



Northern New York Audubon

March - May 2024 Newsletter

Volume 52, Issue 1

Dear Friends -

Welcome to the spring edition of the Northern NY Audubon quarterly newsletter! As the snow melts and the days grow longer, anticipation fills the air for the wonders of the upcoming season. This spring promises not only the return of migratory birds to our region but also a celestial spectacle: the eagerly awaited solar eclipse! As nature enthusiasts and birders, we are uniquely positioned to appreciate the interconnectedness of the natural world, from the smallest warbler to the grandeur of a solar event. Join us as we explore the beauty of the changing seasons and continue our mission to protect and celebrate the diverse avian life of Northern New York.

Jeff Biby, Board Member
Janet Mihuc, Co-President
Catherine Smith, Co-President



Photo - Derek Stoll

Goose Watch Report

On November 4th, about 30 NNYA members gathered at the Malone Recreational Park to watch the spectacle of the Snow and Canada Geese gathering on the pond. We arrived about 1:00 with mostly Canada Geese on the pond with a few Snow Geese. Within 30 minutes, a flock of a few thousand Snow Geese showed up circling the pond several times before landing. If you have never seen that, it is amazing.

There were quite a few experienced birders there with spotting scopes. We all started looking through the large number of geese looking for any rarities. We were lucky to have a very cooperative Ross's Goose that hung out very close to shore. That was a life bird for quite a few people and they were thrilled to have such a good look. We were also able to locate several Cackling Geese, although they were further away. We also saw Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Mallards, Great Blue Heron, and American Black Ducks. A personal highlight was a Golden Eagle soaring over the pond.

Betsy Miner, Board Member



Photo - Larry Master

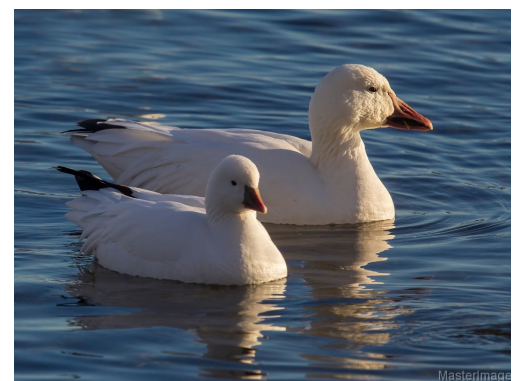


Photo - Larry Master

Northern New York Audubon is dedicated to conserving and restoring natural ecosystems in the Adirondacks, focusing on habitat of particular importance to birds, other wildlife, humanity, and the Earth's biological diversity as a whole. As one of National Audubon's 27 local chapters in New York, NNYA's mission is to "promote the protection and proper management of birds, wildlife, and fragile ecosystems throughout Northern New York."

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Northern New York Audubon

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A Rare Celestial Event

A once in a lifetime, rare celestial event will occur on Monday afternoon, April 8, 2024 in New York. A total solar eclipse happens, on average, every 18 months somewhere on the planet. At any one location, the average is every 400 years! The last time the Adirondacks experienced one was in 1349. After the 2024 eclipse, the park won't see one again until 2399. The April eclipse will cross Mexico first, then Texas and span many states on its northeastern trajectory. Within New York, western areas such as Buffalo and Rochester will be directly in the path of totality, then Watertown, the Adirondack Park, and Plattsburgh. (See maps)

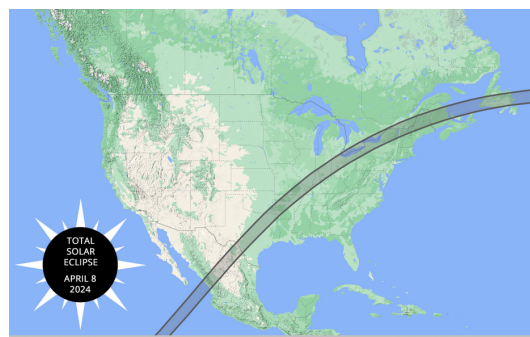
This is a good time to ponder circadian rhythm, the 24-hour internal clock that regulates behavior for plants, animals, fungi and bacteria, allowing organisms to anticipate sunrise or sunset. This evolutionary biological clock is essential for aligning behavior with the environment. Light and dark are the strongest external cues that influence circadian rhythms, but other daily changes, including temperature, and in some animals, such as birds, magnetic field and barometric pressure also play roles.

Humans have been bucking their biological clock since we learned to create light: first with fire, then candles, oil lamps, kerosene lamps, electric bulbs, fluorescent lights, to current LED technology. Earth is now awash in bright artificial light easily observed from planes or outer space. Shift work occurs across the entirety of the 24-hour day. Air and car travel allow us to rapidly shift time zones. Our natural rhythms are continuously disrupted resulting in negative health outcomes.

What happens to birds when their biological clocks experience the anomaly of sudden darkness during the day? Scientists have learned a great deal about how birds and other wildlife react to total solar eclipses, particularly in the past century. Eclipse variables include location in the world, time of year and time of day. There is great interest in the April eclipse since it will occur during spring bird migration.

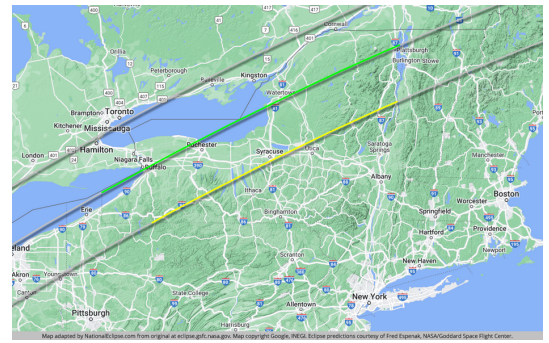
Observations of bird behavior during four different total solar eclipses shed light on many commonalities, and give us an idea of what we might expect on April 8. A total solar eclipse occurred during a late summer afternoon on August 31, 1932 in the Northeast. Chickens, pigeons and flocks of daytime migrating common nighthawks went to roost. Diurnal birds fell silent during totality and nocturnal birds such as owls and whip-poor-wills vocalized. Shorebird flocks were observed taking flight high over the ocean and did not return after totality, with an assumption these nocturnal migrants headed out with the "night" cue of darkness.

Researchers made similar observations during a winter eclipse in Manitoba on Feb. 26, 1979. Three hours after sunrise, diurnal birds went to roost as it became dark, and great horned, snowy and great gray owls became active hooting and feeding. Birds left feeders as totality approached including Canada jays that left eight minutes before dark and came back 11 minutes after the sun reappeared. A bohemian waxwing roosted with its bill tucked into its scapular feathers. Many birds sang as the sun reappeared as if it was dawn.



A Rare Celestial Event, cont.

On the north coast of Venezuela during an eclipse on Feb. 26, 1998, magnificent frigatebirds and brown pelicans were observed leaving the bay for their roosts. Royal terns all left the bay and disappeared. Laughing gulls ceased foraging and flew rapidly in a tight flock back and forth over the water during the few minutes of darkness. The birds resumed foraging over the water 12 minutes after totality.



Another late-summer eclipse occurred across the U.S. on August 21, 2017 beginning at the West Coast in the morning and finishing at the East Coast in late afternoon. Researchers collected information from radar and eBird reports. Diurnal species such as vultures, herons and magpies were observed flocking to roosts. Some night-migrating warbler species began to give nocturnal flight calls.

Aerial insectivores, such as swallows, swifts and migrating purple martins and common nighthawks, descended to roost. The purple martins, silent during totality, excitedly vocalized and flew off high as the light returned. Barred, great horned and eastern screech owls began to vocalize. Radar showed skies emptying of birds and insects as darkness approached, and skies filling back up as totality ended.

In the Adirondacks, April 8 is early for spring migration, but quite a few species will have returned including sandhill cranes, American woodcocks, northern saw-whet owls, song sparrows, red-winged blackbirds, common grackles and winter wrens. Canada jays and winter-irruptive pine siskins will be nesting. Crossbill species will be finishing their winter nesting. If the weather is warm enough, amphibians may also be heard.

There are over a dozen ways for citizens to collect information during the April 8 eclipse. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's worldwide database, eBird, is a great place to submit bird sightings, photographs, videos and audio recordings. You can do the same with the iNaturalist app for all wildlife. (During the 2017 eclipse, observers photographed flowers closing as darkness descended).

At our home we plan to have cameras on our front and back platform bird feeders to capture sound and video. I have already picked one of my favorite wildlife locations to be during the event. Whether out collecting wildlife data, or just enjoying the eclipse, I hope you can experience this rare phenomenon.

Joan Collins, Board Member

Preface

This article was authored by Lynn Hodgson for Ecobon, the Hilton Head, SC Audubon Chapter Newsletter, December 2023. With permission, references to Northern New York Audubon were made by NNYA board member, Ken Adams.

What's in a Name?

What do you think when you hear the name, John James Audubon? Are you reminded of the extraordinary artist and lover of birds who helped spark the nation's conservation movement in the 1800s? Or, do you think of him as the enslaver who argued against abolition? While John James Audubon certainly contributed greatly to our nation's knowledge and appreciation of birds, awareness of details of his life have caused dissent within the National Audubon Society and its chapters, prompting some groups to drop the Audubon name.

John James Audubon Background

Jean Rabin was born in 1785, the son of Captain Jean Audubon and his chambermaid Jeanne Rabin, on his father's sugar plantation in Saint Domingue (now Haiti). His mother died that same year. In 1793, his father sent his young son to his wife, Anne Boynet, in France. She raised him as her own. These facts were to remain a secret because France did not allow bastard children to inherit, and because there was general societal disapproval of children born out of wedlock.

In 1803, this now well-grown and energetic young man boarded a ship for America. He left behind several name changes and came to America as John James Audubon, to live on property owned by his father. During the voyage he became very ill and was put into the care of Quaker women who ran a Philadelphia boardinghouse. They nursed him back to health and taught him English.

For details of Audubon's growth as a marginally successful businessman, budding artist, and proud husband and father, we recommend the references by G. Nobles and R. Rhodes, listed below. Audubon worked steadily at his art throughout his life, sometimes selling portraits and other art to earn money, as he advanced his skills. However, his passion was for birds, and he pioneered painting them in lifelike poses. Between 1827 and 1838, he published [The Birds of America](#), his seminal collection of American bird paintings.

Audubon was an enslaver and anti-abolitionist (Lanham, 2021). On one occasion he returned a man and his family, who had escaped

What's in a Name?, cont.

slavery, to their previous owner. Audubon also sometimes collected skulls of Native Americans, thus desecrating their gravesites, although he was friendly with some living members of nearby tribes. In addition to hunting birds for the table, Audubon killed many birds for use as models for his art. These and other details of Audubon's personal history have come to public consciousness only relatively recently and have led to some tarnishing of his image. Many of his actions have become illegal or are considered immoral today.

The question is: Should those actions sully our concept of him as an important American artist, bird proponent, and budding conservationist? Should those actions impact our decision whether or not to use his name for our bird organizations? The following two simplified versions represent our current understanding of the debate:

In Favor of Changing Names

John James Audubon carried out actions currently deemed immoral, illegal, or unacceptable, such as buying and selling humans, and desecrating Native American graves. Because of these behaviors, his name has become offensive to some people, who may avoid membership or association with organizations bearing his name. Thus, bird clubs should dissociate themselves from his name.

Opposed to Changing Names

John James Audubon was an extraordinary artist and lover of birds. His paintings were a major spark for the nascent conservation movement and later in life he argued for the preservation of birds and their habitats. He died half a century before the founding of the National Audubon Society. His name was chosen because of the influence of his art, and it has since become synonymous with bird conservation for most people. Erasing the name will not erase his history and will not substitute for increased outreach and diversification. Therefore, bird clubs should recognize John James Audubon's faults, but should not eliminate "Audubon" from their names.

Recent Studies by "Audubon" Societies

National Audubon Society spent more than a year studying the issue, listening to its members and others. They decided that, for most people, the name "Audubon" is more associated with bird conservation than with John James Audubon the man. Use of the "Audubon" name was deemed important to maintaining the momentum and reputation for conservation which the Society has garnered over the last hundred years. Thus, they will continue to be the National Audubon Society. They have also re-committed to endeavors that increase the diversity and equity of their membership and staff. For further information -

<https://www.audubon.org/news/national-audubon-society-announces-decision-retain-current-name>

"Seattle Audubon Society" underwent a similar extended study of this issue, but decided differently, and became "Birds Connect Seattle". Claire Catania, executive director of the Seattle chapter, said that "Knowing what we now know and hearing from community members how the Audubon name is harmful to our cause, there is no other choice but to change."

[A New Name for an Inclusive Future - Birds Connect Seattle](#)

Several other Audubon Societies have, for similar reasons, changed their names. Madison Audubon is now the Badgerland Bird Alliance. Read their summary at [Madison Audubon Becomes Badgerland Bird Alliance – Gathering Waters](#). Chicago Audubon Society is now considering changing to a "more welcoming" name, joining Madison in using "bird alliance" instead of Audubon. [UPDATE - Chicago Audubon Society calls for a name change — Chicago Bird Alliance](#)

On December 1, 2023, Georgia Audubon, formerly "Atlanta Audubon," changed their name to "Birds Georgia." This choice puts "birds" up front in announcing what the organization is all about.

Any organizational name change involves complex legal and logistical efforts. All the above organizations, unlike Northern New York Audubon, have professional paid staff and resources to devote to carrying out the extensive process of determining the will of their members and their communities.

Relevance to Northern New York Audubon?

The Board of Northern New York Audubon is following these issues carefully but plans no action regarding our name at this time. This is a complex ethical, political, practical, and sometimes emotional issue. These arguments will not affect our work to protect and enjoy birds, nor our work to reach out to groups under-represented in our organization.

References

- Lanham, J. Drew. 2021. "What to Do We Do About John James Audubon?"
- Nobles, Gregory. 2020. "The Myth of John James Audubon." Audubon Magazine.
- Nobles, Gregory. 2017. John James Audubon: The Nature of the American Woodsman. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press.
- Rhodes, Richard. 2004. John James Audubon: The Making of an American. Vintage Books, Random House, NY.

Field Trips

March-April-May 2024



Photo - Derek Stoll

Thursday, April 18, 2024

Point au Roche State Park (3rd Thursday Bird Walk)
Plattsburgh, NY

Meeting Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Deep Bay Parking Lot, Point au Roche State Park

Directions: The intersection of Route 9 and Point au Roche Road is 5 miles north of Plattsburgh and 7 miles south of Chazy. From Exit 40 on the Northway, the intersection with Point au Roche Road is one half mile south on Route 9. The Point au Roche State Park sign is 1.5 miles from the Route 9 intersection with Point au Roche Road. This entrance is used for the beach and boat ramp. Continue on Point au Roche Road another half mile east to the intersection with Camp Red Cloud Road (across from Point au Roche Lodge). Note the sign for Point au Roche Outdoor Interpretive Center (87 Camp Red Cloud Road). Turn right onto Camp Red Cloud Road. Deep Bay can be seen at the end of Camp Red Cloud Road.

Bring: Binoculars, camera, snack, water, insect repellent, sunscreen

To Register: Email Kenneth.adams@plattsburgh.edu Cell phone (518) 569-2855

Brief Description: This field trip is co-sponsored between NNYA and Point au Roche State Park. For a description of Point au Roche State Park, see the May 11th field trip. Ken Adams, and possibly others, will lead this bird walk. The planned route is the level terrain on Long Point peninsula (about 2 miles round trip). Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size is limited to 15.

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Ausable Point Campground
Peru, NY

Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Main Parking Area beyond the booth

Bring: Binoculars, camera, snack, water, sunscreen.

To Register: Call Erin Pangborn (518)-562-6860 or email her at erinp@townofplattsburgh.org

Brief Description: This field trip is co-sponsored between NNYA and the Town of Plattsburgh Recreation Department. Field trip leaders are Betsy Miner, Mar Bodine and Ken Adams. We will walk through the campground looking for early spring migrants. We will also look out on Lake Champlain for waterfowl. Walking is flat and maybe some short beach walking. Some species we can hope to see include: Pine Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Rusty Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Eastern Phoebe, Caspian Tern, Osprey and many others. Spring migration is a fun time to be out birding as you never know what you might find! Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size is limited to 20 (we may divide into smaller groups). Priority is given to Town of Plattsburgh residents and NNYA members. We will have a few pairs of binoculars available and will have a couple of spotting scopes.

Saturday, May 4, 2024

Grand Lake Reserve
Redwood, NY

Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m.

Locations: Grand Lake Reserve Parking Lot #2 (45701 Burns Rd, Redwood, NY)

To Register: Please sign up at <https://indianriverlakes.org/upcomingevents/>

Brief Description: The Indian River Lakes Conservancy will host its annual spring hike at Grand Lake Reserve. The hike will be led by Clarkson Professor of Biology, Dr. Tom Langen. The Grand Lake Reserve presents a spectacular landscape, rich with biological diversity, rugged geography, and beautiful scenery. Spring is a magnificent time to behold the abundance of life at the reserve. This hike will highlight the diversity of species present on the preserve this time of year including Golden-Winged Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Baltimore Orioles, Trillium, Dogwood, and American Toads.

Field Trips, cont.

March-April-May 2024

Saturday, May 11, 2024

**Point au Roche State Park
Plattsburgh, NY**

Meeting Time: 8:30 a.m.

Location: Deep Bay Parking Lot, Point au Roche State Park

For directions to Point Au Roche State Park, see the April 18 field trip description.

Bring: Binoculars, camera, snack, water, insect repellent, sunscreen

To Register: Email Kenneth.adams@plattsburgh.edu Cell phone (518) 569-2855

Brief Description: This 850-acre "Wildlife Park" features many habitats including rocky peninsula shoreline and sand beach on Lake Champlain; old field and shrubland; forest and woodland; cropland; picnic area and ballfield; swamp; emergent marsh and pond. The Park is one of Clinton County's birding hotspots; more than 180 species have been recorded on the eBird list for the Park. Springtime eBird lists include Osprey, Eastern Towhee, Marsh Wren, Brown Thrasher, American Redstart, Baltimore Oriole, Great Crested Flycatcher, five species of sparrows, three species of woodpeckers, and four warbler species. Ken Adams and Judy Heintz will co-lead this field trip. The planned route is the level terrain on Long Point peninsula (about 2 miles round trip). Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size is limited to 15.

Sunday, May 12, 2024

**Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area
Canton, NY**

Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m. (until 10:30 a.m.)

Location: Middle Lake access road off County Route 14

To Register: Please e-mail the St. Lawrence Land Trust (stlawlandtrust@stlawlandtrust.org) with your interest and how many plan to join.

Brief Description: Dr. Tom Langen will lead a bird walk at Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area outside Canton. We will walk the Middle Lake access road off County Route 14. To ensure all can hear and the birds aren't disturbed, the walk is limited to 15 people. The walk is flat and about a mile long.

Sunday, May 12 through Thursday, May 16, 2024

Cape May, NJ

Bring: Your love of birds and nature for this first-of-a kind NNYA field trip!

To Register: Contact Brian McAllister for details (birder64@yahoo.com) of this multi-day, overnight trip. PLEASE NOTE - Participants are fully responsible for their own transportation, accommodations and meals. Lodging reservations can be made at Cape Harbor Motor Inn capeharbormotorinn.org.

Brief Description: You've heard about it and now here's your chance to bird at one of the world's best birding destinations! Join Brian McAllister as he guides us through the amazing birding hotspots of Cape May, NJ, from early morning to dusk. We'll check our bird lists while enjoying local seafood for dinner! This multi-day trip allows us to fully explore the famed shoreline, wetlands, fields, forests, and sea of Cape May. This narrow peninsula funnels migrant birds in spring and fall. There is great birding throughout the day, and throughout the county.

Thursday, May 16, 2024

**Point au Roche State Park (3rd Thursday Bird Walk)
Plattsburgh, NY**

Meeting Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Deep Bay Parking Lot, Point au Roche State Park

For directions to Point au Roche State Park, see the April 18 field trip description

Bring: Binoculars, camera, snack, water, insect repellent, sunscreen

To Register: Email Kenneth.adams@plattsburgh.edu Cell phone (518) 569-2855

Brief Description: This field trip is co-sponsored by NNYA and Point au Roche State Park. For a description of the Park, see the May 11th field trip. Ken Adams, and possibly others, will lead this bird walk. The route is the level terrain on Long Point peninsula (about 2 miles round trip). Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size is limited to 15.



Photo - Larry Master

Field Trips, cont.

March-April-May 2024

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

Indian Creek Nature Center
Canton, NY

Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Indian Creek Nature Center, 770 County Route 14, Canton, NY

Bring: Binoculars and dress accordingly for ticks. Binoculars will be available to borrow.

To Register: Contact Mary Beth Warburton at mmarybeth.warburton@gmail.com;
315 268 0150 or Eileen Wheeler at eileenwheeler@yahoo.com; 315 244 9957.

Brief Description: May is an excellent time to observe birds at Indian Creek Nature Center. Many species of flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, warblers and other passerines can be observed throughout the nature center.



Photo - Larry Master

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Heyworth-Mason Park
Peru, NY

Meeting Time: 9:00 a.m.

Location: Heyworth-Mason Park, 27 Mason Hill Road, Peru, New York

From Northway Exit 35, drive west on Bear Swamp Road to Main Street in Peru. Turn right and drive past the grocery stores on Gorman Way. Take the next right turn onto Mason Hill Road. Parking area is at the bottom of the hill.

Bring: Binoculars, camera, snack, water, insect repellent, sunscreen

To Register: Call Erin Pangborn (518-562-6860) or email her at erinp@townofplattsburgh.org

Brief Description: This field trip is co-sponsored between NNYA and the Town of Plattsburgh Recreation Department. Field trip leaders are Betsy Miner, Mar Bodine, and Ken Adams. The planned route is about 1.5 miles round trip. The Park includes open fields and forest along the Little Ausable River. Many species of songbirds can be seen and heard along the nature trail such as chestnut-sided warbler, common yellowthroat, American redstart, yellow warbler, pine warbler, ovenbird, and scarlet tanager. Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size is limited to 20 (we may divide into smaller groups). Priority is given to Town of Plattsburgh residents and to NNYA members. The Park includes interpretive signage about the Park's history and features a historic building, constructed of Potsdam sandstone in 1836. The Heyworth-Mason building was used for many purposes including woolen mill, starch factory, tannery, and lumber mill. After the lumber mill closed, the building was divided into apartments known as the Heyworth Village Apartments. It was the only building to survive the big flood of 1998.

Saturday, May 25, 2024

Crown Point State Historic Site
Crown Point, NY

Meeting Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: 21 Grand View Drive at the main parking area in front of the museum

Bring: Please wear comfortable shoes and bring insect repellent, binoculars, snacks and water. A spotting scope is optional but we'll have a couple we can share.

To Register: Email Stacy Robinson maplemeadows@hotmail.com

Pre-registration is required (limited to 12 participants). Co-sponsored by Northern NY Audubon and Champlain Area Trails (CATS).

Brief Description: Please join me for a guided bird walk on this beautiful property in the midst of migration. Crown Point SHS boasts observations of over 230 species! With its diverse habitats and breeding bird populations it is listed as an Important Birding Area (IBA). The walk will last approximately 3-4 hours and cover roughly 2 miles.

Welcome new
members!

Arleen Bonesteel
Patricia Bronson
Ralph Conroy
Anthony Cooper
Thomas Doolittle
Liam Ebner
Marilyn Erickson
Louise Gosnell
Fred & Lisa Hanss
Kendall Jackson
Dawn & Mark Karlson
Lloyd King
Cynthia Koktowski
Constance Lacy
Laura Lewis-Brown
Nancy Mackay
Eric Mandel
Michael McCrory
Patrick O'Shea
Patricia Poissant
David Powell
Redwing Construction
Georgia Vose

To renew or to become
a member, please visit
<https://www.nnya.org>

Northern New York Audubon Newsletter



Photo - Derek Stroll

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