



# THE *OSPREY*

September/October 2018 — Vol. XLIII, No. 5



## PLEASE JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE BIRDING

Wednesday, October 17, 2018 at 6 pm

at Rock Hill Country Club in Manorville

Cocktails, Buffet Dinner, Raffles & Chinese Auction

*with guest speaker*

**KIMBERLY DURHAM**


Marine Mammals & Sea Turtles of New York

## **Conservation, Awareness, Research, Education & Stewardship**

**W**hy have sightings of humpback whales and dolphins increased around Long Island and what does the future holds for them and for the gray and harbor seals? You will find out what endangered and threatened species of sea turtles can be found in our waters and the threats which they face. We will discuss what everyday actions make significant differences for the future of Long Island's marine ambassadors.

**Kimberly Durham** is the Stranding Coordinator for Atlantic Marine Conservation Society. Her expertise includes marine mammal and sea turtle pathobiology. Kimberly was appointed by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to serve as a North Atlantic Right whale necropsy team lead. She has conducted stranding investigations on over 100 large whales and has developed and implemented critical care treatments for sea turtles, pinnipeds and dolphins. She has extensive knowledge with marine mammal and sea turtle rehabilitation.

As an adjunct instructor at Stony Brook State University, Kimberly lectures on the biology and conservation of sea turtles and pathobiology of marine mammals and sea turtles. Kimberly is an outreach specialist and has provided lectures to students and the public.

Kimberly has been trained in the Incident Command System (ICS) and serves as a Logistics Section Chief (LSC) with the regional Specially Trained Animal Response Team (START) funded by the National Oceanic and Administration. 

**TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT AT THE DINNER...SEE PAGE 5**

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

# Summer Doldrums?

**Byron Young**

Late July has brought us the quiet days of summer with oppressive heat, high humidity and quiet birding. In an attempt to counter the slow pace of land birding a group of intrepid birders took advantage of the cool eastern Long Island oceanic waters in search of pelagic birds, and marine mammals.

We signed onto a Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island (CRESLI) whale watching trip out of Montauk. After suffering through the east end traffic (it helps to know some back roads) and finding a parking spot near the docks, we picked up our tickets and boarded the vessel. It was just our intrepid group and a hundred plus whale watchers heading to the waters off Montauk in search of marine mammals and pelagic birds.

The Pelagic birds were the first to make an appearance with a number of Shearwaters being found just north of the lighthouse, first a Greater Shearwater, then a Cory's Shearwater, later a single Sooty Shearwater and several Manx Shearwaters were spotted. As we passed off shore of the lighthouse our first Parasitic Jaeger was spotted harassing a tern. Most of these birds were found relatively close to Montauk Point, within a mile or two of the shore.

As we headed toward Block Island in search of marine mammals the bird life declined a bit, however, every so often a shearwater would glide by searching for food. We were headed in the general direction of the Rhode Island wind farm off Block Island and I was hoping for a closer look at this facility. The marine mammals had other ideas as we encountered our first marine mammal about half way to Block Island, a Finback Whale and her calf. The vessel followed these whales as they came to the surface for air and then dove to feed.

While following this pair a pod of over

one hundred Short-beaked Dolphins paid us a visit, frolicking around the boat and the whales. It is amazing how fast these creatures are and the fact that they seem to be having fun while searching for food. As the vessel followed the Fin Back whales we had a Minke whale pay us a short visit and then several Humpback Whales. With each marine mammal sighting the folks from CRESLI would obtain an approximate location of the sighting, the species, and for the Humpbacked Whales and exact identification if possible. Humpbacked Whales have unique individual markings on the tail flukes so researchers along the coast identified many individuals based upon a tail pigmentation photograph that provides a means of positive identification.

While the CRESLI crew and the Viking Starship searched for and followed the whales our intrepid birders kept an eye out for additional pelagic birds. It seems that we provided the folks on the upper deck with an extra level of entertainment as we scanned the open waters for birds and then debated their identification. The trip provided a very nice mix of bird species along with encounters with several species of migrating marine mammals. It is exciting to see the numbers of marine mammals whether your visit them off Montauk or take one of the trips into the New York Harbor off Raritan Bay. For the land based birders, keep you eyes open for marine mammals and oceanic birds along the south shore of Long Island over the next few weeks. There have been a number of reports of shearwaters off Big Gull Island,



Tom, Steve, Byron, Eileen, Vince, and Mike, ELIAS Ocean Wanderers

Plum Island and along the south shore oceanfront. Beyond that you never know when a pod of dolphins will make a brief appearance or a larger whale will spout relatively close to shore.

It was a special treat to spend some time with good birders on a whale watching trip during the summer doldrums. The ride was a bit bumpy at times with some pretty good sized ocean swells tossing the vessel around as we pursued our quarry without flushing them. While this is not always possible, enjoy them when they present themselves. Exercise patience when viewing your quarry. They are preparing for or taking care of themselves and/or their young. We are the interlopers into their daily lives. Likewise, be courteous to fellow birders, photographers and folks enjoying the out of doors. In summary, please respect the wildlife, respect the environment, and respect your neighbors both avian or human. 🐦

Eileen Schwinn also wrote about the trip  
See page 4.



BYRON YOUNG

*A pod of over one hundred Short-beaked Dolphins frolicked around the boat and the whales. It is amazing how fast these creatures are and the to be having fun while searching for food.*

# July & August Meetings

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2018 AT 7:15 PM

## Journey of the Osprey

*From the Brink of Extinction to Success Story or Trash Bird?*

**Aaron Virgin**

Join us for an evening with the Osprey. Come hear about how, not very long ago, these majestic fish hawks were on the brink of extinction. Learn how they are once again thriving along our coastlines and why their return is such an important success story. Our guest speaker, Aaron Virgin, recently wrapped up the fifth year in a breeding and productivity survey of eastern Long Island. Hear about the trends, the nasty nesting habits, and other interesting tidbits he and his team have seen and what lies ahead for *Pandion haliaetus*.



BYRON YOUNG

**Aaron Virgin** has served as Vice President of Group for the East End since 2010. After joining the Group he expanded the organization's wildlife stewardship programs to include monitoring Piping Plovers, Least Terns, and Horseshoe Crabs, all while expanding its three decade Osprey monitoring research. Prior to the Group, Aaron worked for the Audubon Society in several national, state and local capacities, including his last post as the Executive Director of the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center, Oyster Bay.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2018 AT 7:15 PM

*Championship Birding*

## A Carver's Eye View

**Peter Palumbo**

After making GQ's Best Dressed Man for the tenth year in a row, Peter became bored and sought new a hobby. He'd already climbed Everest, swam the English Channel in a pink Speedo, and landed on the moon, twice. When he discovered bird carving, he found his true calling. At last, here was a way to find his inner voice, solve world peace, and woo women. He now attends carving competitions where he competes, judges, and teaches seminars. Peter will talk about his 41 years of carving and present pictures of some of the work he recently judged from the 2018 Ward World Championship.



**Did you take a wonderful bird photo this year?**

If you would like it to be considered for the ELIAS Calendar, send your photo to

[eliasosprey@optonline.net](mailto:eliasosprey@optonline.net)

Two requirements, this is for members only and the photo must be of a bird on taken on Long Island.

Deadline: September 18

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge, 3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY

Directions are on the website: [www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org](http://www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org)

Meetings are open to the public, there is no charge

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# “We’re gonna need a bigger boat”.....

## “The Seas were angry that day, my friend.....”

**Eileen Schwinn**

With these lines in mind, a motley group of 149 people boarded the Viking Starfish (based in Lake Montauk) at 2:00 pm (rather a civilized hour), on July 29th, 2018, for a five hour whale watch into Gardner’s Bay and Block Island Sound. One hundred and forty of them would be on the lookout for the behemoths of the sea – they would return happy, with Minke, Humpback, and Fin Whales all being seen! Additionally, over 100 Common Dolphins were seen in the distance, as well as along side the boat.

But the other nine people on board the Star – well, we would return to port at 7:00 pm REALLY HAPPY! We were birders, in search of those elusive ocean living pelagic birds. Birds that, at best, can be seen from the ocean shoreline, but about a mile out, with scopes and usually in moderately to terribly poor weather. Six folks from ELIAS, and three Nassau County birders joined forces for rail-side viewing from the top deck – all eyes scanning the waves.

Pelagic birds consist of the Tubenoses, shearwaters and petrels. Named for the “nostrils enclosed in narrow tubes on top of the bill”, they are rarely seen from land, and, except for nesting on small, distant islands, they spend their entire lives at sea. Some – Sooty Shearwaters – travel 40,000 miles per year – yes, 40,000! – migrating between the Poles. The weather

conditions this year – between July 20-25 – were strong, southeast winds, pushing bait fish and birds slightly closer to land than usually expected. A good number of Tubenoses were seen from shore by lots of folks, however, nothing beats heading out into the home waters of these birds.


And, as with most adventures, the first – and last – hour of the journey were the most rewarding! Twenty minutes from the dock, we encountered our first Shearwater – a Cory’s. Probably the most easily IDed of the group, with a 46 inch wing-span, these birds fly close to the water, gaining “lift” from the waves, as all shearwaters do. Brown from head to tail, and a yellow bill, we basically lost count of how many we actually saw (probably in the dozens). Our next “most numerous bird” was the Great Shearwater – actually smaller in body size and wingspan- than the Cory’s. A black cap, and white collar, made this bird easy to pick out as it flew past the boat. Again, a dozen birds were seen. A “target bird” on everyone’s list, was a Sooty Shearwater – easiest to ID because they are brown on back and belly, with a slight section of white on the under wing. We managed to see at least three, with one sitting in the water. My personal “target bird” was the Manx Shearwater, the smallest of the group. With the help of my friends, I was able to see three! This was a life bird for me, having eluded me for three major pelagic trips, off both coasts of the US. A Wilson’s Storm Petrel



We were treated to the dog-fights between Common Terns and Parasitic Jaegers! A larger, dark bird, Jaegers just don’t give up, swooping and diving at the Terns to steal their fish.

was seen by some in our group – I was looking on the wrong side of the boat!

Added treats were the dog-fights between Common Terns and Parasitic Jaegers! A larger, dark bird, Jaegers just don’t give up, swooping and diving at the Terns, being pursued for the bait fish food for their young in beak. The only way to surrender, was to drop the food! We got great views of the aggressive birds, but that behavior cinched the IDs. A juvenile Northern Gannet, and two Common Loons added to the day. We even had a Great Black-backed Gull and two Herring Gulls take the trip along with us – usually sitting atop the stern lighting tower. My guess – looking for that stray French fry, just like they do on land!

Admittedly, off-shore birding is not everyone’s cup of tea. Wave movement, diesel fumes, slow boat turns, this way and that, often make some “uncomfortable”. I packed a good supply of snack foods, all containing ginger – from Ginger Snaps to ginger chews and ginger “mints” – which I shared with my traveling companions. That ingredient seems to help. (Maybe that’s why one of the passengers on the “three hour cruise” of The Minnow, and Gilligan, was Ginger!!) Our trip from Montauk certainly isn’t in the class of major pelagic bird trips, but it’s certainly worth a try if you’re at all interested in seeing a number of North Atlantic birds, almost up close and personal! Put it on your calendar for next July! 

Cory’s Shearwater has a black cap, and white collar, making this bird relatively easy to pick out.



# September & October Walks

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2018 MEET AT 8 AM**

## SMITH'S POINT

**Leader: Eileen Schwinn**

The Fall raptor, songbird and shorebird migration should be well under way, as we meet at the far western end of the main parking lot at Smith Point County Park. We will walk to the Ranger Station for a view from the upper deck. We will then hike westward, toward the New Old Inlet area, then back to the Ranger Station. If there are any birds of note reported in the area of the boat ramp, we shall visit the marina area – just before the bridge – as well. Please dress for the weather and conditions. Binoculars are a must, and scopes are very helpful. This is an exciting time to be along the barrier beach, and hopefully, we will be there on favorable winds and mild weather! For more details, contact Eileen Schwinn at beachmed@optonline.net or call 516-662-7751.

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2018**

## CENTRAL PARK


Central Park is a wonderful destination for fall birding! Join Katie on the LIRR train leaving from the Ronkonkoma train station at 5:35 am or meet her in the city at West 72nd and Central Park West at 7:30 am. There will be opportunities for coffee, food and bathrooms at The Boathouse in the park. We can plan on taking a 1:00 or 2:00 p.m. train home, but you can leave earlier or stay longer if you wish! In addition to buying a train ticket, you will need to purchase 2 rides for the MetroCard/Subway.

Please email Katie at katiekleinpeter@gmail.com so she knows to look out for you.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2018 MEET AT 8 AM**

## FIRE ISLAND HAWK WATCH & HIKE TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

**Leader: Eileen Schwinn**

For this well-liked field trip, we will meet at the eastern end of Parking Lot 5, at Robert Moses State Park. We will stop at the Hawk Watch, where, with favorable winds, we will be joining other Long Island birders for a while, and hopefully see a number of east to west flying raptors. We will then walk the 3/4 mile boardwalk to the Fire Island Lighthouse, looking for migrating song birds along the way. Dress for the weather, and perhaps, bring a light snack and water. Binoculars a must. For more details, please contact Eileen Schwinn at beachmed@optonline.net or call 516-662-7751 the day of the trip. 

**SAVE THE DATE**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3**

## Bird Seed Sale with Guest Vendors!

A jointly sponsored event with Quogue Wildlife Refuge

Saturday, November 3rd from 9 am-2 pm

Order forms will be online.

Please return your orders by October 25.

## Reservations for Eastern Long Island Audubon Society Dinner

**Wednesday, October 17 at Rock Hill Golf Club in Manorville**

- Bluebird Sponsor (\$50 per person)       Eagle Sponsor (\$70 per person)       Osprey Sponsor (\$100 per person)

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ tickets at \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each.

- I wish to join      or       renew my membership in ELIAS at \$20 year. Membership is for Jan. 2019 to Dec. 2019

I wish to make an donation of \_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL ENCLOSED** \_\_\_\_\_

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Checks should be payable to Eastern Long Island Audubon Society (or ELIAS) and sent to: ELIAS, PO Box 206, East Quogue, NY 11942-0206

# Grassland Birds are losing habitat, but some people are catering to them!



SALLY NEWBERT

## Sally Newbert

The following article caught my attention when I read what Connecticut Audubon was doing at their Bafflin Sanctuary in Pomfret. Their fields are maintained for the benefit of grassland birds. Most of those grassland birds are considered declining species. Many of the species they expected showed up. But, they have had a rare visitor, too which made them extremely happy.

It made me think about a few spots on Long Island that could be managed to benefit these birds. Two spots come immediately to mind. EPCAL currently supports some communities of grassland birds including Eastern Meadowlark and Grasshopper Sparrows in the summer and wintering species like Northern Harriers. A few years ago Short-eared Owls were hunting in the fields to the delight of many birders. How sweet it would be to have Bobolinks added to the mix!

Then emailed Katie Kleinpeter who had just returned from Audubon Camp to ask if the fields in Damariscotta Maine were still filled with Bobolinks as they were a few years ago when I visited. Her response: "Yes, it was called the Great Salt Bay Farm Wildlife Preserve. Fabulous place, filled with Bobolinks. They are doing great work, encouraging local farmers to follow mowing practices that attract and support Bobolink breeding."

The other spot that came to mind is the North Fork County Park off Sound Avenue in Riverhead. There were breeding Bobolinks there in 2012 but the field that they were in has filled in since the County Park system took it over. Brambles and other invasive plants abound making it impassible to humans and apparently unappealing to grassland birds. What the County Park plans on doing here is somewhat undecided. They currently are digging the place up to the tune of \$200,000 to \$600,000 to improve drainage for the homeowners on Sound Shore Road. This action has brought out

many environmental groups to protest most of this drainage plan, pointing out that there are rare fresh water wetlands in the park. It is rather ironic that the parks department can spend a good deal of money to dig the place up when they are unable to find enough money to properly maintain the trails and paths that would make it usable to nature lovers.

Remembering my sighting of Bobolinks from 2012 in the North Fork County Park, I thought it was time to check ebird and see what I could find out about Bobolinks on Long Island. It does not seem that there is a breeding population on Long Island. One was spotted during migration on June 4th at Upland Farm Preserve. The bar chart on ebird shows records some sightings during spring and fall migration. There were some older sightings from 2012 to 2014 when 5 to 8 birds were spotted during breeding season at North Fork County Park.

The observations were made by several birders including myself. This led me to a little research on The Bobolink Project. They pay farmers to maintain their fields to benefit Bobolinks. These birds require a fairly large area, certain crops and a mowing schedule that postpones harvest until after the birds are finished nesting. That is probably when they return to the field in Connecticut to chatter their way into our hearts.

Enjoy the story of the fields maintained to benefit the birds and how it attracted birds and birders who came to admire this secretive little wren. The sanctuary built a platform that allowed good views of the birds without disturbing the nesting pair and their young.

*Enjoy the Connecticut success story!*

*Male Bobolink in Damariscotta, Maine.*

## Sedge Wrens are Nesting and Drawing a Crowd at a Sanctuary in Pomfret, Connecticut

**Tom Anderson**

A tiny endangered bird that rarely nests in Connecticut has made a home this summer at the Connecticut Audubon Society's Bafflin Sanctuary in Pomfret.

A pair of Sedge Wrens is raising a family in a field across the road from the Center at Pomfret, and another pair may in a field near the center's parking lot.

How unusual is that? Sedge Wrens weren't found during mid-1980s fieldwork for the *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut*, published in 1994, and were considered "extirpated" as a breeding species in *Connecticut Birds*, published in 1990. Although a pair nested in Newtown without much fanfare several years ago, no Sedge Wrens except the Pomfret pair have been found this year by the 450 observers participating in the current *Connecticut Bird Atlas* project.

This year Andy Rzeznikiewicz, Connecticut Audubon's sanctuary manager in eastern Connecticut, monitored the area closely and announced in early July that a pair of Sedge Wrens had indeed built a nest and were feeding hatchlings.

But the nesting is not a fluke. For years Connecticut Audubon has been managing the 700-acre Bafflin Sanctuary's habitat for birds such as Sedge Wrens – species that nest only in large grasslands. Last year, while he was leading a walk to find Virginia Rails in the same areas that the wrens are nesting this year, Rzeznikiewicz saw a lone Sedge Wren, a sign perhaps that the habitat was right.

Sedge Wrens are migratory and will leave Pomfret before the end of summer, although they winter along the U.S. coast from New Jersey south, elsewhere in the southern U.S., and in Mexico.

They are also known for their low site fidelity – they don't necessarily return to the same nesting location each year, as many species do. But that might be because of habitat changes in the specific

places in which they've nested; if the wet, grassy areas the birds require disappear, so will the birds.

Which might give the Bafflin Sanctuary an advantage in attracting these birds again.

In any case, Connecticut Audubon welcomes visitors to view the birds. The Center is at 218 Day Road. The wrens are observable from a platform on Day Road. However the young birds fledged on July 18th or early on the 19th, and they and their parents are now foraging in a wider area. As summer progresses, scores of other grassland birds, particularly Bobolinks, will gather nearby to feed before migrating. So the birding is likely to be great.

News that the birds are nesting has excited the state's birders. More than 200 have visited the sanctuary, gathering on the observation platform. They've been treated to the sound of the male wren singing, the call notes of the newly-fledged young, and excellent views of the adults.

In addition to being endangered in Connecticut, the Sedge Wren is endangered in Massachusetts and threatened in New York. The IUCN (International Union for Conservation) however lists it to be of "least concern" overall because its range is so large, covering much of the eastern half of North America.

CT Audubon Society's Andy Rzeznikiewicz explains how the nesting came about:

"This particular field that they nested in had some major management changes done to it three years ago.

"I used to just mow the field once a year in October. It was full of nice wildflowers such as goldenrods, milkweeds and Joe-pye weed. But it also contained a large percentage of woody vegetation like bittersweet, multiflora rose, blackberry, poison ivy etc.

"I never observed a single grassland nesting bird use this field for nesting.




MARK S. SZANTYR

"So I decided to have a local farmer come in and plow and harrow the field and re-plant with grasses like timothy, fescue and red clover. He did this at zero cost to Connecticut Audubon. In exchange he could cut the field when he wanted for the first two years. On year three (which is this year) he couldn't cut the field until after July 15.

"The interesting thing about the location of the Sedge Wren nest is that it's located in Reed Canary Grass. This is an invasive non-native grass which I have had zero success in controlling or eliminating. It only grows in the wet areas of the fields, forming a very thick dense tall grassy area. Mowing this grass really works the equipment hard when I actually cut it even in the winter!

"Even with the newly planted field the canary reed grass still took over the wet area. The second singing male is located across the street in the large 30-acre grassland behind our equipment barn. It might have a female, but the females are very quiet and secretive, and they are easily overlooked until they are feeding young birds on the nest. "This large field isn't mowed until December or January. This is our best grassland on the preserve. Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows nested here this year and Meadowlarks have nested historically there.

"Right now the post-breeding Bobolinks from all the surrounding areas are starting to feed in this field. By August, there will be 200 - 300 Bobolinks feeding there until sometime in September. Most winters Northern Harriers, Meadowlarks, and a Short-eared Owl will use this field as well." 

Used with permission of Tom Anderson and Connecticut Audubon.

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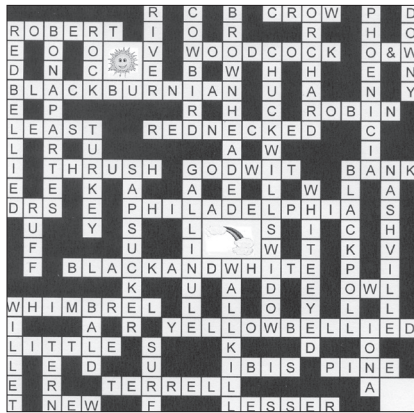
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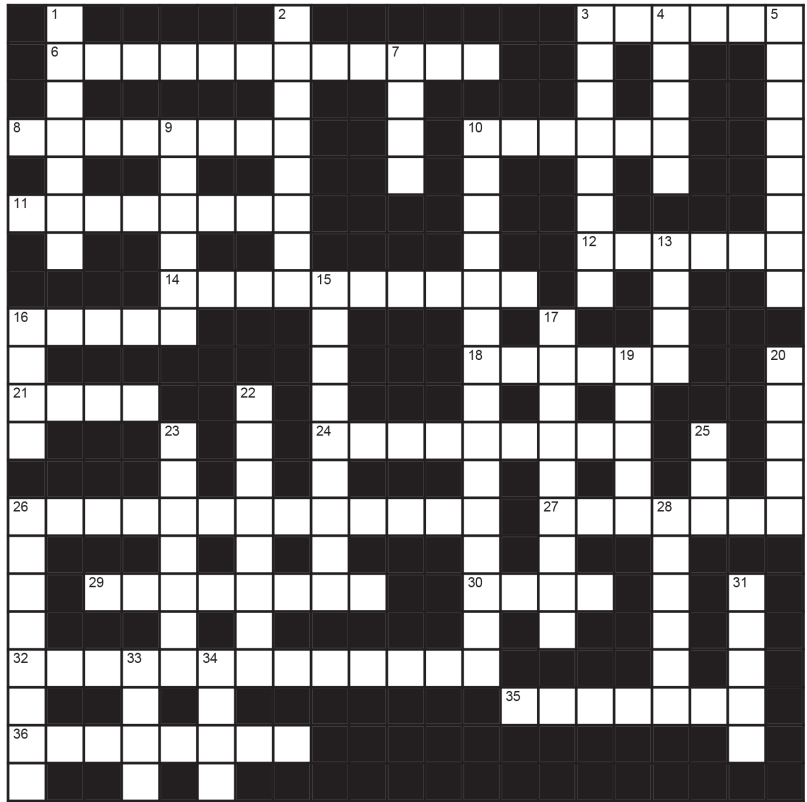
### Something to do on a rainy day...

Answers to July/August puzzle  
by Tom Moran



## Whad'ya mean it's a Canada Jay

### Bird Names: Past and Present Tom Moran



#### Across

- 3 Bicknell's, Swainson's, Wood or Hermit...
- 6 Hummingbird (2 words)
- 8 Prior name American Wigeon
- 10 Eastern or Western?
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_ Sandpiper, try late Aug/Sept at Jones Beach. Heavily streaked breast with sharp border.
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_ Yellowlegs was called Yellowshanks.
- 14 Larger than Common and strictly coastal (2 words)
- 16 Wilson's \_\_\_\_\_
- 18 Warbler with a black cowl encircling head and throat
- 21 \_\_\_\_\_ Pigeon, aka Feral
- 24 Yellow-bellied \_\_\_\_\_
- 26 \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, Oh, Canada, Canada, Canada
- 27 Previous name for 16 Down (just give up now!)
- 29 Previous name for a Common Goldeneye, also a painter known for a portrait of his mother.
- 30 Virginia \_\_\_\_\_ check Arshamomaque
- 32 \_\_\_\_\_ Blue, Green or Gray Warbler
- 35 Previously called an American Pochard, not a Canvasback
- 36 \_\_\_\_\_ Starling

#### Down

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Yellowlegs
- 2 Previous name for a Red-eyed Vireo
- 3 Previous name for 1 Down (2 words)

- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Blackbird
- 5 Previous name for a Chipping Sparrow
- 7 Streamlined water birds, that unlike gulls, don't swim, singular
- 9 Eastern \_\_\_\_\_, says its name, tail bobs
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_ Blackbird, previous name for a Lark Bunting (2 words)
- 13 \_\_\_\_\_ Martin, previous name for a Bank Swallow, or something a piper stands on.
- 15 Ruddy \_\_\_\_\_, once known as a Calico-back
- 16 See 27 Across, secretive bird of freshwater marshes.
- 17 Previous name of a Hooded Merganser (2 words)
- 19 Great or Snowy \_\_\_\_\_
- 20 Great Blue \_\_\_\_\_
- 22 White/Red-breasted or Brown-headed if you're in Florida
- 23 Previous name of a Spotted Towhee (*ha, ha, ha, ha...this is my diabolical laugh*)
- 25 Barred, Great Horned, Screech or Saw Whet...
- 26 Long, curved bill on this shorebird
- 28 Baltimore or Orchard \_\_\_\_\_
- 31 \_\_\_\_\_ Duck, previously called a Sleepy Duck, stiff-tailed.
- 33 American \_\_\_\_\_, runs on water, previously called a Mudhen
- 34 American \_\_\_\_\_ Sparrow, not to be confused with a Swamp Sparrow



# The Audubon Mural Project

## A Different Kind of Birding Field Trip

**Katie Kleinpeter**

The Audubon Mural Project is an incredible undertaking by a series of artists in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, spanning the neighborhoods of Sugar Hill, Hamilton Heights, and Washington Heights. The ongoing project currently consists of over 80 murals.

The project began in 2014 when the Gitler & \_\_\_\_\_ Gallery (<http://gitlerand.com>) wanted to connect with artists to beautify Upper Manhattan. In the beginning stages, there was no theme at all for the murals that the gallery wished to sponsor. The first artist commissioned decided on a bird as the subject for the mural, an American Flamingo. Gallery owners immediately made the connection to John James Audubon and coordinated with the National Audubon Society to create the themed mural project. Audubon lived on an estate in this area along the Hudson River at the end of his life and is buried at the local Trinity Church Cemetery.

Gitler & \_\_\_\_\_ Gallery connects with local business owners and landlords that wish to have a mural painted on their roll down security gate, door, or wall. Artists are then commissioned to choose their bird-or birds-then paint with their choice of media. Mural types range from spray painted works of art, to more traditional paint and brush techniques. Some artists even create highly detailed and finished panels in their studio to later attach to walls and window openings. The project wishes to expand to include 314 species of birds in paint, all of which face serious declining numbers and possible extinction in this century.

Walking through the safe and surprisingly friendly neighborhoods early on a Sunday morning reveals surprise after surprise. Spray painted murals suddenly appear on security screens locking up closed businesses. Hand painted murals in many styles peek out of building doorways. Full scale murals covering the entire sides of apartments and office buildings make jaws drop. Locals comment, oh, you're here


to see Audubon's bird murals! It is a splendid project, definitely worth the trip to the city!

If you want to take a guided group tour, check out: <http://www.nycaudubon.org> or <http://gitlerand.com> for a private tour.

If you prefer to take a tour on your own, visit <https://www.audubon.org/amp> to see information about the entire project, including a map of where all the murals are located. Consider visiting early on a Sunday morning. Driving and parking (garages are reasonably priced) was very manageable and many of the businesses are closed, thus displaying the murals on the security screens. Binoculars can be helpful for some of the larger murals on the sides of buildings. Consider stopping by the Trinity Church Cemetery (153rd to 155th



Roseate Spoonbill by Danielle Mastrion, located at 3531 Broadway in NYC. Photo by Mike Fernandez/Audubon

Streets, between Broadway and Riverside Drive) and viewing John James Audubon's beautiful grave site. Pop into Hamilton's Bakery (146th Street and Broadway) for a delicious coffee, bite to eat, and a clean restroom. 

## Empire Pass Holders: Save That Card!



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# Wind Turbines are planned off our coast

## *But, do we know the harm that they will do?*

Patrice Dalton

We are witnessing a rapid pace of leasing areas of the Continental Shelf by the Bureau of Offshore Energy Management (BOEM) to companies whose business is the construction and operation of offshore wind turbine generators. I attended a meeting hosted by BOEM about the New York Bight\* Call areas. A map of that area appears on the next page.

This map is informative because it shows the areas already leased as well as the new areas that could be offered for lease. The areas already leased are listed in legend by the leaseholder and the lease area number. Deepwater Wind New England, LLC holds two of the leases on the right hand side of the map. The north lease is 97,500 acres, slated for their Revolution wind project. It will serve Rhode Island with 400 MW from up to 50 wind turbines. The south lease is 67,250 acres. Deepwater plans to construct offshore wind turbine generators in the lease area and have entered into an agreement with LIPA. Deepwater Wind plans to bring the power from this plant to shore on the beach in Wainscott. It is planned as a 90 MW facility; various sources cite 12-15 wind turbines will be constructed during this phase.

The map contains additional NY Bight call areas: Fairways North, Fairways South, Hudson North, and Hudson South. These are new potentially new lease areas for offshore wind turbines. BOEM held outreach meetings and solicited written feedback from stakeholders in July.

If there is commercial interest, these lease areas will result in additional wind turbines in this area we could see significant changes in both the ocean floor, due to construction activities, and above the ocean one might imagine, arrays of wind turbines. The New York Bight Call areas lie within the Atlantic Flyway, used

\*A Bight is a bend in a coast forming an open bay, here defined as the area between NY & NJ

by migratory birds and potentially by 8 species of bats. How much risk will this present to birds and bats in the area? How can the risk be mitigated?

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) commissioned a *Birds and Bats Study* as a component of their New York State Offshore Wind Master Plan. The study was conducted by Ecology and Environment Engineering, P.C. and used existing data and literature to describe bird and bat activity in the "Area of Analysis, which is an area 15 nautical miles from the coast of Long Island and New York City to the continental shelf and into oceanic waters to an approximate depth of 2,500 meters." The entire report is available for download at:

<https://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/-/media/Files/.../17-25d-OSW-Birds-and-Bats.pdf>

*The New York State Offshore Wind Master Plan Birds and Bats Study* describes offshore wind farms as being associated with two major impacts to birds.

The first is collision, which refers to \*birds colliding with turbines and related structures during construction and operation. Birds are more likely to experience collisions with turbines sited in feeding, breeding and migration corridors. Birds apparently can be disoriented by or attracted to structures that are lit up at night.

The second risk is due to habitat displacement, which can occur during both construction and operation. During construction activities such as pile driving might displace birds. The noise from survey activities such as sub-bottom profiling and pile driving and the presence of construction vessels may cause birds to try to avoid the area. Even during operation, birds may try to avoid the area of the wind turbines, due to the operational sound.

Many people believe that the gravest threats to bird life is during the

operational life of the wind turbines due to collisions. It is therefore important to properly site offshore wind farms. One concern is that based on a review of the bird species groups in the Area of Analysis, seems particularly hazardous to 39 species of waterfowl, loons, pelagic birds, cormorants, shorebirds, alcids, gulls, terns and other bird species. *The Birds and Bats Study* provides species specific reviews of species – specific characteristics that make particular bird species at greater of lesser risk due to wind turbines.

The *Birds and Bats Study*, contains a list of the bird species that regularly occur in the area of analysis. Each bird is characterized by seasonality of occurrence and sensitivity to Collision and Displacement. Factors include the flight height of each bird species; low height is in range of turbine blades, its level of gregariousness. We do not have projected numbers of fatalities due to collision but it appears to be a grim outlook for many species. Of the 39 bird species that occur regularly in the area only one is identified as low risk.

The second figure shows where the overall abundance occurs. If you compare the planned leasing areas and the where the most birds are found, I think you can see that there is a large overlap, and one that should be taken into account when siting the turbines. Overall one cannot ignore the likelihood of impacts to birds.

*The Birds and Bats Study* also contains guidelines for Avoiding or Minimizing Impacts.

1. Regulatory and Stakeholder Coordination, ideally 3 years prior to the submission of construction and operations plan developers should coordinate with stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations.
2. Identify potential Impacts, establish a baseline with existing datasets and fill in any gaps.
3. Developers should prepare impact assessment.
4. Detailed assessments for special status

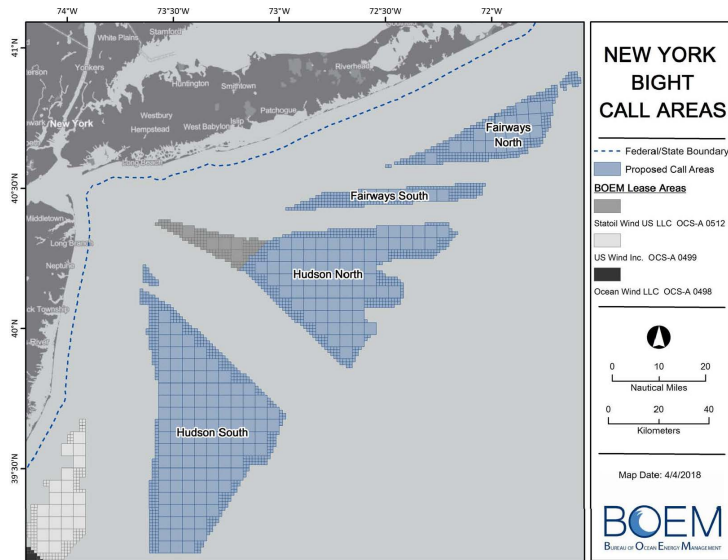
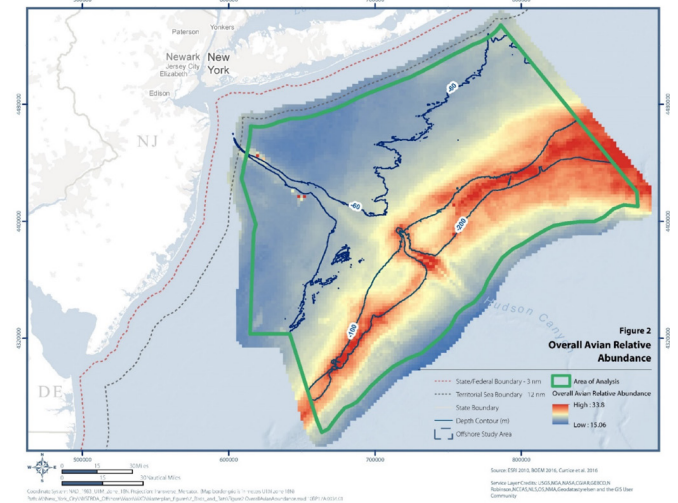


Figure 2. Overall Avian Relative Abundance.

Source: ESRI 2010; BOEM 2016; Curtee et al. 2016




Compare the planned leasing areas and the where the most birds are found, I think you can see that there is a large overlap, and one that should be taken into account when siting the turbines

- species such as Roseate Tern, Piping Plover and Red Knots.
- 5. Micro-siting of wind farms, to include the number, size and layout of turbines.
- 6. Monitoring, developer must submit plans for monitoring both collisions and displacement. Since birds will likely fall into the water after colliding with a wind turbine, creative use of cameras, thermal sensors and sound sensors is suggested.
- 7. Mitigation. Reduce perching areas, follow guidelines on lighting to make it less attractive to birds, bearing in mind that lighting is an important navigational guide. Turbine use curtailment during inclement weather, migratory or

breeding season. Off shore turbines are fairly recent in the USA and all of these suggestions and others should be applicable if bird and bat mortality is found to be significant.

In closing, it is clear that off shore wind turbines are viable fossil free energy sources. It really comes down to risks and benefits. The New York Bight Call areas seem risky given they lie within the Atlantic Flyway. It is particularly troubling as bird fatalities, should they happen, will occur at sea with no witnesses. On shore wind turbines have relied on body counts to assess the frequency of collisions. Offshore wind turbine developers and operators can not rely on this method. If they were to rely on this method,

they may observe almost no bird deaths. Reliability of newer methods, cameras, sensors has yet to be tested. If we have to look for changes to bird census data as a surrogate for accurate data it may be too late. We need timely, accurate data to support decision making about mitigations.

When BOEM moves ahead with these leases, the lessee/developers must develop meaningful plans for avoiding and mitigating impacts to birds and bats. This is an important time to be a voice for Bird Conservation. 

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