

(Try this: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIxfVSS_65o.) Of course, I enjoyed that very much — plus I was able to add another bird to my life list.

But it got me thinking about bird-watching in general. People frequently ask me things like: What’s the best time to watch birds? Where’s the best place to watch birds?

The brief answer is that once you are bitten by the bug, you are watching birds all the time, and while there really are times and places when there is more

bird activity, it really doesn’t matter too much, because once you’re turned on, you will see things all the time. For

example, I used to work on the fifth floor of a building, and my window was at the level of the top of a flagpole. To my delight, a Red-tailed Hawk took over the top of the flagpole for many months. I learned a very great deal about Red-tailed Hawk behavior from that close vantage point — and so did almost everybody else in my office.

Now, some folks are just not into bird-watching — I have a cousin, who is otherwise quite normal, who doesn’t get it at all. On the other hand, some folks have been bird-watchers since they were very young. SSAS is blessed with some young members who teach us a thing or two all the time and, of course, we encourage them in every way we can. But I think most of us have had an “aha!” moment, when the bird-watching switch was turned on. For me it was watching pigeons in Brooklyn with my grandfather when I was very young. How wonderful to fly! A field ecology course I took in college cemented the thing for me; I pored over Peterson for hours and hours.

One person told me it was seeing a flock of flamingos coming to land in Florida at dusk; another person spoke of seeing a Northern Cardinal on the snow in his backyard in the dead of winter — it goes on. I teach classes in field ecology at Nassau Community College, and it gives me unparalleled pleasure when I see that switch turn on in my students. I know they will be bird-watching and enjoying nature forever after.

So — in my opinion, the answer to “when to go bird-watching” is: all the time.



BROOKSIDE PRESERVE FALL CLEANUP

On Sunday, **November 15**, starting at 1 P.M., SSAS will have its fall cleanup at Brookside Preserve, rain or shine. Brookside is a 20-acre freshwater wetland, woodland, and upland area owned by Nassau County that was rescued from oblivion and is managed by SSAS. PDF files of our trail guide and children’s freshwater wetland guide can be downloaded from ssaudubon.org. The Preserve is located on the Freeport–Baldwin border, along Milburn Creek; park at the main entrance on Brookside Avenue just north of Sunrise Highway (turn north at the traffic light that’s just east of Freeport High School). Please bring work gloves and spend an hour or two with us.

WEST POND BREACH ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COMMENT PERIOD

Editor’s note: Here’s some encouraging news regarding a refuge in Queens that for decades, prior to Sandy, was one of the most frequently visited sites for our bird walks.

The National Park Service (NPS) has made the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the West Pond Breach Repair Project at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge available for public and regulatory review. This project will make the West Pond embankment and loop trail resilient to coastal storms and flooding, and will protect environmentally sensitive conditions along the West Pond loop trail that support a diversity of Jamaica Bay habitat, wildlife, and enhanced visitor experience.

The EA evaluates the potential impacts of four alternatives: two action alternatives, the NPS preferred alternative, and the no-action alternative. The NPS preferred alternative includes filling and repairing the primary and secondary breaches, and the subsequent restoration of West Pond and loop trail. The preferred alternative would be implemented in phases, with the initial phase addressing filling and repairing the primary and secondary breaches, replacing the water control structure, the possible installation of a supplemental water supply system (either groundwater or municipal water) to provide fresh water to the pond, and restoring the West Pond loop trail. Future phases of work would include upland habitat restoration at Terrapin Point, shoreline and saltmarsh restoration to increase resiliency against potential future storm damage, and installation of other visitor amenities, such as boardwalks, trails, pathways, viewing blinds, and educational signage.

The ongoing participation of the public is very important to the success of this project. We invite you to attend an Open House [which was/is on the evening of **October 22**] to learn more about the project, the Environmental Assessment, to ask questions, and share your comments.

The EA will be available for public review and comment for a period of 30 days through November 6, 2015. Please go to <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/gate> to review the EA and comment electronically. You are also welcome to mail comments directly to Office of the Superintendent; Gateway National Recreation Area, Fort Wadsworth; Attn: Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge West Pond EA Project; 210 New York Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10305. Written comments must be postmarked by **November 6, 2015** for consideration.



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HOLIDAY LIGHTS AT JONES BEACH

Michael Sperling

Unfortunately, the Holiday Lights Spectacular show that we strongly opposed from 2000 through 2005 (until it was moved for its final year to the Jones Beach Theater's parking field) and again when it was revived last year, is expected to start showing up along the road in the West End of Jones Beach by the time you receive this newsletter. The West End is a critical part of the "West Hempstead Bay/Jones Beach West" Important Bird Area.

On September 22, six Long Island Audubon chapters and the Queens County Bird Club were invited to a week-day lunch meeting three days later at the Long Island Regional Headquarters of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). We were invited as a result of a letter we had sent last December, for which we received a defensive letter from the Regional Director in January. I represented SSAS at the meeting; two weeks earlier, I had e-mailed a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to Albany for documents regarding the show (following up on a similar request nearly a year ago), but as I'm writing this, the deadline for receiving them (20 working days) is yet to be reached.

The meeting was attended by five Long Island OPRHP employees (including the Deputy Regional Director, Jones Beach's Director, the Environmental Manager for the LI Region, and the newly hired Environmental Analyst for Long Island), three other volunteers from the organizations that had signed the letter, and Audubon New York's new Long Island Bird Conservation Manager. We were told that last year's show drew 62,000 vehicles and that Live Nation Entertainment, Inc.'s gross was \$1.2 million, of which \$180,000 went to the LI Region's State Parks, with \$15,000 to be spent on yet-to-be-determined environmental programs at Jones Beach. Live Nation, which operates the Jones Beach Theater, paid for all expenses except for one Parks' employee and the NYS Parks Police.

During its first run, the Holiday Lights Spectacular's peak attendance was 73,000 cars and buses in 2001. We object to the show's location for many reasons, including the exhaust and leaking toxic fluids from these vehicles as they slowly drive for two miles, where people view about 100 displays that are lit for over six weeks. The displays, the largest of which have been 30 feet tall and 150 feet wide, are supported by guy wires and connected via long electric cables to power sources that include large temporary generators.

The 2015 contract was being negotiated at the time of the meeting. Live Nation will probably start installing the displays on the road's shoulders on October 12 and erecting them on October 26. Since this is during the fall bird migration, it was suggested by OPRHP's Environmental Manager that the tallest displays be required to be erected last. The show would open on November 19 to the

media, would run five nights per week for the next three weeks, then six nights per week, and then nightly during the peak of the holiday season through January 3.

As we wrote in a letter that was sent to newspaper editors back in 2002: "West End is one of the premier winter bird habitats in our region, home to Snowy Owls, Short-eared Owls, Long-eared Owls, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Merlins, Northern Harriers, Peregrine Falcons, Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, American Tree Sparrows, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Red-throated Loons, Common Loons, Horned Larks, and Eastern Meadowlarks, to name a few. West End and its environs are one of the few remaining crucial places that our wildlife have left for the daily needs of their lives. The true spirit of the season is about giving. Let's turn out the lights and give the little birds and creatures of West End back their home."

We Need Your Help! When you visit the West End, please take photos of show-related damage to plants, guy wires that aren't flagged, injured or dead birds (very few have been documented but we contend that they're grabbed by other wildlife and by Holiday Light Spectacular employees), broken light bulbs, etc. You can send them to mssperling@optonline.net. Please tell people not to attend the show; have them visit the habitat in daylight instead, in order to see why the show shouldn't be there.



Explore the coast
with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

WINTER WATERFOWL WORKSHOP (Sat., Nov. 14, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge for a slide presentation and walk featuring the many species of ducks and geese that overwinter in NYC and Long Island. Learn about behavior, biology and how to identify birds in the field. Leader: Don Riepe. For info & reservations contact Don. Free.

ASSATEAGUE ISLAND / CHINCOTEAGUE REFUGE (Nov. 19-22). A great wildlife weekend at a national seashore and national wildlife refuge. See wild ponies, Bald Eagles, falcons, hawks, shorebirds, snow geese and lots more. Cost: \$395/person includes three nights lodging at Refuge Inn, breakfasts, guided walks, Safari bus tour, plus an "All-you-can-eat" seafood dinner on Saturday night. Single supplement \$180.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY (Sat., Dec. 12, 5 to 9 P.M.). 30th annual party in Broad Channel. Cost: \$55 incl. buffet dinner, wine & beer, dessert & coffee plus door prizes, an "Ugly Auction" and entertainment. Preceded by a nature hike at 3 P.M.

WINTER BIRDS AT JAMAICA BAY (Sat., Dec. 19 (10 A.M. to 1 P.M.)). Meet at the refuge for a hike around the pond and gardens to look for late migrants and winter birds arriving. Learn to identify many species, and how birds and other wildlife survive winter. For info & reservations, contact Don. Free.

For information and free field trip brochure, call/write Don Riepe, (718) 474-0896, donriep@gmail.com, 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; www.littoralsociety.org.

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER
A Persistent Young Gull

Joe Grupp

This past summer, my wife and I frequently walked the Jones Beach boardwalk for exercise. It is a neat place to do so because health-walk signs are posted each tenth of a mile, starting at the Parking Field 6 entrance to the boardwalk. One then has the opportunity to know how far he or she has walked. Add to that all the things that attract one to a summer beach and the walk becomes a bit more than exercise. Whether on the beach, the boardwalk, or in the air, gulls are ever-present there.

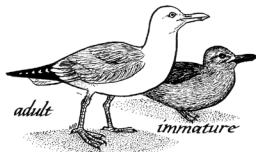
On the return leg of a walk on a late August day, we were going down a ramp to a concrete walk that edges the sand. A scattering of gulls were at the base of the ramp, milling, seemingly, aimlessly about. Some were coming and going into the air; a few were rising a few feet into the air and settling back down again; most were walking about. As we descended the ramp, we noticed a recently fledged youngster. We could not help but notice it, because in a few more steps we could have fallen over it.

It was easy to tell it was a recently fledged Herring Gull youngster because of its chocolate-brown color with no easily defined markings and its all-black bill. Herring Gulls take four years, passing through a number of changes in plumage, to become the gray-winged white-bodied adult that many people call, along with other species of gulls, a "seagull." Its behavior also indicated that it was a really young bird, as it was running around with its body positioned horizontally, head and bill extended, as newly fledged gulls do when begging for food.

The bird was wandering around from one gull to another, frequently pecking at them. It did the same with the foot of another walker but without pecking. It seemed that it was just being a pest. The behavior seemed a bit crazy until an adult Herring Gull dropped down softly from above, wings extended and cupped to slow its descent, and landed on the concrete, somewhat close to the young bird. The young bird's concentration then focused on the adult, who pulled away from it at times. He rushed at it, plucked at its feathers, and chased it when it moved away, seemingly being a pest but really looking to be fed. All of this was happening as we proceeded only a few steps off the ramp.

The action was such that I remarked to my wife, "That mom gull (if it was a mom) is not about to feed that young bird. She is teaching it to survive on its own." As the young bird kept pecking and pecking at the adult, it appeared to our eyes that it was annoying it. Then I jokingly said to the young bird, "You have to earn a living on your own, bird!"

Just as I got the words out of my mouth, the young bird struck the adult at the base of its yellow bill and then again on the red spot near the end of the bill. The red spot



is the spot that nestlings strike to be fed. When struck, the adult opens its bill and regurgitates food for the nestling.

It worked for this young bird also, because the adult opened its bill wide, as wide as the blades of a pair of scissors opened wide, faced the ground, and regurgitated a small bit of food onto the concrete. Before the adult lifted its head and closed its bill, the young bird pecked the food off the concrete, swallowed it, and went about pecking at other gulls and making us do the two-step to avoid falling over it. That young bird certainly knew what it was doing and I most certainly did not. Being persistent served it well that day, but it had better learn its foraging skills fast or its future will not be bright.

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SAVE THE DATE

Marilyn Hametz

The South Shore Audubon Annual Holiday Party for Children at the Tackapausha Museum in Seaford will be Saturday afternoon, **December 12.**

If you would like to enjoy the event as a South Shore Audubon volunteer, please contact me at 799-7189 or marilynexpl@yahoo.com.

Ntaba African Safaris

Lorraine Bondi



New York Agent/East Coast Agency Director

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Due to National Audubon Society's transition between contractors that handle its memberships, for this month none of the chapters were assigned new members. However, we do have two people to welcome who joined us directly and have been participating in our bird walks:

Massapequa..... Frank and Jamie Gerald

SSAS BACKYARD BIRD SURVEY

The Research Committee is conducting a study to document the bird species found in the SSAS geographical area and to make some estimates as to their numbers. We request input from anyone that feeds and/or observes birds in their yard or neighborhood. If you would like to participate in this program, we would greatly appreciate it.

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. Double-sided 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!

<i>Dates:</i> From _____ to _____							
Date	Time	Species	No.	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			

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

Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$20 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 by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get \$0 from these dues 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.



Donations to SSAS are always welcome! \$ _____

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

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