



Vol. 67, No. 2

May – August 2014

www.rocklandaudubon.org

Rockland Audubon Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 404, New City, NY 10956-0404
845.639.9216

In this issue of *The Observer*:

- Are You Using eBird?
- Fishing Line Recycling Project
- Rediscovering the Great Backyard Bird Count
- President's Message
- Welcome New and Returning Members!
- Notes and Sightings: December 2013 – February 2014
- Upcoming Nature Programs
- Upcoming Field Trips
- Special Announcements

Are You Using eBird?

By Alan Wells, RAS Webmaster

The digital era is revolutionizing birding in so many ways. Now, almost instantaneous, alerts to rare birds are available via cell phone, email, twitter and text. Dozens of reference books and recordings can be carried into the field on a smartphone, meaning help with identification is at your fingertips with digital photographs or voice recorders. You can now navigate to within a few feet of a location or even an individual bird via live satellite mapping programs, and the list goes on. One of the most exciting of these changes, however, is the [eBird](#) project—a collaboration between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society.

Just what is eBird?

It is a global internet tool for birders allowing them to: record sightings, maintain bird lists, visually explore spatial and temporal occurrences of species, share sightings with a wide audience, and probably most importantly, contribute to science and conservation. Although the eBird project was launched in 2002, it has increased tremendously in popularity over the last several years.

eBird is an excellent example of the power of something called “crowd sourcing.” It draws its strength from a large number of individual users, each adding their own small contribution to the whole, in this case bird sightings. The more people participate, the greater the usefulness of the whole. It takes only a few minutes for you to map your location, enter the time spent, and check off the sightings in the electronic data entry form. While strongly encouraged, but not required, the number of individuals of some or all of the species seen may be submitted. Photographs may also be included.

The eBird program automatically builds a report from your entries and adds any new species to your personal world, regional, country, state, and county life lists. Your report is almost instantaneously added to the eBird database where it can be shared with other birders or emailed to friends. To maintain the integrity of the database, a regional reviewer will look over the report and clarify any unusual sightings with you. The whole process is so simple that some people enter the information via smartphone while they are in the field.

OK, so you are not a “lister.” Is there anything else that might be useful to you in this program? Absolutely! Check out the “Explore Data” section of the program. Here you will find a number of useful features, including:

Location – show recent sighting, checklists, birding activity, and best hotspots submitted by eBird contributors from around the world.

Hotspots – quickly locate the most productive birding spots near you or worldwide.


Range and Point Maps – display detailed range and locational information for a given species or subspecies. This can help you find a given species or rarities near you.

Bar Charts – find out what birds to expect throughout the year in a specified region or location. Combined with the hotspots capabilities, you can easily plan when and where to go on your next birding adventure.

Line Graphs – graph the frequency of species occurring on all checklists by week, abundance of species per hour, average count of a species by week, high counts by week, and totals by week.

Without a doubt, however, the most important use of the eBird data is its contribution to scientific study. The simultaneous, near global monitoring of species provides valuable insight into the distribution, movements, abundance and community structure of bird populations. Scientists around the world now have easy access to a resource unavailable any other way.

If you are interested in a one-to-two hour workshop on learning how to use eBird, please send an email to awells@bestweb.net expressing your desire to attend. The workshop will take place on a weeknight in Tomkins Cove and will be limited to 10-12 people. I will notify you of the exact date, time, and location. Topics to be covered include: creating an [eBird](#) account, how to make field observations, recording data and shortcuts to minimize data entry efforts, how to attach photographs, creating reports, running and using the various eBird reports, and exporting data.

eBird  We make it visible.

Home About Submit Observations Explore Data My eBird Help

Hello Alan Wells (awells) | [Preferences](#) | [Sign Out](#) Translate to: [English](#) | [Español](#) | [Français](#) | [Português](#)

Welcome to eBird *Birding in the 21st Century.*


The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Audubon

News and Features


[Pelagic birding in eBird](#)
15 April 2014

Ahoy mateys! Have you ever wondered how to enter your checklists from pelagic trips? Will you be going on a pelagic trip this summer that you plan to enter in eBird? Birding at sea has some challenges that are different from birding on land, but many of the fundamental issues are the same. Birds still have their favorite habitats. Because of this, plotting your location accurately and precisely remains really important. But with the boat constantly moving, this creates some challenges. All of us at Team eBird enjoy pelagic birding more than just about anything, and it remains one of the great frontiers for discovery. To that end, eBird has a new eBird Pelagic Protocol that we hope users will follow on offshore trips. We also have a set of recommendations for how best to log your pelagic birding.




[Robert Sams, March 2014 eBirder of the Month](#)
14 April 2014

We are thrilled to congratulate Robert Sams, of Findlay, Ohio, as the winner of the March eBirder of the Month Challenge, sponsored by Carl Zeiss Sports Optic. Robert submitted a checklist from exactly 20 hotspots this month, including checklists from his home state of Ohio as well (here's a nice example) as from hotspots he visited while traveling in San Francisco, California, and points north (such as this one). Robert will receive a new [ZEISS Conquest HD](#)




Help Support eBird

[Donate Now](#)


BirdCast
Real-Time Bird Migration Forecasts

eBird Rarity Photos Pool



eBird Home Page

Fishing Line Recycling Project

By Donna L. Nye, RAS Member

Birding and fly-fishing are two of my favorite hobbies. Recently, when fishing along the Ramapo River in Orange County, I couldn't help notice the trash left behind in the bushes and along the river banks. Some of that trash included strands of monofilament fishing line.

Monofilament fishing line is non-biodegradable and can last up to 600 years in the environment. Since it is thin and clear, it is difficult for birds and other animals to see. Birds, fish, turtles, and marine mammals may be injured and die as a result of entanglement or ingesting monofilament fishing line.

Rockland Audubon Society is engaged in a project to protect wildlife by capturing and recycling monofilament line. Using a generous Collaborative Funding Grant from Audubon New York for the materials, Ron Conzo constructed twenty receptacles out of white PVC 6" pipes, 32 inches long, with elbow tops and hinged flaps on the openings (to keep birds from trying to use the pipes for nesting.) They also have twist-off bottoms for cleaning. Each container will be mounted on a metal post. The pipes will

have stickers on them to identify Rockland Audubon Society and the intended purpose of the receptacles, in both English and Spanish. Audubon volunteers will be responsible for periodically emptying the containers and shipping the monofilament line to recycling centers.

Popular fishing spots on state, county, and other public lands around Rockland County were identified, and our proposal was presented to the local administrative offices responsible for the locations. The response to this project has been very enthusiastic! We are now working with the governing entities to select the specific sites for installing the containers, and as soon as those sites are approved, Ron will begin installation!

Rediscovering the Great Backyard Bird Count

By Vicki Beaumont, RAS Board Member

Many years ago I began to participate in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). I much prefer it to the Christmas Bird Count, when I'm often too busy with holiday preparations to participate. Added to that is the fact that until this winter, our Decembers haven't been very cold, so the birds have had more food sources than the backyard feeder. By February when the backyard count is held, however, the cold weather has limited the birds' choices for food.

While many of us were dismayed to have so much cold and snow-cover, it did provide me with a view of much more activity at the feeders. I now have a new-found awe and marvel at these beautiful creatures and the variety of their habits and plumage. They truly fill me with wonder and joy.

While every season has its own special beauty, the bare trees, frigid temperatures and white snow this year all contributed to a remarkable display for the backyard bird count!

President's Message

Welcome, survivors of the winter of 2013-2014. I knew you could do it! This past winter will be remembered for near record snowfall and prolonged low temperatures, which was highly unusual for these parts.

In the world of birds, irruptive species, the various finches, Red-breasted Nuthatches and more, were notable for their scarcity. Seed crops up north were apparently abundant enough for the birds to stay there. There were some Northern Shrikes around, but I don't sense it was a banner year for this predatory songbird. The big news for this winter was the unprecedented number of Snowy Owls that moved south. Their numbers probably reached into the thousands and individual birds wandered as far south as Florida and Bermuda.

Traditional wisdom is that large irruptions of Snowy Owls are tied to the scarcity of their principal prey, the lemming. More recent thought, however, suggests that an abundance of lemmings might be a more important factor, as Snowy Owls will have more young during times of abundance. Whatever the reason, these beautiful birds are another reason this past winter was one to remember.

Jim Previdi

Welcome New and Returning Members!

Roberto Arias, Rosemarie August, Bonne J. Baer, Robert Baumann, Mattie Bialer, Edward Clark, Marilyn Cohen, Peter J. Cummins, Norma Eidman, Michael Farley, Libby Gogan, Zissel Hanson, Andrew Hu, Albert E. Jackson, Donna Kanzler, Patricia Kennedy, Maria Lerman, Douglas Mauro, Ann Miller, Molly Muenzen, Sally Muir, Donald Oliver, Ellen Price, Christine Rigney, Edward Russell, Guadalupe Sarracino, Rhoda Shore, Karen Sigua, Robert Slotnick, Elizer Spaeth, Margaret Spinnenweber, Ian Weatherly!

Notes and Sightings:

December 2013 – February 2014

Compiled by Carol Weiss

A short report, but full of RAS members' observations and witticisms. Please send your sightings to cweiss1124@optonline.net or call at 845-358-3659.

Dec. 17: Rockland Lake State Park. As I walked the lake today I found in a tree by the little wooden bridge at the northern end, six Eastern Bluebirds. Several Belted Kingfishers were also here and there. On the ice, 10 Great Blue Herons were sitting together looking none too happy about their decision not to fly south a week or two ago. *Peter Johnson*

Dec. 18: A Snowy Owl on a floating dock south of Petersen's Boatyard in Upper Nyack was spotted during RAS' Christmas Bird Count week!

Jan. 1, 2014: Tallman Mountain State Park. Two dozen American Goldfinches were feeding on a seed ball in an American sycamore, dropping little particles which caught my attention. Nearby, two Tufted Titmice were feeding at the top of a tulip tree, breaking up the seed capsules there. *Carol Weiss*

Jan. 8: At the Little League baseball fields off of Old Orangeburg Rd., I noted an American Tree Sparrow. I also had a brief look at a bird on the ground, moving about the leaf litter that just might have been a Hermit Thrush. It had a white eye-ring, red tail, brown sides with a spotted chest, and was in a small piece of spruce woods. I looked at the range charts and Bob Deed's book, which say it is possible but not probable. As I said, it was but a brief look. *Peter Johnson*

Jan. 9: I saw 25 Bald Eagles today between the Village of Haverstraw and Stony Point Battlefield. I regret that I did not have the benefit of a scope to scan the ice further out. *Doris Metraux*

Jan. 9: While searching the Lake Welch area for the Harriman/Bear Mountain State Park Winter Wildlife Count, Alan Wells and Simon Streatfeild found a Snowy Owl, the first seen in the park since 1953.



Snowy Owl © Alan W. Wells

Jan. 19: Jean Bambury reported a Snowy Owl on the second reservoir in Harriman State Park. The report came from Ed McGowan, who noticed it on eBird.

Jan. 24: Piermont. The air was frigid but the sun was warm. At the end of the pier, a small group of Buffleheads were feeding with three or four male and one female Common Goldeneye at the edge of the ice. On the south side of the pier hundreds of Canada Geese were floating both in the water and on ice floes. A flock of 15 Canvasback joined them. *Linda Pistolesi*

Jan. 27: Spotted a Red-necked Grebe and a Redhead duck, both at Piermont Pier. *Evan Mark*

Jan. 30: Alan Wells reported a Long-tailed Duck and a White-winged Scoter near the end of Piermont Pier. The Long-tailed Duck was photographed by Peter Johnson, Feb. 2.



White-winged Scoter © Alan W. Wells



Long-tailed Duck © Peter Johnson

Feb. 2: Bonnie Koop reported a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Marian Shrine in Stony Point.

Feb. 8: Bonnie Koop took me to see two Snow Buntings she had found on the Marion Shrine property in Stony Point. The two active, chirping buntings were exactly where she left them. *Carol Weiss*

Feb. 16: I was surprised today to see an Eastern Towhee feeding on the seed we started putting out this winter. Didn't get a great picture, but it definitely showed a towhee. Towhees in winter in Montebello? *Marianne Leese*

Feb. 20: Palisades, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. I drove into Lamont with the windows down this sunny, almost 40-degree morning. It seemed a good day for the Red-winged Blackbirds to arrive. They did not disappoint. I spotted one on the highest branch of a sapling near the marsh and could hear its territorial song as I drove by. Spring is near. *Linda Pistolesi*

Upcoming Nature Programs

These programs are made possible through generous donations from our members and friends. Thank you!

Unless otherwise noted, **Nature Programs** are held on the first Friday of each month, September through June, at the **Community Center, Congers Lake Memorial Park**, located at 6 Gilcrest Road, Congers, N.Y., 10920. Meet at 7:00 p.m. for refreshments and conversation, with a one-hour nature program following, beginning at 7:30 p.m. There is plenty of parking near the building, and it is handicap accessible. All RAS programs are open to the public and donations are greatly appreciated to help cover costs. If you would like to contribute a sweet or savory treat for the refreshments table, please add your name to the sign-up sheet at the meeting!

*****PLEASE NOTE DATE, TIME & LOCATION CHANGES FOR OUR MAY PROGRAM!*****

May 9, 2014 6:30 p.m. **Skyhunters In Flight: Live Bird Program**

Location: Street Community Center Auditorium, 31 Zukor Rd, New City, N.Y.



Brian Bradley and Dynamite © Brian Bradley

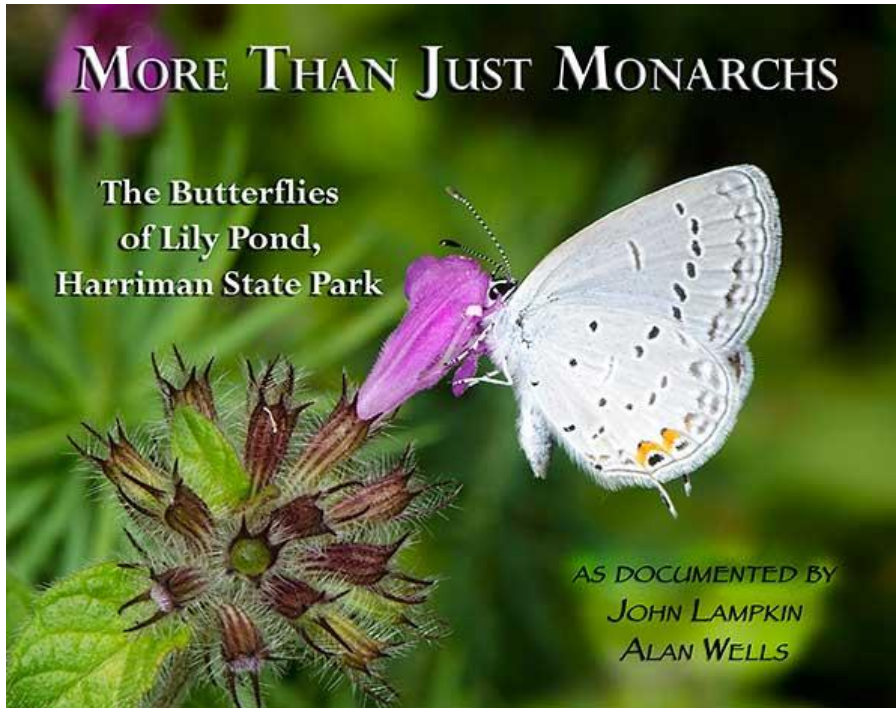
Speaker: Brian Bradley

Join us for an extra-special nature program with Brian Bradley of *Skyhunters In Flight*. Experience an up-close look at several raptors and learn their natural history and biology and how they and other birds of prey are adapted to play a vital role at the top of the food chain in our environment. We will go outside to watch Brian demonstrate a live flight with a hawk and see a falcon chase a man-made lure at high speed, honing his skills for the hunt!

The program will be preceded by a short business meeting to present the slate and elect our 2014-2015 Board of Directors.

Jun. 6, 2014

More Than Just Monarchs



Eastern Tailed-Blue © John Lampkin

Speaker: John Lampkin

Rockland County is home to at least 84 butterfly species, as documented by RAS member John Lampkin. Some are stunningly beautiful, others rather plain, but all have stories to tell. Where do they hang out? What plants are adults and caterpillars associated with? These are just some of the questions John will answer with an artistic and enlightening photo presentation about our local lepidopterans.

Upcoming Field Trips

Note: Please call the trip leader 24 hours ahead if you plan to join the group at the field trip site, rather than the designated meeting place. **Please check** <http://www.rocklandaudubon.org/> **for updates!**

Audubon in the Parks is an initiative with Audubon New York and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation to advance bird conservation in State parks. To highlight this partnership, RAS is proud to offer an **Audubon in the Parks** series of walks.

May 4 (Sun) – First Sunday Walk in Kakiat County Park

Meet Peter Johnson at 8 a.m. in the Kakiat parking lot, Route 202, Montebello. Park entrance is directly opposite the drive to Viola School. Look for resident and migrating bird species. Trip will run 2 to 2.5 hours. 914-261-2895

May 11 (Sun) – Winding Waters Trail (Walkkill River NWR)

Meet Della and Alan Wells at 7 a.m. at the Commuter Parking Lot on Route 9W in Stony Point (just south of Hogan's Diner). Look for migrants and nesting birds along the Winding Waters Trail in Walkkill River National Wildlife Refuge. Bring water, snack, and insect repellent. 845-942-5751

May 12 (Mon) – Doodletown (Audubon in the Parks**)**

Meet Carol Weiss at 7 a.m. at the pull-off on Route 9W, south of Bear Mountain, just north of the Iona Island causeway for an early morning trek up Doodletown Road in Bear Mt. State Park. Look for neotropical migrants. Bring a drink and snack and expect a four-hour trip. 845-358-3659

Big Bird Day – Dates TBA

Look for details in the May reminder

May 24-26 (Sat-Mon) – Birding Delaware, Memorial Day Weekend (3-day Trip)

Call Alan and Della Wells for details 845-942-5751

May 31 (Sat) – Galeville Airport During Nesting Season

Meet Della and Alan Wells at 7 a.m. at the commuter parking lot on Route. 9W, Stony Point (just south of Hogan's Diner) Shawangunk Grasslands NWR is a hotspot for grassland birds. 845-942-5751

June 1 (Sun) – First Sunday Walk in Kakiat County Park

Meet Carol Weiss at 8 a.m. in the Kakiat parking lot, Route 202 in Montebello. Park entrance is directly opposite the drive to Viola School. Trip will run 2 to 2.5 hours. 845-358-3659

June 8 (Sun) – Doodletown for Beginners (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Della and Alan Wells at 8 a.m. at the pull-off on Route 9W, south of Bear Mountain, just north of the Iona Island causeway. Practice bird ID and binocular use. Some uphill walking. 845-942-5751

June 14 (Sat) – Bird Walk at Stony Point Battlefield (Audubon in the Parks)

Co-sponsored with Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site. Meet Alan and Della Wells at 8 a.m. in the main parking lot at the end of Battlefield Rd., accessed from Park Rd., off Route 9W in Stony Point. Come celebrate New York Parks Heritage Weekend with an early summer stroll in search of birds at this beautiful historic site on the Hudson River. 845-942-5751, park phone 845-786-2521

June 15 (Sun) – Dragons & Damsels of Rockland (Audubon in the Parks)

Meet Alan and Della Wells at 9 a.m. at the commuter parking lot, Route 9W in Stony Point (just south of Hogan's Diner) for carpooling. Learn to identify common dragonflies and damselflies at Lily Pond in Harriman State Park. Bring water, a snack and binoculars. Confirm if rainy or overcast. 845-942-5751

July 6 (Sun) – First Sunday Walk in Kakiat County Park

Meet Peter Johnson at 8 a.m. in the Kakiat parking lot, Route 202, Montebello. Park entrance is directly opposite the drive to Viola School. Look for resident and migrating bird species. Trip will run 2 to 2.5 hours. 914-261-2895

Aug. 3 (Sun) – First Sunday Walk in Kakiat County Park

Meet Carol Weiss at 8 a.m. in the Kakiat parking lot, Route 202, Montebello. Park entrance is directly opposite the drive to Viola School. Look for resident and migrating bird species. Trip will run 2 to 2.5 hours. 845-358-3659

Aug. 10 (Sun) – Birds and Cameras at Jamaica Bay

Meet Alan and Della Wells at 7:30 a.m. at the Commuter Parking Lot, Route 303 North in West Nyack, for carpooling to this birding hot spot. Alan's group will photograph shorebirds and Della's group will not. Full day trip. 845-942-5751

Special Announcements

Upcoming Presentations:

Lorrie Pallant, RAS Education Chair

"Birding by Ear"

May 5 (7 p.m.) at Valley Cottage Library

Tom Fuller, RAS Member

"Have You Seen a Bluebird Lately?"

June 2 (7 p.m.) at Valley Cottage Library

Birds and Windmills:

In case you missed the small, late edition note in a recent edition of Audubon magazine about protecting raptors from windmill deaths, you may send any comments to the Department of the Interior at: U.S. Dept. Of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20240, or send an email to feedback@ios.doi.gov.

Change to Publication Schedule for *The Observer*:

REMINDER...Starting with *The Observer* 67(1), the publication schedule has changed to three issues annually, covering January through April, May through August, and September through December. *The Observer* is distributed electronically to members who provide an email address. Those members who do not have email can elect to receive a paper copy via US Mail. Please contact Della Wells, RAS Membership Chairperson, at dmwells@optonline.net or 845-942-5751 to be added to our electronic distribution list or to request a member's paper copy. Monthly reminders will continue to be sent electronically to members and friends for whom we have email addresses.

Mission of Rockland Audubon Society

An all-volunteer chapter of the National Audubon Society, Rockland Audubon Society's mission is to promote environmental conservation and foster an appreciation of birds and nature through education programs and activities.

Board of Directors* and Committee Members

President	Jim Previdi*	Secretary	Karen D'Alessandri*
Vice President	Karen D'Alessandri*	Treasurer	Della Wells*
Conservation	Vicki Beaumont*	Fundraising	Karen D'Alessandri*
Education & Outreach	Joanna Galdone*	Hospitality	Peter Johnson*
	Joanna Galdone*	Hotline Phone	Ron Conzo*
	Lorrie Pallant*	Membership	Della Wells*
	Jim Previdi*	Publicity	Caroline McDonald*
	Julia Warger*	Programs	Julia Warger*
E-contacts	Della Wells*	Webmaster	Alan Wells
Field Trips	Jim Previdi*		

Membership

To join, send a \$20 check payable to **National Audubon Society** to:

Della Wells, RAS Membership Chairperson
9 Dunderberg Road
Tomkins Cove, NY 10986-1003

Allow four to eight weeks for delivery of *Audubon Magazine* and *The Observer*.

The Observer

Editing	Caroline McDonald
Layout	Della Wells
Copyediting	Alan Wells
	Della Wells

Newsletter submissions welcome!

Please send your contributions for *The Observer* to Caroline McDonald at carolinem38a@gmail.com. The editor reserves the right to edit any copy for clarity, accuracy and space requirements.

When reprinting, please credit the author and *The Observer* of Rockland Audubon Society.

Copyright © 2014 Rockland Audubon Society Inc., All rights reserved.