

butterflies and birds to the garden through the warmer weather.

The grant for Tackapausha was a cooperative grant funded through the National Audubon Society, and the grant for the Hempstead Plains was provided by the National Audubon Society's Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants. The work at Tackapausha is reported on the next page; the work at Hempstead Plains is described below.

The Plants for Birds Burke Grant funded a conference for the public on native plants held at the Hempstead Plains Education and Research Center on April 21, and paid for plants, seed packets containing seeds from native prairie plants, and signage for the new butterfly garden created in front of the center on July 21. The conference was highlighted by a talk on native plants by Jennifer

Cappello-Ruggiero from the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Nassau County, and by a talk on bee biology and diversity by Carl Flatow. Immediately after the conference, attendees had an opportunity to tour the Plains.

The garden was a wonderful community effort. Most of the weeds were removed from two areas in front of the center within two hours, thanks to the many volunteers who came to help. This included the efforts of Boy Scout Scott Henneberger, who took this on as part of his Eagle Scout project. He recruited friends and family to come and help with the job, and he made the butterfly boxes that were installed that day. Other volunteers were students in a Nassau Community College physical sciences class taught by Professor Elizabeth Farrell, as well as members of SSAS and the board of the Friends of Hempstead Plains. One hundred seed packets were assembled by volunteers from the Nassau BOCES Center for Community Adjustment with seeds that they and other volunteers collected from native prairie grasses and forbs at Hempstead Plains. In addition to the butterfly boxes, many species of plants native to the Plains were planted in the garden. Signs identifying the plants will be installed in the fall.

We were gratified to see butterflies hovering around the newly planted garden even as we were working on it!

So native plants not only benefit the environment by minimizing the need for fertilizers and pesticides, but they also provide specific kinds of foods for local animal species, including birds. A further bonus is that since they do require less chemicals and maintenance, they're also more economical to maintain. It's an amazing win-win situation.

If you would like to see which plants are best for your specific home's environment, visit <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants> for a recommended list.

We wish to thank National Audubon Society for stimulating us to encourage native plantings, and all the volunteers who helped provide the conference and make the new butterfly garden. Special thanks to Betsy Gulotta,

who partnered with us from the beginning, expediting all aspects of the conference and the plantings; to Amanda Furcall, the new Director of the Friends of Hempstead Plains, who helped coordinate the work on the garden; and to Marilyn Hametz of SSAS, who wrote the grant application and helped throughout.



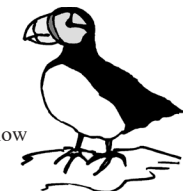
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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., usually on the second Tuesday of the month (third Tuesday this February), 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. 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:

- Baldwin John Kenny
- Bethpage Anna Hughes, Magnolia Syed
- East Meadow Susan Bernstein, S. Millman
- Franklin Square Henry A. Clasen
- Freeport Catherine Collins, Cynthia Gillen
- Garden City Gerald Goldberg, Joan Haskins Ripp
- Hicksville Eleanor Crosio, Elaine Peters, Doris Reilly
- Hollis Davera Banks
- Island Park Kelley Berotti
- Levittown Pat Burns, Tami Cooley, Joseph Pando
- Long Beach Elsa Farbiarz, Brandie Johnson, Michele Knox, Ken Petritz, Barbara Vitale
- Massapequa Lois Garrett, Janet Schnars, Vincent Sorrentino
- Massapequa Park Joseph F. Agovino, Theresa Bartlotti, Edith M. Corso, James Ferris
- Oceanside Mary Alfaro
- Plainview Bert Moskowitz, Zita Rosen
- Rockville Centre Ann Cantor
- Roosevelt Harry D. Vanager
- Seaford Theresa Barrett
- Uniondale David Brown, Bertha Stringfellow
- Valley Stream Mineo Yasufuku
- Wantagh Dorothy Earle, Charles Zegers



HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

The recipients of our annual graduation ceremony scholarships, arranged by Joe Landesberg, were James Hastings from Freeport H.S., Emily Lennon from Baldwin H.S., Jenna Lopez from South Side H.S. in Rockville Centre, and Ethan Maitra from East Meadow H.S. We congratulate all four and wish them success.

OUR NATIVE PLANTINGS AT TACKAPAUSHA

Marilyn Hametz

Our summer has been active, and the Tackapausha Museum’s garden shows it. With a National Audubon Collaborative Funding Grant, South Shore Audubon has added native plants and improved and beautified the garden in Seaford for birds, butterflies, and people.

Anne Mehlinger has put in an enormous amount of effort leading the project with the planning, purchase of plants, donation of plants from her wonderful garden, preparation of the site, and planting. SSAS volunteers who have helped are Betty Belford, Betty Borowsky, Bill Belford, Bill Clifford, Chris Braut, Guy Jacob, Joanne Del Prete, and me.

Even the weather cooperated on our first two weeding, planting, and mulching sessions on the mornings of July 3 and 17. After the working mornings we relaxed, snacked, and socialized.

Tackapausha staff and volunteers water during dry spells and help with maintenance.

Among the native plants added are lowbush blueberry, switchgrass (pictured), New York ironweed, aster, goldenrod, sunflowers, cardinal flower, and honeysuckle.

When completed, the SSAS Tackapausha project will include additional plants, ground signs identifying the plants, and informational materials. If you would like to help, please contact me at mwhametz@optonline.net.



OFFSHORE WIND MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER

The NYS Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA) has scheduled offshore wind public information meetings to provide updates on NY’s plans, including a presentation and Q&A.

The first meeting is at Long Beach City Hall from 6:30 P.M. to 8 P.M. on **September 26**. The second is at the Peninsula branch of the Queens Library in Rockaway Beach from 7:30 P.M. to 9 P.M. the next day. There will also be a public webinar from 1 to 2 P.M. on September 19; registration is required and will be capped at 500 attendees.



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MONARCH ON THE MILKWEED

Anne Mehlinger

Our most recent SSAS weeding session at Tackapausha, on July 31, was especially memorable because Betty Borowsky and I saw the first monarch butterfly on the common milkweed.

There is a nice stand of common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) in the front of the Tackapausha Museum’s garden. Milkweed is the only plant the monarch will lay its eggs on because its larva can only eat milkweed leaves. Common milkweed is one of its preferred, native species.

We saw a female monarch and she appeared to be laying eggs. Males have a black spot on the webbing of each hind wing; females do not. There was no spot on this monarch’s visible hind wing in my photo enlargement.

We will be on the lookout for eggs and larva at our next weeding session. We hope you will join us. Come for an hour or for the whole morning but do come and help if you can. For future weeding dates and any questions, contact me at amehlinger36@gmail.com.




SSAS THANKS ITS ANNUAL DINNER RAFFLE DONORS

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32ND ANNUAL NEW YORK STATE BEACH CLEANUP

See www.nysbeachcleanup.org for a list of cleanups scheduled for **Saturday, September 15** at Lido Beach, Jones Beach, and throughout NY.

**HEMPSTEAD LAKE STATE PARK:
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSERVATION DOCUMENTS AND INTERVENTION**

Brien Weiner

In the 2017 October and December *Skimmers*, we described our objections to proposed “improvements” at Hempstead Lake State Park (HLSP) including the loss of wetlands, the removal of trees, and the creation of new trails. The project continues to be a volatile issue. For those readers new to the issue, the HLSP project is part of the Living with the Bay (LWTB) project, the original purpose of which was to mitigate flooding along the Mill River from HLSP to Bay Park. LWTB is overseen by the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) and funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development with a grant of \$125 million for Sandy recovery. GOSR has allocated \$34.5 million of that grant to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) for HLSP, much of which is designated for increasing recreational use rather than flood mitigation.

SSAS filed Freedom of Information Law requests to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in December 2017 and May 2018 for documents related to the HLSP project. We were sent a CD of documents and visited the DEC office in Stony Brook to photocopy additional documents. From e-mail correspondence between GOSR and the DEC in August 2017, we learned that GOSR admitted to “segmentation” of the HLSP project from the restoration of the Mill River, while lumping the remaining projects in a “Frankenstein” report. Segmentation is prohibited by the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) because of the need to assess cumulative impacts. We also learned that GOSR was in a rush for a negative declaration of environmental impact on HLSP, but the DEC said there was insufficient mitigation, especially for the wetlands.



We believe that the comments provided by SSAS contributed to the precautions being taken by the DEC, especially since the DEC files included a copy of the SSAS letter that detailed the ways in which the HLSP project met the requirements for significant environmental impact according to SEQRA, and the environmental issues that needed to be addressed. Four other Long Island Audubon chapters and NYC Audubon signed onto our letter.

Nevertheless, there was other disturbing information in the documents:

In GOSR’s Tree Removal Application, 1050 trees will be removed for the Hempstead Lake and South Pond dams; this is less than the original 1200, but still a substantial number (an additional 1800 trees are designated for removal from the North Ponds area and 100 trees for a “greenway” through the park). There are references to an emergency action plan if the dam starts to fail, and to an arborist to prevent damage to the trees during

construction, but during a tour given by OPRHP on May 12 we were told neither of the measures were in place.

The application states that tree removal will take place from 11/1 to 3/31 to avoid impacts on bats and migratory birds, but HLSP is a hot spot for migratory birds in March, as well as nesting grounds for our Great Horned Owls. Further, stump removal will take place year-round, which will disrupt nesting birds and ground foragers. The DEC comments that an absence of data does not mean that rare or state-listed (as endangered or threatened) bat species do not occur; the DEC recommends leaving all snag and cavity trees, and cautions that there may be other species and habitats requiring surveys and permits.

In a North Ponds report, the DEC recommends reducing the dredging of the Northwest Pond to minimize the loss of wet meadow, and mitigating the loss of red maple swamp for the sediment basin in the Northeast Pond. A February 2018 Louis Berger corporation report discusses reusing the dredged material from the North Ponds for the berms. A letter dated March 1, 2018 from the DEC says much of the dredged material will be too contaminated for reuse. DEC meeting notes from March 20, 2018 discuss reusing the dredged material and capping the contaminated parts (adding \$7 million to the cost of about \$9 million). We need clarification regarding disposal or capping of contaminated sediments, and if capping is not financially feasible, we need to know if the alternative is sufficient to prevent further contamination.

The contractor Cashin Associates requested an exemption from cleaning up dioxin because of cost; the DEC thankfully denied the request. All the sediment testing required by the DEC is expensive and we need to know whether GOSR properly allocated the money. The Louis Berger report presents scores for wetlands improvement but does not explain the criteria for its scores.

The plans for the ponds have changed substantially several times. The plans call for constructing concrete sediment basins and bermed edges along wetlands, which goes against recent trends and the goal to restore the Mill River with green infrastructure. Moreover, the plans describe how large volumes of water (and the floatables with them) will flow over the floatables catcher. The plans recognize the need to catch floatables at their source but maintain that it is outside OPRHP’s jurisdiction.

The plans state that the most feasible cleanup will involve capture and removal of all larger floatables and bulk materials along the shores and in low-lying forested areas along the ponds, based on economic restrictions. However, the plans also acknowledge that excavating soils in and around the ponds in order to capture micro-debris and buried debris, or additional efforts to remove submerged debris and debris throughout the woodlands, would increase environmental benefit. We need to know the cost of a more-thorough cleanup. Removing contaminants should take priority over other HLSP goals like kayak launches and a new education center when an older

SHETLAND'S FAIR ISLE – ITS KNITTING AND ITS BIRDS

Jim Brown

This past May, I and my wife Gail traveled to Scotland. Aside from time spent hiking in Orkney and Shetland, and visiting Glasgow and areas around the city, we made sure to visit Fair Isle. Gail is an avid knitter and we both love bird-watching, so spending several days on Fair Isle became a major goal of our trip.

Fair Isle, officially a part of Shetland, is a small island, 3.0 miles long and 1.5 miles wide, located in the North Sea halfway between the Scottish archipelagos of Shetland and Orkney, groups of islands off the northern coast of Scotland. Fair Isle is considered the most remote inhabited island in the United Kingdom, currently with a population of about fifty people. It is somewhat difficult to get to, most people taking a 25 minute plane ride from Shetland or booking a 2+ hour trip on the mail and supply boat, the Good Shepherd. If the weather is not good, the plane will not fly and the boat will not sail. These transportation uncertainties add to the remoteness of the island and also to its allure. As it turned out, we were lucky in this regard — we had two smooth and beautiful trips out and back in our small Inter Island Air Service plane, enjoying the views while flying relatively low above steep island cliffs and the sea.

Fair Isle is famous for its knitting. "Fair Isle Knitting" is a technique with a long history and is Gail's favorite way of knitting. It has been variously defined, but seems at least to involve the use of several colors of wool knitted alternately to form a design. It is said that some of the island's knitting motifs resulted from Spaniards shipwrecked on Fair Isle centuries ago. Most of the inhabitants of the island live in the southern half, on small farms called "crofts," and some of them still knit. Currently the residents hand knit for themselves and for friends and family. The principal commercial knitting is also still painstakingly done by hand, but using old-fashioned knitting machines. Numerous woolly sheep and lambs can be seen on Fair Isle, but they are not as numerous as the birds!

The Fair Isle Bird Observatory (FIBO) has been studying bird migration and seabirds since 1948. We stayed at the Observatory's Guesthouse (built in 2010) for four days and three nights, participating in their educational programs and using the Observatory as a base for exploring the island and observing the birdlife. Particularly interesting was going out in the early morning on the staff's trap rounds, where birds are caught in Heligoland traps, then taken back to the Observatory (in small breathable pouches), where the birds are measured, weighed, and ringed (aka "banded"). One of the birds caught during our stay was a lovely Bluethroat, a strikingly colored migratory passerine we had never seen before.

FIBO is known as one of the best places in the United Kingdom to see migrants and rare vagrants, birds often

blown off course. While we were at the Observatory one of these extreme rarities made an appearance — a Song Sparrow was sighted just as we were arriving! This species from North America, so very common on our side of the Atlantic, had not been seen in the UK since 1994, and here it was on tiny Fair Isle! On our plane to the island, one of the passengers, a Shetlander, booked the flight just to see the bird. He was to prove just the first of many. A number of chartered planes brought groups of avid UK birders to the island. (One small plane even suffered a minor crash, damaging its landing gear — the broken plane was still there by the side of the runway when we left the island.) Others booked passage on the Good Shepherd just to catch a glimpse of the rare bird. Gail and I also caught a good view — the bird was feeding in the garden outside the Observatory.

We were in Fair Isle during the migration season. We were in fact lucky to get a booking at the Observatory because of the keen interest in the number of migrants and rare birds that arrive on this small, isolated island. Fair Isle is also home to numerous species and large concentrations of seabirds. Seabird species — Arctic Skuas, Great Skuas, Atlantic Puffins, Northern Gannets (pictured), Kittiwakes, and others — are counted and studied extensively by FIBO, especially during the late spring and summer.

Puffins were a delight to watch — groups of them were located within a short walk from our guest room. Great Skuas, huge brown birds (locally called bonxies), were omnipresent and could be quite intimidating if you approached too closely to their territories. We were told by the Observatory staff that the populations of these various seabird species were in trouble. The cause for much of the decline was overfishing, creating a loss of prey for these magnificent birds. We were told that, in general, only Northern Gannets seem to be holding their own, as they are able to fly great distances for food and can capture prey fish inhabiting deeper, less-fished ocean levels.

Gail and I highly recommend a trip to Fair Isle — especially for knitters and birders! For further information on both Fair Isle and its Bird Observatory, check out FIBO's website: <http://www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk/index.html>.



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