

JOIN THE BIRDATHON!

Jim Remsen

This year SSAS will conduct its 25th 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 up to 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 11** from 5:00 P.M. until **Saturday, May 12** 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 11. 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 11 at 5 P.M. Meet Bill Hollweg at Jones Beach's Coast Guard Station, or Joe Grupp and Jim Remsen at Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot).

Saturday, May 12. Meet Bill at Parking Field #3 of Hempstead Lake State Park at 6:00 A.M.; or Joe and Jim at Mill Pond, Merrick Road, Wantagh at 5:45 A.M. Bill's team will also visit Alley Pond Park (at 7 A.M.), Forest Park, and Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Other meeting places on Saturday for Joe & Jim's team will be Muttontown Preserve (normally 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 us if you plan to go with one of these teams so they will know who to expect; Bill can be reached at (631) 226-2519 (home) or (631) 278-8914 (cell). 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 11 to be eligible for prizes. Pledge forms, if you want them, are available at SSAS events. Let's make our 2012 Birdathon special by raising more funds than ever! Good luck!

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

SSAS'S 41ST ANNUAL DINNER

Therese Lucas

Join us for an evening of celebrations! Celebrations of good food, good company, tales of birding adventures, and honoring some of those who help and study nature and the environment. Our gathering will be at Pompei Restaurant in West Hempstead on **Tuesday, June 12**. The cocktail hour will begin at 6 P.M., followed by dinner at 7 P.M. Awards will be presented during dinner. Raffle drawings will also be held.

Your dinner form is the insert contained in this newsletter. We're looking forward to celebrating with you!

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NYS BUDGET MAINTAINS EPF FUNDING

Editor's note: The following was a March 27 press release from the Friends of New York's Environment (<http://keepprotectingny.com>), which includes Audubon NY:

The Friends of New York's Environment, a broad partnership of more than 100 environmental, public health, agricultural, recreational, and urban stakeholder groups, today released the following statement, thanking the Governor and legislature for maintaining the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) at \$134 million in the state budget.

"New York's Environmental Protection Fund pays for programs that protect valuable natural resources, clean drinking water, family farms, local parks, and recycling and environmental education programs in communities across the state. These programs also create jobs. A recent study by the Trust for Public Land found that every dollar invested in protecting open space through the EPF returned seven dollars to the state in natural goods and services. By leveraging local, federal, and private funds, the EPF generates a significant return on investment for our economy as it works to protect the environment. For these reasons and many others, we thank Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and the rest of the legislature for maintaining last year's funding levels for the EPF, despite a budget deficit.

"Our organizations are also grateful that the legislature and Governor gave consideration during budget deliberations to a proposal that would enhance the EPF. We applaud the Senate and Assembly for including this proposal — which would use revenue from the state's existing Bottle Bill — in their one-house budget bills. This proposal [A. 7137-A (Latimer)/S. 5403-A (Grisanti)] has broad public support.

"While we are disappointed that this or any proposal to enhance the EPF was not included in the final budget agreement, we will continue to work with the legislature and Governor to see environmental funding enhanced during the remainder of the 2012 legislative session. Project needs in all regions of the state currently outpace available funding, and since these programs are proven, successful public-private partnerships that deliver a return on the state's investments and create jobs, we believe that increasing funding in the coming years will help restore New York's economy."

RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

REMINDER: ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On **Saturday, May 5**, SSAS is planning to be in Central Park for our annual (weather permitting) early May morning bird walk. Once again, Chris Cooper will lead us through the twisting, hilly 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 (49 last year, including 17 warbler species).

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).

A group of us will be aboard the local Babylon line 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 7:08. 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. Join us!



FREE ONLINE GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS

The Audubon Online Guide to North American Birds features 818 species. To take advantage of this great resource with photos, sounds, and more, go to www.audubonbirds.org.

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.

NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER A Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker at the End of a Walk

Joe Grupp

On an early spring day, having spent about two hours in the field, I was coming to the end of my walk. I was mulling over my observations. I had turned up a fair list of birds which included two Eastern Phoebes, which are early migrants. They are flycatchers, insect eaters, and I wondered where they were finding a meal on this pretty cold morning. My thoughts were interrupted by the loud wick, wick, wick, wick song of a Northern Flicker. I had heard the song as I began the walk, but only glimpsed the bird as it flew off. This time I spotted it on the end of a fairly low, sturdy branch. It was then chased away when a Red-bellied Woodpecker swept into a neighboring tree to inspect an old hole where a branch had rotted away. As the Red-belly probed the hole, three other woodpeckers, two of which were Downy Woodpeckers, swooped in one right after the other, each landing on separate trees that were close to each other. The Red-belly soon flew off.

The Downy Woodpeckers were probably a pair that will nest together. One had the red mark on the back of the head, indicating male. The second lacked the mark and was female. Occasionally they would fly at one another and separate again, never straying far from each other, and they left flying off together. That left me with one woodpecker to observe and it was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

The bird was at mid-height in the "V" made where the trunk split into two thick sections. The light being good, the red crown and throat stood out, identifying it as a male. A female's throat is white. The yellow wash on its underparts was evident even as it was pressed against the tree. The large white wing stripe was evident with the naked eye and identified the bird even before I got the binoculars on it, and the other markings were clearly visible.

It worked the bark of the tree, moving short distances and then stopping to probe the crevasse of the bark with its bill. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers' diet consists of tree sap, insects, and occasionally fruits. The bird did not seem to be successful finding food in the crevasses of the bark as it searched, but it was pretty hard to tell if it was lapping up some small insects with its long tongue. Eventually it flew off to another nearby tree. That tree obviously was having a hard life.

The tree was a mid-sized black birch that showed a lot of damage from branches and other trees crashing down on it. Some rot showed where the tree was scarred; bits of bark in spots hung loose but still securely attached to the tree and a good portion of the tree was not damaged at all. The bird landed among the carnage and one look through the binoculars told me why. There were patches of intact healthy bark among all the damage and those patches showed the telltale sap holes made by a Yellow-bellied

Sapsucker. They are small and drilled very close to one another, arranged in a horizontal row on the trunk of the tree. Sometimes a number of rows of holes appear, one under the other. From those holes and the sap that fills them, the Sapsuckers get their name and a good portion of their food not only by drinking the sap but eating the insects attracted to it.

The holes are marvels in themselves. Tree sap flows in two directions, up from the roots to the leaves in one type of vessel and from the leaves to the roots in another type of vessel. Both are found just under the outer bark of the tree. The upward flow of sap brings water and other raw material required for the leaves to trap the energy of the sun and make food. The downward flow carries the energy-laden newly manufactured food to the roots for storage there. The inline holes the Sapsucker drills are so constructed that they tap only the downward flow of sap and the bird benefits from the energy the sap carries as it eats it.

The bird landed on the damaged part of the tree and probed one small hole, then another. It explored the damaged bark, moving the loose bits, as well as the intact parts, then returned to the holes. There were about three rows of holes intact among the damaged bark and the bird seemed to randomly sample a few holes in each row. From where I observed, it was hard to determine if there was any sap flowing, which was questionable this early in the year as the holes must be maintained to keep the sap flowing. After a time and never staying long in any one spot, the bird flew off. I hope the bird got the energy it needed from that struggling tree. I know that this observer got a great deal of satisfaction watching it. That being said, it is also not too shabby to have four different species of woodpeckers appear close by in a very, very short period of time.



NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2012-2013 SSAS BOARD

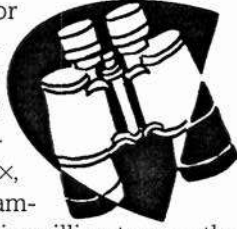
At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting on May 8, officers and directors will be elected for our next fiscal year. All members attending that meeting may nominate candidates from the floor and vote. The SSAS nominating committee (chaired by Wendy Murbach, with Gail Brown and Marilyn Hametz) recommends the following candidates: President, Jim Brown; Vice President, Marilyn Hametz; Treasurer, Joe Landesberg; Recording Secretary, Don Temple; Corresponding Secretary, Therese Lucas; and Director, Jonathan Staller (through June 2015).

Directors & Officers Insurance. In accordance with state law, this paragraph informs our members prior to the election that SSAS obtained D&O insurance for its board at an annual cost of \$300 via a two-year policy from Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company that began on October 18, 2011.

LET'S GO BIRD-WATCHING: FOR BEGINNING BIRDERS

John Gagliano

Binoculars. Birding binoculars are your basic tool. Yes, you absolutely need them. Do not attempt to watch birds with opera-glass type or broken binoculars because you will not have a good experience. For birding you need 7×35 or 8×40 binoculars. Binoculars are described by their power. The first number gives you the degree to which they magnify a distant object, for instance 7×, 8×, or 10×. The second number is the diameter of the distant (objective) lens in millimeters — the greater the number, the more light comes in.



Make sure there is one central knob for focusing and that you can focus on objects within 15 feet. Buy the best you can afford because it will make your experience of bird-watching that much more enjoyable.

Some retail and online shops let you try out binoculars before you make a purchase. It's good to see how they work for you before purchasing.

Field Guide (Printed Format). For an excellent field guide, we recommend Peterson Field Guides' *Birds of Eastern North America* by Roger Tory Peterson. Note the grouping of birds in this book; they are primarily in scientific order but deviations are made so that similar-appearing birds are shown together on the same page, which helps with identification. Arrows by the individual bird pictures point to important areas of the body that distinguish the species. Accompanying text explains the distinctions and range maps.

An even smaller, lighter, and more basic way to get you going is Golden Books' *Eastern Birds* by James Coe, which includes excellent drawings and information. Another field guide option with clear illustrations is *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America* by David Sibley. *Kaufman Field Guide to Birds of North America* by Kenn Kaufman is a very popular field guide. Whichever guide you choose, be sure to read the introduction, which gives important information on habitat and identification clues of size, shape, behavior, and plumage colors.

Birding Field Guides (Software Format). Both *iBird Explorer Pro* version 1.6.1 by the Mitch Waite Group and *National Geographic Handheld Birds* version 1.0 by National Geographic are fun and have actually come in useful a time or two for me when no printed field guide was available. Both have the potential to be even more useful with future updates. (*Editor's interruption:* Newer versions have been released.) I'm not sure that either will ever replace a field guide for me; I'm a little too old-fashioned. But the products are interesting and useful for those who are technically capable.

Binoculars + Field Guide + SSAS = FUN. Birding can certainly be fun and interesting by yourself or with a

friend, but with one of our knowledgeable leaders or guides, it becomes that much better! Check out our field trips and meetings listed in the *Skimmer* to find out which works best for you! I hope to see you in Nature, enjoying what it has to offer all of us.

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 674-0982 for assistance and follow the emergency instructions at www.volunteersforwildlife.org.



Explore the coast
with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

HORSESHOE CRABS & RED KNOTS (May 20, 8:30–11 A.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge visitor center. Leaders: Mickey Cohen & Don Riepe. Free. Contact Don for reservation.

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISES (Sun., May 27, 5–8 P.M. and Sun., June 24, 3–6 P.M.). Leave from Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn for narrated tour aboard the "Golden Sunshine." Learn about the history, ecology, wildlife & management of the refuge; see egrets, herons, osprey, peregrine falcon, terns, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Cost: \$55 incl. wine & cheese, fruit, drink, snacks.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 8–10). The heather and wild roses will be in bloom! Cost: \$385/person (double occ.) incl. 2 nights at luxurious Manor House, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, evening star watch.

CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH (Aug. 16–19). Enjoy beautiful, historic Gloucester and Cape Ann. Cost: \$395 incl. 3 nights lodging, whale watch boat, evening cruise on Essex River, canoeing on Ipswich River, lobster dinner at Gloucester House, and trip to Parker River Refuge.

ANNUAL SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL (Sat., Aug. 25, 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M.). At Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Free but donation requested; contact Don for reservation.

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

