





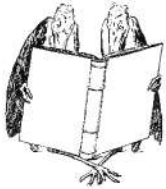
## BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II

Since I've been reviewing books that aim to make us better birders for the last few months, for this month, the last review until after our summer break, I've decided to review an adventure story, *To See Every Bird on Earth: a Father, a Son, and a Lifelong Obsession*, by Dan Koeppel. It is a fascinating book about one of the most prolific "Big Listers" of all time, with over 7,000 bird species from around the world!

Everyone has his or her own addiction, be it coffee, cigarettes, or bird-watching. Bird-watching was the drug of choice for Richard Koeppel, Dan's father. The author writes affectionately but honestly about his dad. Attempting the ultimate bird-watcher's achievement is a lifetime's work. The book addresses a deep-seated desire in all of us to relate to nature in an intimate way. This is a candid book about a man who wanted to become an ornithologist but instead listened to his parents and became a doctor.

This book offers an intimate view of a community obsessed with the thrill of the chase, or the "twitch" if you prefer. It artfully weaves a story of biography, autobiography, and a history of birding in America. It was a good read and a pleasure to review. It is a wonderful story, interwoven with a world of wonderful birds.



As you read you will be amazed at the intricate relationship between a father and his son; it is a very candid story! This book can be enjoyed by nonbirders as well. What could possibly drive a man (or woman) to travel to over 50 countries and spend a fortune in order to count birds? Can *you* count to 7,450? The author's father became a competitive birder — one of about ten people to see this many birds. Can you say Phoebe Snetsinger [whose biography was reviewed by R. U. eleven issues ago]? Dan's father's "spark" bird was a Brown Thrasher. This set him off on his odyssey to see "every bird on earth."

When Dan stuck to his father's birding activities, I enjoyed the book — but too often he overindulged in exposing skeletons from his family's closet. He includes interesting accounts of top-ranking Big Listers. These are not easy to find, and this book is one of the few places to read about them. My question is, "will this book inspire us all to see every bird on earth?" I certainly hope not! Richard's "chase" lasted for over 25 years. Wow! An obsession like this is not simply a chase but, more likely, a crusade. A crusade like this does come at the expense of all else. The family and many relationships suffer greatly, all for the sake of a "check" in a notebook.

The author is a renowned nature, outdoors, and adventure writer in his own right. Obviously, his reasons for writing this book go far beyond his other credentials. His father is the focus of this most enjoyable book — a certified Big Lister. As the author says: "It was only when I began to read between the seemingly dry and formal

lines of the tally itself that I realized what such a lifetime of counting contains: the desire to find one's own place in creation, pursued with a single-mindedness that so far has evolved only in humans. Seeing every bird on earth is a way of seeing everything, of attempting to know everything. Such attempts mark human history. The story told here is about finding a way into that seduction — and finding a way back." The psychology of becoming a Big Lister is carefully portrayed in this very readable book. So read it and let it be food for thought for all of us. Have a great summer! See you all in September.

## SSAS'S 43RD ANNUAL DINNER

Join us for an evening of good food and good company. Our gathering will be at Pompei Restaurant in West Hempstead on **Tuesday, June 10**. The cocktail hour will begin at 6:30 P.M. As usual, awards will be presented and raffle drawings will occur. Your dinner registration form is inserted in this newsletter. Join us!

## SSAS Post Office Statement — South Shore

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OUR E-LIST [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas\\_list](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list)  
NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

## 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](http://www.volunteersforwildlife.org).

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**NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER**  
**Bush tits – A Consolation Prize**

*Joe Grupp*

We were in the Big Sur area of coastal California on a sunny but slightly chilly day. We were drawn there hoping to spot an endangered species, the California Condor (pictured), riding the updrafts where the Pacific Ocean meets the steeply rising highlands of our continent.



Research prior to our arrival in California, and knowledge gained after, suggested that observing the skies from the flagpole at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park would offer a good chance of spotting one. I was dubious about our chances as we approached the park, as only a very few Turkey Vultures or other soaring birds were occasionally seen gliding on the rising air currents.

Near and around the flagpole, our view was somewhat restricted by the height of land behind us that wrapped around in a U-shaped fashion, and by the vegetation on the land that sloped more gently towards the Pacific Ocean in front of us, limiting our line of sight. I wondered why this spot might be a recommended spot for a chance to see a Condor until two Turkey Vultures drifted over our heads so close to us that their every detail could be seen with the naked eye. Our observation spot was a busy place, as cars came and went and a flow of people followed a trail out towards the Pacific as others came back to their cars. A talk with a park employee about Condors also informed us that the trail, that so many were walking, led to a view of a waterfall and then to an overlook over the Pacific and up the coast.

Eventually giving up our wait for a Condor, we walked the mile-plus trail, where the scenery at times was spectacular. After a time, we began to catch sight of McWay Falls, as it launched out from a wooded vee, in a jumbled cliff face, into space. Our view was above and toward the side of the stream of water that fell a hundred feet or more while forming a graceful arc, landing in the soft sand near where the surf of the sea met the sandy shore. One to three Western Gulls (pictured) came and went, walking near where the falling water struck the sand, apparently looking for whatever bits of food fell with the water. Western Gulls look similar to our Great Black-backed Gull, but are smaller and are of a lighter black color.



We were heading back from the overlook and were in the area where we could again view the falls when a small bird shot across the trail into the shrubby, steeply rising land, followed by another and another; eight to ten birds in a loose, somewhat scattered flock disappeared into the shrubs one by one. Immediately by the action of the flock and from some research I did before our trip, I was all but sure that I knew the species. The birds cooperated with my

attempt to confirm their identification, as one and then another popped up to perch in the open before descending again into the shrubbery. They were dull gray, lighter underneath, with a slightly brown tinge on the heads and somewhat long tails. Just as I expected, they were Bush-tits, a widely distributed western bird. They bounced around deep in the shrubs and out again, and then just as they came in one would leave, then another followed, and then another, etc.

They are an interesting species beyond the almost unique way they travel in flocks. They are known to huddle together on cold nights and to build a hanging nest, as much as one foot long, with an entrance on the side near the top, among other traits. It would have been nice to have had a chance to observe some of those interesting traits but just as they moved on, we had to also.

We spent more than an hour at an overlook, also unsuccessfully trying to find a soaring Condor which would have been the grand prize of our trip. Even considering that there are only about 237 California Condors in the wild, not finding one was a disappointment. Bush-tits had to serve as a consolation prize, which was not too shabby, especially as I had never seen one before.

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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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OUR WEB SITE (incl. online store) [www.ssaudubon.org](http://www.ssaudubon.org)

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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.*



## OUR FOURTEENTH ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On **Saturday, May 3**, SSAS is planning to be in Central Park for our annual (weather permitting) early May morning bird walk. As usual, Chris Cooper (who was featured two years ago in HBO's documentary, "Birders: The Central Park Effect," and traces his birding roots to SSAS) has volunteered to 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 (except 31 last year, with only 6 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](mailto: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 on the platform in Massapequa at 7:13 (as of now, only the eastern half of the station is open, due to ongoing major renovations). Other familiar faces plan to board in Bellmore at 7:21 and Rockville Centre at 7:33. We aim to depart from Penn's LIRR waiting room at 8:30 to meet Chris at Beldere Castle at around 9:15. Please buy a MetroCard for the subway. 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!

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### BAY PARK OUTFALL PIPE

*Editor's note:* On March 14, *Newsday* published an edited version of a letter that was submitted by Jim Brown a week earlier on behalf of SSAS. Here's the original letter, which didn't fit in last month's *Skimmer*.

To the Editor: *Newsday* has covered in detail the problems faced by the Bay Park sewage treatment plant, long a source of pollution for the western bays of Long Island and which was additionally damaged by Hurricane Sandy ("Send our treated sewage out to sea," Op. Ed. by Adrienne Esposito and Carl LoBue, 1/20/14, and "Lawmakers, activists call on funding for ocean outfall pipe," by Robert Brodsky, 1/28/14). Recently, in an editorial titled "Grab this chance for ocean pipe," 2/24/14, *Newsday* itself has taken a position in favor of building an outflow pipe into the ocean.

It is indeed necessary that the problems to our environment related to the Bay Park sewage plant be solved, for no one can deny that the pollution released by the plant damages our bays. Proper functioning of the facility is crucial in that more than 50 million gallons of treated sewage created by roughly a half-million Long Islanders daily are released from the plant into our western bays. It is crucial that money be provided to repair this facility.



However, obtaining additional funds and building an ocean outflow pipe might not be the best solution to this important environmental issue.

Is the solution to pollution really dilution? Before we rush to the ocean, this and many other questions need to be considered. An outflow pipe will transfer treated sewage directly to the ocean, which is also vulnerable to additional pollution and excessive nitrogen loadings.

The New York Bight may itself be subject to harmful algal blooms and an increase of nuisance species such as stinging jellyfish. Chlorine and pharmaceutical products, not completely removed from the sewage, will adversely affect marine life. In addition to the environmental harm, the pollution from the pipe could prohibit recreational use of our coastal waters. Beaches might be closed.

If an ocean outflow pipe is added to the Bay Park infrastructure, millions of gallons of treated freshwater will bypass the bays and flow directly into the ocean. Are the impacts known of moving an outfall pipe, which is a dependable source of fresh water, from the bay to the ocean? There is some evidence, for example, that the ecology of Barnegat Bay in Ocean County, NJ may have been adversely affected by the rerouting of sewage outfalls from the bay to the ocean. Before hundreds of millions of dollars are spent on an ocean outflow pipe here in Nassau County, alternatives should be studied and discussed. Land application of treated wastewater might be a solution to our sewage disposal at Bay Park. It should be considered as a possible alternative. The impact of any outflow pipe on the marine and coastal environments should also be studied in detail before approving it. Bay Park should be repaired and upgraded, but the repairs and upgrades should provide a permanent solution to the problem, not just push the problem out to sea.

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### NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2014-2015 BOARD

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting on May 13, 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 recommends the following candidates: Betty Borowsky, president; Paul Stessel, vice president; Joe Landesberg, treasurer; Arlene Rawls, recording secretary; Therese Lucas, corresponding secretary; and Stacy & Kurt Meyerheinrich, directors (for three-year terms).

**Bylaws Vote.** The proposed revisions to SSAS's bylaws that were detailed in last month's *Skimmer* will be voted on by members attending our May 13 meeting.

**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 \$575 via a one-year policy from Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company that was renewed on October 18, 2013.



## PLANTINGS FOR OUR BIRDS

Michael Sperling

SSAS's Paul Stessel recently created a book list for distribution at presentations he's done, entitled "Books That Will Take You to the Next Step: Create a Backyard Birdscape — Where the Avian Elite Will Come to Meet and Eat!" Over a decade ago, I produced an SSAS handout that included a list of the plants that were the most frequently recommended in publications I had accumulated, with an emphasis on Long Island natives (but not necessarily plants suitable for backyard soil). The following is taken from both handouts (the first nine books are from Paul's list), with a few additions from my bookshelves. As Paul wrote, you should "add your own choices!" too.

The old handout began as follows: "It's spring, and time to plan your landscape or naturescape. How can you restore and enhance what nature once put in your yard? Focus on your own backyard to help give plants and wildlife a fighting chance. It is in vogue to go native. Native species are better adapted to local soils and climates. Natives require less water, fertilizer, and pest control. Let plants grow naturally and create a controlled untidiness in your naturescape. Plant trees and shrubs that offer food and protection for birds. Birds need a constant and varied food source, so plant a variety of early and late blooming flowering plants for a steady food supply. The plants also attract insects for spring and fall migrants to feed on. Remember to plant in groups for best food production, protection, and graceful design."



### Recommended Books

- *Gardening for the Birds: How to Create a Bird-Friendly Backyard* by George Adams (2013; update of his *Birdscaping Your Garden* from 1998)
- *National Geographic Backyard Guide to the Birds of North America* by Jonathan Alderfer and Paul Hess (2011)
- *Gardening for Birds & Butterflies* by Birds & Blooms (2012)
- *Birds in Your Backyard: A Bird-Lover's Guide to Creating a Garden Sanctuary* by Robert Dolezal and Birds & Blooms (2004)
- *Backyard Birding in the Northeast United States* by Elmer Waldemar Eriksson (2002)
- *Garden Secrets for Attracting Birds: A Bird-by-Bird Guide to Plants* by Rachael Lanicci (2010)
- *Backyards Are for the Birds* by Edward R. Ricciuti (1998)
- *Northeastern Birds: Backyard Guide* by Bill Thompson III and BirdWatcher's Digest (2013)
- *Backyard Birding: Using Natural Gardening to Attract Birds* by Julie Zickefoose and BirdWatcher's Digest (2011)
- *The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds* by Stephen W. Kress (2006) or his *The Bird Garden* (1995)
- *Attracting Birds & Butterflies* by Barbara Ellis (1997)
- *Bird Gardens* by Brooklyn Botanic Garden (1998)

- *Songbirds in Your Garden* by John K. Terres (1994)
- *The Audubon Backyard Birdwatcher: Birdfeeders and Bird Gardens* by Robert Burton (1999)
- *Attracting Birds to Your Backyard* by Sally Roth (1998)
- *Long Island Native Plants for Landscaping: A Source Book* by Karen Blumer (1990; long out-of-print but in many libraries; not specifically focused on birds)

### Some Plants to Consider

*Bayberry*: Northern ♣ *Beech*: American ♣ *Birch*: Sweet (aka Black Birch) ♣ *Blackberry*: Northern ♣ *Blueberry*: Highbush & Lowbush ♣ *Cedar*: Eastern Red ♣ *Chokecherry*: Red ♣ *Dogwood*: Flowering ♣ *Hackberry*: Common ♣ *Hollies*: Inkberry, American & Winterberry (need male and female plants for berries) ♣ *Maple*: Red (aka Swamp Maple) ♣ *Mulberry*: Red ♣ *Oaks*: Northern Red, White & Pin ♣ *Persimmon*: Common ♣ *Pine*: Pitch ♣ *Sassafras* ♣ *Serviceberry* (aka Shadbush) ♣ *Spicebush*: Common ♣ *Sumacs*: Smooth & Staghorn ♣ *Tupelo*: Black (aka Blackgum) ♣ *Viburnums*: Arrowwood, Blackhaw, Nannyberry & American Cranberrybush ♣ *Virginia Creeper* ♣ *Willows*: Pussy

Therese and I have planted several of these in the past decade; the most successful in attracting birds so far have been the arrowwood viburnum and winterberries. Also, the long-established eastern white oaks on our property and in adjacent yards attract lots of attention year-round.

## Ntaba African Safaris

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### POLOVER 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 disturbance 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 (pictured) 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 486-5272.



