

The Broadwing



Publication of the Montclair Bird Club
October 2021

Montclair, NJ
Volume LXVII, Number 2

Message from the Editor October 2021

Dear Members,

Fall is upon us and like the migrating birds, the club has been extremely active. Introducing leaderless meet-up walks, opening the hawkwatch, and offering a hawk identification and photography lecture at the hawkwatch has kept us busy.

Almost 100 people attended Evan Cutler's chimney swift events. The number would be higher if all the drivers who slowed down to watch were counted. This is certainly the largest turnout for a bird club event in my memory.

Sandy Sorkin

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Next meeting: Wednesday, October 13
Virtual Bird Walk: Thursday, October 21

On the Pumpkin



October Virtual Bird Walk

The theme of the October Virtual Bird Walk is **Masked Birds**. Any inkling of a mask like Zorro's or the Lone Ranger's can be included. Jason is probably a bad idea. Once again, you get to interpret the theme.

Participants will be able to share their screens or email their pictures for inclusion in a group PowerPoint. Emails should be sent at least three days in advance of the meeting to MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.

Sandy

Recent Montclair Bird Club Meetings

May 2020:	An Online Quiz, with Rick Wright.
June 2020:	A Walk on Pipeline Road, by Sandy Sorkin.
July 2020:	The Real James Bond, by Jim Wright.
August 2020:	An Online Quiz, with Rick Wright.
September 2020:	Manakins and Microbes, by Jeniffer Houtz.
October 2020:	The Bizarre Breeding Behaviors of Tropical Cuckoos, by Christine Riehl.
November 2020:	Dispersal in Young Peregrine Falcons, by Elise Morton.
December 2020:	An MBC Story Slam, by Pamela Olsen.
January 2021:	Modern-Day Exploration in the Tropics, by Dan Lane.
February 2021:	Winter Raptors, by Giselle Smisko.
March 2021:	Damselflies and Dragonflies: the Other White Meat, by George Nixon.
April 2021:	Wolf Natural History and Tourism in Yellowstone, by Paul Brown.
May 2021:	Sandhills and Saw-whets, by Matthew Schuler.
June 2021:	Magnificent Namibia, by Linda Woodbury.
September 2021:	Raptors, by Wayne Greenstone

These Female Hummingbirds Don Flashy Male Feathers to Avoid Unwanted Harassment

Better meals and less harassment are perks for females who take on more flashy, masculine coloring.

By Grace Wade

The white-necked jacobin is a large, aggressive, and showy hummingbird. The male's iridescent blue hood and brilliant white belly and tail captivate birdwatchers, but the females have been believed to be olive-green with a gray-mottled breast.



However, 20 to 30 percent of female white-necked jacobins resemble their masculine counterparts, according to a study published today in *Current Biology*. Turns out, looking like a male means the fluttering females are much less likely to be harassed by them, which improves the females' access to food.

"Sexual selection is the dominant narrative in the field for why we expect to see ornamentation in birds," says the study's lead author, Jay Falk, who conducted the research when he was a PhD student at Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology. "But that doesn't tell the whole story here. If we want to look at ornamentation in White-necked Jacobins as a whole, including females and males, we have to use social selection."

The theory of social selection, first proposed in the 1960s, seeks to explain apparent exceptions to Darwin's idea of sexual selection, when traits typically ascribed to sexual selection, including ornamentation and weaponry, also occur in non-sexual contexts. The alternative term 'social selection' encompasses all social interactions that influence the selection of traits, including sexual interactions.

While Falk and his team did not discover the phenomenon of some masculine-traits female, white-necked jacobins, they are the first to determine why it happens. "There have been quite a few museum specimen studies, but none trying to look at the behavior which is really needed to understand what might be adaptive about this trait," says Falk.

Lifer! Rick Wright

When I go birding in our area, the chances are vanishingly small that I'll come home with a lifer. That circumstance has nothing to do with any advantages of skill or fieldcraft, but with age: I've been birding New Jersey, with interruptions, for more than 35 years, and I ticked off all of the state's common species long ago. And even if I were willing to "chase" rarities, most vagrants to New Jersey originate from regions I've had the good fortune to visit and bird with some frequency over the decades.

I certainly never expected to encounter a novum at what has recently become my local go-to birding destination, Clarks Pond in Bloomfield. On August 23, I was working my way through a modest flock of southbound passerines when I briefly glimpsed a bit of lemon-yellow under parts and two neat, bright white wing bars. I put it down as my first blue-winged warbler for the "patch," a far from unexpected addition to the park list but a welcome sighting all the same. As I followed the flock along the wooded edge of the Third River, the putative blue-winged re-appeared, this time, though, showing more of itself. I was startled to see that the throat and upper breast—normally bright pale yellow—were covered by a well-defined but faint sooty patch, and that the usual fine black eye line was replaced by a broad dark smudge on the auriculars.

This was no ordinary blue-winged warbler, but a Lawrence warbler, the rare product of backcrossing between

two hybrid or backcross individuals of the blue-winged and golden-winged warblers; offspring receiving recessive genes from both parents for both throat color and under parts color will exhibit the classic Lawrence warbler phenotype, in which the throat is dark, the eye line enlarged, and the underparts yellow—just as in the Clarks Pond bird, the first such individual I had ever seen. Lifer.



The type specimen of the Lawrence Warbler, drawn by Robert Ridgway in 1874.

The story of the discovery of the Lawrence warbler and the efforts to solve the puzzle of its taxonomic and genetic status is a familiar one. Described in 1874 as a distinct species, on the basis of a "clearly and strikingly marked" specimen collected on the Passaic River at Chatham, New Jersey, the warbler was named for the famous collector and ornithologist George N. Lawrence, author himself of the original description of another hybrid type produced by matings of blue-winged with golden-winged

warblers, the more frequently encountered Brewster warbler.

A full forty years later, Walter Faxon proved that both the Brewster and the Lawrence warblers were hybrids, a conclusion affirmed many times since. For the birder interested in tallying only "good" species, these two warblers—among the most striking birds of the entire family Parulidae—are often little more than curiosities. For those like me, however, finally encountering the rarer of the two after almost half a century of hoping and seeking, the Lawrence warbler remains a prize, a prize I never expected to find on the banks of the Third River. Maybe not a lifebird, but most assuredly a life experience.



Hybrids and backcrosses produced by golden-winged and blue-winged warblers, painted by William C. Dilger. The Clarks Pond bird most closely resembled the third bird from the top.

Cows Learn to Use the Loo

A herd of calves has been successfully trained to urinate in a designated location. Researchers rewarded the calves with sweet treats when they used their latrine, and sprayed them with water from lawn sprinklers when they didn't. Within weeks, 10 of the 16 cows had been potty-trained. Collecting the excreta of cattle could reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and soil and water contamination while still allowing cows to roam free. "Cattle, like many other animals, are quite clever and they can learn a lot," says the animal psychologist and study co-author Jan Langbein. "Why shouldn't they be able to learn how to use a toilet?"



Untrained

Travel in the Time of Covid October 7, 2021 · 2:00 PM EDT

Hosted by Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon, this webinar is a chance to discuss the precautions and measures birders can take to ensure safe, incident-free travel. Joining Victor and Barry are VENT tour leaders Steve Hilty, Paul Greenfield, Rick Wright, and Geoff Lockwood, all of whom will have guided international trips by the time of this presentation. Through their experiences, and in answering your questions, we hope this event provides the confidence you need to prepare for your own return to travel. Register for this free webinar here: <https://www.bigmarker.com/victor-emanuel-nature-tours/Traveling-in-the-Time-of-Covid>.

Allendale Celery Farm Meet-up. Saturday, September 25, 2021

On a beautiful, sunny morning, three birders joined me for a walk through Allendale Celery Farm. We were greeted by a good assortment of birds in the field at the end of Green Way, where we parked. We then moved on to explore the rest of the Celery Farm, seeing a total of 32 species. The most exciting was a very active pocket of feeding warblers on the western border of the preserve, by the Warden's Watch platform. Many of the birds were feeding low in the shrubs, some even on the ground. This allowed for close looks of these tiny whirling dervishes as they fattened up for the next leg of their migration south.

-Beni Fishbein

6 Wood Duck	4 Black-capped Chickadee	3 Song Sparrow
3 Great Blue Heron	3 Tufted Titmouse	3 Red-winged Blackbird
1 Great Egret	1 White-breasted Nuthatch	4 Black-and-white Warbler
1 Hawk sp.	1 Marsh Wren	4 Common Yellowthroat
2 Red-bellied Woodpecker	3 Carolina Wren	1 Northern Parula
4 Downy Woodpecker	8 European Starling	12 Yellow-rumped Warbler
2 Northern Flicker	30 Gray Catbird	6 Palm Warbler
2 Eastern Phoebe	4 House Sparrow	1 Black-throated Green Warbler
1 Red-eyed Vireo	3 House Finch	1 Wilson's Warbler
55 Blue Jay	2 American Goldfinch	7 Northern Cardinal
1 Common Raven	3 White-throated Sparrow	

Classifieds Help Wanted	Classifieds Help Wanted
<p align="center">Refreshments</p> <p>Whether you like to bake cookies and brownies or prefer to buy them, we are looking for individuals to be responsible for refreshments when we return to in person meetings. A résumé is not required, but a cookie would clinch the job for you.</p> <p>Apply with an email to MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.</p>	<p align="center">Field Trip Coordinator</p> <p>If you have ever been outdoors, you know how rewarding a field trip can be. The club is actively promoting field trips, and we need someone to manage registrations, schedule and promote outings, and recruit field trip leaders. The coordinator will also announce field trips at each bird club meeting. This position does not require the coordinator to wear camouflage or an enormous hat.</p> <p>Apply with an email and some ideas to MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.</p>
<p align="center">Writer</p> <p>The Broadwing, a publication of the Montclair Bird Club (the PDF you are reading right now), is looking for talented writers to contribute nature-related articles for publication. If you do not feel that you have the talent, but are certain you have the enthusiasm, then you are absolutely qualified for the job. The pay is abysmal, but you do get a byline. This can be a full-time or part-time position.</p> <p>Apply with an email to</p>	<p align="center">Scholarships, Awards, and Contests Committee Chair</p> <p>This position coordinates the club's community outreach programs. The chair will be responsible for contacting schools and working with faculty members to promote essay contests, develop program RFPs, and find students to present lectures to the club.</p> <p>Apply with an email to MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.</p>
<p align="center">Membership Committee Chair</p> <p>Are you ready to chair your own committee? You get to make the rules and recruit volunteers. The club is in need of an individual to be responsible for recruiting new members, communicating with current members, fussing with dues, and creating status reports for the Executive Board. Some experience with email, telephones, and talking probably qualifies you for this position.</p> <p>Apply with an email to MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.</p>	<p align="center">Volunteers</p> <p>This position has numerous openings for club members who want to collaborate with committee chairs to get things done. Not being a chair allows you to do your job without the anxiety of being in charge. Ironically, the salary is the same as the chair's. Everyone can help, and all members are encouraged to identify rewarding areas for participation.</p> <p>Apply with an email to MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.</p>

Chimney Swifts in Montclair

Less than a mile east of Montclair's most famous birding destination lies yet another magnificent migrant magnet—attracting hundreds of birds each evening with the promise of a safe place to roost and the opportunity to catch up on some much-needed shut-eye after a full day of feeding on the wing. Every year, from late August to nearly the end of September, the 50-foot chimney atop Buzz Aldrin Middle School, just below the Montclair Hawk Lookout, is transformed into a communal overnight motel for chimney swifts on their annual voyage to Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, and Peru. On September 19, the Montclair Bird Club hosted a hometown field trip to watch this incredible spectacle—and it did not disappoint. Though I must admit, for several long minutes, it was very touch-and-go.

The event began on a Sunday evening at 6:30, in the parking lot just west of the school named for its most famous former student turned moonwalker, and it immediately felt more like a viewing party than a field trip. People lounged on lawn chairs and picnic blankets, taking advantage of a gorgeous late summer evening. Children frolicked on the lawn, and there was even some wine and cheese spotted among the crowd.

Unfortunately, except for the occasional American Robin or Mourning Dove, the skies above the school were empty. After welcoming a crowd that had grown nearly 100-strong, I began to wonder if the swifts had already moved on. After winds from the south most of the week, a cold front had entered the region the night before, and a big push of fall migrants had come through. Perhaps the last of the swifts had already departed? That certainly seemed to be the case. I apologized to the eager crowd, explaining to them that in birding, there are no guarantees. Then, for the next ten minutes or so, I did my best to kill some time by describing what we theoretically would be seeing IF Chimney Swifts were actually present. The audience listened politely, but you could clearly sense the disappointment in the air.

And then, suddenly—music to my ears. A rapid high-pitched twittering announced the arrival of dozens of chimney swifts, were circling the school's enormous chimney much to the delight of those gathered. Within minutes, at least a hundred swifts were circling clockwise above the roof of the school, each bird taking a moment to hover above the chimney, but none of them quite ready to make its way inside.

None of the birds seemed to be feeding on flying insects like they normally do. Chimney Swifts spend almost their entire lives airborne, both feeding and drinking on the fly. They are voracious and may cover more than 500 miles on the hunt for more than 12,000 insects a day. But as good as they are as fliers, they are equally poor as perchers. Chimney Swifts have very weak feet and are incapable of perching on a branch or utility wire. Instead, they have specialized toes and tail



feathers let them cling to the brick and mortar while roosting inside chimneys like the one atop Buzz Aldrin School.

As the swifts continued their acrobatics above the school, I recruited three children to be the official counters. Keeping track of how many birds enter the chimney can be tricky. While it looks like the birds might be entering, they often hover at the rim without going inside. One can only guess why so many of these birds don't enter the chimney on their first attempt. As a parent, I know from experience how hard it can be to put your children to sleep. Perhaps with so many swifts gathered together in one place, it's like when you host a sleepover party, and no single bird wants to be the first to call it a night?

Finally, about eight minutes after their arrival, the first chimney swift made its way inside, tucking its wings and dropping into the chimney. Others quickly followed suit, and for the next ten minutes, the crowd cheered as one bird after another retired for the evening. When the last swift disappeared into the chimney, a huge round of applause erupted. Our official counters were eager to report their findings to me. A grand total of 135 chimney swifts had entered the chimney. Not close to the peak numbers we usually see earlier in the month (we've witnessed as many as 500 birds). But perhaps the most impressive number of the day was the 98 spectators—the largest turnout for a Montclair Bird Club event anyone could recall. We can only hope this memorable evening was the start of something very special and will become an annual Montclair Bird Club tradition.



-Evan Cutler



Sandy's [Chimney Swift Video](#).

Coverage of the event in the [Montclair Local](#).



CALIGO VENTURES BIRDING TOURS TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Hugging the continent of South America and anchoring the Caribbean, the island nation of Trinidad and Tobago is considered by birders and nature enthusiasts the best possible introduction to the tropics. Caligo Ventures has been a leader in planning and guiding birders in Trinidad and Tobago since its beginnings 40 years ago.

Caligo Ventures offers guided group tours, independent birding ventures, and relaxing lodge stays. Caligo's local guides take tremendous pride in showing off the unique and colorful birds.

Explore from verdant mountains of the Northern Range to the lowland grasslands of the northern savanna's Aripo Agricultural Station where tropical birds have adapted to the savanna's harsh, drier condition. Look for gray-headed kite, yellow-rumped cacique, blue-black grassquite, and ruby topaz hummingbirds. Scope the eastern coast on a visit to Nariva Swamp and marvel at the sunset gathering of thousands of scarlet ibis in Caroni National Park.

Trinidad is the only place in the world to see the critically endangered Trinidad piping guan, locally known as Pawi, and is a nesting location for giant leatherback turtles. From April to August, witness the female turtles coming ashore to deposit their eggs; later in the season watch the tiny hatchlings make their way to the water.

On Tobago, visit the historic Main Forest Ridge Reserve, the world's oldest legally protected forest and recently designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, where you can look for white-tailed sabrewing, blue-backed manakin, red-crowned woodpecker, and white-fringed antwren. Take a boat ride to Little Tobago Island, where red-billed tropicbirds and both red-footed and brown boobies nest.

Caligo always chooses comfortable small lodges, where local food is proudly prepared by local chefs. Expect private baths, clean and secure rooms, tropical gardens, and birdy surroundings. Your welcoming hosts will see to your comfort and will do their best to meet your needs.

Our tour groups are small, with a maximum of eight or ten guests. All tours include an inter-island flight between Trinidad and Tobago, all meals, transportation on both islands, and the expertise of our local guides.

Check our website www.caligo.com for dates, itineraries, and pricing. You can also call us at 1-800-426-7781.



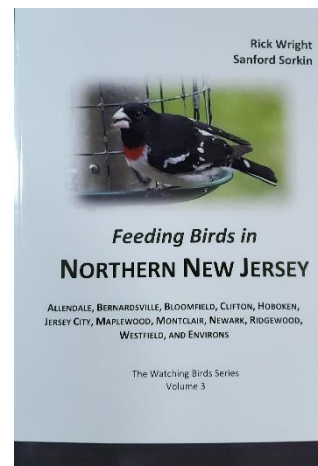
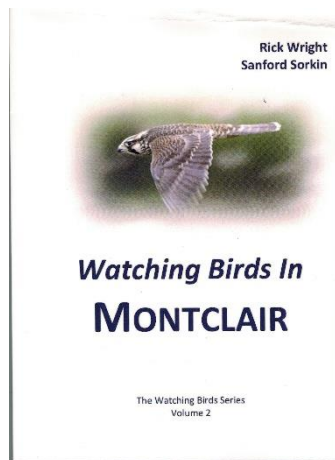
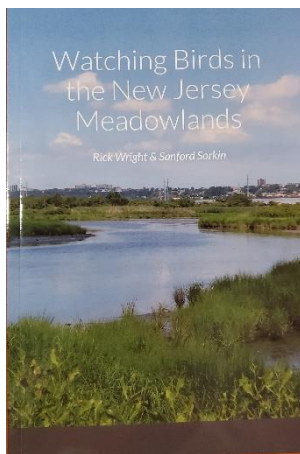
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Not every community is so fortunate as to have a community bookstore. Here in Montclair and Bloomfield, Watchung Booksellers has supported our communities, and vice versa, for more than three decades. Watchung Booksellers offers a carefully selected range of literary fiction, biography, history, travel, education, poetry, the arts, and natural history, including *Watching Birds in Montclair*, *Watching Birds in the New Jersey Meadowlands*, *Feeding Birds in Northern New Jersey*, and other titles in the Custom Bird Guides series.

With over 70 combined years of bookselling experience, the staff knows how to choose challenging, nurturing, and inspiring books, and knows, too, how to value the input and advice of readers and writers in our area’s thriving literary community. Watchung Booksellers further serves the community with a full schedule of events, including author presentations, poetry readings, children’s story times, in-house book groups, and special programs for writers and readers of all ages. The store and its staff are fierce supporters of our community’s schools and libraries among many other political, religious, and civic institutions, including the Montclair Bird Club.



THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY

April 5–11, 2022

with Rick Wright

From our base at a single, centrally located hotel in McAllen, we will make day trips out into the subtropical habitats that make the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas one of the true must-see birding destinations in the US. Among the sites we expect to visit are South Padre Island, Laguna Atascosa and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuges, Bentsen–Rio Grande State Park, Anzalduas County Park, Edinburg Scenic Wetlands, and La Joya—but there is always the possibility of an exciting rarity disrupting our plans. Some of the regional specialties we will be looking for are the least grebe, Mexican and mottled ducks, hook-billed and white-tailed kites, gray and white-tailed hawks, crested caracara, plain chachalaca, red-billed pigeon, white-tipped dove, green parakeet, red-crowned parrot, pauraque, buff-bellied hummingbird, ringed and green kingfishers, golden-fronted woodpecker, vermilion flycatcher, great kiskadee, Couch and tropical kingbirds, green jay, Chihuahuan raven, black-crested titmouse, verdin, cactus wren, clay-colored thrush, long-billed thrasher, tropical parula, pyrrhuloxia, painted bunting, olive sparrow, Morelet seedeater, Cassin and Botteri sparrows, Sprague pipit, bronzed cowbird, and Altamira and Audubon orioles. Minimum of 4, maximum of 7 registrants. Participants are responsible for the own airfare, lodging expenses, and food. The non-refundable registration fee, covering vehicle rental and the volunteer leader's expenses, is expected to be between \$600 and \$800, depending on number of participants. **Register with Sandy Sorkin, montclairbirdclub100@gmail.com, beginning December 10.**

SOUTH AFRICA: WESTERN CAPE AND KRUGER
September 27 to October 14, 2022
with Rick Wright and Patrick Cardwell

We start in Cape Town and return from Johannesburg, in between visiting sites such as West Coast National Park, the Cape of Good Hope, Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, and Kruger National Park. We will enjoy a vast range of birdlife, from penguins to rollers to cisticolas, along with many of the large mammals that South Africa is so famous for. With visits to Robben Island, the site of Nelson Mandela's long imprisonment, and Johannesburg's Apartheid Museum, our trip also offers insight into the history and culture of this beautiful and diverse country.

Strictly limited to 12 participants plus the two leaders, this trip is open to LSNY members, members of the Montclair Bird Club, and clients of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours. For more information and to register, please email or phone Erik Lindqvist at erik@ventbird.com or (800) 328-8368.

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

2021–2022 Montclair Bird Club Officers and Executive Board



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