



SUMMER/FALL 2025

WINGBEATS

Newsletter of the Audubon Society of the Capital Region of New York State

ASCR MONTHLY MEETINGS RESUME SEPTEMBER 15

by Carol Quantock

ASCR will be resuming its monthly meeting schedule beginning with its September 15th meeting at 6:30 p.m. at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, 56 Game Farm Road, Delmar.

We will be conducting a presentation on "Bird Window Collision Prevention". Bird window collisions result in 1 billion birds being killed each year in the United States. We will explain why this happens and ways you can help prevent this from happening at your home. ASCR meetings are open to the public and no reservations are required unless seating space is limited.

The 2025-2026 meeting schedule is as follows. All meeting, unless otherwise noted, will be held at the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 510 Albany Shaker Road, Albany.

- September 15 at Five Rivers Environmental Center
- October 13, 2025
- November 10, 2025
- December—no meeting
- January 12, 2026
- February 9, 2026
- March 9, 2026
- April 13, 2026
- May 11, 2026

For more information and updates, please visit our web page at <https://www.capitalregionaudubon.org/> or our Facebook page.

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ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

ASCR's annual meeting was held on April 26, 2025 at Five Rivers Environmental Center. Turnout was excellent, especially considering the rainy weather that made a pre-meeting bird walk impossible. Special thanks go out to Margie and Douglas Rogers for making sure that attendees had coffee, juice, pastry, and other delicious food for the late-morning meeting. Also, we thank Teresa Murphy, ASCR President, John Loz, Laura McCarthy of Audubon New York, Deb Moyer, and Sheryl Collins for their hard work to make this meeting a success.

The speaker was Rachel Bakerian, Wildlife Biologist with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, who discussed her work with peregrine falcons.

Her amazing PowerPoint presentation was packed with information about peregrine falcons and the research she has been doing over the years on this endangered raptor.

FALCON FACTS

The peregrine falcon can reach up to 180 mph in pursuit of prey. It feeds primarily on birds, which it takes on the wing. Adult peregrines are slate-grey above and pale below, with fine dark bars and spots on their underparts. Both adults and immatures have a wide, dark "moustache" mark below the eye. The tail is narrow and the wings long and pointed. Juveniles are brown overall, with dark streaking below. Airborne, this falcon can be recognized by characteristic rapid wingbeats mixed with long glides.

Peregrine falcons generally return to the same nesting territory annually and mate for life. The courtship flight is a spectacular sight. The pair climbs high in the air and performs a precise acrobatic act of whirling spirals and steep rapid dives, often touching in midair. The average clutch consists of three to four eggs which hatch after an incubation period of 29-32 days. The single brood fledges after 35-42 days. Both parents participate in incubation and brooding activities, but the female remains at the nest for the majority of the time while the male hunts and brings food to her and the young.

Young falcons may stay in the area for about six weeks after they fledge, developing their flying and hunting skills. Sexual maturity is generally reached at two years of age, but one-year-olds have been known to produce young. Individuals may live as long as 20 years.

At one time, there were approximately 350 breeding pairs in the eastern U. S., including 40-50 historic eyries (nest sites) in New York. By 1965, all were gone and populations in other parts of the country showed similar declines. Release programs initiated by the Peregrine Fund in the mid 1970s have resulted in peregrine falcons breeding in New York once again. In 1998, 38 pairs were present in New York, 36 bred, 31 were successful and 69 young fledged. New urban nests have been reported upstate for the first time in Albany. Gradual increases in the breeding population have been recorded throughout the east.

Peregrines' nesting boxes exist on most Hudson River bridges from Albany to New York City. They nest on the Mid-Hudson Bridge, which carries State Routes 44 and 55 over the Hudson River, between Poughkeepsie and Highland, NY.

Thanks to a partnership between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Bridge Authority, and the New York State Department of Transportation, you can view a current image of nest activity from a nest box located beneath the bridge. Between March and July, check out the falcon webcams at Buffalo and Poughkeepsie-Highland. You can also visit the Rensselaer Riverfront Park on Broadway in the City of Rensselaer to view the falcons.

NOTES FROM THE BACK WINDOW

by Carol Quantock

Oh, what a cold, wet spring we had, followed by an incredibly dry summer! This is an excellent example of how changes in our climate affect weather patterns. In order to keep warm during the spring rains, we kept our furnaces running. This summer, the heat was so intense that our air conditioners were cranked up day and night, increasing use of fossil fuels and electricity. Many municipalities restricted water usage, and garden beds and lawns suffered from the lack of a good, steady rainfall.

Moving on: I'm a big proponent of "slow birding", a concept which has been gaining in popularity in the past few years. The short definition is birding in your backyard or local area without the competitiveness of The Big Day or other highly-publicized birding events. Of course, the data that's obtained from Big Days and Christmas Bird Counts is extremely important, but what about the data that we get from our own backyards and neighborhoods? That's where eBird, Merlin, Project FeederWatch, and the Great Backyard Bird Count come in. You can go out onto your porch or just sit in your yard and record songs, calls, and sightings. It's a wonderful treat to see or hear a first-time bird while just relaxing or gardening, or even looking out the window at the right time. I had the thrill of seeing a male indigo bunting earlier this spring. He was with a little flock of goldfinches, picking dandelion seeds off the stems of the many wayward dandelions that line our backyard stone path. Since I hadn't seen one of these lovely birds in about 40 years, I was over the moon. I've also had the privilege of spotting a sweet pair of red-breasted nuthatches, a pair of brown creepers, a yellow-bellied sapsucker drilling its little holes in a birch tree, a great-crested flycatcher, the ethereal and beautiful wood thrush and veery, red-eyed vireo, fledgling pileated woodpeckers, and warblers aplenty. I've spied our resident Cooper's hawk sitting in wait for a mourning dove to relax its vigilance.

It's also a thrill to be able to see bluebird and wren fledglings as they leave their nest boxes and gain confidence as they begin their life out of the nests. Three cheers for slow birding—why not try it out?

In this issue, I'm pleased to present two articles by contributing authors (and members) Brian Hardiman and Atlas Seres, writing about their experiences with bald eagles and black vultures, respectively. I'm always on the lookout for people to write articles for *Wingbeats*—it's a great way to share research and knowledge with other members as well as help keep our chapter active.

Planning is underway for our annual bird seed sale. Details are on page X. This is a major fundraiser for ASCR and we really do appreciate the continuing support of all who have purchased seed and suet over the years.

It's hard to believe that the seasons pass so quickly, and here we are, almost into September. May you all have a wonderful fall season and get out to watch the season change into its gorgeous fall attire!



MONARCH PRESERVATION PLAN BILL PASSES

(via email from Russ Comeau, President, South Shore Audubon Society)

Let's give a fluttering butterfly wing flap to thank our lawmakers in the NY State Senate & Assembly who unanimously passed a new bill (A1819/S3163), known as the Monarch Preservation Plan.

A1819: www.nyasembly.gov/leg/?bn=A01819&term=2025

S3163: www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2025/S3163

But we cannot rest our wings yet. Now's the time to fly into action to make our voices heard through emails, calls and letters to Governor Hochul to sign this bill into law - and NOT veto it!

South Shore Audubon has reviewed the bill and has sent a letter of support to the Governor.

Please kindly consider taking action now to urge Governor Hochul to sign the Monarch Preservation Plan (A1819/S3163) into law. The Governor can sign – or veto – this bill at any time from now to December 31, 2025. Consider sending a letter of support right away, so it has time to be factored into the Governor's decision.

The email address for an organization to send a letter of support to the Governor is: Legislative.Secretary@exec.ny.gov

To call or to send a stamped letter, use the info found in the link here, which also serves as an online form for a private individual to send a message the Governor: governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form

The Monarch Preservation Plan directs the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to take actions to conserve monarch butterflies and the unique habitats they depend upon for successful migrations. Also, to benefit other species of declining pollinators, restore native milkweed for monarch caterpillar habitat, restore other native nectar plant species, while controlling invasive plants, harmful pests and diseases. It's a powerful science-based package in all these aspects.

The educational programs provision of this bill is important for adults and children to learn how constituents can play a part to rescue an iconic species, help it recover from a steep decline and reestablish a sustainable population level.

This bill authorizes monarch and pollinator habitat restoration on DEC- and state-owned lands. It also authorizes DEC to build partnerships with federal agencies, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic programs, private landowners and others, and to establish conservation easements and transportation corridors for monarchs on private and public lands.

SOUNDING THE ALARM!

On the state level, the NYS Legislature finds that Eastern monarch populations have plummeted steeply, down as much as 90% during the past several decades. The once great migration of the eastern monarchs has been named a "threatened phenomenon" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

On a national level, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has proposed listing the monarch as a "threatened" species under the Endangered Species Act. Listing will provide federal protection and funding to help mitigate threats like loss and degradation of breeding and migratory habitat, and reducing pervasive exposure to insecticides and herbicides. USFWS urges the public to get involved to help save monarchs from the threat of extinction. (www.fws.gov/initiative/pollinators/save-monarch).

The bigger butterfly picture isn't pretty, with a catastrophic decline of - 32.6% for all 108 butterfly species in the Northeast region (www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adp4671) between 2000 and 2020. So, please ask Gov. Hochul to consider all opportunities by which DEC actions authorized by this bill may also serve to benefit other rapidly declining butterfly and pollinator species in NY. Finally have a budget here in New York State! The Legislature is still passing the final bills, but we expect voting to conclude late today or early tomorrow morning. I have good news to report on our budget priorities and have included a summary below with some of the highlights. We will schedule a policy committee meeting in the coming weeks to provide an in-depth overview of the final budget, so please be on the lookout for that invitation if you are interested in joining us.

THE PEDESTRIANS WHO ABETTED A HAWK'S DEADLY ATTACK

A zoologist observed a Cooper's hawk using a crosswalk signal as a cue to ambush its prey.

(by Katherine J. Wu, *The Atlantic*, May 23, 2025)

In November of 2021, Vladimir Dinets was driving his daughter to school when he first noticed a hawk using a pedestrian crosswalk.

The bird—a young Cooper's hawk, to be exact—wasn't using the crosswalk, in the sense of treading on the painted white stripes to reach the other side of the road in West Orange, New Jersey. But it was using the crosswalk—more specifically, the pedestrian-crossing signal that people activate to keep traffic out of said crosswalk—to ambush prey.

The crossing signal—a loud, rhythmic click audible from at least half a block away—was more of a pre-attack cue, or so the hawk had realized, Dinets, a zoologist now at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, told me. On weekday mornings, when pedestrians would activate the signal during rush hour, roughly 10 cars would usually be backed up down a side street. This jam turned out to be the perfect cover for a stealth attack: Once the cars had assembled, the bird would swoop down from its perch in a nearby tree, fly low to the ground along the line of vehicles, then veer abruptly into a residential yard, where a small flock of sparrows, doves, and starlings would often gather to eat crumbs—blissfully unaware of their impending doom.



Cooper's Hawk; photo by Gerry Woulfin

The hawk had masterminded a strategy, Dinets told me: To pull off the attacks, the bird had to create a mental map of the neighborhood—and, maybe even more important, understand that the rhythmic ticktock of the crossing signal would prompt a pileup of cars long enough to facilitate its assaults. The hawk, in other words, appears to have learned to interpret a traffic signal and take advantage of it, in its quest to hunt. Which is, with all due respect, more impressive than how most humans use a pedestrian crosswalk.

Cooper's hawks are known for their speedy sneak attacks in the wild, Janet Ng, a senior wildlife biologist with Environment and Climate Change Canada, told me. Zipping alongside bushes and branches for cover, they'll conceal themselves from prey until the very last moment of a planned ambush. "They're really fantastic hunters that way," Ng said. Those skills apparently translate fairly easily into urban environments, where Cooper's hawks flit amid trees and concrete landscapes, stalking city pigeons and doves.

That sort of urban buffet seems to have been a major incentive for this particular Cooper's hawk, Dinets, who published his observations of the bird in *Frontiers in Ethology*, told me. One of the (human) families in the neighborhood regularly dined outdoors in the evening, leaving a scattering of food scraps on their front lawn that would routinely attract a group of small birds the next morning. But the hawk needed perfect conditions to successfully dive-bomb that flock: enough cover, from a long-enough line of cars, to attack unseen. That scenario would play out only on weekday mornings, when both foot and car traffic were heavy enough that the crosswalk signal would stall lines of cars down the streets.

Over several months, Dinets noticed that the bird seemed to have figured out this complex system of ifs, ands, or buts. The hawk appeared only when the necessary degree of congestion was possible. And only after the pedestrian-crossing signal was activated would it ready itself for an attack—perching in a nearby tree to wait for the backlog of cars that it knew would soon manifest. Then, only after the queue stretched long enough to totally conceal its path, the bird would head toward its prey.

The crosswalk signal seems to have been key to this plan: The hawk could predict with startling accuracy how well cloaked it would be—and, thus, the success of its attack. "The hawk understood the connection," Dinets told me. That's hard to prove without experimentation, beyond Dinets's observation of this single bird—but that this hawk figured out the chain reaction that this signal could set off, under weekday-morning conditions, is definitely plausible, several researchers told me.

Plenty of animals, including other types of birds, have proved themselves savvy in human environments. Pigeons, for instance, wait for humans to turn on drinking fountains, then sip the water. Ng has spoken with farmers and ranchers in Alberta and Saskatchewan who have seen hawks use the sounds of gunshots during gopher hunts as a cue that a feast is impending. And crows have been spotted dropping hard-shelled nuts into roads so that cars will crack them open.

Still, Ng, who wasn't involved in the observations, told me that this hawk's feat is impressive, even if no other bird ever replicates it. The hawk clued into a human signal, in a human system, that was multiple steps removed from its target. Managing these attacks required a degree of foresight, a mental map of the neighborhood, even a sense of a human week's rhythm—understanding, for instance, the difference between weekday rush hours and weekend lulls.

The bird also appears to have picked up on all of this relatively quickly: Many Cooper's hawks spotted in cities come to urban areas only for the winter, which hints that this one may have conjured its plan of attack as a recent immigrant to the area. Generally speaking, the faster a creature learns something new, the more cognitively adept it is likely to be, Joshua Plotnik, a comparative cognition expert at Hunter College, told me. And this hawk managed all that as a juvenile, Ng pointed out—still in the first couple of years of its life, when most Cooper's hawks "are just not good at hunting yet." A common cause for mortality at this age, she said, is starvation.

But maybe the most endearing part of this hawk's tale is the idea that it took advantage of a crosswalk signal at all—an environmental cue that, under most circumstances, is totally useless to birds and perhaps a nuisance. To see any animal blur the line between what we consider the human and non-human spheres is eerie, but also humbling: Most other creatures, Plotnik said, are simply more flexible than we'd ever think.

THE INVASIVE SPOTTED LANTERNFLY IS SPREADING: PROTECT YOUR YARD

by Emily Hannemann, *Birds and Blooms*, May 16, 2025

The spotted lanternfly, native to Asia, is spreading and causing trouble in the U.S. Here's what to do if you find this invasive insect.

WHAT IS A SPOTTED LANTERNFLY?

The spotted lanternfly is a mothlike insect native to Asia. Adults are relatively easy to identify; their brown, black-spotted forewings as well as their red and black underwings tend to give them away. They grow to about an inch in length, and half an inch in width.

Egg masses, containing several dozen eggs, are unglamorous. Egg clusters are coated in gray wax and laid on host trees, which can make them difficult to find. When the wax dries, the eggs look similar to mud or dried putty. After hatching, the nymphs feature black-and-white spotted bodies that eventually turn red.

Spotted lanternflies will lay eggs on any solid surface, although they're frequently found on host trees and plants such as red maple, silver maple, weeping willow, and grape. Tree of heaven (also invasive) is their main host.

HOW DO SPOTTED LANTERNFLIES HURT TREES?

These pests can cause damage, especially to fruit plants and forests. When these bugs feed on plants, they leave behind honeydew, which causes mold growth and can bring other insects to the ailing plant.

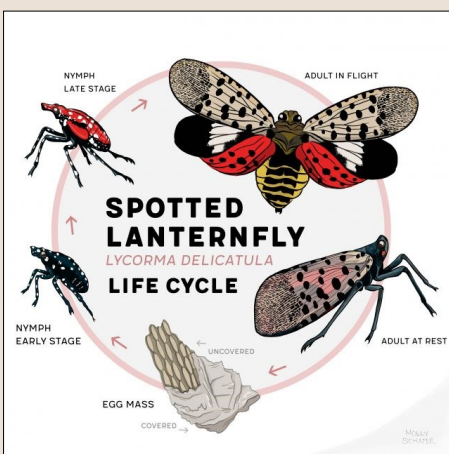
WHERE ARE SPOTTED LANTERNFLIES FOUND IN THE U.S.?

According to Cornell Integrated Pest Management, as of April 2025, spotted lanternflies have been found in many eastern states. They include Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois. If you live in one of those states and are concerned about the insect's spread, read on to learn what you can do to help.

HOW TO GET RID OF SPOTTED LANTERNFLIES

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends a few tricks to reduce the spread of this invasive insect. These include checking trees and plants, and closing car windows when cars are parked. Destroy eggs by smashing them, or scraping them into a plastic bag filled with rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer, and then zipping the bag and throwing it away.

You should also check your belongings and clothes before leaving an area where lanternflies are present. You're most likely to spot spotted lanternflies at night, since they feed in large numbers around dusk. Kill adult bugs by crushing them or putting them in a container of rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer.



DISCOVERING BLACK VULTURES IN THE AREA

by Atlas Seres

Although I moved to the East Coast from Oregon a little over three years ago, the bird population over here never ceases to amaze me. I've seen countless Eastern Bluebirds, Tufted Titmice, and Northern Cardinals since moving here and I count myself lucky each time that I do. Although there are birds native to New York that are also native to Oregon, I had never seen a Wild Turkey or Bald Eagle before—especially at the rate in which you can in the capital region. And one bird I'd never even heard of before moving all this way across the country, but now get to see on a semi-regular basis, is the Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*).

There's a chance you haven't heard of them either and that's fair. They're not very common this far north. In fact, they've only been in New York state as recently as the 1990s. I would bet, however, that you've heard of their larger, more famous cousin the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). Most often seen riding thermals—spirals of hot air emanating from the ground—over the open country or nearby woods, you've probably encountered this bird from your car while driving down the freeway. From tens of thousands of feet below they might not look that imposing but with a wingspan of 6 feet and a diet mostly consisting of the rotting flesh of dead animals, they are not a creature to be messed with. But where Turkey Vultures look straight out of a cowboy western, the Black Vulture would blend right in on the set of a horror film.

With a charcoal, featherless head and jet black body, aside from the streaks of white underneath their wings, the aptly named Black Vulture easily blends in with the shadows. Like most vultures, they don't make nests but rather choose to rear their young in the hollows of trees, in caves, or even in abandoned buildings. Black Vultures are monogamous and form strong family bonds. Nestlings remain close to their parents long after they have fledged and both immediate and extended family members choose to spend most of the year living together. These family units—referred to as a committee, venue, or volt—stick close by in order to find food, raise young, and protect themselves from outsiders. Since Black Vultures don't have a keen sense of smell like the Turkey Vulture does, they typically fly higher up than other vultures and observe their behavior for hints as to where food might be. The Turkey Vulture leads the Black Vulture and its companions straight towards their next meal. There, they act as a group to fight off the much larger bird and steal its dinner. So perhaps a Mafia movie would be a more appropriate metaphor.

If you've visited or driven through East Greenbush there's a chance you've actually seen one of these birds. At the roundabout on the intersection of Troy Road and Red Mill Road lies a house that's seemingly long been abandoned. While it appears that it's been years since the house has seen consistent use, the garage has (to my best estimate) three current residents. Seen surveying from the tops of streetlights or perched in the window, a family of Black Vultures now calls this place home. It is likely that two of the Vultures are a mated pair while the third is either their young from a previous breeding season or related to one of the birds in their group. Either way, this committee of Black Vultures uses this abandoned structure to roost and I am thoroughly invested. Each time I drive from my apartment in East Greenbush to work in Troy I give my roommate a full report on how the Black Vultures are doing. So when, during my internship with the Audubon Society of the Capital Region, I was asked to write some pieces for both ASCR's website and newsletter, I knew I had to take the opportunity to talk about some of my favorite local birds and introduce anyone who may not be familiar with these recent New York residents to some of their newest neighbors.



RESOURCES:

- <https://hudsonvalleyone.com/2017/07/25/9-things-to-know-about-the-black-vulture/>
- <https://www.audubon.org/news/a-closer-look-how-vultures-lazily-circle-air-1>
- <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/turkey-vulture>
- <https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/black-vulture>
- <https://abcbirds.org/bird/black-vulture/>
- <https://www.desertmuseum.org/vultures/morefacts.php?print=y>
- https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black_Vulture/lifehistory
- https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black_Vulture/overview

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES NEW YORKERS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS AGAINST TICK-BORNE ILLNESS

Simple Precautions Can Help Prevent Illnesses Caused by Infected Ticks, Including Lyme Disease May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month

ALBANY, N.Y. (May 12, 2025) – The New York State Department of Health, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation remind New Yorkers, visitors and everyone who enjoys the outdoors of the importance of protecting against ticks and tick-borne illnesses like Lyme disease.

"As the weather warms up and we get outside, it's important to take precautions to protect against diseases, such as Lyme disease, that can be transmitted by infected ticks," State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said. "Ticks can be found in most areas of New York and the best way to prevent infections that can cause serious illness is to follow simple methods to avoid being bitten. Remember to protect yourself throughout the day and use protective clothing and repellent to help keep you safe and healthy."

Even though ticks are still active in cooler temperatures, the arrival of spring and approaching warmer weather mean ticks will become more prevalent. Bites from an infected tick can transmit several diseases, including Lyme disease, the most commonly reported tick-borne disease in the State. Over the last 3 years, the State has averaged more than 17,500 new cases of Lyme disease each year, with more than 19,000 cases reported in 2023 alone.

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissioner Pro Tempore Randy Simons said, "While we encourage everyone to get outside and explore our beautiful Parks and Historic Sites, we urge you to do so safely. Tickborne illnesses are a serious concern, especially in areas with tall grass or dense vegetation just off the trail. We're proud to partner with other New York State agencies to help prevent the spread of these diseases and keep visitors safe."

Department of Environmental Conservation Acting Commissioner Amanda Lefton said, "The return of warm weather means nature lovers and adventurers of all ages are eager to get outside and enjoy the remarkable outdoor recreational opportunities New York has to offer. Unfortunately, ticks and the real risks these pests carry are also returning. Prevention is the most effective defense to protect against tick-borne illness, so keep kids, pets, and loved ones safe by following best practices before heading out."

Lyme disease is caused by bacteria transmitted by infected blacklegged (deer) ticks (both nymphs and adults), which are most active when temperatures are above freezing. Lyme disease can affect people of any age and is spread when an infected tick bites a person and remains attached for 36 hours or more.

The most common symptom of Lyme disease is an expanding rash resembling a bull's eye or solid patch, that appears near the site of a bite. Flu-like symptoms such as fever or chills and muscle aches, headache, or fatigue may also occur within 30 days of infection. If these symptoms develop, it's important to seek treatment from a health care provider immediately.

Tick bites can also transmit other diseases. Since 2015, the Department has reported an average of 600 babesiosis infections and an average of 1,300 anaplasmosis infections each year, as well as cases of more rare diseases such as ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, and Powassan virus disease. All these diseases can vary in severity, but without treatment, they can cause serious illness and even death. Prompt tick removal is important as transmission of these diseases can occur more quickly than Lyme disease. Powassan virus is able to be transmitted within 15 minutes of a tick bite.

New Yorkers should continue to take measures to protect themselves, their children, and their pets against all ticks and tickborne diseases that are present in New York State.

- ⇒ While hiking, working, or spending time in wooded areas, follow these simple steps to help prevent tick bites:
- ⇒ Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and closed-toed shoes.
- ⇒ Keep long hair tied back, especially when gardening.
- ⇒ Check for ticks often while outdoors and brush them away before they attach.
- ⇒ Perform a full body check multiple times during the day, as well as at the end of the day, to ensure that no ticks are attached.
- ⇒ Tumble clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors.
- ⇒ Shower soon after coming indoors.
- ⇒ Remember to check pets thoroughly for ticks after spending time outdoors and talk to your veterinarian about ways to reduce ticks on your pet.

Consider using EPA-registered repellents labeled as effective against ticks containing DEET, picaridin, or IR3535, and follow label instructions. If you are using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.

If you find an attached tick, use fine-tipped tweezers to remove it right away. Avoid risky removal strategies such as detergent or burning, as these could increase your risk of infection. See the Department of Health's website for a video on proper tick removal technique.

The Department and its partners routinely collect and analyze tens of thousands of ticks from across the state each year to better understand the tick population, tick behavior and regional trends in diseases carried by ticks. Current and retrospective tick collection and testing results are publicly available on the Department's Health Data NY website. A map showing your risk of encountering an infected blacklegged tick by NY geographic region can be found at: Tick Score by Region.

For more information about Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases, visit <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/>.

MY FIVE SEASONS OBSERVING AN EAGLE NEST

THACHER STATE PARK 2021- 2025

by Brian Hardiman

My head immediately snapped to attention when I heard the following words: bald eagles, nest monitoring, and volunteers needed. The time was the fall of 2020, and my wife was reading an announcement in the Audubon Society of the Capital Region's (ASCR) newsletter about the chapter's eagle nest monitoring program. At the time I had been looking for volunteer opportunities of this nature. It was perfect!

I was an environmental educator for over 25 years, and my career included leading countless birding programs for adults and children. Among these programs were field trips for bald eagle observation. This volunteer opportunity with ASCR checked all the boxes: watching birds with a purpose, spending time in the field, interacting and sharing with the public, and contributing to eagle conservation.

Bald eagle nest monitors serve a number of functions: they document nest productivity, observe eagle/human interactions, educate nest visitors, and report emergencies to the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) hotline.



The 2025 breeding season was my fifth year of observing the nest near Thompson's Lake at Thacher State Park (TSP). Fortunately, in those five seasons there were no incidents or emergencies where DEC was needed, and the only human encounters were of the positive kind—visitors viewed the nest at my observation point on a hill from a safe distance away of 190 yards. It was a 'wow' moment for these people, especially children, to see the nest and eagles up close and personal through the powerful magnification of my spotting scope. From our hilltop vantage point, we were nearly at the same height as the nest itself, giving us an open window, so to speak, for some thrilling views.

The observation point is very easy to access—it is located just steps away from a TSP hiking trail near the Nature Center. This location makes for an ideal place to watch the nest and engage visitors who stop to take a look. The observer has a clear line-of-sight at the nest situated high in a live aspen tree in a powerline. Between the observation point and nest, the steepness of the terrain and the thick but low vegetation act as a natural barrier that discourages visitors from approaching the nest any closer.

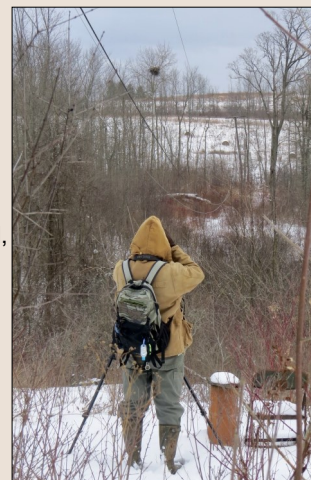
In sharing my sightings with the Nature Center staff, I had learned this nest tree has been used since 2018, after the previous nest in a white pine along the lakeshore was blown down. From the current nest tree, the lake is just a short, quick flight for the eagles.

I typically start my observations in January looking for the presence of the eagle pair confirming to me the territory is occupied for another nesting season. It is a time they strengthen their pair bond—spending more time together, perching next to or near one another, and making 'housekeeping' visits to the nest, adding sticks and other materials like grasses, clumps of sod, and even the occasional corn stalk.

My next goal is to confirm the start of incubation, which for this pair is typically late February or early March. Seeing an adult eagle sitting low with its white head visible above the nest rim is a good indicator incubation has commenced. Typically, two eggs are laid. The diligent observer may even see the eagle stand and reach down into the nest with its beak to turn the eggs. Of course, it is impossible to see into the bottom of the nest and see the actual turning, but the eagle's movements are a telltale sign this is happening. While both sexes perform the incubation duties, the female spends more timesitting on the eggs. It is always exciting to see a nest exchange during this time—the sitting eagle often vocalizes on the approach of its mate. When the two large birds stand together in the nest on their large feet with long sharp talons, it is fascinating to watch as they both appear to almost tiptoe and move gingerly to avoid the eggs. After its mate departs the nest, the 'reliever' carefully and slowly settles down onto the eggs with a few characteristic wiggles of the body.



Each season the most exciting event during my nest monitoring is seeing for the first time the tiny head of a baby eagle popping into view above the rim of the nest. Hatching occurs after about thirty-five days of incubation, so with some simple math and knowing when incubation began, the hatching date can be more or less guessed. Over the next three months or so both adults tend to the nestlings as they transform from tiny helpless hatchlings to eagles the size of their parents. They will fledge, or make their first flight, at ten to twelve weeks of age. Leading up to this first flight, the eaglets can be seen wing exercising more frequently and vigorously, even lifting off slightly out of the nest at times. In time they will perch in branches above and near the nest. At this time the observer can count on the birds fledging any day. Once fledged, a young eagle will stay in the general area of the nest, even returning to it occasionally. During my seasons of monitoring the best location to see the fledglings is the lake, where the adults may still provide a meal for them. The fledglings continue to food-beg and chase the adults, until eventually they gain independence and disperse from the area.



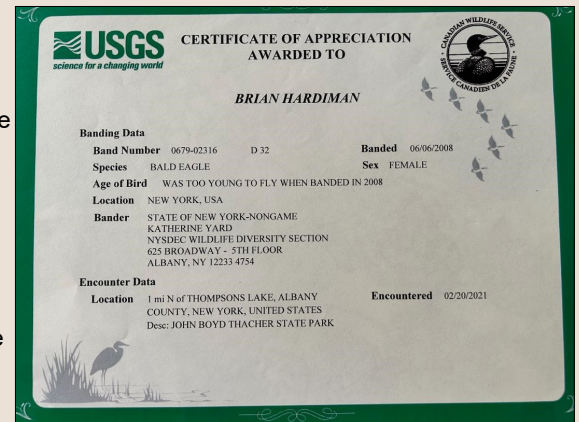
The TSP nest was successful in four of my five seasons of monitoring: fledging two, two, zero, one, and two young for the breeding seasons 2021 through 2025, respectively. Nesting in 2023 produced no young, and I was never able to confirm incubation. My monitoring started in January and extended into May and included multiple observations of the mated pair on territory and performing nest maintenance, however, at no time did I observe incubation behavior. On March 16, for example, I spent seventy minutes observing the nest and the adult female was present adding and moving sticks and a corn stalk in the nest. This eagle made multiple nest visits in that time, performing maintenance but no incubation was ever observed. The second adult briefly joined its mate in the nest before flying off and not returning. The nest failed for an unknown reason, and it made me wonder what the subsequent breeding seasons would bring, but fortunately the nest fledged one and two young eagles the next two years.

Possibly the most exciting discovery made during my five seasons of nest monitoring occurred that first season in 2021. On February 20 during my observations, I noticed bands on the legs of the one adult bald eagle (its mate was unbanded). A blue color band was on the bird's right leg and an aluminum band was on the left leg. Color bands often have an alphanumeric code with large characters intended to be read at a distance with a spotting scope, so I was excited to try to get a good look to read the band. However, getting that good look was easier said than done. The nest tree's branches and the nest itself obstructed the eagle's legs, making it impossible to read the band. The eagle would have to perch on a branch in the ideal position for the band to be visible. However, soon after I noticed the bands, the eagle flew from the nest tree in the direction of the lake. That's where I headed to continue my attempts at reading the band.

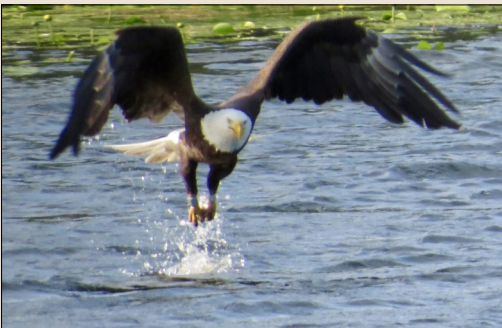
I found the eagle perched high on a branch of a deciduous tree, and with a little patience and my scope zoomed in on the eagle's legs I was soon able to read a letter D over the numerals 32 on the blue band. Success!

The next step was to contact the federal Bird Banding Laboratory with the band information and the date and location of the eagle. I waited anxiously for a reply, and being ever thankful for the speed of the internet, I received an email from the lab telling me the eagle, a female, was banded as a nestling on June 6, 2008, by DEC biologist Katherine Yard. It was banded in a nest at Green Island on the Hudson River near Troy. I contacted this biologist to pass along that 'her' eagle, now thirteen years old, is alive and well and currently nesting at TSP. She was appreciative of my report and very thankful to hear the good news, stating data of this kind contributes to the body of knowledge on eagle dispersal and longevity.

Eagle D32 celebrated her seventeenth birthday this past spring and has nested at TSP each of my five seasons as a volunteer observer. Hopefully she will continue for future seasons and you can bet your binoculars I'll be looking carefully for that D32 blue band next winter when I begin another season of nest monitoring.



Thank you to ASCR's Jennifer Ford, the volunteer nest monitor coordinator, for helping me get started that first season as an observer; to



the TSP Nature Center staff for the sharing and exchange of eagle sightings and nest happenings through the five seasons; and to all the

ANNUAL BIRD SEED SALE COMING SOON!

Stay tuned for important information regarding our annual Bird Seed Sale, a major fundraiser for ASCR. The sale will begin in September, with a pickup date of November 1, 2025, at Wildbird Junction, 308 Delaware Ave, Delmar, NY 12054. Pickup hours are 11:00—1:00. Information will be available shortly on our website: <https://www.capitalregionaudubon.org/>

ASCR's BACKPACK PROGRAM CONTINUES

by Carol Quantock

Since the inception of the backpack program in the fall of 2024, ASCR has had several inquiries from local libraries about obtaining backpacks as well as future bird walks and lectures.

Because so much interest has been generated, the following libraries received birding backpacks: Guilderland, Rensselaer, and Poestenkill. The Board approved funding for the backpacks and their contents.

Douglas and Margie Rogers are ASCR's "backpack heroes", having taken ownership of this project and doing all the legwork required to get backpacks out to libraries as quickly as possible. Our coverage area is very large, and there are many libraries that could use items such as this for their patrons, especially now that so much funding is being cut from the federal budget.

The backpacks, purchased from National Audubon Society, include the following items, tailored to individual libraries' needs:

- ◇ Lightweight binoculars
- ◇ Binocular instructions
- ◇ Lens cleaning cloth
- ◇ Birding journal
- ◇ Laminated guide to the birds of New York State
- ◇ List of locations in each area to see birds.

Below are photos of Douglas Rogers with staff members of the Guilderland Library, Poestenkill Library, and Rensselaer Library.



Guilderland Library



Poestenkill Library



Rensselaer Library

RECENT ASCR EVENTS AND APPEARANCES

by Carol Quantock

It's been a while since the last *Wingbeats* issue, and readers need to know just where and what our volunteers have been doing and working on since the beginning of the year.

Our monthly meetings continued until the summer and will resume on September 15th at Five Rivers Environmental Center (see page 1).

We've been participating in Trivia Night at the Warbler Brewery over the spring and summer and generated interest from patrons about what ASCR does and its mission for birds.

We've conducted bird walks at the Washington County Grasslands, Peebles Island, Five Rivers, Pine Hollow, and Schoharie. We've worked with the staff of Ten Broeck Mansion for their children's summer programs and

President Teresa Murphy, VP Carol Quantock, and volunteer extraordinaire Deb Moyer have given bird identification talks at libraries, garden club meetings, and senior centers. We've also been leaning in on the Audubon Society's theme this year of how to prevent bird window collisions, both residential and commercial.

On June 14th, we "tabled" at Five Rivers' "Get Outdoors and Get Together Day", and were honored to meet DEC's new commissioner, Amanda Lefton and NYS Office of People With Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Willow Baer, who stopped by to say hello. Special thanks go to Maya Niles and Atlas Seres, who helped greet visitors and answer questions.

On July 12th, we participated at the Schoharie Lily Festival, distributing brochures and answering questions from the public. ASCR fit right in with the Festival theme of "Birds and Bees".

We have several more plans for the near future, not the least of which is our annual Bird Seed Sale, which runs through September and October. We also encourage you to participate in two big events: the Hawk Watch at Thacher Park and the Barrens Bird Blitz at the Pine Bush, both in September.

ASCR is active, but we always need more volunteers! It's fun and educational as well as a way to get the word out about birds and their world. We are in need of experienced birders to lead walks. We also would love to have more people willing to conduct talks/lectures, since we get a lot of requests. Our presentations are in PowerPoint format and you don't need to be an ornithologist, just friendly and engaging.



Teresa Murphy, Atlas Seres,
Mel Mathers, Margie Rogers,
and Douglas Rogers
at the Schoharie Lily Festival

Teresa Murphy, Commissioner
Amanda Lefton, Deb Moyer,
and NYS Office of People With
Developmental Disabilities
Commissioner Willow Baer
getting together outdoors at
Five Rivers



UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

ASCR has a history of providing a presence at community events. Recently, volunteers have staffed tables at local farmers' markets, plant sales, and environmental health and safety events. Of special note is the ASCR Annual Bird Seed Sale, which is a major fundraiser for the Society. The Sale and the ASCR Annual Meeting are two of the largest recurring events, but we are always looking for more ways to spread the word about birds. If event is cancelled or postponed, we will post it on our website and on our Facebook page.

SEPTEMBER 13TH- HELDERBERG HAWK WATCH

Thacher State Park Overlook, Thacher Park Road, New Scotland, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

We will again be attending this year's hawk watch count. We will have an information table and you are welcome to stop by and speak with us about this event. Don't forget your binoculars to help with the count!

SEPTEMBER 15TH MEETING

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, 56 Game Farm Road, Delmar, 6:30 p.m.

The public is welcome to attend our meeting. We will be conducting a presentation on "Bird Window Collision Prevention", which results in 1 billion birds being killed each year in the United States. We will explain why this happens and ways you can help prevent this from happening at your home.

SEPTEMBER 20TH, BARRENS BIRD BLITZ

Albany Pine Bush Preserve, 195 New Karner Rd Suite 1, Albany, 6 a.m.-12 p.m.

The Albany Pine Bush is holding the Barrens Birding Blitz again this year on Saturday, September 20th. This team birding competition will take place from 6am-12pm, culminating in an awards ceremony and light refreshments in the Discovery Center at 12:30pm. Both traversing and sit & spot teams will cover different regions of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, each contributing to full coverage of the preserve, hiking trails in all regions. The teams' eyes and ears will provide a snapshot of the birds in the preserve, and teams will compete to spot and identify as many species as possible in the time allotted. For more information and to sign up, go to the link below. If you sign up, you are welcome to join our chapter group, Audubon Society of the Capital Region. Hope to see some of you there!

<https://albanypinebush.org/index.php?section=visit-calendar&evtid=1985>

SEPTEMBER 27TH, BIRD IDENTIFICATION TALK

Cohoes Public Library, 18 Mohawk Street, Cohoes, 11 a.m.-12 noon

A representative from ASCR will give an informative talk on the basics of bird identification and the proper use of binoculars. This talk is not just for beginners, but anyone who is interested in becoming a better birder. For more information and to sign up, go to the link below.

<https://www.cohoespubliclibrary.org/>

SEPTEMBER 28TH, AIM HIGH DOWN SYNDROME BUDDY WALK

Central Park, Schenectady, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

ASCR will be staffing an information table at this annual event. The Down Syndrome Aim High Resource Center at the Center for Disability Services provides parent-to-parent and professional services and support to individuals with Down syndrome and their families. The Center offers support programs, educational services, social events, community events and up-to-date news and resources for families, professionals and individuals. They also work to educate the greater community about Down syndrome and to help individuals become self-advocates. For more information, go to:

<https://cfdsnny.org/dsahrc>

OCTOBER 4TH, ANNUAL BARN TO BRIDGE 5K & FALL FEST

Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail and Firefighter's Memorial Park, 1510 New Scotland Rd, Slingerlands, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

We will have an information table at the Fall Festival site at the Firefighter's Memorial Park. Stop by to meet us, find out what we do and answer any questions you have. Hope to see you there. For more information on these two events, go to:

<https://business.bethlehemchamber.com/events/details/albany-country-fall-fest-barn-to-bridge-5k-10365>

OCTOBER 7TH, BACKYARD BIRD FEEDING TALK

East Greenbush Community Library, 10 Community Way, East Greenbush, 6 p.m.-7 p.m.

We will be discussing what types of bird seeds attract which birds, types of bird feeders, including the placement and cleaning of them. To register for this program, go to the Library's website:

<https://eastgreenbushlibrary.librarymarket.com/>



Audubon Society of the Capital Region

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www.capitalregionaudubon.org

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An All-Volunteer Chapter Organization
Of the National Audubon Society**

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**Board Meetings are held on the second
Monday of every month. We discuss
upcoming events and make decisions that
guide the chapter for the year.**

Email

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for more information

**Looking to have an impact in your
community?**

Become an Audubon Society of the Capital Region

Chapter Supporter!

As a Chapter Supporter, 100% of your membership dues stay local. This helps us support local conservation efforts, continue to promote birding and bird education, and to support other special initiatives, such as the construction of bird blinds. There are four Chapter Supporter memberships available:

Individual: \$20.00

Student: \$15.00

Couple (two persons residing in same home): \$35.00

**Family (three or more adults/children residing in same home):
\$50.00**

In return, you get:

- An official ASCR Chapter Supporter Membership card
- An ASCR Chapter Supporter window cling to prevent window strikes
- The satisfaction of knowing you are supporting local birds and their habitats

Click [here](#) for more information on how you can become an ASCR Chapter Supporter!!



Questions?

Email: capitalregionaudubon@gmail.com