

IN MEMORIAM

Paul H. Gillen, Jr.

February 2, 1921- November 24, 2012

Paul H. Gillen, Jr., a prominent yet unassuming member of the Long Island birding community, died peacefully in his sleep at his home in Cutchogue on November 24, 2012.

Born in Chicago, IL, Paul moved to Long Island as a teenager. He was a graduate of Cornell and served during World War II in the US Army Air Corps. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Joan (known as “Jody”), his son Paul H. Gillen III, his sister Nancy and her family, and many nieces and nephews.

In the birding community, Paul impressed those who knew him with his gentle demeanor and ready willingness to share his knowledge and wisdom. After learning of his passing, a few of those birders shared their sentiments and stories, reprinted here.

Paul Gillen and I had a special relationship. He was the one who made me an avid birder from 1986-2002, until I lost my 380+ NYS list due to the corruption of my Thayer's Birder's List and gave up.

I met him first time at Shinnecock Inlet scoping the inlet and ocean, as I had driven there to check the ocean conditions to see if I could take my boat out. I used to post all the birds I had seen in my yard in a diary, but had no clue people used to search for birds outside their yards. My first question was about the female Red-bellied Woodpecker, a woodpecker I had never seen in my yard in East Quogue since I bought the house in 1976, until then. When it was clear it was not a rare bird, just one which extended its range northward gradually, and that people birded outside their yards too, I got hooked.

Paul was the one who advised me to buy the Swarovski scope I still have and he was the one who showed me my first Red-throated Loon, Boat-tailed Grackle, and Horned Lark. I did also see the Black-tailed Godwit he discovered and identified. He will be greatly missed.

Orhan Birol, Shelter Island

I met Paul over 40 years ago, when I was banding at Tobay. We spent many hours talking about birds and life. He worked for an insurance company that bonded contractors, so we had a mutual interest tie....He was a good and gentle man. He fought against the ravages of time with a quiet determination. Going from car to bike to walking, always looking for the good bird.

Tony Lauro, Cutchogue

Many of you will remember Paul as the fellow who found the Black-tailed Godwit in Eastport many years ago. Before that Paul was one of the first birders in the modern era to find a bona fide Franklin's Gull, a first-year bird that spent several weeks cadging handouts in the parking lot of the Riverhead MacDonald's. For many of us, that was the first Franklin's Gull we had seen in New York. Paul was a regular contributor throughout the years that I compiled East End Birds. Even as his abilities diminished in recent years, he remained active in the field and was often the first to report the rare waterfowl of Lake Marratooka. I, for one, am very saddened to learn of his demise even though I did not know him well.

Hugh McGuinness, Washington, D.C.

It was always a pleasure running into Paul out in the field, peering through a scope at some distant shorebird on the turf fields, or searching through the ducks on the local ponds, and we will treasure those special memories. One that stands out for us was a day in September 2001 when we discovered together a beautiful shorebird in a plumage none of us had ever seen before. It was a juvenile Ruff, and the pleasure of savoring this new experience was enriched by Paul's quiet but deep enthusiasm. Long Island has truly lost a well-loved and learned

gentleman, but his contributions to its avifaunal record will stand as one of many tributes to his persistence and spirit.

Shaibal S. Mitra & Patricia J. Lindsay, Bay Shore

Dr. Robert E. Long

1936-2013

A very moving tribute to Bob Long by Mary Alice Koenke and Kathy Schneider can be found in the July 2013 issue of *New York Birders*, NYSOA's quarterly newsletter, and the obituary in the can be accessed here:

<http://obits.syracuse.com/obituaries/syracuse/obituary.aspx?pid=165094389#fb>

Marie N. Petuh

February 24, 1927-October 1, 2012

It is with sadness that I report the death of Marie N. Petuh, who for many years guided and mentored the members of the Broome County Naturalists' Club. Before I had even met Marie, her book *Broome Birds & Byways* helped me to explore the many natural places of our region. This book provided a guide to roughly 70 locations in Broome, Tioga, Chenango, and Susquehanna (PA) counties, and contained excellent directions to each spot and descriptions of the flora and fauna which could be found in each location. Much of the information in the book is now incorporated in the website of our club.

She also helped others directly with other projects related to conservation and natural history. Dr. Julian Shepherd of Binghamton University stated:

“Marie's extensive knowledge of local natural areas was indispensable for the inventory of Broome County natural areas that I have just completed. Her book *Broome Birds & Byways* was my initial primary source, and she painstakingly copied much of the past Weed Walkers records for me. She also frequently contacted me with information on new areas and on several occasions she made arrangements to show them to me.”

For the uninitiated, the Weed Walkers was the name given to the club's weekly field trips to points of birding promise in our area. Often Marie would be the navigator with maps guiding us through all the myriad back roads from Edwards Hill to Death Valley Road (yes, that's really a road) to Owens Hill Road till miraculously we would somehow come back to the Oakdale Mall in Johnson City from where we had begun.

With her characteristic humor, she also designed the one-page pamphlet called “**Low-Tech Easy Guide to Warbler Songs of the Northeast.**” The pamphlet is folded into four parts, resulting in a small booklet with a cover page, two center pages devoted to local nesters, and a back page devoted to migrant possibilities and good local spots to view warblers. For each warbler species there is a description of their song. Rose Smith, a friend and long-time board member, said, “Many member birders kept it in their bird identification books and referred to it when checking out a bird song. I still carry mine and think of her often.” Colleen Wolpert, who leads many nature walks in our area, states, “I always offer her little guide to bird songs and people just love it. I gave away over a dozen copies just this weekend.” A small but effective guide, logical and concise—perhaps reflecting in many ways its author.

Marie also had a love of raptors. Andy Mason writes, “Marie was instrumental in the early years of the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch. She was introduced to the site by Ron Milliken, and was a regular counter during that period. She helped publicize Franklin Mt. in Broome Co. and elsewhere. She even wrote a humorous little booklet with “rules” for counting at the site. Her contributions are much appreciated by Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society and the Hawkwatch.”

So far it appears that Marie did everything—but wait, there is more. One club member remembered how she always took the tickets for the club’s annual Harvest Dinner. Marie gathered bird-related items from garage sales for raffles. She served as President of our club, Treasurer of our club, Board member, and – and , well you get the picture.

Marie knew her wildflowers, loved crows (she said she wanted to come back as a crow), and would go anywhere to see an owl. She helped numerous people both young and old appreciate the natural world. Marie seemed to know every landowner and every feeder in three counties and could tell you what’s been seen everywhere for the past 20 years or so. Plus she could really, really write. In her honor for the year 2013 we are having the Marie Petuh Birding Challenge to see who can see the most species in our area. We will miss her greatly.

William Kuk, Binghamton, NY

Starr Saphir **July 1, 1939- February 5, 2013**

New York lost yet another birding legend on February of this year, after a long battle with illness. Many touching tributes and informative articles about her life can be found on the website: <http://starrtrips.wordpress.com>

She, too, is sorely missed by her many, many admirers, followers, students, and friends

Remembering Alvin Wollin **August 28, 1928 - December 2012**

I met Al after a long hiatus in my birding career—with graduate school, the army, a career, and marriage, I was too busy to bird. After moving from Pennsylvania to New York, and eventually becoming a “reverse commuter”, one of my first excursions from Queens (other than driving to work) was a trip to the legendary Jones Beach. I had no idea what the place looked like or where to go once I got there. Fortunately, coming off the parkway, I turned right towards the Coast Guard Station parking lot. There I ran into a group of birders piling out of a car as I arrived.

The group was Manny Levine, Neil Ward, Dick Sloss, and Al Wollin. They invited me to join them, gave me information about where to bird in the New York area, told me where and when they usually met, and invited me to join them on weekends. There were far fewer birders then and these were the best. I had hit the proverbial birding jackpot.

Eventually I moved out to the island from the big city and became much more involved with this core group of serious Long Island birders. As a new home owner in need of hardware and all kinds of things, it was only natural that I frequented Al's store, Lynbrook Hardware. There we discussed lawn furniture, barbecues, household items, paint, maintenance and a thousand things a new home owner needs to know and buy. Al was unstinting in his help. And, between other customers who needed his attention, we talked birds.

Some time later, Al and I became co-editors of the Region 10 report in *The Kingbird*, the publication of the former Federation of New York Bird Clubs, now the New York State Ornithological Association. Manny was the Chairman of the Publications Committee and needed a Regional Editor to cover the New York City and Long Island region. During a birding interlude, he offered the job to Al, one of the more knowledgeable birders in the area. Al declined, not surprising given his low-key, behind-the-scenes demeanor, but agreed to co-edit after the job was offered to me. I needed someone more familiar with the terrain than I was before I accepted the job as sole editor.

So began a 16 year saga of sharing duties for the quarterly reports, plus six months of lapsed report catch-up. Tom Burke did a fantastic job of summarizing the Rare Bird Alert reports for us, annotated with viewers' names, which became the basis for the reports. But not everyone reported sightings to the RBA. We insisted on documentation, even if on scraps of paper (which, believe it or not, we often got!). Al knew almost everybody. With his quiet, unassuming personality, he managed to cajole reports from the most recalcitrant members of the birding community. Of course, this was before cell phones and internet. Without his efforts at gathering and retrieving data, the job would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible.

The collaboration required spending time together, usually at Al's place. So, I got to know his wife Joan, and his boys as they grew up and became

professionals: Mike, now a urologist and David, a lawyer. After the data were put together, I wrote the reports and Al edited, pointing out where I erred or was too aggressive when voicing an opinion. I liked to push the envelope, Al was more mellow; stuff got left on the cutting room floor. He made the reports that much better.

Al took Thursdays off from the store and spent the mornings birding. I was now working in the city and had acquired enough time for four weeks of vacation, two weeks together and two weeks in days. I used three to four days in May and four during September and October to join him. (My wife got the other two to three days plus my two week vacation). We lived fairly close to one another, so we started to car pool and continued for years. On the weekends, we usually joined with others of the original group I had first met at the beach.

Over the years, there were many notable birding experiences. Once I had moved to the island, I joined Al for the Hempstead section of the Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Count. It was just the two of us for years in that vast area before Manny and Dick, the count compilers, took pity on us and assigned a few additional personnel. We covered the territory, finding some notable CBC birds over the years, namely, a first-ever wintering Broad-winged Hawk, a Ruff, a Black-billed Magpie, and a Bullock's Oriole.

One day we were walking to Zachs Bay in the winter when we saw a not-quite-right scaup fairly close in. As we approached, it just kept bobbing up and down; finally we realized it was a very nice decoy. I rolled up my pants, walked out into the frigid bay, and retrieved it. After pouring the water out of my shoes, wringing out the inner and the wool outer socks I was wearing, and putting them all back on, we headed to the car where I had a change of dry socks and fresh boots. True to his nature, Al didn't say "You're crazy". However, I'm not so sure he wasn't thinking it.

In 2001, at Seatuck Creek in Eastport, Al patiently set up his scope for me so I could digiscope the Black-tailed Godwit that showed up. Cool! We chased the Northern Lapwing in Mecox in 1995, but I couldn't convince him to go to Brooklyn for the Varied Thrush. (I went alone the next day.) Somehow, Brooklyn wasn't the Island. He rarely left it except for special circumstances. Manny dragged the group up to Westchester for the Pine Grosbeaks in 1978. But Manny was the leader and we all went along with him.

Al was the youngest of our group. I was next, a year older. Neil eventually moved to Denver and died there, Dick's health declined and he dropped out of the group (he passed away in 2005 at the age of 87), then Manny stopped coming out in his mid-eighties due to health issues as well (he will be 91 this summer). Finally, at 80 years old, Al too had slowed down to the point where birding was no longer an option, and we denizens of Al's stomping grounds, mainly the beach and Hempstead Lake State Park, saw less and less of him. We were saddened to learn of his death this past winter. We all miss him.

Seymour "Sy" Schiff, South Hempstead, NY