



for kids, games, a look around the interesting natural history museum, plus a live animal show given by Volunteers for Wildlife. Please bring your kid, your kid's kids, or your neighbor's kids to this fun event. Wear your Halloween costumes. And if you want to have some fun and you'd like to help out at this party as a volunteer — helping at the craft tables, personing the SSAS table, or taking pictures — please call me at 546-6303. Admission is free for volunteers, \$3 for adults, \$2 for children ages 5 to 14, and free for younger children.

**October 18: Brookside Preserve Cleanup, 1-4 P.M.** Our preserve in Freeport, on the west side of Brookside Avenue, just north of Sunrise Highway, is cleaned up by South Shore Audubon people twice a year. We pick up trash, bag it, and haul it out to the curb to be taken away. After we finish, it looks marvelous. Physical activity is good for you and it will be good for our preserve too. Show up with gloves and we will give you a bag to fill.

**October 4, 11, 18, 25: Our Bird Walks, Sundays at 9:30 A.M.** We are birding at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Hempstead Lake State Park, Point Lookout and Lido Preserve, and Jones Beach West End in October. Shorebirds, migrating warblers, incoming winter birds — all are potential sightings. Bring binoculars and enjoy the outdoors, the birds, and the company of like-minded people.

Please join us in October for one/some/all of our planned events. I will look for you there.

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**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

*Wendy Murbach*

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in our vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

Our new members since the last *Skimmer* are:

- Bellmore ..... Ronald Mohlin
- Floral Park ..... John P. McMorrow
- Garden City ..... Maria C. Bicocchi, Angelique & Matthew Siegfried
- Hempstead ..... Ellin Epstein
- Hicksville ..... Ruth Klement, Geraldine Thorsten
- Long Beach ..... Kerry Da Silva
- Massapequa ..... Glenn G. Debona, Rose Viglietta
- Merrick ..... Tony D. Nucci, Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Stahl
- Newport Beach, CA .... Harold Katz
- Oceanside ..... Jean M. Johnson
- Plainview ..... Agnes V. Casey, Richard Calgie, Jud Newborn
- Rockville Centre ..... Edward Moss, Robert Winston
- Wantagh ..... Thomas Moore
- West Hempstead ..... Nancy Cantelmo, Jean Werhner
- Woodmere ..... Gail S. Zimmer

**BIGGER BETTER BOTTLE BILL UPDATE**

*Michael Spelling*


While last month's *Skimmer* was at the printer, on August 13 to be exact, U.S. District Court Judge Deborah A. Batts responded to a request for an emergency hearing by New York State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo by undoing much of the preliminary 10-month injunction that had been issued in May by Judge Thomas P. Griesa of the same District Court.

Under Judge Batts' ruling, New York State may immediately begin collecting 80% of the unclaimed deposits on all non-water bottled beverages instead of the bottlers keeping all of them, and the implementation date for the nickel deposit on unsweetened bottled water will be reviewed at an October 22 hearing (the bill's implementation date of October 1 had been postponed to April 1, 2010 by Judge Griesa). A provision in the Bigger Better Bottle Bill that required a unique Universal Product Code for bottles sold in NY remains enjoined as unconstitutional.

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





*Explore the coast  
with the*  
**AMERICAN  
LITTORAL SOCIETY**

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**ASSATEAGUE ISLAND / CHINCOTEAGUE REFUGE EXTENDED WEEKEND** (Nov. 5-8). Join us for our 25th year at this great wildlife area. See wild ponies, 1000s of snow geese, lots of shorebirds, ducks, bald eagles, and maybe a river otter. Cost: \$365 includes 3 nights lodging at Refuge Motor Inn (heated pool, jacuzzi, observation deck), all guided walks, plus an "All-You-Can-Eat" seafood dinner.

**NEW YORK AQUARIUM** (Saturday, November 14). Meet 10 A.M. at entrance in Coney Island for a 2-1/2 hour "behind-the-scenes" tour given by veteran educator Bob Cummings. See walrus, beluga whales, sea turtles, sharks, penguins, sea otters, and, of course, "Squirt, the Wonder Clam." Cost: \$25 (kids \$15). To reserve, send check to American Littoral Society at address below.

**MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND** (January 8-10). Spend weekend at luxurious Manor House (heated pool, jacuzzi, sauna, spacious lobby w/ fireplaces). See hundreds of sea ducks, loons, scoters, eiders, and visit seal haulout sites. Easy hikes along beach, woods, and bluffs. Cost: \$345 includes 2 nights, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, star watch, and free pickup at LIRR station. Leaders: Mickey Cohen and Don Riepe.

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For information and free field trip brochure,  
call/write Don Riepe, (718) 318-9344, [driepe@nyc.rr.com](mailto:driepe@nyc.rr.com),  
28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; [www.alsnyc.org](http://www.alsnyc.org).

**SO THIS IS WHY WE DO IT**  
**Report from the Twelfth Year of the SSAS Camp**  
**Scholarship Program**

*Betty Barowsky*

The South Shore Audubon Society conducts a scholarship program that sends children from low-income communities in our catchment area to the summer program at the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center for one week each year. We have been conducting this program every summer since 1998. Each year we work with a different school district, asking administrators and teachers to select eligible disadvantaged youngsters in the fourth or fifth grades to receive the scholarship. SSAS pays for tuition and for the bus.

Every year, just before the program begins, I vow I will never do this again. It takes a lot of time to organize all the pieces — remember, we are a volunteer organization offering a service to public schools — we can't tell anybody what to do — we must ask, request, cajole, follow up. But every year I change my mind the instant I meet our children.


This year was no exception. We sent nine wonderful children from the Uniondale School District to the program this summer. To give you an idea of our challenges: The Uniondale School District sent me the names of 30 deserving children whose families had already indicated they wished to send their child to the program. Of those 30, the families of only 12 filled out the necessary forms (the forms are not onerous, but I think that some families simply do not understand what needs to be done — some only speak foreign languages, and some may not be able to read at all). Of those 12, nine actually wound up attending. The reasons why the three did not attend are:

① One child's mother broke her leg the weekend before camp and had to send the child to his aunt's house in Queens while she was in the hospital.

② I am actually not sure of this one — but I think the mother confused the day camp with school. The family is Spanish speaking, and although I have some information in Spanish, the forms are not.

③ But this was the worst — the child could not attend because she had to babysit her infant sibling. This is a ten-year-old child we're talking about.

BUT the ones who did attend loved it. On our first day there really were lots of mosquitoes — it had been pretty wet this summer, and we were really all bothered by them.

 There were also yellow jackets and lots of worms. Well, one little girl was not happy. She started by saying "when are we going in?" Well, not at all, unless it rains. "I hate bugs." You don't have to come tomorrow if you're not having a good time. And finally: "I HATE nature."

Well, by lunchtime she was eager to feel a daddy long-legs on her arm ("does it tickle?"). She had lots of questions about the turtle that was displayed and discussed. And not only did she come the next day, but she was soon the first

into everything, including the marine invertebrates the children collected at the water. I really think we made a difference to this little girl. And this is why we do it.

As always, we have lots of people to thank. I wish to thank the Superintendent of Uniondale schools, Dr. William Lloyd, as well as our liaison, Mr. Arthur Registre. I want to thank all the teachers who participated by selecting eligible children. Thank you to Aaron Virgin, Chrissy Albanese, and the counselors at TR for working with our ever-changing needs. And I would like to acknowledge our chaperones (we must have two adults accompany the children on the bus): Anne Mehlinger, Dolores Rogers, Mary Jane Russell, and especially Gloria Berkowitz and Marianne Gumbs. Thank you also to Marilyn Hametz, who made reminder phone calls to the families. And thank you to Wendy Murbach who agreed to be available to substitute in the event someone could not make it one day.

My only regret is that we did not manage to send more children. If you have any suggestions, let me know! Meanwhile — look for my complaining next year.

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**BACKYARD SURVEY DATA NEEDED!**

*Joe Grupp*

For several years, SSAS's Research Committee has been conducting a study to document the bird species found in the SSAS area and to estimate their numbers. We greatly appreciate input from anyone that feeds and/or observes birds in their yard or neighborhood. Please do not hesitate to submit your observations, even if you make only very few.

Simply record the date, time, and the number or approximate number of each species. At the end of each month, please mail or e-mail your record to me at the appropriate address listed below, or hand it to me at our monthly meeting. Survey sheets are available at SSAS events and at [ssaudubon.org](http://ssaudubon.org) or you can create your own.

Please mail your data to Mr. J. Grupp, Research Chairperson, 660 Edgemere Ave., Uniondale, NY 11553 or e-mail [Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com](mailto:Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com).

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**SSAS HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS**

*Joe Landesberg*

Four awards were made by SSAS to graduating high school seniors this year. These students excelled in their studies and will be attending college in the fall. Each anticipates pursuing an environmentally related course of study based in either biology or chemistry. The students are as follows: Carey Ferber from Oceanside H.S., Michael Lieto from Baldwin H.S., Kerriann Mc Fadden from South Side H.S. in Rockville Centre, and Kelly Jewels from Freeport H.S. We wish them all good luck.

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VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (631) 423-0982

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**BROOKSIDE PRESERVE**

We wish to thank the SSAS members who participated in our invasive-plant removal effort on Thursday, September 3: Marianne Gumbs, Wendy Murbach, Alice & Rory O'Connor, George Peters, Bill Scanlon, Steve Schellenger, Don Temple, and the early-arriving volunteer whose name is missing from this list.

**A Chance to See Your Name in the Skimmer.** Please join us at our fall cleanup on **Sunday, October 18** (details are in the President's Message). If you're unfamiliar with Brookside, which borders Milburn Creek in Freeport/Baldwin and is managed by SSAS, you're encouraged to visit [ssaudubon.org](http://ssaudubon.org) to view our trail guide booklet.

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**LOCAL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE STAFFING**

*Editor's note:* The following is excerpted from "Wildlife Sanctuaries Shortchanged," an article in last winter's *America's Wilderness* newsletter from The Wilderness Society.

A September (2008) report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that refuges do not have adequate resources to meet their goals and keep pace with concerns such as invasive species and law enforcement... Since 2004, about 375 positions have been eliminated, and at least a third of the 548 refuges have no staff at all.

Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge in southern Maine has one enforcement officer to cover its 11 units. "And he's based in Rhode Island, at least three hours away," noted Ward Feurt, who manages the refuge. So no one noticed when an adjoining property owner built a garage and paved a driveway right onto the refuge... "It would make a big difference in our endangered species work if we had staff to educate area residents and enforce rules."

Such problems also plague nine sanctuaries managed jointly as the Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex. "ATVs are damaging and fragmenting wildlife habitat and disturbing a variety of species," says Deborah Long, the refuge manager. She has one enforcement officer on her nine-person staff... "We have a half million visitors a year, and we simply can't provide the services, including nature education, that we would like to." One of just two biologists on her staff, Alex Chmielewski, struggles to fend off invasive species, a scourge that the GAO report found is a serious problem at half the refuges. "A few years ago an aggressive groundcover named black swallow-wort turned up here. It's a strangling vine that came here from southwestern Europe and is forcing out native vegetation. There is evidence that monarch butterflies are prone to lay their eggs on this vine and that their larvae rarely survive." He says that if there were more employees it would be possible to detect and attack such species before they become too entrenched.

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AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201  
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**JERRY BISHOP ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIPS**

*Betsy Gulotta & Wendy Murbach*

College scholarships were awarded at SSAS's annual dinner in June. Once again, they were generously donated by longtime member Evelyn Bishop in memory of her husband, Jerry, who too was very active in South Shore Audubon's activities. This year's winners were:

Neil Duncan, from Long Beach, working towards his Masters of Science (MS) in Biology at Hofstra University. Under Dr. Russell Burke, he is studying the diamondback terrapins (pictured) at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, looking at the dispersal and predation of them. He graduated from the University of Vermont with a BS, and has worked at the American Museum of Natural History, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, U.S. Forest Service, and the Town of Islip's Division of Shellfish Management.

John Luniewski, from Glendale, NY, working towards his MS in Environmental Studies at Adelphi University. He is focusing on sustainable efficient energy systems and is interested in lessening the human impact on natural ecosystems. He has worked at the Bronx Zoo in the Department of Ornithology, and plans to work the summers monitoring the Piping Plover populations at the National Park Service's Breezy Point property.

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**A WORD ABOUT YOUR MAILING LABEL**

In case you're wondering why "or current resident" is now appearing on your mailing label: The U.S. Postal Service expanded its "move update" requirement to include all standard-class mail (it previously only covered presorted first-class mail). Alternatively, SSAS would have to verify everyone's residency at least every 95 days by paying the U.S.P.S. for each *Skimmer* needing an address change and then attempt to update National Audubon's contractor's monthly spreadsheet files accordingly (from which we print our labels); worse, the four-month gap before the September issue would require paying a commercial processing service to update that issue's mailing label file.

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## MOCKINGBIRDS IN FICKLE CLIMATES

*Editor's note:* The following is a press release sent by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Why are some birds simple singers and others vocal virtuosos? Researchers at the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center (NESCent), the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and McGill University suspect that inconsistent climates may play a role.

A large-scale study of mockingbirds in diverse habitats reveals that species in more variable climates sing more complex tunes. "As environments become more variable or unpredictable, song displays become more elaborate," said Carlos Botero, a postdoctoral researcher at NESCent in Durham, NC. NESCent is a National Science Foundation funded collaborative research center operated by Duke University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University.

Local climate patterns are good indicators of how challenging life is in a given location, Botero said. "Survival and reproduction become more complicated when weather patterns are unpredictable, because you don't know when food will be available or how long it will be around," he explains. What's more, the consequences of picking a mediocre mate are magnified in harsher climates. "In really difficult or demanding environments, you would expect females to be choosier," he said.

"Male mockingbirds sing primarily to impress mates," said Botero. Superior singing skills are a cue that a male is a good catch. "Complexity of song display – how many song types a bird sings, how hard the songs are – is a good predictor of the quality of the individual," said Botero. "Males that sing more complex songs tend to carry fewer parasites, and have offspring that are more likely to survive."

Songbirds aren't born knowing their songs, however; they have to learn them over time. Since birdsong is a learned behavior, Botero and colleagues suspect that song-learning ability may also be a display of learning ability in general. The bird equivalent of sparkling conversation, complex songs may indicate which males have not only brawn, but also brainpower. "Birds that sing better are telling others, at least indirectly: Hey, I'm a good learner," said Botero.

More importantly, singing skills may be a sign that males are clever enough to cope with iffy environments. "Individuals that are more intelligent tend to be better able to compensate for the difficulties of unpredictable climates. For example, if some individuals are able to invent new foraging techniques, then they are going to be better at surviving harsh winters than the poor guys who only know one way to forage," Botero said. "The more intelligent you are, the more resourceful you are, and the more curve balls you're able to handle."

To see if there was a correlation between climate and song, Botero searched sound archives around the world and embarked on a solo tour of the southern hemisphere to record bird songs in the wild. Armed with supersensitive recording equipment, Botero trekked his way through desert, jungle, scree, and scrub in search of mockingbirds in song. Botero's recordings — nearly 100 tracks from 29 mockingbird species — will enhance preexisting sound archives by filling in gaps for species for which high-quality recordings weren't previously available (our Northern Mockingbird is pictured with permission, copyright Sue deLearie Adair).



Back in the States, Botero used computer programs to convert each sound recording — a medley of whistles, warbles, trills, and twitters — into a sonogram, or sound graph. Like a musical score, the complex pattern of lines and streaks in a sonogram enables scientists to see and visually analyze sound.

Botero and colleagues then painstakingly analyzed each snippet of song and compared their patterns to a database of temperature and precipitation records. The researchers found that species subject to more variable and unpredictable climates had more elaborate song displays.

The connection between birdsong and climate is new and somewhat surprising, Botero explains. "We're connecting two dots that were far away before."

For Botero and his colleagues, the next step is to see whether this pattern holds true for other animals. By studying animal communication, Botero ultimately hopes to shed light on how language evolved in humans. "You can't help but wonder what is it about humans that made our vocal communication so incredibly complicated compared to other animals," Botero said.

"It has long been hypothesized that one reason why humans have such exaggerated displays – not just language, but music, art, and even math – is because females have selected for signals of intelligence," explains Botero.

"What we have now is a nice arena – outside of humans — where we can test these ideas and start understanding processes that are fundamentally important for our own species."

The team's findings were published in the July 14 issue of the journal *Current Biology* ([www.cell.com/current-biology](http://www.cell.com/current-biology)).

**NASSAU COUNTY IS SELLING PRESERVE LAND TO A DAY CAMP**

*Michael Sperling*

At its June meeting, SSAS's board voted to strongly oppose the sale of 3.86 acres of Roosevelt Preserve to the Coleman Country Day Camp. Unfortunately, on September 9, the Nassau County Legislature approved the sale, 11-8, in a nearly party-line vote where Denise Ford sided with the prevailing Democrats.

The sale is an "alienation of parkland" according to New York State law and therefore must be approved by two sessions of the NYS Legislature. We consider it to be a dangerous precedent and ask you to write to your local State Senator and Assembly member at their local offices (addresses are at [ssaudubon.org](http://ssaudubon.org)), urging them to reject this sale of public preserve land to a private company. Letters are best, but an e-mail or phone call is helpful too.



Roosevelt Preserve is located on the western side of the Meadowbrook State Parkway and consists of 73 acres that were acquired in 1981 as part of Nassau County's purchase of 1,750 acres that were formerly part of New York City's watershed. The preserve was designated in 1989 via an ordinance that identified the property as "having geological, ecological, and environmental significance," under the previous year's Land Preservation Law; this law's purpose is "to protect and preserve in perpetuity the natural, environmental, historical, and scenic resources of the County of Nassau."

Back in 1972, the County had issued a permit to Coleman Country Day Camp's predecessor, Camp Baumann, to use a portion of this acreage near Babylon Turnpike in Freeport for certain purposes; in 1984, Coleman was issued a similar permit. In 2005, the permit was revoked due to the construction of unauthorized structures and violations of the freshwater wetlands regulations of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC); this was later rectified under a consent order, with the annual permit fee greatly increased to \$52,500 and the existence of "temporary structures" approved by the DEC. As of last spring, the 3.86 acres being sold by the County to the adjacent camp included "four scenic bridges, an archery area, a corral for horseback riding, a sand court for playing horseshoes, a rope course, a wooden boat ramp and boats for canoeing, paddle boating, and fishing, a small storage shed for life preservers and paddles, a seasonal seating area for music, picnics, a 1,600-foot hiking trail for nature walks, a pony trail, nature kiosks, a seasonal cooking area, bird feeders to facilitate bird-watching, and other activities receiving written approval from the DEC Bureau of Habitat. Coleman Country Day Camp has agreed to maintain the property in its current natural state and to not disturb the natural environment except for the few temporary structures used in connection with the operation of the camp" (quoting from a

summary compiled by the Nassau County Department of Real Estate Planning & Development in support of the sale).

The sale includes a reverter clause so that property ownership would go back to Nassau County if the adjacent property is no longer a camp or if the DEC's consent order is violated. Prior to the Legislature's vote, the sale was approved by the County's Open Space and Advisory Committee, the County Planning Commission, and (in August) the Legislature's Finance and Rules Committees.

The property was appraised at \$550,000 and is being sold for \$650,000, of which \$317,500 goes to New York City under the terms of the 1981 sale. The County's Open Space Fund will receive 5% of the remaining \$332,500, with the rest going to the County's Building Consolidation Plan.

SSAS's board opposes the sale of any County preserve land to any buyers. We hope you agree and will let your elected officials know what you think about the Coleman Country Day Camp's acquisition of acreage whose regulations they have previously violated.

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**BIRD WALKS**  
Steve Schellenger

All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains. Any questions? Call Steve at 987-8103. Directions and summaries may be found at [ssaudubon.org](http://ssaudubon.org).

- Sep. 27\* Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Oct. 4 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Oct. 11 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Oct. 18 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Oct. 25 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Nov. 1 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

\*Note: The ongoing Streamflow Augmentation and Pond Restoration Project at Massapequa Preserve may result in a detour from our usual route along the paved path; if you arrive late, follow any detour signs to find us.

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RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

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**SSAS Mission Statement**—*The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.*

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OUR E-LIST [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas\\_list](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list)

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**South Shore Audubon Society**  
**P.O. Box 31**  
**Freeport, NY 11520-0031**

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**BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS**  
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*Option 1.* You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$15 payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** using the form below. Our address is P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.

*Option 2.* To join NAS and your all-volunteer local chapter, you can help SSAS survive NAS's major dues-share cutbacks by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get \$0 unless you join through us). Mail the form below and your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to SSAS at the address above. The special rate for the first year is \$20 per household; \$15 for students and seniors.

➔ **Renewing?** Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS (we now get \$0 for all NAS renewals).

**Donations to SSAS are always welcome!**



Yes, I'd like to join:  SSAS only  National Audubon too

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

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