

JOIN THE BIRDATHON!

Jim Remsen

This year SSAS will conduct its 23rd annual Birdathon! SSAS raises funds through the Birdathon by having members get cash pledges for each species of bird identified during a 24-hour period in May, when the spring migration is at its height and over 125 species may be identified by the two teams that visit about a half-dozen locations.

If you aren't going with a team, why not try your own Birdathon? Do a variation on the usual theme of seeing as many species as you can during the count period. Use your imagination. Limit yourself to your backyard, a favorite park or preserve, or even a "couch potato" Birdathon. (For this one, you count as many bird species as you can on television during the 24 hours!)

Mark the dates on your calendar if you haven't already — **Friday, May 7** from 5:00 P.M. until **Saturday, May 8** at 5:00 P.M. — and join one of our intrepid leaders (or go it alone, in which case you choose the turf). Birding expertise is not necessary and your teammates will be happy to point out the birds for you. Rain dates are one week later at the same time.

Please note: In the event of questionable weather, I will decide whether or not to cancel the Birdathon by 3 P.M. on Friday, May 7. If you have any uncertainty about whether it will be postponed, please call me at (631) 957-0949 or (631) 748-8942 by 3 o'clock.

We need Birdathon prizes! As we have done in the past, we will make everyone who brings in at least one pledge (sponsoring yourself counts) eligible for a prize drawing to be held at our annual dinner (attendance not required). If you would like to donate a prize, please contact me.

Our schedule of starting places and leaders is as follows:

Friday, May 7 at 5 P.M. Meet Paul Butkerei at Jones Beach's Coast Guard Station, or Joe Grupp, Jim Remsen, and Steve Schellenger at Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot).

Saturday, May 8. Meet Bill Hollweg (Paul's team) at Parking Field #3 of Hempstead Lake State Park at 6:30 A.M.; or Joe, Jim, and Steve at Mill Pond, Merrick Road, Wantagh at 5:45 A.M. Other meeting places on Saturday for the latter team will be Muttontown Preserve (most likely the gate on Route 106) at 8 A.M., Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area at 11 A.M., and Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge at 1:15 P.M. Please try to notify me if you plan to go with one of these teams so they will know who to expect. Meeting times at Oceanside and Jamaica Bay for my team are estimates; we can be as much as 15 minutes earlier or 30 minutes later, depending on traffic.

Sponsors are the heart of the Birdathon. These are people who agree to give you 25¢, \$1, or any amount for each species you see (they may also give you a flat pledge not based on number of species). Ask anyone you know, and don't forget yourself!

Note on Submitting Pledges: Pledges submitted to me must be received by June 7 to be eligible for prizes. Pledge forms, if you want them, are available at SSAS events. Let's make our 2010 Birdathon special by raising more funds than ever! Good luck!

Birdathon Chairperson: James Remsen, Jr., 8 Venetian Blvd., Lindenhurst, NY 11757.

WALK IN THE WOODS ON JUNE 27

Marilyn Hametz

Brookside Preserve, a Nassau County preserve managed by South Shore Audubon Society, is a hidden gem of nature that can be a lovely peaceful place to walk or relax. Members of the local community and South Shore Audubon devote time and effort to try to maintain and improve this small remnant of natural Long Island. Walk in the Woods is an opportunity for the community to better understand the potential of Brookside Preserve and the environment.

We hope you will join us on **Sunday, June 27** from 1–3 P.M. for our second annual Walk in the Woods, which will include guided walks and children's activities. The entrance is on Brookside Avenue in Freeport, 1/2 block north of Sunrise Highway and the Long Island Rail Road trestle. If you would like to help with the event, please contact me at 799-7189 or marilynexpl@yahoo.com.



Explore the coast
with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

JAMAICA BAY ECOLOGY CRUISE (Sat., May 29, 2 P.M.)

Take a 3-hour narrated cruise around the bay and backwater marshes on a 100-ft boat, the "Golden Sunshine," from Pier 2 in Sheepshead Bay. See nesting herons, oystercatchers, ospreys, and peregrine falcon. Cost: \$45 incl. wine & cheese, fruit, drinks, snacks. Leaders: Mickey Cohen & Don Riepe.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 11–13). Spend a great weekend of natural history programs at the luxurious Manor House. Cost: \$345/person incl. 2 nights, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, star watch, and free LIRR pickup.

FIFTH ANNUAL SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL (Aug. 14 & 15). At Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Learn about the behavior, biology, and how to identify shorebirds in the field during peak shorebird migration. Slide presentations by Kevin Karlson, Don Riepe, and Lloyd Spitalnik. Call or e-mail Don to reserve; donation requested.

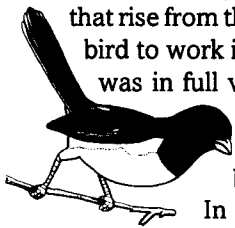
CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH (Aug. 19–22). Spend 3 nights at Captain's Lodge in Gloucester, MA. Cost: \$385 includes lodging, 1/2 day whale boat trip, evening river cruise, canoeing on quiet Ispwich River, lobster/seafood dinner, and guided hikes along the coast. Leaders: Mickey Cohen & Don.

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

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER Observing My Feeder Birds

Joe Grupp

Fairly early one April morning I heard my wife call, "Look out the back window." Under a shrub with long weeping branches not far from our feeder was a male Eastern Towhee. The bush is a favorite of many of the birds that come to our feeder. They feed at the feeder, then head to the shrub to perch before returning to the feeder to feed again, or they flock to it when they seem threatened and then perch well into the center of the shrub for protection. In doing so, they drop some of the seeds they were carrying and the seeds fall under the shrub. Frequently birds forage on the ground under the shrub, taking advantage of the dropped seeds as the Towhee was doing. At first all I could make out was something black that was probably a bird foraging behind the shrub's many branches



that rise from the ground. It did not take long for the bird to work its way around the shrub to where it was in full view. The light on it was just about perfect and the deep dull black of the bird, its rusty sides, and white belly made for an easy identification. In the fall and spring of the year we frequently get a Towhee or two in the yard. Sometimes they stay a few days and at other times they leave rather quickly. This one did not hang around long. After foraging for five minutes or so after we first spotted it, it hopped to a low branch in the shrub, then a higher one, then it flew well up into a tall maple where it perched for a very short time and then flew off to who knows where.

As I left the window, I began to reflect on my observations of this past feeding season. I then realized that each species left an impression on my mind. The birds coming to my feeder were the regulars, the ones that might be expected, the more common birds of the season. For some of the species, the impression was of an observation that lasted a very short period of time; for others it was for a few days; others even longer.

In the beginning of April, two or three Common Grackles were daily visitors at the feeder. I didn't give them much thought. I was even grateful that there were not even more of them. Then one day the sun hit them at just the right angle and the iridescence seen on their dark feathers was as glorious as it gets. As they turned ever so slightly, the iridescence on their heads changed back and forth from brilliant purple to a more subtle green, and the iridescence of their bodies changed back and forth from purple to a yellow brown. All the while, the small yellow eye with the dark pupil stood out like a beacon. I observed Common Grackles before and after that time and even recorded them for the SSAS Backyard Survey, but except for that one time they were "just Grackles."

Then there was the one day that a Northern Cardinal left a lasting impression. Everyone knows that the red

Northern Cardinal male is a thing of beauty regardless of the setting. At least a pair of Cardinals visits our feeder daily and sometimes there are many more. Most of the time I will simply note that they are there or if the scene is a bit dramatic point it out and/or spend a few moments observing it, but usually I do not remember it for long. The observation that left a lasting impression was on a snowy day, with the snow building up on each of the branches of the shrub mentioned before. In the midst of those branches, the bright red bird perched, surrounded by the pure white snow. It was a speck of brilliant red among the white. It was the scene that might be found on a holiday card or photograph, etc.

Not all my lasting impressions are of a single observation, however. For the month of December well into January, we were not getting any Black-capped Chickadees at our feeder. That really bothered us, especially as for the past few years not only were they pretty regular but in the summer they nested in a birdhouse that hangs in a nearby tree. Finally, around the middle of January they once again appeared and from that time on they appeared almost daily. When we spotted the first one it "made our day." We were pretty excited on the day of their return and found ourselves just as excited each day that we observed them after that, in spite of the fact that they were an almost daily observation. It was so intense that each time I saw one I would exclaim, "Chickadee! Made my day!" The day I wrote this article they "really made our day" because we observed them not only feeding at the feeder, but also entering and leaving the birdhouse. Maybe Chickadees will be fledged from that birdhouse again this year.

Other species made memorable impressions on me this feeding season. There are just too many of them to include in this article. I watch my feeder birds to identify what is there, to observe their beauty, to list them as part of the SSAS Backyard Survey. My lasting impressions come from the many observations of my feeder birds.

PLOVER VOLUNTEERS WANTED

John Zarudsky

The Town of Hempstead's Department of Conservation and Waterways needs your help in ensuring the protection and survival of Piping Plovers, Least and Common Terns, and Black Skimmers that nest between Point Lookout and Atlantic Beach.

Audubon volunteers will help prevent disturbances to nesting areas, will record the presence of plover chicks and any incidents of predation, and can give beachgoers educational literature pertaining to Piping Plovers and terns. Help is particularly needed on evenings, weekends, and holidays from May through August. If you're interested and are able to volunteer regularly, please contact SSAS member John Zarudsky, Conservation Biologist, at 897-4126 (work) or 486-5272.

NESTWATCH AND NESTCAMS

The following is from a March 22 press release:

Collecting information about nesting birds in North America is what the NestWatch project at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is all about and the new season is just getting underway. Participants submit data about which kinds of birds are nesting, the number of eggs laid, dates eggs were laid, and the numbers of chicks hatched and fledged.

“Collecting this information across the continent over long periods of time is one of the best ways we have to detect widespread changes in bird breeding biology” says Laura Burkholder, the project leader for NestWatch. “Gathering this information takes on new urgency in light of the State of the Birds 2010 Climate Change Report just released by the Department of the Interior earlier this month.”



Nesting birds are vulnerable to climate change. Data show some species, like the Tree Swallow, are laying their eggs more than a week earlier than they did just a few decades ago,” says Burkholder. “That could spell big trouble if hatch dates get out of sync with the availability of food.”

In addition to its scientific value, NestWatch is fun, free, and open to all. Participation is a great way to connect with nature.

The always-popular NestCams are also back in action. Anyone can get a live peek into nests and nest boxes across the country at www.nestcams.org.

All NestWatch materials and instructions are available online at www.nestwatch.org, including directions on how to find nests, how to build and put up nest boxes, and how to monitor nests without disturbing the birds.

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 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.

WHAT TO DO WITH DISPLACED YOUNG WILDLIFE

Most young wildlife that you come across are not orphaned. The parents are temporarily away finding food or are staying away to avoid attracting predators and will later return. If you are concerned that a bird or animal may be orphaned, watch from a distance for a while to see if the parents return. If you have to chase it, it doesn’t need your help!

A nestling songbird is only partially feathered and cannot yet run, hop, or move about easily. It should be returned to the nest. If you can’t find or reach the nest, make one from a berry box or strainer (something with drainage), line it with grasses, and secure it up in a tree close to where you found the bird. The parents will continue to feed it.



If you are certain a young songbird is orphaned, leave a message for Volunteers for Wildlife at 631-423-0982 for assistance and follow the emergency instructions at www.volunteersforwildlife.org.

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THE STATE OF THE BIRDS: 2010 REPORT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Last year’s unprecedented State of the Birds report has been supplemented to include the impact that climate change is expected to have on each species’ survival. The 2010 report was prepared by 13 organizations and government agencies, including National Audubon Society, and is posted at www.stateofthebirds.org. The following species seen on SSAS’s bird walks are considered to be highly vulnerable to global warming and were also listed in 2009 as species of conservation concern: Hudsonian Godwit, Red Knot, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, American Oystercatcher, Razorbill, and Saltmarsh Sparrow. The Northern Gannet (pictured), also seen on our walks, is considered to be highly vulnerable.



BLACK SKIMMER RECOVERY PLAN

Our March issue included a last-minute announcement about the stakeholder meeting organized by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)



regarding the Black Skimmer, which in addition to appearing on SSAS's patch, window sticker, letterhead, newsletter, etc., is designated by the DEC as a species of special concern. Wendy Murbach represented us at that February 24 meeting and provided the handout that is the source of the information below:

The following is a list of the major issues needing resolution during the formulation of the Black Skimmer recovery plan. Preliminary discussions on these topics will begin during the stakeholder meeting and participants are encouraged to offer their experience and expertise on these issues.

Developing Recovery Goals

- ❁ How many breeding pairs of Black Skimmer, distributed in how many large and small colonies, are necessary for a sustainable population within New York State?
- ❁ How will the recovery of Black Skimmer in New York affect other species that share or compete for similar habitat, especially other shorebirds?

Threats to the Species

- ❁ Competition and/or predation by small mammals and other nesting shorebirds can lead to the abandonment of nesting areas by Black Skimmer. Specific locations being directly impacted by these interspecies interactions need to be identified.
- ❁ Human activities such as recreation, development, or land use can create disturbance or promote competition or predation from other species. Specific locations that are being directly impacted by human activity need to be identified.
- ❁ The resiliency of Black Skimmer habitat in regards to surrounding land use, habitat quality, and rising sea level need to be determined. Methods for qualifying habitat based on susceptibility and adaptability to impacts need to be identified.

Recovery Strategies

- ❁ Management strategies that can mitigate, reduce, or remove interspecies pressures will be examined in the context of local site conditions.
- ❁ Management strategies that can mitigate, reduce, or remove disturbance potential will be examined in the context of local land use.
- ❁ Management strategies that can restore, enhance, create, or improve the adaptability or quality of nesting or forage areas will be examined in the context of local site conditions, regulatory requirements, and ecosystem impacts of habitat manipulation.

AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201

REMINDER: ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On **Saturday, May 1**, SSAS is planning to be in Central Park for our tenth annual (weather permitting) early May morning bird walk. Once again, Manhattan resident Chris Cooper, who birded with SSAS in his formative years, has agreed to lead us through the twisting maze of the Ramble and adjoining areas of the park. In previous years, we've recorded 45 to 70-plus species in under three hours (47 last year, including 15 warblers). Join us!

The cost of the walk is \$5, which is a tax-deductible donation to SSAS (refundable if we rain out or you cancel in advance). Please send your check payable to South Shore Audubon Society, along with your phone number and e-mail address, to Joanne Del Prete, 20 Ceil Pl., Bethpage, NY 11714-4503 (phone 433-0739, jdelprete47@optonline.net) by April 26.

As usual, a group of us will be aboard the local Babylon train that is due in Penn Station at 8:12; you can look for Joanne toward the west end of the platform in Massapequa, boarding at 7:14. We plan to depart from Penn's LIRR waiting room at 8:30 to meet Chris at Belvedere Castle at around 9:15. Please buy a MetroCard for the subway. The walk usually ends around noon. You can bring lunch or buy it in the park, or head back home after the walk if you prefer. Joanne's cell (476-3761) will be on that day only.

NOMINATIONS FOR 2010-2011 SSAS BOARD

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting on May 11, officers and directors 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 (chaired by Marilyn Hametz, and including Gail Brown and Mary Jane Russell) has recruited the following candidates: President, Wendy Murbach; Vice President, Steve Schellenger; Treasurer, Joe Landesberg; Recording Secretary, Don Temple; Corresponding Secretary, Kerry Da Silva; Directors (through June 2013), Jim Brown and John Gaglione.

JAMAICA BAY BIOBLITZ IN JUNE

Rebecca Boger and John Marra of Brooklyn College, City University of New York, along with the National Park Service and Jamaica Bay Institute, are organizing a BioBlitz of Jamaica Bay from 3 P.M. **Friday, June 11** through 3 P.M. **Saturday, June 12**. A BioBlitz is a 24-hour event aimed at cataloging the diversity of organisms in a particular area. A group of experts in their fields will lead taxon groups, but amateur naturalists and volunteers are needed to help with surveys and registration. More information, including data from the 2007 BioBlitz and registration forms, is at <http://jamaicabay.ciesin.columbia.edu/bioblitz>.

NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

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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**2009-2010 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND
 COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS**

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Steven Schellenger, Vice Pres. & Field Trips	987-8103
Laurie Luxner Raisher, Treasurer	378-4025
Don Temple, Recording Secretary	420-1244
Kerry Da Silva, Corresponding Secretary	432-1727
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Barbara Levine, Director (6/11)	741-3386
Therese Lucas, Dir. (6/11) & Greening of L.I.	221-3921
John Gaglione, Director (6/10)	731-5012
Joe Landesberg, Dir. (6/10) & H.S. Scholshps.	536-4808
Betty Borowsky, Education	764-3596
Jim Brown, Conservation	432-8156
Anne-Marie Conn, Electronic Communications ...	671-7685
Joseph Grupp, Research	481-4208
Betsy Gulotta, Brookside Preserve Co-Chair & College Scholarships	546-8841
Marilyn Hametz, Publicity	799-7189
Enid Klein, Programs	561-0004
Elliott Kutner, Birding Consultant	486-7667
George Peters, Brookside Preserve Co-Chair	868-5480
James Remsen, Jr., Birdathon	631-957-0949
Dolores Rogers, Welcoming	599-1224
Mary Jane Russell, Hospitality	766-7397
Michael Sperling, <i>Skimmer</i> Editor	221-3921

BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS
Think Globally, but Join Locally!

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.



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: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO.: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Chapter Code C0ZR150Z (South Shore Audubon Society)

