk* (Natural History Magazine, May 1993), approximately 24 out of 42 families of passerine birds include species dependent on silk for nest building. Think of them next time, like Tommy, you want to squash a spider. Please escort them out the door instead. Our avian friends will thank you.



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From the Editor to all Fyke Members:

Please send items you think would be of interest to our group. News, features, articles on wildlife observation, conservation issues, book reviews, field notes, humorous first-person bird/nature related stories. All submissions will be gratefully appreciated!

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**Stepping Up For The Celery Farm Pledge Form – 2020**

Send your pledge by e-mail to Kurt Muenz, [elkumu@acweb.com](mailto:elkumu@acweb.com). If you do not have email, you can mail your pledge to Kurt Muenz, 25 Berry Place, Glen Rock, NJ 07452

Yes, I want to support Stepping Up by making a pledge per bird species seen. I understand that 60 to 80 species may be recorded, however, the total could be higher if conditions are ideal.

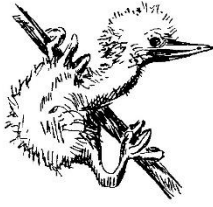
My pledge is:  
\_\_\_\$1/species    \_\_\_\$.75/species    \_\_\_\$.50/species    \_\_\_\$.25/species    \$\_\_\_/species

Name:

Address:

Phone:





## Welcome New Members

Kathryn Bleckman, Allendale  
 Brian Gagliardotto, Mahwah  
 Megan King, Moonachie  
 Patricia Rossi, Warwick, NY  
 Sandra Stevens, Family Membership, Clifton

### Fyke Board of Trustees:

|                          |                  |
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| Publicity:    | Gabriele Schmitt |
| Webmaster:    | Kevin Watson     |

**The Fyke Nature Association**, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets at the Allendale Municipal Building, 500 W. Crescent Avenue, Allendale, NJ 07401 on the fourth Friday of every month January to May, and in September and October. The winter meeting is the first Friday in December. (No meetings in June, July, August, and November.)

Meetings and membership are open to all. Annual dues: Individual – \$20.00; Family – \$25.00. For further information, write to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, visit our website [www.fykenature.org](http://www.fykenature.org), or contact Mike Limatola, President, [mike.limatola@gmail.com](mailto:mike.limatola@gmail.com). The Newsletter is published four times a year and manuscripts and artwork are welcome. Editor: Carol Flanagan, [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com).

**The deadline for the Fall 2020 issue is August 19, 2020.** Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com).

