The Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Newsletter

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THE THIRD NEW YORK STATE BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

By Brendan Fogarty

New York State is achieving a unique milestone in 2020. It will be the first state in the United States to hold its third Breeding Bird Atlas. We were early adopters of the atlas idea, and began our first round of surveys in 1980. Twenty years later, at the turn of the century, we did it again. And here we are on the brink of a new decade, and we are due once more.

What is the atlas? It is a coordinated birding effort, akin to a Christmas Bird Count, but held in the summer with the goal of plotting breeding ranges for every bird species. The whole state is divided into small rectangles of a few square miles called 'blocks', and at the end of the effort we can say one of four things about any species encountered within a block: that it was confirmed breeding, probably breeding, possibly breeding, or that there was no evidence of breeding. Evidence for the above was summed over five breeding seasons previously and will be again, meaning the first breeders will be sought in January 2020 (Great Horned Owls raise their families then, oddly!), and the last breeders will be detected in the end of 2024.

At first, the atlas might seem like a lot of effort to prove what we already know. For example, it doesn't take any brainpower to figure out Brown Thrashers breed at Jones Beach. They are frequently encountered there in the warm months, so they must be breeding. Well, the atlas takes these assumptions very seriously. In fact, with the anecdotal evidence provided before about thrashers, the atlas would call them "possibly: breeding, not "confirmed", and not even "probable". In order to achieve a higher standard, specific behaviors need to be observed. Detecting a thrasher singing is decent evidence for breeding, but detecting the same bird in the same spot a week later is better. A thrasher chasing other birds away from a possible territory is a good sign, but even better is seeing one transporting vegetation to build a nest. Please note that breeding can be considered "confirmed" without directly observing eggs or a nest, so as to minimize disturbance.

Continued on page 5



Carolina Wrens were rare in New York before 1900-not anymore! Photo: Brendan Fogarty



Spotlight: Blue Jay

It can feel like a downer when the only birds at your feeders are jays, but really we are lucky to have them. They are stunning, even by the unlimited beauty standards of tropical jays, and incredibly smart. Our February program was about crow and jay diversity and intelligence. Birds don't have cheeks, but Blue Jays can carry acorns in their throats before hiding them for the winter. When carrying many acorns, they will arrange them so that the smallest is farthest back in the gullet. They also are adept at recovering whatever acorns they cache, and other species of jays have shown that they understand that acorns only have a shelf life of a few months, and are no good for eating after. So next time a jay takes a peanut from your feeder, imagine where it might be stored, and when it might be recovered!

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 the editor at:

bnf25@cornell.edu

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.

Board of Directors Officers Secretary: Brendan Fogarty bn/25@cornell.edu Angelo Garcia III, Treasurer

angelo3@futureenv.com

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Newsletter & Photos Brendan Fogarty

www.hobaudubon.org

www.facebook.com/hobaudubon

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

By Brendan Fogarty

It has been a snowy end to the fall, so all the autumn colors feel especially distant. That may be accentuated by a sort of slow migration season overall, during which we had a few nice field trips andprograms. I wanted to thank everyone involved in this year's birdseed sale both volunteers and buyers. We had double the profit of last year, and two dozen more participants. The crew at Wild Birds Unlimited in Syosset did an amazing job. We also had another successful beach cleanup at Target Rock (read more on page 3). Next year is also looking pretty exciting, in part due to the Breeding Bird Atlas, which is covered extensively in this issue, and will be again at our April monthly program.

Stop in to our monthly programs for all sorts of extras in addition to the speaker. For folks who have not ever attended a monthly meeting, I want to share what else goes on besides the keynote speaker. We provide some brochures on a variety of interesting things, we bring some snacks, there is a raffle with some pretty amazing prizes from Blair's treasure trove (I recently snagged an incredible bird guide that is almost 100 years old, in mint condition), and Marc and Sharon Brody now have a table for people to bask in their wealth of photos from many wonderful trips, and maybe inspire a future trip or two. We have been lucky enough to have Alexa Helburn share her photography project, and I notice all her most unique shots are usually sold before the lecture begins. Her photos are now always available on our website for sale too. So if you have been worried about nodding off during a weeknight lecture, I can assure you there is way more to keep you stimulated.

If you have conservation projects (big or small) that you want done, now is a great time to get involved. Monthly board meetings are open for members to sit in upon—they occur a week after the monthly member program night. The list of dates of the expected meetings is on the back cover. We are lucky to partake in the Long Island Audubon Council meeting, which occurs a couple of times a year around the island. It is one of my favorite events, as chapters can commiserate on challenges and share solutions. Then, moving up a level, there are two Audubon New York meetings annually. One is June in Saratoga, and the other is in a rotating location in fall. Finally there is a National Audubon Conference hosted somewhere in the country. We cannot emphasize enough that these wonderful events are not secret or even private. We think these events are great inspiration. Please reach out to one of the HOBAS Board members if you are interested in learning more and in attending one of the board meetings or to attend a conference on behalf of HOBAS. We are looking forward to increasing active chapter participation and involvement from our dedicated membership. HOBAS' Board of Directors would be happy to share and discuss involvement options with you.

Membership is just \$20 per year. Your membership directly supports HOBAS' mission to advocate for wildlife and habitat through educating others at our programs and walks and in engaging in conservation projects and advocacy both locally and beyond. **Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society appreciates your support and we thank you!**

Membership-\$20____ I wish to make an additional donation of____

Name

Address

City_____State ____Zip code____ Would you like to receive alerts and notices? email

PLUM ISLAND NEWS

By Save the Sound

HOBAS Leadership were some original proponents of saving Plum Island, a mostly wild island just past Orient Point that has been a target for nefarious developers. For many years, members from both sides of Long Island Sound, both sides of the aisle, and both chambers have been working hard to repeal the language that puts Plum Island in jeopardy.

The House Appropriations Committee passed language to repeal the original law thanks to Plum champion Representatives Lee Zeldin (R-NY), Joe Courtney (D-CT), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Tom Suozzi (D-NY), and Kathleen Rice (D-NY). CT's and NY's senators continue to work hard to move legislation in the Senate.

Amidst the budget delays, this Plum legislation is on hold, but there is still hope that Plum Island will be protected during the upcoming deliberations of the House and Senate Appropriations Conference Committee.

On December 3, 2019, there was a public hearing on proposed new zoning district, Marine III (MIII), intended to "provide a waterfront location in the portion of the Town [of Southold] located on Long Island for ferry service to and from Plum Island."

If the new zoning category is approved, then Southold is likely to apply it to the nine-acre Orient Point parcel now used by the Plum Island Animal Disease Center for its ferry service.

The parcel currently is zoned Marine II, which allows for inappropriate and unsustainable development that could adversely affect future access to Plum Island, North Fork traffic, and community character. A new MIII zone, if applied to the ferry parcel, would secure availability of access to Plum Island from its traditional launch point, supporting the Preserve Plum Island Coalition's vision for future conservation, research, and education activities on the island.

For more info please visit:

https://www.ctenvironment.org/save-the-sound/

A SUCCESSFUL BEACH CLEANUP

By Simone DaRos

Volunteers became part of the solution on October 5, 2019 at Target Rock National Wildlife Refuge at our annual beach cleanup. Marine litter found along the wrack line, on the cliff, and along the shore was removed by volunteers from HOBAS, Henry Schein, and Target. Taking action to tackle the marine litter issue has a direct and immediate positive impact on reducing waste-related pollution and by actively reducing marine debris. Volunteers engaged in protecting the environment while enjoying some time with like-minded new acquaintances, friends, and family. Our collaborative effort with USFWS has become a true partnership. HOBAS is eager to engage in future beach cleanups to remove macro and micro plastics, cans, bottles, and an array of debris from the shoreline thus removing it from the coastal zone. Thank you to all of our volunteers and we hope to see you again at our upcoming beach cleanups 2020!



Dune vegetation. Photo: Brendan Fogarty

By Brendan Fogarty

We would like to welcome Iulie Sullivan to the HOBAS board! We are lucky to have her. She is a visionary with creative thinking, especially regarding our natural environment. Over 20 years, after receiving her Masters of Science degree in Environmental Science. Ms. Sullivan founded and administrated a non-profit organization dedicated to



solid waste reduction. Julie also spearheaded an initiative called "Just Mow It", which promoted re-using cut grass as a natural fertilizer. Today, as a volunteer member of Huntington's Conservation Board, she initiated and runs a hands-on pilot project to restore Carpenter Farm Park's meadows to native grasses and forbs. We are lucky to have someone so knowledgeable about local plants, open spaces, and recycling on our board. Welcome Julie!

HOBAS TREASURER

By Angelo Garcia, III

Dear members, after serving as treasurer for a year, I will be resigning effective June 30, 2020. We would like to have someone in place so we can transition the books and financial records over to the new person before my resignation. So, if anyone is interested please contact one of the Board or Committee members. Maintaining the accounts is easy since we use Quickbooks and filing tax information is relatively simple process when using an accountant.

We would like to thank everyone who donated in this year's scholarship appeal. We collected donations to provide two students scholarships for summer camp in 2020. Thank you for your donations. Remember, this is the 2019-2020 financial year and the annual membership dues are due. Membership information is usually located on the printing stamp on the outside of your newsletter. Membership questions may be directed to bnf25@cornell.edu. Thank you for your membership support and for taking the time to keep your membership with HOBAS current.

Editor's Note: We were lucky to have Angelo's support as treasurer. He continued the modernization work started by Sean Prestia, our previous treasurer, and tidied up all loose ends when Sean moved to Canada. Angelo also was assisted pro-bono by an accountant, Jerome Hehir, CPA, to whom we are very grateful.

Sightings by Sharon Brody

For several years, I had a Sharp-shinned Hawk visit my backyard feeders and, occasionally, would snatch a small bird. Then, one cold December afternoon, a Cooper's Hawk saw the Sharpie in my yard. The Cooper's Hawk chased the Sharp-shinned Hawk out of the yard and continued the chase well into the sky. I haven't seen a Sharpie in my yard since.

Recently, a large female Cooper's Hawk has haunted my feeders. I have seen dove feathers scattered around my backyard on several occasions since. Finally, she had her Thanksgiving dinner a few days early as I watched her snatch an unfortunate woodpecker. She flew up to a branch on an old apple tree and proceeded to pluck off the feathers. After her meal, she sat with a full crop, on that branch for at least two hours, digested her meal, she , and flew away. I bet I will see this magnificent accipiter reappear when hunger strikes again.



Photo: Sharon Brody

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS, continued from cover....

We imagine the thrashers of Jones Beach as reliable breeders, but the atlas has taught us caution.

Despite their preference for lower-elevation open habitats, which cover a majority of New York State, thrashers were found breeding in 30% fewer blocks between the 1980 and 2000 atlases. Scientists have identified several factors which could adversely affect thrashers, but all of species affected equally by these factors, thrashers are faring the worst. We still do not understand their plight.

There are many surprising trends revealed by the atlas. Rosebreasted Grosbeak became more scarce in the Adirondacks by 2000. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers expanded their range to include lower elevation sites. Bald Eagles were only found in 45 blocks in 1980, but increased by over 100 times to 445 twenty years later. Virginia Rails increased by 20% over this period, while Eastern Meadowlarks decreased by 25%, and Tufted Titmice doubled their range. Our general knowledge of bird welfare is important, but some important details can be missed. This is why the thoroughness of the atlas is so incredibly important.

The atlas is a citizen science project, meaning it pulls data from a vast network of birders. Previously, sightings were tabulated manually, but this time the atlas is using eBird to help coordinate sightings. eBird is a project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology which sets a gold standard for citizen science and is open to everyone. Those of us with smartphones that can utilize the eBird Mobile app will be able enter records to the atlas readily. Lacking such a device is not a dead-end, however.

To learn more and become the best atlasser you can be, there are lots of helpful resources (including a list of workshop events, for those who prefer face-to-face learning) at the following (note, some content will not be available until early 2020):

https://ebird.org/atlasny/about

One of the upcoming events will actually be right at our Cold Spring Harbor, hosted by Brendan Fogarty, your newsletter editor and author of this very own article!

Stop by to learn more!

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS WORKSHOP Tuesday April 7 Light refreshments at 7 PM, speaker at 7:30 PM Cold Spring Harbor Library 95 Harbor Rd, Cold Spring Harbor, NY

AUDUBON RECEIVES GRANT FOR COASTAL RESILIENCY

By Audubon New York

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced \$30 million in new grants from their National Coastal Resilience Fund to benefit coastal areas across the country. Among them, Audubon will receive funding for three projects—totaling over \$1 million with matching funds—to enhance coastal areas in North Carolina, New York and California.

"Our coasts are the first lines of defense against sea level rise and stronger, more frequent storms," said Dr. Karen Hyun, vice president for coastal conservation at the National Audubon Society. "These grants will allow us to shore up marshes and wetlands, which provide critical habitat for birds like Saltmarsh Sparrows and White Pelicans."

"We thank Congress, NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for their support to increase coastal resilience for birds and for coastal communities," Hyun added.

Following the destructive 2017 Atlantic hurricane season, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation created the National Coastal Resilience Fund in partnership with NOAA to strengthen our nation's natural infrastructure such as marshes, beach dunes, barrier islands and coral reefs.

With coastal resilience grants awarded in three states, Audubon will:

Develop a publicly informed and community-supported design to restore and strengthen urban wetland in Marin City, California, which will serve as shoreline protection from storms and floods while supporting birds and other wildlife, and provide much-needed opportunities for local residents to engage with nature.

Complete a comprehensive marsh site assessment in Currituck Sound, North Carolina, and generate a design plan at one to three of the highest-priority sites to increase community resilience to flooding, sea level rise, storms and other coastal challenges.

Restore priority coastal habitat in a flood-prone area of the Town of Brookhaven on Long Island, New York, to benefit priority bird species and other wildlife, reduce flooding, and better protect inland areas from rising sea levels and storm events.

For more information on how Audubon works to make our coasts stronger and more resilient, visit:

https://www.audubon.org/conservation/coastal-resilience

Events: Jan 2020—Apr 2020

FIELD TRIPS

REGISTRATION BY PHONE IS <u>REQUIRED</u>.

Please register at least two days ahead of your trip. Membership is not required; experts & newcomers welcome. Don't forget to bring binoculars, proper clothing and shoes, and insect repellant! If you need to borrow binoculars, ask your leader if they have extras.

\rightarrow January 2, Thursday, 9AM

Pelham Bay Park

Leader: Coby Klein; Registration: (585) 880-0915

Start the year observing seals and a wide assortment of waterfowl in this NYC park just a few minutes north of the Throgs Neck Bridge. Take Pelham Parkway east into the park and turn right onto Orchard Beach road. Meet in the NE corner of the giant Orchard Beach lot. Bring a scope if possible.

\rightarrow January 26, Sunday, 9 AM

Connetquot State Park and Bayard Cutting Arboretum Leader: Blair Broughton; Registration: (631) 885-1881

The Preserve is a winter waterfowl hang-out as well as many resident birds. The river lowlands are unique and always have something interesting to see. Meet in the parking lot of Connetquot, accessible off of Sunrise Hwy (westbound only) in Oakdale.

\rightarrow February 16, Sunday, 10 AM

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

Leader: Coby Klein; Registration: (585) 880-0915

Jamaica Bay is known for its world-class birding all year. In winter, the waterfowl diversity is unmatched, and the earliest breeding songbirds will be staking out territories. Take Cross Bay Boulevard south from the Belt Parkway. Meet at the Visitors' Center.

\rightarrow February 23, Sunday, 9 AM

Massapequa Lakes and Southern Nassau area

Leader: Blair Broughton; Registration: (631) 885-1881 We will bird the ponds at Massapequa Preserve, then head east in search of variety of wintering ducks and land birds. Meet at western entrance to the park—park near Parkside Blvd and Pittsburgh Ave.

→ March 15, Sunday, 9 AM Shu Swamp Nature Preserve

Leader: Blair Broughton; Registration: (631) 885-1881 Join us as we search for the first spring arrivals amongst the blooming skunk cabbage in this wooded wetland. Meet in parking lot on Frost Mill Road in Mill Neck.

\rightarrow March 22, Sunday, 10 AM Caumsett State Park

Leader: Coby Klein; Registration: (585) 880-0915

Caumsett State Park is special because it has a variety of habitats that attract many different species of birds. It's deep woods, saltmarsh estuaries, and protected grasslands make it an ideal places to see a long list of species.. Follow W Neck Rd north out of Huntington to Lloyd's Neck. Follow signage and meet in the parking lot.

\rightarrow April 26, Sunday, 9 AM

Gardiner County Park in West Bay Shore

Leader: Coby Klein; Registration: (585) 880-0915

Gardiner County Park is a 231 acre nature-oriented public park on the Great South Bay. The lowland woods will be loud with the newly-returned breeding songbirds, and herons and shorebirds will be back in the saltmarsh. Take Montauk Hwy half a mile east from the Robert Moses Causeway and meet in the parking lot.

 \rightarrow Please check our Facebook and website at **www.hobaudubon.org** for the latest on scheduled and additional event

FAMILY EVENTS

\rightarrow February 9, Sunday, 1:30 PM

Nature-themed Valentine's Day Cards Registration: (631) 896-2872

Kids come make your very own handmade "wild" Valentine's Day cards to give to family and friends. We will be using magazine pictures, animal stamps, sticks, feathers, glue, markers and some other fun ingredients. In addition to making a craft, we will also be taking a nature walk in the woods behind the library, if weather allows. For ages 3 and up, accompanied by a caregiver. Registration is limited, participants must register in advance .

\rightarrow April 15, Wednesday, 12:00 PM Animals in Spring Egg Hunt! Registration: (631) 896-2872

must register in advance.

School is out for spring break, so come join us as we learn all about wild animals that lay eggs, and what they do in spring. We will read a story, then go outside and have our very own spring egg hunt- so bring your baskets! For ages 3 and up, accompanied by a caregiver. Registration is limited, participants

Events: Jan 2020—Apr 2020

PROGRAMS

→ **ALL PROGRAMS** held at Cold Spring Harbor Library 95 Harbor Rd, Cold Spring Harbor, NY

 \rightarrow January 9, Wednesday. Light refreshments at 7 PM, speaker at 7:30 PM.

Î KNOW YOU KNOW THAT I AM NOT TELLING THE TRUTH: AVIAN MIMICRY by Coby Klein

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and we'll delve into the ways of mockingbirds, lyrebirds, cuckoos, and explore some of the many ways that birds imitate one another - and some inanimate objects.

Coby Klein recently completed his doctoral dissertation at the CUNY Graduate Center. He leads field trips for HOBAS and has served on the board of directors since 2014. In his spare time Coby enjoys photographing insects and watching the Giants find new ways to humiliate themselves every Sunday. He currently teaches ecology at Baruch College.

\rightarrow February 12, Wednesday. Light refreshments at 7 PM, speaker at 7:30 PM.

ÀNNUAL MOVIE NIGHT: A SQUIRREL'S GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Join us as we view a fascinating documentary, part of the PBS Nature series, directed by Tom Jarvis. This film focuses on why nearly 300 species of squirrels have been successful survivors; displaying the extraordinary abilities of squirrels, from the brainy fox squirrel to the acrobatic gray squirrel, to the problem -solving ground squirrel. Learn about an orphaned, only a few days- old Eurasian red squirrel (threatened), named Billy, rehabilitated for release by Sheelagh McAllister, head of small mammals at the National Wildlife Rescue Center of Scotland. You will surely leave this documentary with a new appreciation and a deeper understanding for squirrels, we hope you will join us! Bring your squirrel pictures and squirrel stories to share with others.

 \rightarrow March 11, Wednesday. Light refreshments at 7 PM, speaker at 7:30 PM.

BIRD BANDING by Harvey Farber

Bird banding is the term for attaching of a small, individually numbered tag, usually in the shape of a metal band, to a wild bird to enable individual identification. The subsequent recapture or recovery of the bird can provide information on where the bird has been, how it has aged, and in some cases, what caused it to die. Join us as we learn about the amazing benefits to studying birds in the hand, and then meeting them again. Harvey was born in Manchester England and came to the USA at 16 years old. He graduated from Queens College in New York with B.S. in chemistry. He is still working as VP of R&D. He has been banding birds since the late 1960's. Every year since then, he has banded at the JFK Wildlife Reserve at Tobay Beach, in both Spring and Fall, as well as other local sites.

 \rightarrow April 7, Tuesday. Light refreshments at 7 PM, speaker at 7:30 PM.

THE JOY OF ATLASING by Brendan Fogarty

It has been 20 years since the last breeding bird atlas in New York State and a lot has changed! The third atlas will take place from 2020-2025 and involve thousands of volunteers from across the state. Learn about the history of the atlas, the importance of atlas data, and how you can get involved. Find out how the third atlas will differ from previous atlases, including how we will be using eBird for data entry. Atlasing is a great excuse to explore new areas and provides an intimate look into the daily lives of birds. Whether you are a beginner or advanced birder, this unique opportunity will strengthen your birdwatching skills while contributing valuable data to a large conservation-oriented project.

Brendan is the Secretary and Newsletter Editor of Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon, and their youngest board member ever. He is a Long Island local and has been involved in birding and Audubon here since his teens. Brendan has been involved in several local conservation projects, including Piping Plover monitoring for the Town of Hempstead and abundance surveys for Seatuck Environmental Association. He is assuming the role of regional coordinator for the third New York Breeding Bird Atlas.



Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon PO Box 735 Huntington, NY 11743

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BOARD MEETINGS

Just a reminder that the board meets once a month, and meetings are open to all members! We meet at the Cold Spring Harbor Library, just like for our monthly meetings, except in the round meeting rooms on the main or basement floors. We meet at 7PM on the third Wednesday of the month (exactly a week after the monthly member's meeting). Please feel free to reach out to one of our board members for more information.. Our next meetings are as follows:

January 15

February 12

March 18

April 15



I FOUND AN INJURED ANIMAL! Please contact Volunteers for Wildlife

516-674-0982 volunteersforwildlife.org

Put this number in your phone RIGHT NOW!

WINTER'S SECRET

By Sharon Brody

Put on your scarf, hat, and gloves, and an extra sweater. Get out there and enjoy the mostly easy-to-see winter birds. A stiff neck is a not a possibility as it is in spring birding; winter birds prefer the low areas over the bare canopy. Get ready to view our winter waterfowl, our premier visitors to Long Island. One can find over 27 species of ducks, geese, and swans that regular over-winter here, plus an occasional rarity. Flock of Brant, Common Eider, and three species of scoter can gather in the thousands in our bays.

Look out for some other winter visitors; Razorbills, Snow Buntings, American Coot, Dunlin, Northern Gannet, Sanderlings, and our only winter warbler, the Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Go to a local beach, lake, river of marsh area. Look out over the ocean and Long Island Sound. The coast, longdevoid of the summer crows, is incredibly rewarding now, and it is all yours.