

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 46, NUMBER 5 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2016

NEXT MEETING

Paul Stessel

DATE: Tuesday, February 9, 2016
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
 144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)
SPEAKER: Peter Warny
TOPIC: Saving Turtles

The ecology and conservation of turtles and tortoises will be depicted and discussed by this month's guest speaker, based on his recent field trips in New York, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. Turtle ecology will be compared in context to bird banding and long-term population monitoring. Radio tracking, trail cameras, and other ecological field techniques will be discussed.

Peter Warny travels extensively to conservation project sites across the U.S. and has worked for The Nature Conservancy and National Audubon Society. Peter owns conservation land in Florida as part of a cooperative biological field station, conducting surveys of reptiles, birds, insects, and plants. Join us!

Parking Lots. In addition to the parking lot adjacent to the library, there's a lightly used, well-lit, and fairly close municipal lot on the east side of S. Ocean Ave., on the near (south) side of the gas station that borders Sunrise Highway.

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 •  IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE •
 • BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS. •
 • **SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!** •
 • • • • •

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.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Betty Borowsky

We have only recently become aware of plans to hold a very large tennis tournament at the courts at Hempstead Lake State Park. The information we have comes from articles published in local newspapers. We have reached out to governmental agencies for more details and clarification, but have learned nothing more to date. Here is the situation as it now appears to be — hopefully we will get clarification on this soon.

According to the September 9, 2015 issue of the *Rockville Centre Herald*, the Women's Tennis Association is planning to hold a nine-day tournament in the park this May. In order to accommodate the 60,000 people expected to attend, they will be building a stadium and will be providing transportation to and from the park during the tournament. Organizers plan to have a tournament every year.

The NYS Department of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation has declared that these activities will not be a threat to the environment of the park. This "negative declaration" under the State Environmental Quality Review Act just flies in the face of reason.

Currently, Hempstead Lake State Park is a model of a balanced, multi-use public park. It provides tree-shaded sites where local families can have a barbeque and enjoy a day in nature. Many come from nearby low-income communities and have no other place to go for a picnic. At the same time, people can fish, ride horses, kayak, and hike in the park. Children can enjoy the playgrounds and the carousel; even dogs have their own place to enjoy the park. All of these activities coexist peacefully, and allow thousands of people to enjoy the park each year without damaging the environment.

Furthermore, in spite of the diversity of these recreational uses, the park is the best terrestrial bird watching site in Nassau County. In fact, it is a designated "Important Bird Area" (IBA). IBAs are determined by an internationally agreed set of criteria. Specific IBA thresholds are set by regional and national governing organizations.

(The criteria for HLSP are listed in <http://netapp.audubon.org/IBA/Reports/812>.)

The park has earned this distinction because it is one of the few remaining natural sites in the New York metropolitan area large enough to support several rare species, including Bald Eagles and the Great Horned Owl. In addition to these rarities, some of the most beautiful birds in the western hemisphere are either permanent residents or regularly pass through during their seasonal migrations. This includes Wood Duck (pictured), about 30 species of warblers — and the list goes on.



If what we hear is true, the proposed stadium will destroy some of the park, and the disruptions that will accompany the planned tournament (60,000 people!) will make all the usual recreational activities difficult or impossible. It will also cause permanent gaps in suitable habitat for the rarer bird species and disrupt the annual spring migration.

We cannot imagine how anyone familiar with the park could decide that the planned tournament will not damage the park. Furthermore, there are other areas far more suitable for sporting events.

Hopefully we will have more information soon.

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II with Sy Schiff

Welcome back and happy new year! To start this year off on the right foot, we've decided on a book that will give us all several (maybe more) good laughs. It is *Why Do Bluebirds Hate Me?* by Mike O'Connor. On Cape Cod, Mike is widely known as Mr. Bird Man! He has been writing a bird-advice column for the "Cape Codder," a local paper distributed on the Cape, for many years. He also is the owner of one of the *best* wild bird stores, if not *the best*, anywhere on the East coast, Bird Watcher's General Store in Orleans, Massachusetts.

His column is entitled "Ask the Bird Folks." He starts with a reader's question and answers it in the most humorous way. The questions are answered in the same spirit in which they are received. The author is the Ann Landers of the bird world; his answers are both factual and humorous. And the questions are all over the bird map. This is his second book along the same lines. You must read this book!



Sy has wondered whether all the inquiries are legit or just written for Mike's witty responses. It doesn't seem to matter. If someone didn't ask that question, he should have. Some of the questions are a little (?) weird, but remember, this column is being written in a non-birder's world. Questions go from things for which we'd like to know the answer to where did he come up with that screwball question? As far as his answers go, he's a pretty knowledgeable guy and gives excellent responses.

The columns are arranged by topic and are given different chapters that cover similar inquiries. There's even a chapter devoted to city birds that includes Central Park! Pale Male and a turkey that visited our city are included. His answers are not always straightforward and he digresses off topic from time to time, sometimes even taking the reader to task for the question. He never responds in an entirely negative way.

The range of topics covers areas like "Why do birds sing in the fall?" and "How do I get to see a Kookaburra?" These topics are all over the place but the author is never at a loss for interesting responses. You can pick this book up and begin at any chapter; there's no special order. These are from stand-alone newspaper columns, after all. The book is really about birds, not about birding.

Here's an example of how he responds. He ends an inquiry on bird strikes with this humorous gem: "The odds of being on a plane that has a bird strike are pretty slim... But not as slim as the odds of your luggage arriving at the same time as you do." He ends an inquiry on James Bond (the ornithologist, not the secret agent) and Ian Fleming, the mystery writer, with this: "And you can bet that whenever either of them filled a bird feeder, the birdseed was shaken, not stirred." Mike's a funny guy and the book is worth your time. Read it! And Enjoy!!



Explore the coast
with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

THE WINTER BEACH AT FORT TILDEN (Sun., Feb. 7, 11 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Sun, moon, and earth are in position today to create a notable low tide. Explore the intertidal zone and walk the sea floor with naturalist Mickey Maxwell Cohen, author of *Adventures at the Beach*, to observe usually hidden biological treasures. For info, e-mail him at bmcohen2@gmail.com. Free.

WINTER THAW BIRD WALK (Sat., Feb. 27, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge for hike around ponds and gardens to look for very early signs of spring as well as late winter birds. Leader: Don Riepe. Contact Don for reservations. With NYC Audubon. Free.

EARLY SPRING BIRD WALK (Sat., Mar. 26, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge for a slide program and walk to look for Phoebes, American Oystercatchers, Osprey and other early migrants. Leader: Don Riepe. Contact Don for reservations. With NYC Audubon. Free.

SPRING BIRD MIGRATION (Sat., Apr. 16, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge for a slide program and hike around the gardens and ponds. Learn about the mystery of bird migration and look for warblers, thrushes, ibis, and other recent arrivals. Leader: Don Riepe. Contact Don for reservations. With Gateway NRA and NYC Audubon. 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.

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.

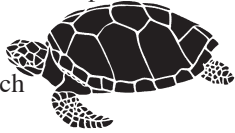
You are automatically a valued member of this active and friendly chapter, so please come out to the next meeting at the Freeport Memorial Library from 7:30–9:30 P.M. on the second Tuesday of the month to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment’s health and viability, to hear about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

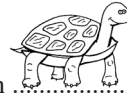
You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

Our new members since National Audubon Society’s change of membership contractors in the fall are:

- Atlantic Beach..... Mike Burke
- Baldwin Mary Greenfield, Jesus Marin, John Rodger
- Bellmore William Durland, Christopher Herman Gunder
- Bethpage Vincent J. Veich
- East Meadow Alventina Stehnach
- Elmont..... Veronica Barrera
- Farmingdale Philip Karavis, Nancy Zappala
- Floral Park..... Nancy Johnson, Timea Kovacs
- Franklin Square Cindy Kanyuk, Mary Napoli
- Garden City Neilia Amato, Diana Tomassetti Danza, Taylor Jeffreys Hare, Robert Votruba
- Glen Oaks..... Carol Arcella, Arnold N. Katzoff
- Hempstead..... Lois Wetzel
- Hicksville Henry G. Chupka, Rita Nolan, Anita H. Wergin, Raquel Wolf-Jadeja
- Levittown Dan Bednartz, Iris Escobar
- Lido Beach Mary Weston
- Long Beach Mark Lunstead, Linda Pringle
- Massapequa Ann Hale, Harriett Lesser, Steven Weiss
- Massapequa Park ... Donna M. Raspanti
- Merrick..... Ruth F. Alves, Linda H. Costa, Arthur Kaplan
- Oceanside James J. Connolly, Sherry Tulip
- Plainview..... Martha Lee Evans
- Point Lookout..... Chris Laskas
- Rockville Centre Burton Bellow, Blossom Miller
- Seaford Coreen Gelber



Valley Stream Angela Brown, Kelly Franklin, Dr. Susan A. Maurer, Elizabeth Meager, Marilyn Melody



Wantagh S. Briskie, Joseph Dellamonica
West Hempstead..... Christine Lobello, John M. Sardone
Woodmere Janet Rudolph



MORTON NWR VISIT SCHEDULED

On **Saturday, February 20**, starting at 10:30 A.M., SSAS’s Joanne Del Prete will lead us from the parking lot as we walk slowly along the 1.2-mile nature trail, holding a few black-oil sunflower seeds out in our palms and pausing for Black-capped Chickadees and other species



to land on our fingers and grab the seeds, as they’ve been doing since the days when the Morton family owned the property. Tufted Titmice, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, nuthatches, and woodpeckers (Downy Woodpecker pictured) are among the birds that will approach people at the Elizabeth A. Morton National Wildlife Refuge (www.fws.gov/northeast/longislandrefuges/morton.html); when we visited several years ago (last winter’s weather foiled us twice), even a Wild Turkey followed us. Joanne will have seeds for everyone.

Bring binoculars for observing the wildlife and for the beautiful views where the trail ends at the beach. Established in 1954 by a donation from the Mortons, the 187-acre refuge boasts exceptionally diverse habitats, including upland forest, fields, ponds, salt marsh, beach, and lagoon. Much of the refuge is on a peninsula surrounded by Noyack and Little Peconic Bays.

Directions: The refuge’s address is 2595 Noyack Rd., Sag Harbor, NY 11963. The entrance fee is \$4 per car.

To get to Sunrise Highway (Route 27), you can take LIE Exit 70 (County Road 111 toward Manorville/Eastport/Montauk). Travel on CR 111 for several miles (past McDonald’s and the Stargazer sculpture) and when the road ends turn left onto Sunrise Highway east.

Travel approximately 17 miles on Route 27 and bear left (at a traffic light) onto North Sea Road (County Road 38 toward North Sea). Travel 2.6 miles and bear right onto Noyack Road for 4.9 miles – the refuge’s entrance (brown sign) is on left.

After our visit, everyone’s invited to an optional lunch in downtown Sag Harbor. Turn left out of parking lot onto Noyack Road. Travel approx. 2 miles; turn left onto Noyack–Long Beach Road. Travel approx. 2 miles along beach to roundabout (traffic circle); take first exit onto Ferry Road (NY 114). After crossing bridge, turn right at stop sign onto Main St. and park vehicle.

This event will be canceled in the event of rain, snow, ice, or temperatures below 25°F. Call or e-mail Joanne at 433-0739 or jdelprete47@optonline.net to register in case of a cancellation or for additional info; you can reach her by cell phone on February 20 only (476-3761).

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER
Eagles and Harriers

Joe Grupp

In the beginning of December, I had reason to make a fast trip to Buffalo; one day going, the next day coming back. Knowing that I did not have to be in Buffalo until early evening and if I left home early in the morning and all went well I should have a cushion of between an hour or two as well as some rest time before having to be in Buffalo, and knowing that Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge was along my route, it did not take much thought before deciding to do some exploring there.

Montezuma is located between Syracuse and Rochester on the NY State Thruway, at the north end of Cayuga Lake. It serves as a major resting place for migratory ducks, geese, and other water-related birds, as well as for other migrants. Coupled with other local lands managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, The Nature Conservancy, and Audubon New York, and the cooperation of local organizations and landowners, it forms the 50,000-acre Montezuma Wetland Complex — a significant wildland managed for the benefit of waterfowl and other wildlife.

My trip started at home under dry skies and unusually warm weather, but it became overcast with showers and at one point a significant snow shower as I drove north and west. As I turned into the refuge parking lot, the sky was leaden, the air damp, the light poor, and the surroundings wet. After a stop at the Visitor Center, I started to drive along the refuge’s four-mile Wildlife Drive with a significant windblown shower pouring down and the car’s wipers going full speed ahead. Two good things about the weather were that I was the only visitor on the refuge road (everyone else was more sensible) and the shower lasted for only a short time.

Not far down the drive, I spotted a large dark mass in one of a number of tall leafless trees. Stopping the car and rolling the passenger-side window down, I got my binoculars on an immature Bald Eagle, a view impressive enough for me to forget the weather. While I viewed it, it started to get restless and then I noticed a second immature Bald Eagle approaching. I then shut off the engine and watched. The perched bird, with a few strong wing strokes, rose into the air. The two birds then flew together not far above the treetops for a time, before settling down on branches relatively close to one another.

Taking a break from watching the eagles but not ready to move on, I realized that the rain had stopped and I turned the wipers on to remove the water from the windshield. In doing so, I spotted a Northern Harrier (pictured) gliding at an angle across the road in the direction of the trees where the eagles were perched. It was a foraging-type flight not far above the cattail marshes and



well below the treetops. In a moment or two I realized that there was a second Northern Harrier headed towards the first. The harriers met at the edge of the marsh, near the trees that the eagles were perched in. They then put on an aerial show, flying near one another at times, rising into the air but never over the treetops, and at times gliding. At times they seemed to be flying with one another and at other times separate from one another.

Before long, the two eagles rose into the air and put on their own show, rising, circling, gliding, and swooping down towards the harriers in a non-menacing way. For a short time the eagles and harriers seemed to be interacting and at other times interacting only with their own species. The show lasted for a few minutes; then it was over. First one harrier flew off, then the eagles perched back in the trees and the second harrier left. Rain or shine, observing birds does not get any better.



BIRD WALKS
Joe Landesberg

All walks start at **9 A.M.**; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Call me at 467-9498 in case of questionable conditions or for other info. Directions and lists of what we’ve seen are at ssaudubon.org.

- Jan. 24 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Jan. 31 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
- Feb. 7 Massapequa Lake*
- Feb. 14 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Feb. 21 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Feb. 28 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
- Mar. 6 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 13 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner

*For Massapequa Lake (the southern end of Massapequa Preserve), use street parking on westbound side of Merrick Road, west of Lake Shore Blvd.



SIGN UP AS AN AUDUBON ACTIVIST

To receive a monthly e-newsletter and action alerts for national and/or statewide environmental issues, go to <http://ny.audubon.org/conservation/advocacy> and click on “Take Flight With Us.”

As it says on that page: “The only way we’ll be successful in our conservation efforts is with your help. We know that lawmakers care about your views and opinions. As a constituent, you have a unique ability to convey your concerns about issues affecting birds, wildlife and their habitats — and be heard like no lobbyist in Albany or Washington, DC. Helping is easy, won’t take much time, and most importantly, will go a very long way in protecting our wildlife!” You’ll have access to ready-made (but editable) messages that are just waiting for your name to be added to them.

OUR FREEPORT LIBRARY DONATIONS

We recently received the following from the Freeport Memorial Library's director, Ken Bellafore:

On behalf of the Freeport Memorial Library, I would like to thank you and the members of the South Shore Audubon Society for your generous donation of \$500. As you suggested, the funds will be used to increase our collection of science-oriented books. All materials purchased will have a bookplate added as a note of thanks.

The books that have been purchased are listed below:

♣ *A Children's Guide to Arctic Birds* by Mia Pelletier

♣ *National Geographic Illustrated Guide to Wildlife: From Your Back Door to the Great Outdoors* by National Geographic

♣ *National Geographic Complete Birds of North America* (Second Edition), edited by Jonathan Alderfer with Jon L. Dunn

♣ *Project Puffin* by Stephen W. Kress and Derrick Z. Jackson

♣ *Tales of Remarkable Birds* by Dominic Couzens

♣ *Woodpecker Wham!* by April Pulley Sayre

Other titles are on order and have not yet been received.

We are grateful for this contribution because it will help all of the residents of Freeport become more aware of the precious natural heritage we share. We are also honored that the South Shore Audubon Society has continued to hold its meetings at the library.



Editor's note: According to the Nassau Library System's <http://encore.alisweb.org> catalog, there are 338 items in Freeport's library with "birds" as their subject, many of which have been obtained using SSAS's annual donations (some have bookplates). They're available to all Long Islanders for free via interlibrary loan.

***** GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The 19th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is **February 12–15** (Presidents' Day Weekend). The GBBC is the perfect way to get birders of all skill levels, even new ones, involved in valuable citizen science efforts. For help in identifying birds by name, shape, or type, visit www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search/.

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Since then, more than 100,000 people of all ages and walks of life have joined the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! Simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world!

If you're new to the count, first register online at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org> and then enter your checklist. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login.

In 2015, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in more than 100 countries counted 5,090 species of birds on more than 147,000 checklists! In New York, 163 species were counted on 6,615 checklists.



During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe.

Help make the most successful count ever by participating this year! Then keep counting throughout the year with eBird, which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time, all the time.

Why Count Birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use information from the Great Backyard Bird Count, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions like these:

- How will the weather and climate change influence bird populations?
- Some birds, such as winter finches, appear in large numbers during some years but not others. Where are these species from year to year, and what can we learn from these patterns?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?
- What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Bird Studies Canada and many international partners. The Great Backyard Bird Count is powered by eBird. The count is made possible in part by founding sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited.

NOTE: If you participate, please also send your data to Joe Grupp! Info is on the next page.

South Shore Audubon Society
P.O. Box 31
Freeport, NY 11520-0031

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Americans Committed to Conservation



DATED MATERIAL

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Paul Stessel, VP, Programs & NAS Liaison	295-1137
Joe Landesberg, Treasurer & Field Trips.....	536-4808
Arlene Rawls, Recording Secretary	712-9514
Therese Lucas, Corresponding Secretary.....	221-3921
Mary Colway, Director (6/18) & Annual Dinner	887-0153
Anne Mehlinger, Director (6/18)	798-1412
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Emma Carpenter, Director (6/16)	637-4901
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Dolores Rogers, Welcoming.....	599-1224
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 \$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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ (Zip+4)

PHONE NO.: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Chapter Code C6ZR150Z (South Shore Audubon Society)

