Winter 2018

Brooklyn Bird Club's

CLAPPER RAIL

Editor's note

Clapper rail at Plumb Beach. Photograph by Marc Brawer.

Birders make different New Year's resolutions than most. A new patch to explore, more songs to learn, a target number of species for the county, state or country. As for the Brooklyn Bird Club, 2018 opens some new chapters. Dennis Hrehowsik has become president after Rob Bate called an end to his five years in that role. Rob, of course, isn't going anywhere, and will continue to spearhead conservation efforts. You can learn more about Dennis, how he got to this point and his ideas for the club, in this issue. In other news, we recap December's Christmas Bird Count (with a stellar map designed by Tina Alleva) and share with you a report on the BBC's finances, courtesy of treasurer Heidi Steiner.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't recognize a few new editorial contributors: Mike Yuan, who wrote the Sparks column, long-overdue since he proposed this series some years ago, and illustrator Jen Kostman, who joins our outstanding roster of artists. There's also a call for poetry submissions, another Clapper Rail first.

But New Year's resolutions can be bittersweet, and for Michele Dreger, who has led Prospect Park's weekend beginner's walks for more than 15 years, hers include moving to Florida. As Tina writes in a profile of her friend and birding mentor, Michele has led over 1,000 walks in that time, averaging roughly three newcomers per walk, which comes to a total of 3,000 people she introduced to birds in the park. Forget a New Year's resolution, that's the gift of a lifetime.

– Ryan Goldberg

Cover: Red-headed woodpecker at Green-Wood Cemetery. Photograph by Janet Zinn.

Inside this issue

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2017 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Ryan Goldberg

Northern flicker at Brooklyn Bridge Park. Photograph by Janet Zinn.

At Green-Wood Cemetery, five birders warmed from a stop in the mausoleum waited for a juvenile red-headed woodpecker that never did show…

In Prospect Park, other birders ran into three tufted titmice, unaware that they would be found nowhere else that day…

Elsewhere, at Breezy Point, a merry band of seven sea-watchers counted too-distant-to-identify scoter flocks: "1,498, 1,499, 1,500"...

While at Spring Creek, a grasshopper sparrow popped up onto a leafless branch, a half-century first...

For the 118th annual Christmas Bird Count on December 16, 88 birders on 11 different teams fanned out across beaches, creeks, marshes, parks, sewage treatment plants and old landfills, along the Brooklyn coast from Williamsburg to Jamaica Bay and out to the western Rockaways (sorry, Queens County Bird Club), through city streets to historic parks and cemeteries.

Their observations were pieced together that night at the Brooklyn Bird Club's annual compilation at Prospect Park's boathouse. The picture they told was tense and occasionally dispiriting, with "lots of fingernail catches" for common species, as compiler Rick Cech put it, but with some pleasant surprises and an overall count of 120 species that was in-line with past records.

It has been a troubling winter for songbirds. The count yielded all-time lows for American goldfinches, titmice, and dark-eyed juncos, plus decade-lows for hermit thrushes, cedar waxwings, and white- and red-breasted nuthatches. There was one black-capped chickadee at Prospect Park. In my group at Green-Wood Cemetery, a lone white-breasted nuthatch was the extent of our tiny songbirds. No purple finches or pine siskins were seen. (See the charts at the end of the issue.) In the two months after the count, the feeders in Prospect Park remained as quiet as a vigil.

Still, as is the case this time of year, most of the action was coastal. Experienced birders suggested that a big freeze up north may have pushed waterfowl to our shores. Bufflehead, nearly 800 of them, were seen in above-average numbers, as were common loons and, in the only all-time high for waterfowl in 2017, hooded mergansers. More than half of the 111 reported came from Jamaica Bay, where the West Pond was frozen, which itself was a good sign—that meant that it's back to freshwater. "That's one duck that's doing well," Rick Cech said of the hoodies. Seventeen Northern pintails also surfaced on the East Pond. My heart goes out to the folks there who counted 16,300 brant—the most-abundant bird in the count area—out of the 22,957 recorded on the day.

Unsurprisingly, Sean Sime's group at Breezy Point came up with key sightings, such as 25 common eiders and a flyover of five common mergansers, which joined eight others on the day for a decade-high count of 13. A pair of Bonaparte's gulls was a save, as was a pair of chipping sparrows, and a snowy owl. More snowies would follow in the weeks to come, however, close to 10 at Breezy, Jamaica Bay, and Floyd Bennett Field by the time of writing.

Common mergansers at Breezy Point. Photograph by Sean Sime.

Due east at Jacob Riis Park and Fort Tilden were Shane Blodgett, Klemens Gasser, and American Museum of Natural History's own Paul Sweet, who also recorded good numbers, which occasionally tracked with the Breezy bunch and later led to a comic repartee between team leaders Sean and Shane at the compilation. "We saw ours first," Shane joked.

Canvasback and ring-necked ducks were nowhere to be seen, which means they could soon drop from irregular sightings to rarities. Three red-necked grebes at Floyd Bennett Field were a major highlight. One American bittern flew out at the Plumb Beach marsh and two red-shouldered hawks came out at Marine Park.

Grasshopper sparrow at Spring Creek. Photograph by Steve Nanz.

Orange-crowned warbler at Bergen Beach. Photograph by Tripper Paul.

Nearby, the Spring Creek group led by Steve Nanz earned quite a few save birds, such as two ring-necked pheasants at the Pennsylvania Avenue landfill and the aforementioned grasshopper sparrow at Spring Creek. Nanz's photo of the bird made it into Rick Cech's slideshow presentation that night. Along the coast, six orange-crowned warblers were spotted at five different locations, tying an all-time high for the species.

Word of the grasshopper sparrow had leaked out during the day, but in Prospect Park, Michele Dreger and Tina Alleva had kept a lid on their secret sighting. On the edge of the ice in the lake's north-shore phragmites, they found the juvenile common gallinule that had turned up there the month before but hadn't been seen in a few weeks. Michele triumphantly raised her hand when Rick Cech called out the species, and held up her camera with the photo to prove it.

For more details, see the charts at the end of the issue.

Green-winged teal at Spring Creek. Photograph by Steve Nanz.

Clockwise from top: Long-tailed ducks (Matthieu Benoit); hybrid Brant-Snow geese (Mike Yuan); Chipping sparrow (Sean Sime); Ruddy ducks (Rick Cech); Snow geese (Sean Sime).

2017 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT BROOKLYN

11	88	120	56,886
TEAMS	PARTICIPANTS	SPECIES	TOTAL BIRDS COUNTED

Christmas bird count map by Tina Alleva.

Snowbirds

By Sheila Friedman

Snowbirds are here! No, I'm not referring to your parents or grandparents who migrate to Florida each year to escape the frigid New York winters. The snowbirds I'm talking about are those chubby, sparrow-sized gray and white birds that make their appearance at the first sign of cold weather. They are the ground-hopping birds often seen at feeders searching for seeds and, when alarmed, that flush into a nearby tree, flashing their white outer-tail feathers. Of course I'm talking about the ubiquitous dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*).

Dark-eyed junco. Pencil drawing by Sheila Friedman.

Dark-eyed juncos (DEJU for short) are common and widespread. Cornell's Lab of Ornithology lists the DEJU population at approximately 630 million. (That said, it's estimated that its population declined by about 1.4 percent per year between 1966 and 2015, a cumulative decline of 50 percent.) This familiar little bird we see as winter sets in creates only mild excitement among birders, although I think we are always glad to see the first few of the season—the new kids on the block. "Oh, it's just a junco," we say.

"Dark-eyed juncos have been the subject of studies for almost 100 years."

But as I thought about a seasonal bird to write about, I remembered some interesting research I once read about juncos. And so this article took me on a journey I didn't expect, and I came to realize that the dark-eyed junco deserves a lot more attention and appreciation than it gets. The junco, I learned, has a lot to teach us.

Dark-eyed juncos have been the subject of studies for almost 100 years. In the 1920s, William Rowan, the head of the zoology department at the University of Alberta, in Canada, was the first to study them. Rowan had always been interested in nature and ecology, but his main interest was birds. According to the University of Alberta Alumni Association, Rowan "viewed western Canada as a wonderful outdoor laboratory for ecological and ornithological studies." He wondered what triggered birds to migrate. At the time, the prevailing theory was that temperature and barometric pressure caused migratory and reproductive behavior. Rowan had a different idea. He hypothesized that changes in the amount of daylight was responsible for those behaviors.

In 1924, he set out to test his hypothesis, albeit in secret. One might wonder why he conducted his studies in secret and not in the university laboratory where he worked. Rowan wanted to test his ideas in the field, whereas the president of the university thought that only research conducted in a lab was valid. Rowan even had his research funds cut. Far from discouraged, he set up two secret aviaries in his backyard, one to manipulate daylight, the other as a control. The aviaries were equipped with lights and dark-eyed juncos were his research subjects. He chose juncos because of their abundance and their ability to thrive in captivity. Just as he had theorized, the juncos in the aviary with gradually increasing periods of daily light developed larger gonads and began to sing and court as if it were spring.

Rowan was the first to test that photoperiod, or day length, was in fact the mechanism that triggered both reproductive and migratory behavior.

An interesting aside: once the juncos were released in winter, Rowan couldn't track them. He needed a

"better guinea pig of the airways" and settled on the crow. He collected 500 of them and dyed their tails yellow to more easily follow them. Rowan was well-known in Alberta and people followed stories of his studies in the newspapers. It proved to be a pleasant distraction from the misery of the Depression.

Snow bird. Detail of print by John J. Audubon.

According to Leslie Day, in her *Field Guide to the Neighborhood Birds of New York City*, dark-eyed juncos draw their name from the medieval Latin for reed bunting and, in hyemalis, meaning belonging to winter. They're members of the Emberizidae family of sparrows and live all over North America. There are six subspecies of DEJU in North America: slate-colored juncos are the ones we find in the east, while in the west live pink-sided, white-winged, gray-headed, Oregon, and red-backed. (White-winged juncos inhabit the Black Hills of South Dakota, where the weather can be extreme and prone to forest fires, and they are often the first animals to return after a fire, letting wildlife rehabilitators know that the environment can again support life.) Sibley's *Guide to Birds of Western North America* devotes four beautifully-illustrated pages to these subspecies. Depending on where you observe juncos they will look different. How can all of these non-identical looking birds be considered one species?

About the same time William Rowan was conducting his experiments, a professor named Alden Miller at Berkeley was also using DEJUs for research. Miller spent ten years traveling across North America capturing, measuring, and classifying close to 12,000 juncos. He organized them by color and size. These birds are part of existing collections at the University of California at San Diego that are still used in studies. He identified 21 groups of juncos across North America, 15 of which were living in the U.S. and Canada. He found that they all had one trait in common—they all had dark-brown eyes. These dark-eyed juncos were classified into six subspecies. The subspecies looked different but often interbred where their ranges met. This ability to interbreed turned out to be the main reason that DEJU are considered a single species. However, Miller didn't have the technology to prove this; there was no DNA analysis at that time.

Through the work of other ornithologists today, like Dr. Borja Mila of Madrid's National Museum of Natural Sciences, we now know that DEJU had

Snow tracks of dark-eyed juncos. Photograph by Sheila Friedman.

a common ancestor, the yellow-eyed junco (*Junco phaenotus*) in Mexico. This evolution happened 10-20,000 years ago when the glaciers receded and the YEJU began to recolonize North America. This is considered relatively rapid in evolutionary terms.

We've already learned so much thanks to the junco, but there's more. Dr. Ellen Ketterson and her research team at the University of Indiana have been studying

juncos for years. She chose them for the same reasons as her predecessor, Rowan. She adds that juncos also nest on the ground although it's not always easy to find their nests. In a piece called "Juncos Underground" on her blog Tough Little Birds, researcher Katie LaBarbera talks about the odd places juncos will nest. One spot appeared to be a small tunnel on the ground but on closer inspection turned out to be a cow's hoof print. Juncos had made their nest on a cow path.

Going back to Ketterson and her team, one of their most interesting studies involved testing the effects of testosterone on the birds' social behavior. One group of male juncos had a testosterone pill implanted under their skin, while the control group was left alone. The researchers found that the testosterone group sang more often, had larger territories, and spent more time attracting mates. While 90 percent of all juncos mate monogamously, the testosterone-treated birds did not. In fact, the offspring of the testosterone "dads" grew more slowly, while the control-group males fed their young more often. The lives of the former were "slightly more perilous" with a survival rate of half that of the control birds. The lower-testosterone males were better dads. As Ellen Ketterson says, "One of the interesting things is that all males stick around to help. If they have higher testosterone they help less. If they have lower testosterone they help more."

"The lower-testosterone males were better dads."

As the winter deepens, the snowbirds are hopping around on the snow, but if it's too frigid to stand outside with your binoculars, make a cup of tea, snuggle into a cozy chair and watch this absorbing video about the junco, a "simple but elegant little bird."

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Snow Birds. Mixed media drawing by Jen Kostman.

Michele Dreger:

A Walk Through the Years

By Tina Alleva

Michele Dreger in Prospect Park.

"Why are you making me go on this bird walk?" I exclaimed to my boyfriend on a cool April morning in 2013. "What are we going to look at? Pigeons?"

Despite my protestations, he dragged me to the boathouse at Prospect Park to join the "Introduction to Birdwatching" walk. The thaw of winter was in full effect and the promise of spring made him want to get outside and, as he put it, "try new things." As we approached the boathouse, I consoled myself with the thought that at least it would make for a entertaining story to tell later at the bar.

"Who's here for the bird walk?" Michele Dreger, petite but with a heavy dose of Brooklynese, asked our group. She handed out spare binoculars from a small black backpack filled with optics. She started off the walk the same way she had started every one before (and after), teaching the fresh-faced rookies like me how to focus and use their binoculars.

"Look at the 1882 plaque on the bridge with your left eye closed," she told us. "Once you have it in focus, open your left eye and use the center dial to focus that. Then slowly push the lenses together until you see one image." She instructed us with the unfailing patience of a kindergarten teacher.

As we set off through the park, she began to point out and identify the various birds: cardinals, blue jays and, not to my surprise, pigeons. As I was finally getting the hang of using the binoculars, Michele brought our attention to a red-bellied woodpecker working its way up a nearby tree. It was resplendent with its day-glo red head juxtaposed against its bold black-and-white striped back, like the latest fashion ensemble. "Whoaaa!" I exclaimed as it clawed its way up the side of a tree.

I marveled that such a bird could exist in this urban environment, so close to where I had resided for over a decade. How had I never noticed? My surprise was palpable, and when I turned to Michele I could see the proud look on her face. For her, igniting that spark in new birders is one of the reasons she has now been leading this walk for over 15 years. Years later she told me, "My favorite experience is when somebody finally figures out how to use binoculars and they look at a bird and they say "aaaaaaahhhh." Just that 'awe' when they finally capture the bird for the first time. That always gets me."

Prospect Park wasn't always the ideal birding destination that it is today. In the '70s and early '80s Prospect Park was a well-known den of crime and drug dealing. From an early age Michele, born in the Carroll Gardens neighborhood of Brooklyn in 1956 and raised in the house that her grandparents had purchased in 1942, was no stranger to Prospect Park. Although she was forbidden to enter it, she would sometimes play hooky there at the age of 17. She later admits, "I was afraid to go there. You went to jog there, you went to do exercise there, but all you did was take the road. You didn't really go into the park."

That all changed when Tupper Thomas joined the Prospect Park Alliance in 1980. "Tupper Thomas did a really good job of helping Prospect Park become a destination rather than a garbage pit," Michele remembers. Thomas is widely credited for slowly restoring the park to the recreational wilderness that was envisioned by its original creators, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. This renaissance opened a new world to Michele, who already had an affinity for birds as far as back as the age of five, when her grandfather gave her a field guide that she then memorized from front to back.

After her daughter was born in 1985, Michele started planning yearly Mother's Day picnics in the park, which included a search for her then-nemesis bird, the scarlet tanager. She had heard that they could be seen in the park during spring migration. "One year," she recalls, "I was having a really good bird day and started climbing up to Lookout while my family stayed on the Peninsula having a picnic. I saw some redstarts, but I was so angry that after all these years I still hadn't seen the scarlet tanager. I got back to the picnic and my husband said, 'Oh, is that what you're looking for?' It was 10 feet away. So that was it. My daughter and my husband, we all got hooked on birding at that time." In the years that followed, Michele met other birders in the park and her hobby solidified.

Years later, Michele was working as facilitator at the post office, teaching motivating techniques to postal employees. The post office bought a "canned class" and Michele was to be the face of the eight-hour daily course. In her time there she taught over 2,200 employees. She learned that she was adept at public speaking and loved doing it. But after the events of September 11, she says, "I needed to just meditate and be in nature."

Michele teaching binocular basics in Prospect Park.

The Audubon center soon opened in Prospect Park on April 22. Michele volunteered there and on the first day she was asked if she felt confident enough to lead bird walks. She said she did, and started on their second weekend. With her background in teaching and public speaking, and her love for birding in the park, it was a perfect fit. In addition, Michele was required to teach a course in order to get her certification as Master Facilitator. Thus, "Introduction to Birdwatching" was born. The tours were held twice on Saturday and twice on Sunday, at 10 and noon. She was hooked. "It was like I was addicted to mornings at the park," she says. "It became my religion, the Church of the Outdoors."

"It became my religion, the Church of the Outdoors."

But after 15 years, she's about to leave her pulpit. This spring will be her final season leading these introduction walks. She has been retired from the post office for five years, and will be moving to Florida. Her new condo there overlooks a canal where she has seen tri-colored herons and an osprey's nest. She plans to spend more time with her sister Susan, who also owns a condo in the same building, and her parents who are in their eighties. "We intend to have a great time together to make up for the last 20 years we lived so far apart," she says.

Which isn't to say that her touring days are over. She says, "I see myself leading bird tours in the intercoastal marshes of Volusia County. That's what I see myself doing. I see myself learning about shorebirds and being able to monitor a Wilson's plover's nest. That's what I wanna do."

Her well-wishers are too many to count. Quite a few birders who learned from Michele went on to lead walks of their own for the Brooklyn Bird Club, like Dennis Hrehowsik, its new president. "She made it a fun-filled walk open to all ages, all races," says Peter Dorosh, who knows a thing about commitment to the Brooklyn birding community. "She's made people's lives better. She always made people feel good and important after a two-hour walk. And she left no one behind."

Cyrus Baty, who has been birding with Michele for three years and will be taking over her walk, sums up his experience: "Michele was wonderful and engaging from the start. I could tell she really loved sharing her knowledge and experience. The learning curve is never-ending, and Michele still enjoys answering my questions or pointing me in the direction where I can

learn on my own. I'll be birdwatching for the rest of my life and will always remember Michele for helping me on my way to learn more about something that I love and can share with others. We'll miss her dearly."

By my rough estimate, Michele has led well over 1,000 walks in 15 years, and in my short time with her I would say she averages at least three newcomers per walk—meaning that she has probably shared the magic of birding in Prospect Park with over 3,000 people. Yet it remains a family affair. She teaches children with toilet-paper-tube binoculars with the same enthusiasm as experienced birders visiting from outside the country. She has unwavering patience with individuals with learning and social disabilities, impatient children, and over-enthusiastic adults alike. If there's a shortage of binoculars, Michele doesn't think twice to lend someone her pair. If you're one of the lucky few to show up on a rainy day, she'll take you in her car over to Green-Wood Cemetery for a private birding tour. Few people in Brooklyn have inspired so many to take up birding as Michele has.

"I've birded with so many people that once they got hooked, that was it—they were onto bigger and better walks," she says.

Michele in Florida.

Three Wings. Acrylic on paper by Toto Feldman.

New Year's Traditions

By Ed Crowne

For more years than I can recall I have ended the last day of December and begun the first day of January birding. Collectively, they provide a chance to consolidate my reflections on the birding year elapsed and consider the possibilities for the year ahead. How this personal tradition started I cannot say. I'm fond of its symmetry and the tie that binds my time to time. No champagne, just a walk with binoculars.

On Friday, December 31, 1999, my destination—Prospect Park—was familiar enough. It wasn't a remarkable day, mostly cloudy and not especially cold. I didn't get started until well after noon. During the course of my peregrinations, I don't recall seeing another birder. Of course, eighteen years ago there were generally fewer birders in Prospect Park than are likely today. And lacking the nearly instantaneous communications readily available today, the likelihood of interacting with other birders was correspondingly diminished.

So it was that late in the afternoon, about four o'clock, I found myself at the summit of the stairs that stretch upward from the Maryland Monument, having nearly completed my circuit. At that time there were several Austrian pines grouped together in that immediate area. At this time of year any trees or shrubs that retain their leaves—evergreens—are of special interest. Peering into the crowns of these pines I saw a shape that initially let me think I was seeing another red-tailed hawk. But as soon as I applied my binoculars, I realized it was not a hawk but an owl, a barred owl. It was the first time I had seen a barred owl in the feathers. After about 10 minutes of observation, I returned home where I sent emails to two people: Peter Dorosh and Rob Jett. Somehow Rob managed to get to the park and reported seeing the owl as it flew out that evening.

As it turned out, the haste was not altogether necessary. The owl remained for several weeks. Reports on eBird show this lone Prospect Park barred owl stayed until late February. Of course, I saw the owl more than once in 2000. Thus I was happy to be able to include it on both my 1999 and 2000 lists. Subsequent conversations focused on the probability of this being a young bird forced by an adult to find suitable non-competitive winter habitat away from its home territory.

Naturally I often think about that particular owl when December ends and January begins. My immediate response then was to share my surprise and excitement with others I knew would be interested. A recent (January 12) opinion article in the New York Times ("The Delicate Politics of Chasing Owls") poses the issues very well. It is as good a discussion of the various viewpoints as I have read. It makes arguments for the best kind of birding: thoughtful birding. Careful, responsible birders will weigh the considerations and act accordingly.

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Naturalist's column: Eastern white pine

By Nancy Tim

The pines are one of the first seed-bearing trees to have evolved and existed before the dinosaurs. They have been able to adapt to natural catastrophic events and changing climate conditions. One of the pine species that the early colonial arrivals to Eastern North America came upon was the eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*). There were vast forests of 400-year-old white pine growing as high as 200 feet, but their use as ship masts by the British and later commercial logging began to reduce the forests. The white pine blister rust imported from Europe in shipments of seedlings reduced their numbers even more.

While white pine forests are few and far between these days, the trees still play an integral part of the natural landscape. They are only second to the oaks in importance to wildlife. Their cones harbor nutritional seeds that are consumed by many songbirds, including chickadees, crossbills, nuthatches, titmice, and jays. Small mammals such as chipmunks, squirrels, and mice also enjoy the seeds. Seed crops are abundant every three to five years followed by very little production.

The white pine is also a valuable cover for ground animals and birds, of course. Their needle-shaped leaves are wax-coated, which cuts down on evaporation in the summer, and their shape minimizes surface areas which helps to shed the weight of snow. The needles are replaced by new ones between three to five years.

The pine is a common nesting site for mourning doves, robins, and other birds, since the needles make for good nesting material. The bark is sometimes eaten by larger animals, especially in winter.

Eastern white pine. Ink on paper drawing by Stephen Tim.

The tree is also important in the general landscape for its picturesque form and its evergreen color. It helps to break up the deciduous monotony of winter. And, last but not least, its needles give off a lovely faint smell of resin as you pass by, leaving you with a fragrance of nature.

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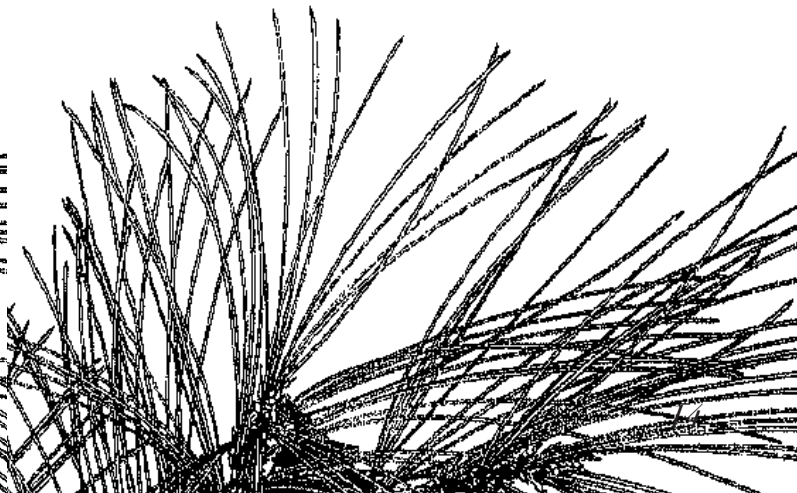

Sparks!

By Mike Yuan

Bobby. Mixed media drawing by Sam Dean Lynn.

I discovered birding well into my adult life, after years of sleeping in on the weekends and thinking of the world of birds as sparrow-brown and pigeon-gray. It took a furry friend to spark my interest.

I'd often bring Bobby, my brown tabby cat, with me on visits to my parents' house outside of Baltimore. In addition to having more room for him to tear around, explore, and hide than our Brooklyn apartment could offer, he'd often park himself at the sliding screen door to the back deck to take breezes, suburban sounds, and occasional bird visits. Looking back, the deck hosted two minor occasions of bird watching while I was growing up. Both involved my grandmother, who lived with us. One was a day in late spring, when she showed me a robin's nest in one of the cedars that lined the deck, and we both looked in awe at the little blue eggs. The other was a gray fall afternoon, when she pulled the curtains on the sight of hundreds of blackbirds sitting on the telephone wires and the neighbors' houses. She didn't like the look of so many black birds. Too ominous.

"Of course, even my non-birding mind knew the black birds that Bobby and I saw on the deck couldn't possibly be called 'mini-crows.'"

Bobby had no qualms about flocks of birds, and I found his rapt attention and vocal antics amusing, like any doting pet owner would. At the time, I didn't know all he wanted to do was to throttle and end those birds, like all cats do. Looking through the screen door with Bobby, I recognized the obvious birds on the deck, like the robins, but I wasn't familiar with a few large, long-tailed, and dark-colored birds perched on the rail.

"I saw a few mini-crows," I told Jeff, my childhood friend who I often visited when back in Baltimore. He agreed. We shared a passing interest in nature and animals. Earlier that year, we had seen a few dark birds with red and yellow patches on their shoulders that we concluded were Baltimore orioles. Being from Baltimore, our non-birding minds thought, "How could they be anything else?"

Of course, even my non-birding mind knew the black birds that Bobby and I saw on the deck couldn't possibly be called "mini-crows," so I had to find out for myself. Luckily, discovering the answer in the age of Google made it easy. I quickly found allaboutbirds.org, and followed its bird shape guide to narrow down the family to blackbirds (after not finding any matches in crows), and concluded that the "mini-crows" were called common grackles. Success on a first bird ID! And, my spark bird!

Later that week, Jeff and I set out on a birdwatching expedition on the trails by a nearby river. We shared a pair of cheap binoculars, and easily identified a familiar bird, a northern cardinal. We took turns watching a pair of short-tailed and pointy-billed birds chase each other high up around the trunk of a tree. After that first walk, going back to allaboutbirds.org helped me determine those mystery birds as white-breasted nuthatches, and the reddish-brown pair we followed through the trees as wood thrushes. Another search through the website helped me narrow down a small, gray bird to the flycatcher family. The next morning, Bobby and I saw red house finches and bright yellow American goldfinches, birds with colors I wasn't aware could occur near me. A few days later, while eating lunch on a lakeside restaurant terrace, I saw my first Baltimore oriole. In Baltimore, no less. The combination of seeking and finding beauty, enjoying nature, and using the process of deduction hooked me, and I hadn't even met any birders yet.

Online, I found the Brooklyn Bird Club and the schedule of field trips, and ordered a pair of binoculars and a Sibley field guide. Since it was July, I had to wait until August to attend my first group trip, but I explored

Purple Grakle [sic]. Detail of print by John J. Audubon.

Green-Wood Cemetery for my first solo outing. The Brooklyn Bird Club's website recommended the cemetery as a quiet place to bird among a variety of trees. I saw my first snow goose, an out-of-season lingerer that summer, and my first brown thrasher and monk parakeet.

After exploring Prospect Park on my own and taking a trip to the Finger Lakes, where my eyes drifted to the birds more than to the wine, I got to enjoy the company of birders (they didn't scare me off!) on the BBC's centennial year trip to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge with Starr Saphir. A friendly birder who I carpooled with suggested the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's birding classes, led by the always-enthusiastic Joe Giunta. Joe's fall and spring classes taught me the basics of identification, and his trip schedule attuned me to the rhythms of migration and visiting the appropriate locale as the seasons progress. Going on Brooklyn Bird Club trips throughout the winter with hardy and knowledgeable birders showed me the promise of chilly weather birding, and birding as a year-round pursuit.

Today, I'm happy to get out as much as I can to see birds wherever I can, and I'm grateful to have found a relaxing and rewarding pursuit that I can enjoy anywhere. As a birding friend said when we took off from work on a spring day to visit Doodletown, "I'm outdoors, and I'm spending my day looking for little warblers. I couldn't possibly complain."

Bobby left us a few years ago, and my parents now live in suburban New Jersey, but when I visit, I always look to see what's outside the back door.

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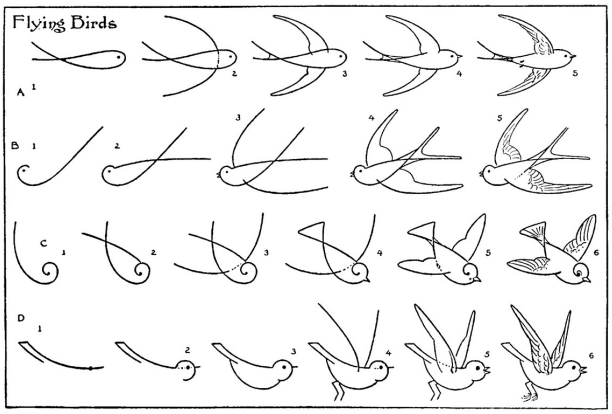

A call for poetry submissions

By Tracy Meade

The Clapper Rail has always been an important source of news and information for club members. The newsletter has held our interest over the years by providing articles about members' environmental concerns and restoration projects; accounts of the epiphanies that prompted obsession and passion for birding; instructions on how to become an increasingly skilled birder and naturalist; records of the spell cast over the community in the presence of a painted bunting or Swainson's warbler; and reviews of field guides and popular books of nonfiction and fiction about birds, birdwatching, and nature more broadly.

The Clapper Rail has been, as well, a place to showcase members' photographs and drawings. But as you have surely noticed, there's a new Clapper Rail—one that is surfacing just how much creative talent resides within our community.

Throughout the pages of the Clapper Rail we now enjoy the works of the painters, photographers, humorists, graphic designers, and writers among us. And we suspect the presence of poets and poetry lovers in our community, and so the Clapper Rail now invites poems and poetry-related submissions.

Submit a poem!

Additionally, we invite you to submit one of your favorite bird- or nature-inspired poems accompanied by a short note from you about its meaning and importance. (Reprinted poems need to be open source or indicate permission to reprint has been granted by the author/publisher.)

Poetry submissions will be reviewed on a rolling basis and may be edited with the consent of the author.

A PRESIDENTIAL PROFILE: DENNIS HREHOWSIK

By Ryan Goldberg

Ten years ago, Dennis Hrehowsik quit competitive cycling and decided he needed a hobby. He had been traveling for races, so all of a sudden his weekends in Brooklyn became free. A friend had given him a pair of cheap binoculars, and he decided to take them into Prospect Park. It was a cold February morning. He visited the lake and recognized a mallard, a mute swan, but there was a duck that caught his eye. It had a green head and rusty sides and dozens of them were spinning in circles. As a fine-art printer, their colors attracted him.

Just about anyone else in this position would have pulled out a smartphone or later went on the internet to solve the mystery. But not Dennis. He didn't even own a cell phone. Instead he rode the subway to the American Museum of Natural History, where he learned that this was a northern shoveler.

"After all these years," he wondered, "what else have I been missing?"

Dennis at Hendrix Creek, 2011.

He threw himself into birding. "I missed learning for the sake of learning," he says.

This is someone who, when he was five, taught the Iliad to his father's high-school freshman English class. In no time, he found the Brooklyn Bird Club. He enjoyed the camaraderie and getting to know the trip leaders; he soon became one himself. And now he has become its president, succeeding Rob Bate after being nominated for a two-year term by the club's council.

In a recent conversation, he told me he has "really big shoes" to fill, naming his predecessors all the way back to Ed Vietor, the club's founder. Vietor, he notes, was focused not only on the educational richness of birdwatching but also its social potential. Thus, Dennis has set two goals: to bring more members into the planning and leading of the club's endeavors and to convert the BBC into a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This second part should make it more attractive for large donations and add muscle to its conservation work.

He takes the helm at a propitious time. The club was a quarter of its current size when he first joined. It didn't yet offer the thrice-weekly walks in Prospect Park during spring and fall migrations, which began in 2010. A few years ago, Rob Bate asked Dennis to lead the new Saturday walks. "I knew it'd force me to become a better birder," Dennis says. "But I wasn't sure if I had the personality for it."

To the contrary, he earned a devoted following, not only for his expertise but for the way he shared it—he gives audio homework the night before his walks, and his precise, colorful metaphors and descriptions help many beginners memorize identifications. (I, for one, will never forget that a lark sparrow sports Mexican wrestler headgear.)

Dennis, the son of a teacher, says he learned "how to trick people into learning." Last fall, for instance, he pushed his groups to begin ageing and sexing the birds, and within a month, without even realizing it, they no longer had trouble with the actual identifications. Of

Peter Dorosh and Dennis at Jamaica Bay's East Pond, 2012.

his regulars, he says, "These people become a part of your life and you root for them."

The BBC has become a central part of his. "It's our surrogate family," he says, which includes his wife, Kristin Costello. When Dennis joined, longtime

Dennis and Kristin Costello at Cupsogue, 2014.

president Peter Dorosh was leading the club toward its centennial anniversary. To Dennis's amazement, Peter planned the field trips and led many of them, organized the monthly events (a position Dennis would one day take over), and edited the Clapper Rail.

"I learned from Peter that the most important thing

Lenny Goldstein, Bobbi Manian, and Dennis at Prospect Park, 2017.

is giving back," Dennis says. "You get back an equal measure of what you give." Other mentors included Tom Stephenson, whose approach to learning birdsong became his own, Joe Giunta, whose Brooklyn Botanic Garden walks he frequented, and Bobbi Manian, who became one of his closest friends. They met on a walk led by Ed Crowne.

"We were at the same level of birding," he says of Bobbi. "We learned everything together: how to ID birds, how to get into the club, how to lead walks. We push each other a lot. Every season we push each other to learn something new."

His exacting nature and quiet ambition also come through at his studio. Dennis works at BRT Printshop

Dennis in Tobago.

in Red Hook, which produces high-end silk-screen prints. When I visited him there before Christmas, he and two colleagues were looking at a row of large posters, still wet, that they were printing for New Orleans' Jazz Fest. Dennis wore a pencil behind his ear, glasses on top of his head, and paint splattered on his dark pants and a red BRT sweater. I struggled to follow along as Dennis walked me through the process, saying, "There's a Zen-like quality in the

simple things done well."

His original introduction to birds was actually through art—namely John James Audubon's *Birds of America*, the 435 life-sized watercolors of North American birds that became the foundation of wildlife illustration. Dennis, who grew up in Perth Amboy, N.J., had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1998 with a minor in art history (his major was in the history of science), and he became a dealer for an antique print and map gallery in Manhattan. The Audubon originals were in demand. He developed a rudimentary knowledge of birds and printmaking, and then pursed a certificate in graphic design at Parsons.

Six months after 9/11, his gallery let everyone go. Dennis found another sales job in SoHo at Axelle, a gallery which also owned a print shop in Brooklyn. He saw a path for himself there; six months later there was a vacancy, and he took it.

His meticulousness stood out. BRT is a word-of-mouth printer and not one that cuts corners. You can see that in his approach to birding, in his extended descriptions on eBird, in the challenges he offers to his Saturday group. I've noticed that he doesn't like to chase after other sightings in the park, preferring instead to cultivate the learning and flow of his own walk. He rarely photographs birds. "For me, communion with the birds is the most important thing," he says.

Our conversation turns philosophical. To my surprise, he tells me that his favorite time of year is actually now, the winter. Although he's recognized for his songbird expertise, he's actually more fond of waterfowl. He likes the coastal trails and beaches when they're empty: places of "faded glory," he says, like Fort Tilden and Norton Point. He grows emotional talking about these landscapes. "To then add in birds," he concludes, "is just magical."

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Three BBC presidents at Prospect Park on New Year's Day, 2018: Peter Dorosh, Rob Bate, and Dennis. Photograph by Bobbi Manian.

East Coast Expedience: The American Birding Expo

By Janet Zinn

When I first found out that the 2017 American Birding Expo was to be held in late September within driving distance of New York, my interest was piqued. The two previous expos had been held in Ohio, and while I was vaguely curious, I didn't feel it merited an airplane ride. But under two hours to Oaks, Pa., just outside Philadelphia, that was doable!

Reviewing the list of exhibitors, I saw many tour operators and vendors whom my husband and I might be interested in talking with, as we were in the throes of indecision as to the identity of our next birding trip. The list of operators was quite comprehensive, covering all but one continent. Many of the larger, well-known companies were represented—Rockjumper, Field Guides, Wings—as were smaller, independently-owned companies. Those were the ones we wanted to check out. The expo would give a chance to catch up with some of the guides and birders that we'd traveled with or corresponded with on Facebook, many of whom we now consider good friends.

So I booked a room at one of the nearby hotels, and made plans to attend the Friday and Saturday of the three-day show, which started on September 29.

Arriving at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center on Friday after lunch, we expected to spend an hour or two. Well, we didn't leave until we were famished for dinner—four hours later. There were so many interesting people to talk to, and at every table, we collected more and more brochures and swag. In addition to tour companies, there were tables with bird books, birding gear, bird feeding paraphernalia, birding knick-knacks, and bird artists. Cape May Bird Observatory was there with an array of scopes and binoculars to try out. And, of course, all the major optics sellers—Leica, Swarovski, Zeiss, Kowa—were displaying their wares, and some photo vendors too. Most were giving show discounts, which was a dangerous enticement. It was like being the proverbial kid in a birding candy store.

But the fun didn't end with the exhibits. Each evening featured a well-known speaker: on Friday, the bird artist and writer Julie Zickefoose, and on Saturday, the founder of Project Snowstorm, Scott Weidensaul. Unfortunately, we found the timing problematic, as

starting at 7, it left little time to have dinner. Starving as we were, we opted for dinner Friday night instead of attending the talk.

But there was still more: workshops (mostly aimed at beginners) on such topics as bird feeding, international travel, and buying binoculars, and on Sunday, billed as family day, activities for kids and a live raptor visit.

Before the exhibits opened in the morning, free bird walks began at a variety of local hotspots, including the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove, Valley Forge National Park, and John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum. Walks were led by volunteers from local birding groups as well as some of the experts from Field Guides, Rockjumper, and other tour companies. On Saturday morning we opted for a short outing at the Audubon Center, which was a five-minute drive from our hotel. It turned out that one of the co-leaders of that walk was Brooklyn's very own Doug Gochfeld, who many of you know, and who is now a leader for Field Guides. It's a small birding world! It was a lovely, if brisk, morning with good sightings of several lingering warblers, vireos, and resident birds.

Returning to the expo center, we wrapped up by visiting a few tables we'd missed the day before and doing a little shopping. We hit the road after lunch with two bags full of brochures, more swag, new binoculars, and plenty of ideas for our next trip. In fact, we later followed up with several of the vendors, and set up an Australian trip for the fall with one vendor and are in talks over a 2019 Patagonia trip with another.

The American Birding Expo is co-sponsored by Bird Watcher's Digest and the American Birding Association. In 2018 it will be held again at the same convenient location from September 21-23. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced international traveler, there is something for every birder. I'll be saving the date.

For more information:
https://www.americanbirdingexpo.com/

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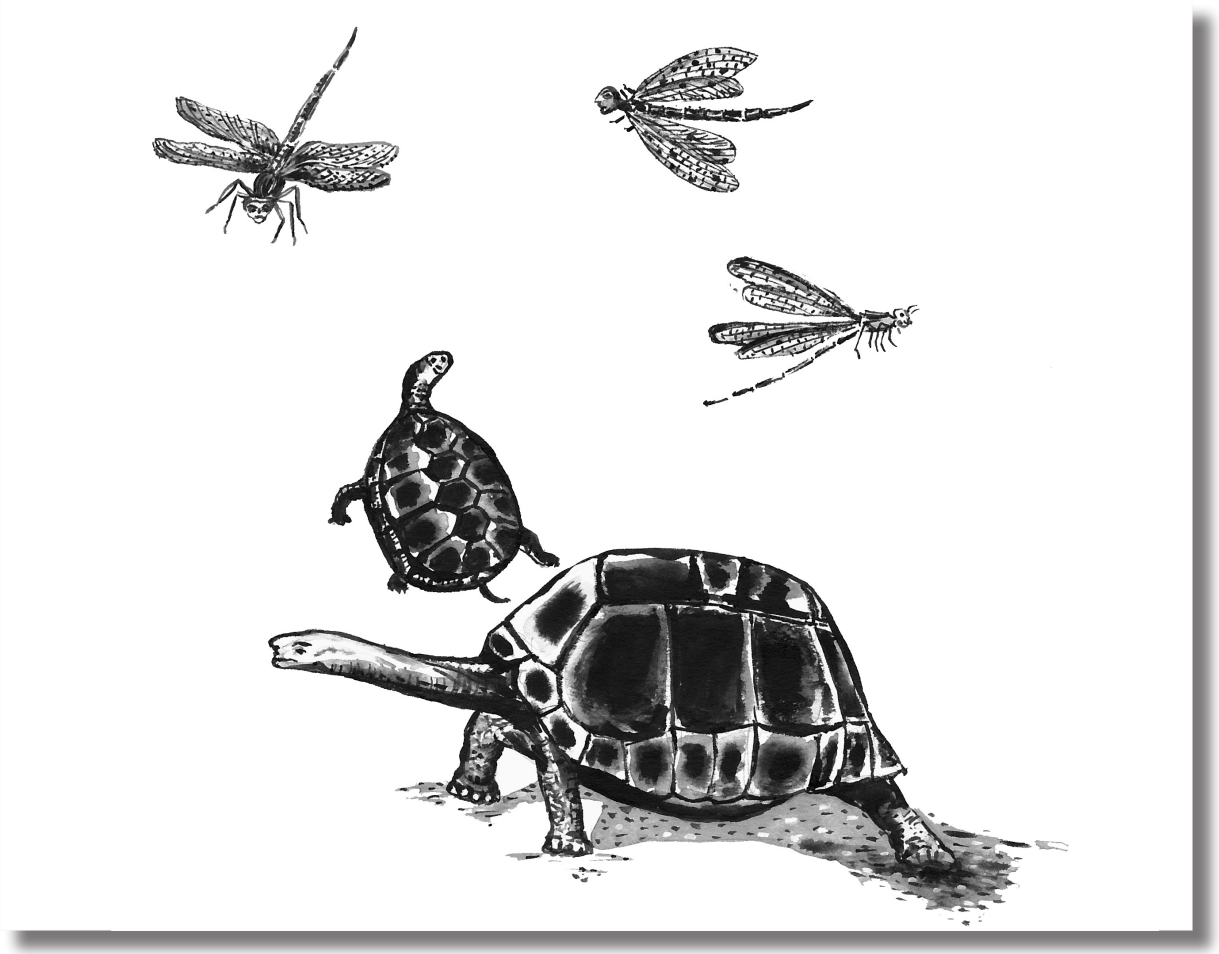

Turtles & Dragonflies. Ink and paper drawing by Toni Simon.

Tracking Owls: Project SNOWstorm

By Janet Schumacher

Snowy owl. Photograph by Sean Sime.

Snowy owls are highly anticipated winter visitors. We've come to expect seeing them, but many conditions factor into whether a few or many will venture south. If your experience seeing snowies has been disappointing this year, perhaps, at best, a scope view from the Terrapin Trail at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, follow Scott Weidensaul's Project SNOWstorm on the internet. It is a satisfying substitute, absent concerns about disturbing the birds but with lots of stunning photos, fascinating data, and drama.

Project SNOWstorm is in its fourth year of fitting snowy owls with solar-powered trackers that transmit data via cell towers. Signals may be sent as frequently as every 30 seconds, allowing researchers to pinpoint the owl's movements and determine whether it is roosting on a church steeple or an irrigation sprinkler. If the bird is out of range or the battery is not receiving enough sunlight, information is stored and transmitted once the owl nears cell coverage.

Their study has shown behavioral variations in the owls, some sticking close to a home base while others wander far afield. On their website, individual owl movements are outlined. Most remain nocturnal while some hunt during the day. Grasslands and coastal areas are important, but a number of snowy owls head out to sea, hunting waterfowl in open water. This mimics adult behavior, with some migrating north in the winter to hunt waterfowl in isolated open water patches in the Arctic.

Most of the ones we see here are immature, especially following a summer when prey was abundant in their Arctic nesting grounds. Snowy owls have been documented fledging up to 14 young in a good year. One nest was found ringed with 78 lemmings! Overpopulation forces immature birds south, and they generally arrive in good health. Project SNOWstorm only outfits robust birds, typically the larger females, with transmitters.

Project SNOWstorm has tagged 60 birds, primarily in the Midwest, Northeast and Canada. Dozens of researchers, vets, pathologists, and local wildlife organizations have aided in the effort. Although the focus is on wintering birds, information is also gathered on the owls' summer activity.

Additionally, necropsy data from more than 150 recovered carcasses is included in their research. Snowy owls are tested for environmental toxins, including mercury and a breakdown product

of long-banned DDT. One question has been whether owls around the Great Lakes and coastal areas that feed on waterfowl have higher mercury levels. Analysis of feather, blood, and tissue DNA help reveal where the owls fledged, what they ate, and genetic lineage.

This year, for the first time, snowy owls were tagged in New Jersey. All males and dubbed the "Jersey Boys," they were named Lenape, Higbee, and Island Beach. There were concerns when a severe winter storm hit the coast in early January. Lenape and Island Beach weathered the storm near Little Egg Harbor, but Higbee's GPS didn't budge. With an all-out effort, his body was recovered under the coastal storm debris. While fleeing inland from the flooded salt marsh, Higbee had apparently been hit by a car. Researchers determined that he had been in good health, eating well and maintaining his weight prior to the fatal collision.

One of the first snowy owls was outfitted in Wisconsin in 2014, named Buena Vista, after a grasslands preserve where it remained all winter. As a Wisconsin native and member of the Wisconsin Ornithological Society, I became aware of Project SNOWstorm via its newsletter. This season, Wisconsin birders were lucky enough to have logged more than 200 snowy owls. Four were strapped with transmitters, paid for by area wildlife organizations. Each transmitter costs $3,000.

Coincidentally, I learned that the speaker scheduled for the June program, Katie Fallon, aided in the rescue of an injured snowy owl in Venice, Va. This owl was not part of Project SNOWstorm. It had been hit by a car, but despite an injured shoulder, was still able to fly short distances. Fallon, her veterinarian husband, and rehabilitation experts found it hanging out on a dumpster behind a fast-food restaurant. Their priority was to keep eager visitors and photographers from stressing the bird. They captured it and brought it back from the brink with food and fluids. Its shoulder bone healed in a few weeks and then was released, ready for takeoff. Katie said that despite its powerful talons, it was easier to care for than the turkey vultures she has studied. Turkey vultures have a stronger beak and tend to vomit foul material when stressed. Katie will be presenting her work on turkey vultures on June 19 at the Brooklyn Public Library.

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Snowy owl rescue by Katie Fallon.

Brooklyn Bird Club Financial Report

By Heidi Steiner, Treasurer

At our last meeting, the Brooklyn Bird Club council thought that members of the club might like to gain a better understanding of the club's finances, how the membership dues are used and what the club provides to its members and the birding community.

Income/Revenue:

The only means of monetary support that the club has is the $20 membership dues and any donations made by members or non-members. The membership dues for 2018 will be $25, the first increase in nearly 20 years.

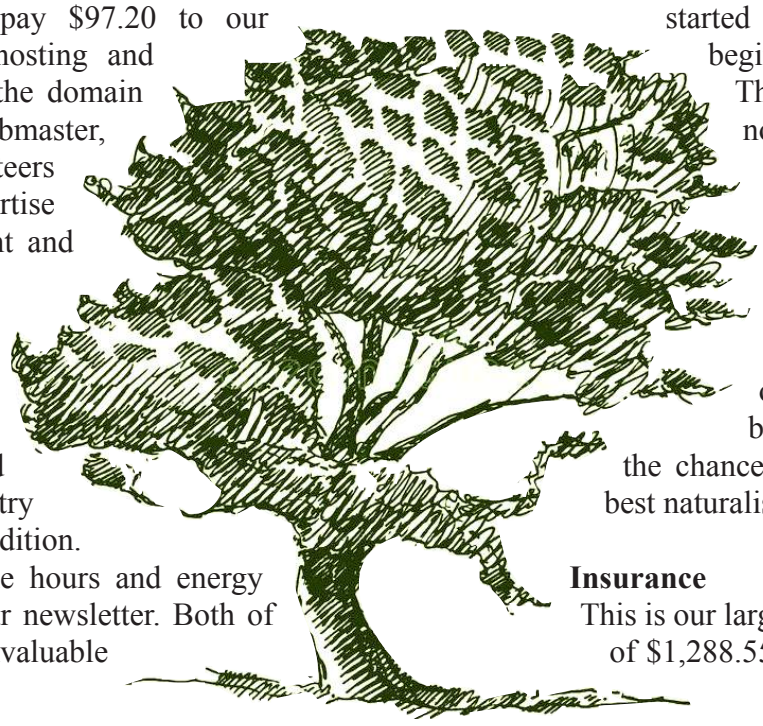
For decades, our membership had remained steady at 80 to 100 members with around five honorary memberships, which provided the club with $1,600 to $2,000 annually. In recent years our rolls have grown and in 2016 the club had nearly 200 dues-paying members providing an estimated total income of $4,000. Club membership is on a yearly basis with renewal notices sent out in December. Donations to our club vary from year to year but they've never eclipsed a couple hundred dollars.

Annual Expenses:

Website and Clapper Rail

We recently had a large expense with the creation of the new website. This was a one-time payment of $3,000 for which we had been saving for several years. Annually, we pay $97.20 to our service provider for hosting and an additional $54 for the domain registration. Our webmaster, Janet Zinn, volunteers her skills and expertise to keep the site current and compelling.

Ryan Goldberg, Angie Co, Tina Alleva and Janet Schumacher are now at the helm of the Clapper Rail and their talents and artistry are present in every edition. They kindly donate the hours and energy required to produce our newsletter. Both of these forums provide invaluable resources for birders in Brooklyn and the entire metropolitan area. We greatly value the contributions of all members of our club who contribute to these two resources.



Field trips

All of the club's field trips are carried out on a voluntary basis. This includes the trip leaders, registrars, and drivers, none of whom receive any monetary compensation. The walks are free to the public, although participants are asked to pay a carpool fee (listed on the website) to drivers to help cover the price of gas and tolls. Peter Dorosh spends countless hours creating the field-trip schedule every year, recruiting old and new leaders, and planning destinations nearby or farther afield. Peter brings creativity and fresh thinking to each new season. He also leads several of the weekend walks, and that generally includes an overnight trip in the spring and fall. He schedules a field trip every weekend from the middle of August through late June, totalling about 45 each year.

In addition to these weekend excursions, Tom Stephenson, Dennis Hrehowsik, Bobbi Manian and other club members lead walks thrice weekly in Prospect Park during spring and fall migration—adding approximately 40 guided walks to the local birding calendar.

For many club members, their love of birding started with Michele Dreger's beginner walks in Prospect Park. These meet at the boathouse at noon every Saturday. Michele or another member of her group also lead walks from the boathouse on the first Sunday of every month.

All of these trips and walks amount to 150 outings to enjoy wonderful birding, good company, and the chance to learn from some of the best naturalists found anywhere.

Insurance

This is our largest annual expense, at a cost of $1,288.55. The BBC council felt that

it was necessary or at least wise to acquire general liability insurance to protect the club, including trip leaders and drivers, in case of accidents leading to injury or property damage. You never know when birders are going to get wild and crazy.

Honorarium for program speakers

For many years the BBC offered dinner at a local restaurant as compensation for the speakers at the club's programs. Around a dozen years ago we started paying $50 instead and over the years it has been doubled, to help attract a variety of excellent presenters. Speakers who are club members typically donate their payment back to the club. The BBC generally holds six to eight programs each year for a total of $600 to $800 in expenses. Janet Schumacher and Dennis Hrehowsik volunteer their services to run the series. All programs are free to the public.

Annual donations

The club makes several annual donations to nonprofit organizations that we would like to support and that often lend us support. These include Prospect Park Alliance, the Green-Wood Cemetery Historic Fund, the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA), NYSOA's Young Birders Club scholarship fund, and the Brooklyn Public Library, which affords us a room at no charge for our events. These donations add up to $1,000.

Christmas Count Dinner and Birdathon

The Prospect Park Alliance has generously given us use of the boathouse in which to host the annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. We've always made it a potluck dinner, which keeps the cost to a minimum; however, the club still covers the payment of two PPA staff members who help set up and clean afterward. We also purchase paper goods, coffee, and other supplies. The cost to the club is $250. Bobbi Manian organizes the count. All birders are encouraged to participate. For more information, please check the BBC website. Bobbi Manian also coordinates the participation of Brooklyn birders in the annual Audubon Birdathon, in May, which raises $2,000-$3,000 annually to support an organization that protects birds or their habitat. The only expense that this incurs is for thank-you cards, which are listed under miscellaneous annual expenses.

Plantings and volunteer opportunities

Club members regularly volunteer in various capacities throughout the city. One group, under the leadership of Janet Zinn, works in Prospect Park's butterfly meadow in the spring and fall. Members donate over 200 hours annually in removing invasive species and planting native trees and seedlings. Members of the club have purchased a total of eight trees for the meadow, including three pin oaks, two serviceberries, and three white pines, planted in memory of club member Arleen O'Brien, who was the senior naturalist at Prospect Park's Audubon Center and who launched the "First Sunday" walks. She also coined the term "Bird Joy," which is entirely self-explanatory.

In 2017, club members helped build the new blind at the Return-a-Gift pond at Floyd Bennett Field and plant bird-friendly trees purchased in part from the proceeds of the Birdathon in memory of Jean Bourque. The club will soon be working on a similar project with a coalition of birders volunteering at Green-Wood Cemetery.

Although these projects don't cost anything, the club often supplements the donations made by club members for trees, bushes and seedlings. This money is included under our additional non-annual expenditures.

Stanley Greenberg represents the BBC at monthly Community Committee (Com-Com) meetings held by the Prospect Park Alliance for the stakeholder organizations associated with the park. The participation of the BBC is vital in that it allows us to explicate the impact of the Alliance's and Parks Department's decisions on bird migration, nesting, and natural habitat. Stanley does this important work gratis.

Schoolteachers often ask the BBC if we can present nature- and bird-related programs in their classrooms. Tom Stephenson, along with other members of the club, have volunteered over the years. This is an aspect of the club that we'd like to expand. Please contact us at info@brooklynbirdclub.org if you'd like to help.

Miscellaneous annual expenses

Over the course of the year, we also purchase stamps, cards and mailings, seed and suet for Prospect's feeders (several club members make special donations to cover much of outlay), pizza for council meetings, banking fees, etc. The cost of this is about $200.

The total annual expenses are approximately $3,500-$3,700.00.

Additional non-annual expenditures

The Brooklyn Bird Club also has expenditures that don't occur annually, such as occasions like our centennial celebration in 2009, last year's open house in February, donations for trees and seedlings in Prospect Park, Floyd Bennett Field, etc., and other events. These can range from as little as a few hundred dollars to the $3,000 that was required for the creation of our new website. I believe that it's smart to include a minimum of $1,000 per year in average expenditures. The website overhaul was possible because we had a surplus built up over several years for such an expense.

Thus, our annual budget totals about $4,500-$4,700. I don't know how or where you could find a better value for your $25 contribution. Your membership is also important in that it helps to sustain the club and the work that so many members put in to create such engaging and gratifying activities. Please renew your membership today!

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American redstart at Prospect Park. Photographs by Ann Feldman.

Cooper's hawk at Green-Wood Cemetery. Photograph by Matthew Wills.

Snow bunting at Floyd Bennett Field. Photograph by Paul Chung.

Common gallinule at Prospect Park. Photograph by Paul Chung.

Brooklyn Christmas Count Annual Report: 2017

Species	Total Seen	NS	PP	GW	OH	MP	FB	BB	SC	JB	RP	BP	BT
Snow Goose	624		1	25			71	2	12	390	51	72	
Brant	22,957	78			115	1080	350	3302	1575	16300	135	22	
Black Brant (sp.)	0									cw			
Canada Goose	3,140	29	383	93	625	546	33	232	800	357	31	11	
Mute Swan	137		9		93	1	5	6		8	2	13	
Wood Duck	5		5										
Northern Shoveler	277		100		1	8			150	18			
Gadwall	118	33			8	2			50	25			
Eurasian Wigeon	2	1				1							
American Wigeon	88	15			5	26	5		16	21			
Mallard	635	50	173		135	121		6	40	83	21	6	
American Black Duck	742	27	9		15	49	3	67	100	431	17	24	
Northern Pintail	22					1				17	4		
Green-winged Teal	110								110				
Greater Scaup	1,560	8			6	3	20	161	520	835	7		
Lesser Scaup	128	3						34	36	55			
Common Eider	26										1	25	
Surf Scoter	4				1						1	2	
White-winged Scoter	64										19	45	
Black Scoter	65										33	32	
Scoter (sp.)	1,507										7	1500	
Long-tailed Duck	156				3	15	14				26	98	
Bufflehead	794	63			36	44	33	95	190	300	21	12	
Common Goldeneye	26	2			3		3	4	3	11			
Barrow's Goldeneye	0									cw			
Hooded Merganser	111	1	1		6	3		19	12	65	2	2	
Common Merganser	13					7			1			5	
Red-breasted Merganser	336	7			4	7	63	31	95	35	27	67	
Ruddy Duck	1,192	8	54			31			950	123		26	
Ring-necked Pheasant	2								2				
Pied-billed Grebe	10					6			3	1			
Horned Grebe	102				1		4	12	45	38		2	
Red-necked Grebe	3						3						
Rock Pigeon	882	71	199	41	255	58	6	98	50	60	30	14	
Mourning Dove	233	7	45	50	41	45	3	8		32	2		
Common Gallinule	1		1										
American Coot	28		12		2				12	2			
Sandhill Crane	0						cw						
Black-bellied Plover	25					24	1						
Killdeer	25	3				1		5	16				
Sanderling	300				4						197	99	
Dunlin	115						26		19	70			
Purple Sandpiper	6				3							3	
American Woodcock	2							1		1			
Greater Yellowlegs	8					2		1	2	3			
Bonaparte's Gull	2											2	

Species	Total Seen	NS	PP	GW	OH	MP	FB	BB	SC	JB	RP	BP	BT
Laughing Gull	2						1	1					
Ring-billed Gull	9,146	716	584	35	1418	658	4900	212	390	117	35	81	
Herring Gull	1,656	58	40	15	16	130	35	191	108	546	225	292	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	0										cw		
Great Black-backed Gull	196	24	5	2	6	17	3	10	8	31	9	81	
Red-throated Loon	134	2			2	2	5	3			37	83	
Common Loon	160				10	7	7	6	2	2	9	117	
Northern Gannet	4,915				15						2300	2600	
Double-crested Cormorant	64	14			3	10	1	7	17	7	1	4	
Great Cormorant	35				1	3	5	1	5	2	2	16	
American Bittern	1					1							
Great Blue Heron	19		5		2	3	1	1	2	5			
Turkey Vulture	1					1							
Bald Eagle	1											1	
Northern Harrier	24					4	2	1	9	4	1	3	
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7			1	1	1				2	1	1	
Cooper's Hawk	9		1	2	1		1				2	2	
Red-shouldered Hawk	2					2							
Red-tailed Hawk	15		4	5	2		1	1	1	1			
Barn Owl	1									1			
Great Horned Owl	1			1									
Snowy Owl	1											1	
Belted Kingfisher	2							1	1				
Red-headed Woodpecker	0			cw									
Red-bellied Woodpecker	34		10	10	12	1			1				
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	13		7	4	2								
Downy Woodpecker	35		9	4	3	6		4	2	5	2		
Hairy Woodpecker	2	1			1								
Northern Flicker	57	1	1	6	3	11	16	7	2	8	1	1	
American Kestrel	7			1	2	1	1				1	1	
Merlin	5		1	1		1	1			1			
Peregrine Falcon	8		1			1	1	1	1	2	1		
Monk Parakeet	5			5									
Blue Jay	163		51	50	32	8		2	20				
American Crow	95	4	25	9	9	7	6	2	20	1	7	5	
Fish Crow	25	21						1	2	1			
Common Raven	2	2											
Horned Lark	27						3					24	
Black-capped Chickadee	6		1				1				3	1	
Tufted Titmouse	3		3										
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1		1										
White-breasted Nuthatch	3		2	1									
Brown Creeper	3		3										
House Wren	2		1							1			
Winter Wren	0		cw										
Marsh Wren	2							1		1			
Carolina Wren	19				2		1	2		6	5	3	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	7		4			1		2					
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	6		4		1		1						

Species	Total Seen	NS	PP	GW	OH	MP	FB	BB	SC	JB	RP	BP	BT
Hermit Thrush	3		1							1	1		
American Robin	132	5	6	1	2	3	42	12	30	12	16	3	
Gray Catbird	10		1					2		4	1	2	
Brown Thrasher	1									1			
Northern Mockingbird	85	8	3	6	5	6	5	4	6	13	18	11	
European Starling	2,148	82	84	39	860	130	42	271	200	240	62	138	
Cedar Waxwing	2							2					
House Sparrow	729	103	37	9	85	3	22	44	150	31	232	13	
American Pipit	20	2				7					9	2	
House Finch	190		10	10	13	3	62	5		41	8	38	
American Goldfinch	12		3	1		2		5				1	
Snow Bunting	98										22	76	
Eastern Towhee	3		1									2	
American Tree Sparrow	24					11	1	2	1	8		1	
Chipping Sparrow	2											2	
Field Sparrow	12									3	1	8	
Savannah Sparrow	28						7	1	10	4		6	
Grasshopper Sparrow	1								1				
Fox Sparrow	14		1	2		3		4	1	3			
Song Sparrow	259	6	6	5	8	26	4	30	35	89	17	33	
Swamp Sparrow	25		1			1		1	5	14	1	2	
White-throated Sparrow	331	11	103	10	51	16	16	11	6	76	5	26	
Dark-eyed Junco	33		5	22					1	5			
Eastern Meadowlark	6						4		2				
Baltimore Oriole	2		2										
Red-winged Blackbird	30		12		2	2		9		3		2	
Brown-headed Cowbird	0				cw								
Common Grackle	153	2		14	2				135				
Orange-crowned Warbler	6					1		2	1	1		1	
Nashville Warbler	0					cw							
Palm Warbler	1								1				
Pine Warbler	1								1				
Yellow-rumped Warbler	363					25	40	43	2	85	42	126	
Northern Cardinal	164	4	24	20	23	23	4	7	14	17	12	16	
Species Count:	120	36	52	33	53	61	50	57	61	65	52	61	
Number Seen:	56,886	1,472	2,055	500	3,957	3,219	5,885	4,996	6,002	20,676	3,716	4,408	

Brooklyn XMas Highlights: 2017 *Territory =* TC

Species Name	x Last 10 Years	Last Seen	All-Time Mx Yr	All-Time Max	All-Time Min	10-Year Max	10-Year Min	Av	2017	Hi All	Hi 10Yr	Lo All	Lo 10Yr	Rare / Irr
Regular [8-10 yrs]														
Hooded Merganser	10	2017	2017	111	16	2017	111	32	68	111	x	x			
American Coot	10	2017	1979	344	11	2010	80	28	48	28				x	
Killdeer	10	2017	1993	43	2	2017	25	2	14	25		x			
Purple Sandpiper	10	2017	1979	85	1	2009	30	6	18	6				x	
Common Loon	10	2017	2005	326	1	2017	160	40	74	160		x			
Double-crested Cormorant	10	2017	1988	628	32	2009	240	64	123	64				x	
Great Cormorant	10	2017	1988	274	20	2014	106	35	66	35				x	
Monk Parakeet	10	2017	1999	90	1	2008	67	5	30	5				x	
Horned Lark	10	2017	1938	1,025	3	2016	91	27	62	27				x	
Tufted Titmouse	10	2017	1995	323	3	2012	134	3	29	3			x	x	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	2017	1997	95	1	2010	37	1	11	1				x	
White-breasted Nuthatch	10	2017	2004	64	1	2012	53	3	25	3				x	
Hermit Thrush	10	2017	2008	30	1	2008	30	3	11	3				x	
Cedar Waxwing	10	2017	2000	389	1	2010	35	2	15	2				x	
House Sparrow	10	2017	1968	13,050	252	2017	729	258	451	729		x			
American Goldfinch	10	2017	2008	377	12	2008	377	12	133	12			x	x	
Dark-eyed Junco	10	2017	2007	721	33	2008	251	33	150	33			x	x	
Common Grackle	9	2017	2017	153	1	2017	153	1	33	153	x	x			
Irregular [4-7 yrs]														
Wood Duck	8	2017	2013	10	1	2013	10	1	4	5					IRR
Common Eider	6	2017	2010	82	1	2010	82	1	22	26					IRR
Common Merganser	5	2017	1938	30	1	2017	13	1	5	13		x			IRR
Red-necked Grebe	7	2017	2014	7	1	2014	7	1	2	3					IRR
American Bittern	5	2017	1968	4	1	2009	1	1	1	1					IRR
Red-shouldered Hawk	7	2017	2010	7	1	2010	7	1	3	2					IRR
Great Horned Owl	7	2017	2015	3	1	2015	3	1	2	1					IRR
Snowy Owl	6	2017	2013	15	1	2013	15	1	4	1				x	IRR
Fish Crow	5	2017	1990	337	1	2014	87	2	26	25					IRR
Common Raven	5	2017	2016	2	1	2016	2	1	1	2					IRR
Golden-crowned Kinglet	7	2017	2005	55	1	2011	9	1	4	7					IRR
Brown Thrasher	5	2017	1996	5	1	2012	4	1	2	1					IRR
Rare [0-3 yrs]														
Eurasian Wigeon	4	2017	1992	5	1	2014	2	1	2	2					RARE
Common Gallinule	1	2017	1970	3	1	2017	1	1	1	1					RARE
Laughing Gull	2	2017	1986	41	1	2016	5	2	4	2					RARE
Turkey Vulture	4	2017	2001	3	1	2011	3	1	2	1					RARE
Bald Eagle	2	2017	1982	2	1	2015	1	1	1	1					RARE
Barn Owl	3	2017	1992	12	1	2011	1	1	1	1					RARE
Wrens														
House Wren	1	2017	1984	2	1	2017	2	2	2	2		x			RARE
Marsh Wren	2	2017	1984	8	1	2009	5	2	4	2					RARE
Towhees and Sparrows														
Grasshopper Sparrow	1	2017	1962	1	1	2017	1	1	1	1					RARE
New World Blackbirds														
Baltimore Oriole	4	2017	2011	2	1	2011	2	1	2	2					RARE
Wood-warblers														
Pine Warbler	4	2017	1987	3	1	2010	2	1	2	1					RARE

Brooklyn XMas Count: Historic Results x Rarity

Year	*Total Species*	*Regular Species*	*Irreg. Species*	*Rare Species*	*Rare + Irr.*
1981	111	88	13	11	24
1982	110	87	12	12	24
1983	121	88	16	17	33
1984	119	95	13	12	25
1985	120	93	16	12	28
1986	121	93	16	13	29
1987	118	92	13	15	28
1988	119	94	16	10	26
1989	122	93	14	15	29
1990	110	90	12	9	21
1991	133	95	21	18	39
1992	126	98	13	16	29
1993	125	96	15	16	31
1994	123	97	19	8	27
1995	126	98	20	9	29
1996	119	97	12	11	23
1997	130	98	16	17	33
1998	126	96	13	17	30
1999	128	97	18	13	31
2000	123	95	16	12	28
2001	123	95	17	11	28
2002	119	96	13	10	23
2003	126	97	17	12	29
2004	128	97	19	12	31
2005	123	100	16	7	23
2006	121	98	13	10	23
2007	123	97	16	11	27
2008	123	99	18	7	25
2009	122	98	16	8	24
2010	126	98	18	10	28
2011	132	100	18	14	32
2012	134	100	19	15	34
2013	111	96	11	4	15
2014	124	98	21	5	26
2015	117	92	17	8	25
2016	119	97	14	8	22
2017	120	97	12	11	23
	122.2	95.5	15.6	11.5	27.2
# Species	230	100	32	98	
Av % Seen	53.1%	95.5%	48.9%	11.7%	
Act % Seen	52.2%	97.0%	37.5%	11.2%	