



Caper Tigers Zurawski, Hansen earn medals in A.C.

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House of the week

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Tom Reed, migration monitoring coordinator for New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory, watches the spring migration on a dune crossover platform in Cape May Point.

Spring count helps researchers gauge climate change's effects on migration

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — What are those folks on the Coral Avenue dune crossover looking at with their binoculars and scopes? They are counting birds in migration as part of a spring monitoring program that operates from March 1 to May 31.

New Jersey Audubon's Cape May Bird Observatory Migration Monitoring Coordinator Tom Reed visited Borough Commission on Feb. 21, saying much of the research work takes place in the fall but that a spring bird count began in 2019.

The bird observatory has operated a hawk watch program at Cape May Point State Park since 1976, as well as a sea watch in Avalon and a morning-flight songbird count at Higbee Beach in Lower Township.

The sea watch and the morning flight are the only projects of their kind that operate on the Eastern seaboard, so they produce very unique data sets, Reed said.

The spring watch project is the only full-time, operating bird migration count on the Eastern sea-

'We see in excess of 200 species of birds every spring and most years over 200,000 individual birds.'

-Tom Reed, migration monitoring coordinator, Cape May Bird Observatory

board, he said.

"We see in excess of 200 species of birds every spring and most years over 200,000 individual birds," Reed said.

He said the bird count at the Coral Avenue dune crossover starts at sunrise and lasts at least four hours and as long as six hours on days of heavy migration.

The data is recorded in the field on a tablet with using an app that allows participants to count the birds, note what direction they are flying and their altitude.

"We can also take demographic information such as how old an individual bird is, if it's a male or female. They give us extra layers

of data that are really important," Reed said.

Participants are looking at population size and the timing of migration.

"Is that changing over time, the timing of migration over age classes and males and females?" Reed asked. "We're looking at all these water birds that show up in the mouth of Delaware Bay every spring, actually a globally important area for various seabirds to fuel up before they can do their migration."

Reed said the researchers looked at links between weather patterns, water temperature and other factors that may be affecting migration.

Northern gannets, a seabird with a wingspan of about 6 feet, are observed here. It is estimated about 150,000 northern gannets live in the western Atlantic. He said Cape May sees a significant number of those birds in spring and fall, especially in March.

Reed said northern gannets nest

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Coastal protection project progresses in Diamond Beach

Property owners displeased deal involves easement, public access

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Homeowners in the Diamond Beach section of Lower Township will be getting some more shore protection for their properties, but some are wary of the consequences.

Lower Township Council approved an agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for construction of sand dune through Diamond Beach as part of a project stretching from Hereford Inlet to Cape May Inlet.

But Robert S. Baranowski, representing the Grand Condominium Homeowners Association, said none of the residents' concerns were addressed.

"I have to say we're very disappointed in the current situation, very disappointed in the DEP commissioner's take-it-or-leave-it position. We don't feel it's a very good-faith negotiation with Lower. They haven't spoken to the private property owners or made any of the changes that we've been seeking," he said. "We don't have final plans for the project; they are still at 65 percent design. None of us even know what we're signing off on at this point."

The recommended plan, part of the New Jersey Hurricane and Storm Damage Reduction Project, includes a berm and dune system along the oceanfront in Lower Township, Wildwood, North Wildwood and Wildwood Crest.

The total project length is about 25,000 linear feet, with a berm of varying widths at elevation 6.5 feet and a dune with crest elevation at 16 feet along the entire length of the project.

The project would be accomplished by back-passing sand from those areas along the project in Wildwood and Wildwood Crest that have an excess accumulation of sand.

During a meeting Feb. 22, Mayor Frank Sippel said officials held a meeting via Zoom in July 2021 with owners in Diamond Beach whose properties would be affected by the project.

The township forwarded questions raised to the DEP, he said, adding that Township Manager Mike Laffey conveyed information on the project as it became available to the Diamond Beach property owners.

"The township requested that the DEP attend a public meeting to discuss the shore protection project and answer questions related to the project," Sippel said.

On Feb. 23, 2022, DEP representatives made a presentation to the council and the public on the dune project, the mayor said.

Sippel said he and the mayors of Wildwood, North Wildwood and Wildwood Crest attended a virtual meeting last month with the commissioner of the DEP to discuss the status of the state aid agreement.

"The commissioner indicated that each municipality ... must execute the agreement in order for this project to move forward," Sippel said.

According to the commissioner, North Wildwood and Wildwood Crest had approved the agreement and Wildwood's administrator stated the city would support the project and approve the agreement.

Sippel said Lower

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'Mean Girls' to put everyone in their place at LCMRHS



John Alvarez/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

The cast of 'Mean Girls,' on stage this week at the Paul Schmidtchen Theater at Lower Cape May Regional High School, stars Gianna Ikey, left, Caylee Wilson, Vika Simonsen and Jayci Shivers.

Musical adaptation of popular movie on stage this week

By JOHN ALVAREZ
Special to the Star and Wave

ERMA — Lower Cape May Regional High School students will be presenting their version of the musical "Mean Girls" this week in the Paul Schmidtchen Theater.

As winter starts to wind down and spring begins to awaken, high schools present their musicals.

During this time, directors, choreographers and vocal coaches get their students prepared to entertain audiences ranging from their families and friends to representatives of "the Plastics," "the Goths," "the Mathletes" and other various groups that make up the student body. And just as sure as wearing pink on Wednesday, the experience of being in

the musical will stay with the cast long after they graduate.

"Mean Girls," a 2004 movie by Philadelphia native Tina Fey, was based on the book "Queen Bees and Wannabes" by Rosalind Wiseman and starred Lindsey Lohan.

In October 2017, Fey, composer Jeff Richmond and lyricists Nell Benjamin developed a musical version of the movie that premiered at the National Theater in Washington, D.C., before moving to Broadway.

In case you have been stuffed in a locker since 2004, the movie is about Lohan's character Cady Heron, a teenager who has been educated by her parents as they worked in Africa. Upon returning to the United States, Heron

finds herself in North Shore High School where she has to deal with the social pecking order found in the average American high school.

Funny and relatable to almost every high school student who has seen the film in the almost 20 years since it was released, the musical version of the show starring high school students portraying high school students seems as if it would be simple.

But that was not the case. "This is my first lead," said Caylee Wilson, a senior who plays Heron. "I've done three other musicals in high school, several in middle school and a few outside of school. But this show is

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