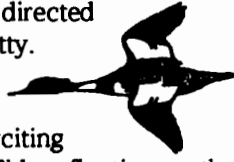


Sanderling. Out in the inlet we found Common and Red-throated Loons, Red-necked Grebe, and Red-breasted Merganser (pictured), but no Harlequins. We continued to the beach, where a returning birder directed us to the east side of the farthest jetty.

Sure enough, we found a male and a female Harlequin diving along the side of the jetty. But even more exciting were the five immature Common Eiders floating on the ocean. A continued search of the sea brought us looks at a number of Horned Grebes. Quite a successful day after a slow start.



**A SPRING FESTIVAL
AT TACKAPAUSHA MUSEUM**

Doreen Remsen

Come join your fellow members of South Shore Audubon Society as we welcome the return of spring on **Saturday, March 21st**, from 1 to 3 P.M. at the Tackapausha Museum on Washington Avenue in Seaford. To celebrate the vernal equinox, we will have spring crafts for children, including fish printing and coloring, as well as balancing eggs for luck!

There will be a live animal show presented by the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary of Oyster Bay at 2 P.M.; TRS Operations Manager Mike Brust will talk about changes our wild inhabitants of Long Island experience when spring arrives. All children who attend will be given a chance to win a door prize at the conclusion of the festival and refreshments will be served. So mark your calendars and bring your children, grandchildren, and all those children at heart. The festival activities and refreshments are free with a nominal admission charge to the museum (one dollar for adults, fifty cents for children).

Volunteers Needed: Calling all South Shore Auduboners! We will be at Tackapausha at twelve noon to set up and we need refreshment servers, crayon welders, fish printers, and egg balancers (hopefully we won't need omelet makers!). You can sign up on our bird walks or at our March meeting, or just come on down for whatever time you can spare. Thank you!

SSAS Mission Statement — *The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education, and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.*

SSAS Post Office Statement — *South Shore Skimmer is published monthly from September through December and February through June by South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.*



THINK SPRING!

Dolores Rogers

Mark your calendars — on **Saturday, May 16th**, from 9:30 A.M. to noon, at the height of spring migration, a TRS naturalist will lead SSAS on a songbird and wildflower walk at the Hoffman Center in East Norwich (on Route 25A, one driveway west of Martin Viette Nurseries). Bring lunch; rain cancels, but if it drizzles it's on!

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 Society. The following programs are open to the public. Space is limited and registration is required. All program fees are required at the time of registration.

Sunday, March 1st and Saturday, March 7th (1 to 3 P.M.) — *Maple Sugaring.* Find out how to make maple syrup from tree sap. Participants will tap a tree, learn tree identification, and get to taste fresh maple syrup cooked over a hot fire. TRS members \$3, nonmembers \$5.

Saturday, March 14th (1 to 3 P.M., ages 8 to 16) — *Day Hunters.* Children will experience live hawks, falcons, and eagles up close. An expert naturalist will share information about their lifestyles, conservation, and adaptations. TRS members \$3, nonmembers \$5.

Sunday, March 22nd (1 to 3 P.M., ages 8 to 16) — *Night Hunters.* Come meet the predators of the night and find out their special nocturnal adaptations. Children can see and touch owls, snakes, and an alligator while finding out about the mysterious life of the night hunter. TRS members \$3, nonmembers \$5.

Saturday, March 28th (10 A.M. to 12 P.M., adults) — *Signs of Spring.* Visit the property of the Hoffman Center on Route 25A for a guided walk in search of early signs of spring splendor. A Sanctuary naturalist will walk you through this new forested and successional field preserve. The Sanctuary and Hoffman Center are working together to provide the best habitat for wildlife. TRS members \$3, nonmembers \$5.

Sunday, March 29th (1 to 3 P.M., children ages 3 to 6) — *Reptiles.* Young children can meet live reptiles and find out how they live their lives. Bertha the Snake, Puddles the Alligator, and many other Sanctuary reptiles will be available to meet program participants. TRS members \$3, nonmembers \$5.

Venezuela Eco-Tour. Spaces are still available for TRS's May 2-10 trip to the ultimate South American destination, featuring a pristine rainforest and wet savannas with incredible wildlife. Call for details.

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

- Feb. 22 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- Mar. 1 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Mar. 8 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- Mar. 15 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Mar. 22 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 29 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Apr. 5 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
- Apr. 12 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Apr. 19 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Apr. 26 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner

CONSERVATION REPORT

Betty Borowsky

Two years ago I had one of the most moving experiences of my life. Deep in the woods within a Costa Rican plantation, I and my fellow traveling companions met Alexander Skutch, one of the most famous contemporary ornithologists in Central America. At the time I believe he was close to 90 years old, and in frail health.

Nevertheless, he and his wife, who so graciously received us, were living in the most primitive of conditions. Their home was a very modest shack, with windows that could be shuttered but which lacked screens or glass. I believe there was no electricity either. A horse was hitched to a post in the ground in their side yard. And a bird feeder, a platform with several fresh bananas, was prominent in the front. The site was absolutely still and peaceful. Dr. Skutch and his wife sat on their porch, which was furnished with a hard plank bench and one or two wooden chairs, and we sat on the floor or the porch stairs nearby, while Dr. Skutch spoke about how he had come to Costa Rica and why he had decided never to leave. At that moment, given these surroundings, I think we would all have made the same decision. I am grateful that I was able to videotape most of his conversation and our questions.

This is all a preface for describing why I looked forward to reading his more scholarly works (I am sure that anyone who has visited Costa Rica and is at all interested in birding will have obtained his field guide to the birds of Costa Rica, a birder's bible). The first book I've come across is his *The Life of the Flycatchers*. The book is actually one of a series of similar treatments of birds within the same family that Skutch has published. It turns out that it is really fascinating to read about the typical life history, as well as all of its variations, within a related group. The flycatchers we see in our area are fairly representative of the full 384 species that live in the Western Hemisphere. I don't have to tell all of you how easy it is to decide you're

looking at *some* flycatcher or other, but then how difficult it is to identify its specific species. Especially the empidonax flycatchers. But some flycatchers are quite easy to identify; for example, the Vermilion Flycatcher and the Eastern Kingbird cannot be mistaken for anything else (and your editor's thrown in a picture of a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher). Dr. Skutch describes the group's feeding behaviors, the various calls and songs, their nests, and their mating behaviors, among other elements of their lives. He also spends some time describing the unusual behaviors of some of them, such as the Piratical Flycatcher, which hangs around a pair of flycatchers of another species while the female is building its nest. Then, after the female is finished with its construction, and after it has finished laying its eggs, the Piratical Flycatcher goes into the nest and throws out the eggs. One by one. After the nest-builder realizes its eggs are missing, it generally abandons the nest and goes elsewhere to build another one. Then the Piratical Flycatcher moves in. This is extremely advantageous behavior for the Piratical: some of the nests built by flycatchers take a week to construct and are quite complex, with coarse sticks and branches as outside protection, and soft milkweed tufts and feathers or spider webs lining the inside.



But this is just a brief discussion of Dr. Skutch's book. It is written for the layperson, and it's clear from every word how much he loves his subjects, and what a joy it is to him to be able to spend so much time watching them. The reader soon begins to share his feelings. If you enjoy learning a bit more about birds, or even if you want to read something written by a field biologist who loves his work, I would strongly recommend reading this or other Skutch books.

SEEN ANY BANDED CANADA GEESE?

This article is borrowed from *Littorally Speaking*, the newsletter of the Northeast Chapter of the American Littoral Society, where it was titled "Ring Around the Collar":

The Waterfowl Management Unit of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) asks that you report any neck-banded Canada Geese to the nearest DEC office (in Nassau/Suffolk, 444-0345; in NYC, 718-482-4900). Please note:

- ① color of the collar
- ② the three- or four-character code (letters, numbers, or symbols)
- ③ date and location of sighting
- ④ number of geese present

Since 1991, over 40,000 Canada Geese have been marked with flexible rubber collars, enabling biologists throughout eastern North America to track their movements between breeding and wintering ranges. Over 200,000 collar observations have already been reported.

**DUCK SURVEY DATA
USEFUL TO U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE**

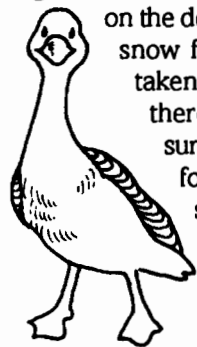
Joe Grupp

Sometime last year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) contacted the SSAS Duck Survey Committee, requesting the input of information on the use of local ponds and inland waterways by waterfowl in Nassau County. The USFWS is gathering data to be used in conjunction with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation in the formation of the South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan. During this past fall, Andrew Milliken of USFWS met with me. Using maps, data, and general information gained in the field, a knowledgeable discussion of the local ponds and their relationship to the wintering waterfowl populations took place. The ponds and waterways were subsequently grouped into ecologically significant units. SSAS is now in the process of forwarding census data to USFWS relating to the species that populate these units and their relative numbers.

The duck survey began in February and March of 1989 when a team of two, myself and Jim Remsen, spent a full day in the field making the first counts. That first day resulted in the establishment of 28 sites along the Merrick Road/Sunrise Highway corridor, extending from western Valley Stream to Massapequa, that became the eastern survey area. Paul Butkerei established a second survey area in the western part of Nassau County. It is located in the Lawrence, Woodmere, and Hewlett area and began in February 1990. Since that time, counts have been taken, regardless of weather conditions, five times each winter

on the designated dates, with one exception when snow forced one of the western counts to be taken on the following day. This year's count, therefore, represents the tenth year of the survey, the ninth and eighth full-year counts for the eastern and western censuses, respectively. The amount of data collected is now massive and is analyzed periodically by Jim, Paul, and me. The current plan is to continue the count through the 1998-1999 winter season and then summarize the data and determine the direction of the census beyond that time.

Any undertaking of this type demands a certain amount of dedication to the project, resulting in numerous hours being spent in the field on the five specific dates each year. While a number of people have given some time to this project, its ongoing success must be attributed to the help and dedication of a small core group. That group consists of Paul Butkerei, Marge Jaeger, and Bill Hollweg in the west, and myself, Jim Remsen, Mary Jane Russell, Jim and Gail Brown, and Carole Adams in the east. *Both groups can always use a limited number of volunteers* who do not need to be skilled in identification, counting, etc. To become active in this project, contact me at 481-4208.



The active members of the committee are pleased to know that the efforts they began as a local independent research project provided some useful input into the South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan which should help to preserve a healthy estuarine environment.

**INTERNET BIRD COUNT
THIS/LAST WEEKEND**

Shortly after the February *Skimmer* was mailed out, chapter presidents and newsletter editors received a press release about the *BirdSource Great '98 Backyard Bird Count*. For the first time, National Audubon and Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology are sponsoring a free North American bird count on the internet, from February 20-22, at <http://birdsourc.cornell.edu>, in order to track 37 species of songbirds and hawks by zip code just before spring migration begins.



Counts made in neighborhoods or local parks, as well as backyards with or without feeders, are wanted. The results will be updated on the internet throughout the weekend; this *Skimmer* was mailed to you on February 17th, weather permitting, and we hope it reached most of our members in time.

**LET'S SPEND A WEEKEND
AT FAHNESTOCK STATE PARK**

Taconic Outdoor Education Center in Putnam County's 11,000 acre Fahnestock Memorial State Park is about two hours from SSAS territory. It is only open to school and environmental groups and was the site of the Audubon Council of New York State's Fall 1997 meeting. If we can gather at least 35 people, we will spend the weekend of **October 17th and 18th** (the first dates not already booked by another group) enjoying evening programs and day and nighttime hikes along the park's lakes and ten miles of trails.

The cost of all activities plus three meals and a night in a heated bed-equipped cabin (with rest rooms and showers in an adjacent building) is just \$50 per person. If you're interested, please call SSAS *Armchair Activist* Chairperson Mary Jane Russell at 766-7397 now.

- Seed - Feeders
- Houses - Baths
- Books - Gifts

(516) 694-2180



WILD BIRD CENTER

"NEW YORK'S LARGEST WILD BIRD SPECIALTY STORE"

621 Fulton St. (Rt. 109), Farmingdale, NY 11735
Located between McDonald's & Dunkin' Donuts

BROOKSIDE PRESERVE COMMITTEE MEETING

SSAS's Brookside Preserve Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday night, February 24th, in Merrick and is always looking for new volunteers. Call Betsy Gulotta at 546-8841 for details. Brookside Preserve is located along Milburn Creek on the Freeport-Baldwin border just north of the LIRR; it is owned by Nassau County and managed by SSAS.



**CONNECTICUT EAGLES
& CENTRAL PARK OWLS**

Mike Higgiston

We decided to see Bald Eagles, which are easier to see in winter than summer. The Connecticut Light & Power Company operates the Shepaug Eagle Observation Area in Southbury. The area is open to the public by reservation only, on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. from December to March. The phone number for reservations is 1-800-368-8954. It's about a two-hour trip to the observation area and we arrived around 10 A.M. The Observation Area overlooks the dam, and the dam is a magnet for fish-eating birds. Had the weather this winter been colder and more of the lakes frozen, there would have been an even greater concentration of eagles present. There were three adult birds and at least two immatures. They usually remained perched in the trees along the shore, but often they would drop down and fly in circles over the water. You really could appreciate their immense size at those times. There was also the usual concentration of gulls at the dam, and a flock of about 125 Common Mergansers floated below the dam. The Nature Conservancy provides volunteers at the site with scopes to see the action. There is also a large feeder at the observation site and we saw White-throated Sparrows, Northern Cardinals, Dark-eyed Juncos, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and Blue Jays. There was a Red-bellied Woodpecker on a power line pole and a Golden-crowned Kinglet in the parking lot. Children are encouraged to view the eagles.

After leaving the site, we returned home via I-84 and had lunch in Danbury. We discussed our options and decided to head for Central Park for Long-eared Owls (pic-



tured) and Red-headed Woodpeckers. We arrived around 2 P.M. and proceeded to enter the park at West 77 Street. Some of us had been given a hot tip concerning the owls, but unfortunately the tipster had confused the west side with the east side and we had to trek across the park for the owls. But upon arriving, we knew we had come to the right spot because there was a birder with a scope trained on a pine tree 50 feet away. Sure enough, a look through the scope confirmed two Long-eared Owls sitting side by side. It was a good, clear look with no branches to look around

or needles to look through. Fantastic!! These owls are so hard to see that this observation was something to die for. After satisfying ourselves with the owls, we retraced our steps to the locust grove just west of the Great Lawn to search for the Red-headed Woodpeckers. Some birders were already there and we saw at least two adults briefly and an immature for the rest of our time there. The birds were taking food and caching it in the bark of the locust trees. Even more surprising was seeing a flock of American Robins and Common Grackles in January in New York. We certainly have had a warm winter. But warm or cold, we still enjoy getting out into the field to enjoy the birds.



AUDUBON CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS REMINDER

It's not too late to apply for full scholarships to the Audubon camp in Maine. As reported in last month's *Skimmer*, our chapter will pay all costs except transportation for a child age 10-14 to attend the Youth Ecology Camp for eleven days starting July 30th or August 12th, and for an adult to attend the Maine Coast Field Ecology Workshop for seven days starting June 27th, July 4th, or July 11th.

In addition to SSAS's annual scholarships (applications due March 1st), you can apply for National Audubon's Carl W. Buchheister Scholarship for educators and chapter activists — two SSAS members have attended the Maine Coast Field Ecology Workshop after winning that scholarship (applications due March 18th). Last year, Maureen Rube sent us the following note: "Thank you for the opportunity to attend the Audubon Workshop in Maine on the Buchheister Scholarship. I'm looking forward to it with great excitement. I attended the Greenwich workshop a few years ago and enjoyed it tremendously. The programs on recycling had a great impact on me and life has never been the same in our house since. I hope to use the information from this trip to develop units for my students related to ecology. Thank you again for making this available to me."



For scholarship applications and/or a copy of National Audubon's 1998 Summer Camps and Workshops brochure, call SSAS Education Chairperson Sue Lancer at 536-6574 between 7 and 9 P.M.



NASSAU COUNTY POLLUTION HOTLINE 739-6666



RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070



WILDLIFE POISONING HOTLINE (800) 356-0560



AUDUBON ACTIONLINE (800) 659-2622

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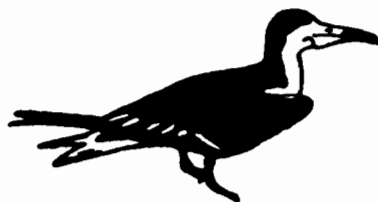


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Nancy Frame, Treasurer	520-9016
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Marge Jaeger, Fund-raising Chairperson	536-9166
Elliott Kutner, Birding / Field Trips Chairperson	486-7667
Joseph Lancer, Binocular / Book Sales (7 to 9 P.M.)	536-6574
Suzanne Lancer, Education Chairperson (7 to 9 P.M.)	536-6574
George Popkin, Financial Advisor (8 to 9 P.M.)	378-4467
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Americans Committed to Conservation



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