



# THE OSPREY

March/April 2018 — Vol. XLIII, No. 2

## West Coast Harlequin Duck Migrates to East Coast

Derek Rogers

January 6, 2018 was one of the most frigid birding days I can remember along the beaches of Long Island. I visited Shinnecock Inlet, where the outgoing tide sucked miniature ice floes into the ocean and wind chill temperatures dipped below -10°F. The region was nearing the end of a prolonged cold snap that locked up most of the Island's beaches and bays in a thick layer of ice. For the first time in many years, portions of the South Shore bays were completely frozen from the mainland to the barrier beach which forced congregations of waterfowl into the free-flowing ocean and inlets. There wasn't an overwhelming number of birds in the inlet on this day but an immature male Harlequin Duck caught my attention. Harlequin Ducks have been declining throughout the years and are becoming scarce on Eastern Long Island, even at traditional locations such as Shinnecock Inlet. Despite the blustery conditions, I was able to capture a series of photos of the young male Harlequin from atop the jetty before eventually retreating to my vehicle for warmth. Later that evening, while processing photos, it became apparent that the bird was sporting a blue band on its left leg with white characters "CI." How fortunate to have captured a legible leg band in the photos, especially given the conditions. There was only one opportunity when the bird rolled to its right while preening, briefly exposing its left leg and, ultimately, the band. What makes this resight particularly remarkable is the fact that "CI" was banded along Upper McDonald Creek at Glacier National Park in Montana this past summer on August 30, 2017.



Harlequin Duck in Shinnecock Canal, with a leg band from Montana

DEREK ROGERS

There are several researchers in North America, both East and West Coast, who band Harlequins within their respective, isolated breeding territories. Since 2011, the Glacier Program has banded a total of 210 Harlequin Ducks at Upper McDonald Creek; 47 females, 51 males, and 112 chicks.

Harlequin Ducks have historically been divided into two separate and distinct ranges; the Pacific coast and the Atlantic coast. Early nomenclature once delineated two subspecies; *H. h. histrionicus* (Atlantic) and *H. h. pacificus* (Pacific) but this distinction is no longer recognized. Based on past and current research, it has always been understood that western breeding populations winter along the Pacific coast and eastern populations along the Atlantic, as one would expect. According to the research, the January 6, 2018 Shinnecock resight constitutes the first ever documented record of a "Pacific coast" Harlequin Duck migrating to the Atlantic coast. There is a previous record of a juvenile, first-fall Harlequin Duck, also with Montana origins, taken by a duck hunter on Lake Erie, Erie, Pennsylvania in the fall

of 2015. Other than the Lake Erie record, there is no existing evidence that West Coast breeding populations make the long journey east across the continent to winter along the Atlantic coast. This new evidence raises many questions and will keep the research teams scratching their heads for some time. Hopefully continued related studies will shed more light on the complex life history of this declining species. 

**What if I see someone harassing a bird or other wild life?**

**What should you do?**

**Please report it to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).**

**Call 631.444.0250**

**This is the number for the duty officer in Stony Brook. He will relay your request to the closest field officer.**

## The President's Corner

# Remember Your Reusable Bags!

**Byron Young**

On January 1, 2018, the Suffolk County Legislature enacted a local law that will require stores to charge customers a minimum of 5¢ per bag provided at retail stores. While not universally accepted, the purpose of this law is to encourage consumers to use their own reusable bags for shopping and to reduce the environmental impacts associated with single use bags.

Now if you are like me, forgetful, Suffolk County has offered a list of helpful tips for remembering your bags.

- Store reusable bags in the car and at work. Many shopping trips are unplanned and unexpected. Be prepared by keeping reusable bags handy and accessible.

- Hang your bags on your doorknob, or some other convenient location so you will remember them on the way out.

- What if you are in the checkout line and discover you forgot your bags? If only a couple of items "go bag-less!" If you have more just load the items back into the cart and bag them once you get to your car. If you forgot your bags completely, you can always load your un-bagged items into the car and retrieve your bags once you get home. You will probably remember them after doing this a few times.

- One that I do not think will catch on is to clip your reusable bags to key chains, belt loops, purse straps, dog leashes, shopping carts and stroller handles.

**Suffolk County in their legislative message lists a series of environmental impacts associated with single use plastic bags.**

They include:

### Loss of Resources:

- It requires 2.2 billion pounds of fossil fuel and 3.9 billion gallons of fresh water to produce 100 billion plastic bags that the US consumes each year;

- The manufacturing of plastic bags produces a billion pounds of solid waste

and 2.7 million tons of carbon dioxide per year;

- Manufacturing and shipping paper bags requires even more energy and water and creates more pollution, than plastic bags. In addition, producing the paper bags in the US each year requires 14 million trees;

- Only 5% to 7% of plastic bags are recycled, in part, due to the fact that it costs more to recycle a bag than to produce a new one; and

- Plastic shopping bags are made of polyethylene, a thermoplastic made from oil. Accordingly, reducing the use of plastic bags will decrease our dependence on fossil fuels.

### Threats to Wildlife:

- Plastic bags can have a devastating effect on wildlife; birds can become entangled in the bags and different species of sea life can die from ingesting plastic bags which they think is food;

- Plastic pollution negatively impacts 267 species of marine life. Fish, and wildlife mortalities are caused by strangulation, restricted mobility, and disrupted ingestion.

### Damage to the Natural Environment

- EPA data shows that between 500 billion and 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide each year

- Plastic bags account for over 10% of the debris that washes up on our shores

- Most plastic bags do not biodegrade, over time, the bags break down into smaller, more toxic petro-polymers which eventually contaminate soils and waterways

- Globally, there is now more plastic in our oceans than plankton, with 46,000 pieces of plastic in every square mile of ocean

- Millions of tons of garbage have formed plastic masses in our oceans. Plastic is believed to constitute 90% of this garbage

- The largest mass is the North Pacific "Garbage Patch", which has 100 million

tons of floating garbage

- The Pacific gyre, which was first discovered in 1997, is now over 500 miles wide. It takes only weeks for the ocean currents to pull plastic from a bay or beach and into the plastic mass gyre, where it will remain for hundreds of years.

Using bags made of fabrics such as cotton, hemp, or burlap will reduce the need to manufacture plastic bags and reduce the stream of these bags entering the pollution stream. A recent publication from the Safina Center at Stony Brook University suggests a 50% to 80% reduction in the use of plastic bags by some stores over the first few weeks of this effort. Plastic bags will still be available for those who reuse them for other purposes albeit at a small expense. Some folks object to paying for these bags, yet some stores are being good neighbors and donating any moneys collected from the sale of plastic bags to local charities.

I suspect that most of you are full participants in this effort to reduce our reliance on single use plastic bags and for that I commend you. For those who have not fully subscribed yet, please give it a try. Yes, it will take some modification of old habits and require taking reusable shopping bags every time you go to the store. Consider the benefits from the reduction in plastic litter, the potential reduction in the amount of petroleum needed to make plastic bags and the wildlife that will not attempt to eat a plastic bag thinking it is food or become entangled and suffer.

Yes, we are in changing times, and this one seems to be of benefit. I believe the Suffolk County Legislature should be commended for implementing the law to reduce the use of single use plastic bags. They have done their part now it is time for us to do ours. Reusable bags are available at a nominal cost at most stores. The cost of which will be recouped in short order with multiple uses. 

# March & April Meetings

Monday, March 5, 2018 at 7:15 pm



## Restoring the Spring Migration of River Herring

Enrico Nardonne

Long Island's numerous coastal tributaries all once hosted annual spring migrations of river herring and American eels. These unique fish transferred ocean energy into the estuaries and provided forage for countless other species, which helps to drive our entire coastal ecosystem. While most of these runs have been severely impacted by dams and culverts, they still persist in many places. Seatuck's *River Revival Project* seeks to reconnect our rivers and streams and rebuild populations of the migratory fish that rely on them. Seatuck staff will provide background on these fascinating fish and detail the *River Revival Project* and other efforts underway to restore their populations.

Monday, April 2, 2018 at 7:15 pm

## Perfect Earth Project

Edwina von Gal

It's time for all of us to take to heart the warnings and real science that demonstrate the hazards to people, pets, and wildlife from the use of pesticides and herbicides in our lawns and gardens. Renowned garden designer Edwina von Gal's Perfect Earth Project, based in East Hampton, NY, collaborates with professional gardeners and lawn care services to educate workers and customers about these hazards and present sustainable, wildlife-friendly alternatives to a beautiful lawn. Edwina will talk about her "conversion" to toxin-free and why toxin-free is important to supporting biodiverse ecosystems. She will also provide the basics of nature-based maintenance, and



design suggestions for keeping it easy with special attention to bird habitat.

Following the presentation there will be a Q&A session for individuals to address specific needs and to provide action items for encouraging neighbors and communities to engage in practices that will protect wildlife and bird populations on a wider scale.

**Edwina von Gal** is the Principal Landscape Designer at Edwina von Gal + Co. and the founder and president of Perfect Earth Project. Edwina creates landscapes with a focus on simplicity and sustainability for private and public clients around the world. She has collaborated with architects such as Frank Gehry, Annabelle Selldorf, Maya Lin, and Richard Meier, on projects for Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Richard Serra, Larry Gagosian, and many others in the design and art community. Her work has been published in many major publications. Her book *Fresh Cuts* won the Quill and Trowel award for garden writing.

Edwina created the Perfect Earth Project in 2013, a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising consciousness about the dangers of toxic lawn and garden chemicals to protect the health of people, their pets, and the planet. 

# Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 28th, Noon to 3:00 pm

Come and celebrate nature and our lovely planet at Quogue Wildlife Refuge! The day will include guided Bird Walks by ELIAS, live animal presentations, crafts, environmental exhibitors, and self-guided kayaking and canoeing on Old Ice Pond.

This celebration is offered by Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, Westhampton Beach Earth Day, & Quogue Wildlife Refuge.

A great day for all ages!

Check <http://quoguelifereference.org> for more detailed schedule of events.

No reservations necessary.  
Rain or shine.

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge  
3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY.  
Directions are on the website.  
[easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org](http://easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org).

Meetings are open to the public, there is no charge.

# Nature Walks

Saturday, March 3, 2018, meet at 8 am

## Elizabeth Morton NWR

Leader: Byron Young

This is always a special walk. Just at the edge of winter, you will be greeted by lots of hungry birds, that eat right out of your hand. Frequently there are pockets of over-wintering birds. Great photo ops as you are close to the birds. Meet at the Elizabeth Morton Wildlife Refuge parking lot at 8 am. It is roughly a 2 mile walk to the beach and around the refuge. Dress warmly and appropriately. Bring binoculars! Bird seed will be provided.

Saturday, April 14, 2018, meet at 8:30 am

## North Fork Preserve

Leader: Eileen Schwinn

The entrance to North Fork Preserve is on Sound Avenue, just east of Church Lane in Riverhead. Follow the long, paved driveway to the parking area by the former hunting lodge. Vernal ponds, meadows and wooded areas attract a variety of visiting migrants and nesting birds, in addition to raptors, and thrushes. Each day is different during migration season. Dress for ticks, however, we will be on mowed paths for most of the walk. 

 Audubon NEW YORK

## Eastern LI Ambassador Training

Friday, April 13, 2018 @ 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Nature Center at Quogue Wildlife Refuge,  
3 Old Country Rd, Quogue, NY 11959

Audubon Ambassadors are a committed group of people passionate about the health and resiliency of their community, and want to turn their values into action. You don't need to be an expert on birds – everyone is welcome! Ambassadors advocate for policies, laws, and practices that make the world sustainable for birds and people alike. Where birds thrive, people prosper.

**Being the messenger:** Tips for having productive conversations on climate change, how to speak to representatives, and identifying stakeholders.

**Being the solution:** Changes we can make in our own homes, our backyards, and in our community that birds and people need for a safe, resilient, sustainable future.

**Being an advocate:** Why organizing matters, how to start a campaign, and concrete steps we can take today to be a voice for birds.

For questions or more information please email Kelly Knutson, New York Field Organizer, at [kknutson@audubon.org](mailto:kknutson@audubon.org).

Link to the registration is on the ELIAS website. 

SAVE THE DATE



SAVE THE DATE



SAVE THE DATE

## Special Trip to Plum Island Scheduled for Fall 2018

**Plum Island** – that pork-chopped shape island just off the tip of Orient Point – has been the focus of “mystery and adventure” for years. The US Government purchased it during the Spanish-American War, and established Fort Terry. Evidence of this military “occupation” is still present. Now home – at least for the next few years – to the US Department of Agriculture and US Department of Homeland Security. Research on animal disease and prevention is currently being conducted there.

In addition to this vital part of our national security, Plum Island is also home to, and a stopping over point, for many birds (land and sea) during migration. It has been designated as an Important Bird Area by New York Audubon. And that's what our ELIAS Club is interested in!

We've managed to secure a Field Trip to Plum Island – **Friday, September 7, 2018**. There are certain restrictions for visitors – and, as most visits to Federally Secured areas – a bit of paperwork needs to be filled out.

**Basically, the visit will be limited to 35 participants.** The information to be provided includes: First, Middle and

Last Name, US Citizens only, Country of Origin, City and State of Residence, Age on Sept. 7, 2018, Social Security Number, and Telephone number. A hand-filled out waiver will also be needed.

Eileen Schwinn will be the Contact Person for this trip – and all information will be sent via secure encrypting to Plum Island via her. She will be providing the appropriate paperwork applications to those interested in attending. **EILEEN WILL BEGIN ACCEPTING REQUESTS FOR APPLICATIONS BY EMAIL - BEACHMED@OPTONLINE.NET – ON APRIL 8, 2018. ALL COMPLETED PAPERWORK MUST BE RECEIVED BY JUNE 13, 2018. PLEASE DO NOT EXPECT TO BE ON A “RESERVATION” LIST PRIOR TO APRIL 8.** Eileen will be out of the area for a good bit of time in March, there's no guarantee that she will be receiving your email prior to the April 8 date.

Plum Island has an interesting history, and currently plays a vital role in today's agricultural well-being. It's a neat place to bird and we hope you can join us! 

# A Snapshot of the Smokies

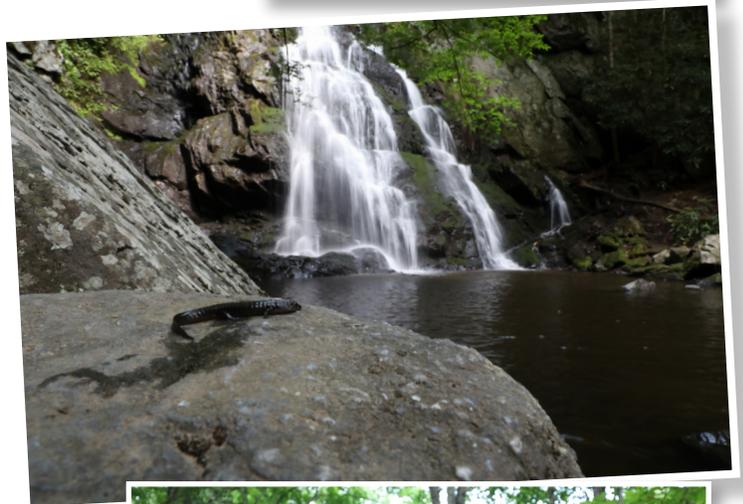
Photos and article by  
Hannah Mirando

The Great Smoky Mountains in July are any nature photographer's dream. From Black Bear cubs, to salamanders, to sloping mountains of green, Tennessee is bursting with vibrancy. From July 10th to the 15th, I found myself here with some of the country's most renowned photographers. I had been selected for the North American Nature Photography Association's High School Scholarship Program.

Every year, this program brings together ten fortunate teenagers who are eager to learn the skills and techniques used for nature photography. One of our main sponsors was Canon Inc., which donated thousands of dollars worth of camera equipment for us to try out during the week. This included a wide array of lenses ranging from macro, wide angle, and a 500mm zoom. Our instructors were a talented group of professional nature photographers including the very president of NANPA himself, Don Carter. Throughout the program, they provided us with advice on how to capture the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains in our shutters, whether it was in the field, during editing sessions, or through one-on-one conversations. I personally enjoyed learning from such a hands-on approach. Being coached on how to frame a photo or capture the right amount of light with a camera in your hands is completely different than learning in a classroom. A relationship forms between the person, the camera, and the outside forces of nature. Only when you are able to master this relationship can you begin to channel ideas through your lens, creating a picture that communicates your thoughts. A photographer's ability to do this is extremely powerful, an idea that was reinforced many times in our lessons, and one that especially resonated with me. One of the most important things I came away with from this trip was that photography is a powerful tool that can influence, teach, and even touch the hearts of others.

Armed with the latest photography technology, brilliant instructors, and the fresh faces of new friends, we set out into the Smokies for five days of action packed adventures. Our home base was the Great Smoky Mountain Institute at Tremont, a gorgeous natural area that is in Townsend, Tennessee and the heart of Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Most of our time was spent here: at the streams, waterfalls, and hilly woods of Tremont property. Our first excursion away from the Institute was to the famous Cades Cove area, with the mission of photographing Black Bear. Soon after entering the area, we spotted a Black Bear mother and three of her young cubs. This little family let us watch them all morning. The cubs climbed trees, wrestled, and sunned themselves as their mother watched carefully nearby. At one point, a lone cub ran across the road only five feet away from us. Being so close to these magnificent animals gave me a dual sense of awe and appreciation. I found that the Black Bears of the Smokies are interestingly complex creatures, for although they coexist peacefully near people for almost all of the time, they are powerful and dangerous animals that shouldn't be trifled with. The tiny bear cubs, bounding up trees with the confidence of their youth, can also be easily swallowed up by the forest if not for their mother's watchful eye. Perhaps it is this that makes visitors so enamored by them, because they share many of the same complexities that make us human.

Following our bear encounter, we were introduced to a unique method of photography called "Meet Your Neighbors." This method is often used for scientific research as opposed to



Top: Black Bear Cub. Middle: Dusky Salamander at Spruce Flats Falls. Bottom: Visitors participate in a bird banding demonstration.

solely artistic purposes. It requires several flashes: one attached to the camera body, one on a free standing tripod with a diffuser, and another sitting below a small, plexiglass specimen table. When the plant or animal is photographed on the table, the background appears completely white, highlighting all its colors, textures,

*Continued on the next page*

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and features. This makes the photos ideal for observing anatomy and comparing similar species. Most importantly, the process is non-invasive, since the organisms only need to remain on the plexiglass surface for minutes or even seconds. To put this method into action, we brought our setups to the stream bank where we collected salamanders, damselflies, crawfish, fungi, and a slew of other microfauna to photograph. Half of the challenge was clicking the shutter button before the animal could fly, hop, or scurry away! Interestingly, my favorite Meet Your Neighbors shot wasn't of an animal at all, but of a Sweetgum Tree seed pod. The photo allows a closer inspection of a typically overlooked fruit. The spiky seed is filled with ridges, textures, and rich shades of brown. It's simply breathtaking, and the fact that the towering Sweetgums above me sprouted from such a small thing was especially astounding. The "Meet Your Neighbors" method taught me that in looking a little closer, you can find beauty in unexpected and hidden places.

Near the end of the program, we dedicated a day to photographing visitors of the Institute. Every year, it facilitates dozens of programs for families and vacationers. That morning, I gathered with several groups to do a bird banding workshop with Institute staff. The children and their parents learned about local bird species and the process of mist netting. Although the amount of bird activity proved to be generally unproductive, the kids did get to see a single American Robin caught in the net. Being able to photograph an important

learning moment for these children was very rewarding. Having been a birder and naturalist from a young age, I saw myself reflected in their excited faces. One can only hope that a moment like this is what sparks their love for the outdoors.

On the last day of the program, the Institute staff, families, and guests congregated to watch us give individual presentations showcasing our photographic work from the week. As I walked up to the podium to present my slide show, I glanced at the packed room and a flurry of nervousness hit me. However, as I looked at those unfamiliar faces, so eager to hear what I had to say, and the faces of my new friends, proud of the work I had done, I felt the nervousness abate just a little bit. Through my images, I had the chance to

share the spirit of the Smoky Mountains, the budding friendships I had created, and the memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life. This in itself was just as rewarding as all the other highlights of my trip, even more so.

I would just like to say thank you to the Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, who sponsored me and made this opportunity possible. Over the years, I have been surrounded by countless people who have encouraged me in my endeavors, and made my dreams their own. Thank you! 



*A Sweetgum Tree seed pod photographed on a plexiglass specimen table*



*View from Clingman's Dome*

*"Home of the 99 cent Suet Cake"*

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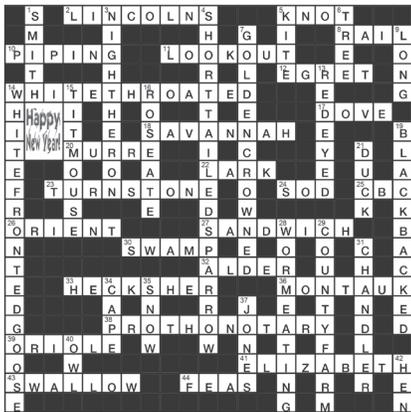
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Eastport, NY 11941

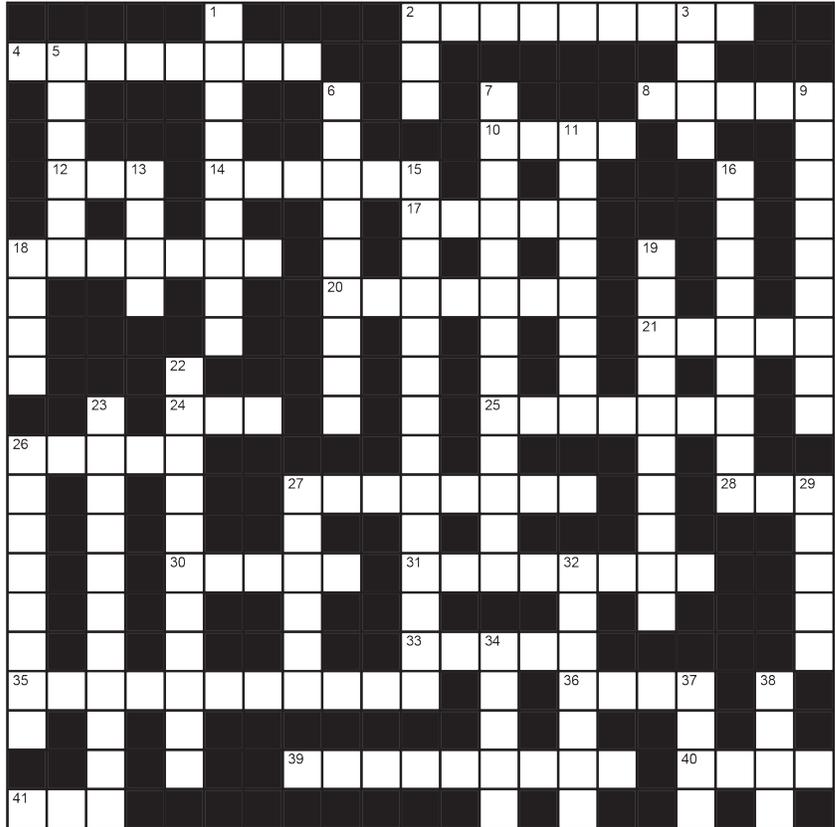
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on Facebook!**

## Answers to January/February puzzle Happy New Year by Tom Moran



## Almost Spring Tom Moran



### Across

- 2 Townsend's \_\_\_\_\_ seen at Tiffany Creek  
Preserve this winter
- 4 With 26 Down – was seen at Robert Moses  
this winter
- 8 Greater or Lesser
- 10 A good place to see dabbling ducks
- 12 Barred, Great Horned, Screech, Saw Whet...
- 14 \_\_\_\_\_ Stream, Hooded Warbler seen there  
in 2016
- 17 AKA Grumman Grassland
- 18 \_\_\_\_\_ River County Park, good place to  
look for warblers in spring
- 20 Our most abundant duck
- 21 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, falling ping pong ball song
- 24 Type of tree that some warblers like to cruise  
the tops of
- 25 Late April to mid June is a good time to look  
for one of these
- 26 LBJ, the B
- 27 \_\_\_\_\_ Dove
- 28 H. \_\_\_\_\_ White Marine Museum, Oswego,  
where the Clark's Grebe was seen last winter
- 30 \_\_\_\_\_ Waxwing
- 31 \_\_\_\_\_ Bittern, occasionally seen along  
Dune Road
- 33 Bald or Golden \_\_\_\_\_
- 35 \_\_\_\_\_ Kinglet
- 36 \_\_\_\_\_ Road, intersects with Grumman Blvd,  
a good place to get Bluebirds
- 39 \_\_\_\_\_ Falcon, fastest member of the  
animal kingdom
- 40 Mute \_\_\_\_\_ DEC has plans...
- 41 \_\_\_\_\_-bellied Woodpecker

### Down

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Warbler, likes country music
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Harbor
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Pigeon
- 5 Baltimore \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Birthplace of Babe Ruth
- 7 Warbler, similar in behavior to a Brown Creeper
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ Lake, can be viewed from bridge  
on East Moriches Blvd. or \_\_\_\_\_ Farm  
remembers (think good cakes)
- 11 Displays a broken wing display when too  
close to nest
- 13 Eastern (see 27 Down) \_\_\_\_\_, often seen at  
Grumman Grassland
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_ Warbler, perhaps  
increasingly common on LI. Has been seen at  
Connetquot and the Cutting Arboretum
- 16 An impressive church where a Cardinal rules
- 18 American \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, not to be confused  
with a Swamp Sparrow
- 19 White patch on male head
- 22 Across the LI Sound
- 23 Northern \_\_\_\_\_, a mimic
- 26 (See 4 Across) \_\_\_\_\_, seen this winter  
at Robert Moses
- 27 Eastern \_\_\_\_\_ (see 13 Down)
- 29 King \_\_\_\_\_, seen off jetty at Jones Beach this  
winter
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_ Gull, gray/white gull, smaller than  
Glaucous
- 34 Coast \_\_\_\_\_ Station, Jones Beach, a Red-  
necked Grebe was seen there this winter
- 37 Opposite of west
- 38 Green-winged or the less common Blue

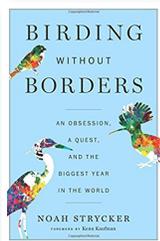
*Curl up and go birding with a good book...*

## **Birding without Borders**

*An Obsession,  
a Quest, and  
the Biggest Year  
in the World*

by Noah Strycker

Review by  
Eileen Schwinn



“Three hundred and sixty-five days with a backpack,

binoculars, and a series of one-way tickets, Noah Strycker traveled across forty-one countries, and all seven continents, eventually spotting 6,042 species of birds” – so says the jacket cover of “*Birding without Borders - and Obsession, a Quest, and the Biggest Year in The World*”, by Noah Strycker. OH, NO - NOT ANOTHER BIG YEAR BOOK!!!! But this one is different – at least it was to me. More about the people than the birds, Strycker’s book reminded me more of Kenn Kaufman’s *Kingbird Highway* than any other Big Year Book. Sleeping on stranger’s couches, occasionally in parks, and always with not enough sleep, and sometimes, not enough food, Strycker’s 2015 started like so many similar sagas – quit his only regular job, broke up with his girlfriend, and had spent most of his savings. So he did what any 29 year old male can do – he hit the road. Not just the road, but the air, and sea as well. He downloaded dozens of Field Guides, maps, and contacts into his laptop, and jammed a flashlight, sleeping bag, two Sharpie pens, two pairs of field pants, three pairs of boxers, four pairs of socks and four tee-shirts, and a black baseball cap into his 40-liter backpack (a couple other things into the nooks and crannies), and hit the road.

Not to spoil the ending, but before he finished the year, he discovered a Dutch birder was set to challenge Strycker record – following almost the exact same path, but tweaking it to visit one or two more birdy areas. That didn’t discourage Noah, who discovered along the way, that, as many travelers do, the journey is better than the destination. He was also made aware of the declining number of

birds, worldwide, due to environmental issues, and the loss of habitat. Strycker met folks in all countries, dedicated to the preservation of the land, and the conservation efforts and the challenges they face. He found that to be the highlight of his quest – the hope for the future of birds, and the world in general.

Ending the book with a little advice, Strycker gives us info which is applicable to all travelers, no matter where the destination: pack light, go hard, and stay flexible. Keep it personal, but don’t make it about yourself. Tip well, smile often and say thank you, and learn to say hello in the local language. And know that the world is much friendlier than it often seems, and don’t be paranoid. Hang out with locals as much as possible. And “above all, don’t let fear get in the way – everyone is afraid of something, but the worst that can happen is to never go at all.”

A wonderful little book, up there among my favorites about birding and the “culture” and breed that we are, a good read, even if a Big Year is not in your (near) future! But why not? Why not make a Big Year in your own back yard???



## **A Parliament of Owls, A Birdwatchers Mystery by Christine Goff**

Review by  
Byron Young

This delightful little mystery is the sixth in the birdwatchers series by Christine Goff. The story takes place in and around the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Colorado involving Burrowing Owls, Bald Eagles, Prairie Dogs and murder. The lead character is a US Fish and Wildlife Agent by the name of Angela Dimato who handles endangered species artifacts for the USF&W Service, processing applications for eagle parts for Native American celebrations along with other duties assigned to her as a special agent



including the investigation of a death in a Prairie Dog Town. The story begins with Special Agent Dimato leading a group of fifth grade students on a tour of a local Prairie Dog colony and Burrowing Owl nesting site. It is there that Agent Dimato and a fifth grade boy discover the body of his soccer mom and local environmental activist near a Burrowing Owl nest site. Meanwhile there are two other shootings in town, no one is talking and the question is are these crimes connected? Agent Dimato and the local sheriffs department begin to investigate these incidents separately but events soon begin to cross paths. The story follows the clues along a circuitous path until the killer is uncovered.

The story twists and turns through the life of a small town outside of Denver, exploring the lives of its characters while delving into Native American ritual, the securing of antiquities, and local community relationships with Prairie Dogs.

As mentioned above the author has written a series birdwatchers books, which includes: *A Rant of Ravens*; *Death of a Songbird*; *A Nest in the Ashes*; *Death Takes a Gander*; and *A sacrifice of Buntings*. They may be a bit difficult to find in your local library but should be available through inter-library loan. At the very least you can find them on Amazon

Since I do not have an official rating system, I will simply conclude with the statement that I enjoyed this very nice little mystery story and read it over a few days. I suspect that anyone who enjoys a good mystery will enjoy this little book (158 pages) and for the birdwatchers this will provide some insight into the lives of Burrowing Owls, Prairie Dogs and Bald Eagle artifacts. I would recommend this book for anyone looking for a book to take on vacation, for a long winter weekend sitting by the fire or just as a nice simple book to enjoy. 

# NYSOA Annual Meeting

Bob Adamo, an ELIAS Board Member, is the ELIAS Representative to NYSOA.

## Bob Adamo

The New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) held its Annual Meeting on November 10-12, 2017 in Niagara Falls, N.Y. The 70th edition of this meeting (first held under the auspices of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs) was hosted by the Buffalo Ornithology Society (BOS), whose members did a grand job! Their efforts were certainly appreciated by the 178 participants, most hailing from New York State, a few came from neighboring states, and even Canada was represented. The farthest travelling attendees were from the most southeastern terminus of our state...the Mirando Family of Montauk!

The venue, DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, adjacent to the spectacular rapids of the Niagara River, was within walking distance of Niagara Falls State Park, and the falls themselves. Aside from the natural beauty of these locations, they are all "magnets" for fall and winter birds. Uncommon gulls are the specialty of this area. While no Sabine's, or Slaty-backed Gulls were reported, many other gull species were, including Little, Glaucous, Iceland and Lesser Black-backed.

Friday registration opened at 9 am, followed at noontime by the Birders Marketplace, a combination of ~ 20 Non-profit Organizations and nature related businesses (including artists and photographers) all with either informational posters, or merchandise to purchase.

That afternoon there were two field trips offered to the early arrivals – the first to the Tiff Nature Preserve, the second to the Buffalo Waterfront. They were well attended, with good birds making up for the cold temperature of 20° F, (18° below the norm). In my case, the 3 Tundra Swans (most probably a family group) seen at Tiff, were the day's highlight... rather, the one juvenile was! To my recollection, this was the first of this species I have seen in this plumage. My past sightings of Tundras have all been of birds in their adult finery!

Friday night's Reception and Buffet

included an outstanding power point presentation by Paul Guris, of See Life Paulagics. He thrilled his audience with photos and commentary about the pelagic species that can be seen off our Atlantic Coast. I have gone on some of his trips, but now realize there are a number of species that are being seen on a regular basis, that would be new species for me!

The Saturday morning Business Meeting/Delegates Meeting (*NYSOA By-laws call for at least one physical meeting each year, for the delegates to address the business of the organization.*) started off with an early 6 am breakfast, which enabled delegates to go on one of two field trips, and be back for the start of the meeting. Two walks were offered: one to Goat Island and another to Buckhorn Island State Park, which was the one I chose. Highlights included Harlequin Duck and Red-necked Grebe. There were three morning field trips offered for non-delegates to view the falls from various locations or go Buffalo Waterfront.

The Business Meeting began with a roll call, followed by the approval of the minutes from the 69th Annual Meeting, as published in our journal, *The Kingbird*. Joan Collins then gave her final "President's Report". She has proven to be an exceptional leader, while also filling her other demanding position as editor of our newsletter, *N.Y. Birders*. We are thrilled that Joan has volunteered to continue on in this important post!

Joan's first order of business was to again thank the Chemung Valley Audubon Society for the outstanding job they did as hosts of last year's Annual Meeting.

She then summarized NYSOA's activities from that meeting to the present.

■ Gave appreciation to Linda Clark Benedick, who maintains the NYSOA Archive housed at the Cornell University Library. Joan encouraged all in need to use its online "finding aid" accessed by visiting the NYSOA website to connect with the appropriate link.

■ Gave appreciation to the Awards Committee, chaired by Bill Ostrander, for the work involved in determining the deserving recipients of the Awards and

Certificates of Appreciation announced and distribute at the Banquet Dinner.

■ Gave special thanks to the Conservation Committee, chaired by Andy Mason, for dealing with the sometimes tedious, but always important issues, that fill its plate year round. From meeting regularly with DEC in Albany, to speaking on environmental issues at public hearings, ie, the Boreas Ponds Tract in the Adirondacks, to writing letters on behalf of NYSOA to address ecological "hotspots", such as the proposed public sale of Plum Island.

■ Gave appreciation to Carena Pooth, for compiling the County and State Listing Project. This very popular yearly exercise has birders submitting the bird species they have recorded in any of the 62 Counties and/or 10 Regions of NYS. Last year 112 birders were listed, of those 15 had seen birds in all these counties. Bill Purcell was the only one to record at least 100 species in all of them. This year a new Pelagic Zone was added to the mix, with 17 participants reporting their totals. Unfortunately, this year also brought sad news in the form of Berna Lincoln's passing. Berna was a very active member of NYSOA, serving in many positions including, as President. One of her initiatives was the establishment, in 1992, of our present listing project. I seem to remember that when she and her husband, Stan Lincoln (who was also a past NYSOA President) retired, they decided to visit/bird all of the state's 62 counties – which morphed into the activity we enjoy today.

■ Gave sincere thanks to the Marketing, Publicity, and Field Trip Committee, chaired by Tim Baird, for their innovative and diverse decisions in "keeping the troops happy"! Throughout the year, their collective efforts provided good services and opportunities for the membership, in the form of efficient publicizing of NYSOA events, the sponsoring of two exciting weekend field trips, and the "give-a-way" of one, very cool, cold weather hat...at precisely the right time! The field trips were to Oswego in February, where a Clark's Grebe (first ever for NYS) was

*Continued on next page*

enjoyed by all, and to Montezuma in September, where, although no mega-species was found, many good shorebirds and waterfowl were present. The “give-away” in November was for the registrants at our 70th Annual Meeting, with those venturing out for even just one of the field trips, returning with heartfelt thanks for the much needed head warmer! Kudos for all this work go to Tim, Carena Pooth, Kathy Schneider, Greg Lawrence, and Mary Beth Warburton.

■ Gave appreciation to the membership and staff of the New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC) chaired by Carena Pooth. It is now in its 9th year. The club has grown from 11 Youth Members, 13 Supporting Adults, and 7 Partner Organizations to 55 Y/M, 30 S/A, and 20 P/O. Of the 20 Partner Organizations, ELIAS is one of only 6 clubs that have been continuous partners since 2010. Every month the YBC holds events and field trips, throughout the state. ELIAS is the sponsor of the February trip to Montauk. The average age of the Youth Members is 15.2, with 36% under 16, 41% under 15 and 14% under 13. 48% live in N.Y.C., L.I., and Westchester. 7% live out of state, in N.J., Ct., and Ma. The youth membership is made up of 39 boys and 16 girls.

■ Gave sincere thanks to the Publications Committee, chaired by Seth Ausubel, for the time and effort involved in making our publications a reality. These include 4 issues of our journal, *The Kingbird*, which is edited by Shai Mitra, with Pat Lindsay, as Managing Editor. Bob Spahn, continues to coordinate with its 10 Regional

Editors, with Bill Krueger now Region 7 Editor. There are also 4 issues of our newsletter *N.Y. Birders*, which is edited by Joan Collins. Its content is varied, ie, the aforementioned “County and State Listing Project”, a much looked for, yearly report!

■ Gave appreciation to the Research Committee, chaired by Greg Lawrence, for its involvement in many areas, such as the Atlas Committee, NY eBird, and the NYS Waterfowl Count. NYSOA is currently engaged with its partners (DEC, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and SUNY ESF) in planning for the Third Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA III) in NYS. NYSOA has, in addition to the active planning, committed to providing project leadership, and participate in recruitment of field workers. 2020 is the hoped for start of field operations, and once operational, the eBird system will be used for data entry and management. The statewide Waterfowl Count, compiled by Bill Ostrander, will be published in *The Kingbird*, and posted on the NYSOA website.

■ Joan again acknowledged Carena Pooth (for wearing another of her many NYSOA hats) as chair of the Website and Information Services Committee, which keeps the website up to date with conservation news, provides information on searching *The Kingbird* Archive, learning of the workings of the NYS Avian Records Committee (NYSARC), and other valuable information.

■ Joan thanked the two new members, Pat Lindsay and Derek Rogers, of NYSARC for stepping up to these exacting and

responsible duties, and to Jim Pawlicki for accepting a second term, and to Willie D’Anna who has agreed to become the Chairman.

The Auditing Committee also has a new chair, Stephen Chang is taking over for the now retired John Cairns, who served on this committee for many years.

After the President’s Report, the following business was conducted:

The DEC Report was presented by Connie Adams, Senior Wildlife Biologist. While also providing a printed report, she spoke on activities of interest to NYSOA, such as the monitoring of: alpine forest birds; lowland boreal birds; Common Loons; marsh birds; Whip-poor-wills and Prothonotary Warblers. She also discussed DEC interests in management of game birds, Mute Swans and Double-crested Cormorants.

The 2017-2018 Slate of Officers and Directors was then voted upon and elected, along with those nominated for the Nominating and Auditing Committees.

#### **Officers 2017-2018**

*President*, Michael DeSha; *Vice President*, Tim Baird; *Treasurer*, Andy Mason; *Secretary*, John Kent

#### **Directors 2017-2019**

Brian Dugan, Brendan Fogarty, Lucretia Grosshans, Carena Pooth

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Under New Business, the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development was voted in as our newest member organization.

Bringing the Business Meeting to a close was the announcement of NYSOA's 71st Annual Meeting, which will be held October 5-7, 2018 in Rochester, N.Y. It will be co-hosted by the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club and the Rochester Birding Association. It seems that going back away, the birding community in Rochester committed to hosting the FNYSBC Annual Meeting every 10 years, and bless their collective soul, to honor that pledge, even after our name change !

After lunch, the Papers Session consisted of 6 presentations, 5 dealing with bird themes, with the other about the geological history of the Niagara River and its Falls.

1) Fitness costs of nest parasites to Purple Martins (*Progne subis*). Heather Williams, PhD Candidate, State University of New York at Buffalo

2) Long-term trends in avian migration timing for the state of New York. Robert Deleon, Buffalo Ornithological Society, based on work presented in the Wilson Journal of Ornithology in April 2017

3) Black-capped Chickadee response to alarm calls of non-flocking heterospecifics: Do chickadees respond to potential threats ?  
Garret VanGelder, President, NYSYBC

4) A Brief Geological History of the Niagara River and its Falls. Tim Baird, President, Cattaraugus County Bird Club and NYSOA Publicity Chair

5) Using Geographic Information Systems to Identify Habitat for the Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) in NY. Jesse Michael Rubenstein, MS, Graduate Student, State University of NY at Buffalo

6) Habitat Improvement Projects: A Regional Overview including Benefits to Birds and Need for Crowd-sourced Science. Loren Smith, Executive Director, Buffalo Audubon Society

After Saturday's evening reception Bill Ostrander announced the awards.

The Gordon M. Meade Distinguished Service Award (which is not given every year) was presented to two v long time

members – Barbara Butler and Angus Wilson. Barbara has served NYSOA in many positions, as President, Director, Committee member, Co-creator of its first website, and as Membership Database & Circulation Manager. Angus was recognized for the 18 years he served as the Chairman of the NYSARC. His leadership, experience and knowledge helped expedite the number of bird records that greeted him upon his arrival, and just kept coming throughout his stay. Angus is credited with implementing many new procedures, while at NYSARC.

This year's Emanuel Levine Award was given to Doug Gochfeld, for his article "What's it going to be? This award goes to the article judged to be the best submitted to *The Kingbird* during the past year. Doug's piece tries to predict which species will become our next new one?

The Lillian Stoner Award is given to juniors or seniors in high school or freshman or sophomores in college. The award provides for financial help for the winner(s) to attend the Annual Meeting. It also gives the winner(s) a year's free membership in NYSOA. This year there were two winning students - Eamon Freiburger, a High School Senior from Lagrangeville, N.Y., and Hannah Mirando, a High School Senior from Montauk, N.Y. Hannah is a past recipient of financial aid from ELIAS, for summer camp attendances. She has also submitted several articles for publication in *The Osprey*. Both of these outstanding young people are members of the NYSYBC.

Each year, NYSOA presents "Certificates of Appreciation" to folks/organizations who extend help to our state's birding community - this year, four were recognized.

1) To Margaret and Keith Brace for welcoming birders to their yard in Aquebogue to see two wintering Rufous Hummingbirds

2) To Jack Delehanty for welcoming birders to his Tupper Lake property to see a Ross's Gull.

3) To Mathew Perry for his many contributions in the Onondaga Region to conserving and restoring bird habitat, advocating for birds, documenting bird life and educating others about birds.

4) To the Buffalo Ornithological Society

for organizing and hosting the 2017 NYSOA Annual Meeting and Birding Conference.

This year's Banquet Speaker was Neil Hayward, who in 2013 set the current record for bird species seen in one year in the territory of the U.S., as defined by the American Birding Association (ABA). The ABA definition includes all our 50 states, all of Canada, and up to 200 miles of sea that forms the sidelines. The year starts on January 1 and ends on December 31. Neil's humorous and exciting presentation tells the story of his late start (April), his adventures throughout the year, which ended with a total that was two shy of the record...but with 3 species classified as "provisional". In August 2014 Neil's Common Redstart from St. Paul Island, Alaska (was accepted by the ABA, tying Sandy Komito's standing record of 748. Shortly after this, Neil's Eurasian Sparrowhawk from Adak Island, Ak. was rejected, but in June 2015, the ABA accepted his Rufous-necked Wood Rail from Bosque del Apache NWR, New Mexico. Neil's 749th species made him the sole possessor of a most respected, but extremely difficult to achieve, record. This accomplishment took: travelling 250,000 miles; 55 rental cars; 28 states; 6 provinces; 56 airports and 195 days away from home, of which 15 were spent in a boat, one in a kayak, plus one up a tree !

After being thrilled listening to Neil's story, I purchased his book, *Lost Among the Birds: Accidentally Finding Myself in One Really Big Year*. The combination of hearing him describe his adventures, and then afterward, being able to read more fully about his personal life and the unique and compelling reasons behind his quest, was a remarkable experience – I urge you to read this book !

On Sunday, there were 4 field trips offered for the homeward bound birders:

1) Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant, lead by Doug Beattie and Joe Mitchell

2) Dunkirk Harbor and vicinity, lead by Terry Mosher and Carol Hardenburg

3) Iroquois NWR, lead by Celeste Morien and Paul Hess

4) Lake Ontario, lead by Willie D'Anna, Chairman of the NYSARC, and Neil Hayward...yes, that Neil Hayward - sure wish I could have been on that trip! 

# The **OSPREY**

Published by  
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 206  
East Quogue, NY 11942-0206

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