

THE MONTCLAIR BIRD CLUB

YOUR WEEKLY BIRD 53

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by Hillary Leonard

Laughing Gull



I have a soft spot for laughing gulls. Understandably, I might be alone in that: most people view them as a nuisance, as french-fry thieves. As a child, I saw one take a steak from my neighbor's grill and then drop it in the dirt when it was too heavy to fly off with. I was pooped on by one as I walked to my car after work. The list goes on. . . .

To keep them in check, Ocean City hires East Coast Falcons to patrol its boardwalk with trained birds of prey.

For me, though, laughing gulls are the ultimate sign and sound of summer. I grew up on a barrier island in a house without air conditioning, so the windows were open 24/7. I'd lie in bed and hear the laughing gulls off in the distance well into the night. Today, seeing them in their breeding plumage and hearing their ha-ha-ha-haaa call brings back happy memories of my youth and the season everyone lived for.



I had no idea then that my home was also home to the largest laughing gull colonies in the world. Now, though, according to Lenore Tedesco of the Wetlands Institute, the marshes used by breeding laughing gulls (and by other birds and wildlife) are seriously threatened by rising sea levels and increased tidal flooding that inundate nest sites, eggs, and unfledged young.

If you would like to see your photographs highlighted here, send one or two pictures with a short paragraph to [Sandy Sorkin & Rick Wright at MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com](mailto:MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com).



Southwest Wings

