



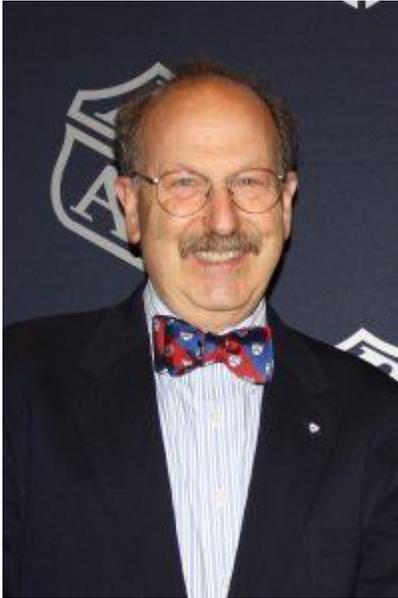
What's in your backyard: a hawk fills the sky



A red-tailed hawk sweeps the sky. SANFORD SORKIN/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL

By SANFORD SORKIN

For Montclair Local



SANFORD SORKIN

Today, Montclair Local debuts a new column: "What's in Your Backyard." In this column, Sanford Sorkin and David Wasmuth will alternate writing about the birds and beasts you may see around your house. Seen a bird or animal you want to know more about? Write to us at culture@montclairlocal.news.

Sanford Sorkin has been a Montclair resident since 1978, and is currently the president of the [Montclair Bird Club](#). He has been a bird watcher and nature photographer for the last 12 years.

The current crises that mandate social distancing elevate the backyard to a more prominent position. Once, we could share the garden and observe nature with our friends. Now it is restricted to us and any fauna we attract. While we would prefer to have friends on the patio, it is entertaining to watch birds from the patio.

I doubt that there are many smaller backyards in Montclair than mine. My good fortune is that my wife is a gardener who does an amazing job, even if she is under the delusion that I have any design sense and could conceivably help in some way. Coupled with my lack of design sense, I have almost no idea what plants should be considered for a backyard garden. The good news, however, is that when she did ask for my planting opinions as she was planning her garden, I was ready with an answer. If you attract wildlife, specifically birds, then you have the garden I would love.

And she did create a garden that attracted birds. Not just birds, but also a skunk or two, raccoons periodically, chipmunks, and one of the most beautiful red foxes I have ever seen. For years she had a garden snake that would bask on the boxwood and watch her work. I wouldn't call the backyard an aviary, but we do get a fair

amount of avian traffic between the backyard and the Bonsal Preserve over a fence or two behind the house.

READ: [WILD MONTCLAIR: TWO RIVERS RUN THROUGH, AND UNDER, TOWN](#)

We've lived in Montclair for over 40 years, but bird watching wasn't a hobby of mine until 2008. Consequently, I know we saw a lot of birds over the years, but I wasn't prepared to identify them. However, not knowing their names in no way diminished the joy of just watching from the porch. It is now a little more than 10 years later, and I can name most of what I see.

I even have a good idea of how many birds I've seen and when they visited because I should probably be considered a lister. Listers are people that keep tallies of their observed species by date and location. Some just check off sightings on a list, but others with an interest in contributing to science participate in [Cornell's eBird program](#), where they reliably keep track of everything for you. My total for New Jersey is 249 species, and 130 of which are from Essex County. It is going to take me a little longer to determine how many are from my backyard, but I know that if I include the Bonsal Preserve the local count jumps to around 100 individual species.



LOOKING AT HAWKS

With approximately 100 species to choose from, I think that two come to mind immediately: red-tailed hawks and sharp-shinned hawks.

There is at least one very local red-tailed hawk that periodically perches in our backyard. More often, it rests in one of the pin oaks that line the street. Spotting the red-tailed hawk is not difficult because we have sentinel blue jays on the street who are completely intolerant of invading hawks. So, whenever we hear a bird racket, we can step outside and see what is being mobbed by noisy birds, and it is frequently a hawk.

The one in the picture was perched on a small limb by the back fence. It may just be hungry and looking for prey on the ground or just resting. He isn't likely to find reptiles on a snowy day, but squirrels, rabbits, mice, and voles are also part of its diet. Small- to medium-sized birds may also be on the menu.

In addition to the resident red-tailed hawks we also can see migratory birds flying south on the eastern flyway over Montclair. The Montclair Hawk Watch in the fall counts large numbers of migratory raptors heading south to warmer climes, and you are almost guaranteed to see some of our resident red-tails on every visit to the Hawk Watch.

Seasonally, we see many activities such as soaring until the hawk can only be seen with binoculars, performing mating rituals with incredible acrobatics, and even upside-down flying talons-extended engaged in combat with Cooper's hawks or sharp-shinned hawks. On occasion the red-tailed hawks will go into a stoop (downward dive) at possibly 100 miles per hour towards something we would probably never spot and carry off a squirrel or grab a pigeon in midair with an explosion of feathers.

When the light is right, the red tail will give you a lot of confidence in your identification of a red-tailed hawk. A dark band across the breast is also diagnostic for the local population.

The other raptor that frequents our yard is a sharp-shinned hawk that usually brings a meal with him. He sits in the back of the yard and assumes a pose indicating that he will fiercely defend his catch.

As spring approaches, other birds frequent the backyard. The nesting pairs seem to enjoy the garden atmosphere as well. In short order we expect to start watching the parents make innumerable journeys to and from the nest with insects for the young.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Bubbles



Bubbles

Courtesy Communities Promoting Animal Welfare NJ

Bubbles is a 4-month-old, petite ball of energy. She was one of four kittens found bouncing around behind an apartment building in East Orange.

She has tested negative for FIV/FelV and will have her shots next week. She's ready to fill your home with love and laughter.

Contact CPAW NJ at cpawnj@gmail.com or visit cpawnj.org for more information.



History and Heritage: A cow — in Montclair?



Carrie the Cow was a fixture in Montclair in the 1880s. COURTESY MONTCLAIR PUBLIC LIBRARY

“History & Heritage” is a series on Montclair history, written by representatives of the Montclair History Center and the Montclair Public Library. Molly Hone is head of adult



MOLLY HONE

services at the Montclair Public Library.

This photo, taken some time in the 1880s, is of Carrie the Cow. Carrie belonged to Colonel Ezra DeForest, a Brooklynite who had a summer home in Montclair.

According to the inscription on the back of this photograph, Carrie the Cow walked all the way to Montclair (as the scribe put it: “a country village” at the time) from Brooklyn in the early summer every year for several years, and then walked back in the fall. While Carrie was a mainstay at the DeForests’ Montclair summer home, the DeForests also kept a cow and chickens at their Brooklyn home.

[READ: HISTORY AND HERITAGE; BOOK DELIVERY FROM MPL](#)

[READ: HISTORY AND HERITAGE; SPRING FLOWERS AT THE IRIS GARDENS ARE A TRADITION](#)

While it is unclear if Colonel DeForest took this photograph, the inscription notes that DeForest was “one of the excellent early amateur photographers.”

To see more historic photographs (including more images of cows than you might think!), visit [digifind-](#)

it.com/montclair/home.php and search the photo collection. In partnership with the Montclair History Center, we offer over 10,000 digitized photographs, plus city directories, and more for your enjoyment. If you want to see more archival material, contact the library to make a local history appointment at reference@montclair.bccls.org or 973-744-0500 x2235. Visit the library website at montclairlibrary.org for more information.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Jack



Jack

Courtesy Montclair Township Animal Shelter

Meet Jack, an adorable, snuggly, sweet, lovable hound dog that needs a family of his own. Jack is 2-years-old.

The Montclair Township Animal Shelter, 77 North Willow St., is open daily from noon to 4 p.m. For information, call 973-744-8600.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Misha



Misha

COURTESY ERIC DELMAR

Misha is smart, sensitive and serious about a long term commitment. This sweet girl is 3 years old and ready for love Come meet Misha.

The Montclair Township Animal Shelter, 77 North Willow St., is open daily from noon to 4 p.m. For information, call 973-744-8600.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Tessie



Tessie Courtesy Communities Promoting Animal Welfare NJ

Tessie will win your heart in an instant. She is an adventurous, active 7-month-old kitty.

Born on the streets of East Orange she was taken in with her three sisters.

She's very healthy, spayed, up-to-date on shots, and tested negative for FIV/FELV. Tessie is looking forward to getting her forever home.

Contact Communities Promoting Animal Welfare NJ - CPAW NJ at cpawnj@gmail.com or visit cpawnj.org for more information.



Montclair Local Pets of the Week: Alfie and Fawnie



Alfie
Courtesy Montclair Township Animal Shelter



Fawnie
Courtesy Montclair Township Animal Shelter

Meet Alfie and Fawnie. They are brother and sister that must be adopted together....They are about 3-years-old and they are sweet and gentle. And they can entertain each other if you're not home all day. The Montclair Township Animal Shelter, 77 North Willow St., is open daily from noon to 4 p.m. For information, call 973-744-8600.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Winslow



Winslow

Courtesy Pound Animal Welfare Society of Montclair, Inc.

Winslow is 10-years-old and was rescued by animal control from an abandoned garage and brought to an inner city pound. PAWS pulled him, and he was there for a long time before spending the summer with a family in New York City. They loved him, but found that the city's pace was too much for Winslow so he came back to PAWS.

In the house, Winslow is very comfortable, very sweet, cuddly and affectionate. He can get anxious with people or dogs he does not know. He enjoys retreating into his crate to just chill out or nap. He only chews his own toys, and never destroys anything in the home. We recommend an adult home.

Winslow is a sweet, affectionate and loyal dog who would do well in a quiet home where he is the only pet. A fenced yard would be great to give him exercise space, though he walks well on leash. This boy has waited a very long time to find the right home — please consider him!

If interested fill out an application on the PAWS Montclair website at pawsmontclair.org (go to 'our cats'). Private appointments can be arranged. For additional information, email info@pawsmontclair.org.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Clover and Clove



*Clover and Clove
Courtesy Pound Animal Welfare Society of Montclair, Inc.*

Meet Clover and her son Clove. Mom is young, not more than a year or so, and her son Clove is about 8 months old. Clover was rescued from an abandoned house late last year with five newborns. The siblings have since been adopted.

Since these two are especially bonded PAWS has opted to keep them together. They are both fully vetted including micro-chipped.

If interested fill out an application on the PAWS website at pawsmontclair.org (go to 'our cats'). Private appointments can be arranged. For additional information email cats@pawsmontclair.org.



Montclair Local Pet of the Week: Moonlight



Moonlight

Courtesy Communities Promoting Animal Welfare NJ

Moonlight is a sweet, affectionate, curious 11-month-old kitty, with a soft, marble gray coat. She was found abandoned and was taken in by a woman who already had cats of her own. Moonlight gets along with other cats and would bring much happiness and love to the right home. She is fully vetted and tested negative for FIV/FelV.

Contact CPAW NJ at cpawnj@gmail.com or visit cpawnj.org for more information.