



Birds of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail

A Great Lakes Seaway Trail Fact Sheet



From the Eastern Bluebird, Barn Swallows, Bluejays, and bitterns to all manner of migratory and resident raptors, songbirds and waterfowl, the Great Lakes Seaway Trail is a birdwatchers' paradise year'round.

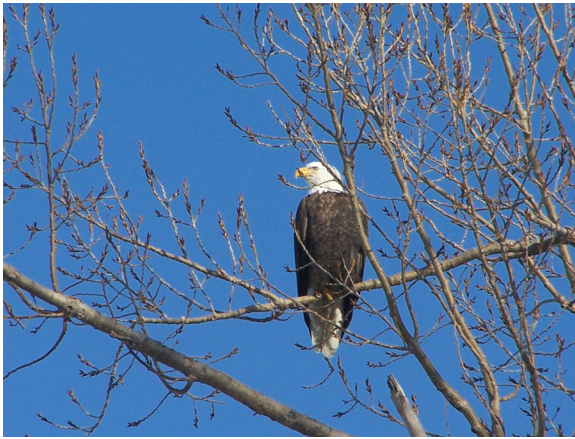
The 518-mile byway that is one of America's Byways and a National Recreation Trail parallels the bird-friendly waters of the St. Lawrence River, Lake Ontario, Niagara River and Lake Erie.

This fact sheet offers a mere sampling of the species and sites that attract professional and amateur birders alike. Why not visit and see the birds of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail for yourself.

Don't forget your binoculars and camera!



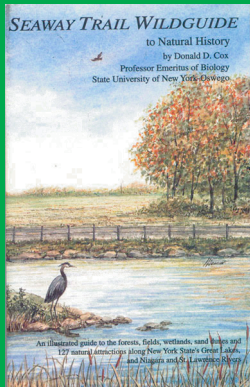
Photos (Clockwise from upper left): Red-bellied Woodpecker, Bob McNamara; an osprey collects dinner from the waters of the Seaway Trail in this mural at the Seaway Trail Discovery Center, Sackets Harbor, NY, Kara Lynn Dunn; tugboat and gull, Brian P. Whattam; illustration from Seaway Trail Tourism Development Zone Plan for Oswego-Eastern Shore Communities; gull on driftwood, Katie Maitland.



This bald eagle was photographed at Oswego harbor in NY in January 2008. Photo: Mary Ellen Barbeau

How Appropriate! Bald Eagles Enjoy Revival on This America's Byways

A Great Lakes Seaway Trail Wildguide



The Seaway Trail Wildguide to Natural History is an illustrated guide to the birds & wildlife found in the fields, forests, sand dunes, woods & wetlands of the 518-mile-long Seaway Trail.

Teachers!

**Use the Wildguide to create lessons that will inspire students to answer such questions as:
how do tiny chickadees save 20% of his energy on a cold winter day on the Seaway Trail.**

The Great Lakes Seaway Trail is one of America's Byways and a National Recreation Trail. The bird that represents American freedom is the Bald Eagle. The natural habitat along the St. Lawrence River and inland from the Seaway Trail along the Salmon River has spurred a revival of wintering Bald Eagles.

Naturalist Don Moore writes, "Bald Eagles feeding their young on a huge nest is the most incredible natural sight I have ever witnessed and you can see this while traveling the Seaway Trail."

A major restoration effort saw 200 juvenile Bald Eagles released by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation into state wetlands from 1976 and 1988. The effort produced nesting adults that now raise their young in the wetlands and along the waterways of the Seaway Trail.

Winter along the St. Lawrence River from Cape Vincent to Massena has supported an average of 15-25 eagles each winter and along the Salmon River from Port Ontario to the Salmon River Fish Hatchery in Altmar is a great time to see these magnificent birds.

Bald eagles which can no longer survive in the wild and young golden eagles destined to help restore wild populations find homes in the natural-style aviary exhibits at the three historic zoos on the Seaway Trail. Bald eagles reside at NYS Zoo at Thompson Park in Watertown, NY.

In Rochester, NY, Seneca Park Zoo's male Southern Bald Eagle named "Windsor" has been popular since 1993 after suffering a shoulder and wing injury in Florida. He enjoys an open, woody setting with logs, stumps and branches for perching and a 15-foot pool for a warm-weather bath.

Golden eagles have been part of the birds at Buffalo Zoo since the early 1900s. A breeding program here has restored the birds into the wild.



NIAGARA RIVER CORRIDOR IMPORTANT BIRD AREA (IBA)

This Great Lakes Seaway Trail storyteller interpretive panel shares interesting facts about the birds of the Niagara River region of the byway. Noted wildlife artist Robert McNamara has designed a series of the birding panels to join more than 100 multi-theme panels seen at outdoor locations Trailwide. Photo: Art of the Wilderness, Robert McNamara

FORT NIAGARA STATE PARK
The mouth of the river provides habitat for large rife (groups) of sea ducks. Like the Long-tailed Duck, during winter months. Red-headed Woodpeckers can be seen year round in the grove of old oak trees.

PROSPECT POINT
This is the largest gull among the thousands of swirling birds below. The gulls are feeding on fish that have been stunned by the upwelling waters.

GOAT ISLAND
Upland habitats bordering the river provide essential feeding and nesting areas for migrating songbirds like the Blackburnian Warbler, Philadelphia Vireo, Hermit Thrush, and Winter Wren.

WOODLAWN BEACH
Over 180 bird species have been recorded in this State Park. The long, narrow shape of the park is aligned with the flight paths of migrating land birds, and the prevailing winds tend to concentrate loons, gulls, terns, scaup, mergansers, jaegers, and other birds onto the beach or just offshore.

YOU ARE HERE

HOW MANY BIRDS?
Peak numbers of selected species seen along the Niagara River:
100,000 Gulls
40,000 Bonaparte's Gulls
50,000 Herring Gulls
14,000 Canvasbacks
11,000 Common Mergansers
10,000 Greater Scaup

UPPER RAPIDS
The rapids are noted for wintering waterfowl such as Canvasback, Scaup, Redheads, and Mergansers. Up to 10,000 birds, 31% of the State's wintering population, can be seen at once.

LEGEND
- Audubon Niagara Birding Trail
- Seaway Trail
- Audubon Niagara Birding Trail

SEAWAY TRAIL, INC.
Corner Bay & Wood Main St.
Sackets Harbor, NY 13685
1-800-SEAWAY-77

This exhibit made possible by a grant from IBA to Seaway Trail, Inc. Thanks to the Buffalo Audubon Society for its assistance.

Audubon-Designated Important Bird Area

Niagara Gorge on Western Seaway Trail is Noted for Wintering Gulls

A significant plethora of 18 species of gulls as well as terns, ducks, geese, swans, hawks and falcons earned the Niagara Gorge on the Western Seaway Trail the honor of being designated the 2nd of New York State's now-100-plus Important Bird Areas by The Audubon Society. The gulls especially frequent here in winter, with November and December prime viewing times.

Rock Termini, then-Secretary of the Audubon Council of New York State, wrote in the 2000-01 Seaway Trail Journey Magazine that the Niagara Gorge was known to be home to thousands of Bonaparte's Gulls.

Niagara Falls is a superb spot to see gulls, herons, terns, all manner of marsh and shorebirds and an occasional jaeger - a hawklike seabird that harasses gulls and terns.

Other popular spots to see gulls, and ducks, in winter are in the warm waters near the power plant on Dunkirk Harbor, NY, and in large numbers in late autumn and early winter at Youngstown, NY.

The world's largest Ring-billed Gull colony is found on Little Galoo Island along the eastern end of the byway.

From Hawkins Point and Robert Moses State Park at Massena at the eastern end of the byway, look for Glaucous, Iceland, Herring and Great Black-backed Gulls and raptors in winter. Near the power dam here you will see wintering Common Goldeneyes, Gadwalls, and Common Mergansers.

Learn more about birding along the Seaway Trail online at www.seawaytrail.com

Rare Birds seen on the Great Lakes Seaway Trail

Among the sightings of birds rarely seen in the area of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail have been:

- **American White Pelicans at Braddock Bay**
- **a pair of Harlequin Ducks near Mexico Point in May**
- **the very rare Ivory Gull and a Black-legged Kittiwake at Robert Moses State Park**
- **a Bohemian Waxwing near Robert Moses Power Dam at Massena**

*Great Blue Heron,
Bob McNamara*



Where to Find Birds on Lake Ontario by Susan Roney Drennan, *Journey Magazine 1990, as excerpted from American Birds*

If a birder is visiting Rochester, one of the best places is Braddock Bay Park. Hawk flights can be spectacular from late February until early June. There is a hawk watch in the park located on an embayment on Lake Ontario. Raptors move eastward, pushed along the shore by southerly winds. Large numbers of birds and excellent views of them combine to make this one of the most outstanding hawk watches in New York State.

There are also large concentrations of waterfowl at Braddock Bay in early spring. Shorebirds and wading birds can be seen here. American Woodcocks are heard at dawn and dusk. Common Snipes will be winnowing overhead from March to June. Owls are definitely specialties here. In winter, birders usually find Snowy Owls in the marsh. Spring brings Short-eared Owls, and from the last week in March to the last week in April, Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet Owls can usually be found in the pines along East Manitou Road at the east end of the parking lot.

Some of the best birding in the Irondequoit Bay area can be had along the entire west shore of the bay. Take any of several local roads down to points along the water. Large concentrations of mergansers, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Oldsquaws, scoters and goldeneyes can be found in autumn and early winter.

Sodus Bay, Sodus Point and Chimney Bluffs are excellent places along the lake in Wayne County to bird. Be sure to stop in the orchards here and in Cayuga County to look for resident thrushes, warblers, mockingbirds and catbirds.

The 823 acres of Fair Haven Beach State Park include The Pond, a 500-acre marsh favored by waterfowl such as Wood and Ring-necked Ducks.

Pioneering Study Documents Migratory Songbirds on Lake Ontario

A pioneering two-year study by The Nature Conservancy and the New York Natural Heritage Program documented songbird concentrations in forests and shrubby habitat all along Lake Ontario's shoreline. Experienced birders have seen more than 40 migrant species in a single shoreline wooded lot in one morning. The colorful neotropical migratory birds include warblers, orioles, thrushes, hummingbirds, tanagers, sparrows, flycatchers, hawks, and cuckoos.

In the spring, when the winds are from the south at Derby Hill near Mexico Point, visitors to the drumlin promontory see spectacular flights of hawks. In autumn watch for waterfowl, jaegers, gulls, and terns. Derby Hill was named New York State's third Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society which began developing an inventory of key areas of bird abundance and diversity, and critical breeding and feeding areas, and migratory stopovers in New York in 1996.

To the east, the pine groves at Selkirk Shores State Park are a popular stopover for sparrows and songbirds.

The nearly 17-mile Eastern Lake Ontario Dune and Wetlands Area of barrier beach is the largest and most extensive freshwater dune system in New York State. The beaches, dunes, marshes, meadows, swamps, ponds, creeks, woods and wetlands provide habitat for the White-Winged Scoter, Black Tern, Mourning Warbler, and Bank Swallows.

Sandy Pond is home to bitterns, Wood and Black Ducks, teal, Killdeer, Sandpipers, Terns, Marsh Wrens, Bobolinks, sparrows, and meadowlarks.



Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Steward John Koltz (left) points out waterfowl over the lake.

Photo: NY Sea Grant

A Great Lakes Seaway Trail Birding Sampler

A small warbler can not store enough fat to travel nonstop from the Caribbean to New York - it must stop to rest and refuel along the way.

Songbirds spend half their daylight hours eating, making use of the most abundant resources...

Birds that have depleted their energy reserves may stay in the same area for days to refuel. These places are known as stopover habitats or staging areas. While migrants use stopover habitats for only a few weeks each year, these habitats are important because they provide food and shelter at a critical time.

For years local bird enthusiasts have found that songbirds concentrate in habitat near the shoreline of Lake Ontario during spring migration.

Excerpt from Migrant Songbirds Along Lake Ontario's Shore, produced by The Nature Conservancy of Central and Western New York, Rochester, NY



The Birds of Braddock Bay by David Semple, *Bird Coalition of Rochester (BirdCOR) Director*

Millions of birds migrate through the Braddock Bay area on Lake Ontario 15 miles west of Rochester, NY. Designated an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society, Braddock Bay provides crucial stopover habitat for migrating birds, and is a "hot spot" for birders. An exceptional diversity of songbirds, raptors, and other avian migrants can be seen here.

For many people, spring doesn't officially arrive without a glimpse of a breathtakingly colorful warbler at Braddock Bay or nearby Island Cottage Woods. Others crane their necks atop the Braddock Bay hawkwatch platform. Official raptor counts reach the thousands, with the highest recorded count of 140,000 in 1996.

Braddock Bay is easily accessible from the Lake Ontario State Parkway (Seaway Trail). Points of interest include Braddock Bay Park on the east side of the bay, the "pear orchard" and "owl woods" on the west side, and Braddock Bay Bird Observatory at Manitou Beach.

Annual programs include Bird of Prey Days in mid-April and daily bird banding research for six or more weeks each spring and fall. The Bird Coalition of Rochester (www.BirdCOR.org) holds a free public festival to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day on the weekend of the second Saturday in May.

A not-for-profit education and service-learning program of the Genesee Valley Audubon Society, BirdCOR is the first organization in the U.S. to begin outreach to schools with the *Flying WILD* project that provides lesson plans for grades K-12.

In downtown Rochester, five miles from the mouth of the Genesee River, Peregrine Falcons nested atop the high-rise Kodak headquarters from 1998 to 2008. Building renovation required moving the nesting box to the Powers Building on Main Street. Check rfalconcam.com for nest views made possible by cameras placed by the Genesee Valley Audubon Society.

From melodic songsters and symbolic harbingers of spring to the ever-fascinating raptors, birds are an important economic resource to the Seaway Trail region. BirdCOR's mission is to foster interest in conserving birds as a vital natural and economic resource through learning, service activities, festivals and participating with the Birds of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail program.

Sharing a Well-Kept Secret with Birding Travelers

In 2008, the not-for-profit Seaway Trail, Inc. in Sackets Harbor, NY, began to shine the light on a well-kept secret, i.e., the diversity and range of the birding resources found along the 518-mile byway along the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes in NY and PA.

The goal is to attract some of the millions of birders who spend billions of recreational dollars in communities across the U.S.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service statistics for 2006 showed that more than 71 million people spent nearly \$45 billion observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife and another \$12 billion on wildlife-related travel expenses.

Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Steward Mike Slattery (center with hat) used bird mounts on one of his tours at Black Pond Wildlife Management Area. Some of the wild birds that inhabit the area in the summer season also appeared for group members to see.

Photo: Mary Penney, New York Sea Grant



Black Pond WMA: ADA-Compliant & A Birders' Paradise

by Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Steward Michael T. Slattery, 2007

Black Pond Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Henderson (on the Seaway Trail) is a great place for birdwatchers, nature lovers, vacationers, seasonal and local residents, and is ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant. A nearly half-mile raised boardwalk suitable for people with all types of disabilities was added here in 2001.

Managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and interpreted in the summer months by Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Stewards, this 526-acre site is part of the Eastern Lake Ontario Marshes Bird Conservation Area.

From the observation platforms of the ADA-compliant trail, complete with side rails and benches are spectacular views of Black Pond and Lake Ontario. The Nature Conservancy's checklist of the Birds of the Eastern Lake Ontario Shoreline lists 281 species of birds that can be seen in the forest, marsh, pond, dune and lake habitats.

The rich variety of habitats at Black Pond WMA offers a unique opportunity to view a wide range of flora and fauna, especially birds! The Red Cedar uplands at the WMA entrance are home to many of the more common songbirds. The ADA-compliant trail starts in a flooded Silver Maple woodland where the quiet observer may catch a glimpse of breeding birds such as the Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Pileated Woodpecker, Scarlet Tanager, and Wood Thrush. Warblers, sparrows, and flycatchers can also be spotted here.

The trail continues along the marsh to the observation platform overlooking Black Pond where wetland birds such as Osprey, American Bittern, Great Blue Heron, Blue-winged Teal, and Wood Duck can be seen. The ADA-compliant boardwalk affords an unequalled view of the sand dunes and cottonwoods.

Song Sparrows, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Northern Orioles will no doubt greet you as you make your way to the last observation platform overlooking Lake Ontario, the beach, and bird sanctuary. Here is where you find gulls, terns. Lucky observers may see Bald Eagles, Tundra Swans, or the Black Tern, an endangered species in New York.

This unique area, including the bird sanctuary at the El Dorado Nature Preserve, is home to two breeding shorebirds: Spotted Sandpiper and Killdeer.

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Father of the Modern Field Guide

**Roger Tory Peterson
1908-1996**

Roger Tory Peterson published his first **Field Guide to the Birds in 1934**, inspiring Americans to get outside to see the birds and appreciate the natural environment.

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History in Peterson's birthplace of Jamestown, NY, is just a short drive from the Seaway Trail. You will find a vast lifetime collection of the work of the noted American birder, artist, photographer, educator, and naturalist here.

Also stop at the Jamestown Audubon Nature Center where the Roger Tory Peterson Nature Interpretive Building displays his bird prints and a 600-acre wetland preserve is home to raptors, waterbirds, warblers, and gamebirds, 5 miles of trails, an arboretum, and herb and butterfly gardens.

(America's favorite comedienne Lucille Ball was also born in Jamestown. Her legacy is honored at the Lucy-Desi Museum here.)

Rock Termini's Notable Seaway Trail Birding Spots

Mr. Termini is a former Audubon Council of New York State Secretary

Seaway Trail Pennsylvania

- Presque Isle State Park: spring/fall migration, 325 species
- Roderick Wildlife Preserve: spring hawks, nesting woodcocks

Great Lakes Seaway Trail - New York

Lake Erie-Niagara River

- Chautauqua Lake: spring/fall migration, loons
- Dunkirk Harbor and Point Gratiot: all year, diverse waterfowl
- Ripley Hawk Watch: spring migration, key raptor passover
- Wheeler's Gulf: spring/fall, breeding Cerulean warblers
- Tift Nature Center: spring/fall migration, 260 species

Lake Ontario

- Niagara River Corridor: globally significant gull site
- Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, Oak Orchard, Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area
- Braddock Bay: world-class hawk migration site
- Hamlin Beach State Park: top loon site, 250 species
- Rochester urban parks: important warbler stopover
- Northern Montezuma Wetlands National Wildlife Refuge: top year-round Northeast waterfowl and shorebird site
- Cayuga Lake: fall migration, geese, ducks, loons, gulls
- Derby Hill Bird Observatory: spring hawks, raptors, waterfowl
- Eastern Lake Ontario Barrier Beaches: wetlands species
- Fort Drum Grasslands: clay-colored sparrow
- Little Galloo Island: world's largest Ring-Billed Gull colony
- Perch River Grasslands: spring/fall grassland species site
- Perch River Wildlife Management Area: wetlands-grasslands birds
- Point Peninsula: vital North American arctic breeding site
- Indian River Lakes, Black Lake: golden-winged warblers

St. Lawrence River Region

- Upper St. Lawrence River/ 1000 Islands: Great Blue Herons & Black Terns
- Lisbon Grasslands: breeding area for wetland birds
- Lower St. Lawrence River: nesting Common Terns, wintering waterfowl & eagles
- Massaweppee Mire: Palm Warblers & Spruce Grouse

Red-tailed Hawk, photo: Randy Caccia, Minna Anthony Common Nature Center, Wellesley Island State Park



To See & Learn More about the Birds of the Great Lakes, visit these & other Great Lakes Seaway Trail sites:

Along Seaway Trail Pennsylvania

- Tom Ridge Environmental Research Center at Presque Isle State Park, Erie
- Erie Zoo
- Asbury Woods Nature Center, Erie

Along New York Seaway Trail

- Jamestown Audubon Nature Center
- Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History, Jamestown
- Canadaway Creek Nature Center, 30 miles SW of Dunkirk
- Dunkirk Harbor and Point Gratiot
- Buffalo Audubon Society's 6 sanctuaries
- Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo
- Buffalo Zoo
- Buffalo Urban Canoe Trail
- Niagara Falls and Niagara River Gorge Discovery Center
- Niagara Audubon Birds of Prey Center, Lewiston
- Old Fort Niagara State Park Nature Center, Youngstown
- Point Breeze
- Lakeside Beach State Park, Waterport
- Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, Basom
- Braddock Bay Park
- Seneca Park Zoo, Rochester
- Irondequoit Bay
- Genesee Country Nature Center, Mumford
- Sodus Bay & Sodus Point
- Chimney Bluffs State Park
- Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
- Fair Haven Beach State Park
- Sterling Lake Shore Park and Nature Center
- Rice Creek Field Station, Oswego
- Oswego Harbor
- Derby Hill & Mexico Point State Park
- Selkirk Shores State Park
- Salmon River Fish Hatchery, Altmar
- Sandy Pond Beach Unique Area
- Black Pond Wildlife Management Area
- Seaway Trail Discovery Center, Sackets Harbor
- NYS Zoo at Thompson Park, Watertown
- Chaumont Barrens
- Minna Anthony Nature Center, Wellesley Island State Park
- Wilson Hill Wildlife Management Area
- Sparrowhawk Point near Ogdensburg
- Robert Moses State Park



Birds of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail

*A Great Lakes Seaway Trail
Fact Sheet*

**Seaway Trail Foundation
Seaway Trail Discovery Center**

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www.seawaytrail.com

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