



# The Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society Newsletter

Serving from Fort Salonga in Suffolk County to Oyster Bay and Centre Island in Nassau County

Volume 12, Issue 2  
May - August 2024

## Letter from the Editor

By Alexandra Martinez

The mission of the Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society is to protect wildlife and preserve habitat through conservation action, advocacy, and education. This chapter territory serves both Huntington and Oyster Bay townships with its all-volunteer chapter 501c3 non-profit established in 1961.

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Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2024 issue! I hope that your life this spring has been blooming, prosperous, and hopeful - all things this renewing time of year should be.

Did you have the opportunity to watch the solar eclipse? Were you one of the lucky ones to get the eclipse glasses from your local library before they ran out in the craze? Were you looking forward to the natural phenomenon or were you concerned about the signs on the highway that said "Use Mass Transit"? Did you book a place in the path of totality to see it all up close and personal (and in the dark)? I for one had to drive home at the exact time it was happening, and I was driving back east as the sun was setting west, so I saw a whole lot of nothing besides what was posted online and on social media.

What I found most fascinating about the solar eclipse was nothing about the sun, the moon, or the concealing of one by the other. Instead, what I found most bewildering was the fact that - for those in the path of totality - the particular moment would have a strange impact on wildlife. We all know the impact it has on human life - from awe and excitement, to obsession, to worry, to potential blindness, but did you ever think of the impact a solar eclipse has on animals whose only true way of telling the time of day is based on the sun? According to Syracuse University (SU) News (Syracuse was near totality during this 2024 eclipse), while research on how eclipses affect animal populations is quite limited, researchers know that most wild animals will begin their normal nighttime routines as totality approaches (signaling in the animal's mind that it is in fact true night time). According to SU, "Common animal vocalists in evening choruses, such as frogs and crickets, may begin singing, while animals that vocalize during the daytime, such as most cicadas, may stop." Honey bees and worker bees may return to their hives, thinking the day's work is over. Nocturnal moths may take flight when the sun disappears. And, birds and insects that normally migrate at night may also take flight during a solar eclipse experience.

The entire experience just reminds me of how humans have to **take the time** to appreciate nature - as many of our members obviously relish in. But, think about our animal friends. They are so connected they know nothing else but endless appreciation, fascination, biological clocks based on the biosphere, and the start and end of the day based on the classic signals of light and dark, sunrise and sunset.

# Bending the Bird Curve

By Greg Richter

The world has lost more than 3 Billion birds since the 1970s. 3 Billion with a B....That's the curve we are trying to bend. It's hard to even fathom but that is what we are up against in the face of worldwide habitat loss and the increasing effects of climate change. The birds we love are hurting and they need our help! Hunting Oyster Bay Audubon Society is committed to 'bending the bird curve'. The chapter's efforts in the coming years will be supported and guided by the principles included in the National Audubon Society's

strategic plan for 2023-2028 known as the *Flight Plan*.

This strategic plan

is groundbreaking as it sets specific goals to save the birds we love. The Flight Plan will use five 2028 conservation milestones to assess progress towards its goal. Through habitat conservation, climate action, policy and community building the Flight Plan looks to get birds back on track. Greg Richter Vice-President of HOBAS had an opportunity to attend the National Audubon Leadership Conference in Estes Park, Colorado to learn more about the flight plan. He was joined by National Audubon staff, local chapters, and campus chapters from across the hemisphere to learn and bring back ideas which will fuel local conservation and advocacy here at home. HOBAS is committed to the common goal of protecting the birds we love and bending the bird curve. Keep an eye out for new programs and ways to get involved by visiting us at <https://www.hobaudubon.org/>. More info regarding the

"In my lifetime, North America has lost more than 3 billion birds. This is a catastrophe playing out on a planetary scale. We are reaching a tipping point for birds, magnified by the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. But if we act now—in this critical decade—we can reverse this trend."



— Dr. Elizabeth Gray, Chief Executive Officer



Flight Plan can be found at [www.Audubon.org/flightplan](http://www.Audubon.org/flightplan).

Quote and Image from National Audubon Society website

## Birdy Bits: The Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)



By Simone DaRos

"The Black-capped Chickadee is the most common and widespread of the seven chickadee species found in North America. Named for its call and trademark black cap. The Black-capped Chickadee's vocal repertoire is quite complex, with at least 15 different sounds that serve as contact calls, alarm calls, individual identification, territorial markers, or in recognition of a particular flock: with its typical "chick-a-dee-dee-dee" call. Black-capped Chickadees eat many insect and spider eggs, larvae, pupae, and nymphs. These adaptable little birds also consume berries, seeds, suet, and even bits of carrion, particularly in the winter when insects are scarce.

In spring and summer, these normally social birds split up into monogamous breeding pairs. As cavity nesters, they usually select a site in a decayed snag, branch, or knothole. They may also take advantage of old woodpecker holes or nest boxes. Chickadees can excavate their own nest cavities in soft, dead wood, taking the wood chips away from the site to avoid attracting predators. Once the nest cavity is established, the female builds a cup-shaped nest of moss and bark at the bottom and lines it with softer material such as animal fur.

Each fall, Black-capped Chickadees gather and store large supplies of seeds in many different places – an adaptation that helps them to survive harsh winters. But how do they remember where they stash their supplies of seed? Scientists have shown that Black-capped Chickadees are able to increase their memory capacity each fall by adding new brain cells to the hippocampus, the part of the brain that supports spatial memory.

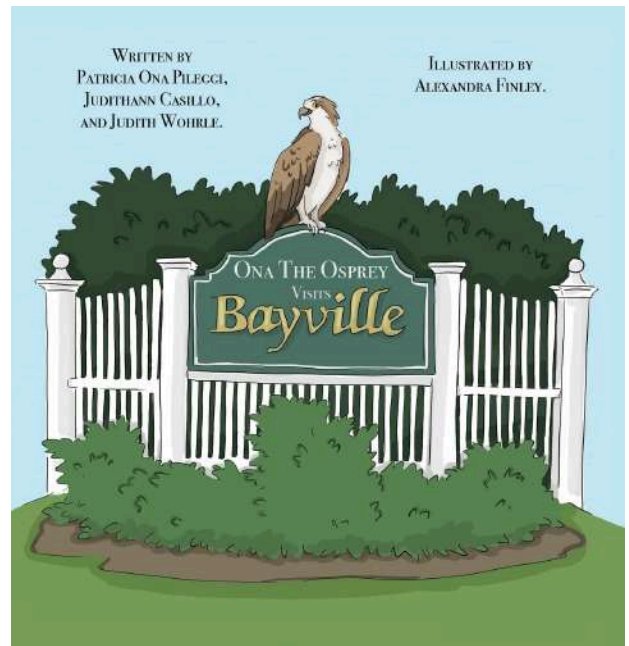
During extremely cold winter nights, this remarkable little bird shows another interesting ability, it can lower its body temperature and enter short periods of torpor. This ability to go into controlled hypothermia helps it conserve essential energy. In addition, Black-capped Chickadees sometimes cluster together in tree cavities for extra warmth" (excerpted from: American Bird Conservancy, ABC's All About Birds, [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org)).

Photo: Black-capped Chickadee: Leo Raymakers/Audubon Photography Awards

# Finding Delight in Nature and a Tale About an Osprey

By Barbara Suter

What do I mean by “delight”? In a recent New York Times editorial (1/9/24), Catherine Price wrote about the concept of “delight,” explaining that “taking time to notice life’s small joys can improve your health and your outlook.” I had been feeling discouraged at my lack of mobility since recent back surgery, when my husband wisely suggested we go for a “duck walk” (more accurately, in my case, driving to favorite viewing spots along the shore). More than 25 years ago on a bitterly cold January day, we joined a “winter duck identification walk” led by the director of the TR Bird Sanctuary. I was so inspired by that experience that I became an avid winter duck fan. The feeling Catherine Price wrote about reappeared on our recent walk when we spied some widgeons in Huntington Harbor. The following day we came upon several red-headed canvasbacks in a pond in Centerport. Both sightings inspired cries of delight. And I was feeling much better.



Finding delight in nature is still possible. The Winter 2023 edition of Nature Conservancy features a story “50 Years of Protecting Endangered Species,” in celebration of the anniversary of the Endangered Species Act which was enacted in 1973 by President Nixon. Spread across the first two pages of the article is a photo of an eagle, wings wide open, reminding us of its majesty. About a week ago, my daughter posted on Facebook her delight in “coming upon a bald eagle standing on an icy local pond dismembering its prey” while its mate sat in a tree high overhead. Fifty years ago, there were no bald eagles left in this part of the world due to the use of DDT, a spray used to kill insects that poisoned the eagles. There was no Endangered Species Act to protect them. Now, however, on Long Island you can see eagles everywhere, flying in circles high above the ponds and woods, hunting for the abundant small mammals that populate this area and sitting in their nests with their babies in springtime.

Another cause for celebration for me has been the return of the osprey, another victim of the use of DDT. I still remember the day when my family, on a short nature outing, was leaving the parking area of the beach on Orient Point and suddenly came upon an osprey sitting boldly in a tree. I had never seen one before and it was decades before I saw another. Perched high in their nests, resting on platforms built in wetlands for their use, they are now in such abundance they have become part of the local scenery. Watching the ospreys multiply, returning in early spring to build their nests, has become a seasonal delight.

When I was nine, my family moved to Bayville, a small seaside village on the north shore of Long Island, from urban Queens. It is there where I discovered and fell in love with nature; a love affair that has only deepened throughout my life. I recently came across a children’s book entitled *Ona the Osprey Visits Bayville* by Patricia Ona Pileggi, Judithann Casillo, and Judith Wohrle. During my youth there were no ospreys in Bayville. To discover this story, decades later, of an osprey mom introducing its offspring to the local sights and sounds...you guessed it, delighted me!

The story is written in rhyming couplets and is beautifully illustrated. When my children were young, we read endless books about nature and stories about sea and land creatures. There is a new generation of children on Long Island who now see these majestic birds whenever they visit the seashore and perhaps take them for granted. To have the story of Ona the Osprey told through the eyes and voice of the mother osprey makes the tale instantly delightful to children and encourages them to take notice of their surroundings. I like to imagine that the children who are reading or have read the story of Ona the Osprey Visits Bayville are learning to love nature as my children did and still do. My hope is that they find as much excitement in nature as I felt in seeing my first osprey so many years ago and as my daughter felt recently coming unexpectedly upon a pair of bald eagles. Delight is all around us if we keep our eyes and ears open!

\*Copies of *Ona the Osprey Visits Bayville* are available locally in Bayville at Over the Bridge store on Ludlum Avenue, Bayville Pharmacy on Bayville Avenue and Marty’s Party at the IGA shopping center; through Friends of the Bay in Oyster Bay; eBay and Amazon.

Barbara Suter is a retired teacher currently living in Huntington, LI. Her wish is to contribute articles to this newsletter that will inspire readers to delight in the Church of Nature.

## A note from the author of *Ona the Osprey*:

Writing *Ona the Osprey Visits Bayville* was a new and enchanting endeavor for myself and co-authors. We are all retired Bayville residents with a love for our village and the magnificent Osprey. Publishing the book was a learning experience encouraged and accomplished with hours of computer time and patience from my daughter-in-law, Celeste, and my son, Jason. It is a tremendous joy to see the response and success this book has been and continues to be and the wonderful stories it inspires. One young man read the book and immediately had a tattoo of the Osprey put on his leg.



Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon  
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**Membership Application**

**Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society**

*A Chapter of the National Audubon Society*

Please consider joining or renewing your membership to Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society, a local, all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) chapter. Your membership directly supports HOBAS' mission to advocate for birds, wildlife and habitat through conservation efforts and educational outreach. You will receive our newsletter and an open invitation to field trips and events. Thank you for supporting HOBAS with your membership!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Details:

**New HOBAS member**, chapter only annual \$20.00       **Renewing HOBAS member**, chapter only annual \$20.00

**Additional Donation** \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to: **Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society**

Send your check and application to: **Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society**

**P.O. Box 735**

**Huntington, NY 11743-0735**

# Vernal Pond Restoration Project

## Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center, Oyster Bay Cove

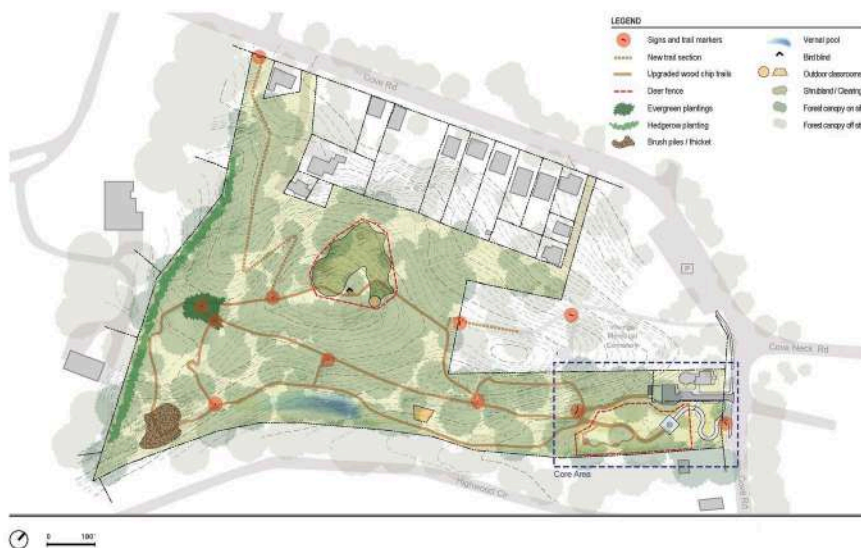
By Greg Richter

Last summer, I, Greg Richter, a newly appointed Vice President of our chapter, and Blair Broughton, former HOBAS board member and former longtime caretaker of the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary (TRS) worked to complete the restoration of the two Vernal Pools (or vernal ponds) at the TRS property. Although the ponds are man-made, the benefits that the ponds provide to the ecosystem are incredibly important. The project will be completed in two phases. Phase I was completed last fall and included cleaning out the debris from ponds, restacking and replacing stones, the installation of native shade and deer tolerant plants and a new split rail fence. Phase II of the project will include additional plantings, informative signage and a nearby sitting area to enjoy the sights and sounds of the visitors of the ponds. So, you might now be asking... What is all the fuss about a couple of small ponds in the woods?

Vernal Pools (or vernal ponds) are an important part of Long Island landscape. Vernal ponds are temporary, often seasonal, bodies of shallow freshwater that are often surrounded by drier, wooded land. They are fed exclusively by snow and rain runoff; they have no permanent inlets or connection to groundwater. They exist in depressions that are filled with water during spring snowmelt or periods of high rainfall. Unlike in nature, the TRS ponds have a rubber liner that holds the water, however those that occur naturally usually last for several months before drying up into muddy wetlands that can sometimes stick around for years. Because they dry up, the pools that occur naturally don't support fish. These unique places are essential to a wonderful gathering of wildlife, including many of our region's frogs, salamanders, insects and birds including the American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal and several species of sparrow and warbler. Birds can be important in vernal pool ecosystems as seed dispersers, prey species, and predators.

Vernal pools may provide birds with resources in areas that may otherwise be considered subpar habitat. Some birds are capable of making use of the patchwork urban environment where green areas and pools are fragmented by roads, parking lots, and buildings.

Work on Phase II will begin this Spring. Please reach out to us via email or our website if you would like to join our volunteering efforts and/or look out for announcements regarding upcoming volunteer opportunities on this project and others.



### Photo Credit:

[https://mnlandscape.com/projects/theodore\\_roosevelt\\_sanctuary\\_and\\_audubon\\_center\\_trsaac\\_master\\_plan](https://mnlandscape.com/projects/theodore_roosevelt_sanctuary_and_audubon_center_trsaac_master_plan)

If you encounter local wildlife in need, please contact a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Wildlife rehabilitators give of their own resources and volunteer to assist in the proper care of injured and orphaned wildlife. Here are several great resources:

- Volunteers For Wildlife [info@volunteersforwildlife.org](mailto:info@volunteersforwildlife.org), 516-674-0982
- Sweet Briar Nature Center, 631-979-6344
- NYS Wildlife Rehabilitation Council [nyswrc.org/wildlife-resources/](http://nyswrc.org/wildlife-resources/)
- Bald Eagles of Centerport Facebook Page

# The Great Backyard Bird Count: Counting Birds and Finding Community

By Barbara Suter, Retired teacher, Member/supporter of Friends of the Bay & TR Sanctuary & Audubon Center

This year, for the first time, my family officially participated in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) conducted by the National Audubon Society across the nation and the world. *Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was the first online participatory-science project (also referred to as [community science](#) or citizen science) to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to provide an expanded capacity to support participation in Canada. In 2013, we became a global project when we began entering data into eBird, the world's largest biodiversity-related participatory science (community science or citizen science) project.* (Google: [birdcount.org/count](http://birdcount.org/count))

This commitment meant that for four days in February (16-19), we would set aside a minimum of 15 minutes each day to digitally record a tally of birds who visited our backyard feeder and in our local park about a mile from our home. I began to feel excited about joining a nationwide group of birders willing to participate in an exercise to benefit all birds. The data collected by the count is used to assess dwindling or increasing bird populations in different locations around the world, as well as the specific details (weather, etc.) at the time of the count.

I became specifically interested in winter ducks about 40 years ago when my husband and I participated in a Winter Duck Walk led by the director of the Teddy Roosevelt Bird Sanctuary in Oyster Bay, LI. The enthusiasm of the director was contagious: I have been observing winter ducks ever since then. Then life interfered. We started a family and observing birds became a once-in-a-while escape from the hectic demands of family life.

Since my retirement from teaching ten years ago, my interest in birds has rekindled and I slowly began to take up the habit of bird watching once again. Fast forward to this past month and my participation in the 2024 GBBC. Since most of my bird watching has been solo, except for occasional walks with my husband or daughter, I saw this as a chance to expand my birding connections and perhaps make some new friends. I also liked the idea of being part of a global community all doing the same thing on this particular weekend. The opportunity felt BIG and friendly!

My GBBC experience began with my participation in a virtual program offered by the local TR Sanctuary and Audubon Center (TRSAC) staff and volunteers to familiarize newbies like myself with the history of the event and specific instructions for how to count birds and contribute to the national tally through digital participation in eBird an online birding site. Bird watchers are, as a rule, really nice people and they were no exception. They explained the process for counting birds and recording the results through ebird. As a retired senior who is not a digital native, I sometimes feel challenged by doing things on my computer or Android phone, but they patiently walked me through the process until I was able to follow the program instructions. (An in-person presentation was canceled due to inclement weather conditions.) Their enthusiasm for the project was very encouraging and contagious. For me it was very exciting to see the digital map of the world which lights up to display the entries of data from around the world in "real time." That feature is a real motivator!

The first day of the GBBC arrived and we eagerly counted the visitors to our backyard feeder. Unfortunately, the weekend weather was very cold and unpleasant and the number of birds was fewer than usual. I submitted our count to ebird and felt very proud of myself for taking the first step. On the second day it snowed and few birds were present. We entered our meager count. On the third day we participated in a special event.

A local marine conservation organization, the Friends of the Bay (FOB) offered a Duck Walk and Talk in collaboration with the local TR Bird Sanctuary and the Huntington Oyster-Bay Audubon, providing a wonderful opportunity to step outside our usual domain and participate in a group seeking to identify and observe local winter ducks. The group consisted of about two dozen people ranging in ages from 30 ish to 70ish. The new director of FOB, a local NGO, gave a talk about winter ducks and led us through a color illustrated worksheet that would help us identify the local species. I chatted with a couple about my age, seated alongside me, who were duck watching for the first time. I gave them lots of advice and encouragement and we agreed to meet again. Then off we went to find ducks in Oyster Bay.

The walk we took is beautiful as it runs alongside West Shore Rd., a 4.3 mile out and back trail between Oyster Bay and Bayville, a Long Island Sound-side community. Oyster Bay is largely a National Wildlife Refuge so it provides the necessary environment to attract many different bird species. The walk was undertaken at a slow pace with many stops along the way to observe the various species of ducks in the bay. We spotted Red-breasted Mergansers, a Common Loon, Lesser Scaup, double-breasted cormorants, a Killdeer at the shoreline, and a few pairs of Buffleheads. This was not the best or largest collection of ducks we've ever seen there, but it was sufficient to satisfy the newcomers and even the veteran bird watchers who are always eager to help newbies with the task of identification. Birding is like that: Feast or famine! And never predictable.

Our first GBBC was very satisfying in many ways. I found a community of like-minded people eager to begin their own engagement with winter birds; we got a chance to take a beautiful stroll along Oyster Bay harbor; we were able to provide encouragement to some first-timers; and we got some fresh air and exercise on a cold, sunny winter day. When we got home we eagerly entered our numbers for the bird count and felt very proud of ourselves for providing some useful data. We are now officially part of the global birding community. It doesn't get much better than that!

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

### "Wild Animal Moms Program"

**\*Thursday May 9th 2024**

**5:00pm to 6:30pm**

**Cold Spring Harbor Library**

**95 Harbor Road**

**Cold Spring Harbor NY**

In honor of Mother's Day, join us as we learn about wild animal moms and how they take care of their babies. We will read a story about wild moms, make a craft, and go for a hike outside, weather permitting.

For ages 4-8, accompanied by a caregiver. Registration is a must. To register, please call 631-896-2872.

### "Full Moon Beach Program"

**\*Thursday May 23rd 2024**

**5:00pm to 6:30pm**

**Crab Meadow Beach**

**445 Waterside Road, Northport NY**

Join us on the beach as we celebrate the May full moon, which is also known as the Flower Moon. We will learn about the animals that live at the beach this time of year, such as shorebirds and horseshoe crabs. We will play a scavenger hunt game, and explore the beach to see what creatures we can find.

*For ages 4-8, please be accompanied by a caregiver. Registration is a must. To register, call Tess at 631-896-2872.*

Please visit our website & social media for updates & additions to field trips & programs!

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

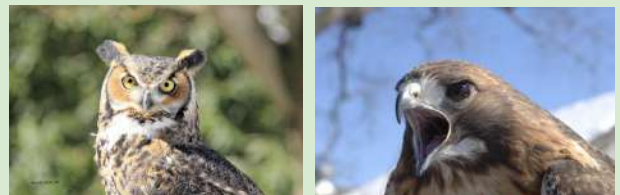


### Raptors of Long Island

HOBAS will be hosting an in-person presentation on Wednesday, June 19 at 7 p.m. at the Cold Spring Harbor Library located at 95 Harbor Rd. in Cold Spring Harbor.

Join the Wildlife Center of Long Island for an exciting program to meet some of the amazing raptor species found locally here on Long Island! Learn about raptor adaptations and what makes these birds such incredible hunters and an important part of our ecosystem.

This event is free and open to the public. Please sign up via: <https://shorturl.at/bBYZ1>.



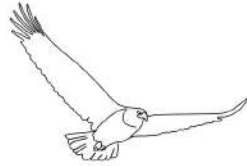


# "Things with Wings" Scavenger Hunt for Kids

The weather is getting nicer! The sun is shining brighter! The birds are getting louder! The world is abloom! How many creatures on this Scavenger Hunt can you find in your local area?

## *In the Air*

- Hawk
- Eagle
- Cardinal
- Airplane
- Firefly



## *In the Woods*

- Crow
- Bluejay
- Mosquito
- Red fox
- White tailed deer



## *In the Field*

- Butterfly
- Dragonfly
- Blackbird
- Bumble bee
- Wild rabbit



## *Near the Water*

- Duck or goose
- Bat
- Turtle
- Heron or egret
- Kayak

