



Fall 2024

The Great Fall Migration

New York City's Central Park is the place to bird watch during the Fall Migration. With its unique habitats it offers birders spectacular views of migrating birds.

The great fall migration begins with the movement of shore birds in late July. The Central Park Pond, Lake, and Pool often become a good stopover point for Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers. These birds bob along the

temporary shelter.

Woodland Warblers, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Scarlet Tanagers, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks begin to arrive in late August and remain through early October.

The warblers, no longer in breeding colors, are heading south with their immature offspring. Some warblers are brown or olive green with one or two wing bars. This gives credence to the phrase "confusing fall warblers." It



shoreline grabbing small insects and crustaceans. Some good locations to observe the sandpipers are the 103rd street Pool, the Gapstow Bridge wetland area at 59th street, and the Central Park Lake. In addition, you can also find Wilson's Snipes, Least and American Bitterns, and American Woodcocks foraging for food and seeking

is often a challenge to identify some warblers, which adds a bit of mystery and fun to birding. A bird guide can help you identify confusing fall warblers. Bird walks are offered by the Linnaean Society all year. Please visit our website for the schedule.

The Ruby-throated Hummingbirds zip through the gar-



den on their way to Mexico and Central America, where they will spend the winter. Their journey of 600 miles is often covered in a single flight! They gather precious nectar from the Park’s flowers – Jewelweed and Cardinal Spikes are their favorites. The nectar provides them with the energy needed for the long flight. Look for orange blossoming Jewelweed and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds throughout the park.

Scarlet Tanagers and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks arrive to feast on the berries of the Park’s dogwood and cherry trees. Their dull but brilliant feathers are still a sight to behold. The male Scarlet Tanager molts from bright red to a greenish yellow in the fall. Immature Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are usually a combination of brown, black, and red feathers, adding allure to this already spectacular bird.

Without a doubt, the greatest show in September is created by the migrating Hawks and Eagles. Bald and Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Broad-winged Hawks (by the thousands), Peregrine Falcons, Merlins, Sharp-shinned Hawks, American Kestrels, Cooper’s Hawks, Osprey, and Turkey Vultures are all migrating to their winter grounds. The Linnaean Society holds hawk watches from Belvedere Castle, which provides great looks of the surrounding skies. With many eyes looking up, and enjoying the effort, we can identify the raptors as they fly over our heads or skirt the outline of the park on

fashionable Fifth Avenue.

New York City is situated in the middle of the greatest stream of migrating birds—in a unique ecosystem of coastal wetlands, forests, meadows, and woodland habitats— which makes up the Atlantic Flyway. The hawks ride the warm thermals of air along the Eastern Seaboard, often conserving energy by gliding as they journey to warmer climates.

The month of October brings the sparrows; Lark, White-crowned, Fox, Vesper, Savannah, Clay-colored, Chipping and other species visit our area during October and sometimes linger until mid-November. Sparrows are seed eaters and delight in pulling out the thistle seeds from plants and shrubs. Look for these “little brown jobs” in the compost heap, Dene Slope, and most of the meadows in the North Woods. These meadows produce seed-bearing plants which are consumed by hungry sparrows.

And we also get surprise birds such as early migrating Long-eared Owls, Eastern Meadowlarks, Eastern Blue birds, Yellow-breasted Chats, Eastern Whip-poor-wills, and Common Nighthawks.

Join us on a fall bird walk! A complete list of our walks are on our website, linnaeannewyork.org

Photographs © Debbie Becker: Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great-horned Owl, Black-throated blue Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Yellow-breasted Chat, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Meadowlark, Solitary Sandpiper, Red-tailed Hawk & Bald Eagle, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

Birdathon 2024 - Great Gull Island



Two Common Terns displaying at Great Gull Island © Melinda Billings



Roseate Terns in front of a line of nest boxes on the western end of Great Gull Island © Melinda Billings

Each year, the Linnaean Society sponsors a birdathon to help raise money for Great Gull Island. The island, which was acquired by the American Museum of Natural History in 1949, is home to the world's largest nesting colony of Common Terns and the largest colony of Roseate Terns in the Western Hemisphere. Located in Long Island Sound next to Plum and Orient Islands, it has remained uninhabited and desolate.

In 1969, ornithologist and naturalist Dr. Helen Hays made a visit to Great Gull Island and realized it was a nesting haven for terns. Since then, she has supervised the repurposing of the island to favor nesting conditions for the birds. Her work has been successful, and the most recent counts of Common Terns show more than 26,000 nesting pairs. Dr. Hays has been recognized for her contributions to bird conservation and has received a service award from the United States Department of the Interior, among other accolades for her work.

This year's Linnaean Society birdathon raised almost \$6,000 to contribute to the island's maintenance and to help fund the interns

who work to keep the island free of invasive plants that could ruin the terns' nesting sites.

The Linnaean Society birding teams included Slow Birding Saturday (\$4,037); Wandering Warblers (\$431); Gnoble Gnatcatchers (\$902); and Scarlet Tanagers (\$194).

"A birdathon is a fun and challenging day at the office," said Amy Chaplin, who volunteered on one of the five teams organized by the Linnaean Society.

The Gnoble Gnatcatchers observed 106 species of birds as they birded Sunset Cove Park, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, and Central Park. Some of the highlights included Blue-winged Teal, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Clapper Rail, American Oystercatcher, Willet, Forster's Tern, Little Blue Heron, Glossy Ibis, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-throated and White-eyed Vireos, Purple Martins, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Scarlet Tanagers and a variety of warblers. These are all species that migrate through the NYC area during the month of May.

The Bird Collective, a conservation-minded apparel company, has designed a line of shirts and other products that feature images from Great Gull Island. A percentage of Bird Collective's profits from the sale of these products will be donated to the Great Gull Island Project to support their ongoing tern research and conservation efforts. Please check out their offerings on birdcollective.com and purchase some items to support the terns.



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The Linnaean Society On The Move...

The Linnaean Society participates in many different activities throughout the year. Please view our website, linnaeannewyork.org for a comprehensive list of membership opportunities (including committee participation), published materials, meeting dates, field trips, and more. Please note that members can join one of our many committees to play an active role in our society.

UPCOMING:

- Belvedere Castle Hawk Watch—Fall 2024 (Please check the field trips section on the website for the dates.)
- Annual Members Homecoming Picnic—September 22, 2024
- Service Projects with the Central Park Conservancy—Ongoing
- Free Meetings, open to the public—linnaeannewyork.org/programs
- Field Trips—linnaeannewyork.org/field-trips
- Birdathon- May 2025

Belvedere Castle Hawk Watch – September/October 2024

This event is the highlight of fall migration, as we observe hawks, eagles, falcons, and owls migrating right over our heads. Impromptu meetups take place when Broad-winged Hawks are migrating through our area, a spectacular event that usually takes place the third week in September, beginning on or about the 15th. The exact timing depends on the direction of the winds: when they are from the northwest or northeast, raptors use them to conserve energy as they fly south for the winter. Please check the field trips section on the website for the dates, or simply head over to Belvedere Castle if the winds are from the northwest or northeast.

How can you learn about the wind direction? Google BirdCast.com or view/listen to your local TV or radio weather station.

Annual Members Homecoming Picnic in Central Park – September 22, 2024

Every year, Linnaean Society members gather for a “homecoming picnic” in Central Park. This year’s gathering will take place at Summit Hill, located off 82nd Street and Central Park West, at 12:30–3:30pm (rain date September 29th). Members are invited to bring lunch and mingle over soft drinks and sweet treats and partake in the yearly birding quiz. Merchandise will be available for purchase. We hope you will be able to join us for this festive picnic. Immediately following, Ursula Mitra and Peter Davenport will lead bird walks. Please RSVP: linnaeannewyork.org/homecoming/

The Mission Statement of the Linnaean Society of New York
The Linnaean Society of New York provides a forum for the sharing and advancement of science-based knowledge through a program of lectures and field trips. It fosters an appreciation of the natural world with a special emphasis on birds. Founded in 1878, the Society comprises dedicated amateurs and professionals interested in the study, preservation, and enjoyment of nature and the environment.

About the Society

Established by amateur naturalists in 1878, the Linnaean Society of New York has worked to foster learning about, and stewardship of, the natural world. Its original members included H.B. Bailey, E.P. Bicknell, Ernest Ingersoll, C. Hart Merriam, and John Burroughs. The Society focuses particularly on birds and their place in nature. It organizes regular birding field trips to various destinations in the New York City area and beyond, sponsors lectures from experts on birding

and natural history topics, and offers a variety of birding resources, including a rare bird alert. It also takes a leadership role in addressing local conservation issues of concern to birders and natural history enthusiasts. Its aspirations are reflected in its highest award, the Eisenmann Medal, which is given each year to honor “excellence in ornithology and encouragement of the amateur.”

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To become a member of the Linnaean Society or for additional information please visit our website, linnaeannewyork.org