

## **EDGAR A. MEARNS BIRD CLUB**

*Founded in 1959*

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### **GUIDELINES FOR THE MEARNS CLUB WHATSAPP ELECTRONIC BIRD ALERT SYSTEM\***

#### **What Is It?**

The Mearns Club WhatsApp electronic bird alert system is an OPT-IN messaging list for alerting club members about sightings of rare or uncommon birds, primarily in Orange, Sullivan, and Ulster counties. The list may also occasionally be used to report true rarities (such as Great Gray Owl) in neighboring counties. Using WhatsApp, anyone with a device capable of connecting to the internet can send and receive bird-sighting alerts in the field. The alerts can be in text or audio form and can contain images, maps, and links.

#### **Who Can Join the WhatsApp List?**

If you have a device with internet access and have paid your club dues for the current year (January–December), you may join the list. Failure to pay dues will result in removal from the list.

#### **When to Use the List—and Why**

The purpose of the WhatsApp list is to help club members find birds that are uncommon or rare in our area. WhatsApp is not just about big rarities (such as Great Gray Owl) but also about notable birds, including interesting migrants (such as Canvasback, Long-tailed Duck, and scoters in late Fall) and birds not easily found in our area (such as Golden Eagle). In addition, it's worth reporting birds that can be reliably found at a particular location in the three counties but are tough to find elsewhere (such as Peregrine Falcon and Cliff Swallow).

#### **When Not to Use the List**

The WhatsApp list should NOT be used to report anecdotes about common birds; such anecdotes belong instead on our Facebook group. WhatsApp should also NOT be used for chit-chat or personal messages.

#### **List Etiquette**

- Always use the four W's: What, Where, When, and Who. Your message should include species, sighting location and time (month, date, time of day), a description of the bird and/or the location (if necessary), and your name.
- If you're an intermediate or experienced birder, remember that there are less-experienced birders on the list. Don't use band codes, don't over abbreviate, and don't assume familiarity with locations or unofficial place names. The objective is to help other birders, not to present them with a time-wasting puzzle or an intimidating challenge!
- Share your sightings! This is a two-way list. Enjoy reports from others, and make sure that YOU report good birds that you see. If you get an alert from outside the WhatsApp list, pass it along to the list.
- If you find a notable bird that someone else has already reported via WhatsApp, let everyone on the list know that it is still around (even if it's been around for days). For example: Canvasback still at Sylvan Lake 11:30 12/12 Carena.
- Do NOT send personal messages, jokes, memes, or chit-chat. Repeat offenders will be removed from the list.
- If you have a question about a WhatsApp message that you receive, keep it to a minimum—or send a private message to the person who sent the original message. A phone number is associated with each message.

#### **How to Join the List**

Download and install the WhatsApp app from the App Store (iPhone) or Play Store (Android). Follow the instructions for setting up the app; it takes only 3–4 steps.

Provide your full name, and include your nickname if that's what you prefer to be called.

Provide your phone number to an administrator (listed below) so that they can add you to the Mearns Club WhatsApp list.

- Jeff Goulding, jeffryg04@gmail.com
- Karen Miller, kcmiller@citlink.net
- Bill Fiero, Wfiero@gmail.com

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact one of the administrators.

*\*These guidelines are based on the ones written by Carena Pooth, who devised and implemented the PEEPS bird alert system for the Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club.*