



# THE OSPREY

Summer 2020 — Vol. XLV, No. 3

## A Guide to Some Local Parks

with contributions from  
**Byron Young,**  
**Eileen Schwinn**  
**& Sally Newbert**

**A**s New York State is beginning to open up, Eastern Long Island Audubon Society is hoping in-person engagement, education, and outreach activities including bird walks, on-the-beach outreach, volunteer activities, and other gatherings will be possible soon. We will announce by email and on the website when we can start to reschedule programming.

We know it would be nice to spend some time in the field with our friends. Safety and caution say that you simply take your friendly binoculars with you when you feel the need to get out of the house. Check out some new roads, farm fields, small parks on the water or wherever your journeys take you. Stop occasionally, look around and listen. This is a good time to improve your birding by ear skills.

Most importantly of all be safe, bring your face coverings, do not share your optics and avoid crowds..

ELIAS has put together a list of places that may be suitable to take a walk by yourself or with immediate household family members. Please keep in mind that restrooms at State Parks and DEC's public facilities may be closed, the parks, grounds, forests, and trails are usually open during daylight hours, seven days a week. Each week seems to change, some parks may require residency or permits. We tried to pick out some places that might offer a quiet walk, places that are not overcrowded and perhaps are lesser known.

If you do see a crowd, we suggest you try elsewhere.

One of the criteria we used to select these areas is how safe you would feel walking around these places. Some of the places that we might go in a group have been eliminated. In the past we have offered walks to many of these parks.

**Smith Point** offers beach and a boardwalk to the Bay. Field edges by the field/picnic area can be good for flycatchers and sparrows. Best early in the morning. This is a county park charging an entrance fee. The fee is reduced with a Green Card.

**Cupsogue County Park** is on the west end of Dune Road. It is best early in the morning. With the bay on one side, and the ocean on the other it is good for shorebirds and ocean birds. Perhaps you have come on our summer walk when we wade over to the flats. Get there before 8 am and you can avoid the fee. As a county park, it honors the Green Card for a reduced rate.

Dear ELIAS Members & Friends,

We are very pleased to be resuming our newsletter – and we hope everyone is safe and healthy! The ELIAS Board of Directors has met, and we are working out safe and compliant ways to resume our General Meetings. We are considering a couple of Zoom Members Meetings for the fall and winter.

We hope to resume Field Trips as soon as possible. We ask your understanding during these unusual times – but be assured, we want everyone to be safe and comfortable – and we will be keeping you informed via our web page, Constant Contact, and our FaceBook page.

In the meantime, please enjoy this issue of The Osprey!!! We can't wait to see everyone back together again when it's safe to do so, and, as always, **THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!**

**Byron Young, President & The Board of Directors**

*Continued on page 3*

**FOR NOW IN PERSON EVENTS HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED.**

**THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

# Unusual Morning Visitor!

**Byron Young**

I hope this finds everyone doing well during these difficult times. We hope to return to our field walks and programs sometime in the foreseeable future. Currently, we are following the social distancing advice and crowd sizing advice. Please watch our Facebook Page and look for Constant Contact notices regarding any changes to our current suspension of activities.

I hope everyone has had a chance to visit the birds in their yards or neighborhoods. On Thursday, April 23, 2020, while fixing my morning coffee a motion caught my attention outside in our backyard. I moved to the sliding back door to get a better look and to my surprise a female Wood Duck landed on an oak branch in our backyard. Quickly grabbing my kitchen table binoculars, everyone has a set of binoculars on their kitchen table, right. As I watched, this bird perched about 30 feet up in the oak tree, she investigated the various bird houses in the neighbor's backyard from her perch. At least I think that is what she was doing. However, none of the local bird houses are sufficient to support a Wood Duck, nor am I aware of any cavities in the local oaks that might support a nest.

Since we do not live close to any bodies

of water, I did a quick check to see how far from water a Wood Duck might nest. Typically, they like a wooded swamp, or shoreline close to water. However, some will nest up to a mile away from water if they find a suitable nesting site. We do have a couple of small kettle hole ponds within a mile of our house.

I am usually greeted by Cardinals, Carolina Wrens, Robins, Blue Jays, Fish Crows and Common Crows. I should not forget the noisy Mockingbird. It was a treat to be visited by this female Wood Duck, no matter her reason for visiting our yard. It spiced up an otherwise dull and dreary day.

The female Wood Duck's appearance added a new species to my yard bird list. Has anyone else been keeping track of the birds that visit their yards or neighborhood? So far this month I have observed 28 species of birds in or around my yard. Most of the birds have been relatively common visitors, coming to my bird feeder. Each morning that it is fit I venture outside to see if a new bird might be visiting. I listen to the calling birds looking for a mate and try to make an identification for their vocalizations.

It has been interesting to watch the

changes that take place around my feeder stations. Birds that feed peacefully together during the winter months are now chasing each other in defense of their territories. I do not see the female Cardinals as frequently as in March. They must be on their nests already or at least preparing them.

I am hoping that soon that more of the summer nesting birds will begin to make their appearance like the Baltimore Oriole, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and I look forward to visits by the warblers as they pass through on their way north toward their nesting grounds.

Currently, my yard life list stands at 81 species. Hoping to improve on that number, I have been rearranging my yard to make it more bird and butterfly friendly. I am planning to introduce some new native plants to the yard which will provide some cover and food for birds and butterflies as they pass through. I have not settled upon which plants I will introduce but will try report on my progress and success or failure, not looking for failure in future pieces.

Best Wishes to everyone and enjoy the birds in your yard over the next few weeks as Spring advances to Summer.



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## A Guide to Some Local Parks

*Continued from page 1*

Driving **Dune Road** checking the road edges can yield some good sightings. And a birder favorite especially in winter when no residency or permits are required. Tiana Bayside is good for shorebirds. Our summer walks usually take us here. It is best to have a Southhampton Permit at Tiana. If you go toward Cutchogue look for **Westhampton Dunes Overlook**. The path leads you to a deck that overlooks a sandbar. If it is low tide, stop and check out it out. No permits needed for this stop. Bins and scope are helpful.

While on Dune Road look for **Quogue Wetlands**. There is only room for about 3 cars. The boardwalk runs to the bay overlooking a variety of habitats.

**Quogue Wildlife Refuge** back on the mainland has ponds and woods. Early morning before most folks begin to show up is best. Hiking trails are open sunrise to sunset, no charge.

**Pine Neck Preserve** (Park at the trail head along Head of Lots Road, East Quogue). This is south of Montauk Highway, east of 7-11. Owned and maintained by the Nature Conservancy, it has a number of easily walked, well maintained foot paths through oak and

pine woods. Early mornings are the best times. This can be good for warblers. The trails all end by a large open field (home to Bluebirds and nesting Phoebe, Baltimore Orioles and Eastern Kingbirds). The adjacent grassy marshlands is home to Clapper Rail and Saltmarsh Sparrow, as well as nesting Osprey. Most trails are one mile loops, but you can make a long morning out of your visit by taking a woodland walk in on the return trip take the interior edge of the marsh on the western side of the Preserve. There is no charge, and it is not well-known.

### **Rocky Point DEC Property (Area 26)**

This is a large area that offers trails for bikes and hikes. With a variety of habitats it hosts a variety of warblers during migration and a few nesters during the summer. The parking lot is on the south side of the Route 25A Bypass, about 1/8 mile west of the fork you would take to get to the Route 25A Business district. Coming from the west, the parking lot is the second one you come to after having turned onto the bypass from Route 25A just a tad past McDonalds. No charge to enter this large open space.

### **Ridge DEC Maintenance Facility.**

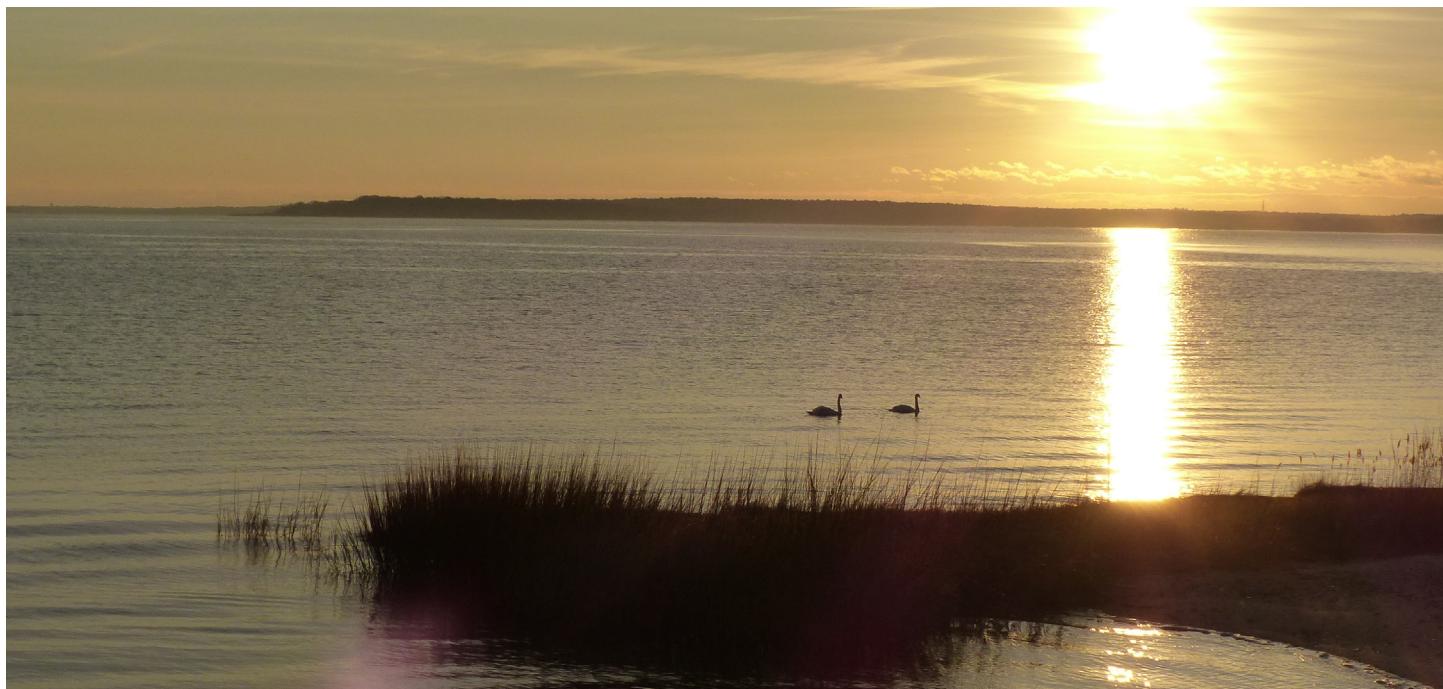
This facility is located at one Randall Road immediately north of Route 25. Randall



*A young Great Horned Owl, a branchling, spotted at North Fork County Park. Photo by Sally Newbert*

*Sometimes its just a beautiful peaceful view can make a visit worthwhile. Sunrise at Indian Island State Park.*

*Continued on page 4*



## A Guide to Some Local Parks

*Continued from page 3*

Road is about half a mile west of the William Floyd Parkway. From Route 25 headed west make a right hand turn just past the Sunoco Station. The entrance to the facility is the second driveway on your left just beyond a small circular pond. Parking is ahead in front of a small building on your right. The trail-head is located to the right, you will see several kiosks at the head of the trail which has been improved and runs along a small pond and then makes its way into the back of the property. Be careful to stay on the mowed sections of the trail as the ticks can be quite bad. A map is available online at: [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/regions\\_pdf/randallpondtrail.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/regions_pdf/randallpondtrail.pdf). No charge here.

**Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge** in Shirley is best early morning. There are several nice wide trails. The Carmens River runs through the refuge. There is no charge. Kayak rentals are available along Montauk Highway, so you can paddle through the Refuge.

**Manorville Hills County Park** is a surprising large area with separate trails for walkers, bikers and horses. Keep an eye out for fast moving mountain bikers as you cross their trails. No charge here.

**EPCAL** Park at the Veterans Field lot, which is south of Route 25, west of the National Cemetery entrance. You can walk all the way (about a mile), along a street-wide, paved path, through woodlands, open fields at the beginning with Bluebirds and flycatchers, and end up near the runways, where you have an excellent chance to see and hear Meadowlarks as well as Grasshopper Sparrows. Indigo Bunting and Blue Grosbeak are possibilities, as are Raven and – on occasion – Bobolink, along the Eastern edge. Butterflies are also easy to see there, later in the summer.

A bicycle path runs around the property. It is about a 10 mile loop. There are sections that can be easily walked. Maps are available to see and print online. This is the property that environmentalists are

trying to save. The controversy is ongoing. But for now it is accessible from a variety of spots.

Across River Road from EPCAL are few small parking areas for Fisherman's Access to the Peconic River and one for **Prestons Pond Complex**, A lovely complex of ponds and fishing holes. It tends to be a bit ticky and a bit lonely - so bring a friend. No charge, not much parking.

On the north side of Rt 25 right across from EPCAL is the **National Cemetery** – not usually considered the number one go-to birding spots – although some cemeteries like Greenwood in Brooklyn and Mount Auburn in Cambridge, MA are definitely on most birders "radar". Locally, the National Cemetery in Calverton offers a variety of open field and woodland birding opportunities which can be taken advantage of by simply staying in your car. Quiet, little if any traffic, and rolling terrain – no joggers, bike riders or dogs – as well as well kept public restrooms near the entrance, make this an unusual but possible birding "destination" during these think-outside-the-box times. Please be respectful.

While you are driving try a drive through into and around **Indian Island County Park**. Stop at the small bay beach and look for small birds in the bushes and at the pine forest-picnic area. This park offers camp grounds and they do charge. This may be restricted to Suffolk residents with a Green Card.

**Headed along the North Fork there are several places to explore:**

**North Fork County Park** is best early morning. Trails are wide and this can be good for warblers and woodland birds. No charge here.

**Hallock State Park** is just east of North Fork County Park. Woodlands and beach are offered here. This State park is available with an Empire Pass. Stop by the gate to find out the entrance requirements.

**Downs Farm Preserve** is at 23800 Main Road in Cutchogue. It is the property of The Group for the East End.

They have active bird feeders near the building as you enter. There is a loop trail that offers views of scenic woodlands and tidal wetlands.

**Arshamomaque Pond Preserve**, on Church Lane in Southold. It has a small parking lot. There is an observation platform overlooking two ponds a nice place to sit and relax and listen for birds before you wend your way back. No charge.

**Inlet Pond County Park** in Greenport is the home of North Fork Audubon Society. Park in front of the red house and follow the 1.5-mile hiking trail through woodlands, open areas of shrubs and vines, and a mature oak forest past Inlet Pond and to the beach front along the Long Island Sound.

Before you reach Orient Point, just west of the Causeway, keep a sharp lookout for **Ruth Olivia Preserve at Dam Pond**.

At the very end of the North Fork you'll find **Orient Point County Park**. Drive out to the end. Take a nice walk along the beach with views of the Orient Point Lighthouse and Bug Lighthouse. Empire Pass is honored here.

**Along the South Shore**

You need a NYS Empire Pass for the next 3 parks. Seniors are free during the week at Bayard and Heckscher.

**Connetquot River State Park**

**Preserve** has 50 miles of hiking, horseback riding and nature trails. The fish hatchery is always fun to visit. The entrance is off Sunrise Highway in Oakdale.

**Bayard Cutting Arboretum** is a beautiful place to visit with wandering landscaped trails. A Yellow-throated Warbler has been nesting there for the last few years.

**Heckscher State Park** is a wide open park, a few rarities have been spotted here. Stop at Field 7 and see if birds are hanging out in the puddles.

If you have a favorite spot that you would like to share, please send it along and we will feature it in another issue of *The Osprey*.

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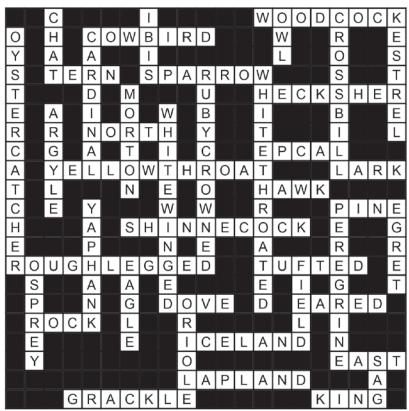
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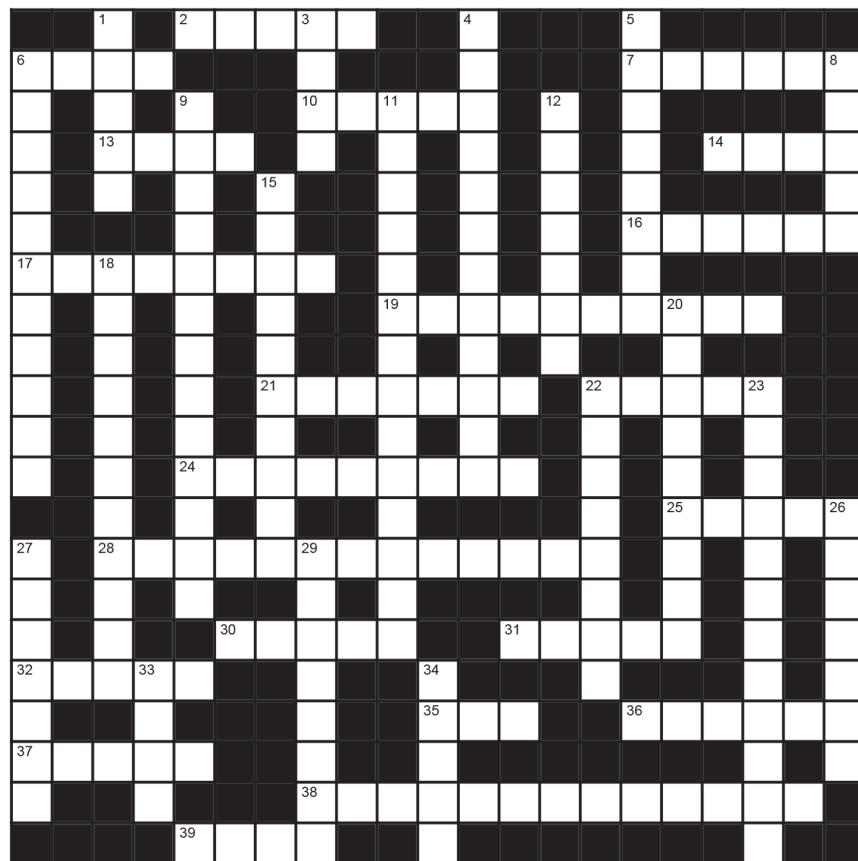
*Our mission is to be an inspiration  
to those who feel a sense of kinship  
with Long Island by encouraging an  
appreciation for the natural world and  
a commitment to the environment.*

## Happy Spring

Answers to March/April puzzle  
by Tom Moran



## Places to Bird Tom Moran



### Across

- 2 Horned \_\_\_\_\_ is the local common one
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, starts with 3 or 4 clear notes
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ Tern, very short legs
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ Tern, orange billed, don't confuse with Caspian
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ Thrush, ee oo lay
- 14 Jones \_\_\_\_\_, Red Crossbill seen here March and April last year
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_ Black-backed Gull, yellow legs
- 17 Grassland bird, try the Gunks
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_ Ibis, but the bright red legs may be a better clue
- 21 \_\_\_\_\_ River County Park, Center Moriches
- 22 \_\_\_\_\_ Smith SP Preserve, Smithtown, don't forget your Empire Pass
- 24 \_\_\_\_\_ Pond Park, Babylon
- 25 \_\_\_\_\_ Point DEC
- 28 \_\_\_\_\_ Warbler
- 30 - see 2 Across, a rare one for LI
- 31 \_\_\_\_\_ -winged Teal, try Setauket Millpond in the fall
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_ Duck, look for the stand-up tail
- 35 Great Horned, Eastern Screech, Northern Sawhet...
- 36 Shorebird with slightly drooping bill
- 37 Long Island \_\_\_\_\_ occasionally you will see Gannets there
- 38 \_\_\_\_\_ Hawk, look for translucent crescent across outer primaries
- 39 Mute\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_ Lake in Patchogue

### Down

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Owl or Egret
- 3 See 35 Across or Swallow
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Cuckoo
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Warbler, must be from Mississippi
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Dowitcher, the common one for LI
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_ Waxwing, also the common one for LI
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_ Cormorant, they never get the migrating V right
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_ Chat, one appeared Nov-Dec at Mill Pond Park, Bellmore last year
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ Vireo, stays up too late
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_ River SP
- 18 \_\_\_\_\_ Stilt, rare on LI, better to take a road trip to FL
- 20 Where EPCAL is
- 22 \_\_\_\_\_ Estate, Mt Sinai
- 23 \_\_\_\_\_ Plover
- 26 Upper Lake and Lower Lake in\_\_\_\_\_
- 29 \_\_\_\_\_ Flicker, look for white rump patch
- 33 \_\_\_\_\_ Road
- 34 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow

# Birdwatchers Set World Records On Global Big Day

*Socially  
distanced,  
more people  
reported birds  
in a single day  
than ever before*



Migrants, such as this Ovenbird, were met with unseasonably cold, snowy weather in the northeastern U.S. on Global Big Day. Photo by Ian Davies, Macaulay Library.

Ithaca, NY—Birdwatchers set a new world record on May 9 for birds documented in a single day. During the annual Global Big Day, participants reported a record-breaking 2.1 million bird observations, recording 6,479 species. An all-time high of 50,000 participants submitted more than 120,000 checklists, shattering the previous single-day checklist total by 30%.

The Global Big Day sightings were submitted to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's free eBird program, which uses the data to power science, outreach, and conservation efforts around the world.

"This year's Global Big Day checklists contain more than 2.1 million observations of birds in a single calendar day," said eBird coordinator Ian Davies. "That means Global Big Day 2020 collected more information on birds than was submitted during the first 2.5 years of eBird's existence!" Since the program launched in 2002, eBird has amassed more than 810 million observations of birds.

This Global Big Day was unprecedented for another reason: it took place during a pandemic. Participants banded where they could safely do so, socially distanced from balconies, gardens, and local parks—contributing from every continent toward a common cause. Their record-breaking numbers are part of a larger trend that has become pronounced in recent months as birds and nature have become a bright

spot for many.

During the first two weeks of April, eBird checklist submissions jumped 46% compared with the same period the previous year. Contributions of photo and audio recordings to the Cornell Lab's Macaulay Library wildlife media archive, and downloads of the Lab's free Merlin Bird ID app, were all up by 50–100%.

"Contributions from birdwatchers around the world provide a whole new way of seeing biodiversity," says Steve Kelling, co-director of the Center for Avian Population Studies at the Cornell Lab. "Your observations help build an unparalleled window into the full annual cycle of bird populations that will help us better understand and prevent avian population declines."

Even watching birds for just 10 minutes and sharing observations, photos, and sound recordings at eBird.org, any day of the year, from anywhere in world, can help the effort to better understand, conserve, and enjoy birds.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.

## ELIAS Calendar

*Have you been taking pictures this year?*

We are planning our calendar for next year! Send you best pictures to

Byron Young at [young53@optonline.net](mailto:young53@optonline.net) and/or Sally Newbert at [ELIASOSPREY@optonline.net](mailto:ELIASOSPREY@optonline.net)

You must be a member to have your photos considered!

# The Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

Byron Young



Generally shy and elusive, the Yellow-billed cuckoo can be easily overlooked. Its calls are usually loud and often provide the best evidence to the presence of the bird. It favors eating caterpillars and seems to respond well to outbreaks of tent caterpillars. Drawing by Dennis Puleston, used with permission.

**O**n the morning of April 6, 2020, I stepped outside to listen to the morning birding symphony. As usually this time of year the Cardinals and Robins were leading the chorus along with the neighborhood Fish Crows and Blue Jays. However, a new sound caught my attention a loud *kwop, kwop, kwop*. This bird was only a couple of houses away from me, but I just could not spot the bird. As I listened, puzzling over what might be making that noise the bird began to move around my house and into a wooded section behind my house. The bird made the *kwop* sound throughout the entire pass around my house disappearing west toward the large wooded between Ridge and Middle Island. I never was able to spot the bird, yet I was sure I could identify the bird from its distinctive call.

Following the encounter, I began a search of bird sounds that I thought might be promising. Starting with the woodpeckers,

none of our local woodpeckers made sounds similar to what I had heard. The sound took me away from all of the common resident birds and even many of the soon to be arriving spring migrants. It was not

an American Crow, a Fish Crow or a Raven as I could have easily observed these birds. After some searching, I listened to the sounds of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and there it was the very sound that I had heard.

Now I had a dilemma. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is not usually seen this early on Long Island. I did remember that Mike Schiebel had reported one on March 31 from Brookhaven and his search of the records indicated that his observation was the earliest reported observation for Long Island. After reaching out to him for confirmation of my observation, I decided that I did in fact hear a Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

**F**inding a Yellow-billed Cuckoo is not a rare observation for Long Island but this early in the year certainly is. This observation caused me to take a closer look at this species.

It has a slender body, a long tail, and rounded wings. As an adult: it has

grayish-brown upperparts with whitish underparts. The crown can be noticeably grayer than the rest of the upperparts on some individuals. The rounded wings have reddish primaries. The long tail is graduated with brown central rectrices (tail feathers) tipped in black. The remainder are black and broadly tipped with white. It has a yellow orbital ring. The bill is curved with a black culmen extending over much of the upper mandible. The lower mandible is yellow with a black tip. As an immature bird it looks similar to the adult but has buffy undertail coverts. The undertail pattern is muted and the tips of the rectrices (tail feathers) are buffy and not as prominent. The orbital ring is a dull yellow.

While hunting for large caterpillars the Yellow-billed Cuckoo usually sit on a shaded perch and stay completely still, even hunching up their shoulders to hide their crisp white underparts. The bold white spots on their underside of their tail are often the most visible feature. Their stuttering croaking calls, heard over great distance are quite distinctive. On a side note, I have heard the Yellow-billed Cuckoo a number of times, however, the repeated *kwop, kwop, kwop* sounds from this observation were new to me.

**T**he population of Yellow-billed Cuckoos is estimated at 9.2 million birds over their range. The birds breed in eastern North America, southeastern Canada, the Greater Antilles and northern Mexico. They winter mainly in South America (Peru, northern Argentina and Bolivia). The birds prefer open woodlands with a shrub layer and clearings preferably near water. They will use old fruit orchards, abandoned farmland, dense thickets and successional shrublands. In the winter they frequent tropical habitats with similar structure, thick shrub forest, and mangroves.

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo leads a solitary lifestyle, except during the breeding season when they can be found in pairs. It is thought that they are territorial but that is not certain. However, they do migrate in flocks of varying size. They migrate at night which is typical of many of our passerine birds.

The birds begin nesting in mid to late May, laying 1 to 5 eggs which are laid one to two days apart. The eggs hatch in 9 to



Caterpillars are one of the favorite foods of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. If you look closely you can spot a few on the branch near the top of the photo.

11 days. The chicks are born naked but are alert and active within 10 minutes of hatching; they become partly covered in pin feathers within 24 hours, with one or both eyes open. The young are fledged in 21 days. (Cornell Lab, All About Birds). Yellow-billed Cuckoos don't lay their eggs all at once: the period between one egg to the next can stretch to as long as five days. This "asynchronous" egg laying means the oldest chick can be close to leaving the nest when the youngest is just hatching. When food is in short supply, the male may remove the youngest bird from the nest. They do not feed them to the older siblings, like their relative the Greater Roadrunner.

Caterpillars top the list of Yellow-billed Cuckoo prey: individual cuckoos eat thousands of caterpillars per season. On the East coast, periodic outbreaks of tent caterpillars draw Cuckoos to the tent-like webs, where they may eat as many as 100 caterpillars at a sitting. Fall webworms and the larvae of gypsy, brown-tailed, and white-marked tussock moths are also part of the Cuckoo's lepidopteran diet. They are often supplemented with beetles, ants, and spiders. They also take advantage of the annual outbreaks of cicadas, katydids, and crickets, and will hop to the ground to chase frogs and lizards. In summer and fall, cuckoos forage on small wild fruits, including elderberries, blackberries and

wild grapes. In winter, fruit and seeds become a larger part of the diet (Cornell Lab, All About Birds).

The eastern North American Yellow-billed cuckoo overwinters in Central and northern South America. Whereas its western counterpart overwinters along the Pacific coast of South America as far south as Argentina. Evidence suggests that this bird is expanding its range northward into southern Canada primarily due to climate change. Unfortunately, they are losing some overwintering range in northern and central Mexico. This loss is low at this point in time.

When the time is right head out birding in places like the Wertheim Wildlife Refuge, Terrel River County Park, the North Fork Preserve or any place with mature forests, a dense understory of shrubs, or places that might hold tent caterpillars and look or listen for the Yellow-billed Cuckoo or its cousin the Black-billed Cuckoo. Even better see if you can find one in your back yard.

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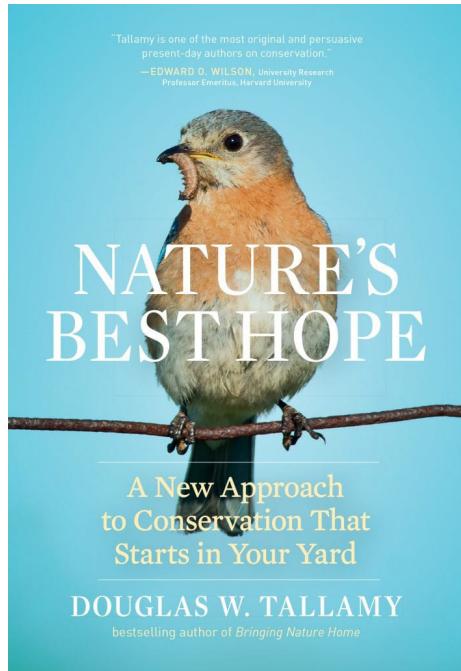
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# Nature's Best Hope

Reviewed by  
John L. Turner

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**A**uthors have differing goals for writing. For some, the motivation is to entertain, for others it's to illuminate some slice of life, and for others still it's to explore some fascinating historical event. In rare cases, though, the author writes with the not-so-modest goal of changing the world by presenting a new and novel way of looking at things, the result being a change to a person's perspective on an issue, concept or their set of values.

Changing the world, or at least a part of it, by shifting our collective mindset is Doug Tallamy's goal in his highly insightful book *Nature's Best Hope*. The target of this change? The front and backyards of suburbia, dominated as they are by grass lawns and non-native shrubs. As Tallamy makes clear our yards are a virtual dead zone, biologically speaking, requiring vast amounts of water and chemicals and which provides little to no food or shelter for wildlife, large and small.

In its place, Tallamy sees a suburbia vibrantly alive with wildlife — butterflies and moths, pollinating bees, and abundant birds — all sustained by widespread plantings of native, life-sustaining plant species — white oaks, willows, and black cherry trees; elderberry, arrowwood and spicebush shrubs interspersed among beds of wildflowers including goldenrods (not the producers of hay fever!), asters, evening primrose, blazing stars, and milkweeds. He sees residential landscape design incorporating new values beyond just aesthetics to include the needs of the local ecology by providing species that help maintain, and to a large degree enhance, local food webs.

What does he call this interconnected webs of land with interconnected native plant and animal species flourishing within? Homegrown National Park, a place every bit as diverse as any national park existing today and "Nature's Best Hope" for restoring highly important ecological relationships.

As Tallamy makes clear, the spread of "sterile suburbia," dominated by turf grass and exotic trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, is not a small problem. Collectively, lawns

take up approximately forty million acres of land in the United States, equivalent to the combined size of the states of New York and Massachusetts. And it is growing daily.

And as Tallamy further makes clear, this growth has come at a high ecological cost. Forests and fields, filled with native plants that sustain caterpillars, bumblebees, squirrels, and Scarlet Tanagers, are replaced with exotic and sterile plants — Callery Pears, Arborvitae, hostas, and English Ivy, to name but a few. These plants and other exotics are fed upon by very few species, causing food webs to fall apart, a trend that portends an ominous future.

Here's but one example — butterfly and moth caterpillars are the major source of food that songbirds feed their young — and oak species sustain 557 caterpillar species! If there are oaks, and other native trees, then the local food web is intact; remove and replace them and other native plants with non-natives and it unravels — insects decline followed by birds and mammals.

And this unraveling, happening quietly before our eyes, means that Tallamy's idea isn't just an interesting one — it is vital to our survival! Birds are not the only group of animals dependent on insects for their survival — we humans depend upon insects too. If we were to do away with all insects, human society would soon collapse and humanity would simply not survive long-term for there would be no replacement agent to pollinate the nearly 90% of all plants that they currently depend upon insects for.

Many insects are in trouble, a trend which scientists have labeled the "insect apocalypse." Several North American bumblebees have already gone extinct and 25% of our other native bumblebees risk extinction. Many other of the continent's 4,000 bee species are in trouble too, not to mention countless moths, butterflies, and beetles. Even the workhorse European honey bee is in trouble.

Tallamy is a fine writer with an interesting

*Continued on page 10*

Continued from page 9

and clear style and he presents subjects and concepts in logical sequence. Color photographs of numerous plants and butterflies (and their famous larvae-caterpillars) fill the book and there's an informative question and answer section in the back of the book. Also, an extensive bibliography is available if the reader is interested in digging deeper into some concept covered in the book.

And the most important chapter in the book? Chapter 11, entitled "What Each of Us Can Do." The chapter includes a bunch of common sense ideas: shrink the size of your lawn; remove invasive species; plant native plants that are ecologically important like the aforementioned oaks and goldenrods and be generous with these plantings; talk to, and team up, with your neighbor to coordinate plantings; install bee hotels; place covers over sunken window wells that can serve as death traps for small mammals and amphibians; use motion-sensing security lights that only go on when needed (security lights that stay on all the time can kill hundreds if not thousands of moths attracted to the light); and do not spray or fertilize — native plants don't need it.

Each of us can do some or all of these things. If we do any of them, we are helping to expand Homegrown National Park!

For more information on the author, visit [www.bringingnaturehome.net](http://www.bringingnaturehome.net).



### Eileen Schwinn

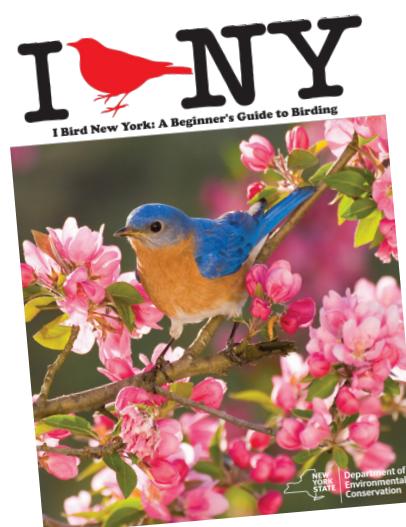
Birding is an activity enjoyed by many New Yorkers of all ages and abilities and is a great way to connect with the outdoor world. As we enter the summer months – still under some limitations due to health concerns – you may be looking for a new way to interact with Birds and the Younger People in your household – whether children or grandchildren! New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is now offering a wonderful birding program – I BIRD NY Beginner's Birding Challenge!

By finding and identifying 10 common NY State birds who like to live in different places or habitats, NY State kids under the age of 16 can submit an easy to fill out two page form – with photos and descriptions of the 10 birds. Those completing "The Challenge" will receive a Certificate, and will also be entered into a contest for fun birding accessories!

Check out the DEC Information at: [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/109900.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/109900.html). A printable checklist is there, as well as all the information you need to get started with your kids or grandkids!



Kate S – An "I Bird NY" Participant



# The Eastern Bluebird

**Authors:**

**Byron Young, Sally Newbert,  
Gigi Spates, Evelyn Voulgarelis, &  
Chris Schmidt**

The Eastern Bluebird is our New York State bird. Does anyone know when the bird was declared our state bird? The Bluebird, (*Sialia sialis*) was adopted as New York official state bird in 1970. The American Robin was first selected as the state bird of New York, but a campaign by Mrs. Charles Cyrus Marshall, President of the New York Federated Women's Clubs, in 1927 and 1928 had determined that the Eastern Bluebird was a more popular.

It took over forty years however to adopt the Eastern Bluebird as the official state bird of New York. The legislation adopting the Bluebird as the official state bird was signed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller on May 18, 1970.

Once common throughout the Northeast, the Bluebird fell prey to changing land use practices. Until the 1920s, the countryside was a patchwork of small farms with apple orchards and fields separated by overgrown fence rows. Bluebirds nested in holes in fence posts or apple trees and patrolled orchards, fields and gardens for insects. A great many of these small farms were abandoned when their tenants abandoned the land for jobs in the cities. Fence posts rotted and fields gave way to trees – inhospitable to Eastern Bluebirds.

In more recent years, the Bluebird has staged a comeback largely due to efforts of the North American Bluebird Society and its state and local affiliates. Together, these organizations and other concerned individuals have waged an educational campaign about the Bluebird, encouraging the proper construction, placement and care of nesting boxes. The result is that the Bluebird once again graces open spaces and its beautiful plumage and sweet song are enjoyed across the Northeast.

The Eastern Bluebird is a medium-sized thrush. Adult males are blue on top, with a reddish-brown throat and breast, and a white belly. The Bluebirds are mostly insectivorous or omnivorous. As the name implies, these are attractive birds with

**Identification:**

- Length: 5.5 inches
- Thin bill
- Most often seen in open habitats: agricultural areas, wood edges, et al
- Southwestern United States birds are paler

**Adult male**

- Bright blue upper-parts
- Orange-red throat, breast and sides
- White belly and under-tail coverts

**Female**

- Blue wings and tail – duller than male
- Gray crown and back
- White eye ring
- Brownish throat, breast and sides
- White belly and under-tail coverts

**Juvenile**

- Blue wings and tail – duller than male
- Gray crown and back
- White eye ring
- Spotted under-parts

- No nearby buildings that might harbor house sparrows, which can parasitize Bluebird nests and kill the young.
- Scattered knee-high bushes, such as those found in old fields.
- Grasses and other low vegetation under the shade of 20-foot-high trees.
- Well-established maturing trees.

ELIAS has supported bluebird restoration for many years, creating and currently maintaining two Bluebird nest box trails. One is located on the Indian Island County Golf course and the other is located on the Sandy Pond Golf Course. ELIAS Board members visit these sites several time during the year to maintain the nest boxes, check on their use by nesting bluebirds and where they can determine whether the nest boxes were successful.

ELIAS has attempted to create additional trails in cooperation with the Town of Brookhaven. Unfortunately it became difficult to maintain the trials in order to gain access to the boxes in the summer. The heavy grass fields were a haven for ticks making it unsafe to check the boxes. Unfortunately, in one location we had serious nest box vandalism issues.

Because of the specific needs of these birds, they are probably not well suited to most peoples' back yards. There are quite a few online sources that will give you plans to build Bluebird houses. Among them NYS Bluebird Society ([www.nysbs.org](http://www.nysbs.org)) offers a host of PDF documents to choose from that cover many of the specifics needs of Bluebirds. Information includes the types of wood, and pole, the height of the pole, the size of the hole that allows Bluebirds, but not others, and how to use a baffle to discourage predators.

Seeing a Bluebird on LI is always a treat. The South Fork Natural History Museum in Bridgehampton maintains Bluebird houses in the field behind the museum. Look for the Bluebird houses along the fence line on River Road by EPCAL. frequently they can be spotted there.

blue, or blue and red, plumage. Female birds are less brightly colored than males, although color patterns are similar and there is no noticeable difference in size between sexes

Although the female Eastern Bluebird builds the nest and incubates the young, the male arrives first and makes the initial site assessment. Then, during courtship, the male must persuade a potential mate of his overall fitness, as determined, in part, by his choice of a nest site. It must have abundant food for the young and protection from predators and competitors. The male waits by his suggested site, singing (loudly at first, then more softly when a female approaches) and performing courtship displays to draw attention to the nest site. If a female agrees, a match is made. Sites with repeated successful nesting of Eastern Bluebirds in man-made nest boxes in suburban areas of upstate New York have these factors in common:

- Short, mowed grass, such as a golf course or cemetery.
- Open land, similar to a meadow.
- Utility wires overhead, for Bluebirds to perch on while hunting insects below.

# THE OSPREY

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