

Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen, NJ North Coast Region 2017 Memorial Field Trip

The Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen Memorial Field Trip took place along the New Jersey North Coast February 15, 2017. I first birded this region during a Field Ornithology course in 1967 at Montclair State University taught by Dr. Kuhnen. Subsequently, Marie and I birded the region together every February for the next 40 years.

We started at Ross's Corner and en route "down the shore," a New Jersey idiom we searched for birds. A North Shore tour, November through March is noted for loons, grebes, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, geese, ducks including dabblers, divers, and sea ducks, Purple Sandpiper, gulls, and if you're lucky, Alcids such as Razorbill, an impressive list of "target species" for a tour.

Two Sussex County Bird Club stalwarts and I enjoyed a beautiful sunny day and logged 272 miles from 7:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m. We experienced a temperature range from 32 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Winds from the northwest were mild. The tour began at Manasquan Inlet's south jetty Point Pleasant Beach where we searched for and found a Razorbill. We observed an abundance of Common Loons, a few Red-throated Loons as well as some Long-tailed Ducks (Oldsquaws.) We concluded by searching the ponds at Lake Takanassee.

Jack Padalino, president emeritus of PEEC as well as Brandwein Institute, a partner with the National Park Service, orchestrated the North Shore Tour that included visiting numerous fresh water ponds, estuaries, inlets, and oceanfront. None of the ponds were frozen and much of the area this year was open water .

How did we do? Forty-eight bird species were observed. Highlights include two loons, Common and Red-throated, two grebes; Pied-billed and Horned, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Gannet, Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose was most abundant, almost to a distraction. Many Brant, 16 ducks: Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Surf Scoter, Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded, Common, and Red-breasted Mergansers, and Ruddy Duck. One falcon, Merlin, no shorebirds. Razorbill, Three species of gulls: Great Black-backed, Herring, and Ring-billed. Three blackbirds: Red-winged, Common Grackle, and Boat-tailed Grackle. Cedar Waxwings were a Wreck Pond. Snow Buntings and a Warbler were at Shark River inlet.

The trip finale at Lake Takanassee brought us Pied-billed Grebe and Ring-necked Duck.

We returned to Sussex County at 7:00 PM.

We look forward to next year's North Shore memorial field trip in late January of 2018.

