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NEWS RELEASE

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Spectacular Rail and Canal Trails for Spring Birding

ALBANY, N.Y. - Visiting a rail or canal trail is a wonderful way to stretch your legs after a long, cold winter. With scores of beautiful birds available for viewing during spring migration, bird watching is a great reason to get moving. Birding is one of the most popular forms of recreation in the country, with one in five people enjoying the activity. With this in mind, Parks & Trails New York has developed a list of trails especially good for birding.

New York's multi-use trails offer the perfect place for bird watching. Within a few miles, many trails pass through multiple habitats including forests, wetlands, open fields, ponds, marshes, lakes, streams, and even sand dunes, providing multiple opportunities to see and hear a large number of species in a single outing.

“The diverse habitats our trails in New York traverse provide the opportunity to see many species, maybe even less common or rare species, which can be very exciting,” said Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York's Executive Director. “Bird watching on trails is an inexpensive activity that can be enjoyed by the entire family.”

While enjoying the sights and sounds of birds on the trails, it is important not to disturb their homes. [Audubon New York](#) works to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and their habitats. The [Important Bird Areas](#) (IBA) program is an international bird conservation that identifies the most important places for bird species vulnerable to habitat loss or disturbances, and works to conserve them. There are currently 136 IBA sites in New York.

There are many places to enjoy bird watching across the state. Here are Parks & Trails New York's top rail and canal trails to help you revel in the beauty of spring migration.

[Ralph C. Sheldon Trail](#) (Western NY) – More than 175 species have been identified along this 5.5 mile trail, part of the Chautauqua Rails-to-Trails system. Recognized as one of the outstanding bird habitats in the region, some of the rare birds spotted here include the Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Philadelphia Vireo, American Bittern and approximately 25 species of migrating and nesting warblers. While visiting Chautauqua County, be sure to stop by Ripley Hawk Watch, which has officially counted more than a quarter-of-a-million raptors since 1985, and Point Gratiot, one of the most visited regions in Western New York by birders for spring migrants.

[Chenango Canal Towpath Trail](#) (Central NY) – The 6.4-mile Towpath Trail runs five miles along the historic Chenango Canal and over one mile along an abandoned railroad. The Towpath trail has excellent bird watching at peak migration and a wide variety of waterfowl in the Canal and Woodman Pond.

[Harlem Valley Rail Trail](#) (Mid-Hudson NY) – Enjoy 15 paved miles of converted rail trail as you explore rural Dutchess and Colombia County landscapes. Along the trail you will see former railroad stations and interpretive signs highlighting the railroad, community, and natural history. Many species of birds and other wildlife can be seen from the trail including the red-winged blackbird and yellow rumped warbler.

[Old Erie Canal State Historic Park](#) (Central NY) – A 36-mile stretch of the 363-mile Old Erie Canal has been designated a national recreational trail by the National Park Service. This trail will take you through woodland and wetland habitats, giving you the opportunity to observe many species of birds. Several areas have footbridges that aid access to the canal towpath where visitors can view the remnants of stone aqueducts.

[Catharine Valley Trail](#) (Finger Lakes NY) – Experience the scenic beauty and historic charm of the glacially-carved valley south of Seneca Lake. The compact stone dust trail runs 6 miles along an abandoned railroad and canal towpath corridors. Passing through a variety of habitats, the trail is home to warblers, catbirds, cardinals, orioles, hawks, and owls.

[Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail](#) (Capital District) – Just east of downtown Saratoga Springs, this rail-trail runs two miles through open marsh, wet meadow, and forested wetlands via an extensive boardwalk system. This environment attracts migrant birds and residents alike, with over 100 recorded species. View beautiful Bog Meadow Brook from the trail and learn the historical significance of the area with posted educational signs.

New York has hundreds of trails with exceptional birding opportunities. Visit one of our top picks or find one closer to you on the Parks & Trails New York Trail Finder at www.ptny.org/trailfinder.

Parks & Trails New York is the leading statewide parks and trails advocacy organization, working since 1985 to develop a statewide network of parks, trails, and open spaces for all to use and enjoy. For more information about Parks & Trails New York visit our website www.ptny.org, our [blog](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Flickr](#).

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