

another reason that birds gather at feeders. When a snag is cut down, the supply of bugs overwintering in the dead wood, a prime food source for birds, has disappeared. When a meadow is mowed and lawn grass is substituted, seed from the wildflowers and weeds disappears. When an invasive plant crowds out a native plant, the food value of the native plant is gone for the birds that utilized that source. Long Island is covered with invasive plant species, hardly any of which have nutritional value for the birds that live here. Extreme weather conditions make feeders attractive to birds. Ground-feeding birds have a hard time finding food when the snowfall gets heavy and covers the ground deeply. A wet snow will cover the bushes and branches that may hold the food for the bird that eats berries and nuts. All birds have a hard time when the snow is glazed with ice.

Is this a strong enough argument to make for feeding birds in your backyard? I hope so. If you do, you will get the very valuable bonus of being able to watch the feeding antics of "your birds" outside "your home". It is a lovely sight to see red Northern Cardinals on a snow-covered backyard feeder, or adorable Tufted Titmice and Black-capped Chickadees flying in, grabbing a seed, and retreating to a branch to bang it open and eat the vegetable protein inside. Often there are feeder squabbles as pecking order is enforced and established. The show is always entertaining.



If you start feeding now, you will be positioned well to participate in the 14th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count, February 18th through 21st. Go to www.birdcount.org to find out about it, to participate, to see the results online, and to enter the photo contest. Please send a copy of the birds that you find to Joe Grupp (see p. 7) so that we can continue South Shore Audubon's own bird database.



COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS WANTED

Thanks to the continued and much-appreciated support of longtime member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is again offering two \$750 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarships this spring to college juniors, seniors, or graduate students who are continuing their studies toward a degree in an area of biological or environmental science, such as wildlife management, forestry, animal behavior, ecology, marine biology, oceanography, mammalogy, or ornithology. Our annual college scholarship program began in 1994 and was named in memory of Jerry two years later. For information, call Betsy Gulotta at 546-8841 or send e-mail to gulotte@ncc.edu. Applications are due by April 30 and we typically receive just a few, so apply if you're eligible or please help us spread the word!



NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

One of the wonderful perks that you get from an Audubon membership is the chance to be a part of your local Audubon chapter, South Shore Audubon Society.

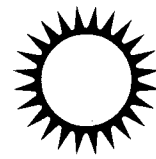
You are automatically a valued member of this active and friendly chapter, so please come out to the next meeting at the Freeport Library from 7:30-9:30 P.M. on the second Tuesday of the month to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment's health and viability, to hear about local issues that you can help to solve, and to see an interesting program.

Whether you are a beginning birder or someone with a large life list, you will enjoy our weekly Sunday bird walks. Check out the special events that are mentioned in this *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this 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:

- Baldwin Cecilia Gutierrez
- Bellmore Edgar Hausman, Sandra Wechsler
- Cedarhurst Scott Dere
- East Meadow Deirdre Benoit, Rochelle Sklaw
- East Rockaway Paula Lariosa
- Elmont Bob Menak
- Farmingdale Edward Kmioitek
- Floral Park Patricia A. Hildebrandt
- Freeport Joseph Cotroneo
- Island Park Ethel Kampf
- Long Beach Robert Devinney
- Lynbrook Diane C. Webster
- Malverne Stephen Gagliano
- Massapequa Kathleen Dorso, Connie Fisher,
Suzanne Getz, Susan Maguire
- Massapequa Park Ellen Mazza
- Merrick Patricia L. Kepic, Janis & Ave
Kleman
- Plainview Barry Goldstein
- Point Lookout Charles A. Albanese
- Rockville Centre Eleanore Graepel, Debra Oxberry,
Suzan Pegler
- Seaford Melissa Grof, Carol Keen, Philip &
Susan Nicola
- Stewart Manor Marianne McCarthy, M. Sawka
- Valley Stream Joan Gonnely, Doris Graham,
Jonathan Lehrer, Irene Waxman
- Wantagh Carmella Monteforte, Barbara
Segal
- Woodmere Jonathan Wolf



AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201



NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER
On A Cold Day, A Northern Flicker
Joe Grupp

On one of the coldest days in this year's snowy, cold, freezing rain, real winter month of January, I went birding on the Greenbelt Trail from Old Bethpage Rd. to the LIE. I did so for two reasons. One was curiosity, as I wondered how many and what species might be using the habitat that was deeply covered with snow and ice. The second was to record the species that were present and their numbers for inclusion in SSAS's database for the area. Being a "weather junkie," I enjoy being out in severe weather if I am dressed properly and it is relatively safe to do so. That day I was dressed for the weather.

A light covering of fairly new snow covered a fair amount of old snow on the trail, and my steps would leave the first tracks in the new snow. Walking was relatively easy, as my foot would not sink very far before hitting a solid base made by the footsteps of others who walked there prior to the most recent snowfall. I crunched snow as I walked and at one point the lack of birds found me mentally focused on the rhythm of that sound until my eye caught the movement of a bird landing in a tree. A tangle of hanging vines kept the bird partially hidden from view.



Using binoculars, the bird's tail with its feathers slightly spread was the most obvious feature seen through the vines. The feathers were long, narrow, and came to a point, and some showed a faint yellow line down their center. The longest central feathers curved gracefully where they were pressed against the trunk of the tree, helping to support a Northern Flicker there. Gradually, seeing more of the bird, including the red crescent on the nape (back of the neck), a black patch across its chest, and black spots on its breast, confirmed what I already knew.

Crunching on through the snow when the bird left, my thoughts turned to one of the functions of bird's feathers — thermoregulation (control of body temperature). The feathers on a bird's body trap air between the feather and the body itself. Air, when it is not moving, is an excellent insulator and by regulating the amount of air trapped, the bird can warm or cool itself. On that cold day, the bird and I had something in common. I was dressed in layers that trapped air between them, as did the material each layer was made of. The bird trapped air by regulating the position of its feathers. As cold as the day was, the trapped air prevented our body heat from escaping too quickly, keeping us both warm.

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BIRD WALKS
Steve Schellenger

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

- Feb. 20 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Feb. 27 Pelham Bay Park*
- Mar. 6 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 13 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Mar. 20 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Mar. 27 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Apr. 3 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)

*For Pelham Bay Park (where we expect to see owls): Wear hiking shoes — it's a hilly forest walk to the bay. Take Throgs Neck Bridge to I-695 north to I-95 north. Take I-95 to exit #9, Hutchinson River Parkway north. Take first exit #5, Orchard Beach Rd., go past traffic circle, and continue on Orchard Beach Rd. to end. Turn left on Park Dr. to enter park. Go past another traffic circle and enter parking lot thru toll gates (free); meet at far left corner of parking lot (southeast corner). See <http://mappery.com/map-of/Pelham-Bay-Park-NYC-Map> for reference.



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

NYC AUDUBON EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS (Sat., March 26). Meet 10 A.M. at the Jamaica Bay Refuge for 3-hour hike around the ponds and gardens to look for the first returning birds of spring. We should see egrets, oystercatchers, ibis, phoebes, osprey, and many other species. Call Refuge to reserve, (718) 318-4340; e-mail donriep@gmail.com.

EARTH DAY RESTORATION CLEANUP (Sat., April 23). Help restore Jamaica Bay. Meet at Refuge visitor center at 9 A.M. and we'll direct you to site in Breezy Point. Bring boots, gloves. Call or e-mail Don.

CHINCOTEAGUE REFUGE / ASSATEAGUE NATIONAL SEASHORE (May 12–15). Great spring birding and wildlife viewing. See eagles, falcons, shorebirds, warblers, plus endangered fox squirrel, red fox, Sika deer, river otter, and more. Cost: \$375 includes 3 nights lodging, safari bus tour, guided hikes, 2 evening programs, plus an "All-you-can-eat" seafood buffet dinner. Car pooling available.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 3–5). Call/e-mail Don for itinerary & more info.

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.

JOIN AUDUBON'S ACTION NETWORK!

Laura McCarthy

Audubon Action Alerts are a quick, easy way to get access to your lawmakers, local media, and inside information on issues impacting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. If you aren't already a part of our online action network, sign up today at www.audubonaction.org/newyork.

We know that lawmakers care about your views and opinions. As a constituent, you have a unique ability to convey your concerns to them. Helping is easy, won't take much time, and most importantly, will go a very long way in protecting our wildlife!

MOURNING DOVE

Julle Zickefoose

Editor's note: This article is reprinted from the January/February 2003 issue of *Bird Watcher's Digest*.

They're more a herd than a flock, these 19 Mourning Doves that work my feeders. Every time I open the front door, I'm startled by a great winnowing roar of wings as they explode from the ground like a case of bottle rockets. Nineteen buffalo could make a quieter exit.

Depending on how you look at them, Mourning Doves are elegant, subtly colored, graceful beings; common backyard birds; walking birdseed vacuums; tempting targets. They have their detractors, their passionate defenders, and even a place on some dinner tables. Some of us feed them; some of us feed on them. No wonder they seem a little paranoid, a wee bit too quick to flee. "You're not just being paranoid," I tell them. "We really are out to get you!"

Though they'd doubtless take issue if they could with their status as a game bird in most states, the way we've changed the natural landscape apparently suits Mourning Doves well. They avoid heavily forested areas, preferring a patchwork of suburban and agricultural areas for feeding and nesting. Mourning Dove range expanded considerably north during the second half of the 20th century, almost certainly in response to changing agricultural practices and the wide availability of seed feeders.

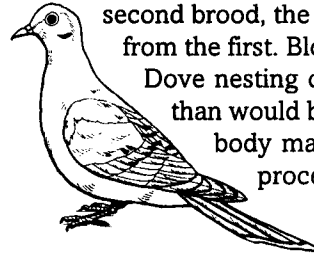
Many observers are touched by the apparent devotion of the male Mourning Dove to his mate. Watch a pair for a while in April, and see if, from a human viewpoint, you don't find that devotion seeming to border on obsession. The male dove guards his mate jealously, always a half-step behind her as she forages. He inflates his crop with air, flashing an evanescent rose-pink and bottle-green iridescence along the sides of his neck. He sometimes resorts to a comical, crabbed hop as he strives to keep up with her. He'll stop, lean forward, inflate his crop even fuller, and voice the sad *coo* that gives this bird its name: *oooh, ooh, ooh, ooh*. It's odd that no one in the old ornithological literature seems to have put words to it; the song begs for a lyric. To me it is a song of the South, of tall pines, dirt roads, and long evenings heavy with honeysuckle. To

human ears it speaks of longing and loss. To the doves, it's probably more a hopeful come-on.

Sex is never far from a Mourning Dove's mind, which is not surprising for a species that's been recorded nesting successfully in every month of the year. In the southern part of their range, they have been recorded nesting as many as six times in one year. I remember trying to focus my binoculars on a female gathering nesting material in a blowing snowstorm. It was late January in Connecticut. I've picked up freshly pipped eggshells in April and September. Mourning Doves nest so frequently because nest failures are fairly common and mortality of young is high.

There's a slapdash quality to their whole reproductive scheme that might seem maladaptive. Burgeoning dove populations indicate otherwise. Researcher David Blockstein outlined a suite of adaptations for high reproductive output in Mourning Doves in his doctoral thesis dissertation at the University of Minnesota in 1986. Small, flimsy, quickly built nests that are often reused house two small eggs per clutch. Males produce greater quantities of crop milk, a nutritious secretion of the crop lining that nourishes the young, than do their mates. Females put their energy into the next clutch. Nestlings grow phenomenally quickly; they're feathered and flying at 15 days. By the time the two young fledge, the female may well be incubating a second brood. While she's incubating the

second brood, the male is feeding the fledglings from the first. Blockstein found that Mourning Dove nesting cycles are 22 percent shorter than would be predicted for a bird of their body mass. The speed of the nesting process and the fact that the male takes over the care of the young make it possible for



Mourning Doves to nest frequently. The result is that they are one of the most abundant birds in North America. According to the 1989 North American Breeding Bird Survey, the species ranked second only to the Red-winged Blackbird in the number of survey routes in which it was encountered.

In conversations about Mourning Doves, at least in my family, the subject of their IQs often comes up. I heard my own mother recently referring to doves as "notoriously dumb," and my eldest sister, an avid bird feeder, refers to them as "dippies," a nickname applied when she'd find them milling about in her plexi-topped windowsill feeder, bumping their heads on the clear ceiling as they strove to find their way back out. I think, though, that this reputation arises in part from the Mourning Dove's escape strategy; crouch until the last second; then, with a rush and rattle of wings, scare the heck out of your pursuer. This is a highly effective strategy when used on fur-bearing predators, but it does seem a bit outdated when used in defense against speeding automobiles.

I feel especially qualified as an ombudsman for Mourning Doves, because I've raised and released two orphans.

The first came to me as a naked nestling, barely the size of a 50-cent piece, when I was 18. My father, who had raised a few pigeons as a boy, helped me concoct a slurry of half-and-half, hard-boiled egg yolk, ground oatmeal, and ground sunflower hearts, which I administered through a bulb syringe. It worked fabulously. The nestling slept on a curtain rod or, more typically, on my chest under my chin, grew and flew, made the *Sunday Times-Dispatch's* front page, and even came back to visit on July 4, two weeks after I'd last seen it fly off. It was a bird-teenager bonding experience to remember.

The latest one blew from her nest three years ago in a sudden May squall, and I watched her wandering sulkily around the patio for a day, pecking about but finding no food, until she lay down, too weak to rise. I sighed, picked her up, let my then-three-year-old daughter name her (Cookie), and fed her a commercial parrot rearing formula through a syringe until she was ready to pick up millet and chick scratch.

Released, she became a delightful addition to our sanctuary. She spent much of the day sheltering in a roofed wooden bird feeder we put out for her, pecking savagely at any other Mourning Dove that dared to intrude in her retreat. With each day, she flew higher, faster, and harder, trying her newfound freedom and her strong young wings, but she sat still for my daughter's friendly approach, preening companionably as they sat together on the deck.

This behavior is not related to what we might consider intelligence: It is evidence of the Mourning Doves' capacity to adapt themselves to the presence of humans, which has allowed them to expand and thrive. However, because Mourning Doves are game birds in most states, the fact that the birds have not "learned" to be afraid of humans surely makes them more vulnerable to hunters.

Although I had my pick of birds to paint for the cover of this magazine, birds that are more colorful or impressive, I am drawn to Mourning Doves. I've watched them grow up in my hands, and I've exulted when they have left me to whistle through the air with their own kind. Drawing them from life, choosing which of their resting poses to paint, was pure pleasure.

Yes, Mourning Doves are common, even abundant, but part of my coming of age as a bird watcher and a painter is learning to settle down and appreciate what is wonderful in the familiar. Doves have a dancer's poise and unconscious grace. Their soft colors and rounded contours make them beautiful from any angle. More than that, they've taken this altered landscape and made it their own. They accept our handouts of grain and seed even as they dodge sudden blasts of birdshot in once-quiet fields. This uncomfortable dichotomy in humanity's relationship with Mourning Doves doubtless bothers me more than it does them. They fill their bellies where they can, make more Mourning Doves when they can, and leave it to us to decide whether we'll take aim or let them be.

Enid R. Klein
 Attorney and Counselor-at-Law
 132 ALBERMARLE AVE.
 Valley Stream, NY 11580

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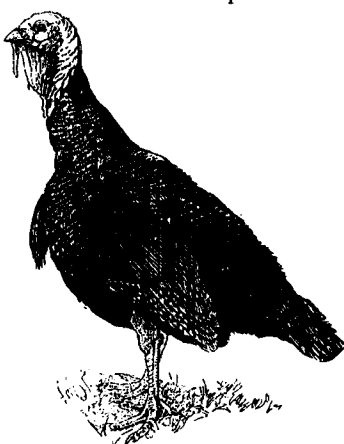
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BIRD REBUSES

This and a variety of other bird-related puzzles, including word searches, can be found in *The Puzzle Aerie* at www.wasatchaudubon.org. Wasatch Audubon Society is based in Ogden, Utah.

The constructions below are all North American bird names in the form of rebuses and riddles. To give you the idea, UKYTER stands for Wild Turkey (the letters of TURKEY arranged wildly). Various methods of concealment are used in the puzzles. Answers are on p. 6.

1. GRACKLEBOAT
2. NNUGTIB
3. IDLEBL GREBE
4. HAWKRED
5. CHOUSE FH
6. SOLITAIRETOWNS
7. GRAY RIDG
8. SAVNAC
9. RUDDY ENOTS
10. W R L R
11. BIS
12. GRAS
13. AMERICAN R
14. LTTRTAE
15. SCSCSCSCSCSCSCSCSCSC WARBLER
16. CHESTS P U RNUT
17. HUMMING B I R D
18. DO-Q RE-U MI-A FA-I SOL-L
19. LRE WOODPECKER
20. KCALB GULL



ANSWERS

- 1. GRACKLEBOAT = Boat-tailed Grackle
- 2. NNUGTIB = Varied Bunting
- 3. IDLEBL GREBE = Pied-billed Grebe
- 4. HAWKRED = Red-tailed Hawk
- 5. CHOUSE FH = House Finch ("HOUSE F" in "CH")
- 6. SOLITAIRETOWNS = Townsend's Solitaire
- 7. GRAY RIDG = Gray Partridge
- 8. SAVNAC = Canvasback
- 9. RUDDY ENOTS = Ruddy Turnstone
- 10. W R L R = Black-and-white Warbler
- 11. BIS = White-faced Ibis
- 12. GRAS = Grassquit
- 13. AMERICAN R = American Redstart
- 14. LTRTAE = Wandering Tattler
- 15. SCSCSCSCSCSCSCSCSCSCSCSCSC SCWARBLER = Tennessee (10 "SC") Warbler
- 16. CHESTS P U RNUT = Chestnut-sided Longspur
- 17. HUMMING B I R D = Broad-tailed Hummingbird
- 18. DO-Q RE-U MI-A FA-I SOL-L = Scaled Quail
- 19. LRE WOODPECKER = Ladder-backed ("L," add "ER"-backed) Woodpecker
- 20. KCALBGULL = Greater Black-backed Gull

THE FUTURE OF BAY PARK

Jim Brown

Editor's note: In January, the following letter was sent by SSAS to County Executive Ed Mangano, with copies to Parks Commissioner Carnell T. Foskey and our County Legislators. Despite the refusal of the County's Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee to endorse the licensing of Bay Park's facilities to Molloy College (the committee requested additional information but did not receive it), the Nassau County Planning Commission approved the license and forwarded it to the County Legislature. According to the County's website: "Bordered by the East Rockaway Channel on the east and Hewlett Bay on the south and west, Bay Park offers 96 scenic acres dedicated to a range of athletic and family activities."

Dear Mr. Mangano:

The board of the South Shore Audubon Society wishes to make known its opposition to an announced plan to lease Bay Park athletic fields to Molloy College for a period up to thirty years. The South Shore Audubon Society is a chapter of the National Audubon Society representing approximately 1500 families in Nassau County. We are an environmental organization fervently committed to preserving nature and wildlife on Long Island. We have also worked for many years to protect responsible and reasonable public access to County land, both preserves and parks.

The deal currently discussed for the County's Bay Park would essentially turn over the park to Molloy College for the foreseeable future, in exchange for \$3 million and a few more tennis courts. The college, according to the agreement, would be able to practice on these fields at no cost and play their NCAA games at the park for half-price fees. Current teams using the park would be forced out. The announced schedules in the proposed 20-year contract essentially exclude the taxpaying public from using the playing fields. This ill-conceived plan for Bay Park amounts to privatization of a valuable and irreplaceable public resource.



In the spirit of the County's avowed goal to "take back our parks," the South Shore Audubon Society urges you to halt this proposed deal with Molloy College. Our county parks belong to all the people of Nassau County, and these important recreational assets should not be lost to private interests for purposes of shortsighted economic expediency. Nassau residents need and deserve the enjoyment of our parks, our valuable open space. This proposed deal for Bay Park, if allowed to go through, would set an extremely negative precedent vis-à-vis the public's right to access and use our parks. Bay Park should be kept for the public, not given away.

Sincerely,
 Jim Brown
 Conservation Chair
 South Shore Audubon Society

23RD ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The last of the five dates for our 2010-2011 Waterfowl Survey are **Saturdays, February 26** and **March 26**. Volunteers are welcome to participate. If you are interested in spending a full or half day visiting up to 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park, call Joe Grupp, SSAS's Research Chairperson, at 481-4208.

***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.*

RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

OUR E-LIST http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list

OUR WEB SITE (incl. online store) www.ssaudubon.org

SSAS BACKYARD BIRD SURVEY

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.

To participate, simply record the birds that you see in your yard, neighborhood, or at your feeder; the date, time, and the number or approximate number of each species; and fill in the table provided below. If you have more recordings than lines in the table, please attach an additional piece of paper to the table and submit the additional recordings in the same manner. 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. Additional survey sheets are available at SSAS events.

Please do not hesitate to submit your observations, even if you have been able to make only very few. **WE NEED YOUR INPUT!**

Dates: From _____ to _____							
Date	Time	Species	No.				
				Submitted by: _____			
				Address: _____			
				Phone number: _____			
				Please send to: Mr. J. Grupp, Research Chairperson			
				660 Edgemere Ave., Uniondale NY 11553			
				or			
				E-mail: Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com			

