

Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen, NJ North Coast Region 2020 Memorial Field Trip

The Dr. S. Marie Kuhnen Memorial Field Trip took place along the New Jersey North Coast January 26, 2020. Three Sussex County Bird Club members joined me to enjoy the birding. We logged 283 miles from and to Ross's Corner from 7:00 a.m. through 6:30 p.m. Temperature ranged from 28 to 46 degrees Fahrenheit. Winds from the northeast were between 5 and 20 mph. The tour began at Manasquan Inlet's south jetty Point Pleasant Beach where there was an abundance of Common Loons as well as a Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw.) Notable among the 50 bird species observed were: Laughing Gull, Razorbill, Surf, White-winged, and Black Scoter, as well as Eurasian Widgeon.

I first birded this region during a Field Ornithology course in 1967 at Montclair State taught by Dr. Kuhnen. Subsequently, Marie and I birded the region together every winter for the next 40 years. Many of those North Shore field trips led by Marie served as opportunities for Pocono Environmental Education Center (PEEC) staff members' professional development and personal enrichment.

Jack Padalino, for the 52nd year, orchestrated the North Shore Tour that included visiting numerous fresh water ponds, estuaries, inlets, and the oceanfront. The fresh water ponds were mostly frozen this year.

The early start was at Ross' Corner and en route "down the shore," a New Jersey idiom, we were delighted by two juvenile Bald Eagles on the ice in Lafayette. We looked for Red-tailed Hawks and spotted a few on our journey south.

A New Jersey North Shore birding 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. It is also possible to see noteworthy species sighted in the past such as Red-necked Grebe, Eurasian Widgeon, Common and King Eiders, Harlequin Duck, Little, Common Black-headed, Bonaparte's, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous gulls, as well as Black-legged Kittiwake. A list of rare species observed in the past include Eared and Western Grebes, Tufted Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Sooty Tern, Black-tailed Gull, Sabine's Gull, Dovekie, Common and Thick-billed Murres, Black Guillemot and Razorbill, an impressive list of "target species" for a tour.

This year 50 bird species were observed. Highlights include an abundance of two loons, Common and Red-throated. Of all the years I've been doing this trip, I have never seen as many Common Loons, they were everywhere! Also, Great Blue Heron, Pied-billed Grebe, Double-crested Cormorants, many Mute Swans and Brant at Shark River, Canada Goose, 15 duck species – Eurasian Widgeon, American Wigeon, Gadwall, Mallard, Black Duck, Greater and Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Surf, White-winged and Black Scoters, Bufflehead, Red-breasted, and many Hooded Mergansers, as well as Ruddy Duck, Turkey Vulture, 4 Bald Eagle, two perched adults along Shark River, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot. Shorebirds: Purple Sandpiper, and Sanderling. Five gulls: Great Black-backed, Laughing, Bonapartes Herring, and Ring-billed. Three Razorback spotted from Manasquan and Shark River inlets.. Rock Pigeon and Mourning Dove, Blue Jay, American and Fish Crows. Northern Mockingbird, American Robin, European Starling, Common Grackle, House Finch, and House Sparrow.

Look forward to next winter's 2021 North Shore field trip.