

Celebrate your birding experiences with the ABA community! Share stories and sightings from the ABA Area and beyond by sending an email to *Birding* Associate Editor Ioana Seritan (iseritan@aba.org). Submissions should be 50–150 words long, written in the third person; please include the location and date for your celebration, and please indicate your place of residence. Traditional numerical milestones (100 species at your local patch, 300 species in your state or province, 500 species in the ABA Area, etc.) are welcome, but we prize submissions of celebrations of any sort: special sightings, cool discoveries, birthday birds, powerful experiences, nutty anecdotes, and more. If you celebrated birds and birding, we want to hear about it—and so does the rest of the ABA membership.

—Ioana Seritan, Associate Editor

In July 2021, the ABA's **Camp Colorado** celebrated a special, although unplanned, milestone with the participation of not one, not two, but *three* past ABA Young Birders of the Year in our first bird camp since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Jen “JB” Brumfield, a long-time Camp Colorado instructor who came up through the ABA's young birder program, was one of the 1998 Young Birders of the Year, the very first year that the program existed. Johanna Beam, a 2017 Young Birder of the Year, joined us as our Camp Colorado intern, and 2021 Young Birder of the Year Katie Warner was a bird camper!

Aaric Eisenstein of Austin, Texas, teaches Jewish wisdom through the beauty of birds as the “Avian Rebbe.” When the COVID-19 pandemic started, Aaric found refuge in parks and their birds. His avid photographer friend helped him buy his first “grown-up” camera. He posted his photos coupled with gallows humor to Facebook. These “Avian Therapy” posts resonated. He began looking at the birds through a Jewish lens. Could a bird, or the light, or the environment, trigger or reflect an element from Jewish tradition? He published his 100th drash,



or short teaching, on Thurs., Oct. 21, 2021, inspired by a sighting of a Yellow-breasted Chat. He also celebrates the publication of his first book of teachings, *The Avian Rebbe Takes Flight: Volume 1: Central Texas*.

Fred Fahmy of Lexington, Kentucky, started birding in the spring of 2019. While he quickly picked up many lifers, the Pileated Woodpecker, the 2021 ABA Bird of the Year, eluded him for more than 12 months. In the late spring of 2020, he finally got his

In July 2021, ABA's **Camp Colorado** celebrated a special, although unplanned, milestone with the participation of three past Young Birders of the Year: 1998 winner Jen “JB” Brumfield (center), 2017 winner Johanna Beam (left), and 2021 winner Katie Warner (right). Photo by © Jennie Duberstein.

first glimpse of the beautiful woodpecker at Veterans Park in Lexington. Although he was happy to get that first opportunity, it only strengthened his desire to get a better

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Aaric Eisenstein teaches Jewish wisdom through birds. His 100th drash, or short teaching, was inspired by this **Yellow-breasted Chat**. In this excerpt from the drash, Aaric wonders, “The chat is by no means rare or endangered, but it tends to stay out of sight, and I’d never seen one before. So for me, this bird was a joyful new find. The irony, of course, is that I saw this bird in a thicket that I’ve passed 1,000 times before...Had I simply been looking at the thicket through the wrong lens?” *Photo by © Aaric Eisenstein.*



look. On Thurs., Nov. 12, 2020, while taking in the sights at Lexington’s Jacobson Park, he stumbled across a male Pileated Woodpecker eating berries. After returning home and looking at the pictures, Fred told his girlfriend (and frequent bird spotter) Cathy Tomlinson, “I don’t think I’ll ever get a better, more scenic look at this stunning bird.”

From May 29 to June 5, 2021, 16-year-old **Ronan Nicholson** of Candler, North Carolina, attended the first-ever session of the Rio Diablo Bird Camp in West Texas. Over the eight-day camp, the group visited many memorable places in the region such as Big Bend National Park, various hummingbird centers in the Davis Mountains, and the Frio Bat Cave. It’s hard to choose a favorite of the 170 bird species they encountered, but some unanimous favorites were Mexican Whip-poor-wills, Tropical Parulas, and a Colima Warbler, which was Ronan’s 40th ABA Area warbler species (he had 43 by the end of the trip). But more important than the numbers was all the birding, herping, and general naturalist acquaintances he made of all ages during the week.



EDITORS’ NOTE: In 2021, we were overjoyed to hear your Pileated Woodpecker stories. We can’t wait to hear your Celebrations with the 2022 Bird of the Year, the Burrowing Owl! We encourage both submissions with accompanying photographs or without photographs, and, as always, they don’t need to be milestones, although we welcome those, too. —Ioana Seritan and Frank Izaguirre

On Thurs., Nov. 12, 2020, Fred Fahmy stumbled across this male **Pileated Woodpecker** eating berries in Lexington, Kentucky’s Jacobson Park. Fred said, “Needless to say, I was thrilled to get such a great look at such a beautiful bird!” *Photo by © Fred Fahmy.*

Kurt Schwarz of Ellicott City, Maryland, was unable to move his life list much during the COVID-19 pandemic and curtailment of travel. But he enjoyed some remarkable birds during Oct. 2021. The month began when an immature Kirtland's Warbler touched down in Swann Park, Baltimore City, on Oct. 4 for an eight-day stay. Kurt saw the warbler late on the morning of Tues., Oct. 5, 2021, when it walked right up to him for a life/U.S./Maryland/Baltimore City tick. The following week, taking his disabled brother for a short vacation, he ticked his New Jersey/Cape May County Wilson's Phalarope at South Cape May Meadows, New Jersey, on Thurs., Oct. 14. Two days later, he saw his Maryland Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Pasadena, Maryland. Fork-tails in Maryland are typically present for just hours. Finally, on Sat., Oct. 30, he saw only his second Tropical Kingbird in Maryland at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, for an outstanding Dorchester County tick.

On Mon., Aug. 30, 2021, the day after Hurricane Ida hit New Orleans, long-time Arkansas birder and ABA member **Bill Shepherd** and his sister, **Kathy Sue Phillips**, followed advice from Kenny Nichols and Karen Holliday to search for Magnificent Frigatebirds. They drove to Grand Lake, in the extreme southeastern corner of Arkansas, arriving around 5pm. There, they saw not one, but *three* Magnificent Frigatebirds perched in two small bald cypress trees. The frigatebirds were Bill's 341st Arkansas bird species. Kenny was still standing guard at Grand Lake when Bill and his sister arrived and advised them that there had been *seven* frigatebirds at Grand Lake earlier that day, but four of them had already flown away.

Vjera Thompson of Eugene, Oregon, had been birding closer to home during the COVID-19 pandemic and realized it would be a fun time to start a 1-mile-radius (1MR) list. Modeled on the 5MR challenge, this list only includes birds observed within one mile of her home. Vjera often visits a local pond in a nearby industrial zone. Patch birding during

shorebird migration led to #149, Semipalmated Plover, on Sat., Aug. 14, 2021, and #150, a calling Short-billed Dowitcher on Mon., Sept. 6, 2021. She has also enjoyed audio recording during the pandemic and had another #150 milestone on Fri., Sept. 3, 2021, with Canada Jay for her world audio recording list.

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While Ronan Nicholson was attending the first Rio Diablo Bird Camp, he saw numerous species, including this **Tropical Parula** (BOTTOM) in Kinney County, Texas, and a **Hepatic Tanager** (TOP) at a feeder set up in the Davis Mountains. Photos by © Ronan Nicholson.



Katie Warner got her 400th lifer, **Short-tailed Shearwater**, during her first pelagic trip out of Westport, Washington. The species is typically fairly uncommon and mixed among the more abundant Sooty Shearwater. However, on this trip, the group saw a total of 317 Short-tailed Shearwaters.
Photo by © Katie Warner.

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Katie Warner, a 14-year-old birder from Vancouver, Washington, went on her first-ever pelagic trip on Thurs., Aug. 21, 2021, out of Westport, Washington. Katie started the trip with 389 lifers, which steadily grew, until she only needed one more species to reach 400. She was on the lookout when someone shouted, “Short-tailed Shearwater!” It was a great lifer. It turned out that 2021 was a standout year for the fairly uncommon species. The typical scenario on pelagics out of Washington state is looking for one or two Short-tailed Shearwaters among hundreds of Sooty Shearwaters. For most of this trip, the two species were almost equal, and the Short-tails sometimes outnumbered the Sootys. The trip ended with a total of 317 Short-tail sightings, a new record for August, and the second-highest all-time record for Westport. By the end of the trip, Katie finished with 410 lifers, including her sought-after Black-footed Albatross and a rare Bar-tailed Godwit. 🌊

Kurt Schwarz of Ellicott City, Maryland, enjoyed some remarkable birds during Oct. 2021. This fantastic month began when he saw an immature **Kirtland’s Warbler** in Swann Park, Baltimore City, on Tues., Oct. 5, 2021. *Photo by © Kurt Schwarz.*



During the COVID-19 pandemic, Vjera Thompson started recording all of the species she saw within one mile of her home on a 1-mile-radius list. This radius included a local pond in Eugene, Oregon, where she also started taking photos to record the pond’s water level, like this photo from Sat., July 17, 2021. *Photo by © Vjera Thompson.*

