

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 27, NUMBER 3 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

NOVEMBER 1996

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Carole A. Adams

The last weekend of September closed the month with eight of your board members attending the Audubon Council of New York State's fall meeting in Bear Mountain State Park. We all came away encouraged, enthusiastic, and chock full of new ideas for our chapter. With your support and encouragement, we will see some creative fund-raising and progressive educational programs activated in South Shore Audubon Society.

The weekend in Bear Mountain gave us the opportunity to speak with folks from Audubon chapters all over New York State. At dinner on Saturday, September 28th, Governor Pataki spoke enthusiastically about the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act. He proudly announced the Sterling Forest "success" and voiced his concerns regarding the environmental future of New York State.

We no sooner returned from Bear Mountain and it was time for a Board meeting, a Conservation Committee meeting, and preparing an exhibit for the ten day Fall Flower & Landscape Show at Planting Fields Arboretum in Oyster Bay. The exhibit featured a butterfly display, in keeping with the theme *Kaleidoscope of Color*, as well as a display featuring all seven Audubon chapters on Long Island. It took a number of volunteers to make it work well. Volunteers came from Huntington, Lyman Langdon, Four Harbors, and South Shore Audubon Societies. Special thanks go to Howard Barton and Cathy Gordon from Four Harbors for their work on the butterfly display and hosting at the exhibit.

Volunteer hosts from South Shore Audubon Society that deserve a very special thank you are — in no special order — Evelyn Masset, Marge Bodenburg, Ann Marie Pozzini, Nancy Frame, Larry and Harriet Berke, Dolores Rogers, and Marcia Specht. These folks "manned" the exhibit (I don't think "manned" is politically correct, but I can't come up with another word), greeting people and answering questions. An additional thank you to Marge Bodenburg for her butterfly drawings. Originally they

NEXT MEETING

Sandy Brenner & Steve Goldberg

DATE: Tuesday, November 12, 1996
TIME: 8:00 P.M. ☪ (Letter of the Month at 7:30)
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
Merrick Rd. & S. Ocean Ave.
SPEAKER: Rob Alvey
TOPIC: The Garden City Bird Sanctuary

This humorous slide presentation will show the progress and pitfalls of being a community volunteer involved with coordinating a grassroots environmental stewardship program and educating a community on innovative ways of applying leisure time in a constructive manner.

Rob, a professional environmental geologist, was dozing through a Village Property Owners Association meeting in 1992 when his wife raised his hand and he was "volunteered" to his first four year term with the newly established Garden City Environmental Advisory Board. He was then mysteriously volunteered to be Chairperson of the GCEAB's Land Use Committee.

One result was that in April 1995, under the Nassau County Adopt-A-Spot volunteer program, field work began to clean up a trash and debris filled five acre Nassau County owned stormwater basin (sump) and convert it into an attractively landscaped, quiet nature refuge and bird sanctuary that could be used for hands-on environmental education. Rob's project became the largest and most comprehensive effort under the Adopt-A-Spot program, attracting over \$25,000 in volunteer and donated services and over 400 participants; when the County tried to shut down the program last spring, SSAS entered an agreement with the County to take over management of the sump and officially establish the Garden City Bird Sanctuary.

IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE

BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS

BINOCULARS & PATCHES FOR SALE

For many years, South Shore Audubon has been selling the complete line of Bausch & Lomb / Bushnell binoculars and spotting scopes at competitive prices. Joe Lancer



(536-6574, 7 to 9 P.M.) keeps a supply of National Audubon Society Natureview binoculars handy and can order anything else for you. A very familiar

birdfeeding catalog describes these binoculars as follows (and sells them for \$158.95; we sell them for \$110): "Bushnell is highly regarded for the high quality and performance of its optical gear. Their Natureview binoculars were designed for bird-watchers and naturalists and selected as the official binoculars of the National Audubon Society. Fully coated optics provide exceptional clarity with 8 x 42 magnification. A 341' field of view enhances your ability to spot birds and other wildlife. Convenient center focusing. Rubber armor protects body from wet conditions. Complete with vinyl carrying case and neck strap.

Look for Joe on Bird Seed Savings Day and at meetings and bird walks. He'll also be happy to sell you one of SSAS's beautiful and newly redrawn chapter patches for just \$3.



CONSERVATION REPORT

Betty Barowsky

After a long haul, it looks as if quite a few environment-friendly initiatives have been adopted after all. You already have heard about the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act [there's more info in this *Skimmer*] — all the New York State chapters of the National Audubon Society, as well as numerous other environmental groups (joining together in an ad hoc group called the Environmental Coalition for the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, 1996) have been campaigning as hard as possible to solicit votes in support of the bond.

In addition, Congress recently approved a bill authorizing the purchase of Sterling Forest, a beautiful piece of property straddling New York and New Jersey which, for a while there, we thought would be lost to development. This chapter and many others conducted an aggressive letter writing and lobbying campaign to convince legislators that this purchase was well worth the expense, and evidently they agreed.

Various constraints imposed upon the Endangered Species Act are on hold or have been lifted (most notably the halting of additional species being identified as endangered). To prevent future attacks on this act, however, a new proposal, the Endangered Natural Heritage Act, is being proposed by the National Audubon Society and its Endangered Species Coalition partners. The main objective of the act is to "close Endangered Species loopholes, ensure the recovery of listed species, prevent the need to

list species in the future, and encourage conservation by private property owners through tax incentives." Rather than list all the details (quite boring, and probably premature anyway), the important point is that the act is an attempt to shore up the effort to monitor the numbers of species and population sizes, and to maintain the amount of natural habitat which can support them at relatively stable levels.

An alarming development is the apparent number of deals being cut between private interests and the government under the umbrella of Habitat Conservation Plans. Briefly, these are agreements in which landowners promise to do something to protect the environment on one part of their property in exchange for waivers that permit them to alter another part of their property. For example, the landowner promises not to develop one part of his/her property in exchange for permission to eliminate a wetlands area on another.



We are greatly opposed to all deals of this sort. The effect of this is merely to *slow down* environmental destruction, not to eliminate it.

History teaches that areas that are protected by such deals today are the next targets for compromise tomorrow. Our goal should be to halt environmentally unsound development of all natural areas.

If you know of any such deals, or have any expertise on this subject, please contact Mary Minette at National Audubon (send e-mail to mminette@audubon.org) or myself. The first objective is to document the number and scope of these contracts; then we can mount an appropriate defense.

Meanwhile, visit Sterling Forest. You'll love it.



BACKYARD BIRDING WITH ELLIOTT KUTNER

The guest speaker at the Garden City Bird Sanctuary's November 21st meeting at the Garden City Public Library will be our own Birding & Field Trips Chairperson, Elliott Kutner, who is scheduled to present a slide show and talk about the many birds that visit our backyards and how you can make your yard more attractive to songbirds. The library's address is 60 Seventh Street; the Thursday night meeting runs from 8 to 10 P.M.



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SIGN UP FOR OUR MONTAUK BIRD TRIP

Mike Higginson

South Shore Audubon Society will sponsor a winter Montauk and East End bird trip on **Saturday, January 25, 1997**. The trip will be limited to 25 participants and you must call to reserve a spot. We will meet at the parking lot at Hempstead Lake State Park on Peninsula Boulevard at 5:45 A.M. to carpool and begin our trip. Those who live farther east can elect to meet us at the Montauk Point State Park parking lot at 7:30 A.M.; we will begin our trip on the sea side of the concession stand.

We will proceed to Montauk Point, after which we will wend our way westward, visiting such spots as Deep Hollow Ranch, the Lake Montauk jetty, Fort Pond, Lazy Point on Napeague Harbor, David's Lane Pond, Hook Pond, Shinnecock Inlet, and Dune Road, among others. If conditions are right, we could see up to 60 species, including all three scoters, eiders, gannets, loons, grebes, and mergansers. Land birding can be just as exciting as sea and there is always a chance to see something out of the ordinary. Bring lunch so we can maximize our time in the field. There will be a charge of \$10, which will help support our all-volunteer chapter. Bill Hollweg (226-2519) and I (538-8376) will be the trip leaders and you may call either of us to register for the trip. Snow or rain will cancel the trip. Heavy accumulation of snow already on the roads will also cancel the trip. Bring spotting scopes if you have them and dress warmly. You can probably expect to leave the Dune Road area around 4:30 P.M.

A FALL INTERLUDE

Morton I. Silver

On a knoll, at the end of the road, in the shadow of the Fire Island lighthouse, birders scan the sky to witness the annual fall migration of the "hawks." The viewing is not just restricted to hawks, but also includes the passage of eagles, osprey, falcons, loons, cormorants, and even the monarch butterflies and multihued dragonflies. It is the location of this barrier island, situated between the inhospitable waters of the ocean and the bay, that funnels the flight down the length of the island, in view of the "hawk watch."

Each fall day, a group of dedicated men and women, joined by interested amateurs, identifies and records the numbers of raptors, adding to the yearly observations of the fall migration. Students and Ph.D.'s, businessmen and retirees, and doctors and teachers are all involved in this "benign madness."

Two plastic owls perched atop two separate poles are put in position, exposed to the elements and to the piercing eyes of the overflying raptors. One stands exposed as a bare plastic deception; the other is a pathetic attempt to emulate avian reality by having had feathers pasted to its

plastic frame. We all laugh and shake our heads in disbelief — those decoys couldn't attract a pussycat. But wait...

Suddenly, we note a falcon rocketing by, circling about and making for the unfortunate owls. A Merlin attacks the feathered decoy, hauling up at the last moment when the deception is recognized. We all shout with laughter and admiration at the sight of this magnificent falcon on the hunt. Off he flies as we await the next visitor to our absurd lures.

Time passes and our count increases, as well as our appetites. We sit on any available log or beach chair, eating our lunch yet always alert to the aerial visitors. I sit with my sandwich in my lap, enjoying a quiet moment,



when someone sees a far-off silhouette, wings powerfully beating, making a deliberate approach toward our site. I leap to my feet, binoculars at the ready, for a magnificent Peregrine Falcon is rocketing toward the decoys. He veers slightly away as he recognizes the owl frauds — soaring above us and away. He wasn't even interested in my delicious sandwich lying there in the sand.

Oh well! A sandwich is just a sandwich, but a Peregrine is the glory of Nature incarnate.

SSAS AND ROGER TORY PETERSON


Dolores Rogers

[A few days after Roger Tory Peterson's death last July (at age 87 at his home in Lyme, Connecticut), your *Skimmer* editor rejected requests that his passing be noted on these pages, on grounds that everyone would see obituaries in *Audubon* and other prominent publications. However, requests have continued, many fellow chapters have honored him in their newsletters, and I was recently reminded that two of our board members had met him, so see below. What impresses me the most in any of the obits I've seen is the story that in order to get the first 2000 copies of his ground-breaking *Field Guide to Birds* published in 1934, Peterson had to agree to receive no royalties on the first 1000 copies. To date, 7 million Peterson Field Guides have been sold; two are mine.]

Early last year, Marge Jaeger and I went to a lunch-hour book signing at a Rizzoli International Bookstore in Manhattan. We stood in a long line, waiting to give Roger Tory Peterson an invitation to be a guest speaker at SSAS's 25th Anniversary Dinner (he later sent us a regret letter). While we were at it, Marge bought a coffee table bird book for \$50 which Roger graciously signed. On the other hand, I asked him to sign a very *old* bird guide to the United Kingdom — hardback, which I purchased for \$1 at T.R. Sanctuary. I think it was his first edition of that book. He very graciously mentioned that there is a newer edition out and autographed it. He was a kind gentleman! We will sorely miss him.

BIRD WALKS
Elliott Kutner

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

- Oct. 27 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Nov. 3 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Nov. 10 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- Nov. 17 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Nov. 24 Pelham Bay for Owls (pull over to street on extreme right after going through Throgs Neck Bridge toll; meet at 9 A.M.)
-  Dec. 1 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Dec. 8 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Dec. 15 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- Dec. 22 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Dec. 29 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Jan. 5 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Jan. 12 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Jan. 19 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- Jan. 26 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Feb. 2 Pelham Bay for Owls (meet at 9 A.M.)



CLEAN WATER/CLEAN AIR BOND ACT

[At Bear Mountain, the Audubon Council of New York State, which represents 32 Audubon chapters with 40,000 members, approved the following resolution. Each spring, the council and NYS Field Office approve and distribute to elected officials a booklet of state and federal legislative resolutions.]

Whereas, the State Legislature has approved, and Governor Pataki has signed into law, a \$1.75 billion Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act; and

Whereas, the Bond Act will be presented to New York State's voters for approval on the ballot in November, 1996; and

Whereas, this Bond Act was endorsed by virtually every major environmental organization in the state — including the National Audubon Society's New York State Field Office and the Executive Committee of the Audubon Council of New York State — in addition to business and civic groups, such as the New York State Conference of Mayors, the Business Council of New York State, the Association for a Better Long Island, and others; and

Whereas, to benefit every community across New York State, the Bond Act concentrates on five key categories: clean water programs (including protection of water bodies, watersheds, and aquifers); safe drinking water programs; solid waste initiatives; municipal environmental restoration projects; and air quality projects; and

Whereas, \$790 million will be allocated to the *Clean Water Program* for municipal treatment improvements, nonpoint source pollution control projects, aquatic habitat restora-

tion, and implementation of existing management plans for significant water bodies, such as the Long Island Sound, Lake Champlain, Onondaga Lake, the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes, Peconic Bay and South Shore Estuary, New York Harbor and Hudson River; and

Whereas, the *Clean Water Program* includes \$150 million for open space acquisition to protect water resources such as important aquifers, watersheds, and wetlands, plus \$50 million for wastewater and flood control, \$15 million for dam safety projects, and related initiatives; and

Whereas, the *Safe Drinking Water Program*, receiving \$355 million, will include \$265 million to start a revolving loan fund and \$90 million in grants for municipalities to upgrade their drinking water systems to meet safe drinking water standards; and

Whereas, \$175 million will be earmarked for *Solid Waste Initiatives*; \$200 million will be earmarked for *Municipal Environmental Restoration Projects* for grants to municipalities for costs associated with cleaning up "brownfields" to Superfund standards; and \$230 million will be earmarked for *Air Quality Projects*;

Therefore Be It

Resolved that the Audubon Council of New York State believes the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act will bring tremendous benefits to all New York State residents and will also benefit the birds, wildlife, and habitats the Audubon Council and its members strive to protect; and be it further

Resolved that the Audubon Council of New York State strongly urges citizens to vote "yes" on November 5, 1996 for the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act.

Help Get the Word Out. At the Council meeting we were urged to encourage everybody (members and especially nonmembers) to call the NYS Field Office's toll-free Activist Hotline, (800) 414-ACTN, regularly. The current taped message from the hotline's founder and our hero, NY State Representative Suzanna Dwyer, gives details on the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act.



BIRDSEED SALE REMINDER

The first of our two annual birdseed sales will take place on Sunday, October 27th, from 9:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. in the parking lot of Tackapausha Museum on Washington Avenue in Seaford (just north of Merrick Road). The order form for the 17 seed packages appeared in last month's *Skimmer*; if you didn't preorder, there will be some seed available on the sale date (but not as much as usual, since we cannot return unsold seed this year). Volunteers are needed to process orders and help carry seed. Our next sale will be Sunday, January 26th; the order form will appear in next month's *Skimmer*.



RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070



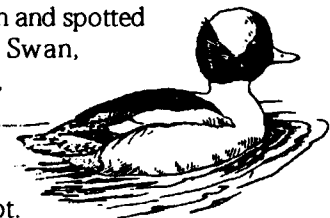
MONTAUK'S WINTERTIME BIRDS

Mike Higgiston

[This winter, Mike and Bill are offering you a chance to join them on this trip. See this *Skimmer* for details.]

There is always a desire to see birds far from home, especially if one decides to go to warmer places during the winter. However, winter birding at home can offer the same amount of interest and excitement and it doesn't cost as much. Bill Hollweg and I plan two special trips during the year, an overnight trip to Cape May over Columbus Day weekend for some hawk watching and fall migration, and a winter day trip to Montauk. Early in January 1996, Bill and I, joined by Rick Kopitsch, started out early to reach Montauk Point around 7:30 A.M. It was the coldest I've ever been in my life, as the wind whipped off the water and around and through us, but the weather didn't seem to bother the birds much. There were Common Eider, Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, White-winged Scoter, Oldsquaw, and two kinds of gulls. In the shrubbery along the road, we found Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler, White-throated and Song Sparrows, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, Gray Catbird, Northern Cardinal, and Blue Jay.

We left the Point and drove west to East Lake Drive, where we intended to bird the jetty leading from Lake Montauk into Block Island Sound. Along the way, we came upon a mixed flock of sparrows foraging for seeds. Two new species greeted us, Field and Tree Sparrows. After scanning the waters surrounding the jetty, we beat a hasty retreat from the cold and stopped for breakfast at a diner. After warming up, we proceeded leisurely westbound along Old Montauk Highway, where we found a Black-capped Chickadee and a Red-breasted Nuthatch. A Red-tailed Hawk sailed above Napeague State Park as we drove through to Promised Land and joined Montauk Highway as Amagansett came into view. We proceeded to Hook Pond in East Hampton and spotted Canada Goose, Tundra Swan, Northern Shoveler, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead (pictured), Canvasback, Ruddy Duck, Lesser Scaup, and American Coot.

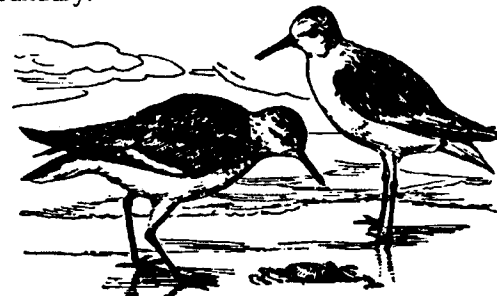


We left Hook Pond, turned toward the ocean, scanned from the car, and were rewarded with looks at a Red-necked Grebe. We continued west and poked around Georgica Pond, but saw nothing of interest. Further west, we ventured into Bridgehampton, south of Montauk Highway, and were fortunate to come upon a house with several bird feeders. Mourning Dove, House Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Junco, American Robin, Common Crow, and Rock Dove were helping themselves to the seeds. Further south, an American Kestrel entertained us by hovering over an open field, searching for field mice.

We turned west onto Bridge Lane, which crosses Sagaponack Lake. We stopped there and found American Black Duck, Great Blue Heron, American Wigeon, Belted Kingfisher, Green-winged Teal, Killdeer, Double-crested Cormorant, and Black-crowned Night Heron. Our first glance at the cormorant got us excited, as it looked quite unusual, but after studying the bird we realized it had only adopted an unusual position to take a nap. We quickly discarded any ideas we had of calling the Rare Bird Alert. From there we drove to the jetty at Shinnecock Canal. We found Brant, Mute Swan, Horned Grebe, and Bonaparte's Gull. We retraced our path back on Dune Road and turned under the Ponquogue Bridge. Here along the bay we found Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling (shown below), and Dunlin. We turned the car west along Dune Road and stopped periodically to scan both sides of the road. We spotted a Northern Harrier on the Shinnecock Bay side and then we came across our mystery bird of the trip. Bathing and drinking in puddles along both sides of Dune Road was a blackbird. That's about all we could agree upon. It had many of the characteristics of a Brewer's Blackbird; unfortunately, it also showed many of the patterns of a Rusty Blackbird. We simply couldn't decide. I have seen both blackbirds myself, but as Bill needed the Rusty for his life list and Rick needed a Brewer's for his life list, I decided to keep my opinions to myself.

We continued west and were rewarded with our best bird entertainment of the day. Between the road and the ocean dunes, we spotted a Barn Owl. It was flying back and forth looking for food and it was completely oblivious to our presence. We were able to follow the owl along the road for a mile or so as it dipped and turned and hovered. It was the best look we'd ever had of a Barn Owl in action.

Further on, I drove into a parking lot on a hunch. It seemed like some excellent habitat for Horned Lark and Snow Bunting, and sure enough we came upon some Horned Lark hunting for seeds along the cracks of the concrete. There was another lot on the other side of the road, and we tried that one also and found our Snow Bunting. By this time, it was getting late and we started for home. We crossed over the bay on the Quogue Bridge and stopped when we saw waterfowl near the bridge. We scanned the birds and found a Common Goldeneye swimming with the more usual species. It turned out that this was our most successful Montauk trip, with a total of 61 species spotted during the day. Not a bad list for a frigid day in January.

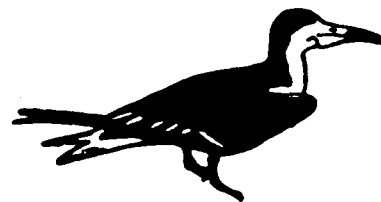


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