

The Broadwing



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A young Green Heron at Garret Mountain Reservation before the county removed most of the vegetation from Barbour Pond.

President's Message May 2020

Until we resume the regular meeting schedule, the Broadwing will be a monthly newsletter. Going forward, it would increase the relevance of the newsletter if we had wider participation of the membership. If you want to contribute, you may consider a story in the "not to exceed 100 words" category. It is a challenge, but a lot less writing. Longer articles with pictures are also welcome.

I would also like capitalization opinions regarding the names of species. Style books offer conflicting guidance. In general writing they say that species names are not capitalized unless the name is a proper name such as American robin. On the other hand, if the writing is for birders, as in a journal, birding magazine, or newsletter, then species names should be capitalized. What do you think?

In this issue:

Rick Wright has contributed a quiz. As with Rick's other contributions, there are exceptional graphics and you learn something.

My contribution is a description of a short walk in Hyde Park in London. Since the story doesn't quite get me around The Serpentine and The Long Water, I'll continue the walk it in a future Broadwing.

Donna Traylor reports on a trip to Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge. She demonstrates that even as we physically distance ourselves, we can still hike and bird. Bill Beren discusses a relaxing afternoon and opportunities to bird at the Great Swamp.

Sandy

Quiz

This lithograph by the great Joseph Smit, published in the *Ibis* for 1868, depicts the Azure-rumped Tanager. This endangered species is found only in the broadleaf mountain forests of Guatemala and Chiapas—and yet it has a connection to Essex County, New Jersey.

What is the connection?



The Answer

The bird we now know as the Azure-rumped Tanager, endemic to a small area in the Pacific slope [mountains of Chiapas and Guatemala](#), was first [described to science in 1866](#) from a specimen in a German collection. The describer, Jean Cabanis, christened his new bird *Calliste Sclateri*, in honor of Philip Lutley Sclater, editor of the *Ibis* and the unrivalled expert of his day in matters tanager.

Two years later, [Sclater himself pointed out](#) that the name *Calliste Sclateri*—close enough!—was “preoccupied,” [assigned more than a dozen years earlier](#) to what was now identified as just a color variant of the familiar Golden Tanager. “To return the compliment paid to [him] by Dr. Cabanis,” Sclater gallantly renamed the Azure-rumped Tanager *Calliste cabanisi*. Until quite recently, the species was known in English, too, as the Cabanis(’s) Tanager.

The New Jersey connection was Cabanis himself. In 1956, Erwin Stresemann, occupying Cabanis’s chair at the natural history museum in Berlin, published an account of Cabanis’s “adventure” in North America, an adventure that included an unplanned sojourn in Belleville.

In 1838, John Bachman—Audubon’s co-author and sometime friend—traveled from South Carolina to Berlin, where he sought the advice of the museum’s director, Hinrich Lichtenstein, in the matter of finding a good preparator for the natural history section of the Charleston Museum. Lichtenstein recommended Cabanis, then a university student in Berlin.

Cabanis sailed from Le Havre to New York in the late spring of 1839. Just as he was set to continue his journey to Charleston, he received word of a yellow fever epidemic there; Bachman, who had already fled the city, instructed Cabanis to wait in New Jersey until the danger of infection was past.

The young Cabanis spent the next three months in Belleville, assembling a collection of more than 100 bird skins for the Berlin museum. He was not happy with his take: “You often have to run around for a long time before you even see a bird, and sometimes after a bird has been shot you can’t get to it because the terrain is so inconvenient.” He complained that without a dog to help, he had had to swim out himself to recover a grebe he had shot.

It was November before Cabanis could safely travel to Charleston. Nothing, he said, as was he had expected. The museum, he claimed, reneged on its obligation to pay his living expenses. When the museum also failed to pay a local carpenter, Cabanis, who had ordered the cabinets for the collections, was held liable and threatened with imprisonment if he failed to pay. Bachman, whom Cabanis called “the very image of a medieval Jesuit,” refused to reimburse Cabanis, who promptly sued.

Back in Berlin, Lichtenstein expressed his sympathy, but offered no help beyond the advice to return to Germany as soon as possible. He rejected out of hand Cabanis’s proposal of a collecting trip to the American Arctic or across the prairies and mountains to the Pacific. Shattered by the experience, embittered by the “perfidy” of Bachman and all Americans, Cabanis sailed for Europe late in 1840.

Of the specimens he shipped to Berlin from his time in Belleville, the staff of the Museum für Natur there tells me that at least three have survived, the last witnesses to an otherwise virtually unknown episode in the ornithological history of northern New Jersey.

*For the entirety of the story excerpted here, see Stresemann, E. 1956. “Jean Cabanis’ amerikanisches Abenteuer (1839-1840).” *Journal für Ornithologie* 97.4: 415-429.*

A London Morning

-Sandy Sorkin

For many years, I visited England regularly. The monthly trips were primarily for business but often afforded me spare time to be a tourist. Kathy often accompanied me for some extended stays indulging her Anglophilia and educating me. When I left the business-owner world and became employed by a university our travel schedule changed dramatically and didn't include trips across the Atlantic. Upon retirement it reverted. Now we visit the UK at least twice a year and effectively live in England one month a year. The Grosvenor House on Park Lane sits directly across the street from Hyde Park, which is one of the reasons we stay there. It offers me the opportunity to go birding almost every morning by crossing the street and later returning to the hotel for breakfast with Kathy. This is how most mornings proceed:



I cross Park Lane and enter Hyde Park. This sounds simple enough, but it isn't. The road has special metal barriers along its length to prevent anyone from jaywalking. They appear to utilize the same design as the barriers to stop tanks during WWII. It is quite entertaining to watch attempts at jaywalking because they result in people with their feet entangled in the metalwork typically found in dungeons. They aren't suffering in their embarrassment, but it does take time and dedication to extricate themselves. I walk up the hill and cross at the light with bicyclists and other pedestrians and never consider jaywalking.

Entering the park, I have a routine that allows me to see more than birds. The walk typically starts in the Rose Garden located in the southeast corner of the park. The Rose Garden isn't marked on the map, but while standing in the garden you can see The Wellington Arch and Apsley House. There are roses and much more. This is one of the planted beds by the entrance.



In the gardens proper, teams of grounds keepers perform their daily chores planting, weeding and doing all the other things professional gardeners do. They know the names of everything planted and generously offer information and gardening guidance if you ask.

I will attempt to identify all the bird images, but I leave the flowers to everyone else.



On my first visit to the Rose Garden, I saw a green woodpecker, and I should have been reminded of all the people at home that asked me what



you call the black bird with red on its wings. So, I asked a friend about the green woodpecker and she politely told me it is called the Green Woodpecker. They also feed on the ground and the second picture is another Green Woodpecker by the flower beds in front of Buckingham Palace. I assume that the woodpecker was extremely hungry, because he didn't mind the one or two thousand people waiting for the Changing of the Guard. Another wonderful feature of the Rose Garden is that there is invariably a Eurasian Robin singing.



I think the robins are everyone's favorite bird resulting in T-shirts, mugs, and other tourist souvenirs found everywhere. This picture is accurate, but the Mary Poppins movie used the wrong bird.

My walk continues towards the northeast corner of the Serpentine. The map indicates a restaurant in that location. People eating food are closely correlated with people feeding birds either directly or indirectly. Children are the primary indirect feeders. Tourists bring food as well. The Japanese and French tourists usually start by feeding the squirrels they believe to be exotic creatures, not just the compatriots of Feral Pigeons.



One view from the corner of the lake is a bridge and a bit of a dam. The small islands in front provide attractive nesting opportunities for the waterfowl.

If you feed them, you can pet them.

Gray Herons are abundant around the Serpentine and the



Long Water. Initially, I mistook them for the familiar Great Blue Heron, but they are smaller and have similar coloration. The behaviors are pretty much the same. This bird is ignoring some seriously large fish and waiting for something much smaller to swallow. Continuing west, you are likely to see pairs of Great Crested Grebes. The chicks look nothing like the adults. They frequently rest on the back of a parent under a wing until the adult dives. The chicks float



off, but clamber back on immediately after the adult surfaces. Other times they are fed before hopping back on.



Continuing along the north bank the regular birds are all present. Moorhens work the concrete edge. Where branches reach down to the water, they build reed nests.

Seasonally, the chicks are plentiful. Egyptian Geese are found in the Serpentine in increasing numbers. They nest along the periphery and swim in a line with their chicks. One adult at the front, a stream of chicks, and a trailing adult. But the little ones need a rest now and then and the concrete bank is warm.



These Egyptian Geese chicks are being eyed by the Feral Pigeons feeding at the water's edge.



Approaching West Carriage Drive on the bridge separating The Serpentine from The Long Water, more Mute Swans are making themselves busy, but are always ready to visit a tourist with food. There are often 100 or more swans. One of the most beautiful birds in the park is the Mandarin Duck. Early in the morning they are found roosting in the trees and later make their way to the water.



At this point, I am about halfway through my walk and need to return for breakfast. This is the time when I need to stop taking pictures and walk, but all too often something makes me stop and shoot some more like the Gray Heron gliding over the water.



(All of the photos were taken on various trips through Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens along the Serpentine and Long Water by the author.)

Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge

March 21, 2020

Donna Traylor



It is the first full day of Spring and a walk seemed to be in order. The weather was crisp - in the upper 40's - with ample sunshine and blue sky shining on us. The refuge is just that - a refuge from the serious situation that is upon us. Obviously, others felt the same way because there were a good many people on the trails. That does not mean that you were elbow to elbow since there are miles of wide hiking paths that allowed much distance between walkers.

The parking area at Owens Station Road is open, so that is where we started. We hiked from Owens Station Road to the back side of the Liberty Loop Trail and went part way around - all told maybe about 2-3 miles total on a lovely level expanse. There are wetlands on either side of the early part of the trail and the spring peepers were in full chorus. It always amazes me how such a tiny frog can make such a mighty sound. Our year-round birds greeted us - tufted titmice calling to say this was their territory. Red-winged



blackbirds kept us company throughout the hike. Song and swamp sparrows were also broadcasting their territorial needs. Once we reached the open water areas, we began searching for ducks and enjoyed watching Northern pintails, mallards, black duck, green-winged teal, Northern shoveler and ring-necked ducks along with some mute swans. Two northern harriers were flying low on the marshes way out and doing their best to disturb the duck population. The only other soaring birds were numerous turkey vultures enjoying the spring breezes.

On the way back, we had the good luck to come upon a small flock of rusty blackbirds making their distinctive calls to announce their presence. The first snake of the year ventured across our path - a northern brown snake trying to blend in with the leaves on the edge of the path. Although there was not a huge diversity of bird species for the day, that wasn't the point. Our



goal was to get some fresh air, do something normal and enjoy the wonders of nature. We have the good fortune to live in Sussex County where open public spaces are abundant. There are 6 state parks, 1 state forest, many state wildlife management areas, part of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge. So, keep that in mind when travel restrictions ease and life becomes more normal.

Great Swamp Bill Beren

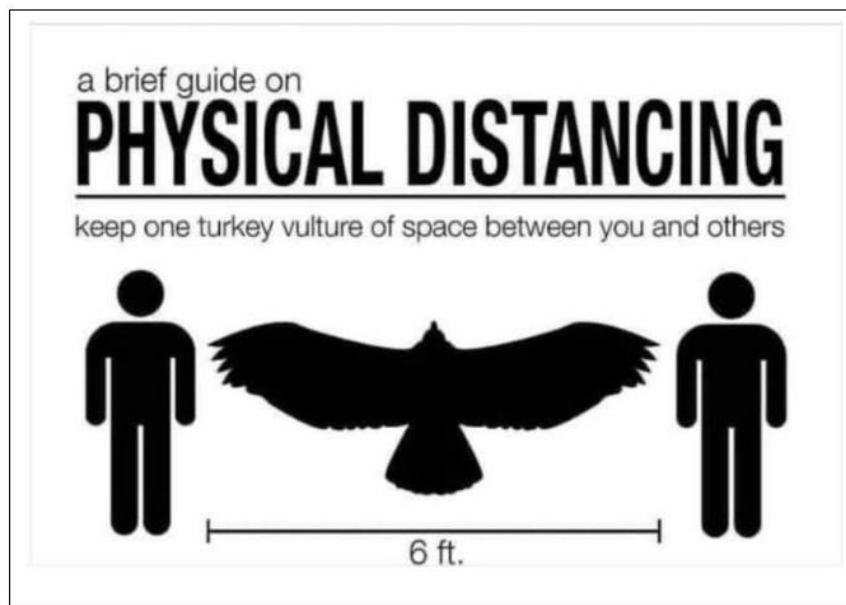


Is your local birding area closed due to the Corona Virus? Try the Great Swamp in Morris County.

After almost two weeks of social distancing at home, JoAnn and I got in our car and drove to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Vernon, Morris County. Many different ways to get there, so use your GPS for guidance. We first looked at the main Boardwalk Parking area off of Long Hill Drive, but there were a lot of cars and the boardwalks are narrow, so we figured it wouldn't be a great environment for social distancing. We doubled back on Long Hill Drive to White Bridge Road, and turned right and then right again on Pleasant Plains Road to the Blue Bird Parking Lot. Across the street was a pond – no bluebirds yet but lots of turtles sunning themselves on logs. Further up the road, a few cars were stopped, and it turns out they were following a Red Shouldered Hawk. We caught up with the hawk around the bend of the road, where we found it on the ground feasting on its lunch.

A little bit further up the road, we stopped at the Observatory parking lot. Some other birders were there, and we were able to follow some spectacular Bald Eagles soaring in the distance, and a Raven flew over directly overhead. The road here is wide enough to allow people to walk in two directions while keeping their distance from other people. A sort distance down the road is the bridge over Great Brook, and if you go still further (on foot or by car), you will come to the new visitor's center – which is now closed to the public. But there are hiking trails at the visitor's center through the woods to the Passaic River, which flows through the Swamp.

Not too many birds yet, but certainly a relaxing way to spend an afternoon in the (6' distant) company of fellow birders and nature lovers.



The MBC Bulletin Bird

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**Send photos, field notes, or articles to the editor at
oguss.editor@gmail.com or mail to Elizabeth Oguss,
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From the Desk of the Very Temporary Editor:

Please feel free to e-mail me with 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.

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