

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOL. 9, NO. 4

DECEMBER 1978

MEETING: TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12TH
FREEPORT LIBRARY
8:15 P.M.

GUEST SPEAKER: Helen Hayes "Ternwatch"

This program will feature a fascinating 16 mm. film concerning the monitoring of tern populations on Great Gull Island. This island located at the eastern end of Long Island Sound, has a complex history. In 1949, following a long period of army occupation, Great Gull Island has been monitored by the Linnaean Society, under the auspices of the American Museum of Natural History. Helen Hayes spends her summers on this island researching the tern population as an ongoing project of the Linnaean Society. She will also present a small slide show and talk on the bird banding program at Great Gull. This should be a very exciting evening and an easy way for us to appreciate the project in lieu of a pilgrimage to Great Gull Island during the summer months.

BIRD SEED SAVINGS DAY:

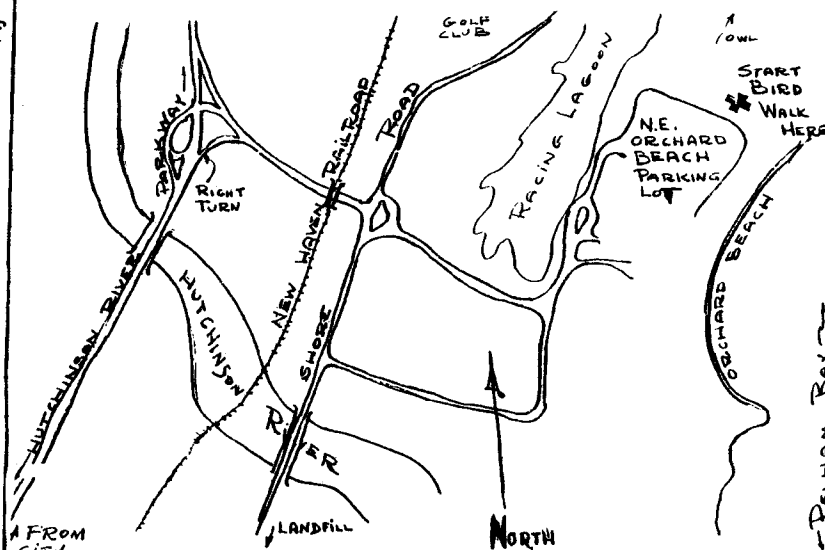
Our November sale was our best effort yet, with close to 36,000 lbs. of seed sold. A special thanks is to be given to those people who helped. Their assistance made the sale go so smoothly. Next month's Skimmer will contain information on our upcoming Jan. 27th Seed Sale. Paul Butkereiit

AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILM/LECTURE SERIES

January 3, 1979--John Wilson "Galapagos"

John Wilson will present a film and lecture on the Galapagos at the Town Hall Pavilion, Hempstead at 8:15 P.M. on January 3, 1979. For free tickets (limit of 2) send a stamped self-addressed envelope, specifying date and number of tickets to: Audubon Wildlife Film/Lecture Series, 200 North Franklin St. Hempstead, N.Y. 11550

DIRECTIONS TO PELHAM BAY BIRDWALK:



The Nature Conservancy is having its 4th Annual Art Show and Sale on Sunday, December 3rd, from 1:00-6:00 P.M. at the Uplands Farm Barn, Lawrence Hill Road, Cold Spring Harbor. Donation-\$5.00 per couple.

ACTION ALERT

Newspaper reports indicate that Peter A. Berle may not continue as the state's Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation even though he has said he would stay if asked.

I hope that you will agree that this is a matter of great concern as Peter has been one of the finest Commissioners of this generation. He is extremely capable, knowledgeable, and courageous. He has a miraculous grasp of all state-wide environmental issues. Even those who disagree with him on occasion, respect his sincere and informed opinions and decisions.

He has effectively implemented many provisions of the State Land Master Plan. He has cautiously, but steadfastly, kept Olympic projects on schedule. And he has untiringly fought to clean up our land, air and water.

I urge all of you to write Governor Hugh L. Carey at the Executive Chambers, State Capitol, Albany 12224. Ask him to please retain Peter Berle as the person who can balance a healthy and diversified environment with an improving state economy. Thank you.

Harold A. Jerry, Jr.
Chairman
The Adirondack Council

NOTE: The National Audubon Society is a member of the Adirondack Council.



SEASON'S
GREETINGS

The following appeared on the "Letters to the Editor" page in Newsday's October 23rd edition.

Welcome Bridge?

As a resident of Long Island, I cannot help but rejoice over all the wonderful changes for the common good that will be catalyzed by the construction of a bridge connecting Long Island with Connecticut.

The first obvious benefit will be to provide an additional route to the commercial traffic flowing between the New York-New Jersey and Connecticut-Massachusetts areas. The increased traffic on the under-used LIE is going to make driving on it even more desirable than it is now. A little known and unappreciated fact is that some of the additional traffic might actually have Long Island as its destination.

The industries attracted by the bridge will set up prettily decorated factories to cover the ugly pine barrens and potato fields on the eastern end of the Island.

While some people might express concern over the impact of additional industry and traffic on the environment, the present good air quality of the Island can easily absorb this load and still be below the federal minimum hazard standards. Only a small number of wells have been polluted by industry and we have several hundred more to pollute before our drinking water becomes acutely toxic.

The additional schools, services, and sewers needed by an expanding population will provide our deserving county executives, who gave us the national tax-rate championship, the opportunity to try for the world title.

Then the proper imagination and planning, we can guide the forces set loose by the construction of the bridge to develop L.I. into the industrial region similar to northern New Jersey. But best of all, the bridge will give the unappreciative Long Islander, who opposes these changes and has the gall to like the Island the way it is, a convenient way to get off.

N.J. Shevchik
Stony Brook

Due to an error on the editor's part, Chapter 4 of Al Lemke's series on the Galapagos was published instead of Chapter 3. Therefore, Chapter 3 is being printed this month. We apologize for the error.

Las Islas Encantadas
The Galapagos Islands

3. Tower -Pirates of the Sky- Frigate Birds

We wandered away from the beach along a tidal creek which unfortunately was at the time under water. Since it was liberally strewn with large chunks of frequently sharp lava, we were forced to wear our shoes or sneakers, which, of course, immediately became waterlogged. But any discomfort was promptly forgotten as we gazed enthralled at the hordes of red-footed boobies and great frigate birds in virtually every bush.

They were sitting on their nests or flying about their business without paying us the slightest bit of attention. Here, as on all the other islands we later visited, we were struck by the disparity in the actual breeding schedule. This, of course, is ideal for any visitor, as one is offered the opportunity of watching the almost complete breeding cycle within a short period of time. Many birds were incubating their eggs while others were proud parents of white-downed chicks, some of which were tiny and could not have been more than a few days old, while the earlier hatchlings made their presence known by vigorous movements of their stubby little wings. The late bloomers were still in the process of "building" those sloppy nests and going through courtship rituals. Many juveniles from the previous year were quarrelling for space to land on dead trees on the nearby cliff, and making lots of noise.

Although the reasons are far from obvious, frigates and boobies are placed in the same order, pelecaniformes. They do not have much in common. Frigates are entirely and

superbly adapted for aerial life. With an 8 to 9-foot wing span and a weight of less than 3 pounds, their ratio of wing area to body weight is the largest of any sea bird. They fly with leisurely, buoyant wing beats, and soar or glide effortlessly. They have been recorded at a height of 4,000 feet and a distance of 1,000 miles from the nearest land.

Their plumage is not fully waterproof, and their ability to alight on water is in dispute. Thornton writes "a frigate cannot rise from the water, and certainly none ever land on the surface." Nelson states "they rarely settle on water, though, contrary to some opinions, they are certainly capable of rising even in a flat calm. I saw frigates splash into calm water in an attempt to seize a sinking fish, and then rise from the surface." It should be noted that Nelson bases his conclusions on actual observation; he is a highly reliable scientist frequently quoted by Thornton.

In any event, their limited fishing ability requires a supplemental food supply, and this they get by pirating food from the boobies and each other. A frigate, or more often, a group, hound boobies in the air and even snatch food from their bills while they are feeding their young. They appear to be able to tell when a red-foot has a fish, and Nelson writes that he and his wife learned to distinguish a red-foot with a catch by his call. The frigates seldom seriously attack boobies, but they certainly manhandle them, seizing them by the tail or wings and capsizing them. With their superior flying ability they are almost always successful in forcing a hapless booby to disgorge his catch. Rather to our surprise, most of the frigates we saw were very peaceful, and we rarely witnessed this harassment.

There are two species of frigates, the great and the magnificent, the former being far more common on Tower.

The males are virtually identical and almost impossible to identify, but the females differ in that the magnificent has a black throat and white belly while the under side of a great is almost all white. Juveniles of both species have a white head. Frigates have tiny, unwebbed feet, with the vestiges of a fringe between the toes. They

are useless for swimming or walking, but extremely flexible and prehensile and very useful among the twigs and branches in which they usually nest.

The nest consists of an untidy platform of twigs constructed on low shrubs among their victims, the boobies. The nest material is collected in flight, sometimes torn from bushes but more often stolen from a red-foot. Usually a single egg is laid; incubation takes 55 days, with most of the egg sitting done by the female with relief spells by the male. The young are fed by their parents for over six months, long after they have learned to fly. The frigate breeds only in alternate years.

A few of the males we saw had their brilliant red gular sacs inflated, advertising for females.

On our return to the beach we passed several very tame yellow-crowned night herons, adults and juveniles. A number of sea lions were swimming just off-shore, and I decided to join them. They swam within two or three feet of me, in their curious, playful way, to get a closer look. In quality the Galapagos beaches cannot compare with Long Island's - but who ever heard of swimming with sea lions at Jones Beach?

Al Lemke

Gardiner Gregory, founder of the Gregory Museum in Hicksville, recently retired to Castine, Maine. He was nice enough to send a letter with his Bird Feeder Survey which I would like to share with you. As you will see, he has a very impressive Bird Feeder Survey.

Birding in Maine

We are enjoying our retirement in Castine, Maine. For the past two weeks we have been enjoying Indian summer.

This summer I raised over 400 cecropia and polyphemus caterpillars to cocoons. There appears to be many more insects in Maine - probably due to lack of spraying and more open spaces.

Regularly we have 3-6 deer in our fields and garden. They drink water out of our Japanese garden. A red fox, several woodchuck, porcupine, and raccoons frequently visit us. I have had to pull porcupine quills from our two dogs.

Since we are situated between the Penobscot and Bagaduce Rivers near Penobscot Bay, we are along bird migration routes, especially ducks, geese, and other water birds. We have listed the following birds that have fed in our backyard, woodlands, and at our feeders:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| robin | phoebe(nest under garage) |
| blue jay | eastern kingbird |
| grackle | crested flycatcher |
| starling | crow |
| Amer.goldfinch | partridge(ruf.grouse) |
| purple finch | pheasant |
| barn swallow | mourning dove |
| bank swallow | eastern goshawk |
| sl. col. junco | red-tailed hawk |
| pine grosbeak | meadowlark |
| evening grosbeak | eastern kingbird |
| pine siskin | catbird |
| black-cap. chickadee | cedar waxwing |
| wh. breasted nuthatch | loggerhead shrike |
| red-breasted nuthatch | yellow-throated vireo |
| ruby-crowned kinglet | br.headed cowbird |
| olive-backed thrush | bobolink |
| hermit thrush | whip-poor-will |
| veery | bobwhite |
| red-winged blackbird | sparrows-various species-most spectacular |
| white-crowned and chipping sparrow | |

The following are birds seen along our waterfront:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| loon | mallard |
| bittern | black duck |
| blue heron | wood duck |
| green heron | ring-necked duck |
| black-bellied plover | harlequin duck |
| semipalmated plover | common eider |
| surf scoter | Canada goose |
| herring gull | American scoter |
| Arctic tern | |

IMPORTANT!! If you purchased a Birds of North America Field Guide by Robbins, please check the pages to make sure none are missing-we have received a few complaints from members. If any are missing, please return the field guide to us at our monthly meeting. Thank you.

BIRD FEEDER SURVEY
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER



BIRD FEEDER SURVEY
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

MOURNING DOVE	<u>27</u>
DOWNY WOODPECKER	<u>4</u>
BLUE JAY	<u>14</u>
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	<u>5</u>
TUFTED TITMOUSE	<u>3</u>
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	<u>1</u>
MOCKINGBIRD	<u>6</u>
STARLING	<u>25</u>
HOUSE SPARROW	<u>51</u>
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	<u>3</u>
COMMON GRACKLE	<u>13</u>
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	<u>3</u>
CARDINAL	<u>7</u>
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	<u>14</u>
HOUSE FINCH	<u>29</u>
SLATE-COLORED JUNCO	<u>1</u>
SONG SPARROW	<u>3</u>
YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER	<u>1</u>
ROBIN	<u>2</u>
HERMIT THRUSH	<u>2</u>
TOWHEE	<u>3</u>
CROW	<u>4</u>
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW	<u>1</u>
CREEPER	<u>1</u>

Please keep a log of the following birds at your feeders -- the deadline for this Survey is January 15. (Take a count of the birds at your feeder one day per month, then put the number of each bird seen on the survey.) Send your computations to: Miriam Raynor, 127 Morris Avenue, Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11570.

MOURNING DOVE	_____
DOWNY WOODPECKER	_____
BLUE JAY	_____
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	_____
TUFTED TITMOUSE	_____
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	_____
MOCKINGBIRD	_____
STARLING	_____
HOUSE SPARROW	_____
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	_____
HAIRY WOODPECKER	_____
COMMON GRACKLE	_____
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	_____
CARDINAL	_____
EVENING GROSBEAK	_____
CATBIRD	_____
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	_____
HOUSE FINCH	_____
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	_____
SLATE-COLORED JUNCO	_____
TREE SPARROW	_____
SONG SPARROW	_____
FOX SPARROW	_____
YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER	_____
PINE SISKIN	_____
ROBIN	_____
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	_____

NOTE: Because many of these sightings have not been verified by a second party, we cannot attest to their total accuracy. This Bird Feeder Survey is solely for the enjoyment of our members and to encourage bird watching in our area.

Thanks to all of you who sent in your Bird Feeder Survey for October-November, but we need many more of you to send them in so that we can get an accurate count of the birds in our area. Please help us by remembering to send in your Nov.-Dec. count. Thank you.

AT THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT SANCTUARY: Programs begin at 1:30 P.M.

DECEMBER 10	Christmas Celebration for the Birds. Help trim a tree for the birds and meet special guest visitor of the month!
JANUARY 14	Wood Burning Stoves, An Alternative Source of Energy
FEBRUARY 11	Indians of Long Island-Exploring Man's Ways of Surviving Winter-Natural food and drink
MARCH 11	Whale Tales-Flight of the Whales-the staff of the Cold Spring Harbor Museum will present a special program
APRIL 8	T.R. Sanctuary Critters-Wild, Feathered and Furred!
MAY 13	Mothers Day Special "Spring Walk of T.R.S."

JANUARY NEWS DEADLINE DEC 15

NEXT MEETING-----TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, FREEPORT LIBRARY, 8:15 P.M.

FIELD TRIPS: Starting time - 9:30 A.M.

No walk if it rains, snows, or temperature is 25 degrees or below.

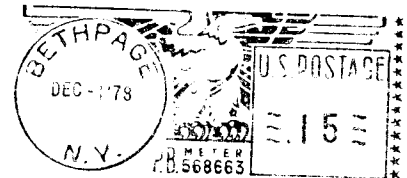
- NOV. 12 Tobay, J.F.K. Sanctuary
- 19 Zach's Bay, Pkg.Fld.#4, N.E. corner
- 26 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- DEC. 3 Pelham Bay-Throg's Neck Bridge, right toll booth at 9:00 A.M. side
- 10 West End #2, N.E. corner
- 17 West End #2, N.W. corner
- JAN. 7 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- 14 Zach's Bay, Pkg.Fld.#4, N.E. corner
- 21 Tobay, J.F.K. Sanctuary
- 28 Short Beach, West End #2, N.E. corner
- FEB. 4 West End #2, N.W. corner
- 11 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- 18 Zach's Bay, Pkg.Fld.#4, N.E. corner

OFFICERS

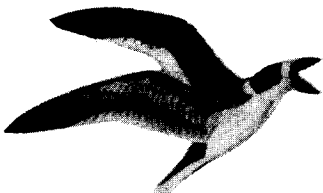
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- T. Stoltz-Membership-LY 3-4554
- 19 Broadway, Lynbrook 11563
- E. Kutner-Birding-IV 6-7667
- 461 Dunster Ct., W.Hempstead 11552

BINOCULAR SAVINGS are available thru **Barbara Tancredi** evenings 7-9 887-2491
 the club. Save 30 to 50% on Bushnell **Bill Herzog** evenings 7 to 9 791-7886
 and Bausch and Lomb binoculars and **Asa Starkweather** 599-5824
 scopes. See us at meetings and **Joan Butkerei** 593-4554
 birdwalks or call the committee members listed.

SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 31
FREEPORT, N.Y. 11520



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