



The Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society Newsletter

Serving from Fort Salonga in Suffolk County to Oyster Bay and Centre Island in Nassau County

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The mission of the Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society is to protect wildlife and preserve habitat through conservation action, advocacy, and education. This chapter territory serves both Huntington and Oyster Bay townships with its all-volunteer chapter 501c3 non-profit established in 1961.

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Letter from the Editor

By Alexandra Martinez

A Popular Bird-Themed Holiday Tune... 🎵🎵🎵

It's one of those quintessential songs that everyone knows the words to - like 99 bottles of beer on the wall, but the holiday version: Seven swans a swimming, six geese a laying, fiveeee golden rings! The "12 Days of Christmas" is such a holiday staple and as an inquisitive person, I've always wondered about the true meaning of this song. And now, as the HOBAS newsletter editor and a bird lover, I felt it was my duty to find out.

First of all, for those who may not be aware, the 12 days of Christmas is part of the Christian period that begins with the birth of Christ on December 25th and ends on January 6th when the Three Wise Men arrive, according to the Bible. As for the origins of the lyrics, scholars believe in different starts - mostly French or English beginnings. Many historians believe what we know as the Christmas carol actually began as a "memory-and-forfeit" game from England during the 1900s. Games like this were very popular amongst children as the rules were quite simple: upon your turn, repeat everything that was said before you, plus add something new. It's almost like the game of picnic, or telephone that students might know today. I could believe that this lyrical holiday song began as a game, but I also wondered about the meaning of each of the lines.

The earliest version of the song I could find in an archived newspaper is the one posted on the right from the St. Johnsbury Caledonian (Vermont) on December 25, 1858. Research shows that the lines have changed over the years and symbolism is up for debate, especially depending on if the song is viewed through a secular lens or not. I searched in my "The Illustrated Signs and Symbols Sourcebook" in the "Birds: Divine Communicators" section. Although not all of our feathered friends from the lyrical lines are listed, here is some interesting symbolism found about birds and other parts of the song:

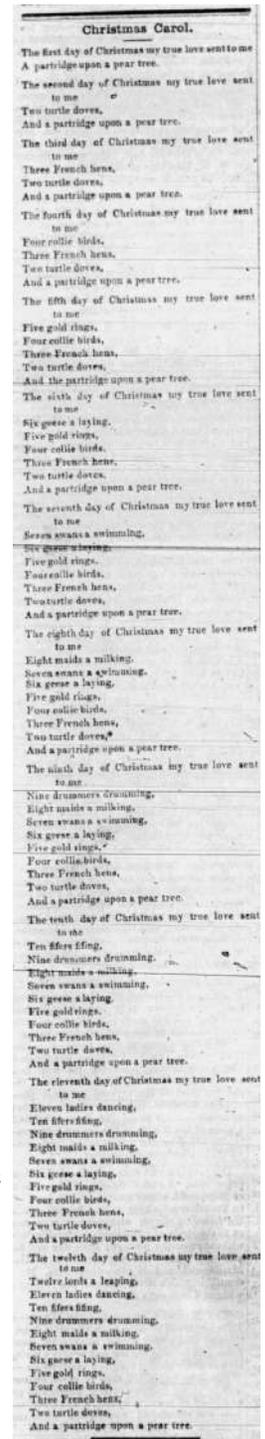
Seven **SWANS** a swimming: "In Ancient Greece, the swan was the attribute of the Muses and the symbol of Apollo, the God to whom poetry and song belong. Apollo could shape-shift into the form of a swan, and when he was born, seven swans flew around the island of his birth, seven times."

Six **GEESE** a laying: "If birds in general are symbolic of divine communication, then the goose is also symbolic of a more practical type of message giving,, the goose feather... is the most popularly used in the making of the quill pen."

Two Turtle **DOVES**: associated with the "feminine aspect, love and peace."

A **PARTRIDGE** in a pear tree: "... the fecundity of the bird, a quality that led to disapproval from the Christian Church... A Latin Bestiary from the eleventh century describes the partridge as being so fertile that even the scent of the male could impregnate the female. This supposedly lewd behavior gave the partridge an evil reputation..."

And, that's all my encyclopedia book covered sadly. I don't really know what any of this means, but I hope you found it the least bit interesting. Happy Holidays from the Board of HOBAS!



Seabird Rediscovered (In Part) by New Yorkers Finally Visits Our Waters

By Brendan Fogarty

Brendan is a native Long Island naturalist. He is a former board member of HOBAS and is currently working as a Regional Coordinator for the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas.

In October 2022, birders on an offshore birding adventure saw something that had never been seen in Suffolk waters, or even New York for that matter. They were about 100 miles south of Montauk, just off the continental shelf, where the water drops off from about 600 feet deep to 6,000. The enormous underwater cliffs there help for deep nutrients to well up to the surface, pushed by currents like the Gulf Stream. It all looks about the same to people at the surface, but seabirds know this is a great place to find food. It was while sifting through birds there that the group saw a Bermuda Petrel. It spent just about three minutes flying around with other more expected seabirds, and then was gone.

Bermuda Petrel is one of a number of species of very athletic seabirds that soar long distances effortlessly on the wind in search of fish and other nutrients at the surface. It's mostly white and gray with black highlights, and, like all petrels, stays very far from land in the North Atlantic while foraging. Bermuda Petrel is well-named as it only breeds around its namesake island. No other petrel breeds nearby; the closest are its cousins which breed on the Azores and in the Caribbean. It doesn't sound like a very unusual species perhaps, but it has an incredible conservation story, part of which plays out in New York state!

It was formerly quite abundant, as Bermuda was apparently incredibly undisturbed and never inhabited by people. Early European colonizers discovered it to be a useful stop on their way to the New World around the turn of the 16th Century, and the petrels, which they called "Cahow" after their call, were quickly found to be an easily harvested source of nutrients. Early estimates suggest that there were about a million petrels breeding on the island when it was first encountered by the colonizers, but within a few decades they became scarce, with reports of thousands being slaughtered daily and introduced hogs disturbing the colonies. A century later, the English had fully settled the island and brought predatory pests, such as dogs, cats, and rodents, which meant that the only surviving petrel colonies were now on the outlying islands around Bermuda. In 1614, the introduced pests destroyed most of the year's harvest and food store, and the settlers fled to a smaller island across the bay called Cooper's Island. This was apparently the last stronghold of the Bermuda Petrel; the birds returned to Cooper's Island later that year to breed and were again consumed. The next fall, the number of Bermuda Petrel seen on and around the islands was so meager that the governor urged the public to leave them alone, but it was too late. The species was declared extinct in 1620.

Almost three centuries passed, with the Cahow becoming a distant memory. With it being such a common bird until the 1500s, there were many fossils of the species available. In 1916, scientists compared these fossils with a petrel specimen, originally found alive on Bermuda ten years earlier by Bermuda Aquarium director Louis. L. Mowbray. At the time the petrel was attributed to a different southern hemisphere species, but the bones suggested that it had the right dimensions for Bermuda's lost seabird. A member of the New York Zoological society named William Beebe searched Bermuda in 1935 and failed to find any. However, he learned that a seabird had struck a lighthouse while he was there, and he obtained it and sent it back to Robert Cushman Murphy of the American Museum of Natural History (Murphy is now honored with a park in the pine barrens near Calverton). Murphy thought it was consistent with a Bermuda Petrel, and it was recently fledged!

Over the next decade, a few more specimens and live birds that collided with buildings were noted on Bermuda. It wasn't until 1951 that an expedition was successful in locating nests. Robert Cushman and Grace E. B. Murphy were joined by Louis. L Mowbray and a young local named David B. Wingate, and together they discovered seven pairs actively nesting on a tiny rocky island in the harbor.

David Wingate went to Cornell University but returned home in 1957 to Bermuda to help and eventually lead conservation efforts. David retired in 2000 but his projects continue to this day, including eliminating the pesticide DDT from the island, providing cement nest holes which exclude rival burrowing tropicbirds, rewilding the small islands around the harbor, and encouraging nesting above the storm surge line. The Bermuda Petrel still faces many conservation threats but is now studied very well. Individual birds with trackers often head east deep into the Atlantic, sometimes almost to Europe and Africa. In recent decades, single individuals were sometimes seen at the shelf edge near North Carolina, but in just the last few years the birds have been seen and tracked into new areas up as far north as Maritime Canada.

There are over one hundred pairs of Cahow today, so hopefully sightings will continue to increase as their population slowly rebounds. Most species that were hunted to the brink, like the Passenger Pigeon, never got a chance to rebound, so let's be grateful for all the hard work involved in giving this lovely seabird a second shot.

Audubon's 123rd Christmas Bird Count

Audubon's 123rd Christmas Bird Count, the nation's longest-running community science bird project, **will be held from December 14, 2022 to January 5, 2023**. The Christmas Bird Count is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 120 years of community science involvement, it is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the U.S., Canada (where Audubon partners with Birds Canada), and many countries in the Western Hemisphere go out over a 24-hour period on one calendar day to count birds.

For more information, please refer to the Audubon website at: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>.

A New Invasive in Town

By Julie Sullivan, Conservation/Plants for Birds Chair
GoNativeLI.com

Photograph: Porcelain-berry in August with small, white flowers

If you've ever driven through the South you likely encountered miles of green mounds hiding trees, shrubs and even cars and structures. It is known as Kudzu -- The Vine That Ate The South. Now imagine a vine just like Kudzu invading Long Island. It's called Porcelain-berry, *Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*, and although prohibited from sale in New York State, they are exploding from formerly trellised ornamentals to invading our backyards, parks and abandoned properties.

This vine was introduced to the US east coast from Asia/Siberia as an ornamental plant for its attractive berries, which ripen from green to white, pink, lavender, turquoise, and finally blue and black from late September through October. The leaves are often mistaken for grape leaves, but differ from them by their glossy undersides.

These invasive climbers, working their way through trees with their zigzag vines, are harmful to the ecosystem (the interaction between plants, animals and the environment), since they have no natural predators or diseases outside their homeland, aggressively out-competing native plants for water, nutrients and especially light. Consequently, once trees are hidden from sight, the bees, butterflies, and birds that evolved along with our native plants can no longer access their intended nutrient-rich food.

Porcelain vines climb by their twining tendrils that are so tenacious they must be cut when anyone attempts to pull them from their supporting trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and even tall grasses. During the spring and summer, be sure to control porcelain-berry vines by hard-pruning, by removing seedlings and by cutting and digging out established root crowns. Each crown supports an average of five vines above ground and several lateral, knotty roots, which are easily pulled out when cut from the crown. Once berries appear, remove and securely bag/dispose of them with all berry-laden vines. Be sure to protect the native plants growing beneath, and because the vines hide multi-flora rose shrubs, wear leather work gloves -- welding gloves are even better -- and cut them too at the ground.



Visit [GoNativeLI.com/porcelain-berry](https://www.gonativeLI.com/porcelain-berry) to identify with methods for removal.

And, to see a recent infestation visit [GoNativeLI.com/Restoration](https://www.gonativeLI.com/Restoration).



Thank you to all of our loyal members (and non-members too) who participated in this year's annual **Bird Seed Sale** fundraising event. We had another very successful event and we would like to extend our gratitude to all who made that possible. A very special thank you to Andy and the entire staff at the wonderful **Wild Birds Unlimited store on Jericho Turnpike in Syosset**. We could not have done this without their help, support and generosity. Thank you to all!

PLANT SALE

Add native plants and happy butterflies to your yard this year. Shop soon at ReWild's Spring 2022 Native Plant Sale. Pre-Order Online, March 21 to April 15, 2023. <https://www.rewildlongisland.org/plantsale>
Pickup in early May at a convenient location near you.



Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon
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Huntington, NY 11743

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For \$20 a year, you can be a member of the all-volunteer Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society. Your membership directly supports HOBAS' mission to advocate for wildlife and habitat through conservation efforts, educational opportunities, and youth programs. Please join or renew today; HOBAS appreciates your support!

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Including:

_____ \$20.00 annual chapter only membership

_____ Additional Donation

Please fill out this form and mail with your check payable to:
Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society
P.O. Box 735, Huntington, NY 11743-0735

Amazon Smile

By Michael Frank

Thank you to all of our members who have started to use Amazon Smile as an easy way to support the Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society! Amazon Smile is a simple and cost-free way to show your support for your favorite charity and we appreciate all who have done so already. Instead of logging into amazon.com, please log into smile.amazon.com and choose the Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society as your supported charity. You will get the same exact low prices and great selection you normally would from Amazon, but with Amazon Smile for every dollar that you spend on eligible purchases Amazon will donate .5% to us. It is a great, easy way to support the good work at HOBAS!



UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS



January 8th, Montauk Point, 8 AM

During this all day trip, Dr. Coby Klein will discuss winter waterfowl abound including scoters, eiders, loons, gannets, and numerous pond ducks. Registration: 585-880-0915. Directions: LIE to exit 70, Manorville. Go south on Route 111 to Route 27. Take Route 27 east all the way to Montauk Point Lighthouse. There may be a parking fee. Meet at the concession building at Montauk Point State Park.

February 5th, Jones Beach, 8 AM

Get ready to see winter waterfowl as well as many resident birds. There may be some surprises. Registration: 585-880-0915. Take either Meadowbrook Parkway or Wantagh Parkway to Ocean Parkway. Follow signs for the Coast Guard Station at the West End of Jones Beach. Meet at the parking lot by the restrooms.

March 12th, Sunken Meadow State Park, 9 AM

The best birding spot on the North Shore. We may see wintering waterfowl, resident songbirds, and birds of prey. You never know what is going to turn up. Registration: 585-880-0915. Directions: take the LIE or Northern State Parkway to the Sunken Meadow State Parkway north, all the way to the end and park in Lot 1.

April 23rd, Avalon Nature Preserve, 9 AM

Since its inception, Avalon Nature Preserve has sought to protect and restore the ecological heritage of this special landscape. With the purchase of 8 acres in 1997, Avalon's evolution began; the preserve has flourished into a thriving 216 acres of fields, forest, and wetlands, 140 of which are open to the public. Registration: 585-880-0915. Take the Northern State Parkway east to NY 347. Keep right to NY 111 and then continue east on Route 25A. Then turn left on Saddle Rd. The preserve is on the left.

ALL FIELD TRIPS ARE HOSTED BY DR. COBY KLEIN.

REGISTRATION IN ADVANCE IS REQUIRED :

585-880-0915.

All participants must print and sign a waiver to be provided upon arrival (<https://bit.ly/HOBASwaiver>).

Please visit our website & social media for updates & additions to field trips & programs!

Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center Summer Internship Program

HOBAS was so happy to sponsor K. Fives, a teen conservation ambassador, at the TRSAC over this past summer. Here are some reflections K. Fives made at the conclusion of his summer internship. Thank you to all who contributed toward our summer scholarship fund.

This summer was a rollercoaster of surprises, the good kind. This year I had the privilege of being promoted to an intern at TRSAC (Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary Audubon Center)! My job was to assist counselors for each group, basically a second-in-command type of role. I helped the kids out with crafts, encouraged them to join in on the camp games, educated them about the sanctuary's rescued animals, comforted campers and co-workers, and mostly just made sure to keep a safe environment for the kids and wildlife. I personally feel I work well with kids, so it was a very fun and educational experience for me! One of the things I learned was that newborn Madagascar hissing cockroaches tend to appear albino-ish, and as they age, their colors begin to show. I'd have to say my favorite part, aside from being with the kids and educating them, of my experience as an intern would have to be connecting with my co-workers. I tend to be a shy and independent person, and to my surprise, I was very outspoken and communicative.

Would I recommend other parents send their children here? 100%! TRSAC is a very safe place for children to be educated and even gain friends. Folks are welcomed even to visit the grounds and enjoy the beauty of nature.

Would I recommend donating to TRSAC? Again, 100%! Whenever TRSAC is in need of extra funds for their rescued animals and campgrounds, it's much appreciated. Overall, this place has always felt like a home for me. I've been here since I was at least 6! I'll definitely be back next year!

Truly yours, Keith Fives



HOBAS is Seeking a New Monthly Program Chairperson

Over many years, HOBAS has presented a rich and diverse set of monthly educational programs ranging from birding, plants for birds, birds of prey, conservation initiatives, and others of L.I. just to name a few. HOBAS' recent program chair has moved, and we are looking to find someone who would enjoy taking on this role.

The program chair will be responsible for booking, coordinating, and hosting up to 10 monthly online speaker programs. It would be beneficial for interested persons to be self-directed, well-organized, and comfortable holding Zoom meetings. Please contact Michael Frank, HOBAS' Treasurer, at vonfranz77@gmail.com for more information.

Thank you in advance for your interest in supporting HOBAS' educational and outreach goals. We look forward to meeting with you!

Birdy Bits: the White-Throated Sparrow & the Dark-Eyed Junco

By Simone DaRos

Look for White-throated Sparrows on the ground in woods and at brushy edges. In winter these birds often forage in large flocks and readily visit bird feeders for millet and black oil sunflower seeds. White-throated Sparrows are brown above and gray below with a striking head pattern. The black-and-white-striped head is complimented by a bright white throat and yellow between the eye and the gray bill.

You can find Dark-eyed Juncos by walking around open, partially wooded areas with understory for cover. Keep your eyes on the ground and if they are flushed from the ground, look for an overall gray or dark brown bird with obvious, white underneath and outer tail feathers. At feeders they seem to prefer millet over sunflower seeds.

Although they look nothing alike and aren't particularly closely related, the White-throated Sparrow and the Dark-eyed Junco occasionally mate and produce hybrids. The resulting offspring look like grayish, dully marked White-throated Sparrows with white outer tail feathers. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, allaboutbirds.org). Are you interested in counting and celebrating birds? Join the Great Backyard Bird Count February 17-20, 2023. For more information refer to www.birdcount.org for all details.



White-throated Sparrow
Susan Lord / Great Backyard Bird Count



Dark-eyed Junco
Michele Black / Great Backyard Bird Count

Nominating Committee Seeks Like-Minded Leaders

Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society (HOBAS) is seeking serious candidates for board of director roles and leadership positions. The nominating committee is eager to meet interested individuals who feel they may have the skill set to further enhance HOBAS' mission to protect birds and wildlife through conservation action and education, or who can support the board in various administrative ways. Members of the HOBAS Board of Directors are all volunteers who attend monthly meetings and serve on committees such as: programs, field trip leaders, public outreach, conservation, education, newsletter, and communications.

HOBAS (formerly Huntington Audubon Society), established in 1961 as an all-volunteer, not for profit, 501 (c)3 chapter of National Audubon Society serving Northern Oyster Bay and Huntington Townships, is looking forward to reinvigorating the board and leadership with new recruits who want to build upon HOBAS' successes. If you have an interest in dedicating your passion and time to a long- established organization of like-minded individuals, who care deeply about birds, wildlife, conservation, and education then please contact Michael Frank, HOBAS' Treasurer, for more information.

Contact Information:

- **Telephone Number:** 631-252-1082
- **Email:** yonfranz77@gmail.com

Injured Wildlife Resources

If you encounter injured or distressed wildlife, please contact the NYS Department of Environmental Protection at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/839777html. Find; "contact a rehabilitator," and search for a licensed wildlife rehabilitator near your area. Please make note: Wildlife rehabilitators aid in the care and recuperation of injured or sick wild animals. All wildlife rehabilitators are licensed by the DEC. Please keep this information handy. Rehabilitators volunteer their time to provide services to wildlife. Not all rehabilitators may be able to accept every injured or orphaned animal. No state funding is available for animal caging, veterinary care, medicine, or food. Important note on handling sick or injured wildlife: If you discover sick or injured wildlife, please contact a rehabilitator immediately for advice on safe handling, both for your sake and for the animal. Some animals require special handling, while others may have diseases that can be transferred to people. Extra precautions should be taken around bats, raccoons or skunks as these species have a higher risk of carrying rabies, which can be transmitted to humans and pets.