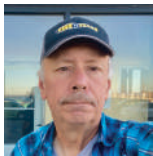




## Looking Up: The South Shore's Wacky Winter Waterfowl

by Russ Comeau



Russ Comeau from colder climates up north. The annual kick-off occurs in mid-October with a sudden, massive influx of Brant.

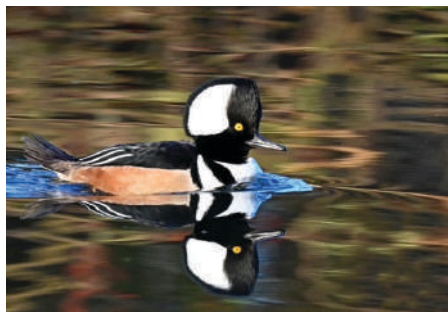
Many more geese arrive through November. Skies fill with white and some blue Snow Geese, Canada Geese, a few Cackling, Barnacle, Pink-footed, Greater White-fronted, and Ross's Geese.

Sea ducks that frequent the frothy South Shore surf include Black, White-winged and Surf Scoter, Common and King Eider, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded, Common, and Red-breasted Mergansers, painted Harlequins, beautiful black-and-white Long-taileds plus smallest of all: Buffleheads.

Bay ducks in the *Aythya* genus of diving ducks gather in impressive rafts of Greater and Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked, handsome Canvasback,

stunning Redhead, and Ruddy ducks. Their trusty allies are Common and Red-throated Loons, Horned and Red-necked Grebes.

When areas up north or elsewhere ice over, these wacky waterfowl flock toward the LI marine habitats that stay hospitable. To them, Long Island is their balmy Miami snowbird vacation destination!



Hooded Merganser by Jay Koolpix

They visit here through mid-March, when skeins can be seen returning north again or from whence they came. They leave us at a low level of relative birdlessness for a few weeks until the spring migration of songbirds fills our skies and trees again.

With few exceptions (especially Brants or Canadas), these winter waterfowl species are not found here much during spring, summer, or fall. A few individuals or bonded groups of some species may linger into April or beyond, becoming local rarities the longer they stay.

The bay, inlet, and ocean at Jones Beach West End is a popular spot. Point Lookout too.

Some species will frequent freshwater havens like Mill Pond, Massapequa Preserve, and other open freshwater, sharing it with Mallard, Black, Shoveler, Gadwall, Wigeon, Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and allies such as Pied-billed Grebe or Coot that occupy LI during spring, summer, or fall as well as winter.

So, bundle up and trundle down to the South Shore to enjoy our visiting winter waterfowl. Once spring arrives, you may not glimpse many here again. Not until next year. ♦

*Help us with our Waterfowl Survey.  
See details on this page.*

### Waterfowl Survey

**Volunteer for a few hours or a whole day!**

SSAS will conduct the 2022-2023 Waterfowl Survey on Saturdays 12/10, 1/14, 2/4, 2/18, and 3/25.

We visit a variety of ponds in Southern Nassau from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park.

For more information or to volunteer, call Bill Belford at 516-385-1759.

### Coming Attractions

Virtual Programs Tuesdays @ 7:30 PM • See page 4

**A 27-Year Wildflower Journey**  
with Nita Winter & Rob Badger • 12/13

**Snow Birds** with Ken Elkins • 1/10

**Meet the Terrapins of NYC** with Russell Burke • 2/14

### South Shore Skimmer

**Editor-in-Chief:** Alene Scoblete  
alene.scoblete@gmail.com

**Managing Editor:** Frank Scoblete  
frank.scoblete@gmail.com

#### Contributors

- Betty Borowsky
- Jim Brown
- Russ Comeau
- Louise DeCesare
- Guy Jacob
- Joe Landesberg
- Brien Weiner

#### Table of Contents

##### News

- Winter Waterfowl, Front Page
- Waterfowl Survey, Front Page
- TRASC Internship, p. 6

##### Columns

- On the Record, pp. 3-4
- Borowsky Report, p. 5
- Insights, p. 5
- Through Guy's Eyes, p. 6
- Going Native, p. 7
- The Wise Owl, p. 7

##### Events

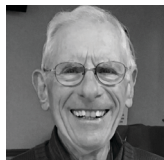
- Bird Walks, p. 2
- Snowy Owls, p. 2
- Programs, p. 4

##### Of Interest

- Ads, pp. 2, 7
- Mission Statement, p. 2
- Social Media, p. 4
- Donors, p. 7
- Injured Wildlife Hotline, p. 7
- Membership/Renewal Form, p. 8
- Who's Who @ SSAS, p. 8
- QR Code, p. 8

## Bird Walks

by Joe Landesberg



Joe Landesberg

Join us on our Bird Walks! To register, text me your name and contact information at 516-467-9498. We follow COVID protocols in effect at time of walk. Bird Walks are free of charge and start at 9 AM. No walk if it rains or snows. Text me regarding questionable conditions.

See [ssaudubon.org/bird-walks](http://ssaudubon.org/bird-walks) for December schedule.

### January | Sundays, Weather Permitting

- 1/1: No walk. Happy New Year!
- 1/8: Jones Beach Coast Guard Station (Meet in parking lot)
- 1/15: Mill Pond Park (Bellmore/Wantagh)
- 1/22: Hempstead Lake State Park (Meet in parking lot #3)
- 1/29: Point Lookout/Lido Preserve

### February | Sundays, Weather Permitting

- 2/5: Massapequa Lake (Merrick Road)
- 2/12: Massapequa Preserve (Meet at East end of train station)
- 2/19: Jones Beach Coast Guard Station (Meet in parking lot)
- 2/26: Hempstead Lake State Park (Meet in parking lot #3)

### March | Sundays, Weather Permitting

- 3/5: Mill Pond Park (Bellmore/Wantagh)
- 3/12: Point Lookout/Lido Preserve
- 3/19: Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens
- 3/26: Jones Beach Coast Guard Station (Meet in parking lot)

### April | Weather Permitting

- Sunday, 4/2: Massapequa Preserve (Meet at East end of train station)
- Sunday, 4/9: No walk. Easter Sunday
- Saturday, 4/15: Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area
- Sunday, 4/23: Hempstead Lake State Park (Meet in parking lot #3)
- Sunday, 4/30: Norman J. Levy Park

**For future Bird Walks, check our website & Facebook page:**  
[SSAudubon.org/bird-walks](http://SSAudubon.org/bird-walks) • [Facebook.com/SSAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/SSAudubon)

**Directions:** [SSAudubon.org/directions.asp](http://SSAudubon.org/directions.asp)

Join SSAS at Jones Beach to find Snowy Owls on Saturdays 1/21 and 2/11!

→ Register at [jonesbeachenc.org/public-programs](http://jonesbeachenc.org/public-programs) ←



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[www.wbu.com/syosset](http://www.wbu.com/syosset)  
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SILVER FOREST EARRINGS • GARDEN ACCENTS

The mission of the South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and to preserve and restore our environment through responsible activism for the benefit of both people and wildlife. ♦

## On the Record: Doug Tallamy

*An Interview by Alene Scoblete*



Doug Tallamy

*Dr. Doug Tallamy, of the University of Delaware, is an entomologist, wildlife ecologist, and conservationist. His books include Nature's Best Hope, Bringing Nature Home, and The Nature of Oaks—where he encourages us to create a native ecosystem on our properties and shows us just how to go about it. You can find Doug at HomegrownNationalPark.org. Watch the full recorded Zoom interview at [ssaadubon.org/video](https://ssaadubon.org/video) or on YouTube.*

### **In your youth, what sparked your interest in insects?**

DT: I was born loving nature. The insects I ran into most were horseflies and deer flies that wanted to bite me, so I was good at swatting them. It wasn't until junior year of college I took a course in entomology and knowledge generates interest and they're interesting things.

### **In your youth, what inspired your interest in conservationism?**

DT: I grew up in New Jersey in one particular development. Our house was the first to be built. The lot next to us was the last house to be built. There was a pond on that lot and I used to go to the pond all the time. In the spring there were toads that laid their eggs and the little guys developed.

One day, just as the little toads were coming out, a bulldozer came and buried the pond. That made an impression on me. My response was what everybody else's response was: we've got to save the places that are not already destroyed.

I never once thought of putting a pond on my property. I could have. But it didn't occur to me, until, what, 30 years later?

### **You call Aldo Leopold and Edward O. Wilson "the dreamers." How did they influence you?**

DT:[Aldo Leopold] talked about developing a land ethic, saying we have to have reverence for the nature that supports us. We can use the land...but we can do it gently enough that we don't destroy the nature that supports us. Who can argue with that?

One of things that [E. O. Wilson] was consistent throughout his career was his effort to save life on earth. He loved biodiversity. He didn't want to save it just because he loved it. He knew it was essential.

In 2016 he wrote *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life* where he said we have to save nature on half of planet earth or we're going to lose life everywhere. It's a pretty stark statement, but I'm glad he made it. It got people thinking.

Thinking about how to meet E. O. Wilson's dream, how to make it a reality has directed a lot of my work. The only model that is going to work is if we live together—if we find ways for nature and humans to actually coexist.

***"The only model that is going to work is if we live together—if we find ways for nature and humans to actually coexist."***

### **Describe the yard in which nothing moves.**

That's a typical yard. We have 44 million acres of lawn. If you take care of it, particularly the way commercials tell you to take care of it—it's dead. There are no pollinators, there is no carbon sequestration, you've wrecked the watershed, and you're not supporting the food web. Those are the four things every landscape has to do.

### **For bird lovers whose property is replete with ornamentals, what initial changes can we make to support birds?**

Reducing the size of the lawn. I don't talk about getting rid of it. You'll still have manicured lawn, but less of it. And you're going to put plants...keystone plants. They're supporting food webs best.

Birds need caterpillars, particularly when they're reproducing. You need the plants that make those caterpillars. If we don't have them in our yards we won't have thousands and thousands and thousands of

caterpillars necessary to make one clutch of chickadees.

### **Tell us about HomegrownNationalPark.org.**

DT: I got this idea years ago when I heard the statistic of how many acres we have in lawn, then 40 million acres. Gee, what would happen if we cut that in half? That would give us 20 million acres we could put towards conservation right at home.

Your property is the perfect opportunity to practice this conservation, to exercise your responsibility to good earth stewardship.

When you join Homegrown National Park, it's free, first of all. You register your property...and the amount of area you're going to be a good steward of. So if you plant that oak tree, how much space will that take up? You put that on there. If you put one aster in a flower pot, you're going to help that migrating Monarch, and that little bit of area goes on there. The goal is to change the culture as much as it is to get area of conservation.

### **How can we best provide native plant habitat under drought conditions?**

DT: Native plants in the right place and the right biome are good at handling drought. Your best defense against drought is to use the plants that belong where you are.

**Interview continued on next page →**

### **On the Record: Doug Tallamy Continued**

#### **What birds thrill you every time you see them?**

DT: The bird that excites me every time I see it is the new bird that I've never seen before. But the migrants come through every year. It's like seeing old friends again...and warms your heart.

Look, things have not totally disintegrated. These birds are still alive. I see the Blue Jays moving the acorns. Blue Jay...it's a common bird, but it's still fun to see. Just to see it happening is what I enjoy most.

#### **What are your favorite insects and why?**

DT: I really do like lepidoptera, the caterpillars and the adults. There are 14,000 species of them in this country alone, so it's going to be a while before I see them all.

Why? They're beautiful. I like beauty like anybody else.

They're so important. That statistic about caterpillars is coincidental. I liked them even before I knew that.

#### **Anything else you'd like to tell us?**

DT: I want to emphasize your personal role in addressing these issues. Because we all need healthy ecosystems, it's everybody's responsibility to take care of them.

Every corporation, *everybody* has got go be conducting their life with conservation in mind. If not, we're not going to meet E. O. Wilson's goal and we're all going down the tubes. ♦

*Watch the entire recorded Zoom interview with Doug Tallamy at [ssaudubon.org/video](http://ssaudubon.org/video) or visit South Shore Audubon Society on YouTube.*

### **Visit Us Online!**



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## **Coming Attractions**

### **A 27-Year Wildflower Journey with Nita Winter & Rob Badger**

**Tuesday, December 13 @ 7:30 PM**

→ *Virtual Program on Zoom*



Nita & Rob

Nita Winter & Rob Badger will dazzle us with photos of their wildflower journey that led them to pen the book *Beauty and the Beast: California Wildflowers and Climate Change*.

Internationally acclaimed conservation photographers Nita and Rob have been life partners and creative collaborators for more than three decades. They are the recent recipients of the Sierra Club's 2020 Ansel Adams Award for Conservation Photography. Website: [winterbadger.com](http://winterbadger.com). Instagram: @beautybeastwild and @winterbadgercollection. Facebook: @beautybeastwildflowers, @nitawinter, and @robbadger

### **Snow Birds with Ken Elkins**

**Tuesday, January 10 @ 7:30 PM**

→ *Virtual Program on Zoom*



Ken Elkins

Ken Elkins is back to lead us on an exploration of snow birds and to answer questions including: How do gulls and waterfowl stand on the ice? How do birds remember where they stored food, and what are the best foods to provide birds in winter?

After serving as Community Conservation Manager for Audubon Connecticut and New York, Ken is now Director of the Coastal Center at Milford Point for Connecticut Audubon. He recently developed *A Dose of Nature*—an after-school program for children on the Autism Spectrum—and *Bird Tales* for seniors in assisted living settings.

### **Meet the Terrapins of NYC with Dr. Russell Burke**

**Tuesday, February 14 @ 7:30 PM**

→ *Virtual Program on Zoom*



Russell Burke

The Jamaica Bay Terrapin Research Team has been studying terrapins in the midst of urbanized New York City since 1998, and has uncovered many surprising facts about our estuarine neighbors. There are plenty of reasons to be concerned about their future, but also there is reason to be confident that conservation works.

Dr. Burke is a Professor of Biology at Hofstra University specializing in research on local vertebrates including snakes, lizards, turtles, raccoons, and coyotes. He is ever-fascinated by how they adapt to our urbanized environments.

**Find program updates & links on:**

***SSAudubon.org • facebook.com/SSAudubon • Twitter: @AudubonSS***



## The Borowsky Report

by Betty Borowsky

**M**erlin is the component of the eBird app developed by **Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology** that helps identify birds. What a tool!

If you haven't tried it, here's how it works: go to the Merlin home page where there are four options. You can select either: **Start Bird ID**, which helps you narrow down the possibilities; **Photo ID**, which compares the bird you have photographed with the Merlin database; or **Explore Birds**, which gives you a list of all the birds in your area and relevant information about them.



The fourth option is **Sound ID**. This allows you to record ambient sounds. When you press **Record**, the app simultaneously creates a sonogram of all the sounds it detects, and posts the identity of the birds it has identified.

That's the marvel of the thing. The app cross-checks all the ambient sounds but can distinguish bird sounds from any others. Meanwhile, the recordings are automatically saved for future reference.

Birding by ear is wonderful. Bird sounds tend to be species-specific, so if you can figure out what the sounds are, you don't have to see that bird at all!

Of course, we are visual creatures, and I think it would be a mistake to consider the sound ID as proof positive, especially if you are unfamiliar with the sound and/or the bird it has identified. But let's say you hear a bird. The app says it is a Red-eyed Vireo. Of course, you see nothing. But you now have a big clue, and if you then see the bird, you can more easily confirm its identity by cross-checking with the images in the app or a field guide.

At first, I was skeptical about the app's accuracy; most birds have a wide variety of sounds. So last summer I tested this with two cell phones: one to play the song of a specific species on YouTube; the other to run Merlin's sound app to see if Merlin posted the correct ID. Merlin correctly identified the species every single time.

I am sure that Merlin isn't perfect—what is?—but I am confident that it will enhance your birding enjoyment a great deal.

Oh—and did I mention it's free? ♦

## Insights

by Jim Brown

### Nuclear Energy & Climate Change



Jim Brown

**R**ecent events surrounding nuclear power plants and the threat of nuclear war in Ukraine have heightened the ongoing debate over nuclear technology, both in terms of energy generation and war. The SSAS does not primarily concern itself with issues of war, but most of us undoubtedly hope that the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* will soon be able to roll back the hand on its Doomsday Clock, currently set at an alarming 100 seconds to midnight—*midnight* symbolizing humanity's self-inflicted destruction.



By Karolina Grabowska

The *Bulletin* views two factors affecting its Clock as primary: nuclear risk and climate change. It is disturbing that given what the situation in Ukraine shows us about the danger of exposing nuclear power plants to war, some people still advocate for the expansion of nuclear power to combat climate change. Recent fighting has brought back real fears of another Chernobyl accident, another Fukushima disaster, another Three Mile Island partial meltdown. There are still radioactive *hot spots* at the site of the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophic explosions, still causing a decline in wildlife and loss of biodiversity in the area.

Aside from the danger posed by nuclear reactor accidents, no safe method of radioactive waste disposal has yet been developed, even after more than seven decades of fission-generated electricity production. The production of tons of dangerous radioactive waste is a horrible legacy to leave future generations.

Although, while operational, nuclear plants are responsible for only small amounts of greenhouse gases, the whole nuclear fuel cycle, including the mining, milling, and enrichment of uranium and fabrication of fuel rods, is dependent on energy derived primarily from fossil fuels. The construction of the reactors and plants themselves, also use a huge amount of dirty energy. While not totally clean energy, as it is often billed, neither is it renewable. Uranium, unlike wind and sun, is a limited resource. For these reasons, and more, nuclear power should be no part of our energy future. ♦

## Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary & Audubon Center Summer Internship Program

by Keith Fives

This summer was a roller coaster of surprises—the good kind. I had the privilege of being promoted to an intern at Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary Audubon Center (TRASC). My job was to assist counselors for each group—a second-in-command type of role.

I helped the kids out with crafts, encouraged them to join in on the camp games, educated them about the sanctuary's rescued animals, comforted campers and co-workers, and made sure to keep a safe environment for the kids and wildlife.

I personally feel I work well with kids, so it was a fun and educational experience for me.

One of the things I learned was that newborn Madagascar hissing cockroaches tend to appear albino-ish, and as they age, their colors begin to show.

My favorite part of this experience was connecting with my co-workers. I tend to be a shy and independent person, and to my surprise, I was very outspoken and communicative.

Would I recommend other parents send their children here? One hundred percent! TRASC is a very safe place for children to be educated and gain friends. Folks are welcome even to visit the grounds and enjoy the beauty of nature.

Would I recommend donating to TRASC? Again, one hundred percent! Whenever TRASC needs extra funds for their rescued animals and campgrounds, donations are much appreciated.

This place has always felt like a home for me—I've been here since I was six. I'll definitely be back next year. ♦

# Through Guy's Eyes

by Guy Jacob

## Ditch the Plastic Containers



Guy Jacob

The United States is the world's largest generator of plastic waste—it engendered about 42 million metric tons (46 million U.S. tons) in 2016. Second and third, India and China produced 26 and 21 million metric tons respectively. The U.S. also ranks third among coastal nations for contributing litter, illegally dumped trash and other mismanaged waste to its shorelines. (Link1; See links below article)

Americans recycle less than 10% of their plastic waste. Even if your plastic makes it into your recycling bin, you're still part of the problem. In part, that's because the U.S. has a 30-year history of shipping half of its recyclable plastic overseas to developing nations lacking the infrastructure to manage it. (Link 1)

The recycling symbols and numbers found on all plastic containers are often misleading industry propaganda. Only certain plastics really get recycled, and poor people in developing countries—including children—work in unsafe, unhealthy conditions trying to separate the plastic that is truly recyclable (#1 & #2) from the overwhelming majority (#3-7) that is not. (Link 2)



Photo by Catherine Sheila

Even if our plastic bottles and containers are recycled, each time we eat and drink from a plastic container, we ingest toxic chemical additives. Throughout their lifecycle, plastics transport and release toxic chemicals globally, posing significant threats to human health, wildlife, and ecosystems. (Link 3)

Moreover, to create plastic containers, these chemical additives are mixed with plastic pellets that are made from a byproduct of fracked methane gas. Each time we purchase plastic products, we support the fossil fuel industry and all the environmental havoc that the industry wreaks. (Link 4)

But you can be part of the solution. For starters, never ever purchase bottled water. Instead, install a water filtration system in your kitchen, and carry your filtered water in metal bottles. I installed Hydroviv because of the company's environmental education initiatives and the quality of their products, but I'm not endorsing them. There are several companies that sell quality water filtration systems.

Whenever possible, purchase food and beverages in glass containers, which are inert and much easier to recycle. In time, we all can become more environmentally-conscious consumers. ♦

**Link 1:** "US Generates More Plastic Than Any Other Nation, Report Finds" | National Geographic: [nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/us-plastic-pollution](https://nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/us-plastic-pollution) (You'll need to sign in to read this one.)

**Link 2:** "Smarter: Which Plastics Are Actually Recyclable?" | Consumer Reports [tinyurl.com/ywhcj4xw](https://tinyurl.com/ywhcj4xw)

**Link 3:** "Plastic's Toxic Chemical Problem: A Growing Public Health Crisis" | Beyond Plastics: [tinyurl.com/2uhvmw37](https://tinyurl.com/2uhvmw37)

**Link 4:** "How are Plastics Made?" | Plastics 101: [tinyurl.com/9w3dhr54](https://tinyurl.com/9w3dhr54)

# Going Native: Hanging in the Balance

by Betty Borowsky & Louise DeCesare



Betty Borowsky

Native plants are hardy and resilient, but without care their survival hangs in the balance.

The exceptionally wet spring kept us busy weeding to control the spread of invasive plants. Then the summer drought brought new problems and some solutions.

We added mulch around the most sensitive plants to retain moisture and inhibit weeds. With help from Tackapausha Museum staff, soaker hoses were laid so plants could be evenly and efficiently watered throughout the garden.

Despite such adversity, there were relatively few casualties and most plants prevailed.

If success is measured not solely by the number of survivors but also by those who benefited, then the garden was a resounding victory!

Pollinators came in huge numbers—some flying, some crawling, some walking, and some by the busload. Still others took up temporary residence to rear the next generation.

Although our work has come to a close for 2022, we look forward to a new season in 2023.

We thank SSAS volunteers Betty Borowsky, Louise DeCesare, Linda Ilan, Marilyn Hammetz, Barry

McCartan, Anne Mehlinger, Sue Scotto, Ben Rosnick, and high school students Lily Goch, Hannah Montuori, Matthew Zavelson, and Sean Salazar.



Louise DeCesare

Special thanks to Dennis Fleury, Isabel Fernandes, and staff members Alec and Caroline for being our watering angels.

### Please consider volunteering.

Contact Louise DeCesare at [Lmdecasare128@gmail.com](mailto:Lmdecasare128@gmail.com) or (917) 548-6974. ♦

## The Wise Owl: State of the Birds 2022

Courtesy Danielle Scoblete



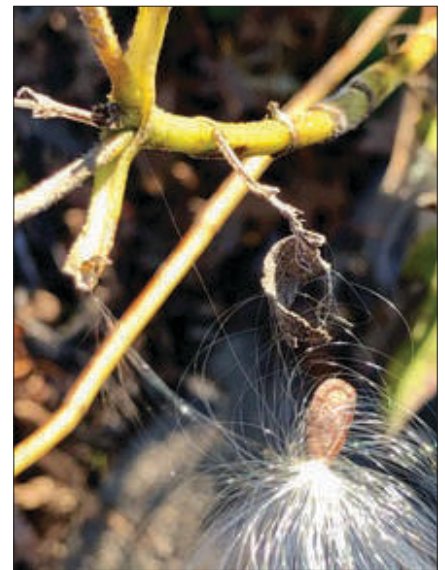
Wise Owl

The 2022 U.S. State of the Bird report finds that more than half of U.S. bird species are declining. Seventy newly identified Tipping Point species have each lost 50% or more of their populations in the past 50 years and will lose another half in the next 50 years if nothing changes; 1/3 of our shorebirds and 1/4 of our seabirds are Tipping Point species.

Paradoxically, U.S. birders are 45 million and growing. As J. Drew Lanham states, "The dire circumstances at hand demand we activate affection, profession, and obsession into policy and practice."

Read the whole report at [stateofthebirds.org/2022/](http://stateofthebirds.org/2022/)

By the way, Doug Tallamy comments on this report in a Zoom interview with Alene Scoblete, now available at [ssaudubon.org/video](http://ssaudubon.org/video). ♦



Milkweed Seed by L. DeCesare

**LEONARD G. KONSER**  
Certified Public Accountant  
990 Westbury Rd., Ste. 103  
Westbury, NY 11590



Phone: (516) 931-1445  
Fax: (516) 931-1467  
[lenny@konskerandcompany.com](mailto:lenny@konskerandcompany.com)

Use the form on p. 8 to renew your membership for 2023!



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[volunteersforwildlife.org](http://volunteersforwildlife.org)

### Thank You, Donors!

Marilyn Hametz  
Jay Koolpix  
Joseph Landesberg  
Brian Ohst  
Alene & Frank Scoblete





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Remember to renew your membership for 2023!

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Bill Clifford: 631-991-7989  
Russ Comeau, Social Media: 928-614-9186  
Louise DeCesare, Native Plants: 917-548-6974  
Betsy Gulotta, College Scholarships: 546-8841  
Marilyn Hametz, Publicity: 799-7189  
Linda Ilan, Programs: 935-1268  
Guy Jacob, Conservation Co-Chair: 312-3348  
Jay Koolpix: NaturePhotography7@gmail.com  
Richard Kopsco: 825-6792  
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Dolores Rogers, Welcoming: 426-9012

**Join South Shore Audubon Society!**  
Become a member of our local chapter for **only \$20 per year!** Receive our newsletter, *South Shore Skimmer*, which includes listings for our local outings and programs as well as the latest on environmental issues and initiatives.  
To **join or renew** your membership, make your check payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** and send the form and check to: **PO Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.**

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Circle One: JOIN or RENEW

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