



**Rochester Birding  
Association**

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

# Little Gull

## February 2024 Events and Birding Field Trips

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

**Feb 8 RBA Monthly Meeting— via Zoom, see details below**

Thursday

**Feb 11 Winter Waterfowl and Other Possibilities**

Sunday

Starting at Irondequoit Bay Outlet, we will look for beautiful Long-tailed Ducks, mergansers, scaup and other ducks. We will also concentrate on locating wintering gulls like the occasional Lesser Black-backed, Iceland and Glaucous gulls. We will then drive over to Summerville and Charlotte to see what might be in the Genesee River. If Redpolls or winter finches are being seen, we will stop at Durand-Eastman Park along the way. Walking is flat on pavement. Restrooms are available in the Charlotte area. Meet at **9:00 a.m.** in the large parking lot next to the Outlet bridge on the west side of Irondequoit Bay Outlet (Irondequoit Bay State Marine Park). **Dress for the weather. Spotting scopes would be useful.**

**Leader:** Lynn Bergmeyer 585-576-0422 and co-leader Robert Buckert 585-269-4206



### **BIRDS AND BREWS**

*Join us for craft beers and conversation!*

*A chance to meet up and socialize with people who love birds.*

**Thursday, February 22, 2024**

**6:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

**Faircraft Brauhaus**

**25 Parce Ave., Ste 100, Fairport NY**

This pub and restaurant features an extensive selection of craft beers, as well as a full menu and table service. They're famous for their German specialties, from spaetzle to schnitzel.

<https://faircraftbrauhaus.com>



Northern Shrike, Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant © Alan Bloom January 5, 2024

## Field Reports

### Irondequoit Bay and Durand-Eastman Park—1/1/24

The group of a dozen or so who joined us leaders managed to scratch out a few ducks but they were largely absent due to the hunting season lasting until the day before. The bay was mostly empty as was the channel. Sharp eyes in the group found a few Bald Eagles and a Belted Kingfisher. Moving on to Zoo Road in Durand-Eastman Park, we were treated to a very large flock of American Robins gorging on the fruit trees. They were accompanied by a number of European Starlings. Mixed in were smaller number of American Goldfinch and a few Golden-crowned Kinglets. Moving away from the fruit trees we were able to find a good assortment of the usual passerines as well as a Gray Catbird. We finished the day with total of 30 species for the two locations.

*Norma Platt, John Boettcher*

### Webster Park—1/6/24

Sheryl, Tom and I were so pleased to have twenty participants show-up to bird the Webster Park campground area with us. Our group was a nice mix of newer birders and those with more experience. It was a very gray morning, cold and dry and no snow on the ground.

Moving from the parking area on Lake Road to the West Loop, only a few birds were detected: Red-bellied Woodpecker, Crow and Blue Jay. We were a sizable group, so not everyone heard the ethereal call of a single Eastern Bluebird. All in all, it was very quiet!

As we walked to the utility road gate, two small flocks of Cedar Waxwings flew past in a south westerly direction.

At the gate we had our first hit of a few different birds, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees and a Brown Creeper. A Hermit Thrush flew from one side of the road to the other and in the distance a Carolina Wren did a typical 'comb' call.

Even with that action it continued to be a quiet walk. Continuing further south and east we used a mob call to bring in a few more birds like Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch and more chickadees. We were all chatting and getting ready to move down the trail when clear as anything, "who cooks for you" rang out through the trees. It repeated so clearly several times, that an experienced birder thought it sounded "too good", maybe someone was playing Barred Owl(?) but we started hearing another more distant owl responding from a different direction. Not quite so quiet anymore. Listening hard, the soft whinny of an Eastern Screech Owl could also be heard.

Approaching the actual campground area, a Pileated Woodpecker was spotted awkwardly swaying at the very top of a deciduous tree. A trip leader was able to put the woodpecker in focus in a spotting scope for all to admire. It was such a cooperative bird. In the same general location a Northern Flicker was also perching at the very tip top of an evergreen, very much like a Christmas ornament, but that bird didn't stick around.

It was fun walk. Everyone participated, looking and listening, making for a great team effort in tallying 23 species on a (sorta) quiet day!

*Sheryl Gracewski, Tom Nash and Rosemary Reilly*



## President's Corner, Randi Minetor

### It's Not Just for Nerds Anymore

The winter issue of Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *Living Bird* magazine delivered some great and fairly startling news in January: According to a recent survey conducted by the US Fish & Wildlife Service, one-third of American adults consider themselves bird watchers. That's 96 million people who say they have "closely observed, fed, or photographed birds; visited public parks to view birds; or maintained plantings and natural areas around the home for the benefit of birds in 2022."



Photo by Richard Ashworth

Birding has gone mainstream. We are no longer "bird nerds"; we are cool. I don't quite know how to feel about this except to be very, very pleased at the growing interest in something I have loved and participated in for more than 30 years. It's glorious to see younger faces at our general membership meetings, children and their parents crowding up to our booth at events, and so many people joining us for our field trips. Now we can share those wonderful moments that happen when new birders see something they've never seen before: maybe a Scarlet Tanager or a Blackburnian Warbler glowing in the sun, or a Common Yellowthroat at the top of a reed. That spark of excitement mingled with astonishment—there's nothing like it, and there's nothing like that first year as a birder, when everything is new and each life bird brings wonder, adrenalin, and the drive to find more.

I remember my first RBA field trips in 1988, when my husband encouraged me to take up birding. I had just left a job at Geva Theatre, where working every night and all weekend in addition to my full-time business hours was simply part of the expectation. When I moved into the private sector, I suddenly had more free time than I could fill. Birding on field trips with the RBA and The Nature Conservancy quickly plugged the gaps, and soon I learned about hotspots like Island Cottage Woods, Cobbs Hill Park, Owl Woods, and Round Pond.

But back then, my lack of experience was met with scorn and derision by a small cadre of members. These guys shamed me when I could not tell a Semipalmated Sandpiper from a Least Sandpiper, or a Canvasback from a Redhead. They actually said to the group, "Don't listen to her; she doesn't know anything." Luckily, I'm not usually cowed by such arrogance, so I stuck with it and learned everything I could from others who were more helpful. Friends I had brought with me, however, never returned for another field trip.

I hope you're shocked by this story, because it is nothing like the welcoming atmosphere and willingness to teach that we find in today's RBA. As we welcome lots of new birders to our member rolls and to our meetings and field trips, it's important that we give them the best experience possible. New birders are future advocates for habitat and conservation; they are the environmental champions of the next generation, and we need them desperately if we are to continue to have birds to watch in the years to come. Also, they may be the people who will take over RBA and perpetuate our existence. Please join me in reaching out to people you don't recognize on field trips and in meetings. Everyone is welcome!

## Welcome to the Flock

Join us in welcoming these 5 new or returning members who joined in the last month.

Alaine Thibault & Family  
Susan & James Comstock

**Current RBA Membership as of January 15 is 309:**

296 Household memberships  
20 Complimentary

Jo Taylor, Membership Data



Snow Geese, Hamlin

© Alan Bloom 2/20/23

I have refreshed the database, omitting members who have not renewed for 2024. The current membership numbers are about the same as at this point last year (316). As in years past, we lost a bunch of people, but we will get some of these folks back as late renewals. With this Little Gull, members (except Complimentary) will also be getting the current roster of members. The roster excludes Junior and Complimentary members, as well as those who have asked not to be listed. The roster is intended for the personal use of members.

## RBA Monthly Meeting—Thursday, February 8, 2024

**“Leveraging Hunter Knowledge to Find and Conserve Bird Species in New Guinea”**

### Dr. Jordan Boersma, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Jordan will talk about how his team leveraged the immense natural history knowledge of local hunters to find the Black-naped Pheasant-pigeon, a species with no scientific documentation since the 1800s. They used an innovative approach to gauge accuracy of knowledge and determine whether this critically endangered species was familiar to local hunters, then worked with experienced hunters to capture the first-ever photos and video of this species. He will also highlight pending efforts to conserve the remaining habitat for the Black-naped Pheasant-pigeon, and how their methods can be applied to other elusive and potentially imperiled species. Depending on his field schedule, he may also have stories to share about using the same methods to search for another bird species with no previous photographic evidence.

**Dr. Jordan Boersma’s** curiosity for birds developed in his backyard in W Michigan, where he spent his childhood. He headed west to study wildlife biology at the University of Montana, which led to an opportunity to study ornate and elusive birds in Borneo, where he spent much of four years before pursuing a Ph.D at Washington State University. His dissertation work centered on physiology and behavior of fairywrens, a colorful and socially complex family of birds native to Australia and New Guinea. During extensive field seasons in New Guinea, he learned that indigenous people harbored immense knowledge of local fauna, and is now working with local communities to study and conserve rare and potentially imperiled species as a postdoctoral researcher at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



John Gerrard Keulemans, Catalogue of the Birds in the British Museum. Volume 21 (1893)



## Records Report December

One could summarize December 2023 as warm, with back-to-back storm systems. Temperatures averaged 39.9°F, 7.9° above average, ending as the second warmest month for Rochester on record (records go back to 1871). December 2015 was the warmest December on record, also an El Niño winter. Just two days were recorded with below average temperatures. The region also recorded four new record warm minimums this past month. Precipitation totaled 2.91", 0.24" above average; most of which fell as rain, scattered throughout the whole month. The longest dry stretch was only two days: 15-16 December. The airport recorded a weak 5.3" of snow, most of which fell in two events on 6-7 and 18-19 December. The water temperature on Lake Ontario fluctuated between 42° and 46° the entire month.

December's eBird download came out to just over 24,600 lines with out-of-region filtered out for the western half of Orleans, Genesee, and Wyoming Counties, plus the eastern half of Ontario County – down 13.8% from 2022, surely a factor of the unfavorable weather. Unsatisfying is the word that one could use to describe the month's birding overall. Observers reported a decent mix of uncommon species for the month, but numbers seemed down for waterfowl (a factor of no ice to concentrate ducks) and low for passerines (no reason for things to come to plowed roadsides to grit and find food with no snow). Three Christmas Bird Count (CBC) circles fall entirely within Region 2. The Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC on 16 December recorded 82 species. The Rochester CBC on 17 December recorded 94 species (97 for count week). The Conesus-Hemlock CBC "Little Lakes" on 30 December recorded 84 species (85 for count week). New high counts or ties were: LSLCBC – Lesser Yellowlegs (1, new bird for the count), Carolina Wren (34), Eastern Bluebird (63); RCBC – Ruddy Duck (62), Red-bellied Woodpecker (228), Gray Catbird (3, tie), Fox Sparrow (1, tie), White-crowned Sparrow (16); CHCBC – Lesser Black-backed Gull (1, tie), Red-bellied Woodpecker (94).

Taking a look at the Region 2 checklist for 2023, some notable misses that stand out such as Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Western Cattle Egret, and Mississippi Kite. However, those which are missed are always outweighed by the unexpected. This year, Region 2 recorded Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (April), Heermann's Gull (STATE FIRST, May), Lark Bunting (Regional first, May), three Swallow-tailed Kites (July), and Purple Gallinule (November). Surely a year for the record book!

Effort at the Hamlin Beach State Park Lakewatch dipped off in December, as expected given that some local birders seem to shift their attention away from jaegers and the good numbers of ducks that pass the Lakewatch all fall as

the temperatures continue to drop through the season, making standing in a stiff north wind off the lake unbearable. One should hesitate to say that birders ignored waterfowl this month, since several rarer species were reported, but the number of birders putting dedication into studying waterfowl patterns surely dipped off. Among the rarer reports included a Ross's Goose in the fields of Hamlin, found by Mike Tetlow, on 12-14 December. Andy Guthrie reported a female King Eider from Hamlin Beach on 11 December and two more females on 29 December, also from Hamlin Beach. The lakeshore has experienced somewhat of a King Eider drought in the past few years. The drought worsened earlier this year, with only one report, also by Andy, in February. These December birds were much welcomed. Two Harlequin Ducks continued from November at Mill Creek Outlet in Webster Park through the end of the month. Presumably the same pair was seen from Irondequoit Bay Outlet for a two-day stretch. Andy Guthrie reported another Harlequin Duck past the Hamlin Beach Lakewatch on 7 December.

Waterbird migration was evident looking at grebe numbers for December. Horned Grebe numbers decreased as the month went on. Red-necked Grebes increased, peaking in the last half of the month. Andy Guthrie counted 646 Red-necked Grebes on 16 December from Hamlin Beach SP and had four other days above 100 after 16 December. As a comment on effort, it would be difficult to pinpoint the peak date for Red-necked Grebe this year based on Lakewatch checklists. Effort at the Lakewatch, while greatly appreciated, is not consistent day-to-day. 16 December fell on a Saturday, when the observer likely had more time to stay at the count. It would be interesting to have a full-time specialist spend a full fall at Hamlin Beach and to compare the data to that from 25 years ago, when such was the case. Large numbers of Sandhill Cranes stuck to Seneca County (Kingbird Region 3) this season, which typically peak in the first two weeks of December. The highest count in our reporting Region was 43 from Van Dyne Spoor Road in Savannah on 2 December. Extralimital, but of note, was that Sandhill Crane numbers crested at 490 on 12 December, less than one mile south of the Wayne County line, at Knox-Marcellus Marsh – upward and upward year-over-year! Remarkably, the Purple Gallinule found by Mitchell Barry in November continued all month in the reeds on the north end of Braddock Bay. There have been other Purple Gallinules in Monroe County to meet their fate of joining the Cornell Lab of Ornithology after only a few days in upstate New York.

Shorebirds typically slow considerably in December. One or two Dunlin were present around Braddock Bay through 24 December. Killdeer showed up twice in the data download, not historically unprecedented, but potentially a fac-

## Records Report continued

tor of the mild weather. Robert Buckert captured a video of a Lesser Yellowlegs on the mudflats of Silver Lake on the LSLCBC; a very late date for anywhere in New York State. Braddock Bay’s East Spit “Island” hosted Purple Sandpiper on and off throughout the month, usually one individual, but Andy Guthrie and Jim Miles recorded two on the RCBC and Karl Schmidt photographed four on 19 December.

There were no reports of jaegers this month, again, not historically unprecedented, but Pomarine Jaeger is known to occur into December. Greg Lawrence reported the highest number of Bonaparte’s Gull for the month (203) from LaSalle’s Landing Park – an expected location. Total numbers of commoner Larus gulls felt light, surely a factor of lacking ice, with low high counts of Ring-billed Gull (1000, low), Herring Gull (520, very low), and Great Black-backed Gull (7, very low). Region 2 received its first Glaucous Gull of the fall/winter, photographed on 19 December, from the East Spit – very late – and the only individual reported for the rest of the month.

Raptors proved interesting for December. The records committee was not privy to reports of American Goshawk (invisible in eBird due to the ongoing breeding bird atlas). Neal Reilly observed a flyover Golden Eagle in Rush on 6 December. Mike Gullo photographed a flyover Golden Eagle in Williamson on 26 December. January through March of 2023 had a Snowy Owl drought, so it was much to the surprise of many when one showed up on 24 December on the piers of Sodus Point. Perhaps a sign of a winter with slightly more Snowy Owl activity? Two Northern Saw-whet Owls were found on the CHCBC on the south end of Hemlock Lake the morning of 30 December. Some observers heard them that night as well.

Much like last December, overwintering passerines seemed less abundant than in years past. The lack of snowfall is a cheap excuse the author of this report could give, but in this case, that argument legitimately applies. That, combined with absolutely no reports of winter finches and the dreary weather resulted in very low numbers and even lower diversity. One could argue that a saving grace for December was that it appears to be a good season for Northern Shrike, with at least six individuals spread out between Nations Road in Avon, Braddock Bay, Buckland Park, Buffalo Road in Gates, Whiting Road Nature Preserve, and the town of Kent. For other observations of interest, overwintering Yellow-bellied Sapsucker continues to become a more common phenomenon locally, with 23 unique individuals reported throughout the Region, indifferent to inland or near the lakeshore. Andy Guthrie reported a Baltimore Oriole from Newco Drive in Hamlin on 7 December, a species that borders half-hardiness and genuine rarity in winter. Jim Miles reported a Rusty Blackbird from Ellison Park on 20 December. Doug Bassett re-

ported three Rusty Blackbirds from Taylor Marsh on the Honeoye Creek on the CHCBC, another borderline rarity in December, January, or February. Also uncommon, but an occasional overwintering species, is Orange-crowned Warbler, which was found on private property near Hogan Point Road on 3 December by Dave Tetlow and Andy Guthrie.

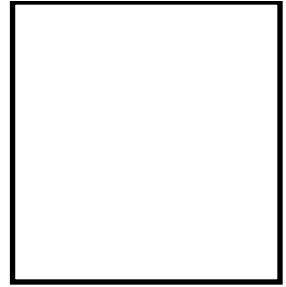
Please submit reports to eBird, post them on geneseebirds, and/or send them by the 5th of the month to Nick Kachala nicholaskach@gmail.com or 1141 Rush-Scottsville Rd. Rush, NY 14543

**Observers:** Kate Adams, Michael & Kimberly Adriaansen, Osvaldo Araya, Kevin Armstrong, , Diane Baillargeon, Niki Banke, Devin Banning, Ted Barnett, Mitchell Barry, Jessie Barry, Jordan Bartlett, Doug Bassett, Frederic Beaudry, Don Bemont, Steven & Linda Benedict, Dave Bennett, David Benvent, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, Shawn Billerman, Linda Birkel, Robin Blakesley, Alan & Lisa Bloom, John Boettcher, Terry Bohling, Justin Bower, Lynn Braband, Christopher Brandt, Janet Brooks & Scott Brooks, Mark Brown, Matthew Buckert, Robert G. Buckert, Sara Burch, Bruce Cady, Brad Carlson, Douglas Carpenter, Donna Carter, Robert Cicotta, Jeanne Cimorelli, Roger Clark, Kelly Close, Jeremy Collision, Andrew Consler, Robert Crandall, Doug Daniels, Katelyn Davis, Rod Davis, Thomas Davis, Cliff Dekdebrun, Peggy Dempsey, Diane Egan, Harold Ellingsen, Adam Farid, Joseph Fell, Annabelle Foos, George & Katie Ford, Andrew Gaerte, Kyle Gage, John Gaglione, Colin Gallagher, Dan Gallagher, Andrew Garland, Matthew Gavette, Janis George, Candy Giles, Christopher Goetz, James Goetz, John & Karla Gordinier, Sheryl Gracewski, Jay Greenberg, Kevin Griffith, Lucretia Grosshans, Michael Gullo, Carmen Gumina, Andrew Guthrie, Bill Haake, Helen Haller, Kim Hartquist, Tristan Herwood, Christina Hoh, Bruce Hoover, Dick Horsey, Bill Howe, Lynn Howes, Alec Humann, Pam Inzinna, Colleen Josh, Jordan Juzdowski, Nick Kachala, Amy Kahn, Laura Kammermeier, Jacob Kearney, David Kennedy, James Kimball, Cindy Kindle, Hans Kunze, Michael Kutny, Michael Laird, Greg Lawrence, Gayle Lazoration, Fred Leff, Peggy Mabb, Peggy Macres & Jennifer Rycenga, Melissa Mance-Coniglio, Patricia Martin, Donna Mason-Spier, Cynthia Marino, Judy Massare, Lauri Mattle, Jacob McCartney, Kevin McGann, Ryan McGinty, Jay McGowan, Chita McKinney, Ann McMican, Scott Meagher, Jim Miles, Kent Millham, Hunter Mills, Phil Mills, Kris Montalbano, Brian & Brooke Morse, Phoebe Morse, Jim Mott, Jonathan Mott, Thomas Mudd, Ann Nash, Susie Nettleton, Matt Nusstein & Claudia Rosen, Gabriella Orfanides, Erma Perkins, Jeremy Pete, Luanne Pignataro, Jay Powell, Derek Pulhamus, Doug & Elizabeth Rabjohns, Carolyn Ragan, Rosemary Reilly, Neal Reilly, Susan Roberts, Chris Rockwell, Brian Rohrs, Andrew Romanowski, Don Ross, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Robert Ryan, Kevin Rybczynski, Anne Salverda, Greg & Shannon Sanda, Karl Schmidt, Dominic Sherony, Gail Sielaff, Rob Sielaff, Dave Spier, Reuben Stoltzfus, Allan Strong, Kimberly Sucey, Dave Tetlow, Michael & Joann Tetlow, Eunice Thein, Thaddeus Trzeciak, Nathan Ukens, Erika Venniro, Tom & Jeanne Verhulst, Mike Wasilco, Bridget Watts, Kim Weeks, Kory Whittum, Joe Wing, Jim Wood, Chris Wood, and Ryan Zucker (there were 380 observers in the eBird download, up 13.9% from 2022).

	2023	2022	10-year Average
Species for Dec.	135	137	133.4
New for the year	0	1	1.5
Total for the year to	297	298	292.6



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