



Little Gull

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

Rochester Birding Association, 144 Greystone Lane #24, Rochester, NY 14618

MARCH AND EARLY APRIL 2019 EVENTS & BIRDING FIELD TRIPS

MAR 3
Sunday

BEGINNER BIRDER TRIP—CHARLOTTE, BRADDOCK BAY, LAKESHORE FIELDS

Warmer weather is on its way and with it, bird activity picks up. We'll check water for ducks, fields for inland birds, and watch the skies for raptors as well. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at Ontario Beach Park in Charlotte in the northeast corner of the parking lot beside the Genesee River outlet. **Extra spotting scopes would be very helpful.**

Leader: John Boettcher 585-671-9639 and co-leader Cindy Marino 585-454-8051

MAR 9
Saturday

HAMLIN BEACH STATE PARK

We will gather at Braddock Bay Park and drive to Hamlin Beach State Park where we will be looking for migrating waterfowl as we work our way back east. We will stop at Owl Woods in search of migrating owls. We will end at the Braddock Bay Hawk Watch in hopes of spotting Rough-legged and Red-shouldered Hawks and eagles. Dress warmly, as the lakeshore can be cold this time of year. Meet at **9:00 a.m.** at Braddock Bay Park main parking lot off East Manitou Road from the Ontario State Parkway.

Leader: Mike Tetlow 585-425-7849 and co-leader Lynn Bergmeyer 585-576-0422

MAR 14
Thursday

RBA General Meeting, 7:00 p.m., the Baptist Temple, 1101 Clover Street, Rochester NY 14610 (in Brighton). Speaker: Greg Lawrence. Title: Restoring Wetlands for Birds: An overview of ongoing wetland restoration projects in the Braddock Bay WMA and how they'll impact bird communities. See p. 3 for more information.

MAR 16
Saturday

LAKE SHORE MARSHES EAST WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

This extensive driving tour of the large natural area to our northeast always turns up some great birds! We'll look for unusual ducks, late winter birds, and interesting migrants like Fox Sparrows. Bring a snack to munch on to keep your energy up, and dress for the weather! Meet in Webster Plaza at the junction of Route 404 and Hard Road near Starbucks at **7:30 a.m.** **Extra spotting scopes and FRS radios would be very helpful.**

Leader: Kinsley Whittum 585-872-7334 and co-leader Christina Hoh 973-224-7009

MAR 24
Sunday

BEGINNER BIRDER TRIP—OWL WOODS AND HAWK WATCH SITE

We'll look primarily for our smallest visiting owl, the Northern Saw-whet, which returns to this spot on a yearly basis. Long-eared Owls generally put in an appearance, too, although they're quite shy and great at hiding. After the owl walk, we'll head to the hawk watch site to learn how to identify raptors on the wing. At this time of year, we might witness spectacular flights of thousands of raptors! Meet in the parking lot on the right side of Manitou Beach Road across from the Owl Woods trail head at **7:30 a.m.** The Owl Woods trails may be wet and muddy in spots. **Boots are STRONGLY recommended – they're almost mandatory!**

Leader: Greg Lawrence 585-730-2553 and co-leader Liz Magnanti 585-748-0309

APR 12
Friday

OWL WOODS ("PEAR ORCHARD") WOODCOCK COURTSHIP FLIGHT

This will be an evening trip for woodcock courtship flight. If you've never seen this spectacle, prepare to be amazed; birds call noisily from the ground in grassy fields before spiraling rapidly up high, descending back down in a zigzagging noisy frenzy, only to start the cycle anew. An amazing sight! Meet in the parking lot on the right side of Manitou Beach Road just off the Lake Ontario State Parkway and across from the Owl Woods trail head at **7:00 p.m.** The Owl Woods trails may be wet and muddy in spots. **Boots are STRONGLY recommended.** Bring a flashlight or head lamps.

Leader: Lucretia Grosshans 585-467-2474

Welcome to the Flock



Join us in welcoming these five new members to the RBA.

George Antoniadis
Kevin Armstrong
David Issler
Thomas Kredo
Ann Nadeau

Current RBA Membership is 360.

The total comprises household members (328), young birders (7), corporate member (1), *Little Gull* subscribers (3) and *Little Gull* complimentary subscribers (21).

Jo Taylor
Membership Data

Adrianna Anderson
Membership Outreach

President's Column

Andrea Patterson



Do you have trouble telling a Tundra from a Trumpeter? Are you stumped by scaup? Flustered by finches? Does the thought of moving past "gull sp." make your eyes glaze

over? Well never fear, because BIRDING BITS IS BACK!

Years ago, Diane Henderson and Lucretia Grosshans created a series of slideshows aimed at helping people become better birders. Some shows focused on distinguishing 2 or more similar species, while others taught bird topography, how to pish, or how to describe a bird's location to other viewers.

I remember my first Birding Bits – it must have been early 2012, and the topic was how to separate Fox and

Song Sparrows. That's an easy one for experienced birders, I suppose, but as a newer birder just beginning to untangle sparrows in the field, I found it beyond useful to have someone point out the difference between a Song Sparrow's streaky breast and a Fox Sparrow's arrow-head markings. Learning that one tends to perch on low twigs and weeds, while the other likes to hang out in the leaf litter on the forest floor, made it easier not only to figure out what I was seeing, but also to know where I should go to find them. That slideshow did exactly what it was supposed to do; it made me a better birder.

Whenever the RBA board brainstorms how we can best serve the club, someone always wistfully mentions Birding Bits. So, a couple of weeks ago, I approached Diane and asked if she and Lucretia would consider reviving the series. They politely let me know that they are at a time in their birding careers when they just want to enjoy the birds. And who can blame them? These 2 ladies have given generously of their time and talents to the club for many years, and I can't begrudge them a bit of time outside with their binoculars.

They did, however, leave the RBA a gift. Diane and Lucretia have generously donated all their old PowerPoint presentations, and they've given us permission to bring the series back to life! Many thanks to these two fantastic birders!

At January's RBA meeting, I created a brief presentation separating Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, and I asked for volunteers to help me fill the remaining months. Two people have already stepped up, and I'd love to have more! And here's a secret . . . do you want to know my vision? I'd love to have a five-minute show every meeting using photos taken by our members, that ultimately gets narrated and posted to a YouTube channel so that our members can review them as often as they like.

That may be a goal for tomorrow and not today, so in the meantime let me know if there is a particular

Bit you'd like to see, and especially let me know if you'd like to do one yourself! Diane said you never learn as much as you do when you're teaching, and she's right.

Happy birding!

Editor's Corner
Jay Greenberg

Mysteries of Birds in Winter, Part 2



I continue to see robins in my yard this winter, although not every day, and continue to wonder what attracts them, as

there are no berries to eat. To my great surprise, I recently saw 4 of them that appeared to be eating from a neighbor's rain gutter! Most of the snow was gone temporarily. I suspect that they were eating long-dead frozen bugs found in the debris of the gutter. I have also seen it suggested online that they might be eating grit washed off roof tiles to aid with digestion. However, it seems unlikely that this would attract them from afar. Maybe the mystery is solved, at least partially.

I have found online reports of American Robins bathing in winter, even in very frigid places like Calgary, Canada, so the puzzling phenomenon is not limited to House Sparrows. I suspect that feathers trap a layer of air next to the skin, so the main part of the body does not actually get wet.



American Robins at a rain gutter
Feb. 16, 2019. Photo by Jay Greenberg.

March Talk and Speaker

Restoring Wetlands for Birds: An overview of ongoing wetland restoration projects in the Braddock Bay WMA and how they'll impact bird communities

The Braddock Bay Wildlife Management Area (WMA) includes a series of large barrier beach wetlands on the south shore of Lake Ontario, just northwest of Rochester. A combination of lake-level regulation, introduction of invasive species, increased development on adjacent land, pollution, and other factors led to degradation of these coastal wetlands over the last 100 years. As part of an effort to de-list the Rochester Embayment as an Area of Concern, state and federal agencies and their partners completed multiple wetland restoration projects in the Braddock Bay WMA. Greg Lawrence will give an overview of the current and completed restoration projects in Braddock Bay WMA and how they aim to impact the bird communities in the coastal wetlands.

Greg Lawrence is a research scientist in the Department of Environmental Science & Ecology at the College at Brockport. He manages multiple wetland restoration and monitoring grants through various federal, state, and non-profit agencies focusing on Lake Ontario and eastern Lake Erie coastal wetlands. His research interests include Great Lakes coastal wetland ecology, restoration, management, and monitoring, as well as bird population monitoring and conservation, peatland ecology and restoration, and grassland community ecology.



RBA IN THE FIELD

Mendon Ponds Park 1/19/2019

It's true....that thing about 'a bird in the hand'! Even at 17 °F!

The annual Mendon trip provided the advertised delights. Feathered creatures – Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, both White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches and Downy Woodpecker—bravely came to our outstretched palms to gather seeds. (Too bad they didn't like gloved hands as well, given the cold.)

We sorta thought that there would be children attending this RBA trip, but all 5 participants and 3 leaders averaged out well on the plus side of 50. Fortunately, a child-like wonder is not reserved for the very young.

The day concluded with a visit to the Wild Wings facility for a warm-up at a blazing fire, hot chocolate and a tour of the rescue birds.

Janet Miles, Norma Platt, and John Boettcher

Nations Road and Local Area Trip 01/26/2019

For a late afternoon birding trip, we had 17 birders to start with and added another later in the day to finish with 18. This January day had the typical cold temperature, but was filled with sunshine, blue skies and calm wind conditions. We started on some of the side roads that often require some patience and good search proficiency to locate the birds. After several stops, we had acquired Northern Mockingbird and Northern Harrier, along with the usual assortment of juncos, cardinals, Blue Jays, a large group of Mourning Doves and a lone American Robin. On the mammal side of things, a hunting red fox provided everyone with a nice view. The last stop on the trip is always the highlight and certainly did not disappoint: several Short-eared Owls and a Northern Shrike, along with a stunning gray-blue colored male Northern Harrier. Some in our group

were able to get on a group of Snow Buntings, a Ring-necked Pheasant and some sought-after sparrows. The shrike and Short-eared Owls stayed close and allowed everyone to get a good view in the few scopes we had available. The owls seem to draw so much attention to this area.

This is such a spectacular area and an important migratory route, breeding and wintering area for so many of our bird species. It has extensive vistas to take in the fields, woods and sky. Scattered throughout the pastures are many large white, black and red oaks, letting us see what 200 year old trees can look like with their massive trunks and spreading crowns. Beneath the horse and sheep pastures lie the remains of mastodons and other creatures from a retreating ice age. In the lowest part of the valley is a river that has carved the Letchworth gorge and made the flat lands here fertile.

So when we come here to bird or just see the sites, try to enjoy what is here, and be aware that as the owling location becomes more and more popular, we as birders have a responsibility to help keep congestion, disturbance to property owners and the birds we so love to a minimum. Please think of carpooling to reduce congestion, not parking in front of people's homes, not blocking roadways, and keep some distance from the birds, even if it sacrifices that premier photo, allowing them the space to hunt for food and do what they need to do to survive a cold winter.

Rick Stevens



A Northern Mockingbird at Nations Road. Photo by Jay Greenberg

Winter Waterfowl and Other Possibilities 2/10/19

On February 10th, a sizable group of 17 birders met at the Irondequoit Bay outlet, hopeful for decent conditions to view the nearby waterfowl. The weather held beautifully, with little to no wind and bright sun, making the 20° temperature significantly more bearable. In the small patches of open water on the bay itself and the channel, we were able to view 12 species of waterfowl, highlights being White-winged Scoter, close views of Long-tailed Duck, and significant numbers of Canvasback and Common Mergansers. We even noticed a female Long-tailed Duck with ice around the end of its bill! The Bald Eagles resting on the ice are also always a treat. There was also a decent group of gulls roosting on the ice just to the south of the lot, and a quick scan revealed 2 immature white-winged gulls amongst the Herring, Ring-billed, and Great Black-backed. These were eventually determined to be Glaucous.

Moving on from the bay, we made 2 brief stops at Durand-Eastman Park, at Zoo Road and Horseshoe Road.

Zoo Road was generally quiet with the best birds being Northern Mockingbird and a calling Eastern Screech-Owl. At Horseshoe Road, a little bit of patience brought around the continuing Red-headed Woodpeckers for nice views.

After this, we made two stops to hopefully tack on some more waterfowl to our list. We visited Bateau Play Park, just east of Summerville Pier, which provides an excellent vantage point. Despite the favorable position, there was little in terms of diversity and numbers on the lake itself. Some passerines in the yards surrounding the park kept us busy for a short time, though. We next moved to Summerville Pier, avoiding the Winter Fest taking place at Charlotte. This was also very poor in terms of waterfowl, and it seemed Irondequoit Bay could not be beat out! At this point, the majority of the trip departed for their afternoon activities while one devoted participant remained – Rick Stevens.

We scoured all the regular lake-viewing areas between Charlotte and Braddock Bay for any waterfowl

in sight, generally producing little to no waterfowl at all. We finally hit it big at Braddock Bay when the North Marina provided excellent views of the small bit of open water on the bay. There was a fantastic concentration of waterfowl here with hundreds of Canada Geese and Mute Swans, as well as many diving ducks mixed in. All species were consistent with what was seen at Irondequoit Bay, except for the additions of Hooded Merganser and Bufflehead.

With overall lake-viewing yielding poor results, we took to the fields of Hamlin to add some end-of-the-trip species. Wild Turkeys were seen crossing the road (a new species for the day), and we were able to pull out many Horned Larks along the way. The Northern Shrike on Church Road showed excellently for us as well, which was a wonderful highlight! This ended our day with 41 species. We extend our thanks to all participants and we hope to see you again soon!

*Robert Buckert and
Lynn Bergmeyer*



A female **Long-tailed Duck**. Photo by Jay Greenberg

Birders Exchange

Birders' Exchange collects and redistributes new and used binoculars, spotting scopes, digital camera equipment, old and new field guides, and other relevant material. Sponsored by the American Birding Association, it supports critical research and conservation programs in the Caribbean, Central and South America. Won't you help? Please bring your donations to the RBA monthly meetings or contact Lucretia at 671-1310 or lucretia@frontiernet.net for alternate arrangements. Remember to include a list of the items and your name and address with your donation.

Lucretia Grosshans

New Board Member

Monika Herrmann

When I joined the RBA in the early 1990's, I was not really a birder. I did possess a Peterson field guide, but did not even own binoculars. Long walks in county and state parks had been a regular activity in my family as I was growing up. Later on, hikes with a birding group seemed to be the right activity level for me to get out in nature with some companions. At first I was amazed at field trip leaders who could tell a Downy from a Hairy Woodpecker, or identify anything by its song. I've come a long way since then at identifying by sight, and learning how to listen. I keep a life list of sorts, but will never be competitive for having seen the most birds.

I hope that as a board member of the RBA, I can help more people to appreciate not only birds, but the impor-

tance of preserving the environment for them, and thereby, for all creatures.



Photo by Richard Ashworth.

Ten Days of Birding in Cuba: Part 3

by Monika Herrmann

We had a buffet lunch and rested a while at a seaside resort called Caleta Buena, with a lagoon of clear blue water where people were snorkeling. There we saw some Brown Pelicans flying over.

Day 4 - Tuesday. Some members of the restaurant staff at Playa Larga got up extra early to provide us with breakfast, so we could depart well before dawn, in order to see the Blue-headed Quail-Doves at the Bermeja Refuge. They reportedly come out just at dawn, forage in an area in front of a bird blind, then disappear before it's even light enough to get pictures of them. We were thrilled to see them, along with some Zenaida Doves and an Ovenbird. We continued on with our expert guide, Orlando, in this mostly forested refuge, where we saw Gray-fronted Dove, Cuban Parrot, Cuban Vireo, Yellow-throated Warbler, Mourning Dove, and Bare-legged Owl (formerly Cuban Screech-Owl). The owl was roosting in a hollow palm stump, which was about 10 feet high. The guide knocked on the stump, and the owl came up from the hole and peeked out. It was very cute, and I was thrilled to see it. But I worried a little, because another small group was following us, and probably the same thing happened. I wondered how many times a day it would be disturbed.



A Blue-headed Quail-Dove. Photo by Jay Greenberg

That afternoon, we picked up a different guide, who I swear must have had eagle-like vision, and headed to Las Salinas, a salt marsh refuge. Santiago, as deftly as possible, guided the car several miles through a deeply rutted, muddy tunnel of vegetation to an observation platform overlooking a beautiful landscape of pools and islands. From there we viewed American Flamingos, Roseate Spoonbills, Tricolored Heron, Great Egret, Black-necked Stilts, Belted Kingfisher, Lesser Yellowlegs, Great

Blue Heron, Caspian Terns, Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorants, Blue-winged Teal, Common Gallinule, Osprey, Magnificent Frigatebird, American White Pelicans, Little Blue Heron, Laughing Gulls, and Reddish Egret.

We had dinner that night in town at a casa particular, Paladar Enrique, which appeared to be a small, narrow building from the street, but was actually huge in back, with 2 stories of dining space inside, and a roof garden patio with twinkle lights, where we ate. Here, there was also another tour group. The meal was excellent, fancy, and served family-style.

January Young Birders Meeting

This year on January 27th Robert Buckert's family hosted the RBA Young Birders at their Lake Ontario home in Greece. Two new young birders joined our group for this meeting and shared an afternoon of friendship and learning. The wind was howling, which made for decent in-flight viewing of waterfowl, but not so much for birds resting on the water. Attendees were able to enjoy views of this Great Lake during the winter months, from the comfort of a warm house. Andrea Patterson gave a greatly informative presentation on identifying waterfowl, all focused on Kevin McGowan's method of "Where's the White?", using the pattern and presence of white on ducks to identify them to species. After this presentation, birders mingled and played bird trivia and identification games while socializing over light snacks and sweets. Special thanks is extended to all parents and adult leaders that attended this event! Without you, nothing that we do would be possible.

Robert Buckert

February Birds & Brews Event

Attention BrewBirds! February's Birds & Brews event will be held at Knucklehead Craft Brewing on Wednesday, February 27th. This is a casual evening for members and non-members, experienced or brand new, to get together to talk birds, the outdoors, and more! We hope to see you there!

Date: Wednesday, February 27th

Time: 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

Location: Knucklehead Craft Brewing, 426 Ridge Rd, Webster, NY 14580

January 2019 Sightings Report

January continued December's green grass and mild temperatures through the 9th, with temperatures averaging 9 °F above normal. During the rest of the month, only 5 days reached above normal and 4 days dropped to below 0°. Temperatures averaged 23.9 °F, 0.8° below normal. Precipitation totaled 2.56", 0.15" above normal, with snowfall at 32.8", 4.6" above normal. There were noteworthy rain events on the 8th and 23rd-24th at about 0.3" each. There was some snow on 24 of the month's 31 days. A record snowfall for the date was recorded on the 19th at 7.8". Adding more the next day, that event produced a foot to a foot and a half over parts of the area. As usual, distribution was uneven. The snow and cold and fluctuating temperatures led to bays and ponds freezing and thawing and finally to increasing shore ice out into Lake Ontario.

The annual NYSOA Waterfowl Count was again impacted by the snow, cold, and wind; still the total tallied by the many dedicated observers was right on the average for the years since 2000. The 30 species recorded was also normal. Only Wood Duck could be considered a miss. Observers also spotted an interesting array of passerines while out on their waterfowl searches. Rarer waterfowl species included Cackling Goose, Tufted Duck, and Barrow's Goldeneye. All relatively common species were at totals below their 2000-2018 averages except for Canada Goose, Long-tailed Duck, and Red-breasted Merganser.

Grebes were again scarce, though a count of 9 Red-necked Grebes on January 1st is good for the date.

Virginia Rail presents a good example of the need to look at records (such as in a database like eBird) carefully. An individual was noted in Sherry Pond marsh in Durand-Eastman Park on January 1 and another 2 in the Deep Pond area of Mendon Ponds Park on January 2. Then from January 22-29, there were about 23 reports from the Quaker Pond part of Mendon Ponds Park with various descriptions of the sites and at 5 pins on the eBird map. In fact this was generally one bird (other than a single report suggesting 2), all from the south end of the pond, NOT the traditional wintering location noted most years. Only one report plotted the pin at that spot; the rest were at spots as far as 0.8 miles north! American Coot numbers were again poor. Sandhill Cranes lingered near Honeoye in the Ashley Road area where they could be viewed, with up to 11 present to at least January 18.

A Parasitic Jaeger passing off Webster Park on the 6th was a surprise. Bonaparte's Gull was back to the historic norm of mid-January departure. There were some good counts of gulls, mostly from Irondequoit Bay and the ponds in Greece along Edgemere Drive. The usual wintering gulls were reported in typical numbers. Loons were again very scarce. Up to 24 Double-crested Cormorants again lingered in Irondequoit Bay, though only 17 were spotted on the waterfowl count day.

Wintering raptors were again generally scarce. Numbers of Bald Eagles were high at local sites, especially Ironde-

quoit Bay, but not up to last winter's numbers. Northern Goshawk and Red-shouldered Hawk were missed. There were good numbers of reports for all 3 regular falcons. No Black Vulture was found, and Turkey Vultures were again scarce except at known roost sites.

This was not a big Snowy Owl year. Still, about 20 individuals were reported from at least 13 sites through the month. Unfortunately, few were regularly seen for long periods at any one site. Again, birders searching and the regular DEC surveys out of the Avon office turned up very good numbers of wintering Short-eared Owls and other raptor species. The surveys generally occur at sites in the area from Routes 5 & 20, south to the top of the Finger Lakes and from Bloomfield on the east, west to the Retsof area. The DEC survey on January 29th located 33 owls, a record for one evening on the survey. Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported only from Durand-Eastman Park where several were located in December. Lingering Yellow-bellied Sapsucker numbers and number of sites were well above average for winter.

Much of the time, wintering passerines seemed scarce and hard to find. Yet the list of half-hardy species was good, and for many, the numbers of individuals were well above normal, e.g., White-throated Sparrow. There are many examples and summaries in the Noteworthy Records table posted on the RBA website. The fairly regular ones included Winter Wren; Hermit Thrush; Field, Savannah, White-throated, and White-crowned Sparrows; and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Less common to rare were Eastern Phoebe; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Eastern Towhee; Chipping, Vesper, and Fox Sparrows; and Pine Warbler. Among the missing were Gray Catbird and Rusty Blackbird, though both are uncommon in winter. Among the potential irruptive species, Northern Shrikes were scattered about, Red-breasted Nuthatch was scarce, and Bohemian Waxwing was missed. Again this winter, there were hopes of winter finches, but only a few Evening Grosbeaks, the usual few Purple Finches, Common Redpolls, and Pine Siskins were scattered about, and then late in the month, a Hoary Redpoll was found with a flock of Commons in Hamlin.

As usual, a table with more detailed records will be posted to the RBA website.

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



A **Virginia Rail** in winter at Mendon Ponds Park. Photo by Jay Greenberg Feb. 3, 2014.

	2019	2018	(2009-2018)
Species for January	126	129	126.3

10-year
Average

Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee

Observers: Jim Adams, Janet Akin, Carolyn & Jerry Barnhart, Mitchell Barry, Doug Beattie, Don Bemont, Steven Benedict, Linda Clark-Benedict, Mike Bergin, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, John Boettcher, Terry Bohling, Lynn Braband, Mark Brown, David Bruestle, Robert Buckert, Sara Burch, Bruce Cady, Brad Carlson, Donna Carter, Jill Church, Robert Cicotta, Tiffany Clay, Kelly Close, Andrew Consler, Kris Constable, Lydia Culbert, Doug Daniels, Beth Duncan, Diane Egan, George Ford, Jim Fry, Kyle Gage, Andy Garland, Janis George,

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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.

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