



*Photo taken by Doug Domedion*

### **Birding in the Towns of Yates and Somerset for 2025-2026**

**Save Ontario Shores (SOS)** presents its annual list of birding information and bird counts conducted in our area, celebrating the wealth of ornithological activity in Western New York.

Many of the organizations listed below have memberships with perks like fieldtrips and classes. Some activities are appropriate for children, families and groups.

**Project Snowstorm** Snowy owls are a perpetual favorite along Lake Ontario. Project Snowstorm is an innovative effort to provide detailed tracking information, using crowd sourcing and interactive maps. This is a fascinating way to support Snowy Owl Research. <https://www.projectsnowstorm.org/>

### **Birds on the Niagara International Bird Festival: A Winter Celebration**

February 12, 2026 – February 16, 2026 <https://www.birdsniagara.org/>

This celebration is taking place once again on Presidents Day/Family Day weekend on the Niagara River. Birds on the Niagara (BON) focuses on winter birding, including indoor and outdoor programming, on both sides of the border with attention to conservation needs and progress on the International Niagara River Corridor. Most programs are free, some have a small fee and require registration.

### **BIRD COUNTS**

**The Christmas Bird Count:** Audubon's Christmas Bird Count is held between December 14 and January 5 each year <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count>. One of the longest-running wildlife censuses in the world, and organized by the Audubon Society, this count takes place in specifically designated areas. You can participate in as many counts as you like, or choose the one that works best for you. There is information about counts with data going back 100 years. See the map on the website to find the contact information for the Compilers.

They should be contacted in advance of the count day. For more information about other regional counts, see <https://www.buffalornithologicalsociety.org/Counts/CBCs.aspx>

**The Great Backyard Bird Count:** <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>

This is a popular event where people collect information on bird populations all over the world. It's free and easy to participate. **The GBBC will be held February 13–16, 2026.**

In addition to the count there is an annual photo contest with many of the pictures sent in displayed on the website. The **eBird mobile app** is available and allows you to enter eBird observations from anywhere by creating an account. You can upload both photos and sound recordings:

<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>. 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 244 species sighted, <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L169679>. Another local Hotspot is the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge [https://ebird.org/region/USFWS\\_219](https://ebird.org/region/USFWS_219) with 275 species observed and over 1500 birders listing their sightings, both up from last year.

**Project FeederWatch:** The Cornell Lab also sponsors Project FeederWatch, a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders in backyards, nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. As they say “No matter where you live, your observations are important.” The FeederWatch season always begins the second Saturday in November and runs for 21 weeks, ending on a Friday in April. Feeder Watchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. Even if you only count once all winter, your data is still considered valuable <https://feederwatch.org/about/detailed-instructions/>. If you are a beginner, the site provides 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 at <https://feederwatch.org/learn/common-feeder-birds/>. There is a participation fee associated with Project FeederWatch.

**Buffalo Ornithological Society:** The Buffalo Ornithological Society <http://www.buffalornithologicalsociety.org/> 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 fieldtrips and events on their calendar page. <https://www.buffalornithologicalsociety.org/Calendar.aspx>

The events page lists a number of Christmas Bird Count (CBCs) locations in western New York and southern Ontario. The Society is affiliated with the Buffalo Museum of Science and is a member of the New York State Ornithological Association, for the birders and birds of the Empire State. <https://nybirds.org/>.

**Lakeshore Waterfowl:** 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 2026 it runs January 17-26 (target date - Sunday, January 18). Bald Eagle sightings are also counted. See website for details. <http://www.nybirds.org/ProjWaterfowl.htm>

## MIGRATION

**BirdCast** offers live bird migration maps, now year round. <https://birdcast.info/migration-tools/live-migration-maps/>. About 75% of North American birds migrate. Spring migration takes place from the end of February and can last until the beginning of May. Most birds will travel through one of four flyways in the U.S. New York is in the Atlantic Flyway. This flyway covers the east coast and inland to the Great Lakes.

**Hummingbird Central:** If you enjoy watching the first hummingbirds come into the area each spring, this interesting website tracks the bird intensity on a heat map. Tracking for the spring hummingbird migration begins in late January of 2026. Hummingbird Central maps sightings of hummingbirds across the US. <https://hummingbirdcentral.com>

**The Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge** in Genesee County is a stop for migrating birds and is listed on the **I Love New York** website as **New York State's largest wildlife refuge:**

<https://www.iloveny.com/listing/iroquois-national-wildlife-refuge/2436/>

## Places to watch for birds in the area

**Yates Town Park**, located on Morrison Road, had a major upgrade in 2022 that will enhance visitor experience with a graded walk, kayaking area, new enclosed pavilion and a handicap accessible playground. <https://townofyates.org/local-attractions-yates-ontario.php>

**Braddock Bay Bird Observatory** is 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. <https://braddockbaybirdobservatory.wordpress.com/>

**The Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge** is located south of Medina. 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.

<https://www.fws.gov/carp/refuge/iroquois>. The phone number is (585) 948-5445. The refuge has a number of programs throughout the year for youth and adults as well as self-guided activities. <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/iroquois/map>. There is a live bald eagle nest camera on this website, sponsored by the Friends of the Iroquois National Wildlife refuge: <https://finwr.org/>.

## OTHER RESOURCES

**The Roger Tory Peterson Institute** is located in Jamestown and holds the largest collection of Peterson's art. They offer classes, exhibits and programs with a focus on the preservation of earth's biodiversity and a particular emphasis on the natural area wonders of Western New York. <https://rtpi.org/>

**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 you can access international bird data at their website. Birding classes are available at different levels, see the Cornell Bird Academy at <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/course-list>.

**American Birding Association** has created a code of ethics for birders. <https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>

**The American Bird Conservancy:** This organization takes action to conserve the habitats and birds that depend on each other for survival. <https://abcbirds.org/>

Partners in Flight is an international organization and focuses on land bird conservation throughout the Americas and brings scientific land bird expertise to the North American Bird Conservation with the goal of Keeping common birds common and helping species at risk through voluntary partnerships. <https://partnersinflight.org/about/>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has developed a series of training webinars that are available for viewing: <https://fws.gov/training/forests-for-the-birds-webinar-series>

**New York State Birding** is a site provided by the DEC providing information on the NY State Birding Trail, maps and locations: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/birds/birding>

**Merlin** is an app for your phone. If you hear a bird but cannot see it or do not recognize the call, a useful tool developed at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is Merlin <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>. This free app will help you to identify a bird's call by its song, appearance by photos in eBird and provide general information about birds in your area.

## **GAMES**

**Wingspan** is a popular, award winning board game with beautiful illustrations. For 1-5 players aged 14 and older.

**Audubon Bird Spotting Opoly** for players aged 8 and above, 2-4 players features the celebrated illustrations of the birds of John J. Audubon.

**Match a Pair of Birds:** A Memory Game for children and families, match the male and female pairs of 25 species of birds from all over the world. Sturdy cards and outstanding artwork.

**SOS is 100% funded by generous local individuals.** Please consider joining this work by giving what you can. SOS is a not for profit corporation and it is not a tax exempt organization, so donations are not deductible for tax purposes.

**We have a donation button on our web site** [SaveOntarioShores.com](http://SaveOntarioShores.com)

**Checks can be sent to:**

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You are receiving this email because of your interest in the wind turbines that may be installed on Lake Ontario in the Town of Yates and Somerset.

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