



# Birds on the Niagara

www.birdsontheniagara.org



**FEBRUARY 14-15 2020**

## **For Immediate Release**

**Date: January 24, 2020**

An *International* Celebration of Winter Birds  
Canada/US

*“Birds On the Niagara Winter Bird Celebration is now an International Event”*

“2020 marks the second consecutive year of this now “international” winter celebration of the Birds On the Niagara.”

### **CONTACTS**

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**Birds on the Niagara, A Celebration of Winter Birds**, will be held on **Valentines Day Weekend**, Friday, February 14, and Saturday, February 15 2020. The event will be held at a variety of indoor and outdoor locations and venues along the U.S. and Canadian side of the Niagara River strait.

This will be the second year of the celebration. It was initiated in January of 2019 with a U.S. organizational partnership that included the Niagara Greenway Commission, Several state agencies ( New York State Parks,

Recreation, and Historic Preservation Western, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation) the Grand Island Footprints Festival, Buffalo Ornithological Society, Buffalo Audubon, the Western New York Land Conservancy, The Buffalo Museum of Science/Tiff Nature Preserve, Blackrock Riverside Alliance, and the Pollinator Conservation Association.

This year the event is going international.

“This is significant” said **Jay Burney**, one of the founders of the event. “Our Canadian friends that helped us so much with last years event, make this a rare, cross-border bird celebration. We are pleased to announce that we now have Canadian organizational partners including Niagara Parks, the Niagara Falls Nature Club, The Bert Miller Nature Club, the Peninsula Field Naturalists, and Birds Canada. We will be able to explore and enjoy this celebration at msny sites on both sides of the international Niagra River strait.”

**Greg Stevens, Executive Director of the Niagara River Greenway Commision**, also a founding partner of the celebration said “This is such an important area, ecologically speaking. Conservation of the birds that are here, and the habitat that they depend upon, are a primary focus of the Niagara River Greenway Commission. The fact the the Niagara River is a **Globally Significant Important Bird Area** and that we now have the Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance Designation makes this area comparrable to other Important Bird Areas and Ramsar sites including the Galapagos, San Francisco Bay, and the Florida Everglades.”

**Tom Kerr of Buffalo Audubon**, a founding organizational partner said "Buffalo Audubon is excited to be a part of this celebration again this year. We are pleased to be hosting Birds and Brews at Flying Bison Brewery on Valentines day to kick off this weekend. It is especially relevant because many of the waterfowl that we will be looking at along the waterways are just entering the courting season and they are in full breeding plumage”

**Marcie Jacklin, of the Bert Miller Nature Club** commented “The internationally recognized Niagara River is one of the best places to see a variety of ducks and gulls in the winter. Festivals like these are great for kids and adults alike to start learning about the fastest growing hobby in North America - bird watching.”

## **EVENT SCHEDULE**

Birds on the Niagara Events will kick of with a **Friday Evening February 14, 2020** with a Valentines Day themed Birds and Brew hosted by Buffalo Audubon at Flying Bison Brewery.

**Saturday Feb 15** events will include birding tours on both sides of the international border (8am-2pm), early afternoon indoor programing and displays (2-4pm) at the Niagara Power Vista in Niagara Falls which overlooks the Niagara Gorge. At 4 pm the keynote speaker, Jajeane Rose-Burney will present a program about thte Birds on the Niagrara, The Niagara River Globally Significant Important Bird Area, and the recent designation of the Niagara as a Ramsar Wetlands of International Significance.

For more information on the schedule and event locations, go to **<http://www.birdsontheniagara.org/schedule-of-events.html>**

## **Background**

Generations of outdoor, nature, bird, and science enthusiasts have long-known that the Niagara is a winter magnet for wildlife, especially birds. Why is the Niagara River strait important for birds? Birds and other wildlife depend on this area as critical habitat year round. The Niagara, located in the Great Lakes region of North America, provides a fundamental connection between the Arctic and the Amazon Basin for migrating, overwintering, and breeding birds.

From ancient times this strait, stretching from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario, has been a migrating and overwintering paradise for birds from the far north. On any given winter day, many common and unusual species, and hundreds of thousands of individual birds can be found on the Niagara.

These birds are attracted to the open waters of the winter Niagara and adjacent lakes. Many species of waterfowl, including ducks, geese, and swans, and species of rare and unusual gulls, depend on this place as critical habitat. Some of these birds come from the Arctic and some from the boreal Pacific coasts of Canada and Alaska. Many are migrating through here during this season, or just plain wintering here.

The Niagara is a critical source of food, for socialization, and provides life preserving conditions during harsh times. November through spring brings an abundance of birds. February finds us at the beginning of waterfowl breeding season and we can see most species in full breeding plumage, which is pretty spectacular.

Today we in the midst of a precipitous declines of most species of birds. Our conservation efforts here are fundamental to helping save both the Amazon and Arctic. The Niagara provides a critical winter habitat for some of the most effected species including the Snowy Owl, Bonaparte's Gull, Common Merganser, and dozens of other species.

Birds use this area in all seasons, Migrating shorebirds and raptors including the Bald Eagle (which breeds here), neotropical warblers, and other songbirds, depend on this corridor during spring and fall migrations. In the summer hundreds of species of breeding birds make their homes here. Many of these birds winter in Amazon basin. many species including warblers and the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows, and Purple Martins, breed here in the summer months and winter in Central America and the Amazon Basin.

The Niagara River corridor, a Globally Significant Important Bird Area, is recognized by both the US and Canada. This IBA links the biodiversity of the western hemisphere from the Arctic, Central America, and the Amazon Basin. It is a critical place for birds. The Niagara provides hemispheric connections to important ecological regions that keep the earth a healthy and life giving place for wildlife and humans. Our conservation efforts here have hemispheric and global impacts. Birds on the Niagara, A Winter Celebration of Birds is designed to uplift awareness and enjoyment of this avian ecological winter paradise.

## Keynote Speaker

“Jajeane-Rose Burney is a knowledgeable conservationist who has brought a lot of success to the region. He is Deputy director of the Western New York Land Conservancy, one of the principle architects of the Ramsar Designation.” -Greg Stevens, Executive Director of the Niagara River Greenway Commission

Mr. Burney the Deputy Executive Director at the Western New York Land Conservancy. He has a bachelor's degree in environmental design and a master's degree in urban planning, both from the University at Buffalo (UB). After graduating in 2007, he worked at the Urban Design Project, a research center at UB, on several local planning efforts, environmental coalition building, and non-profit development. As a graduate student, Jajeane studied in the Sustainable Futures program in Costa Rica, and taught in the same program while working for the Urban Design Project. From 2010 to 2012 he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer stationed with Mexico's federal environmental agency in Puebla, a large city in southern Mexico, along with his wife Ana. There, he helped protect a large wetland from rapid and unplanned urban development, a project that led to an international Ramsar Site designation for the wetland and a new state park. At the Land Conservancy, Jajeane has helped save important wildlife habitats and create new nature preserves. He also led an effort to designate the Niagara River as a Ramsar Site.

### Resources and References:

Scientific American September 2019

Silent Skies: Billions of North American Birds Have Vanished

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/silent-skies-billions-of-north-american-birds-have-vanished/>

Audubon September, 2019

“North America Has Lost More Than 1 in 4 Birds in last 50 Years, New Study Says”

<https://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50-years-new-study-says>

Audubon May 2016

“Thirty Percent of North American Bird Species Face Decline Across Seasons.”

<https://www.audubon.org/news/thirty-percent-north-american-bird-species-face-decline-across-seasons>

Audubon

September 2019

Audubon Declares a Bird Emergency, Demands Immediate Action After Scientists Reveal Huge Losses of North American Birds

“We have to act now to protect the places birds count on: Places like the Arctic, Great Lakes, Everglades and the Colorado River must be a priority”

<https://www.audubon.org/news/audubon-declares-bird-emergency-demands-immediate-action-after-scientists-reveal>

### Niagara River Ramsar Wetland of International Importance

Western New York Land Conservancy

<https://wnylc.org/conservation/current-projects/niagara-river-corridor-ramsar-site/>

USFWS Press Release

[https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=-niagara-river-corridor-recognized-as-40th-wetland-of-international-&\\_ID=36474](https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=-niagara-river-corridor-recognized-as-40th-wetland-of-international-&_ID=36474)

UB Law

<https://www.law.buffalo.edu/news/ramsar-designation.html>

Canada

NRRAP

<https://ourniagarariver.ca/ramsar/>

### **Niagra River Globally Significant Important Bird Area**

IBA Canada Niagara River Corridor

<https://www.ibacanada.ca/site.jsp?siteID=ON002>

Canada Niagara River Remedial Action Plan

Niagara River Important Bird and biodiversity Area

<http://ourniagarariver.ca/iba/>

Audbon Niagara River Corridor IBA

<https://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/niagara-river-corridor>

Friends of Times Beach Niagara River Corridor IBA Description

<http://www.friendsoftimesbeachnp.org/niagara-river-corridor-globally-significant-important-bird-area.html>