

## Birding in the Towns of Yates and Somerset 2019

Here is an updated list of bird counts conducted in our area and other related activities. You can participate as a citizen scientist by reporting what you see on the lake, at your feeder, or during one of the other organized bird counts each year. This is a simple yet wonderful way to enjoy the variety of birds that pass our way and help to determine numbers and species in our local environment that SOS is working hard to preserve.

**The Christmas Bird Count**: Organized by the Audubon Society, this count takes place in specifically designated areas. Audubon's 119th Christmas Bird Count will be conducted this coming season, with designated areas for the count. The closest are Wilson - Lake Plains Christmas Bird Count, to be held Saturday, December 15, and the Oak Orchard Swamp Christmas Bird Count on Thursday, December 27. There is also a Rochester Bird Count on Sunday, December 16. You can participate in as many counts as you like or choose the one that works best for you. See the map on their website to find the contact information for the Compilers. They should be contacted in advance of the count day.



*Northern Shrike*

**The Great Backyard Bird Count** is a popular event where people collect information on bird populations all over the world. It's free and easy to participate. The 22<sup>st</sup> GBBC will be held Friday, February 15, through Monday, February 18, 2019. In addition to the count there is a photo contest with many of the pictures sent in displayed on their website. The **eBird mobile app** is available and allows you to enter eBird observations from anywhere in the world. You can upload both photos and sound recordings. Sightings of owls, eagles, other rarities can be added to [e-Bird](#) at any time. This

link shows data compiled from the [2018 count](#). Using the Explore tab on the eBird website, you can see counts from specific areas. For example, [Golden Hill State Park](#) is considered a Hotspot for birds with hundreds of different species sighted.

**The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society** started the Great Backyard Bird Count in 1998. Back then, most of the counts were done in the United States and Canada. In 2013, the event went global and many counts were done in countries such as India, Europe, Mexico, and Australia. The 2018 Great Backyard Bird Count set two new records, for Species: 6,310 (2017 species total: 5,940) and Complete Checklists: 176,905 (2017 checklists: 173,826). **Birding classes** are available at different levels, see the [Cornell Bird Academy course list](#). The course on using eBird is offered free of charge.

**Project FeederWatch** sponsored by the **Cornell Lab**, is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders in backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North

America. FeederWatchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. If you are a beginner, they provide a list of common birds to get you started and an [interactive page about birds](#), what they like to eat and where they like to eat it at.

FeederWatch data helps scientists track broad scale movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance. FeederWatch is conducted by people of all skill levels and backgrounds, including children, families, individuals, classrooms, retired persons, youth groups, nature centers, and bird clubs. Participants watch their feeders as much or as little as they want over two consecutive days as often as every week (less often is fine). They count birds that appear in their count site because of



*White-Crowned Sparrow*

something that they provided (plantings, food, or water). The project always starts on the second Saturday of November and runs for 21 weeks. The 2018–2019 FeederWatch season runs from Saturday, November 10 to Friday, April 5. New participants will be able to log into online data entry and set up their count site on November 1. The last day to start a two-day count is Thursday, April 4. New participants are sent a [Research Kit](#) with complete instructions for participating, as well as a bird identification poster and more. There is a downloadable research guide as well. The annual participation fee is \$18 for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members). You provide the feeder(s) and seed.



*Canvasback*

**[NYSOA Lakeshore Waterfowl count](#)**: Each January, members visit lakes, rivers and shorelines to count waterfowl (ducks, geese, swans, loons, grebes, etc.). New York State Ornithological Association has conducted this survey annually since 1955. In most years, more than a quarter of a million birds are tallied. In addition to being an enjoyable outing, DEC has acknowledged this to be a useful survey for long-term monitoring of waterfowl populations wintering in New York. The count will always begin the Saturday just before Martin Luther King Day, which is the third week in January. For 2019, it is January 19-27 (target date - Sunday, January 20).

**[Buffalo Ornithological Society](#)**: The Buffalo Ornithological Society (BOS) was established in 1929 to promote the study of the birds of the Niagara Frontier Region. The BOS coverage area

includes western New York and parts of nearby Ontario, Canada. This region is rich in bird life with over 380 species and 25 recognizable subspecies of birds recorded. Explore the site to learn more about where to report and find birds, both regional specialties and rare visitors, and find [upcoming events on their calendar page](#). The Society is affiliated with the Buffalo Museum of Science and is a member of the [New York State Ornithological Association](#).

## A Bit Further Afield

### [The Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge](#)

From the Refuge website:

*Two pair of bald eagles have established nest sites on the refuge. Eagles start nesting behavior in January and continue until eaglets fledge in July. Eagles stay on or near the refuge for most of the year, leaving only to find open water in winter or in times of drought. When visiting Cayuga Overlook, the eagles are likely to be observed flying above. Osprey also nest on the refuge preferring similar habitat as the eagles, and are found near open water, or nesting on raised platforms. Other raptors that visitors often see include red-tailed hawks and cooper's hawks.*



*Tundra Swans*

*Of the tens of thousands of Canada geese flying their way northward each year, 30,000-40,000 can be viewed from the refuge, and approximately two hundred pair nest on the refuge. Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge is a stopover point on the Atlantic Flyway for waterfowl to rest and feed on their way to stinging grounds in Canada. Spring waterfowl migration peaks from mid-March through early April, and other species that can be observed include American black duck, northern pintail and mallards. Fall migration peaks, generally from mid-September through early October, and visiting one of the various wetland*

*overlooks increases your chances of viewing any of these species.*

The refuge headquarters and visitor center is located at 1101 Casey Road, one mile north and west of the Alabama traffic light, which is at the intersection of Highway 63 and Highway 77 in Alabama. The phone number is (585) 948-5445. <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Iroquois/> The refuge has a number of programs throughout the year for youth and adults as well as self-guided activities. [The Wildlife Observation handout](#) gives instruction on using their lookout points. Saturday, January 5 is **National Bird Day**. There will be a Winter Birding information session from 9-11:00 A.M. at the Iroquois NWR visitor center.

**[Department of Environmental Conservation Bald Eagle Program](#)**: The NY Department of Environmental Conservation was responsible for returning the Bald Eagle to the state. Learn about the process on their website.

**[Braddock Bay Bird Observatory](#)**: located in Hilton, NY near Rochester on Lake Ontario. The Observatory focuses on ornithological research, education, and conservation. Bird counts, banding and classes are held on site.

**[Braddock Bay Raptor Research](#)**: Conducts research, educates the public, and contributes to public policy discussions regarding birds of prey, other wildlife and the environment. Every spring BBRR has a hawk watch that counts into the tens of thousands. BBRR annual **[Bird of Prey Days](#)** in April (April 26-28, 2019) is a fun educational weekend.

**[Rochester Birding Association \(RBA\)](#)**: RBA provides opportunities for birders to expand their skills, meet others who share their interest in birds, and see more species throughout the upstate New York area. With 50+ field trips during the year, monthly educational meetings and a monthly newsletter, this organization serves beginners and expert birders.

**[Genesee Valley Audubon Society](#)**: The vision of Genesee Valley Audubon Society is to promote environmental conservation and to educate and advocate for protection of the environment, focusing on birds, wildlife and habitat. They have monthly meetings, birding field trips, a downtown Rochester falcon project, invasive species and beach cleanups and are involved in conservation efforts.