

Where the Birds Are: Edwards Lake Cliff Preserve

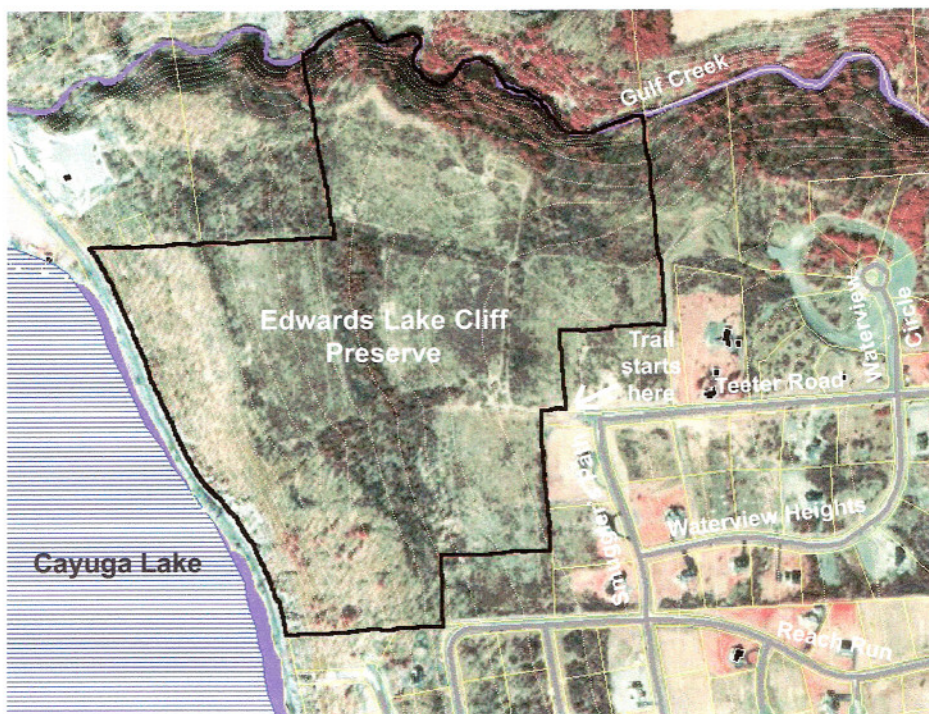
BY MARK CHAO

At the end of Teeter Road in Lansing, looming high above the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake, lie 92 acres of some of the richest upland bird habitat in our area. These lands were largely unknown to local birders until this spring, when some thrilling warbler finds put the place on the map. Even now, the site remains nameless to almost everyone. It does have a name—the Edwards Lake Cliff Preserve.

The property, a recent gift to Cornell University from Helen and Don Edwards, comprises mixed forest, extensive dense brush, and the steep south face of the Gulf Creek ravine. Cornell Plantations manages the preserve, making it available for educational purposes. Local birders may visit the site but must stay on established trails. In discussing or visiting the preserve with others, please spread the word about the need to stay on the trails.

In the spring and summer the preserve hosted two local rarities, a Golden-winged Warbler and a Worm-eating Warbler. Both males, these birds staked out territories and sang incessantly in attempts to find mates, but successful breeding was not confirmed for either one. Despite relatively little traffic from birders, many other notable birds were seen in the preserve this spring and summer, including well over a dozen warbler species, vireos, Willow and Alder flycatchers, Black-billed and Yellow-billed cuckoos, and much more.

The preserve remains largely unexplored in fall and winter. Warblers, vireos, thrushes, sparrows and other migrants surely pass through the preserve in fall, quite possibly in numbers and variety comparable to the most renowned migration hotspots of the Cayuga Lake Basin.



Map of the Edwards Lake Cliff Preserve and environs.

To find the preserve from Stewart Park in Ithaca, head north on Route 34 (also known as East Shore Drive). After about seven miles, take a left on East Shore Circle; then turn left on Reach Run. Turn right on Smuggler's Path and park at the intersection of Smuggler's Path and Teeter Road. This intersection is marked with a red diamond-shaped sign. Note that East Shore Circle intersects twice with East Shore Drive; if you are coming via East Shore Drive from the north, you can turn right at the northern intersection with East Shore Circle, then bear right onto Teeter Road, and proceed to the red sign.

Proceed west on foot from the red sign to enter the preserve. The trails are sloped gradually, and thorough exploration of all of them should take no more than a few hours. Note, however, that tall waterproof boots are highly advisable because the trails are grassy and usually moist. Watch for poison ivy too.

At the request of Cornell Plantations management, I plan to keep track of bird sightings in the Edwards Lake Cliff Preserve. Please enter your sightings into eBird (www.ebird.org), or if you prefer, send your lists to me at [<markchao@imt.org>](mailto:markchao@imt.org). 🐦