



The city I friggin' love.

Yeah, it's Buffalo. (Part 1)



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Feb 11

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I used to wonder what it would be like to be the kind of writer that wrote about themselves. The idea that there were actually people out there that would want to hear about me seemed so self-serving it made me uncomfortable.

But then one day something occurred to me. We all have this in common: We go through trials, challenges and pains in life. How we all deal with these is very valuable information to be sharing with each other. If we discover that certain techniques result in better (or worse) outcomes, we can train ourselves to be in better mindsets when facing problems or issues in life.

Being a problem solver is something I think we should all aspire to be. It's what I have trained the coach in my head to parrot back to me with invocation: "Don't be a shrinking violet! Be a problem solver!" When I have listened to that voice, life has seemed to find better navigation. And when ignored, I tend to get weighed down with problems.

Anyway, this isn't really about me. It is about the city I haphazardly fell in love with, and a few things you might not know about her. But undoubtedly, a topic like this is hard to write about without entering at least partially into a personal mind space.

BUFFALO, NY - PART 1: The Owls

Did you know? Western New York is one of the best places in the world to see snowy owls. In the Hollywood movie "[The Big Year](#)," Owen Wilson's character flies to Buffalo to see this beautiful species on his quest to see as many species as possible in one year (that's what a "big

year” is).

Snowy Owls spend the summer breeding in the high arctic, but once winter comes they will often irrupt southward in search of food. In some years, these numbers can be fairly large. For example in 2018 there was an irruption so large that 44 snowy owls were counted in one location from a single observation point in Buffalo Harbor. This is one of the highest counts of this species ever - anywhere on Earth.

Snowy owls prefer open, tundra-like habitat. Places like open or frozen shorelines, airports, or large open farm fields are where they can often be seen resting on the ground or perched on nearby objects. If you see an object that looks like a white milk jug in an open area, it is wise to get some binoculars out and get a closer look.

There are seven species of owl that visit Western New York annually - Great Horned Owl, Eastern Screech Owl, Barred Owl, Snowy Owl, Short Eared Owl, Long Eared Owl, and Northern Saw Whet Owl. Plus there are several more species that have shown up as migrants, or others that could show up someday.

Three species of owl stay and breed here year round - Great Horned, Eastern Screech, and Barred. The other four can be found in winter, usually November through April.

One winter - in 2017 - I had an epiphany: I had never seen an owl in real life before, and I wanted to. So on January 1st I decided to go on a quest to find one. It didn't take long before finding one became finding *more* than one. And then it didn't take long to go from finding only owls to finding *all* species of birds.

I used diplomacy with local experts (who I now consider friends) combined with technology advancements like Ebird.com and social media to help track and find new birds. I was amazed at how well thought out some of the technology was. Made by the “Ivy League” Cornell University, Ebird is the largest citizen-science project on Earth - where people input data and media, and that data is used to track the movement and health of species throughout the world.

Pretty soon I got fairly obsessed with birding. It checked a lot of boxes for me. Adventurous? Check. Outdoors? Yup. A huge pool of knowledge and learning? You bet. Can be done nearly anywhere? Yes. Analytical? Oh yeah, highly cerebral.

When I was a little kid I used to think that the lady at the park feeding and watching the birds was a weirdo. But now in a way I have become her. I bird everywhere and anywhere I go. And you should see the feeders at my house. To me, it is sort of like the game of Pokémon Go, but you are looking for wild living creatures instead of digital ones. In the [documentary](#) “The Central Park Effect,” someone compared finding a rare bird to seeing a celebrity on the street - and I thought it was an interesting take. It's like you know they exist, but then when you finally see them you are little taken aback. And the more rare the bird is for the area or for yourself, the more special the find feels.

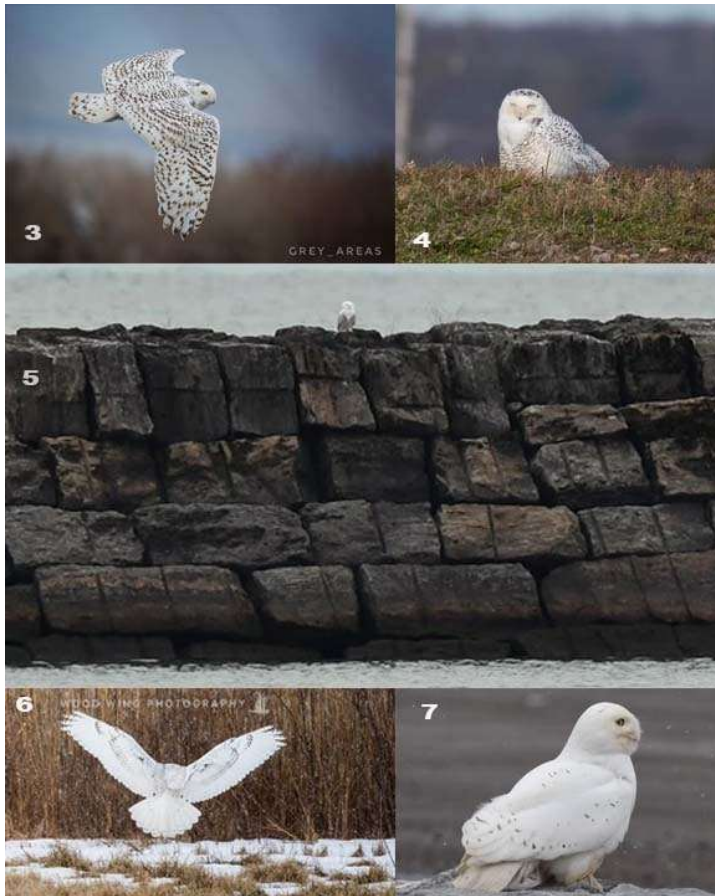
I have always loved the outdoors - whether it be snowboarding, hiking, angling, or camping. To me birding is just another interesting and analytical reason to be outside enjoying the world. Instead of just going for a hike, I am on a hike with a quest: to find something interesting or beautiful or rare. It's a mini call-to-adventure, with plenty of bigger “calls to adventure” available within it for those willing to put in the effort.

Most importantly, this was something wonderful and beautiful that I never knew existed in my own neighborhood, right here in Buffalo, NY. And it is just another reason why I friggin' love this city.

PHOTOS: 2) Snowy Owl in front of Buffalo 3) Snowy Owl in flight 4) Sleepy Snowy 5) Snowy on the breakwall 6) Snowy in a field 7) Snowy scans rafts of ducks looking for lunch



²photo by Missy Marie



³ Grey_Areas - aka Nathan Johnson

⁴Christy Librock Hibschi

⁵Bill Massaro

⁶Woodwing Photography - aka Timothy Gryckiewicz

⁷Heather Ferrara

These are the other owls found in Western NY a): Barred Owl b) Northern Saw Whet Owl
c) Great Horned Owl d) Long Eared Owl e) Eastern Screech Owl f) Short Eared Owl



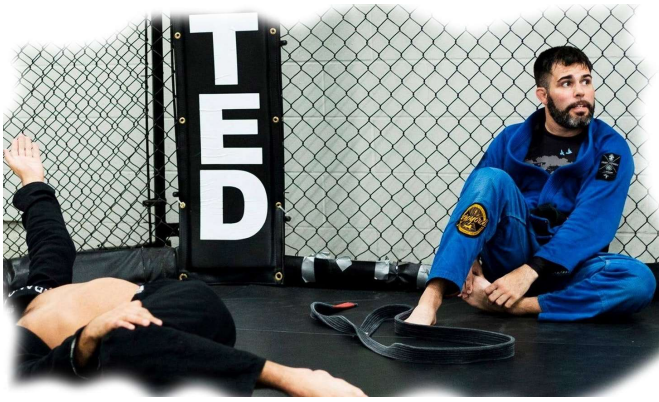
Part 2 coming soon!

Thank you for being a beautiful part of this consciousness we share. Part 2 about 'The City I friggin Love' will take us underwater.

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- 2 Missy Marie
- 3 Grey_Areas - aka Nathan Johnson
- 4 Christy Librock Hibsch
- 5 Bill Massaro
- 6 Woodwing Photography - aka Timothy Gryckiewicz
- 7 Heather Ferrara

About the author:

Josh R. Ketry is an advocate for freedom, human growth, and human potential. A Brazilian Jiu Jitsu blackbelt and Academy owner. Entrepreneur. Writer. Philosopher. Carnivore diet advocate. Birder. Muskie fisherman. Photographer. A voice for the bullied. No topic off limits. Thank you for reading!



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Nicole J Feb 13 ❤️ Liked by J.R.K.

Pic 2 is awesome! I had no idea your birding started with the owl hunt! Very cool! Would love to know what times and the paths you take looking for birds....


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