



Rochester Birding  
Association

# Little Gull



*On October 8, two Black-bellied Plovers were seen at Braddock Bay East Spit by Richard Horsey*

## THERE ARE NO ORGANIZED FIELD TRIPS FOR NOVEMBER



Don't let that stop you from going out and having a good time, though! November is an excellent month to observe the parade of waterbirds on Lake Ontario. Several experienced birders are active at the lake watch beside the Lakeshore Pavilion at Parking Lot 4 of Hamlin Beach State Park many mornings during these months.

**DEC 1**  
Sunday

### NIAGARA RIVER (JOINT TRIP WITH THE BUFFALO ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY)

The Niagara River area is famous for the variety and number of gulls in winter. Join us on our birding venture along the Niagara River in both the US and Canada. We will start at Lake Ontario and work our way south to the Falls. Our focus will be on waterfowl and gulls, including Bonaparte's Gull and Little Gull, with possible late migrating Common Tern, with additional stops for Red-headed Woodpecker, Black Vulture and late migrating passerines. This is a joint trip with the Buffalo Ornithological Society. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the large parking lot next to the swimming pool of Fort Niagara State Park Beach, 1 Scott Avenue, Rt. 18F, Youngstown, NY. Bring beverages and lunch for this is an all day trip. We will be crossing into Canada, carpooling would be very helpful.

**Participants MUST bring passports or Enhanced Driver's licenses.** Dress warmly and in layers. Spotting scopes and FRS radios would be very helpful.

**Leaders:** Tom O'Donnell of the Buffalo Ornithological Society (BOS) 716-622-5185 or [tmodonnell@roadrunner.com](mailto:tmodonnell@roadrunner.com) and Neal Reilly 518-256-9147 and co-leader Cathy Ballard 585-322-2621

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER, RANDI MINETOR

As I sip my pumpkin spice latte and watch the leaves falling from the black walnut tree in my backyard, I can't help but marvel at the squirrels hopping across the ground cover, walnuts encased in green shells clutched between their teeth. Fall has set in, with all the anticipation that we learned as children, from school starting to the approach of the year-end holidays. Squirrels seem to feel the same sense of urgency we do, working feverishly to gather the last of summer's bounty and—dare I say it?—squirrel it away for the coming frozen months.



Photo by Nic Minetor

Here at RBA, we are also reviewing our resources, with an eye toward keeping our cupboards well stocked, with as much coming in as is going out. In an effort to give our members the best possible experience with the club, we have made some changes over the last two years. Some of these have required us to spend money for a one-time expense, while others have become ongoing expenses.

For example, we now pay a technician to help us make sure that the Zoom component of our general membership meetings actually works. We have a webmaster who is a marvel with WordPress and problem-solving, and he charges us a fairly nominal fee for his services. The costs of having a website have increased with time, and some things that web hosts and other suppliers once provided for free are now only available for a fee. And you've seen the new layout of the Little Gull, for which our editor/artist charges a monthly fee as well.

So when you get your membership renewal letter this month, you will see that we are asking for **an additional donation beyond your membership**. In 2025, we will introduce a new membership structure that will help us defray some of these new costs, but **when you renew your membership in 2024, it will be at the old rate**. An additional gift will help offset our rising operating costs, while ensuring that we can continue to support the efforts of other organizations to improve access to birds and birding. Please consider an additional gift to keep RBA strong.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are excited to announce our upcoming 50th Anniversary Dinner! We're planning to have it on Sunday, February 2—that's the Sunday after the championship games and before the Super Bowl, so there's no game to watch—at a venue to be named soon. Watch your email in December for more details, but in the meantime, save the date!

The last of the skeins of geese are passing over my house, so it must be time to get out and start looking for rafts of ducks on the Finger Lakes and fields filled with feeding Sandhill Cranes. Happy fall, and we'll see you out there.



Sandhill Cranes in a field at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Alan Bloom.

# RENEW YOUR ROCHESTER BIRDING ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

What's your favorite part of being part of the RBA community? Attending field trips? Monthly speakers sharing unique insights into the world of birds? The Little Gull newsletter? Birds & Brews? Whatever the reason, your annual RBA membership makes all of this possible!

This year, RBA brought you more than fifty field trips, eight professional speakers, the monthly Little Gull newsletter, and social events like Birds & Brews and the annual picnic. We have added functionality to help us use technology to our members' advantage, hiring a technical specialist to run the Zoom component of our monthly meetings and a webmaster to ensure that our website, [rochesterbirding.org](http://rochesterbirding.org), is always online and running smoothly. We have also hired a newsletter designer to make the Little Gull more engaging and timely.

You may have noticed a word that's new to RBA: we *hired* people to do some of these important tasks. After attempting to find people within our membership who had the necessary skills, we concluded that we needed to go beyond the club to find experts who can give RBA members a quality experience. This means that RBA has expenses that we have never had before.

In 2025, we will introduce a new pricing structure for RBA membership. Before we do, however, we're giving you the opportunity to **renew your membership for the same price our members have paid for more than fifteen years**. The new structure will go into effect on January 1, but until then, you can renew or join RBA at the current rate:

Household membership	\$25 (with Little Gull via e-mail)
Junior membership (9-18)	\$15 (with Little Gull via e-mail)
Little Gull by USPS mail - add to membership dues	\$15

To renew now, please visit [rochesterbirding.org](http://rochesterbirding.org) and click on the Join/Renew button at the top of the page. Renewing in November saves RBA the printing and mailing costs and volunteer time needed for sending out membership reminder letters.

We have made a concerted effort over the past two years to spend from our Capital Funds to support worthwhile projects that make a difference to birds and birding in the greater Rochester area. If you have the means, please **consider making an additional gift to RBA's Access to Birds and Birding Fund**. An additional \$50, \$100 or more would help replenish our Capital Fund so we can continue our mission to support conservation efforts, trail access, and other projects that protect birds and enhance our area's birding experience. (Supported past projects can be viewed at <https://rochesterbirding.org/access-to-birds-and-birding-fund/> )

If you prefer not to renew online, download the renewal form here: <https://rochesterbirding.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/RBA-Membership-form.pdf> , or you can contact Jo Taylor at [jhtaylor@frontiernet.net](mailto:jhtaylor@frontiernet.net), and she will email you the renewal form that you can print out and mail in with your check, or, if necessary, mail you a paper renewal form. We don't want to lose you as a member! We'll do our best to accommodate your needs.

Your renewal will be good until January 1, 2026, and will bring you and the RBA community another great year of birds and birding.

Thank you,  
Jo Taylor, Membership Data

*NOTE: New members joining after September 1 of this year are paid up through all of 2025.*



## Behavior as a Driver of Population Differentiation

*Maria Castano, Doctoral candidate and Biologist, University of Rochester*

Maria Castano is a Colombian biologist studying the role of behavior as a driver of population differentiation. The outstanding bird diversity of her home country made her an enthusiastic birder and ornithologist. She earned her BS at Universidad de los Andes, where she completed her undergraduate thesis about the amazing experience of performing a long-term population monitoring study about patterns of space use of montane birds. Maria joined the TropBioLab at the University of Rochester in Fall 2020, with the specific interest in how visual and acoustic signals involved in mate choice are shaped by ecological pressures that ultimately result in reproductive isolation of neotropical birds. Her dissertation project at UR focuses on the Flame-rumped Tanager (*Ramphocelus flammigerus*) subspecies complex—two subspecies that exhibit subtle morphological differences, but dramatic variation in the carotenoid-based plumage color of the rump.



## WELCOME TO THE FLOCK

**Join us in welcoming these new members who joined over the last month.**

Cindy Bero

Ethel Duble

Michele & Ed Fisher

Thomas Hilling

Bunny Krao

Ashley Luciano

Elizabeth Mundschenk

Melanie & Gary Popick

**As of September 15, total membership is 389**

373 Household memberships

1 Junior member

1 Corporate member (The Bird House)

23 Complimentary

*Jo Taylor, RBA Membership Data*



*Dunlin seen by Richard Horsey at Braddock Bay East Spit.*

## Beginner Birder Trip –Ontario Beach and Turning Point Park September 8, 2024

The skies brightened to a cloud-studded blue. A stiff breeze blew off of Lake Ontario. The beach parking lot had few birds, so we leaders and 13 participants headed straight for the water. There, we found hundreds of gulls tucked down in the sand. Three common gulls gave our beginner birders a chance to view each in adult plumage and begin to understand how gulls have a wide range of sub-adult plumages.

Multiple large flocks of Double-crested Cormorants streamed east to west over the water. One or two individuals hung out on rocks for closer inspection. While looking outward, we also looked closer at the shoreline. It was nice to see a few Sanderling and Semi-palmated Plover foraging the slim bounty at the water's edge.

The channel, this day, was disappointing. The terns that we were hoping for were not on the Summerville Pier. Of course, there were a few Mallards but the real show ended up being in the air. An Osprey and a mature Bald Eagle were having a dispute. While putting on quite a display, both birds disengaged and went separate ways.

Our group moved to Turning Point Park. On the boardwalk, we had distant views of Wood Duck and closer looks at Great Egret and Great Blue Heron. A scope is always helpful here, as well as when exploring the new islands on the east side of the river. We sighted several Killdeer, Mute Swans, and an additional Great Egret and Great Blue Heron. A Belted Kingfisher kited and made several spectacular 'plunge' dives for fish and an Osprey flaunted its fishing success flying over with what appeared to be a large Koi.

Southward on the nature trail, foliage made viewing and identifying avian species difficult. A small clearing was found where we had success using a mob call. Seven House Finch responded immediately and adorned one

small, dead pine tree. Three male 'not so' Scarlet Tanagers joined them. Flitting in and out of the scene were Tennessee, Magnolia and Pine Warblers. A couple of American Redstarts and Red-eyed Vireo complained, a Carolina Wren belted out a 'comb' call as a Red-breasted Nuthatch tried to climb the speaker.

We finished the day with a trip total of 44 species.

*Rosemary Reilly and John Boettcher*



*Bonaparte's Gulls at Braddock Bay East Spit. Photo by Richard Horsey.*

## Braddock Bay East Spit September 15, 2024

Nineteen birders gathered at the Braddock Bay East Spit on a warm and sunny morning. A Black-crowned Night Heron was a good start, visible from the parking lot. The group moved down the spit picking up a nice variety of migrating warblers including Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Yellow, Bay-breasted, Northern Parula, and Blackpoll. The channel between the spit and the island had a variety of gulls and shorebirds including Caspian Tern, Herring, Ring-billed and Bonaparte's Gulls, both Yellowlegs, Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpiper, and Semipalmated Plover. Part of the group crossed the ankle-deep water to the

*Double-crested Cormorants were also seen at Braddock Bay East Spit on September 15th. Photo by Richard Horsey.*



island and eventually found a Black-bellied Plover that moved to the channel, giving nice views. A warm day with little wind gave us a nice total of 48 species.

Thanks to everyone who participated.

**Neal Reilly, Sheryl Gracewski, and Tom Nash**

## **Ganondagan State Historical Site September 21, 2024**

On a lovely sunny fall day, twenty adults plus one child walked a trail through shrub, deep woods, fields and along a wetland for a 2-mile walk. We had 3 RBA members and everyone else heard about the walk through Ganondagan even though 10 people had never been to GSHS. We were a wonderfully diverse group in every way—age, heritage, orientation, experience, etc.—and I was still hearing how much fun people had three weeks later. We had a mix of resident birds and migrants. Our 27 species included Ovenbirds which had likely bred onsite, Eastern Towhee, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, many Gray Catbirds and a Brown Thrasher. There were many sparrows that didn't show themselves for identification, with the exception of one Song Sparrow.

**Amy Kahn and Neal Reilly**

## **Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge September 22, 2024**

Six birders gathered at Goose Pond overlook on a bright, sunny and very warm first day of fall. After spotting Great Egret, Common Gallinule, and Horned Lark at the overlook, we moved to Center Marsh in search of shorebirds. There we had scope views of Semipalmated Plover, Least

Sandpiper, both Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, and flyovers by Bald Eagle and Sandhill Crane. After lunch at Mallard Overlook, we moved to Kumpf Marsh spotting more Sandhill Cranes, Northern Pintails, Northern Shovelers, both teal, and several Pectoral Sandpipers. Cayuga Overlook produced immature and adult Black-crowned Night-Herons, Pied-billed Grebe, and Northern Harrier. Overall, we had 47 species under bright warm sun. Thanks to everyone who participated.

**Neal Reilly and Doug Rabjohns**



*A Common Gallinule (above) and a Bald Eagle spotted at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge by Alan Bloom.*



## Hamlin Beach State Park

October 5, 2024

On a beautiful fall day, 21 birders met at parking lot 1 of Hamlin Beach State Park to enjoy the summer-like weather conditions. As we have in recent years, the trip was run in early fall to take advantage of fall passerine migrants. This year's trip of October 5th was the earliest ever, but this event has been scheduled as late as November 6th. We started our trip at parking lot 4 to look over the lake for migrant waterfowl. There was no waterbird movement today; it appears to be too early. However, small passerines were plentiful.

At parking lot 4, we watched a feeding flock of House Finches, Chipping Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, and a few Ruby-crowned Kinglets. We encountered another large feeding flock on the west side of parking lot 3 that included Eastern Bluebirds, Chipping Sparrows, some kinglets, and a single Pine Warbler which everyone was able to see. We walked the wooded area between parking lots 1 and 3 looking for Red-headed Woodpecker. We did not find one but had views of Hairy, Downy, Red-bellied, Northern Flicker, and Brown Creepers. One highlight of this walk was a White-crowned Sparrow. A Hermit Thrush was seen by a few birders but a total of three for the day



Red-bellied Woodpecker at Hamlin Beach State Park spotted by Richard Horsey.

gave most birders brief views of this species. Surprisingly missing from the feeding flocks were Yellow-rumped Warblers.

On route to parking lot 5, one of our participants sighted a Peregrine Falcon flying east. Unfortunately, the group could not get on this bird. We encountered another flock of small birds high in the trees on the Devil's Nose trail. Both kinglets, Tufted Titmouse, an Eastern Phoebe, and eventually White-Throated Sparrows were seen by everyone. We had brief views of two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

We ended the trip at the park with 31 species. While some of the group were enjoying Niki Banke's brownies in the parking lot, a Common Raven showed up. Everyone seemed to enjoy the trip, it was a beautiful day for a walk.

**Dominic Sherony and Rick Stevens**



A juvenile Pine Warbler  
Photo by Richard Horsey.

A Ruddy Duck at the Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant. Photo by Barbara Smith.



## Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant October 13, 2024

A dozen birders braved a steady light rain and chilly temperatures to explore the Batavia Wastewater plant. Northern Shovelers and Ruddy Ducks were present in large numbers. Other waterfowl present included Wood Duck, Mallard, American Black Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Green-winged Teal, Common Merganser, and Lesser Scaup. A flyover adult Bald Eagle was a nice treat. Passerine birds included a late-staying Palm Warbler and numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers for a total of 34 species. Thanks to everyone who participated.

*Neal Reilly*

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Little Lakes Christmas Bird Count 2024

**An Opportunity to Be a Part of the Birding Community!**

**Save the date of Sunday, December 29 to participate in the 73rd bird count of the Little Lakes area!**

Each year around the end of December, we count the diversity and abundance of birds in the Little Lakes "count circle." The center of the 15 mile diameter circle is the outlet of Hemlock Lake, at the north end of the lake. The circle includes all of Conesus, Hemlock, Canadice and Honeoye Lakes and a large area to the north. The data is compiled and sent to the National Audubon Society, who uses it to identify trends and influence conservation policy.

The afternoon compiling meeting will be held at 4:30 pm at the American Hotel, located at the SE corner of NY 15A and US 20 in the village of Lima.

Please contact Pat Martin for further information [emartin139@earthlink.net](mailto:emartin139@earthlink.net) or (585) 301-5485

*Further details will appear in the December Little Gull Newsletter*

Snow Bunting photographed by Alan Bloom.





# ROCHESTER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Sunday Dec. 15, 2024 is the day of the 121st Rochester Christmas Bird Count. With this traditional activity we renew our commitment to science and birding.

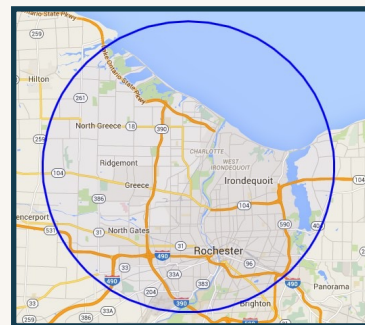
*Sunday, December 15, 2024*

This is a significant opportunity.

- to develop your birding skills in the field
- to make connections in the birding community
- to contribute to 'Citizen Science'
- to attend the tally dinner, exchange stories, enjoy pizza and make birdy friends.

We need your help and welcome all skill levels. Please join us!!!

These sector leaders for the RCBC have consented to coordinate the field work for the count of our winter birds. To participate in the count, contact them or Nick Kachala. Be sure to ask your leader for details.



John Boettcher 298-3404  
[john2w3b@gmail.com](mailto:john2w3b@gmail.com)

Braddock Bay to Long Pond Road

Greg Lawrence  
[glaw-rence21@yahoo.com](mailto:glaw-rence21@yahoo.com)

Long Pond Road to Dewey Avenue  
Dewey Avenue to Charlotte Harbor

Andy Garland  
[andrew.garland@yahoo.com](mailto:andrew.garland@yahoo.com)  
585-329-1577

Summerville to Culver Road  
& Seneca Park

OPEN SLOT – Contact Nick Kachala if  
interested in serving as a sector leader

Culver Road to Baker Road (Webster)

Shirley Shaw 385-3907  
[shirley@jashaw.com](mailto:shirley@jashaw.com)

Parks and neighborhoods  
(Highland, Genesee Valley, Mt. Hope Cemetery)

Rosemary Reilly  
[reilly.rosemary@gmail.com](mailto:reilly.rosemary@gmail.com)

Maplewood & Turning Point Parks,  
Holy Sepulcher and Riverside cemeteries

Brian Morse  
[brianmorse2000@gmail.com](mailto:brianmorse2000@gmail.com)  
269-9576

West of airport/south of the canal/  
north of the river

Rob Buckert 269-4206  
[avbro@hotmail.com](mailto:avbro@hotmail.com)

Crow Roost

Nick Kachala, Compiler  
[nicholaskach@gmail.com](mailto:nicholaskach@gmail.com) or 585-750-5536



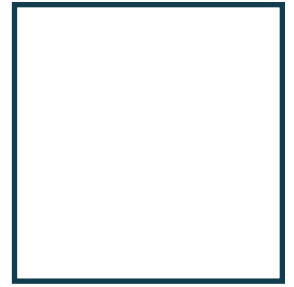
*A photo of a Dark-eyed Junco taken by Alan Bloom at Mendon Ponds Park in January of 2024.*





# Rochester Birding Association

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