

Palisades

NATURE NOTES



Fox Sparrow



Dark-eyed Junco



Red-breasted Nuthatch

Bird photos: Evan J. Zupfer

Notes from the Naturalist

“Cold enough for ya?” How many times have you heard that question this winter? Yes, almost everyone believes that this winter has been colder than the last one, but the question is still asked. Maybe it’s a way to start a conversation or to introduce yourself to someone new.

However, I find myself puzzled by the question. What temperature is cold enough? How cold does it have to be to be too cold? The answer will vary depending on who you ask. It certainly does vary from person to person. Some people actually enjoy the cold weather, while others despise it. I look at the cold as a change in conditions that can lead to many different wildlife observations and activities.

Cold weather does many things to the environment that alters how wildlife go about their daily business. For one thing more birds visit bird feeders in the winter than during the summer. This year the most obvious change at the Sanctuary feeders is the number of Dark-eyed Juncos.

Often referred to as snowbirds because they usually ar-

rive with the first snow, Juncos are a wide-ranging sparrow from northern forests of conifers and mixed hardwoods. Across North America you can find many different types of this medium to dark gray bird, but in the northeast, we usually find the Slate-colored type. They are gray from head to tail with a white belly and distinctive white tail feathers that become visible when flying.

In past years we would usually get a half dozen to two dozen birds at the Sanctuary feeders, but this year I have counted well over one hundred. This is true for not only the Sanctuary’s feeders but for mine at home as well.

Other surprises at the Sanctuary’s feeders this winter are two Red-breasted Nuthatches and two Fox Sparrows. Red-breasted Nuthatches are smaller than the common, and better known, White-breasted Nuthatch. They have a black eye-stripe and, of course, a pale red breast, and they love to hang upside-down.

They usually migrate during early to mid-fall and are not

seen again until the spring. However, two of them decided to stay this winter, and were seen several times, and are still being sited at the feeders from time to time. Their calls can also be heard reverberating through the pine grove directly south of the Orientation and Education Center. This is their ideal habit because they breed in the coniferous forests of the far north.

Fox sparrows are not very common in the winter, but they always migrate through in late fall. To have two of them stay the winter is quite rare. They are a bit larger than the other sparrows that winter here, and are usually rusty red in color with some gray. They also have streaks on their breast and flanks.

On the 5th of November, Ken Spotted a Great Horned Owl where trail "B" & "O" intersect. The next day, a pair of Purple Finches arrived at the bird feeders behind the office. Purple finches usually migrate through Greenbrook and do not stay for the winter. A brightly colored male was accompanied by a much browner female. During a scheduled walk around the pond, on November 8, I and other members were treated a good look at a male Northern Pintail duck feeding on the western side of the pond, while a Northern Harrier Circlled overhead, it's white rump patch clearly visible as it turned and moved south over the trees. On the west side of the Pond, the last Dragonfly of the season, a Meadowhawk (*Sympetrum*), was discovered as it buzzed over the path in front of us. On November 27, Paul Coburn sighted a Brown Creeper in the parking lot, and a Black Vulture over the pond. The Northern Pintail was again sighted on the pond November 28 by Ken, and a beautiful rusty colored Swamp Sparrow was also found by the dam.

On December 4, Sandy and Ken discovered a single

Green-winged Teal on the pond as they checked trails. Sandy spotted three Black Vultures circling above the pond on December 12. The next day, December 13, I found a Hermit Thrush darting in and out of the Entrance Road Holly trees. It was probably stopping to feed on the bright red berries found there during the winter. The same day was the first sighting of the Red-breasted Nuthatch at the feeders. Ken spotted a Sharp-shinned hawk perched in a Holly tree by the entrance road. A male Red-breasted Nuthatch was again spotted at the feeders on December 26 & 27. Then on December 28, it was joined by a female. They would continue to be sighted together at the feeders throughout the winter. The first Fox Sparrow also arrived at the feeders on that same day.

A Bald Eagle was flying past Picture Point on December 31.

January 1st, New Year's Day, Ken was rewarded with an American Kestrel as it flew by Arboretum Point. Ken spotted the Fox Sparrow again at the feeders on January 2. During a night hike on January 3, two Bald Eagles gave us great views from Arboretum Point. January 4, brought us the resighting of the Red-breasted Nuthatch again at the feeders. The Fox Sparrow was also resighted the same day, and an American Robin was also found in the Holly Trees. January 9, Ken heard a Pileated Woodpecker near the parking lot. January 15 gave us another Bald Eagle sighting at Duck Hawk Look out. Because ten inches of snow was dumped by winter storm Fern on January 25 & 26, a second Fox Sparrow joined the first at the feeders, along with two Red-breasted Nuthatches, and over a hundred Dark-eyed Juncos on January 28. And on the last day of January, a Northern Mockingbird was seen feeding on suet behind the office along

with both Red-breasted Nuthatches.

That's it for the sightings. On a positive note, the weather is warming and I believe the coldest days of this winter are behind us. I don't know about you, but I can't wait for spring.

— Evan J. Zupfer, Naturalist/Director

Volunteer Day was a complete success



On December 13 a small group of Greenbrook volunteers gathered on the entrance road to remove a year's worth of leaves and debris. The crew was very speedy, and the task was finished in under an hour. Thank you, volunteers, for doing an outstanding job. If you would like to volunteer at Greenbrook please email the naturalist at pnanaturalist@gmail.com. Volunteers in center photo, from left to right: Andrew Katzman, Brett Weber, Fang-Chin Chiang, Chris Murphy, Ryan Zupfer, Steve Hutnik.

— Evan J. Zupfer, Naturalist/Director

Saturday, March 7 --- 6:00PM – 7:00

Early Spring Amphibians 1

Observe as Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs emerge from hibernation to breed. Bring flashlights. Light rain does not cancel this program.

Saturday, March 14 --- 7:00PM – 8:00

Early Spring Amphibians 2 See March 7 for details.

Saturday, March 21 ---- Noon – 2:00PM

First Weekend of Spring Hike to High Point and Bald Eagle Point

The two highest places in the Sanctuary. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and bring binoculars. We may see a Bald Eagle.

Sunday, March 22 ---- 7:15PM – 8:30

Early Spring Amphibians 3 See March 7 for details

Saturday, March 28 ---- 7:30PM – 8:30

Early Spring Amphibians 4 See March 7 for details

Sunday, March 29 ---- 10:00AM – 11:30

Volunteer Day – Spring Clean-up

Help remove winter debris from the picnic area and pavilion. Bring work gloves and wear sturdy boots.

Saturday, April 4 --- 1:00PM – 3:00

All the Waterfalls and Cascades of Greenbrook

A long, scenic hike to all the waterfalls and cascades inside the boundaries of Greenbrook Sanctuary. Wear sturdy hiking shoes and bring your cameras.

Saturday April 11 ---- 10:00AM - Noon

Greenbrook History Hike with Eric Nelsen

(Open to the Public). Highlighting many historical structures in the Sanctuary, this guided hike covers about 3 miles round-trip in 2 hours on moderate trails, “drizzle or shine.” Heavy or steady rain° or icy trails will cancel. If weather seems questionable on the morning of the hike, call 201-768-1360, ext. 6108 to confirm.

Saturday, April 18 ---- 1:00PM – 2:30

General Nature Walk

Friday, April 24 ---- 7:00AM – 9:00

Early Morning Bird Walk First in a series of four. Beginners welcome. Bring binoculars. Rain cancels.

Saturday, April 25 --- 8:00AM – 9:30

Birding for Beginners

Expert Birder and Naturalist Evan Zupfer will share the basics of birding as we look for early spring migrants Birders of all abilities are welcome. Bring binoculars. Rain cancels.

Saturday, April 25 ---- 1:00PM – 2:00

Hike to Picture Point & Duck Hawk Lookout

Visit two of Greenbrook’s most spectacular vistas.

Sunday April 26 ---- Noon to 3:00PM

Visitor’s Day Open house for non-members to learn about Greenbrook. Call 201-784-0484 or email pnanaturalist@gmail.com for information.

Friday, May 1 ---- 7:00AM – 9:00

Early Morning Bird Walk See April 24 for details.

Saturday, May 2 ---- 10:00AM – Noon

Iconic Trees of Greenbrook

Learn about some of Greenbrook’s uncommon trees.

Saturday, May 2 ---- 8:30PM – 9:30

A Flower Moon Hike

Hike the Sanctuary during the first Full Moon of May, called a Flower Moon. See May 31 for more information

Sunday, May 3 ---- Noon to 3:00PM

Visitor’s Day Rain Date See April 26 for details.

Friday, May 8 ---- 7:00AM – 9:00

Early Morning Bird Walk See April 25 for details

Saturday, May 9 ---- 8:00AM – 2:00PM or longer

Big Day Bird Count (Global Big Day)

Join us for the year’s biggest birding day. Help us find as many bird species as possible in the Sanctuary. Lunch break at Arboretum point. Beginners welcome.

Saturday, May 9 --- 10:00AM – 11:30

Ta-Chi by the Pavilion

Join Nancy Hoffman, Ph.D, for Tai Chi warm-up exercises and Part I of a Yang style Tai Chi long form. Classes are suitable for beginners as well as those with some experience. Feel free to drop in for class that fits your schedule. Members are encouraged to bring a friend!

Friday, May 15 ---- 7:00AM – 9:00

Early Morning Bird Walk See April 25 for details

Saturday, May 16 ---- 10:00AM – 11:30

Tai-Chi by the Pavilion See May 9 for details

Saturday, May 23 ---- 10:00AM – 11:30

Tai-Chi by the Pavilion See May 9 for details

Saturday, May 30 ---- 8:30 PM

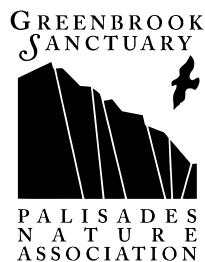
Once in a Blue Moon Hike

Hike through the Sanctuary during a rare event, a Blue Moon—the second full moon in the same month, which only happens every three-and-a-half-to-four years.

Sunday, May 31 ---- NOON--1:30 PM

The Impact of White-tailed Deer on Greenbrook

Take a walk with Naturalist Evan J. Zupfer as he demonstrates how the White-tailed Deer have changed the landscape and habitats of Greenbrook Sanctuary.



WELCOME, NEW & RETURNING MEMBERS: 2026 CYCLE 1— Juliana/Charles Silveira Solomon, Debra Rosen, Sean Zheng, Lauren Koslow, Natalya Paykina, Barbara Landzberg, John T. Gallo, Washington & Liberty Young, Jingying Zhao, Michael Woods, Nina Ishmael, Dina Pomarico, Steve Smyth, Martin Anderson, Erica DiMarzo, Niall Higgins, Seung Joon Lee, Marvin Gunz, Bob Kaiser, Franco V. Paradiso, Ralph Ekiert, Patricia Flores, Analicia Culp, Rosemary Yim, Dong Won Park

CHANGES? If you have moved or changed your email address, please email your updates to greenbrooksanctuary@gmail.com. Members may RSVP to events on our website. <https://www.greenbrooksanctuary.org/events>
 Email 2greenbrook@gmail.com or call Membership Director Mike Gallo with online questions: 201.701.1424

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