



Little Gull

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

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

MARCH AND EARLY APRIL 2021 EVENTS & BIRDING FIELD TRIPS

Please Note: Pre-registration is now required for all field trips (see the COVID-19 field trip guidelines in the revised field trip schedule or on the [RBA website](http://www.RochesterBirding.org)). Bring your own binoculars and scopes if you have them, as there will be no sharing of equipment. Social distancing will be practiced, and masks will be required.

MAR 11
Thursday

RBA Virtual Meeting, 7:00 p.m. Speaker: Matthew Young. Title: From Finches to FiRN (the Finch Research Network). See the article on p. 3 for more information.

Mar 13
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. One portion of the trip is walking on a wide, flat trail. Bring a snack to munch on to keep your energy up, and dress for the weather! Restrooms are available at Sodus Point Park. Meet at **7:30 a.m.** in Webster Plaza at the junction of Route 404 and Hard Road near Starbucks. **Spotting scopes would be very useful.**

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

Mar 20
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 the 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 Bald Eagles. **Dress warmly** as the lakeshore can be cold this time of year. Trails are flat. Waterproof boots are strongly recommended. Restrooms are available at Hamlin Beach only. Meet at **9:00 a.m.** at the Braddock Bay Park main parking lot. Use the East Manitou Road exit from the Ontario State Parkway. **Spotting scopes would be very useful.**

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

Mar 27
Saturday

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! The Owl Woods trails are flat and likely will be wet and muddy. **Boots are STRONGLY recommended – they're almost mandatory!** No restrooms are available. **Bring binoculars and, if you have them, spotting scopes.** Meet at **8:30 a.m.** in the parking lot on the right side of Manitou Beach Road across from the Owl Woods trailhead

Leader: Liz Magnanti 585-748-0309 and co-leaders Daena Ford 585-321-1616 and 2 TBA

Apr 9
Friday

WOODCOCK COURTSHIP FLIGHT AT BRADDOCK BAY BIRD OBSERVATORY

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! Following the woodcock display, owl banding is a possibility at the banding station. Fields may be wet and muddy in spots. **Boots are STRONGLY recommended. Bring a flashlight or headlamp.** A port-a-john is available. We will meet at **7:00 p.m.** in the parking lot of Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, 10 Braddocks Avenue, Hilton, NY 14468. Take the Manitou Beach Road exit from Ontario State Parkway. Turn north and follow Manitou Beach Road until it forks. Take the left fork to the small dirt road (there is a sign for BBBO). The parking lot is at the end of the dirt road.

Leader: Andrea Patterson 585-490-5361 and co-leader Robert Buckert

Welcome to the Flock



Join us in welcoming these 18 new and returning members (12 memberships) who joined in the last month. We also had a number of late renewals.

Deena Rocco
Kathleen Finch
Daniel Giblin
Patricia & Daniel Same
Cassandra Pettry
Joan & Steve Burch
Maria & Patrick Golder
Megan Meyer
Mark Miller & Michelle Cavalli
Victoria Korth & Alex Ceres
Ashley & William Zeh
Nathan Ukens

Current RBA Membership as of February 14 is 387:

371 household memberships
2 young birders
1 *Little Gull* membership
13 complimentary

Jo Taylor
Membership Data

Adrianna Anderson
Membership Outreach

President's Column

Liz Magnanti



I think it's safe to say winter is here! The snow and cold temperatures that have descended upon the Rochester area are difficult for us humans, and it begs the question: how do birds survive these harsh temperatures and conditions?

A trip along the lakeshore is sure to bring an array of ducks, waterfowl and gulls this time of the year. They will float on the frigid water and appear to be perfectly content while doing so! And for good reason. Birds have a well-adapted circulatory system in their body, and their legs have what's called a countercurrent exchange system. This system allows for the feet of the bird to be submerged in ice-cold water, but the body of the bird remains warm. The cool blood in the veins of the foot are warmed by the hotter blood of the arteries as they pass each other in the legs of the bird. Geese and ducks can also often be seen standing on one foot with their beak tucked into their feathers this time of the year. This posture helps minimize the exposure the bird has to the elements.

If you see a bird that looks very fat or fluffy, this is another tactic birds use to stay warm. Birds will gain some extra weight for the winter months, but their feathers also have a pivotal role. The feathers of birds are very good at trapping air to maintain body heat. They will trap air in between their feathers and their body. These pockets of air are warmed by the bird's body heat and act like a little blanket around the bird. Birds will often preen their feathers to keep them clean, and clean feathers allow for better air capture. When they are using this technique, they can sometimes look much bigger than usual! Is there anything we can do to help birds in the winter? Keeping nest boxes out all year will provide birds with a place to roost. With birds being less territorial at this time of the year, sometimes more than one species of bird will use a box to roost in at once! Birds also keep active to stay warm. They actively forage and eat food they have cached away. Feeding birds will also keep them coming into your yard all winter long. Birds will eat from feeders as a supplement to their natural diet, so having feeders go dry won't cause the birds to starve. They wouldn't be here in the winter if they couldn't survive on their own!

In 2021, although limited by COVID restrictions, the RBA does have a full calendar of events planned. Field trips in March are going forward. There are group size limitations on each, so please make sure to register for trips online. The full field trip list can be found on rochesterbirding.org. Please note that there may be changes due to COVID restrictions. The most up-to-date information can be found on the RBA website. The monthly membership meetings via Zoom have been quite popular and draw in a large audience! Those meetings will continue online for the foreseeable future.

Thank you all for your continuing support, and enjoy the birds!

Editor's Corner

Jay Greenberg

In Memoriam Ann Watson



Long time RBA member Ann Watson passed away in January at 85. As far as I know, she didn't serve on the RBA

Board of Directors or as a committee chair. However, she was an excellent birder who was known to and loved by many of us, and she was a birding mentor to many. Originally from Georgia, she never lost her southern accent or charm. She always seemed friendly and pleasant and glad to see people.

Ann is best known for putting Cobbs Hill Park's Washington Grove on the birding map and making it one of the RBA's favorite spring birding spots. She had started keeping records of her sightings there by 1979 and continued to bird there as long as she was able to. Around 1997, her observations were compiled into a checklist that became part of a brochure on Washington Grove that was put together by Friends of Washington Grove and the City of Rochester. The checklist had 142 species, which compares favorably with checklists for local nature

(continued on p. 9)

March Talk and Speaker

From Finches to FiRN (the Finch Research Network)

Many area birders have been fortunate and delighted to observe Common Redpolls, as well as a sprinkling of other winter finches this season, colorful visitors from the North. Want to learn more about them? Join us on Zoom Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 7 p.m. to hear: "From Redpolls to Evening Grosbeaks to the Distribution and Ecology of Different Red Crossbill Fight Calls." Matthew Young, president and founder of the Finch Research Network, will talk about these interesting and beautiful winter finches and what led to the formation of the Finch Research Network (FiRN).

Matt has been observing and enjoying nature since a very young age. He's lived in Central New York the past 23 years, and it was during this time when he really started studying everything from birds to orchids, bogs and fens. Matt received his B.S. in Water Resources with a minor in Meteorology from SUNY-Oneonta and his M.S. in Ornithology from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry/Syracuse University in 2003. Matt did his masters research on avian diversity in restored wetlands of central New York at the Great Swamp Conservancy. He was a regional editor of the *Kingbird* (the state ornithological journal in New York) for 10 years, was an adjunct professor in Environmental Studies at SUNY-Cortland, and currently teaches an Intro to Birding class for Cornell University and is the board chair at The Wetland Trust. He worked at the Cornell Lab across 15+ years where he did extensive fieldwork for the lab's Cerulean and Golden-winged Warblers atlas projects and was project lead on the lab's first Finch Irruption Bird Survey for Bird Source in 1999. He was the collections management leader/audio engineer at the Macaulay Library ~12 years where he edited sounds for several Merlin packs around the world in addition to being the lead audio engineer on

guides: Songs of the Warblers of North America (Borrer/Gunn), Audubon Society's Voices of Hawaii's Birds, and the Cornell Lab's Guides to Bird Sounds: the North America Master and Essential Sets. He's been a tour guide leader for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, written finch species accounts for breeding bird atlases and Birds of the World, has published several papers about the Red Crossbill vocal complex, and is the president and founder of the Finch Research Network (FiRN). E-mail: may6@cornell.edu or info@finchnetwork.org



RBA IN THE FIELD

Avon and Lima 1/23/2021

Elijah Kruger and I led the RBA trip through the Nations Road area Saturday afternoon. There was no shortage of birders in the area, as our little caravan of 6 cars kept meeting other folks, who were mostly searching for the Short-eared Owls – the principal local birding attraction. One of our first hits was a Merlin (the first of 2 on the day) along Boyd Road, perched up and easily seen by all. Just past the Merlin was a group of 15-20

Mourning Doves along the road – supper-in-waiting perhaps for the Merlin. We drove all the way south to Jaycox Creek, which is still mostly open and good for a few small birds, including our one White-throated Sparrow. Along the way, we had the first of many tree sparrows of the day. We came back by way of a snow-covered Huston Road where we found a flock of about 7 bluebirds (half way up the road, by the Millard place). Driving up along Route 39 and then down South Avon Road, we had the first of our 3 Northern Harriers, and then a flock of about 15 Horned Larks. I had seen other flocks of Horned Larks (and possibly some Snow Buntings) along the road as I drove up Nations Road earlier in the afternoon, but with all the other birding traffic by 3:00 p.m., I think these had all moved away from the road and out of sight. Getting closer to sunset, in beautiful late day sunlight, we saw 3 Ring-necked Pheasants, just north of the small marsh north of Little Road. Our cue was seeing one of the other birders photographing them from the road. This has been a pretty good area for pheasants for some years. We also had a great look at a very handsome female harrier flying over the road and around the marsh. At sunset we parked along Nations Road near Little and awaited Short-eared Owls – and waited, and it got colder. Finally, a woman drove up Little Road and said there were a couple Short-ears at the other (east) end of Little. At that point part of the group went down there, and apparently saw at least one Short-ear. I drove

home by way of Nations Road and had my own Short-eared Owl over the road near Jaycox Creek. One other bird I had, in my earlier drive up Nations, was kestrel, hovering and then perching by the field at Oxbow Lane and Nations Road.



A Short-eared Owl. Photo by Zaphir Shamma.

Jim Kimball

2021 Annual Meeting Recap

by Liz Magnanti, RBA President

The RBA Annual Meeting on January 16th was unlike the usual get-together full of great food, member presentations and socialization. This year, the meeting was held virtually via Zoom.

There was a motion made from the RBA Board of Directors to change Section 26 of the bylaws regarding membership quorums. The motion was seconded by Mary Gordon, 49 were in favor of, and 0 opposed the motion (quorum is 35 members based on 341 household memberships as of Jan. 16, 2021.) The motion defined what a quorum for the association entails. The change officially voted in what the RBA has been doing in the past to tabulate vote and quorum.

Also announced at the meeting was the Board's decision to donate \$5,000 to the New York Breeding Bird Atlas. This donation allows the organization to sponsor a species, and a link was sent out for members to vote on what bird species should be sponsored.

The Little Gull Award was presented to Conservation Committee Chair Amy Kahn for her many years of service to the conservation committee and the multiple leadership roles Amy has had throughout the years.

The nominees for 2021 board of directors were announced by Nominating Committee Chair Tom Verhulst. All 2020 RBA board members agreed to be nominated again to their roles for 2021. Those nominations were:

- President-Liz Magnanti
- Vice President-Jeanne Verhulst
- Treasurer-Brian Rohrs
- Secretary-Greg Lawrence
- Directors at large-Kevin Farrell, Randi Minetor, Rosemary Reilly, Wanda Thistle

Tom Verhulst (on behalf of the RBA nominating committee) made a motion to elect the entire slate of nominees to the RBA Board of Directors, Eunice Thein seconded, 46 were in favor and 0 were opposed.

Rounding out the evening was a wonderful presentation made by Laura Erickson called "The Love Lives of Birds." The presentation highlighted the unique mating rituals, breeding behaviors, and pair bonds of a selection of North American birds.

In Memoriam Mary Mattei

Mary passed away on January 24, 2021 at the age of 90. After Mary lost her husband Frank, she became active in the Rochester Birding Association. She was president for 2 terms, once in 1980 and again in 1991. She liked to have the RBA board meetings at her home when she was president. She was also editor of the *Little Gull* for several years in the late 1980s and served as a director.

She enjoyed birding for the simple pleasures of enjoying nature and being out and with people. She was not a

listener or a field trip leader, but she enjoyed participating in the social aspects of field trips. She was famous for an incident on a RBA field trip to Sodus. On this trip, around 1975, her car was rear-ended by a military vehicle that was part of a convoy. The entire convoy had to stop to exchange insurance information, and this delayed the field trip about a half hour.

I remember her as being soft spoken and a very sweet person. She was always welcoming to new birders.

Michael Tetlow

Rochester Christmas Bird Count – December 20, 2020

We held the 117th Rochester Christmas Bird Count in the 'Age of Covid'. Fifty-eight participants worked throughout the day to count the birds in the 15-mile diameter circle centered at Dewey Avenue and Stone Road. We spent 166 hours on foot and in cars.

Temperatures were moderate, moving from low- to upper 30's as the day progressed. Overcast skies were accompanied by light rain or snow. There was a southerly light breeze.

The presence of numerous duck hunters out in boats was particularly disruptive this year. There were lots of them

(maybe trying to compensate for being cooped up so long).

In the field, observers found 95 species and 47,029 individual birds. We saw a record number of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (3) and Hermit Thrushes (14). Two new species were sighted: Swainson's Thrush (Pete Debes) and Pine Warbler (count week, Kevin Griffith). Three count-week species showed up that hadn't been seen in decades: Black-legged Kittiwake, Little Gull, and Hoary Redpoll. You will find a full listing of bird species and numbers in Bob Spahn's summary of the 3 local counts (Rochester, Little Lakes and Silver Lake) in the February *Little Gull*.

As in years past, the total number of individual birds is so high because it includes the American Crows that roost

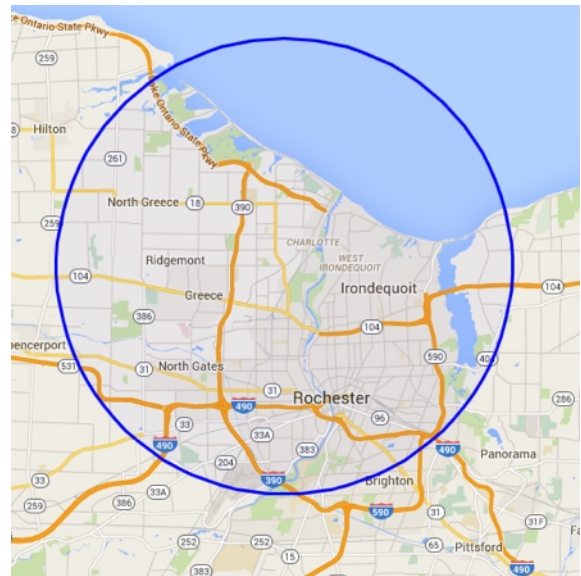
'somewhere' in urban Rochester. The 'somewhere' continues to be quite interesting. A bit of history: After the city hazed the roost out of Washington Square Park some years ago, the locations of the crow roost and pre-roosts have been extremely fluid. Each year, we've gone out ahead of the count, followed incoming crows to pre-roosts, and finally to the roost. Two years ago the roost was in Gates where Chili Avenue crosses the Erie Canal. Last year it was in the pines along the railroad track between State and Plymouth, just north of the Inner Loop. This year they went to the very heart of the city and roosted on buildings in the area of Main and Chestnut.

Owing to COVID, we could not meet for the traditional tally and dinner. All data was collected and collated electronically. Shirley and John Shaw graciously provided Zoom access so we could 'gather' to review the count results. There was an interesting discussion of how habitat has changed during the history of the count and how it may appear in the future.

The bird-count circle is divided up into 9 sectors. Each sector has a leader responsible for recruiting/deploying observers and gathering observations. We are fortunate to have these sector leaders: John Boettcher, Greg Lawrence, Jay Greenberg, Sheryl Gracewski and Tom Nash, Rosemary Reilly, Shirley Shaw, Dominic Sherony, Andrea Patterson and Robert Spahn.

In addition to the sector leaders, the following people were field observers or feeder watchers:

Doug Bassett, Lynn Bergmeyer, Bob Bemont, Lynn Braband, Robert Buckert, Doug Carpenter, Mark Catlin, Barbara Cole, Maggie Deutschbein, Jill Church Heimrich, Peter Debes, Andrew Garland, Janis George, Candy



Giles, Mary Gordon, Andrew Guthrie, Bob Heimrich, Alan Handelman, Monika Herrmann, Nicholas Kachala, Fred Lawrence, Holly Lawrence, Ben Levy, David Levy, Carol Loveland, Jim Loveland, Nic Minetor, Randi Minetor, Bill Maier, Cindy Marino, Pat Martin, Chita McKinney, Brian Morse, Nancy Poeth, Tom Poeth, Jay Powell, Elizabeth Rabjohns, Dave Rabjohns, Carolyn Ragan, Neal Reilly, Judy Slein, Susan Spahn, Dave Strong, Jerry Sullivan, Jill Thomann, Jeanne Verhulst, Jules Wagner, Bridget Watts, Beth Wheeler and Kinsley Whittum.

This year everyone contributed mightily. Thank you!

Norma Platt, Compiler

Eastern Screech-Owl and Wood Duck Nest Boxes in Webster

by Norma Platt

One of the benefits of being involved in the Friends of Webster Trails (FWT) Habitat Preservation Committee is finding what's been going on in the 6 owl and duck nest boxes that are located in the Webster Open Spaces. We take very seriously the responsibility of being good stewards for nature. In this case, we need to monitor and clean the boxes.

Eastern Screech-Owls and Wood Ducks both breed in tree cavities. They will also use nest boxes that resemble these cavities. The boxes we use are high end cedar dwellings made to specifications from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (<https://nestwatch.org/>). These boxes were made and installed in 2013 by Eagle Scout candidate Sullivan Easley (FWTwebsite). A key design feature is the size of the opening, which prevents use by larger creatures. The nest boxes are located on long poles away from trees and are fitted with a predator guard. It is

important to site the boxes in an appropriate habitat and away from competing alien invasive starlings and House Sparrows.

First thing: we only look in the boxes out of the nesting season. Wood Ducks use the boxes in spring and early summer. If you look on the ponds at Whiting Road or Gosnell, you may be lucky enough to see mom and her brood. Eastern Screech Owls nest starting in February and take about 2 months to raise their family.

Second: We have to really work to look in the nest boxes. We



Screech owl in nest box (it's facing away)

schlepp in an 8 foot ladder up to half a mile (up/down trails) to a nest site.

When we're lucky, we find evidence that an Eastern Screech-Owl or Wood Duck has been using the box.

For an Eastern Screech-Owl, there will be pellets (hocked-up fur and bones) or feathers from avian prey.

This year we were really lucky and found a roosting owl. In the photo, it's facing away with its eyes closed. We were worried that the intrusion would be harmful, so we quickly took this picture, closed the box and moved away. It didn't act disturbed, emerge from the box or fly away, so we're going to believe that things are OK. Evidence of occupation by a Wood Duck is down from the adult's breast and bits of egg shell.

Sometimes there are surprises, like the year we found a Black-capped Chickadee nest still containing an egg, or a box full of moss/grass/leaves that we attributed to a Flying Squirrel, or this year, the mystery of a 2-inch layer of small twigs. (We think it may be the start of a House Wren nest. They use sticks and nest in a cavity).



An owl box located in a woodland opening in Whiting Road Nature Preserve

The Votes Are In ...

At the RBA annual meeting on January 16th, the board of directors announced that we had voted to donate \$5,000 to the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas, to support the 5-year effort to map all of the breeding species across the entire state.

For our donation, we had the option of choosing a bird to "sponsor" throughout the Atlas process. We had 7 birds to choose from, so we threw it open to the membership to select one from the list.

The votes are in—and we thank the 126 members who took a moment out of their schedules to pick their favorite.

So we get the pleasure of supporting Wood Ducks across the state, and the RBA name will appear with the Wood Ducks in the Breeding Bird Atlas final report.

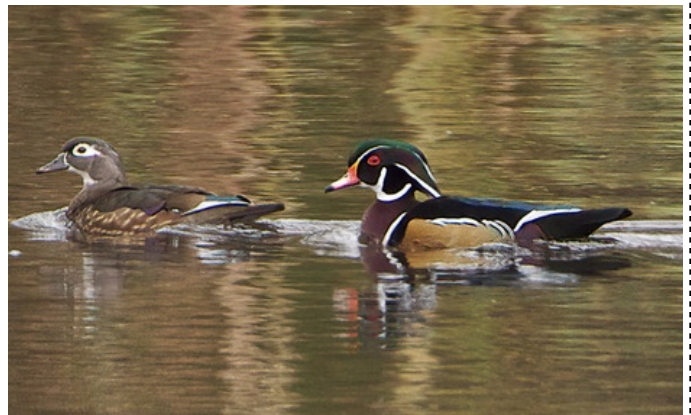
Meanwhile, our donation goes to work to support the BBA in many important ways:

- General project funding for future years (salaries, travel, subcontracts, administrative support)
- Workshops, volunteer appreciation gatherings, and blockbusting events (venue costs, equipment rental, signage, food, speakers)
- Outreach and advertising (stickers, banner, travel, incentives and awards)
- IT and supplies (email marketing services, maps for block sign-up, books, software)

- Fundraising costs (online directories, premiums, prizes, raffle tickets, software)
- Additional research (field technicians for point counts and abundance data collection, targeted species surveys)
- Part-time staff to assist with data management and communications
- Final product development (website development, writing, editing, publication)

Thank you for participating—and don't forget to record all of your sightings this spring and summer as the NYSBBA enters its second year. See you out there!

Randi Minetor, for the RBA Board of Directors



A Wood Duck pair. Photo by Nic Minetor.

What's the Right Thing to Do With a Bird in Distress?

The arrival of an Anhinga in our region in the fall of 2020 spurred an energized discussion on the Rochester Birding Community Facebook page, as well as in Zoom meetings, over email, and on other forums. Over time, people recognized that the bird was in distress and wanted to save its life, so rehabilitation experts became involved—but some less experienced birders called for more aggressive measures, and even volunteered to try to capture it, put it in a car, and drive it to Florida where it belonged. Eventually, the bird became too weak to survive, and it perished in the custody of a wildlife rehabilitator.

Everyone had the best interests of the bird at heart, but what is the right thing to do when such a bird strays so far out of its accustomed range? Of the hundreds of birders who raced to see it, many observed that the bird seemed weakened, and some even reported that it was shivering in the upstate New York climate. These were signs that the bird had undergone considerable stress, signaling the need for intervention if its life could be saved.

Birds that stray so far out of their comfort zones, however, are already unlikely to survive. Whatever phenomenon led a bird from the southeastern states to fly all the way to New York—one of 2020's many hurricanes, perhaps—took a significant toll, leaving the bird far from its normal habitat and unable to find the climate, shelter, and food supply it required to gain strength. The fatigued bird may even have struggled to regulate its own body temperature, further complicating its situation. (Anhingas lose body heat very rapidly, so they stand with their wings spread to absorb solar energy to compensate for this natural heat loss. In our colder climate, there just isn't enough sun and warmth to sustain them.)

Hard as it is for us to see a bird that may be suffering, we cannot save every living thing, especially if it arrives here already compromised. Birds, like all creatures on Earth, have a natural lifespan that comes to an end, and circumstances can hasten this. Sometimes we have to accept that nature will take its course, and the bird will not survive.

Some birds that stray so far out of their range become prey for other birds and animals, making it possible for these living things to nourish themselves. Years ago, birders witnessed the demise of a Ross's Gull that visited Ontario near the U.S. border, when a raptor easily snagged the weakened bird for its dinner. Other rare birds have flown into oncoming cars, or have simply disappeared, leaving us to question if they met an untimely end.

So what should we do when such a bird comes to our area? If the bird appears to be sick or injured, it's time to contact a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Veterinarians, animal hospitals, and wildlife refuges rarely have people on staff who are equipped to deal with a wild bird; you will need to find a licensed professional who has the time and

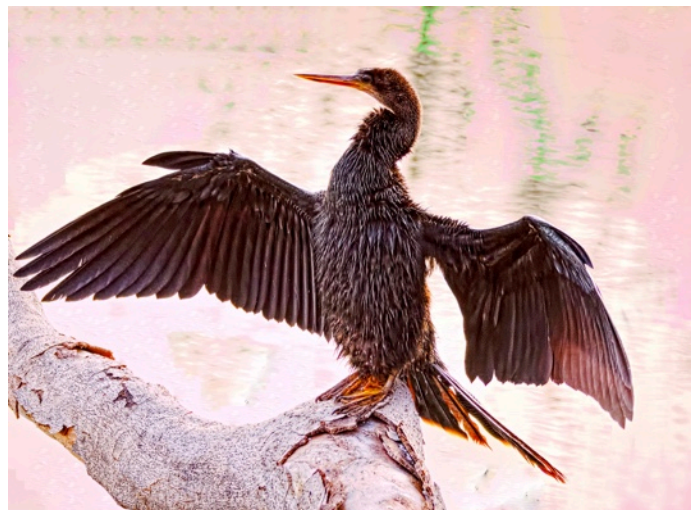
ability to help. The RBA website (<https://tinyurl.com/2cvk9y>) lists rehabilitators in every county in our region who specialize in waterfowl, raptors, game birds, or songbirds.

Kind-hearted people may want to attempt to capture such a bird themselves to take to a rehabber, but it's important to remember that this bird is wild, and is therefore terrified of humans—so approaching the bird may only force it to use its energy to try to get away from you. Keep in mind that an injured bird can die of stress very easily. The bird has no way to understand that your intentions are good, so it may panic and even injure itself further—or bite, claw, or stab you with its bill while trying to escape. Licensed rehabilitators have tools and methods for capturing the bird, so it is best to allow professionals to do their job.

If a rehabilitator cannot come to the bird's location, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (<https://tinyurl.com/yc2gc67u>) and the New York State chapter of the National Audubon Society (<https://tinyurl.com/59gtvlqd>) both offer guidance for capturing a bird. These sites, however, only describe what to do with essentially immobile birds that have been injured or stunned and are small enough to fit into a shoebox. Capturing larger birds should be left to professionals.

Finally, as with all birds, remember to maintain a respectful distance when viewing a rarity to keep from causing the bird additional stress. Crowds of people can create a frightening situation that forces the bird into a constant state of high alert, just as it needs to rest and feed. Give the bird its space, and let it tend to its own needs. Don't let the excitement of seeing a rarity overwhelm your common sense.

Randi Minetor, for the RBA Board of Directors



The Churchville Park **Anhinga** spreading its wings. Photo by Jay Greenberg.

January 2021 Sightings Report

January was a typical, quiet, wintry month, with a warm start for most of the first 3 weeks. In that period, all but one day averaged above normal. A high of 43° on the 15th was the lowest January high since 2003. Later, wintry weather set in, as a cold air mass arrived on the 17th. There was cold and lake effect snow through the rest of the month. Temperatures averaged 27.9 °F, 3.2° above normal. Twenty-nine days saw lows below freezing. Precipitation totaled 1.97", 0.44" below normal, with snowfall at 21.9", 6.3" below normal. There was light snow on 23 days and heavy on just 2 days. Lake Ontario remained generally ice-free for the month other than a few days of floating ice just offshore.

The eBird download at about 35,061 lines for our region was nearly double last year's and well above the previous highs. This is reflected in the species total for the month at 138, the highest since 2006 and approaching record high for the month. It was only surpassed in 3 years when some birders strongly pushed for high January lists. Many lingering, half-hardy species were found in larger than usual numbers, illustrated in the Noteworthy Table on the RBA website.

Once again, winter arrived on the eve of the annual NY State Waterfowl Count. The snow, cold, and wind persisted through the count period. Observers were able to pick decent dates and times for most areas of the count. It was interesting that on some of the apparently best viewing days out over Lake Ontario, birds visible way out were nearly zero. The results again proved the necessity of being careful with numbers and statistics. The total number of water birds counted was 54,094, third highest since the count began in 1973. But, this year 3/4 were from just the Canada Goose and Redhead totals. The 34 species reported was a good number for this count. Nearly all the lingering species were found, and for the month we had all the really expected January species, with only Ross's Goose having any remote claim to being "missing". Over the month, high counts for many species were not very high historically.

Virginia Rail was missed, but Sandhill Crane was reported from both the Livonia and Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Areas (NMWMA). American Coot numbers were again poor. A lone Killdeer on the Braddock Bay barrier beach island on several dates was the only shorebird.

An immature **Black-legged Kittiwake**, likely an individual seen earlier this winter, popped up a few more times. Bonaparte's Gull lingered in small numbers at typical lakeshore and bay sites. Gull numbers were again generally unremarkable, though reports of the winter, white-winged gulls were up a bit and a rare Herring x Lesser Black-backed Gull was seen and photographed at a couple of locations. Loons and grebes were scarce, but all the regulars were reported. A good flock of up to 34 Double-crested Cormorants lingered near the Newport Yacht Club until the final Irondequoit Bay freeze up. A

surprise was a Great Egret at Turning Point Park on the 3rd.

Wintering raptors were again generally scarce. Northern Goshawk was missed, and there were 3 Red-shouldered Hawk reports. Rough-legged Hawk was noted at 17 locations. There were good, and even increased a bit, numbers of reports for all 3 regular falcons.

There was only one report for Snowy Owl, at Sodus Point on the 26th. Good numbers of Short-eared Owls were found on the surveys out of the Avon DEC office, in spite of weather issues on Tuesdays again. Two Long-eared Owls on the 2nd and a Northern Saw-whet Owl on the 17th were located in the Owl Woods area. Red-headed Woodpecker was unreported. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker starts a showing of many of the lingering half-hardy species present in good numbers – about 52 reports of about 29 individuals from 25+ locations. Several other examples will appear in the Noteworthy Records table.

All of the really expected January passerines were found. As noted just above, the list of half-hardy species was very good and many species were quite numerous. The list included: Winter Wren; Marsh Wren; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Hermit Thrush; Gray Catbird; Brown Thrasher; Chipping, Field, Vesper, Savannah, Fox, White-throated, and White-crowned Sparrows; Rusty Blackbird; Common Yellowthroat; **Orange-crowned**, Pine, and Yellow-rumped Warblers; and a rare **Summer Tanager**. There were large numbers of reports for Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and both nuthatches. Winter finches were down from numbers reported earlier in the winter, but most species were still found, including 5 **Hoary Redpolls**. Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting reports were good when there was snow on the fields. Blackbirds were again poorly reported.

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

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

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	10-year Average (<u>2011-2020</u>)
Species for January	138	121	126.7

Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee

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(Editor's Corner, continued)

preserves such as Thousand Acre Swamp and Taylor Marsh. The brochure also has a trail map. I have asked the powers that be to put the brochure on the RBA website as a way to honor her memory.

Ann also had an important role in getting Cobbs Hill Park recognized by the National Audubon Society as part of the Rochester Urban Parks New York State Important Bird Area (IBA). The other locations in this IBA include George Badgerow Park and Durand-Eastman Park. As a former RBA conservation chair, I was involved with getting this and a number of our other local birding treasures recognized as IBAs.

Also in the 1990s, I helped to organize RBA members to take shifts in the spring at the entrance to the Schaller-owned portion of Island Cottage Woods to ask the many birders for pledges to raise money to purchase the property for conservation purposes. I took one of the shifts with Ann and passed a couple of agreeable hours with her. We also raised a fair amount of money in pledges. Unfortunately, the effort was futile because the Schaller family was unwilling or unable to sell. They still own that parcel today.

Ann was also one of my companions on a 2000 Nature Discoveries trip to Alaska that consisted almost entirely of RBA members. The group also included Kathleen Dalton, who considered Ann to be her best friend and sorely misses her. Kathleen wrote a moving tribute to Ann, part of which I quote here. "Ann had the utmost respect for all creatures. We spent entire days roaming the forests and fields studying birds, butterflies, wildflowers, all of nature. Ann taught me all my birdsongs. I will carry on with her respect and love of nature." Kathleen's full tribute can be viewed at <https://tinyurl.com/1loz12ph>.

Another long time RBA member, Pat Martin, is a frequent birder at Cobbs Hill Park and was a friend of Ann. Pat was influenced by Ann, but also helped Ann to learn warbler songs. Pat says, "Also, she was one of my star pupils in a course that I taught at Monroe Community College, called Field Natural History of Greater Rochester."

Ann's obituary can be viewed online at <https://tinyurl.com/biqn07a9>.





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