



THE **OSPREY**

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Flocking behavior can be downright mesmerizing

Bob Duchesne
Bangor Daily News

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All over the world, virtually every species of shorebird shares a similar characteristic. Despite being different species, they all have long, distinctive stripes on the upper wing. That characteristic helps prevent predators single out one target.

Let's say you're being chased by zombies. Are your survival odds better if you're in a crowd of 100 people being chased by one zombie, or better if you're running alone, chased by 100 zombies? OK, so now you understand why birds flock together. Imagine you're in a flock of 100 sandpipers, being chased by a peregrine falcon. There's a 99% chance the pending victim won't be you.

There are, of course, other possible reasons why birds flock together. But we can be pretty sure that defensive flocking is a real thing because shorebird plumage tells us so. All over the world, virtually every species of shorebird shares a similar characteristic. Despite being different species, they all have long, distinctive stripes on the upper wing. It's a curiosity on individual birds, but it's downright mesmerizing in a large, cart-wheeling flock. And that's the point. It makes it more difficult for a predator to pick out an individual target. It's why zebras are striped. When a herd dashes away from a cheetah, the pattern of undulating stripes is confounding.

Birds that fly in large, tight flocks have always intrigued biologists. How do the birds do that without crashing into each other? Without a leader, who decides when to turn?



BOB DUCHESNE

All over the world, virtually every species of shorebird shares a similar characteristic. Despite being different species, they all have long, distinctive stripes on the upper wing. That characteristic helps prevent predators single out one target.

You can watch flocking behavior. Go to Youtube and search "murmuration of starlings." Prepare to be mesmerized.

Scientists filmed these undulating flocks about a decade ago and postulated that each bird was paying little attention to the other 20,000 in the flock. Each was really just keeping a set distance from the six or seven around it. Furthermore, when executing a turn, birds reacted predictably.

Balloon-shaped flocks would elongate as they turned, with adjacent birds automatically moving into line behind their neighbors. Slow-motion analysis suggested the birds had specific rules on how to interact with neighbors.

This suggestion was consistent with observations published in 1984 in the scientific journal *Nature*. After frame-by-frame analysis of a video featuring European shorebirds, biologists noted that turns and rolls started slowly but rapidly

picked up speed. They theorized that birds were aware of changes far from them, and anticipated how they would have to adjust flight when the change reached them. It's like when humans do the wave at a football game. Usually, the change is triggered by birds on the outside edge moving closer to inside neighbors, a behavior one might expect when those outside birds wish to avoid being eaten by an approaching falcon.

So, it appears that this leaderless choreography in the sky is possible because it happens automatically. Birds don't think about it. They just react as a group to outside stimuli, following specific rules that keep them from crashing into each other. For humans watching, it's astonishing. For the birds, it's just another day at the office. 

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Welcome to the New Year!

Byron Young

I hope everyone's Holiday Season was pleasant and that you are ready to tackle a New Year of birding adventures.

We are planning our slate of birding trips for 2019 with at least one each month and several during the height of warbler migration in May. If anyone has suggestions for new bird walks, please, pass them along to me, or to Eileen Schwinn, our field trip chair. If any of you want to lead a bird walk at your favorite birding location please let us know. We do have an opening for a team leader to lead a walk at the Morton Wildlife Refuge in March. Being a team leader means that you will coordinate the walk and make the call if the weather is bad. Beyond that everyone is there to enjoy the day, the birds and the camaraderie. Moreover, there will be other seasoned birders there to help with difficult identifications and to help answer questions.

Moving on into spring, which we are all beginning to look forward to, we will be participating in the Annual Earth Day event at the Quogue Wildlife Refuge. The date and times will be announced in the March/April Newsletter. Here again we are always looking for volunteers to help staff our booth, lead a bird walk around the Refuge and interact with visitors. This

Annual Event has been growing over the past several years and has become the place to be on Earth Day, in my humble opinion.

Once spring finally arrives and the migrating birds appear in force we will be very active with walks during the month on May and early June. After that we settle into the summer with a trip along Dune Road looking for Shorebirds. Then in August if you want to get your feet muddy we will visit the Cupsogue flats looking for early southbound migrating shorebirds. Once September rolls around we begin to look for the migrating songbirds, and raptors along the ocean dunes either at Smith Point or Robert Moses. In addition, during the past couple of years a group of birders has made the trek into Central Park to view the spring and fall migration. This has become a popular event.

February will be our first meeting of the year. Then each month after that we will be at Quogue Wildlife Refuge at 7:15 pm on the first Monday of the month for a lecture/presentation on a topic of interest to LI birders. Eileen Schwinn will start us off with a presentation called Fire & Ice about her trips to Iceland and Cuba. Should be fun.

The ELIAS Annual Dinner Committee will be busy planning for our mid-October Annual Dinner. It would be great to

receive feedback from members who have attended recent Annual Dinners to let us know what you liked about the locations, the speakers and to offer any suggestions that you might have.

November bird walks include the popular Hallockville site and a visit to the William Floyd Estate followed in December by the Annual Christmas Bird Counts. The Christmas Bird Count is Audubon's longest running Citizen Science effort. The 2019 count will mark the 119th such effort, so come on out and join the effort.

We will also be involved in several environmental issues again during 2019, including the effort to save Plum Island from development. We are continuing our long term commitment to maintaining at least two Bluebird trails and attempting to develop a third, Providing input on projects that have environmental impact, especially related to birds, and working with other Eastern Long Island partners as effective stewards of our environment is always one of our goals.

Thank you for supporting ELIAS and we look forward to another exciting year of birding adventures and activities. Please come out and join us when you can. 

It's time to renew your membership.

All memberships now run from January to December.

Please renew for the new year!

Many thanks to those who have already renewed.

PS: Check your expiration date on the mailing panel.

February & March Meetings

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2019 AT 7:15 PM

Fire & Ice

Two Countries, Very Different – with a Common Factor – Great Birds!

Eileen Schwinn

In May of 2015, Eileen, along with her husband, Hans, and two friends, spent 15 days exploring all the major regions of Iceland by car. Although not specifically a birding trip, it was impossible not to notice the abundance of bird life - especially since it was breeding season.

In February, 2017, Eileen again hit the road – this time on a structured, two-week citizen-science bird survey trip to Cuba, along with members of Massachusetts Audubon and the Caribbean Conservation Trust.

Two very different countries, environments, and climates – but each containing some elements in common, such as welcoming, open people, and some pretty neat birds.

Join us for a photo presentation of both Iceland and Cuba, and maybe your interest will push you toward similar trips of your own, to these unique places.

A Baltimore Oriole was The Spark Bird for Eileen Schwinn, which she saw at age seven. The birding bug really bit and infected her about 50 years later – the rest is history. Past President and current Vice President of ELIAS, Eileen is the Trip Leader for the club. Her interests outside of birding are few – a history book club and, of course, her four, dear little grandchildren. You can usually find her roaming Dune Road or any place a rare, slightly rare or not nearly rare bird is reported in Suffolk County! 

MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2019 AT 7:15 PM

WARBLERS!!!

Dianne Taggart

Warblers!! 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 presence to claim his territory in the spring.

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

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Winter Chores:

Take Care of Your Bird Boxes and Feeders

Eileen Schwinn

Just when you thought it was safe to sit back, put your feet up, and have a cuppa tea, it's time to think about your outdoor bird nesting boxes and feeders.

Bird Houses first: The houses are or will be used only during nesting season, usually mid spring – early summer. Not all species use houses, but you will commonly find Chickadees, House Wrens, Carolina Wrens, and occasionally Screech Owls using them (the owls are the earliest nesters, beginning in mid-February). Also Tree Swallows and Bluebirds, if the habitat the houses are in, include open fields bordered by mid-sized trees. All these species are usually “cavity” nesters, and will use hollow tree trunks or various nooks and crannies (dryer vents, trailer hitches, etc.)

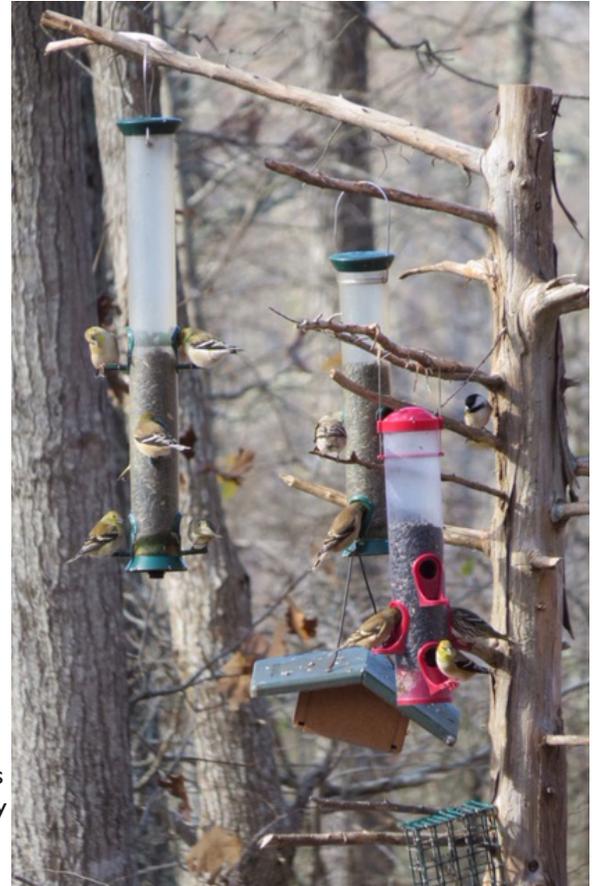
Now that the nesting season is over, it's best to open the box (try to buy the ones with an easy to open front or side – usually with a hinge) and just sweep out the existing nest. Occasionally, you will find the nest already “missing” – House Wrens are known to attack another's nest box, remove the eggs, and disassemble the nest – sometimes for no apparent reason other than to prevent competition for the food in the area. I would definitely NOT use any sort of cleaning liquid or bleach solution on the nesting box. If there are signs of insect infestation, brush as much out as you can – the bugs might be a food source for birds in the area. Anything such as lice, which may have been in the nest, will die over the winter, and not a worry the following year.

Leave the boxes outside in winter – on very rare occasions, and on very, very

cold and or snowy nights, the over-wintering birds, such as Chickadees and Titmice, may use the box for shelter. They might gather inside, ride out the storm there in numbers – as many as 3-6 birds in one box, sharing the space for warmth. They tumble out in the morning – or after the storm passes, and are grateful for the shelter provided to them!

Feeders Next: If you are planning to put feeders up – which I definitely encourage! – those can be bleach-water washed every few months, left to air dry, and refilled. I would encourage feeding year round – not only now, in the winter, but especially in Spring and Summer even though you might think there is sufficient *natural* food – the closer to the nest the food can be found will encourage birds to stay nearby, and save time away from the nest as well as provide enjoyment to you to watch! Suet is excellent, and black sunflower seed works best for attracting most species. Nyger seed is liked by Goldfinch, but they will go to mixed seed feeders as well.

Whatever food you elect to put in your feeders – no bread or grains, please! That can cause wing damage and doesn't provide the nutrition and protein the birds need, especially in the cold winter. Be sure to keep it filled as best as you can – I use small feeders, which frequently need filling daily. Since all the seeds are usually eaten in a short period of time, there's no fear of seed getting damp with



Goldfinches happily feeding on Nyger seed – one of their favorites, but one that needs to be the freshest!

rain or snow, and rotting in the feeder.

With just a little bit of time spent cleaning and maintaining your bird houses and feeders, your birds will thank you by being there when you look outside your windows! Even the most common birds can bring a smile to your face, and warm a spot in your heart – especially in the cold and dark days of WINTER – burrrrrr! 🐦

Stay in touch with us – Like us on Facebook

Go to 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.)

Winter Walks

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 2019 • MEET AT 9 AM

LAKES AROUND PATCHOGUE

Leader: John McNeil & Rosemary Valente

Meet at the parking area at the corner of Lake Drive and East Main Street in East Patchogue by the side of Swan Lake. We will check out Swan Lake and then visit several other spots for a look at the bountiful water birds that flock to LI in the winter. Hopefully a surprise or two will be waiting for us. Contact John McNeil at 631.281.2623 or mcneil.jp@gmail.com if you need more information.

Snow date: Saturday, January 19, 2019

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019, MEET AT 8:30 AM

ANNUAL TREK TO MONTAUK!

Leader: Eileen Schwinn

We will be meeting at the Point – and what's the Point?? The Montauk Lighthouse Parking Lot! Meeting time: 8:30 am, to view (hopefully) the hundreds – or thousands – of sea ducks! With luck, Razorbills and other alcids will be present, and perhaps, wintering gulls and terns. Moving on to Camp Hero, we will also view the southern shore and ocean, and continue the day with visits to The Ranch, Lake Montauk, Ditch Plains, and various great birding spots which make up the Must Do List of the Winter in Montauk Birding Experience! The itinerary may change if any rare or noteworthy birds are reported in the area. Dress for the weather – which will be cold, windy, and downright nasty! There are heated restrooms at The Point, and various other spots, and be sure to bring snacks and water. There are some local restaurants and delis which are open, but you may want to pack a lunch. We will spend the morning birding. Contact Eileen Schwinn, beachmed@optonline.net, for more information. (And since it's Groundhog Day, we might be forced to do the same thing on the following Day!!)

PLANNED FOR MARCH

ELIZABETH MORTON NWR

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 on the way to Sag Harbor (if you are coming from the west).



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR THE WATERFOWL CENSUS

This long standing census is conducted and organized by New York State Ornithological Association. Each January, NYOSA members and supporting groups visit lakes, rivers and shorelines to count waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans, loons, grebes, etc.). The results are published in *The Kingbird*, NYOSA's magazine.

The count begins on the Saturday before Martin Luther King Day, (the third Monday in January). It lasts a week giving leaders options to pick the a day or days to avoid snow storms or other bad weather days.

In most years more than a quarter of a million birds are tallied. In addition to being an enjoyable (but usually cold) outing, DEC has acknowledged this to be a useful survey for long-term monitoring of waterfowl populations wintering in New York. If you would like to participate, contact one of the regional compilers listed below.

Saturday, January 19-26, 2019

(target date - Sunday, January 20, 2019)

Territories & contacts for our area:

Smith Point to Shinnecock Inlet

Contact Jay Kuhlman at sjkuhlman@aol.com or 631.878.446. Target date for this survey is Sat. January 19th.

Yaphank to Peconic Bay

Contact Rosemary Valente at 631-882-2464 or hobbesmom4ever@gmail.com

Montauk to Shinnecock

Contact Frank Quevedo at 631.537.9735 or sofoexdir@optonline.net

Reeves Bay to Noyack Bay & Fresh Pond to Sag Harbor

Contact John McNeil at 631.281.2623 or birdwchr@gmail.com 

November Walks



On Saturday, November 17 a little over a dozen people joined MaryLaura Lamont for walk at the Hallockville Museum Farm and into Hallock State Park. About 25 species were tallied. As we started the Savannah and Song Sparrows played hide and seek with us in the hedgerow.

Past the pond, with some Canada Geese and through the woods to enjoy the view over Long Island Sound. Swimming in the Sound were Surf and White-winged Scoters, a Long-tail duck and a few Loons.

The woods gave the group views of a Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker and a Hairy Woodpecker. Both Kinglets appeared as we were on the home stretch.

The walk ended dramatically as a Bald Eagle flew over the neighboring field.

Good birding on a nice sunny fall day!



On Sunday, November 18 a group of about 30 joined MaryLaura Lamont for walk at the William Floyd Estate in Old Mastic. There the group saw about 20 species. We were greeted by some beautiful BlueBirds just off the large field by the house.

Several hawks were cruising through including two Northern Harriers, one Sharp-shinned Hawk and a Cooper's Hawk. Once again we had a fly by Bald Eagle. They have been nesting at the Estate for the last few years, but it is always a treat to see the majesty of that bird.

Rain was due in, but it held off until after the walk. 🦅

Into the New Year with eBird – *What's it all about?*

Sally Newbert

It is about time we write about eBird. Quite a few ELIAS members use eBird to keep track of their bird lists. Several ELIAS birders are listed in the Top 100 for Suffolk County and tend to check it every now and again to see if they are keeping up. I am far from an expert on this site but I have found it useful and thought I would share some of what I have learned and try to encourage others to use it.

The site, eBird, is a project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It is free to use and is supported entirely by grants, sponsors, and donations.

They do have a tendency to update the site frequently, so be prepared. Just as you think you have it understood, it changes.

First you will need to set up your eBird account (easy to set up, or so they say, it has been a while since I set mine up). Your account keeps track of birds you see and where you see them. Your photos and your sound recordings can be added to your sightings. No more scraps of paper with bird lists, with no idea where or when you saw them. No more paging through data bases or old notebooks. If you do not want your eBird account to be public you can be an anonymous birder and your name will not be public, however you will not be listed in the state or county rankings.

When you open your eBird page it will show you how many species you have seen, how many checklists you have submitted, and how many birds are on your life list. Those are all clickable. You can find your year list, last year's list (or the year before). You can organize it by date or by species. Want to know where and when you saw a particular species, if you see it underlined, the info is there and you can click on the information you want. Want to know when you visited a certain park, your list is there. How many birds did you see in 2016, just change the year on the top left of your list. It will access any information you have entered, and organize in any way you like. Your lists can appear alphabetically or taxonomically lists, either way is fine.

Do you like a contest? There is a challenge every month sponsored by Zeiss. December's Challenge required birders to split a single day list into 3 or more eligible checklists. One eBirder is drawn from all the submissions that match that criteria and wins a pair of Zeiss binoculars.

Are you a numbers person?

If you are a numbers person you will love seeing how many, where, and when birds are being seen. Like it on a chart, well you are in luck. You will find it on eBird. Even if you are not a numbers person, the information is accessible to you and it is made available to scientists, making you a citizen scientist. The information you submit will be adding to the overall knowledge allowing scientists to evaluate bird populations, keep track of timetables of migration, and generally speaking know where the birds are. This should become important in evaluating many issues, including when and if birds are moving their ranges due to climate change. It should help document population changes, too. Currently Audubon has a special study to document if and how birds are adapting to climate change.

Alerts make it local

My favorite feature is the Alerts. Go to the Explore head on the top of the page, then to Alerts. Choose Rare Birds and/or Year Needs, select an area. You will receive email notices to let you know where and when a rare bird has been seen. Then, chase or not, it's up to you! It is easily changed if you travel, go back and edit and get information for your travel locations. Also under the explore head you will find the Top 100 list for your area, state or country. From this you can glean other information. By checking out the last bird that the top 100 birders have seen, it can set you on a path to see any interesting birds. This feature also gives you the total number of species that have been seen in a particular area. As of the end December 336 species of birds have been seen in Suffolk County, all time sightings for Suffolk County is 425 species.

Keep an eye on the top 100, this is an irruptive year and Cross-bills, red and white-winged, Pine Siskins, and Red-breasted Nuthatches are showing up.

By the way, your sightings are reviewed by a knowledgeable birder who will get back to you if you have come up something that is unlikely. You may be asked to describe the bird more fully. Of course, a photo works wonders if you are able to get it.

But don't be hesitant in reporting those rare birds, those rarities do show up! That bird from Texas or the Arctic is not impossible. Take the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher a resident of Texas found in Montauk or the Northern Wheatear from the high Arctic and Alaska found in Heckscher Park.

Perhaps you are trying to find a bird, or maybe a hot spot, or want to know what you can expect to see at a particular location. You will find that too under the Explore section.

Near the bottom of the Explore section you will find Learn Birding Skills which offers a free self-paced course to help you get the most out of eBird. There is also a link there to Merlin Bird ID, a free, instant Bird ID which now has about 2,000 birds in its data base.

On the next rainy day, when you can't go birding spend some time with eBird. There is always something new to learn.

My own challenge is going to be to use the mobile eBird. I had some problems getting this to work, but finally realized it needed me to put my eBird password into my new phone. The app will keep track of the time you spend birding, the amount territory you covered and the number of species you see. Should be a good learning experience.

Good birding to all of you! 

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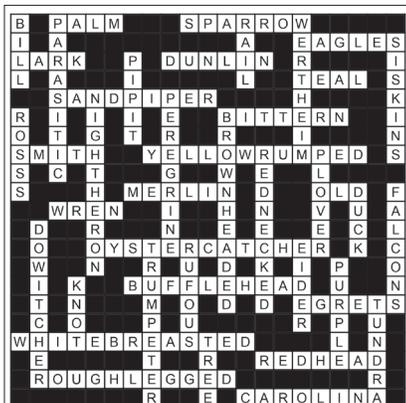
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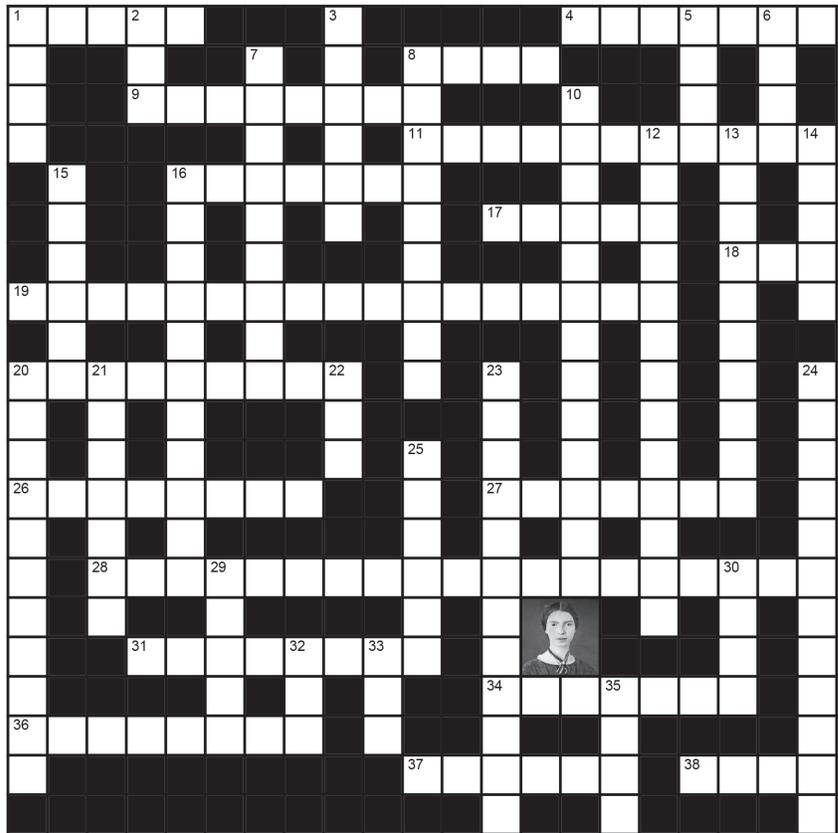
Our mission is to be an inspiration to those who feel a sense of kinship with Long Island by encouraging an appreciation for the natural world and a commitment to the environment.

Late Fall Sightings

Answers to Nov/Dec puzzle by Tom Moran



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



Across

- 1 House, Purple _____
- 4 _____ Sparrow, Not Saltmarsh
- 8 _____ Goose, something to enjoy after a day of birding?
- 9 _____ Wren
- 11 _____ Kinglet
- 16 _____ Tern, seen on a Brooklyn pelagic trip August 20 this year
- 17 Receiver of the Ten Commandments or a builder of many roads and parks in NYS
- 18 Female bird, especially domesticated fowl
- 19 Greater _____, seen at the Riverhead sod farms this November
- 20 Common, Hooded or Red-breasted _____
- 26 _____ silver, or Forest, good warbler location on the NY/NJ border
- 27 It can be White or Brown
- 28 Males yellow capped and ladder backed, rare sighting
- 31 _____ Wigeon
- 34 Cedar or Bohemian
- 36 _____ Woodpecker
- 37 Genus of wetland birds, including rails
- 38 _____ May Warbler

Down

- 1 Smaller, weaker caw crow
- 2 Abbr. fun activity to participate in during December
- 3 Baltimore or Orchard
- 5 _____ Goose, Not Ross's, look for grin patch
- 6 Mourning _____
- 7 Killdeer (*Charadrius* _____)
- 8 _____ Island, viewed from New Suffolk, maybe you will see a Bank Swallow
- 10 _____ Flycatcher, seen this winter at Deep Hollow Ranch
- 12 American _____, shorebird with flamboyant red bill
- 13 Yellow-crowned or Black-crowned
- 14 Not Hairy
- 15 If the western one is still called Green-tailed, why can't we still call ours Rufous-sided?
- 16 Black-throated _____
- 20 _____ Kite. Seen 2012 at 26 Across.
- 21 _____ Spoonbill
- 22 _____-bellied Woodpecker
- 23 Onomatopoeia, not Chuck-will's-widow
- 24 _____ Sandpiper, seen on the Riverhead sod farms this September
- 25 _____ Winged Warbler, distinctively colored wing patch
- 29 It can be Great or Snowy
- 30 _____ Eider, seen at Shinnecock Inlet through the summer
- 32 You poor old _____, or grass grown on a farm.
- 33 The family of Guillemots and Puffins.
- 34 Not east

Ban Balloons Save the Critters!

Let's get behind this effort! It's Not meant to ruin the fun, but hey, it's killing the turtles, whales and other wild things!

**Seen in the Sag HarborExpress.com
By Kathryn G. Menu**

The East Hampton Town Trustees on Monday unanimously voted to support a ban on the intentional release of balloons in the town — a measure that supports a broader effort by the Eastern Long Island chapter of the Surfrider Foundation for a ban that would stretch across Suffolk County where it is currently legal to intentionally release as many as 25 balloons per person in a 24-hour period.

According to the nonprofit foundation, a total of 774 balloons were found on beaches from Westhampton Beach to Montauk during 38 beach cleanups it held between June 2017 and December 2018,

In addition to town trustees in East Hampton, the ban also has the support of a number of environmental groups including the Peconic Baykeeper, Concerned Citizens of Montauk, the Group for the East End and the Nature Conservancy, as well as government leaders like Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming and New York State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele Jr.

On Monday, Trustee Susan McGraw Keber introduced a resolution to town trustees to specifically support a ban on the intentional release of balloons in East Hampton Town, which found support from the entire body. The current county legislation, which prohibits a “person, nonprofit organization, firm, corporation, or municipality” from “knowingly” releasing, organizing the release, condoning the release of, or intentionally causing the release, “within a twenty-hour period, 25 or more helium or lighter-than-air gas balloons within the Suffolk.”

“That’s a lot of balloons,” said Ms. McGraw Keber. “It means graduations, birthday parties, weddings. It will not include children who get a balloon at the fair, but it would be for Mylar and latex balloons – they are not biodegradable, they are not recyclable.”

From Chris Paparo The Fish Guy

On one summer outing we picked up over 50 balloons while traveling the ocean from Shinnecock to Moriches. With endless stories and photos of fish kills, harmful algal blooms, oil spills, beach closures, etc. filling our daily newsfeeds, it appears that our environment is in a horrific state of “Doom and Gloom”. Although we do face many environmental challenges, this constant bombardment of negativity creates a lack of enthusiasm among local communities when it comes to protecting our environment. I prefer to focus on the positive with my social media posts, by showcasing all the amazing wildlife that calls our Island home. By doing this, I hope that people will regain their enthusiasm for protecting the environment.

The topic of balloons is where I make an exception to negative posts. These objects are put into the environment on purpose to celebrate happy moments such as graduations, birthdays, Father's/ Mother's Day, etc... others are released in memory of a passed loved one. Do we really need to release balloons to celebrate? No. I have had plenty of fun at a non-balloon parties. Will your loved ones get your balloon? No. I know that first hand as many of the balloons I pick up were released for that reason.

Leatherback sea turtles, ocean sunfish, and marine mammals often ingest these balloons thinking they are food. Once ingested, the plastic objects clog their digestive tract, causing the animal to die a slow painful death.

There is absolutely no positive outcome to releasing balloons, so please DON'T!!!

As more people become aware of the disastrous affect balloon releases have on our environment, they might think twice before releasing or buying a balloon.



Chris's boat as it returns to the dock with over 50 balloons in just one trip. Photo by Chris Paparo, used with permission.

The 22nd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count is for Everyone

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! Spend at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 15-18, 2019, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe. You can even add photos and sounds to your checklist.

Your help is needed every year to make the GBBC successful!

Then keep counting throughout the year with eBird, which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time.

Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex



How many birds will you find?

22nd Annual Great
Backyard Bird Count

February 15-18, 2019

birdcount.org

Red-breasted Nuthatch. Photo: Karen E. Brown

distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use information from the Great Backyard Bird Count, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

- How will the weather and climate change influence bird populations?
- Some birds, such as winter finches, appear in large numbers during some years but not others. Where are these species from year to year, and what can we learn from these patterns?

- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners. The Great Backyard Bird Count is powered by eBird. The count is made possible in part by founding sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited. 

What was Learned from Last Year's GBBC

By Marshall Iliff, Pat Leonard, and Kerrie Wilcox

Another edition of the Great Backyard Bird Count is in the books, with a great showing for the birds and the bird watchers who joined in from around the world. As always, participants tell us they really enjoy this opportunity to do their favorite thing and contribute to science at the same time:

Species:	6,310 (2017 species total: 5,940)
Complete Checklists:	176,905 (2017 checklists: 173,826)
Estimated Participants:	192,456

Top 10 most frequently reported species:

(number of GBBC checklists reporting this species)

Species	# of Checklists
Northern Cardinal	48,956
Dark-eyed Junco	43,742
Mourning Dove	43,412
American Crow	40,959
Blue Jay	37,549
Downy Woodpecker	36,495
House Finch	34,766
Black-capped Chickadee	31,942
House Sparrow	31,884
European Starling	28,683

Watch for Purple Sandpipers! *A Bird that Winters on Long Island*

Sally Newbert with photos by Byron Young

There are some birds that you will only find here in the winter one of them is the Purple Sandpiper, although you have to use your imagination to come up with purple, they are more intensely-colored than your average sandpiper with colorful orange legs. They also have unusual and distinctive habits. You will have to look carefully to find them. Plus you have to know where to look. They eat the plants and small prey that are on the algae covered wave-washed rocks of the jetties. They can usually be found at Ditch Plains, Mt. Sinai Harbor and in Nassau County on the jetties near Point Lookout and Long Beach. 



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Membership is \$20 a year, you will receive 6 issues of *The Osprey* and you will be supporting our education and conservation activities.

This is a Renewal New Membership

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Please be sure to include your email. You will receive an email confirmation, a pdf of the first newsletter and updates and reminders of programs and trips including notices of any program changes or cancellations due to weather. This list is not shared.

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