

**JOIN THE FUN AT SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON'S
POST-BIRDATHON DINNER!!**

Doreen Remsen

After the excitement, thrills, and nonstop action of our twelfth Birdathon, we hope you will come join your fellow team members for some good food, good fun, and good company as we share our stories of "the one that got away" and the ones that didn't at our annual Birdathon dinner! It is an opportunity for all of us to compile our chapter's total-species-seen list and relax as we celebrate what is sure to be another successful year for South Shore and the Audubon causes we support. If you are an independent Birdathoner, a backyard Birdathoner, or a sponsor of the Birdathon, please consider joining us!

When? Where? At the conclusion of the Birdathon on Saturday, May 8th at 5 P.M. (or Saturday, May 15th, the rain date), by popular demand, we will make our way to The Super Buffet on Merrick Road in Rockville Centre, located behind the Twin Theaters. The Super Buffet is an all-you-can-eat Chinese buffet and they can accommodate a good number of us at their family-style tables. Seating is on a first-come basis (the lines can be long!), so if you are the first to arrive, save a family table up front and watch for our "migratory wave" to pass through! The cost for the buffet is \$9.95. Hope to see you there!

✪ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ✪

Jackie Richichi

We are pleased to welcome this month's large group of new members; spring is here, a great time to enjoy the outdoors while meeting fellow South Shore Auduboners and learning something about Long Island's natural world.

To receive an application for membership in National Audubon Society and SSAS, please call our Membership Chairperson, Jackie Richichi, at 691-1855. Membership for the first year costs \$20; \$15 for students and senior citizens.

- Baldwin..... Charles Gifford, James Gillette,
Thomas Rohrer
- Bellmore Doris Dennis, Harriet A. Heuser,
Coby J. Lichter, Margaret
Mc Innis, Joseph Pearsall,
Jackie Tabacco
- Cedarhurst Ruth Greenwald
- East Meadow Susan Ahearn, Deirdre Bendit,
Myrtle Bergeman, Robert
Gambitsky, Michael Mc Carthy
- East Rockaway Florence Temple
- Farmingdale..... Joseph H. Bannon, C. Delalio
- Floral Park Sylvia Foley, Linda Mc Carthy,
Clirio Pellegrini, Kathleen Quinn
- Franklin Square Judith H. Wachtel,
William Wallace



- Freeport..... John E. Davies, Arthur Haganes,
R. Heiman, Sylvia Lesser,
Lorraine Rosenberg, Linda Siani
- Garden City Kathleen Derrico, Doris
Hauswirth, Jitka M. V. (?), Jim
Pratt, R. D. Zinke
- Hempstead..... Theodore W. Jackson
- Hewlett Morton Haves
- Hicksville..... Anne Browning
- Inwood Juan Perez
- Island Park Michelle Phillips
- Levittown Mr. & Mrs. Oswald Brett, Hedy
Esposito, Victoria A. Linzie,
Ethel Sailor
- Long Beach Jennifer Chimienti, Lynn Feinson,
Eileen Hennessey, Abraham
Kirschenbaum, Dorothy L.
Thoung
- Lynbrook The Kaplans, Alma Aquinto
Tayco
- Malverne Mr. & Mrs. Harold Olson,
Francis X. Tully
- Massapequa Joe Ademski, Ann Dinstell,
Anne Mehlinger,
Diane Schultz
- Massapequa Park Ernest Begun, Harry Volz
- Merrick Douglas Thomas
- Oceanside Sari Golds, Jessica J. Kaufman,
Terrie Zinkofsky
- Old Bethpage..... Albert J. Hilber, Joseph Mehlman
- Plainview Stanley E. Handman
- Rockville Centre..... Anne Rothman, Earl H. Shatzkin
- Seaford Coreen Gelber
- Stony Brook Joseph A. Vanderbilt
- Uniondale June Sada
- Valley Stream..... Robert Coyle, S. Ferranti,
Ruth Green
- Wantagh Eleanor Kohler, Margaret Shaw,
V. Thruston
- West Hempstead Mollie C. Huang
- Woodmere..... Verne Getreu, Lauren Heid



SSAS Mission Statement — The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education, and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

SSAS Post Office Statement — South Shore Skimmer is published monthly from September through December and February through June by South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.



**EARTH DAY 1999 AT
TACKAPAUSHA MUSEUM AND PRESERVE**

Doreen Remsen

The Nassau County Department of Parks and Recreation will celebrate Earth Day on **Sunday, April 18th** from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. on the grounds of Tackapausha Museum and Preserve on Washington Avenue in Seaford. South Shore Audubon is the proud sponsor of this event and will be joined by other environmental and community groups in an ongoing effort to educate and increase awareness to the needs of the planet. Weather permitting, there will be outdoor events including Native American dancers and nature walks through the preserve. This would be a wonderful opportunity to pack a picnic outdoors under the trees and simply enjoy the return of spring to our world! Inside the museum, you can catch a nature film and visit with the wildlife. We hope to see many of you there! The Earth Day event is free; however, there is a nominal charge for admission to the museum: \$1 for adults, 50¢ for children.



Attention South Shore Auduboners: Once again, your help is needed to make this event a success. Museum Curator Carole Ryder has a commitment until noon that day, so our help setting up and coordinating the participating groups is greatly needed and appreciated. We also need you for hosting our tables and greeting the public when the event begins. We will be meeting in the parking lot at 9:45 A.M. to begin setup. Any time you have to share with us and the community that day is most welcome! As always, thank you!!

LAST WEEKEND IN MARCH

In case you don't have last month's *Skimmer* and it isn't April yet, here's a couple of things we're doing:

Morton National Wildlife Refuge. On Saturday the 27th at 11 A.M. we'll be hand-feeding chickadees and titmice while birding in this 187-acre refuge. Afterwards, we'll head into Sag Harbor to do some less-natural sightseeing. For directions and details, contact leader Joanne Del Prete (433-0739 evenings, jdp4@erols.com) or Michael Sperling (541-0805 evenings before Friday, mssperling@compuserve.com; I'll be upstate at an Audubon Council of New York State meeting that weekend).

Extra Birdseed Sale in Lynbrook: On Sunday the 28th, from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M., we'll be selling leftovers from our last sale. Call Paul Butkerei at 599-0395 before arriving at the shop (Poodles in Blue, 10 Lincoln Place) to confirm that we still have 20 & 40 lb Premium Wild Bird Seed Mix (\$6.75 & \$12.75), 20 & 40 lb Special Mix (\$6.90 & \$13.00, no corn and 1/3 sunflower), 25 lb Sunflower Chips (\$17.75, no shells), 25 lb Peanut Splits (\$17.75), and 12 oz Pine Tree Peanut Suet Cake (\$1.75).

BIRD TRIVIA #3

Jonathan Staller

People tell me the questions are too tough. I'll make them a little easier but I need your feedback. Tell me what you think; are the questions too hard or not? Thanks.

- ① How does a woodpecker reach its prey once a hole has been made in a tree?
- ② What species of hummingbird is the smallest?
- ③ Where does the Northern Shrike keep its food supply until it is ready to ingest it?
- ④ What purpose is served by the yolk of a bird's egg?
- ⑤ What color are a peacock's feathers?

① With its tongue, which is long and has small barbs on it.
 ② The Bee Hummingbird (see February's *Skimmer*).
 ③ It impales its prey of mice and insects on twigs, thorns, and even fences.
 ④ Nourishment for the embryo during its incubation period.
 ⑤ Brown; we see multicolored patterns caused by the refraction and reflection of light on the feathers.

OUR ANNUAL DINNER

South Shore Audubon's 28th annual dinner will be held at Pompei Restaurant and Catering in West Hempstead (as usual) on **Tuesday, June 8th**, beginning with a cocktail hour at 6:30. Save the date for this always well-attended event (last year there were 119 of us). Cost is \$25 including hot hors d'oeuvres and a complete dinner. Smoking will be prohibited in the Banquet Room; please see next month's *Skimmer* for the registration form.

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 Houses - Baths
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"Earth Day is a commitment to make life better, not just bigger and faster; to provide real rather than rhetorical solutions. It is a day to re-examine the ethic of individual progress at mankind's expense. It is a day to challenge the corporate and governmental leaders who promise change, but who shortchange the necessary programs. It is a day for looking beyond tomorrow." — from a NY Times ad for an environmental teach-in, 11/8/70

THE BATTLE OF BETHPAGE Notes from the Front Lines

Michael Goldsmith

Often overlooked by nature enthusiasts, Bethpage State Park is a natural gem located in our own backyard. It is also a precious area of green that came perilously close to being lost forever. Even now, representatives of SSAS and other organizations are hard at work to preserve the integrity of this major environmental resource.

For those of you who tuned in late, the abbreviated history in Chapter I will bring you up to speed on the continuing saga of Bethpage State Park (BSP).

Chapter I: The Battle of Bethpage. The five golf courses at BSP constitute the biggest public golf complex in the country and include the world-class Black Course, site of the 2002 U.S. Open.

The 315 undeveloped acres surrounding the picnic area and softball fields is perhaps the largest wooded area in Nassau County and, as the State would later discover, heavily frequented by hikers, bikers, joggers, horseback riders, birders, picnickers, and other recreationists.

In 1996, the State Parks Department proposed the construction of a 130 acre sixth golf course in the wooded area. A coalition of 11 environmental and user groups organized to oppose the plan. The group came to be known as the Bethpage Trail Users Coalition (BTUC). The Battle of Bethpage had begun.

Although technically not permitted by the State, mountain bikers are arguably the biggest users of the Park. Emily Kelly of CLIMB (Concerned L.I. Mountain Bikers) co-chaired the BTUC. Representing the L.I. Greenbelt Conference was Richard Schary. Jerry Licht appeared on behalf of the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK). After then-president Carole Adams sustained a knee injury, I represented SSAS.

The BTUC lobbied the Parks Dept. and influential State politicians, and waged a public relations campaign that received a fair amount of local media attention.

On April 27, 1997, the BTUC planned to hold a large "Day of Support" rally at the Park to oppose the sixth golf course. On April 25th, surprised by the strong and well-organized opposition, Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro officially killed the plan. The protest rally turned out to be a victory celebration.

Chapter II: To the Victors, the Spoils. Jerry Licht and Emily Kelly proposed that the Bethpage user groups, concerned environmental organizations, and local citizens' associations develop a management plan for the Park to present to the State. The State agreed, and hence was born the Bethpage Trail Users Committee (BTUC again).

What was not understood by many of the participants (including yours truly) was that formulating a management plan for the heavily frequented wooded area, involving so many conflicting user and environmental groups, was unprecedented in NY.

At the first meeting, in June 1997, each group presented its "wish list." For example, CLIMB wanted an 8–10 mile continuous mountain bike trail. The State wanted an interpretive nature trail. Greenbelt wanted a dedicated hiking trail through the Park. On behalf of SSAS, I asked that any management plan be environmentally sensitive to the flora and fauna, prevent environmental degradation, restore damaged areas and processes, and maintain desired natural communities, populations, and processes.

However, before anything could be done, the area needed to be surveyed. Emily Kelly volunteered to prepare a map of the existing terrain. After making my impassioned tree-hugging plea, I was volunteered by everyone else to prepare an environmental inventory.

Realizing that I was totally ill-equipped for such an ambitious project, I immediately sought help. My wife Lorraine, with her M.A. in Environmental Science, would help to catalogue the birds; however, we still needed someone who could identify the diverse plant communities in the Park. Our good friend, the late and sorely missed Mary Richard of National Audubon's Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary in Oyster Bay, after chuckling over my plight, suggested I contact Dave Kunstler, a wildlife manager with the NYC Parks and Recreation Department, and holder of an M.A. in Biology. Dave turned out to be a walking field guide with a wry sense of humor and provided reams of invaluable data for the project.



Emily's map confirmed what our field work observed — the Park has some high-quality environmental areas but is also being carved up by a huge amount of trails that spiderweb from the main trails. The user groups got together with Emily and picked out the trails each group wanted, and a new map was prepared. The habitat map that Dave prepared was then overlaid upon the proposed trails map. The State, after some delay, produced a new map combining the two.

While this proposed plan was a vast improvement over the chaos and destruction that currently prevailed, some of the user trails cut through sensitive, globally rare plant communities identified by Dave and fostered forest fragmentation identified by Lorraine.

As our environmental inventory showed, BSP has the only portion of the pine barrens located in Nassau County. The oak brush plains mapped out by Dave is ranked by rarity as S1 and G2; this means that it occurs only 1–5 times statewide and 5–20 times globally. Dave also located (and I even found some!) a few dozen blackjack oaks scattered throughout the Park. Although BSP is not a preserve, clearly these natural communities are deserving of protection.

Currently, the BTUC is trying to hammer out a trail map that is acceptable to all the groups. The State, in support of the SSAS position, is finally leaning on groups to abandon their trails in the sensitive areas. The target date

for a workable plan is May 1999. Once the plan is submitted to Albany, it will have to go through the lengthy State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) process. The State will also have to pass legislation concerning mountain biking.

Many of the groups comprising the BTUC feel that mountain biking is probably one of the Park's more destructive activities. While this may be true, I believe that without the mountain bikers we would now have six golf courses at BSP. Therefore, on behalf of SSAS, Dave, Lorraine, and I will insist that a strict trail enforcement system be devised to keep any environmental damage to a minimum. This will involve signage, policing, education, and the closing of many trails. Also, we will do our best to see to it that the approved trails are monitored for erosion and ecological harm. We will also insist that the plan be reviewed in light of the monitoring data and be subject to revision.

Chapter III: The Empire (State) Strikes Back. Just when you thought it was safe to go into the Park, the concrete pourers announced their return. This time, it's the State Department of Transportation that wants to do the bulldozing. In a misguided plan to reduce air pollution by encouraging bicycling, DOT proposed constructing a paved bike path through the Park as part of an ill-conceived scheme to link BSP with the Cold Spring Harbor train station (as if anyone commutes from Bethpage to Cold Spring Harbor!).

As noted in previous *Skimmers* (see last month's for who to write to), SSAS opposes the plan. Our chapter has signed onto a coalition of close to a dozen groups being organized by Rich Schary of Greenbelt. SSAS holds that the proposed bikeway provides no environmental benefit whatsoever. The unnamed coalition feels that it makes little sense to destroy one area of the environment to arguably preserve another. There are many less-destructive alternatives to the proposed bike path.

So, as you can see, beyond the beautiful tree-lined facade of BSP there lies quite a bit of controversy. Keep in mind, though, that vigilance and the hard work of many dedicated people was the price of keeping this section of Nassau County green.

ANOTHER THANK-YOU COLUMN

This month's thanks go to the people who collated, folded, stuffed, and sealed this year's SSAS Greening of Long Island letters and envelopes: Kathy Battaglia, hostess Betty Borowsky, Marge Jaeger, Therese Lucas, Doris Pirodsky, and your editor. We didn't have time to stick on the labels, so that was done by unsuspecting attendees of the Brookside Committee meeting a week later; your editor thanks the following for the overabundance of post-meeting helpers: Betsy Gulotta, Judy Hoyer, Linda Pickens, Vince Puglisi, Alvira Serdock, and repeat performers Betty, Marge, Therese, and Doris.

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.

- Mar. 28 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Apr. 4 Happy Easter & Passover — No Walk
- Apr. 11*** Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Apr. 18 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Apr. 25 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- May 2 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- May 9*** Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

***After these bird walks, everyone's invited to stay for a picnic; bring lunch! On April 11th, after the picnic, please head to Brookside Preserve for the cleanup that begins at 1 P.M. (see page 2) — we need you!

Directions to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge: Southern State Parkway to Belt Parkway to Exit 17 South (Cross Bay Boulevard). Drive four miles, passing through Howard Beach and over Joseph P. Addabbo Bridge; turn right at the Refuge entrance's traffic light and look for dozens of Auduboners in the parking lot.

RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070



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LITTORAL SOCIETY**

NEW YORK AQUARIUM (Sat., April 17th). A 2-1/2 hour behind-the-scenes tour of this wonderful facility in Coney Island. See walrus, sea otters, seals, sharks, sea turtles, penguins, local fish, and more. Cost: \$15 (\$8 kids).

FIRE ISLAND HIKE (Sat., May 8th). Visit the Sunken Forest during peak warbler migration. Hike the boardwalk trail through the holly maritime forest, dunes, and beach. Bring lunch. Cost: \$20 includes round-trip ferry and guides.

ASSATEAGUE SPRING WEEKEND (May 20-23). Visit Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge and Assateague National Seashore in Virginia. See nesting Bald Eagle and Osprey, wild horses, river otter, etc. Cost: \$260 includes 3 nights at Refuge Motor Inn, 3 evening programs and star watch, marsh boat tour, Safari bus tour, and all-you-can-eat seafood buffet.

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET BOAT CRUISE (Sat., June 5th). Enjoy a calm cruise aboard the "Dorothy B VIII" during peak bird nesting season. See Peregrine Falcon, egrets, herons, ibis, oystercatcher, terns, skimmers, and lots of shorebirds. Learn about the history & ecology of the refuge. Cost: \$35.

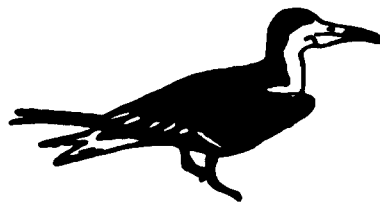
For information and free field trip brochure,
call/write Don Riepe, (718) 634-6467,
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