

Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club

PEEPS

Electronic Bird Alert System

The PEEPS list is an OPT-IN mailing list to be used ONLY for sharing alerts with other club members about rare or uncommon bird sightings primarily in Dutchess County. It may occasionally be used for true rarities in neighboring counties that we may want to go see.

Using PEEPS, bird alerts can be received out in the field by anyone who carries a device capable of texting or email. In addition, alerts can be sent to the list by anyone on it.

The success of PEEPS is predicated upon the unselfish spirit of helping and sharing that characterizes birders in our club. The system relies on every participant's commitment to send concise alerts (in the PEEPS format) about their own notable bird sightings quickly and directly to all other "PEEPSters."

PEEPS users may send/receive their messages via EITHER email OR texting.

WHICH TO CHOOSE – TEXT OR EMAIL?

At signup time, PEEPS users must choose to send/receive their messages via EITHER email OR texting. Here are some things to consider before you make your choice.

1. There are two kinds of "texting" – SMS (Short Message Service) and MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service). The main difference (for PEEPS) is this:

SMS	MMS (smartphone/iphone only)
Depending on the cell carrier and the type of phone being used, PEEPS alerts may come in up to 4 chunks of 140 characters each (560 characters total).	Each PEEPS alert comes as a single message, usually up to about 1000 characters (depending on the cell carrier).

2. Here is a chart comparing texting vs. email for PEEPS. Please note that there is variation from cell phone to cell phone and from texting app to texting app in what is displayed and whether or not SMS messages will be split into pieces. Your texting app settings will also have a bearing on your PEEPS experience.

Texting	Email
Works on almost all cell phones and other mobile devices.	Requires computer, smartphone, iPhone, tablet, etc.
Potential individual privacy concern: Texter's cell phone number is displayed in the "from" address shown to email users.	Email user's alerts include only what the user types in, plus email address as the sender (shown only to recipients who get alerts via email).
Depending on the cell phone setup, texting can be more immediate, with audible alerts and automatic message display upon receipt.	Unless email "alerts" are set up, user may not be aware an email has arrived. PEEPS alerts will be mixed in with other email messages, so they may be overlooked. However, incoming emails that are PEEPS alerts all have a subject line beginning with [PEEPS].
Some texters pay by the message.	No additional charge.

If you use simple SMS, incoming and outgoing alerts may be broken into 140-chunk pieces and may arrive out of order.	All incoming messages arrive intact.
Occasional send & receive delays.	Fewer delay issues.
Standard PEEPS footers are stripped out of SMS messages. Some are included in MMS.	Standard PEEPS footers are included (where to send alerts, how to unsubscribe, maybe other general info)

WHICH BIRDS TO REPORT – AND WHY

The purpose of PEEPS is to help birders find birds that are not easy to find. They may want to “chase” the bird you report, or they may just make a note of where you found it, so they can look for it at the same place or in a similar habitat sometime in the future. PEEPS can be a fun tool even for “armchair birders.”

PEEPS is not just about big rarities, but also “notable” birds, such as interesting migrants (like Canvasback, Long-tailed Duck, and scoters in late fall) as well as birds not easily found in our area (like Golden Eagle or Northern Shoveler). In addition, an uncommon bird that is “known” (by some but not all!) to be reliably found at one particular location in Dutchess but is tough to find elsewhere is worth reporting. Examples include Peregrine Falcon and Cliff Swallow.

One hard-and-fast rule: Do NOT report “fun” anecdotes about common birds. These may be entertaining or interesting, but save them for Facebook. PEEPS is a bird alert system to help birders find “good” birds. That fun anecdote will not help anyone find a bird they’re looking for.

We’re all friends here! Hopefully PEEPS will help us make even more friends out in the field.

ETIQUETTE:

- Always use the **4 W’s PEEPS format – What / Where / When / Who**:
Species, Location, Month/Day, Time, [description if needed], Your Name, [phone #]
Additional guidelines and details will be included in your PEEPS Welcome Letter.
- If you are an intermediate/experienced birder, keep in mind that not everyone on the list falls into this category. Do NOT use band codes, over-abbreviate, or assume that your audience is familiar with locations or unofficial place names. The objective of PEEPS is to HELP others, not to present them with a time-wasting puzzle or an intimidating challenge.
- SHARE! This is a **two-way** list. Enjoy reports from others, but make sure YOU report good birds that you see, too. IF YOU GET A NON-PEEPS ALERT FROM SOMEONE OR SOMEWHERE ELSE, PASS IT ALONG TO YOUR FRIENDS ON THE PEEPS LIST!
- If you find an **unusual** bird that someone else already reported via PEEPS, let everyone on the list know that it is still around (even if it's been around for days).
EXAMPLE: Canvsbk still there Sylvan Lk 11:30 12/12 Carena
- DO NOT SEND “THANK YOU” NOTES, JOKES, ETC.** These USELESS MESSAGES will NOT be appreciated! You WILL be flogged if you violate this rule. Repeat offenders will be kicked off the PEEPS list.
- If you have a question about a PEEPS alert you receive, do not send it to the entire list – take it private with the person who sent the alert.

PEEPS is a benefit of RTWBC membership. Your membership for the current year (Nov-Oct) must be paid in order to be on the PEEPS list. Non-renewal of club membership will result in removal from the list.

HOW TO SIGN UP for PEEPS

If you have paid your club dues for the current membership year (November through October), you may sign up for this service. Your request to be added to the list signifies that you commit to sending alerts to the list about your own uncommon bird sightings in the format described in your PEEPS Welcome Letter.

- In the **SUBJECT** line of your email, type: **PEEPS SIGNUP REQUEST**
- Copy the following questions into the message body and answer all that apply:
 1. Please give your full name (include your nickname if that is what you prefer to be called).
 2. Which of the following will you use for sending and receiving PEEPS alerts – EMAIL, SMS, or MMS?
 3. If you will be texting:
 - (a) What is your cell phone NUMBER?
 - (b) What is your cell phone COMPANY? (Verizon, AT&T, etc.)
 - (c) Occasionally we send an information message to all PEEPS users. What email address should your notices be sent to?
 4. Do you have any questions? Suggestions?
- Send to carena@prodigy.net.

Once you have been added to the list, you will receive a Welcome Letter via email. This letter will include guidelines and “how-to” details for using the PEEPS alert system.