



Rochester Birding  
Association

# Little Gull



American Avocet spotted by  
Alan Bloom last April in Hamlin.

## APR 2025 FIELD TRIPS



Leaders and trip details are subject to change. Please check the most recent issue of the Little Gull, or the online schedule at the RBA website [rochesterbirding.org](http://rochesterbirding.org), for updated information prior to departure! All field trips go rain/snow or shine unless there is a travel advisory issued. Trips run approximately 2 to 4 hours. Bring binoculars. Wear weather appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes. Registration is not required, please arrive at the designated meeting location 10 minutes before the start time of the trip. Colds, flu, and COVID are still around—if you're not feeling well, please stay home. Please carpool when possible. Enjoy your trip!

APR 5  
Saturday

### WOODCOCK COURTSHIP FLIGHT AT OWL WOODS

This will be an evening trip for woodcock courtship flight. If you've never seen this spectacle, prepare to be amazed: birds call noisily (peenting) from the ground in grassy fields before spiraling rapidly up high, making twittering, kissing-like sounds at the apex of their ascent and descending silently back down, only to start the cycle anew. An amazing sight! Fields may be wet and muddy. **Boots are strongly recommended. Bring a flashlight or headlamp.** Meet at **7:00 p.m.** in the parking lot across from Owl Woods. Take the Manitou Beach Road exit from Ontario State Parkway. Turn north then right into the parking lot.

**Leaders:** Neal Reilly 518-256-9147 and co-leader Robert Buckert 585-269-4206

Field Trips continue on [page 4](#)



## An Old Friend

We lost a member of our household in March. Well... maybe that's a bit melodramatic, but during an ice storm in February, a large limb from the mature box elder in our backyard came down. Box elder trees have a relatively short lifespan, only 60–75 years, and ours was quite old. It had been slowly losing sections of leaves, the trunk was full of cavities where woodpeckers had been having a field day, and every year in the spring we would wonder how much of it would come back. Yet, like Saturday Night Live, it always seemed to have one more season in it.

Leaving up dead and dying trees is a benefit to the ecosystem and was the main reason we let ours go for so long. Woodpeckers prefer them for foraging because the wood is softer. The cavities they create are then available for shelter and nesting sites. Many a time in the fall and winter, we watched as nuthatches would cache seeds and peanuts from our feeders under the bark. Perhaps most selfishly, the open areas provided perches which made birds easily visible as we sat out on our patio watching the activity and trying to get just one more species for our eBird list that day.

A few years ago, a small branch came down and created a hollow in the trunk. We noticed a pair of European Starlings taking a particular interest in it. Starlings are an invasive species, and we were less than thrilled that we were being targeted as a host family. We keep a stash of avocado pits (we chuck them at the deer who raid our feeders, but that's another story), so we filled the cavity with the pits and smugly thought we had foiled their nesting plans. The next day, we found the pits all out on the ground and nesting material protruding from the hole.

Being outsmarted by a bird is somewhat humiliating, and thus began a battle of wits. I thought, two can play this game, so I removed the nesting material and replaced it with the avocado pits. The next day, the pits were on the ground again. As I replaced the pits, I thought they will tire of this, right? Wrong. I will adapt, I thought after a couple days, as I plugged the opening with a ball, only to find it on the ground the next day. I am not giving up, I thought, as I squeezed a tennis ball into the opening, only to find it pried out the next day. I am stronger than a couple of Starlings, I thought, as I took a hammer and pounded the tennis ball into the hole. The next day there were peck marks in the wood around the ball, but they had moved on, proving it only takes me a week to outwit a bird and that my stubborn streak can occasionally produce a positive outcome.

Maybe I'm overly sentimental, but that tree was part of our lives. When we made the difficult decision to remove the whole box elder, we had to leave the house to avoid the trauma of seeing it cut down. Now we have a large open area and the opportunity to plant something new. I just hope the woodpeckers still deem us worthy enough to visit.

Some RBA highlights for this month:

Our speaker this month is our own Randi Minetor, sharing stories from her newly published book *The Complete Language of Birds*. She will be speaking in person, and I hope to see many of you Thursday, April 10th at 7:00 pm at Asbury First United Methodist Church or via Zoom.

Check out the upcoming April field trips! Migration season is upon us, so there are lots of opportunities to join your fellow birders in the field.

Check out the Braddock Bay Hawkwatch. The new counter is Maili Waters and she is very

personable and willingly shares her knowledge, as do the experienced volunteers that help out. Any day is fun, but the best opportunities for large numbers of raptors are days with southwesterly winds that push the birds up to the lakeshore. Don't forget Bird of Prey Days , scheduled for April 25th-27th. RBA will have a table there, so stop by and say hi.

In March, your RBA donated money to Braddock Bay Raptor Research to pay for a portable toilet. While perhaps not glamorous, this is a very welcomed way to support Hawk Watch activities prior to the opening of the public restrooms by the Town of Greece. I visited the Braddock Bay Hawk Watch this week and several people expressed their gratitude to the RBA for the funding.

Finally, we continue to ask for your support towards our \$8500 1:1 match goal for our Access to Birds and Birding Fund. An update on progress is provided below. We use this fund to support projects in our community. Thanks to those who have already donated!

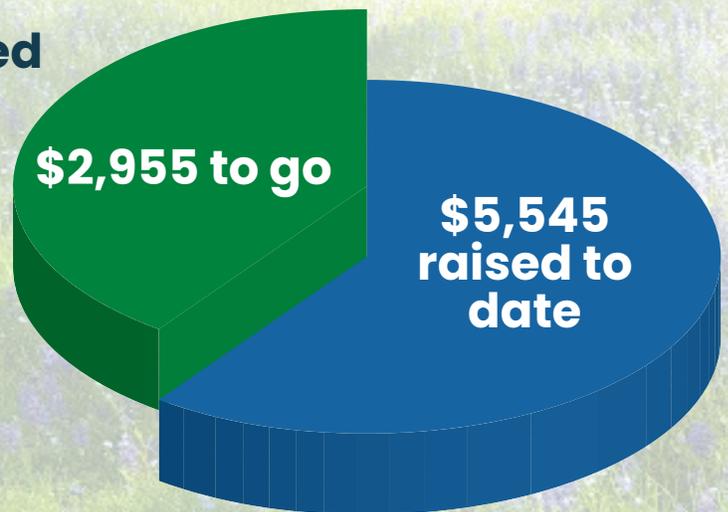
Until next month, Happy Birding!

## WE'RE GETTING CLOSER!

**Give to the Rochester Birding Association's Access to Birds and Birding Fund before May 1, 2025, and your gift will be doubled!**

As announced in the February Little Gull, we have an anonymous donor who will match every dollar RBA raises until May 1, 2025, up to \$8500. This includes donations given during our 2025 membership drive. Funds are used to support projects that improve access to birds and birding in the Greater Rochester area.

**As of March 25, we have raised \$5,545 or 65% of our \$8500 match target.**



Please consider a donation and help us reach our goal. Visit [rochesterbirding.org/access-to-birds-and-birding-fund/](https://rochesterbirding.org/access-to-birds-and-birding-fund/)

Background image from [bancny.org](https://bancny.org)



# FIELD TRIPS

**APR 19**  
Saturday

## HIGH ACRES NATURE AREA

Over 130 bird species have been observed at HANA, including more than 70 that nest in the diverse habitats found there. During this field trip we expect to see at least 40 species returning to nest or on their way to northern nesting grounds. Our approximately two-mile walk over mostly flat trails will explore about 250 acres at HANA and include some wet spots requiring at least ankle-high waterproof shoes or boots. No restrooms available. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot on Perinton Parkway approximately 1/4 mile east of the Waste Management offices.

**Leaders:** Rosemary Reilly 585-748-0802 and co-leaders Brian Rohrs and Gayle Lazoration 585-281-9534

**APR 23**  
Wednesday

## HIGHLAND PARK – A JOINT TRIP WITH THE HIGHLAND PARK CONSERVANCY

We'll be looking for spring migrants while enjoying lovely flora. This walk would be gorgeous even without the birds, but it does have birds in abundance! Find out where people have spotted the rarities that pop up in this urban treasure. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars. We will be mostly walking on paved walkways with gentle hills; walking in grass is a possibility. Restrooms may be available. Meet at 8:00 a.m. on Reservoir Avenue in front of the Conservatory building.

**Leaders:** Jeanne Verhulst 585-362-0803 and co-leader Amy Kahn 585-310-2330

**APR 25-27**

# BIRD OF PREY DAYS

**Braddock Bay Park, Greece, New York**



*Red-tailed Hawk  
by Eunice Thein*

**APR 26**  
Saturday

## BRADDOCK BAY HOTSPOTS—BRADDOCK BAY PARK, EAST SPIT, BURGER PARK, WEST SPIT, OWL WOODS

Locations to be determined based on where the birds are at the time. The trip will end at the Braddock Bay Park where Bird of Prey Days will be in full swing. Carpooling is encouraged. Dress for the weather and muddy trails. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Braddock Bay Park main parking lot.

**Leaders:** Neal Reilly 518-256-9147 and co-leader Robert Crandall 585-278-3455

**APR 27**  
Sunday

## FOUR MILE CREEK PRESERVE, WEBSTER

We will look for spring migrants along the approximately 2 to 3 miles of gently rolling hiking trails. The trails will most likely be muddy, so appropriate footwear is recommended. No restrooms available. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the preserve parking lot at the SE corner of Lake Road and Phillips Road in Webster.

**Leaders:** Tom and Jeanne Verhulst 585-362-0803, Sue Robertson 585-427-2535 and Pat Martin 585-301-5485



*Baltimore Oriole at Four Mile Creek Preserve. Photo by Eunice Thein.*



# FIELD TRIPS

**APR 30**  
Wednesday

## COBB'S HILL PARK—WASHINGTON GROVE

With spring in full swing, come to one of Rochester's best-kept birding secrets: Cobb's Hill Park's Washington Grove. Colorful warblers and other spring migrants arrive en masse at this urban oasis of tall stately trees. We will search for Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Nashville, and Black-and-white Warblers among others. We will likely hear the flute-like Wood Thrush and see Hermit Thrushes searching the ground for food. Sparrows, orioles, and perhaps a Scarlet Tanager will make an appearance. The entrances into the grove have two short steep trails, the main trails are gentle hills. No restrooms available. Meet at 8:00 a.m. under the conifers opposite the reservoir at the flat section of Reservoir Road. Access to Reservoir Road is from Highland Avenue. Look for two stone pillars at the road entrance; the road goes up a hill. (DO NOT use the Nunda Blvd. entrance to Washington Grove).

**Leaders:** Tom and Jeanne Verhulst 585-362-0803, Sue Robertson 585-427-2535 and Pat Martin 585-301-5485

**MAY 3**  
Saturday

## BEGINNER BIRDER TRIP – LAKESHORE WARBLER HOTSPOTS

The shoreline of Lake Ontario is a haven for migrating warblers and other passerines. We will stop at several areas where these birds tend to congregate in spring. Learn the basics of identifying our most colorful migrants on this trip. We'll be looking for color patterns, song, and their distinctive behaviors to enhance identification skills with these fast-moving beauties. Though flat, trails may be very muddy. Waterproof boots are strongly recommended! Dress for the weather and bring binoculars. No restrooms available. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the parking lot behind Lakeview Community Church, 30 Long Pond Road, Rochester, NY 14612 (near Edgemere Drive).

**Leaders:** Sheryl Gracewski and Tom Nash 585-261-6975, Lynn Bergmeyer 585-576-0422 and co-leader Ann McMican 585-533-1222

**MAY 3**  
Saturday

## BRADDOCK BAY HAWK LOOKOUT

This trip is for the spring hawk flight and migrating songbirds. We will be working to identify distant raptors and meet some great new people, too! This requires a short walk across grass to the viewing platform. Port-a-John may be available. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Braddock Bay Park main parking lot. Use the East Manitou Road exit from the Ontario State Parkway. Spotting scopes would be very useful.

**Leaders:** Mike Tetlow 585-748-5838 and Neal Reilly 518-256-9147

**MAY 4**  
Sunday

## BEECHWOOD STATE PARK AND OLGA FLEISHER WILDLIFE PRESERVE

Beechwood State Park is on the shoreline of Lake Ontario in Wayne County and should attract warblers, vireos, thrushes and other migrants. The Beechwood trip will involve about two miles of walking over mostly level ground (Port-a-john available) and will last until about noon. Bring lunch if you plan to attend the second part of the trip to the Olga Fleisher Preserve (known locally as Huckleberry Swamp), a bottomland forest and wetland. Huckleberry has both boardwalk and flat forest trails. (No restroom.) Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the Webster Park east parking lot (with Port-a-john and playground) on Holt Road, just before Lake Road, or at 7:30 a.m. at B. Forman Park, 4507 Lake Road, Pultneyville, 14538 (Port-a-john). We will continue to Beechwood from there. If coming



## FIELD TRIPS

from the east, meet at about 8:00 a.m. at Beechwood's main parking area (Gates Road on Google maps) on the north side of Lake Road, near Maxwell Road (not at the Salmon Creek area parking).

**Leaders:** Jim Wood 585-967-8687 and co-leader Jeanne Verhulst 585-362-0803

**MAY 6**  
Tuesday

### ONTARIO PATHWAYS (FLINT CREEK SECTION)

We'll look for warblers and other spring migrants along this rails-to-trails pathway in Ontario County. This well-maintained trail is an established favorite for wildlife viewing and scenic views. Wear comfortable walking shoes. At times, the weather can be fickle; dress accordingly! This is a level grade, easy-to-walk, linear trail, 1.6 miles in and 1.6 miles back out. No restrooms available. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trailhead. It is on the south side of Rt. 96 just east of the Rt. 488 intersection. For anyone needing a bathroom before heading out on the trail, there is a Byrne Dairy on the corner of Rts. 96 & 488.

**Leaders:** Lynn Bergmeyer 585-576-0422 and Rosemary Reilly 585-748-0802

**MAY 7**  
Wednesday

### WHITING ROAD NATURE PRESERVE

This preserve includes about 240 acres of land that is made up of a variety of birding habitats. This results in decent birding lists throughout the year. The trails are well marked and maintained. However, they do get muddy at times, so appropriate footwear is recommended based on the weather leading up to the trip date. Most of the trails are flat, but there definitely will be a bit of up and down trail climbing in some sections. Our trek will take us on parts of the blue, brown, orange, and red trails. Moderate difficulty in a few spots; length about 2.5 miles. No restrooms. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot on Whiting Road in Webster, 0.6 miles south of Lake Road.

**Leaders:** Candace Giles 585-281-1643 and co-leader Eunice Thein 585-746-2919

## Birds and Brews

*Join us for craft beers and conversation! A chance to meet up and socialize with people who love birds.*

**Wednesday, April 30, 2025**

**6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse  
760 Jefferson Road, Henrietta**

This pub and restaurant features an extensive selection of craft beers, ciders, wines, and a full-service bar for cocktails, as well as a full menu and table service. They're famous for their deep-dish pizza, by the way. They're even willing to turn down the music in our section, so we can hear each other!

[www.bjsrestaurants.com](http://www.bjsrestaurants.com)



**GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING** • Thursday, Apr 10th, 2025 @ 7 PM

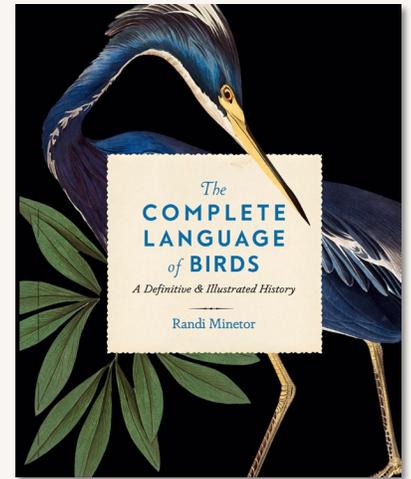
Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Avenue, Rochester NY

Free and open to the public. Parking and entrance at rear of church.

## How Birds Created the World ... and Other Stories from *The Complete Language of Birds*

Speaker: *Randi Minetor*

Ancient Egyptians believed that the Earth began as an egg laid by a giant goose. Ojibwa people of America's northern plains tell of a Great Flood that swept away the world's evils, and the bird that braved the deep waters to bring a bit of soil up from the bottom to restore land at the surface. European scientists once believed that geese survived the winters by turning themselves into barnacles and adhering to the bottoms of ships, transforming back into swans in spring. These and many other tales told in Randi Minetor's latest book, *The Complete Language of Birds*, bring us back to a time when birds seemed like magical beings with the answers for so many of the world's questions.



Bestselling author **Randi Minetor** has written more than 90 books, including the Birdfinding and Best Easy Bird Guides series for Falcon Guides/Globe Pequot Press, and she is the author of *Backyard Birding* and *Butterfly Gardening* for Lyons Press. Her most recent book, *The Complete Language of Birds*, is an encyclopedia that unites classic illustrations, science, folklore, and mythology about more than 400 bird species around the world. She writes for *Birding Magazine*, serves as an editor of regional reports for *North American Birds*, and has served as president of the Rochester Birding Association.

*Randi will be joining us in person. If you will be attending by Zoom, look for the Zoom link in your email prior to the meeting. The Zoom Room will open at 6:45 PM. Don't wait until the last minute to sign on, you might be left out!*

## WELCOME TO THE FLOCK

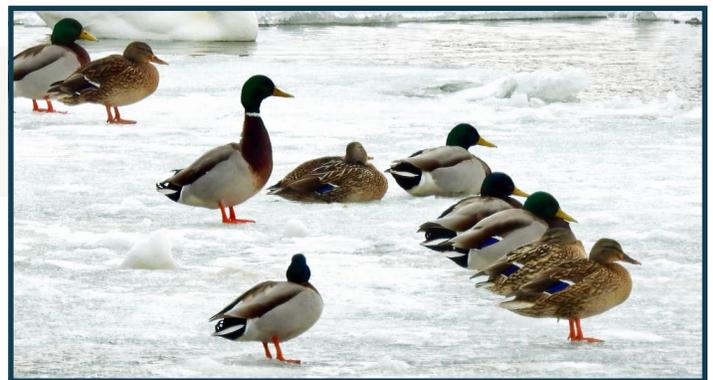
### Please welcome our new members:

Michael Ledwin & Elizabeth Feltner  
Carl Murano & Regina Gortych  
Jennifer & Larry Wagner

### As of March 15, total 2025 membership is 345

Individual Members: 217  
Family Members: 91  
Supporters: 3  
Sponsors: 3  
Corporate Sponsors: 1 (The Bird House)  
Complimentary Memberships: 30

*Doug Rabjohns, RBA Membership Data*



*Mallard on Irondequoit Bay  
photographed by Candy Giles.*



## Lakeshore Plains West January 26, 2025

It was a blustery Sunday at 9 a.m. that 17 birders met at Braddock Bay Park to search lands west for field birds. In the welcome circle, most participants voiced interest in Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs—key targets! In order to successfully locate these field birds, blanket snow cover is all but required, which has been lacking on this field trip for the past several years. So, with a more ‘normal’ winter and considerable snow cover, we were hopeful for success in breaking the streak of fails. We made our way to Burger Park, which ended up being something of a mistake. The blowing snow had blanketed the entrance road and although all participants were able to drive down the road, one misjudged the shape of the lot and slid down into a ditch! Thankfully, a parks employee was there with plywood on hand, and with the help of several participants, we freed the car.



Burger Park was mostly lackluster bird-wise, but a continuing uncommon-in-winter Fox Sparrow made a brief appearance under the dogwood shrubs along the lot for a handful of participants. We continued on towards the Hamlin farm fields. We encountered our first group of field birds on Hamlin-Parma Townline Rd., with 50 Snow Buntings crossing the road ahead of the caravan. We then found a large group of field birds along Church Rd., just west of Walker Lake Ontario Rd. We carefully scanned this flock of hundreds of Horned Larks and

Snow Buntings amongst the corn-stubble, with beautiful, well-lit views, and successfully located at least four Lapland Longspurs, a lifer for many! After soaking in this flock and marveling as they occasionally lifted off and swirled around, we continued west. On Jacobs Rd., we intercepted a smaller, but closer-range flock, that also contained all three species and allowed for more photo ops. Most participants departed after our bathroom break at Hamlin Beach SP, yielding a handful of the common winter ducks including Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneye, and Red-breasted Merganser.

Two participants were prepared to continue west in hopes of winter raptors and maybe a shrike. We continued traversing the rural roads out through Kendall and Point Breeze, coming up empty-handed on those targets, but crossing paths with more of the aforementioned field birds. We ended the trip at Point Breeze, which was very fruitful! The open channel contained Scaup, Redhead, Coots, and a surprise Ruddy Duck. Amongst the flocks of goldeneye and Long-tailed Ducks on the lake were a substantial number of White-winged Scoters and a lovely young male and female Surf Scoter mixed in. We ended the day with a respectable 35 species and a great time traversing the snowy plains.

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/342438>

*Lynn Bergmeyer and Robert Buckert*

## Winter Waterfowl and Other Possibilities February 9, 2025

At 9 a.m. on February 9th, 2025, 15 birders met at the Irondequoit Bay Outlet for a day full of waterfowl. Firemen were present at the location practicing ice rescues, which the roosting gull flock did not enjoy, but it was quite interesting and entertaining as the participants gathered! The bay was well-frozen, creating a wonderful close-range concentration in the open water around the outlet. As we started bayside, close views of Mute Swans, Mallard, Redhead,



Greater and Lesser Scaup (including excellent, educational comparisons), and Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers were had by all. Despite an impressive accumulation of around 1500 gulls, nothing besides Herring and Ring-billed were to be seen! More distantly south on the bay, hundreds of Common and Red-breasted Mergansers were packed into an opening, feeding. Five Bald Eagles were present and we enjoyed them then moved to the north side of the bridge to scan the channel. Here we added Long-tailed Duck, Common Goldeneye, and White-winged Scoter before heading to Durand-Eastman Park for an attempt at an overwintering Red-headed Woodpecker.

All winter long, a pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers have been seen in the oaks around the Sunset Shelter of Durand-Eastman, near Horseshoe Rd. As our most uncommon resident woodpecker, Red-headed Woodpecker was well worth the wait and suspense as we tracked around in the snow searching every oak. Incredibly, Robin M. spotted one about halfway up an oak, sitting perfectly still. We spent about 20 minutes soaking in scope views of the vivid red, black, and white color scheme before continuing on to Charlotte.

After passing the new Bald Eagle nest on Lakeshore Blvd, we reconvened at Ontario Beach Park to scan the river. Fish Crows greeted us in the parking lot on arrival. The river was frozen upriver, creating a shelf towards River St. that most waterfowl concentrated along. We added a pair of Ruddy Ducks and a Red-throated Loon to the trip list here. Among the Summerville Pier gulls were a few Great Black-backed, which were also new on the day. A dapper pair of Bufflehead added to the

excitement amongst the more usual waterfowl, and we decided to continue a short distance west to Slater Creek. As we exited cars, an immature Peregrine Falcon perched up in a cottonwood along the lakeshore and was flushed by an incoming immature Cooper's Hawk, giving disgruntled calls as it flew east. The lake was mostly quiet except for more looks at Common Goldeneye off the ice edge and a steady flow of Long-tailed Ducks westbound. Three Common Loons were spotted foraging actively quite distantly, which presented quite the challenge of getting all participants views!

Most ended their day here, but a few continued on past Braddock Bay to Ontario Blvd. for a longshot chance at locating the female King Eider that had been bouncing around various lakeshore hotspots recently. Although no Eider was to be seen, a close mixed flock including White-winged Scoter, Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, and Common Goldeneye was enjoyable. Additionally, a handful of Common Goldeneye were performing courtship displays, which were delightful! The day ended around noon with a total of 33 species, including 14 species of waterfowl.

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/342447>

**Lynn Bergmeyer and Robert Buckert**

## **Hamlin Beach March 15, 2025**

On a warm March morning with southerly winds, a group of 30 birders gathered at Braddock Bay. The good conditions for raptors and the large number of waterfowl on the bay, in addition to few birds scouted toward Hamlin, led us to decide to stay and bird the bay area.

*Rough-legged Hawk  
seen on the trip.  
Photo by Maili Waters.*



The morning started nicely with a group of 3 Sandhill Cranes moving over. We started scanning the large group of waterfowl when the best raptor of the day, an adult dark-morph Rough-legged Hawk, flew directly overhead. It was difficult to sort through the ducks but focusing on individuals gave us good looks at Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintail. A group of 18 Tundra Swans flying over was a nice addition. Eastern Meadowlark and a small group of Lapland Longspurs were the passerine highlights there.

Learning of an Eurasian Wigeon seen at the north marina, we moved there to try for that bird. With a little work everyone was able to see that bird along with a surprise Red-throated Loon and 2 Horned Grebes.

We then checked out Salmon Creek behind the Braddock Bay Tavern and found the reported Blue-winged Teal and 1000-plus Ring-necked Ducks.

The group shrank a bit as we went to the Owl Woods where we were able to find the 2 Saw-whet Owls reported. On the walk around, Fox, White-throated and Swamp Sparrows were added.

Most of the group left before we heard of a secretive Long-eared Owl. Those that walked through the muddy trail were rewarded with this bird for a pretty good ending!

A total of 58 species were tallied on a surprisingly comfortable March day.

**Mike Tetlow and Lynn Bergmeyer**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 6:00 PM**

## YOUNG BIRDERS WALK

**Sandra L. Frankel Brickyard Trail  
Brighton Town Hall, Elmwood Avenue, Brighton**

Neal Reilly of the Rochester Birding Association will lead a bird walk for young birders at the Sandra Frankel Brickyard Trail. We will meet at 6:00pm in the Brighton Town Hall Parking Lot on Elmwood Avenue. The trail is paved and flat and passes through a variety of different habitats. We will walk south on the Brickyard trail looking for migrating and nesting birds for about 45 minutes to 1 hour depending on species seen and young birder interest.

All young birders must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Extra Binoculars will be available.



*Hooded Merganser seen on the  
Brickyard Trail by Jeanne Verhulst.*

*Save the Date!*

**RBA PICNIC  
ANNUAL**

Join us at Burroughs Audubon Nature Club (BANC) on Thursday, June 12, 2025 - rain or shine - for picnic and a stroll - more details to come!



# Monthly **ECO-CHALLENGE**

## BALLOON RELEASES NEGATIVELY IMPACT WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A pink balloon glides upward towards the heavens; the wind effortlessly carrying its symbolic message to a loved one resting high above the clouds. What happens next? Once out of sight, how many of us are thinking about where our balloons end up?

Releasing balloons may seem like an innocent gesture of love; a method to soothe our emotions during the grieving process. However, balloons cause a plethora of issues for wildlife and the environment when released. Plastic, latex, and foil balloon fragments litter the ground and watersheds. They are not biodegradable and take years to decompose. Balloon strings may also become tangled in electrical wiring, which increases the risk of power outages, fires, and safety concerns for utility workers. Wildlife may become entangled in strings and suffer from strangulation. When ingested, balloon litter remains in the digestive system, resulting in illness and death.

What are the alternatives? Consider giving bubbles a try; their cheerful and whimsical essence guarantees to bring a smile to your face. Imagine the beauty of thousands of bubbles floating along with the wind currents. Planting native trees, shrubs, or flowers is

another way to memorialize a past loved one. Native plant species are adapted to the environmental conditions of their region and require less maintenance than non-natives. Whether you plant a single flower or create a memorial garden, this is a great way to support nature as well as process grief. Lastly, if you are an avid hiker, or enjoy walking, establishing an annual tradition of hiking a local or national park is a wonderful ritual to honor your loved one, and has a low environmental impact. Whatever alternative(s) you choose, it's important to think about how your actions may positively or negatively impact your surroundings.



Photo from [the dodo](#)/Justin Williams

Photo from [Balloons Blow](#)/David Steely



By Chelsea Blauvelt Plimpton

### References

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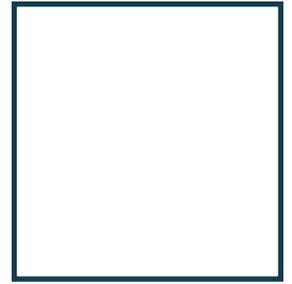
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# Rochester Birding Association

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