# OUTH HORE KIMMER

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 7 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

APRIL 2018

### **NEXT MEETING**

Paul Stessel & Bill Belford

**DATE:** Tuesday, April 10, 2018

**TIME**: 7:30 P.M.

**PLACE**: Freeport Memorial Library

144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)

**SPEAKER**: Joyann Cirigliano

**TOPIC:** My Yard Is for the Birds: The Things That

Birds Look for in a Suburban Yard

After gardening, bird-watching is America's favorite pastime. Many gardeners are also bird-watchers, and vice versa. Sadly, because of habitat loss, climate change, and other issues, many species of birds are in decline. By using our yards, we can help our avian neighbors increase their numbers. Find out what our feathered friends (and other wildlife) look for in our yards and what we need to put there. Becoming good stewards and ecoscaping our yards can help restore balance and create safe harbors for wildlife in otherwise sterile environments. By blending aesthetics and ecology, landscapes that are both very attractive and highly functional can be created. Please bring questions, curiosity, and an open mind.

Our speaker this month is the president of Smithtown-based Four Harbors Audubon Society, an officer of the NYS Audubon Council, and a Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional. She is also certified as a National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat Landscape Professional and is the proprietor of Joy's Forever Endeavor, which specializes in native plant and wildlife habitats, ecoscaping, sustainability, invasive plant species, and other gardening and environmental issues. She also works at Atlantic Wholesale Nurseries in Dix Hills, an ethical grower and re-wholesaler that provides quality plant material to the horticultural industry, arboretums, and parks. She has designed and installed nine native plant habitat display gardens on Long Island to date. Join us!

**Pre-Meeting Book Discussion.** Arrive a half-hour early to participate in a discussion led by R. U. Abyrdar II (aka Paul Stessel) of the book that he and Sy Schiff reviewed in the previous *Skimmer*. This meeting's book is

Bird Droppings by Pete Dunne.

**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 NATIVE PLANTS INITIATIVE**

Betty Borowsky

Although SSAS has always understood how important native species are for providing food and shelter to our local birds, we have not always focused as much as we should on promoting their use. Recognizing that encouraging the use of native plants is an essential extension of our educational efforts, we recently applied for and were awarded two \$1,000 grants to provide education on this extremely important aspect of bird conservation. Support from the two grants will allow us to plant native species in two local parks, and to promote planting native species in local homes and gardens.

The first grant is a National Audubon Society "Chapter Collaborative Funding" grant. Marilyn Hametz submitted an application for a garden of native plants to be located in front of Tackapausha Museum in Seaford. Plants will be selected to attract the greatest diversity of birds and other wildlife possible. We thank Marilyn as well as Anne Mehlinger for her hard work in selecting just the right plants for the garden's specific soil profile and exposure, and, as always, we deeply appreciate Dennis Fleury and Isabel Fernandes's tireless efforts and dedication to Tackapausha Museum and

Preserve. We expect that the garden will be in place by late spring, and the signage and accompanying descriptive brochure will be done by fall.

The second grant is from the National Audubon Society's Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants. The objective of this new series of grants is to plant more native species throughout the United States as part of Audubon's "Plants for Birds" campaign. I worked with Betsy Gulotta to develop a plan to use grant funds to increase native plantings at the Hempstead Plains, and to educate the public about the advantages of employing native species in general.

Our Burke grant will also fund a conference on native species that thrive on Long Island. The conference will be held on Saturday, April 21, from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Education and Research Center at the Hempstead Plains (see bottom of this page for directions). Our speakers will be Jennifer Cappello-Ruggiero and Carl Flatow, from Cornell Cooperative Extension Program in East Meadow, who will discuss how to choose the right native plants for different areas, and which plants attract which birds or other wildlife. There is no charge and all are invited. If you wish to attend, please RSVP as soon as possible, as space really is limited because of the size of the Center. Contact me at bborow@optonline.net or leave a message for me at 764-3596. Be sure to include your e-mail or telephone number so we can confirm your attendance and notify you in the event of inclement weather.

# ★ BIRD WALK5

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. Check www. facebook.com/SSAudubon (you don't need to have a Facebook account) for cancellations, changes, and lists from recent walks. Directions and lists of what we've seen over the years are at www.ssaudubon.org.

Mar. 25	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Apr. 1	Happy Easter & Passover — No Walk
Apr. 8	Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
Apr. 15	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Apr. 22	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Apr. 29	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north
	side of Merrick Rd.)
May 6	Hempstead Plains*
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\*For Hempstead Plains: Take the Meadowbrook State Parkway to Exit M4 (also used for Hempstead Turnpike/ Nassau Coliseum). Continue on the exit road to Charles Lindbergh Blvd. west. Go a short distance on the boulevard to the first exit on the right, which is for Nassau Community College's East Campus parking lots. After turning, park on the right along the entrance to Hempstead Plains and its Education Center. See www.friendsofhp.org/site/index.php?id=9 for a link to Google's map.

# UPDATE ON THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DRILLING PLAN SSAS's Comments on the Proposed Expansion Throughout the Outer Continental Shelf

Jim Brown

Representing the South Shore Audubon Society, I have attended and given testimony at two different hearings on the proposed plan to expand offshore oil and gas drilling off the coasts of the United States.

The first hearing, called by members of the New York State Assembly, was held on February 14. The event was held in Smithtown because the only New York hearing scheduled by the federal agency BOEM (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management) was to take place far from coastal communities, in Albany.

Following complaints from numerous Long Islanders, a federal BOEM hearing was scheduled at the urging of Representative Lee Zeldin for March 2 in Brookhaven. Stakeholders and attendees were given only two days' notice, and most people learned of this hearing through word-of-mouth and notification from interested environmental groups, not through BOEM or its parent agency, the U.S. Department of the Interior. This hearing happened to fall on a day of a strong nor'easter. but like the earlier hearing it too was wellattended by scores of people who spoke out in opposition to the fossil fuel drilling plan. My oral testimony at both hearings has been entered into the official record. Below is the additional electronic version submitted to BOEM on behalf of SSAS.

Comments for the 2019–2024 Draft Proposed OCS
Oil and Gas Leasing Program

("OCS" above is Outer Continental Shelf — ed.)

The coast of New York was devastated by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Many communities along Long Island's South Shore and along the New York Bight still remain severely impacted to this day. There is no doubt that human-induced global warming and climate change have added to the strength and harrowing effects of recent storms — Sandy five years ago and Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria this past year. Rising ocean temperatures are creating more powerful and more frequent hurricanes in the Atlantic. Melting ice sheets and glaciers, along with rising ocean temperatures, have led to sea level rise. The rapid sea level rise we are undergoing increases the possibility of coastal areas experiencing especially severe storm impacts, from strong and even from moderate storms. A recent Newsday headline highlights this problem on Long Island: "Move Montauk Businesses Inland - Town consultants share plan to deal with rising sea levels." Montauk is now — as a result of climate change — even considering the option of "strategic retreat" from its endangered shoreline.

New York State, especially its coastal communities, is experiencing the ravages of climate change. Indeed the whole planet is experiencing its undeniable impacts. And what is the response on the federal level? The U.S. government is withdrawing from the Paris Climate Accord. Congress has passed (and President Trump has signed) a tax bill that includes the opening of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for fossil fuel drilling. And now this offshore drilling plan has been proposed, yet another potentially huge gift to the fossil fuel industry. The world is experiencing horrific impacts from global warming. Increasing are phenomena such as strong hurricanes, wildfires, floods, desertification and species endangerment. (It is estimated that 126 species of North American birds will lose more than 50% of their current ranges by 2050 due to climate change. Some bird species may indeed become extinct. Audubon realizes that climate change is the major threat to birds.) Also alarming and increasing are rising sea levels, loss of glacial ice, social unrest, emigration, and war — all likewise inextricably linked to the climate crisis we are experiencing. To pursue a fossil fuel drilling program such as the one the federal government, through BOEM, has recently announced is totally irresponsible. Climate change requires the rapid development of alternative energy sources such as wind and solar power, not the pursuit of yet more climate-changing fossil fuel development.

Added to the undeniable negative climate change impacts, expanded drilling also needlessly endangers our shorelines, wildlife, and coastal communities with the threat of accidents and spills. We do not want to experience along our coasts the damage caused by accidents like the Exxon Valdez sinking or the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill. These were huge ecological disasters that vividly demonstrated the dangers inherent in fossil fuel extraction and transport. It is estimated that one million birds were killed in the Deepwater Horizon incident, and a similar event off the coast of our state would affect seabirds and shorebirds, including the endangered Piping Plover, in a similar deathly way. Opening up 90% of our Outer Continental Shelf to oil and gas exploration and drilling through the scheduling of 47 lease sales will threaten all our shores — the Arctic in Alaska, the Pacific Coast, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Atlantic.

The South Shore Audubon Society, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society representing approximately 1300 households on Long Island, strongly opposes the newly announced BOEM program to expand drilling not only in the Atlantic Ocean, but elsewhere as well. Expanded drilling for fossil fuels will endanger every coastal community of the United States. Indeed this proposed policy will adversely affect our entire planet through its negative impact on our attempts to fight global warming. BOEM's new drilling plan is a huge step backward. We hope that BOEM abandons this ill-advised oil and gas leasing program and instead focuses its energies and

expertise on leasing well-sited offshore renewable wind energy projects.

We encourage the public and our elected officials at all levels of government to vigorously oppose the 2019–2024 Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The South Shore Audubon Society is also urging the public and our government representatives — at all levels — to support the federal "Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act," H.R. 3671. This legislation would transition the nation to 100% renewable energy by 2035, as it moves the U.S. away from fossil fuels. This current expansion of oil and gas drilling off the coast of New York (and elsewhere) would be illegal, and not even contemplated, if H.R. 3671 were the law of the land.

Editor's note: On March 9, Governor Cuomo requested that our state be excluded from the drilling program, which proposes to make over 90% of the total U.S. offshore acreage available, including two areas adjacent to New York.

# BROOKSIDE PRESERVE SPRING CLEANUP

On **Friday, April 20**, from noon to 2 P.M., SSAS is scheduled to have its spring cleanup at Brookside Preserve. We're holding it on a weekday this time because a class from The Waldorf School in Garden City will be helping us.

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 the trail guide and freshwater wetland guide for children that we published 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 gloves, grabbers, rakes, or clippers if possible, and friends of all ages.

# SSAS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Betsy Gulotta

Thanks to the much-appreciated support of longtime member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is offering \$500 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholar-

ships this spring for two 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. For information, call Betsy Gulotta at 546-8841, send e-mail to betsy.gulotta@ncc.edu, or use the application at www.ssaudubon.org/scholarship.asp. Applications are due by **April 30**.

# BOOKS FOR BIRDERS One More Warbler

R. U. Abyrdar II with Sy Schiff

For those of us just dreaming of birding in far-off, exotic places, this book is written for you! Authored by none other than Victor Emanuel, dean of the ecotourism genre, with the help of S. Kirk Walsh, *One More Warbler: A Life with Birds* is a wonderful read for all of us, bundled-up in our winter gear, and mentally planning that future "bucket-list" trip to some faraway place! Mr. Emanuel has observed more than 6,000 species of birds during travels/adventures that have taken him to every continent. He founded the largest company in the world specializing in birding tours and one that has gained the most respect in the world of ecotourism. Victor Emanuel Nature Tours are in a class all by themselves. (Sy is tapping me on the shoulder, anxious to get his side of the story in, so here's Sy!)

Founder of VENT (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours), Victor Emanuel started birding at an early age and with a passion for the hobby devoted himself to making it a business where none had existed before. People want to go to exotic places to see "rare" and exotic birds. You can join a trip, but when he started there were *no* trips to join!

Emanuel managed by personality, personal skills, and mentoring to amass a coterie of skilled birders from around the world. And, at the same time, he employed them to good use as friends and tour leaders for his expanding business. He knew them all. The essays are filled with name dropping of magnificent proportions!

The book starts with some biographical information and proceeds to a series of trip reports of both

tours and scouting expeditions for tours. This book describes trips with legendary birders, all of whom were his friends. So you can read what it was like to bird with Roger Tory Peterson, Peter Matthiessen, and George Plimpton,

among hosts of others. Go with him birding with a President and then getting invited to the White House.

The book is autobiographical and consists of trip re-

The book is autobiographical and consists of trip reports of places he went, some as a tour leader and some to just bird. Ordinary places — like the Andes, Mexican mountains, India, Antarctica, and Attu.

Since there are trip reports to "out of the way" places, lists of birds seen include many rare, one of a kind, and lifers for a birder who birded everywhere. While the bird names may have no meaning to a bird-watcher, a description of brilliant plumage of some livens up what otherwise becomes a dull listing of unattainable birds for the rest of us!

There's some high adventure in some of his essays, and bold experiences, like renting a luxury train to travel through India and chartering an entire ship to explore Antarctic waters. As expected, none of these trips come cheap! So this is a chance to read about them, in front of that fireplace.

Then there is birding in the Ramble of Central Park (don't forget May 5!, I interject). Here, it's all about spring warblers. And finally, birding the Texas coast where he lives. This is the ultimate travel book for an armchair birder!

Now, R. U. returns to create the finale: Read it and... ENJOY!

# SSAS NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In accordance with our bylaws, any member in good standing may suggest candidates for officers and directors for the fiscal year that will begin on July 1, who will be elected during our meeting in May. If you might be interested in helping to lead SSAS, please contact committee chairperson Jim Brown at 608-1446. Our board meets monthly in Freeport, normally on a Tuesday night. If you're good at taking minutes, we need you! Other slots need to be filled too.

**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.

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### **SAVE THESE DATES - DETAILS NEXT MONTH**

Saturday, May 5 — Annual Morning in Central Park. As usual, Chris Cooper (who was featured in HBO's documentary, "Birders: The Central Park Effect," and traces his birding roots to SSAS) has agreed to lead us through the Ramble during peak warbler season. Many of us will meet in Penn Station for an 8:30 A.M. subway trip.

**Wednesday, June 13 — Annual Dinner.** Join us at Pompei in West Hempstead for raffles, awards, etc.

Phone: (516) 931-1445 Fax: (516) 931-1467

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# LEONARD G. KONSKER CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

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### BELMONT STAKES: OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

Brien Weiner

Just when you thought it was "safe" - that there couldn't be any more major development projects in our already crowded southwestern Nassau villages - New York Arena Partners (NYAP) proposes to construct a sports and entertainment destination at Belmont Park. According to a Draft Scope (available at https://esd. ny.gov/esd-media-center/public-notices/public-scoping-belmont-park-redevelopment-project), the proposed project would redevelop the project sites with an arena for the New York Islanders National Hockey League franchise and for other entertainment events; dining, retail, and entertainment uses; a hotel; commercial office space; community center space; publicly accessible "open space" (I put this in quotes because the document defines open space as an area for basketball courts); parking (this would include the Cross Island, Belt, and Southern State Parkways with additional traffic); and two pedestrian bridges. The construction would occur in a single phase over a period of approximately 28 months, starting in 2019 and finishing in 2021. The project is located in the unincorporated hamlet of Elmont and would involve an override of Town of Hempstead zoning laws.

The project received a positive declaration of significant environmental impact from Empire State Development, which will serve as lead agency in preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) per the State Environmental Quality Review Act. Public hearings on the Draft Scope are/were scheduled for March 22 at the Elmont Memorial Library and comments will be accepted until April 6 by Michael Avolio, 633 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017; phone (212) 803-3729; e-mail: belmontoutreach@esd.nv.gov.

The South Shore Audubon Society opposes the Belmont Park Redevelopment Project. The project poses serious risks to air and water quality and the health of the community, contributes to climate change, and could compromise the sustainability of our water supply. Further, the economic benefits are questionable; the proposed arena is inconveniently located for most Islanders fans, and any additional traffic in an already congested area will hurt commuters and local businesses.

The development site sits on top of sole source aquifers for Queens and Nassau, and the project threatens to pol-

lute the drinking water for 3 million people.

New York City and Long Island already face
a water shortage from drought and heavy
usage, and the aquifers of southwestern
Long Island show evidence of saltwater intrusion as the water table drops. The Belmont Project

will increase demands on a shrinking water supply, exacerbate saltwater intrusion, and shift contaminants in the groundwater. The DEIS proposes to use older studies in

analysis, but needs also to use the Long Island Sustainability Study that was ordered by the Governor and is currently underway.

The project would send waste to Bay Park, but the Scoping Document fails to consider the current plan to send waste from Bay Park to Cedar Creek.

The Belmont area is already heavily developed, and the air suffers from heavy traffic and little green space. Building larger structures and bringing even more vehicles into the area will increase the incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases. Further, the buildings will be powered by fossil fuels, producing a significant amount of greenhouse gases and contributing to climate change.

The Full Environmental Assessment Form notes the presence of the following birds: Red-tailed Hawk, Turkey Vulture, Mourning Dove, Rock Pigeon, Blue Jay, American Crow, American Robin, Gray Catbird, House Sparrow, European Starling, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Song Sparrow, and Canada Goose. The Scoping Document acknowledges the potential for migratory birds to collide with the proposed buildings, but resident birds may also be killed in collisions and, at a minimum, new buildings should use bird-friendly glass. The project must also mitigate bird collisions with transmission lines.

The Scoping Document defines open space as an area for recreational opportunities such as basketball courts. For the health of both people and wildlife, for enjoyment and education, open space should be a green area for native plants. This would provide habitat for displaced birds and flood mitigation for rain and snow events.

As stated previously, the Belmont area is already heavily developed. What community character is left will be compromised by turning it into a major commercial zone, and one that may ultimately fail to provide economic benefits. Islanders fans want a more central location for their team. Commuters already complain that the Cross Island, Belt, and Southern State Parkways are parking lots. The Long Island Rail Road service to Belmont is poor, and the LIRR, like the MTA in general, faces dire budget and maintenance problems.

Please add your voice and send your comments to the contact given above.



VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982

### THE BOOKCASE Fastest Things on Wings

Frank Scoblete

Hummingbirds are indeed the "fastest things on wings" and although the Peregrine Falcon can descend to earth at 200 miles an hour, a hummingbird can fly its body length over and over again far faster than can the Peregrine. A hummingbird's wings can beat at 60 to 80 times a second, and some hummingbirds in South America can beat up to 120 times per second.

Still, hummingbirds living in cities and suburban enclaves, though they are accustomed to human beings,

with individuals so friendly they can be fed by hand — these tiny birds, some almost as small as a large bee, some somewhat larger than that — face extraordinary dangers. Among such perils are hitting skyscraper windows; blasting into cars, buses, and trucks; getting stuck in air conditioning systems and on fire trucks; hitting objects, products, and mannequins in stores; falling to earth in exhaustion (sexual torpor) after mating; and even in one case getting hit by a golf ball in midair.

"Everybody cries about hummingbirds," states hummingbird rehabber Terry Masear, author of the fascinating book Fastest Things on Wings. In her experience, bikers, goths, salespeople, laborers, CEOs, groundskeepers, tree cutters, professional and amateur athletes, along with some ludicrously rich Hollywood actors, directors and producers, all tremble in the light of a hummingbird's approaching demise. They seek Terry out at all hours of the day and night to get the necessary help for the little bird they wish saved. In a single year she will get close to 5,000 calls!

Terry Masear cares for injured hummingbirds in Los Angeles. During the hummingbird season, late April through the summer months, she will save over a thousand birds with her step-by-step rehabilitation techniques. Sadly some will die. These are not casual deaths, as Terry, despite her attempts at being "cold-blooded," often mourns them. Life is precious, even the tiny life of a hummingbird. A tiny life is still big.

As we are learning now, individual birds within a species are not all alike; just as we humans differ from one another, each hummingbird has his or her own personality. Terry recounts instances where hummingbirds react in radically different ways to her rehabilitation techniques. Some are docile, some inquisitive, and some look to mate — even in rehabilitation. Terry states that male hummingbirds are quite horny. I guess that's the way of the world when it comes to males.

A small percentage of hummingbirds, again predominantly males, are nasty. She recounts one such monster that attacked almost every bird in her aviary. This beast would nail the other birds with his bill, trample them when they were feeding on the ground, and bully them almost

nonstop even in the early evenings when hummingbirds typically grow quiescent. In fact, one of Terry's rehab friends said that such intensely aggressive hummingbirds — were they human — should be shot! Terry does not waste much of her time with such cruel beasts; she lets them meet their fate rather than risk the lives of the other birds.

The book is fascinating, well written, and hard to put down. Masear has done a wonderful job!

Editor's note: Frank, the author of 35 books and an expanding collection of "Bird Scobe" articles, invites you to check out www.frankscoblete.com.

## **^ ኢ**ጵ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ኢጵ

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., usually 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: Julie Bloom

Fact Meadow

East MeadowJulie Bloom
Floral ParkJoan Andren
Franklin Square Karen Strauss
Garden City Darlene B. Daly
Levittown Amanda Pachomski
Lynbrook Diane Horr
Malverne Eileen Armstrong Larney, Richard H. Funk
Massapequa Louise Catalano
Merrick Patrick Stapleton
Oceanside Joanna Corio-Tobin, Doris Fins, Carol
Martin
Plainview Nina David
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### **LOCAL COLOR: BUTTERFLIES!**

Brien Weiner

Spring is here and by now many of you may have seen its telltale Mourning Cloak butterfly, a large maroon-brown butterfly with a lacelike yellow band around the wings. Soon the Eastern Commas and Question Marks will follow — orange and brown butterflies with scalloped wings and a fluttering flight. These butterflies of the brushfoot family hibernate over winter and are sometimes irruptive in the spring. Other brushfoot butterflies such as the Red Admiral and Painted Lady migrate, but are also sometimes irruptive. And then there is the poster child of the brushfoots, the Monarch.

The plight of the Monarch has been publicized, but less understood is the general decline of the number and variety of butterflies that until recently frequented our area. Butterflies come in all sizes, shapes, and colors; can be found in all types of habitat; and vary greatly in survival strategy. Most butterflies, however, overwinter in the larval stage and do not stray far from their host plants during their life cycle. They fly spring through fall, often with more than one brood. Most birders are familiar with the ubiquitous Cabbage White and common butterflies of the Sulphur, Azure, and Swallowtail families. But pick up a butterfly field guide and you will find that half of it is devoted to the Skipper family, the LBJs (little brown jobs) of the butterfly world, small mothlike butterflies whose species can be common or rare, hard to distinguish, and are the obsession of many butterfliers.

Learning to identify butterflies can be rewarding for birders, because butterflies are most active when birds are less so. Butterflies peak during the warm part of the day, usually from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M., when birds lay low, and in the summer months, when woodland birds are nesting and more elusive. So butterflies can keep you in the field, as long as you have good insect repellent, because unfortunately ticks and mosquitoes like the same habitat, and good sun protection, because butterflies generally like the sun. There are many butterfly guides that will help you find and identify various species of Hairstreaks, Checkerspots, Satyrs, etc. Moreover, those that sit and sip nectar can be fun to photograph (which is often necessary for identification).

Planting host and nectaring plants can bring the butterflies to you and contribute to their survival, although it might take a few years for a butterfly garden to establish itself. There are many guides and databases to tell you which plants will attract which butterflies. Some common plants that attract a variety of species are milkweed,

that attract a variety of species are milkweed, aster (pictured), sunflower, coneflower, daisy, black-eyed Susan, joe-pye weed, Queen Anne's lace, lantana, and butterfly bush (buddleia). The butterfly bush is like catnip to butterflies, and

butterfly bush is like catnip to butterflies, and controversial among butterfliers. Some consider it invasive and lacking in nutrition, while others see it as any

port in a storm, and as long as it is kept from crowding out native plants, it can be included in a butterfly garden. Given that butterflies like weeds and wildflowers, and lay eggs in grasses and leaf litter, it is best to leave a messy garden, especially in the fall and winter.

Butterflies are important pollinators and indicators of the health of our environment. Their recent decline in our area may be due to a number of factors:

both climate change — extreme heat and drought kills host and nectaring plants and butterflies at all stages, and coastal flooding washes away larva and eggs while also salinating gardens and bringing other pollutants

pesticides — not only those used in gardens, but also spraying for West Nile by municipalities, reduce the "good" bugs with the "bad"

parasites may go undetected and predators may increase

development results in habitat loss

Butterflies are mysterious. Some years are irruptive for some species while others decline, and boom and bust years can follow each other with no definitive explanation. Climate change is shifting ranges northward. The butterfly population changes daily; many butterflies fly for only a week or two, so both timing and location are crucial to finding them.

A good place to start for information is the North American Butterfly Association and its local chapters, its resources, and its butterfly counts (www.naba.org). Good general butterfly locations in our area include Caumsett State Park, Muttontown Preserve, Planting Fields Arboretum, Bayard Cutting Arboretum, Lido Passive Nature Area, and Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. However, past performance is no guarantee of future success. Nearby and famous for its butterflies is Ward Pound Ridge Reservation in Westchester. All these locations also feature excellent birding.

A final note on NABA: In recent years, NABA realized its dream of a National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas, with spectacular numbers and variety of butterflies, a premier education and research center, and a yearly festival. (The Center will be featured on PBS Nature in "Sex, Lies and Butterflies," starting on April 4.) The Center is located near Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and other wildlife refuges, and is itself crucial habitat for many at-risk species of birds. The Trump administration is currently bulldozing parts of the area to build its border wall. NABA is challenging the destruction in a lawsuit, which also takes up the issue of the right of the government to appropriate private property. To learn more, visit www.nationalbutterflycenter.org.

# AT THE FRANKLIN SQUARE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Thanks to the efforts of Betty Belford and Alene Scoblete, an SSAS display is now in a display cabinet at FSPL; it will be there until the end of March.

# **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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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.

<b>Renewing?</b> Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS.
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