

The Broadwing



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September 2022

Montclair, NJ
Volume LXIX, Number 1

Message from the Editor September 2022

Dear Members and Friends,

The summer flies by and it's September again. *The Broadwing* resumes publication with this issue and will continue monthly. Our monthly meetings also start again.

Members who haven't received their membership renewal email will get it shortly. Our dues remain the same: \$25 for an individual and \$35 for a family. Student membership is free.

For now, we will continue with Zoom meetings, and if possible, we'll try to have some in-person meetings.

Sandy

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Next club meeting: Wednesday, September 14
Virtual Bird Walk: Thursday, September 22

Mythical Birds



Alkonost
The bird of happiness



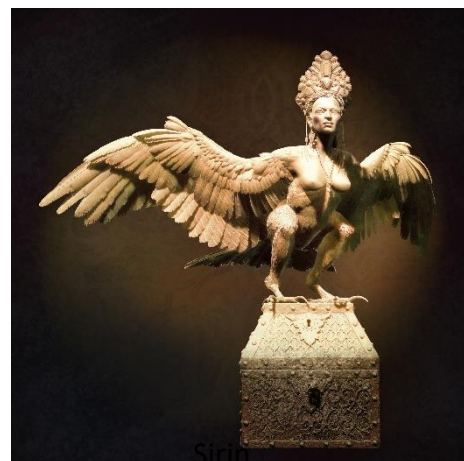
Caladrius
Harbinger of hope or despair



Phoenix



Roc



The bird of sadness in Paradise

Elsa Greenstone Essay Contest Winner

Congratulations to Kristen Conlan, a senior studying Environmental Biology at Kean University.

Only Eight Hours

Only eight hours separates my two lives. I have been living somewhat of a double life that many don't understand. After one job was done, I'd squeeze in a few hours of sleep and it was off to the next.

At 4:00 am, my half-awake self would slip down the stairs and start a fresh pot of coffee. Once dressed in my "uniform" of thick socks, hooded sweatshirt, and carefully curated baseball hat of choice, I would be off up the Garden State Parkway to my destination. My destination was the New Jersey Meadowlands, a saltmarsh wetland that attracts large numbers of birds due to its location along the Atlantic Flyway. Even with its history of heavy-metal contamination, the Meadowlands serves as a habitat for birds, supplying food, shelter, and a place to breed. During the summer of 2021, I participated in running two MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) bird-banding stations. Under the direction of one of my Kean University professors, I acted as assistant and scribe at both MAPS stations.

I acted as assistant to the master bander, helping remove birds from mist nets and carefully transporting each bird safely in a clean cloth bag to be processed at the station. Back at the station, I would act as a scribe, taking all important notes. As the master bander carefully applied the USGS (United States Geological Survey) aluminum band, I recorded the serial number along with other information such as age, sex,

species, wing chord, weight, molt, fat score, breeding condition, and any insects or injuries present on the bird. After all of this was completed (alongside maybe a photo or two), the bird was released back into the wild.

Later in the season, I also served as the Data Specialist, slowly and carefully inputting our findings into USGS Bandit software for submission to the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory (BBL). Anyone with experience using this software will fully understand why "slowly" and "carefully" are underlined above.



2019: My first time ever handling a wild bird, a gray catbird.

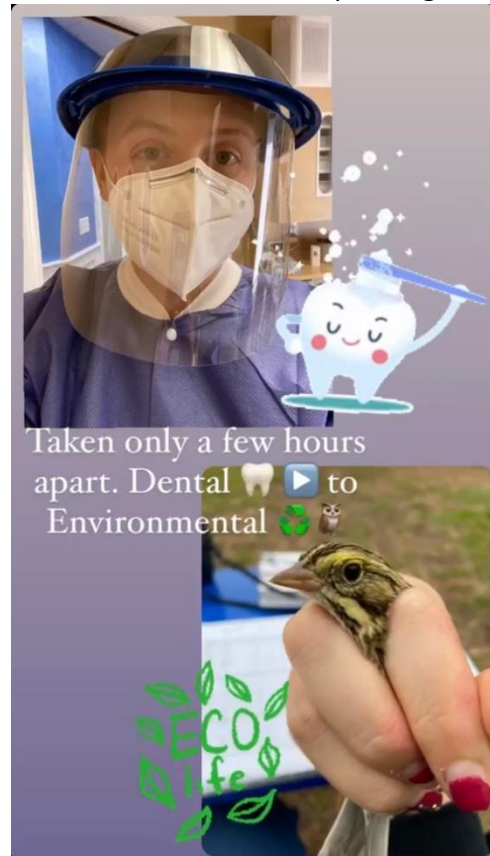
Now, I know what everyone is probably asking: "What was all that 'double life' stuff at the beginning of the essay?" One might assume that I am just an ordinary environmental science student along for

research experience. Well, that is partially true: I am an environmental science student at Kean University, but with an interesting background. This new life as a bird-banding station assistant for me was very far removed from where I had been just eight hours before. You see, readers, I'm not just an environmental biology student, but also a registered dental hygienist. Yes, I am one of those people who clean your teeth and tell you to floss more often.

Every day before my 4 am wake-up call, I would be completing prophylaxis on my patients, discussing home hygiene, screening for oral cancer, and creating custom goody-bags filled with a toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, and rinse (maybe a sticker, too, if you were extra good). This is usually where people get confused: Dental to environmental? How does one go from counting teeth to counting birds?

It all stems from a passionate desire to learn as much as I can about the world around us. As hygienists, the need to continue to learn new skills, information, and techniques is instilled in us to give our patients the best experience possible in the dental chair. Continuing to learn sharpens your mind and helps you grow as a practitioner. As I worked as a hygienist, the need to expand my knowledge grew to the point of my wanting to return to school to complete a bachelor's degree in biology. I was determined to find a concentration that not only suited my needs but also opened up new and exciting opportunities for me. Once I took my first environmental science class, I was thrown headfirst into an entire new world of possibilities. These included researching conservation areas in the Pine Barrens, learning medicinal botany, and finally seeing bird banding for the first time.

My first experience with bird banding was on a class trip to Duke Farms, and it was the first time I ever saw a bird up close. On that day in 2019, a gray catbird was thrust in my direction, and I was asked if I wanted to try to hold it. Shakily, with a very weak "V" finger grasp, I held that little bird in my hands and realized how utterly small it was. A beady black eye stared up at me, and I was just overwhelmed with curiosity and wonder, and overwhelmed with how cute it was. As I released the catbird back into the wild, I had no idea it would spark a growing



2020: At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, at work as a dental hygienist, then refining my "V" grasp in the field.

fascination with birds.

I soon joined the banding team at the Meadowlands and have since expanded into birding in my own free time. Being involved with the MAPS project at the

Meadowlands has increased my interest in the world of birds immensely. As I continue assisting and scribing, I learn more each time. I become more confident in sight identification of birds, learn bird calls, and further hone my net-extracting skills. My bird identification skills have made birding more exciting and have taken me to new natural areas to try my newly learned skills.

Though dental hygiene and bird banding are so different on the surface, they really are similar underneath. In both fields, you are constantly learning new things as you go along, which strengthens you as a clinician/birder. Working with people and with birds has taught me much patience and compassion, and has also taught me to appreciate the time between my two worlds. A good nights' rest consists of eight hours on average.



One of our netted birds, a semipalmated sandpiper.

The Most Fascinating Birds Will Be the First to Go Extinct

The biodiversity crisis will most directly affect distinctive members of the avian family. Get ready for a world that “is really simple and brown and boring.”

By Marion Renault

The giant ibis deserves its name.

Adults of the largest species in the ibis family can grow to almost 3.5 feet in length, weigh more than nine pounds, and boast nine-inch beaks that bring to mind a Venetian plague doctor’s mask.

The species has also been critically endangered since 1994, driven to the verge of extinction by hunting, habitat disturbance, and deforestation. Today, fewer than 200 mature members of the species are left in its native range in Southeast Asia, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The giant ibis, along with other physically distinctive birds of extreme shapes and sizes, is more likely to be lost in the current biodiversity crisis, according to a study published in the journal *Current Biology*. That is because human activities have threatened or destroyed the limited landscapes in which they have evolved to live.

The risk of extinction, the paper suggests, is not randomly or equally spread across the avian tree of life. Instead, birds like the [Sulu hornbill](#) (with its huge and hollow onyx beak), the [Chatham shag](#) (penguin-looking with a metallic sheen), the four-foot-tall [white-bellied heron](#), or the seven-inch-tall [Seychelles scops owl](#) are more likely to face permanent erasure from Earth.

“The global extinction crisis doesn’t mean we’re just losing species,” said Emma Hughes, an ecologist at the University of Sheffield in England and an author of the study. Nor does it mean we’re just losing birds that are the most attractive. “We’re going to have a major loss of life strategies and functions,” she added, referring to the adaptations that have driven many birds’ unusual features.



A Chatham shag in New Zealand. Nature Picture Library/Alamy



A Seychelles scops owl on Mahé, Seychelles. R. Müller/Imagebroker, via Alamy

For the study, Dr. Hughes and her colleagues looked at a set of physical traits—body size, beak dimension and shape, and leg and wing length—extracted from 8,455 avian species in natural history museum collections. They also looked at phylogenetic diversity, a measure of the evolutionary differences between species that can capture traits like bird songs, migratory propensities, and foraging and eating styles.

Then they sequentially eliminated species, starting with the most threatened before moving to the least threatened, and measured the impact on anatomical and phylogenetic diversity along the way. They found that as they removed imperiled species, the remaining birds became more and more alike, leading to ecological “downsizing” across most biomes and half of all ecological regions, especially in East Asia and the Himalayas.

The study casts scientific predictions of major [avian losses](#) in a new light, said Eliot Miller, a researcher and collections manager at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology who was not involved in the paper. “What we’re talking about here is observable,” Dr. Miller said. “It’s happening. It’s not just species being lost at random. There’s a predictability to it. It’s important, if a little disappointing.”



The paper shows that the most threatened species are also the most genetically distinct, like the giant ibis or the [Bengal florican](#), the world’s rarest bustard, of which there remain just a few hundred in a narrow band stretching across Cambodia, India, and Nepal. It also suggests that birds at either extreme of the size spectrum—from the shimmering, four-inch-long turquoise-throated [puffleg hummingbird](#) to the [kakapo](#) parrot, which can match a backpack in dimension—are at higher risk of extinction. “We’re losing the largest and smallest species,” Dr. Hughes said.

A sparkling violetear. Juniors Bildarchiv GmbH/Alamy



*A female Bengal florican in
Arunachal Pradesh, India.
Neil Bowman/Alamy*

This loss of morphological diversity, she said, is closely linked to a loss of the **ecological roles** that each species plays in the habitat it occupies. After all, how a bird looks is often tied to how it survives: hummingbirds use

long, thin beaks to delicately sip nectar, while a pelican's pouch-like beak allows it to scoop up aquatic prey and gulp it down whole.

And birds don't just fly around in a vacuum. They pollinate plants, spread seeds, control pests, regenerate forests, and carve, burrow, or build homes for numerous other organisms. When a distinctive avian species disappears, the hole it leaves in its habitat may be unignorable, unfillable, or both. "The ecosystem unravels," Dr. Miller said.

The new paper, for example, found that vultures are disproportionately imperiled despite their distinctive ecological role. As scavengers, vultures help clear decaying carcasses that would **otherwise** transmit infectious diseases or feed smaller scavengers like rats and dogs that can, in turn, spread rabies and bubonic plague to humans.

"There are certain things that birds do in ecosystems that are important to us," Dr. Hughes said. "We're potentially losing species that could be beneficial to humanity."

The study also shows that the planet's feathered inhabitants are becoming increasingly homogeneous. Already in the world of birds, Dr. Miller said, "almost everything is really simple and brown and boring." The extinction crisis will not only cost us a certain number of species, but also impoverish the biodiversity we have left, he said, adding, "It shows that we are sort of making the world a less rich place with our actions."

Bizarre bird challenges ‘tree-thinking’

The New Yorker

Hoatzins (*Opisthocomus hoazin*) present an evolutionary enigma: one analysis of their DNA suggests that the birds’ closest relatives are cranes and shorebirds, and another found that they are closely related to a group that includes tiny hovering birds such as hummingbirds. The riddle is forcing biologists to consider [whether to rethink the shape of the standard “tree of life” for modern birds](#). “Frankly, there is no one in the world who knows what hoatzins are,” says museum curator Joel Cracraft.

Spotted lanternfly glue traps are killing birds, wildlife rescue group warns

For the past couple of years, bug experts and agriculture officials have been urging homeowners and business owners to [kill spotted lanternflies](#). But some of the most popular devices used to snuff out those insects—glue traps—have also been injuring and killing birds, according to officials from [The Raptor Trust](#).

“While the spotted lanternfly is of great concern in our area, the unintended consequences of this method of remediation far outweigh its effectiveness, and in some cases the by-catch victims are the very things that might prey on the lanternflies in the first place,” the bird rehabilitation group posted on its [Facebook page](#) in August 2022.

DUES

Annual membership dues are due. Individual dues are \$25, and family dues are \$35. Students are free.

Please make your check out to the *Montclair Bird Club* and mail it to

Montclair Bird Club
c/o Sanford Sorkin, Treasurer
3 Marquette Road
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043-2625

Bird Challenge

Sanford Sorkin

Zinnias are my wife's favorite flowers. Mine too. Kathy starts them from seed in pots on the north edge of the patio. Most of the seeds germinate, producing beautiful multicolored blooms. Some of the seeds fall prey to the chipmunk family, but enough survive to demonstrate that her efforts are worthwhile.

The blooms are magnificent, but they don't last very long. It seems that goldfinches like zinnias as much as we do.

I queried the Audubon website regarding the diet of the American goldfinch, assuming that they are not interested in zinnias for esthetic reasons:

"Diet. Mostly seeds, some insects. Diet is primarily seeds, especially those of the daisy (composite) family, also those of weeds and grasses, and small seeds of trees such as elm, birch, and alder. Also eats buds, bark of young twigs, maple sap."

The result was pretty much what I expected, but I delved further by checking the Birds&Blooms website with the same question:

"The goldfinch diet consists almost entirely of seeds, but these birds also occasionally enjoy the bark of young twigs, fresh tree buds, and maple sap. Western red cedar, elm, birch, and alder trees will encourage more goldfinches to stop by for lunch. In summer, goldfinches add a few small insects to their diets, but seeds remain at the top of the menu."

Then I realized that maybe I was asking the wrong question. **Do goldfinches eat zinnia petals?** And the answer from multiple sources was:

Yes, they do. One common food source for goldfinches is zinnia flowers.

I just wish one of my birding books had alerted me to the situation, but they didn't.



American goldfinch eyeing the zinnias to identify the tastiest blooms.

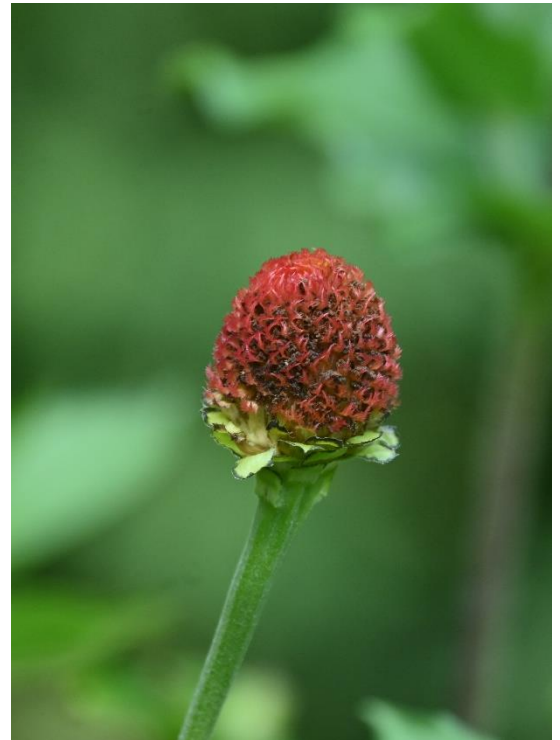
American goldfinch establishing zinnia ownership.



Before



After



[Editor's note: Sandy and the birds got it wrong. Zinnias don't have petals. The goldfinches are eating ray florets.]

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, by 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 Virtual Bird Walk

The theme for the VBW on September 22 is “What I Did This Summer.”

Actually, it could be any summer. You are welcome to display your own images or forward them to Sandy at MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com, to be included in a group PowerPoint.

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Montclair Bird Club 2022 Bird of the Year

Eastern Screech-Owl

These little owls are found throughout New Jersey, including Montclair. They occur year-round in small woodlots, yards, and forests, although they are often overlooked. They could be in your backyard. They are in ours! Most of the time we only hear them.



A juvenile eastern screech owl photographed in Montclair. The mother is in a nearby tree watching the youngster.



Ecuador

Sandy Sorkin

In 2021, a birding trip to Ecuador seemed like a good idea. Rick Wright asked if I wanted to join him and Alison for a week in July 2022 at San Jorge Eco-Lodge. At the time, I couldn't see any reason why I shouldn't. Fast-forwarding to April of 2022, the knee I had ignored for over 30 years caught up with me, making walking almost impossible and certainly dimmed the prospects of Ecuador. But after a knee replacement, Ecuador became possible again.

Ebird users are de facto listers. I added over 100 life birds on the trip. More importantly for me, I was able to capture some good pictures.



The red-headed barbet is fairly common, and flies to the feeders at the lodge multiple times a day along with a female.



Each bird has spectacular colors, but it is a toss-up as to which one is the more attractive.

The blue-winged mountain tanager is one of many tanagers that visit the feeders, but also decorate the nearby trees.



The russet-backed oropendola flew in on our last day. It was the first, and only, oropendola seen at the lodge.



A variety of birds hunted at a moth sheet, as shown on the next page.



These were the birds seen early in the morning capturing moths.

Two birds we encountered in the Andes are on the next page. The woodpecker is the only one I saw on the trip.





Walker Avenue Wetlands

A birding meetup: August 26, 2022

Walker Avenue Wetlands, near the Pompton River in Wayne, New Jersey, is a shallow marsh surrounded by woodlands that was formed by dredging for fill for the construction of Route 287. This part of Wayne is often flooded, and the remains of homes destroyed by flooding can be seen nearby. The marsh is usually filled with water, but due to the drought, much of the muddy bottom of the marsh was exposed and we were able to walk out on it. Fourteen of us gathered at 8:00 am on Friday, August 26, to explore this lesser-known and somewhat off-the-beaten-track hotspot. Yes, it's a hotspot! Many birds, including rarities, have been seen at Walker Wetlands.

Killdeer were abundant, calling and interacting with each other in every corner of the marsh. Many least sandpipers were seen, scuttling behind the lily pads that were often bigger than them. Lesser yellowlegs were there in numbers, and several pectoral sandpipers winged around the marsh with a flock of least sandpipers, giving us a good view. Even this less-experienced shore-birder was able to pick them out! The group spooked a great horned owl that took flight showing us its tail end on the way out. Several warbler species were found: most exciting were the Canada warblers and the Wilson warbler that many of us got to see.

A total of 52 species and one empidonax flycatcher were seen or heard. In addition, several species of frogs were found. Butterflies seen included red-spotted purple, pearl crescent, cabbage white, and monarch.



1	Canada goose		Eastern phoebe
2	Wood duck		Great crested flycatcher
3	Mallard		Blue jay
4	Rock pigeon		American crow
5	Mourning dove		Black-capped chickadee
6	Chimney swift		Tufted titmouse
7	Killdeer		Tree swallow
8	Least sandpiper		Barn swallow
9	Pectoral sandpiper		White-breasted nuthatch
10	Spotted sandpiper		Carolina wren
11	Solitary Sandpiper		European starling
12	Greater yellowlegs		Gray catbird
13	Lesser yellowlegs		American robin
14	Great blue heron		Cedar waxwing
15	Great egret		American goldfinch
16	Green heron		Song sparrow
17	Black vulture		Baltimore oriole
18	Turkey vulture		Red-winged blackbird
19	Red-tailed hawk		Common grackle
20	Great horned owl		Northern waterthrush
21	Yellow-bellied sapsucker		Common yellowthroat
22	Red-bellied woodpecker		American redstart
23	Downy woodpecker		Canada warbler
24	Hairy woodpecker		Wilson warbler
25	Pileated woodpecker		Scarlet tanager
26	Northern flicker		Northern cardinal





Roman theater of Arles

Upcoming VENT Tours

VentBird.com

**VICTOR
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NATURE
TOURS**

Sweden:	Fall on Öland	August 28 – September 4, 2022
Spain:	Birds and Art in Asturias NEW	September 7–16, 2022
Israel:	Birds and Culture in the Holy Land	November 2–14, 2022
Kansas:	Shorebirds on the Prairie	April 23–29, 2023
New Jersey:	Birding the American Revolution NEW	May 13–20, 2023
France:	Birds and Art in Provence	May 22–30, 2023
Colorado:	A Summer Stay in Estes Park	June 18–24, 2023
Colorado:	Northeast Colorado Extension	June 24–27, 2023
Germany:	Birds and Art in Berlin	September 28 – October 7, 2023
Italy:	Venice and the Po Delta	October 7–15, 2023
Israel:	Birds and Culture in the Holy Land	November 3–15, 2023



Triumphal arch at Glanum,
first century BCE



Viking ship burial
on Öland



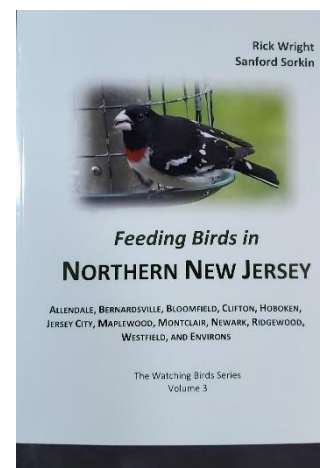
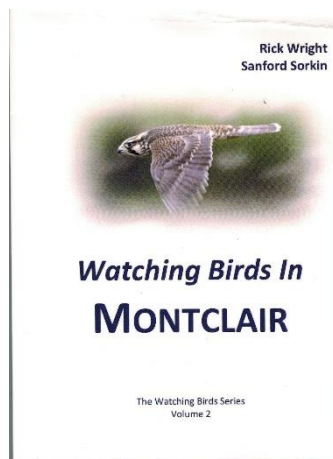
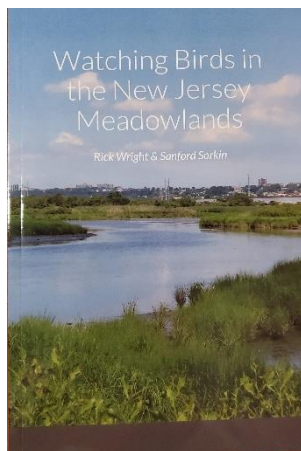
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With over 70 combined years of bookselling experience, the staff knows how to choose challenging, nurturing, and inspiring books, and knows, too, how to value the input and advice of readers and writers in our area's thriving literary community. Watchung 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.



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

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In This Issue

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Page 18: red-crested cotinga, crimson-mantled woodpecker

Page 19: great egret (Ric Cohn)

Page 20: glossy ibis, snowy egret (Ric Cohn)

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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