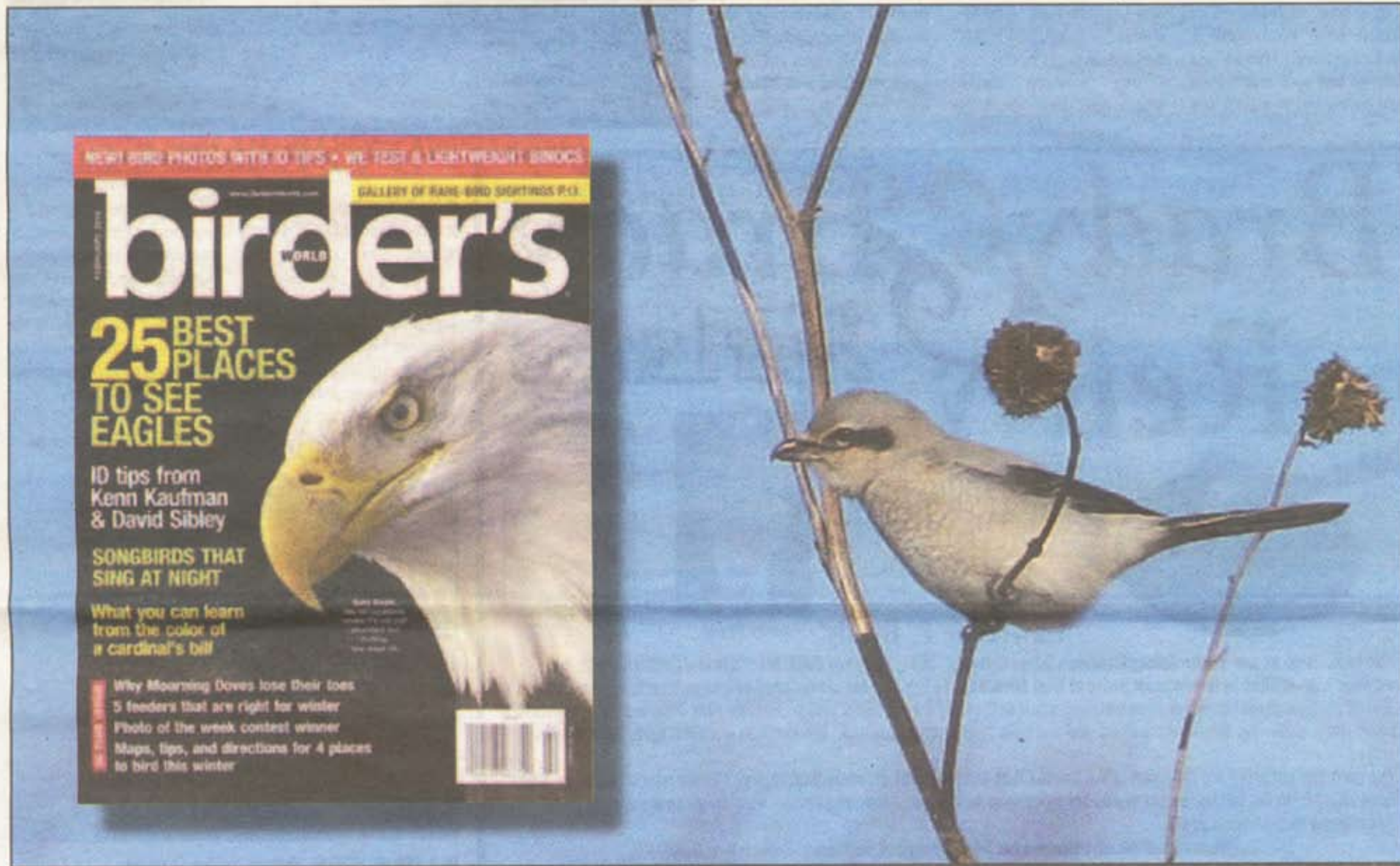




THE OBSERVER NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Sharing the good news of our communities

DeKorte Park is a top-flight destination for birdwatchers



Photos courtesy of NJMC

FROM THE ARCTIC: Rarely seen northern shrike visits Lyndhurst.

By Karen Zautyk
Senior Correspondent

"By the late 1960s," notes the February 2010 issue of Birder's World magazine, "the New Jersey Meadowlands was a sorry emblem of rampant environmental degradation, a sprawling

trashopolis sulking in the shadow of Manhattan."

Yes. Yes, it was.

And we commend the writer, Adam Marcus of Montclair, for his way with words, for never a more vividly accurate description of the "swamps of Jersey" have we read. But wondrous is the

transformation, as the magazine acknowledges.

Birder's World has named the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission's Richard W. DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst one of its top places for birdwatching. Not only that, but it judges the 110-acre refuge — once slated to be a

garbage dump — to be "among the premier urban wildlife spots in the country." Yes, in the entire country.

Even if, when it comes to birds, you can't tell a rock dove from a pigeon [see Editor's Note below], this is an honor we should all crow about.

The February issue, which is already on the newsstands, cites the NJMC for rescuing "what was once a national shame" and notes that, because of the commission, the 30-square-mile Meadowlands area "has undergone a reclamation

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of remarkable scope and success."

Instead of rotting trash and old tires and rusty refrigerators and the odd floater or two, the fresh and saltwater marshes and the grasslands are now home to more than 200 species of birds, all of which have been seen in DeKorte Park. Hawks and falcons and owls and herons and egrets and swallows and

kestrels and orioles and on and on. According to Birder's World, birdwatchers can spot up to 120 species in one day during the spring and fall migration periods.

But the birding is fine year-round. Even in these winter months, waterfowl and raptors abound, and there is the occasional rarity, too.

"The big birding attraction near DeKorte Park so far this winter," an NJMC spokesman said, "has been an elusive northern shrike, which flew down from the

Arctic in December and has attracted hundreds of birders from across New Jersey over the past month."

Earlier this month, the shrike was still at DeKorte, but we wonder if it has returned home, the Arctic being considerably warmer than New Jersey was in the last few weeks.

Still, if you bundle up properly, you can enjoy the beauties of the park, with its trails and icy vistas stretching to the horizon and Manhattan's towers. It is open daily,



SNOWY HAVEN: DeKorte Park is a delight even in winter.

from 8 a.m. to dusk and attracts about 50,000 visitors annually.

If you are interested in birding, or would like to learn about it, the NJMC in conjunction with the Bergen County Audubon Society offers twice-monthly, free guided bird walks. These are held at 10 a.m. on the first

the Meadowlands a great destination for birdwatchers and everyone else who loves the outdoors," said Robert Ceberio, the NJMC's executive director. "The article is the latest confirmation of the Meadowlands amazing environmental comeback."

Yes. Yes it is.
Editor's Note: "Rock



IN A SEA OF WHITE: Visitors' center at sunset.

Sunday and the third Tuesday of each month. For more information, go to meadowblog.net.

"The NJMC is pleased to be recognized by Birder's World for our efforts to make

dove" is actually a more poetic name for a pigeon. The ornithological, Latin name for a pigeon is "Mus avis," or "flying rat." (OK, we made that up.)



VIEW FROM THE TOP: Nature trail looks down upon visitors' center.