



# Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Spring 2026

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## President's Column

By June Summers

### Chapter Engagement Survey

Genesee Valley Audubon Society values making sure that everyone's voice is heard. That's why we encourage everyone in our chapter, leaders, volunteers, and participants to take this quick survey from the National Audubon Society; the link is below. Your insight will help improve programs, boost engagement, and make our chapter stronger.

[https://audubonresearch.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5tkdE06jEAa1CyG](https://audubonresearch.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5tkdE06jEAa1CyG)

Please take 10 minutes to give us your insights to serve you better.

### Great Lakes Lobby Days in Washington, DC

This fall Genesee Valley Audubon Society Board members recruited Alonso Ponse and Bryden Kerchoff, Audubon Campus Chapter members at RIT, to go to Washington, D.C. for Great Lakes Lobby Days sponsored by the Healing Our Water Great Lakes Coalition, one of Audubon's many partners. GVAS is also a member of the coalition. These young men along with Erin McGrath from the Audubon CT/NY State office visited the offices of Senators and Representatives such as Congressman Joe Morelle. Below is Alonso's story of his visit.



*Erin McGrath, Alonso Ponse, and  
Bryden Kerchoff in the Hall of  
Congress*

### My Visit to Congress

By Alonso Ponse, Graduate Student Researcher  
Environmental Science, RIT

My father always believed that a day without learning was a wasted day, and that passion for discovery stayed

with me. As a kid, I was captivated by Animal Planet and inspired by figures like Steve Irwin and Jane Goodall, who showed how deeply people can care for the natural world. Those early influences sparked my interest in the field of environmental science and my desire to contribute to meaningful change.

As I continued my studies, I began to understand that protecting the environment isn't only about identifying the root problems and effects, but it's also about inspiring collective action and shaping the policies that guide our relationship with the planet. My current research focuses on the impacts of plastic pollution, and much of my work relies on community science, collaborating with residents to support data collection and promote environmental awareness. Through this work, I've seen firsthand the power of education, but I also wondered how far those efforts could reach beyond my city. So, when the opportunity to lobby with Healing Our Waters in Washington, D.C. came along, I knew I had to take it.

The thought of being a researcher on Capitol Hill, informing policymakers about the environmental challenges facing their districts, felt like the perfect way to help promote solutions. I packed my suitcases, and after a missed flight and a few chapters of my book, I arrived in D.C., ready to hit the ground running.

Stepping into the office of a Member of Congress on Capitol Hill can be intimidating. The fast-paced energy of lobbyists and professionals drafting proposals

and discussing ways to shape the country made it difficult not to feel the symptoms of imposter syndrome. Who was I, a student who isn't even an American citizen, to walk into these halls and speak

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# Programs

## March Monthly Program

March 24, 7:30 pm by Zoom

**40 Years of Banding At Braddock Bay: What Have We Learned?**

Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/YieuD7>

Speaker: Andrea Patterson

Braddock Bay Bird Observatory has been banding birds on the south shore of Lake Ontario since 1986, and we've collected data on more than 300,000 birds. Thanks to a platoon of collaborating researchers including local professors and their undergraduate and graduate students, our data has been used to answer a variety of questions concerning the behavior, ecology, and biology of birds. Join us for a romp through 40 years of research, as we tackle questions like:

- Have we noticed any changes in bird populations or migrations over time?
- Are migrating flocks just associations of birds that happen to be coordinated by time, place, and species, or is there something more meaningful at work?
- Why do birds carry extra fat in the spring?
- Why do some insectivores switch their diet to fruit in the fall?

- Is it possible to distinguish individual Magnolia Warblers just by their night flight calls?
- What is that thing on the chin of that Great Crested Flycatcher?

We promise that you don't need a knowledge of statistics or the scientific method to understand and enjoy this fun overview of our work. Andrea Patterson began volunteering at Braddock Bay Bird Observatory in 2009, and banded her first bird in the spring of 2010 when she took a bander training class from Elizabeth Brooks. Since then, she has handled more than 20,000 birds as part of the Observatory's long-term migration study and has been lucky enough to spend time banding Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sparrows in New Hampshire, rails (including one Black Rail!) in Louisiana, and Tawny-crowned Greenlets in Belize. Now the executive director of the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Andrea coordinates the migration, summer, and owl monitoring programs; facilitates the use of the Observatory as a field site for a half-dozen research affiliates; and teaches four banding classes annually.



## BBRR Bird of Prey Days

April 17-19

[BBRR.org](http://BBRR.org)



*Upcoming change in our email communication with you. Be on the lookout for an email with subject: Welcome to GVAS - your local Audubon chapter*

## Board of Directors

### Genesee Valley Audubon Society, Inc.

**Officers:** *President*, June Summers; *Vice President*, vacant; *Secretary*, Joni Dubner; *Treasurer*, Karen Curtis.

**Committee Chairpersons:** *Field Trips*, vacant; *Fundraising*, Lisa McKeown; *Publications*, Joanne Mitchell; *Programs*, vacant; *Publicity*, vacant; *Conservation*, June Summers; *Membership*, Loretta Morrell; *Education*, vacant; *Hospitality*, vacant; *Directors-at-Large*, Nancy Strong, Linda Howell, and Catherine Rainwater; *Webmaster*, vacant; *Web Host*, vacant.

*The Meadowlark* is published online the first week of March, June, September, and December. If you are interested in receiving a reminder when the new Meadowlark is released, send an email to [gvaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:gvaudubon@gmail.com).

**Meadowlark staff:** *Editor & Layout*, Joanne Mitchell; *Business Editor*, vacant; *Distribution*, vacant.

# Field Trips

**Nature Outing at Tinker Nature Park**  
**1525 Calkins Road. We will meet up in the parking lot South of the Nature Center and behind the barn.**

**Saturday, March 14, 2026, 9:00am**

Registration is Required by Thursday, March 12.

Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/fJXWDn>

We invite everyone to join GVAS Saturday, March 14th at 9:00am for a winter morning stroll along the trail at Tinker Nature Park. We will discover what wildlife waits for us around a pond, wetland, open field and woodland. The trail surface is a combination of crushed stone, grass, and boardwalk that circles the perimeter of the park and is 1.2 miles long. There are both designated parking spaces and a restroom available. For more details about this trail, please visit the Birdability website at <http://tinyurl.com/4uuse77n>

We will contact you in the very rare occasion we have to cancel. Note that GVAS rarely cancels an event due to weather unless there is a road closure, threat of imminent lightening, or dangerous windchills. We understand that things come up and sometimes you need to cancel. If you know beforehand that you won't be able to make it, please email Cathie Raintree at [c\\_m\\_rainwater@hotmail.com](mailto:c_m_rainwater@hotmail.com).

**Nature Outing along the Genesee Riverway**  
**River Street Marina to Genesee Riverway**  
**Boardwalk**

**Saturday, April 25 at 9:00am**

Registration is required by Thursday, April 23rd

Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/VOhoLy>

On the morning of our outing, spring will be right around the corner. We invite everyone to join us as we listen and look for some possible early spring migrants, and enjoy the views of the Genesee River gorge from River Street Marina to the bottom of Turning Point Park (2.8 miles) We will pass through a wooded area to the boardwalk with views of marshland and the river. Trail surface is a combination of tarmac (with some heaving caused by temperature changes) and boardwalk. Trail details are available at Birdability at <http://tinyurl.com/y7rpcc7w>. We will meet at the River Street Marina located at 110 Petten Street. Dress for

weather conditions; sunscreen, bug spray, and binoculars may enhance your enjoyment.



**Birding by car: Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge**

**Meet at the Visitor's Center**

**3395 Route 5 & 20 East**

**Seneca Falls, NY 13148**

**Saturday, May 2, 2026**

**9:30am – 11:30am**

Register by Thursday, April 30 at <https://mobilize.us/s/AoS8Ue>

Everyone is welcome. Come join us as we see what birds are visiting the MNWR as part of their migratory journey. We will meet in the Visitor's Center parking lot at 3395 US-20, Seneca Falls NY, and spend some time on the deck to look for shorebirds. Purple Martins also be found here. We will then travel by car along the Wildlife Drive. Along the way we might see some duck species such as Mallards, Shovelers, Blue Wing Teals and others. Great Blue Herons and other birds such as Red-wing Black birds and Song Swallows can also be found. Bald Eagles are known to frequent this area. We may even see a Sandhill Crane. We will conclude our journey at the observation tower found on Tschache Pool off State Route 89. From here we can see the Great Blue Heron rookery in addition to another wetland popular with waterfowl, Ospreys and Bald Eagles. Restrooms are available inside the center between 10am-3pm or to the right of the parking at a short distance from the cars. Sunscreen and water are advised. Binoculars will enhance your vision; we will have some pairs available, if you do not have your own. For questions or concerns, please email Linda Howell at [h31884@rochester.rr.com](mailto:h31884@rochester.rr.com)

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## Field Trips, continued from page 3

### Field Trip Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Saturday May 16 at 9:00 am – 11:00am Meet at the DEC parking lot on Manitou Beach Road

Register by Thursday, May 14, at <https://mobilize.us/s/dx5ZcW>

Join GVAS for a visit to Braddock Bay Bird Observatory to learn how they catch, band, and record data on birds. We will be able to get a close view of captured birds as they are banded and data taken. You don't often get a chance to see birds this close up. If you would like to go out and see the nets the birds are caught in you should wear tall rubber rain boots.



BBBO strives to make their facility accessible to those with disabilities, but they are not yet fully accessible to everyone with mobility challenges. Their building has doors wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair, and they have sufficient seating for those who cannot stand. However, guests should know that their trails – while well maintained – are surfaced with crushed rock or mulch and are frequently muddy. Furthermore, their only restroom is a porto-john that is not large enough for a wheelchair.

We will meet at the DEC parking lot on Manitou Beach Road. Take Rt. 390N to the Lake Ontario State Parkway, take the Manitou Beach Road exit, turn right then turn right again into the parking lot across from Owl Woods. We will carpool from here to the banding station. Their parking lot is small. We are limiting this trip to 25 attendees.

### Bird Walk at Mount Hope Cemetery 1133 Mt. Hope Ave.,

Saturday, May 17, 8:00am-9:45am  
Register after April 16th at <https://fomh.org/tours-events/tours/>, or in person morning of walk

The mature trees of this 200-acre 1838 Victorian cemetery are very attractive to migrating birds. Join us for a 1-mile stroll that is partly on pavement and partly on an uneven dirt path, with a hill. This is not

## Great Lakes Lobbying Trip, continued from page 1

with confidence to members of congress? As much as that question could have spiraled into a rabbit hole of doubt, I was already speaking with my first staff member of the trip. Communicating the importance of improved water infrastructure across the Great Lakes Region and supporting its necessity through my research felt exhilarating. In that moment, I realized that my work not only mattered, but that I was helping contribute to the catalyst for the change so many of us hope to see.

After two days of lobbying, my trip to D.C. was coming to an end as quickly as it had begun. While traveling back to Reagan National Airport, I reflected on the impact my efforts could have. I arrived home like any other day, returning from the lab, and yet I went to bed still thinking about the experience. I felt a deep sense of accomplishment, that I had, in some small way, contributed to the possibility of a future where society and the environment can truly coexist.

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accessible for strollers or wheelchairs. Meet at the gatehouse by the North Gate, the entrance that is across from Robinson Drive (NOT the entrance opposite the Distillery Restaurant). Parking is available inside the cemetery next to the 1862 chapel that is visible when you drive in the Gate. There is a \$15 per person charge for this tour, which goes toward restoration work at the cemetery. Pre-registration will be available one month ahead of the tour at <https://fomh.org/tours-events/tours/> or participants can just show up on the day of the tour. For questions, contact June at [summers@frontiernet.net](mailto:summers@frontiernet.net).



# Water Chestnut Management in Braddock Bay this Summer

## Volunteers needed

Genesee Valley Audubon and the Department of Environmental Conservation have a new partner this year in the fight against European Water Chestnut in Braddock Bay—the Town of Greece. The spread of invasive water chestnut in Braddock Bay and nearby ponds has become a significant concern for the local ecosystem and the recreational use of our waterways.

To address this, the Town of Greece and partners are organizing a series of **community hand-pull events** throughout the upcoming summer. These efforts are a big part of keeping our local ponds a vibrant part of our town and Wildlife Management Area.

### TOWN OF GREECE

#### Water Chestnut Hand Pull Calendar 2026

ALL EVENTS 9AM-1PM

#### WEDNESDAY

24 June Salmon Creek

Host: Finger Lakes PRISM

1 July Braddock Bay

Host: Finger Lakes PRISM

8 July Buck Pond Creek

Host: NYS DEC

15 July Buck Pond Creek

Host: NYS DEC

22 July Braddock Bay

Host: NYS DEC

29 July Cranberry Pond

Host: Genesee Land Trust

#### SATURDAY

27 June Long Pond

Host: Finger Lakes PRISM

4 July HOLIDAY-SKIP

11 July Salmon Creek

Host: Genesee Valley Audubon

18 July Salmon Creek

Host: Genesee Valley Audubon

25 July Braddock Bay

Host: Town of Greece

1 August Long Pond

Host: Genesee Land Trust



All events are 9am-1pm. Please RSVP to: [mmorris@greecenyny.gov](mailto:mmorris@greecenyny.gov).

What to bring: kayak/canoe, water shoes or chest waders, life jacket, hat, sunscreen, snacks, and lots of water.

If possible, the following would be helpful: utility sled, long rubber/latex gloves, and a rake/pitchfork if you will be pulling from a larger boat.

## Volunteers Needed

### Environmental Research and Activities This Spring and Summer

#### High Falls State Park Spring Bird Surveys

Genesee Valley Audubon Society (GVAS) plans to do spring bird surveys in High Falls before construction begins this fall for the High Falls State Park. We are interested in doing this to get base line data on the birds that breed there and migrate through the area before the construction begins and the park occupies the area. We plan to do the surveys in the months of May and June. We plan on continuing this project for three to four years to see how the park changes the habitat in that area.

GVAS is planning the survey to get the best data. If you're interested in spending a couple of mornings in High Falls counting birds please contact June Summers, at [summers@frontiernet.net](mailto:summers@frontiernet.net), by Friday, May 1, 2026.

#### Bird Window Collision Surveys Downtown, Volunteers Needed

Genesee Valley Audubon Society will be joining Smash the Crash and the Rochester Birding Association in an initiative to end bird-window collisions in Rochester and the greater metropolitan region. GVAS is joining this project because this research is long overdue for downtown Rochester. Bird window collisions are the #2 REASON for MAN-CAUSED BIRD DEATH. Cats are the #1. We know that song birds migrate through the Rochester area in large numbers in the spring. We need to document the number that die in bird-window collisions to stop it, by getting downtown building owners to make the glass in their buildings bird safe.

**We need volunteers this spring to walk survey routes downtown around at least six buildings**

**looking for evidence of bird-window collisions. You will take pictures of any carcasses that are found and enter other data on the Survey 123 app. Surveys will be done between 7:00 am and 4:00 pm. Most birds hit windows between 7:00 am and 11:00 am. The surveys will probably start in April or May and run through June. We will train you and give back up when needed. Surveys routes will be run once or twice a week. If you are interested please contact June Summers, [summers@frontiernet.net](mailto:summers@frontiernet.net). She will send you more information.**

**More Information:** Smash the Crash is a university-community initiative to end bird-window collisions in Rochester and the greater metropolitan region. Founded in 2024, it consists of researchers at RIT and the University of Rochester along with partners from the Genesee Valley Audubon Society (GVAS) and the Rochester Birding Association, among others. Together, they combine scientific research, art/design production, and educational outreach to study and

prevent fatal strikes with windows. Their current work spans three ongoing surveys at RIT, the University of Rochester, and downtown; the installation of student-designed collision deterrents at the Sage Art Center, funded by the GVAS; and a suite of “**vertically integrated projects,**” <https://www.rit.edu/verticallyintegratedprojects/smash-crash-environmental-initiative-end-bird-window-collisions-rochester> that

include the creation of automated collision detectors, the construction of a Rochester-wide collision database, and a consumer-oriented economic analysis of the cost of bird-safe design.

