

Attending: Eric Marczak, Nelson Kent, Amy Lauterbach, Dave Nelson, Russ Pokorny and guest speakers Tristan Lowery and Jared Feura, and an audience of about 20 members of the public.

Eric welcomed the gathering at about 7:30 PM.

### Education and Outreach

Dave introduced guest speakers Tristan Lowery, President of Hudson Mohawk Bird Club and Jared Feura, who is Assistant Project Coordinator for the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III for 2020-2024.

- Tristan explained that <https://eBird.org> website from Cornell Lab of Ornithology identifies “hotspots” for optimal bird observing, including Knox Wetland. Since 2014 when it was discovered by local birders, nearly 200 visits have been recorded and 125 species of birds have been observed and documented at our wetland.
  - Tristan explained that birders used to walk the minimally used railroad track that crosses the Black Creek Marsh in Voorheesville to observe birds, but due to increased rail traffic and track maintenance work, that access closed to birders in April 2023. This has driven some birders to find other cattail marsh habitat, including the Knox Wetland.
  - In 2023, 71 visits to the wetland were posted to eBird.org. Tristan believes this count will increase since the boardwalk is now more easily accessible.
  - Tristan outlined the great diversity of birds that have been observed year-round in and around the wetland.
  - Tristan also noted the great biodiversity of plants and animals in this habitat.
    - The <https://www.inaturalist.org> app uses AI and photos to identify many different kinds of flora and fauna.
      - Knox Town Wetland is a page featured on this site.
      - Dave noted that some purple loosestrife has started to take hold in the wetland and it needs to be removed by getting into the water and pulling up the roots.
- The Hudson Mohawk Bird Club meets the first Monday of every month. <https://www.hmbc.net/>
  - They plan an updated publication of a local birding guide, *Birding New York's Hudson-Mohawk Region*, with a chapter on the Knox Wetland.
  - They would like to consider organizing club field trips to the wetland and other nearby preserves and highlights, including the Winn Preserve, Limestone Rise and the Knox Town Park.
- Jared has lived in Knox for a few years. He presents public programs about birds and he helps coordinate NYS DEC's New York Breeding Bird Atlas for their Natural Heritage Program: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/29338.html>.
  - It identifies important bird areas, bird population changes and at-risk species.
  - He showed data indicating increases in some species and declines in other species across the state.
  - This data can be used to inform land use planning, engage citizen scientists and promote appreciation of nature, as well as indicating changes over time and informing population management efforts.
  - We will consider nominating the Knox Town Park and Wetlands for inclusion in the NYS Birding Trail.

### Wetlands Boardwalk Restoration Project

- The walkway, ramp and kiosk structures are all complete. Signs and interpretive materials need to be developed.
- Russ showed an aerial video of the walkway and the boardwalk that was photographed by a drone.

Resources: <https://eBird.org/atlasny/>

NYS Birding Trail <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/109900.html#Trail>

Refreshments were served. The next regularly scheduled meeting is planned for 7:30 PM on Tuesday, January 16.