

# The Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Newsletter

Serving from Fort Salonga in Suffolk Co. to Oyster Bay and Centre Island in Nassau Co.  
Feb 2018 - Apr 2018

Volume 6, No. 2



## MID-WINTER HUMMINGBIRD THOUGHTS

*Simone DaRos*

Over the last few years, one of my biggest joys has been to welcome Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) into my yard during their migration northward in the early spring, visits during the summer, and on their journey South in the late summer and fall. I remember being mesmerized on birding trips when gifted by a hummer “fly-by” or amazed that someone in the group was able to focus upon a perched hummer high atop its preferred lookout. I never thought I would actually be able to see Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in my yard. It seemed unbelievable. But over time, I have been successful in attracting many Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and have had the opportunity to view them up close and personal. With a little bit of planning, research, and maintenance, you too may be rewarded with the visitation of these amazing tiny birds.

Starting in February 2018, the Journey North website, a citizen science resource which tracks migration, begins to post observations of ruby-throated hummingbird migratory movements from the South to the North. As an arm-chair birder, one can track locations of individual birds as they wing their way toward breeding grounds. This movement can be very exciting to track in anticipation for their arrival in your area. You can plan for their arrival in a timely way and have a feeding station set up for the hummers during their migration which typically occurs in late April or early May. Audubon New York’s Hummingbirds at Home is another citizen science initiative where one can report sightings and hummingbird activity. The collected data will inform scientists in the study of Ruby-throated Hummingbird population trends. Additionally, you will find resources on attracting hummingbirds to your yard. .... *continued on page 5*



*A Rufous Hummingbird spent winter of '06-'07 in Northport in the yard of a thoughtful birder!*

## Spotlight: Peregrine Falcon

Peregrines are the largest of our regular falcon species (the others are Merlin and American Kestrel). Peregrines, like Bald Eagles, have a classic success story of surviving the DDT era, thanks to conservation initiatives. But everybody knows that one.

What people have only discovered more recently is how different eagles and falcons really are. They are both considered raptors—along with hawks, vultures, and owls — since they all have sharp talons and beaks for catching and mincing prey. But recent genomics suggests that falcons are imposters, evolving separately from the rest and branching off the lineage that went on to next produce... of all things... parrots.

## CALL TO ACTION

There are always opportunities to help our chapter! If you are interested in volunteering on a committee, help with our website, or to be considered for our board of directors, please email us at:

[hobaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:hobaudubon@gmail.com)

**Huntington-Oyster Bay  
Audubon Society, Inc.**

*The mission of Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon is to protect wildlife and preserve habitat through conservation action, advocacy and education.*

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***MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD***

***Brendan Fogarty***

Last newsletter I wrote our board message during the terrible parade of hurricanes, which sunk Texas, shred the Lesser Antilles, and caused substantial mayhem and suffering everywhere between. Now the United States is enduring a powerful cold spell, which is locking up all small bodies and arable land in ice, sending all sorts of bird species south for food along our temperate coast. Yet somehow even the tiniest kinglets and wren persist through the weather. When the wind is low, it almost seems like there is more bird activity when it is well below freezing. Some birds seem to be focused singly on foraging, and will allow happy observers to watch them at close range. During this North American freezeout in January, the rest of the world is experiencing warmer than normal temperatures—following a troubling trend of changing weather that promises to renew the cause of conservation indefinitely.

We have had a busy year at HOBAS, which was capped off nicely with the Northern Nassau CBC and our new take on the birdseed sale (see page 4 to learn about both!). I'd like to thank Marc Brody for taking on some of Simone's hospitality role while she focuses more on her role as officer, including collaborative projects such as fishingline receptacles. Marc, Simone, and the many other volunteers that make this organization tick are all inspirational; I cannot thank them enough for their work.

And as such, I am excited for another year of great local conservation work. We hope to have more chances to engage children with walks, programs, and projects, so stay tuned (and check out our next two Little Naturalist programs coming up!), along with some excellent programs and field trips open to all. We will also be continuing our commitment to native gardening by collaborating with Sagamore Hill National Historic Site to enhance their native demonstration garden, and hosting another native plant sale around May. At the local scale, there is always lots of potential for new projects. Let's see what the year brings us.

As always, there are always ways to become more involved in the organization. We are all volunteers at HOBAS and always appreciate the help! Contact any of us at our email addresses, listed just to the left. I frequently look at our cardinals and wrens going about their day in the sub-freezing temperatures and biting snow and know every hour I spend fighting on their behalf is worth it. I hope you will join me.

**Membership is just \$20 per year. Please join or renew today to support our conservation, advocacy and educational programs and projects.** Your membership allows us to count your voice as we advocate for wildlife and habitat, including issues on a local, regional, national and global level. **We truly appreciate it and extend our heartfelt thanks!**

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**Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon**  
**PO Box 735**



## ***THE BEST KEPT SECRET***

***Sharon Brody***

The best kept secret that everyone should know about is our National Wildlife Refuge System operated by the Division of Fish and Wildlife under the Department of Interior.

The refuge system was established by an executive order under President Theodore Roosevelt on March 13, 1903. Pelican Island Refuge, on the east coast of Florida, near Sebastian, was created to protect egrets and other birds from extinction due to plume hunting and to save the last Brown Pelican rookery on the east coast of Florida. Pelican Island consisted of only three acres. Now, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the largest in the system, has over 19 million acres. The refuge system, as of 2016, manages more than 850 million acres of lands and waters, including five national marine monuments, 562 wildlife refuges and 38 wetland management districts.

Not all refuges are open to the public. Some allow hunting and fishing. Some have visitor centers that resemble small museums. All are remarkable places for the protection of wildlife and ecosystems, but also for their educational value and for the protection of special historical artifacts native to the particular refuge.

Long Island has seven refuges: Setauket, Wertheim, Conscience Point, Target Rock, Elizabeth Morton, Amagansett, and Oyster Bay. New York State has two others, Iroquois and Montezuma.

Here is a sampling of a few of the refuges that I have visited. Bombay Hook in Delaware has Avocets, nesting Black-necked Stilts, huge flocks of Snow Geese and other water fowl in fall and winter. Blackwater on the Eastern Shore of Maryland has an abundance of Tundra Swans and Bald Eagles. Sixty White Pelicans made their appearance this past March. Merritt Island in Florida consists of 140,000 acres. One can get close views of Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills Mottled Ducks, Florida Scrub Jays, and manatees.

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## ***SCIENCE CORNER: BIRDS VS. URBAN NOISE***

***Coby Klein***

The noise from everyday human activity can negatively impact birds in a few ways. Songbirds might have a hard time hearing their potential mates singing over the din of morning rush hour. They might not hear their nestlings calling to them or they might not hear an approaching predator. New research shows how human noise affects not just individual birds but whole populations. The study, published in the journal *Ibis*, measured several features of urban parks in Belo Horizonte, Brazil and compared the number of bird species in each park. The noisiest parks had the fewest bird species and the quietest parks had the most. Another finding of the study was that tree cover in the neighborhoods surrounding the parks increased species diversity as well. This research shows yet another way that birds are imperiled by human actions. It also shows the importance of preserving large, open spaces and the value of planting trees in urban areas.



*Pine Warblers are some of the very first migrant we see in Spring, most easily detected by their song—a dry trill that is loudest in the middle, emanating from the tops of Eastern White Pines.*

## ***NORTHERN NASSAU CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT***

Long Island is fortunate to have many Christmas Bird Count circles, and the Northern Nassau count is one of the most interesting due to its geographic limitations. On December 16, participants were further challenged by arguably the most challenging natural force — a stiff northwestern wind. Nevertheless, we persisted and found 94 species and 19,855 individual birds. HOBAS had several board members and some of our hardest members out working to find the birds hiding in the wind. Some highlights include up to seven Bald Eagles, a Virginia Rail, a remarkable 20 Greater Yellowlegs, 21 Northern Gannets, an amazing nine ravens, five American Pipits, and 21 Rusty Blackbirds. All waterfowl numbers were way down this year, surely in part due to the extreme discomfort brought about by trying to scope the sound! Some species that were in greater abundance than their ten-year averages were Red-tailed Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Blue Jay, Fish Crow, and American Robin. Those who persisted through the conditions were rewarded by a minor feast put on by HOBAS volunteers and generous food donors at the Teddy Roosevelt Sanctuary Audubon Center. Thank you all for keeping the tradition alive and thriving!



## ***2017 ANNUAL BIRDSEED SALE FUNDRAISER***

Our annual birdseed sale is Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon's largest fundraiser, and in 2017 we again had a successful sale. We partnered with Wild Birds Unlimited of Syosset as a way to bring you higher quality seed, and are very grateful to Andy and Christine Burke for their support and patronage. **Thank you to everyone who bought seed and made donations.** A special shout-out goes to our hard-working volunteers: Tom Lynch, Marty Wenz, Simone DaRos, Sonia Garrido, Stella Miller and Cathy Fitts. Funds raised during this event are used to support our conservation and educational initiatives. Thank you again to everyone who participated!

### ***NEW! Member's Gallery***

*Do you have any great photos of nature or wildlife from within our chapter territory? Send us and we may feature it HERE!*

*→ [bnf25@cornell.edu](mailto:bnf25@cornell.edu)*

→ Shortly after the Northern Nassau CBC in December, longtime HOBAS member Brent Bomkamp found this Townsend's Solitaire at the Tiffany Creek Preserve in Oyster Bay. Despite being difficult to catch up with, the bird is still being seen at the time of writing in early January. Go Brent! Photo: Brent Bomkamp





### **MID-WINTER HUMMINGBIRD THOUGHTS**

*(continued from page 1)*

Both Journey North and Audubon's "Hummingbirds at Home" websites are informative and easy to navigate as you begin to research for the arrival of the little feathered gems.

The only hummingbird that breeds east of the Mississippi River, averaging only 3.5 grams as an adult, the Ruby-throat occupies the largest breeding range of any other hummingbird in North America. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds feed by day on nectar from wildflower blossoms and the flowers of many species of shrubs and vines. Insects comprise a large percentage of the Ruby-throat's diet, and tree sap is consumed when available as well. Planting flowering native plants, such as Red Columbine (*Aquilegia canadense*), Beebalm, (*Monarda didyma*), Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), and Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), create flower nectar sources for hummingbirds either in containers or out in your garden. "Audubon's Native Plant Database," is a helpful resource for identifying bird-friendly native plants for your planters and garden.

While it may seem too soon to think about the return of the Ruby-throats, there is much to consider in preparation for their arrival. With some research, forethought and planning, you too may increase your chances of having Ruby-throated Hummingbirds visit your yard, your flowering box, and your feeding stations. As I begin my plans for their return, I am looking forward to clustering large pots of early spring flowering columbine near my strategically located and clean feeder near my kitchen window where I can be observant of a briefly alighted green feathered gem. Here's wishing you the joys of the Ruby-throated Hummers visiting you this 2018!

### **PRO-TIPS: HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS**

*Simone DaRos*

Hummingbird nectar feeders can be used to attract hummingbirds to backyards and gardens. Following are some tips for using feeders to attract hummingbirds:

- ◆ Nectar can be made from dissolving one part table sugar in four parts boiling water. Store unused portion in the refrigerator.
- ◆ Place feeders in the shade in areas safe from outdoor cats.
- ◆ Change the nectar and clean the feeder with hot water every 3-4 days -- more often in hot weather -- to prevent nectar from becoming rancid, cloudy, or moldy.
- ◆ If black mold forms inside the feeder, scrub it out with a brush. Add clean sand as an abrasive to the wash water to clean hard-to-reach spots.
- ◆ Do not use harsh detergents to clean the feeder.
- ◆ Use a water-filled ant guard or other device to keep ants out of the feeder.
- ◆ Do **not** add red food coloring, honey, or artificial sweeteners to the nectar -- these may cause hummingbird health problems. The red color found on most hummingbird feeders is sufficient to attract them.

## Programs and Field Trips: Feb 2018 - Apr 2018

### GENERAL INFO

→ Nature programs, field trips and activities are open to members and nonmembers alike.

→ **All programs, unless otherwise specified, are held at the Cold Spring Harbor Library.** Refreshments begin at 7:00PM and the speaker starts at 7:30. Registration is *not* required.

→ Field trips are open to both experts and newcomers. **Registration is required.** Please register at least two days ahead of your trip.

→ Call the leader for a status update in case of unfavorable weather.

→ Don't forget to bring binoculars, proper clothing and shoes, and insect repellent! If you need to borrow binoculars, ask your leader if she or he has extras to bring. And for the comfort and safety of all participants, please refrain from wearing perfume or smoking on field trips.

### FEBRUARY

→ **Trip: 14th Annual Eaglefest (Croton-on-Hudson)**  
Saturday, February 10, 9 AM

Join us in Croton Point Park in Westchester for a celebration of Hudson River's eagles, hosted by the Teatown Nature Preserve. You can see both wild eagles by the river and captive eagles up close! There will also be music, food, heated tents, and activities for kids. Advance tickets are \$17 for adults and \$10 for children; day-of are slightly higher. To purchase advance tickets and for more info visit <https://www.teatown.org/events/eaglefest/>

**Leader:** Blair Broughton **Registration:** 631-885-1881

**Directions:** Take the Taconic State Parkway just past where it merges with the Sprain Brook, and take 9A north to its end in Crotonville. Continue north on route 9 for 0.7 miles then exit and follow signs into Croton Point Park.

→ **Little Naturalist's Program: Wild Valentine's Day!**

Location: Cold Spring Harbor Library

**Saturday, February 10,**  
**1– 2:30 PM**

Join us for the February Little Naturalists Program - Wild Valentine's Day! We will make our own nature-themed Valentine's Day cards to take home and give to family and friends. We will also read a storybook about animals, and if weather permits, we will take a walk outside and look for signs of animals in winter. For ages 4-8 accompanied by a caregiver. Registration is free, but you **must** register in advance.

**Leader:** Tesi Copa **Registration:** 631-903-5556

→ **Trip: Heckscher State Park (East Islip)**

**Sunday, February 11, 9 AM**

This 1600 acre park is on the Great South Bay in East Islip. The forest and wetland areas are home to a variety of winter bird species.

**Leader:** Coby Klein **Registration:** 585-880-0915

**Directions:** Take the Southern State Parkway to the end and merge onto the Hecksher State Parkway. Follow signs to field 5.

→ **Program: Where Eagles Dare: Two Centuries of Environmental Change on Long Island**

*Speaker: Shai Mitra*

**\*\*Tuesday\*\*, February 13, 7 PM (please note the irregular date!)**

Long Island, New York was historically home to Bald Eagles and the largest colonies of Ospreys ever described. As human pressures reshaped this region during the 19th and 20th Centuries, both raptors fared badly, reaching a nadir under the post-World War II DDT crisis. This talk will focus on the history of Long Island's estuarine communities, the remarkable role that scientists and activists from Long Island played in recognizing and mitigating the DDT crisis, and the resurgence here of these two magnificent species in recent decades. → *Shai Mitra is an Assistant Professor of Biology at the College of Staten Island, with research interests in avian ecology, evolution, and conservation. Shai is Editor of The Kingbird, the quarterly publication of the New York State Ornithological Association; co-compiler of bird records for the New York City and Long Island region; Chair of the Rhode Island Avian Records Committee; and co-compiler of three Christmas Bird Counts on Long Island and Rhode Island.*

### MARCH

→ **Trip: Massapequa Preserve**

**Sunday, March 4, 9 AM**

Located in the heart of Massapequa, the preserve is one of the most beautiful parks in the area. We may see an assortment of song birds, waterfowl, and raptors.

**Leader:** Coby Klein **Registration:** 585-880-0915

**Directions:** Follow Sunrise Highway to the Massapequa LIRR station, then follow the north side of the station to the parking lot across from the police station and park in the far eastern end.

→ **Trip: Target Rock**

**Sunday, March 11, 9 AM**

All day trip. Winter waterfowl abound including scoters, eiders, loons, gannets, and numerous pond ducks

**Leader:** Blair Broughton **Registration:** 631-885-1881

**Directions:** Take West Neck Rd north out of Huntington,

## Programs and Field Trips: Feb 2018 - Apr 2018

following it along Lloyd Neck and past Caumsett all the way to the end, and watch for the big brown wildlife refuge sign.

### → Program: *The Secret Life of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird and their Exotic Cousins*

Speaker: Aaron Virgin

**Wednesday, March 14, 7 PM**

Join us as we learn more about the exquisite Ruby-throated Hummingbird. One of more than 300 hummingbird species in the world, and a dozen that breed in North America, the Ruby-throated is the only one that nests on Long Island. We will also hear about some exotic hummingbird visitors to our region and why the trend has been increasing. We will also learn about creating a hummingbird friendly yard and see how our little Ruby-throated converts gardeners into blooming birders, and birders into budding gardeners.

→ Aaron Virgin spent nearly 8 years working for the National Audubon Society in several capacities. Before joining Group for the East End in 2010 he was Director of the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary in Oyster Bay. Aaron has also worked as an environmental educator for the State of New York, and as a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. He holds a B.A. in Environmental Science from Plattsburgh State University and received an M.P.S. in Wildlife Ecology & Management from the College of Environmental Science & Forestry, Syracuse. An accomplished ecotourism guide, some of his exotic birding trips included Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Libya, Mali, The Gambia and Senegal.

### → Trip: *Shu Swamp*

**Sunday, March 25, 9 AM**

There is no better place to celebrate the beginning of spring than this lovely preserve near Oyster Bay. We'll look for the earliest migrants and the first blooms, while being serenaded by the rare Rusty Blackbird.

**Leader:** Blair Broughton **Registration:** 631-885-1881

**Directions:** Take Oyster Bay Rd west out of Oyster Bay town and turn north onto Beaver Brook Rd. Follow the road north as it becomes Frost Mill Rd, and look for the parking area on the left just before the train trestle.

### → Little Naturalists Program: *Signs of Spring!*

Location: Cold Spring Harbor Library

**Saturday, March 31, 1– 2:30 PM**

Join us for our March Little Naturalists program- Signs of Spring! We will make a craft, read a storybook about animals in springtime, and if weather permits we will go outside and take a walk to look for signs of spring. For ages 3-7 accompanied by a caregiver. Registration is free, but you must register in advance.

**Leader:** Tesi Copa **Registration:** 631-903-5556

## APRIL

→ **Program:** Passerine Pit Stops: An Introduction to Stopover Ecology

Speaker: Coby Klein

**Wednesday, April 11, 7 PM**

Annual migrations are energetically highly demanding for birds on the move. Finding suitable habitats along the way is crucial for the successful completion of migration. What kind of habitats do birds need during migration? How do birds select stopover sites? What types of threats do stopover habitats face in a rapidly changing world? Join us as we explore what factors are most important for the finding these stopover habitats." → Coby Klein is a PhD candidate in Biology at the City University of New York, Graduate Center and a member of the HOBAS Board of Directors. He is a trained bird bander and has worked on research projects all over the New York area involving migrating and breeding songbirds and waterfowl. Coby was named one of the Long Islander's 2017 Cool People of Huntington.

→ **Trip: Muttontown Preserve**

**Sunday, April 29, 8 AM**

The wet woods and hilly fields of Muttontown create a unique preserve that attracts a perhaps the widest variety of breeding bird species in northern Nassau county. Some of them will just be arriving!

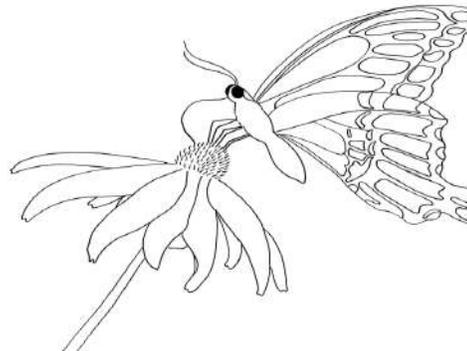
**Leader:** Coby Klein **Registration:** 585-880-0915

**Directions:** Take 25A one block west of the intersection of 25A and 106. Go south along Muttontown Lane just past the last houses and enter the dirt parking area.

## Further Afield

→ **SPRING 2018 PLANT SALE**

Stay tuned for an official date, likely in May. Ordering information will be distributed in a separate mailing.



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Do you have a **LITTLE NATURALIST?**

We have *two* upcoming programs for the next little Rachel Carson or E.O. Wilson in your family....

**Sat 2/10 — Wild Valentine's Day!** (Ages 4-8)

**Sat 3/31 — Signs of Spring!** (Ages 3-7)

Both events will be held at the Cold Spring Harbor Public Library from 1:00PM to 2:30PM. For more details, see our events calendar on pages 6 and 7.

Call Tesi Copa at 631-903-5556 to register!



## ***THE BEST KEPT SECRET***

*(Continued from page 3)*

DeSoto, on the border of Iowa and Nebraska, in its visitor center, host the perfectly preserved Steamboat Bertrand which sank in 1865 and savaged in 1968. Lake Ilo, a small refuge in North Dekota,became one of my favorites because of the friendly park ranger. He is the only paid employee of the refuge and his dedication to the refuge is exemplary. Aransas in Texas has Whooping Cranes. On approaching the top of the wildlife viewing tower, four Whoopers flew in front of our group, landed in the salt marsh below and proceeded to feed. Klamath Basin, on the Pacific Flyway, in northern California, hosts 500 Bald Eagles which migrate from Alaska for the winter. It also hosts a myriad of shore birds and waterfowl. Kodiak, in Alaska, can be reached only by float plane or boat. We watched several young bears fishing for Salmon on a pristine overlook.

The refuge system has a locator map on the internet which can direct you to each refuge. The website is [fws.gov/refuges](http://fws.gov/refuges). Visit at least one these gems next time you travel.

