**Welcome Back to Birdland (March 2020)**

Greetings, fellow birders and birding-curious friends at Copake Country Club.

Spring is nearly with us, and not a moment too soon. It’s the favorite season for many, and certainly for our aerial friends around the area.

For most birds in the region, spring is breeding time. On our spectacular golf course, we’ve expanded our housing development — bird nestboxes — to a total of 41, and climbing, ready to welcome cavity nesters.

Most of these tenants will be migrants that raised their families in the region and then flew hundreds and even thousands of miles last fall to wintering grounds in the Southern U.S., the Caribbean, Central, and South America. Naturally — though always incredible for us to contemplate — their cycle of migration brings them right on back to these breeding grounds, frequently to the same towns, and sometimes (the science proves it) to precisely the same birdhouse where they started families last year.

Specifically, we’re waiting for Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows to be our most common nestbox residents again. In 2019, those two species alone produced a total of 32 successful nests in the birdhouses on the golf course. This year, with upgrades we’ve done out there (some new boxes, more security against predators, better locations), the numbers should rise.

Beyond Bluebirds and Tree Swallows, the boxes should or, we hope, could welcome house-hunters like wrens, nuthatches, woodpeckers, and other not-so-usual suspects.

Then our local rock stars, back for an encore: Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagles. The Red-tails were the 2019 breakthroughs, a pair nesting right on “main street," in one of the most easily observed trees on the property, a tall pine next to the practice green. The Eagles have been using and reusing a massive nest just southeast of the golf course for at least five years — and as March begins, they’re at it again.

Those are among the many topics we look forward to talking about on this platform in 2020. Others:

-What you could do, and shouldn’t do, if you put up birdhouses at home.

-Why your birdhouses need your help (monitoring) during the season.

-Ecological benefits of birding and “citizen science."

-Two of the greatest comeback tales in all of nature: Eastern Bluebirds and Bald Eagles.

-The amazing journeys: bird migrations.

Curtain is going up on springtime and our phenomenal Birdland. Welcome back. There are hundreds of “playbills” you can always use to ID the players and get your spring birding off the ground. Here’s a favorite: https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/

Thank you very much to Copake Country Club, especially to Austin and Jon Urban, for providing this forum to talk birds and this great venue to support and admire them.

**—Tom Walsh**