

THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

Doreen Remsen with Wendy Murbach

Change... For most of us, change is something we'd rather not think about, rather not face. Yet life, all life, is about change. We at South Shore marvel at the changing of the seasons. On our walks and on our solo rambles, we look for the beauty and variety in the trees, plants, birds, and wildlife that change brings. Who has not been struck by the brilliance of a Scarlet Tanager in full summer plumage or the soft verdant greens of the woodlands in spring? The flaming colors of maples, oaks, and birches in the fall; the kettles of hawks on the move; and the crisp cold quiet of the dunes in winter... Our lives would be the poorer without these changes.



Thirty-three years ago, various individuals from different families "flocked" to the home of Alvin Friedman in Oceanside. They were a diverse group, yet they had a common purpose in mind. They wanted to share their love of the environment and educate others in the south shore communities they represented that our environment, and all environments, were worth protecting, worth fighting for. The seed they planted took hold and a new family was born — the family of South Shore Audubon.

As an organization and a family, we have been through many changes. Sometimes we handled them well, sometimes not. We have learned from them all and they have made us who we are today.

This year we are facing a period of transition and change. Unless there is a dramatic turn of events at the national level, our portion of dues share that we have received from National Audubon will be gone with the start of our fiscal year, July 1, 2004. This is a sizable part of our income, one that we have relied on to cover operating expenses vital to our organization. The board of South Shore Audubon recognized that we need to be proactive and asked for volunteers to serve on the Finance Committee. The purpose of this committee is to take a hard look at our finances, list our income and expenses accurately, and redesign our bookkeeping and budget formats so our financial standing is clear at a glance. This is very different from what we have been comfortable with in the past. The committee met several times over the summer and has begun the process. We recognize that our whole family needs to be involved in this, our family finances, and it is our intention to share our work with all of you, and encourage you to share your thoughts with us and join us.

Closely linked with changing our handling of the organization's finances is the need for long-range planning. In order to adapt and grow, as all life does, we need new ideas, new projects that will insure a steady growth of new members and also will produce a steady, dependable income stream. The Long Range Planning Committee will be a vital partner with the Finance Committee.

To me (Doreen), one of the most frightening sentences any member of any organization can utter is: "But we have always done it that way." With that mindset, there can be no change. No new directions, no new ideas, no new friends... that is not the South Shore family I have grown to know and love. To quote a member of the Finance Committee, "We can do this!"

The Finance Committee members are George Peters, Scott Oglesby, Joe Grupp, Wendy Murbach, Doreen Remsen, and Jim Remsen.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

One of the wonderful perks that you get from an Audubon membership is the chance to be a part of your local Audubon chapter, South Shore Audubon Society.

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

- Our new members since last month's *Skimmer* are:
- Freeport Petrina Notarstefano
 - Howard Beach Molly Durning
 - Massapequa Park Natalia B. de Cuba
 - Rockville Centre Patricia Sullivan
 - Wantagh S. Crain



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

(516) 694-2180



"NEW YORK'S LARGEST WILD BIRD SPECIALTY STORE"

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



AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201



UPDATE ON TAKE BACK AUDUBON

Michael Spelling

In early September, SSAS's board voted to join Take Back Audubon (www.smbas.org/tba), whose goal is to steer National Audubon Society's undemocratic Board of Directors away from recent policies that have put the future of all-volunteer chapters, including ours, in peril.

In order for TBA to succeed, we need your help! There will be a proxy in the next *Skimmer* that we will urge you to return *instead* of the one you'll be receiving from NAS. The TBA proxy will support a slate of grassroots candidates for NAS's Board of Directors, plus five resolutions to restore chapter funding and influence.



Explore the coast
with the
**AMERICAN
LITTORAL SOCIETY**

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISES (Sun., Sep. 28 & Sat., Oct. 4). Meet at 4 P.M. Pier 6 Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn for a 3-hour guided tour of the marshes and backwaters of the Jamaica Bay Refuge. Cost: \$35 includes guides, wine, cheese, fruit, and snacks. Contact Don.

FIRE ISLAND FALL HIKE (Sun., Oct. 12). Meet at 9:15 A.M. at Sayville Ferry for a hike through the "sunken forest" during raptor and monarch migration. Cost: \$20 incl. ferry & guides. Bring lunch, binoculars. Call Steve Finn: 631-821-2160 (eves).

ASSATEAGUE FALL WEEKEND (Nov. 6-9). Visit Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge and Assateague National Seashore. See wild ponies, Snow Geese (thousands), Bald Eagle, River Otter, Sika Deer, and lots more wildlife in a beautiful setting. Cost: \$295 includes 3 nights at Refuge Motor Inn, guided hikes, boat tour of marshes, evening slide programs, star watch, and Saturday night dinner.

FLORIDA EVERGLADES (Feb. 28 - Mar. 7). Visit north & south sections of Everglades National Park, Big Cypress Preserve, Sanibel Island/Ding Darling Refuge, Loxahatchee Refuge, Butterfly World. Closeup views of Florida's best birds, as well as American crocodile, alligators, etc.

ICELAND (June 18-30, 2004). Contact Don for details.

For information and free field trip brochure, call/write Don Riepe, (718) 318-9344, donriepe@aol.com, 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; www.alsnyc.org



NASSAU COUNTY POLLUTION HOTLINE 739-6666



BIRD FOOD BASICS

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from "Bird Food and Feeder Basics: What You Need to Know to Get Started" by Bill Thompson III and comes from the January/February 2003 issue of *Bird Watcher's Digest*.

Just like people, birds have certain food preferences. The good news for you is that people have been feeding birds for many decades, so you get the benefit of all that trial-and-error experimentation. These days, we, the bird-feeding public, already know what foods birds prefer. At the feeders this means seeds.

But which seeds are the best? In a nutshell, sunflower seed. So if you are just starting out in feeding, I suggest you buy some black-oil sunflower seed. Following are the best kinds of seed, in descending order of popularity.

Black-oil Sunflower. Gray- or white-striped sunflower seed used to be the king of the bird foods. Now it's black-oil sunflower seed. Smaller than gray-striped sunflower seed, with a thin, all-black, papery shell, black-oil seed can be cracked by sparrows, juncos, and even small-billed goldfinches. It's a better buy, too, because 70 percent of



each seed is meat, compared with only 57 percent for striped sunflower. Its high oil and fat content helps birds get through cold winter nights. Black-oil sunflower seed is the heart of any feeding program because it's accepted by the greatest variety of birds. You can feed it out of hanging feeders, in hoppers, on tables, or scattered on the ground — preferably all of the above.

Sunflower Hearts. If I were to pick only one food to offer at my feeding station, it would be sunflower hearts. Yes, they are expensive, but a bag of sunflower hearts (no shells, just the meat of the seed) lasts more than three times as long as a bag of seeds with shells. Not only that, every species that comes to my feeding station will eat them. Being hullless, hearts are accessible to weaker-billed birds like siskins, redpolls, and Carolina wrens. Goldfinches love them.

Compared with seeds with hulls, hearts are relatively free of waste and of the messy shells that pile up to smother grass and rot decks. The only drawback is that the hearts should not be exposed to wet weather; thus, they should be fed only from feeders. They rot quickly when damp. On dry days, it's fine to spread a handful on the bird table, but otherwise, stick to weatherproof feeders. You'll be surprised how little it takes to feed a lot of birds.

Mixed Seed. Mixed seed, often generically referred to as "wild birdseed," is a vital addition to any feeding program. But not all mixes are created equal, and what is eagerly eaten in Arizona can go to waste in New York. A prime example is milo, a round, reddish seed that looks like a BB. You'll see it, along with wheat, oats, and even barley, in grocery-store mixes. In the East, milo and wheat are spurned by most birds except blackbirds and doves. In the West, however, quail, doves, towhees, and sparrows eagerly eat milo.

Millet. Millet is a main ingredient in most mixed birdseed. White proso millet is a little, round, shiny, cream-colored seed. It's a staple for most sparrows and juncos, as well as doves, Carolina wrens, thrashers, and cardinals.

Cracked Corn. Another common ingredient of good mixed seed is cracked corn, which is accepted by most birds after the sunflower and millet are gone. Cracked corn is the cheapest and best offering for quail, pheasants, and doves, but it is irresistible to blackbirds, cowbirds, grackles, and house sparrows. If you're inundated by these less desirable birds, you may want to stop offering corn.

The third ingredient of a good mix is our old buddy, black-oil sunflower seed. Peanut hearts, which are small, rather bitter byproducts of peanut processing, make birdseed mixes smell good (which is nice for us), boost the price (which is nice for retailers), and may appeal to chickadees, titmice, jays, and wrens. Peanut hearts are not vital because, in my experience, the sunflower always goes first anyway. This is not to devalue whole peanuts as a food — they can be great if offered in the right feeder.

Peanuts. In Europe, peanuts have been a staple of bird feeding for years. But peanuts have become popular for

bird feeding in North America just in the past decade. Peanuts are a vital part of my feeding program. Woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, creepers, titmice, and wrens are among the birds favoring peanuts. The peanuts we use for bird feeding are rejects from the cocktail peanut trade. They are out of the shell and usually roasted, but not salted.

When offered in the shell, only crows, jays, and the occasional clever titmouse can really exploit them, because peanuts are just too big and cumbersome for most birds to crack open. Better feed and birdseed stores, though, sell raw shelled peanuts in bulk. If you can't find these in your area, you can buy the cheapest unsalted roasted cocktail peanuts (sold in cans or jars) at your grocery store.



Offered in wire-mesh tube feeders, in mesh bags, or in hopper and platform feeders, peanuts are an incredibly popular food, especially in harsh winter weather. They offer a great high-protein boost to winter-weary birds and help insect eaters like wrens, woodpeckers, and sometimes even sapsuckers make it through.

Peanuts can be subject to mold in hot, wet weather. Check them often for signs of black mold or the darkening in color that can mean they've gone rancid. Offer only as many as the birds will eat in a few days in warmer weather.

Thistle/Niger/Nyjer. Niger, or thistle seed (now sometimes referred to by the commercial name of Nyjer), is imported from Africa and Asia. The seed is sterilized, so it won't germinate in North America.

Thistle seed requires a special feeder style, one that has small openings sized to accommodate the tiny seeds but still permit birds to gain access to the seed.

Thistle seed can be somewhat expensive and is subject to mold, especially in hot, damp weather. To avoid this, shake your feeders every time you fill them to be sure the seed is coming out of the ports properly. If the seed clumps, you may have to dump it out where the birds won't find it and wash and dry your feeder before refilling it. Fine-mesh nylon thistle "socks" are a cheap way to feed niger, and they let air circulate around the seed. If you don't mind paying a bit more per pound, thistle/niger seed will really attract finches and siskins to your feeders.

Safflower. Safflower is a white, shiny, conical seed that's gaining popularity among people who find that cardinals like it and some squirrels and grackles don't. The operative word in that statement is *some*. Lots of squirrels love safflower seed. Safflower seed is usually found in bulk at better feed stores. You can offer it in any feeder that dispenses sunflower seed or scatter it on the ground to attract cardinals (who aren't much for perching on tube feeders). Safflower seed is nice to offer, but not vital; any bird that will eat safflower will also take sunflower seed.

Other Bird Foods. There is a vast array of other foods you can offer birds besides birdseed. Here are a few of the most commonly offered items on the birds' smorgasbord.

Peanut Butter. Every feeder bird will eat peanut butter, especially woodpeckers, chickadees, and titmice. But it's not a food that you want to offer in great quantities, for two reasons. First of all, peanut butter is sticky and messy, so, like suet, it should be offered in a way that birds will not get it all over their feathers. Second, although it may be a myth that peanut butter sticks to the roof of a bird's bill, it's not inconceivable that a big wad of sticky PB could be difficult to swallow. For these reasons, we offer peanut butter in very small quantities when the weather is very cold. At other times of year, we offer peanut butter as an ingredient in our bird pudding.

You can make a simple peanut butter feeder by drilling shallow one-inch holes in a piece of scrap wood, filling them with peanut butter, and hanging it up near your feeders.

Gouge out a few toeholds underneath each hole to help the birds cling. If the food goes unrecognized, try sticking a few sunflower hearts in the peanut butter — the birds will soon get the idea.

Suet. Suet is the dense white fat that collects around beef kidneys and loins. You'll find it in grocery store meat counters. It's amazing how many different species eat suet. All the regular seed eaters — chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, woodpeckers — will eat it, as well as wrens, sapsuckers, warblers, orioles, catbirds, creepers, and others. A little suet goes a long way.

Suet Cakes. Many people take convenience a step farther and buy commercial suet cakes. Some of these blocks are great; some are not so great.

Avoid commercial blocks that have whole seed, like sunflower and millet seed, melted into them with the shells on. These slippery fat-covered seeds are difficult for birds to crack, so they may just be discarded.

If you buy cakes, buy those with easily edible ingredients like peanut hearts, sunflower hearts, chopped raisins, insect parts, or cornmeal.

In my experience, the fuss of rendering suet or the expense of buying suet cakes isn't justified by any greater enthusiasm on the part of the birds who eat it. They're just as happy with the meat-counter lumps. Suet cakes are convenient for humans more than anything else, which is why they are so popular.

Fruit. When I noticed yellow-bellied sapsuckers, robins, and pileated woodpeckers eating the last shriveled apples and pears in our orchard, I began offering halved apples impaled on short twigs of the dead branches we put up all around our feeder.

You can offer raisins and currants, but these need to be chopped up and soaked in hot water to soften them. Mockingbirds, catbirds, wrens, and thrashers appreciate these most, although bluebirds and other thrushes will sometimes take them, too.

Bill Thompson III is the editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest* and *Backyard Bird News*. He lives with his family on a farm near Whipple, Ohio.



**WILD BIRD FEED SAVINGS DAY
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2003
TACKAPAUSHA MUSEUM
9:30 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.**



The museum is located on Washington Avenue in Seaford and lies about 1/2 mile south of Sunrise Highway, just north of Merrick Road. Since there will be only a little extra for sale that day, preordering is greatly appreciated; an order form appears below for your use. Please keep this upper portion as a reminder of the sale date. All preorders must be received by OCTOBER 16. **Please make checks payable to the South Shore Audubon Society. Mail check and order form to Paul Butkerei, 268 Wallace St., Freeport, NY 11520.**

Help will be needed on the sale date to process orders and to aid in unloading seed. If you wish to volunteer, call (516) 593-4554 and ask for Paul. **PLEASE NOTE THAT WE WILL NOT HAVE A JANUARY SALE!**

My name is _____

My address is _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ SSAS Member? Yes No

E-Mail Address _____

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	TOTAL
	25 lb Black Oil Sunflower Seed	10.10	
	25 lb Striped Sunflower Seed	13.50	
	20 lb Premium Seed Mix	8.50	
	40 lb Premium Seed Mix	16.00	
	20 lb Special Mix (1/3 sunflower, no corn)	8.75	
	40 lb Special Mix	16.50	
	25 lb Cracked Corn	7.75	
	25 lb Peanut Hearts	29.00	
	5 lb Peanut Hearts	6.00	
	25 lb Sunflower Chips	20.00	
	5 lb Sunflower Chips	4.30	
	5 lb Safflower Seed	3.25	
	8 lb Nyjer (Thistle) Seed	7.75	
	12 oz Suet Seed Cake	1.10	
	12 oz Peanut Butter Seed Cake	1.50	
	Single Cake Suet Basket	2.00	

TOTAL AMOUNT: _____

South Shore Audubon Society
P.O. Box 31
Freeport, NY 11520-0031

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
Americans Committed to Conservation



U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 Permit No. 1181
 NONPROFIT
 Freeport, NY

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED



DATED MATERIAL

**2003-2004 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND
 COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS**

George Peters, President	868-5480
Scott Oglesby, Vice President	798-4871
Laurie Luxner Raisher, Treasurer	378-4025
Christine Schmitt, Recording Secy. & Educ.	887-7713
Alice Blaustein, Corresponding Secretary	221-1870
Doreen Remsen, Director (6/06) & Birdathon	764-5168
Michael Sperling, Dir. (6/06) & <i>Skimmer</i> Editor ...	541-0805
Lou Paolillo, Director (6/05)	766-4285
Ann Marie Pozzini, Dir. (6/05) & Special Trips ...	579-3353
Enid Klein, Director (6/04) & Programs	561-0004
Betty Borowsky, Conservation Education	764-3596
Joan Butkerei, Conservation Legislation	593-4554
Paul Butkerei, Wild Bird Feed Savings Day	593-4554
Anne-Marie Conn, Electronic Communications ...	671-7685
Michele DeCaprio, Youth Representative	707-7698
Joseph Grupp, Research	481-4208
Betsy Gulotta, Brookside Preserve	546-8841
Elliott Kutner, Birding / Field Trips	486-7667
Therese Lucas, Environmental Festivals	631-225-6377
Annie F. McIntyre, Educational Media	379-2206
Wendy Murbach, Membership	546-6303
James Remsen, Jr., Birdathon	631-957-0949
Dolores Rogers, Welcoming	599-1224
Mary Jane Russell, <i>Armchair Activist</i>	766-7397
Marcia Specht, Publicity	694-8229
Jonathan Staller, Hospitality	482-7963

BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS
Think Globally, but Join Locally!

Option 1. You can help SSAS survive NAS's major dues share cutbacks by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get a first-year bonus for recruiting you). If you'd like to become a member of National Audubon and your all-volunteer local chapter, please mail the following form and your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to us at South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031. The special rate for the first year is \$20 per household; \$15 for students and seniors. Gift memberships help too; we will ask that non-local recipients be assigned to their own local chapter if you prefer.

Option 2. You can subscribe to the *Skimmer* for a year by sending \$10 payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** to us at the address above.

Renewing? Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS.



NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO.: _____

E-MAIL: _____
Chapter Code R15 7XCH (South Shore Audubon Society)

