

# The Broadwing



Publication of the Montclair Bird Club  
May 2023

Montclair, NJ  
Volume LXIX, Number 9

## Message from the Editor May 2023

Dear Members and Friends,

Montclair Broadwings information is on page 3. We are hoping that everyone takes the time to register to join the team and participate.

There are a plenty of pictures in this issue from local field trips as well as an exciting trip to Mobile, Alabama, and a brief visit to Florida to see a hundred indigo buntings, red-cockaded woodpecker, and brown-headed nuthatch.

Migration is in full swing in New Jersey, so next month will have plenty of pictures as well.

The May Virtual Bird Walk is the last one before the summer hiatus, so please try to join us.

Sandy

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**Next club meeting: Wednesday, May 10, 2023**  
**Virtual Bird Walk: Thursday, May 18, 2023**  
**Theme: *Small Birds***

## Moths are more efficient pollinators than bees, shows new research

by University of Sussex



*Photo credit: Sandy Sorkin, Brigantine, NJ*

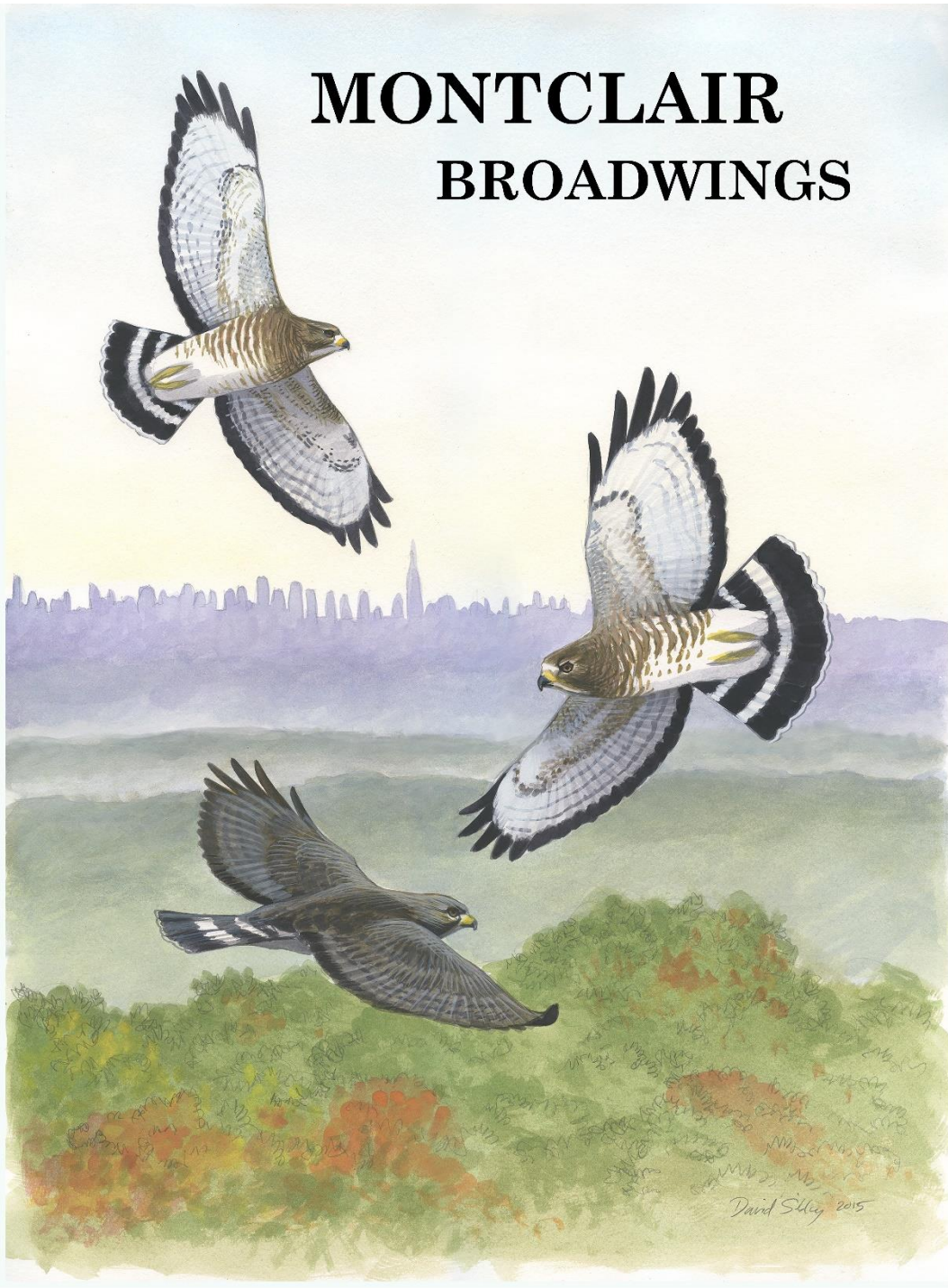
Moths are more efficient pollinators at night than day-flying pollinators such as bees, finds new research from the University of Sussex, published March 29 in *PLOS ONE*.

Amid widespread concern about the decline of wild pollinating insects like bees and butterflies, University of Sussex researchers have discovered that moths are particularly vital pollinators.

Studying 10 sites in the southeastern England throughout July 2021, the Sussex researchers found that 83% of insect visits to bramble flowers were made during the day. While the moths made fewer visits during the shorter summer nights, notching up only 15% of the visits, they were able to pollinate the flowers more quickly.

As a result, the researchers concluded that moths are more efficient pollinators than day-flying insects such as bees, which are traditionally thought of as "hard-working." While day-flying insects have more time available to transfer pollen, moths were making an important contribution during the short hours of darkness.

Full article: [PHYS.ORG, Moths](https://phys.org/news/2021-03-moths-pollinate-bramble-flowers.html)



*Painting by David Sibley, with permission of the artist*

Calling all MBC members, former Montclair hawkwatchers and counters, interns, friends, and family of the Montclair Hawkwatch to join and support the bird club's **Montclair Broadwings**, who will be participating in the World Series of Birding on May 13, 2023. The **Montclair Broadwings** are raising funds in support of the Montclair Hawkwatch, a New Jersey Audubon

sanctuary in Montclair, New Jersey. Our goal is to raise \$50,000, with a stretch goal of \$75,000. The Hawkwatch is a significant site for monitoring migrating hawks, averaging over 15,000 broad-winged hawks in the skies above Montclair each fall on their annual migration to South America. The Hawkwatch also hosts educational programs about raptor migration for school groups and members of the general public.

“Counting For Else” is the theme of our team. The late Else Greenstone, a former MBC president, coordinated the Hawkwatch for over 30 years. She was a noted hawk migration expert and educator, and was responsible for introducing thousands of people to the wonder of raptors, mentoring dozens of hawk counters and future conservationists.

There are four ways you can participate:

- 1) **You can register to join the *Montclair Broadwings* [here](#), then count birds on May 13 to add to the team’s species list.** All team members must register by May 5, and there is no cost to register. After registering, all you have to do is enter into Cornell’s eBird platform all the bird species you see between the hours of midnight EDT and 11:59 p.m. EDT on May 13. You can count wherever in the world you are within that 24-hour window: in New Jersey or any other state, even in any country; on a hike, a field trip, in a park or backyard, or just looking out the window. eBird will aggregate the lists of all team members to create what we hope will be the biggest and most diverse bird species list of any team in the World Series. Detailed instructions on how to use eBird’s trip report function will be sent in a future email.
- 2) **Donate.** You can support the *Montclair Broadwings* and help the team reach its fundraising goal by donating [here](#). If you decide to join the team and count bird species as a team member, you can still provide financial support as well.
- 3) A local contingent of the *Montclair Broadwings* will conduct a Big Sit at Mills Reservation between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. All are welcome to join us there ([directions here](#) and at [MontclairBirdClub.org](http://MontclairBirdClub.org)).
- 4) **Get the word out.** Share this newsletter with your friends, co-workers, and family to let them know about the World Series of Birding. Encourage them to join the team, count birds that day, and make a pledge to support our team. If your company engages in charitable giving, ask if they would consider pledging, or have them email Wayne Greenstone ([wglaw2@verizon.net](mailto:wglaw2@verizon.net)) for more information.

**About the Painting:** To support the team, the noted author, ornithologist, and artist David Allen Sibley has given the *Montclair Broadwings* permission to use his painting of the view from the Montclair Hawkwatch.

Montclair Bird Club  
2023 Bird of the Year  
**Belted Kingfisher**



The 2023 Bird of the Year  
Photo: Ric Cohn  
Picture taken at Garret Mountain Reservation

Migrant Trap  
IV  
Æneas Faber

I glanced over to see if Tuck was listening; I wasn't sure, as the speedometer needle slipped past 85, whether I should be relieved or not to see him completely absorbed in scanning the sky and the fenceposts as they whizzed past the car windows. With one hand on the wheel and the other gripping his half-raised Swarovskis, he was reciting the litany of open-country birds we passed: "Vesper...kestrel...dickcissel...." I half turned to Phoebe: "Phoebe, you know how fond I am of Anne, and you know too that my relationship with Do is purely professional—apart from the birding aspect, of course. I don't understand why Anne is suddenly so hostile, but it certainly can't be that she's jealous—Slow down, Tuck, there were godwits on this pasture last weekend—It's probably something at work; I know that Decker has been having some problems, and Anne has been pretty much running the copy shop for him. And I really don't think there's much I can do to make her feel more included—come on, Tuck, if you're going to use those bins, at least take your foot off the gas—we asked her to come on the big day, didn't we?"

Seven gray partridges flew across the road, uncharacteristically landing in a patch of short vegetation where we could watch them; Tuck came to what nearly constituted a stop, and Phoebe took a moment to update the list. I poured myself a cup of strong birder's coffee, burned my mouth, and thought about what Phoebe had said about Anne. And about Do.

*To be continued*



**Marbled Godwit**

***Field Guide to North American Flycatchers: Empidonax and Pewees***

by Cin-Ty Lee, illustrated by Andrew Birch

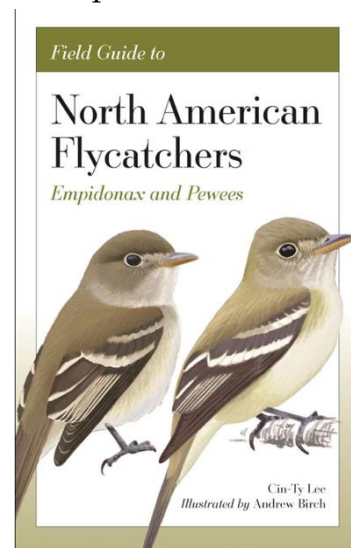
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023

Softcover, 157 pages – \$19.95

*A review by Rick Wright*

Nearly a century ago, Ludlow Griscom wrote to the most promising of his protégés that in the field, “it is *impossible* to be certain in separating the Acadian, Alder [and Willow], and Least Flycatchers by color characters even in the spring. In the fall, it is out of the question. . .” (quoted in Peterson 1947; emphasis in the original). Even museum skins posed serious challenges, but with the specimen in hand, “proportions,” which “tend to be more important than color in this most difficult genus,” could help solve at least some of the puzzles (Griscom 1932).

That hint went unheeded for decades, and American birders eager to identify their flycatchers were left to rely on habitat and voice—two clues of very little use in the field during migration, when most of us see most of our flycatchers. Not until the 1980s did Griscom’s pointer trickle into the consciousness of most field birders. Bret Whitney and Kenn Kaufman’s “*Empidonax* Challenge,” published in *Birding* over a span of three years (1985–1987), and Kevin Zimmer’s *Western Bird Watcher* (1985), followed by Kaufman’s *Advanced Birding* (1990), opened a great many eyes, making it seem “possible to accurately identify most silent *Empidonax*” (Zimmer 1985) without undue reliance on plumage characters or habitat preferences.



Cin-Ty Lee and Andrew Birch have now taken the next step with the publication of their guide to the *Empidonax*, the *Contopus* pewees, and the Tufted Flycatcher, covering all the species in those genera known north of Mexico. Their approach in this handsomely produced volume is “holistic,” designed to encourage identification “based mostly on differences in color contrast, shape, and relative lengths of tail and wings.”

The first almost 50 pages are devoted to descriptions and illustrations of the often very subtle variation in those features across species. Some of these field mark categories—crown shape, bill structure, and primary projection, for example—are familiar from their use in many field identifications, while others—such as forehead angle and wing panel contrast—are introduced here as especially useful in dealing with the flycatchers.

Andrew Birch’s drawings, here and throughout the book, are attractive and meticulous as usual, prepared in a “soft” style especially well suited to birds whose plumages range, for the most part, from gray-green to green-gray. I will admit that even with the help of

such fine illustrations, my eye still finds it difficult to distinguish “peaked” and “crested” crowns or “intermediate” and “steep” forehead slopes. All the same, this book is worth having just for the sensitivity and high quality of the pictures.

A brief but salutary reminder of the importance of correctly aging a bird and assessing its molt status is followed by 100 pages of “field guide” proper. Each of the eighteen species is made the subject of a detailed, one- to three-page identification essay, treating general identification features, voice, and range and habitat. In the case of especially similar taxa, such as the wood-pewees, the Traill flycatchers, and the Cordilleran and Pacific-slope flycatchers, the two species are considered together for easier comparison. Birch’s illustrations are carefully placed on the page to emphasize the differences between similar species. Clearly reproduced, large-scale sound spectrograms will help fix vocal differences in even the most visually and verbally oriented reader’s mind.

Each species account, including those for vagrants such as the Cuban pewee, ends with a map or maps depicting the bird’s migration phenology. Reproduced at large scale, these maps are remarkably precise, and they are annotated to show not just the direction of the spring and fall passages but their timing, in most cases down to the week. For species with an extensive range north and south, histograms indicate the seasonal peaks in selected regions on the breeding grounds and along the migration routes, a very helpful reminder that a quick glance at the calendar can often eliminate some possible identifications and highlight the likelihood of others.

In 2000, in his *Birding in the American West*, Kevin Zimmer sought to temper some birders’ euphoric “impression that all silent empids can and should be identifiable in the field. This is clearly not the case. Caution must remain the byword. . . .” Almost a quarter of a century on, Lee and Birch repeat the warning. Thanks to this little book, though, we are that much closer to the goal.

#### Works cited

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## Montclair Bird Club Field Trip Reports

### Liberty State Park Birds & Beer

**March 19, 2023**

Our annual Liberty State Park Birds & Beer trip started up again after a three-year hiatus due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Sunday, March 19, turned out to be a sunny, but cold and blustery day at Liberty State Park (typical for March), but a small party of eight people turned out to see which birds were out and about. This year, rather than the traditional afternoon visit, we were here in the morning, when, unfortunately, the low tide turned the bay into mudflats and kept the usual shorebirds and ducks out of view.

Still, we had an interesting morning birding along the Hudson River Walkway at the southern end of the park. The bay section along Morris Pesin Drive had an abundance of buffleheads and common, red-breasted, and hooded mergansers. In the distance, along the Caven Point beaches, we could see double-crested cormorants and lots of ring-billed and other gulls. American black ducks, gadwall, Canada geese, and brant were also represented.

Walking along the walkway under the Liberty National Golf Course we found white-throated and song sparrows, a mockingbird, a hairy woodpecker, house finch, and robins.

Returning to our cars after our 2 ½ mile excursion, we drove to Zeppelin Hall on the other side of the Morris Canal inlet and enjoyed a cold beer, brats, and other lunch fare, ready to return in 2024.

### Mill Creek Marsh

**April 15, 2023**

Despite predictions of rain and thunderstorms (which never came), eight members congregated for a photography-focused walk at Mill Creek Marsh led by Ric Cohn and Fred Pfeifer. Equipped with still, video, and cell phone cameras, we shared photography tips and some of the pictures we had just taken. Sightings included many green-winged and a few blue-winged teal, many tree swallows, and monk parakeets rebuilding their nest. We also saw a muskrat and a very large snapping turtle. Overall, more than 25 species were recorded, and a good time was had by all.

Canada goose	Downy woodpecker	White-throated sparrow
Blue-winged teal	Monk parakeet	Savannah sparrow
Mallard	crow sp.	Song sparrow
Green-winged teal	Tree swallow	Swamp sparrow
Mourning dove	European starling	Red-winged blackbird
Greater yellowlegs	Northern mockingbird	Brown-headed cowbird
Ring-billed gull	American robin	Yellow-rumped warbler
Herring gull	House sparrow	Northern cardinal

## Mill Creek Marsh



Photo credit: Dennis Connor



Photo credit: Dennis Connor



Photo credit: Maureen Phair  
Green-winged teal on mud



Photo credit: Michael Yellin  
Green-winged teal in water



Photo credit: Michael Yellin  
Herring gull



Photo credit: Michael Yellin  
Brown-headed cowbird



Photo credit: Ric Cohn  
Blue-winged teal



Photo credit: Ric Cohn  
Yellow-rumped warbler



Photo credit: Ric Cohn  
Monk parakeets rebuilding their nest  
rebuilding their nest



Photo credit: Susan Matson  
Tree swallows



Photo credit: Hillary Leonard  
Tree swallows

## Earth Day Celebration at Garret Mountain Reservation April 22, 2023

The Montclair Bird Club was honored to be asked to participate in the Garret Mountain Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 22. The club led an adult-only bird walk from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. and a family bird walk from 10:00 to 11:00. The two walks were attended by a total of approximately 13 people. It was a cool and overcast day, which kept the bird numbers down but, still, 49 species were observed. Most hearteningly, one participant who was new to birding said, “I thought this would be boring, but it has been anything but. It’s exciting and relaxing. I think we’ll do this again.”

In addition to our bird walks, MBC hosted a table sharing literature about the club, listing our field trips and meetings, showing photos of north Jersey birds, and offering those in attendance an opportunity to sign up for our email list.

Thank you very much to all the MBC members who volunteered at this event: Ric Cohn, Evan Cutler, Beni Fishbein, Fred Pfeifer, Sandy Sorkin, Don Traylor, and Donna Traylor.

Canada goose	European starling
Mallard	Brown thrasher
Mourning dove	Northern mockingbird
Chimney swift	Hermit thrush
Double-crested cormorant	American robin
Great blue heron	House sparrow
Turkey vulture	American goldfinch
Osprey	Chipping sparrow
Red-tailed hawk	Dark-eyed junco
Red-bellied woodpecker	White-throated sparrow
Downy woodpecker	Song sparrow
Hairy woodpecker	Swamp sparrow
Pileated woodpecker	Eastern towhee
Northern flicker	Red-winged blackbird
Merlin	Brown-headed cowbird
Blue-headed vireo	Rusty blackbird
Blue jay	Common grackle
Fish crow	Black-and-white warbler
Common raven	Northern parula
Black-capped chickadee	Hooded warbler
Tufted titmouse	Palm warbler
Ruby-crowned kinglet	Pine warbler
Red-breasted nuthatch	Yellow-rumped warbler
White-breasted nuthatch	Northern cardinal
Blue-gray gnatcatcher	

## Tewksbury Library Programs in May

The Tewksbury Library is sponsoring or cosponsoring the following programs in May. All programs will be recorded.

- Tuesday, May 16, 10:30 am: A Trip To Scotland: Finding the Underwater Gannet in the Shetland Islands -- Learn more & register [HERE](#).
- Thursday, May 18, 2:00 pm: Singing Frogs with Mass Audubon -- Learn more & register [HERE](#).
- Friday, May 19, 1:00 pm: Introduction to Birdwatching with Bill Gette -- Learn more & register [HERE](#).
- Tuesday, May 23, 7:00 pm: Fifty Hikes in Eastern Massachusetts -- Learn more & register [HERE](#).
- Wednesday, May 24, noon: Explore Lowell National Historical Park -- Learn more & register [HERE](#).

### Upcoming Montclair Bird Club Field Trips

#### May 4 (rain date May 5) Central Park, Manhattan

*A Birder's Meet-up*

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the northeast corner of 72nd Street and Central Park West, across the street from the B and C subway entrances and the Dakota apartment building.

In the midst of the steel and concrete of New York City, Central Park is an oasis of trees and plants, providing insects and other food sources to birds migrating along the Atlantic coast. Over 270 species of birds have been seen in Central Park, and the club member and NYC resident Ardith Bondi has offered to show us around the park and familiarize us with some of its bird-rich areas.

Expect a 3-hour walk. Bring binoculars, and wear a hat and good walking shoes. You may need bug spray and sunscreen.

We will go to a nearby restaurant for a late breakfast/early lunch after birding. Please let Beni know at [mbcoutings@gmail.com](mailto:mbcoutings@gmail.com) if you want to join us for the meal.

## **May 13 (rain date May 14) South Mountain Reservation, West Orange**

Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the main parking lot on Crest Drive (second on the right; you'll see a wooden sign that says Bramhall Terrace, entrance to Summit Field).

South Mountain Reservation is a 2,100-acre nature reserve in southern Essex County. Nestled between the first and second ridges of the Watchung Mountains and overlooking the urban sprawl of the greater Newark area, it can serve as a tremendous migrant trap in the heat of spring migration. We will walk several trails in the reservation, and hope to see good numbers of warblers, thrushes, sparrows, and other birds taking advantage of the feeding opportunities in the varied habitats here. Many of the trails are paved, but it is recommended that you wear sturdy hiking boots, as some trails can be a little rocky and uneven.

For more information, email [mbcoutings@gmail.com](mailto:mbcoutings@gmail.com).

Directions from the Montclair area: From Exit 7 on I-280, take Pleasant Valley Way south for 3.5 miles, then turn left onto South Orange Avenue. Take this road for 1 mile and turn right onto Crest Drive, marked with a sign for the dog park (you will encounter Crest Drive just after you've reached the crest of the hill). Stay straight on Crest Drive; within half a mile, there will be a very long parking lot on the right, in an open space with a vista to your left. We will meet at the far end of this parking lot.

## **Cold Brook Farm, Tewksbury, NJ Saturday, May 27, 2023 8:30 am (Rain or shine: trip to be held unless it is pouring)**

Join us at Cold Brook Farm, the home of club members Deb and Jason DeSalvo. We will explore the farm fields, wooded areas, river, and wetlands on and bordering their property to discover the many different migratory and breeding bird species that stop here to refuel and to nest. Deb and Jason have been working hard to remove invasive plants and to plant native species to improve the habitat for insects, birds, and other animals, so it is a real treat to explore this bird-friendly habitat. Last year, we visited earlier in May and saw 39 species, including four swallow species.

Bring binoculars, a snack, and something to drink. If it has rained recently, waterproof boots are recommended.

Email [mbcoutings@gmail.com](mailto:mbcoutings@gmail.com) if you want to attend. The address and driving directions will be sent to you once you register.

**Tuesday, June 27, 2023 (rain date: Wednesday, June 28)**

**Long Island, New York**

**Nickerson Beach Park, Lido Beach, NY and Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area,  
Oceanside, NY**

Meet at 8:30 am in the Nickerson Beach Park parking lot in Lido Beach, New York. Before 9:00 am, nonresidents can enter for free, but from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm, nonresidents must pay a \$37 fee to enter.

Nickerson Beach is the first stop on this exploration of two Long Island hotspots. In June, Nickerson Beach is known for its nesting colonies of common terns, least terns, black skimmers, American oystercatchers, and piping plovers. Sanderlings, in breeding plumage, are usually found running in and out of the waves, and with good luck, a gull-billed tern or two may show up. The large freshwater pond by the parking lot is often a feeding spot for both night herons, egrets, and glossy ibis, while terns and skimmers fly in and out to bathe and drink. After enjoying all the delights of Nickerson Beach, we will drive about 20 minutes to Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area, a tidal salt marsh where we hope to see clapper rails, purple martins, osprey, Nelson's sparrows, Forster's terns, willets, various sandpipers, great and snowy egrets, and tree swallows. A forested patch in the preserve often hosts warblers, flycatchers, butterflies, and sparrows. And of course, lots of dragonflies inhabit the marsh. Birds feeding in the beautiful grasses of the marsh make for many attractive photographic opportunities.

Bring binoculars, a scope if you have one, lunch in a cooler (there are picnic tables at both locations), sunscreen, sun hat, bug repellent, and good walking shoes. We will be walking on sandy but level paths. There are restrooms at both locations.

GPS address for Nickerson Beach: 880 Lido Boulevard, Lido Beach, NY Directions to Nickerson Beach: <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/2802/Nickerson-Beach-Park> (click on link on the righthand side for online directions). Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area: <https://sites.google.com/view/marine-nature-study-area>.

Contact us at [mbcoutings@gmail.com](mailto:mbcoutings@gmail.com) with any questions and to coordinate carpooling.

**Dotted with Globally Important Bird Areas comprising a spectacular variety of habitats, Alabama’s Gulf Coast is among the very best places on the continent to witness first-hand the northbound movement of millions of birds each spring. In April 2024, Victor Emanuel Nature Tours will be offering a new excursion to Mobile Bay, Dauphin Island, and the wild delta of the Tensaw River. Among our targets are a wide range of seabirds and shorebirds, along with the classic pinewoods trio of the red-cockaded woodpecker, brown-headed nuthatch, and Bachman sparrow. What follows is a brief account of a “reconnaissance mission” to this splendid birding area.**

**For more information about the 2024 tour, write Patrick Swaggerty at [Patrick@ventbird.com](mailto:Patrick@ventbird.com) or call 800 328-8368.**

## **Alabama’s Gulf Coast Birding**

By Rick Wright

Photos by Sanford Sorkin

It’s rare that I’m able to scout a new tour on exactly the same dates set for the tour proper—but it worked out just right as I made the preparations for next year’s new VENT tour of Alabama’s Gulf Coast. We’ll be back there in April 2024, and I hope that the official trip’s first day is as exciting as the first day of reconnaissance was.

That day had started mighty early, with a 3:10 am departure for Newark. The flight to Houston was uneventful, but the connecting trip to Mobile was bumpy, boding ill, I feared, for the weather in Alabama. And in fact, the skies for the rest of the day on Mobile Bay and Dauphin Island were unsettled, with occasional light rain giving way mid-afternoon to almost two hours of steady pelting. But it didn’t bother the birds, and so it didn’t bother us.



Scarlet Tanager





Orchard Oriole

playground there gave us spectacularly close views of **least** and **semipalmated sandpipers** and **dunlins**. Even more dramatic was a female-type **magnificent frigatebird** riding the wind just above Fort Gaines, at the eastern end of the island.

By that evening, after an excellent meal and with the prospect of a good night's sleep in our fine hotel, I was fully ready to declare the Mobile area one of my favorite spring birding spots. I wasn't quite so sure when I got up early the next morning to heavy rain, thunder, and lightning—but by the time we reached Village Point Park, fifteen minutes from downtown, the weather had begun to improve and excitement levels rose. It was still raining lightly when Larry met us in the parking lot, but the precipitation ended shortly thereafter, and our walk out to the bay found the clouds



Indigo Bunting

scattering until the sky was nearly clear.



Prothonotary Warbler

We started with two of my favorite birds, the always appealing **eastern towhee** and a late **white-throated sparrow**. Warblers were scant on the way out, but on our way back, they included a **prothonotary** and a very vocal **Swainson warbler**, both species sure to be of interest to next year's participants. I'll admit that my first **indigo buntings** of the year took my breath away just as much.

We'd decided to defer breakfast in our hurry to take to the field, so stopped in Fairhope to make up for it; a flock of at least 60 **cedar waxwings** welcomed us in the parking lot, gorging themselves with only slightly less enthusiasm than we showed for our pancakes, omelettes, and biscuits. By now the sky was bright blue, and tempting as it was to linger over just one more cup of coffee, the thought of even more birds got us back out promptly. The Gator Boardwalk lived up to its name with

at least two seven- or eight-foot reptiles floating deceptively placid in the water, while big turtles basked on the logs.

The Weeks Bay NERR, our next stop, could have been a disappointment: the buildings were deserted, the parking lot closed, a tree down on the boardwalk and the nature trail under a couple of feet of water. Three **great crested flycatchers**, though, rid our minds of any frustration, and a **rose-breasted grosbeak** was enough to draw a gasp as we watched it at close range in a brush pile. We were due anyway at Five Rivers, where a boat was supposed to be waiting for us at the landing named for William Bartram, whose explorations of Spanish Florida brought him here 250 years ago. The boat canceled, on strength of a decidedly faulty weather forecast, but our wait was enlivened by **ospreys**, **bald eagles**, and the first **anhingas** of our visit so far. Meaher Park, just across the road, made a poor first impression with its ranks of enormous rv's and campers; the east end of the park, though, turned out to be peaceful and pleasant, and I'm sure it can be very birdy in the right conditions.



Short-billed Dowitcher



Brown Thrasher

The missed boat trip meant that we had time to drop in at Battleship Park, just ten minutes short of our hotel. The park and the eponymous big boat were crowded on a lovely Sunday afternoon—crowded not just with people. The extensive rain pools were obviously irresistible to shorebirds put down by the early morning's bad weather, among them some 160 **short-billed dowitchers** (most *griseus*, with a few apparent *hendersoni*, too) and a couple of dozen **pectoral sandpipers**. The adjacent

marsh turned up four **glossy ibis**, a few **common yellowthroats**, **orchard orioles**, **blue grosbeaks**, a **tricolored heron**, a **marsh wren**, a **white-winged dove**, a **black-necked stilt**. . . It's nice indeed when the day ends as well as it began.

The next morning would start with a quick drive to Florida, a state I hadn't birded for some



Red-cockaded Woodpecker

years. Rare woodpeckers were on the menu, and who could guess what else spring on the Gulf Coast might bring.

It was downright chilly—not quite 50°—when we left Mobile, but the bright skies matched our spirits as we headed east into the Florida Panhandle. Pensacola, a city I’d never seen, proved remarkably attractive, Gulf Breeze even more so. Bob and Lucy (with whom I’d birded in Arizona some years ago) generously opened their home and their feeders to us. And to more than 100 **indigo buntings, blue grosbeaks, wood thrushes, brown thrashers, downy woodpeckers,** and many other residents and migrants.



Cattle Egret



Great Blue Heron

Hard as it was to tear ourselves away, more birds awaited us in Blackwater State Forest. It was a gloriously beautiful day, and we dawdled happily along the red dirt roads through the pines, enchanted by pitcher plants, sundews, and orchids in the seepage bogs. A **peregrine falcon** passed over high and dramatic, while **eastern towhees** chewinked from the thickets; I got a good look at only one, but it was a fine white-eyed male, a very special bird to those of us used to the red-eyed towhees farther north in the species’ range. The stars of the whole glorious

show, though, were the **red-cockaded woodpeckers**, which gave spectacular eye-level views as they fussed and fed in the trees right next to the road. This is the second-rarest of picids in the US, exceeded in scarcity only by the Arizona woodpecker, and I’m already looking forward to showing them off to my companions on next April’s tour, when they will certainly be a highlight.

We bade a grateful farewell to Lucy and Bob, then stopped for a quick lunch in Milton before moving on to Gulf State Park, back on the Alabama side of the line. A lingering **common loon** was a nice find, as was a **marbled godwit** sharing the beach with human waders.

Once back in Mobile, we headed to the bay with John and Joe for a lavish seafood meal as **brown pelicans, royal terns, cattle egrets, and double-crested cormorants** looked enviously on. The only thing wrong with the day? Joe had to return to Birmingham early tomorrow morning, leaving us to continue our scouting without his good counsel and good company.



Green Heron

There followed another glorious morning, bright and cool, and we headed straight to Shell Mounds to greet whatever the nighttime breezes had brought in. The woods were lively, with **Kentucky, prothonotary, hooded, yellow-throated, worm-eating, and Tennessee warblers** all showing beautifully well to happy eyes. **Black-bellied whistling ducks** and a **solitary sandpiper** were quick flyovers, and a couple of **yellow-bellied sapsuckers** reminded us that more northerly climes still had a lot to look forward to too.



Swainson Thrush

We kept an eye on our own migratory clock, and after a couple of other brief stops, made our way to the ferry terminal for the 35-minute voyage across the mouth of the bay to Fort Morgan. **Least terns** and **piping plovers** provided the entertainment as we waited to board, while an immature **great black-backed gull** was an exciting surprise. The crossing itself was enlivened by several pods of playful dolphins.

Fort Morgan immediately struck us as every bit as good for migratory birds as Dauphin Island just to the west. **Cattle egrets, Savannah**

**sparrows, summer and scarlet tanagers,** and loads of **indigo buntings** crowded onto the roadsides as we made our way to the banding station maintained by Alabama Audubon. It was warm, but the net runners brought in a steady flow of **indigo buntings, cardinals, and warblers** for close-up views.

We returned to the western shore of the bay so that John could introduce us to Bellingrath Gardens, a promising site far less famous than Dauphin or Fort Morgan. On a hill above the Dog and Fowl Rivers, this colorful riot of native and cultivated plants was fairly quiet at mid-day, but we'll definitely be including a stroll here on next year's tour, in hopes of repeating our experiences with fishing herons (poor sunfish!), loud and tame **summer tanagers, bald eagles, and pied-billed grebes.** The skies were showing a bit of overcast, but the beds and thickets of Bellingrath were full of butterflies, too.



Summer Tanager

We stopped for an early supper, then moved on to one of the more mysterious birding localities in the Mobile area. The “disposal ponds,” whatever those might be in practical application, turned out to be very attractive to birds, among them a few lingering **green-winged teal**, a **merlin**, lots of **blue grosbeaks**, and a nice smattering of shorebirds, most of them—at fifty each—**lesser yellowlegs** and **dowitchers**. The warm light of a glorious late afternoon turned even this industrial moonscape into a beautifully evocative experience.

We’d been watching the tide table all day, and as sunset approached, we resolved to take advantage of the falling tide in the shallow stretches of the bay to the east of Battleship Park. The mudflats revealed were few and relatively distant, but the thousands of terns and gulls were joined by the trip’s first **American white pelican**, while seven **glossy ibis** joined the herons in the shallow water. It had been a great day.

I’d decided to devote what was somehow already our last day of scouting to firming up our impressions of some of the sites that had already earned a fast place on next year’s itinerary. We started on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, stopping at D’Olive Park to look for marsh birds; two **common gallinules** were our reward, the first of this scouting trip.

We would surely have seen more had I been less impatient to return to Village Point Preserve, in Daphne. Things started off with a bang—or rather, a series of slurred whistles—when a **Swainson warbler** began to sing just below the parking lot, presumably the same individual we’d heard on our first visit a few days earlier. **White-eyed vireos**, **gray**



Yellow-crowned Night Heron

**catbirds**, and **great crested flycatchers** seemed to be everywhere; a flock of some 700 **tree swallows** was resting on the beach, and a **swamp sparrow** fed quietly on the sand at the edge of the phragmites.

With the temperature rising into the high 60s, our quick visits to a few sites in Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge were less productive. Good encouragement was provided, though, by the birds at the oddly named Tacky Jack’s, a bayside restaurant near Fort

Morgan. **Green, little blue**, and **great blue herons** fished the waters beneath us as we enjoyed our food; the adjoining scruffy yard was a feeding spot for **blue grosbeaks** and **house finches**. Among the many **royal terns** loafing on the jetty were a few **Caspian, Forster,** and **sandwich terns**, and of course there were **brown pelicans** and **laughing gulls** aplenty—a shame that their abundance tended to make it so easy to overlook the dramatic beauty of these conspicuous and easily watched birds.



**Black-bellied Plover**

Fort Morgan lay just a few minutes farther down the road. **Blue grosbeaks** dominated the fields and lawns here, too, but they were overshadowed by the first (and only) **scissor-tailed flycatcher** we would find, hunting patiently on the ground among the abundant **cattle egrets** on the sloping lawns of the ancient fortress. The woods at the ferry slip were fairly quiet as we waited for the boat to arrive, but an **eastern bluebird**, a **summer tanager**, and a **palm warbler** added a bit of color; two **swamp sparrows**, in conjunction with the Daphne bird from earlier in the day, were a clear sign that that species, too, was on the move.

Somehow the afternoon got lovelier and lovelier, with temperatures in the 70s and a fine onshore breeze. The white sands of Pelican Point were haunted by **least** and **royal terns**, **sanderlings** and **dunlins**, and **great blue herons**; the shores of a small flag just offshore were lined by **black skimmers**. Toward the end of the walk, we found no fewer than five **piping plovers** darting along the beach. Delightful as they were, none of those birds



Reddish Egret

were unexpected—unlike the **reddish egret** we found dancing in the shallows. On the way back out, we paused to check one of the small ponds and discovered that two of the many noisy **clapper rails** had actually deigned to emerge from their fastness to preen and bathe and stomp around on the mud.

Our last stop of the day was a final visit to Shell Mounds. It was getting on to suppertime, so more birders were leaving than arriving, but the

birding continued to be exciting, and a bit wistful for us, as this would be the last stop of the entire trip. The fruit feeders across the road attracted **orchard** and **Baltimore orioles** and **indigo buntings**, and **yellow-throated warblers** and **scarlet tanagers** foraged on the roadside. And the **white-eyed vireos** we had with us always.

Fittingly, John had booked a table for us at Hummingbird Way for our last dinner together. We started with oysters, crab soup, and biscuits, followed by macaroni and cheese, red snapper, crab cakes, and the entire suite of the menu's desserts, my favorite the pineapple upside down cake and none of them anything short of delectable.

And so it came to an end. But we'll be back in exactly a year for what is sure to be another spectacular excursion to Alabama's Gulf Coast.



Bird Banding – Indigo Bunting (F)



Great Blue Heron

## Virtual Bird Walks

### 2020

July	1	Local Birding
August	2	Backyards and a Marsh
September	3	Backyards and Trips
October	4	Member Birding
November	5	Member Birding
December	6	Member Birding

### 2021

January	7	International Birding and New York City
February	8	International Birding
March	9	Member Birding
April	10	Shore Birds
May	11	Local Birding
June	12	Member Birding
July	13	Birding, Costa Rica
August	14	Identify a Bird by Its Eyes
September	15	Birds and Water
October	16	Birds with Masks
November	17	Winter Birds

### 2022

January	18	Personal Choice
February	19	Color
March	20	Signs of Spring
April	21	Birds Eating or Black & White Birds
May	22	Local Birds
September	23	My Summer
November	24	Bird Pairs
December	25	A Trip

### 2023

January	26	Winter
February	27	A Month in a Birder's Life
March	28	Egrets, Herons, and Wading Birds
April	29	Woodpeckers



## Montclair Bird Club Meetings

### 2020

May	An Online Quiz, with Rick Wright.
June	A Walk on Pipeline Road, by Sandy Sorkin.
July	The Real James Bond, by Jim Wright.
August	An Online Quiz, with Rick Wright.
September	Manakins and Microbes, by Jennifer Houtz.
October	Bizarre Breeding Behaviors of Tropical Cuckoos, by Christine Riehl.
November	Dispersal in Young Peregrine Falcons, by Elise Morton.
December	An MBC Story Slam, by Pamela Olsen.

### 2021

January	Modern-Day Exploration in the Tropics, by Dan Lane.
February	Winter Raptors, by Giselle Smisko.
March	Damselflies and Dragonflies: The Other White Meat, by George Nixon.
April	Wolf Natural History and Tourism in Yellowstone, by Paul Brown.
May	Sandhills and Saw-whets, by Matthew Schuler.
June	Magnificent Namibia, by Linda Woodbury.
September	Raptors, by Wayne Greenstone.
October	Watershed, by Hazel England.
November	Build-a-Bird, with Rick Wright.

### 2022

January	A Tale of Many Penguins, by Ardith Bondi.
February	Oh! Canada, by Chris Sturm.
March	Tracking the Migration of New Jersey Birds Using the Motus Network, by Cailin O'Connor.
April	Spotlighting Voices in Bird Conservation, by Mardi Dickinson.
May	101 Great Birds from Around the World, by Mark Garland.
June	Member's Meeting.
September	Exploring the Big Bend in Southwest Texas, by Donna Traylor.
October	Build-a-Bird, with Rick Wright.
November	On Safari: Botswana and South Africa, by Ric Cohn.

### 2023

January	America's Iconic Birdman: Frank Chapman, by James Huffstodt.
February	A Bird Club in San Diego, by Rick Wright
March	The peregrine project, by Wayne Quinto Greenstone
April	Piping Plovers on the Rockaway Peninsula, by Chris Allieri

## 2022–2023 Officers

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### From the Editor's Desk

Please feel free to email any items you would like included in future issues of *The Broadwing*. Please include pictures and any other news that will reduce anxiety and make us smile.

Sandy

**[MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com](mailto:MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com)**

## Upcoming VENT Tours

VentBird.com

<b>France</b>	Birds and Art in Provence	May 22–30, 2023
<b>Colorado</b>	A Summer Stay in Estes Park	June 18–24, 2023; June 17–23, 2024
<b>Colorado</b>	Northeast Colorado	June 24–27, 2023; June 23–26, 2024
<b>Germany</b>	Birds and Art in Berlin	September 28 – October 7, 2023
<b>Italy</b>	Venice and the Po Delta	October 7–15, 2023
<b>Israel</b>	Birds and Culture in the Holy Land	November 3–15, 2023
<b>Nebraska</b>	Sandhill Cranes and Prairie Chickens	March 15–22, 2024
<b>Alabama</b>	The Gulf Coast and Dauphin Island	April 21–26, 2024
<b>Greece</b>	The North of Greece	May 5–20, 2024
<b>Scotland</b>	Wild Scotland	May 26 – June 27, 2024
<b>Spain</b>	Birds and Art in Asturias	August 28 – September 6, 2024



## In This Issue

Page 1: Ring-necked ducks, by Sandy Sorkin (SS)

### May Virtual Bird Walk

The theme for May 18: **“Small Birds”**

You select the birds.

You are welcome to display your own images or forward them to Sandy at [MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com](mailto:MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com), to be included in a group PowerPoint.



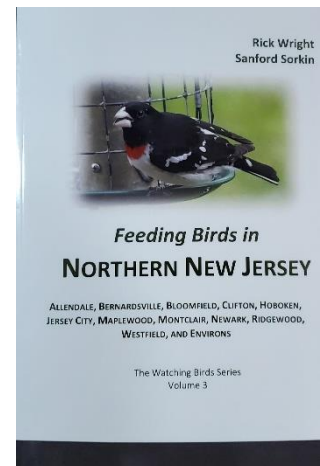
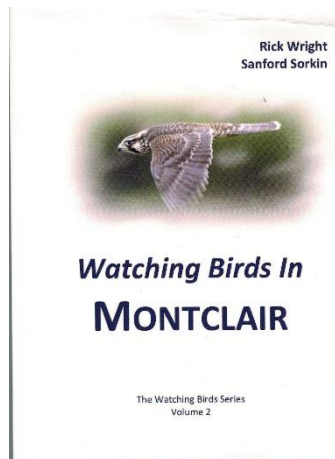
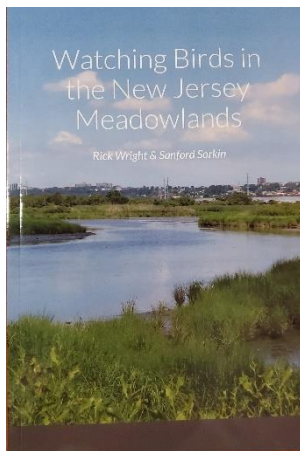
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# The MBC Bulletin Bird

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## THE BROADWING

The *Broadwing* is published ten times a year:  
We vacation during July and August.

Send photos, field notes, or articles to Sandy at  
[MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com](mailto:MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com).

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