



THE *OSPREY*

Winter 2026 – Vol. LVIII – No. 1

The Vagrant

Byron Young

Photos Janis Hurley

On October 23, 2025, a vagrant Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) was found by a golfer near the Woods Golf Course in Riverhead. Based upon newspaper reports the golfer, not sure what bird he was seeing, took a photo and sent it to his nephew, an ornithologist, in California, for help with the identification. After a series of cross continent messaging the identification was confirmed. This exciting sighting was posted on the rare bird alerts, as an extremely rare observation. The Common Cuckoo is native to most of continent of Europe. It overwinters in central Africa far away from the farm fields of Riverhead. It's the bird we think of when we hear the Cuckoo Clock – That's its call!

Here on Long Island, there are two related species, the Yellow-billed and the Black-billed Cuckoo. While not easily encountered, they are local breeders and can be found with a bit of effort.

Once the rare alert message was posted birders flocked, pardon the pun, to Riverhead in search of this mega-rare bird, a first in New York State. In fact, this is only the fifth reported observation of this bird in Eastern North America and the sixth report from the lower 48 states. Digging through the eBird reports for the Common Cuckoo I found one report on October 2, 2012, near Santa Cruz, California. Expanding the search



further, Alaska birders have recorded numerous cuckoo sightings reported from Sitka north to Anchorage and up to one reported on the North Slope 2008. The majority of the current and historic observations occur along the Aleutian Island Chain, which may be another species, the Oriental Cuckoo. Interestingly all these reported observations were in the Spring, with the bulk of the reports being made in June or July. The reports from Eastern North America were from October and November sightings. The significance of the timing of these sightings can be explored at another time.

To many, if not most, of the local birders, this rarity was a New York and North American life list bird. Some folks had been lucky enough to see the Rhode Island Bird in November of 2020. Folks traveling to Europe

may have encountered the bird on its home range. Fortunately, the Riverhead bird stayed near the golf course from October 23 to October 26. It has not been seen since, to the disappointment of many.

The Common Cuckoo's range is widespread throughout Europe during breeding season, also parts of North Africa, East through Russia and Central Asia to the Russian Far East, Chukotka, Kamchatka, Commander Islands, and south into north-eastern China and Korea. This species winters throughout Africa, Sri Lanka, and in the northern parts of Southeast Asia. Their habitats include both forests and lowland habitats including coniferous and deciduous forests, second growth, open woodlands, wooded steppe, scrub, heath land, meadows, and

Continued on page 12

The President's Corner

Looking Ahead

Byron Young

We hope that everyone is looking forward to 2026. There are several announcements that need to be made. First is that the Quogue Wildlife Refuge will be undergoing some significant renovations during the Winter and Early Spring. The ELIAS Board of Directors is looking for alternative meeting locations for our Monthly Members Meetings. We do not hold a meeting in January, so we are good there and the February meeting will be via ZOOM. We are not certain where we might meet after February but will keep you informed. The construction at Quogue will not affect our Bird Walks. We begin the year with our annual search for wintering waterfowl in the lakes round Patchogue. See the listing of upcoming Bird Walks for the late winter and early Spring in this edition of *The Osprey*.

The ELIAS Board of Directors would like to thank our members for your continued support. It is a pleasure to see many of you at our Monthly Members meetings and on our Bird Walks. During 2025 a couple of new birding trips were added involving boating, thanks to Eileen Schwinn for organizing these events. One was held in November out of Greenport looking for Sea Ducks and other interesting birds that like to hang out around Orient Point. The second is a winter trip around Shinnecock Bay looking for waterfowl, overwintering shorebirds, other species of birds and of course the local overwintering seals. A great deal of effort goes into organizing our bird walks and events especially the boating trips which have limited capacity. Our routine walks can accommodate large numbers of individuals. However, it is always appreciated when folks make sure to sign up with the trip leader(s) in advance.

Thanks to our new Program Chair, Terry Brunnemer, and Program Committee, we have programs

secured through September of 2026. The details will follow in future issues of *The Osprey* and through Constant Contact notices.

We hope that everyone is enjoying the latest edition of our 2026 ELIAS Birding Calendar. We had many talented photographers submit far more great photographs than we could fit onto the 2026 Calendar. As we enter 2026, please consider collecting your favorite images for the next iteration of our Calendar. We have a few extra copies of the 2026 Calendar if anyone would like to purchase one or more. They are \$10.00 apiece. A note of gratitude goes to Sally Newbert for organizing the Calendar and the other efforts that she does with the Newsletter, making Constant Contact notifications and providing support for our other events.

ELIAS had a successful Annual Dinner, one of our major fund raisers to support Chapter events. The Annual Dinner was held at the Bellport Country Club a very nice venue. The Board of Directors is looking ahead to our 2026 Annual Dinner, more on that as we get closer to the Fall

event. The whole ELIAS Board of Directors do a great job and should be recognized for their efforts.

I wanted to add a note relative to the current Long Island Hunting Seasons. While reviewing some recent notices from DEC and Suffolk County regarding sharing the woods, both state that the woods are to be shared by hunters and those of us that want to recreate in other ways. Hunting is allowed on many if not most of the State and County Lands where we might want to bird. The notices about sharing the woods cautioned non-hunters to wear bright colors to make yourself visible. Also, if you know that someone is hunting in a location you want to visit consider choosing another location, safety first. Various hunting season will be ongoing through May with the Spring Turkey hunt.

Again, thank you all for your continued support and we are looking forward to a great 2026. We look forward to seeing you at a meeting or on one of our bird walks.

Good Birding!

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PO Box 206
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Monday Evening,
February 2, 2026
at 7:00 p.m.

**WACKY, WEIRD AND
WONDERFUL THINGS
BIRDS DO!**

DIANNE TAGGART

Did you know birds can dance, fight or blow bubbles during courtship? Or that they can stay in the air for months? Or protect themselves by vomiting? Using photos and fun/interesting facts, Dianne Taggart, long time birder, will tell you about our wonderful wild birds.

This is the first meeting of the new year. It will be Zoom meeting. So stay nice and toasty and join via Zoom. We will send a Constant Contact notice with the link and post it on the website or use the QR code to sign up.



Monday Evening
March 2, 2026
at 7:00 p.m.

BERRIES FOR BIRDS
A North Fork Audubon Society Initiative

ELLEN BIRENBAUM

Migrating and overwintering birds need calorie-rich berries to survive. Loss of habitat for berry producing native trees and shrubs has contributed to a precipitous drop in our migratory bird population. To address this problem, North Fork Audubon Society's **Berries for Birds** initiative advocates cooperative conservation to encourage people to create new ecological networks by planting native berry-producing trees and shrubs where we live and work. The **Berries for Birds** presentation reviews the science of co-evolution of native plants, insects and birds, the nutritional properties of berries by season and describes in detail the nutritional properties of berries by season and describes in detail the wide range of berry producing trees and shrubs native to the east end of Long Island.

Upcoming Programs to look forward to

On April 6th Don Lanaham from Turtle Rescue will join us to talk about Land Turtles on Long Island.

April 25th join in the fun at the Earth Day Celebration at Quogue Wildlife Refuge.

On May 4th Joe Giunta will give us a program on Spring Migration and Local Hot Spots.

ELIAS Field Trips – Winter 2026

Saturday, January 3, 2026
Meet at 8:00 am

The Lakes & Ponds of Patchogue

This ever-popular trip, led by Rosemary Valente, will explore the winter resting spots of almost all the fresh-water ducks and waterfowl you can find on Long Island! Meeting at Swan Lake, Patchogue we will travel in the local area, with multiple stops along the way. Pre-register with Rosemary at: hobbesmom4ever@yahoo.com. Binoculars are a must and a birding scope would be helpful, if you have one

Saturday, January 31, 2026
Meet at 9:30 am

Shinnecock Bay by boat

This is a joint field trip with Quogue Wildlife Refuge and Southampton Stony Brook Marine Science. Meet at 9:30 am at the Marine Science building, Shinnecock Hills. This two-hour trip will explore all the mammals and winged creatures who call Shinnecock Bay their home during cold winter days. There is a fee for this trip – \$40 for QWR and ELIAS members, \$45 for non-members. Registration information is available by contacting QWR at programs@Quoguewildliferefuge.org.



The R/V PECONIC is a U. S. Coast Guard-inspected catamaran, houseboat-style vessel for operation in protected bays and rivers.

Sunday, February 15, 2026
Meet at 11:45 for noon departure

Shinnecock Bay by boat, yes, again

Another opportunity to see the waterfowl and mammals on Shinnecock Bay by Boat! This time, CRESLI (Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island) leads the trip, with plenty of space for ELIAS members to join in! This two-hour trip begins at 12 noon from the dock at the Marine Science Building in Shinnecock Hills. With a \$40 fee, payable to CRESLI, please register with Eileen Schwinn, beachmed@optonline.net, for the trip.

Saturday, March 7, 2026
Meet at 8:30 am

Elizabeth A. Morton National Wildlife Refuge

Our annual walk to have birds eating right out of our hands! Starting a 8:30 am, this two/three hour walk along the paths, past fields, woods, freshwater ponds and streams, leads us to Little Peconic Bay. Oh, yes, the leader will provide bird seed to all, to share with the hungry birds along the way! Contact Byron Young, youngb53@optimum.net, to register.

RIP Mandarine Duck

Just as the excitement of the Cuckoo was dying down along came this extravagantly colorful fellow. He was found on a rather small hidden pond off Rhododendron Road in Stony Brook. He is usually found in China, Japan, Korea or Russia.

One photo showed him on land with a leg band. Most seem to think he is an escapee.

I am sad to say, on or about December 19, it was announced that a hunter had shot and killed the duck.

Sally



©JanisHurleyPhotography

Flurries of Finches?

Long Island and the 2025-2026 Winter Finch Forecast

Brian Moldashel

As the excitement of fall migration subsides with the departure of the last neotropical warblers, birders of all stripes find themselves slipping back into the familiar routines of winter bird watching: dutifully refilling and studying backyard feeders, scanning fresh and saltwater alike for long-absent waterfowl, playing “Where’s Waldo?” with flocks of Canada Geese in the hopes of finding the rare oddball... But somewhere between the near-total guarantee of spotting a White-throated Sparrow and the “who ever would have thought?” arrival of some once-in-a-lifetime rarity lies the intriguing uncertainty of our irruptive winter visitors. Indeed, the prospect of a large winter bird irruption can be enough motivation to get even the most cryophobic of birders outdoors, as it offers the opportunity to cross paths with some of the continent’s most entertaining and enigmatic species.

What’s an irruption?

But what is an irruption? Despite being a homonym of “eruption”, it has nothing to do with exploding volcanoes (although, in some respects,

the big picture impression can be somewhat similar!). Instead, a bird irruption is a migratory phenomenon where birds that generally stay in one particular area will leave it and travel elsewhere in large numbers, usually in search of food. On Long Island, Snowy Owls are perhaps the showiest example of a species that can be abundant here one winter and absent the next. However, there are also a number of songbirds with similarly inscrutable wandering tendencies. Chiefly among them are the handful of finch species who feed primarily on the cones and fruit of various types of trees, and whose movements are thus inextricably linked to the success or failure of the seed crops of their favored hosts. Many of these birds breed in the boreal forests of Canada and the northern United States, where the trees that sustain them – such as pine, spruce, ash, and birch – cover millions of acres, serving as an immense buffet that gives the birds little reason to leave and stray elsewhere. Some years, however, due to climatic factors or insect infestations, the seed crops produced by some or all of these plants are exceedingly poor, and the birds who

rely on them must venture elsewhere to find food to survive the winter. In these “flight years”, millions of individuals from one or more species will migrate out of the boreal forest, often well below the Canadian border to (relatively) warmer climes and the delight of local birdwatchers, including those of us here on Long Island.

So is there any way to predict whether or not these birds will venture south for the winter? In some ways there is! Every year, the fine folks at the Finch Research Network (FiRN, for short) publish their annual “Winter Finch Forecast”, which uses data on cone crop health for various tree species important to winter finches to determine whether or not those birds are likely to remain in the boreal forest for the winter, or will irrupt to parts south. This year’s report suggests that it is going to be a flight year for many species, particularly in the eastern part of North America, as, in the words of the report, “significant food source species such as White Spruce, Tamarack and White Birch have a total absence of any new crop over large areas” of eastern Canada. Many secondary food sources in these areas also appear

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to be unusually low, and as such, the report further suggests that this could be the biggest season for winter finches since the “super flight” of winter 2020-2021, a remarkable event where huge numbers of many boreal species ranged deep into the eastern United States.

So which finch species might Long Island birders hope to encounter during this year’s flight? There appear to be five kinds that seem particularly primed to irrupt en masse and make it far enough south to give local birdwatchers a show this winter. Some – such as Purple Finch and Pine Siskin – are regularly seen here in the form of lone individuals or small groups during the fall and winter, but should occur in greater numbers than usual, while others – notably Red Crossbill, Redpoll, and Evening Grosbeak – are generally absent from our area except in irruption years, and thus stand to make many birders very happy should they indeed make a great push south this year.

Purple Finch

A bird familiar (at least in name) even to many non bird watchers, the Purple Finch is the larger and arguably more striking cousin of the ubiquitous House Finches that live on Long Island year-round. The males of both species sport a reddish head and breast, although the red on the male Purple finch is a brighter rosy burgundy than that of the orange-tinged House Finch, and it extends through more of the face and onto the back than on the House Finch. Indeed, it is a common remark that male Purple Finches look like someone has spilled a glass of red wine on them! Conversely, female and immature Purple and House Finches are a dull brown on top and have whitish underparts with dark streaking. The former is more high-contrast than the latter, with a dark brown cheek framed by a noticeable pale eyebrow and malar/cheek stripe, and much darker, heavier streaking below.

Although it can sometimes be difficult for amateur birdwatchers to confidently tell one species from the other, this winter should provide for a lot of identification practice; for even



Purple Finch looks like he was dipped in raspberry juice or red wine. The femae has a distinctive pale eyebrow on an otherwise stripy body. Photo: Joyce Palm

as of the writing of this article in the middle of November 2025, there has been a steady stream of reports of Purple Finches across Long Island since as early as late August! More of a generalist than other winter finches, this species feeds on a wide variety of deciduous seeds and fruit, and will readily come to bird feeders to feast on sunflower seeds, so backyard birdwatchers who pay extra close attention to flocks of House Finches may find their heightened vigilance paying dividends this winter. Beyond the backyard, birders searching for Purple Finches will want to check areas with abundant fruiting trees – such as Eastern Red Cedar and crabapple – as well as moist environments that support a wide range of deciduous trees, such as swamps and riverine habitats. Lastly, keep an ear out for the sharp “pik!” calls often given by this species in flight, or shortly before or after, as birds will be on the move throughout the winter and thus may be more easily detected by ear than by sight.

Pine Siskin

For many Long Island birders, the last time they had more than a fleeting encounter – if any – with a Pine Siskin was during the “superflight” winter of 2020-2021, when millions of Siskins irrupted out of Canada and descended on the eastern United



A little yellow can be detected on the Pine Siskin. Both sexes are alike. Photo: Darlene McNeil

States following an exceptionally productive breeding season and the subsequent headwinds of a poor winter cone crop yield. Resembling a cross between a female House Finch and American Goldfinch, Pine Siskins evoke a slimmer, “pointier” version of the former, and streakier version of the latter, with adults exhibiting beautiful, alternating black and yellowish-tinged wing bars, and yellowish bases to the tail feathers. Though sexually monomorphic (adult males and females look the same), some rare “green morphs” are suffused with yellow beyond the flight feathers and readily stand out from their flock mates. Flight calls are a buzzy, upslurred “zeep!” that somewhat recall the slightly sweeter calls in the repertoire of the familiar American Goldfinch, although this latter more consistently gives its classic “potato chip” call while flying.

As many a Long Islander with a bird feeder in the winter of 2020-2021 can attest, Pine Siskins have voracious appetites and will gladly devour a wide range of bird seed, particularly Nyjer and sunflower seeds. Even yours truly, still a nascent bird watcher at the time of the last superflight, recalls being amazed at the swarms of manic, brown and yellow birds that would appear on occasion that winter and muscle out all the other backyard

residents, leaving hardly a scrap of seed in their wake. Though feeder watchers may have the best chance of encountering this species as the winter season drags on, hardy birders may chance upon lone individuals or small flocks in morning flight along the coast and on the barrier beaches, as several observers already have so far this fall. Likewise, despite their name, Pine Siskins don't really care much for the Pitch Pines that cover so much of our Pine Barrens, instead preferring the softer cones of species such as true cedars (i.e. not the widespread Eastern Red Cedar, which is actually a juniper!), spruce, and hemlock. As such, areas with extensive ornamental or diverse conifer plantings such as Bayard Cutting Arboretum in Great River, or healthy stands of Atlantic White Cedar such as Owl Pond in Flanders, may offer the best chances of finding feeding flocks of this exciting little finch.

Red Crossbill

A bird that seems to defy logic, the Red Crossbill is this writer's favorite example of the "I didn't know THAT bird could be found HERE!" category of local avifauna. Remarkably well adapted to exploit its preferred food source, this species is distinguished by its heavy, strongly-hooked bill which, as the name suggests, crosses towards the tip. To feed, it jams this peculiar bill between the scales of a pinecone and opens its jaw, using its mandibles as a lever to force the scales apart and access the precious seed within. As if this incredible adaptation weren't enough to set it apart from other birds, the Red Crossbill found in North America actually comprises eleven different subtypes, each of which has slight bill adaptations designed to help it exploit a particular type of cone (hard vs. soft, deep vs. shallow, etc.) and, most importantly, a corresponding "language" of call types that allow flocks of similar birds to communicate with each other about foraging efficiency, among other things. Like Purple Finches, Red Crossbills are sexually dimorphic: adult males are the namesake cherry red above and



Red Crossbill feeding on a pine cone, note the bill that allows them to extract the seed. The female is yellowish with gray. Photo: Nadia Hag

below, with black wings and tail, while females and immature birds are various shades of brown, yellow, or orange. Unlike its sister species the White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbills lack prominent white wing bars and produce a distinct, musical "jip jip" flight call that stands in sharp contrast to the drier chattering of its white-winged congener.

Unlike the two previously described species, Red Crossbills rarely come to feeders, although they will forage for grit on gravel roads and other rocky patches, which could cause them to appear in areas outside of their expected coniferous forest biome. Living on eastern Long Island, however, we are fortunate to have our fair share of just the kind of extensive pine forest that our expected subtype of Red Crossbill loves (despite the machinations of real estate developers and the Southern Pine Beetle, but those are conversations for another time...). Red Crossbills regularly breed in the Long Island Pine Barrens during or immediately following an irruption year, including as recently as the spring of 2023, and this year's Finch Forecast predicts that their numbers may swell in our area in late winter, once reliable food sources in northern New York and New England are exhausted. In the past, this species has been reliably reported from the



Look for that little red cap on the Redpoll. About the size of a Goldfinch. Photo: Roger Williams.

area around Jones Pond in Manorville, where a combination of a large wildfire in 2012 and ongoing severe Southern Pine Beetle infestation has killed an extensive number of pitch pine trees, providing crossbills with an abundant source of easily-opened dead pine cones and allowing birders to better see and hear this species through the open canopy. Finally, although White-winged Crossbills rarely occur on Long Island even during irruption years, diligent birders should always double-check groups of Red Crossbills for this species as well, as mixed flocks are not unheard of.

Redpoll

True denizens of the Arctic, Redpolls live and breed in some of the northernmost reaches of North America and Eurasia, where a number of adaptations – including extra-fluffy plumage, an ability to store and slowly consume high-calorie food in their digestive tract, and even a penchant for burrowing under insulating snow during severe blizzards– allow them to survive even the harshest winters. As such, it takes an extreme failure of their favorite food sources, notably alder and birch seeds, to force these remarkable birds to roam as far south as Long Island. Fortunately for local birders – albeit unfortunately for the Redpolls – this year's Finch Forecast notes a dearth



Evening Grosbeaks. Photo by Janis Hurey

of such cone crops throughout the northern and central portions of eastern Canada, likely forcing large numbers of this species well south this winter, especially as secondary food sources are covered in snow.

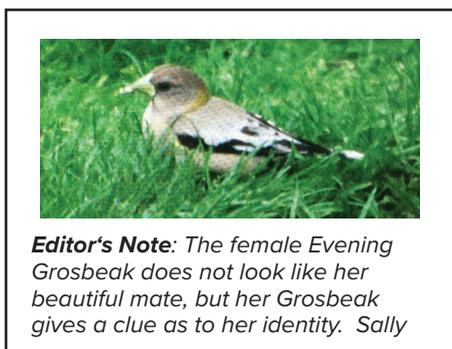
Redpolls are fairly small, fluttery finches with a brownish back and a characteristic ruby red cap, petite yellow bill that looks like it could give you a good poke, and black chin. Adult males have a reddish wash on the breast and flanks, while females tend to be darker-backed. Considered three distinct species – Common, Hoary, and Lesser – until just last year, when new genetic evidence caused ornithologists to “lump” them together into the present species, Redpolls are quite social birds and tend to stick together with members of their own species, although wayward individuals may be found in winter flying alone or amongst groups of sparrows or other finches. Astute birders will often pick up on lone migrants by listening for their rapid “chit-chit-chit” flight calls, which are distinctly finch-like yet drier and less warbling than any produced by our local species.

Nearly all Long Island reports of Redpolls are from immediate coastal areas such as the barrier beaches and Twin Forks, the majority of which are of small groups or single birds heard and briefly seen flying overhead (indeed, one was already observed flying past the Fire Island hawk watch in early November). In exceptional irruption years, such as winter 2014-2015 and 2020-2021,

larger groups of nearly fifty have been found foraging on scrubby coastal plants like seaside goldenrod (Tiana Beach area, Hampton Bays, 2015) and on corn stubble in large agricultural fields (Oregon Rd., Cutchogue, 2021). Any brushy, weedy fields with retained food sources could prove attractive to these birds, as can areas with large numbers of healthy birch trees. There are several reports from past years of birds coming to feeders, usually with other finches, so backyard birdwatchers should be on the lookout for any unusual streaky visitors among their regular flocks.

Evening Grosbeak

Although the Finch Forecast predicts only a “moderate flight” of Evening Grosbeaks this year, the species’s striking appearance and erratic tendencies make it worthy of inclusion here simply for the joy a serendipitous encounter would bring any local bird watcher this winter. Startlingly large finches with an eponymously oversized, ivory-colored bill, Evening Grosbeaks are noisy and gregarious birds that are just as easily identified



Editor’s Note: *The female Evening Grosbeak does not look like her beautiful mate, but her Grosbeak gives a clue as to her identity. Sally*

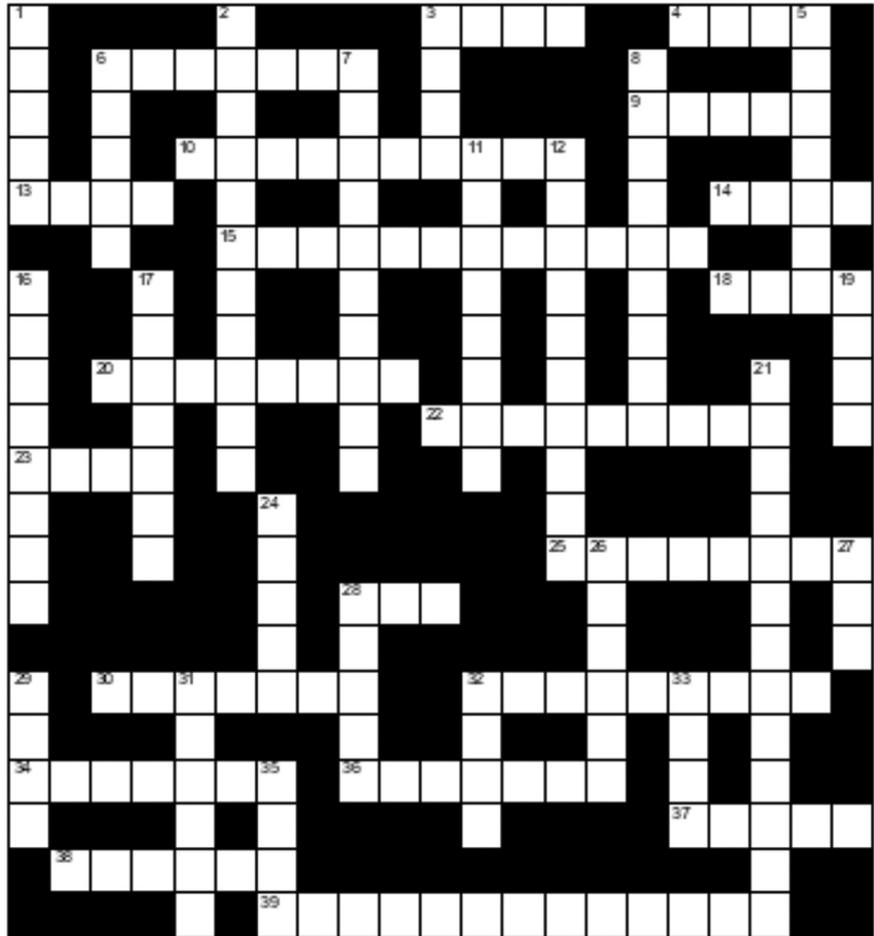
by sight as by sound. Adult males are especially noticeable thanks to their school bus yellow forehead and matching broad eyebrow, richly contrasting black and white wing patches, and golden-amber underparts. Female and immature birds are a more subdued but equally beautiful silver-gray on the head and back, with a gentle yellowish wash to the nape and frosty edges to the flight feathers. The most commonly heard call is a House Sparrow-esque “cheer” and is given often by birds in flight, as well as by feeding or roosting flocks. Birdwatchers hoping to turn up an Evening Grosbeak this season should therefore keep an ear out for House Sparrows in odd places, such as in pine forests or on the barrier beaches, though many encounters with this species seem to be more a product of luck than of careful searching. In this regard, one of the best ways to make your own luck with this species is by keeping a well-stocked feeder in a bird-friendly yard, as there are a number of local records of Evening Grosbeaks making multiple repeat visits to backyards to gorge on black oil sunflower seeds.

In sum, whether you lament the arrival of cold weather or rejoice in the rhythms of winter birdwatching, all birders should feel a little tinge of excitement in knowing that the next couple months might bring with them a flurry of amazing and beautiful visitors from The Great White North! Those interested in reading the entire Winter Finch Forecast for this year or seasons past, or who wish to learn more about finches in general, should visit the website of the Finch Research Network at finchnetwork.org. Likewise, the recently published “Stokes Guide to Finches of North America” by Lillian Stokes and Matthew A. Young contains a wealth of fascinating information on these birds’ life histories, as well as identification tips and interesting personal accounts from the authors. Lastly, as always, ebird.org is the best way to track sightings of all kinds of birds, both current and from past years. Happy winter, and happy birding! ■

Recent Sightings and More... Tom Moran

Across

- 3 _____ Swallow
- 4 _____ Sparrow, often with chest spot
- 6 _____ Goldeneye, crescent spot on face
- 9 Black & white winter birds sometimes referred to as penguins of the north!
- 10 Short, slim billed, Lesser: Long upturned, Greater
- 13 On one of these is good place to find a Purple Sandpiper
- 14 Is that a Tundra or a Trumpeter _____
- 15 Greater _____ Goose, seen at the Buffalo Farm early this year
- 13 Not sea just _____
- 20 See 30 Across _____ seen at Yaphank Farm this November at the same spot that it was sighted last October
- 22 Purple _____ seen in Montauk this year, at the same spot it was seen last year
- 23 Could be a Whistling, Dabbler, Bay, Sea, Stiff-tailed...
- 25 _____ Gull, an occasional winter visitor to the Bellport Marina and other places
- 28 ___ Sparrow
- 30 See 20 Across
- 32 See 21 Down _____
- 34 House _____, an Old World one
- 36 Northern _____, adult male is nicknamed a gray ghost
- 37 _____-billed 24 down, maybe see one off Montauk Point this winter, not Common
- 39 Common (not so here) seen in Riverhead this October
- 30 _____ Cormorant



Down

- 1 _____ Waxwing
- 2 _____ 3 down, a first location fall sighting at Wading River Duck Pond this October/November
- 3 2 down _____
- 5 Common winter duck, male is mostly gray backed
- 6 Red-winged _____ bird
- 7 _____ Owl
- 8 A sea duck, that, takes its name from a colorfully dressed character in Commedia dell'arte
- 11 _____ Wigeon, rufous and cream headed, not American with white, green and gray
- 12 Always one step ahead or behind a wave
- 16 Likes to rest on grass, double breast band
- 17 Northern _____, yellow shafted here
- 19 _____ sparrow, rare but regular fall vagrant. Distinctive facial pattern
- 21 _____ 32 Across, often referred to by Yosemite Sam
- 24 37 Across _____
- 26 _____ Black-backed Gull
- 27 _____ Farm, an Upland Sandpiper was found on one along CR 51 this September
- 28 House or Purple _____
- 29 _____ Crow *uh, uh*
- 31 Northern _____ its hunting technique was used as a negotiating tactic in *The Big Year*
- 32 _____ Scoter, two white splotches on head
- 33 American _____
- 35 _____ Duck, boxes are put up for them to nest in

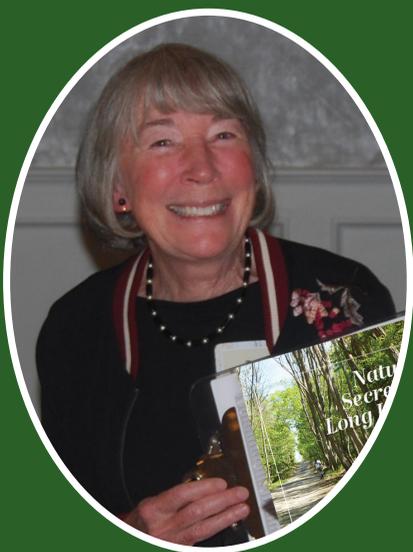
ELIAS ANNUAL DINNER

Wednesday, October 15 at The Bellport Country Club many members and friends of ELIAS joined to celebrate another year of birding.

The speaker, John Turner, well-known conservationist and environmental advocate shared his "Natural Secrets of Long Island".

With lots of raffle prizes many went home with goodies.

The list of raffle prize donors is on the following page. If you visit any of our donors please give them a Thank You.



Terry Brunner, one of our new Board Members helped out.



Byron Young (right) congratulates our speaker, John Turner on a successful presentation.



Lots of smiling faces greeted the speaker that night.





A Big Thank You to the Businesses that Donated Raffle Prizes

A BIG Thank You to all who purchased Raffle Tickets for our recent Annual Dinner - and Congratulations to all the Winners!! Here's a list of the generous donors of the Raffle Prizes and, please, thank them when you shop there:



- Bay Gardens – East Moriches**
- Briermere Farms – Riverhead**
- CRESLI (Whale and Seal Watch) – West Sayville**
- Croteaux Vineyard – Southold**
- Dolci Momenti Bakery – Medford**
- Eastport Luncheonette – Eastport**
- Green Island Distributors – Riverhead**
- Hidden Ridge Plants – Ridge**
- Janis Hurley Photography – Eastport**
- Jerri's Cakery & Confections – Eastport**
- Long Island Aquarium – Riverhead**
- Long Island Maritime Museum – West Sayville**
- Lucharitos – Center Moriches**
- North Fork Craft Gallery – Wading River**
- Olish Farm – Eastport**
- Panera – Riverhead**
- Peconic Herb Farm – Calverton**
- Roses and Rice – East Quogue**
- Quogue Wildlife Refuge – Quogue**
- Shirley Feed – Shirley**
- Six Corners Liquor – Westhampton Beach**
- South Fork Natural History Museum – Bridgehampton**
- Sunset at Senix – Center Moriches**
- Tamage Farm Agway – Riverhead**
- The Fish Store – Bayport**
- Wild Bird Crossing – Bridgehampton**



Continued from page 1

along riverbeds. The Common Cuckoo is well known for its nest-parasitism. The female cuckoo selects the nest of another species of bird, removes any eggs present and lays her egg or eggs in that nest. They can lay between 12 and 22 eggs per season. The young cuckoos, typically larger than any other young birds that may hatch within the nest force them out of the nest, certainly not good neighbors.

While mingling with the birders camped out at the Wood Golf Course hoping to view the bird, the subject of how this bird made its way to Riverhead came up. There was a good deal of speculation. Did the bird get blown off course by winds? Did it lose its navigation due to shifting magnetic fields or was it possible it hitched a ride on a passing ship. However, upon examining the eBird records it appears that this vagrant island hopped from native habitats in Europe and Asia to our shores. It is difficult to see that movement from the East North American data with only a few observations. The West Coast of North America, especially Alaska offers a much clearer picture of the birds Island hopping from Russia along the Alutitian Islands into mainland Alaska.

While all of this may shed some light on the Common Cuckoos habits and movements it's presence on Long Island caused a great deal of excitement. For those who saw the bird, even for a few fleeting minutes it was an exhilarating experience. For those who missed the bird this time have faith another one may be on its way in the next few years. For both Janis and me this was a lifer we were happy to add to our Life List.

Good Birding!

Byron

ELIAS Represented at NYSOA's 78th Annual Meeting

Tom Moran

This year's New York State Ornithological Society (NYSOA) conference was held in Ithaca, New York from September 19-21. NYSOA's goals are to document rare sightings, promote appreciation of birds and habitat preservation. It holds annual meetings to bring birders together, provide speakers of notable interest and provide birding opportunities away from home. The meetings offer social, educational and, of course, birding activities. During the conference an annual business meeting is held. As a member organization ELIAS is entitled to send a delegate.

The featured speaker Friday night was Adrian Dokter, from the Cornell Lab's Center for Avian Population Studies, who discussed how BirdCast uses weather radar to detect night migrations. This can reveal numbers of birds and location. This information can be used to note trends over time and promote conservation efforts.

Peter Kaestner, Saturday's keynote speaker, included many anecdotal stories about his successful effort to become the first person to see more than 10,000 species, including one he discovered himself! A species from every bird family was observed. Here is a link to an interesting interview in which Peter Kaestner discusses this achievement in addition to his conservation efforts. A species from every bird family was observed. Here is a link to an interesting interview in which Peter Kaestner discusses this achievement in addition to his conservation efforts.

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/>

or search for the following:
E20 Peter Kaestner — From Peace Corps to 10,000 Birds and Beyond!

New York State Young Birders Club is a NYSOA project to assist youth between ages of 10-19 to become



Left to right: Patricia Aitkin, NYSOA President; Tom Moran, author and ELIAS delegate, Peter Kaestner, keynote speaker; and Patricia Paladines, 4HAS co-president.

involved in birding. They are given opportunities to present findings of studies they have done in the past year. More fun is the annual quiz they put together to test the attendees. No team got a perfect score this year! ELIAS also supports NYSYBC.

Among the species that I saw while birding locally was a Purple Gallinule at Freese Rd., a first for Tompkins County!

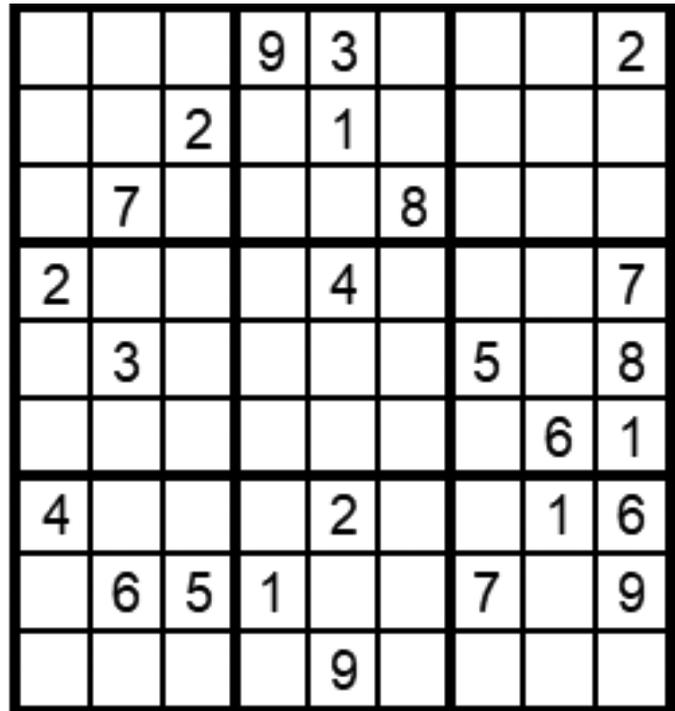
The business meeting was held on Saturday afternoon. Anne Swain presented the Treasurer's Report. On behalf of Andy Mason, she reviewed the Conservation Committee's recent efforts. These included information concerning Barred vs Spotted Owls on the west coast. A recommendation to the NYS Governor to support legislation to protect horseshoe crabs, Piping Plovers at Rockaway Beach and efforts to protect EPCAL here on Long Island. Careena Pooth reviewed the popular County and State listing project that NYSOA has been conducting since 1992; an activity in which many of our members participate. She also discussed the continuing efforts to archive NYSOA reports and publications online. In addition, she discussed the current status of the

Continued on page 14

Word Search - the Bird Version



Sudoku



- | | | |
|--------|---------|-------|
| ALDER | KELP | RAIL |
| ANI | KITE | RED |
| ASH | LAPLAND | SAW |
| BALD | LARK | SHINY |
| BLUE | LOON | SHORT |
| ELF | MACAW | SNOWY |
| EYE | MAG | SWAN |
| FEAS | MEALY | |
| FERAL | MONK | |
| GLOSSY | NEW | |
| GRAY | NODDY | |
| GREAT | NUT | |
| GREEN | OLD | |
| JAR | OWL | |
| JAY | PINE | |

The Laughing Gull

Q: Which bird is always out of breath?

A: A puffin

■■■

Continued from page 12

which has remained steady at 360 members and 42 clubs. Shai Mitra discussed the organization's publication of *The Kingbird*. Patricia Aitken assumed the presidency from outgoing president, Anne Swaim.

As a delegate, I attended the business meeting to learn of progress NYSOA is making on birding and conservation issues and voted on various issues presented to the group.

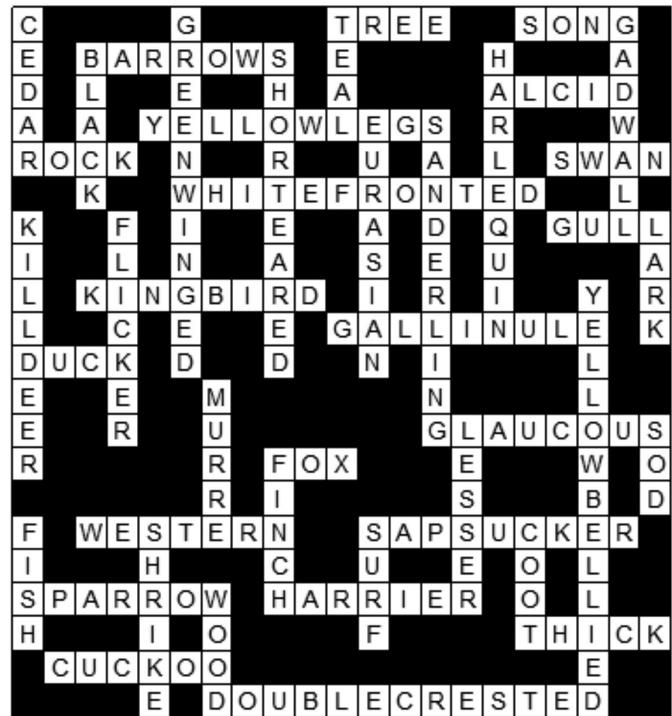
Darlene McNeil also attended.

The conference was hosted by the Cayuga Bird Club. ■

Winter Birding is here.

Take a trip to Montauk or Shinnecock to check out the ducks that spend the winter here.

**Answers to Crossword
Recent Sightings and more...
on page 9
Puzzle by Tom Moran**



Answers to puzzles on page 13

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 2 |
| 6 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 3 |
| 9 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 7 |
| 1 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 8 |
| 7 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| 4 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 6 |
| 3 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| 8 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 5 |



BIRD FOCUS

A Definite Bird that Says Winter is HERE!

Eileen Schwinn

As Osprey and American Oystercatchers announce the arrival of Spring on Eastern Long Island, the arrival of White-throated Sparrows and JUNCOS inform us each year that, even though it's not snowing yet, WINTER IS HERE!

The Junco – The Snowbird!

Not at all colorful, with a dark gray head and back and a white belly, this bird can be found, depending on the season, anywhere in North America. They spend their summers, breeding across Canada and Alaska. The winter brings them to the “warmer” climate of almost every state. They can be found year-round in parts of New England as well as the Rocky Mountains.

There are six subspecies. And until 1983, there were four “different” Juncos you could add to your Life List. Currently, they are “lumped” together as a solo species. It's the Dark-eyed Junco that arrives on Long Island. Usually found here under feeders, in patchy woods, or near brush, one mostly finds the birds together in small, ground-feeding flocks. If you watch them at your feeder over a short period of time, you can see a definite “pecking” order – males first, followed by the slightly lighter colored females, and finally, the youngest birds. Their Latin name comes from *Juncus*, a moisture-loving plant (rushes), and *Hyemalis* “of winter”. They feed on insects as well as seeds – that's why you have them in your yard, especially after a snow fall. Very “flighty” when they are spooked, the flock will retreat to nearby shrubs, and can easily be identified by their white outer tail feathers as they fly away from you.

In a book on my shelf – printed in 1904 *Bird Neighbors – an Introductory Acquaintance with One Hundred and Fifty Birds Commonly Found in the Gardens, Meadows, and Woods About Our Homes*, by Neltje Blanchan (the pseudonym of Mrs. Nellie B DeGraff),

I found this description: “They are trim, sprightly, sleek and even natty: Their dispositions are genial and vivacious, not quarrelsome..... and what is perhaps best about them, they are birds we may surely depend upon seeing in the winter months”. And Miss Florence Merriam, a contemporary of Mrs. DeGraff, describes the Juncos as “little gray-robed monks and nuns”. Both pretty well describe these perennial visitors!

That little bird, with a rather small pink bill, can be very entertaining to watch, especially after a snow fall. If you can, toss some birdseed out on a snow-free patch, or under a shrub – watch them appear! They look like the winter days they are named after – “leaden skies above, snow below”. Enjoy them all winter long – when the snowbirds disappear, you will know Spring Time is right around the corner. ■



Dark-eyed Juncos can easily be identified by their white outer tail feathers as they fly away.. Photo: Colleen DuBois

Photo below; Alan Kolnick



THE OSPREY

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