

In addition to anomalously high SST offshore in the North Atlantic, the 2012 Razorbill invasion accompanied the meander of the Gulf Stream in the nearshore North Atlantic. Such meandering can produce anomalously cold water close to southeastern coasts, as the Gulf Stream's currents carry warmer water farther away from land and dissociate, allowing colder water to move south.

Ironically, warmer SST off Atlantic Canada during spring and summer may produce an expansion of the Razorbills' preferred fish and crustacean prey farther north and east, and a corresponding increase in Razorbill population. Larger numbers of Razorbills may then seek food in depleted warm water and be forced to move south.

Research in 2015 by Richard R. Vent and Lisa L. Manne found that for Razorbills, southward shifts in winter distribution have been accompanied by southward expansion of breeding range, and increase within the core of the range. The immediate cause of these changes is unclear, but, as for most other species of seabirds whose distributions have changed with climate, seems likely to be the availability of prey. Razorbills feed on a variety of schooling fishes and their breeding range also expanded into the Canadian Arctic following northward expansion of capelin and sand lance.

Overfishing, like climate change, initially benefited but ultimately threatens the population of Razorbills. In the 1970s, overfishing of herring, a predator of sand lance, resulted in an increase in sand lance and in Razorbills and other seabirds feeding on them. Overfishing of sand lance followed. As people consume more seafood, they rely increasingly on fish farms to meet their needs; enormous quantities of forage fish, including sand lance, are caught worldwide and processed into fish meal and fish oil to feed farmed fish. In 2016, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council limited the harvest of forage fish.

Capelin abundance in the waters off Newfoundland and Labrador declined by 70% from 2016 to 2018, largely because of poor environmental conditions, and this exacerbates capelin's vulnerability to overfishing. Declines in forage fish such as sand lance and capelin could be catastrophic for our entire marine ecosystem of larger fish, marine mammals, and seabirds that depend on them, as well as for the fishing industry and our food supply.

Other threats to Razorbills include fishing nets, oil pollution, and hunting. Razorbills were harvested until they came under the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) in 1917, without which they might have been hunted to extinction like the Great Auk in the mid 1800s, which was hunted for food and feathers. With the weakening of the MBTA by the Trump administration, which gives corporations a free pass on the birds they kill, Razorbills are even more at risk to the fishing and oil industries.

Fortunately, Razorbill populations are currently thought to be stable or increasing throughout major parts of their global range. The North American Waterbird

Conservation Plan estimates a continental breeding population of 76,000 birds, rates the species a 14 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score, and lists it as a Species of Moderate Concern. Razorbill is not on the 2016 State of the Birds Watch List.

Although Razorbills occur only on the East Coast in North America (they also occur in the Northwestern Atlantic), Audubon's climate model suggests that climatically suitable regions may soon become available on the West Coast, though at the cost of over half of the current climate space on the East Coast. With the continued melting of sea ice in the Arctic Ocean, Razorbills may be able to disperse biogeographically from East to West. What prey and predators they will find is unknown.

Razorbill invasions are harbingers of climate change and indicators of the health of the Atlantic Ocean; conservation actions that are good for Razorbills will accordingly be good for us.

One simple conservation action we can take as individuals is to make sustainable choices when we eat seafood. For recommendations, visit the Monterey Bay Aquarium's www.seafoodwatch.org, whose annual pocket guides have been distributed at some SSAS meetings.



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www.wbu.com/syosset
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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. 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 in recent years are at www.ssaudubon.org.

- Feb. 24 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Mar. 3 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 10 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Mar. 17 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Mar. 24 Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
- Mar. 31 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Apr. 7 Mill Pond Park (see above)
- Apr. 14 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)

JOIN US IN THE TACKAPAUSHA GARDEN

Marilyn Hametz

Last spring, summer, and fall, South Shore Audubon improved and beautified the garden at the Tackapausha Museum for birds, butterflies, and people. With the help of a National Audubon Collaborative Grant, we added native plants, removed weeds and invasives, and are putting in signage and preparing informational materials.

Spring is on the way, and the garden will be active again. We will be maintaining it and have applied for additional funding to expand the improved area and add additional plantings.

If you would like to join our garden volunteers, please contact SSAS's Anne Mehlinger at amehlinger36@gmail.com or 798-1412.

NYNJHAT UPDATE

Editor's note: The November *Skimmer* (which is posted at www.ssaudubon.org, along with every other back issue we could find) featured Brien Weiner's article about the New York and New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Study and the concerns that she submitted on behalf of SSAS. Here's a January 31 e-mail sent to us by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' NYNJHAT Study Team. As Brien wrote, "The study, which is in the process of scoping an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), is evaluating five alternatives that combine structural and non-structural measures, and a no-action alternative, for an area that covers parts of the New Jersey coast, the Hudson Valley, New York City, and western Long Island Sound. Close to home, this includes Jamaica Bay and the Rockaways. The measures include beach nourishment, levees, floodwalls and seawalls, and storm-surge barriers."

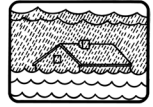
Dear NYNJHAT Study Stakeholders,

Thank you for your thoughtful comments sent during the extended Scoping Period for the NYNJHAT Study this past year. Responses to your comments will be shared in the Public Engagement Appendix to the Interim Report that the NYNJHAT Study team is preparing for release on February 19, 2019. This Interim Report is being provided to share these responses as well as study information that has been collected and analyzed on the various conceptual alternatives under evaluation in the study. This report is not required by Corps policy or regulation, nor is it identified as an agency decision document, but rather is intended to share interim study information as the Corps, in partnership with the States of New York and New Jersey as well as the City of New York, work towards identifying the tentatively selected plan early in 2020.

During the Scoping Period the public expressed eagerness to learn more about the study, including how the alternative concepts could address the substantial and pervasive coastal flooding problems that face this vast region, including sea level rise, and a desire for the

public to meaningfully engage in the study before decisions were made. In order to facilitate this, the study team will release this Interim Report and hold a series of Public Information Meetings throughout the study area associated with it.

Additionally, we have updated our website (new shorter URL: www.nan.usace.army.mil/NYNJHATS) with more information to answer some of the common questions received. Information about the Corps' project, coastal storm risks facing this region (including those from sea level rise), and how the alternative concepts address these ambient, frequent, and infrequent coastal flooding risks is available on the website and discussed in more detail in the Interim Report. On or soon after February 19, 2019, this Interim Report will be available via this website.



The Corps welcomes any input you may wish to provide related to this study as detailed in the Interim Report. There is no comment period or deadline for providing feedback. However, comments received earlier (e.g., within two weeks of our last planned public meeting, the end April) will be of most value in helping to guide future analysis as we work towards identifying the tentatively selected plan. As always, should you have comments or thoughts on this study later in the year, we welcome those comments then as well. Given the great concern and interest in this study, our team plans to exchange information more frequently via the website, social media, and public meetings through this year and future years of the study.

CONSERVATION ISSUES AND PROBLEMS: SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS

Jim Brown

In the last year, the South Shore Audubon Society has been involved in numerous important conservation issues, and at all levels: federal, regional, state, and local. These include:

- ① Supporting strong national climate legislation (Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act)
- ② Supporting strong state climate legislation (the New York State Off Fossil Fuels by 2030 bill)
- ③ Fighting offshore oil and gas drilling on the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf and in the Arctic
- ④ Preserving the wildlife habitat of Hempstead Lake State Park from harmful overdevelopment
- ⑤ Working to ensure that critical offshore wind development is done properly and is sited so as to minimally impact birds and other wildlife; and working to ensure that urgently needed solar power facilities are properly sited, so as not to destroy important natural habitat, an unnecessary swap of "green for green"
- ⑥ Speaking out to preserve the integrity of the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act
- ⑦ Seeking a ban on single-use plastic bags

⑧ Challenging environmentally harmful storm mitigation projects in the New York Bight

⑨ Halting construction of the Williams Pipeline and other harmful fossil fuel infrastructure

⑩ Fighting overdevelopment at Belmont Park

⑪ Preserving Plum Island

Our activities around all of these issues are ongoing and none of them are completely resolved at this point. The environment has been, as many of us are aware, under particularly vicious attack for the last several years. It is depressing to consider the necessity of the constant battles we must wage. I've often thought about the obstacles we face in reaching goals that we, as environmentalists, believe should be obvious and valued by everyone. Doesn't everyone wish the greatest diversity of species to exist? Doesn't everyone want clean oceans, free of plastic pollution? More generally, don't all people desire a healthy, natural environment in which to live, work, and recreate? Unfortunately I don't believe the answers to these questions are obvious or unequivocal. Not everyone shares our commitment to the environment.

Many problems that environmentalists face are due not just to a conflict in values but also involve having to confront powerful and wealthy interests. Carl Hiaasen, noted Floridian novel writer and journalist, has described how thousands of acres of wetlands have been destroyed in his state through the influence and actions of the real estate industry. Real estate developers have been granted the right to destroy wetlands, provided they build substitute wetlands in another area. Generally the substitutes are vastly inferior to what is lost: "Unfortunately," Hiaasen reports, "a shopping mall is much easier (and much more lucrative) than constructing an ecologically healthy swamp. Many of the artificially devised wetlands are nothing but glorified rain puddles." Real estate developers have operated so successfully in Florida through the power of their considerable financial campaign donations to candidates and elected officials, who in turn have seen to it that governmental agencies don't stand in their way. The developers have been permitted to trash the environment for profit. Is there any doubt that similar deals are carried out in New York, and indeed throughout the country?

My belief is that we, as environmentalists, must continue to argue for sound environmental values and scientific solutions to environmental problems. Doing so is necessary to accomplishing our goals. But it is far from sufficient. We must go beyond the purely "environmental" if we are going to accomplish the changes we want, the changes our planet truly needs. Solid accomplishments for us will only be won as we also move outside of our customary concerns and delve into wider social, political, and economic issues. I would argue, to return to implicit suggestions in the example given by Carl Hiaasen, that environmentalists should be concerned with such issues as corporate control of politics and public campaign

finance laws. To solve our many environmental problems, we also must solve the problem of too-little democracy.



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 to 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 last month's *Skimmer* are:

- Atlantic Beach..... Miriam Sanello
- Bellmore..... Steven Biegler, Angela Martin
- East Meadow..... R. E. Bohnenberger
- East Rockaway..... Richard Braverman, Roslyn Hoff
- Elmont..... William J. Campbell
- Farmingdale..... Samuel Shapiro
- Levittown..... Mary Sue Carr, Ellen Insana, Charles Mandell
- Long Beach..... Kate Patton
- Valley Stream..... Norma Brown, Alan Kalin
- Wantagh..... Mary & Joseph Coleman, Edward Koerber
- West Hempstead..... Eleanor Bateman



31ST ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

Bill Belford

The remaining waterfowl survey dates for the 2018–2019 season are **Saturdays, February 23** and **March 23**. For five days each winter, our group visits the various ponds in southern Nassau County from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park. Volunteers can help out for a few hours or the whole day. Call me at 385-1759 for more information and/or to volunteer.



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NYS BUDGET PROPOSALS

Editor’s note: On January 15, Audubon New York’s Executive Director, Ana Paula Tavares, responded to Governor Andrew Cuomo’s State of the State address and Executive Budget Presentation as follows:

Governor Cuomo’s proposals include an aggressive agenda that will tackle some of the biggest environmental challenges facing our nation. We fully support a carbon neutral future, achieved through ambitious goals like using our working lands and forests to achieve greater carbon sequestration, investing \$1.5 billion in responsibly sited offshore wind and other renewables that minimize impacts to birds and other wildlife, and banning offshore drilling for oil and gas.

We are thrilled to see Governor Cuomo recognizing the importance of natural climate solutions. Additional grants for forest management will improve forest resiliency and build on the success of Audubon’s bird-friendly forest management programs, and a ban on offshore drilling will help ensure habitats for coastal and marine birds are preserved. The vision for New York State’s forests, waterways, and beaches should focus on balancing human activities with the preservation of our unique ecosystems, a source of pride for all New Yorkers and a boon for our state’s economy.”

Proposals That Will Make the Biggest Impact on New York Birds and Other Wildlife

Continued investment in the Environmental Protection Fund. This fund protects clean water, open space, working lands, forests, parks, and waterfronts, helping birds and people thrive. The \$300 million proposed for the Environmental Protection Fund includes \$15 million for the Zoos, Botanic Gardens, and Aquaria program and \$500,000 for Regenerate NY, which would assist forest landowners in addressing the extreme difficulty achieving forest regeneration, partly caused by heavy deer forage pressure and competing vegetation.

Combat climate change and support climate-threatened species by requiring New York’s electricity be 100% carbon-neutral by 2040, and set us on the path toward eliminating carbon emissions from all sources. Audubon New York fully supports a renewable energy future, and projects which are sited with minimal impact to birds and other wildlife.

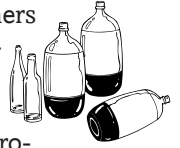
Accelerate the development of offshore wind and provide greater incentives for renewable energy. Wind power is an important component of New York’s renewables portfolio, and Audubon strongly supports the investment of \$1.5 billion in offshore wind and other renewables. Achieving 9,000 MW by 2035 is an ambitious goal, and we look forward to continuing to work with New York State to make sure that new wind projects are responsibly sited.

Banning offshore drilling for oil and gas. Habitats for coastal and marine birds and other wildlife are already threatened by a multitude of issues, including a changing climate, plastic pollution, pressure from human

development, and rising sea levels. Another threat does not need to be added to the mix. Audubon has witnessed firsthand the long-term impacts of other oil spills, like the Deepwater Horizon disaster. An equivalent disaster in the Atlantic Ocean would coat beaches and estuaries throughout the North Atlantic Planning Area, with a particularly devastating effect on New York State’s 117.5 miles of Atlantic Ocean coastline. The vision for New York State should focus on balancing human activities with the preservation of our unique marine and coastal ecosystems.

Reduce our reliance on single-use plastics. Plastics have become an abundant pollutant in our oceans and pose a major threat to marine and coastal wildlife. On average, an estimated 8 million metric tons of plastic enter oceans around the world each year due to littering, illegal dumping, and poor waste management on land and at sea. New York should do its part to address this threat. This proposal would ban the use of plastic bags in New York State – an important first step in reducing our consumption of single-use plastics.

Expand and strengthen the Bottle Bill. This proposal would place a five-cent deposit on non-carbonated beverages. Non-carbonated beverage containers litter our beaches, parks, Audubon Important Bird Areas, and other important habitats throughout New York, and are contributing to the proliferation of microplastics, which have direct impacts on our coastal and marine birds. The Bottle Bill must be expanded to promote increased recycling of these products and decrease waste and the threats posed to our environment.



Green Futures Fund. Adequate funding is essential to achieving our shared goal of protecting New York’s environment and natural resources. The Green Futures Fund proposals will provide critical funding for clean water, renewable energy, climate resiliency, and our parks.

Address issues of water quantity and quality for birds, people, and other wildlife by investing \$2.5 billion in clean water infrastructure and water quality protection. We all share a need for clean water. An additional \$2.5 billion dollars — with \$500,000 to be dispersed this year — is a substantial and needed investment that will allow New York to continue to upgrade and improve municipal drinking water and wastewater systems and protect source waters.



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