BIRDATHON DONORS

PHAS is deeply grateful to the following individuals for their generous donations to the 2018 Birdathon (team and grand totals appear at the end of the list):

Robins
Kathy Barnes
Aileen M. Cohen
Philip Dobrovich
Elizabeth Doty
Joanne P. Dyroff
Anne B. Endler
Joseph Fitzgerald
Frances Galati
Nicole Gallo
David & Margaret Gordon
Mark Graser

PUTNAM HIGHLANDS AUDUBON SOCIETY: CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

The mission of the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society (PHAS) is to preserve and maintain the lands and waters that have been entrusted to its stewardship; to inform and educate the public on issues involving birds, wildlife, and the environment; and to encourage membership in the chapter and participation in its activities.

JoAnn Haughey
Robert & Victoria Jauernig
Edward Kaplan
Susan Landstreet
Catherine Lim
Dawn Osselmann
Amy & Eric Richter
Elaine Sanders
C. & T. Scozzafava
Adele & Henry Stern

Doves
Ryan & Jillian Bass
Jane Wilson Carhart
John & Maureen Clancy
Robert Cutler
Pierre De Rham
Myra T. Endler
Carol Marquand & Stanley Freilich
Louis Hebner
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Bryan and Alison McNeary
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Nathaniel & Anita Prentice
Wylie & Sally Sypher
Ellyn Varela-Burstein
Suzanne & Tyrell Jones Willis
Nancy & James Witt

Swans
Connie & Robert Bakall
Nancy Durr
Pascale Hulz
Richard & Joanne Mrstik
Patricia Schories

Eagles
Friedrike Merck
Elmer Sprague

Total species seen by...
Garrison Gumshoes: 108
Putnam Valley Bogtrotters: 112
Beakin’ Beginners: 58
Wappingers Creekers: 100
Grand total: 159

Bluebirds
John & Tamara Benjamin
Anne Impellizzeri
July 21, 8:30 – 10:00 A.M.: Duck Pond Walk at Taconic Outdoor Education Center (TOEC). Enjoy a pleasant 1-mile hike around the Duck Pond. Target bird species include Baltimore oriole, warbling vireo, and wood duck. This is a special experience, as the TOEC is a restricted-access site. Due to the nature of the special permit granted to Putnam Highlands Audubon Society, this event is limited to twenty participants. Advance registration is therefore required. (Look for the pre-registration link at www.putnamhighlandsaudubon.org.)

Meet trip leader Ryan Bass at the TOEC lodge at the end of Mountain Laurel Rd. The walk will begin promptly at 8:30.

August 18, 8:30 – 10:00 A.M: West Point Foundry Cove Preserve: Discover the bird life of Cold Spring in this tranquil waterfront preserve with scenic views of Storm King Mountain. Target bird species include green heron, double-crested cormorant, and spotted sandpiper. Universally accessible walking path. Meet in the parking area at the end of Kemble Ave in Cold Spring. Birders of all experience levels are welcome to join. All walks are free and supported by donations to PHAS. Donations are accepted at www.putnamhighlandsaudubon.org.
Dear Cy,

I wonder if you can help me. With the nice weather, I have started letting my not-quite-a-year-old cat outside for a few hours each day. She is neutered, has all her shots, and is really a good girl, who comes back after an hour or two of exploring around, especially if I call her in for dinner.

My problem started earlier this week, when she came in with something in her mouth. Much to my surprise, when she went over to her food dish and put down the item, I found it was a bird. I am pretty sure it was a sparrow of some kind.

But the story gets worse! Today, after she came inside I noticed something on the back porch, and it was a BABY BUNNY HEAD!

Before you start thinking terrible things about my little kitty, let me tell you she is actually one of the sweetest cats I have ever met, and I can’t believe that she is killing all these animals.

My question to you is, What can I do about it? I feed her plenty of food, but can she still be hungry? Can I put a bell around her neck to stop her from sneaking up on these other animals? I am really upset, but I am at a loss. Please help!

At a Loss in Fishkill

Cy, the Bird Guy, says:

Dear At a Loss,

I understand your problem. As a cat lover myself, I have dealt with the same issues in the past. In fact, many years ago I tried putting a bell on my own outdoor cat, but that only worked for about three weeks, as I recall. I had to admire him, as my cat apparently figured out how to hunt with the bell on, because after a few weeks he was right back to catching
birds, field mice, and other little critters (and yes, including little rabbits).

So as much as it pains me to say it, I do not have a good answer for you. Domestic cats are estimated to be responsible for MILLIONS of songbird deaths in the United States each year. And that does not include small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians that are too tempting for cats to resist. Songbirds migrate long distances to come to the Hudson Valley and places to the north, as they need the long daylight hours to build nests and raise and feed their young. Many fledglings spend their first few days out of the nest, on the ground, where the parents still feed them before taking flight. This makes them easy targets for cats. The National Audubon Society estimates that domestic cats are one of the primary threats to songbirds in the United States, and they can be devastating to other wildlife as well.

And it’s a terrible shame, because I know that cats love being outside (at least in places that do not have coyotes or other predators around). As I said, bells on collars really do not work, and I do not recommend declawing cats in any event. It is also not a matter of their being hungry. Their instincts for hunting and (I’m afraid) killing, are just too strong – it’s not a habit you can train out of them.

So in closing, I will share with you the same conclusion I reached years ago. The best place for domestic cats is indoors. It is probably safer for them, and it is definitely safer for the birds and bunnies around your home!

Cy (the bird guy)
PHAS members Perry Pitt and Ralph Odell work to clean up the garden behind Hubbard Lodge on RiverSweep Cleanup Day (Saturday, May 5).

All members of PHAS are welcome to attend meetings of the Board of Governors. Board meetings are held at Hubbard Lodge (or at the Red Line Diner in Fishkill on snow days). They’re a good way to learn about what PHAS is doing, the problems we face, and the interesting wildlife in our region. The next board meeting will be held on **Friday, July 13, at 6 P.M.**

For more information, e-mail Connie Mayer-Bakall at board@putnamhighlandsaudubon.org
Can you identify this bird? (answer on p. 9)

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- In an experiment begun in Russia in 1959, a group of urban foxes were selectively bred. Within twenty years they had lost all fear of humans, wagged their tails, and developed floppy ears and black and white fur; they had become dogs.
- Because no one ever saw a migratory goose mate or lay an egg, for centuries it was thought that they hatched from the barnacles washed ashore on driftwood at the same time of year as they arrived from the Arctic.
- House mice can be found wherever there are settled human populations; they live on all the continents, at altitudes as high as 15,600 feet, as far north as the Bering Sea, and as far south as the sub-Antarctic islands.

*Study nature, love nature. It will never fail you.*

*Frank Lloyd Wright*
Ryan Bass spotted this painted turtle on Indian Brook Road while walking his dog George. He stood vigil until it had safely crossed the road.

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Editor’s note: This issue of the PHAS Newsletter would ordinarily be published on July 1, but is coming out late because I was on vacation during the last few days of June. Thank you for your understanding.

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The Marty McGuire Audubon Scholarship is available to college students from the PHAS area who are interested in nature. For details, go to www.putnamhighlandsaudubon.org/scholarships.

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*Photo by Ryan J. Bass*

*Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.*

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*--Ralph Waldo Emerson*
*Thistles*

Thirty thirsty thistles
Thicketed and green
Growing in a grassy swamp
Purple-topped and lean
Prickly and thistley
Topped by tufts of thorns
Green mean little leaves on them
And tiny purple horns
Briary and brambly
A spiky, spiney bunch of them.
A troop of bright-red birds came by
And had a lovely lunch of them.

*Karla Kuskin*

*The bird pictured on page 7 is a Canada warbler.*
**PHAS BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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Vice-President: Perry Pitt

Treasurer: Peter Conway

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  - Pete Salmansohn
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**PHAS COMMITTEES**

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Website: Pete Conway

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Birdseed sale: Paul Kuznia

Birdathon: Ian Kingsley and Ryan J. Bass

Birdwalks/hikes: Ryan J. Bass

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Sanctuaries: Perry Pitt and Max Garfinkle

Conservation: Connie Mayer-Bakall

Education: Pete Salmansohn

Nominating: Connie Mayer-Bakall, Adele Stern, and Paul Kuznia

Marty McGuire Scholarship Fund: Ralph Odell

For additional information about PHAS, send e-mail to info@putnamhoghlandsaudubon.org.