

# SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 21, NUMBER 6 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

MARCH 1992

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Reprieve

Joan Butkerei

It's nothing short of miraculous, the sense of satisfaction and belonging you can feel while sitting in the warmth of your house on a gray winter day, watching the color and life at a bird-feeding station. Splashes of Cardinal red and Blue Jay blue arrive, as if by request, to accent the white, brown, and gray of a snow-dusted Long Island backyard. Surprises occur as well: the yellow, black, and white of a passing Evening Grosbeak; the soft peach color of the underwing of a tiny, neat Tufted Titmouse; and the sudden arrivals and departures of Dark-eyed Juncos and their companions, the White-throated Sparrows, with their yellow lores. Many of us entice as wide a variety of bird life as possible, using water heaters, useful plantings for cover, and a wide assortment of seeds and feeders. So it was with mixed appreciation and anxiety that we received a Sharp-shinned Hawk into our flock of feeding station regulars this winter. This hawk is nervy, undaunted by humans, squirrels, or cats; poised and singular in her attention to the deed at hand, which is to catch herself a meal. Much to my relief, she is infrequently successful. My backyard is my psyche's soother; death, even when life-giving, is not a welcome sight. After a recent light snow cover, as dusk was dimming my view, I was witness to a quick burst of a small black shadow, and a thud against the window. There, perched on the clothesline, flicking her tail, the hawk was brazenly looking my way. The shadow was too small to have been the aggressor, so I looked further. To my dismay, a Downy Woodpecker was upside down in the forsythia against the window. The moral dilemma seemed overwhelming — to let what was natural occur, or intercede and keep the predator from her prey? Muttering my rationalizations about her choice, her incomplete skill, my yard, I went out to help the Downy. Her feathers were stuck in the bush; her beak was open; she was knocked out, but breathing, injured by her window encounter, not a hit by the hawk. I gently released her into my open palm, carried her inside, and laid her in a tissue-filled gift box. The trick

## NEXT MEETING

Sandy Brenner

DATE: Tuesday, March 10, 1992  
TIME: 8:00 PM  
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library  
Merrick Rd. & S. Ocean Ave.

SPEAKER: David Mizrahi  
TOPIC: The Least Tern – Piping Plover  
Protection Plan

A talk and slide show on a program with which our chapter has been very involved. See the related article in this *Skimmer*.

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IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE  
BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS

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was to keep from handling the bird, to allow it to recover from shock or to succumb. I went about my business, not expecting much. Ten minutes later, the bird was still prone and breathing very heavily. In another ten, the bird was standing up, but quiet. Because it was now dark outside, whatever the outcome, I would have to keep the bird overnight. Several hours later, the bird was sleeping, head cozily tucked under its wing. Dawn brought lots of activity in the box. The Downy was pecking away at the sides, apparently fully recovered. Paul and I took the box outside, lifted the lid, and watched as the Downy flew up to a tree limb and began pecking and circling the branch. The hawk is still around. The woodpecker had a reprieve.

**Help Us — Tag Sale for Brookside Preserve.** South Shore Audubon wants to raise the \$2500 it will take to cut up, remove, and recycle the two huge tanks that are on Brookside Preserve. These tanks are 100 years old and once were used for storing water by the Brooklyn Water Works Company. Since we are going to begin restoring the upland field area of the preserve this spring, it is time to get rid of the tanks. These kinds of improvements eat up money. We thought an appropriate way to meet this cost would be to

hold a one day tag sale at the entrance to the preserve. The date we have chosen, weather permitting, is Sunday, April 26th, from 9 AM to 3 PM. The raindate is Sunday, May 17th. We are looking for people who can bring salable belongings to this event. We need the help of volunteers, as well as their stuff (all of which is tax deductible). Please contact Joan Butkerei at 623-0843 or Betsy Gulotta at 546-8841 if you have any expertise with tag sales, items to donate, or willingness to help. This is the first time we have ever held this kind of an event. **PLEASE HELP!**

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## CONSERVATION REPORT

*Lois Bartow Schlegel*

**Annual Water Supply Statement.** According to a New York State Public Health Law effective since 1987, each Water District must *publicly issue* an Annual Water Supply Statement giving you the current status of your district's water *quality, quantity, costs, and conservation efforts.*

The status of your water quality should include the results of groundwater tests for contaminants and, if contaminants were found, what kind of treatment is being done to make the water you drink from your faucet safe.

The statement usually comes out in March. Hicksville Water District, for instance, includes it in the spring issue of their seasonal newsletter WATER-GRAM. Some areas have been known to provide it via public notices in Newsday. Call your district to find out *how* they are distributing this important info; look for it, examine it, and feed back to your water district any questions you may have to help better understand your drinking water's condition and what is being done. This is your right!

Being our sole source of drinking water, it is up to us to learn the state of our aquifers, to find and prevent the causes of contamination. Treatment (i.e., carbon filters, air stripping units, etc.) may work to remove volatile organic compounds from our water so it's fit to drink, but at what cost? These are million dollar projects that we are paying for! A question to ask ourselves is "*How and why* is our groundwater being poisoned to begin with?"

I'm sure all of our over 100 water districts on Long Island are doing what they can by law to make our drinking water safe. They can also be a conduit of information to the public. If we as conservation-minded people can learn more, we can perhaps help the districts provide sound advice on how to prevent or minimize contaminating our groundwater. Hicksville, through its Water Conservation Program, mails newsletters to its consumers, gives talks and slide presentations at Civic Association meetings, and provides "Water Conservation Workbooks" to schools. They address "use" of water. Good. And do they also address *how to prevent groundwater contamination?* I don't know that yet. Does *your* district have a Water Conservation Program? If so, what would you like them to address? Tell them! This, too, is your right.

**Long Island Water: Myths & Facts.** The following is taken from a brochure written by the L.I. Groundwater Coalition, of which SSAS is a member.

**MYTH:** Long Island's drinking water comes from lakes and streams.

**FACT:** Rainwater falling on L.I. is the only source of the water we drink and is stored underground in sandy soil called *aquifers*. All of our drinking water is pumped from the ground, not lakes or streams. Thus, our water supply is hidden from sight. Wells, hundreds of feet deep, bring the clean water to the surface.

**MYTH:** Water quality is protected because even polluted water is cleaned as it sinks through the sandy soil to the aquifers.

**FACT:** Sandy soil does not remove toxic chemicals, oils, or fertilizers picked up by the rainwater from roads, lawns, landfills, and farms. Once picked up, these chemicals move down with the rain into the aquifer. These pollutants are destroying our clean water supply.

**MYTH:** Industry is the source of most of the pollution of our groundwater.

**FACT:** Industry is the source of much pollution. However, petroleum products, poisons, fertilizers, and synthetic hydrocarbons are also used in household products so that pollution comes from many sources, including our garbage stored in landfills.

**MYTH:** Pouring chemicals and oils into storm drains removes them safely.

**FACT:** Storm drains are attached by pipes to large holes in the ground called *recharge basins*. Storm water is carried to recharge basins and there it slowly sinks into the ground, carrying the pollution with it.

**MYTH:** Contaminated drinking water is simple to detect. If the water is bad, it will taste bad.

**FACT:** There is no taste to most chemically polluted water. Only expensive tests can find many of the chemicals that pollute the water.

**MYTH:** Fertilizing my lawn does not pollute the water.

**FACT:** Lawn fertilizer increases the nitrate level in groundwater as the rain washes the nitrate into the soil. Weed killers also soak down into the ground. Use as little of both as possible, or find alternatives. Leave grass clippings on the lawn as fertilizer.

**MYTH:** There is enough water on L.I. to meet our present and future needs.

**FACT:** Nassau County is now using more water than the aquifer can safely provide. Nassau has proposed pumping water from under Suffolk to meet future needs. Only through regional management and protection can we assure a safe and plentiful water supply.

**MYTH:** If we run out of water, L.I. can always tie into the New York City system.

**FACT:** The N.Y.C. water system is already stretched to meet the needs of 7 million people within the city. It does not have the extra capacity to meet the water needs of 2.7 million people on L.I.

**MYTH:** Watering my lawn is not wasteful, because the water sinks back into the ground.

**FACT:** Watering in the early morning or late evening helps to save water because of a lower evaporation rate. Watering the lawn by sprinkler loses 90% of the water through evaporation or absorption. Only 10% is returned to the ground.

**James Bay.** Assemblyman William Hoyt's bill that asked that a New York State Environmental Impact Statement be done on any *future* contracts with Hydro-Quebec was not successful, was not voted in. Now there is an amendment to the bill. The amended bill (A2162-B) would require that an NYS Environmental Impact Statement be done for any *current* contracts with Hydro-Quebec, which is actually much better, although no contract would be best. This is timely because the NY Power Authority will be renegotiating their contract with Hydro-Quebec, but we must have the legislation signed by the Governor before the renegotiations are done. The bill needs a Republican sponsor in the Republican-controlled Senate; a vote in the Democrat-controlled Assembly is expected around the time you read this (Hoyt is a Democrat from Buffalo and is a member of the Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee).

To help save James Bay, please write to **Governor Mario M. Cuomo**, Executive Chambers, Albany, NY 12224, asking him to cancel the contract or at least support the amended Hoyt bill (A2162-B). Please also write to **Senator Ralph J. Marino**, 220 Townsend Square, Oyster Bay, NY 11771, asking him to support identical legislation in the Senate (Marino is State Senate Majority Leader).

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### BIRD WALKS

*Elliott Kutner*

All walks start at 9:30 AM; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Any questions? Call Elliott at 486-7667.

Mar. 1	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Mar. 8	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Mar. 15	Hempstead Lake State Park (Pen. Blvd.)
Mar. 22	Tobay JFK Sanctuary
Mar. 29	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Apr. 5	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Apr. 12	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Apr. 19	Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
Apr. 26	Tobay JFK Sanctuary
May 3	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
May 10	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
May 17	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
May 24	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
May 31	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

### NOMINATIONS FOR 1992-1993 OFFICERS

*Elliott Kutner*

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting in May, officers will be elected for our next fiscal year. All members attending that meeting may nominate candidates from the floor and vote. The SSAS Nominating Committee [Elliott Kutner (Chairman), William Hollweg, and Nora Lourenco] has recommended the following candidates:

President — James Remsen, Jr.  
Vice President — Mark Phillips  
Treasurer — George Popkin  
Recording Secretary — Louise Hillen  
Corresponding Secretary — Doris Pirodsky  
Honorary Corresponding Secretary — Ruth Grossman  
Director (to 6/95) — Paul Devendittis  
Director (to 6/95) — Bruno Loporati

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### SCHOLARSHIPS

**Deadline — March 16, 1992**

*Evelyn Blume*

South Shore Audubon Society once again is making possible two scholarships this year, one to be awarded to a youth (age 10 to 14 years old) and the other to an adult.

The youth scholarship is for the Audubon Camp in Maine from August 1st to 11th or August 13th to 23rd. The scholarship will be awarded to a young person recommended by an active SSAS member.

This year's adult scholarship is for the Audubon Camp in Maine and dates are July 7th to 13th, 15th to 21st, or 23rd to 29th. The scholarship will be awarded to a candidate who is an active member of SSAS and who will be involved in an educational role in the chapter, community, schools, etc.

Please call Evelyn Blume at 378-7122 after 7 PM for an application. See last month's *Skimmer* for Audubon Camp descriptions.

#### **A Word From an SSAS Youth Scholarship Winner.**

The following was sent to us by Maine Youth Camp attendee Elena Lourenco: "I would like to thank Audubon for giving me the wonderful opportunity to go to the camp at Hog Island. It was an experience I will never forget. Never before was I able to wake up with the sounds of waves outside my bedroom window and when I look out, to see eagles and osprey above with seals swimming below. I saw the northern lights which was an unforgettable sight! The sunsets and peacefulness were most memorable to me, along with the great friends I made with the other kids and staff. I don't think I was ever so upset leaving somewhere as I was when I left Hog Island. I felt enchanted there and when I left, I felt like I was leaving behind a magic that felt like it was part of me then. I miss the calm waters and the fresh air, the tide pools, and just everything! Thank you."

## LEAST TERNS & PIPING PLOVERS The 1991 Breeding Season at Jones Beach

*David Mizrahi and Dr. Carl Safina*

With winter's grip secure, thoughts of the coming spring help to buoy the spirit and get us through another day of bleak skies, frigid winds, and icy roads. [Editor's note: This article was intended for last month's *Skimmer*, space permitting.] For those of us in the business of protecting and monitoring beach-nesting birds like Least Terns and Piping Plovers, thoughts of spring usually begin around Labor Day. Our charges have all flown south to warmer climes and the prospect of spending the next three or four months preparing voluminous reports on the past breeding season makes us wish we were flying south too.

Now, as the Ides of March approach, we know that the melodic whistle of Piping Plovers will soon be heard across Jones Beach West End and that the squeaky call of Least Terns will follow. All the reports are completed and there's time to reflect on the past season and to contemplate the one ahead. The 1991 breeding season at West End was an exciting one. Here are some highlights:

Due to New York State budgetary constraints, the West End beaches at Jones Beach State Park were closed to general recreational activities on weekdays during the 1991 breeding season. Access to these beaches was by special permit only, issued on a per day basis to fishermen, surfers, and birdwatchers with appropriate equipment. This drastically cut the amount of recreational pressure at West End and subsequently the amount of disturbance experienced by Piping Plovers and Least Terns.

Least Terns returned after a two-season absence and 139 pairs nested seaward of the primary dunes between the West End #1 and #2 Parking Fields. Though the site was well protected and doggedly monitored by volunteers, reproductive success was poor. Terns at this site were adversely impacted by the presence of gulls in the vicinity of the colony. On at least ten occasions, gulls were observed taking chicks of various ages. On one day, in a span of 30 minutes, eight chicks were seen being taken by gulls. The best estimate of the number of fledgling Least Terns from this colony was 25.

Jones Beach West End was second only to the Breezy Point site (Gateway National Recreation Area / Breezy Point Coop) in the number of nesting pairs of Piping Plovers on Long Island. In 1991, 21 pairs nested at West End and these pairs fledged 34 chicks (1.66 fledged/pair). Though reproductive success during the 1991 season did not vary greatly over the 1990 season (1.5 fledged/pair), the number of nesting pairs increased dramatically (by 50%). This may have been a result of improved nesting conditions.

Piping Plovers at the West End beaches of Jones Beach are unique in that better than 95% of foraging by adults and offspring is done in moist areas between the dunes and not along the shoreline as is generally the case for most of the

Long Island population. These inter-dunal areas are also favored thoroughfares for beach-goers, and this poses a threat to foraging plovers and especially chicks (which require a relatively undisturbed environment while foraging). Working together, the Nature Conservancy and Scully Audubon Science Center were able to convince the State Park authorities of the need to protect these foraging habitats. Large inter-dunal areas where chicks were known to feed were posted and fenced, which may have had a positive effect on the survival rate of chicks utilizing these areas.

Five plover nests were lost early in the season; three of the losses were believed to be the result of crow predation. After obtaining authorization from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and Park Superintendent Joseph Leschinski, Conservancy stewards, staff from Scully Audubon, and volunteers erected five wire mesh enclosures at this site to control predation of Piping Plover nests. The results were encouraging. No nest loss due to predation or abandonment of nests as a result of enclosure installation was experienced. Of the 20 eggs protected by enclosures, all 20 hatched, with 9 fledged chicks documented (1.8 fledged/pair).

West End was monitored regularly (on weekends) by Nature Conservancy and South Shore Audubon Society volunteers. The coordinated effort by the two organizations proved an effective way to insure that nesting areas were always patrolled during critical periods. Volunteers from both organizations were instrumental in the installation and removal of fencing, and in the effort to educate beach users about the protection project. Open dialogue between the Conservancy, Scully Audubon Science Center, and South Shore Audubon Society resulted in the implementation of management plans developed to enhance the success of the birds nesting here. It is hoped that the strides made during the 1991 season will be repeated in 1992.

[Another Editor's note: Under the Endangered Species Act, Least Terns are protected as an endangered species and Piping Plovers are protected as a threatened species. Join us on Jones Beach West End #2 walks in late spring for a chance to see these birds and also the ones responsible for our newsletter's name, Black Skimmers.]

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## CLEANUP AT TWIN LAKES

*Dolores Rogers*

Spring cleanup at Twin Lakes Preserve in Wantagh will be held on Saturday, April 11th at 9:30 AM.

Welcome spring by helping keep a beautiful preserve free of debris. If light rain, it's on; if a downpour, rain date is Sunday, April 12th at 1:00 PM. Please — let us have a good turnout!

Directions: Sunrise Highway to Old Mill Road north (one block west of Wantagh Parkway); meet in school parking lot.

## THE JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE Part III: The Bird Sanctuary

*Betty Borowsky*

The Jamaica Bay Bird Sanctuary is located on Cross Bay Boulevard, Broad Channel, Queens. This 150+ acre parcel of Gateway National Recreation Area is completely protected; no fishing, swimming, or similar recreational activities are permitted, and access is confined to specific trails and paths. It is probably the best place for bird watching in our area, and one of the best in the United States; over 325 species have been identified to date.

The sanctuary attracts so many birds because of its location and because of its diverse habitats. It is right in the midst of the Atlantic flyway, the major east coast pathway for migrating birds. Thus, it not only provides a refuge for local species, but offers a good resting place for birds that need a safe haven during their seasonal migrations.

The sanctuary itself is man-made, although it all appears perfectly natural. It is carefully managed by the National Park Service; this includes general housekeeping as well as decisions about habitat modification. Originally a salt marsh, the area has been developed and intentionally diversified to attract the greatest number of species of birds possible. Two freshwater ponds were created in 1951 by Robert Moses, then the New York City Parks Commissioner. One of the ponds is on the east and the other is on the west side of Cross Bay Boulevard. The level of the ponds is intentionally changed at different times of the year to encourage breeding (for example, it is lowered in the spring to expose muddy areas that contain prey for shore birds). Meadows and wooded areas have grown up around the ponds from the wide variety of trees and shrubs which have been planted over the years.

The most commonly used trail passes around the West Pond, so fresh water is on one side of the trail and salt water is on the other side of it. This allows views of both saltwater and freshwater species, and close-ups of birds as they fly low over the trail from one body of water to the other. One bird, the Glossy Ibis, is rarely seen elsewhere in our area, but can often be seen flying across the trail. In addition, there are benches along the way, and several blinds which allow close views of the water birds. These are perfect for spotting scopes. Toward Cross Bay Boulevard, the walking trail enters a wooded area, where, if it is the right time of the year, you can see many species of warblers and other perching birds.

One of the ways the Park Service encourages birds to stay in the sanctuary is by providing birdhouses. There are large birdhouses for owls and small birdhouses for Tree Swallows. There are even butterfly houses. The houses not only offer shelter to the birds, but offer the visitor opportunities to see the birds while they are perching quietly, in full view. A few weeks ago, a Tree Swallow was perched at the opening of its house with its back in the bright sun. At rest, at eye level, you could see the bird's striking

coloration; its midnight blue-black back contrasted with its white breast.

Sometimes the sanctuary is so attractive to birds that they decide not to migrate. Last summer, a Snow Goose stayed in one of the ponds. As Don Reipe, the current director of the sanctuary, said, the goose probably figured there was no sense in going north, since he'd be back in the fall anyway.

The diversity of habitats not only attracts a wide variety of birds and butterflies, but also attracts a wide variety of noxious pests. These include abundant growths of poison ivy, deerflies in May, tiny blackflies ("no-see-ums") in June, and mosquitoes year round. Ticks should also be expected. Proper dress and insect repellent are pretty effective deterrents.

Of course, you will see different birds in different seasons, but a visit at any time of the year is rewarding. The Visitor's Center is located near the Boulevard, and offers bird books for sale as well as many brochures describing the sanctuary and its birds. Educational programs are available for classes from time to time. For information, write to Gateway NRA, Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, NY 11234; call (718) 474-0613; or join South Shore Audubon Society on one of our walks at the sanctuary.

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### OUR FIFTH ANNUAL BIRDATHON IS COMING!

*Doreen Remsen and James Remsen, Jr.*

On MAY 9, 1992 (RAINDATE MAY 16th), the South Shore Audubon Society will take part in the 1992 National Audubon Birdathon. This will be our fifth annual spring bird count.

Birdathon participants recruit sponsors who agree to pledge a certain amount of money per species seen on Birdathon day. We will be in need of people to be birders, sponsors, or simply "recruiters" who will be willing to obtain sponsors on behalf of other participants. We are also interested in finding people who will approach local businesses for pledges.

This year, we are pleased to announce the first ever **Birdathon Kickoff Reception!** On Saturday, April 4th, from 2:00 to 3:30 PM at the Freeport Memorial Library, anyone who has ever participated in our past Birdathons is invited to a "thank you" reception. We will swap Birdathon stories and share refreshments. We also invite those who have never participated in the Birdathon to come and learn about the event, ask questions, and celebrate with us. Anyone who has never taken part in the Birdathon and who signs up to participate at the reception will receive a door prize.

More information on the Birdathon will be forthcoming. If you have questions or want to participate, see either of your chairpersons at bird walks or meetings or call us: Doreen Remsen (472-6830 — leave message if calling during the day) or James Remsen, Jr. (764-5168 — evenings).



# SKUNK CABBAGE

Tom Torma

It is an annual ritual held every spring: normally sane people suddenly appear in swamps and along woodland streams. Throughout eastern North America, the mission of these nature photographers is to capture the Skunk Cabbage on film.

In early spring, a brownish-purple and green-mottled shell-like sheath appears, enclosing a club-like organ within. The organ, or spadix, is covered with tiny flowers. The plant gives off an odor that resembles decaying flesh which attracts flies that pollinate the flowers. The plant begins to sprout so early in the spring that it often melts snow and ice with heat from cellular respiration due to its fast growth. Later a tight roll of green cabbage-like leaves open to create a rich green carpet on a wet forest floor.

According to the Peterson Field Guide on Eastern and Central Medicinal Plants, Skunk Cabbage has a history of medicinal uses. American Indians used it for cramps, convulsions, whooping coughs, and toothaches. They poulticed the roots for wounds and, as hard as this is to believe, also used them as a deodorant. Poulticed leaves were used to reduce swelling. Native Americans ate the dried roots to stop epileptic seizures. Physicians have used the plant as an anti-spasmodic for epilepsy, spasmodic coughs, and asthma. Skunk Cabbage can be used in a lotion to prevent itching and help rheumatism. However, be warned — eating the leaves of Skunk-Cabbage causes burning and inflammation. The roots are considered toxic.

It can be a challenge to photograph Skunk Cabbage flowers, or any flower for that matter. Field flower photographers need close-up equipment that is affordable, lightweight, and easy to use. Close-focusing macro lenses are expensive and heavy to carry, but do produce the best pictures. Extension tubes fit between a lens and the camera; they allow for close focusing with normal lenses. These tubes are clumsy to use and reduce the amount of light entering the camera, thereby increasing the difficulty of taking pictures. Close-focusing filters, or diopters, sometimes called close-up lenses, fit into the front of a normal lens. They are lightweight and easy to use. Most diopters are made of a single low-quality glass lens or element. These close-up filters will reduce the quality of your pictures.

In recent years, some camera manufacturers have begun to make better close-up filters. These diopters are made with two lenses, or elements, of high-quality optical glass. Some are designed for use on 70–200 mm or 300 mm zoom lenses. These close-up lenses are lightweight, easy to use, and reasonably priced. How good are these diopters? John Shaw, the famous nature photographer, used these close-up filters to take a picture of a lichen that ended up on the cover of *Audubon* magazine.

With prime real estate getting harder to find, many developers are looking to our wetlands for future development. Many native American plants and animals survive in

these wetlands. Like the Skunk Cabbage, these plants and animals are part of our American heritage. If we allow our wetlands to be turned into office complexes, condominiums, and shopping malls, we will lose part of the biological diversity that makes up the beauty and uniqueness that is America.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Marion Yavarkovsky

It is a pleasure to introduce South Shore Audubon Society's newest members. It is our hope that you will become involved in our chapter's various activities. We have much to offer, so join in!

[For information on joining the South Shore Audubon Society, please call our Membership Chairperson, Marion Yavarkovsky, at 379-2090. The best time to call is after 4 PM, Monday through Friday.]

- Baldwin .....Birt & Brit Birkelund, Mark Walsh,  
Mr. Thomas Weber
- Bellmore .....Mr. David M. Roberts
- Farmingdale .....Gerard McIntee
- Floral Park .....Peter Carucci, Mrs. Denise A.  
Dettileux, Stephen J. Walker
- Franklin Square .....Mr. Geoffrey J. Schaffner
- Garden City .....Mr. Robert W. Vassalotti
- Hewlett .....David Kaufman
- Hicksville .....Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Blaha,  
Mrs. Elizabeth Ruggiero,  
Ms. Peggy Sicari
- Lawrence .....A. Passoff
- Long Beach .....Marjorie Collins, Michael Kranitz,  
David Weiss
- Lynbrook .....Mr. Santo J. Oliva,  
Mr. Fred Shwom
- Malverne .....Louis A. Gregory
- Massapequa .....Mr. Barry Goldfarb, D. Langan
- Merrick .....Mr. Kenneth M. Levine,  
Mr. George Ram
- Plainview .....Mr. Jeremy Feinberg,  
Mrs. Estelle Mitnick
- Valley Stream .....Ralph A. Musullo
- Wantagh .....John Arvid Moriarity

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 RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 832-6523  
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 WILDLIFE POISONING HOTLINE (800) 356-0560  
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 AUDUBON HOTLINE (202) 547-9017  
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## BIRDING IN ARIZONA

Michael Higgiston

I was fortunate to be able to go on a bird tour to Southeast Arizona for five days in January. I arrived in Tucson in the early afternoon on January 10th and our group quickly assembled. We drove south on Route 19 to Nogales, a town on the Mexican border. Along the way, we stopped at a pecan grove and looked for and found a Northern Cardinal, Audubon's Warbler, Red-naped Sapsucker, Red-bellied Sapsucker, Say's Phoebe, and American Pipit. All this activity was surprising, given the fact that the wind was blowing at about 20 knots. We continued our journey and stopped at a rest stop to search for a Sage Sparrow, but were unsuccessful. We did get beautiful looks at three Rufous-winged Sparrows on a nearby bush. The birds cooperated nicely by not moving about. We regained the road and drove on to Nogales, where we stopped at a series of ponds with phragmites, cottonwoods, and marsh, and saw a number of species including Cinnamon Teal, Gila Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Pied-billed Grebe, Green-winged Teal, and American Coot. We also heard a Sora calling in the marsh. The highlight of this stop, as well as of the first day, was a good view of a Green Kingfisher on a cottonwood branch hanging out over the pond. As it was getting dark, we left Nogales and drove on to our lodgings for the next two nights, the Circle Z Ranch. Here a feeder had been set up in the middle of the compound and we found Curve-billed Thrasher, Canyon Towhee, and many White-crowned Sparrows. For anyone keeping track, we also saw House Sparrows, Rock Doves, and European Starlings.

Our first full day in Arizona found us northeast of the town of Patagonia in grassland habitat that seemed to go on forever except for mountains that rose straight up from the ground to the sky. It was quite like a floor meeting a wall. The sky was an endless blue, with white clouds moving briskly, as the wind was still with us. It was a situation that was to remain with us all weekend, and the temperatures were unseasonably chilly. Where we had expected temperatures in the 50's and 60's, we actually had 30's and 40's with which to contend. We spread out as we marched across the grasslands to flush any birds we could. In the course of the morning, after much marching and flushing, we located and got good looks at Chestnut-collared Longspur, Horned Lark, Sprague's Pipit, and Baird's Sparrow, and also saw a Prairie Falcon fly along a ridge, looking for breakfast. We left there to visit the San Rafael Grasslands, which was different habitat even though it's called a grassland. Rocky cliffs, trees of all kinds, and a small creek formed the habitat that we birded; we saw Bridled Titmouse, Oregon Junco, Gray-breasted Jay, Eastern Bluebird, Gold-shafted Flicker, Strickland's Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Chipping Sparrow. The highlight of this stop, as well as of Day 2 birding, was a good look at an unexpectedly close Golden

Eagle on a crag on the side of a cliff. After lunch, we went to Sonoita Creek, a riparian habitat, and found Abert's and Green-tailed Towhees, Brown Thrasher (very unusual in Arizona), Belted Kingfisher, Pine Siskin, Great Horned Owl, Brown Creeper, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Dusky Flycatcher. We then left to visit Keno Springs, which included two ponds on a golf course. We found American Coot, American Widgeon, Western Grebe, Canvasback, Common Moorhen, Common Yellowthroat, Red-winged Blackbird, Marsh Wren, Double-crested Cormorant, Ringed-neck Duck, and Ruddy Duck. We explored a pond on the Guevara Ranch, a private holding nearby, and saw much the same birds, as well as Mallard, Green-winged Teal, and Pied-billed Grebe.

Our third day in Arizona saw us up early, driving through Patagonia State Park. A thin layer of snow covered the ground. It was still unseasonably cold in the desert and we had hail during the night. Patagonia State Park contains a very large lake and this morning it held a few Olivaceous Cormorants drying their wings on the far shore. Grackles perched in treetops as Ruby-crowned Kinglets and White-crowned Sparrows flitted in and out of nearby bushes. We next visited the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Nature Conservancy, the most heavily visited Nature Conservancy in the country. The possibility of the conservancy being overrun by birders is a real threat; because of its proximity to Mexico, many Mexican strays have been recorded in the sanctuary. The managers of the reserve no longer advertise sightings of rare birds on the local Rare Bird Alert, in order to avoid the crush of people that has been known to descend upon the park. Our group was alone in the park and we saw Ash-throated, Hammond's, and Dusky Flycatchers; Bridled Titmouse; and Song, Vesper, Lincoln's, White-crowned, and White-throated Sparrows, the last being an unusual sighting in the Arizonan winter. [Editor's plea: Help! I've run out of space! Look for part two in next month's *Skimmer*.]

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### THEODORE ROOSEVELT SANCTUARY

134 Cove Road  
Oyster Bay, NY 11771  
(516) 922-3200

Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bird Sanctuary is owned by the National Audubon Society and operated by the Community and three local Audubon chapters, including South Shore Audubon. The following program is open to the public. Space is limited and registration is required. All program fees are required at the time of registration.

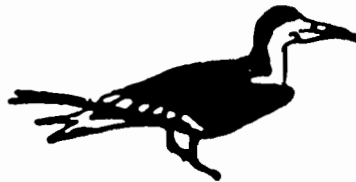
*Saturday, March 7th (1 PM to 3 PM, ages 6 and up) — Maple Sugaring.* Each year we tap our maple trees and make syrup with the help of the participants. Learn about tree life and enjoy a nature walk! Program fee \$3 for members, \$5 for nonmembers.

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