

2020 COPAKE COUNTRY CLUB (AND NEIGHBORHOOD) BIRDING/BIRDHOUSE SEASON-ENDING REPORT

Greetings. 2020 has been a year of upheaval for everybody, of course. Fortunately, our bird populations at Copake Country Club and in the Copake Lake neighborhood rose above it all and had an outstanding breeding season.

-Some of the information below is available on the new **“Course Bird Community”** blogging-and-info pages on the Copake Country Club website. I really appreciate the great efforts by Austin Urban to set it up and maintain it with me on the site during lockdown this past spring.
-On the club’s website home page, you’ll find it in the “About” menu.
<https://www.copakecountryclub.com/About/BirdCommunity>
(Thanks for checking it out; there’s much background info, and my blogs from nesting season.)

On the golf course in '20:

-We hit a new high out there: 43 birdhouses are now sprawled across the property, most in plain sight and a handful of them deep within 8 of the woodland areas that adjoin fairways on the course.

In the nest boxes:

-We had 17 successful Eastern Bluebird nestings (up from 15 last year); a total of 80-plus Bluebird eggs; 3 failed nests.
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eastern_Bluebird/overview

-We had 19 successful Tree Swallow nestings (up from 17); 90-plus eggs; 2 failed nests.
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Tree_Swallow

-A total of 6 House Wren nests, but only 1 of those was a fully successful nesting (7 eggs); the others were the House Wrens’ trademark “dummy nests,” built by males to entice females but then abandoned in favor of nest sites chosen elsewhere by the females (guys, take note). The numbers are mostly in line with 2019’s.
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Wren

Also in the nest boxes:

-We expanded our “nontraditional” birdhouse types and locations and now have 8 of them in play. One of the newcomers is meant to attract my own favorite bird, the Pileated Woodpecker (in the woods alongside 14th fairway); other boxes that are “off the beaten track” are meant for Eastern Screech Owl (3rd hole); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (2 in the woods by 8th hole); White-breasted Nuthatch and Northern Flicker (both deep in the 13th-hole trees); and, maybe our most spectacular hope, American Kestrel, a beautiful falcon (16th hole, in the “wedding tree”).
-All of those are “hopes” — the birds we target to use them are cavity-nesters, but they mostly prefer natural holes more than the manmade boxes. We’ve had very limited success with those over the years, but if they keep showing up to nest, so will we. . . . :)
https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pileated_Woodpecker

Also:

-We stopped a total of 12 nestings by House Sparrows on the course. As we remind locals all the time, House Sparrows are public enemy number one for birdhouse-keepers — they're very aggressive and will regularly attack and kill other house-nesters to take over. So birders are in fact encouraged to prevent them from nesting, anywhere; these sparrows are not "protected by birding law," so removal of their nests and eggs by citizen scientists — like you, at home, in your nest boxes — is strongly endorsed by many birding organizations.

<http://www.sialis.org/hosp.htm>

And the rock stars:

-Everybody wants the news about the resident celebrities, the Bald Eagles that have been using the same local nest for quite a few years. In '20, the timetable of the Eagles' nesting activity was remarkably similar to that of last year, and 2018's. The nest (high in a tree east of the 15th tee) is still there and still huge; we saw 2020's first signs of adults close to the nest in mid-January; the first confirmed nest-sitting vigils (Mom inside the nest for 20-30 minutes) in early March; the first time she sensed my presence (a hundred yards away, with binoculars) and flew out to circle and squawk above me in late March.

-After that — like every year — we watched and hoped to see adult Eagles going to and from the nest, meaning eggs have hatched; but that outcome is never confirmed, only educated guesses and observations, because of the nest's well-chosen height and privacy.

Much more about Bald Eagles' life history and other cool stats in this link, and in the "**Course Bird Community**" blogs.

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bald_Eagle

Elsewhere in the neighborhood:

-More locals than ever have been ramping up their birdhouse and birding interest, and it's my ongoing pleasure to chip in and help them out.

-Lebrecht, Lakeview Road: Lindsay has 5 birdhouses in a compact area; her proximity to House Sparrow-heavy territory has made HS a chronic problem in her nest boxes; so this year we adjusted her houses and locations to make them more accessible for cavity nesters smaller than those sparrow menaces: House Wrens (also a problem, but much less so than the HS) and the tiny Black-capped Chickadee. Initial results were promising.

-McCarthy, Golf Course Road: Their first nest box (just a few steps from the lake shore) was a hit: a successful Tree Swallow nesting, 6 eggs.

-Casey, Golf Course Road: 2 of the 3 birdhouses on their property had a second consecutive year of great production. The tiny box in their top garden had a successful Chickadee nesting, 7 eggs (last year, 2 Chickadee nests in the same box); one of their lakeside boxes had a successful Tree Swallow nesting, 6 eggs.

-Many thanks as always to everybody at the club and vicinity who supports the birdhouse project and local birding in general. Particularly the whole Urban family; Mark Anderson, John Stickles, Kyleigh Zengen, Kyle Bell, and everybody else at the Greens and in the pro shop;

Lindsay LeBrecht; the Mauri and Chickery families; and all the locals who have questions, comments, and interest in our birds and the greatly beneficial pastime of birding.

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