

The Broadwing



Publication of the Montclair Bird Club
October 2024

Montclair, NJ
Volume LXIX, Number 2

In This Issue

From the Archives	2
2024–2025 Club Officers	4
Fifteen Years a Treasurer	4
New Members.....	5
Field Trips	6
Field Trip Reports	9
SPAIN: Birds and Art in Asturias.....	12
Virtual Bird Walks	53
Meeting History.....	55
Birds in This Issue.....	56

Message from the Editor October 2024

Dear Members and Friends,

This will most likely be the last message from the editor as our new president, Evan Cutler, picks up the pen. He won't have to construct his messages to fit into this tiny box because we will grant him as many pages as needed. He could even throw in a picture or two. Either way, you will be treated to a new perspective.

As the current editor, I am still anxious to find more members and friends interested in telling their stories or showing their pictures.

Please note the theme for the October 17 Virtual Bird Walk. I hope you can participate.

Sandy

Next club meeting: Wednesday, October 9
Virtual Bird Walk: Thursday, October 17
Theme: Fall Color

From the Archives

The Star-Ledger

FINAL EDITION
★★★★

The Newspaper for New Jersey

Newark, N.J. Saturday, October 11, 1986

Price: 15 cents

SHARP EYES

Birdwatchers spot 50,000th hawk

By KITTA MacPHERSON

Two "sharpies" skimmed across the sky above Upper Montclair, dipping and weaving with the air currents that rose from the Watchung Ridge below them.

In their characteristic flap-flap-and-glide, flap-flap-and-glide, the pair of sharp-shinned hawks floated briefly in the clear blue heavens and then disappeared into the southeastern sky, where they will winter somewhere beyond.

They didn't know it, but their presence in the sky yesterday was a source of immense joy to an earthbound group below them. They were the 49,999th and 50,000th hawks, respectively, to cross New Jersey skies this year, a record high.

"It's such a thrill to see the birds," said 85-year-old Suzanne Haupt, a regular member of the Montclair Bird Club, who donned longjohns, two sweaters and a winterweight coat to spend the brisk October day atop a 600-foot-high basalt ridge spotting hawks.

Normally, the club of bird-lovers spots the rare birds of prey from another nearby ridge, the site of the Montclair Hawk Lookout, part of a series of bird sanctuaries under the protection of the New Jersey Audubon Society. But the 65 ruddy stone steps leading to the lookout tower proved to be a bit much for Haupt so the group convened instead at an adjacent hill in the Mills Reservation.

"We knew this was going to be a special day and we wanted Suzanne to be part of it," said Andrew Bihun, a retired executive who has been spotting hawks and other birds since 1948.

Bihun believes that bird-watchers in Cape May may have seen more hawks flying over the Atlantic Ocean this year, but in terms of inland bird migration, yesterday topped the list. Until yesterday, the most hawks ever spotted from inland New Jersey were the 32,600 hawks spotted from Upper Montclair in 1981.

No one is exactly sure why

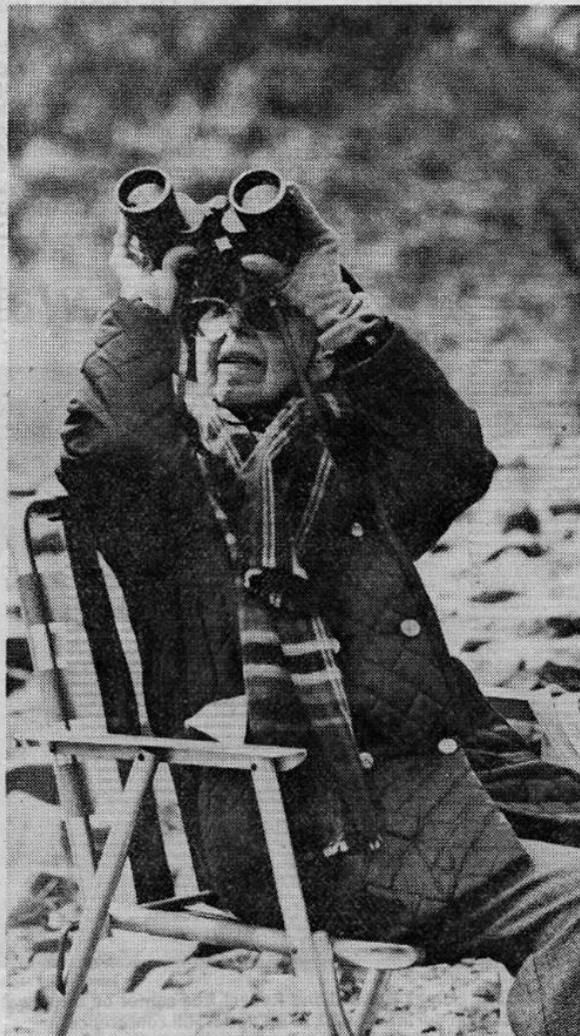


Photo by Steve Andrascik

Suzanne Haupt, a member of the Montclair Bird Club, searches the skies above the club's observation post for a hawk

there are more hawks than ever this year. But most attribute it to a combination of serendipity and strong winds.

The mountain ridge is just be-

neath what ornithologists call a "flyway," a celestial version of a highway in which birds travel rou-

Please turn to Page 5

Continued from Page One

tinely from spot to spot. The hawks are now returning to America from northeastern Canada where they nested over the summer, Bihun said. The large hawks like the ospreys may be flying as far as Argentina. Many of the smaller hawks, like the sharpies, may only go as far as South Jersey where they will find enough mice and small mammals to meet their feeding needs.

Hawks are generally described as birds of prey that are active by day, such as the peregrine falcon. They can be large, like the osprey, with a wing span of five to six feet, and they can be small like the kestrel, with wing spans of about two feet.

Keeping track of the hawks requires a fair amount of devotion. At least one member of the bird club is at the lookout tower every day, through every season. The only time bird-watchers may not be present is during a downpour—and only because the birds then stop flying.

Haupt started coming to the Upper Montclair lookout in 1938. She kept coming, she said, because she enjoyed the beauty of the birds and the banter with other bird-watchers. She admits having no bird as her favorite. "The one I see today is my favorite," she said.

And yesterday, as the senior bird-watcher present, she led a group of six in spotting hawks. Since the birds fly very high, spotting them requires excellent vision, practice and a good pair of fieldglasses. In a 30-minute period, Haupt was the first to spot at least three hawks.

Bihun was the one who spotted the 49,999th and 50,000th birds, a moment he described as extremely exciting. Yet, once the birds were spotted, the group stayed on, continuing a watch that has been occurring for decades.

"You never get bored with this, there is a great deal of sport involved in spotting them," said Else Greenstone, a Cranford resident who has been

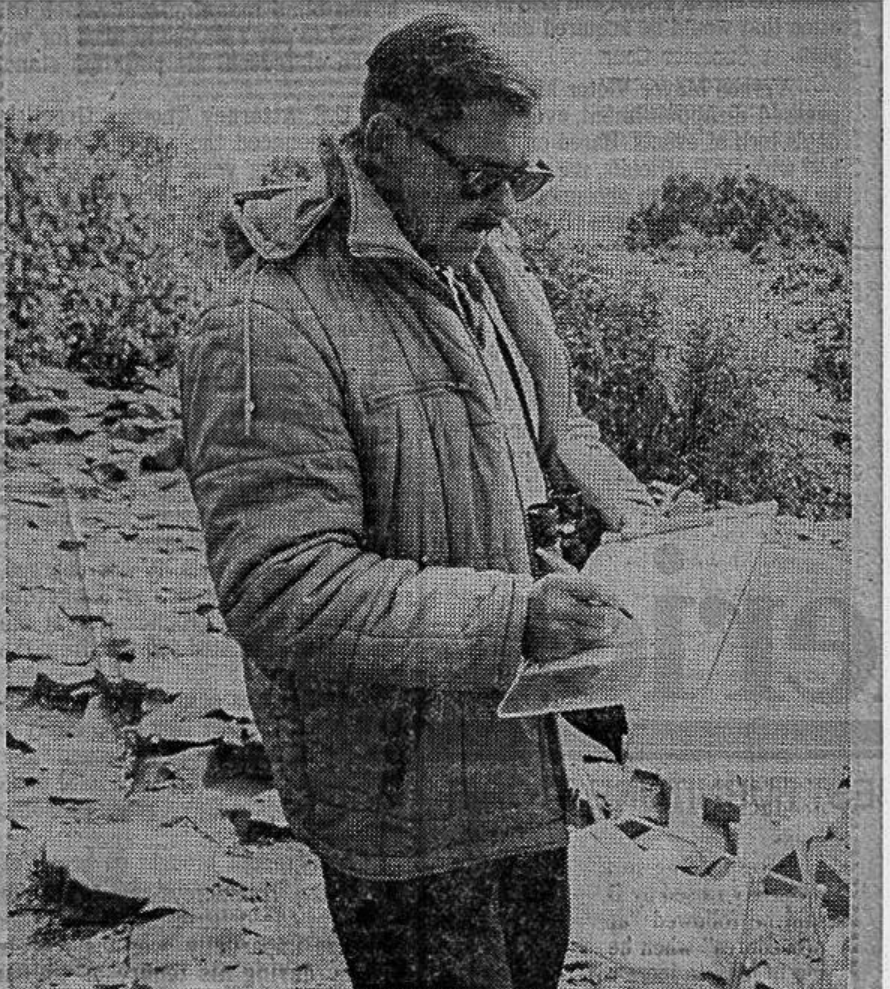


Photo by Steve Andrascik

Andrew Bihun, a member of the Montclair Bird Club, records information on a hawk sighting from his observation post in the township

coming to the lookout nearly every day for the past six years. Part of the fun of it is spotting the bird first and then identifying it quickly, she said, a talent that develops over time.

But all agreed that it was the beauty of the birds that draws them.

"They are so majestic, so royal," said Greenstone. "Their sense of freedom is beautiful to watch. By watching

them, you become part of that feeling. In a certain sense, we are really up in the sky flying with them."

Associated Heat 686-3223 C.O.D. 200 Gal. Min.	56^c per gal.	*Essex & Union Serving all of Central Jersey
--	-----------------------------------	--

MONTCLAIR BIRD CLUB OFFICERS 2024–2025

Evan Cutler **President**
Deb DeSalvo **Vice President**
Ric Cohn **Treasurer**
Donna Traylor **Recording Secretary**

Executive Board

Bill Beren
Ardith Bondi
Wayne Quinto
Don Traylor
Rick Wright

Recent Montclair Bird Club meetings on YouTube

Colombian Andes

[youtube.com/watch?v=Piv9On6RX90](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Piv9On6RX90)

Whimbrels

[youtube.com/watch?v=6-P2rT5Txg4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-P2rT5Txg4)

New Members

2023

January

Monica Cardoza	Ridgewood, NJ
Susan & Michael Monaghan	Montclair, NJ
Anil & Seema Nerurkar	Wayne, NJ

February

Karen Nickeson	Edgewater, NJ
----------------	---------------

March

Grace Friend	Montclair, NJ
Camille Gutmore	Nutley, NJ
Christie Morganstein	Randolph, NJ

April

Hillary Leonard	Montclair, NJ
Kathrine McCaffery	Maplewood, NJ
Kathy & Bob Wilson	Newton, NJ

May

Michael Yellin	Montclair, NJ
Amanda & A. J. Tobia	Rockaway, NJ

June

Vicki Seabrook	New York, NY
----------------	--------------

July

Michael Davenport	Succasunna, NJ
Eileen Diaz	Upper Montclair, NJ
Victor Go	Bloomfield, NJ
Liz Hillyer	
Marc Holzapfel	
John Smallwood	Randolph, NJ

August

Eric Knies	Clifton, NJ
Diane Louie	Madison, NJ
Roland Straton	Montclair, NJ
Susan Sheldon	Seattle, WA
Peter Rosario	Patterson, NJ
Mary Conroy	Montclair, NJ

October

Jimma Byrd	TX
------------	----

November

Diane Holsinger	VA
Lauri Carlotti	Belleville, NJ
Lisa Kroop	Berkely Heights, NJ

December

Eva DeAngelis	Franklin Lakes, NJ
---------------	--------------------

2024

February

Samuel Crespo	Clifton, NJ
---------------	-------------

March

Peter A. Axelrod	Berkeley Heights, NJ
Sharon Gill	Bloomfield, NJ

April

Howard Spaeth	Glen Rock, NJ
---------------	---------------

May

Todd Sloane	Little Falls, NJ
-------------	------------------

June

Dena Ressler	Teaneck, NJ
--------------	-------------

July

Molly Cody	Montclair, NJ
------------	---------------

September

Christina Gilham	Montclair, NJ
Becky Meister	Woodcliff Lake
Danica Stitz	Montclair, NJ

This list includes new members,
returning members, and additions
from our Friends roster.

Field Trips

Saturday, October 5, 2024
(rain date October 6)

Hilltop Reservation, North Caldwell

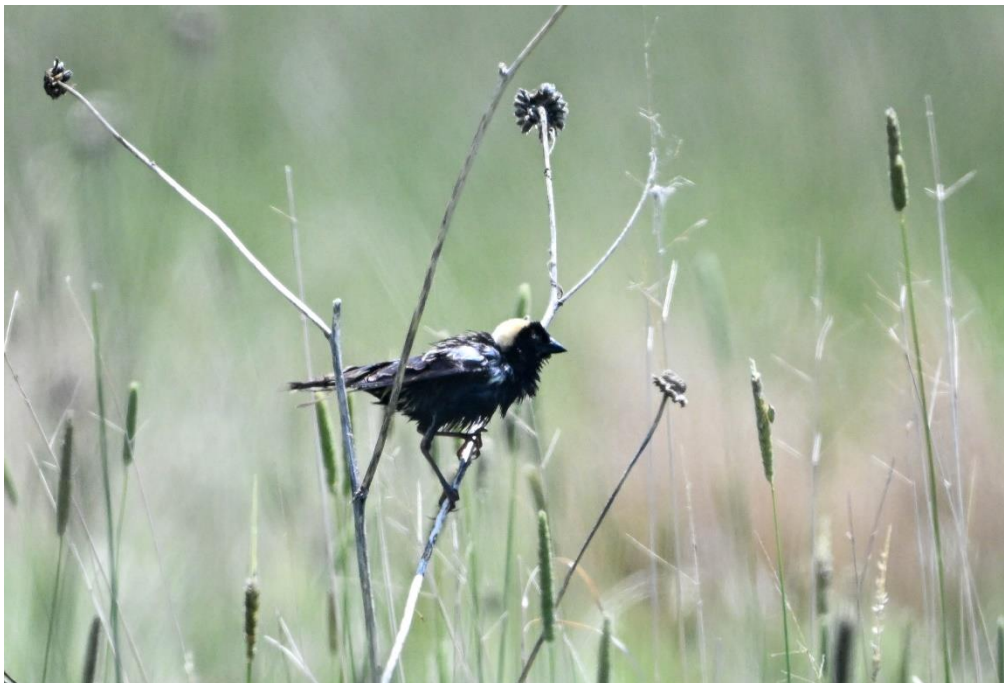
Meet at 8:00 am in the parking lot at Mountain Avenue and Courter Lane, North Caldwell, near to the dog park.

Hilltop Reservation is a 284-acre nature preserve on the Second Watchung Mountain, at the point where North Caldwell, Verona, and Cedar Grove meet. The habitat includes upland grasslands, oak-hickory and beech-maple forest, and open and wooded wetlands. In the center of the reservation, the native grasses and wildflowers of a 15-acre meadow, restored by the Hilltop Conservancy, are often excellent for fall migrants. In recent autumns, birds seen here have included the bobolink, clay-colored sparrow, Connecticut warbler, and yellow-breasted chat.

Bathrooms or porta-sans are available at the parking lot. Bring binoculars, tick repellent, snacks, and water. A sunhat is recommended.

From the Montclair area, take Bloomfield Avenue west to Mountain Avenue in north Caldwell. Turn right on Mountain Avenue, then right on Courter Lane and park.

Write mbcoutings@gmail.com for more information.



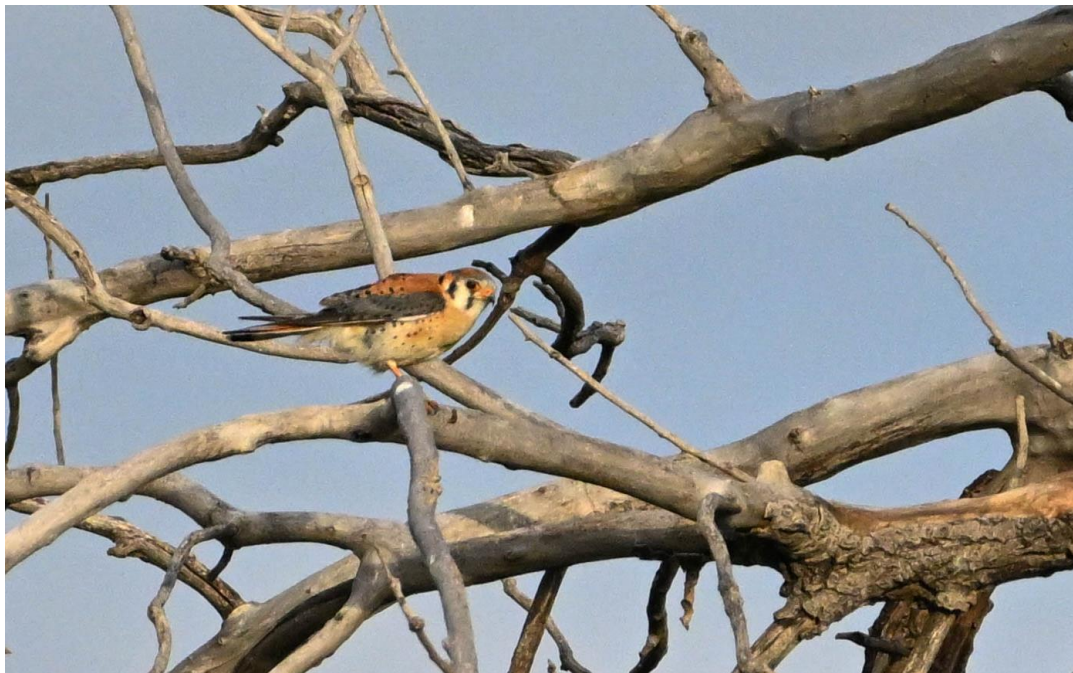
Cold Brook Preserve
Saturday, October 19, 2024
A birder's meetup

Meet at 8:30 am in the preserve parking lot at 65 Old Turnpike Road, Oldwick, NJ 08858.

Just forty-five minutes from Montclair, in the middle of New Jersey's horse county, this 287-acre Hunterdon County Park is well known for beautiful views and excellent fall birding. Hedgerows provide plenty of edge where birds can forage and take shelter from predators (or nosy birders). The occasional heron or duck can be seen on the small pond. Northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, American kestrels, and other raptors are often seen at this season, and many sparrow species are known from this site. Ring-necked pheasants are also seen on occasion.

Our walk of one and a half or two miles will end at 10:30. The trails are flat, though there are a few areas where the terrain is rolling and sloped; a trail [map is here](#). Bathrooms are available at the Oldwick Market, two minutes from the preserve.

Driving directions: From the Montclair area, take the Garden State Parkway south to exit 142B for I-78 west; you can also take I-80 west to exit 43 and follow 287 south to exit 21B, where you will take I-78 west. Leave I-78 at exit 24 for Route 523, Oldwick. Continue straight through the village of Oldwick and past the Zion Church on your right. The preserve parking is ahead on your left, just at the end of Oldwick.



Saturday, November 16, 2024
(rain date November 17)

Photography at Mill Creek Marsh

with Sandy Sorkin and Ric Cohn

Meet at 8:00 am at Mill Creek Marsh Trailhead, Secaucus.

Join us for a Montclair Bird Club photography trip to Mill Creek Marsh. Meet at the entrance gate by Bob's Discount Furniture with your preferred equipment—cameras, tripods, scopes, and smartphones. We'll take our time along the trail, keeping the sun over our shoulders as we concentrate on photographing birds, landscapes, woodchucks, and any other slice of nature we encounter. If you are new to photography, or just prefer to watch photographers, you are welcome to come along. There will be plenty of opportunities for sharing tips, helping each other with equipment, or reviewing shots.

For further information, call or write Ric Cohn at 917 414-3392 or Sandy Sorkin at 973 698-7900. Driving directions are [here](#).



Trip Reports

Walker Avenue Wetlands and DeKorte Park

Saturday, August 24, 2024

A birder's meetup

By Beni Fishbein

At Walker Avenue Wetlands, the water level in the marsh was high due to the recent heavy rains, but there were areas of dry grass and mud that looked like perfect shorebird habitat to me. Not so, apparently, to the shorebirds: there were none to be seen. We did find some woodland and wading birds, as well as a few ducks, but it was relatively quiet. After about two hours, the four of us decided to move to DeKorte Park in hopes of seeing shorebirds.

That turned out to be a good choice. In the West Pool by the parking lot, we were greeted by a group of semipalmated sandpipers milling about the mud flat while four snowy egrets pranced and searched for prey nearby. We found two yellow-crowned night herons on the islands facing the walkway and—“Whoa! What’s this?! Is that a least bittern?!” shouted one of our participants. “Yes!” The little heron was easy to miss, perched inconspicuously in the reeds, where it didn’t stay for long. Within minutes, it up and flew directly across the pool to the phragmites near the shore and disappeared, not to be seen again, by us at least. How lucky we were to catch it at just the right moment!

Other highlights included large flocks of sandpipers flying about in unison, many great egrets, several ospreys with fish, a green heron, and a threesome of yellow warblers that flitted accommodatingly low enough for photos. In total, 44 species were seen or heard. WW=Walker Avenue Wetlands. DK=DeKorte Park

Canada goose WW, DK	Red-bellied woodpecker WW	House wren DK
Mallard WW, DK	Downy woodpecker WW, DK	Marsh wren DK
Mourning dove WW, DK	Hairy woodpecker WW	Carolina wren WW
Least sandpiper DK	Northern flicker WW	European starling DK
Semipalmated sandpiper DK	Eastern wood-peewee WW	Gray catbird WW, DK
Laughing gull DK	Eastern phoebe WW	American robin WW, DK
Least bittern DK	Great crested flycatcher WW	Cedar waxwing WW
Yellow-crowned night heron	Red-eyed vireo WW	House sparrow DK
DK	Blue jay WW	American goldfinch WW, DK
Snowy egret DK	Fish crow WW	Song sparrow WW
Green heron DK	Black-capped chickadee WW	Common grackle WW, DK
Great egret WW, DK	Tufted titmouse WW	American redstart WW
Great blue heron WW, DK	Barn swallow DK	Yellow warbler WW, DK
Turkey vulture DK	White-breasted nuthatch	Northern cardinal WW
Osprey DK	WW	
Belted kingfisher WW, DK	Blue-gray gnatcatcher WW	





SPAIN: Birds and Art in Asturias
with Rick Wright and Virgilio Beltrán
August 28 to September 6, 2024



The Hotel Reconquista. Photo Eurostars

This year marked the first time that VENT included this delightful Asturias outing in our expanding series of Relaxed & Easy tours, a category specially designed for those of us in search of a slightly slower, more easy-going pace and a bit more time off than offered on some of our more intense trips. Less intense, though, doesn't mean any less exciting, and even with some late starts and relatively generous afternoon breaks, our days were full almost to bursting with novelty and fresh experiences. As usual on our birds and art tours, those experiences extended far beyond the fantastic diversity of bird species we encountered, taking in everything from flowers and sea mammals to architecture, painting, and sculpture dating from the Neolithic to the twenty-first century.



A typically hearty first course, with much more to come. Photo Rick Wright

And, if the infelicitous metaphor can be excused, it was just icing on the cake that Oviedo was Spain's 2024 Capital of Gastronomy, a circumstance driven home three times a day when we sat down to lavish—sometimes almost overwhelmingly lavish—meals featuring irresistible regional specialties from fresh fish and artichokes to subtle cheeses and enormous cachopos. Through it all, we caught a rich glimpse of contemporary Asturian culture, too, in our interactions with guides, restaurateurs, and wonderful hotel staff; some of us even managed to cross paths with an itinerant troupe of traditional dancers and musicians making their colorful way through Oviedo's streets.



Traditional dancers in the shadow of Eduardo Úrculo's 2001 *Culis monumentalibus*.
Photo Howard Clyman



The stern beauty of the fifteenth-century Casa de la Rúa, one of very few private houses to survive the Oviedo fire of 1521.
Photo David Leland

The fun started the instant our congenial group got together for our first meeting, in the imposing lobby of our hotel. Built 275 years ago as the city's public hospice and orphanage, the Reconquista is now Oviedo's finest hostelry, a home away from home for Spanish royalty, award-winning artists, and eager birders. We set the culinary bar high with a first dinner together at the Corto de Pelayo, one of the city's finest restaurants, named for the first of the Asturian kings, whose traces we would encounter again and again during our wanderings over the days to come.



The comfortable lobby of the Hotel Reconquista. Photo Rick Wright

With sunrise late and our first birding destination just a block from the hotel, we lingered the next morning over the vast breakfast buffet, then set out to see what birds had landed on the Campo de San Francisco overnight. Occupying what were once the orchards and gardens of the city's Franciscan monastery, the Campo's 25 acres are today Oviedo's favorite site for walking, birding, and quiet contemplation. We made the acquaintance of many of the birds we would see almost daily, from dapper White Wagtails to chattering Great and Blue Tits, and had the good fortune to encounter Coal Tits, Short-toed Treecreepers, and Firecrests, too, three species more easily seen here than at any of the wilder localities we would visit.



The coast of Asturias. Photo David Leland



Photo Rick Wright

After lunch and a break, we met for the first time with our local guide, Noelia, who proved a font of almost endless information as we strolled through Oviedo's streets to the cathedral. San Salvador is a fine piece of Spanish Gothic, but the real prizes here are hundreds of years older than the fourteenth-century fabric of most of the church. The Camara Santa, now wedged into a corner of the younger building, was constructed more than a thousand years ago to house some of Spain's most precious religious and historic relics, among them the stunningly bejeweled golden crosses known as the Angels' Cross and the Cross of Victory. The Victory, created in the year 908, is today the official symbol of Asturias, and we would see its image everywhere, in the murals of San Julián, on bumper stickers, on the Romanesque bridge of Cangas, and in shop windows. Unlike most pilgrims to the Camara Santa, we made a point of pausing in the treasury's anteroom to gape at the incredibly beautiful statues of the Apostles, some of the most breathtaking medieval sculpture to survive anywhere in Spain.



Admiring the astonishing statues of the Apostles at the entry to the Camara Santa. Photo Howard Clyman



Morning on the Campo de San Francisco. Photo Rick Wright

The next day dawned misty, but even a little genuine rain later on could not dampen our birding visit to Villaviciosa and its rich estuary. Lifebirds were coming fast and furious for some of the group, and we all enjoyed the chance to watch a Eurasian Spoonbill feed in the shallows. Most exciting of all, though, were the Water Rails. First an adult emerged from the reeds to hunt the edges of a small pond, then a juvenile joined it; the two fed, apparently oblivious, for many minutes, disappearing into the dense vegetation only to pop back out far from where they had vanished. We heard the handsome birds' hair-raising squeals a couple of times, usually the only sign of this fairly common but devilishly reclusive species' presence in the dense marshes they prefer.



Birding the Campo. Photo Virgilio Beltrán

After another fine lunch, we moved south and up the estuary to another marsh, where we were welcomed by Gray Herons, Common Gallinules, and Asturian ponies. The weather grew more ominous, and just as we reached the shelter of the tower blind, honest-to-goodness rain began to fall. While we waited for our obliging bus driver to pick us up, we enjoyed the only Common Teal and Northern Shoveler (good spotting!) of the tour.



Birding the Campo de San Francisco. Photo Virgilio Beltrán



Looking out across the Cantabrian Sea. Photo Rick Wright

Happily, the next day was drier and calmer. We made an early start, after an early breakfast, to catch the sunrise at Cabo de Peñas, the northernmost point in Asturias. This peninsula and the other headlands protruding into the Cantabrian Sea are the first land migrant birds see on their autumn journey south and west from Scandinavia and the continent, and as we watched, numbers of White and Yellow Wagtails, Black Redstarts, Linnets, and European Goldfinches descended for a rest and breakfast. Over the water, Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were joined by Great Cormorants and Atlantic Shags, while distant fishing boats attracted even more distant Cory's Shearwaters.



The view from Moniello. Photo Rick Wright

The late morning found us back in Oviedo, visiting the pre-Romanesque treasures of the Naranco. Here, the early kings of Asturias built a large church and an imposing throne room. The church of San Miguel collapsed in part not long after construction, and the current building is a small but charming stump of what must originally have been a very impressive structure. The throne room, though, now consecrated as the church of Santa María del Naranco, is a true gem of early medieval European architecture. Tall and stern, this Unesco world heritage structure set high above the city of Oviedo makes an indelible impression on anyone fortunate enough to see it.

We dedicated the afternoon to some unstructured exploration of Oviedo. Some visited the world-class Museum of Archaeology, others the delightful Museum of Fine Arts; still others of us paid another call on the birds of the Campo, while some just let chance and whimsy take us through the streets of this handsome and relaxed city. Knowing that another (and our final) early morning faced us the next day, we enjoyed a relatively early dinner at one of Oviedo's many famous cider presses and prepared ourselves for our first excursion into the mountains.

The Picos de Europa, so called, we were told, because their high, stark summits were the first land seen by Spaniards returning by sea from the New World, are almost inconceivably rich in natural beauty and historical significance. We arrived first at Covadonga, site of the eighth-century battle in which the first Asturian king, Pelayo, definitively repulsed the invaders from the south. The massive neo-Romanesque church, completed in the first years of the twentieth century, is a fine specimen of its kind, and the birds seemed to agree: House Martins and Crag Martins hunted the

air all around and perched on the sills and ledges of the huge structure. Just up the hill, the Sacred Cave shelters a miraculous statue of the Virgin, known as La Santina, and the dust of Pelayo and his family is entombed a few feet away.



Wild crocus on the slopes of the Picos. Photo David Leland

New regulations meant to improve the navigability of the narrow roads snaking up to the Picos' highest elevations forced us to shift into a less roomy vehicle, then make the climb up what seemed like endless stairs to Lago Ercina, a small mirror-like lake perched high on the treeless grasslands. The view itself would have been reward enough, but we quickly found birds, and soon enough we were enjoying such fine montane specialties as Water Pipits and both Red-billed and Yellow-billed Choughs, the most charming of European corvids. The sparkling water was dotted with Eurasian Coots with half-grown young, and Little Grebe numbers were unusually high, with a conservative minimum of ten diving and loafing on the lake.

Our walk back down to the parking lot was as atmospheric as it gets: the clouds lowered and the fog settled in. It was suddenly a different and more than slightly eerie world, one in which we recognized each other only by the color of our jackets. Once back in Covadonga, we climbed back onto our more spacious bus and made the quick drive downhill to Cangas, the first royal capital of Asturias.



The Niemeyer Center. Photo Virgilio Beltrán



Birding Las Ubiñas on a foggy morning. Photo Rick Wright

Even apart from its historical significance, two things drew us to Cangas: lunch, which was splendid as usual, and the Sella River, which reliably adds a species or two to our trip list. We took our places on one of the small bridges in town just as it started to mist, then sprinkle, then rain—Virgilio earned his place in heaven by retrieving raincoats for those of us who had left them on the bus. As we huddled beneath a shallow awning, we enjoyed the bobbing and fluttering of both White and Gray Wagtails in the rocky riverbed; one pair of Gray Wagtails was apparently still on a nest in the stone retaining wall.

Even in the rain, a brilliantly blue European Kingfisher lit up the airspace above the river, flashing past and beneath the bridge and perching on a convenient branch above the water. And it didn't take long for us to spy our principal feathered objective, a White-throated Dipper dipping, swimming, and diving in the rushing water below us. This nattiest of the world's five cinclids is always an exciting find, and we watched the bird at our leisure through the raindrops as it approached closer and closer, white eyelids a-pop.

The next morning took us to another, equally impressive montane locality, Las Ubiñas Natural Park, on the border between Asturias and Castille and León. We started at the top of the road, at the pass of Puerte Ventana. The weather lived up, or down, to the forecast, and it was chilly as we enjoyed European Serins, Water Pipits, Dunnocks, and a couple of shy European Bullfinches on the tundra-like slopes surrounding the famous little spring. When the rain began to fall and the wind to rise, we retreated downslope to a sheltered forest trail, where Mistle Thrushes worked the

field edges and Eurasian Nuthatches whistled and bubbled from the ancient beeches and oaks. A pleasant surprise was a Spotted Flycatcher, less expected here than the by-now-familiar Pied Flycatcher; this individual was kind enough to return again and again to the same open perch, giving us plenty of opportunity to enjoy its muted elegance.



Birding the forests of Las Ubiñas. Photo Rick Wright

The weather continued to improve as we kept moving to lower elevation, and by the time we reached the lakeside picnic area at Valdemurio, it had become a very pretty afternoon, with high clouds, pleasant temperatures, and no more rain. Common Sandpipers and more Gray Wagtails played on the shores of the lake, but it was bigger birds that drew most of our attention. The flock of Eurasian Griffons soaring low over the jagged peaks was joined by two Egyptian Vultures, and a Short-toed Eagle made a brief appearance before dropping down behind the mountain. A very satisfying day in one of Spain's most impressive landscapes ended back in Oviedo with another fine meal—and the promise of a later start tomorrow.



The entrance to the cave of Tito Bustillo. Photo Rick Wright

Of course, even our earliest mornings had been humane, extremely humane by birding standards, but the extra hour felt good as we dallied over breakfast before starting out on the hour's drive north to Ribadesella, the broad estuary of the same river that had given us our dipper show the day before. The birding here seemed almost lackluster, even at an ideal tide, but we had bigger things in mind: for right on the banks of the river is the entrance to the cave of Tito Bustillo, a Neolithic site that ranks with Lascaux and Chauvet and Altamira in artistic value (and is still accessible to the public, on a strict and strictly enforced schedule—while we waited to be let in, the guard told several would-be drop-ins to come back end of the month!).

There is no way to capture in words the experience of suddenly coming face to face with the beautifully preserved images of horses and reindeer on the damp limestone walls, not just masterpieces of Stone Age painting but landmarks in the history of all art over the past 14,000 years or so. Our guide, helped along by the interpreting skills of Virgilio and Ernesto, was very informative, and the conversation that followed his hour-long presentation reached a depth I suspect most tour groups leave entirely unplumbed.

Hard as it was to believe, the next day would be our last full day of exploring together. We took a couple of morning hours for our departure preparations—checking in for flights, some initial packing, or a chance to just soak in the grandeur of the Reconquista—then struck out again for the coast, this time to Avilés. Our first stop was at one of northern Spain's best shorebird sites, a blind and small beach in an otherwise unprepossessing industrial part of town. Both godwit species

joined in with a nice variety of shorebirds, and patient scanning of the flats finally produced a couple of Mediterranean Gulls, an ethereal white adult and a heavily marked, obviously very young juvenile covering behind the Lesser Black-backed and Yellow-legged Gulls.

A stop at the Oscar Niemeyer Cultural Center was a chance to use the restrooms and to ponder the now slightly old-fashioned-looking curves of the enormous structure. We walked thence, quickly, into the old city of Avilés, admiring the former Franciscan church and the capitals of its west front along with the Gothic porch of Saint Nicholas of Bari. The wonderful arcades of the old town gave welcome protection from the light rain that had begun to fall, as did (for the most part) the marquees at the Plaza, where we enjoyed a tapas lunch on the patio under the watchful eyes of Yellow-legged Gulls. The restaurant staff seemed mildly disappointed when we declined the offer of a fourth course; Asturias is like that.



Two griffons square off at the west portal of the church of San Antonio de Padua in Avilés. Photo Rick Wright

We had one more stop before returning to the hotel for a break and dinner: the marvelous church of San Julián de los Prados, on the edge of Oviedo's old town, just down the hill from the cathedral. Handsome enough from the outside, with its celosia windows and oddly elevated



San Julián. Photo Howard Clyman

crossing, San Julián is nothing short of breathtaking inside, its expansive ensemble of ninth-century wall paintings transforming the space into a simulacrum of the City of God and making of the congregant an inhabitant of heaven. We left the church, stunned, to find the rain finished.



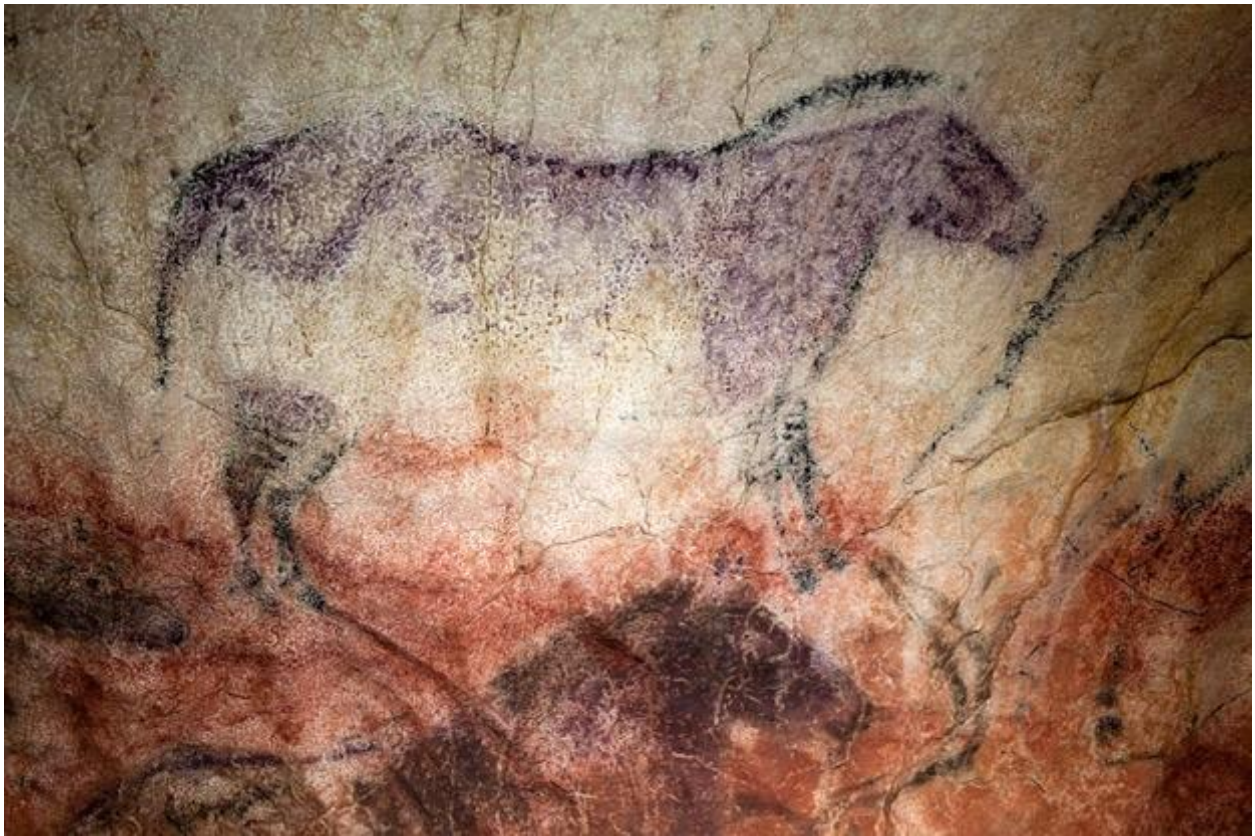
Ribadesella and the Picos de Europa. Photo David Leland

With a few of us under the weather, the fine dinner in our hotel was suitably quiet and calm. Asturias, and Oviedo, are a revelation on each visit, and the combination of birds, history, and art in this compact and relatively little-known corner of the Iberian peninsula is virtually unparalleled. We'll look forward to getting to bird with you in 2026 (with a total solar eclipse) as we explore another of Europe's immeasurably rich cultural and natural landscapes.

- *Rick Wright and Virgilio Beltrán*



San Julián de los Prados. Photo Barb Putnam



Tito Bustillo Cave. Photo Tourism Asturia

August 28: tour begins with international flights to Asturias airport, most by way of Madrid, and transfers to our Oviedo hotel.

August 29: Most participants arrived today; transfers from airport to Hotel Reconquista, Oviedo. 6:30 pm, first meeting in hotel lobby for introductions and drinks. Leave hotel 7:45 pm; 68°, overcast with sprinkles and light rain, calm. Dinner at Corte Pelayo 8:00–9:50 pm. At hotel 10:05 pm. Overcast with sparse sprinkles, calm, 68°.

August 30: mostly cloudy, 65° at breakfast, beginning 7:00 am. Leave hotel 8:30 am. Campo de San Francisco 8:30–11:55 am; mostly sunny, calm, rising to 74°. At hotel 12:00; leave hotel

12:45 for lunch at Los Oscos. Lunch 1:00–2:25 pm. At hotel 2:35 pm. Cloudy, 76°. Leave hotel 3:30. Walk to Oviedo Cathedral, tour including Camara Santa. Cloudy, 76°. Dinner at Terra Astur 7:00–8:30 pm. Checklist in hotel 8:50–9:15 pm.

August 31: Breakfast in hotel beginning 7:30 am; cloudy, calm, 68°. Leave hotel 9:30 am. Occasional light mist and fog. Arrive Villaviciosa 10:30. Bridge at La Encienona 10:35–11:00. Cloudy, calm. Playa de Misiego 11:40–1:00. Lunch at Amandi Casa Contina 1:20–3:10 pm. El Salín–El Cierrón 3:30–4:45 pm; light mist followed eventually by steady rain. At hotel 4:45 pm; cloudy, faint mist, 73°. Checklist in hotel 7:00–7:20 pm. Leave hotel 7:35 pm. Dinner at Taberna de la Catédral 8:00–9:20 pm. Clear, calm, 68°. At hotel 9:45.

September 1: Breakfast at hotel beginning 6:00 am. Leave hotel 6:30 am; calm, sprinkles, 66°. Parque Playa Moniella 7:20 am to 9:05 am; light rain followed by cloudy, calm, 70°. Cabo de Peñas 9:15–10:30 am; mostly cloudy, calm, 70°. At Monte Naranco 11:25 am; partly cloudy, calm, 74°. At hotel 1:05 pm. Independent lunch and exploring in Oviedo; partly cloudy, calm. Checklist in hotel 8:15–8:40 pm. Dinner in hotel 8:40–10:35 pm.

September 2: Breakfast in hotel beginning 6:00 am. Leave hotel 6:30 am; cloudy, calm, 68°. Lagos de Covadonga 8:15–11:45 am. Cloudy, calm, 66°, with light rain and pockets of dense fog as we were preparing to leave. Covadonga shrine and basilica church. Cloudy, calm, 66°. Cangas 12:20, and lunch at Casa Manuela 1:20–3:20 pm. Steady rain followed by light sprinkles. At hotel 4:45 pm; cooler, breezy, cloudy. Checklist 6:30–6:50 pm. Sprinkles; dinner at La Bellota 7:15–8:40 pm. Chilly, very light mist, breezy. At hotel 8:55 pm.

September 3: Breakfast in hotel beginning 7:00 am. Leave hotel 8:20 am. Cloudy, calm, 58°. Light mist as we drove to Puerte Ventana, Las Ubiñas Natural Park. Puerte Ventana 10:35–11:35 am. Chilly, 44°, breezy (and windy on the south side of the pass), foggy, cloudy, light mist to light rain. Forest trail at Cascada Xiblu 12:10–1:10 pm. Cloudy, 58°, occasional very light mist, calm. Valdemurio and picnic lunch 1:55–3:35 pm. Cloudy, 62°, calm. At hotel 4:30 pm. 66°, calm, high clouds. Checklist 7:15–7:50, dinner at Terra Meiga 8:10–9:55 pm. At hotel 10:10 pm; light rain.

September 4: Breakfast in hotel beginning 7:00 am. Leave hotel 8:00 am. Cloudy, calm, 66°. Arrive Ribadesella 10:05; light sprinkles. Birding Ribadesella 10:05–10:30 am. Tito Bustillo Cave guided tour 11:00–12:15. Lunch La Volante 1:40–3:10 pm. Partly cloudy, light breeze, 65°. Arrived hotel 4:35 pm; partly cloudy, 70°. Dinner 7:00–8:15 Cimadevilla.

September 5: Breakfast in hotel beginning 7:00 am. Leave hotel 9:35 am. Mostly sunny, calm, 60°; clouds building. Arrive Avilés 10:15; cloudy, with occasional very light mist. Avilés shorebird preserve at Ensenada de Llodero to 12:25 pm. Niemeyer Center 12:35–12:55 pm; light breeze, mostly cloudy followed by light rain. Avilés old town, followed by lunch at Plaza Avilés 1:30–3:25 pm. At hotel 4:10 pm. Light breeze, clearing somewhat, 55°. San Julián de los Prados 4:00–4:40 pm; cloudy, breezy. At hotel 5:00 pm. Dinner in hotel 8:40–9:50 pm.

September 6: tour ends with breakfast, beginning at 6:00 am, and transfers to Asturias airport.

For more information on our bird sightings, including numbers and precise locations, visit the eBird Trip Report compiled by Virgilio Beltrán at ebird.org/tripreport/267997.

WATERFOWL

[Graylag Goose, *Anser anser*: two white birds on the Sella. To judge by linguistic reconstructions, the goose was the “default bird” for speakers of Indo-European, who used the etymon to refer to all birds.]

[White-faced Whistling Duck, *Dendrocygna viduata*: a single adult in the Campo de San Francisco. Native to Central and northern South America, birds of this species fetch high prices from collectors of waterfowl, one of whom was certainly crying in his cerveza at having lost this handsome specimen. The species epithet *viduata*, “widowed,” refers to the demure mourning cap worn by the adult.]

[Muscovy Duck, *Cairina moschata*: two on the ponds of the Campo de San Francisco. One of the Oviedo birds was entirely white, the other largely “wild-type” but with a white neck and head.]

Mallard, *Anas platyrhynchos*: about two dozen flying past the windows of Corte Pelayo over dinner August 29. Some 25 or 30 at Villaviciosa August 31. A good three dozen on the upper Covadanga lake September 1; fifteen or so on the river in Cangas that same day. Feral or released birds common in city parks, with up to 30 at a time present on the small ponds of the Campo de San Francisco; some may have been originally wild birds drawn in by the company of their fellows and the promise of generous duck feeders.

Common Teal, *Anas crecca*: five individuals at El Salín in Villaviciosa August 31. In the past often considered conspecific with the Green-winged Teal, *Anas carolinensis*, but all but the most timorous taxonomies now treat this as a distinct species. The birds we saw were brown, but when they landed on the marsh, the large amount of white on the wing was easily seen, a good mark helping to distinguish this from the American bird.

Northern Shoveler, *Spatula clypeata*: one on the water at El Salín August 31.

Red-crested Pochard, *Netta rufina*: six individuals on the pond at Campo de San Francisco. This dramatically beautiful duck is increasing virtually throughout its range, which is spreading north and west. It is impossible to know whether these birds arrived in Oviedo on their own or with the inadvertent assistance of careless waterfowl collectors, but there is a chance that these were the descendants of wild pochards that strayed into the city. On the strange name “pochard,” see tinyurl.com/PochardName.

PHEASANTS, GROUSE, PARTRIDGES

Red-legged Partridge, *Alectoris rufa*: one spotted by Lee as we left Moniello September 1.

Common Pheasant, *Phasianus colchicus*: two at Cabo de Peñas September 1.

GREBES

Little Grebe, *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: an impressive total of more than ten on Lago Ercino September 2.

PIGEONS

Feral Pigeon, *Columba livia*: common and ubiquitous in cities, towns, and agricultural areas. Particularly abundant in urban green spaces such as the Campo de San Francisco, but impossible to miss anywhere in the appropriate habitats.

Common Wood Pigeon, *Columba palumbus*: one past the windows of Corte Pelayo at dinner August 29. Eight or nine in the Campo San Francisco August 30; one extremely violent group of three fussing, flapping birds probably comprised a harried parent and two importunate young. Twos and threes here and there August 31. Eight or ten total September 1. A few at Covadonga, and common along the road, September 2. A total of a dozen or so September 3, with similar numbers on the two days succeeding. The hoarse, low-pitched rumbling song was heard several times. Superficially similar to its feral Rock Pigeon cousins, this species is easily identified in flight by its long tail and dark underwings.

Eurasian Collared Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*: a total of four or five roadside birds September 1. A singing bird at Valdemurrio September 3, with two at our hotel on our arrival that afternoon. Collared doves first arrived in Asturias in the 1970s, as part of their phenomenal spread north and west from the Balkans. This is the only bird species in the world with a species name meaning “eighteen”; see tinyurl.com/RWrightEighteen.

RAILS

Water Rail, *Rallus aquaticus*: outstanding views of two birds, an adult and a juvenile, from the boardwalk at Playa de Misiego August 31. A third was heard giving its squealing call at El Salín that same afternoon.

Eurasian Moorhen, *Gallinula chloropus*: a dozen or more, including large juveniles and one invisible chirping chick, at El Salín August 31. Two on the river in Cangas September 2. This bird has sometimes been considered conspecific with the American Common Gallinule, *Gallinula galeata*, but is now once again recognized as a distinct species, differing signally in its vocalizations and, more subtly, in the shape of the adult’s frontal shield.

Eurasian Coot, *Fulica atra*: thirty or more on Lago Ercino September 2, including at least a dozen large chicks. This species differs from the American Coot most obviously in its larger, pure white facial shield and its entirely dark undertail; it is of regular occurrence in the Canadian Maritimes, but is surely overlooked elsewhere on North America’s coasts.

PLOVERS

Common Ringed Plover, *Charadrius hiaticula*: five or six at Villaviciosa August 31.

SANDPIPERS

Whimbrel, *Numenius phaeopus*: five very distant birds at Villaviciosa August 31. Much better views of at least two at Avilés September 5. This species differs markedly in plumage from the American Hudsonian Whimbrel, *Numenius [phaeopus] hudsonicus*, and can appropriately be considered a distinct species, whatever the decisions of some stodgy taxonomic authorities.

Eurasian Curlew, *Numenius arquatus*: one of the world's two largest sandpipers, this rapidly decreasing species was represented by a total of ten or twelve individuals at Villaviciosa August 31; our first views were distant, but we eventually had much closer looks at this most strikingly shaped of European sandpipers.

Black-tailed Godwit, *Limosa limosa*: six repeatedly seen, perched and in flight, at Avilés September 5.

Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*: one juvenile at Avilés September 5.

Common Sandpiper, *Actitis hypoleuca*: seven at Villaviciosa August 31 was an excellent total for a species that is often anything but common over most of its range. Two at Valdemurio September 3.

Green Sandpiper, *Tringa ochropus*: a quick flyby bird at El Salín in Villaviciosa August 31, unfortunately not seen by all.

Common Greenshank, *Tringa nebularia*: three at Ribadesella September 4, with two more at Avilés the next day.

Common Redshank, *Tringa totanus*: two at Villaviciosa August 31.

Dunlin, *Calidris alpina*: two at Villaviciosa August 31.

GULLS

Black-headed Gull, *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*: a total of about 15 at Villaviciosa August 31, and similar numbers at all coastal and wetland sites in the lowlands. This is the most abundant gull in Europe away from the seacoasts, and is increasing in the Canadian Maritimes; the predicted explosion of the small population found on the east coast of the US has still not happened.

Mediterranean Gull, *Ichthaetus melanocephalus*: two, an adult and a very fresh juvenile, at Avilés September 5. This bird's explosive westward expansion will take it to North America sometime soon; it is already abundant in many parts of Europe where it was hardly present a generation ago.

Yellow-legged Gull, *Larus michahellis*: one past the windows at Corte Pelayo August 29. A score or more over Oviedo August 30, with one briefly on the duck pond in the Campo San Francisco. Common throughout August 31 and September 1. A high flock over Cangas September 2. One on the way back to our hotel September 3. The common, and default, large white-headed gull of Asturias, especially away from the immediate coast. Like the other

members of the herring/lesser black-backed group, this species can be difficult to identify rigorously in the field, but the Yellow-legged is by far the most common in our area.



Hoping for handouts, a Yellow-legged Gull. Photo Virgilio Beltrán

Lesser Black-backed Gull, *Larus fuscus*: two at La Encienona and half a dozen at Playa de Misiega at Villaviciosa August 31. Two or three September 1. At least nine at Ribadesella September 4, and four or five at Avilés the next day.

Great Black-backed Gull, *Larus marinus*: a flyby adult at Moniello September 1, with two at Avilés September 5.

PETRELS and SHEARWATERS

Cory's Shearwater, *Calonectris diomedea*: at least two far off Moniello September 1.

Balearic Shearwater, *Puffinus mauretanicus*: a few seen by some off Moniello September 1.

GANNETS and BOOBIES

Northern Gannet, *Morus bassanus*: eight or ten birds far off Moniello and Cabo de Peñas September 1.

CORMORANTS

Great Cormorant, *Phalacrocorax carbo*: a flock of ten over Villaviciosa August 31. A couple at Cabo Peñas September 1. Half a dozen at Ribadesella September 4, with approximately nine at Avilés September 5.

European Shag, *Gulosus aristotelis*: a total of about eight at Moniello and Cabo de Peñas September 1. One in the harbor at Avilés September 5.



A Gray Heron at Villaviciosa. Photo Rick Wright

HERONS

Gray Heron, *Ardea cinerea*: three dozen at Villaviciosa August 31, including a single flock of 23 dropping in to the ponds at El Salín. Four over Moniello September 1. One on the river just below the basilica church in Covadanga September 2. One on the Sella September 3. Scattered singles and small groups at Ribadesella September 4. At least six at Avilés September 5. This common bird has strayed several times to North America, and is certainly overlooked most of the time; it can be distinguished from the superficially similar Great Blue Heron, *Ardea herodias*, by its smaller size, bulkier build, and lack of red on the shoulder and thigh.

Great Egret, *Ardea alba*: one flyby bird at Moniella September 1. The Old World bird is almost certainly a separate species from the American birds; the soft part colors are radically different in breeding condition, European individuals showing a dark bill and pink tibia at that time.

Little Egret, *Egretta garzetta*: small numbers, up to a dozen at a time, at all coastal and lowland wetland sites. This handsome white heron is a regular visitor to North America, where it is more easily overlooked than it is detected in wetlands teeming with Snowy Egrets, *Egretta thula*.

Western Cattle Egret, *Bubulcus ibis*: 44 at Villaviciosa August 31, plus a couple of dozen among roadside herds. A dozen with livestock at Ribadesella September 4.

SPOONBILLS

Eurasian Spoonbill, *Platalea leucorodia*: increasing in abundance and range throughout Europe, and of probably regular occurrence now in the West Indies. We encountered a single bird at Villaviciosa August 31.



White birds at Villaviciosa: a Eurasian Spoonbill, a Black-headed Gull, and a Little Egret share a tidal pond. Photo Rick Wright

HAWKS and OLD WORLD VULTURES

Egyptian Vulture, *Neophron percnopterus*: an immature bird seen well, and an adult seen only fleetingly at a distance, among the griffions at Valdemurio September 3.

European Honey Buzzard, *Pernis apivorus*: one overhead September 3.

Eurasian Griffon, *Gyps fulvus*: four atop a cliff on our way down from the Covadanga lakes September 2. This species is very common there, but the weather kept them down, and those loafing birds were the only ones we saw that day. A couple at the forest trail in Las Ubiñas September 3, followed by a good 30 at Valdemurio as the air dried and warmed.



A ragged-winged Griffon. Photo Rick Wright

Short-toed Snake Eagle, *Circaetus gallicus*: one at Valdemurio September 3.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter nisus*: one female seen by some at Cabo de Peñas September 1.

Common Buzzard, *Buteo buteo*: half a dozen roadside birds August 31, with particularly good looks at one perched on a pole at El Salín that day. Excellent views of several on a newly mown hayfield at Cabo de Peñas September 1. Five or six roadside birds September 2. Similar numbers September 3, including a spectacularly dark bird at Valdemurio. As usual, the low total on our eBird trip report reflects the fact that almost all the birds of this species we encountered were seen on roadsides as we passed between birding sites.

KINGFISHERS

Common Kingfisher, *Alcedo atthis*: a total of four at Villaviciosa August 31; this species moves to the coast in autumn and winter from its breeding grounds on quiet streams. One on the river in Cangas September 2, flying and perching nearby. One seen as it dashed past Ribadesella September 4. This charming and colorful little fish eater was once said to nest on the sea in calm weather, the so-called halcyon days; we know now that like other kingfishers, it nests in burrows in earthen banks. On one way such lore could be passed on in early modern Europe, see tinyurl.com/RWComenius.

WOODPECKERS

Iberian Woodpecker, *Picus sharpei*: one heard at Las Ubiñas forest trail September 3, but we were unable to find it; these birds spend a great deal of time on the ground, where they blend in nicely with the grass.

FALCONS

Eurasian Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*: one briefly over the Campo de San Francisco August 30. Two, one male and one female, at Cabo de Peñas September 1, mobbed by Eurasian Linnets. This large, lanky kestrel commonly nests on church towers in cities, a circumstance that certainly influenced its traditional Latin name, the “little bell” or “bellringer.” Some of its English names are less wholesome; see tinyurl.com/RWrightWindhover.

Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*: a juvenile over El Salín August 31 in the rain. One dashing over the basilica church of Covadanga September 2. The European peregrine was never as deeply imperiled as the American populations of this species, but its reproduction was depressed by agricultural poisons in the mid-twentieth century; the recovery of this bird in western Europe has been impressive.

SHRIKES

Iberian Gray Shrike, *Lanius meridionalis*: excellent if somewhat distant views of one at El Salín August 31. This beautiful large shrike differs from the other members of the old “northern shrike” complex in the pale pink wash of its breast, which we were able to see on this Villaviciosa individual. In addition to the peninsula, the Iberian Gray Shrike is also an uncommon resident of southernmost France.

CROWS and JAYS

Eurasian Jay, *Garrulus glandarius*: good looks at two September 3, the first above the parking lot in Samartín, the second feeding on the grass below the forest trail of Las Ubiñas.

Red-billed Chough, *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*: an amazing forty or more at the Picos de Europa September 2, giving outstandingly good views in flight and on the ground at Lago Ercino. This is usually much the shyer and less common of the two choughs.



A Red-billed, and red-legged, Chough. Photo Rick Wright

Yellow-billed Chough, *Pyrrhocorax graculus*: only three or four at Lago Ercino, where these birds typically outnumber their red-billed congeners. As usual, the birds were loafing on the roof of the snackbar, waiting for careless visitors to drop something edible.

Carrion Crow, *Corvus corone*: small but constant numbers throughout, down to sea level and as high as Covadanga.

Common Raven, *Corvus corax*: six flew over the Campo de San Francisco together the morning of August 30. Three in the Picos de Europa September 2. One calling from the fog at Ventana September 3, and two later that same day looking puny in the griffon flock at Valdemurio.

Eurasian Magpie, *Pica pica*: common and conspicuous in most open and lightly forested habitats. Various combinations of the black and white magpie taxa of the western Palaearctic and Nearctic have at times been considered to constitute a single species, but at present, the Black-billed and the Eurasian Magpies are recognized as distinct at the species level. Most of the Eurasian Magpie's vocalizations are lower-pitched and harsher than the whining notes of the Black-billed and Yellow-billed Magpies. Like other corvids, magpies are notoriously good mimics, a talent that can get them into trouble; see tinyurl.com/RWrightMagpies.

CHICKADEES

Coal Tit, *Periparus ater*: four in Campo de San Francisco August 30. Another seen by some in Oviedo September 5.

Great Tit, *Parus major*: common in Campo de San Francisco August 30, including many young. Small but continual numbers in wooded habitats elsewhere, in towns and forest alike. Early autumn is perhaps the worst time to see the European tits, as breeding season is over and most birds have not yet taken to visiting feeders; we were fortunate to meet up with still cohesive family groups.

Eurasian Blue Tit, *Cyanistes caeruleus*: half a dozen in Campo de San Francisco August 30. One at Ribadesella September 4.

CISTICOLAS

Zitting Cisticola, *Cisticola juncidis*: extremely good views of as many as five at Cabo de Peñas September 1. Several more furtive individuals at Villaviciosa and one at Avilés September 5.

SWALLOWS

Eurasian Crag Martin, *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*: good views of a dozen or so flying around and perching on the south crossing of the Covadonga basilica church.

Western House Martin, *Delichon urbicum*: half a dozen, not seen by all, at El Salín August 31. One at Cabo de Peñas the next morning. A total of eight or ten between Covadonga and Cangas September 2. Several September 3.

Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*: a total of about 30 at Villaviciosa August 31, including birds hunting the marshes and a wire-perched flock of 15 in town. Presumed migrants were in almost constant view at Moniello September 1. Fifteen or so at Covadonga and Cangas September 2. Three or four in Samartín September 3. These western European birds are strikingly different from American Barn Swallows, with much whiter underparts, darker breast bands, and longer tails with, in males, noticeably more attenuated streamers.

LEAF WARBLERS

Willow Warbler, *Phylloscopus trochilus*: several in the Campo de San Francisco August 30; we eventually had very good looks at the foot color of some. At least one, very nicely photographed, at Villaviciosa August 31. Great views of a single bird at Puerte Ventana September 3. Unless seen very well, or heard calling or singing, this species can be hard to distinguish from the chiffchaffs, which differ in their slightly shorter wings, generally duller underparts and face, darker feet, and shorter, more nearly monosyllabic whistled calls.

Common Chiffchaf, *Phylloscopus collybita*: one heard at Cabo de Peñas September 1.

BUSHTITS

Long-tailed Tit, *Aegithalos caudatus*: seen by a few at Naranco September 1. Heard by some in the willows at Valdemurio September 3. A small flock above the cave in Ribadesella September 4.

SYLVIA WARBLERS

Eurasian Blackcap, *Sylvia atricapilla*: two heard at Villaviciosa August 31. One or two heard September 3. Two in Ribadesella September 4. A common to abundant summer resident over much of Europe, more and more are staying north for the winter.

Sardinian Warbler, *Curruca melanocephala*: one at Moniello and one at Cabo de Peñas September 1, not seen by all.

KINGLETS

Common Firecrest, *Regulus ignicapilla*: several of these fast-moving kinglets were seen, repeatedly but briefly, in the Campo de San Francisco August 30. One seen by some at Cabo de Peñas September 1. Heard by some at Las Ubiñas September 3. This tiny treetop species is barely larger than the closely related Goldcrest, which is on average the smallest bird in Europe.

TREECREEPERS

Short-toed Treecreeper, *Certhia brachydactyla*: outstandingly good views of at least five of these often very inconspicuous birds in the Campo de San Francisco August 30. Visually, this species is very similar to the (generally less common!) Common Treecreeper, but the Short-toed is typical of urban habitats at lower elevations—and the birds we watched creeping up tree trunks had the good grace to sing and call, establishing their identity beyond any doubt.



A Short-toed Treecreeper creeps short-toedly up a tree in Oviedo. Photo Virgilio Beltrán

WRENS

Eurasian Wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*: two or three singing birds at Moniello and Cabo de Peñas September 1. Two heard at Covadonga September 2. One heard in Las Ubiñas September 3. One or two singing birds September 4 and 5. Bizarrely, we never so much as

glimpsed one. Long considered conspecific with the Winter Wren, *Troglodytes hyemalis*, and the Pacific Wren, *Troglodytes pacificus*, this species was restored to full status a decade ago. More splits are probably in the offing across the Eurasian Wren's huge geographic range.

STARLINGS

Spottless Starling, *Sturnus unicolor*: a score or more at El Salín August 31; a few roadside flocks September 1.

DIPPERS



Cangas on a rainy day. Photo Rick Wright

White-throated Dipper, *Cinclus cinclus*: fine looks at a single bird on the Sella River right in Cangas, swimming and feeding in the rain September 3.

THRUSHES

Eurasian Blackbird, *Turdus merula*: this close relative of the American Robin, *Turdus migratorius*, was present in small numbers in park-like landscapes in cities and towns and common at higher elevations in the Picos de Europa and at Las Ubiñas. A juvenile, an adult female, and an adult male in Campo San Francisco August 30. At least two at Villaviciosa August 31; one at Cabo de Peñas September 1. About five September 2. Several in Las Ubiñas September 3. One at Avilés September 5. Adult blackbirds are in body molt this time of year, making them shyer than usual and depressing daily counts.

Mistle Thrush, *Turdus viscivorus*: a dozen or more in Las Ubiñas September 3, the best views on the fields around the forest trail.

CHATS

European Robin, *Erithacus rubecula*: not at all closely related to the American Robin, and quite different in appearance and voice. See tinyurl.com/RWrightRobins. We had great views of two in the Campo de San Francisco August 30; two or three were also seen and heard at Villaviciosa August 31. Heard at Cabo de Peñas September 1. Several at Covadonga and Cangues September 2. Several at Las Ubiñas September 3, at all elevations. Small numbers heard and seen September 4 and 5. Trusting almost to the point of domesticity in Britain, this species can be quite furtive on the continent, but patience paid off for us several times with good looks of birds on the ground and in low bushes and trees.

European Pied Flycatcher, *Ficedula hypoleuca*: at least three in the Campo de San Francisco August 30. Two at Playa el Misiego August 31. One or two in Las Ubiñas September 3. This species is somewhat phoebe-like in habit and appearance, but is a member of the chat family, Muscicapidae, which it shares with the Old World robins and redstarts.

Spotted Flycatcher, *Muscicapa striata*: splendid scope views of a bird at the forest trail in Las Ubiñas September 3.

Black Redstart, *Phoenicurus ochrurus*: excellent views of about four, often at very close range, at Moniello and Cabo de Peñas September 1. A few at Lago Ercino September 2. One or two at Ventana September 3, and one roadside bird as we entered Oviedo that afternoon. This is the familiar redstart of European cities; the Common Redstart is a denizen of orchards and woodland edges, but can occur in almost any habitat in fall migration.

European Stonechat, *Saxicola rubicola*: three at Villaviciosa August 31. Three or four total September 1. Four or five at Covadonga September 2.



A male Stonechat takes a characteristic perch. Photo Rick Wright

Northern Wheatear, *Oenanthe oenanthe*: one at Moniello September 1. “Wheatear” is notoriously the bowdlerization of an older and more forthright English name.

ACCENTORS

Dunnock, *Prunella modularis*: excellent prolonged views of three individuals at Lago Ercino September 2. At least four, cooperative and close, at Ventana September 3. As we mentioned in the field, this apparently unassuming little bird has some of the most unusual breeding behaviors in the passerine world.

OLD WORLD SPARROWS

House Sparrow, *Passer domesticus*: eight or so in Campo de San Francisco August 30. Fifteen at Playa del Misiego August 31. About ten at Moniello September 1, and a few at Cabo de Peñas that same morning. Several at the basilica church in Covadanga and in Cangas September 2. A few in towns September 3. More common in the countryside, including in the small feedlot at the Cabo Peñas lighthouse, but even so our counts never exceeded about 20 birds a day.

PIPITS and WAGTAILS

White Wagtail, *Motacilla alba*: common in Campo de San Francisco August 30, among them many young; even more common at Villaviciosa August 31, again with many immature birds. Continually arriving off the sea at Moniello and Cabo de Peña September 1, most of them immature birds. Small numbers at Covadanga and Cangas September 2. Common September 3. This sturdy little ground-dwelling bird is called “laundress” in Spanish and a number of other European languages, for its fondness for water and the constant pumping motions of its rear end. See tinyurl.com/RWrightWasherwomen.

Gray Wagtail, *Motacilla cinerea*: half a dozen very active birds in Cangas September 2. At least three at Valdemurio September 3.

Yellow Wagtail, *Motacilla flava*: half a dozen, several seen very well, at Moniello September 1.

Water Pipit, *Anthus spinoletta*: common around Lago Ercino September 2, with excellent views of some eight birds perched at near range on the ground and in the trees. About four total at Puerte Ventana September 3. Several species of similarly brown and streaky pipits, including the American Pipit, *Anthus americanus*, and the Siberian Pipit, *Anthus japonicus*, were once lumped under the name “Water Pipit.”



A Water Pipit mid-stride. Photo Rick Wright

FINCHES

Common Chaffinch, *Fringilla coelebs*: one in Campo de San Francisco August 30. A few seen well below Lago Ercino September 2. Several at Ventana September 3, and flocks of up to 20 on the road down from Las Ubiñas. This species tends to migrate and winter in sex-segregated flocks, whence its scientific name *coelebs*, the bachelor. The bright, sharp chirp of this species, *pink*, is said to be the origin of the name “finch” in English and, *mutatis mutandis*, other Germanic languages.

European Greenfinch, *Chloris chloris*: excellent views at El Salín August 31.

Eurasian Bullfinch, *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*: at least two, one male and one female, at Ventana September 3, seen well by most of us but characteristically flighty.

Eurasian Linnet, *Linaria cannabina*: several flocks, totaling fifty or more, at Moniello and Cabo de Peñas September 1. Two flocks and scattered small numbers September 2, probably coming to 40 individuals. A few roadside birds in Las Ubiñas September 3.

European Goldfinch, *Carduelis carduelis*: a couple at Villaviciosa August 31. Fifteen or so at Moniello September 1.

European Serin, *Serinus serinus*: finally, good views of this normally “easy” species at Puerte Ventana September 3, where they fed in the grass around the spring.



Carrot cake, delivered by rabbits. Our mammal list was otherwise slender this time. Photo Rick Wright

MAMMALS

Feral Goat, *Capra hircus*: fourteen at Moniello September 1.

Dolphin sp.: four or five at least off Cabo de Peñas September 1.

REPTILES

Common Wall Lizard, *Podarcis muralis*: a couple on the pre-Romanesque buildings of Naranco September 1.

Virtual Bird Walks

2020

July	1	Local Birding
August	2	Backyards and a Marsh
September	3	Backyards and Trips
October	4	Member Birding
November	5	Member Birding
December	6	Member Birding

2021

January	7	International Birding and New York City
February	8	International Birding
March	9	Member Birding
April	10	Shore Birds
May	11	Local Birding
June	12	Member Birding
July	13	Birding Costa Rica
August	14	Identify a Bird by Its Eyes
September	15	Birds and Water
October	16	Birds with Masks
November	17	Winter Birds

2022

January	18	Personal Choice
February	19	Color
March	20	Signs of Spring
April	21	Birds Eating or Black & White Birds
May	22	Local Birds
September	23	My Summer
November	24	Bird Pairs
December	25	A Trip

2023

January	26	Winter
February	27	A Month in a Birder's Life
March	28	Egrets, Herons, and Wading Birds
April	29	Woodpeckers
May	30	Small Birds
June		Members Meeting, no Virtual Bird Walk
September	31	What I Did on My Summer Vacation
October	32	Black & Orange

2024

January	33	Cold
February	34	Water
March	35	Beyond the Bird
May	36	Pick-a-Place
September	37	Summer Birding

Upcoming VENT Tours

ventbird.com

Nebraska	Sandhill Cranes and Prairie Chickens	March 17–24, 2025
Nebraska	Niobrara River Extension	March 24–27, 2025
Colorado	A Summer Stay in Estes Park	June 15–21, 2025
Colorado	Northeast Colorado Extension	June 21–24, 2025
Germany	Birds and Art in Berlin	September 19–28, 2025
France	Brittany in Fall	October 1–9, 2025
Texas	South Texas in Style	January 5–18, 2026
Texas	VENT 50 th Anniversary Celebration	April 19–24, 2026
Italy	Birds and Art in Apulia	April 28–May 8, 2026
France	Birds and Art in Provence	May 9–17, 2026
Scotland	Scotland in Style	May 26–Jun 7, 2026
Nebraska	The Sandhills and Pine Ridge	June 11–21, 2026
Spain	Birds and the Solar Eclipse in Asturias	August 8–16, 2026
France	Brittany in Fall	October 1–9, 2026

**VICTOR
EMANUEL
NATURE
TOURS**

Montclair Bird Club Meeting History

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 Quinto.
October	Watershed, by Hazel England.
November	Build-a-Bird, with 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	Members Meeting.
September	Exploring the Big Bend in Southwest Texas, by Donna Traylor.
October	Build-a-Bird II, with Rick Wright.
November	On Safari: Botswana and South Africa, by Ric Cohn.

2023

January	America's Iconic Birdman: Frank Chapman, by James Huffstodt.
February	A Bird Club in San Diego, by Rick Wright.
March	The Peregrine Project, by Wayne Quinto.
April	Piping Plovers on the Rockaway Peninsula, by Chris Allieri.
May	Basic Ornithology, by Phil Echo.
June	Members Meeting.
September	Build-a-Bird III, with Rick Wright.
October	Finding W. H. Hudson, The Writer Who Came to Britain to Save the Birds, by Conor Mark Jameson
November	Attracting Screech Owls, by Jim Wright
November	Birding and Conservation in Italy, by Marcos Valtriani

2024

January	Panama, by Rick Wright
February	The Spectacular Staging of the Whimbrel on the Texas Coast, by Sam Wolfe – YouTube
March	Looking for the Goshawk: The Lost Raptor, by Conor Jameson
April	The Life of the Whooping Crane, by Paityn Bower
May	Birds of Colombia, by Deborah Bifulco
June	Members Meeting

Birds In This Issue

- Page 1: Greater yellowlegs, by Sandy Sorkin (SS)
- Page 6: Bobolink (SS)
- Page 7: American kestrel (SS)
- Page 10: Yellow warbler, least bittern, great blue heron, osprey (SS)
- Page 11: Yellow warbler, American goldfinch (SS)



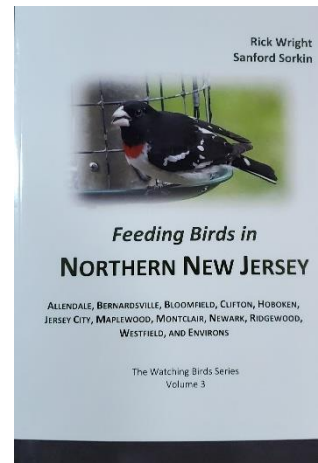
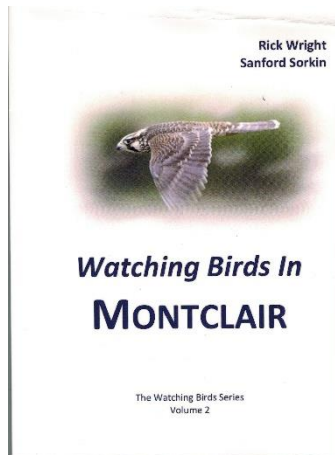
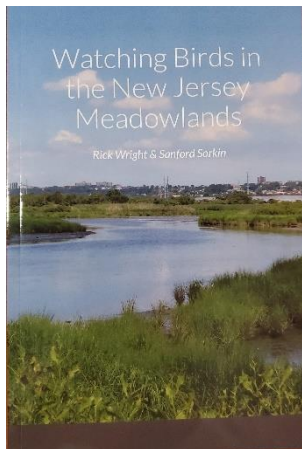
watchung booksellers

YOUR COMMUNITY BOOKSTORE

54 Fairfield Street, Watchung Plaza, Montclair, NJ 07042 Monday - Friday 10-7
973.744.7177 • info@watchungbooksellers.com Saturday & Sunday 10-5

Not every community is so fortunate as to have a community bookstore. Here in Montclair and Bloomfield, Watchung Booksellers has supported our communities, and vice versa, for more than three decades. Watchung Booksellers offers a carefully selected range of literary fiction, biography, history, travel, education, poetry, the arts, and natural history, including *Watching Birds in Montclair*, *Watching Birds in the New Jersey Meadowlands*, *Feeding Birds in Northern New Jersey*, and other titles in the Custom Bird Guides series.

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.



The MBC Bulletin Bird

Montclair Bird Club Officers for 2024–2025

PresidentEvan Cutler
Vice PresidentDeb DeSalvo
TreasurerRic Cohn
Recording SecretaryDonna Traylor

Committees

Field TripsBeni Fishbein
ProgramsDonna Traylor
PublicityWayne Quinto
Refreshments.....Betsy Cohen

**The Broadwing Editor
and PhotographerSandy Sorkin**

THE BROADWING

The *Broadwing* is published ten times a year. We usually vacation during July and August.

Send photos, field notes, or articles to Sandy at MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.

© Copyright 2024. All rights reserved by the contributors.