



THE OSPREY

May/June 2017 — Vol. XLII, No. 3

Embracing the unexpected pleasures of stupidity while birding

By Bob Duchesne,
Special to the Bangor Daily News
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I've come to enjoy the excitement of feeling stupid. Stupidity opens up a world of pleasant surprises. For instance, I just returned from vacationing in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Although there was little likelihood of finding a bird that was new to me, I had a wonderful week encountering old friends in new ways.

Nothing surprised me more than the Red-throated Loons. Loyal readers know I enjoy the challenge of finding these unusual loons in Maine. They are smaller and skinnier than our common loons, with a snakier appearance. A fair number winter along our coastline, but they are tricky to spot.

It was a short walk to the beach on my first day down south. I had barely curled my toes in the sand when I spotted a loon — a Red-throated Loon. Excitedly, I directed the attention of my friends to this uncommon bird. While guiding their gaze to the correct spot, I noticed another nearby. And another. And another. OMG, the ocean is full of Red-throated Loons!

I felt stupid, a victim of my own

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Time Travel to 1960

Eileen Schwinn

Miss a major snow storm, get on a plane in Miami, arrive in the 1960's — That's just what I did this past February! A long-dreamed of Birding Trip to Cuba! Along with 14 other time-travelers, part of MassAudubon and the Caribbean Conservation Trust, we spent 12 days exploring the western two-thirds of this 780 mile-long island, located just 93 miles from the Florida Keys! No Internet, cell phone service, or credit cards (!!). We visited all the major National Parks, and a number of lesser know birding spots, along the north and south coasts, and in the interior of the country.

Cuban Trogon – the National Bird of Cuba



Mangrove Cuckoo

Of the 25 endemic species of birds in Cuba, we were able to get good looks at 23 of them, along with a great number of Neotropical beauties and wintering "familiar old friends". One astounding discovery we made, was a flock of over 500 American Avocets, feeding along side over a thousand American Flamingos. Little did we know, that the Avocets are rare visitors to the island, and the leading field guide author of the *Birds of Cuba*, Orlando Garrido, has only seen three of the species in his lifetime!

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The President's Corner

Winter Raptor Survey

Byron Young

Eastern Long Island Audubon Society assisted the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in conducting the Eastern Long Island portion of its wintering raptor survey. The primary focus of these surveys is to determine where Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*), 'endangered' in New York, and Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), 'threatened' in New York, are spending the winter season to roost and feed.

One of our members and Chapter Treasurer, Tom Moran, first spotted the announcement seeking volunteers to help with the DEC with a winter raptor survey in the Hudson River Valley. After a brief email exchange between Board Members an inquiry was sent to the Long Island DEC Wildlife Office at Stony Brook inquiring whether they were also conducting a Winter Raptor Survey. We found out that they were indeed conducting such a survey and had been doing so for several years and would be appreciative of volunteer help.

The DEC staff have focused their attention on the EPCAL Grasslands where the winter raptors the Short-eared Owl and the Northern Harrier, were known to roost and feed. With ELIAS

Members volunteering to help with the survey a second site was established at Road K on Dune Road. Eileen Schwinn and I joined the DEC staff at EPCAL in December to educate ourselves on the details of the survey. Arriving about half an hour before sunset and staying until half an hour past sunset we searched for feeding raptors. Details of our observations or lack thereof were recorded.

Following our initial trip with DEC staff, ELIAS members ventured to Dune Road a few days later. Here perched on a dune overlooking Shinnecock Bay we were entertained by two Short-eared owls and two Northern Harriers. The January survey was cold and windy and no wintering raptors were observed. However, we did have a glorious sunset. The February survey was a bit better with one Short-eared owl and one Northern Harrier and another great sunset. Tom Moran, Sally Newbert and Mike Higgiston have joined Eileen Schwinn and me on the Dune Road Survey portion. Our observations have been forwarded to the DEC staff at Stony Brook for inclusion in the Statewide Survey.

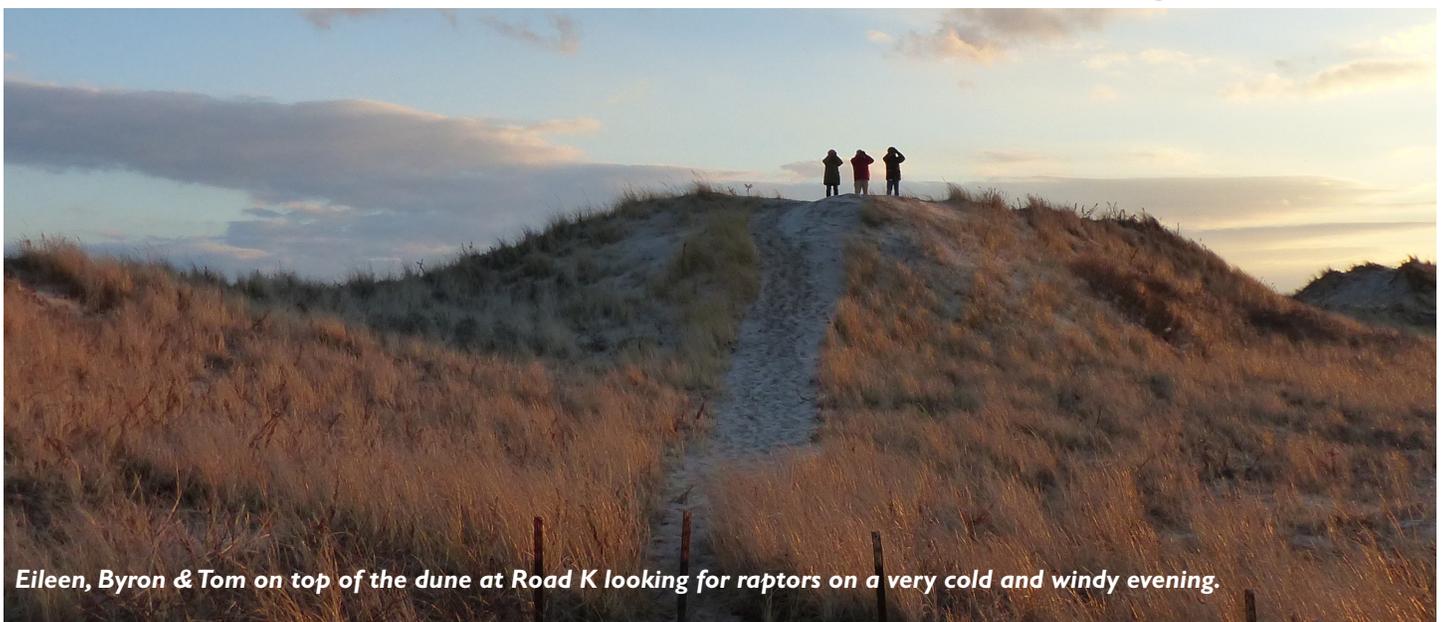
The Region One DEC staff will utilize the wintering raptor survey data as they review project proposals for development in sensitive areas especially the grassland

around EPCAL and along Dune Road. This does not mean that development will be stopped but conditions can be placed upon the activities.

I find it rewarding to help with volunteer wildlife surveys. While employed at DEC we established several such efforts in Marine Fisheries. By enlisting volunteers to collect observations and data while they are out and about helps the managers develop rules and regulations necessary to protect our valuable wildlife species. In addition, these observations provide insight into the value of habitat to endangered or threatened species as well as more common species important to all of us. There are a number of volunteer monitoring efforts around Long Island that are always looking for help, such as, the Seatuck Environmental Association's River Herring monitoring program; Audubon New York's shorebird survey; the Horseshoe crab surveys conducted by DEC and Cornell Extension.

While our efforts did not uncover large numbers of Short-eared owls or Northern Harriers it did provide an important piece of information for 2017. This information coupled with observations from around the state will be used to protect these species and hopefully their habitats.

Good Birding! 



Eileen, Byron & Tom on top of the dune at Road K looking for raptors on a very cold and windy evening.

Speakers at ELIAS Meetings

Monday, May 1, 2017, at 7:15 pm

Raptors of Long Island

James MacDougall

The Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center will present Raptors of Long Island. Special guests will include Sonia the Red-tailed Hawk and Meep the Great Horned Owl. Learn all about the rescue center's mission to rescue, rehabilitate, and release injured and orphaned eastern Long Island animals.

The evening will include an educational presentation, question and answer period and opportunities to have your picture taken with one of our raptors!

The Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center is the only wildlife hospital on Long Island. It is located in Hampton Bays.

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge, 3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY. Directions are on the website. easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org.



Come meet Meep, the Great Horned Owl on May 1.

Monday, June 5, 2017, at 7:15 pm

The Art of Bird Carving

Peter Palumbo

Peter began carving birds 40 years ago. Like many carvers, his roots are in waterfowling, although it wasn't very long before he realized that he enjoyed studying birds more than he enjoyed hunting them. Hours spent in the salt marshes of Moriches Bay revealed whole new worlds to him and his interest in waterfowl soon grew to shorebirds and songbirds. While in college, he made extra money by going to decoy shows and selling paintings and carvings. For the past 20 years he has successfully attended carving competitions all over the country where he competes, judges and lectures. It is especially gratifying for him to be able to spend time with carvers, artists and collectors whose love of nature only enhances his own.

He will share some examples of his early and current work, and briefly discuss his work process. He will talk about his involvement with The Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art in Salisbury, Maryland and the Ward World Championship Wildlife Carving Competition, sponsored by the Museum, taking place this April in Ocean City, Maryland. He will include photos from this year's World Championship.

Weather permitting we will try to take a short walk around the Refuge before the meeting. 

Yellow Legs, one of Peter's prize winning carvings displayed at The Ward Museum



Morton Wildlife Refuge

Sally Newbert

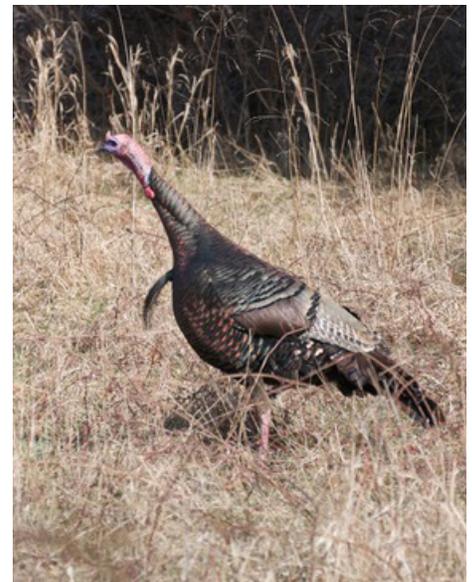
On March 4 ELIAS visited the Refuge. From Turkeys to White-breasted Nuthatches all of them made their appearance and ate seed from our hands. Yes, it was cold, very cold, but we found a few warm spots in the woods and enjoyed the close up encounters with the residents.



SALLY NEWBERT



BYRON YOUNG



BYRON YOUNG

Time Travel to 1960

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The Birds? Here's a few – but be sure to check out the ELIAS website to see these lovelies in “living color” –

Good birds, good food, good music, old cars – go soon, before Cuba becomes the 21st Century! 



Great Lizard-cuckoo - 22 inches long and wow-look at that bright red eye!!



Cuban Bare-legged Owl

PHOTOS: EILEEN SCHWINN



Bee Hummingbird – the world's smallest bird!
Only 2.5 inches long



Cuban Grassquit

Cuban Tody, (left) possibly the cutest bird around with pink fluffy feathers on the side and under the neck, touches of blue, a bright green back and a short wren-like tail.



Western Spindalis



Red-legged Thrush

Spring Bird Walks

During the cold, dark days of Winter and early Spring, most birders dream about May — the month of Birds, yellow and green, blue and orange! The Migration! The early morning Dawn Chorus, and Walks in the Woods! We all have our favorite spring birding sites, and here's a list of upcoming Field Trip Walks, sharing some of those favorite spots with you all!!

Saturday, May 6

Central Park's Ramble

Leader: Katie Kleinpeter

Located in the heart of Central Park, The Ramble is a destination not to be missed during spring migration! Join Katie on the LIRR train leaving from Ronkonkoma train station at 5:37 a.m. or meet her in the city at West 72nd and Central Park West at 7:30 a.m. There will be opportunities for coffee, food and bathrooms at The Boathouse in the park. We can plan on taking a 12:00 or 1:00 train home, but you can leave earlier or stay longer if you wish!

Please email Katie at katiekleinpeter@gmail.com so she knows to look out for you. She will provide her phone number for the day of the field trip and other last minute details.

Parking for the train station: There is a smaller north lot and larger south lot. Automated ticket booths are located at both sides and a teller is located on the north side only. The train leaves from the north side, track A. In addition to buying a train ticket, you will need to purchase 2 rides for the MetroCard/Subway. Seniors get a discount with a Medicare card.

Wednesday, May 10, Meet at 7:30 A.M.

Rocky Point DEC Property (Area 26)

Leader: Bob Adamo

Bob Adamo will lead this quest for some of our "Flying Friends". Meet at the east most parking lot for the DEC property located 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. Traveling from the east, this turn-off is just after the intersections of first, Randall Rd. and then, Ridge Rd. Coming from the west, the parking lot is the 2nd one you come to after having turned onto the bypass from Route 25A — a tad past "McDonalds". Any questions, call or email Bob at radamao4691@gmail.com or call (631) 905-7360 cell, (631) 369-1958 home.

Saturday, May 13 – Meet at 9 am

William Floyd Estate

**Leader: MaryLaura Lamont
(Estate phone 631-399-2030)**

MaryLaura will be leading this walk in celebration of **INTERNATIONAL MIGRATORY BIRD DAY**. The Estate has a variety of habitats: woods, fields, creeks and marshes that offer a host of choices for the birds. They tend to settle in for a day or two to rest and feed on their migration north. We hope to catch a glimpse of various migrating birds – and maybe a few surprises. Cleared pathways are the majority of walking areas for us, but ticks may be anywhere on Long Island – and this is no exception!

The Main Entrance Gate is at 245 Park Drive, in Mastic Beach proceed to the parking area.

Wednesday, May 17 Meet at 8 am

Hunters Garden, Eastport

Leader: Eileen Schwinn

Located on the west side of Route 51 in Northampton (border of Brookhaven and Southampton Townships, just north of Sunrise Highway), Hunters Garden is a DEC managed area which is truly unique. Vernal ponds and dirt trails lead us in a rather hilly section of the South Shore. Cuckoo, Scarlet Tanager, Vireos, Wood and Hermit Thrush, Gnatcatchers, as well as many warblers, are likely to be seen. Dress for ticks, and bring a snack/water. We will meet at the clearing at the end of the dirt road (which will have an open yellow gate), approximately one mile from the Route 51 "entrance". Contact Eileen at beachmed@optonline.net for more information.

Wednesday, May 18 Meet at 7 am

Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge

Leader: John McNeil

Located at 340 Smith Road in Shirley, on the Carman's River, this Refuge has much to offer migrating and nesting warblers. This could be the peak day for migration in our area. Ospreys can be seen fishing here, and Eagles nest near by. Meet in the parking lot at 7 am.

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Saturday, May 20 - Meet at 9 am

Hallockville & Hallock State Park

Leader: MaryLaura Lamont

The Hallockville Farm Museum and State Park is located at 163 Sound Ave, in Riverhead. During peak migration, there is a good chance to see thrushes, vireos, warblers and more. We will walk past farm fields into the woods leading up to views of Long Island Sound. There is a \$6 per person charge for this walk, which benefits the Hallockville Farm Museum Educational Program. Please call the Museum for information and a for a reservation at 631-298-5292.

Thursday, May 25 - Meet at 7:30 am

Quogue Wildlife Refuge,

Leaders: Byron Young & Eileen Schwinn:

Beginning at 7:30 am, we will meet in the parking lot of the Refuge, and walk the approximately one mile loop around the Ice Pond. Various warbler-loving habitats — pine woods, open fields, and tangled understory — will be explored. In past years, this hidden gem has had Mourning Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, and even Yellow-throated Warbler, along with the expected nesting war-

blers and song birds! Almost guaranteed to be tick-free (the Wildlife staff makes sure the trails are wide and brush-free), this spot is a real winner! Contact Eileen at beachmed@optonline.net for more information.

Saturday, June 3 at SoFo - Meet at 8 am

South Fork Natural History Museum

**Walk Leader: Eric Salzman,
South Fork Natural History Museum (SoFo)
Board of Directors**

Cosponsored by the Eastern Long Island Audubon Society (ELIAS) and the South Fork Natural History Museum (SoFo)

On this joint walk, expert birder, composer, and author Eric Salzman will explore the avian life of the meadow behind the South Fork Natural History Museum and the adjacent Greenbelt woodlands and wetlands. This walk will provide an opportunity to see and—especially—hear some of our locally breeding birds. The two-hour walk will be followed by a short introduction to the Eastern Long Island Audubon Society. Light refreshments will be served.

There is no charge for this event, but advance reservations are required. Please call SoFo at (631) 537-9735 for reservations and directions to the Musuem, if you need them. 🐦

BYRON YOUNG



ELIAS is Looking for Volunteer(s) to Help Set Up and Maintain a New Bluebird Trail

ELIAS would like to help set up a new Bluebird Trail. Working with the Town of Brookhaven and Gigi Spates, ELIAS Board

Member we would like to set up a new trail in the Rocky Point State Natural Response Management Area located along Ridge Road in Rocky Point. ELIAS and Brookhaven are hoping for a kick-off in Spring, 2018, with research on placement taking place in Fall 2017.

This area has been identified by Brookhaven as good Bluebird habitat. It has a ring road that would allow a volunteer easy

access to the Bluebird houses. The volunteer would help install the houses (ELIAS would donate the houses).

Since Bluebirds are rather particular in their needs and the location of the houses, we would like to get feedback from Gigi as to where to position of the houses. The height of the boxes, distance from the woods, direction they face, are all important factors to aid in the success of the boxes.

About once a week during nesting season, the volunteer would monitor the boxes and keep track of the birds that nest in boxes (Tree Swallows also like to use these boxes). They would keep records of how many chicks fledged and of which species. After nesting season, the boxes need to be cleaned out.

Ideally the volunteer would live in the Rocky Point/Shoreham area and be available during the nesting season, roughly May through August.

Please email Eileen Schwinn if you are interested at beachmed@optonline.net. 🐦

Eastport Feeds Inc.

Bird Seed

Black Oil Sunflower Seed

Suet

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Triumph® Horse Feed

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Hay • Feed • Bedding

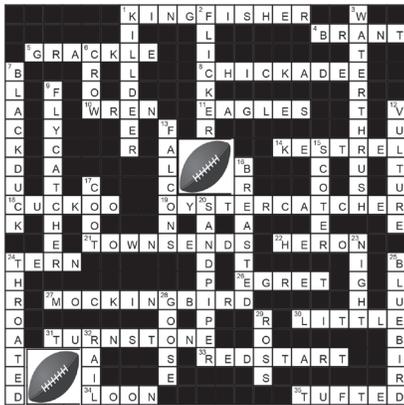
140 East Moriches Blvd.

Eastport, NY 11941

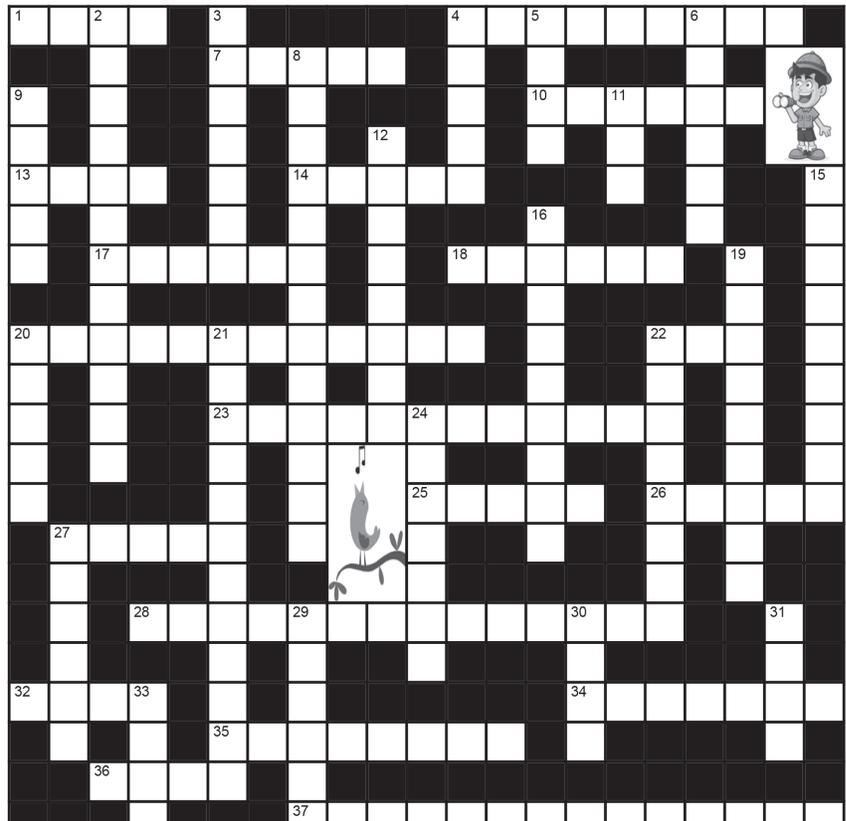
631-325-0077

**Be Sure to Like
Eastern Long Island
Audubon
on Facebook!**

Answers to last issue's puzzle Super Bowl Birds by Tom Moran



Springtime Birds and Places Tom Moran



Across

- 1 _____ Crow or somethnig 29 Down likes to eat
- 4 Country music loving warbler?
- 7 _____ Waxwing
- 10 Black and Yellow-billed Cuckoo can be found at Sterling _____, located on the NJ/NY border
- 13 _____ May Warbler, seen at Jones Beach last May
- 14 Cupsogue _____ County Park, check sandbars for peeps
- 17 _____-Blue Heron, seen at Shirley Marina last summer
- 18 _____ Grebe, seen in Oswego this March
- 20 _____ Warbler, flamboyant orange and black face
- 22 Barred _____ seen at Massena NY this March
- 23 _____ Preserve in Southhold on the North Fork
- 25 _____ Sandpiper or Tern
- 26 _____ Creeper
- 27 _____ Smith SP
- 28 _____ Chat
- 32 _____ Sparrow
- 34 _____ Bluebird or _____ Long Island Audubon Society.
- 35 _____ Starling
- 36 _____ Eagle, not Golden
- 37 _____ Vireo

Down

- 2 _____ Sandpiper or Plover
- 3 _____ Tanager, seen at Hunter's Garden last June
- 4 _____ Fork Preserve
- 5 Nickname for local environmental organization located on the South Fork.
- 6 _____ Yellowlegs or _____ Black-backed Gull
- 8 _____ Cormorant, the coastline, inshore one
- 9 _____ Point DEC
- 11 _____ Crossbill, seen at Edgewood Preserve this March
- 12 _____ Wren
- 15 Location of a large grassland where Short-eared Owls, Rough-legged Hawks, Grasshopper Sparrows can be seen
- 16 Sparrow seen near water
- 19 _____ Oriole
- 20 Small goose, similar to Canada
- 21 _____ Plover
- 22 "teacher, teacher, teacher"
- 24 Common local duck
- 27 _____ Merganser, seen at Lake Ronkonkoma last winter
- 29 aka fish eagle, sea hawk, river hawk, and fish hawk
- 30 American _____ Sparrow
- 31 _____ Swallow or Owl
- 33 Great _____ Owl, seen at Massena this winter

Why Native Plants Are Better for Birds and People

Bird-friendly landscaping provides food, saves water, and fights climate change

With bird migration currently underway, the National Audubon Society invites nature enthusiasts to grow bird-friendly native plants. Audubon's Plants for Birds is an online database that anyone nationwide can access and get a list of native plants that benefit their favorite local bird species. All they have to do is type in their zip code.

"Did you know that 96 percent of land birds feed insects and spiders to their chicks? A single nest of chickadee babies may scarf down as many as 9,000 caterpillars before they fledge. Native tree species are better for birds because they host many more caterpillars; native oaks support more than 550 kinds of butterflies and moths. Non-native Ginkgo trees? Only five." said Tod Winston, Plants for Birds program associate at Audubon.

Gardens are outdoor sanctuaries for birds, insects and other wildlife. Every spring, migrating birds visit our yards looking for nourishment from our gardens and places to raise their chicks. By adding native plants to one's yard, balcony, container garden, rooftop or public space, anyone, anywhere can not only attract more birds but give them the best chance of survival in the face of climate change and urban development.

Many landscaping plants available in nurseries are exotic species from other countries, prized for qualities that make them poor food sources for wildlife. They

generally require more chemicals and water to thrive, increasing maintenance time, costs and environmental hazards. Some can even become invasive.

"Birds and native plants are made for each other thanks to millions of years of evolution," says Dr. John Rowden, Audubon's director of community conservation. "As plants grow and bloom earlier because of warming temperatures, there is a growing mismatch between bloom times and the arrival of birds that depend on them. Habitat provided by native plants can help climate threatened birds adapt and survive."

By growing native plants, you can help protect birds while turning your home into a private wildlife paradise. Keep common birds common with these native plants this spring:

Cardinal, Blue Grosbeak, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager

Attract Them With:
Sunflowers, elderberries and serviceberries

Chickadees and Titmice

Attract Them With:
Birches and sumacs

Goldfinch, House Finch, Purple Finch

Attract Them With:
Spruces, hemlocks, and pines

American Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow,

White-throated Sparrow

Attract Them With:
Blackberries and wild grasses

Warblers and Vireos

Attract Them With: Oaks and beeches

Downy & Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker and Red-bellied Woodpecker

Attract Them With:
Pines, hickories, oaks, and cherries

If you plant it, the birds will come.

There is a database on Audubon's website for anyone seeking more information on plants and where to obtain the right plants. There is also a section on extra bird-friendly home tips, gardening DIY's, and more, visit audubon.org/plantsforbirds

A few resources for Native Plants

The native plants movement is just beginning, so your mileage may vary at local nurseries. The nurseries listed are likely a good place to start. There is a local group called Long Island Native Plant Initiative based at Suffolk County Community College (121 Speonk Riverhead Road, Riverhead, NY, (631) 560-9945, linpi.org) that has plant sales once a year at the College off Rt 51 in Riverhead. Date was not available yet but is usually in June.

Nurseries to check out:

Long Island Natives
220 Old Country Road

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for the
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Eastport, NY 11941
(631) 801-2855
longislandnatives.com
by appointment only

North Fork Boutique Gardens
2450 Elijah's Lane
Mattituck, NY 11952
(631) 734-6832
nfbgi.com

Online Native Plant Retailers

Roundstone Native Seed
9764 Raider Hollow Road
Upton, KY 42784
(888) 981-8330
roundstoneseed.com

Ernst Conservation Seed (mail-order)
8884 Mercer Pike
Meadville, PA 16335
(800) 873-3321
ernstseed.com 

Try this Natural Weed Killer on your patios and driveways:

Mix in your sprayer: 1 gallon white vinegar, 1-1/2 cups epsom salt, and 1/4 cup blue Dawn dish soap. Amazingly effective! 

Plants that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds like:

The following list includes those native plants judged by Operation RubyThroat to be the "Top Ten" found naturally within the breeding range of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds..

#1: Trumpet Creeper, *Campsis radicans*

#2: Beebalm or Oswego Tea, *Monarda didyma*

#3: Trumpet Honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens*

#4: Cardinal Flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*

#5: Spotted Jewelweed, *Impatiens capensis*

#6: Red Columbine, *Aquilegia canadense*

#7: Canada Lily, *Lilium canadense*

#8: Indian Pink, *Spigelia marilandica*

#9: Red Buckeye, *Aesculus pavia*

#10: Mountain Rosebay or Catawba Rhododendron, *Rhododendron catawbiense*

Shopping for these plants? Try

Long Island Perennial Farm
159 Reeves Avenue
Riverhead, New York 11901
Phone: (631) 727-0009
www.liperennialfarm.com

Peconic River Herb Farm
2749 River Road
Calverton, NY 11933
631-369-0058
www.prherbfarm.com

Trimble's of Corchaug Nursery
20985 Main Road, Route 25
Cutchogue, New York 11935
631-734-6494
www.trimblesnursery.com

Birds to Congress: Protect the Heart of the Arctic Refuge

In early April twin bills were introduced to Congress to designate the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as a wilderness. The Arctic Refuge provides summer nesting grounds for millions of migratory birds that fly north through all fifty states in order to reach this lush ecosystem. The coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge is the biological heart of the refuge and has long had the threat of oil and gas development hanging over it.

"Alaska's coastal plain is one of North America's most prolific bird nurseries. If the Arctic Refuge is ever developed, America loses one of its last untouched, wild places and millions of baby birds could lose their homes," said David Yarnold (@david_yarnold), Audubon's president and CEO.

"The breeding and nesting grounds for birds that later fly to all 50 states and all

seven continents make this a truly special place where no drill rig or pipeline should ever be.

"Today, in the face of a new campaign to open the wildlife refuge to drilling, a record number of Senators and a bipartisan group of Representatives introduced legislation to permanently protect this unique and rare landscape once and for all. Americans strongly support protecting this place and our natural heritage, so the only question for the rest of Congress is, 'Are you listening?'"

Given its biological and aesthetic value, the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge has enjoyed bipartisan support from Congress for decades. Yet the coastal plain remains without permanent federal protection as wilderness, even though it is has the highest concentration of biological

diversity in the Refuge. While currently managed as wilderness, formal designation requires an act of Congress.

"The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is an exceptional example of a complete, intact, Arctic ecosystem on a vast scale, and the coastal plain is essential to the integrity of this wild and productive place," said Nils Warnock, executive director of Audubon Alaska, the state office of the National Audubon Society.

"In addition to providing critical breeding habitat for nearly 200 species of migratory birds, the coastal plain supports a large herd of caribou, and a full complement of large predators. It's time for Congress to protect this life-sustaining landscape once and for all."

Audubon has long advocated for permanent protection for the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. 

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assumptions. I knew Red-throated Loons were subarctic breeders on Canadian freshwater ponds. I knew they were forced south in the cold months, and I just assumed they stopped when they got to Maine. Wrong. I saw Horned Grebes swimming with Anhingas. I saw Buffleheads swimming with alligators. Mind blown. I had to re-think my assumptions about the wide range of seabirds that winter in Maine.

Re-thinking is harder than thinking. I try to avoid both. So you can imagine what went through my mind when I spied a small duck winging its way over the surf, landing among four Pelicans about 500 feet offshore. A Blue-winged Teal? Really? It's a freshwater dabbler in Maine. A pair usually nests in Essex Marsh in Bangor each summer. What on earth is a shallow-water dabbling duck doing out there in the ocean with Pelicans?

Another thousand yards beyond this mystery, the horizon was crowded with Northern Gannets. Their nesting colonies are in Canada, but the entire eastern coastline of North America is their home. We see them often in the Gulf of Maine, going to and fro from their summer and winter stomping grounds. I wasn't surprised to find them in South Carolina, but I was staggered at their abundance. Watching Gannets and Pelicans plunging together was not something that my brain could easily accept. Maine doesn't have Pelicans.

Maine does have Willets. This large shorebird is fairly easy to find in Scarborough Marsh during summer. They

stand a foot tall and are uniformly gray, with few distinguishing characteristics until they fly, whereupon the bold black-and-white wing pattern is a dead giveaway. Willets are named for the "willet-willet" cry they make as they fly away from you, startled.

Except in the south, Willets don't startle. Shorebirds there are so accustomed to bikers, hikers, joggers and geriatric dog-walkers that they pay virtually no notice. You can walk right up to them, and they regard you with the same concern they show a beached jellyfish. Hey, in Maine we have to work for our birds!

Of course, working for birds is what makes Maine fun. As late winter days lengthen and warm, our own coastline gets more exciting. You can huddle behind the lighthouse at West Quoddy Head in Lubec and scan a vast expanse of ocean without fog. You can stand at Thunder Hole in Bar Harbor, searching for seabirds without the January frostbite... You can walk southern Maine beaches without seeing tourists.

Or you might be a tourist yourself. Many Mainers head south this time of year, and binoculars fit neatly into carry-on luggage. Find old friends in new places. The same Pine Warblers that sing above my house in May are trilling incessantly in South Carolina in March. It seems that Maine's



TAKEN ALONG DUNE ROAD/SALLY NEWBERT

Our Long Island Willets startle, and are extremely noisy if you come near their marsh. Watch them transform from bland to attractive when they fly. They have a distinctive pattern on their wings. Listen for them, and enjoy them all over the marshes of Dune Road.

Sally

entire breeding population of Yellow-rumped Warblers is biding its time in Hilton Head. Hordes of Cedar Waxwings are fattening up for their migration north.

Also, you need not travel far to learn more about familiar birds. It starts upon exiting the driveway. Lots of folks have been amazed to see how many American Robins stayed in Maine this winter. Actually, we've always had some. They can subsist on berries and crab apples for months. Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks can, too. Watch for bird activity in fruit trees this winter, and be prepared for a surprise. 🐦

Bob Duchesne serves as vice president of Maine Audubon's Penobscot Valley Chapter. He developed the Maine Birding Trail, with information at mainebirdingtrail.com. He can be reached at duchesne@midmaine.com.

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Seal Rescue?

Tom Moran

On April 2, during an unsuccessful attempt to sight the Eared Grebe that had been reported at Oak Beach, I almost tripped over a small, young seal resting on the beach just above water line. Standing behind the seal was Bill Doxey, a frequenter of the “Sore Thumb,” an area accessible by walking or by four wheel drive vehicle with a NYS fishing permit. Bill had observed some well-meaning individuals manually put the seal into the water from a westerly location from where we stood.

“If you find a seal or other wildlife you think may be in distress call the Rescue Hotline (631) 369-9829 right away. Do NOT attempt to touch or feed the animal or get the animal back into the water. Observe the animal from at least 150 feet away, and keep other people and dogs away from the animal.”

The seal washed up again where we stood closer to the point. He stood there to guard the seal from being run over by vehicles driving on the beach, many were enjoying one of this season’s first truly



spring-like day: the high was in the 60s with a beautiful blue sky, sunlight dappling off the water.

The seal seemed injured; it had a small laceration on its head near its ear. It seemed to move with difficulty. Bill had called NYS DEC, which dispatched two officers to assess the situation. While we waited, we diverted traffic and tried to keep people away from the seal. Many stopped, the seal was very cute! Shortly, two officers, Justanna Bohling and Kyle Bevis were on the scene. They did good work keeping curious beachgoers a reasonable distance from the animal, which prevented the animal from being unduly stressed. Officer Bohling, who had been dispatched first, notified Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation. Occasionally, when someone would get too close, the seal would bark and flap its front flippers, an attempt to show its claws. This was

later explained by an employee of the Foundation as behavior meant to prevent anything (people in this case) from getting too close. Sadly, she indicated, people misinterpret these warning signs as waving by the animal, a welcoming sign.

Once the two representatives of the Foundation arrived, they quickly assessed the situation. Happily, their finding was that this was a healthy young seal, approximately four months old. Seals wean from their mothers at approximately four weeks, according to the Foundations representatives, and then travel individually. As the young seals are small, they beach often at this time of year to rest.

Although I missed my bird (nothing new to me, sadly!), I was impressed with the citizen involvement and effective coordination of both state and local nonprofit group response.

If you see a marine animal that you think is in need of assistance, please take the Foundation’s advice:

“Please call the Rescue Hotline (631) 369-9829 right away. Do NOT attempt to touch or feed the animal or get the animal back into the water. Observe the animal from at least 150 feet away, and keep other people and dogs away from the animal.” 🐾



NYS DEC and Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation both sent representative to access the situation.

The **OSPREY**

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

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