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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 automatically a valued member of this active and friendly chapter, so please come out to the next meeting at the Freeport Library from 7:30–9:30 P.M. on the second Tuesday of the month (second Monday this February) to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment's health and viability, to hear about local issues that you can help to solve, and to see an interesting program.

Whether you are a beginning birder or someone with a large life list, you will enjoy our weekly Sunday bird walks led by Elliott Kutner. Check out the special events that are mentioned in this *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

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 the last *Skimmer* are:

- Bethpage Stanley J. Squires
- Carle Place Suzanne McVetty
- East Meadow Sherri Ackereizen
- Elmont Stanley Wager
- Farmingdale E. Gorczycki, Timothy Heagarty, Francis J. McCormick
- Floral Park Deborah Moore
- Garden City The Klupka Family; James B. Sarno, M.D.
- Hewlett Elizabeth Laster, John Richardson
- Huntington Sta. Scott Honickman
- Lido Beach Terry Raddock
- Lynbrook Helene Loan
- Massapequa Maria DeLuise-Brodsky, Suzie Novak, Joan Ridam
- Massapequa Park.... George Duffy, Nancy Vannata
- Oceanside Joseph Gray, Anthony Penna, June M. Titus
- Stewart Manor Edward & Phyllis Cookson
- Upper Brookville.... Roni Downey
- Valley Stream Meyer Balamut, Julia Bromley, Gail Lindman Tinghitella
- Wantagh Eva Frendzel
- Woodmere Berle S. Bonner



MASSAPEQUA PRESERVE MEETING

Michael Sperling

On **Thursday, November 29**, starting at 7:30 P.M., there will be (was?) a free meeting at the Bar Harbour Library to discuss two major issues that are of concern to SSAS.

It's been three years since the *Skimmer* last mentioned a \$6 million project that is now expected to begin this spring. Mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency when sewer systems were approved for the adjacent streets decades ago, the Streamflow Augmentation and Pond Restoration project will include the temporary closing of portions of the preserve from Sunrise Highway north to Linden Street and the rebuilding of the "bike path" when a two-mile-long pipeline for water recirculation is buried near it. Representatives from Nassau County's Department of Public Works will be at the library to discuss this project, which also involves the partial dredging of some of the ponds and streams.

The other issue to be discussed at the meeting is that as part of Nassau County's efforts to transfer responsibility for parks and preserves to the Towns of Hempstead, North Hempstead, and Oyster Bay, the transfer of Massapequa Preserve to Tobay is under serious consideration.

The sponsor of the meeting is the all-volunteer Friends of Massapequa Preserve; I have been on its board of directors since it was founded.

Directions: The Bar Harbour Library is at 40 Harbor Ln. in Massapequa Park. From Sunrise Highway opposite the LIRR station, take Park Blvd. south; when you cross Merrick Rd., you will be on Harbor Ln. The library is on the right.

20TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The dates for the 2007–2008 Waterfowl Survey are as follows, rain or shine: **Saturdays, December 8, January 5, February 2, February 23, and March 22.** Volunteers are welcome to participate in the surveys. If you are interested in spending a full or half day visiting up to 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park, call Joe Grupp, SSAS's Research Chairperson, at 481-4208.

JOIN A CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT TEAM

SSAS's Wendy Murbach is the team leader for the Northern Nassau Christmas Bird Count (CBC) quadrant that is surveyed from Gerry Park in Roslyn to Garvies Point in Glen Cove. This CBC is run by North Shore and Huntington Audubon Societies (the Southern Nassau CBC is several decades older than SSAS and consequently is not organized by us). If you're interested in participating (for the usual CBC fee of \$5), contact Wendy at Wmrbch@aol.com or 546-6303. The **Saturday, December 22** count will begin at 8 A.M. and continue through the day, but you can join it after lunch (ask for Wendy's cell phone number in order to locate her team).

keep them from, biting us didn't help our comfort level, but insect repellent, while not perfect, improved it somewhat. Mosquitoes were not what we had returned to the refuge for and in a short time we were about ready to give it all up when three birds flew into the woodland and landed in trees not too far from us. One then flew to a branch close by and we identified it as a Brown-headed Nuthatch. The other two birds came closer and I heard myself mentally say, "yes, yes, yes" as they were Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. As we studied the birds while being attacked by the mosquitoes, it was hard to keep the glasses steady, but study them we did!

One of the birds then swept down on the nuthatch and quite a battle took place, with the nuthatch finally giving way to the woodpecker. The woodpecker then perched for a while on the very same branch from which it had chased the nuthatch. After a reasonable length of time passed, the three birds flew off and we quickly left the woods, thankful to be getting away from the mosquitoes.

Only two times have I seen the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and both times were memorable. My experience learning about and observing this species is best summed up in the title of this two-part article: An Interesting Bird — Two Interesting Observations.

GIVING BACK TO THE BIRDS

Therese Lucas

Saturday, December 15th from 1 to 3 P.M. is the SSAS Holiday Party for children, which is being held at Tackapausha Museum & Preserve on Washington Avenue in Seaford. Tickets are \$2 for adults and \$1 for children (ages 4 to 14; free for younger children), which are the normal museum admission prices. This is a chance for attendees to make various feeders for birds. During the holiday season, children receive many gifts, and this is an opportunity for them to give something that they've created to the birds.

At 2 P.M., Bobby Horvath of Wildlife in Need of Rescue and Rehabilitation will conduct an interactive live raptor presentation. Mr. Horvath always has interesting facts to share and deepens our appreciation for these amazing birds.



Volunteers are always needed. Please contact me at 221-3921 or tklwings@optonline.net if you can help.

Halloween Follow-Up. A special thank you to all of the volunteers who helped out at our annual Halloween Party at Tackapausha: Gloria Berkowitz, Alice Blaustein, Helen Buckley, Mary Jane Conlon, Louise Leonard, Wendy Murbach, Theresa Perez, and Michael Sperling. More than 200 people attended and almost every child came in a costume. This made for some great interaction between the children and the volunteers. The handouts available at the bat and owl craft tables were well received.

SSAS WELCOMES LEONARD G. KONSKER

South Shore Audubon is pleased to announce that our treasurer's accountant has agreed to handle our tax returns pro bono. Thank you, Mr. Konsker!


Phone: (516) 931-1445
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LEONARD G. KONSKER

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

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ALS HOLIDAY PARTY (Dec. 8, 5–10 P.M.). Held at the historic control tower on Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, the cost is only \$35 and includes food & drink, a Silent Auction, an "Ugly Auction," door prizes, and entertainment: *Flamenco Dancers and Exotic Dancer*. Nature Walk at 3 P.M. before party.

NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACHWALKS (Jan. 1). Three walks: Jones Beach West End 2 (11 A.M.), Fire Island Lighthouse (10 A.M.), and Fort Tilden, Rockaway Beach (11 A.M.). *Champagne, coffee & cake at Fort Tilden*. Call for more info.

MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND (Jan. 4–6). Spend a quiet but active weekend at Montauk during peak seabird and seal-watching time. Cost: \$345 incl. 2 nights at luxurious Manor House, 5 meals, 5 hikes, 2 evening programs, a star watch, and LIRR station pickup. Leaders: Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe.

FLORIDA EVERGLADES AND PARKS (March 1–8). Visit best wildlife areas of South Florida: North & South Everglades, Key Largo, Sanibel Island, Corkscrew Swamp, Loxahatchee Refuge, Wakodahatchee and Green Caye Boardwalks, more.

TEXAS COAST BIRDING & BUTTERFLY PRESERVE (April 12–19).

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

BROOKSIDE PRESERVE'S FALL CLEANUP

SSAS's October 28th cleanup at chapter-managed Brookside Preserve was remarkably successful, for which we thank members of SSAS, the South Nassau Unitarian Universalist Congregation, a group of Nassau County Parks employees, and neighbors, including Lloyd Abrams, Lorraine Avitabile, Tom Beach, Jim & Gail Brown, Laura D'Angelo, Connie Gallagher, Betsy Gulotta, Marilyn Hametz, Therese Lucas, Rory & Alice O'Connor, George Peters, Steve Schellenger, Michael Sperling, Nelson W., Arthur Weaver, Pearl Weinstein, and John Zarudsky.

AUDUBON ANALYSIS REVEALS DRAMATIC DECLINES FOR SOME OF NEW YORK'S MOST FAMILIAR BIRDS

Editor's two paragraphs: As many of you saw, the July/August issue of *Audubon* magazine had a foldout entitled "Wakeup Call," about the ten common birds whose nationwide numbers have declined the most sharply in the last 40 years (if not, you can download it and more from <http://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/cbid/magazine.php>). What follows is a June 14th press release from Audubon New York that localized the magazine story.

The foldout mentioned that ten more common birds in decline were listed online; here are all 20 common species, where "common" means more than 500,000 with a range exceeding 1 million square kilometers: Northern Bobwhite (down 82%), Evening Grosbeak, Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup, Boreal Chickadee, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Tern, Loggerhead Shrike, Field Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Snow Bunting, Black-throated Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Common Grackle, American Bittern, Rufous Hummingbird, Whip-poor-will, Horned Lark, Little Blue Heron, and Ruffed Grouse (down 54%).

Population declines for some of the most recognized and beloved birds in New York echo the disturbing findings of a new analysis by the National Audubon Society that reveals how local and national threats are combining to take a toll on birds, habitat, and the environment across the country.

"These are not rare or exotic birds we're talking about — these are the birds that visit our feeders and congregate at nearby lakes and seashores, and yet they are disappearing day by day," said Audubon Chairperson and former EPA Administrator, Carol Browner. "Their decline tells us we have serious work to do, from protecting local habitats to addressing the huge threats from global warming."

The national study found that continental populations of some common birds nose-dived over the past forty years, with several down nearly 80 percent. In New York, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and Ruffed Grouse topped the list, with statewide declines of between 98% and 83%. These figures are steeper than the national rates, indicating that the loss of these types of habitats is

accelerated here in New York. These dramatic declines are attributed to the loss of grasslands, healthy forests, and other critical habitats from multiple environmental threats such as sprawl and changes in agricultural practices. The study notes that these threats may now be compounded by new and broader problems, including the escalating effects of global warming and demand for corn-based ethanol.

Species especially hard hit in New York include:

● *Grasshopper Sparrow*. This species gets its name from its buzzy, insect-like song. Because it requires especially large, open expanses of grasslands, it has suffered steep declines due to encroachment by shrubs, intensive agriculture, and development, all of which cause loss and fragmentation of its habitat. Stewardship of private farmland is imperative to provide the habitat necessary to maintain this species.

● *Eastern Meadowlark*. This robin-sized, melodic songbird nests directly on the ground in pastures and hayfields. Farm abandonment and sprawl development have resulted in the loss of much of its habitat. Intensification of agriculture on remaining habitat has contributed to the declines. Cooperation with private landowners to help manage grassland habitat is the best opportunity for conserving this bird.

● *Ruffed Grouse*. Found in young deciduous and mixed forests, the Ruffed Grouse is dependent on successional habitat. Maturation of forests due to lack of forest management and control of natural disturbance factors is a key threat, while over-browsing from deer makes some early successional forest less suitable for this species.



● *Field Sparrow*. This small, brown songbird that nests in shrub/scrub habitat is distinguishable by its light rusty cap and bright pink bill. The major threat to this species is habitat loss from sprawl development and old fields reverting to forests. Stabilizing their populations may be possible by maintaining suitable shrub and old field habitats through management and allowing natural disturbances such as floods and fires to occur.

● *Common Tern*. This slender, black-capped, gray-and-white bird is seen flying low along coasts and diving for fish. Threats include development, human disturbance, predation, and pollution. Continued management of breeding colonies, and the protection of lakes, rivers, and shorelines from development will help to ensure this species' success.

To address these population declines, Audubon New York is working with individuals across the state to monitor birds in Important Bird Areas and in their own backyards, and to promote sound stewardship of public and private lands. "Since many of our declining common birds are found in grasslands that are privately owned, it is essential that we reach out to landowners with guidance and support for managing their lands in bird-friendly

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A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Think Globally, but Join Locally!

Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$15 payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** using the form below. Our address is P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.

Option 2. To join NAS and your all-volunteer local chapter, 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 \$0 unless you join through us). Mail the form below and your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to SSAS at the address above. The special rate for the first year is \$20 per household; \$15 for students and seniors.



Renewing? Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS (we now get \$0 for all NAS renewals).

Donations to SSAS are always welcome!



Yes, I'd like to join: SSAS only National Audubon too

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