



Little Gull

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

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

MAY AND EARLY JUNE 2019 EVENTS & BIRDING FIELD TRIPS

MAY 1

Wednesday

COBBS HILL PARK

With spring in full swing, come to one of Rochester's best-kept birding secrets: Cobbs 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 Warblers, Black-throated Blue, and Black-throated Green Warblers, Nashville, Black-and-white and Hooded 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. Washington Grove is one of the best spring birding spots in the area. **Meet at 8:00 a.m.** opposite the reservoir in the grassy area between the road and the woods; use the Highland Avenue entrance, just east of Monroe Avenue.

Leaders: Tom and Jeanne Verhulst 585-473-9229 and co-leader Sue Robertson

May 1

Wednesday

Wednesday Evening Warblers

Start of regular Wednesday birding at Lucien Morin Park, 1135 Empire Blvd. Meet in the parking lot. Bring binoculars, sturdy shoes, and bug spray. **6:00 p.m.** until dark. There will also be Wednesday Evening Warbler events on May 8, 15, 22, and 29.

Leader: John Boettcher 585-671-9639

MAY 4

Saturday

TAYLOR MARSH (Joint trip with the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society)

Taylor Marsh is a preserve owned by the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society and located in Ontario County north of Honeoye Lake. It is best known for marsh birds, including both local bitterns and rails. However, the star attraction is the 2-3 Sandhill Cranes that have been present in this area all year around for many years. They are occasionally heard at Taylor, although seldom seen. Taylor also has brush-shrub and wooded upland habitat with a good variety of spring migrants and breeding birds. An adjacent hay field is home to Bobolinks and meadowlarks. It has a checklist of well over 100 species, and we usually rack up 40-50 in just a couple of hours. From Rochester, take I-390 south to the Avon exit. Turn left onto Routes 5 & 20 and go east. In the town of Lima, turn right onto Route 15 A and follow it south. Turn left onto Richmond Mills Road (Livingston County Road 41) east. It becomes Ontario County Road 15. Follow County Road 15 past County Road 37 and turn right at the next stop sign onto Allen's Hill Road. (There is no road sign at the intersection.) Meet at **8:00 a.m.** at the Taylor Marsh parking area on the west side of Allen's Hill Road just south of Nighan Hill Road.

Leaders: Lynn Braband 585-436-9388 and Jay Greenberg 585-256-0485

MAY 5

Sunday

FOUR MILE CREEK PRESERVE, WEBSTER

We will meet at **8:00 a.m.** in the preserve parking lot at the SE corner of Lake Road and Phillips Road in Webster. We will look for spring migrants along the hiking trails. The trails will most likely be muddy, so appropriate footwear is recommended.

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Poeth 585-872-5344

MAY 7

Tuesday

CORNWALL PRESERVE AND OLGA FLEISHER WILDLIFE PRESERVE

NOTICE!!: Due to the sudden but temporary closure of Camp Beechwood State Park, this field trip has been modified to include the Cornwall Preserve. The trip will begin at B. Forman Park just east of Pultneyville, then proceed to the Cornwall Preserve. The preserve is located on the shoreline of Lake Ontario, and it should attract warblers, vireos, thrushes and other migrants. Bring beverages, snacks or lunch if you plan to attend the second part of this trip to the Olga Fleisher Preserve, a bottomland forest and wetland (known locally as Huckleberry Swamp) with an excellent boardwalk and trail. The trail

portion of Huckleberry can be wet and muddy, and boots are suggested for that portion. Meet at Webster Park, corner of Lake and Holt Roads at **7:00 a.m.** or at Forman Park in Pultneyville at **7:30 a.m.**

Leaders: *Tom and Nancy Poeth 585-872-5344; Co-leader: Kevin Farrell*

MAY 8

Wednesday

ONTARIO PATHWAYS

We'll look for warblers and other spring migrants along this level, 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 and bring some cash for a great brunch at the Blue Ribbon after we walk! At times, the weather can be fickle, but we've seen better warblers in the snow on this trip than many trips get on sunny days. Please join us! Meet in the Bushnell's Basin Park and Ride lot (off NY Route 96 just south of Exit 27 from I-490) at **7:00 a.m.** Carpool arrangements may be made before we commute to the trail area parking.

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

May 9

Thursday

RBA General Meeting, 7:00 p.m., the Baptist Temple, 1101 Clover Street, Rochester NY 14610 (in Brighton). **Speaker:** *Eli J. Knapp*. **Title:** *Birds Become Stories*. See the notice on p. 3 for more information.

MAY 11

Saturday

ISLAND COTTAGE WOODS, CHURCH WOODS, AND FIRE HOUSE WOODS—WARBLER HOTSPOTS

West side hotspots are highlighted in this multi-stop trip for migrants of various kinds: from warblers to snipe, we'll show you where to look for spring birds on the west side. Meet at **7:00 a.m.** at the parking area at the intersection of Island Cottage Road and Edgemere Drive (opposite Schaller's). Boots are **STRONGLY** recommended.

Leader: *Greg Lawrence 227-5837 and co-leader Rosemary Reilly 585-748-0802*

MAY 12

Sunday

AMY'S POND AND WOODSMITH—GENESEE LAND TRUST / RBA JOINT TRIP

This is a field trip to the private property of Janet Smith for spring migrants, early nesters and waterfowl. Two adjacent easements make up 187 acres that include two large ponds, mature woodland, and open fields, all within 0.5 mile of Lake Ontario. Past trips have yielded eagles, bitterns, herons, many warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, etc. We'll walk along uneven trails, so bring a walking stick if needed, and prepare for a medium-long hike in an outstanding sanctuary open only by special arrangement, many thanks to GLT! Meet at Webster Park on the west corner of Holt and Lake Roads at **7:00 a.m.** or at Amy's Pond at **7:30 a.m.** To get to Amy's Pond, take Route 104 east to County Line Road. Drive north until it ends at Lake Road. Turn right and travel approximately one mile to 484 Lake Road, Ontario, N.Y. and turn down the long gravel driveway (on the south side of Lake Road) until you reach the marked parking area.

Leaders: *Sheryl Gracewski and Tom Nash 585-261-6975 and co-leader Kevin Farrell 585-748-6919*

MAY 16

Thursday

TINKER NATURE PARK

Located in Henrietta, the 68 acre Tinker Nature Park features wide (handicapped-accessible) trails through a varied habitat of mature forest, swamp, marsh, and meadow. Join us as we search for migrating and nesting birds. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the main parking area (at the Tinker Homestead) at 1525 Calkins Road, Henrietta. Dress for the weather.

Leaders: *Tom and Nancy Poeth 585-872-5344*

MAY 18

Saturday

POWDER MILLS PARK AND BANC SANCTUARY (Joint trip with Burroughs Audubon Nature Club)

On the east side, Powder Mills Park is a mature woodland park that can be productive for many species of late migrating or nesting warblers and other songbirds. Blue-winged Warblers, Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers, Pileated Woodpeckers and Red-tailed Hawks have all nested there in the past couple years. The trip will continue with a visit to the BANC Sanctuary on Railroad Mills Road, where we'll walk the trails round the woodland, wetland and creek habitats. Nesting species there include Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens, Eastern Phoebe and screech-owl, and adjacent tree lines have produced a variety of migrating warblers. Meet at the Powder Mills Park Fish Hatchery parking lot on Park Road at **7:30 a.m.**

Leader: *Richard Ashworth 585-381-2189 and co-leaders Tom and Jeanne Verhulst 585-473-9229*

MAY 19

Sunday

MANITOU BEACH PRESERVE

Our trip to this lakeside treasure should rack up good numbers of warblers, flycatchers, and other spring arrivals. Owned by the Genesee Land Trust, the Manitou Beach Preserve consists of 5 acres of field and hedgerow, shrub, and cattail wetlands extending into Braddock Bay. Wear waterproof, sturdy shoes and don't forget the bug spray! Meet in the Owl Woods parking lot on Manitou Beach Road (Rt. 261) at the Lake Ontario State Parkway at **8:00 a.m.** We will shuttle to the preserve, as parking space is limited.

Leader: *Amy Kahn 585-310-2330 and co-leader Kevin Farrell 585-748-6919*

MAY 21

Tuesday

OATKA CREEK PARK

Woods and meadow provide great habitat for nesting species such as Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee, Blue-winged Warbler and Field Sparrow. Meet at the park entrance at the intersection of Quaker Road and Union Street in Garbutt at **7:30 a.m.** Take Route 383 (Scottsville—Mumford Road) west 1.5 to 2 miles from its intersection with Route 386 in Scottsville and turn south onto Union Street and go about 0.5 miles.

Leader: *Judy Gurley 585-582-2349 and co-leader Nick Kachala 585-750-5536*

(continued on p. 6)

Welcome to the Flock



Join us in welcoming these 20 new or returning members to the RBA. Due to a website glitch, a few of these members joined as far back as January. We apologize for the delay in recognizing their membership.

Jeanne Allen	David Levy
Claudia Bly	David Mathiason
Naren Borgharkar	Linda Roca
Krista Cameron	Noreen B. Salerno
Marie & Jay Costanza	Cindy Scoda
Betsy Desmitt	Laurie Shepland
Paul Emerick	Trevor Spears (Young Birder)
Miela Ford	Valerie Spencer
Alison Grube	June Summers
Sara Hirst	Indira Thirkannad

Current RBA Membership is 393.

The total comprises household members (361), young birders (8), corporate member (1), *Little Gull* subscribers (3) and *Little Gull* complimentary subscribers (20).

Jo Taylor, Membership Data

Adrianna Anderson, Membership Outreach

President's Column

Andrea Patterson



Last weekend, I was treated to a talk by Mike Lanzone. Mike grew up in the Rochester area, and managed to find his way to the lakeshore

where he met and was mentored by a number of banders and birders. Spurred by a desire to know more

about bird movements than mere observations or even banding data could provide, Mike was determined to find a way to track Golden Eagles using parts from discarded cell phones. Currently, Mike lives in Cape May, NJ, and he runs Cellular Tracking Technologies (CTT), a company that makes sophisticated animal tracking devices.

Mike's GPS trackers are used in Project Snowstorm, which has now deployed units on 77 owls over six years. California Condors now sport CTT devices, and the data stream can be used to warn wind turbine operators of approaching birds. CTT devices equipped with accelerometers can record how many times a bird flaps in a day. Bald Eagles, for example, flap approximately 48 times/km, while Golden Eagles flap only 6 times/km.

Technology has dramatically changed the way we study birds — not just for professional ornithologists, but for good old-fashioned birders as well. Once, we had to scribble notes in our bird books and keep lists in waterproof journals, but now we can mark everything in eBird. Once, we had to understand details of bird behavior and habitat choice to find species of interest, but now we can call up a computer program that tells us where to go. Once, we had to carefully note characteristics like plumage and shape in order to identify a bird; now we can simply snap a picture and have it identified by a computer algorithm.

Some changes are unequivocally positive. With high-quality optics, we can watch birds from a farther distance which reduces disturbance. With sophisticated digital cameras, we can easily document rarities. Programs like eBird and Merlin are making birding accessible to more and more people.

This month, I encourage you to think about how technology has changed the way you bird. Do you get up in the morning and follow the crowd to the latest interesting sighting? Does your ranking in eBird inspire you to submit more lists, to pursue more big days, or to bird in new counties?

Do you engage in the photographic version of "shoot first and identify later"?

And now, think about the way you would like to bird. Would you like to find an unusual bird on your own? Would you like to sit quietly and observe birds, documenting in your own field notes their appearance and behavior, much like early naturalists did? Would you like to learn to identify more species on your own in the field?

There are lots of ways to be a birder, and as long as the birds are safe and respected, I won't quibble with how a person chooses to enjoy their hobby. At the same time, I'd love to see more people striking out on their own for under-birded places, taking field notes and making drawings, and sometimes just observing.

One note about last month's column on our Young Birders program. I didn't mean to imply that youth birding began in Rochester only 18 months ago when I referred to an official recognition of the program; I only meant that the board had passed a charter detailing the structure of the program. Much credit is due to the birders who have mentored our youth over the past decades — Kevin Griffith, Ferne Merrill, Lynn Bergmeyer, and many others — and to the youths themselves, many of whom are now grown and are in turn mentoring the next generation.

May Talk and Speaker

Birds Become Stories

Some spectacular birds turn the people who see them into birders. Others have a power even beyond that. Their unexpected appearance, special attributes, or sheer rarity attract birders to chase them, often forsaking all else. Sometimes, the birders get their bird. Just as often, they miss. Succeed or fail, every birder gets a tale to tell. Come listen as Eli Knapp shares excerpts from his new book, *The Delightful Horror of Family Birding*. You'll find out how birds teach us, inspire us, and

best of all, become stories to share.

Eli J. Knapp, *PhD*, has had a fascination with wildlife ever since obsessively counting deer on his bus rides to school every morning as a kid. His wildlife interests have put him into kayaks, hot air balloons, dilapidated land rovers, and many pairs of hiking boots in search of new species and experiences. When not watching birds, Eli teaches courses in conservation biology, wildlife behavior, human ecology, and Swahili at Houghton College in western New York, where he is a tenured professor of intercultural studies and biology. Each spring, he takes 20-30 students to East Africa where he directs an annual study abroad semester. His research interests spawn out of a 3-year stint living in Serengeti National Park, where he studied the coexistence of people and wildlife around protected areas. Eli now enjoys sharing nature with his wife and 3 children, and has chronicled his adventures in his first book: *The Delightful Horror of Family Birding: Sharing Nature with the Next Generation* (Torrey House Press).



RBA IN THE FIELD

**Hamlin Beach State Park
3/9/2019**

On a chilly, bright winter morning, 18 people joined the 2 leaders at Braddock Bay Park, pooled a few cars, and drove out to Hamlin Beach. We were hoping for some early spring migrants, but knew the east wind was supposed to get stronger, so that was unlikely.

We began with a nice walk along the lake toward the Yanty Creek Trail. Common Goldeneyes, Long-tailed Ducks and Red-breasted

Mergansers were doing a little showing off to their potential mates, so spring was in the air for them, at least. A single White-winged Scoter was spotted among the ice floes, and a group of 8 Common Mergansers was gathered near the Yanty Creek outlet at the lake. The woods were silent, so we chose not to trudge through the snow at the Yanty Creek Trail.

We began our road tour back east at Jacobs Road in Hamlin. Horned Larks flew off the roadside there and along every road. The flock of Common Redpolls was there, as hoped, but either stayed on the backside of the weeds, or flew to the trees backlit above us, so there was no chance to see the Hoary Redpoll reported there periodically. Estimates that ranged from 80 to 150 were all wrong as, thanks to Dick Horsey photographing the flock and counting, there was a minimum of 275.

Then came the best and worst bird of the trip! I looked straight overhead and spotted an all-white falcon flying directly overhead and yelled, "Everyone get on this, it's a white Gyrfalcon". The 5 second view was enough for me to see the dark flight feather tips and some streaking in the breast that was enough to eliminate the leucistic Red-tails they are often mistaken for. Unfortunately, Lynn, and most of the group, were a ways away from me and did not see it. One other observer saw it well before it went behind the trees and provided a very good description, but no one else was able to get on it. (I'm sorry not to remember her name and if anyone knows, please let me know). We moved out into the open fairly quickly and spotted a Northern Harrier and a Red-tailed Hawk, but the other was long gone. A consolation there was a flock of about 70 Snow Buntings and the only real migrants of the day, 9 Tundra Swans flying west.

We continued on to the Owl Woods at Braddock Bay. Although none had been seen that morning, we took a leisurely walk and checked some of the normal hiding spots. As others had reported, we were not able to find any. The bay was mostly frozen, so we ended here.

In all, a very wintery total of 35 species was tallied as the cold east wind picked up. The would-have-been lifer for most continued on its winter wanderings to be seen in another place on another day. Thank you to Lynn for co-leading, and it was a pleasure to have so many new faces join us. Next year, sunny and 60!

Mike Tetlow and Lynn Bergmeyer

Lake Shore Marshes East Wildlife Management Area 3/16/2019

Co-leaders: Kinsley Whittum and Christina Hoh

Eight brave birders met in Webster early on Saturday morning, ready for a trek through the wind and cold along the lakeshore. Our first destination was the beach at Sodus Point, where we spotted Long-tailed Ducks and a handful of Common Mergansers bobbing along the channel and some gulls and Canada Geese flying over. The water was much calmer within the bay itself, where we were able to get great views of a raft of diving ducks sheltering from the wind. Bufflehead, Common Merganser, and Lesser Scaup broke up the large group of Canvasbacks, while Mallards, Canada Geese, and Mute Swans hung out closer to shore. We found a similar assortment of species farther south at a marina, plus Ring-necked Duck, Redhead, and some Common Goldeneyes.

Continuing on, a nice surprise along Shaker Tract Road was an American Kestrel doing its trademark hovering over the newly-tilled fields. The bay was largely iced-over near Third Creek, even enough for some brave ice fisherman, but we were able to find another flock of Canvasbacks and scaups, along with more swans and geese, close to the piers. Other birds here included Herring Gull, Ring-billed Gull, and a Song Sparrow singing from the marsh.

Our next stop was the Ridge Road bridge, where we got to watch an immature Bald Eagle feeding on the ice behind the bait shop. There was much more open water south of the

bridge, where we could see a large flock of Ring-necked Ducks, along with Bufflehead, Hooded and Common Merganser, and more swans and geese. Here we also picked up Red-winged Blackbird, Blue Jay, American Crow, Northern Cardinal, and Red-bellied Woodpecker.

Chimney Bluffs State Park was largely quiet, but we caught a small flock of newly-arrived Eastern Meadowlarks in the field south of the main entrance. We trekked out to the lake and saw mergansers and goldeneyes flying past above the crashing waves. We then stopped at a couple of the DEC overlooks, where we found our first Mourning Dove, Common Grackle, American Robin, and a couple of soaring Red-tailed Hawks. On the way to the next stop, we spotted another kestrel perched on a power line and a Northern Harrier working the edge of a farm field.

We then headed to the Red Creek Unit along Larkin Road, where we made the short hike to the frozen marsh. Despite the ice, we were still able to pick up Wood Duck and American Black Duck, as well as a pair of Downy Woodpeckers in the pine grove. Our final stop was Fields Hill Road and a hike through the Black Creek

Unit, which turned up a few common woodland birds before folks headed off for their own adventures. This trip highlighted some of the challenges of birding Lake Ontario in late winter: unpredictable wind, waves, and ice! Despite all this, we were able to tally 44 species and got to introduce a few folks to some great new birding locations.

Christina Hoh



An **Eastern Meadowlark**. Photo by Jay Greenberg

Beginner Bird Trip—Owl Woods and the Hawk Watch Site 3/24/2019

There was a fantastic turnout for the beginner birder trip at Braddock Bay's Owl Woods and hawk watch site. A group of 50 people of all ages and experiences came out on this chilly morning in hopes of catching a glimpse of an owl. We were lucky enough to see 4 different saw-whet owls! For some, it was the first owl they had ever seen in the wild. Sixteen species were spotted in and above the woods, including Mute Swan, Turkey Vultures, Horned Lark, Song Sparrows, juncos and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Over at the hawk watch platform, 50 species were sighted! Waterfowl migration was in full swing, and we were treated to sightings of Snow Goose, Tundra Swan, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Hooded Merganser and pintail, to name a few. A Eurasian Wigeon was a new sighting for many of the birders. In the skies above the hawk watch we saw flyovers of Turkey Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks.

Greg Lawrence & Liz Magnanti

May Birds and Brews

Join Rochester Birding Association members on **Wednesday, May 29th from 7-9 p.m.** for Birds and Brews! This is a casual evening for members to get together and share birding stories, compare travel destinations, and catch up all while having a pint of Rochester's finest ales. This month's event is right down the road from Warbler Wednesdays at Lucien Morin Park! Enjoy warbler watching and then stop by for a chat!

Volunteer Marsh Bird Monitors Needed

National Audubon Society is planning to construct a restoration project in Cranberry Pond which is part of the Braddock Bay Fish and Wildlife Management Area. As part of the project, Genesee Valley Audubon Society will be running the marsh bird monitoring this spring and for the next several years to see how the populations of marsh birds change. The suite of birds that we will be looking at includes, American Coot, Least Bittern, Common Gallinule, and King Rail. The survey will require the volunteers to walk into the marsh and listen for the marsh birds at least twice a week. We will provide all necessary equipment except binoculars.

This volunteer opportunity offers the chance of a life time to experience the adventure of spending time in a marsh with frogs and other creatures you rarely get to see. This will be an adventure you will never forget. For more contact June Summers, summers@frontiernet.net.

(continued from p.2)

MAY 23
Thursday**THOUSAND ACRE SWAMP**

Thousand Acre Swamp is a preserve owned by The Nature Conservancy. It has a bird checklist of 120 species. This easy 2.5-mile walk goes through varied habitats, resulting in a variety of breeding bird species and migrants. The habitats include swampy woods, drier woods, a marshy area, meadows, and a pond. Shorter routes are possible. The entrance and parking lot are on the west side of Jackson Road opposite Penfield Center Road in Penfield. Boots are recommended. Meet in the parking lot at **7:30 a.m.**

Leaders: Jay Greenberg 585-256-0485 and Richard Ashworth 585-381-2189

MAY 25
Saturday**IROQUOIS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

We will search for Prothonotary Warblers, Yellow-throated Vireos, Cerulean Warblers, and other nesting birds at this local natural treasure. We'll drive to various spots in the refuge and take an easy walk along one of the very scenic trails. Meet at **7:00 a.m.** at the Brockport Park and Ride on Route 31 (west of Route 19 and Wegmans). For those traveling from the west: meet at the Upper Stafford Marsh Overlook near 5999 Albion Road, Oakfield, N.Y. at **~7:30 a.m.** It is advisable to bring water and snacks or a picnic lunch since there may be no local resources, and the trip may last into the afternoon.

Leaders: Tom Nash and Sheryl Gracewski 585-261-6975 and co-leader Cathy Ballard 585-322-2621

MAY 26
Sunday**NORWAY ROAD**

This unassuming trip usually racks up one of the longest bird lists of the year. From nesting Cerulean Warblers to Purple Martins along the lake, this trip showcases roadside birding in spectacular fashion! There are no long walks, no rough terrain, and it is totally handicapped accessible. Meet in Ridgemont Plaza in front of Best Buy on Route 104 in Greece (opposite Heritage Drive) at **7:00 a.m.** **Extra FRS radios and scopes would be helpful.**

Leader: Greg Lawrence 227-5837 and co-leader Cathy Ballard 585-322-2621

JUN 1
Saturday**CANADICE LAKE**

We'll go down the east side of the lake for a variety of nesting passerines, especially warblers and vireos. There will be a short walk at the south end of the lake, but mostly, we'll drive and park along the shore. Meet at **7:00 a.m.** at the Rush Town Hall parking lot on the southwest corner of East Henrietta Road (Route 15 A) and Rush-Mendon Road (Route 251).

Leaders: Lucretia Grosshans 585-467-2474 and Diane Henderson 585-334-9400

JUN 2
Sunday**BERGEN SWAMP**

A trip to this unique place is by special permit from the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society and will feature nesting birds. The mix of vegetation zones provides secluded nesting habitat for the usual western N.Y. species, as well as those more characteristic of the Canadian Zone, such as Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Black-and-white, Canada and Nashville Warblers. This is a walking trip of 3–5 miles on variably wet and slippery corduroy trails that must be followed closely for safety reasons and because of the fragile habitat. Sturdy boots (rather than sneakers) are **STRONGLY** recommended, and hiking or ski poles may be useful. Massasauga rattlesnakes are **VERY** rarely encountered. Parking at the trailhead is limited, so we will meet in the parking lot of the 7-11 gas station at the junction of Routes 33 and 19 at **7:30 a.m.** Drive about 20 miles west of Rochester on I-490 to exit 2. Turn right (west) onto Route 33 and go about one mile to the junction with Route 19. Turn left onto Route 19, then make an immediate left turn into the parking lot.

Leader: Jay Greenberg 585-256-0485 and co-leader Rick Stevens 585-689-1882

ABA 50th Anniversary

The Red-billed Tropicbird (infrequently seen in the U.S.) is the American Birding Association's logo bird. This year, the club's 50th anniversary, the Red-billed Tropicbird was honored as "bird of the year". Recently Chuck and I went to Trinidad and Tobago (not in the ABA listing area) and had the opportunity to observe and photograph this lovely creature.

Diane Henderson

A Red-billed Tropicbird and chick in a nest. Photo by Diane Henderson.



March 2019 Sightings Report

It was a month with a cold start and a wet end, but no real extremes in between, other than a few periods of strong and gusty winds – March weather. The first 8 days were cold, with lake effect snow. Then temperatures warmed to a spike of 70° on the 14th, followed by 14 of the last 22 days above normal. Temperatures averaged 33.5°F, 0.8° below normal, while precipitation totaled 1.72", 0.78" below normal. Snowfall at 13.9" was 2.4" below normal. Snow was not much of a problem, other than several events dumping on the roads during commuting periods.

Again, over most of the month, conditions were not conducive to migration, and new arrivals seemed slow, although actually all the arrival dates reported were in the interquartile range or earlier relative to their historical arrival distributions, and few expected species were missed. Species for the month and year to date were both well above their 10-year averages. Reports to eBird totaled 32,156 lines, up about 1/3 from last year. Much of this increase is due to consistent and complete reporting of all species daily by the official Braddock Bay hawk counter, David Brown.

Among the waterfowl, again Snow Geese persisted in high numbers both in our region and nearby. The rarer but now regular geese, Greater White-fronted and Cackling, were found in good numbers, and a Ross's Goose was reported. Again, while missed in February, Eurasian Wigeon appeared early at 3 sites in our region. An adult King Eider seen and photographed at Sodus Point was a nice observation for a few birders. There were some good peak counts at several locations, especially on Braddock Bay and in the Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area (NMWMA). Diving duck counts, including Canvasback, were good on the ponds and flooded fields. The usual species tallied passing the lake watch were not so good, especially loons and scoters. There were a few good days for high Red-necked Grebe counts. An early Common Gallinule was spotted from the hawk watch on the 30th. At least 21 Sandhill Cranes were noted from the hawk watch, and at least 19 more from other sites.

Good numbers of Killdeer were noted across the region after the 10th, and American Woodcock starting in mid-month. Late in the month, Pectoral Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, and Greater Yellowlegs were added. The first spring Bonaparte's Gull was seen on March 15. There were fair numbers of our regular gulls, the now typical numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gull, and fairly low numbers of the usual winter species, Iceland and Glaucous Gulls. There were no really rare gulls reported this month.

Great Blue Heron numbers picked up through the month, and Great Egret arrived near month's end, plus a relatively early American Bittern was noted on the 30th. This year, we had a big jump in Black Vulture sightings at the hawk watch and elsewhere. Again, the official counter this year is David Brown. The hawk count seemed slow, but it progressed in jumps and ended up at 4,017, a third

above last year's March total. As typical, 3,112 Turkey Vultures was 77% of the total raptor count. Osprey arrived on the 24th, and this year 3 Northern Goshawks were tallied at the hawk watch. For most species, counts were typical of recent years. A table can be found on the hawk count website.

Only 3 Snowy Owls were reported. The DEC Short-eared Owl surveys out of the Avon office continued with good numbers for this month's counts and a good total of 44 on the March 26th date. Jim Adams reported an excellent year for Northern Saw-whet Owls roosting in the Owl Woods area, with a count of 49 for the month. The Long-eared Owl number was only 6. On the 28th, a surprise was a resting Barred Owl, which remained for many views and photos that day. Red-headed Woodpecker was reported only at Durand-Eastman Park. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers continued from winter, and some likely spring migrants were noted by month's end. The 3 regular falcons were all reported in typical numbers at the hawk watch and elsewhere.

Passerine arrivals were slow through the month, with only Tree Swallow, Barn Swallow, American Pipit, and Rusty Blackbird as new for the year. The two earliest Barn Swallow records were record early on the 14th. Some judgment calls added arrival dates for other species that also wintered in some numbers. The most interesting were Eastern Phoebe, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, and Eastern Meadowlark. Others with quite a few winter reports were Winter Wren, Eastern Towhee, and Savannah and Fox Sparrows. None were at really exceptionally early dates. Our tantalizing yet disappointing season for "winter finches" continued, with a few reports of Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, some decent counts for Common Redpoll, a Hoary Redpoll or two, and small numbers of Pine Siskins. At month's end, signs of spring movement were appearing.

Please send your reports by the 5th of the month to Andrea Patterson, 144 Greystone Lane, #24, Rochester, NY 14618.

	2019	2018	10-year Average (2009-2018)
Species for March	145	138	140.2
New for the year	20	11	17.6
Total for the year to date	155	151	150.7

Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee

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RBA BANC Picnic on June 13, 2019 at 6 p.m. Save the Date!!

by Wanda Thistle, Social Chair

I hope to see many of you at our June picnic. Recent years' entertainment included an Indigo Bunting (in the sun!) and a hilarious Pileated Woodpecker. Let's hope they remember to show up this year.

The picnic is a time when you can meet old friends and make new ones. On bird trips we have tended to listen for the birds, but at the picnic we get to socialize.

Come rain or shine. Bring food to grill (there will be 2 grills) or, like me, just stop at the store for a sub. And don't forget to bring a dish to share with others (appetizer, salad or dessert).

Give me a call @ 585-236-1834 or e-mail me thistlew@yahoo.com to indicate what type of dish you would like to bring.



A male **Indigo Bunting** in the sun. Photo by Jay Greenberg

Ten Days of Birding in Cuba: Part 5

by Monika Herrmann

Day 7 - Friday. Breakfast and lunch were "to go" today. We headed to Najasa and the Belen Reserve, a bird and horse sanctuary. This is beautiful open land with palm groves. New for us here were Palm Crows. They exist side-by-side with Cuban Crows, and the result is very noisy. The Cuban Crows sound a lot like parrots trying to talk. We also added Plain Pigeon, LaSagra's Flycatcher, and Cuban Oriole to our list, in addition to seeing many others again.

We proceeded on to a farm, where horses and oxen drew carts. Unfortunately, we did not find Cuban Parakeet, which was the target bird for this area. While standing near a pig barn, I did have the privilege of witnessing a

kitten stalk a lizard that was up on a post, pounce, catch, and eat it.

The 2 places we visited this morning were full of butterflies.

In the afternoon we made the 4-hour journey to Cayo Coco, a key about 30 miles off the northern coast, via a well-maintained causeway. We would spend 2 nights at the Hotel Pullman, birding Cayo Coco and Cayo Guillermo and Cayo Paredon Grande. It appears these entire keys are becoming covered with huge resort hotels. Our group was in building 32 of 54. That's not cabins; that's 3-story buildings of rooms, restaurants, cabarets, snack bars, etc. - an entire village in itself. My partner and I nearly got lost that evening (and all subsequent meal-times), trying to find the cafeteria. This was a place where all you can eat and drink at any of the restaurants

or bars is included in the price. I must say, I did like the cafeteria, where the food selection area alone was about as big as Wegman's, with any kind of food you could imagine, presented beautifully. And tons of desserts! It was crowded with tourists, largely from Russia and Canada, I'm told. The rooms were fancy, with complimentary drinks in the refrigerator and a generous supply of grooming aids in the bathroom; and there was an oddly designed shower stall with loose shutters, where one couldn't help but flood the bedroom floor. The first floor room had sliding doors to a patio. These the maids leave open to air the unoccupied rooms. I had more than a sneaking suspicion that some boy cats had come in and had a territory-marking contest. (Note to you non-cat people: that doesn't mean the furniture was shredded). This resort was so over-the-top, that as a professed nature-lover, I was almost embarrassed to be there.

Day 8 - Saturday. We had picked up our latest guide the previous day, so we headed out early to explore the keys. Last year's Hurricane Maria had devastated a lot of the mangroves and other delicate vegetation of the sandy terrain, and along with it, some bird populations were also decimated. Things are slowly beginning to come back. This was the only day we had to deal with rain, November being officially

just over the line into the dry season. But there were only a few sprinkles.

While still in the hotel zone, we spotted a West Indian Whistling Duck high up on a building ledge. In a shrubby area, we found Mangrove Cuckoo, Cuban Gnatcatcher, Oriente Warbler, Cuban Vireo, Common Ground-Dove, and Cuban Black Hawk. Near areas of quiet water were seen Snowy Egret, White Ibis, Great Egret, Clapper Rail, Black-bellied Plover, Royal Tern, Northern Shoveler, Spotted Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, American Coot, Least Grebe, and Pectoral Sandpiper. There was even a Yellow Warbler.



An **Oriente Warbler**.



A **Cuban Gnatcatcher**. Both of these species are Cuba endemics. Photos by Jay Greenberg.

Towards evening we went to an area behind a building that appeared to be out in the middle of nowhere, but we were told it was the back of a disco, the front of which was a cave. Well, someone was maintaining feeders and a bird-bath there, and many birds were using the amenities. It was almost too dark to take pictures by then, but we could get good looks at them. Along with many of those previously seen, were Yellow-throated Vireo, Painted Bunting, and Worm-eating Warbler. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo and a Merlin were seen along the road as we were leaving.

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

Plants for a Bird-Friendly Garden

Part One, Flowers and Vines

Adapted by Amy Kahn from information from National Audubon Society, Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYS Division of Lands and Forests *BIRD ATTRACTING GARDENS*

Putting up a feeder is an easy way to attract birds. But if you want to attract a wider variety of species, consider landscaping your yard—even just a part of it—to be more bird-friendly. Even a small yard can provide vital habitat. All it takes is a little time and effort, all the easier if you already enjoy gardening. The rewards are beautiful birds that add color and music to your life year-round.

There are 3 basic things that all birds need from their habitats:

- FOOD:** Your yard can be landscaped to provide fruit, seeds, beneficial insects, and other small animals that birds feed upon. See below for some suggested plants suitable even for a small yard.
- WATER:** Birds need water for drinking and bathing, either in the form of a bird bath or a small pond that will support frogs, toads, and small fish to attract a wider variety of birds. A very simple way to add a water feature is to take a baking dish, place it on a few flat rocks and keep it full of fresh water.
- SHELTER:** Whether it's a safe place for sleeping, a protected haven from the elements, a hiding place to elude predators, or a secure nesting spot, providing shelter is an important way to make your property bird-friendly. See below for some suggested plants suitable even for a small yard.

Native plants help birds and people. Looking to spruce up your yard this spring? Try growing more plants that naturally occur in the Monroe County area. Gardening with native plants has many benefits: They're beautiful, they're already adapted to the local precipitation and soil conditions, and they don't need artificial fertilizers or pesticides. Of course the biggest benefit might be that native plants are great for birds.

Native plants provide nectar for hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. They provide nourishing seeds and irresistible fruits for your feathered neighbors, and they offer places to nest and shelter from harm. They're also a critical part of the food chain—native insects evolved to feed on native plants, and backyard birds raise their young on insects. Take the Black-capped Chickadee: A single clutch of 5 chicks will gobble up thousands of caterpillars in the 16 days between when they hatch and when they leave the nest. So thriving insects means thriving birds.

The key is to pick the right plants for your yard. Here are 8 great plants native to Rochester:

Native Flowering Plants

Cutleaf coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*):

Also known as green-headed coneflower, it is native to New York State. *Echinacea purpurea* is a great native

plant from the plains states but will grow well in our area. It isn't native to New York, though.

Birds that love them: These beautiful blooms attract butterflies and other pollinators during the summer and provide seeds for goldfinches and other birds in the fall.



Cutleaf coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*). Photo by Jay Greenberg.

Sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.)

Sunflowers may signify loyalty and longevity for people, but they mean food for many birds. *Helianthus angustifolius* in the eastern United States produce seeds in bulk.

Birds that love them: Birds often use the sunflower seeds to fuel their long migrations.

Milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.)

Milkweed is best known for hosting monarch butterfly caterpillars, but they attract loads of insects that are great for birds, too. Bonus: the flowers are gorgeous. Try butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) in hot dry areas, while swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) is great in wet areas or gardens.

Birds that love them: Some birds, like the American Goldfinch and orioles, use the fiber from the milkweed to spin nests for their chicks. Goldfinches and other birds also use the downy part of the seed to line their nests.



Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*). Photo by Jay Greenberg

Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

The cardinal flower's bright red petals resemble the flowing robes worn by Roman Catholic cardinals, after which it was named. This moisture-loving plant is native in the East.

Birds that love them: While few insects can navigate the long tubular flowers, hummingbirds feast on the cardinal flower's nectar with their elongated beaks.

Wild Bergamot, Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.):

Monarda fistulosa, with its purple flowers and *Monarda punctata* with its spots are both native to our area, but *Monarda didyma* or red bee balm is not native to our area, although it also is a great garden plant for hummingbirds.

Birds that love them: It attracts hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies.

Sundrops, *Oenothera fruticosa* and Common Evening Primrose, *Oenothera biennis*:

Yellow flowers bloom in late spring to early fall.

Birds that love them: Attracts hummingbirds and bees. Seeds are eaten by birds, especially finches and sparrows.

Native Vines:**Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)**

One of the most well-behaved vines to plant in your garden, the multitudes of red tubular flowers are magnets for hummingbirds. Trumpet honeysuckle is native in the northeast United States. The common sweetly scented

Japanese honeysuckle is an exotic invasive—but if you swap it with native trumpet honeysuckle, you'll attract plenty of birds. Trumpet honeysuckle is also a great substitute for non-native wisteria, which rarely blooms in our area but also is invasive.

Birds that love them: This vine's nectar attracts hummingbirds, and many birds like Purple Finches and Hermit Thrushes eat its fruit. During migration, Baltimore Orioles get to the nectar by eating the flowers.

Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

The Virginia creeper may be best known for its similarity to poison ivy, but its leaves are harmless to your skin. While people may intentionally avoid it, many birds rely on its fruit during the winter.

Birds that love them: It's a key food source for fruit-eating birds, such as mockingbirds, nuthatches, woodpeckers and Blue Jays.



Virginia creeper fruit and leaves. Photo by Jay Greenberg.

Wind Project Update

by Amy Kahn, RBA Conservation Chair

Sources: SOS; Orleans Hub; Niagara Gazette; Cat Mosley, Apex spokesperson

Apex withdrew its application to construct a 110-megawatt wind energy project on Galloo Island on Feb. 8. In recent months, the Galloo Island Wind Project application suffered several setbacks. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation recently discovered a Bald Eagle's nest on Galloo Island, which Apex did not disclose in its original application. In response, state agencies decided to extend their review of the project. The delay may have jeopardized the company's ability to take advantage of federal tax credits that could have lowered the cost of the roughly \$200 million project. The tax credits are only available for wind energy facilities that began construction by Dec. 31, 2018, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Apex started the Lighthouse Project proposing 70 wind turbines. By 2018, that number was down to 47 turbines in Somerset and Yates. Then on April 11, Apex announced

they were no longer planning to submit their application for the Lighthouse Project in 2019. Last October, Apex had publicly detailed its plans to submit its application early this year and begin construction in late 2021. In addition, the company also closed its Barker office. However, in a post to the Lighthouse Wind Facebook page, Apex wrote that it is keeping open a single "consolidated Western New York development office" on North Main Street in Albion. They have also said that leases they have with property owners in Somerset and Yates will still be good for the next 2 years, so the fight is not yet over, just delayed.

Threats are not all over for the birds, however. Apex hopes to submit their application plan for the 33 turbine Heritage Project in Barre to the state in May or June, 2019, which could open the fields of Barre to wind energy in 2021. Wind Apex proposes building the tallest windmills the land can hold. Heritage Wind is aiming to use Nordex 149 wind turbine models. The top of the blade span would be 655 feet — which is 64 feet taller than the windmills proposed by Apex at the Lighthouse Wind project — and will generate a total of 147 MW of power, or enough to power about 39,000 homes. The anticipated date of commercial operations and construction would be in 2021 and the project would last for about 25 years.



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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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