

The Kestrel

NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON CHAPTER FOR CENTRAL NEW YORK AND THE EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO BASIN

Vol. 57 | No. 1

Spring/Summer 2026

ONONDAGA
Audubon



SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMS AND EVENTS



ANDREW HUDNUT

Andrew Hudnut leading a group on a guided workshop.

Andrew Hudnut Wildlife Photography Courses Open House

Wed., February 11, 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
East Syracuse Library
4990 James St.
East Syracuse, NY 13057

Wildlife photographer and educator Andrew Hudnut will host an open house to introduce his upcoming wildlife photography workshops. Photographers of all experience levels are encouraged to attend. Onondaga Audubon members will receive a discount on all workshops. More information is available at andrewhudnutphotography.com, and Andrew can be reached at andrewhudnut247@gmail.com.

Volunteer Orientation
March 26th

Online!
Zoom Invitation provided when registered.
6 - 7:30 PM
RSVP required.

Join the team to help conserve Piping Plovers!

ONONDAGA Audubon
Nina House

NINA HOUSE

NYS Great Lakes Piping Plover Volunteer Orientation Webinar

Thurs., March 26, 6 -7:30 p.m.

Virtual through Zoom.

Scan the QR code on image to register!

The NYS Great Lakes Piping Plover Recovery Program 2026 season is coming up. The program is looking for volunteers to assist with monitoring and outreach. If interested in becoming a volunteer, join this online orientation and training to learn how to help. Scan the QR code on the left to register!

Invasives Removal Training

Sat. June 6, 9 a.m.

3415 Oran Gulf Road, Manlius

Join us for an introduction to common invasive plant species with experts John Rybinski and George Spak. Participants will take a short walk through the woods to learn how to identify and manage invasives such as buckthorn, bush honeysuckle, bitter-sweet, swallowwort, and phragmites. Wear sturdy shoes, dress for the outdoors, and don't forget insect repellent. Bring water, snacks or lunch, and optional tools (clippers, nippers, or a shovel) if you'd like hands-on practice. Binoculars are encouraged for birders. The program will last about 3 hours.

Ornithology Art Night

Wednesday, March 4, 5:30-7 p.m.

Baltimore Woods Nature Center
4007 Bishop Hill Road.
Marcellus, NY 13108

Join us for a creative evening of bird sketching with naturalist and artist Anna Stunkel. Participants will draw from Baltimore Woods' taxidermy bird specimens, offering a unique chance to study details up close. All skill levels are welcome. Some supplies will be provided, but you are welcome to bring your own. Space is limited, and registration through the Baltimore Woods website is required.

<https://baltimorewoods.org/event/ornithology-art-night/>



Examples of participants' drawings from past Art Nights.

The Kestrel

Editors Kayla Fisk, Andrew Hagemann, Molly English-Bowers

Officers, Chairs, and Directors 2025-2026

President Dori Joiner
Vice President Alison Kocek
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Lights Out CNY Emma Borys
Sanctuaries Meredith Barges
Directors Dave Fitch
Maryanne Adams, Meredith Barges, Emma Borys, Kayla Fisk, Danielle Davignon, Kennedy Sullivan

Join

To become a member of Onondaga Audubon Society, please send your name, address, and a check for \$15 payable to Onondaga Audubon Society to the address below. Chapter-only members receive *The Kestrel* newsletter. For information on National Audubon Society membership, please visit audubon.org. Joint members with National Audubon receive *The Kestrel* plus *Audubon* magazine.

Volunteer

If you would like to talk to a committee chair about how you might help, contact OnAudubonCom@gmail.com, and a representative will contact you.

Donate

If you would like to help us achieve our mission, you can do so by mailing a check to:

Onondaga Audubon Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 620
Syracuse, NY 13201

Stay in touch

Letters to the editor may be sent to OnAudubonCom@gmail.com or to the address above.

Visit our website: OnondagaAudubon.com



If you would like to receive *The Kestrel* by email only, please send your request to OAS.Membership@gmail.com.

If you would like to receive email reminders about public programs and field trips, send an email to OAS.Programs@gmail.com with the word *Subscribe* in the subject line.

Problems with subscriptions should be referred to the membership chair at OAS.Membership@gmail.com.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hope for the Future

By Dorothy "Dori" Joiner
President

My contribution to this newsletter is unlike my earlier pieces, but its message is essential for everyone to embrace in their lives now.

As you may have heard, Jane Goodall—the pioneering primatologist renowned for her work with chimpanzees—recently passed away. Her death profoundly moved me, prompting me to dive more deeply into her life, especially her later years. What I discovered was truly inspiring: when her field studies concluded, she didn't simply retire—she transformed into a passionate advocate. And not just for chimpanzees, but for a broader cause: encouraging all of us—humans and animals—to live harmoniously on our shared planet.

Goodall believed in our interconnectedness. She recognized that humans, animals, and ecosystems are intricately intertwined, and that our actions have far-reaching ripple effects. She dedicated herself to conservation, speaking out against habitat destruction, climate change, and resource depletion—and yet, she wasn't an alarmist. Instead of wielding fear, she chose to uplift and empower, especially young people. She urged us to take responsibility, reminding us that "Every person makes some sort of impact on the planet, and we get to choose what sort of difference we make."

Her message was one of hope, emphasizing kindness over harsh rhetoric. She believed in empathy, respect, and connection, inspiring others to heal the planet through compassionate choices. In "*The Book of Hope*," written by Goodall and Douglas Abrams, she highlights four reasons for hope: the amazing human intellect, the resilience of nature, the power of young people, and the indomitable human spirit.

While Jane worked to inspire conservation on a global level, there is much we can learn from her to enhance

our local ecosystems, ultimately benefiting birds, wildlife and, in turn, ourselves. We all can do little things, which accumulate and result in a big effect.

Here are some suggestions for small actions that can make a significant impact if we all do our part:

Reduce Microplastic Pollution:

Eliminate single-use plastics from your life.

Conserve Resources: Avoid wasting water, paper, and energy.

Reduce Your Carbon Footprint:

Walk, bike, take public transportation, or carpool.

Stop Using Chemicals and Pesticides:

Don't use them on lawns and gardens, as they can harm beneficial insects that are pollinators and provide food for birds.

Plant Native Species: Choose native plants that offer food and shelter for local birds and wildlife. Remove invasive plant species to help native plants thrive.

Create a Meadow: Eliminate lawn by planting native wildflowers to create a meadow. This will reduce the need for mowing and provide food for pollinators, potentially supporting the insect populations that many birds depend on for sustenance.

Advocate for Habitat Protection:

Write and sign letters and petitions to protect habitats from encroachment by human activities—the proposal to fill in vital wetlands for the construction of chip fabrication plants, such as Micron, for example.

By taking these steps together, we can make a positive impact on our environment. But we must act now! Jane realized that there is a limited window of time to reverse the damage already done to the planet, and she felt a strong urgency to spread her conservation message. Please continue to advocate for her cause and take action to protect our fragile yet resilient Earth.

SANCTUARIES

Maintenance and Remediation

By David Fitch
Sanctuary Chair

I am pleased to announce that 2025 Counter David Brown has communicated his intention to return to Derby Hill for a second season. Please join me in welcoming him back.

We managed to complete cutting the fields at both lookouts in October through a partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and contracting the labor with Bill Thurlow of Fulton.

A telescoping pole has been positioned just beyond the west hedge-row at the north lookout for the purpose of mounting a decoy owl. The majority of hawk watches that I have visited have such decoys, which occasionally draw migrating raptors closer for the enjoyment of visitors and photographers. Having the decoy mounted on a collapsible pole will make it simpler to display and remove. The pole, decoy, concrete, and stone were all donated.

Kennedy Sullivan is taking the lead in exploring grants for invasive

species removal and some physical improvements at the north lookout. Stay tuned.



Cut fields at the North Lookout.



Owl decoy to draw migrating raptors closer.

If you would like to receive the 2025 Derby Hill Bird Observatory Rough-leg newsletter and be added to the mailing list for future issues, please contact: oas.membership@gmail.com

DAVE FITCH

DAVE FITCH

Raptor Academy

Onondaga Audubon is pleased to host its Raptor Academy once again. Join Kayla Fisk in a series of Zoom webinars taking place over several weeks starting in late February and continuing into March. After the virtual sessions, several in-person field trips will take place where participants can get hands-on practice IDing birds of prey as they migrate over Derby Hill Bird Observatory.

These Zoom meetings will cover topics such as:

- The history of Derby Hill
- Why it's one of the northeast's premier hawkwatching sites.
- Raptor Ecology
- Conservation and Advocacy
- As well as Raptor ID

If you have any questions, feel free to email Kayla at Fisk.audubon@gmail.com.

Dates through Zoom:
February 26 and March 5, 12 at 6 p.m.

Scan the QR code or visit:
www.tinyurl.com/OASRaptorAcademy



CONSERVATION

Reasons to Care About Preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

By Maryanne Adams
Conservation Chair

For decades, conservation groups and eco-conscious individuals have been striving to obtain permanent protection for the pristine ecosystem called the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). These 19.6 million acres of land, most of which are in northeastern Alaska, are one of the last unspoiled places on earth.

The Trump administration just opened 1.5 million acres of the ANWR to oil and gas drilling. Why should people in the lower 48 states

even care about what happens so far away? Because we are connected to it. Many bird species that spend time here depend on land in Alaska for part of their life cycles.

Over the years, Onondaga Audubon has taken action to protect ANWR, including:

- meeting at Rep. Elise Stefanik's Watertown office in 2017 to talk about the value of the refuge;
- sending an action alert for chapter members, asking them to contact their reps (Claudia Tenney, Stefanik, and John Katko) about protecting the refuge;
- sending a letter from the chapter to Katko explaining why the ANWR needed protection and participating in a video conference with his office;

- writing a letter to the editor, published in *The Watertown Daily Times*, giving Stefanik credit for voting in favor of protecting the refuge;
- sending a lengthy letter to the Bureau of Land Management with all the reasons why we should protect the ANWR; and
- attending a hearing on June 15, 2018, in Washington, D.C., to offer comment about protecting ANWR (Defenders of Wildlife provided transportation and a hotel room for Pat Parkhurst and me).

The arguments in favor of preserving the refuge are as valid today as they were 20 years ago. In fact, in the context of today's world, they are even stronger. Undisturbed areas are

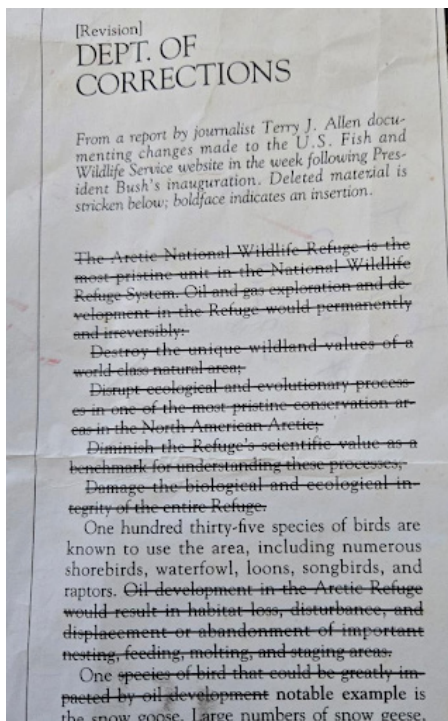
Continued on page 4

disappearing, and those that remain are even more crucial for the wildlife that needs them. Also, if we want to slow down the negative effects of climate change, it is more important than ever to “keep it (fossil fuel) in the ground” and to pursue alternative sources of energy that are less harmful to the planet.

For more than 20 years, every time an administration with a “green” agenda took power, it was hoped that the refuge would receive permanent protected status. Unfortunately, that never happened. At the same time, energy companies and our own government tried to manipulate the truth and portray the ANWR as nothing more than a wasteland.

In June 2001, *Harper's Magazine* shared an excerpt from a report by journalist Terry J. Allen that documented changes made to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website immediately after President George W. Bush took office. By deleting information that explained the importance of keeping the ANWR off limits to oil and gas exploration, it decreased the likelihood of public opposition to doing just that. The deleted text is shown with a line drawn through it:

MARYANNE ADAMS



What they did not want the public to know

In addition to this, according to those supporting the “drill, baby, drill” mentality, the rich oil reserves beneath the surface were going to waste. It did not matter that the infrastructure that would be required to get to the area, assess the deposits, drill for the oil, and bring it back to refineries would make this oil more expensive than more accessible reserves.

The points I made when speaking at the hearing in Washington, D.C., in 2018, remain valid today because the refuge remains pristine and the wildlife that has depended on it for millennia still needs a place to live and reproduce. Here is a portion of my commentary:

“The mission of the Bureau of Land Management is ‘to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of future generations.’ The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is a place that must be preserved in its current pristine state for future generations of wildlife and humans. Oil exploration and drilling in this magnificent, biologically diverse ecosystem will cause irreversible harm.

Avian species from six continents and all 50 states use the refuge as a place to create the next generation. The fact that the Arctic Tern flies 12,000 miles from Antarctica to breed within ANWR boundaries indicates the importance of the refuge. Almost every bird species on earth is already in decline due to habitat loss, climate change, and pollution. Adding the loss of crucial breeding grounds would significantly accelerate the decline of the bird species that depend on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for reproduction.

Species that would be especially impacted by oil drilling on the Coastal Plain are the shorebirds that use this area for breeding. Here’s the list: Black-bellied Plover, American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Wandering Tattler, Spotted Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Baird’s Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Dunlin, Stilt Sandpiper,

Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, and Red Phalarope (from *Arctic Wings, Birds of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*).

Although we don’t see these species every day, birders in the Lower 48 are quite aware of shorebird migration and take advantage of any opportunity to catch a glimpse of iconic species like the Buff-breasted Sandpiper that follow flyways over the continent on their journey north. Because they nest on the ground in the open, all shorebirds are particularly vulnerable to the predators that are drawn to manmade disturbance. Oil exploration would require that roads, buildings and industrial facilities be built. This construction would fragment and degrade the habitat so much that nests would be abandoned or perhaps not even made.

The worst-case scenario of a major oil spill is unthinkable. We already know what that looks like. Should that happen, cleanup would be challenging, and restoration of the land to its previous pristine conditions would be impossible.

The best-case scenario for the Coastal Plain, should oil leasing occur, would be habitat fragmentation, noise and light pollution, and the presence of humans. Breeding birds would experience less nesting success and serious population declines. There is no such thing as ‘drilling responsibly’ when considering the ability to avoid creating a negative impact on avian populations that nest on the ground.

Surveys conducted in 2002 and 2004 indicate that 14 species of breeding shorebirds (more than 230,000 individuals) were present on the Coastal Plain (*The Condor* 109(1):1-14. 2007). Many of these species are in decline, and increased disturbance to their breeding grounds would put them at greater risk than ever before. In addition, more current data needs to be obtained. The statistics cited here merely provide baseline information, which does, however, indicate the importance of the Coastal Plain



Buff-breasted Sandpiper displaying on nesting ground on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

SUBHANKAR BANERJEE

The Importance of Native Plants

by Kayla Fisk
Education Chair

Many of us want to help birds, but when it comes to knowing how, it can feel overwhelming. Luckily, it can be as simple as what you plant in your own yard.

The birds around us have co-evolved with the plant and insect life that call New York home. In recent times, people have imported plants from other countries, and yards and landscapes have begun filling up with these non-native and invasive species of flora. While this may not seem like an issue, that's until you realize the scale at which these plants have replaced our native species. Look through your yard. How many of these plants are truly native? Is your yard filled with species such as Autumn Olive, Japanese Honeysuckle, or various non-native turf grass species?

It is no secret that birds need insects; for example, a single pair of chickadees needs over 6,000 caterpillars to successfully fledge one clutch. That's a lot of caterpillars! And that's where the main issue with non-native plants comes in — since they are so new to our local ecosystem, many insect species can't use these plants as a food source. As a result, these plants can't sustain much insect life or diversity. Native species, on the other hand, can host hundreds of species of caterpillars, especially oaks. It all comes down to a simple equation — the more native plants, the more insects, and finally, the more food for birds.

Even small changes make a difference. Replacing part of a lawn with native flowers, shrubs, or trees can transform a yard into a functioning habitat. When many people take these small steps, the collective impact can help counter habitat loss — one of the leading causes of bird population declines.

So, the next time you are purchasing plants for your yard, make sure they're native; your local birds will thank you!

A handy resource to check out to get ideas on what to plant can be found at: www.audubon.org/native-plants

for shorebirds. *The Condor* article stated that 'Existing studies are insufficient to predict or mitigate the potential impacts of development on shorebirds within the coastal plain because population sizes and the distribution of nesting shorebirds are unknown.' At the very least, more surveys should be carried out before determining that the area is appropriate for development and will not cause irreparable harm to avian species in the balance.

As taxpayers, we see our dollars applied to projects that do not appear to be of any direct benefit to us as individuals. Although we may never even see some of the things our money is used for, we are expected to contribute. In this case, although I may personally never set foot in the Arctic Refuge, I feel connected to the birds that migrate through New York State and breed in the ANWR, and I want them to continue to be protected.

Unfortunately, pressure to open the ANWR to development is increasing exponentially. According to Joe Balash, President Trump's appointee for Assistant Interior Secretary for Land and Minerals Management during his first term, there is a new mission to be accomplished. He says that "Developing our resources

there (in the ANWR) is an important facet for meeting our nation's energy demands and achieving energy dominance." This mission continues in Trump's second term.

I disagree. In my opinion, the Bureau of Land Management should not endorse the sacrifice of the Coastal Plain—the nursery for porcupine, caribou, denning polar bears, and breeding shorebirds to reach this dubious goal. Instead, they should keep the facets sparkling on the gem that is the ANWR by preventing oil drilling there.

Can the Bureau of Land Management look profiteers in the eye and say, "No! Oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is not a sustainable process and runs contrary to our mission to ensure the enjoyment of the refuge for future generations?"

It seems that legislation for preserving the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is currently unlikely. However, if energy companies determine that developing resources in Alaska is too costly, leases for energy exploration and oil drilling will not be purchased. Finally, as the last line of defense, lawsuits for protecting public land are being filed by conservation groups like Earthjustice. It remains to be seen what the outcome will be.

BIRDATHON

Spring Birdathon

By Paul Richardson
Birdathon Coordinator

The 2026 Onondaga Audubon Birdathon will be held Saturday, May 16. Both competitive and recreational teams are invited to take part. We also encourage teams to raise funds in support of Onondaga Audubon's mission to conserve birds and their habitats here in Central and Northern New York.

The Rules

When: Saturday, May 16, anytime between midnight and midnight May 17—no rain date!

Where: Anywhere you like within Jefferson, Lewis, Onondaga, Oswego, Madison, Oneida, Herkimer Counties, plus Cayuga County north of Route 31.

Teams: Join another, form your own, or go solo—no assigned territories.

Count: Carefully identify species by sight and/or ear—follow the honor system, please.

As we approach Birdathon Day on May 17, we will be posting additional information on our social media pages as well as the Onondaga Audubon website (onondagaaudubon.com/Birdathon/).

Records to Beat

Most People: 43 teams, 116 birders (1999)

Most Funds: \$7,500 (2001)

Most Money / Team: \$2,251 (2025)

Most Species Combined: 209 (2011)

Most Species / Team: 158 (2013)

For More Information:

onondagaaudubon.com/Birdathon. Sign up now for this exciting bird-watching event and help support Onondaga Audubon's local education and bird sanctuary priorities. Contact Paul Richardson at richardsonp.audubon@gmail.com.

The 2025 Birdathon raised nearly \$5,000. The top two team donations were Marsh Madness with \$2,251 (a new team donation record) and Total Eclipse of the Redstart with \$725. Below is the full list of the 2025 team donations.

Updated 2025 Team Donations

Team Name	Total Donations
Bluebirds	\$100
Marsh Madness	\$2,251
Old Gray Gnatcatcher	\$200
Osprey Can you See	\$175
The Blackburnians	\$651
Total Eclipse of the Redstart	\$725
What the Hawk?	\$550
Wrenegades	\$303
ALL TEAMS COMBINED	\$4,955

Thank you to everyone who participated or donated to the 2025 Birdathon!

Birds and Dark Skies Win in Homer

By Meredith Barges
Chair of Lights Out CNY

This summer brought a heart-lifting victory for conservation in Homer in Cortland County. After three years of advocacy led by Dark Sky Homer and more than 900 residents signing petitions, the Homer Town Board voted down a proposal to install illuminated billboards along the I-81 highway through their town.

The vote showed how powerful local conservation campaigns can be—and how willing town leaders are to consider science and community input in choosing long-term environmental protections over short-term gains. In an area of rich natural heritage, the Homer Town Board's decision demonstrated forward-thinking leadership: practical, community-minded, and protective of the ecosystems that make Central New York special.

After the win, lead Dark Sky Homer member Karen Dudgeon posted a powerful quote from Margaret Mead on their Facebook page, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change

the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Lights Out Central New York supported these efforts by voicing opposition to the plan in a July letter. We emphasized that Homer sits in a biodiverse hotspot along the Atlantic Flyway, a migratory superhighway used by hundreds of millions of birds each spring and fall. Most migratory birds migrate at night, when cooler temperatures, calmer air, and fewer predators make flying safer. But artificial lighting, including LED lights on billboards, can lure migrating birds fatally off course.

Studies from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and New York City Audubon show that bright nighttime lighting can disorient birds, causing them to circle, call in distress, burn through critical migration energy reserves, or even fatally collide with structures. Sometimes, whole flocks collide with over-lit structures.

Light pollution affects many of the species we cherish, including Common Yellowthroats, Nashville Warblers, Ovenbirds, Black-and-White Warblers, Swainson's Thrushes, White-throated Sparrows, and more. Light pollution can also harm

nocturnally active birds like Barred Owls and Eastern Screech Owls by delaying their hunting patterns, reducing foraging success, and interfering with the darkness on which their specialized vision depends.

This issue doesn't just affect birds. Illuminated billboards contribute to persistent skyglow and cause glare and wider ecological disturbances. They also draw down electricity from our regional grid that is still mostly fueled by natural gas and nuclear power, leading to greenhouse gas emissions and forever nuclear waste. With artificial nighttime lighting in North America increasing by more than 10% annually, preventing light pollution by protecting darkness has never been more urgent.

By choosing to block illuminated billboards, Homer's Town Board not only saved their community's character and thousands of watts of energy, but safeguarded an irreplaceable natural asset: the night itself. Their decision will help keep the Atlantic Flyway safer, the stars brighter, and the nighttime world more brimming with life—the wingbeats of bird migration—for generations to come.

FIELD TRIPS, CLASSES, AND EVENTS: January 2026-August 2026

Please contact the trip leader at least two days in advance for sign-up. Trips will be limited to a certain number of participants, and sign-up is required. Trip leaders will limit the number of people as they see fit; they will reveal the time and meeting place when each participant enrolls. People who don't sign up in advance may be allowed to participate only if space is available.

Pop-up Field Trips. Additional trips may become available and will be announced one to two weeks in advance on social media, so keep an eye out for these special events.

Welcome to all beginning birders! We hope you'll join us this spring to enjoy birds migrating back to their summer nesting grounds. Please bring binoculars if you have them; if not, let the leader know, as you may be able to borrow a pair. Be sure to dress according to the weather and wear appropriate footwear. Bring water and snacks if you need them.

Biweekly trips to Onondaga Lake Creekwalk Trail

More details will be provided on Social Media as soon as they are available.

Creekwalk at Onondaga Lake
Sundays, Jan. 25, Feb. 8, Feb. 22, and March 8

Contact Fred Leff at (315) 956-0462, fredleff@verizon.net.

On Jan. 25, Fred will lead short bird walks to Onondaga Lake in search of our wintering Bald Eagles. In past years, we have observed them in great numbers. Only about a half-mile of the trail will be open, and it could be slippery. These walks are open to all levels of birders. Besides Bald Eagles, we should see many wintering ducks, such as Goldeneyes, Scaup, and Mergansers. These walks will be relatively short, at least an hour, but Fred may stay longer.

This year has been an irruption year so far. Therefore, additional trips may be added during the winter months, depending on weather conditions and bird activity. Check Facebook for announcements on these special events.

The Hunt for Winter Gulls Saturday Feb. 14

Fred Leff: (315) 956-0462,
fredleff@verizon.net.

Fred Leff will lead a trip to look for winter gulls and waterfowl. We will most

likely see Scoters, Long-tailed Ducks, wintering loons and grebes, and possibly Glaucous and/or Iceland Gulls. We will begin at the Inner Harbor, continue to the East Shore trail at the Liverpool Marina, then drive to Oswego County, ending at the Oswego Harbor. Carpooling is highly recommended as we will cover a lot of area. Contact Fred for the starting time.

Spring Outing at the Inner Harbor and Onondaga Lake Shoreline Saturday, March 21

Fred Leff: (315) 956-0462,
fredleff@verizon.net.

Fred will lead a hike to the Syracuse Inner Harbor to look for waterfowl and wintering gulls. We will then drive to the Destiny USA "Pink" lot (park near number 3) and walk the Creekwalk to the Onondaga Lake shoreline where the wintering Bald Eagles roost. Spotting scopes are highly recommended.

Derby Hill Bird Observatory

Leader: Anna Stunkel (appywalker@gmail.com)

Join former hawk counter Anna Stunkel for a day at Derby Hill, one of North America's best spring raptor migration sites. Contact Anna to sign up and let her know if you need to borrow a pair of binoculars. A spotting scope will be available to share. If it is a good flight day, the trip may continue further into the afternoon.

Saturday, March 28, 10 a.m.-noon

This is the peak time for many adult raptors. Along with Turkey Vultures and Red-tailed Hawks, we may expect to see Red-shouldered and Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harrier, and both Bald and Golden Eagles.

Saturday, April 25, 10 a.m.-noon

The second field trip to Derby Hill falls when broad-winged hawk numbers are often high, and all of the 15 regularly occurring raptor species are likely visible.

Birding by Ear for Beginners

Danielle Davignon
dldavignon@gmail.com
Wendy Kurlowicz wak468@gmail.com

If you are a beginner birder, learning to identify birds by their songs and calls is a useful skill. During four evening classroom sessions, we'll teach you how to actively listen for bird songs/calls, describe their characteristics, and use memory aids to arrive at a bird identification.

Key bird songs will be reviewed in detail during the class, and then simple homework assignments will build on your knowledge. Class will include lots of repetition, allowing you to hone your skills. Following the classroom sessions, four or more field trips during peak spring migration will present lots of opportunities to practice your skills and gain confidence in your identifications.

Class is open to all Onondaga Audubon members. No prior birding experience is necessary to join the class. Class size is limited to 10 participants. Students must be present for all four evening classes, willing to do homework, and attend at least three field trips. Contact Danielle or Wendy for more information or to sign up for the class.

Class info:

Tuesdays, April 7, 14, 21, 28, 6-8 p.m.

Location: Onondaga Lake Visitor Center

Tentative Field Trip Dates/Locations:

subject to change based on weather
Saturday, May 2, 8-11 a.m. Green Lakes State Park

Wednesday, May 6, 6-8 p.m. Barry Park

Saturday, May 9, 8-11 a.m. Green Lakes State Park

Saturday, May 16, 8-11 a.m. Erie Canal towpath

Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area.

Saturday, May 9

Fred Leff: (315) 956-0462,
fredleff@verizon.net.

Contact Fred Leff for the meeting time and location. This trip will cover 3 to 4 miles in no more than 4 hours, taking birders to various locations in the area. We should see many early migrants, including warblers and other birds typical of northern hardwood forests.

Split Rock Quarry and the Bike Park,

Saturday, May 30

Smoral Road, Camillus
Fred Leff: (315) 956-0462,
fredleff@verizon.net.

Leaders: Fred Leff, Mary, and CJ Harkola. Contact Fred for the meeting time and specific location. We will be walking about 3 miles in 3-4 hours. We should see late migrants, including many warblers, vireos, flycatchers, and thrushes. We will probably see Common Gallinules as well.

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Sustainability Practices

Onondaga Audubon is committed to environmentally responsible practices. This piece is printed at Jacobs Press, an environmentally-conscious facility run by 100% wind power, on paper from tree farms with sustainable production methods in which nearly all waste paper, plastic, wood, and metal is recycled.



Blue-winged Teal on Onondaga Lake.

KAYLA FISK

FIELD TRIPS: January 2026- August 2026 *Continued from page 7*

Labrador Hollow, including Markam Hollow Road, Saturday, June 6

Contact Michele Nelligan (315) 450-6860; michele.neligan@gmail.com or Fred Leff: (315) 956-0462, fredleff@verizon.net.

Labrador Hollow Unique Area sits south of Syracuse in the town of Fabius. We will walk the boardwalk and Markham Hollow Road in search of Canada Warblers, Alder Flycatchers and Black-billed Cuckoos. Several birds will be breeding by now. The walk may take up to 3 hours. This is an easy walk, mostly on a boardwalk and paved road. We may walk on some trails that are a bit uneven but well-maintained.

Camillus Forest Unique Area, Saturday, June 13

Contact Paul Richardson, richardsonp.audubon@gmail.com

This forest contains some of the tallest and oldest trees in Onondaga County. Although it is a forest, many parts of the hike will be through meadows and along open fields. Location is good for Baltimore Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo

Bunting, as well as Hooded, Blue-winged, and Mourning Warblers. Trip should last at least 3-4 hours. Expect moderate to difficult walking due to some steep trails.

Green Lakes State Park Saturday, June 20

Paul Richardson richardsonp.audubon@gmail.com

Paul Richardson will lead this trip, which will last 2½ to 4 hours, or more, depending on the trails chosen and weather conditions. Contact Paul for details, and specific time, and meeting place. We should see and/or hear many songbirds, possibly including Orchard Oriole, Scarlet Tanagers, Hooded Warblers, and Wood Thrushes. This trip may fill fast, so contact Paul ASAP.

Split Rock Quarry and the Bike Park, Saturday, July 11

Smoral Road, Camillus.
Fred Leff: (315) 956-0462, fredleff@verizon.net.

Fred Leff, Mary, and CJ Harkola will lead this trip. Contact Fred for the meeting

time and specific location. We expect to see a decent number of breeding birds, including warblers, sparrows, vireos, gallinules, and flycatchers. We will walk about 3 miles with some steep terrain.

Montezuma Wetlands Complex Saturday, Aug. 22

Fred Leff: (315) 956-0462, fredleff@verizon.net.

Join Fred Leff for an all-day trip (possibly 7 hours total) to several locations within and near the Montezuma Wetland Complex, in mostly Seneca and some of Wayne counties. We will visit the Visitor Center Pool and Wildlife Drive at Montezuma, Knox-Marsellus Marsh, Tschache Pool, the Montezuma Audubon Center, and Armitage Road. We may hit other areas (Seneca Meadows Wetland Preserve and the EskerBrook trail area).

There should be many migrating waterfowl and songbirds, Sandhill Cranes, herons, and Bald Eagles. Please carpool, as we may be driving a significant amount.