



Rochester Birding
Association

Little Gull



A Red-tailed Hawk at
Hamlin Beach State Park.
Photo by Alan Swire.

OCT 2026 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 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!

OCT 3
Saturday

GANONDAGAN STATE HISTORIC SITE, A FIELD TRIP FOR ALL AGES

This trip is open to all ages (ages 15 and younger must be accompanied by a responsible adult). This trip goes through four habitat types and has the potential for many birds, including fall migrants. We will start from the parking lot and walk wide mowed or packed dirt trails through grasslands, then head downhill through shrubland and wetland, to travel back up the hill through hardwood forest. The round trip is about 2 miles and includes hills. Restroom facilities are available at the Seneca Arts and Culture Center (SACC) at the end of the trip. Meet at **10:00 a.m.** in the main parking lot situated below the SACC, 7000 County Road 41, Victor, NY 14564.

Leader: Amy Kahn 585-310-2330 and co-leader Neal Reilly 518-256-9147

Field Trips continue on [page 4](#)



Helpers

Back when I was a working stiff, my job would take me to Florida every few months. While I was not so appreciative of the tropical heat and humidity in the summer, I looked forward to my late winter visits. My spouse would occasionally join me, and I would use a couple of my vacation days so we could explore the various natural areas the state has to offer. On one such occasion, we visited Oscar Scherer State Park located on the West coast south of Sarasota.

We had visited the park over 40 years ago and had fond memories of camping, canoeing, and swimming. (I remember it was the first time I had seen an alligator fence surrounding a body of water, and I was naïve enough to believe they would be 100% effective.) It struck me on our return that the area had undergone a tremendous amount of growth—the 2 square mile park is now an oasis in a sprawl of housing developments, strip malls and shopping centers. One of the key reasons we wanted to visit the park is that it is one of the few remaining areas that have actively breeding Florida Scrub-Jays. We had never seen one, so it would be a lifer for us.

The Florida Scrub-Jay is a Florida endemic—it doesn't occur anywhere else in the world. They live exclusively in scrubby flatwoods and require open, sandy patches and oak shrubs about 3-6 feet tall. These habitats occur on high, dry, nutrient-poor sandy soils found mainly in central and coastal Florida. Historically, wildfires have prevented these habitats from being overgrown, but with development encroachment and fire suppression, much of this habitat has been lost.

Gayle and I joined a nature walk with a park ranger and learned about the habitat management through very careful prescribed burning complete with notifications to surrounding communities so residents wouldn't be alarmed by large plumes of smoke. We had flyovers of White and Glossy Ibis, a Sandhill crane, and a large squadron of White Pelicans. We found some wintering warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Blue-headed Vireos. One distinct memory I have of that day is a Great Horned Owl sitting high up in a lone Slash Pine and being harassed by a couple of Red-shouldered Hawks. Did we get any Florida Scrub-Jays? No. (This seems to be a recurring theme in this column...)

The ranger had assured us that there were a couple of family groups in the area and described their cooperative breeding behavior. Cooperative breeding is a relatively rare phenomenon. According to Birdfact, only about 3% of all bird species engage in some type of cooperative behavior, where non-parental individuals assist with nest building, incubating, and/or feeding young. One theory as to why this behavior evolved is that it may confer better survival rates for all, including the chicks, since the collection of individuals are better at warding off predators. Another theory is that the helpers gain experience with the breeding process, and so they are better equipped to raise their own young.

Florida Scrub-Jays live in an extended family group, with a dominant breeding pair and offspring from previous years. These offspring may delay breeding for several seasons in order to help provide food, defend territories, build and maintain nests, and incubate eggs. For those of you from large families, you can liken it to older siblings doing chores and helping to raise the younger ones, although it is unclear whether the younger Scrub-Jays suffer the same amount of teasing that goes on in human family groups.

For birders, an advantage of this cooperative behavior should be that during breeding season, there would be a whole family flitting around and, hence, individuals should be easier to spot. Sure enough, when we revisited the area a couple days later, we were rewarded with five Scrub-Jays, including a very easily spotted sentinel. How could we have missed them before? Maybe the previous sentinel was doing its job.

Individuals helping out the group is necessary for the long-term survival of the Florida Scrub-Jay. The same is true for our organization. The RBA's mission is to provide access to birds and birding in the greater Rochester area. We offer field trips and host speakers, all of which are open to the public. We provide grants for worthy projects. We run field trips for young birders to engage future generations. All of this requires volunteers. If this mission resonates with you, we would love for you to get involved. We are currently looking for RBA members willing to serve on the Board of Directors; we need folks to help identify and coordinate future speakers; we need a volunteer coordinator; we need people willing to serve as field trip co-leaders; we need people to help with digital communication and social media. In addition, the RBA will host the New York State Ornithological Association annual convention in 2027 and we will need volunteers. None of these require you to be an expert birder, only to be willing to join together with other enthusiastic birders and use your skills to help us continue our mission. If you have any interest or questions about any of these roles, please contact me or any of our board members or committee chairs via the contact info listed on the final page of the *Little Gull*.

Some other RBA news for this month:

Our October speaker is Dr. Mike Ward talking about the population decline of Whip-poor-wills and what we can do about it. Please join us in person or on Zoom for a very interesting talk.

We have 6 field trips this month including a Young Birders trip to Durand Eastman Park. Check out details elsewhere in the *Little Gull*.

CALLING ALL RBA BIRDERS!

Trip Leaders and Co-leaders Needed



Would you like to meet fellow birders, see more birds, and support the Club while having fun and exploring your favorite birding sites? Then becoming a RBA field trip leader is for you.

Trip leader and co-leader duties include:

- Signing people in to the trip on the club sign-in sheet
- Creating and sharing ebird checklists
- Leading the group on foot and/or by vehicle
- Pointing out birds to your fellow birders
- Sharing your knowledge of birds and their habitat
- Making sure the group has a safe and enjoyable trip

With a small commitment of 3-4 hours for one trip you can help the RBA be one of the most active birdwatching organizations in the state with over 50 trips a year!

For information, contact Field Trip Committee Chair Jeanne Verhulst at Jeanne.verhulst@gmail.com

FIELD TRIPS

OCT 4
Sunday

DURAND-EASTMAN PARK

Dark-eyed Juncos, woodpeckers, Hermit Thrushes and, if lucky, Red-headed Woodpecker, are possible. After checking out Lake Ontario and Eastman Lake for ducks, we will drive to and walk a section of Horseshoe Road. We will then drive to Log Cabin Road, where we will walk the non-motor vehicle section and parts of Zoo Road, traversing the Blue Trail to return to Log Cabin Road. Steady moderate grades in sections. Length about 2.5 miles, total. Restrooms available. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** in Parking Lot D on the right side of Lakeshore Blvd., opposite Log Cabin Road. Please dress for the weather.

Leader: Jeanne Verhulst 585-362-0803 and co-leaders Doug and Elizabeth Rabjohns 585-690-6296

OCT 10
Saturday

YOUNG BIRDER TRIP – DURAND EASTMAN PARK – 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Durand Eastman Park has a pleasant mix of ponds, woods, fruiting trees and pine woods. Birds possible here include: hawks, finches, nuthatches, robins, and sparrows. We will meet at Parking Lot D on the lake side of Lakeshore Boulevard. We will walk the portion of Zoo Road closed to vehicle traffic, a paved road with some hills. Restrooms are available. **Note:** Trips will go forward rain or shine unless there is a travel advisory. **Wear sturdy shoes/boots and dress for the weather. Bring binoculars.** Extra binoculars will be available to borrow. A spotting scope will be available for up-close looks at birds thanks to a very generous donor!

Leader: Neal Reilly 518-256-9147 or email neal.f.reilly@gmail.com

OCT 11
Sunday

HIGH ACRES NATURE AREA

Over 130 bird species have been observed at HANA, including more than 70 that nest in the diverse habitats found there. During this fall field trip we expect to see various species of migrating birds such as ducks, kinglets, warblers and thrushes, and summer resident birds getting ready to migrate south. As a bonus, the fall colors should be in full glorious display. Our approximately two-mile walk over mostly flat trails will explore about 250 acres at HANA and may include some wet spots

if it has been a wet fall. No restrooms available. Meet at **8:30 a.m.** at the parking lot on Perinton Parkway, approximately 1/4 mile east of the Waste Management offices.

Leaders: Brian Rohrs and Gayle Lazoration 585-281-9534



A male Rusty Blackbird seen on a previous trip to High Acres Nature Area. Photo by Alan Bloom.

OCT 17
Saturday

BATAVIA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

Why a wastewater treatment plant? Open water and a great location mean that this spot appears regularly on fall birding lists for ducks as well as passerines. We will drive on the banks of the ponds, getting out wherever the birds are congregating. Discover the great opportunity this spot (and its helpful staff) offers. Restrooms might be available at the plant offices. Meet at **9:00 a.m.** at the wastewater treatment plant

FIELD TRIPS

OCT 17
Saturday

headquarters (5 Treadeasy Ave.). To get there, follow Rt. 33 West from Main Street in Batavia, take the second exit on the roundabout to continue on Rt. 33W. Turn left onto Industrial Blvd., continue over railroad tracks, cross over Treadeasy Ave, go up a small hill, and through the gates at the end of Industrial Blvd. Turn left after the gates, follow the driveway around to the back side of the building. If possible, we will carpool from the plant offices. **Spotting scopes would be very useful.**

Leader: Neal Reilly 518-256-9147 and co-leader Alan Bloom 585-752-1643

OCT 24
Saturday

HAMLIN BEACH STATE PARK

We'll spend some time by the lake watch to view ducks on the water and in flight, learning about the lake watch process. We will also walk flat trails in the wooded and brushy areas of the park, looking for Winter Wrens, sparrows, and maybe a half-hardy warbler or two. Dress appropriately for cooler weather along the lake and wear sturdy footwear. Restroom facilities are available. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** in Parking Lot 1, Hamlin Beach State Park. **Spotting scopes would be useful.**

Leaders: Roger Clark 505-231-7369 and Rick Stevens 585-689-1882



*A Harlequin Duck
catches a wave at
Hamlin Beach State Park.
Photo by David Laiacona.*

Birds and Brews

Join us for craft beers and conversation!

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

Thursday, October 15, 2026

6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

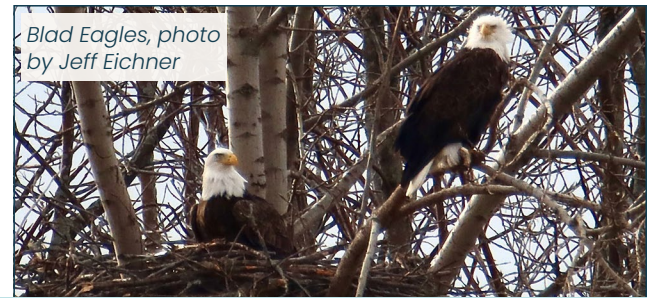
Three Heads Brewing
186 Atlantic Avenue, Rochester



We'll enjoy sitting outside, weather permitting, at this neighborhood favorite brew pub. Three Heads doesn't serve meals (just some limited snacks), but you are welcome to bring your own takeout.

www.threeheadsbrewing.com

HELP PROTECT BIRD HABITAT



Want to make a difference while enjoying your favorite hobby?

The Tonawanda Seneca Nation, a federally recognized Indigenous Nation and part of the Haudenosaunee, whose Reservation Territory is located in Western NY, is seeking to document “essential behaviors” of Threatened and Endangered species, such as Bald Eagle, to prevent the construction of a [proposed massive data center](#) complex at the Science and Technology Advanced Manufacturing Park (STAMP) mega-industrial site, which is located immediately adjacent to the Nation’s Reservation Territory and surrounded by a network of federal and state public protected lands.

“Essential behaviors” include breeding, sheltering, feeding, movement, and more. [Click here for more information.](#) Documenting these activities will bolster [the Tonawanda Seneca Nation’s request for a Part 182 Jurisdictional Determination](#) at the site. If DEC decides to require a Part 182 permit, this could slow or stop the proposed data center.

Beyond Bald Eagles, we are collecting data on any rare species, including grassland birds (Sedge Wren, Horned Lark, Eastern Meadowlark) and others such as Sandhill Cranes and Golden Plovers.

Locations: Areas near the STAMP site on Crosby Road (43.08596, -78.40368). That could include road rights-of-way and nearby public lands such as Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and John White WMA.

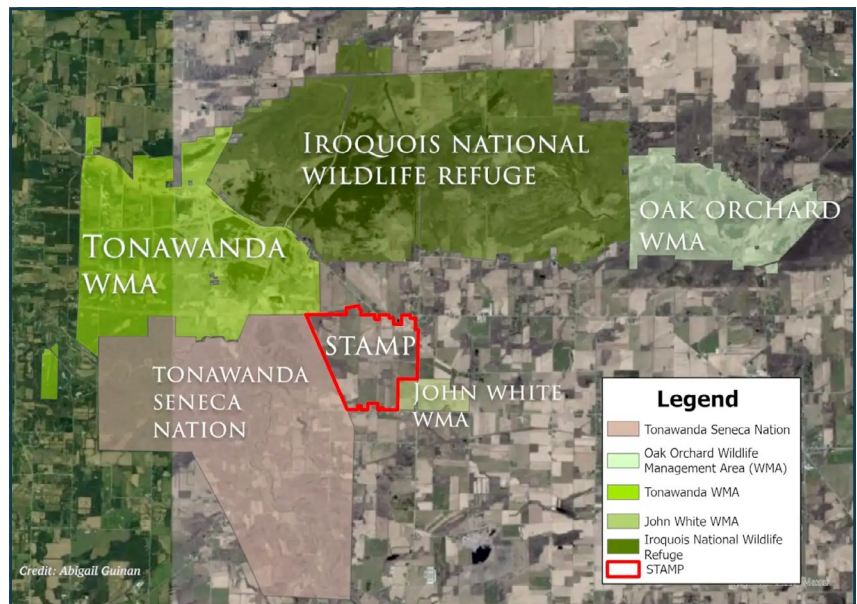
Here is a hyperlinked list of the public lands:

[John White WMA](#)

[Tonawanda WMA](#)

[Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge](#)

[Oak Orchard WMA](#)



Important: Please do not bird on Tonawanda Seneca Nation’s Reservation Territory.

You can record your observations in the usual way on eBird, iNaturalist, and/or send to Catherine Landis at cllandis@syr.edu and Sarah Howard (Environmental Consultant to the Tonawanda Seneca Nation) at alliesoftsn@gmail.com. Please don’t hesitate to reach out with questions, and please help us spread the word!

Many thanks!

Dr. Catherine Landis, Sarah Howard, and Bill Wallauer



Beginner Birder Trip Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge August 9, 2026

We had three leaders and a bumper crop of 41 people for this trip on a beautiful day with temperature in the low 80's, clear sky and light wind. Most of the attendees were new to birding. We leaders did our best to encourage carpooling. The trip around the wildlife drive was productive with many expected species including Common Gallinule and Pie-billed Grebe. To the delight of the crowd there were several Grebe young in their fancy plumage.

Research on eBird said that May's Point Pool would be productive, and it did not disappoint. From the platform we could see many Great Egret, several Sandhill Cranes and a few lingering Caspian Terns. Overhead Peregrin Falcon, Merlin, Bald Eagle and Osprey put in appearances. Both species of teal were sighted. We also found a number of shorebirds including both Yellowlegs, Semi-palmated and Stilt Sandpiper. As we were wrapping up the trip, sharp eyes found three species of warbler foraging in the trees behind the platform. Total species for the trip was 48.

Niki Banke, Neal Reilly and John Boettcher

Whiting Road Nature Preserve September 5, 2026

On a sunny, 67-degree Saturday morning, 26 enthusiastic birders gathered, looking forward to newly arriving fall warblers and perhaps a sighting of an Olive-sided Flycatcher seen the previous day. We spent most of our time on the Blue Trail, carefully checking any leaf movement. Gray Catbirds were plentiful. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen by a few, then a Red-eyed Vireo was heard and seen, followed by a Swainson's Thrush. A Magnolia Warbler gave fairly good looks, then Cape May and Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen. A Veery was clearly heard, but not seen. While looking at a distant Cooper's Hawk, a

closer Rose-breasted Grosbeak was spotted. We moved onto the Brown Trail still hoping for the Olive-sided Flycatcher, but after doing the loop around the open fields, alas, no luck. Returning to the Blue Trail, we came upon a flurry of activity in one area: an American Redstart, a Black-and-white Warbler, a Yellow-



bellied Flycatcher, Black-capped Chickadees, a White-breasted Nuthatch, as well as a Broad-winged Hawk that drifted overhead, all gave good views. It was a nice end to the trip which had a total of 39 species. Thanks to all who came, it was a great group!

AP Salverda and Jeanne and Tom Verhulst

Beginner Birder Trip Charlotte and Turning Point Park September 6, 2026

Thirteen participants joined us leaders on a pleasant but breezy Sunday morning. It was an enjoyable group with a varying mix of birding experience. While the skill set differed, there seemed to be a strong common theme amongst them, a desire to be better at it.

The beach area had many Ring-billed Gulls of different ages, judging by their plumage. Tucked in amongst them were a few Herring Gulls and a mature Great Black-backed Gull. They were three perfect comparison species for

identifying contrasting field marks. The northerly breeze kept the gulls' heads turned in one direction but sharp birder eyes found a couple of lingering Caspian Terns. Offsetting the lack of shorebirds was the close flyby of thousands of Double-breasted Cormorants. The dark steady stream had all our heads turned to watch in awe. The river was muddy and disappointingly the only occupants were a lone Canada Goose and some Mallards.

Relocating to Turning Point Park proved to be more productive in the variety of birds. From the boardwalk we were able to find Wood Duck, Mute Swan with young, Green and Great Blue Heron and a couple of elusive Marsh Wren. On the nature trail along the river to the south, we found a number of usual suspects with three warbler species putting in brief appearances, which offered teachable moments in warbler field marks. The skies were strangely void of cruising raptors but the walk ended with that distinctive rattle of a Belted Kingfisher. We finished the day with 37 species.

Rosemary Reilly and John Boettcher

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge September 12, 2026

What a beautiful day for birding! Skies were partly to mostly clear with a light breeze and temperatures were in the 70s. Our group of 18 birders got a good start at the Refuge Headquarters with a young Green Heron, Pectoral Sandpiper, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, both Teal, and both Yellowlegs. On the Wildlife Drive we found Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Common Gallinule, Pied-billed Grebe and Wood Duck. Our best bird of the trip came in a pond along Wildlife Drive just before the eagle statue: a Glossy Ibis, a bird normally found on the seacoast in southern New York. The Ibis allowed good looks before flying off. At Mays Point we had distant looks at an American Golden Plover on the mudflat along with large numbers of Great Egrets and

Great Blue Herons. At the overlook for Knox-Marcellus Marsh, we spotted at least 8 Sandhill Cranes and heard their impressive bugling call. Two Peregrine Falcons and a Northern Harrier seemed to stage an aerial show for us, harassing each other in flight. Further along East Road we found Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebirds, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers for a trip total of 42 species. Thanks to everyone who participated!

Neal Reilly and Sheryl Nash Gracewski

Braddock Bay East Spit September 13, 2026

Thirty enthusiastic birders walked the East Spit and found a good variety of birds. We were barely out of the parking lot when a group of fall warblers was discovered including Nashville, American Redstart, Yellow, Black-and-white, Magnolia, Cape May, and Bay-breasted. In the grove at the end of the spit we added Yellow-rumped and Blackpoll Warblers. High water in the channel limited shorebird habitat but good looks were had of a cooperative Belted Kingfisher, a Mute Swan harassing a Great Blue Heron, several male Wood Ducks, and a group of Green-winged Teal. Some birders in the group got quick looks at a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, a Merlin, and a distant Forster's Tern over the bay. After walking the East Spit, some of the group continued to Ontario Beach and Charlotte Pier in search of shorebirds. At the base of the pier, we had a calling Fish Crow and a soaring Red-tailed Hawk. On the beach two Sanderlings and a Semipalmated Plover allowed good looks in the scope. Moving down the pier we had excellent close up looks at Ruddy Turnstones and Sanderlings, and at a distant Semipalmated Sandpiper on the Summerville Pier.

Thanks to everyone who participated!

Neal Reilly and Pat Martin



FIELD TRIPS REPORTS

Ganondagan State Historic Site September 19, 2026

Seventeen birders gathered under clear sunny skies at Ganondagan State Historic Site. Ganondagan is unique as it is the only State Historic Site dedicated to Indigenous culture. A Bay-breasted Warbler showing some of its characteristic bay color on its flanks was our first warbler species. An Eastern Towhee was heard and seen by most of the group as were Carolina Wrens. Along the Earth is our Mother Trail the group ran into a fall mixed passerine flock including Swainson's Thrush, Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler and Yellow-rumped Warbler. In open field habitat, a number of raptors were visible including a distant adult Bald Eagle, two young Red-tailed Hawks diving at each other, and several Turkey Vultures. In a field near the

reconstructed Seneca Longhouse we found the best bird of the trip, an Olive-sided Flycatcher that let us have good views in our scopes. Around the garden near the museum we found Eastern Bluebirds and a singing House Finch. In total the group found 37 species.

Amy Kahn and Neal Reilly



A Yellow-rumped Warbler from a previous trip to Ganondagan State Historic Site. Photo by Alan Swire.

SAVE THE DATE!

ROCHESTER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2026

An Opportunity to Contribute, Learn, and Be a Part of the Birding Community

Save the date of Sunday, December 20 to participate in the 123rd year of the Rochester Christmas Bird Count!

Each year around the end of December, we count the diversity and abundance of birds in the Rochester "count circle." The data are compiled and sent to the National Audubon Society, who then use it to identify trends and influence conservation policy.

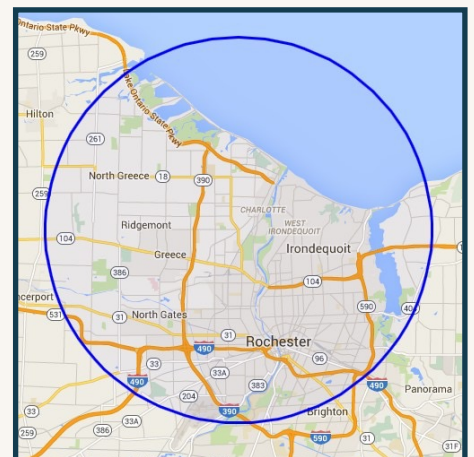
This is a significant opportunity to:

- Develop your birding skills in the field
- Make connections in the birding community
- Contribute to a longstanding traditional citizen science project
- Attend the count tally dinner, exchange stories of the day, eat good food, and make more birding friends!

We need your help and welcome **ALL** skill levels. Please join us!

Please contact Nick Kachala for further information or to sign up
nicholaskach@gmail.com or 585-750-5536

Further details will appear in the November Little Gull Newsletter



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING • Thursday, Oct 8th, 2026 @ 7 PM

Asbury First United Methodist Church, 1050 East Avenue, Rochester NY

Free and open to the public. Parking and entrance at rear of church.

“Why are the Whip-poor-wills declining, and what can we do to save them?”

Speaker: Dr. Mike Ward

Dr. Mike Ward is originally from Jacksonville, IL and received his PhD from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign in 2004. He is currently the Stuart L. and Nancy J. Levenick Chair in Sustainability in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, in the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois and an Ornithologist at the Illinois Natural History Survey. Dr. Ward conducts research on avian ecology and conservation throughout the Midwest as well as in Texas, Florida, Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Cuba. He is a global leader in the use of automated telemetry to investigate the movements (e.g., migration) and behavior of birds. He has published over 100 peer-reviewed papers and won multiple awards for his research. He is also on many technical committees most of which are charged with informing management and policy to better conserve the environment. Dr. Ward studies the ecology and behavior of birds in natural and modified ecosystems in order to inform conservation and management.



Dr. Ward will be joining us via Zoom, although we will still gather at Asbury First Methodist for socialization before and after the meeting. If you will be attending by Zoom, look for the Zoom link in your email prior to the meeting. The Zoom Room **will open at 6:45 PM**. Don't wait until the last minute to sign on, you might be left out!

WELCOME TO THE FLOCK

Please welcome our new members:

Lauren Arsenault
Sandra & Jordi Barenys
Josh Crawford
Celia Lewis

Chris Phillips
Cameron Rustay
Brianna Turner

As of September 15th, members in good standing: 338

Individual Members: 240
Family Members: 93
Supporters: 17
Sponsors: 3
Corporate Sponsors: 1
Additional Complimentary Memberships: 38

Doug Rabjohns, RBA Membership Data



*Caspian Tern at Summerville Pier.
Photo by Candy Giles.*



RBA Merchandise Now Available!



Show your support of the RBA by purchasing **branded merchandise!** A portion of every order goes towards supporting birds and birders in the greater Rochester region. From drinkware and totes to shirts and hoodies, there is something for everyone. To explore available items, visit rochesterbirding.org and click the '[Merchandise](#)' button in the top right corner. In addition to the online store, we have **RBA ball caps** in tan and dark blue available now for **\$18** and spudz for \$5. Contact Kevin Farrell at kmfarrell18@gmail.com to purchase or for more information. Thanks for your support!



BIRDING CRUISES ABOARD THE RIVERIE

Only two dates remaining!

Saturday, October 17 • Sunday, October 18

These 75-minute cruises are perfect for every bird watcher from novice to die-hard enthusiast, and appropriate for all ages.



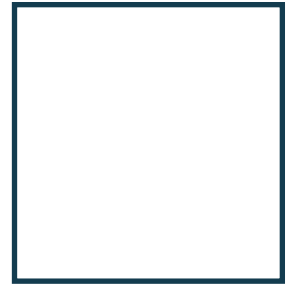
For more information and to book your cruise, visit
https://rochesterbywater.org/public_cruises/genesee-river-erie-canal-birding-cruises/





Rochester Birding Association

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