



# THE OSPREY

March/April 2019 — Vol. XLIV, No. 2

## *A Bird Was Found On the Beach...*

**Eileen Schwinn**

The Common Murre is an alcid, a stocky, oceanic bird, rarely seen in our local waters. If we do encounter them, they are usually far off shore. They come ashore only to nest, along rocky cliffs which rise out of the ocean, and lay their eggs on open rock ledges.

This past January, was basically a snowless month for us, and rather, it was filled with sunny, if cold days. It was unusual, too, because a good number of alcids were seen up close and personal, in Shinnecock Bay, and the Shinnecock Inlet, feeding, swimming, and just floating around. It wasn't necessary to travel to Montauk and peer out into the sea, toward Block Island, and perhaps be lucky and get to see a Razorbill or Thick-billed Murre fly by. In Shinnecock, they were seen clearly by eye, and super clearly with binoculars and scopes. Excellent photos were taken by not only birders, but local beach walkers as well! At least two individual birds seen were very special – two Common Murre! Many birders from all over the tri-state area came to find this highly unusual species, with success!

Sadly, after about a week of excellent viewing, one of the Common Murre was found, deceased, and washed up on the shore near Triton Lane one of the roads off of Dune Road. The cause of death? Unknown. When word got out about the dead bird, the Museum of Natural History in NY put a message out – “If re-found, could the bird be transported to us here at the Museum”.

The day after that message was received Vincent C and I took a walk along the shore near Triton Lane, on a cold, freezing

day. We found the Murre. It appeared in pretty good shape – for a dead bird – which had been tossed about in the waves for perhaps a day or two. No scavenger had found it and the bird was intact. I photographed what we found, sent the photo to the Museum, and was told that it looked OK – send it along to us! Vince placed it carefully in his truck,

and transported it to a freezer at his home – no, not the one in his kitchen (we both thought his wife wouldn't take that so well), but rather to his Bait and Fish freezer in the garage. Now, the question – How to get a frozen, 18 inch long bird, to NY City before it defrosted and started to, well, smell up the place?

Enter a routine visit to my dentist – I had run into him while viewing the Shinnecock Inlet birds a few days earlier. I shared the story of finding the one on the beach – and my problem of getting the bird where it's final resting place should be. He offered an empty, home food delivery Styrofoam box, complete with freezer packs! OK, we had a bird, a box and now the only problem – how do we get it to the city? USPS most likely would not be too keen on taking it for us, especially if the ice packs started to lose their efficacy..... I sent out an all-points-bulletin. I was hoping a subscriber to the NY Rare Bird List (who might be heading out East to bird) would be willing to get the bird to NY for us. I had offers to bring the bird to Smithtown and Babylon. Close but not close enough.



*One of the Murres in Shinnecock Inlet.  
Photo by Eileen Schwinn*

Enter my friend, Vicki S., who lives in Manhattan. She was planning to join the ELIAS Annual Field Trip to Montauk Point, and she was willing to be the Common Murre's UBER Driver! Vicki stored the bird (I'm guessing still in the box.....) in HER home freezer. (I read somewhere, that a good friend helps you move. A GREAT friend helps you move a body!!) She contacted the Museum and made the delivery a few days after getting the bird!

As of this writing, no final results have been received, but hopefully, a cause of death can be determined – and maybe some solid, scientific knowledge will come from this rarely seen little bird who made it as far as our Shinnecock Inlet! But, a really huge thanks for all the help along the way – to Joe G who originally found the deceased bird, to Vincent C, to Dr. Robert B. and his “Bird Box”, and to Vicki – all GREAT friends! 🐦

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

# How do birds keep warm in the winter?

**Byron Young**

Sitting here with my feet propped up against the radiator trying to keep warm during our January Polar Vortex I began to wonder how our wild bird friends keep warm. Armed with that thought and no desire to venture outside I got a fresh cup of coffee, powered up my computer and asked Google the question "How do wild birds keep warm in winter?" Google replied with a number of interesting articles that ranged from very specific scientific investigations to the more general articles describing the basic mechanisms. One very specific article by Brodin, Nilsson and Nord from the Department of Biology, Lund University, Lund Sweden discussed the survival of boreal forest birds where winter temperatures routinely can be -20 to -30 degrees centigrade or -4 to -22 degrees Fahrenheit. Now I must admit that these researchers lost me with their first mathematical model looking at maximum body fat deposits, maximum degrees hypothermia, number of days in winter, number of time periods in winter, increase energy expenditure cold weather, reduced energy gain unsuccessful foraging, reduced energy expenditure maximum hypothermia. That occurred right after the introduction which had me going to my dictionary a couple of times.

Immediately putting this paper aside, I began to search for less complex descriptions for how birds adapt to our local winter environment. Happily, I found an article by Melissa Mayntz, published in "The Spruce, October 22, 2017" that provided a very nice summary on how our local birds survive the winter. Melissa points out that many of us are astonished by the variety of birds that stay for all or a portion of the winter, like a very late Baltimore Oriole reported to us from a local backyard feeder in mid-January. Birds and animals have many superb adaptations that allow them to survive even in the coldest conditions. Below is a summary of Melissa's article that I hope will help everyone understand more about our wintering birds.

Birds are warm-blooded animals that have a much higher metabolism, and thus higher body temperatures, than humans. The average bird's body temperature is 105 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius). A bird's body temperature can fluctuate during the day depending on climate and activity, but it can be a challenge for birds to maintain their high body heat when temperatures dip severely. Smaller birds are particularly at risk, since they have a proportionally larger surface area on their bodies to lose heat but a smaller core volume to generate it. Even the smallest birds, however, have several ways they can efficiently keep warm.

Birds have many physical and behavioral adaptations to keep warm, no matter what the low temperatures of their surroundings. First, bird feathers provide remarkable insulation against the cold and many species grow extra feathers as a part of a late fall molt. Think about the down filled jackets we might wear. The oil that coats most birds' feathers provides some insulation as well as water proofing. Their legs and feet are covered with specialized scales that minimize heat loss. Birds can also control the temperature of their legs and feet separately from their bodies by constricting blood flow to their extremities thus reducing heat loss.

Behavioral adaptations include fluffing out their feathers to create air pockets for additional insulation. We have all seen birds that look fatter because their feathers are fluffed out. Birds will tuck their heads under a wing or stand on one leg to shield them from the cold. When a bird tucks its head under a wing for protection they also breathe in air warmed by their body heat. Of course, birds take advantage of solar heat by sunning themselves. They will turn their backs to the sun because that position exposes the largest surface of their bodies to the heat and they raise their feathers slightly. This allows the sun to heat the skin and feathers more efficiently. Birds will shiver to raise their metabolic rate and generate more body heat as a

short-term solution to extreme cold. Shivering does require more calories but does provide a means to stay warm in extreme conditions. Finally, birds do gather in large flocks to roost. They can roost in shrubbery or trees, empty bird houses, and roost boxes, if available. Some roost spots may have residual heat from the day's sunlight, such as close to the trunk of a tree or near any dark surface.

Birds can also enter a state of torpor to conserve energy during cold winter nights. Torpor is a state of reduced metabolism when the body temperature is lowered, therefore requiring fewer calories to maintain proper heat. Most birds lower their temperature only a few degrees however, some torpid birds have lowered their temperature as much as 50 degrees. Torpor can be dangerous as the reduced body temperature leads to slower reactions and greater vulnerability to predators. Hummingbirds, and chickadees regularly use torpor as a way to survive cold temperatures.

What can we do to help keep birds warm? Simply, we can provide food, water and shelter. Offer the best winter birds foods, selecting seeds, suet, nuts, peanut butter, scraps and other high fat and calorie food items to give birds plenty of energy to generate more body heat. Keep your feeders full. Provide water if possible, such with a heated bird bath. Birds can melt snow to drink if necessary but doing so requires energy. Finally, provide shelter around your yard with shrubs, coniferous trees or simply build a brush pile to give birds a safe, shelter place to roost.

When the temperatures dip, it is not necessary to worry about how birds keep warm. They have plenty of efficient adaptations to survive even during the chilliest nights. If we understand those adaptations and help birds with even better food, shelter and other necessities we can provide a friendly backyard habitat for our birds no matter how cold it is outside. 

## March, April and May Meetings

**MONDAY, MARCH 4 2019 AT 7:15 PM**

### WARBLERS!!!

*Dianne Taggart*

**W**arblers!! Springtime brings beautiful warblers to Long Island! Come and join us as Dianne Taggart (long time LI birder) tells us all about these remarkable birds. Using photos and many interesting and fun facts, the evening will get you ready for spring migration and the return of the Warblers!!

Dianne Taggart has lived on LI all her life but came to be a birder late in life. However that quickly became a passion that has lasted for over 30 years. She ran the "LI Birds" website for many years and is currently the administrator for the "LI Birds" FaceBook Group. 🐦



*Singing from the highest tree a male Yellow Warbler announces his claim to his territory.*

**MONDAY, APRIL 1, 2019 AT 7:15 PM**

### Living on the Edge in the Face of Climate Change

*Kevin McAllister,  
Founding President, Defend H<sub>2</sub>O,  
From the Source to the Sea,  
Defending Clean Water and the  
Coastal Zone.*



**N**atural shorelines, particularly ocean beaches are dynamic transitional zones which are regularly being altered by the forces of nature—wind, waves and currents. Beyond the obvious ecological importance to diverse array of marine and avian species, naturally functioning shorelines are critical buffers against the damaging effects of storm surge on coastal development. With sea level rise accelerating in response to climate change, the urgency to protect, restore and effectively manage transitional zones for ecological benefits and coastal resiliency is more critical than ever. 🐦

**MONDAY, MAY 6, 2019 AT 7:15 PM**

### San Diego County: From the Ocean Over the Mountains to the Desert

*Gail Delalla*

Five hundred and forty bird species have been reported in San Diego County. We will explore the wide diversity of habitats from the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado Desert and view some of the representative species found in this premier birding county.

**Gail DeLalla** lives in San Diego County but spends two to three months a year on Long Island. She taught biology as an adjunct faculty member at California State University, East Bay for many years, and enjoys discovering the ecological relationships between plants and birds.

*Allen's Hummingbird and Burrowing Owl  
Photos by Gail Delalla*



**Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge, 3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY**  
**Directions are on the website: [www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org](http://www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org)**  
**Meetings are open to the public, there is no charge**

## Coming soon to East Patchogue – Swan River Preserve Part II!



A female Common Yellow-throat makes her nest by the river. Photo Luke Ormand

### Luke Ormand

Decades ago, Swan Lake and the namesake river were nearly invisible along Montauk Highway in East Patchogue. The north side of the road was a mash-up of small businesses in block buildings backing up to the lake, while the south side was reserved for new and used car sales. In the late 1970's, this area was fully developed as the nearby agricultural lands were being gobbled up by developers. But things have changed in the past forty years – gone are the car dealerships, repair shops and mom and pop establishments. They've been replaced by meandering pathways, native vegetation, an elaborate engineered drainage system and public parkland. But there was one reminder of the past still hanging on – a postage stamp used car dealership and a four-acre patch of forgotten woods where Montauk Highway forks into South Country Road.

For years, the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County have had their eyes on these parcels but could never make a deal happen. Around five years ago, the Town of Brookhaven, through a NY State Grant, was able to purchase the former Nessenger Chevrolet dealership and transform it into a beautiful park, bursting with life. Drainage ponds were

constructed to collect road-runoff and allow for natural (and physical) filtering before the water entered the sensitive Swan River where native brook trout can be found. Thousands of native wetland and upland plants were installed and allowed to grow free, spurred on by the abundance of pollinators who come to visit. The Swan River Preserve (as its called) has quickly become a local favorite for families, nature lovers and birders alike – but what about that wild and wooded parcel just on the other side of the river? Would this land end up like so many others in our local community? Sold to the highest bidder, bulldozed and built upon?



A Common Grackle gathers mud for its nest by the river bank. Photo Luke Ormand

At long last, it seems the stars have aligned. The Town of Brookhaven recently announced they are purchasing the wooded land on the east side of the river, to be added to their ever-expanding open space inventory. Meanwhile, the used car dealership has closed and the owner is negotiating with Suffolk County on an open space deal. These acquisitions represent the last puzzle pieces to the restoration of the Swan River corridor along Montauk Highway. Future plans for the area include the collaborative efforts of the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County on construction of a fish passage

on the north side, allowing native species of fish to freely travel upstream and spawn. The design is similar to the passage found in Riverhead's Grangabel park – a cascading rock stream flowing from Swan Lake into the spillway beneath the road.

Once the land has been acquired, the Town will largely leave it as is – there are no buildings to remove nor pavement to rip up. The Town will listen to the voices of the local community (and birding community!) to make enhancements such as a meandering trail or more interpretive signs. The preserve will be the perfect compliment to the existing park, providing woodland and edge habitat that will feature an entirely different array of avian finds. From my time spent at the Town's Preserve looking east across the river, I've witnessed hints of what this expansion has to offer. Yellow Warblers racing from tree to tree in hot pursuit of one another (one nearly crashed right into me); Grackles collecting mud along the riverbank to bring back to the under-construction nest; an American Redstart taking a bath and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds flitting from perch to perch. While it may have taken longer than many would have hoped, the Swan River corridor in East Patchogue has finally been given back to nature. 🐦



A Ruby-throated Hummingbird is another visitor to the Preserve. Photo Luke Ormand

# Early Spring Walks

**SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2019, MEET AT 8:00 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 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.

The Elizabeth Morton NWR is off Noyac Road to the west of Sag Harbor.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2019, MEET AT 8:30 AM**

## HALLOCK STATE PARK PRESERVE

**Leader: Eileen Schwinn**

This is a fairly new State Park that has trails going down to Long Island Sound. We will follow the trails and see where they lead.

The park address is 6062 Sound Avenue in Riverhead. It is just east of the Hallockville Museum Farm. Parking fee is \$8 per car or an Empire passport.

### PRELIMINARY MAY & JUNE WALKS

Sat., May 4 – Rocky Point DEC Area – Bob Adamo (rain date Sun.)

Sun., May 12 – NYC trip – Katie Kleinpeter

Fri., May 17 – Manorville Hills County Park – Byron Young

Sun., May 19 – Hunters Garden – Eileen Schwinn

Tues., May 21 – Quogue Wildlife Refuge – Eileen Schwinn

The joint South Fork Natural History Museum/ELIAS walk at SoFo is Saturday, June 1

**SATURDAY,  
APRIL 27TH  
FROM NOON TO 3:00  
PM**

## 2019 Earth Day Celebration



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 for the kids, environmental exhibitors, self-guided kayaking and canoeing on Old Ice Pond and a few surprises.

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://quoguewildliferefuge.org> for more detailed schedule of events.



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## January & February Field Trips

On January 12 a group of birders gathered at Swan Lake and continued on to the Swan Preserve and several other Lakes around Patchogue. Cold, *oh sure*, but we saw lots of our wintering ducks.



On February 2, it was off to Montauk, it was a strangely birdless day, the wind had subsided for the morning and the cold abated, at least in the sun. Common Eider and all three Scoters were at the Point, but the best bird of the day was an Iceland Gull at Montauk Harbor. 🐦

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**Go to [www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org](http://www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org) to see what's new.**

**While you are on the website, sign up for our Constant Contact email list —**

(If you are a member you are probably already on it.)



## An Unexpected Guest

Sally Newbert with photos by Karl Nilsen

The day started with our walk around the Patchogue Lakes. Rosemary Valente and I had decided to do a little birding after the walk. We headed first to Heckscher Park and found the mother-load of Scaup. Looking for something more interesting we read the bird reports and saw the notice about a White Pelican in Water Mill. Ah, to chase or not to chase, well this time the chasing paid off. What this bird is doing here is anyone's guess. But, what a great visitor!

On our way we did make a few wrong turns but then we looked down one of the side streets and spotted other birders and knew we found the spot. For some reason I really had my heart set on seeing a Pelican here in Suffolk County this year. I was thinking it would be a Brown Pelican blown here by one of the storms. But no, it was a White Pelican! A bird that usually winters in Gulf of Mexico and Southern California and breeds in the lakes of the Western states and Canada, but there it was hanging out with a large number of Mute Swans. A few minutes after we got there it soared over our heads and then went out of our view, I understand it came back later. Fortunately, Karl Nilsen had already gotten there and got some pictures. I did not even have time to get my camera out before it flew off. Thanks Karl for sharing your pictures.

The bird did stay around for quite a while after that so I believe quite a few people got to see it.

It is a large bird with a wing-span of about 108" and can weigh about 16 lbs. Kind of hard to miss sitting there with the swans or soaring over head. What a nice sight. 🐦



# Long Island Natural History Conference

MARCH 22 – 23, 2019 AT BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY

Register & Sponsor at [www.longislandnature.org](http://www.longislandnature.org)

Cost is \$45 for both sessions, LINO member \$36 and \$25 for students

## Friday, March 22, 2019

### Regional Status of the Eastern Wild Turkey

Frederick “Chip” Hamilton, NYSDEC

### Odonate Biodiversity and Rarities on Long Island

Erin White, Zoologist for the New York Natural Heritage Program and coordinator for the New York Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey

### Barn Owls of Jamaica Bay

Don Riepe, Jamaica Bay Guardian and Director of the Northeast Chapter, American Littoral Society

### Living on the Edge in the Face of Climate Change: An Overview of Coastal Processes, Interventions and Adaptation

Kevin McAllister, Founder & President of Defend H2O

### LUNCH & NETWORKING

*(BYO lunch or purchase lunch at the BNL cafeteria)*

### Climate Change and Global Warming Impacts on Marine Fish Distribution,

Janet Nye, Assistant Professor, SoMAS, Stony Brook University

### Jamaica Bay Marshes as Archives of Past Vegetation, Sediment and Pollution History in New York City

Dorothy M. Peteet, Senior Research Scientist, NASA/Goddard Institute for Space Studies & Adjunct Professor, Columbia University

### Conservation Updates

#### Pine Barrens Research,

Polly Weigand, Central Pine Barrens Commission

#### White Sharks

Tobey Curtis, SOFO Shark Research & Education Program

#### Southern Pine Beetle, Gypsy Moth & Oak Wilt

John Wernet, NYSDEC

#### Menhaden,

Carl Lobue, Senior Marine Scientist, The Nature Conservancy

## Saturday, March 23, 2019

### Welcoming Remarks

Tim Green, Environmental Compliance Manager, Brookhaven National Lab

### Great Ferns I Have Known

Andrew M. Greller, Queens College

### The Pageantry of the Monarch Butterfly

John E. Potente, naturalist and instructor, Greentree Foundation's Teachers' Ecology Workshop

### Coastal Adaptation:

#### Harnessing the Power of Nature to Protect People

Alison Branco, Coastal Director for The Nature Conservancy, Long Island.

### Encounters with the Raccoon & the Virginia Opossum

Dell R. Cullum, Hampton Wildlife Rescue & Rehab/Imagination Nature

### LUNCH & NETWORKING

*(BYO lunch or purchase lunch at the BNL cafeteria)*

### Envision Plum Island's Conservation District

Louise Harrison, Save the Sound

*(NOTE: This is a working lunch session open to the general public to brainstorm ideas for managing Plum Island's natural areas.)*

### Sharing the Shore with Coastal Birds

Amanda Pachomski, New York Audubon

### The Comeback of the Osprey:

#### Success Story or Trash Bird

Aaron Virgin, Vice-president of Group for the East End

### Conservation Updates

#### Northern Long-eared Bats

Samantha Hoff, NYSDEC

#### Fish Passages

Enrico Nardone, Seatuck & Byron Young, Eastern Long Island Audubon

#### Orchid Colony Restoration

Julie Sakellariadis, Garden Club of East Hampton

#### Diamondback Terrapins

John Turner, Seatuck

### 2019 Long Island Natural History Conference Steering Committee

Tim Green   Melissa Griffiths Parrot   John Turner   Mike Bottini   Artie Kopelman   Russ Burke

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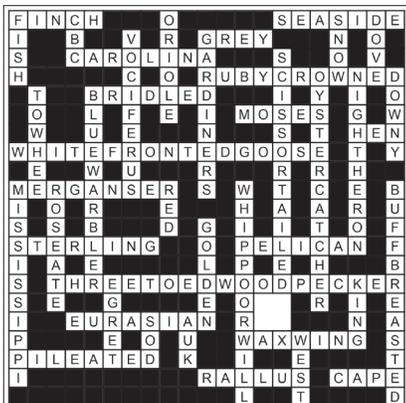
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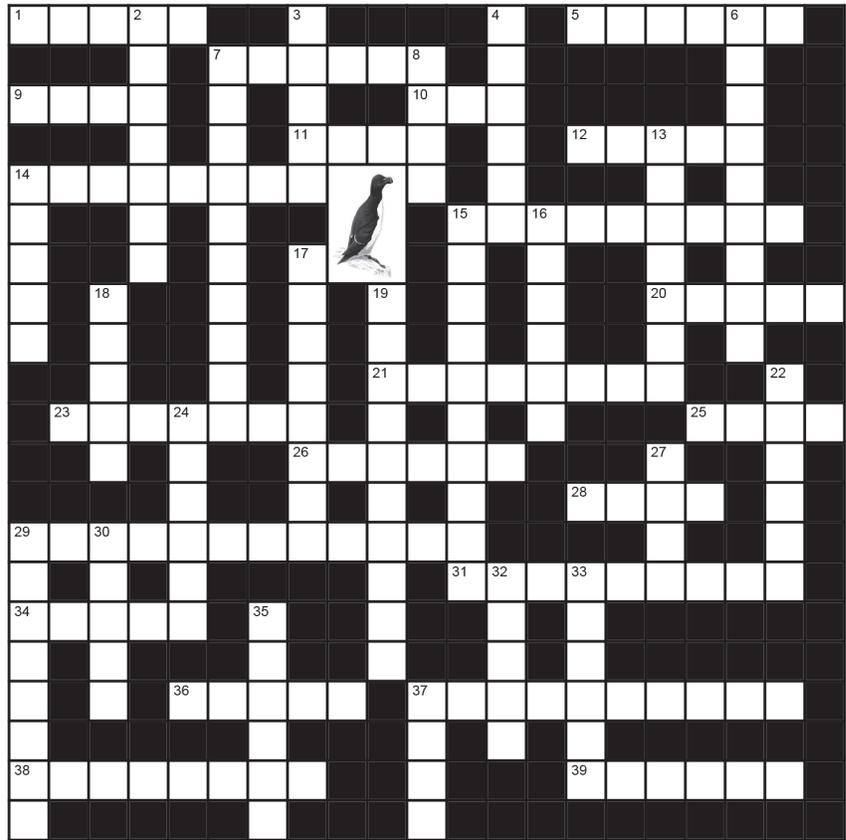
*Our mission is to be an inspiration to those who feel a sense of kinship with Long Island by encouraging an appreciation for the natural world and a commitment to the environment.*

## Something to do when "There's a certain slant of light"

Answers to January/February puzzle by Tom Moran



## Some Winter Rarities & Places to Bird Tom Moran



### Across

- 1 Randall Pond is located in \_\_\_\_\_ Conservation and Maintenance Area
- 5 Location where 7-Across Grebe was sighted March 2017
- 7 See 5 Across
- 9 Preston's, Mill, Poxabogue, for example
- 10 Short-eared or Long-eared \_\_\_\_\_
- 11 Mute \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, pink bill, song accelerates like a dropped ping-pong ball
- 14 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, yellow marks on lores helps identification
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_ Thrush, found lower on mountains than Bicknell's
- 20 \_\_\_\_\_ Grebe
- 21 \_\_\_\_\_ 25 Across Sparrow
- 23 \_\_\_\_\_ Sandpiper, constantly teeters
- 25 \_\_\_\_\_ See 21 Across
- 26 & 27 Down, seen on an ELIAS field trip at Montuak Point last year
- 28 & 18 Down Snow Goose. seen with 29 Down on the Riverhead sod farms this January
- 29 \_\_\_\_\_ Warbler
- 31 Calverton \_\_\_\_\_ or a smaller one in Hempstead
- 34 \_\_\_\_\_ Point DEC/Pine Barrens Forest
- 36 \_\_\_\_\_ Smith State Park
- 37 \_\_\_\_\_ National Laboratory, LI Natural History Conference is held here, you should attend
- 38 \_\_\_\_\_ Gull

### Down

- 2 Common winter duck
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Wren, gurgling, bubbly song
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Flycatcher, not Alder
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Island, privately held, south of Orient Point
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ River State Park
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, more heavily striped than 14 Across
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ Towhee, not Rufous-sided anymore
- 14 Long Island \_\_\_\_\_
- 15 Small shorebird that runs with the waves found on the Cupsogue mudflats
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_ Tern, very short legs, sometimes found on the Cupsogue mudflats
- 17 \_\_\_\_\_ Estate, now known as Pipe Stave Hollow Suffolk Co Park Land
- 18 Second word of 28 Across
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Grackle
- 22 Red \_\_\_\_\_ Grebe, seen at the mouth of Shinnecock Inlet with the 30 Down irruption this January
- 24 \_\_\_\_\_ Vulture
- 27 Second word of 26 Across
- 29 \_\_\_\_\_ Goose, seen with 28 Across and a pair of Greater-white Fronted Geese at the Riverhead sod farms this January
- 30 See 22 Down, black and white birds of the northern oceans, singular
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_ bill, seen with Common and Thick-billed Murres & 22 Down
- 33 \_\_\_\_\_ Meadow State Park
- 35 Long \_\_\_\_\_
- 37 \_\_\_\_\_ Swallows, nest on Robins Island, check them out from New Suffolk

# A Great Time Was Had in Rochester!

## Bob Adamo

The 71st Annual Meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association was held on October 5-7, 2018 in Henrietta, N.Y., a suburb of Rochester. It was co-hosted by the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club and the Rochester Birding Association, keeping the tradition of the Rochester area hosting the meeting every 10 years, since 1948.

Registration started on Friday at noon, with vendor exhibits open from 2 pm on. For those arriving early enough, a field trip to Mendon Ponds Park was offered at 2 pm. Unfortunately my travelling partners, Brendan Fogarty and Doug Futuyama and I didn't make it, but had a few nice birds along the way, however, and more importantly we did arrive in time for dinner! There were two workshops after dinner, each given twice, enabling all to attend both. The first, presented by Ian Davies, described the use of eBird as the data input tool and archival database for the N.Y. Breeding Bird III, which is scheduled to start in 2020 – more on this later. The second, given by Daena Ford of the Braddock Bay Raptor Research, gave an historical perspective of the organization, including highlights of its research and educational programs, ie, the B.B.Hawk Count, and the B.B.Owl Survey. Saturday, for the NYSOA delegates, began

with an early breakfast at 6 am, followed by the Delegates Field Trip at 6:30. These early starts enabled members to be on time for the start of the Annual Business Meeting at 9:30 am. There were two trips to choose from – the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, for migrating passerines, or Irondequoit Bay, for waterfowl, gulls and shorebirds. I picked the latter, with the highlight being a Wilson's Phalarope. Over the course of three days, there were ten organized field trips, with 121 bird species recorded. Because of the location of this year's meeting, and the season, three highlights were Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Hudsonian Godwit and Common Raven.

The Business Meeting was attended by 37 delegates, representing 23 NYSOA member clubs. During Mike DeSha's President's Report, he touched on many of the activities that have transpired since our last annual meeting. He was especially thankful for Joan Collins, Tim Baird and Pat Aitken, who stepped into the void caused by the passing of Berna Lincoln, our Membership Chairperson. She was a very active and long serving member, who filled many positions along the way, including President.

The field trips offered at this year's Annual Meeting were many (10) and varied. In addition to the 3 already mentioned, on Saturday, there were 4 choices, including Ganondagan (*ga-Non-da-gan*) and the

Odonata Sanctuary for song birds and migrating passerines. The Ganondagan State Historical Site is an Historical Landmark, the only NYS Historical Site dedicated to a Native American theme. On Sunday, there were also 4 trips offered, with a second trip back to the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, to experience their fall bird banding operation for migrating passerines – from capture in mist nets, to release.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

Once again the Marketing, Publicity & Field Trip Committee came up with a useful "give-away" to the folks who attended the Annual Meeting. This year's gift was an umbrella, small enough to carry on a field trip – a most useful gift! They also scheduled a Winter Birding Weekend in the Central Adirondacks on Feb. 10-12, 2018. It was well attended, with a number of Boreal Species seen. Among them were Black-backed Woodpecker, Boreal Chickadee, Purple Finch and Pine Siskin.

The Conservation Committee, chaired by Andy Mason, has been active with a number of issues statewide; joining the coalition opposing a proposed wind project on the shores of Lake Ontario, which calls for installing 600' high wind turbines. It also voiced strong objections

*Continued on the next page*

## THE FARMERS MARKET FARM STAND

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West of  
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to the NYSDEC regarding using Sabattis Circle Rd. in the Adirondacks as a detour around a construction site, sending heavy traffic through an IBA (Important Bird Area) during the breeding season. Another effort of their's is the participation in the coalition to Save Plum Island from being commercially developed, rather than for recreational use.

Next, Carena Pooth reported on NYSOA's County and State Listing Project, which was established in 1992. There were 129 reports submitted in 2017, up from the 112 submitted in 2016, with the figure of 129 representing the highest total ever. Paul Buckley still holds the title for the highest NYS life list with 446 species, while Anthony Collerton continues to reign as leader for recording the most species in one calendar year, 361. Gail Benson repeated (from 2016) as 2017's best, in both the categories of life list (440) and in calendar year (346). 28 members reported birds from the Pelagic Zone category, up from 22 the previous year. Dave Klauber's total of 80 species leads this off-shore discipline. A total of 22 observers reported from all 62 counties. Bill Purcell is still the only member who has reported at least 100 species from all 62 counties. Bill Cook, along with Dave Klauber, are the only other observers to have recorded 50 or more species in all of NYS's counties. The NYS Young Birders Club contingent was represented by 7 members, 3 active, who are under 18, while the remaining 4 having graduated into its alumni group.

Joan Collins reported that membership now stands at 647, with 569 annual individual members, 40 individuals who are Life members, and 38 separate individual clubs and organizations, ie, ELIAS. NYSOA lost 5 clubs who didn't renew their membership, but added one, with the addition of the Friends of Washington County Grasslands.

Carena Pooth then brought us up to speed re: the New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC), which celebrated its Ninth Anniversary in 2018. Since its unofficial start in 2008 it has grown from 11 to 49 youth members, from 13 to 24 supporting adult members, and from 7 to 23 partner organizations, of which ELIAS

is one of only 6 continuous partners since 2010. The age requirements are 10-19, with the average age of 15. There are 36 boys and 13 girls in the youth category. The YBC took ten field trips in 2018, with ELIAS sponsoring the February trip to Montauk. Ed Yohann, and the rest of his crew at the Third House Nature Center helped to make it a memorable outing.

Both NYSOA publications were cited for their excellent content, as well as for their intrepid editors, Shai Mitra & Pat Lindsay for *The Kingbird* and Joan Collins for *NY Birders*. Carena Pooth was also recognized for her timely updating of the Checklist of the Birds of NYS, in both the printed and online versions. The "splitting" or "lumping" of species by the American Ornithological Society (AOS) is not unusual, nor is changing a species name – in this case, the Gray Jay has been re-named Canada Jay.

Carena Pooth wears many hats for NYSOA, one of which is maintaining it's website. One of this year's (Sept. '17-August '18) bits of info. listed the aforementioned "checklist", as being it's second most visited page, after the home page.

Kathy Schneider reported on the progress of planning for the Third NYS Breeding Bird Atlas (NY BBA III). The steering committee was in the process of hiring a project coordinator (since filled). The atlas is a joint project of NYSOA, the NY Natural Heritage Program, the NYSDEC, Audubon NY, eBird/Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Cornell Cooperative Research Unit and SUNY College of Environmental, Science and Forestry (ESF). It is scheduled to begin in 2020. The committee is also starting to fill the 10 positions of regional coordinators – our own Gil Raynor was the Region 10 Coordinator on the first NY BB Atlas Project, which ran from 1980 to 1985. Unfortunately Gil became incapacitated in 1984 and was not able to finish the project. A significant portion for the funding of NYS BBA III has been provided by a federal grant.

The NYSDEC report was given by Mike Wasilco, who touched on many of the initiatives outlined in a 20 page information packet (Non-game Avian Projects through March 2018). I will mention the one survey that included

L.I., and will share the packet with anyone who wishes to read it. The 2017 Whip-poor-will monitoring and habitat evaluation resulted in detecting 112 Whip-poor-wills, only one Chuck-wills-widow and zero Common Nighthawks. The roadside surveys with the highest number of sightings, as in previous years, were taken in northern and western Jefferson County (63%) and in Suffolk County (Calverton and Rocky Point) (28%).

## THE ANNUAL ELECTIONS

The annual election of officers, directors and some committees were as follows:

**Officers:** President, Michael DeSha, Vice-President, Tim Baird, Treasurer, Andy Mason & Recording Secretary, John Kent.

**Directors:** Doug Futuyama, Rich Guthrie, Shirley Shaw, Bob Spahn, Brian Dugan, Brendan Fogarty, Lucretia Grosshans, Carena Pooth & Joe Brin.

**Nominating Committee:** Kathy Schneider, Dominic Sherony & Bob Adamo, Chair.

**Auditing Committee:** Thomas Burke, Peter Capainolo & Stephan Chang, Chair.

The Delegates Meeting ended under "New Business", with the announcement that the 2019 Annual Meeting will be hosted by The Catskill Center, in collaboration with the John Burroughs Natural History Society on September 13-15, 2019. The Keynote Speaker will be Nathan Pipelow, author of *The Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Eastern North America*.

## PAPER SESSIONS

After lunch, the Paper Session, consisting of eight presentations, got under way. I will list them all, but discuss only one in the interest of brevity.

1) Monitoring Bird Movements Using a Coordinated Automated Radio Telemetry, Andrea Patterson, Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Rochester, N.Y.

2) A King Rail Mystery in Western N.Y., Bill Evans, Old Bird Inc., Ithaca, N.Y.

3) Time of Day as a Factor for Flight Call Responsiveness in Migratory Wood Warblers, Michelle Gianvecchio, Suny College at Brockport, Brockport, N.Y.

4) Spatiotemporal Trends in Avian Populations Following the introduction of West Nile Virus in North America, Gaetan ('Gates') Loredon-Brock Dupont, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

5) Nest Box Selection and Success of Secondary Cavity Nesting Birds at The College at Brockport Campus, Brockport, N.Y., Zac Falconer and Andie Graham, SUNY College at Brockport, Brockport, N.Y.

6) Influence of Agricultural Grains on Diets, Body Condition, and Seasonal Stress in American Black Ducks and Mallards Wintering on Long Island, Aidan Flores and Michael Schummer, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, N.Y.

7) Ecological Assessment of Wetland Management Techniques on Restored Wetlands in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex Edward Farley, Michael Schummer, and Donald J. Leopold, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, N.Y. John Coluccy, Ducks Unlimited, Inc., Great Lakes/ Atlantic Region, Dexter, MI.

8) A Survey of Breeding and Migrant Bird Species at High Acres Nature Area, Dominic Sherony, Rochester Birding Association, Rochester, N.Y.

After hearing Bill Evans' talk/slide presentation entitled "A King Rail Mystery in Western N.Y.", I approached him to let him know how much I enjoyed it! Responding to my comments and questions, he agreed to send me a summary of his Rail talk from the meeting – which I'm including in total, since I couldn't add or change anything, that would improve upon it.

*Bill Evans played King Rail calls he recorded from the coastal region of Lake Ontario northeast of Buffalo. There are few records of the western N.Y. population in past decades and his data indicates the species is still hanging on in the region. He recorded night flight calls from six King Rails at four different monitoring stations between May 19 – June 4, 2017. Another was coincidentally recorded by Andy Guthrie 20 miles to the west near Hamlin, N.Y. on May 28, 2017. Guthrie's and some of Evans' reports and recordings are available in eBird. Evans*

*hypothesized that the rapid rise and record high Lake Ontario water levels in spring 2017 may have displaced nesting KIRAs from the region's scattered coastal marshes. He noted another possible explanation for the relative abundance of detections was spring 2017 weather dynamics that led to very dense concentrations of migrants along the southwestern shore region of Lake Ontario. Evans expressed concern that the proposed Lighthouse Wind Energy Project\*, the largest such coastal project proposed in the USA, could impact the remaining King Rail population in western N.Y.*

\* Recently this project (mentioned earlier in this article under our Conservation Committee's activities) was defeated, and won't be built...yessssssssssssss!

## THE BANQUET

Saturday night's Banquette Dinner was a very successful exercise in providing good food, good company, good speaker, and plenty of good awards being given out!

The Stoner Award, awarded to foster a young student's interest in birds by financially helping her/him attend this fall convention, went to 3 NYSYBC members, Silas Hernandez, Avery Scott, and Garret Van Gelder.

The Manny Levine Award, given to the author for the best article published in *The Kingbird* the previous year, was presented to Sarah A. Lazazzero (Piecuch) and Christopher Norment.

The Gordon Meade Award, not given every year, was earned by Tom Burke, for his many distinguished contributions to NYSOA, in particular for his 30 years of service as a member of NYSARC (N.Y.S. Avian Records Committee)

The NYSOA President's Award, was awarded to Carena Pooth, to recognize her 10 year commitment as Adult Chair of the NYSYBC, her nurturing and growing of the club since its inception in 2008, and for her continuing service in all things NYSOA.

Certificates of Appreciation were presented to the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club and the Rochester Birding Association for their enthusiastic hosting of this very successful meeting!

I am sure the name of Greg Miller is familiar to many of you...yes, he was 1/3 of the birders depicted, first in the book, and then in the movie of the same name...*The Big Year!* The year was 1998 when Greg, Sandy Komito and Al Levantin took part in their 365 day marathon to find the most bird species, in what author Mark Obmascik describes as "a tale of man, nature, and **fowl** obsession!" Greg is one funny man, with a wonderful smile and cheerful face that appear to be continuously radiating good cheer – but he is much more – he is an inspired and inspiring speaker! His talk touched on the now twenty-year-old quest, but the majority of his time dealt with what followed; the book, the making of the movie, and his future involvement in birding. His goal is to bring birding to as many folks as possible by leading tours, giving talks to groups such as NYSOA, sharing his birding experiences through eBird, and encouraging young birders. While his limited telling of 1998's day-to-day birding was colorful and exciting, the recounting of his working as a consultant for the making of the movie was downright hilarious! One sample of his humor was in the observation "that his becoming well-known was due to his participation in a contest he didn't win, and a book he didn't write!" The winner was Sandy Komito, of course, who set a North American single year record, recording 745 bird species! Greg took 2nd place with 714, followed by Al Levantin's 710. During his talk, which was appreciated by all, Greg went into some of the low moments of his life afterward, such as the year (2000) his dad, who had taught him to bird, died, only to be diagnosed himself the next year with acute lymphocyte leukemia. This put him in the hospital for 45 days, but his indomitable spirit prevailed, as evidenced by seeing 26 birds (including a Peregrine Falcon) while he was cooped up! In addition to his tour leading business, much of Greg's time is spent trying to lift the aspirations of his audiences...whether they are birders or not! 

# The OSPREY

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