



**BIRDING  
HERE  
AND  
THERE...**

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BY EDNA DUFFY AND RAY DUFFY

### 'SUPER BIRD SUNDAY'

This past Sunday morning, as Super Bowl XLVIII turned the world's attention to the Meadowlands region, a large group of intrepid birders gathered a few miles northeast of MetLife Stadium for "Super Bird Sunday V." This event, co-sponsored by the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission and Bergen County Audubon, celebrates the annual football championship by awarding prizes to participants who spot the first bird sporting a team name: Eagle, Cardinal, Raven, Falcon and Seahawk.

Don Torino, president of Bergen County Audubon, welcomed the participants to Super Bird Sunday V at Losen Slote Creek Park, situated next to the Bergen County Utilities Authority in Little Ferry. The entrance is located on Mehrhof Road between the roller hockey rink and the DPW recycling center. The park consists of the largest hardwood forest in our area with thick understory growth, open meadow and water access that was frozen.

Although weather was a major consideration for fans attending the first "cold weather" Super Bowl, most of the 50+ birders who gathered in the parking lot had dressed in the parking lot had dressed appropriately. Temperatures were in the low 40s when the walk started with an inch of snow covering the ground. The trails that transect the park are rather narrow and there were many times when the group was strung out in a long, single line resulting in some people seeing birds that other people missed.

It was a very quiet morning of birding and the cold weather and above-average snowfall this winter may have reduced the number of birds we found. We walked for several

hundred feet before hearing blue jays calling overhead, yet we were unable to see them. As we scanned the tree tops trying to locate the jays, two ring-billed gulls flew over and a red-tailed hawk appeared briefly.

We came upon a group of American tree sparrows that were running along the ground about 15 feet away and spent a few minutes going over the identifying features which included a rust colored crown and spot in the middle of the breast. American tree sparrows winter in our area but nest in northern Canada and Alaska. Further along the path we heard the "tea kettle" calls of a Carolina wren. As the group stopped to look for the wren, a hermit thrush jumped into a small tree about 20 feet away, giving all good looks at its spotted breast and rusty brown back. The group at the front of the line saw a winter wren that others were only able to hear, and a brown thrasher also was seen by those at the front of the line.

The trail at Losen Slote Creek Park can be very wet, muddy and slippery, but we were lucky that the ground was frozen and covered with snow. We turned a bend in the path and entered a large open area where a northern flicker flew around the perimeter showing its yellow underwing. Red-bellied and downy woodpeckers rounded out the list of woodpeckers seen.

We walked another heavily wooded section before entering a smaller opening where we heard several American goldfinches twittering above. Two large dark birds flew to a distant tree and the group turned their attention to a mixed flock of blackbirds. Surprisingly, a few rusty



**Birders and nature lovers on the trail at Losen Slote Creek Park in Little Ferry for the NJMC/Bergen County Audubon's "Super Bird Sunday" on Super Bowl Sunday morning.**

blackbirds were mixed in with the common grackles and European starlings. Rusty blackbirds nest and breed in northern Canada and winter east of Texas to the Atlantic coast, a

little south of the Great Lakes. Their population has declined drastically and this decline is being studied by ornithologists.

On the return out of the woods we happened upon three golden-crowned kinglets in the birch trees and spent several minutes enjoying these tiny birds. They are only four inches long and weigh less than an ounce. We later saw a northern cardinal, the first bird representing a team name. It wasn't until the walk was ending that a second target bird, an eagle, was spotted from the parking lot.

The two hour walk was enjoyed by all and was multi-generational. Some people arrived alone or as couples and others with birding friends. A grandmother was there with her grandson, who will soon be an eagle scout, while a young lady, who recently moved to the area from Canada, joined with her grandpa. Fathers and sons shared the morning adventure before watching the big game later that day.

If you would like to learn more about birds in the Meadowlands region, visit [www.meadowblog.net](http://www.meadowblog.net).




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