

### **Young Birders Club**

By Rob Bate

On April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> the Brooklyn Bird Club proudly hosted one of the monthly expeditions of the Young Birders Club (YBC) of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA). Sixteen young birders and their parents were treated to an exclusive Warbler Workshop by Tom Stephenson on Saturday afternoon, a night flight watch on top of the Empire State Building led by Nadir Souirgi (founder of the Harlem Bird Club) and finally a bird walk in Prospect Park on Sunday morning led by Tom Stephenson and co-hosted by local Brooklyn YBC members Gabe Newman and Noam Klotz.

The NYS Young Birders Club http://www.nysyoungbirders.org is a group of incredible kids between the ages of 10 and 19 who have been completely smitten by the love of birding. Through the inspiration of then 15 year old Hope Batcheller, the club was formed in 2008 under the sponsorship of NYSOA, and Batcheller became the club's first President. At that time Hope had already developed a great love of birding and had sought out the company of fellow birders to help her hone her skills and share birding information. Her problem was that she felt like the extralimital bird in a large flock of birders whose median age was closer to retirement than high school graduation. Having formed, with mixed success, a Yahoo chat group aimed at generating a community of young birders, Hope then boldly presented the idea of a young birders club to the governing board of NYSOA

Carena Pooth heard the call and took up the challenge. Hope and Carena put out the word, calling together isolated young birders from all over the state. Ken and Kim Kaufman, who had formed the first young birders club out of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory in Ohio, leant their expertise and advice in setting up the rules, guidelines and charter for the NYS YBC. The initial response was phenomenal and enthusiastic. These kids, often birding in isolation away from any birding peer group, now found-like minded birders their own age to socialize, share

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### The Brooklyn Bird Club

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### The Clapper Rail

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The founding trip of the YBC was held in August of 2008 with renowned birder, Ornithologist and NYS Avian Records Committeeman Shai Mitra. Mitra led the initial group of 8 young birders on a tour of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge during peak shorebird migration and treated them to a rare White-faced Ibis along with a host of other migratory shorebirds. 2008 saw membership at 11 members and now in 2015 the YBC has grown to its current 46 members, with a growing roster of alumni. Besides members themselves and their families, the YBC has sponsoring organizations and the BBC is proud to be one of 22 such sponsors. Additionally the YBC has 38 adult supporting members, 8 of which are graduates of the club.



NYSOA, formed in 1946, was originally called the "Federation of New York State Bird Clubs." Each month a sponsoring club hosts an outing in their area for the YBC and makes the special habitats and special features in their areas accessible to the young birders. These kids have experienced special behind-the-scenes looks at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (the Lab-of-"0"), the skins collection at the Museum of Natural History, and they have had a chance to do bird banding during migration. Now they have one of Tom Stephenson's Warbler Workshops in their toolkit and the experience of night flight seen from the Empire State Building.

These very special birding experiences and the opportunity to socialize with a peer group of likeminded young birders has led a number of collegebound members who have "aged out" of the club to pursue studies in Ornithology and Conservation at various universities. Hope Batcheller herself has graduated from Cornell University and was a fixture in the Laboratory of Ornithology during her time at

Cornell. Benjamin Van Doren, Brendan Fogarty, Nathanial Hernandez and Menachem Goldstein (of Queens) have all enrolled at Cornell to study at the Lab of O. Lila Fried at Oberlin, Jacob Drucker at Hampshire College, Brent Bomkamp and Scott Wieman at Williams College and Ben Goloff at Swarthmore are all pursuing or completing conservation studies' programs.

The American Birding Association and other organizations have birding camps in spectacular locations where the young birders often spend part of their summers honing their skills and widening their birding knowledge. Often the wider world of ornithology offers these young birders many opportunities they might not otherwise have found. Jacob Drucker, an original member of the YBC, has participated in an expedition banding Spoonbill Sandpipers is China. Many YBC members go on to pursue research and birding opportunities in Alaska, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Canada and elsewhere, putting them in the company of scientists doing important field research.

Since 2009, the YBC has fielded their team, "The Razorbills," to compete in the annual World Series of Birding in Cape May and environs during mid-May, and they use the money they raise to help fund a scholarship program to finance trips and participation in YBC events. In 2011, the BBC dedicated its Birdathon to the YBC to help build this important scholarship fund. And, adult sponsors also support the YBC, which has dispersed \$14,000 since 2012 to support the club activities.



The young birders club idea has been catching on in recent years, and I count at least 35 clubs in the United States (http://ebird.org/content/ybn/clubs/) and the idea seems about to go international. A club like this takes a lot of work and, besides Hope Batcheller, Joe Hernandez, current YBC President, and the other young birders themselves, a big round of applause needs to go out to the adults who have done so much to get the effort off the ground and keep it going.

Carena Pooth, NYSOA's current Vice President has led the project from the beginning with deep involvement and commitment. She tells me, with a deep sigh of relief, that she couldn't do it alone and thankfully she doesn't have to because many parents and other adults help out: Annette Lehner, the club's first Adult Coordinator and current Treasurer; Sue Frieberger, the current Trips Coordinator; Scholarships Coordinator Kelly Liao, and mentor/advisors Herb Thompson and Mary Batcheller have managed to shoulder much of the heavy lifting in raising each new brood of young birders.

I invite all BBC members to think of the YBC if you'd like to make a birding-related donation. They make it easy:

https://nybirds.org/membership/NYSYBC/donation.html

Another great way to help is to become an adult supporting member for a \$20 yearly fee. And, of course, if there are any potential YBC members or their parents reading this please don't hesitate to reach out and join the club itself. Membership information can be found at this link:

http://nysyoungbirders.org/membership.html

The YBC can change your life (parents – get ready for a lot of driving.)

### My 40 Years Birding

By Peter Dorosh

It's hard to imagine how the time flies since the day I saw my career bird, a spectacular male Scarlet Tanager in my backyard 40 years ago. As a 14 year-old teenager living under the shadow of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, who would have expected such a beautiful species of bird to show up in such an unlikely place? Thereafter, a hearing- impaired child set out upon a journey that to this day still infects me with a passion

for birding and nature; additionally, I have become an upstanding member of the Brooklyn Bird Club. That Tanager became a divine moment, propelling me into the fascinating world of birds.

Since that day, I have embarked on a lifelong journey gathering many friends and building up many cherished memories. Starting in Prospect Park, the greatest of city parks, I learned my skills as a birder, identifying all those terrific species—especially my beloved warblers; I am a fortunate and lucky person. When I started journeying beyond Prospect Park, it was at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge where I learned of the Brooklyn Bird Club. A small postcard on the visitor's center bulletin board said there was a field trip that weekend to High Tor State Park. It was led by Ron and Jean Bourque, outstanding citizens of the New York birding circuit. On that trip 37 years ago, I met my first BBC members and outstanding people, among them a larger than life club celebrity. Esther Swayer. It remains an unforgettable trip. Through the years, I have played a large part in the Brooklyn Bird Club, and I am still active. I remember well my thrilling year as club president in 2009; it was momentous as we all celebrated the Brooklyn Bird Club's centennial. I am now enjoying my role as president emeritus.



Peter and friends at High Tor

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Fast forward to this year when I celebrated my 40th year of birding. I returned to High Tor for the first time since my inaugural club trip to mark this significant milestone. On April 25th, along with five club members, we celebrated my milestone—whatever birds we saw. On this cold, crisp day, we walked 7.5 miles in five different parks. It was about seeing birds regardless of the species and sharing the joy and time with friends

and likewise birders. We saw Broad-winged and Redshouldered Hawks, all the common woodland species including a Tufted Titmouse calling, "peter, peter, peter" as if it was a celebratory chant; we saw Black Vultures, Turkey Vultures, a Merlin, an American Kestrel, and a Northern Harrier on a raptor-rich day. In all, my group tallied 55 species. Even the climb up Little Tor outcrop with its stunning views took our breath away, awarding us the deep appreciation of being in the great outdoors. Little Tor's rock walls were adorned with a multitude of Dutchman Breeches' wildflowers. Wildflowers are another personal passion that birdwatching opened my eyes and mind to and deepened my profound gratitude for nature.

My career as a birder would not have been fulfilling without having met all the wonderful people who crossed my path or joined me on my trips, many becoming friends. Those opportunities are what define the beauty of birding. We share an incredible leisure that adds life enriching memories, a leisure that makes us into better human beings and champions for conserving the world for birds. I hope you share that sentiment.

Now I have to start thinking how I will celebrate my golden anniversary. Thank you all for making my 40 years birding journey a very memorable one!

April 25th Trip report: http://tinyurl.com/powtrh4



**Sparks!** Jennifer Kepler

My interest in animals began as early as my first memories. I thank my parents

for fostering my love of all things animal and not forcing me into typical "girl things." I went through all the phases—dinosaurs, whales and dolphins, horses, lizards, and birds.

As a kid, my dad would take me to the local park (in Nassau on Long Island), and while he ran, I got to wonder around with a camera. I would search for Redtailed Hawks and photograph the Canada Geese that lived on the pond. In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, my mom bought me my first bird field guide because I was making a painting of piping plovers in art club. That same field

guide, Nat Geo's, Field Guide to the Birds of North America, second edition, serves as my North American life list and I always have it close by, hoping to put in a new lifer.

Birds were always an interest growing up, but never a main interest, because reptiles dominated my teenage years. The summer of my senior year in high school I found a job working at summer camp in Audubon's first sanctuary, the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center in Oyster Bay. I continued summer work there through college, balancing various internships with the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Riverhead Foundation in between. After receiving a B.S. in Zoology, I found myself teaching about birds with Audubon, handling birds of prey for school children and adults, and even leading hikes through the sanctuary's trails. This is where I began honing whatever birding skills I had.

My first full-time job was as a zookeeper in Prospect Park Zoo. It is here that I began noticing birds I had never seen before—Northern Waterthrush, Blackthroated Blue Warblers, and I was amazed to see Ospreys flying over Brooklyn. My interest in Prospect Park was piqued. I walked the park often, surprised at the wildlife within. I'd often take pictures of things I'd see, to the point where friends of mine were giving me positive feedback about my photos and the information I shared. That feedback is what sparked my idea to begin a blog, my virtual nature journal, logging the adventures I take.

My blog, "Snapshots of Nature"

(<a href="http://snapshotofnature.blogspot.com">http://snapshotofnature.blogspot.com</a>), is about my wildlife sightings, but avian fauna dominates it. Blogging is what motivates me to keep getting out and also motivates me to explore different parks and wild places within New York City. Working full-time with a home of seven pets and a husband, among other adult responsibilities, makes finding time to bird a challenge, but I make ways to fit it in.

I think my birding got more serious after seeing a swallow-tailed kite soar effortlessly over the Lullwater in Prospect Park. I felt so lucky to have experienced it and to have captured it in a photo. I found out slowly that this massive birding community existed in Brooklyn and I have slowly become a part of it. That experience taught me about the importance of logging sightings into databases like eBird and reporting rare sights to the ABA. I love sharing and learning from

others, I love the stories people have, and most of all I love the pride we have for our parks that hold all these little feathered treasures within them.

By trade, I teach, I am a coordinator for the New York Aquarium's education outreach program. Encouraging people to seek out the wonders in nature and take part in citizen science is a huge part of my job. Birding is a great way to take part in contributing data to science and it's exciting to see patterns in migration, share sightings with others, and discover something new for yourself. Brooklyn birding is my favorite way to escape the urban landscape and find adventure close to home.

### Mute Swans by Rob Bate

As of this writing, there are 11 adult Mute Swans on Prospect Park Lake, with two pairs sitting on 11 eggs. We could soon have a population of 22 Mute Swans grown to full size on the lake by the end of this summer. As the younger swans begin to reach breeding maturity over the next few breeding seasons, at least half of them are sure to be driven off the lake by the dominant breeding birds. This will certainly force the young adult swans to search for breeding territory elsewhere and thereby contribute to population

expansion in the larger NY State region.



An expanding Mute Swan population in NY State poses a significant threat to our already quickly disappearing wetland habitat and also threatens breeding native waterfowl species. Mute Swans are non-migratory (unlike our native Tundra Swans) and they stay in our waterways when most waterfowl that winter over in New York State migrate north in the spring to breed. During their stay, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV), forming our wetland habitats, begins to grow. Mute Swans make quick work of the new vegetation, often pulling it up by its roots preventing the grasses from establishing themselves. Mature and maturing grasses, when allowed to flourish, help to create a stable and rich environment for a wide range of marine creatures and help stabilize coastal resiliency protection zones.

Another problem is that Mute Swans are highly aggressive and territorial during mating season, and so they often drive out native waterfowl. Many of these waterfowl species (Canvasbacks and Blue-winged Teal, for instance) are already facing critical population declines.

Mute Swans were originally imported to the United States from their native Europe over a hundred years ago to decorate the ponds of the newly wealthy aristocracy during America's Gilded Age. These newly minted plutocrats hoped to mimic the splendor and classiness of the English and French aristocracy, who had traditionally protected Mute Swans for their own pleasure. Mute Swans were prized for their sedentary ways as these super rich would have hated to see their magnificent, but expensive, swans pick up and fly away during the spring.

Mute Swan populations have already established themselves downstate in our area, especially throughout Long Island. Now they threaten the remaining sensitive habitat upstate and around Lake Ontario, where they are just now beginning to establish permanent populations. These marshlands are historical breeding areas for many native breeding waterfowl species.

Faced with this environmental problem, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) last year released a draft management plan (a plan which has since been updated and revised) aimed at eliminating the feral Mute Swan population in NY State by 2025 through a series of strategies, including:

 education of the public about the need for control of the population

- oiling eggs so that breeding pairs don't raise new broods where feasible
- removal of Mute Swans to private sanctuaries where they could be managed so not to breed or escape
- including Mute Swans in the same category as non-endangered waterfowl for hunting purposes when and where allowed
- passing legislation making illegal the importation or raising of Mute Swans
- direct culling of Mute Swans where necessary using humane euthanasia techniques

http://tinyurl.com/muteswanplan

Following release of the draft Management Plan, there was a concerted effort to stop the plan by local, well meaning animal rights activists; they condemned the draft plan out of hand, often characterizing it as a plan by the government to slaughter peaceful symbols of love by an uncaring government bureaucracy. The media picked up on this narrative, and articles opposing the plan soon appeared.

"Killing Swans is a Bad Idea" by Carl Safina at CNN, "Speaking up for the Mute Swan" by philosopher Hugh Raffles in the NYT, and in the Daily News, "Swan Killing in Prospect Park Ruffles Feathers" and "NYState's 2,200 Mute Swans should not be on the most wanted list: Dead or Alive." Additional articles in other Long Island and upstate newspapers defended Mute Swans and few covered any of the DEC's reasoning behind the plan or the environmental impact an expanding population of feral Mute Swans pose.

The most vocal opposition was local opposition by people bonded to Brooklyn's Prospect Park and Sheepshead Bay Mute Swans. Through this public outcry, two New York politicians, State Senator Avella of Queens and Assemblyman Cymbrowitz of Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, drafted legislation to halt the DEC plan before the standard public discussion and comment period. Draft Management Plans always include a public vetting process prior to any formal adoption. The legislation passed both state legislative houses before it met its demise through Governor Cuomo's veto. The Governor may actually have considered some of the science surrounding the Mute

Swan problem in NY State and took an unpopular stand in the face of some public hysteria.

These local and media activists may suffer from a cognitive bias whereby "What You See is All There Is." This bias entails that a pure white, large, easily seen. charismatic creature like the Mute Swan is privileged over small, secretive and unseen creatures like the Blue-winged Teal, and they are especially privileged over the unseen life of an underwater ecosystem. Mute Swans readily adapt to human interactions (particularly when fed) and people then develop strong bonds with the swans, even naming individual birds they can identify by a mark or by particularly friendly behavior. Against this romantic backdrop, the DEC Mute Swan Management Plan is often characterized as intrusive, heavy-handed government bent on slaughtering harmless birds. People don't see the other waterfowl who are driven off territory by Mute Swans, and they are rarely aware of the habitat degradation the swans cause.

In contrast to the emotional arguments made by activists, the DEC has rigorously studied the impact of Mute Swans in complex natural ecosystems. They have evidence from controlled experiments demonstrating the degradation of SAV in habitat where Mute Swans are present; additionally, they have survey data establishing the diminished presence of native waterfowl where Mute Swans are present.

Also contrasting the media and local outrage about the plan are the birding and environmental organizations throughout the state, including NYC Audubon, NY State Audubon and the NY State Ornithological Association. These organizations and their constituencies were unanimous in their detailed and official support of the DEC plan. A number of them may have stressed a preference for humane methods over direct culling, but none stood in opposition of the need to control the expanding Mute Swan population or the basic strategies of the plan.

A good local solution, one that could contribute to a more general public acceptance of the DEC plan, would be to take several steps here in Prospect Park. First, we would need to ensure that no more Mute Swans successfully raise broods of cygnets (baby swans). This is easily accomplished through an egg oiling program—a program that is already being carried out by certified PP Alliance personnel on the eggs of Canada Geese. Geese had established a local, non-migratory

population in Prospect Park prior to the disastrous slaughter of over 400 local geese in July of 2010. Egg oiling renders eggs unviable, but the parents will still sit on the oiled eggs in an attempt to hatch them. Simply removing the eggs causes the adults to lay another clutch and begin again. When the breeding season ends and the oiled eggs don't hatch, the adult swans go about their normal routine and there would be no new swans.

A second step would be to remove a number of the young swans, those that are sure to be driven out of the park during breeding season by dominant males. These young adults would be transported to sanctuaries set up for their care and protection.

Finally, the DEC, in its revised draft plan, allows for the care and protection of local populations of Mute Swans provided they are not allowed to successfully breed. A stipulation of this solution is that local governments and organizations must bear the costs of such a program, and so municipalities and non-governmental organizations would need to take up this cause.

Through attrition, Brooklyn's Mute Swan population could eventually be reduced to zero without violent or inhumane interdiction. This could resolve any potential conflict between the vital need to protect wildlife ecosystems and the desire to protect Mute Swans.

Environment for the Americas

### 2015 IMBD Birdathon Results By Bobbi Manian

The Brooklyn Bird Club held its annual birdathon to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on Saturday, May 9th. The theme for this year's hemisphere-wide event, chosen by Environment for the Americas, the sponsor organization for

International Migratory Bird Day, was "Restore Habitat, Restore Birds." Working with EFTA, we partnered with Vallarta Botanical Gardens near Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, where we will sponsor a project in the hills above the gardens to restore some native Pine and Oak

forest and install an eco-friendly trail.

Unfavorable winds made for what was by all accounts one of the lowest count Big Days in recent memory. It was a tough day out there! As teams passed each other in the field they kept asking the same thing, "where are the birds?" Some teams dealt with the paucity of birds with humor, such as The Laughing See-Gulls, pictured below. But Brooklyn is tough and one way or another, our teams persevered, some past sunset, to eek out every last bird possible.



The Laughing See-gulls had a sense of humor about it all!

In the end, a cumulative total of 119 species were seen (which is really very good seeing as last year's total was 129). In the final tally, the Timberdoodlers, winning for a second year in a row, netted the most birds in Brooklyn overall with 106. The Soft Targets had the most birds in Prospect Park with 67 species.

Pledges are still coming in but we anticipate raising over \$1500 for our cause.

#### Final counts:

**Timberdoodlers**: 106 (Dennis Hrehowsik, Kristin Costello, Bobbi Manian)

**The Laughing See-Gulls**: 88 (Karen O'Hearn, Monica Berger, Jane Simmons, Marc Brawer, Mira Furgoch, Chris Laskowski)

**The Soft Targets**: 67 (Mike Yuan, Bob Washburn, D. Eddie Davis, HJ Kim, Alie Rattay and Paige Linden)

**Wandering Warblers**: 60 (Jerry Layton, Steve Nanz, Janet Zinn and Alan Baratz)

**The Bird Squad**: 59 (Rob Bate, Tracy Meade, Marvin Baptiste, Rob Ruvolo, and Michael Landy)

**Intro to Birdwatching**: 42 (Michele Dreger's beginners walk)

The Fledge Allegiance: 41 (Heidi Cleven, Andrew Land, Freyja Land (5), Thea Land (3))

Of note, the Intro to Birdwatching team led by Michele Dreger averaged 16.8 birds/hour, a possible new record! The Soft Targets had the most warblers in the park (13). And first-time team, The Laughing See-Gulls, had the only Fish Crow and Little Blue Heron of the day. Congratulations to all teams and thank you to all our sponsors!!!



### Do The Reading: The Thing With Feathers by Noah Strycker

Reviewed by Tracy Meade

Above all, Stryker's is a playful, clever book. The author's decision to engage

these stylistic features shows up at every level of the book: from its organizational arrangement of 3 parts (Mind; Body; Spirit), to the names of the book's chapters, as well as in Stryker's development of the content for each chapter. To enjoy the book from cover-to-cover, the reader needs to find these writerly choices interesting, and based on the many rave reviews reprinted on the first four pages of the book, clearly lots of folks did.

But I didn't. I found the book equal parts fun and frustration. I don't tend to read non-fiction for pleasure alone; I read non-fiction because I care to learn as much as possible about the subject at hand. Given the limited time I have available to read books *to learn more* about birds, I don't have much patience for digression into the etymology of the word "wanderlust" or how much the author likes pot roast or the failed attempt to outfit factory-farm chickens with contact lenses, or how much the speed of urban pedestrians has increased in ten years' time.

Still, the subtitle of the book, *The Surprising Lives Of Birds And What They Reveal About Being Human*, should

have tipped me off early on that the book is about birds and humans—and the behavioral intersections of the two species. My sense is that Stryker hopes that humans might forgo quick dismissal of the importance of getting to know birds better because they are not so different from us after all. In line with this thinking, the target readership may be tipped towards non-birders over birders, although I can see birders flipping through the book based on bird behaviors that have always piqued their interest: homing, flocking, cooperating, remembering, nest-building, and so on.

I did enjoy the book's introduction, with its fanciful opening sentence: "Imagine what might happen if birds studied *us.*" And I like how Strycker plays out the idea of Robins as scientists pursuing research to understand human behavior. Additionally, a number of chapters include evidence to debunk or question information I've heard from others about snowy owls, vultures, lemmings, and starlings. And what's not to like in this factual tidbit: "Vulture excrement is, amazingly, completely sterile."

If you enjoy a playful medley of anecdote, scientific study, folktale and history about birds and humans, and you don't mind several accounts of hapless and cruel experiments on birds, you will likely enjoy this book. A non-birder colleague, one whose intelligence and opinion I respect and value, recently surprised me when she said she was reading this book and enjoying it very much; her testimony makes it difficult for me to generalize from my reading experience, and so I say: give it a try!

Finally, it seems fair to ask if the book is successful in presenting bird behavior as a lens through which we can understand more about being human. I've an obvious opinion, but I wonder what you think?

\*\* A copy of The Thing With Feathers will be available to a BBC member at the June 23rd club event.\*\*



# Species ID: Thrushing By Dennis Hrehowsik

As migration draws to a close, one of my favorite hobbies within a hobby is thrushing and going for the cycle of thrushes on a given day. The problem: Gray-cheeked

and Swainson's Thrushes can look very similar, especially in the shaded, low-light habitats that these birds tend to favor. Let's go over some of the traditional field marks and discuss areas that may need a little clarification.

#### Swainson's

- strong buffy eyering
- buffy chest, sides of neck and area around cheek patch
- lighter chest spots
- tail and back matching green/brown color
- overall warm appearance

### **Gray-cheeked**

- · weak gray eyering
- clean white chest, sides of neck and area around cheek patch
- darker chest spots
- tail and back matching green/gray color
- overall cool appearance

Eyering: we are told the Swainson's has a bold, buffy eyeing but the eyering of the Gray-cheeked is not usually discussed. The Gray-cheeked does not, as Ken Kaufmann likes to say, "exactly lack an eyering," which leads to some confusion. The Gray-cheeked has a thin whitish-gray eyering that can vary greatly in thickness, much like that of a Hermit Thrush. Sometimes the thickness of this eyering can approach that of the Swainson's, so pay close attention to the temperature of the eyeing and not presence.

Chest: we are often told that the Gray-cheeked has darker spots than the Swainson's but this is not entirely true. The spots appear darker because the Gray-cheeked lacks the buffy chest color of the Swainson's and thus the spots contrast more against the white chest of the Gray-cheeked. The lack of this buffy chest band also makes the birds' upper parts contrast more strongly with their under parts giving the Gray-cheeked a longer, leaner look in the field

compared with that of the Swainson's. The lack of this buffy chest color contributes to the Gray-cheeked's overall cool appearance which is why I always joke about them having a cold, cold heart.

#### Bicknell's Thrush

Originally I was not going to discuss Bicknell's Thrush in this piece as at the present moment it is considered only identifiable by song. This week I had the rare opportunity—both alone and with the BBC Saturday walk birders—to spend some time with the cooperative Bicknell's that has been in Prospect Park. While the identity was made by song and call, the bird is unmistakably different. Smaller, more compact, warmer, shorter primary projection, and more yellow on lower mandible than Gray-cheeked.



The author examines skins at the AMNH.

I was also struck by these features when I had the skins in hand at the AMNH. As time goes by, I believe more reliable field marks will be developed for the Bicknell's Thrush, and especially as digital photography becomes even more widespread in birding, visual ID alone of this bird will become increasingly accepted.

# Feeding the Birds by Janet Schumacher

Nancy Tim has been putting out bird seed in the Vale of Cashmere for more than four years. Either she or one of her Plaza Street neighbors, Howard Mandell or Sharon McGinnis, take seed to the Vale almost every day in the winter. Howard is a photographer, and they all enjoy seeing the birds. This year Nancy said there were many aggressive Mourning Doves - they even intimidated the Blue Jays. Nancy would like permission for a feeder in the Vale.



### Submissions wanted!

The Clapper Rail is always in need of interesting content. As a volunteer organization, we encourage editorial contributions from our members. If you would like to submit a birding-related article, or other contributions such as trip reports, local events, members in the news, or images, please contact us at newsletter@brooklynbirdclub.org

### BBC EVENING PROGRAMS

**IMPORTANT!** Meeting locations are changing for 2015 due to construction at our usual venue, the Litchfield Villa. *Please note location for each individual meeting as they may change from month to month*.

Unless otherwise noted, all start at 7 p.m. For up-to-date information and directions go to: http://www.brooklynbirdclub.org/meetings.htm

Tuesday, June 23rd: An environmental DNA (eDNA) approach to discovering life in NYC Ponds.

Presenter: Seth Wollney

Location: Brooklyn Public Library Central Branch at Grand Army Plaza

Various human impacts, such as pollution and buildings, can shape freshwater pond ecosystems in the urban landscape of New York City. Ponds are important centers of biodiversity in cities and benefit humans in many ways. At our June meeting, Seth Wollney will talk about his project to inventory the biological communities in seven local ponds using cutting-edge environmental DNA collection techniques. The data collected will lead to a deeper understanding of what humans can do to help conserve these important ecosystems for future generations.

As a native New Yorker, Seth Wollney has been a life-long naturalist exploring the ponds, woods, fields and beaches of the city. While passionate about almost everything that concerns ecology and natural history, he has a particular interest in birds, turtles, dragonflies and moths. He is currently working on his doctoral degree at the Conservation Genetics lab at the College of Staten Island, CUNY. His thesis project investigates how biological communities found in urban ponds are impacted by human activities with a particular focus on painted turtle ecology and population biology. In March 2015, he received an Honorable Mention from the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program!



The June meeting will be our last until the Fall season. Check the website in late summer for the fall schedule! http://www.brooklynbirdclub.org/meetings.htm

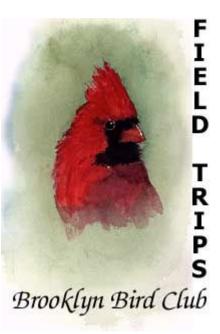
### LATE SPRING-FALL 2015 Schedule

### **Information and Registration**

No registration is required for Prospect Park or Green-Wood Cemetery trips. For all other trips, advance registration is required; exact location and time of meeting will be provided at time of registration. Car pool fees are required for some trips and should be paid directly to your driver.

In noting the need to make trip registrations more manageable and fair, the BBC council has imposed these guidelines:

- With the exception of Prospect Park and Green-wood Cemetery trips, a TWO-WEEK registration period will precede all trips.
- Club members will be given first-priority for all trips except Prospect and Green-wood Cemetery. Nonmembers and guests are welcome on BBC trips but only if there is available space at the end of the registration period. Drivers, whether members or not, will normally have priority over non-drivers. Full weekend (overnight) trips are reserved for members only.



- Children 14 years of age or younger are welcome on trips but must be accompanied by an adult guardian.
- Some trips have limited enrollment, at the discretion of the trip leader. So register early! In addition, most car trips require lunch, water, appropriate clothes for seasonal weather, and all the essentials you require for day trips.
- Please call registrars as early as possible within the registration period, and before 9 p.m. Please be sure to leave your phone number(s) so that we may contact you in the event of a schedule change.
- Status changes of a trip due to inclement weather will be posted on our Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/BrooklynBirdClub and also on Peter Dorosh's blog: http://prospectsightings.blogspot.com/ Please check before leaving for the trip if the weather looks questionable.

We hope these guidelines will facilitate the registration process in the fairest possible way.

The registrar and information source for each trip is listed at the end of the trip description.

**Prospect Park Bird 2-hour Sunday Walks:** In addition to the trips listed below, the first Sunday of every month the Brooklyn Bird Club participates in the Prospect Park Audubon Center's "First Sunday" two-hour walks. All walks leave from the Prospect Park Audubon Center at the Boathouse at 8 a.m. (10 a.m. in January and February; check http://www.prospectpark.org/calendar to confirm times.)

#### **Fall 2015 Prospect Park Walks**

No registration is required for these weekly walks in Prospect Park during migration season. (**Note:** due to possible scheduling conflicts, leader substitutions may be made for some dates.)

# TUESDAYS: Sept 8th, Sept 15th, Sept 22nd, Sept 29th, Oct 6th, Oct 13th, Oct 20th

Leader: Rob Bate or Bobbi Manian. Meet at Bartel Pritchard Square park entrance at **7:30** a.m.

# THURSDAYS: August 27th, Sept 3rd, Sept 10th, Sept 17th, Sept 24th, Oct 1st, Oct 8th, Oct 15th

Leader: Tom Stephenson. Meet at the Stranahan Statue, Grand Army Plaza, at **7:15** a.m.

## SATURDAYS: Sept 5th, Sept 12th, Sept 19th, Sept 26th, Oct 3rd, Oct 10th

Leader: Dennis Hrehowsik. Meet at Ocean/Parkside Avenues "The Pergola" at **7:15** a.m.

(**Note:** due to possible scheduling conflicts, leader substitutions may be made for some dates.)

# June 5th - June 7th, Spring Weekend: Mianus River Gorge, Fahnestock, Schwanagunk: a journey to the lower Hudson River Valley NOTE: Limit 12 participants

**Leaders:** Ryan Bass, Peter Dorosh **Focus:** breeding birds and late migrants.

Note: Excellent breeding bird locations: Mianus River Gorge Preserve, Clarence Fahnestock State Park (led by Ryan), and Schwanagunk Grasslands. Additional locales might include Ward Pond Ridge Park, Constitution Marsh (some rugged low hiking) and Iona Marsh. Fahnestock will be long periods of walking on trails that may be slightly rugged and at times sloping. Wear comfortable light hikers. Any questions, email the registrar. Members wanting to do Saturday-Sunday 2 day trip can alert the registrar.

**Car fee:** \$100.00

**Registrar:** Peter Dorosh Prosbird@aol.com (preferred) or 347-622-3559 text only **Registration Period:** April 1st - May 30th

# Saturday, June 13th, Breeding birds of central Long Island

**Leader:** Eric Salzman www.ericsalzman.com **Focus:** Breeding birds. In past trips led by Eric, Blue
Grosbeak, Vesper Sparrow, Roseate Tern, and marsh
sparrows were some specialties. Visits to the
Shinnecock region are very productive for coastal
species.

**Car fee:** \$30.00

**Registrar:** Donna Evans, email devansny@earthlink.net

**Registration Period:** June 2nd -June 11th

### Saturday, June 20th, A Memorial to Jean Bourque: Nature of Floyd Bennett Field

Meet 8:30 am at the south entrance parking lot, accessible by the Q35 bus

http://tinyurl.com/June20thJbourque

**Leaders:** Steve Nanz/Jerry Layton (insects,

dragonflies, butterflies), Marielle Anzelone (plants,

botany), Peter Dorosh (general)

**Registrar:** Peter Dorosh Prosbird@aol.com (preferred) or 347-622-3559 text only

Registration Period: June 9th - June 18th Note: This trip celebrates the memory of Jean Bourque whose love of Floyd Bennett Field was her great joy. Jean, who passed away in June 2014, will be remembered best for the plants and habitats she nurtured and loved and birds and nature that thrived upon them. This walk will focus on plants, insects, birds and overall nature. This event is celebrated in conjunction with NYC Audubon and the National Park Service

The Q35 bus (which goes to the south Floyd Bennett Field entrance) stops in front of the Target store near Brooklyn College. Nearest train to the Q35 is the IRT to Brooklyn College (last stop.)

### Leader profiles:

Marielle Anzelone http://www.popupforest.org/, http://nycwildflowerweek.org
Steve Nanz http://stevenanz.com
Peter Dorosh
http://prospectsightings.blogspot.com/

# Saturday, June 27th Staten Island Dragonflies and Odonata

**Leader:** Seth Wollney **Registrar:** Sandy Paci, email sandypac56@gmail.com

**Registration Period:** June 16th - June 25th **Focus:** the rich diversity of dragonflies and

damselflies

# Saturday, July 11th, Cupsogue Beach County Park, central Long Island

**Leaders:** Bobbi Manian, Dennis Hrehowsik **Focus:** Shorebirds and Terns. Herons, egrets, water

birds

**Car fee:** \$30.00

**Registrar:** Mike Yuan email mjyuan@gmail.com **Registration Period: June 30th -July 9th** 

**Note:** Visit timed to maximum low tide. There is a parking entrance fee. This trip requires

walking/wading across a channel at low tide. Water may be waist deep or lower depending on tide. Wear old sneakers or water shoes that won't suction off. Also wear a sun hat, suntan lotion, and bring plenty of water in this shadeless beach marsh locale. You may want to bring a campstool. A stationary observation most of the time, scope required. The birding area is a large mudflat or sandbar on falling low tide that will attract a variety of birds. For more information or questions, email either the registrar or Dennis deepseagangster@gmail.com

**Site profile:** http://tinyurl.com/CUPbirds

### Sunday, August 16th, Jamaica Bay Refuge

Leader: Rafael Campos

Focus: Peak of shorebird migration

Car fee: \$10.00

**Registrar:** Donna Evans, email devansny@earthlink.net

Registration Period: August 4th - August 13th

### \*August 22nd & 23rd: An overnight weekend to

New Jersey's shorebirds (Members only trip; limit 12)

**Leader:** Peter Dorosh

**Note:** For this overnight trip, locations include different habitats that attract a diversity of shorebirds: Whitesbog Preserve, Sods fields, Edward G Forsythe NWR ("Brigantine"); other birds will be recorded.

Car fee: \$90.00

Registrar: Peter Dorosh Prosbird@aol.com

(preferred) or 347-622-3559 text

**Registration Period:** April 15th - August 9th **Site Profiles:** http://www.whitesbog.org/http://www.fws.gov/refuge/edwin\_b\_forsythe/

### Saturday, August 29th , Prospect Park

Meet 7:00 am at Grand Army Plaza park entrance, "Stranahan "statue

Leader: Gabriel Willow www.nycaudubon.org/trip-

leaderseducators

Focus: early fall migrants, warblers, flycatchers, and

songbirds

### Tsunday, September 6th, World Shorebird Day

**Leader:** Mike Yuan

**Focus:** Tour of shorebird rich locations in Brooklyn

and Jamaica Bay Refuge

Car fee: \$12.00

**Registrar:** Dennis Hrehowsik email deepseagangster@gmail.com

Registration Period: August 25th - Sept 3rd

### Saturday, September 12th, Exploring obscure

**Staten Island** 

**Leader:** Peter Dorosh

Focus: Fall migrants in a new location and lesser

known areas **Car fee:** \$22.00

**Registrar:** Peter Dorosh Prosbird@aol.com

(preferred) or 347-622-3559 text

Registration Period: Sept 1st - Sept 10th

**Note:** We will be exploring a new location, St. Francis Woods, a recent land acquisition by the NYS DEC. Other locations might include Goodhue Park, Silver Lake Park and a coastal park in this all-day trip.

Exact itinerary to be determined.

# Saturday, September 19th, Fort Tilden, Rockaway

**Leader:** Steve Nanz

Focus: Fall migrants peak. Raptors, swallows,

warblers, and other passerines.

**Car fee:** \$12.00

**Registrar:** Heidi Steiner -Nanz Heidi Steiner-Nanz email heidi.steiner@verizon.net or call before 8 pm

718-369-2116

Registration Period: Sept 8th - Sept 17th

### Saturday, September 26th Bush Terminal Pier Park Big Mini Sit & Greenwood Cemetery tour

Meet 7:30 am west corner of 4th Ave and 45th Street where R train stops at 45th St. We will walk to the Bush Terminal Park at 43rd St and 1st Ave entrance. **Leader:** Peter Dorosh 347-622-3559 (text message only)

**Focus:** a one/two-hour stationary "sit " at Bush Terminal locust grove for fall migrants, warblers, flycatchers, and songbirds, then back to the 4th Ave entrance of Greenwood Cemetery (15 minute walk); the emphasis is to see what birds visit in Bush Terminal Park's first fall season.

# Saturday, October 3rd , Sunken Meadow Park to Captree Island

Leader: Rusty Harold

Focus: Fall migrants peak. Raptors, Sparrows, late

season warblers, water birds.

**Car fee:** \$25.00

Registrar: Chris Laskowski email

celaskowski@yahoo.com

**Registration Period:** Sept 22nd - Oct 1st

# Saturday Oct 10th Saturday Autumn Series Prospect Park (see box at top of page)

Leader: Dennis Hrehowsik

### Sunday, October 18th , Marine Park Sparrows

**Leader:** Sean Zimmer

Focus: Fall migrants peak of sparrows. Raptors, late

season warblers, marsh and water birds. **Car fee:** \$10.00 (or public transportation)

**Registrar:** Kathy Toomey email kathleentoomey@gmail.com

Registration Period: Oct 6th - Oct 15th

### Cotober 23rd - 25th Weekends: Autumn in New Jersey's northern Highlands (Members only, limit 12)

Leader: Peter Dorosh

**Focus:** Fall migrants various locations, including two hawk watches; primarily hawks and sparrows, open

space species.

Car fee: \$120.00

Registrar: Peter Dorosh Prosbird@aol.com

(preferred) or 347-622-3559 text

**Registration Period:** June 1st - Oct 11th