

Letchworth State Park



Located in the Genesee River Gorge in Western New York — Size: 14,500 acres

A premier watchable wildlife site



Ray Minnick

This “Grand Canyon of the East” is one of the most scenic areas in the eastern U.S. The Genesee River roars through a deep gorge and over three major waterfalls between 550-foot cliffs surrounded by lush forests. With open water drawing thousands of waterfowl, forests sheltering high concentrations of migratory birds, and several great blue heron rookeries, it’s no surprise that Letchworth is both a state Bird Conservation Area, and an Audubon Important Bird Area.

Letchworth is critically important for a number of individual bird species, particularly those designated “of special concern” or “at risk.” Birds associated



Bill Baraszewski



with forest, river and shrub habitats find safety and sustenance in this natural fortress. The gorge is particularly important for raptors as they glide on cliff-face updrafts in search of food.

Upland forests of hardwoods and conifers make up a large portion of the park and are the preferred nesting areas for more than 60 species of migratory songbirds, many of them warblers. Shrub and grasslands are home to several species of ground-nesting birds. Waterfowl and wading birds are found in wooded swamps and river habitats.

Many species of mammals can also be found in the park's diverse habitats.

Wildlife to Watch

Bald eagles use the park year-round, as do many turkey vultures, which may not be revered national symbols but are equally impressive in size. Winter roosts of up to 20 vultures have been seen, and as many as 200 of these large raptors have been observed soaring in the gorge on a single summer day.

Several great blue heron rookeries have been observed in the park's wetlands, and more than 100 nests have been counted. Open water below the Mt. Morris dam may attract in excess of 2,000 Canada geese in winter. Common mergansers and wood



Site Features

Visitors will find parking, a visitors center/museum, an inn, a conference center, restrooms, lodge and cabin rentals, trails, tent/trailer campsites, picnic tables/pavilions, playgrounds, playing fields and a swimming pool.

Trails: The William Pryor Letchworth Museum provides an excellent introduction to the park. Hikers can choose among 66 miles of hiking trails. Trails are also available for horseback riding, biking, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. Overlooks provide spectacular views of the three waterfalls. Footpaths and auto roads parallel the river and pass the historic Glen Iris Inn and Seneca Indian sites.

Accessibility: This site has many accessible features, including trails, recreation programs, picnic areas, campsites, a swimming pool, cabins and showers.

Site Notes: The park is open daily from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. year-round. There is a per-vehicle entrance fee. Dates, times and fees for amenities vary—contact the park for details. Visitors can also enjoy canoeing and kayaking, performing arts, nature programs and tours. Hunting and fishing are allowed in season.

Directions: Visitors can access the park via exit 46 of the NYS Thruway/I-90. Entrances to the park are located in Mt. Morris and Portage off of I-390 in Livingston County.

Contact: 585-493-3600,
1 Letchworth State Park, Castile,
NY 14427, <http://nysparks.com/parks/79/details.aspx>





Joe LeFevre

ducks are the most abundant of several species of ducks visible on the river.

Bird species listed as “at risk” or “of special concern” that can be seen here include sharp-shinned hawk, Cooper’s hawk, northern goshawk, red-shouldered hawk, red-headed woodpecker, golden-winged warbler, cerulean warbler, vesper sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, American

woodcock, willow flycatcher, wood thrush, blue-winged warbler, Canada warbler, yellow-breasted chat and rusty blackbird. Letchworth’s grasslands are important as historical nesting sites for northern harriers, upland sandpipers and Henslow’s sparrows.

Mammals that may be encountered include white-tailed deer, red fox, coyote,

cottontail rabbits and woodchucks in woods, shrub and grasslands, and beaver in wetlands.

A visit to Letchworth is worthy in any season. Go to <http://nysparks.com/parks/79/details.aspx> for more information.



Joe LeFevre



Tom Lindsay