





**# ARMCHAIR ACTIVISTS WANTED! #**

South Shore Audubon Society recently joined National Audubon's *Armchair Activist* network. We urge everyone to participate in the network's **Letter of the Month Club** — membership is **free** and requires less than one hour of your time per month!

This is one of the simplest and most effective ways to influence public policy on behalf of the environment. Participants write one letter per month to elected officials on topics which include local, state, and federal issues. A summary of the topic is sent to you, along with an explanation of current legislation and a sample letter. Past issues have included oil spill liability, clean air, wetlands protection, and old-growth forest protection.

To sign up, call our Conservation Committee's Betty Borowsky (764-3596) or Mary Jane Russell (766-7397), or send a postcard to SSAS's mailbox.

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**✓ CHECK YOUR BIRDING SKILLS ✓**

*Michael Sperling*

The table at the bottom of this page was sent to me by Carole Adams (thanks!), who found it in the October 1993 issue of the American Birding Association's *Winging It* newsletter. The ABA found it in the newsletter of an unidentified Audubon chapter under the title "Guide for Evaluating Fellow Bird-watchers" and credits it to one of the chapter's members, Susan Ulrich of Otterbein, Indiana.

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**THEODORE ROOSEVELT SANCTUARY**

134 Cove Road  
Oyster Bay, NY 11771  
(516) 922-3200

Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bird Sanctuary is owned by the National Audubon Society and operated by the Community and three local Audubon chapters, including South Shore Audubon. The following programs are open to the public. Space is limited and registration is required. All program fees are required at the time of registration (TRS members \$3, nonmembers \$5).

*Sunday, March 6th (1 to 3 P.M., ages 5 to 10) — Penguins.* Join us for a children's program featuring costumes, games, and artifacts.

*Sunday, March 13th (1 to 3 P.M.) — Maple Sugaring.* Learn the history, the tree dynamics, and the process for making maple syrup the colonial way! See tapping demonstrations and enjoy fresh syrup over a corn cake cooked on an open fire.

*Wednesday, March 16th (7 to 9 P.M.) — Owl Prowl at TRS.* We will learn about the natural history of owls and meet our live owls and specimens. Afterwards, we will walk the trails and attempt to call in some of the wild owls that live here.

*Sunday, March 20th (2 to 4 P.M.) — Rainforest Program.* See live animals and plants, learn about the importance of the rainforest, try some rainforest food, and play some games.

*Sunday, March 27th (2 to 4 P.M.) — Signs of Spring.* Join us for a nature walk, see our live animals, and play games.

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**A Guide to Evaluating Your Birding Skills**

Performance Factor	Far Exceeds Norm	Exceeds Norm	Meets Norm	Needs Some Improvement	Does Not Meet Minimal Standards
Pursuit Ability	Leaps trees with a single bound	Needs a running start to leap trees	Can leap large bushes	Crashes into bush when attempting to leap over it	Catches poison ivy
Locating Birds in Binoculars	Faster than a Peregrine Falcon	Fast as a Chimney Swift	Not quite as fast as a Chimney Swift	Would you believe a slow Chimney Swift?	Has trouble locating chimneys
Field Work	Walks on water consistently	Walks on water in emergencies	Needs log to get over water	Drinks water	Spills water
Credibility	Talks with God	Talks with Roger Tory Peterson	Talks with himself	Argues with himself	Loses arguments
Sight Identification	Eyes of an eagle	Eyes of a Blue Jay	Needs binoculars	Needs binoculars in good light	Can't find binoculars
Sound Identification	Can recognize birds from a single chip	Can recognize birds by song	Can identify some birds by song	Can hear songs	Eh?

**BIRD WALKS**

*Elliott Kutner*

All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Any questions? Call Elliott at 486-7667.

- Feb. 27 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 6 Connetquot [see directions below]
- Mar. 13 Hempstead Lake State Park (Penin. Blvd.)
- Mar. 20 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Mar. 27 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- Apr. 3 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Apr. 10 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Apr. 17 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Apr. 24 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- May 1 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- May 8 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- May 15&22 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- May 29 *Memorial Day Weekend — No Walk*
- June 5&12 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Aug. 14 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

**Directions to Connetquot River State Park Preserve.**

Connetquot is in Oakdale and occupies 3473 acres, including a grist mill, fish hatchery, bridle paths, deer, and nature trails. Admission is by permit only, so tell them you're with South Shore Audubon Society. Take the Southern State Parkway to Exit 44 (Sunrise Highway, Route 27; not 27A) east for about two miles. Sunrise Highway is a divided highway out there and the Preserve entrance is on the north side, so you have to make a U-turn as soon as you pass the Preserve (at Pond Road) and *slowly* head back west on Sunrise Highway (the Preserve entrance is not obvious, but the preserve is definitely worth the trip).

**OPEN HOUSE AT AUDUBON HOUSE**

National Audubon Society cordially invites you to join them on Saturday, April 30th at their headquarters for a day of tours and education about their truly exceptional "Urban Sanctuary." Located at 700 Broadway in Manhattan (on the east side of the road, just north of East Fourth Street), the energy-efficient, environmentally responsible office building; proves that environmentally conscious design can be both practical and affordable; saves \$100,000 a year in energy costs; reduces the presence of toxins with VOC-free, water-based paint and undyed natural wool carpeting [VOCs are volatile organic compounds]; and recycles office refuse through a building-wide chute system.

The open house runs from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M., with tours at 11:30, 12:30, and 1:30. A 13-minute video will be shown throughout the day. If you're interested in attending, please send a postcard (attn: Michael Sperling) to SSAS's mailbox and indicate the number of people, your phone number (so I can call you to confirm), and which tour you prefer, if any (we need to contact NAS to reserve space for the tour).

**OUR ANNUAL DINNER**

*Diane Singer & Shirley Kutner*

This year's annual dinner will once again be held at the Pompei Restaurant in West Hempstead; it will cost just \$20 per person and will include entertainment by a one-man band. Save **June 14th** on your calendar and get ready to eat, dance, and sing with more than a hundred fellow South Shore Audubon members.

**NOMINATIONS FOR 1994-1995 OFFICERS**

*Elliott Kutner*

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting in May, officers will be elected for our next fiscal year. All members attending that meeting may nominate candidates from the floor and vote. The SSAS Nominating Committee [Elliott Kutner (Chairman), William Hollweg, and Tom Torma] has recommended the following candidates:

- President — Carole Adams
- Vice President — Betty Borowsky
- Treasurer — George Popkin
- Recording Secretary — Louise Hillen
- Corresponding Secretary — Doris Pirodsky
- Director (to 6/97) — Lois Schlegel

**HELP RENOVATE TACKAPAUSHA**

The Tackapausha Museum and Preserve in Seaford wants to renovate its animal care areas and is seeking the donation of the following: vinyl floor tiles, ceramic wall tiles, a commercial sink, and a countertop. Anyone wishing to donate labor or materials should contact Carole Neidich-Ryder at 571-7443. Unbroken fish tanks and animal care volunteers are also needed.

RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

WILDLIFE POISONING HOTLINE (800) 356-0560

(516) 694-2180

Seed — Feeders  
Houses — Baths  
Books — Gifts



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"NEW YORK'S LARGEST WILD BIRD SPECIALTY STORE"

621 Fulton St. (Rt. 109), Farmingdale, NY 11735  
Located between McDonald's & Dunkin' Donuts

## MIGRATORY BIRDS AND THE GREAT NORTHERN FOREST

The National Audubon Society's Northern Forest and Birds in the Balance campaigns are joining forces to promote the conservation of large tracts of northern forest in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and New York. Maintaining large core areas free of industrial-scale forestry and fragmentation by roads and second homes is vital to the long-term future of bird populations in the Northeast. And birds help maintain the balance of the region's biodiversity — which benefits all of us.

**Ancient History, Uncertain Future.** The first seeds of the Great Northern Forest germinated approximately 20,000 years ago. Our best historical record of the forest's evolution is written in the land itself, but an exact account remains elusive. Who can help but wonder — when walking through the pine stands of the Adirondacks or listening to the song of the Swainson's Thrush in the Maine woods — about the circumstances of the forest's beginnings, some twenty millennia ago.

When did the last great ice sheet recede to expose a fresh layer of earth to air, sun, and wind? How long did it take before the thawed land became forest? And what about the first birds, pushing north with the receding glacier, taking advantage of a new landscape to establish a pattern of breeding and migration that continues to this day?

As we situate ourselves in time with a look back at the history of the Great Northern Forest, we must also look forward. What does the future hold for this land that so recently, in geological time, has been exposed to life? How long will the great forests, only newly reestablished, thrive? And, once again, what about the birds? Will their migrations endure to see the next ice age?

**Birds of the Transition.** The Great Northern Forest — the study area designated by Congress — provides breeding habitat for more than 150 species of birds. Its 26 million acres are mostly wooded, stretching from the Tug Hill and Adirondack Mountains of New York to the majestic Maine woods. The forest cover of the Great Northern Forest represents a broad transition between the once-vast eastern deciduous forests and the still-vast coniferous forests — taiga or boreal forest — to the north.

Just as the Great Northern Forest represents a transition between eastern deciduous forest and the taiga, so does its avifauna. Among the breeding species of birds in the Northern Forest are those typical of eastern deciduous forests (such as the Wood Thrush) and of the taiga (such as the Blackpoll Warbler).

According to the late Robert Mengel, who studied avian evolution following the most recent glaciation, examples of other species closely associated with this transition zone are the Broad-winged Hawk, Least Flycatcher, Black-throated Green Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and White-throated Sparrow.

Birds such as these are the core of bird life in the Northern Forest, and they evolved in an environment that was both

extensive and largely continuous. However, within this vast forest existed a mosaic of habitats. From mature forests to various successional stages of forests, habitat was shaped by such factors as wind, water, tree-falls, disease, insects, beavers, and even the Native Americans who lived here.

Today, nonindigenous Americans have scarred, imprinted, and transformed the landscape of the Great Northern Forest, often indelibly, altering the natural processes that have been in place for millennia.

**The Status of Bird Populations.** Data from Breeding Bird Surveys for the eastern third of the United States indicate that more permanent resident and short-distance migrant species increased than decreased in the period from 1982 to 1991. Conversely, habitat for birds — including neotropical migrant, grassland, scrub, and coniferous forest species — decreased rather than increased.

Looking at Breeding Bird Survey data for species that nest in the Adirondacks and northern spruce hardwood forests, and which migrate to the Caribbean and Latin America during the northern winter, more than half of these neotropical migrant species declined rather than increased during the period from 1982 to 1991. Among these species are many different types of birds. One group that is declining are the grassland and scrub species, such as the Brown Thrasher, Common Yellowthroat, Bobolink, and American Goldfinch. Throughout the Northeast, these and related species are declining as land that had been cleared for agriculture reverts to forest cover.

Although grassland and scrub species are a valuable part of avian diversity in the Northern Forests, species such as the Swainson's Thrush, Black-throated Green Warbler, Ovenbird, and Scarlet Tanager are also of great concern. They are part of that core group of birds in the zone of transition between deciduous and coniferous forests.

Other species that declined on Breeding Bird Surveys in either the Adirondack or Northern Forest spruce hardwoods regions include the Nashville Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco, Northern Oriole, White-throated Sparrow, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak.

**What's Behind the Declines.** A number of factors may be responsible for declines in forest-dependent species. Unlike much of New England — whose forests have been heavily fragmented by roads, power lines, and residential developments — the Great Northern Forest is largely intact. Fragmentation of the Great Northern Forest is of increasing concern for the future, but it probably does not account for recent population declines in that region.

Species that benefit from outbreaks of spruce budworms (e.g., Bay-breasted Warbler) experienced declines in the 1980s, reflecting the natural fluctuations of their insect prey. For other species — for example, Swainson's Thrush — the problems may likely be found in wintering areas in the Caribbean or Latin America. We often do not know why bird populations decline, and only time will tell whether the

declines cited above will continue. What is important is that the forest-dependent species of the Great Northern Forest are still common, and we must act now to keep their numbers healthy. Maintaining large blocks of natural forest is vital to their future.

**Area Requirements.** Some species of forest birds prefer mature forests, while others are more abundant in successional stages. In general, the diversity of bird life increases when there is a mosaic of habitats, including fields and other openings. Many forest-dependent species, however, are *area sensitive*, meaning that the chance of their occurring and breeding successfully increases with the size of the forest.

Recent research in Ontario indicates that larger forests with more habitat diversity had more species and pairs of birds than did small forest fragments. Large forests were especially important for forest-interior species.

These forest sizes only relate to the occurrence of breeding birds — not to the breeding success. Forest sizes needed for maximum breeding success are probably larger.

One study by Chandler Robbins and his colleagues identified 26 species of area-sensitive birds in mid-Atlantic states; some of these same species are present in the Great Northern Forest. Following are examples of breeding birds and the forest size in which they have the greatest chance of occurrence:

*Greater Than 7400 Acres.* Red-shouldered Hawk, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-and-White Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Canada Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

*Greater Than 1100 Acres.* Wood Thrush and Ovenbird.

**Threats to Birds.** For bird species that nest in forests and are area-sensitive, fragmentation of nesting habitat is an enormous and increasing threat. Roads, power lines, and residential developments (including second homes) open up what had previously been extensive tracts of forest. As a result, nesting birds are exposed to increased predation by edge species (such as Blue Jays, American Crows, skunks, and raccoons). They are forced to select poor nest sites, and they become vulnerable to nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

The smaller a fragment of forest is, the less “interior” space will be available for nesting by area-sensitive species. Reproductive success in such areas is often inadequate to maintain a species.

Thus, areas where once-forested landscapes are fragmented into suburban and rural woodlots may now become “sinks” in which birds continue to attempt to nest — but with poor success. These areas contribute little or nothing to maintaining bird populations. We can only speculate that the “sources” of northern breeding stock for sink areas in the eastern states are the vast forests of the Great Northern Forest region.

**Forest Management Practices.** Although the Great Northern Forest remains largely intact, we must not be complacent. There is grave danger of encroachment by the type of piecemeal suburbanization that has overtaken much

of the area to the south. Forest management practices, such as industrial-scale clear-cutting, pose another significant threat, harboring the potential to fragment forests in large areas.

The scientific record on clear-cutting and bird populations is ambivalent. To a degree, forest management practices can mimic natural processes, creating a series of habitats in different successional stages and increasing avian diversity. As clear-cut areas regenerate, they are occupied by a sequence of bird species and communities.

However, bird species and communities that depend on extensive, mature forests are diminished or lost during the recovery period, which may take many years. The regenerated forest may be quite different from that which originally existed, and this can be harmful to cavity-nesting species such as Pileated Woodpeckers (pictured) and to crossbills, which are dependent on conifer cone crops in mature forests.



It is best to consider the effects of forest management practices on birds regionally, because the results depend on the scale and location in the context of other land uses within the broader area. For example, forest management in tracts on the margins of large natural forests will have different regional

effects on birds than if the same activities were carried out in the only extensive forests remaining in a landscape dominated by roads, power lines, and houses.

Two things are certain: The long-term future of forest birds depends on the existence of some extensive tracts of forests in which natural processes reign; and now is the time to plan and take action for the future of forest birds — while the bird populations are still healthy and the forests on which they depend are still extensive.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO.** Be proactive and work to save both forests and birds while they are still with us! The National Audubon Society invites you to participate in its Great Northern Forest and Birds in the Balance campaigns by:

- \* joining the National Audubon Society’s Great Northern Forest Advocate Network and promoting the creation of wildland reserves, sustainable forestry programs, and strong local economies;

- \* writing the Northern Forest Lands Council and attending their spring 1994 Public Listening Sessions (hearings). For a schedule of NFLC public meetings [including one in New York City], contact Audubon or write to NFLC, 54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301 (603-224-6590); for information on Audubon’s planned March 15th evening workshop in NYC, contact David Miller (see end of article);

- \* supporting federal and state funding to purchase forest land or conservation easements on forest land currently at risk in the Great Northern Forest region;

\* advocating at the state level management practices and policies that sustain both the economy and ecology of the Great National Forest;

\* promoting state legislative and administrative programs to protect open space, ensure proper management practices, and help local economies;

\* documenting the status of bird populations in work with one of Audubon's local chapters by lending your expertise as a bird-watcher to monitoring and survey programs.

For more information regarding National Audubon's Northern Forest campaign, contact David Miller, Northeast Regional Vice President, National Audubon Society, 1789 Western Avenue, Albany, NY 12203 (518-869-9731). For more information regarding migratory birds and National Audubon's Birds in the Balance campaign, contact Stan Senner, Director, Migratory Bird Conservation Program, National Audubon Society, 4150 Darley Avenue - Suite 5, Boulder, CO 80303 (303-499-0219).

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## 1993 NYS ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

*Michael Sperling*

In last month's *Skimmer*, I started reprinting descriptions of the content and fate of all the bills covered in the Environmental Planning Lobby's comprehensive 1993 Voters' Guide. The EPL awarded a rating of 3 trees to proposed legislation that would be of significant assistance and benefit to help resolve a pressing problem facing New York's environment, 2 trees if it would provide substantial benefit to NY's environment, 1 tree if it would be beneficial to some aspect of NY's environment, and up to 3 stacks to harmful bills.

To recap last month's article: Seven 3 tree bills passed the Assembly last year, three of which also passed the Senate and were signed into law by the Governor (the other four bills died in the Senate); five 2 tree bills that passed the Assembly fit in the February issue, one of which became law (the other four died in the Senate). So far, we are yet to see a pro-environment bill that passed the Senate but not the Assembly in 1993 (not so coincidentally, different political parties control the two houses of our state legislature). We now continue our story.

**Lead Paint Removal** 𠄎𠄎. In the fall of 1992, the soil around at least three bridges in the New York City area was found to have very high concentrations of lead. These levels of lead are the result of repeated sandblasting of old paint. Children playing in these soils suffer elevated concentrations of lead in their blood. This legislation establishes safety requirements for the major removal and disposal of lead from the exterior surfaces of any public works infrastructure. A3357-B passed the Assembly but was held in the Senate Health Committee.

**Biodiversity** 𠄎𠄎. Rapid loss of habitat is the chief cause of species becoming endangered and threatened with extinction. This measure fosters the creation of a permanent information network concerning rare and endangered species.

A5235-B (Brodsky, D-Scarsdale) / S5072-B (Johnson, R-Babylon) passed both houses and was signed by the Governor.

**Property Owners Protection Act** 𠄎𠄎. This bill would require sellers of commercial property to disclose whether there is hazardous waste present at the site. This measure is necessary to disclose old hazardous waste sites that otherwise may not be revealed to the potential purchaser of the property. A5262 (John, D-Rochester) / S1935 (Sheffer, R-Amherst) passed the Assembly but was held in the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

**ELECTRA — Power Incentives** 𠄎𠄎. The existence of dependable markets for recycled materials is necessary for the success of local recycling programs established since passage of the Solid Waste Management Act of 1988. This measure allows the allocation of economic development power to businesses which are utilizing secondary recycled materials as raw materials in a manufacturing process. A5414 (DiNapoli, D-Great Neck) passed the Assembly but was not sponsored in the Senate.

**ELECTRA — Notification** 𠄎𠄎. In accordance with the Solid Waste Management Act of 1988, many communities have embraced the opportunity to recycle. Compliance by private waste haulers and businesses, however, has been insufficient. The noncompliance is resulting in the needless destruction of large volumes of materials which could be readily recycled. This bill ensures that private waste haulers notify their clients of materials which must be recycled according to mandatory local recycling laws. A5308 (DiNapoli) passed the Assembly but was not sponsored in the Senate.

**Utility Right-of-Ways** 𠄎𠄎. Chemicals used to kill "nuisance" vegetation along utility right-of-ways often become a costly problem when they contaminate drinking water, soil, and the air and harm wildlife, birds, and humans. Vermont and Connecticut already have laws in place that limit the use of pesticides in accordance with individual homeowners' discretion. This measure phases out the use of chemical pesticides on utility right-of-ways, leading to an eventual ban. A7794 (Parment, D-Jamestown) passed the Assembly but was not sponsored in the Senate.

**State Trip Reduction** 𠄎𠄎. The Trip Reduction Initiative Program (TRIP) is designed to reduce auto emissions by increasing the number of passengers per vehicle and thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the road. This bill requires that all state agencies with 50 or more employees participate in TRIP. Although this bill (S783) passed the Senate but was not sponsored in the Assembly, a similar provision was incorporated into the final version of the clean air bill which passed both houses and was signed by the Governor.

**Electric Vehicles** 𠄎𠄎. This bill requires that state vehicle fleets are comprised of at least ten percent electric vehicles by no later than January 1, 1998. The bill also requires the state to equip a small percentage of parking spaces with recharging outlets which will be available for state employees who own electric vehicles. S661 (Johnson) passed the Senate but was not sponsored in the Assembly.

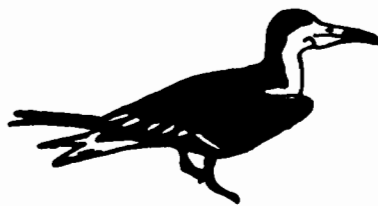
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Michael Sperling, Vice President and <i>Skimmer</i> Editor .....	541-0805
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Louise Hillen, Recording Secretary .....	546-6147
Doris Pirodsky, Corresponding Secretary & Historian .....	378-1790
Carole A. Adams, Director (6/96) & Education Chairperson .....	731-4425
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Richard Packert, Director (6/94) .....	437-9683
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Sandy Brenner, Program Chairperson .....	249-4919
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Elliott Kutner, Birding / Field Trips Chairperson .....	486-7667
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**South Shore Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 31**  
**Freeport, NY 11520-0031**

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

*Americans Committed to Conservation*



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