



Rochester Birding
Association

Little Gull



*A Buff-breasted Sandpiper
at Braddock Bay East Spit.
Photo by Alan Bloom.*

SEPT 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!

SEPT 5
Saturday

WHITING ROAD NATURE PRESERVE

This preserve includes about 240 acres of land that is made up of a variety of bird habitats, resulting in decent bird lists throughout the year. The trails are well marked and maintained; however, they can get muddy at times, so appropriate footwear is recommended based on the weather leading up to the trip date. Most of the trails are flat, but there will be a bit of up and down in some sections. Our trek will take us mainly on the Blue and Black trails. Moderate difficulty in a few spots, length about 2.5 miles. No restrooms. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** in the Preserve parking lot on Whiting Road in Webster, 0.6 miles south of Lake Road.

Leaders: Tom and Jeanne Verhulst 585-362-0803 and co-leader
AP Salverda 585-957-6064

Field Trips continue on [page 4](#)

Disappearing Act

My spouse and I have a ritual on nice mornings (nice being loosely defined as a tolerable outside temperature and no precipitation). I make some coffee, then we sit out on our patio with binoculars, start an eBird list and see how many backyard birds we can tally before our day begins in earnest. When we travel, we tend to repeat this practice (it is a ritual, after all) if circumstances allow. I'm always interested in what birds happen to show up while we are just hanging out.



Gayle and I were recently at a friend's house in Northern Vermont. His house is in an idyllic spot in a small clearing at the top of a mountain. We camped out overnight in his backyard and were awakened by the early morning sun filtering through the tent and the dawn song of the surrounding forest birds.

We were smart enough to have picked up some iced coffee the previous day, so before our hosts were awake, Gayle and I set up our chairs, pulled out our binoculars, sipped our caffeine, and initiated an eBird list. There was no traffic noise, so even faint calls were audible. We were excited to hear birds rare to our own backyard: Wood and Hermit Thrush, Black-and-white and Black-throated Blue Warblers, Eastern Wood-Pewee and Eastern Pheobe. We even had a Sharp-shinned Hawk flyover. At one point, we heard a harsh robin-like call, looked at each other and simultaneously said, "Is that a Scarlet Tanager?" We've seen plenty of Scarlet Tanagers, but only one while passively birding over coffee—way back in May 2017 (thanks for the memory, eBird screening tools!).

Scarlet Tanagers are canopy birds, but the males are brilliant red so they should be easy to spot, right? We trained our binoculars in the direction of the song. Several minutes of scanning failed to produce the bird. Then the song came from a different direction. Different bird? Same bird moving? Still no luck seeing it. Finally, we glimpsed it flying over the open clearing. It landed in another tree, then...disappeared. So, why is a brilliant red bird so hard to see?

The obvious answer is that they spend their time in treetops, so they are blocked by foliage. But it got me thinking: are Scarlet Tanagers more difficult to spot up in a tree than birds of the different primary colors, say, a Blue Jay or an American Goldfinch? It seems like it to me, but I'm not sure I could easily run a controlled experiment to answer the question. So I did the next best thing—I asked the Internet. After all, Google is always right, right?

It's easy to go down a virtual rabbit hole, but I think I discovered an entire warren of color theory and neural perception. I also think that search engines and AI go out of the way to find a positive answer rather than to just say no. I combed through many fascinating references to phenomena like color constancy (a feature of our color perception system which helps us perceive the color of objects as relatively constant under different lighting conditions—think: how do we know that's a Granny Smith apple no matter what the light level?), and the development of Chromoluminarism by the Neo-impressionist artists in the late 19th century whereby paint colors are applied separately on a canvas, but our perception from a distance is of a blended color.

If you look long enough, you'll eventually find something that supports your belief. I found a reference that seemed to explain my issue. Our eyes pick up visual signals through photoreceptor

PRESIDENT'S CORNER, BRIAN ROHRS

cells called rods and cones. Simplistically, rods are highly sensitive to low-light conditions, whereas cones function best in bright light. Additionally, rods are more sensitive at shorter wavelengths, whereas cones are more sensitive at longer wavelengths. This difference in spectral sensitivity is called the Purkinje shift (named after a Czech anatomist). As light gets dimmer (like in a forest under a canopy), we gradually lose the ability to distinguish longer wavelengths, i.e., reds. In fact, in low light, a red object appears black. So, sure, if a Scarlet Tanager is perched in bright sunlight, it is easy to pick out. But in a dark forest...?

My conclusion about my inability to find Scarlet Tanagers in the woods? I don't have poor birding skills; I'm just a victim of the Purkinje shift.

Some other RBA news for this month:

Our September speaker is Dr. Kristin Brunk talking about passive acoustic monitoring to monitor bird populations. Please join us in person or on Zoom for what looks like a very interesting talk.

We have 8 field trips this month including a beginning birder trip to Charlotte and Turning Point Park, and a Young Birders trip to the Brickyard Trail. Check out details elsewhere in the Little Gull.

Birds and Brews this month is at Rising Storm Brewing Company on Monday September 14th. Come out and socialize with your fellow birders.

RBA Members save big at The Bird House! Cut out this coupon or show on your phone to save.

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Prior Sales excluded. May not be combined with any other offer, 4+1 seed sale, 6+1 seed log special or gift certificates.

Expires September 30, 2026



FIELD TRIPS

SEPT 6
Sunday

BEGINNER BIRDER TRIP – CHARLOTTE AND TURNING POINT PARK

We'll be looking for shorebirds, warblers, and other fall migrants along the river and lakeshore. At Charlotte Beach, we'll look for gulls in many plumages and some shorebirds, too. At Turning Point Park, we will look for local resident birds and fall migrants. The Charlotte Beach area is mostly flat and paved; there is one long, steep grade at Turning Point Park. Length is about 2 miles total. Restrooms are available at Charlotte only. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** at Ontario Beach Park in Charlotte, in the northeast corner of the parking lot, beside the Genesee River outlet. **Bring binoculars and, if you have them, spotting scopes.**

Leaders: John Boettcher 585-671-9639 and co-leader Rosemary Reilly 585-748-0802

SEPT 9
Wednesday

SANDRA L. FRANKEL NATURE PARK (BRICKYARD TRAIL)

The wide, flat, multi-use Brickyard Trail winds between Elmwood Avenue and Westfall Road in Brighton. With woods at both ends and ponds and marshes in the middle, it provides a nice variety of bird habitat. We will walk the full length of the trail and back (1.7 miles) to look for migrating fall warblers, sparrows, wrens, and finches. There might even be a Belted Kingfisher or Osprey hanging around. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars. Insect repellent may be needed for the wooded sections. No restrooms. Meet at **7:30 a.m.** in the parking area near the entrance to Temple B'rith Kodesh (2131 Elmwood Ave.); the trail entrance is nearby. Wheelchair friendly—please call leaders for accessibility questions.

Leaders: Jeanne and Tom Verhulst 585-362-0803



Belted Kingfisher on the Brickyard Trail. Photo by Jeanne Verhulst.

SEPT 12
Saturday

MONTEZUMA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

We'll be looking for waterfowl and migrating shorebirds. Expect to see herons, eagles and possibly falcons. There will be a number of stops during this mostly driving trip. Restrooms are available at the Visitor Center. Meet at **10:30 a.m.** at the Montezuma Visitor Center. Pack a lunch. **Spotting scopes would be very useful.**

Leaders: Sheryl Nash Gracewski 585-261-6975 and Neal Reilly 518-256-9147

SEPT 13
Sunday

BRADDOCK BAY EAST SPIT

The East Spit of Braddock Bay is a well-known spot for migrating shorebirds in late summer. Herons, eagles, Osprey and early warbler migrants are also possible. The trail is a woodland path between Lake Ontario and the Braddock Bay Marshes. We will walk out to the end of the spit and back, about 1 mile. The trail is narrow and has uneven, rocky footing in places. Sturdy waterproof shoes or boots and bug spray will be needed. Crossing the channel to the barrier island will be optional and dependent on water levels. Restrooms are available next to the Marina building. Meet at **8:00 a.m.** in the East Spit parking lot beyond Westport Marina at Braddock Bay. **Note: You must drive through the Marina to reach the East Spit parking lot. Spotting Scopes would be very useful.**

Leaders: Neal Reilly 518-256-9147 and Pat Martin 585-301-5485



FIELD TRIPS

SEPT 19
Saturday

GANONDAGAN STATE HISTORIC SITE

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.



A Yellow-rumped Warbler seen at Ganondagan State Historic Site by Alan Swire.

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

SEPT 20
Sunday

IROQUOIS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

We'll look for migrant ducks and various passerines in this "get to know Iroquois in autumn" trip. This trip is a combination of driving and walking and includes a boardwalk, forest trail, and dirt road. Length, about 3 miles total, on mostly flat trails. Port-a-john is available about midway through the trip. Meet at **9:30 a.m.** at the Upper Stafford Marsh Overlook near 5999 Albion Road, Oakfield, NY. Bring a lunch and beverages as this trip may go into the later afternoon. **Spotting scopes would be very useful for some of the stops.**



Veery at Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Rebekah Earthwalker.

Leader: Rick Stevens 585-689-1882 and co-leaders Doug and Elizabeth Rabjohns 585-690-6296

SEPT 20
Sunday

YOUNG BIRDER TRIP – SANDRA L. FRANKEL NATURE PARK (BRICKYARD TRAIL) 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Sandra Frankel is a mix of woods and marsh habitat. Birds possible here include: herons, ducks, kingfishers, and blackbirds. We will meet in the parking area near the entrance to Temple B'rith Kodesh at 2131 Elmwood Avenue, Brighton. The trail is flat and gravel paved. Restrooms are not 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 neal.f.reilly@gmail.com



FIELD TRIPS

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.

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

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 lake 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



A Dark-eyed Junco at Durand Eastman Park seen by Eunice Thein.

Birds and Brews

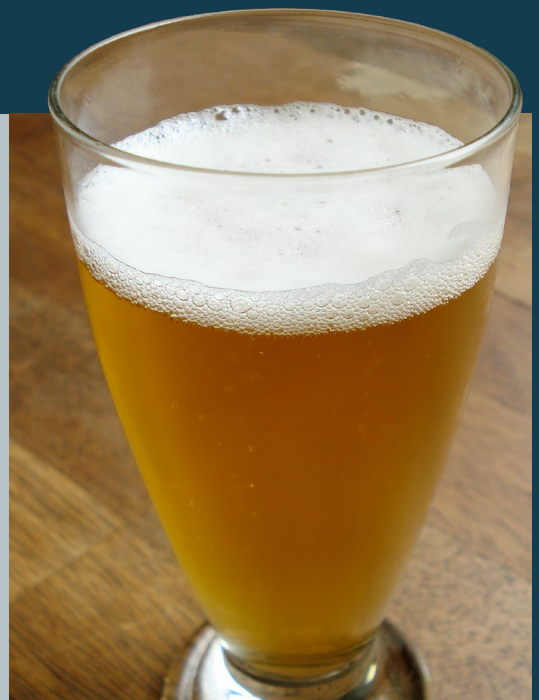
Join us for craft beers and conversation! A chance to meet up and socialize with people who love birds.

Monday, September 14, 2026
6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Rising Storm Brewing Co.
1880 Blossom Road
Rochester

Beer, wine, cider, and cocktails are all on the menu, as well as an imaginative selection of meals for your dining pleasure.

We'll be on the upper level.

www.risingstormbrewing.com



Barnhart's Camp and Keeney Swamp **June 28, 2026**

Since I already used the word “epic” to describe last year’s trip, I’ll put it this way: this year’s trip was “epic squared!” Thirty-one of us canvassed 70 miles of roads and trails in Livingston and Allegany Counties. We started at 7:30 AM and pulled the plug at 10:30 PM for the four of us who were still trying for an Eastern Screech Owl or Great Horned Owl. (We did not get either).

What we did get was 100 species (with no asterisk, either), and this crushed our record of 93 last year. We heard or saw 17 warbler species, including our target birds: Blue-winged, Mourning, Magnolia, Canada, and Prairie Warbler. The Nashville Warbler was a bonus bird, not usually found on our trips. The last bird seen was an American Woodcock which flew across the road and over our barn at 9:30 PM.

There were 37 of us at camp for our picnic. Two birders showed up just for the food, and our four dear friends cooked and helped serve. Thanks for all of the wonderful dishes to pass!

Our brief walk out back after lunch produced good looks at a Least Flycatcher, Belted Kingfisher, Cedar Waxwings, Eastern Kingbirds and a Great Blue Heron. Matt Nusstein chose to hunt for Ragged Fringed Orchids around the main pond and counted more than 20!

The oddest bird of the day caused a lot of discussion and research before it was claimed to be a young Wild Turkey (with a tail you’d expect to see on a Pheasant). However, when five pictures were submitted to e-Bird as a Wild Turkey, the ID was challenged. The bird has now been confirmed to be a male Ring-necked Pheasant in molt. See eBird Trip Report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/545292>

Thanks to all who made the journey a smashing success. The perfect weather, car pools (20 cars to start with), the bird quiz

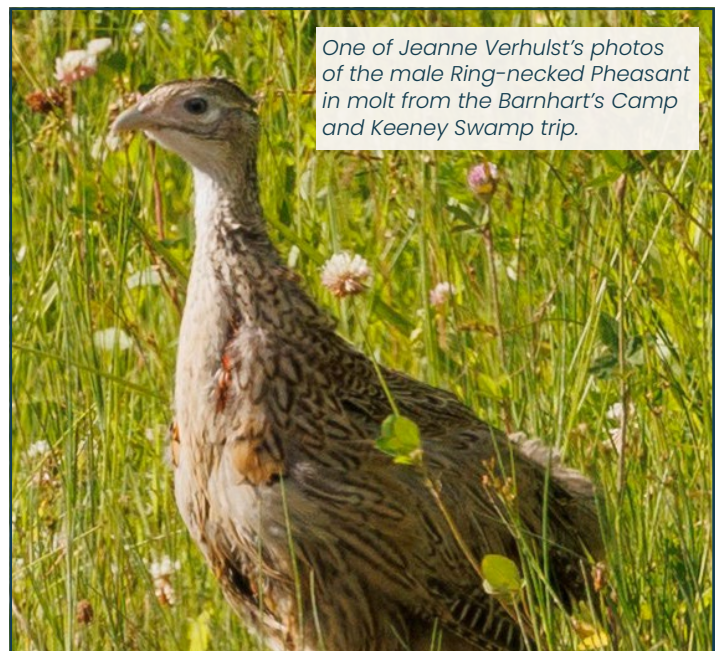
(Tom Verhulst rules!), and the life birds for our newest and visiting birders all contributed to making this a memorable field trip.

Carolyn Barnhart, Jerry Barnhart, Rick Stevens, Tom and Jeanne Verhulst

Conesus Inlet Wildlife Management Area **August 1, 2026**

Hans Kunze and I led the August 1st RBA trip to the Conesus Inlet Swamp. We had a good time with 15 participants, good weather and we turned up a good number of interesting birds. As we gathered at Vitale Park, a good start was an adult Bald Eagle, which flew low across the end of the park – the first of five eagles on the day. At the inlet swamp, from the west side board walkout, we had Bald Eagles and Ospreys, one of them flying over with a caught fish. Of special note, but brief, was a Least Bittern seen in flight. It was a particularly beautiful time of day in that location early in our trip. Other special moments were searching out a singing Scarlet Tanager along East Swamp Rd., an unexpected female Bobolink at the east side pond, and watching a Kestrel interacting with a Cooper’s Hawk along Guiltner Rd.

Jim Kimball and Hans Kunze



One of Jeanne Verhulst's photos of the male Ring-necked Pheasant in molt from the Barnhart's Camp and Keeney Swamp trip.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING • Thursday, Sept 10th, 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.

Passive Acoustic Monitoring: Studying Nature Through Sound

Speaker: Dr. Kristin Brunk

Bird song has been a source of inspiration and joy to people for centuries, but it can also provide clues about bird community health and insights into the success (or failure) of habitat management for birds. Passive acoustic monitoring—using sound to study nature—is a rapidly-advancing technique that's increasingly being used to monitor bird populations in many contexts. In California's Sierra Nevada, researchers are using passive acoustic monitoring at unprecedented scales to improve habitat management for birds in the context of rapidly changing climate and fire regimes.

About the Speaker:

Kristin Brunk, PhD, is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oslo, in Oslo, Norway, and was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, NY. Kristin's research lies at the intersection of conservation, quantitative ecology, and behavioral ecology, and the questions that most interest her are those with implications both for wildlife conservation and for ecological theory. Kristin is a field ecologist at heart, and in addition to working in the Sierra Nevada, Kristin has conducted fieldwork in a wide variety of landscapes including the old growth redwood forest in Big Basin Redwoods State Park, the ground-nesting seabird paradise of Johnston Atoll (a tiny, remote Pacific wildlife refuge), the swamps and marshes of the ACE basin in South Carolina, the volcanic shores of Isla Española in the Galapagos, and the mountain birch forests of Norway.

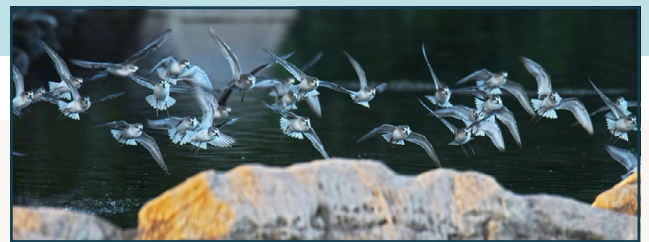
Dr. Brunk will be joining us via Zoom, although we will still gather at Asbury First Methodist for socialization before and after the meeting. If you will be attending by Zoom, look for the Zoom link in your email prior to the meeting. The Zoom Room **will open at 6:45 PM**. Don't wait until the last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



WELCOME TO THE FLOCK

Please welcome our new members:

Karen & Frederick Becker Michael Kutny
Stephen Goodrick Nancy Thayer
Margaret Jennings



Semipalmated Sandpiper at Braddock Bay East Spit. Photo by Dick Horsey.

As of August 15th, members in good standing: 346

Individual Members: 233	Supporters: 17	Corporate Sponsors: 1
Family Members: 92	Sponsors: 3	Additional Complimentary Memberships: 37

Doug Rabjohns, RBA Membership Data



AN EXCITING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

And we need your help NOW!

HELP US CREATE THE 2027 NYSOA ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN ROCHESTER

In 2027? Is that a typo? No, our hosting of the NYSOA Annual Conference has been moved up a year. Buffalo will host the conference in 2029, so we graciously offered to do ours a year earlier than planned so there won't be two conferences in a row in western New York.

So on September 24-26, 2027, RBA will welcome members of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) at the RIT Inn and Conference Center. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase Rochester's best birding experiences and exemplary hospitality for people from all over New York.

To put this together, we need your help! Randi Minetor is chairing the event, and we're building a committee that can help with these aspects of the weekend:

SOME OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE GRACIOUSLY OFFERED TO CHAIR THESE ACTIVITIES:

-  **Publicity:** Liz Magnanti
-  **Registration Management:** Doug Rahjohns
-  **Field Trips:** Jeanne Verhulst
-  **Treasurer:** Steve Taylor
-  **Paper Session Planning and Recruitment:** Dominic Sherony and Greg Lawrence
-  **Event Souvenir:** Kevin Farrell
-  **Signage:** Kevin Farrell
-  **Advisors at Large:** Shirley Shaw and John Shaw

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS TO CHAIR THESE ACTIVITIES:

- Sponsorships
- Workshops
- Welcome Packet planning and assembly
- Audio-Visual Coordination
- Vendors and Exhibits
- Fundraising (Silent Auction and Raffle)



CAN YOU HELP?

Get in on the ground floor of an exciting, once-in-a-decade event—and be part of creating that excitement!

To volunteer, contact:

RANDI MINETOR

writerrandi@gmail.com



JANUARY 2026 RECORDS SUMMARY

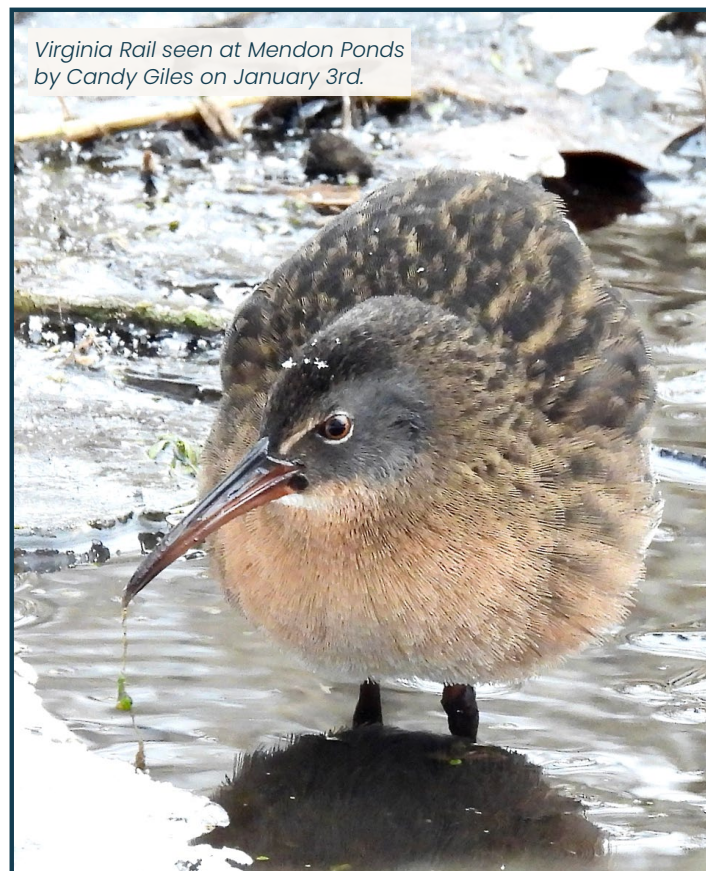
January 2026 was generally split into two distinct patterns. The first half of the month featured slightly above-average temperatures, while the second half of the month turned drastically colder. Temperatures averaged 23.0°, 3.2° below average. The two-month stretch between December 2025 and January 2026 was the coldest start to winter in 12 years. The final week of January averaged 10.0°, breaking the record for the coldest last week of January in Rochester. Precipitation totaled 3.28", which is 0.73" above average. Within that 3.28" of precipitation, the Rochester airport recorded 37.7" of snowfall, which is about 10" above average. The high snowfall was a result of four significant lake effect events scattered throughout the month, plus two synoptic snow events, including one on 24 January that deposited 8-12" of snowfall Regionwide. The above-average precipitation helped to lessen the precipitation shortage that caused moderate drought conditions in late summer and fall 2025.

Among the waterfowl, Mike Wasilco reported the Region's only Greater White-fronted Goose of the month from the Cold Spring Road ponds in Caledonia on 19 January. Snow Geese did not make a massive movement into the Region this January, with only scattered individuals seen throughout the lakeshore plains and a couple of random flocks of 100-250 reported inconsistently from inland. Puddle ducks, such as Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, and American Wigeon, were found as individuals to small groups throughout the Region, with concentrations in the Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area being the most prominent, as expected. Mike Wasilco reported 214 American Black Ducks on Hemlock Lake on 6 January, which stood out as a decent count. Among the rarer ducks, Mike Wasilco found an adult male Tufted Duck on Conesus Lake on 18 January, which was seen by a handful of observers on that day only, but not afterwards. Joe Wing reported a female Harlequin Duck from Bear Creek Harbor in Ontario on 16 January, which was widely seen through 19 January. Nate Chu reported a female Harlequin Duck from Ontario Beach Park on 27 January, which was reported by many observers through the end of the month.

The Quaker Pond Trail at Mendon Ponds Park continued to host two Virginia Rails throughout the first half of the month before dropping to reports

of only one bird for the last half of the month. An American Bittern, originally found by Alan Bloom on 1 January, was well documented at Quaker Pond and last seen on 17 January. Numbers of loons were aligned with baseline expectations for January, with a single Red-throated Loons scattered along lakeshore hotspots. A Sandhill Crane seen in flight around Braddock Bay on 12 January. Three more Sandhill Cranes were reported from Nations Road on 13 January. The only shorebird reports of the month were two Killdeer seen from 1-3 January at Ontario Beach Park. A high count of 80 Wild Turkey was noted by Janis George in Mumford on 3 January.

The last report of Bonaparte's Gull for the month came from Summerville Pier, with a count of three on 6 January. Ring-billed Gull and Herring Gull numbers were average, with the typical large concentrations on the frozen ponds and bays along the lakeshore attracting the occasional Iceland Gull or Glaucous Gull. Iceland Gulls were scattered around the Region in about average numbers. Glaucous Gull once again seemed lower, with seemingly only two individuals reported Regionwide this month. There were no reports of rarer gulls, such as Black-legged Kittiwake or Little Gull.



*Virginia Rail seen at Mendon Ponds
by Candy Giles on January 3rd.*

JANUARY 2026 RECORDS SUMMARY

As usual, Turkey Vultures overwintered in southern Monroe County/northern Livingston County, with Brad Carlson reporting as many as 54 from Sibleyville Nature Reserve on 23 January. Bald Eagles accumulated on Irondequoit Bay, a phenomenon in recent years, with Roger Clark reporting a maximum of 18 on 6 January. Chris Wood reported an overwintering Red-shouldered Hawk from Armitage Road near the NMWMA on 17 January. Rob Fergus reported another overwintering Red-shouldered Hawk from Honeoye Falls on 18 January. The number of overwintering Rough-legged Hawk was difficult to assess for January, but there were at least six individuals, some of which were widely seen at places like Jones Bridge Road in Leicester and the impoundments of the NMWMA. Short-eared Owls were regularly seen at Nations Road in Avon and the NMWMA, but were also found along Jones Bridge Road in Leicester and Oneill Road in Richmond.

Despite the cold conditions, a handful of expected half-hardy species were still present throughout the month, although in lesser numbers than the past few winters. Only three Gray Catbirds were reported, each only one time. Sixty-four eBird reports of Hermit Thrush reduced to 14-15 individuals, which was not bad, but not as high as recent years. A single Chipping Sparrow was reported only once from Kevin Griffith's yard. Fox Sparrow was a species that seemed scarcer this January than in the past few Januarys, with only two individuals reported, both on 4 January, one at each location. It was only about a decade ago that overwintering Fox Sparrows would have been considered exceptionally rare in the Region. An incredible 78 eBird lines for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker reduced to about 28-30 individuals, a trend that has only recently started. One to sixteen Savannah Sparrows were reported throughout the month from Jones Bridge Road in

Leicester, with the count of sixteen standing out as very high for a winter month. Overwintering Swamp Sparrow numbers were low once again this year, with only a scattering of reports, mainly from Mendon Ponds Park and Durand Eastman Park. Four Eastern Towhees were reported throughout the month, three of which were long-staying individuals at feeders. There were no large flocks of overwintering blackbirds reported throughout the Region this month. Overwintering Yellow-rumped Warblers were found at known locations such as Greece Canal Park, Beatty Point, Black Creek, and the Caledonia Fish Hatchery. One highlight of January was that winter finches were still present, such as the flock of Pine Grosbeaks in Whiting Road Nature Preserve, which numbered as high as 15 on 14 January before dwindling to the single digits by the last week of the month. Alan Bloom reported five Red Crossbills from Durand-Eastman Park on 4 January and Rosemary Reilly re-found three of the crossbills on 6 January. Lorenzo Colantoni photographed two Bohemian Waxwings at Whiting Road Nature Preserve on 17 January. Individuals to small flocks (maximum 40) of Redpolls were noted moving along the lakeshore throughout the month, although only a limited number were seen inland. The largest concentrations of field birds (Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, and Horned Larks) were in the fields between Avon, Geneseo, and Leicester and attracted many observers throughout the month. The out-of-season immature male Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Naples, first reported in late December, continued through at least 7 January.

Please submit reports to eBird, post them on geneseebirds, and/or send them by the 5th of the month to Nick Kachala.

American Bittern at Mendon Ponds. Photo by Jeffrey Eichner.



	2026	2025	10-year Average (2016-2025)
Total species for January	129	129	130.6
Total for the year to date	129	129	130.6

FEBRUARY 2026 RECORDS SUMMARY

The brutal cold from January continued through most of February with temperatures averaging 23.4°, or 4.0° below average. The start of February was so cold that the first nine days of the month averaged 11.3°, which was one of the coldest first weeks of February in recorded meteorological history for Rochester. The final nine days of January, plus the first nine days of February, averaged 10.3°, setting a new record low average temperature for this 18-day stretch. Precipitation totaled 2.06", which is 0.07" below average. Among the precipitation, the Rochester airport recorded 25.1" of snowfall. The first warming events of the season occurred from 17-19 February, when a warm front melted some of the snowpack, dropped 0.6" of rain, created dense fog, and formed widespread black ice when temperatures dipped back below freezing. By the last few days of the month, temperatures drifted into the low 50s, eliminating the snowpack almost entirely by 1 March.

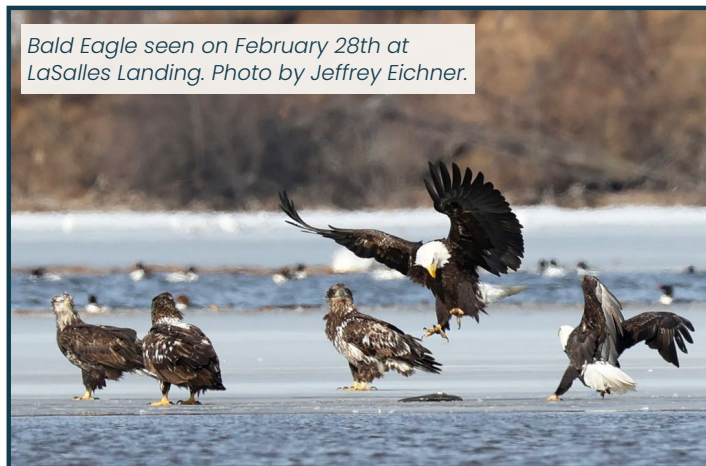
February is a month where changes in waterfowl abundance and distribution are an early sign of spring migration. A telltale sign of seasonal change is the arrival of Snow Geese to the NMWMA, of which flocks in the 1000s (max 3000) were observed all over the refuge on 28 February. Canada Goose numbers followed the same trend, with a maximum of 1,800 also reported from the NMWMA. Migratory flocks of puddle ducks started to appear across the Region in the last week of February, with small incursions of Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, American Wigeon, and Northern Pintail noted at both lakeshore hotspots and in the NMWMA during that week before taking a steep uptick starting on 28 February. An early male Blue-winged Teal, reported flying into Braddock Bay on 28 February, is now tied with 1983 for the earliest record for Region 2. Interestingly, there were no reports of Wood Duck for this February. Absence in February is historically backed up, but unusual in recent years at least. With the western Finger Lakes frozen, reports of Redhead (there is an annual overwintering flock of Redhead typically on Conesus Lake in early winter) were lower (maximum 320), but other diving ducks, such as scaup and Long-tailed Duck, were reported in healthy numbers from lakeshore hotspots. For rarer waterfowl, the female Harlequin Duck at Ontario Beach Park continued through 6 February.

A group of 20 American Coots were found throughout the month on Irondequoit Bay, where bubbleers keep a small section of water open around docks. Interestingly, the only report of Double-crested Cormorant was of a single bird on 4 February reported from Sodus Point. There were no reports of Pied-billed Grebe or Red-necked Grebe. The Virginia Rail(s) at Mendon Ponds Park were not reported this month, which was either due to the birds' demise/moving on from the prolonged cold conditions in late January/early February or the sharp decrease in eBird checklists submitted from Quaker Pond in February. Killdeer arrived for the year on 28 February. There were no reports of early American Woodcock this February, a direct result of the cold conditions.

Concentrations of Ring-billed Gulls and Herring Gulls were around, but not impressive, possibly due to widespread ice giving gulls many areas to congregate, leading to smaller flocks. Despite having a "true" winter, Iceland Gull numbers seemed to be about average. Cliff Dekdebrun, Dominic Sherony, and Mike Gullo reported as many as four Iceland Gulls along NY31 in Walworth throughout the month, likely feeding at the High Acres Landfill in nearby Fairport. Glaucous Gulls were once again scarce, with only two to three individuals reported, and not widely seen by multiple observers. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were also scarce, with zero reports in the first three weeks of February and only scattered reports the last week of the month as they (presumably) moved in.

Turkey Vultures slowly trickled in during the last few days of the month. Bald Eagles continued to accumulate along Irondequoit Bay throughout the

Bald Eagle seen on February 28th at LaSalles Landing. Photo by Jeffrey Eichner.



FEBRUARY 2026 RECORDS SUMMARY

Snowy Owl seen by Jeffrey Eichner on February 6th.



month, reaching a maximum of 38 by 28 February. Mike Gullo reported the first migrant Golden Eagle of the season soaring northward over Nations Road in Avon on 28 February. Early raptor migration was evident at Braddock Bay during the last few days of the month, with Rough-legged Hawks moving through in decent numbers (maximum of 6 on 27 February). Tom Nash and Sheryl Gracewski found a Snowy Owl along Redman Road in Hamlin on 6 February. The Snowy Owl was widely seen throughout the day, but not the next day. A true surprise came from Webster Park on 2 February when Cronan Kobylak photographed a Boreal Owl. Despite tremendous effort from area birders, it was not found again. The first Northern Saw-whet Owl of spring migration was reported in Owl Woods on 15 February. Additional Northern Saw-whet Owls (single birds) were reported on 23 February from Webster Park and 28 February from Owl Woods.

The extremely cold weather took a noticeable toll on the abundance of half-hardy species in the Region this February. While 28-30 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported in January, the number dropped to 11 for February. There were no reports of Ruby-crowned Kinglet or Fox Sparrow, and only two reports of Gray Catbird. Similarly, there were only six eBird lines of Hermit Thrush, which reduced to three individuals, a sharp decrease from January. Three out of the four Eastern Towhees reported were the same three reported overwintering at feeders in January. A Red-headed Woodpecker, a species that is missed more winters than it is found, was photographed along Nations Road on 15 February. Eleven Northern Shrike individuals Regionwide is about average for recent years. Winter finch excitement continued in February with the flock of Pine Grosbeaks continuing between

Webster Park and Whiting Road Nature Preserve all month, with a maximum of nine reported on 25 February. John Gordinier reported three Evening Grosbeaks from Nunda-Dalton Road on 6 February. Several flocks of Evening Grosbeaks overwintered inland during the winter of 2025-2026, but none seemed to do so in Region 2. Flocks of Redpoll were occasionally reported moving along the lakeshore, with Andy Guthrie reporting a maximum of 80 from Hamlin Beach State Park on 4 February. Megan Miller reported the only Red Crossbills of the month, three at Webster Park on 16 February, which were not seen by anyone else. Field birds, such as Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, and Snow Bunting continued to be widespread. A report of 600 Snow Buntings along Cox Road in Bloomfield stood out as high, but not



*Evening Grosbeak (above) at Whiting Road Nature Preserve
Photo taken by Kris Montalbano on February 15th. Pine Grosbeak
(below) also at Whiting Road Nature Preserve. Photo by Candy
Giles on February 27th.*



FEBRUARY 2026 RECORDS SUMMARY

Snow Bunting & Horned Lark seen by Candy Giles on February 5th.



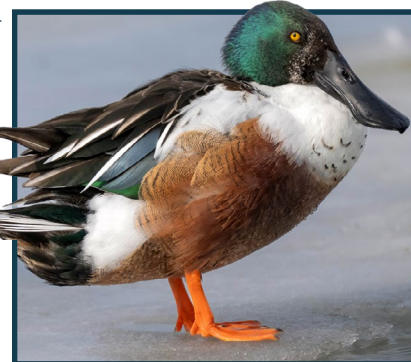
totally unexpected. Barry Bermudez reported a Rusty Blackbird, rare in winter, coming to his feeders with a flock of 20 Brown-headed Cowbirds near Victor on 11-12 February. Signs of changing seasons were once again evident in the last two weeks of the month with an influx of northbound Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds. An unexpected, out-of-season, immature male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was reported once again on 12 February in Naples by homeowner Heidi Gardner and photographed by visitor Kyle Gage.

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.

Observers (for January and February): Janet Akin, Niki Banke, Timmy Banker, Jessie Barry, Mitchell Barry, Frederic Beaudry, Betty Beckham, Don Bemont, Steve & Linda Benedict, Mike Bergin, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, Linda Birkel, Robin Blakesley, Alan & Lisa Bloom, John Boettcher, Terry Bohling, Noah Brickman, Scott & Janet Brooks, Robert Buckert, Sara Burch, Peter Burns, Ian Campbell, Brad Carlson, Donna Carter, Nate Chu, Robert Cicotta, Roger Clark, Sara Close, Holley Coates, Lorenzo Colantoni, Robert Crandall, Doug Daniels, Thomas Davis, Cliff Dekdebrun, Peggy Dempsey, Mark Druziak, Diane Egan, Rob Fergus, George & Katie Ford, Kyle Gage, Heidi Gardner, Andrew Garland, John Garrett, Matthew Gavette, Janis George, Candy Giles, John

& Karla Gordinier, Sheryl Gracewski, Kevin Griffith, Austin Groff, Michael Gullo, Carmen Gumina, Andrew Guthrie, Bill Haake, Kim Hartquist, Christina Hoh, Dick Horsey, Bill Howe, Lynn Howes, Mark Janetos, Nick Kachala, Amy Kahn, Laura Kammermeier, David Kennedy, James Kimball, Cindy Kindle, Cronan Kobylak, Hans Kunze, Greg Lawrence, Susan Lewis, Joan Lindberg, Peggy Mabb, Peggy Macres, Cynthia Marino, Patricia Martin, Judy Massare, Lauri Mattle, Jacob McCartney, Ryan McGinty, Jay McGowan, Ann McMican, Scott Meagher, Jim Miles, Kent Millham, Mark Miller, Phil Mills, Ann Mitchell, Joe Mitchell, Celeste Morien, Brian & Brooke Morse, Tom Nash, Paul Novak, Matt Nusstein, Dave Nutter, Jeremy Pete, Luanne Pignataro, Charlie & Chelsea Plimpton, Derek Pulhamus, Doug & Elizabeth Rabjohns, Rosemary Reilly, Neal Reilly, Michael Rizzo, Susan Roberts, Brian Rohrs, Andrew Romanowski, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Robert Ryan, Shawn Ryan, Jennifer Rycenga, Anne Salverda, Greg & Shannon Sanda, Mickey Scilingo, Luke Seitz, Dominic Sherony, Todd Shusky, Judith Slein, Robert & Susan Spahn, Rick Stevens, Reuben Stoltzfus, Stephen Taylor, David Tetlow, Michael Tetlow, Eunice Thein, Nathan Ukens, Tom & Jeanne Verhulst, Brad Walker, Mike Wasilco, Maili Waters, Bridget Watts, Drew Weber, Mamie Weed, Kim Weeks, Joe Wing, Chris Wood, Jim Wood.

*Northern Shoveler at Irondequoit Bay Outlet.
Photo by Alan Bloom.*



	2026	2025	10-year Average (2016-2025)
Total species for February	120	124	126.9
New species for the year	6	3	7.3
Total for the year to date	135	132	138.0

BIRDING CRUISES

Aboard the

RIVERIE

Cruise with birding experts Randi and Nic Minetor and observe some of the 100 species of birds that make their home along the Genesee River. Perfect for every bird watcher from novice to die-hard enthusiast, you'll see local birds in their lush habitat and learn to identify them by sight and sound.

These 75-minute cruises are appropriate for all ages. Participants are encouraged to bring their own binoculars, though binoculars will be available on board for use during the cruise.

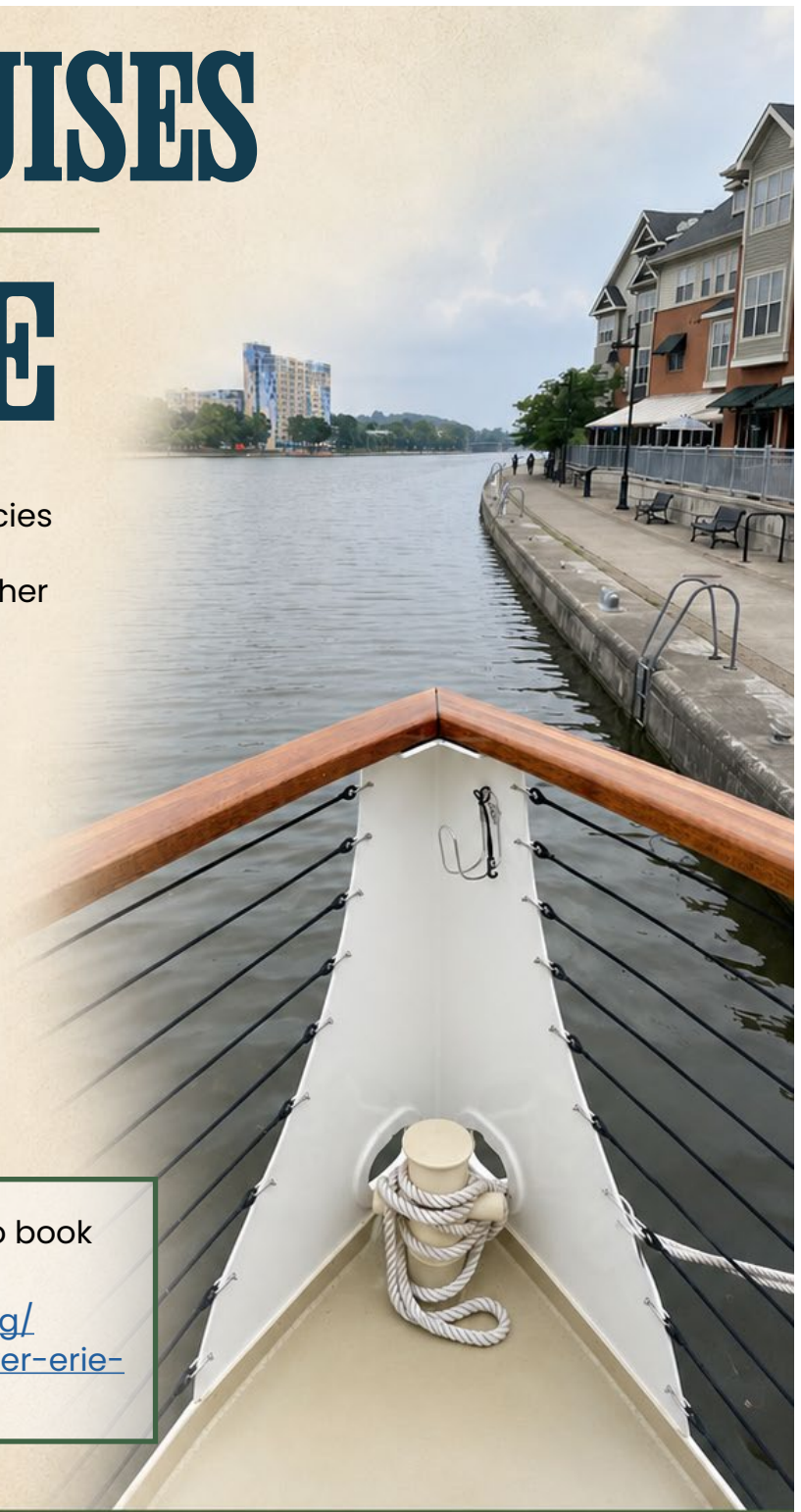


All of last year's birding cruises sold out early, so choose your dates and get tickets soon!



For more information and to book your cruise, visit

https://rochesterbywater.org/public_cruises/genesee-river-erie-canal-birding-cruises/



Upcoming dates: All cruises depart from Corn Hill Landing at 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, June 20

Sunday, June 21

Saturday, June 27

Sunday, June 28

Saturday, July 11

Sunday, July 12

Sunday, August 2

Saturday, August 29

Sunday, August 30

Saturday, September 19

Sunday, September 20

Saturday, September 26

Sunday, September 27

Saturday, October 17

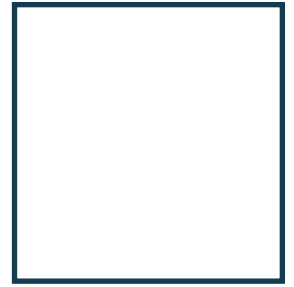
Sunday, October 18





Rochester Birding Association

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Rochester, NY 14692-9998



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