

Atlantic Currents

Newsletter of the Atlantic Audubon Society
Fall 2022

Fall in Review

This past fall has brought many of our common species back through our beaches and woodlands with some unexpected surprises.

New Jersey got its first and second verified records of Kirtland's Warbler in the same day! New Jersey also got its first pelagic record of Bermuda Petrel.

Our migration was about average for the early fall movements. They did not seem to be deterred by the extremely dry conditions that persisted for months in New Jersey, and in fact around many parts of the country.



Kirtland's Warbler in Cape May (photo by Josh Gant).

The Current Season

Our final fall walk was held last Saturday, October 29, at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Thank you to all the leaders and participants for another great season.

Atlantic Audubon's Halloween birding trip to Harleigh Cemetery in Camden went over very well. We racked up 40 species on our meandering drive around the twists and turns of the graveyard, and we even got to see Walt Whitman's tomb.



Walt Whitman's gravesite at Harleigh Cemetery (photo by Jason Nargiz).



The Coming Season

Christmas Bird Count season is almost upon us. We will be conducting our annual Marmora CBC on Wednesday, December 14. Please email us at atlanticaudubonsociety@gmail.com if you are interested in joining. You do not have to be an expert to take part, you just have to like birds.

While we wave goodbye to our summer residents, we welcome our winter residents back to their cold season haunts. I have heard many questions about the winter finch forecast for this coming winter season. The massive irruption or “superflight” we had two years ago seems to have people on their toes waiting in anticipation for the next irruption year.

While regular winter finch movements bring a trickle of birds into our area every year with a few notable individuals or small groups being seen, larger scale irruptions are less

frequent occurring every three to four years.

Massive *superflights* average every 12 years, with our last superflight of 2021–22 occurring off-schedule at only 7 years after the previous. Red-breasted Nuthatches have been irrupting south this year so you may notice them at your feeders more often than usual. This does not seem to be a sign of any coming winter finch southern movement anomaly.

For more winter finch information check out these resources:

<https://finchnetwork.org/>

<https://extension.psu.edu/theres-a-new-bird-in-town-irruptions-and-superflights>

Stay Golden

Warblers are amazing creatures. The group known as the New World warblers, also called the parulid warblers or wood-warblers, whose 115 members span the continents of North and South America have been thriving for around 2.6 million years.

We can see a little over 50 species in the continental United States. Even more granularly, we can generally find 35 parulid warbler species here in New Jersey. They range in habitats from the dense forests and mountain sides of northern New Jersey to the Pine Barrens and coastal regions.

Most warbler populations are stable, but there are a few imperiled species. One of those declining species is the Golden-winged Warbler, which is a local breeder in northern New Jersey. There are a few factors behind the decline of this species; they prefer to breed in disturbed areas that are in the early stages of succession, this warbler also hybridizes with the much more common Blue-winged Warbler further decaying the gene pool of valid mates.

Known breeding locations include areas affected by both natural and anthropogenic disturbances. Consider fresh growth on the sides of powerline cuts or small shrubs growing in the wake of a new forest wide cutting regime. Without natural or man-made disturbances populations of species who rely on this type of habitat will become more and more at risk.

Here in southern New Jersey, we are less likely to see this warbler. Most of the population migrates following the Appalachian Mountains, or quickly flies south ending up in New Jersey's funnel, Cape May. Mostly this species stays far from our barrier islands and southern pine woods, but every so often we get lucky. A female Golden-winged Warbler took up residence for a day at a local Ocean County park this August.

Finding an uncommon or rare bird can be exhilarating, and a golden wing is no exception. Be wary of any you find. Always check for the hybrids and backcrosses. Brewster's Warbler is the more common hybrid, and Lawrence's Warbler is the rarer. Taking field notes and photos can help you better ID the individual or individuals you are seeing.

It is the speculation of many authors, ornithologists, and scientists that the genetic pool has been fractured beyond repair. There are many who believe there are few fully and truly genetically distinct Golden-winged Warblers left.

There is hope though, certain populations exist with little to no influence from Blue-winged Warblers on the breeding grounds. These populations alone are the last bastion for theoretically distinct golden wings.



Golden-winged Warbler specimen from the Morris Museum (photo by Jason Nargiz).

The Ducks Are Here

A poem by Eider Gray

The ducks are here, good cheer, good cheer. The ducks bring mirth to all that hear. They bring big grins from ear to ear when we all cheer the ducks are here.

All kinds of ducks call this place home, some small, some large, some together, some alone. They swim and dive, they splash and play. They watch for eagles and birds of prey.

Ducks fly and hide. They quack and peep, they swim all day and then they sleep. They slumber off with marsh grass dreams and wonder what tomorrow brings.



American Wigeon flock in Cape May (photo by Josh Gant).

Calendar of Events

Wednesday, November 23: No meeting
Sunday, December 11: Holiday party
Wednesday, December 14: Marmora CBC
Saturday, December 17: Oceanville CBC
Wednesday, December 28: No meeting
Wednesday, January 25: AAS meeting Members'
Night



Let's
Flamingle

Atlantic Audubon Society's
Holiday Party - Let's Flamingle!
Sunday, December 11, 2022 @ 12 p.m.
Fred & Ethel's Lantern Light Tavern
1 N. New York Rd., Historic Smithville, NJ
Tickets \$35 in advance - \$40 at the door
Fireside Hors d'Oeuvres:
Bruschetta, Crab & Cheese Wonton and Sesame Chicken
Buffet Dinner with Caesar Salad
Bowtie Primavera, Chicken Marsala and London Broil
Includes Potato, Vegetable and Non-Alcoholic Beverages
Cash Bar - Door Prizes

Do you have a story you would like to have published in the newsletter? Reach out to us at Atlanticaudubonsociety@gmail.com.

We would love to hear from you!