



Bittle Gull

Visit the RBA's website at www.RochesterBirding.com

Rochester Birding Association, 5 Cranswick Lane, Rochester NY 14618

JANUARY 2019 EVENTS & BIRDING FIELD TRIPS

JAN 1
Tuesday

IRONDEQUOIT BAY OUTLET AND DURAND-EASTMAN PARK—YEAR LIST JUMP-START

Get started on your 2019 list! We'll look for winter waterfowl at the outlet, then move to Durand-Eastman Park, where we will stroll Log Cabin Road and Zoo Road looking for finches, waxwings, and resident birds. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** in one of the several convenient parking lots on the west side of the outlet at the north end of Irondequoit Bay (end of Culver Road) or at **8:45 a.m.** at the Lake Shore Boulevard parking area between Log Cabin Road and Zoo Road (Parking Lot D). **Dress warmly!**

Leaders: *Norma Platt and John Boettcher 585-671-9639*

JAN 5
Saturday

***BEGINNER BIRDER TRIP*—IRONDEQUOIT BAY, LAKESHORE, GENESEE RIVER OUTLET**

In open areas of water, we'll look for some of the spectacular waterfowl that visit each winter, and with luck even see a few rarities! The spots we visit feature good, close looks with very little walking. Dress warmly as we may be standing outside for some time. Wear boots with good traction. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** in one of the several convenient parking lots on the west side of the outlet at the north end of Irondequoit Bay (end of Culver Road). **Bring your spotting scope if you have one, or share ours in turns.**

Leaders: *Tom Nash & Sheryl Gracewski 585-261-6975 and co-leader John Boettcher 585-671-9639*

JAN 12
Saturday

RBA WINTER DINNER AND ELECTION, 6:00 p.m., Summerville Presbyterian Church, 4845 St. Paul Blvd., Rochester, NY 14617. See the notice on p. 6 for more information.

JAN 13
Sunday

LAKESHORE PLAINS WEST

A driving tour of the farm fields and open lands to the west of Rochester, this trip will search for Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, Northern Shrikes, and hawks in the plains and country roads of western Monroe and Orleans Counties. If the weather cooperates, we may venture as far as Golden Hill State Park for a look at the lake and a short walk. Dress warmly in layers. Bring a snack and a thermos filled with cocoa. We will drive along backcountry roads for a few hours, stopping where we see bird activity. Barring the possible walk at Golden Hill, this trip should be handicapped-accessible. Meet at the Braddock Bay State Park parking lot opposite the hawk watch pavilion on East Manitou Rd. in Greece at **9:00 a.m.** **Extra FRS radios and scopes would be very helpful.**

Leader: *Lynn Bergmeyer 585-576-0422 and co-leader Robert Buckert*

JANUARY 12-20 (with January 13 as the target date) is the time for the annual **NEW YORK STATE WATERFOWL COUNT** organized by the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc. Bob Spahn (585-671-5690) coordinates several local teams and would be pleased if other birders would join up. See the notice on p. 4 for more information.

JAN 19
Saturday

***BEGINNER BIRDER TRIP*—MENDON PONDS PARK SONGBIRD TRAIL**

This trip will be a leisurely winter walk featuring some very close looks at our winter passerines! Bring some sunflower seeds and your camera! Meet at the visitor center on Pond Road near Clover Street at **9:30 a.m.**

Leaders: *Janet Miles 585-787-0507 and co-leader John Boettcher 585-671-9639*

JAN 26
Saturday

AVON AND LIMA RURAL TOUR

We'll search the Nations Road area, looking for Northern Shrikes, hawks, Snow Buntings, and other birds of the fields and farmland in winter. We'll be mostly driving, with frequent stops. Carpooling would be appreciated! Meet at Tops Plaza in Avon on Routes 5 and 20, 2 miles west of I-390 at **3:00 p.m.** **Extra spotting scopes and FRS radios would be very helpful.**

Leaders: *Jim Kimball 585-243-0316 and Rick Stevens 585-689-1882*

Welcome to the Flock



Join me in welcoming these four new members to the RBA.

Lynn Caulkins
Lydia Culbert (Young Birder)
Tom Napoli
John Romero

Current RBA Membership is 421.

The total is comprised of household members (387), young birders (8), corporate member (1), *Little Gull* subscribers (4) and *Little Gull* complimentary subscribers (21).

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

If you have renewed for 2019, thank you! The 3 month membership renewal campaign is coming to an end with 40% of our membership not having renewed! On December 14 a renewal form and return envelope were USPS mailed to all members (170) who have not renewed for 2019. Thanks to Sheryl Gracewski, Tom Nash, Norma Platt, and John Boettcher for helping with this substantial mailing. Sometime in the middle of January, I will update the database and remove all those who have not renewed. This means no more *Little Gull*, no entry in the new roster, and no access to the members area of the website. Don't let this happen. Renew NOW!

Jo Taylor
Membership Data

President's Column

Amy Kahn



It has been my pleasure to have been your president for the last 2 years. With the help of dedicated members of your board of directors, we have continued to

make a difference in Rochester, upstate NY and the world at large.

Through our efforts to bring more young and diverse people into RBA to join us in our love of birds and their habitat, our Young Birders program became formalized with a charter. They are our future.

We have continued our emphasis on education and conservation efforts to protect bird habitat. I look forward to continuing as your conservation chair.

We had 2 members leave positions which they held for a very long time. We are very grateful for their service. Kimberly Sucky left as field trip chair and leader after 10 years of service, and John Boettcher left as membership and outreach chair after 6 years following continuous leadership positions since 2004.

We are grateful for many members who are stepping up to take leadership. The board is committed to mentoring and succession planning so we continue to build leadership in RBA. We are fortunate to have had Liz Magnanti fill communications chair and Jo Taylor take over our membership database. Jeanne Verhulst stepped up and chaired a committee comprised of Cathy Ballard, Sheryl Gracewski, Tom Nash, Andrea Patterson and myself to put together the 2019 field trip list. We are still looking for a new field trip chairperson. We have a number of members who have stepped up to lead trips this year as well. Cathy Ballard chaired our nominations committee in 2017 and 2018, finding us wonderful candidates for our board of directors and officers. Richard Ashworth chaired our 2018 audit committee with Jon Dombrowski, Sarah Compter and our current treasurer, Brian Rohr confirming that we are fiscally in great shape. Thank you to all our continuing committee chairs: circulation, Sheryl Gracewski; *Little Gull* editor, Jay Greenberg; item Sales, Nancy Poeth; records and young birders, Andrea Patterson; social, Wanda Thistle; webmaster, Laura Kammermeier; web content manager, Shelley Patterson. Thank you to all members who have volunteered to help.

RBA and Burroughs Audubon put on a successful statewide conference for the New York Ornithological Association in 2018. We had a successful warbler workshop in April 2017. We formed stronger relationships with other regional and local conservation organizations to strengthen our visibility and ability to effect change. Our members have continued to be enthusiastic and informed ambassadors for birds and the environment.

Please keep educating yourself, sharing knowledge and enthusiasm with neighbors and friends and supporting efforts to protect birds and nature. Come to the RBA annual dinner meeting January 12 to elect the new board. Nominated for 2019 are Andrea Patterson (president), Jeanne Verhulst (vice president and program chair), Brian Rohrs (treasurer), Kim Weeks (secretary), Liz Magnanti, Wanda Thistle, Kevin Farrell (directors).

Editor's Corner

Jay Greenberg

2019 RBA Nominations

I am pleased to announce that Andrea Patterson has agreed to run for 2019 RBA president. As of the December issue, there was no candidate for president. There is now a position open for a director-at-large. Hopefully, there will be a candidate on or before the date of the January dinner and election. See the nominating report on p. 3.



Birding in Cuba

I am also pleased to announce that this issue has the first installment of a report on a birding trip in Cuba by long-time RBA member Monika Herrmann (p. 7).

ROCHESTER BIRDING ASSOCIATION NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2019 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Andrea Patterson
 Vice President: Jeanne Verhulst
 Treasurer: Brian Rohrs
 Secretary: Kimberly Weeks
 Directors-at-Large: Kevin Ferrell, Elizabeth Magnanti, Wanda Thistle, and one more to be determined.

Past President, Amy Kahn, automatically retains a voting position on the board for 2019 and shall assist the president in the performance of the duties of the president's office and in the promotion of the efficient operation of the association.

Additional nominations, with the consent of the nominee, will be taken from the floor at the January meeting. In particular, there is one open director-at-large position.

Officers and directors-at-large will be elected by a majority vote of the members present at the annual dinner on January 12, 2019. We urge all association members to attend this event because a quorum consisting of 10% of current association members at any meeting is required for the transaction of any business including the election of the board of directors.

The nominating committee recommends the election of the entire slate of nominees.

Catherine Ballard, Nominating Chair, with Mary Gordon and Richard Ashworth

RBA IN THE FIELD

Niagara River Field Trip 12/02/2018

For the second year in a row the Niagara River field trip had a mild day for searching out all manner of birds on lake, land and river. We started our day-long trip at Old Fort Niagara with 16 birders. The fort's battlement and high bluff gives good views of both Lake Ontario and the mouth of the Niagara River. It was a relatively quiet start with mostly Bonaparte's Gulls, Long-tailed Ducks, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Horned Grebes, a lone White-winged Scoter, and a singing Carolina Wren to start our field list. No big flocks of scoters or Red-breasted Mergansers could be located. Our next quick stop was one of the day's highlights, with several Red-headed Woodpeckers all in close view. On to Joseph Davis State Park, where we picked up some Eastern Bluebirds and a couple of Cedar Waxwings, but not the wealth of sparrows we were hoping for. Lewiston proved once again the place to get good looks at non-breeding adult Little Gulls mixed in with Bonaparte's Gulls. Some time was spent looking closely at Little Gulls' black underwings, rounded terminal wing shape and white trail-

ing edge on the primaries and secondaries. As we were packing up to go to the nearby churches for Black Vulture, a lone Black Vulture decided to save us some time and flew over us for everyone to get a good look.

Our next planned stops were on the Canadian side of the river, so we lost a few of our group that did not want to cross the border. The Adam Beck site on the Canadian side was not packed full of gulls as in times past, but did produce an adult Iceland Gull. They shine so brightly in the sun with their pale mantle and white wings. We had to wait until the falls stop to pick up an immature Glaucous Gull and adult Great Black-backed Gulls. With the river flow higher than last year, fewer waterfowl and gulls could be found loitering on the exposed rocks, but we still located good numbers of Common Goldeneyes working the rapids, and many Hooded Mergansers in their favorite backwater spot. The walk back to our vehicles produced a Brown Creeper with some chickadees, another Carolina Wren, and with a quick scoping up-river, we found large numbers of Canvasbacks, Redheads and scaups.

We finished our day in sunshine and blue skies with a total of 50 species. It was a good start for the month of December. With the Christmas bird count coming up, everyone should have a good-sized list by the end of the month.

Rick Stevens and Tom O'Donnell

Conesus Lake 12/8/2018

A hardy crew of 11 met at Vitale Park for Saturday's RBA trip around Conesus Lake. There were hunters active at the north end of the lake, at many spots along both east and west sides, and in 4 or 5 boats on the lake, complete with strings of decoys. It was cold and gray early on, but the sun came out by the time we got to the inlet swamp, where we had good looks at a soaring raven, 4 Great Blue Herons (3 of them standing on the ice), and an adult Bald Eagle perched up along the southeast corner of the lake. The largest concentration of waterfowl seemed to be away from hunters along the west side, roughly between Maple Beach Rd. and Cottonwood Drive. It was in this area we saw significant concentrations of Redheads with Canvasbacks and Lesser Scaups mixed in; the greater number of our ca. 100 Tundra Swans were in this

area as well. Thanks to all who participated.

Jim Kimball

Nations Road 12/9/2018

It was gorgeous weather (30's, no wind, sun), with lots of people (24), but few birds. At Rick's suggestion, we started in the south and worked

our way north. The trip started at 2:00 p.m. with sunset at 4:30 p.m. Several times the group had sightings of birds only to have them disappear by the time we stopped and got out of the cars. Some got a look at a distant Northern Harrier on a post, and all who stayed till after sunset got reasonable looks at a couple of Short-eared Owls. Both were target species for the trip. To give you an idea of how thin the bird

watching was, the total count of all birds seen was 119. Total species for the trip was a disappointing 22. It was a humbling day for the trip leaders.

John Boettcher and Rick Stevens

Annual New York State Waterfowl Count 2019 Request for Help

NYSOA (the NY State Ornithological Association) carries out an annual New York State Waterfowl Count each year in mid-January. This is carried out by teams of volunteers recruited and organized by leaders in each Kingbird bird-reporting region. Locally we are in Region 2 (Genesee) and cover Lake Ontario from Pt. Breeze to the west side of Fairhaven and inland over all of Livingston, Monroe, and Wayne Counties and the eastern halves of Orleans and Genesee plus Wyoming Counties east of Route 19 and Ontario County west of Routes 64 and 21, to Naples. Historically this has been split into 11 sectors with groups covering each, some having done this for a long time. Last year we split or added some pieces as in the table below.

The goal is to census waterfowl in as many areas as possible where they are wintering. The aim is for all to count on one day, Sunday, January 13th this year. However, there is freedom to shift a group's count from the Saturday before to as late as a week later (12th to 21st) if weather or personal schedules require.

Late in 2015, I learned that the Region 2 coordinator could no longer do this job and was asked to try to get it done and to try to find a new leader. I'm still looking for a volunteer; please call if you have an interest. I am looking for volunteers as sector leaders, birders to help in the various sectors, as well as for a new Region 2 coordinator.

Bob Spahn – phone: 585-671-5690; email: rspahn@prodigy.net

<u>Party</u>	<u>Leaders</u>	<u>Area(s) surveyed</u>
A		Point Breeze to Hamlin Beach State Park
B		Hamlin Beach State Park to Braddock Bay
C		Charlotte to Braddock Bay east side
D	Jay Greenberg & Monika Hermann	Genesee River (north of falls) & east to Irondequoit Bay
D2	Jay Greenberg & Monika Hermann	Seneca Park Pond
E	John Boettcher & Bob Spahn	Irondequoit Bay to Bear Creek
E2	Bob & Sue Spahn	Irondequoit Bay
F		Bear Creek to Sodus Bay
G		Sodus Bay to Fairhaven
H		Finger Lakes - Conesus to Honeoye
H2		Hemlock, Canadice, & Honeoye Lakes
I		Fairport/Pittsford and Mendon Ponds
J		Oatka Creek, Mumford, Caledonia, etc.
K	Carolyn & Jerry Barnhart	Penfield/Brighton
L		Silver Lake, Genesee River - Mount Morris Dam & Geneseo to Avon
M	Jim Eckler	NMWMA Region 2

November 2018 Sightings Report

It was a cool, cloudy, and damp month, aside from brief warm spells. Temperatures averaged 36.4 °F, 4.1 ° below normal. A drop to 7° on Thanksgiving on the 22nd was the coldest for that holiday on record, and the drop to 4° before the next morning was the coldest ever for that early in the season. Precipitation totaled 4.54", 1.60" above normal. Snowfall was 17.4", 10.1" above normal. Variable amounts across the area of 12-18 inches of snow fell in the period from the 13th-16th, and the one-day maximum of 4.2" fell on the 28th. The month started off soggy and rainy leading to a warm spell on the 6th & 7th, then below normal days all the way to the 24th, followed by a 2-day warm spell accompanied by another 0.5" of rain, and finally, the heavy snow on the 28th.

Again, nearly all waterfowl species with any serious expectation of being reported were recorded. Only Ross's Goose and Blue-winged Teal were missing. However, again, most peak counts were modest to low, except Long-tailed Duck and Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers. Both King Eider and Harlequin Duck were seen by mid-month, but only 1-2 each. Peak Horned and Red-necked Grebe counts were decent, though in the latter case, higher counts will follow in December.

With the new checklist order, we add nightjars, swifts, and marsh birds here, with record late Chimney Swifts over Durand-Eastman Park on the 2nd and Sandhill Cranes scattered around the region. Specific details will be posted in the Noteworthy Records table on the RBA website.

There were the usual few lingering shorebirds to even late in the month—no great surprises, though 76 Dunlin on the Salmon Creek mudflats was a good late count, and American Woodcock is not often reported in the late fall. We need more contact with hunters. Purple Sandpiper was again not located by month's end.

Heading into the larids, we first note only a few more Parasitic Jaegers seen off Greece early in the month. Then we have an immature Black-legged Kittiwake passing off Hamlin Beach State Park. Bonaparte's Gulls were generally scarce other than some good counts at mudflats, especially at Northrup Creek and off LaSalle's Landing Park at the south end of Irondequoit Bay. Three Little Gulls at Buck Pond and two at the south end of Irondequoit Bay on the 21st is interesting. Iceland and Glaucous Gulls both arrived around mid-month, and we had the now usual scattering of Lesser Black-backed Gull report, about 12 individuals. This grouping ends with a couple of Common Terns into the month.

Now we catch up with the loons, seabirds, and waders. Observers at the Hamlin Beach lake watch on the 11th caught a big movement of 1977 Red-throated Loons plus a bonus Pacific Loon. The Common Loon peak was only 164, but that is typical, as that species peaks earlier and is dropping off by November. Again, no Northern Gannet, and Double-crested Cormorant numbers dropped way off. A big surprise was a record late Least Bittern found at Buck Pond on the 21st by Mitchell Barry and seen shortly

after by other family members. Great Egret also lingered a bit late, and then we had the now-expected influx of Cattle Egrets, with reports from three locations in our region plus at the Goosehaven site near Montezuma just outside our region.

Again, raptors were generally scarce, but we did have a late Osprey to the 9th, many Bald Eagles, 2 reports of immature Northern Goshawks, and small numbers of Rough-legged Hawks. The owls now follow right after the hawks, with only a couple more Snowy Owls to follow their October arrival. The first Short-eared Owl was reported from the Geneseo airfield on the 8th, and good numbers were tallied on the first DEC survey out of Avon on the 20th. Numbers of reports for American Kestrel were very low, but Merlin and Peregrine Falcon reports were typical of this time of year. Northern Shrike was present, but numbers of reports and apparent individuals, 9, were low.

Finally the passerines, again a bit scrambled, but the order remains nearly the same from flycatchers to waxwings. Then the finches and Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur move up, followed by the sparrows, blackbirds, warblers, and finally cardinal and relatives. Another surprise was 3 interesting flycatcher reports, 2 *empidonax*, with unfortunately not enough detail to be sure of ID to species, and then a latish Eastern Phoebe on the 17th. The only late vireo was a very late Blue-headed Vireo at Yanty Creek on the 12th. Moving to the swallows, we had several Northern Rough-winged reported and a lone Cave Swallow found and photographed by Mike Gullo at Sodus Point on the 9th. We follow with a number of lingering half-hardy species reported and good numbers of American Robins scattered about. Then finally 3 locations with Bohemian Waxwing and a start of winter finch arrivals. There was the best scattering of Evening Grosbeaks in years, with about 67 individuals reported this month, plus a Pine Grosbeak and reports of both crossbills in Durand-Eastman Park and many reports and some good numbers for both Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin. Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were hit and miss, with at least some good flocks of Snow Bunting. We end this large grouping with the usual few sparrow departures, none really surprisingly late; generally poor counts for blackbird flocks; and two late Pine Warbler reports from Hamlin Beach and a few Yellow-rumped Warblers noted.

Please submit reports to eBird, post them on genesee-birds, and/or send by the 5th of the month to Andrea Patterson, 144 Greystone Lane, #24, Rochester, NY 14618.

	2018	2017	10-year Average (2008-2017)
Total species for November	160	154	151.8
New species for the year	5	4	4.1
Total for the year to date	287	288	290.3

Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee

Observers: Jim Adams, Janet Akin, Jessie Barry, Jim Barry, Liz Barry, Mitchell Barry, Steve Barry, Sue Barth, Doug Beattie, Don Bemont, Steve Benedict, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, John Boettcher, Terry Bohling, Lynn Braband, BBBO (Braddock Bay Bird Observatory), Joe Brin, Mark Brown, Lia Buckert, Robert Buckert, Sara Burch, Bruce Cady, Brad Carlson, Robert Cicotta, Linda Clark-Benedict, Kelly Close, Andrew Conslor, Kris Constable, Lydia Culbert, Kathleen Dalton, Doug Daniels, Laurie Dirx, Steve Donahue, Joe Fell, George Ford, Kyle Gage, Andy Garland, Candy Giles, Bill Gillette, Christopher Goetz, John Gordinier, Shannon Gordinier, Sheryl Gracewski, Jay Greenberg, Kevin Griffith, Ralph & Georgia Guenther, Michael Gullo, Andrew Guthrie, Robert Haggett, Helen & Chris Haller, Mike & Hazel Hanna, Kim Hartquist, Tristan Herwood, Bonnie Hewitt, Chris Hibscho, Christina Hoh, Dick Horsey, Bill Howe, Alec Humann, Carolyn Jacobs, Nicholas Kachala, Logan Kahle, Amy Kahn, Dave Kennedy, Jim Kimball, Mike Laird, Greg

Lawrence, Tim Lenz, Joan & Vern Lindberg, Peggy Mabb, Melissa Mance-Coniglio, Cindy Marino, Pat Martin, Donna Mason-Spier, Lauri Mattle, Jacob McCartney, Jay McGowan, Jim Miles, Kent Millham, Chita McKinney, Adrielle Mitchell, Celeste Morien, Brian & Brooke Morse, Chan Nam, Allen Nash, Ann Nash, Tom Nash, Rivka Noll, David Odell, Jay Ovsiovitch, Andrea Patterson, Jo Popma, Norma Platt, Joel Pocock, Jay Powell, Carolyn Ragan, RBA Field Trips, Rosemary Reilly, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Robert Ryan, Livia Santana, Karl Schmidt, Shirley Shaw, Dominic Sherony, Judy Slein, Roger Smith, Tom & Pat Smith, Cathy Spahn, Robert & Susan Spahn, Dave Spier, Chris Stanger, L. Stenzler, Rick Stevens, Joe Stevenson, Elaine Taft, Mike & Joann Tetlow, Eunice Thein, M. J. Thomas, Sarah Toner, Jeanne Verhulst, Mike Wasilco, Bridget Watts, Joe Wing, Paul Wolter, Chris Wood, Jim Wood, Martha Zettel.

RBA WINTER DINNER

Saturday, January 12, 2019, 6:00 p.m.

Summerville Presbyterian Church, 4845 St. Paul Blvd., Rochester NY 14617

Cost per person: \$5.00

Main entrees: roasted turkey, honey basted ham. Guests will provide additional dishes.

To make reservations: e-mail Wanda Thistle at thistlew@yahoo.com or call (585) 236-1834

She will need the following information:

- ✓ Your name
- ✓ Number people attending
- ✓ Side dish you will be bringing

We will be providing the place settings & cutlery

WHITE ALBATROSS TABLE

If you bring something for the White Albatross Table, be sure to price it, and let us know if you want the sale price to go as a donation to RBA or back to you.

EVENING'S ENTERTAINMENT

If you plan to give a presentation, please let us know and how long it will take. Artwork, carvings, photos, and slides are welcome. Please contact Richard Ashworth at 381-2189, or richarda@rochester.rr.com, if you will be showing slides.

If you can help with this event, please contact Wanda Thistle!
Many hands make light work.

Ten Days of Birding in Cuba

by Monika Herrmann

In November 2018, my birding buddy and I went on a group birding trip to Cuba with the tour company Cuba Explorer. From what I had read about Cuba, I sort of expected inadequate plumbing, or maybe none at all, junky cars, dodgy food, mosquito-infested swamps, machine gun-toting militia at every corner, and Big Brother Raul watching everywhere. After all, we were warned, BYOTP, have plenty of bug repellent and gastro-intestinal medications, don't expect things to be up to U.S. standards, and most worrisome of all, to behave ourselves.

Cuba and the entire trip were full of surprises, starting upon arrival. The tour company's website said they escort groups of not more than a dozen people, and listed 2 spaces left for our tour; we would be on a modern, air conditioned bus with plenty of room for luggage; and our guide would be well-known ornithologist, expert guide and author, Arturo Kirkconnell (who had spoken at the RBA a couple of years ago).

We were met by our guide Susanna at the airport. When I asked her whether the rest of the group had arrived yet, she replied, "It's just you two." Huh? We were introduced to our taxi driver, Santiago, who not only drove us to our hotel, but it turned out, would be driving us the length and breadth of Cuba in his Hyundai Accent (a sub-compact). The 4 of us went everywhere together. Four fit well in the car - the luggage, not so much, but we managed. However, much of the time we had a fifth person, as there would be a local guide traveling with us in each area. And by the way, we found out Kirkconnell had left the company months ago. (As of this writing in mid-December, he's still promoted on their website as the guide). We drew our own conclusion that maybe the others who had signed up originally had found this out and cancelled. It was their loss.

Santiago was a skillful and very careful driver. In fact, it seems Cubans in general are much more courteous drivers than those in the U.S., patiently and safely interweaving with the crowds of horse carts, bicycles, pedestrians, and other cars, without honking horns or rude gestures. The exceptions are the huge buses, which blare their horns and barrel on through.

And Susanna, who is fluent in several languages, well-versed in Cuba's (and U.S.) history, and a competent birder, too, did a fabulous job of organizing things and looking after us.

The local birding guides were mostly beyond excellent at spotting birds, calling them vocally or with recordings, identi-

fying, and getting us to see them. They knew what birds we would most want to see, and exactly where those birds should be, and were dogged in their efforts to find them for us. Well... there was one guy who insisted on our getting more really good looks at a Northern Flicker. I tried to tell him, "Estos a mi casa". I guess he didn't understand. I must admit, my innovative rendition of Spanish 101 elicited a few politely suppressed smiles. Sometimes people told me the word I meant to say, I was never sure what I had said, but I like to think I added a little humor to someone's day.

Our first evening in Havana was not auspicious. We were checked into the elegant, historic Hotel Sevilla. With its chandeliers, marble columns and statues, and potted palms in a high-ceilinged, airy lobby, I felt as if I were in an old Humphrey Bogart movie. On the wall were photographs of some of their most famous patrons, among them Ernest Hemingway and Al Capone. We were quartered on the second floor. Dinner was to be on the ninth floor at 7 p.m. Just as we were about to get into the elevator, the power went out. It came back on within a few minutes. While we were deciding whether or not to risk the elevator, power went out again, only for a short time, but it was settled: granola bars in the room for dinner. We later found out from Susanna that, while outages may be frequent, most hotels have their own generators, so outages seldom last long. But still... granola bars were fine.



A **Cuban Trogon** (the national bird of Cuba)
Photo by Jay Greenberg.

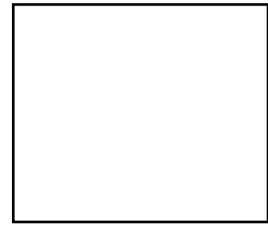
Day 2 - Sunday. Our first birding stops were in the area of Viñales, in the Sierra de los Organos, 93 miles west of Havana. The landscape was gorgeous, hilly, with steep limestone outcroppings. We birded at Cueva de los Portales, a picturesque area of steep cliffs (and many steps), and caves, where Che Guevara had hidden out and operated from - very impressive. Here we saw our first Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, and after much searching, the Cuban Solitaire. Between this spot, a nearby park, and along the road, we logged 28

species before lunch, including West Indian Woodpecker, Cuban Pewee, Western Stripe-headed Tanager, Greater Antillean Grackle, Olive-capped Warbler, Smooth-billed Ani, Giant and Loggerhead Kingbirds, Cuban Blackbird, Red-legged Thrush, Purple Gallinules, and Cattle Egrets. I discovered a Cuban Emerald Hummingbird going to a nest. In addition, we saw several of our familiar migrants from back home. Turkey Vultures were everywhere, of course, seemingly outnumbering even House Sparrows and Rock Pigeons. American Kestrels, American Redstarts, Palm, Black-and-white, and Black-throated Blue Warblers, Northern Mockingbirds, and Gray Catbirds were abundant just about everywhere. We also spotted Purple Gallinules, Green Herons, Black-crowned Night-Herons, and a Red-tailed Hawk. I got my very closest look ever at Eastern Meadowlarks, where 2 of them sat on fence posts on opposite sides of the road, singing!



ROCHESTER BIRDING ASSOCIATION

**P.O. Box 92055
1335 Jefferson
Road Rochester, NY 14692-9998**



Address Service Requested

We're on the Web
www.RochesterBirding.com

The *Little Gull* is published monthly at the beginning of the month, except that the July and August issues are combined and published at the beginning of July. RBA members are encouraged to contribute. Please send contributions by the 15th of the month to Jay Greenberg, Editor, LittleGullEditor@gmail.com. Contributions can consist of original birding-related nonfiction and fiction articles, poems, photos, and artwork. Humor is welcome. If you have any questions, please contact the editor.

2018 RBA Board of Directors

		Address
President	Amy Kahn	5 Cranswick Lane, Rochester NY 14618
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