



Happy New Year!

Atlantic Audubon Society Newsletter

January 2022

Website-see upcoming 1/26/22 meeting information on the website
<http://www.atlanticaudubonsociety.com/>

Facebook page- Atlantic Audubon Society
<https://www.facebook.com/AtlanticAudubonSociety>

Field Trip - Coastal Winter Waterfowl, January 22

Please join us on Saturday, January 22nd. Atlantic Audubon will visit coastal pond, ocean and bay habitats in Ocean and Monmouth Counties. We will meet at the Forked River Rest Area, and begin birding in Toms River, continuing north along the coast for the day. Dress warmly! Sign up by contacting Becky Hedden at atlanticaudubonsociety@gmail.com or (609) 384-4599.

Membership News

After eight years of free chapter membership, we are offering our members an opportunity to support our Atlantic Audubon Society chapter once again. AAS is a local New Jersey chapter of the National Audubon Society. The 2022 Chapter Membership fee is \$20 per year for January through December. Chapter Membership entitles you to participate in our meetings and field trips and to receive newsletters and advance notice of all AAS events via email. Your chapter membership helps to make our ten yearly programs, educational outreach, and scholarships possible.

Current Atlantic Audubon Society Volunteers qualify for **FREE CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP**. If you help with one of the following: bird walks, road clean-ups, Christmas Bird Counts (Oceanville or Marmora), or are on the board or a committee, you will be given a one year chapter membership free of charge!

The deadline for your 2022 chapter membership payment is February 28, 2022.

After that time, only current chapter members will receive advance email notification of Atlantic Audubon Society activities.

Both Free Volunteer Members and Paying Chapter Members, please click on the following link to fill out our online chapter membership form:

<https://nasatlanticaudubon.wufoo.com/forms/z13n87js005583x/?fbclid=IwAR3BgnNoyBSFiVHuz2yzXQnWSZplWliXsodBCmhhhwUOiU5EG5mDhtKry3w>

Paying Members, there are two ways to pay for your chapter membership: After filling out the online chapter membership form through the above link, you can use your personal PayPal account to send \$20 to **atlanticaudubonsociety@gmail.com** or mail a personal check for \$20 through the US Postal Service to Atlantic Audubon Society at P.O. Box 63 Absecon, NJ 08201. **Thank you for your support!**

eBird

If you are signed into your eBird account, you can view the NEW Atlantic Audubon Society eBird page, managed by Jason Nargiz. <https://ebird.org/profile/Mjg5MDExMg> This is an exciting way for us to share bird lists from field trips and our Saturday walks. If you haven't tried eBird yet, consider giving it a try! If you need help with the eBird website or app for your phone, please contact Atlantic Audubon at atlanticaudubonsociety@gmail.com and we will put you in touch with one of our eBird advisors.

Friday Bird Walks offered by Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, Fridays 8-10am. The walks are free and open to the public. The walks take place **year-round**, except for a summer break during the peak biting fly season.

Saturday Morning Bird Walks hosted by Atlantic Audubon Society at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR. (April, May and September, October) Saturdays 8am to noon. **Spring 2022 dates** are April 2,9,16,23 and 30, and May 7,14,21 and 28. The walks are free and open to the public. We hope to see you there!

Christmas Bird Count News

This year was the 122nd CBC sponsored by the National Audubon Society! CBC's started over a century ago as an alternative to the traditional Christmas Day bird hunt. Please join us next year for the Christmas Bird Count! It's always fun to participate in your 'home circle', so if you live in Atlantic or Northern Cape May County, please consider being a part of this tradition. Contact us at atlanticaudubonsociety@gmail.com to be put in touch with Kyle Chelius (Oceanville) or Becky Hedden (Marmora), the count compilers. **Save the dates** for the Marmora Christmas Bird Count - Wednesday, December 14, 2022 and the Oceanville Christmas Bird Count - Saturday, December 17, 2022.

Marmora Christmas Bird Count

December 14, 2021 <https://ebird.org/tripreport/16931>

There were five teams covering different sections of the Marmora Christmas Bird Count circle. The Marmora CBC began in 1974, the same year that the Atlantic Audubon Society was founded. This year, one team was in Linwood and Egg Harbor Township, another team birded the Egg Harbor Township Nature Reserve, the Longport Jetty and Malibu Beach Wildlife Management Area. Other teams birded Ocean City, Sea Isle City and Strathmere, Marmora, Tuckahoe and Corbin City Wildlife Management areas. Highlights include a **birdbath full of Cedar Waxwings**, Two Common Ravens, a Tree Swallow, Pine Siskins, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Oystercatchers, a Black-crowned Night Heron, Marbled Godwits, and a Purple Finch. A total of ninety eight species were seen this year in total on the Marmora CBC!

Here's the report from the Ocean City territory-covered by Charlie and Roz Herlands, Renee Rubin and Michael Delesantro. They saw 52 species of birds!

Brant 400	Purple Sandpiper 17	American Oystercatcher 10
Canada Goose 43	Ring-billed Gull 9	Northern Mockingbird 8
Mute Swan 2	Herring Gull 118	European Starling 103
Gadwall 3	Great Black-backed Gull 14	Yellow-rumped Warbler 38
American Black Duck 66	Rock Pigeon 73	Dark-eyed Junco 4
Mallard 63	Mourning Dove 22	White-throated Sparrow 20
Northern Shoveler 3	Belted Kingfisher 1	Song Sparrow 12
Surf Scoter 7	Red-throated Loon 4	Northern cardinal 9
black Scoter 4	Common Loon 5	Red-winged Blackbird 3
Scoter species 50	Horned Grebe 1	Brown-headed Cowbird 2
Long-tailed Duck 29	Northern Gannet 26	House Finch 36
Bufflehead 9	Double-crested Cormorant 50	Tree Swallow 1
Hooded Merganser 18	Great Blue Heron 4	Carolina Wren 2
Red-breasted Merganser 4	Great Egret 9	Hermit Thrush 2
Greater Yellowlegs 17	Black-crowned Night-Heron 1	American Robin 24
Ruddy Turnstone 12	Turkey Vulture 2	Pine Siskin 2
Sanderling 158	Cooper's Hawk 1	House Sparrow 51
Dunlin 547	Red-tailed Hawk 1	

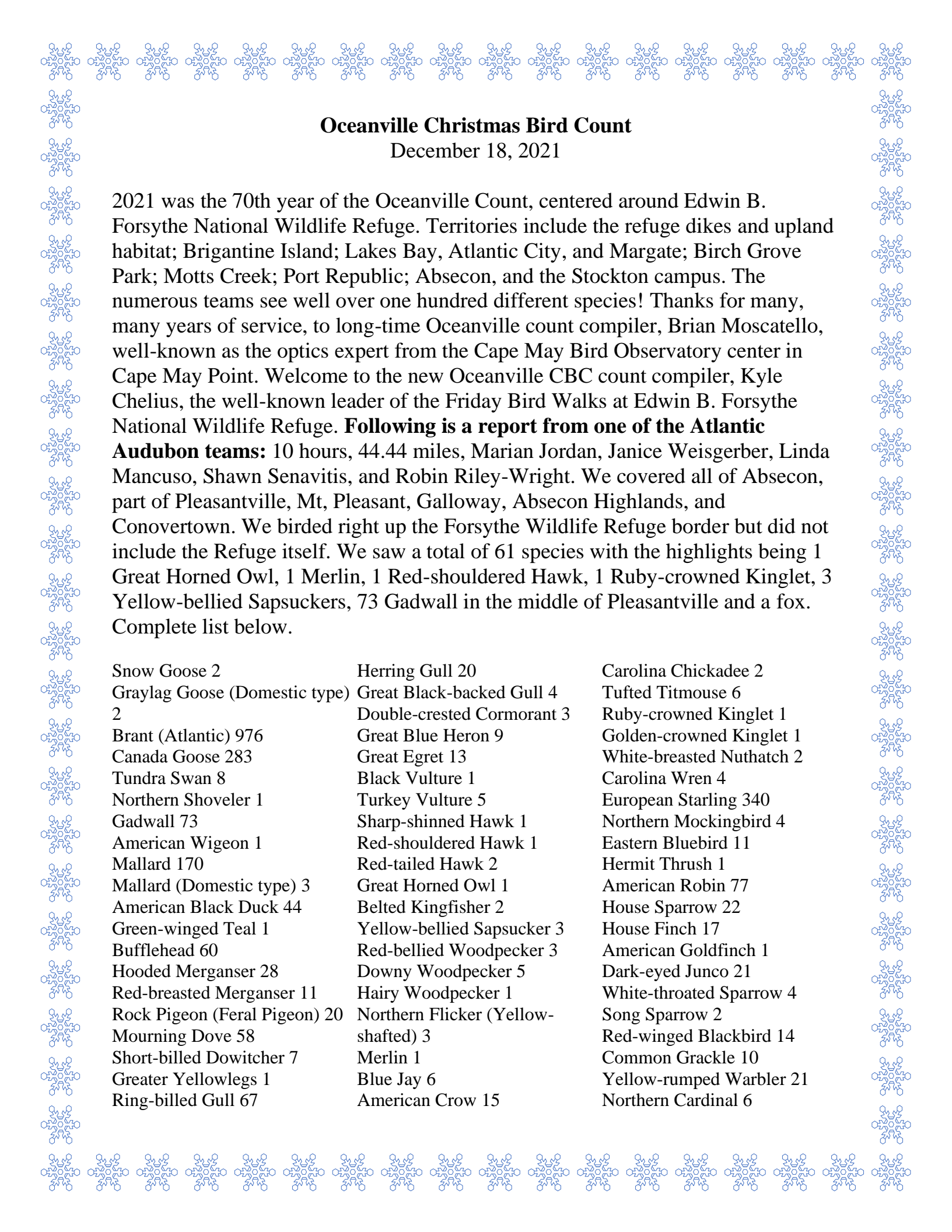
Photos from the Marmora Christmas Bird Count



L to R: Paul Mandala, Joshua Gant. Photographer, Jason Nargiz



14 Cedar Waxwings at a birdbath, Photo by Jason Nargiz



Oceanville Christmas Bird Count

December 18, 2021

2021 was the 70th year of the Oceanville Count, centered around Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Territories include the refuge dikes and upland habitat; Brigantine Island; Lakes Bay, Atlantic City, and Margate; Birch Grove Park; Motts Creek; Port Republic; Absecon, and the Stockton campus. The numerous teams see well over one hundred different species! Thanks for many, many years of service, to long-time Oceanville count compiler, Brian Moscatello, well-known as the optics expert from the Cape May Bird Observatory center in Cape May Point. Welcome to the new Oceanville CBC count compiler, Kyle Chelius, the well-known leader of the Friday Bird Walks at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. **Following is a report from one of the Atlantic Audubon teams:** 10 hours, 44.44 miles, Marian Jordan, Janice Weisgerber, Linda Mancuso, Shawn Senavitis, and Robin Riley-Wright. We covered all of Absecon, part of Pleasantville, Mt, Pleasant, Galloway, Absecon Highlands, and Conoverstown. We birded right up the Forsythe Wildlife Refuge border but did not include the Refuge itself. We saw a total of 61 species with the highlights being 1 Great Horned Owl, 1 Merlin, 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, 1 Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 3 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 73 Gadwall in the middle of Pleasantville and a fox. Complete list below.

Snow Goose 2	Herring Gull 20	Carolina Chickadee 2
Graylag Goose (Domestic type) 2	Great Black-backed Gull 4	Tufted Titmouse 6
Brant (Atlantic) 976	Double-crested Cormorant 3	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1
Canada Goose 283	Great Blue Heron 9	Golden-crowned Kinglet 1
Tundra Swan 8	Great Egret 13	White-breasted Nuthatch 2
Northern Shoveler 1	Black Vulture 1	Carolina Wren 4
Gadwall 73	Turkey Vulture 5	European Starling 340
American Wigeon 1	Sharp-shinned Hawk 1	Northern Mockingbird 4
Mallard 170	Red-shouldered Hawk 1	Eastern Bluebird 11
Mallard (Domestic type) 3	Red-tailed Hawk 2	Hermit Thrush 1
American Black Duck 44	Great Horned Owl 1	American Robin 77
Green-winged Teal 1	Belted Kingfisher 2	House Sparrow 22
Bufflehead 60	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 3	House Finch 17
Hooded Merganser 28	Red-bellied Woodpecker 3	American Goldfinch 1
Red-breasted Merganser 11	Downy Woodpecker 5	Dark-eyed Junco 21
Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon) 20	Hairy Woodpecker 1	White-throated Sparrow 4
Mourning Dove 58	Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted) 3	Song Sparrow 2
Short-billed Dowitcher 7	Merlin 1	Red-winged Blackbird 14
Greater Yellowlegs 1	Blue Jay 6	Common Grackle 10
Ring-billed Gull 67	American Crow 15	Yellow-rumped Warbler 21
		Northern Cardinal 6

December Atlantic Audubon Society Field Trip Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

On Wednesday, December 1, 2021, Atlantic Audubon sponsored a trip to Bombay Hook NWR in Kent County, Delaware. It was a beautiful sunny December day and warm enough to get out of our cars and walk the trails and check out the view from the towers. Highlights included 4,500 Snow Geese (and we counted every single one 😊), 56 Tundra Swans, 500 Dunlin and 6 Bald Eagles. We drove 12.5 miles and saw 42 species. The full list is below.

Snow Goose 4500	American Coot 8	Downy Woodpecker 2
Canada Goose 538	American Avocet 10	Northern Flicker 4
Mute Swan 2	Dunlin 500	Peregrine Falcon 2
Tundra Swan 56	Greater Yellowlegs 19	Blue Jay 1
Northern Shoveler 32	Ring-billed Gull 8	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1
American Wigeon 3	Great Black-backed Gull 2	Carolina Wren 4
Mallard 39	Great Blue Heron 9	Eastern Bluebird 1
American Black Duck 2	Great Egret 26	Hermit Thrush 2
Northern Pintail 103	Black Vulture 3	American Robin 39
Green-winged Teal 103	Northern Harrier 4	White-throated Sparrow 10
Ring-necked Duck 23	Bald Eagle 6	Song Sparrow 7
Bufflehead 7	Red-tailed Hawk 1	Eastern Towhee 2
Hooded Merganser 136	Belted Kingfisher 2	Red-winged Blackbird 94
Pied-billed Grebe 2	Red-bellied Woodpecker 3	Yellow-rumped Warbler 2



L to R: Marian, Jason, Robin, Diane, Johan, Linda and Karmie. (Missing from photo is Karen)

A decorative border of blue snowflakes surrounds the text. The snowflakes are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with a row of 18 snowflakes at the top and bottom, and vertical columns of 10 snowflakes on the left and right sides.

Birding News

The winter season is upon us once again. It's time for Christmas Bird Counts, winter waterfowl and the seasonal chill that Old Man Winter sometimes forgets to bring nowadays. This year has been great for birds, and I'm sure will be remembered fondly as the year Red Crossbills became a yard bird for a bulk of Central and South Jersey residents, or possibly the year NJ got inundated with Snowy Owls on the beaches, and definitely not the second year of a terrible pandemic.

On a lighter note, Jersey received a special early Christmas Gift this year, the fifth record of Northern Lapwing to visit the state. The previous accepted records are March of 1953, January of 1997, November of 2012, January February and March of 2013, and now currently December of 2021 possibly into the New Year. This bird has been seen and admired by many and will hopefully stay for more birders to see.

Got the indoor blues? What can you do to keep busy during the cold winter months when it's too cold to bird? Have you tried the board game Wingspan? It's a challenging and fun game that can be played alone or with family and friends. It's sure to bring some fun to a rainy or chilly day, maybe with a cup of cocoa.

If you feel like braving the elements here are some options for those sunny or dreary winter days. Barnegat Lighthouse State Park and it's one-mile-long jetty is a must-see location for winter waterfowl. Harlequin Ducks gather there in small numbers annually as well as Common Eider and the occasional King Eider, all three Scoter Species, and a menagerie of other sea ducks and winter birds. Great Cormorants can be seen sitting on the channel markers off the end of the jetty and seals dot the rocks on the north side of the jetty's interior bay side.

For our friends in southern NJ how about a drive around Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge to see the multiple species of waterfowl and other birds that spend the winter in the impoundments. Test your female waterfowl identification skills on the way around. Although drakes are colorful and showy, hens can be difficult to ID. Make sure to visit the Gull Pond Tower and the Turtle Cove Tower during your trip.

If you have completed the 8 Mile auto loop at Forsythe and you still feel like birding, take the short trip over to Brigantine Island. This island holds a large number of American Oystercatchers over the winter, you may even see a Marbled Godwit or two. This small island seems to be one of the few places to see Godwits during the New Jersey winters. Try birding the South Cove area or take the 2.5 mile walk out to the inlet and check there.

Featured Bird-
Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*)

These wonderful winter friends show up when the weather turns cold.
They fly like a flurry of snowflakes being blown by a strong breeze.
They dip and dive, fall and float.
Blown in on the cold breezes of winter.
Dressed in their winter best with a toasted brown head, back and breast.
You will know when a flock takes flight, they wave the little black flags on the tips
of their wings as they flap.
They lift off from the dunes singing the praises of the sky.
Flitting and falling back to earth to feed on seed that the dunes provide.

Ode to a Snow Bunting, Joshua Gant



Snow Bunting on a washed-up piling, Photo by Jason Nargiz



Josh's not-so-big Ocean County find-as-many-birds-as-you-can-athon (not an Ocean County big year)

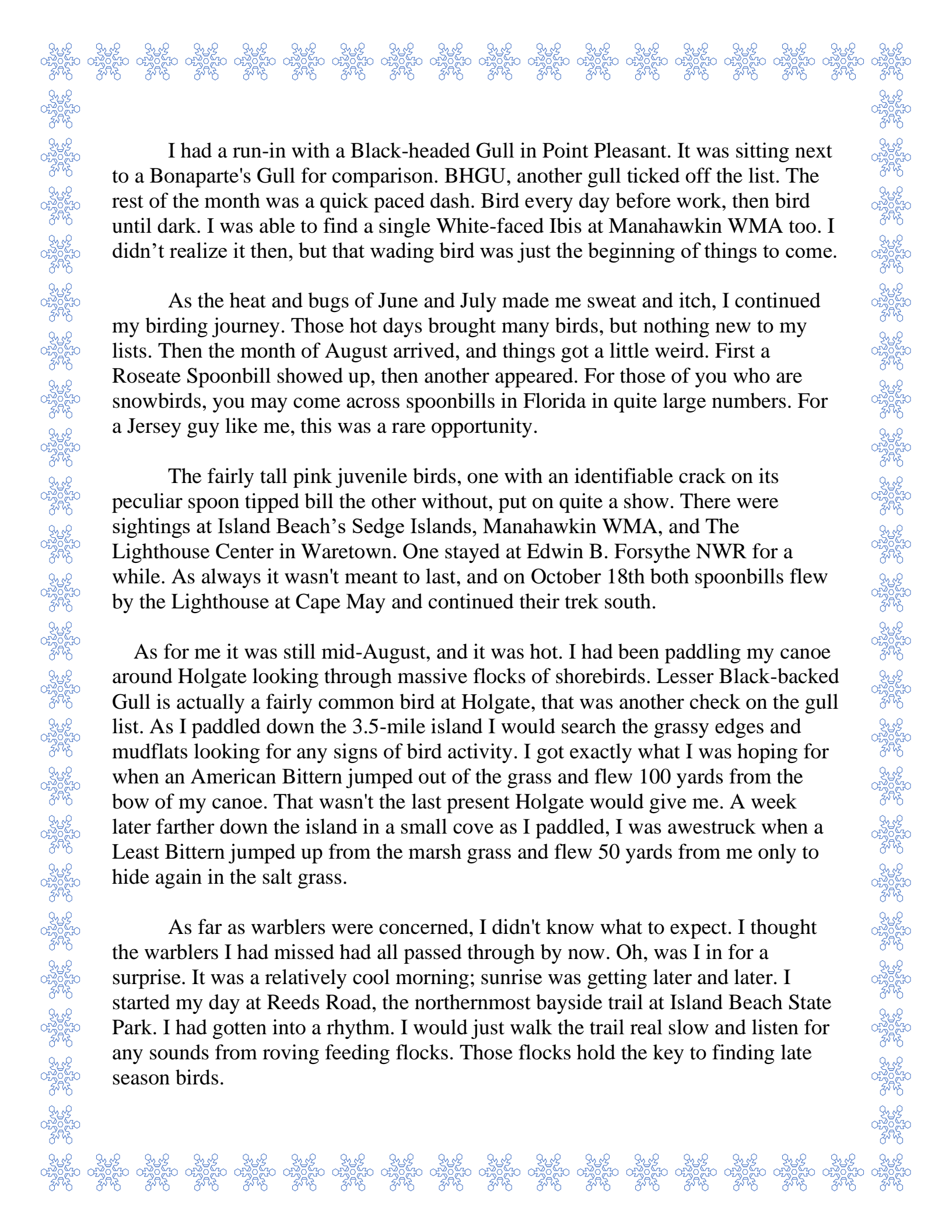
This year I challenged myself to try and see as many of the commonly occurring species of bird in Ocean County as I could. I think it went over pretty well. I added a few species to my life list and spent countless hours in the field. This was a personally massive undertaking, and I would like to thank my parents, brother and girlfriend for putting up with me, and for their love and support through the whole year.

Although all the days I spent birding this past year seem to be a blur of wings, beaks, feathers, and talons; missed chases and successful days, each day I spent is represented as a list on the long line of eBird entries of 2021. You can find my eBird account here, <https://ebird.org/nj/profile/MTAxNDAYMw/US> and follow along with my most recent adventures. Some lists were short but full of adventure, some lists were long and packed full of birding action, alone and with friends. Some will live on in infamy in my mind; others are a reminder that with enough perseverance anything is possible.

I set out a few criteria for myself to attain this past year. I would attempt to bird as many days of the year as I could. I would attempt to complete my annual and semi-annual warbler list for Ocean County. I would attempt to complete my annual and semi-annual Eastern Gull list for Ocean County. These goals I thought were reachable, and I was fairly successful, depending on how you measure success.

I began the year with a first-winter Iceland Gull, my lifer Iceland. January 1st and already one of the ticks on my list checked off. I was off to the races. The winter went by quickly then spring came, and it brought birds. I had high hopes, I began birding almost every day. Up before dawn, around 4am, and out after my shift was done, 4:30pm, until sunset, about 8pm.

As April turned to May I began slowly collecting the common warblers of Ocean County. Most of the warblers are somewhat easily heard or seen. Some need to be searched for, and others are unlikely, to nearly impossible. By the time June came I had 28 of New Jersey's 33 annual and semi-annual Warblers. This is not to say there weren't a few misses along the journey. Connecticut, Mourning, Cerulean, Yellow-throated, and Canada had eluded me, although they had all made brief appearances in the county.



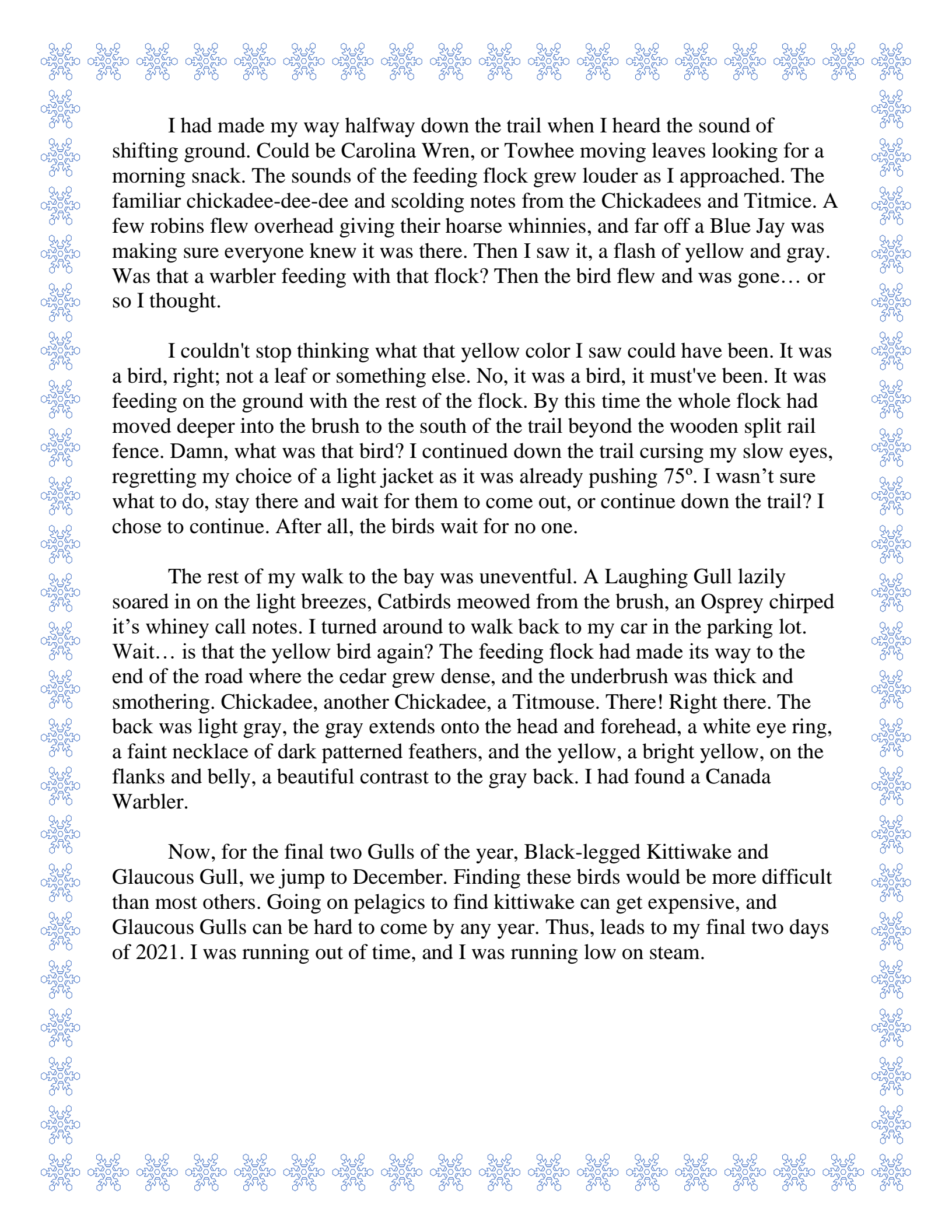
I had a run-in with a Black-headed Gull in Point Pleasant. It was sitting next to a Bonaparte's Gull for comparison. BHGU, another gull ticked off the list. The rest of the month was a quick paced dash. Bird every day before work, then bird until dark. I was able to find a single White-faced Ibis at Manahawkin WMA too. I didn't realize it then, but that wading bird was just the beginning of things to come.

As the heat and bugs of June and July made me sweat and itch, I continued my birding journey. Those hot days brought many birds, but nothing new to my lists. Then the month of August arrived, and things got a little weird. First a Roseate Spoonbill showed up, then another appeared. For those of you who are snowbirds, you may come across spoonbills in Florida in quite large numbers. For a Jersey guy like me, this was a rare opportunity.

The fairly tall pink juvenile birds, one with an identifiable crack on its peculiar spoon tipped bill the other without, put on quite a show. There were sightings at Island Beach's Sedge Islands, Manahawkin WMA, and The Lighthouse Center in Waretown. One stayed at Edwin B. Forsythe NWR for a while. As always it wasn't meant to last, and on October 18th both spoonbills flew by the Lighthouse at Cape May and continued their trek south.

As for me it was still mid-August, and it was hot. I had been paddling my canoe around Holgate looking through massive flocks of shorebirds. Lesser Black-backed Gull is actually a fairly common bird at Holgate, that was another check on the gull list. As I paddled down the 3.5-mile island I would search the grassy edges and mudflats looking for any signs of bird activity. I got exactly what I was hoping for when an American Bittern jumped out of the grass and flew 100 yards from the bow of my canoe. That wasn't the last present Holgate would give me. A week later farther down the island in a small cove as I paddled, I was awestruck when a Least Bittern jumped up from the marsh grass and flew 50 yards from me only to hide again in the salt grass.

As far as warblers were concerned, I didn't know what to expect. I thought the warblers I had missed had all passed through by now. Oh, was I in for a surprise. It was a relatively cool morning; sunrise was getting later and later. I started my day at Reeds Road, the northernmost bayside trail at Island Beach State Park. I had gotten into a rhythm. I would just walk the trail real slow and listen for any sounds from roving feeding flocks. Those flocks hold the key to finding late season birds.

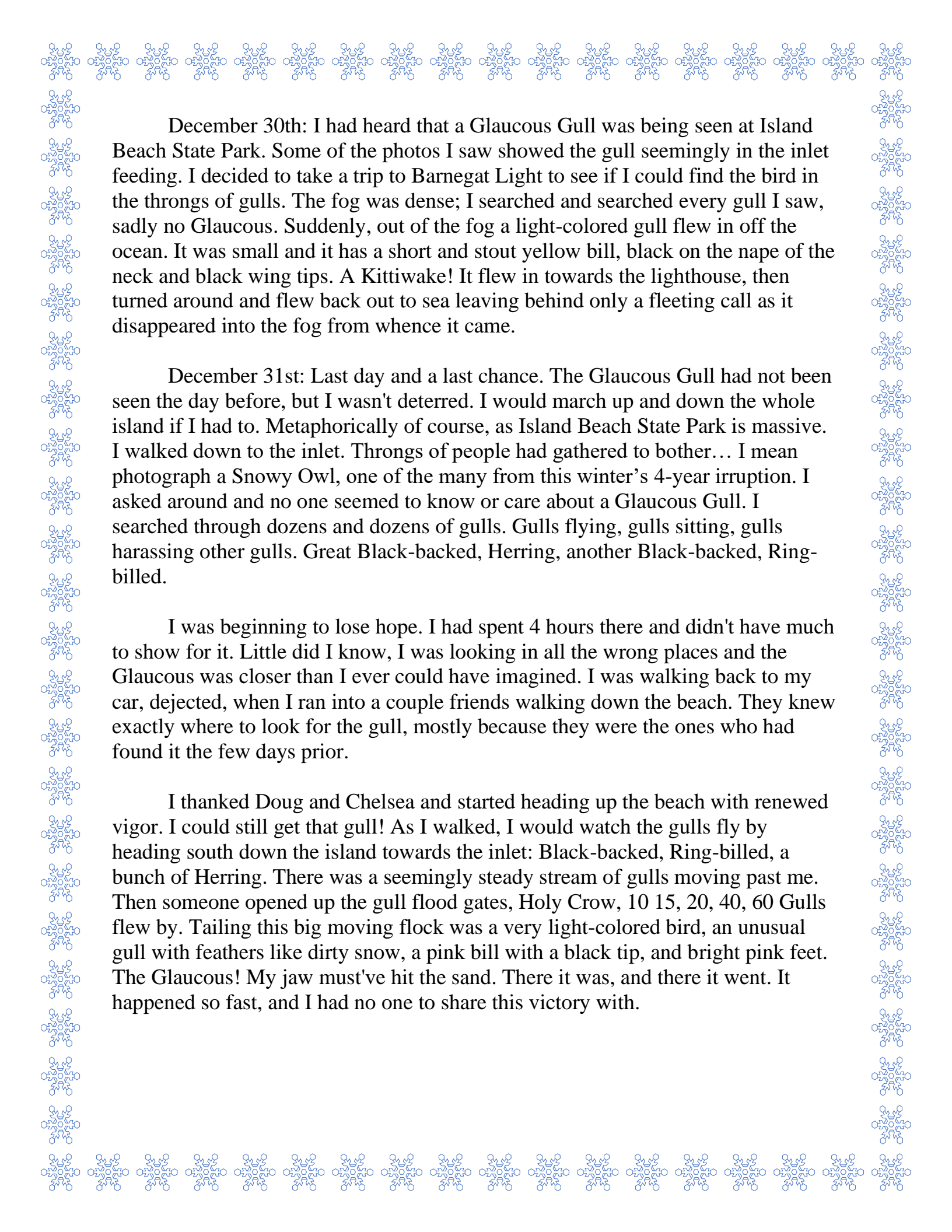


I had made my way halfway down the trail when I heard the sound of shifting ground. Could be Carolina Wren, or Towhee moving leaves looking for a morning snack. The sounds of the feeding flock grew louder as I approached. The familiar chickadee-dee-dee and scolding notes from the Chickadees and Titmice. A few robins flew overhead giving their hoarse whinnies, and far off a Blue Jay was making sure everyone knew it was there. Then I saw it, a flash of yellow and gray. Was that a warbler feeding with that flock? Then the bird flew and was gone... or so I thought.

I couldn't stop thinking what that yellow color I saw could have been. It was a bird, right; not a leaf or something else. No, it was a bird, it must've been. It was feeding on the ground with the rest of the flock. By this time the whole flock had moved deeper into the brush to the south of the trail beyond the wooden split rail fence. Damn, what was that bird? I continued down the trail cursing my slow eyes, regretting my choice of a light jacket as it was already pushing 75°. I wasn't sure what to do, stay there and wait for them to come out, or continue down the trail? I chose to continue. After all, the birds wait for no one.

The rest of my walk to the bay was uneventful. A Laughing Gull lazily soared in on the light breezes, Catbirds meowed from the brush, an Osprey chirped it's whiney call notes. I turned around to walk back to my car in the parking lot. Wait... is that the yellow bird again? The feeding flock had made its way to the end of the road where the cedar grew dense, and the underbrush was thick and smothering. Chickadee, another Chickadee, a Titmouse. There! Right there. The back was light gray, the gray extends onto the head and forehead, a white eye ring, a faint necklace of dark patterned feathers, and the yellow, a bright yellow, on the flanks and belly, a beautiful contrast to the gray back. I had found a Canada Warbler.

Now, for the final two Gulls of the year, Black-legged Kittiwake and Glaucous Gull, we jump to December. Finding these birds would be more difficult than most others. Going on pelagics to find kittiwake can get expensive, and Glaucous Gulls can be hard to come by any year. Thus, leads to my final two days of 2021. I was running out of time, and I was running low on steam.

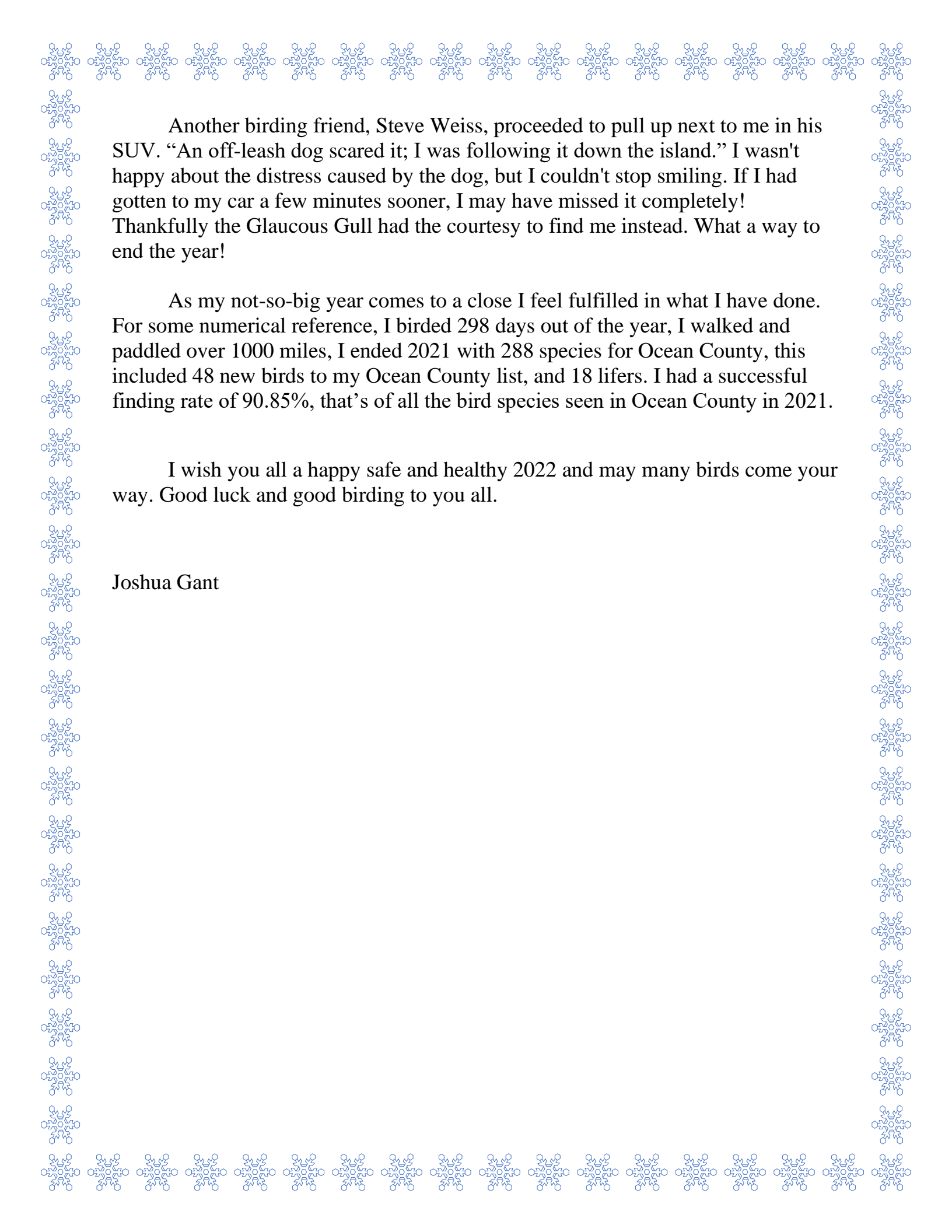


December 30th: I had heard that a Glaucous Gull was being seen at Island Beach State Park. Some of the photos I saw showed the gull seemingly in the inlet feeding. I decided to take a trip to Barnegat Light to see if I could find the bird in the throngs of gulls. The fog was dense; I searched and searched every gull I saw, sadly no Glaucous. Suddenly, out of the fog a light-colored gull flew in off the ocean. It was small and it has a short and stout yellow bill, black on the nape of the neck and black wing tips. A Kittiwake! It flew in towards the lighthouse, then turned around and flew back out to sea leaving behind only a fleeting call as it disappeared into the fog from whence it came.

December 31st: Last day and a last chance. The Glaucous Gull had not been seen the day before, but I wasn't deterred. I would march up and down the whole island if I had to. Metaphorically of course, as Island Beach State Park is massive. I walked down to the inlet. Throngs of people had gathered to bother... I mean photograph a Snowy Owl, one of the many from this winter's 4-year irruption. I asked around and no one seemed to know or care about a Glaucous Gull. I searched through dozens and dozens of gulls. Gulls flying, gulls sitting, gulls harassing other gulls. Great Black-backed, Herring, another Black-backed, Ring-billed.

I was beginning to lose hope. I had spent 4 hours there and didn't have much to show for it. Little did I know, I was looking in all the wrong places and the Glaucous was closer than I ever could have imagined. I was walking back to my car, dejected, when I ran into a couple friends walking down the beach. They knew exactly where to look for the gull, mostly because they were the ones who had found it the few days prior.

I thanked Doug and Chelsea and started heading up the beach with renewed vigor. I could still get that gull! As I walked, I would watch the gulls fly by heading south down the island towards the inlet: Black-backed, Ring-billed, a bunch of Herring. There was a seemingly steady stream of gulls moving past me. Then someone opened up the gull flood gates, Holy Crow, 10 15, 20, 40, 60 Gulls flew by. Tailing this big moving flock was a very light-colored bird, an unusual gull with feathers like dirty snow, a pink bill with a black tip, and bright pink feet. The Glaucous! My jaw must've hit the sand. There it was, and there it went. It happened so fast, and I had no one to share this victory with.



Another birding friend, Steve Weiss, proceeded to pull up next to me in his SUV. “An off-leash dog scared it; I was following it down the island.” I wasn't happy about the distress caused by the dog, but I couldn't stop smiling. If I had gotten to my car a few minutes sooner, I may have missed it completely! Thankfully the Glaucous Gull had the courtesy to find me instead. What a way to end the year!

As my not-so-big year comes to a close I feel fulfilled in what I have done. For some numerical reference, I birded 298 days out of the year, I walked and paddled over 1000 miles, I ended 2021 with 288 species for Ocean County, this included 48 new birds to my Ocean County list, and 18 lifers. I had a successful finding rate of 90.85%, that's of all the bird species seen in Ocean County in 2021.

I wish you all a happy safe and healthy 2022 and may many birds come your way. Good luck and good birding to you all.

Joshua Gant