

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



NEXT MEETING

Enid Klein

DATE: Tuesday, March 9, 2010
 TIME: 7:30 P.M.
 PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
 144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)
 SPEAKER: Andrew Farnsworth
 TOPIC: Tracking a Hidden Spectacle: Using
 Radar and Acoustic Monitoring to
 Study Nocturnal Bird Migration


In northern temperate latitudes, migration is a twice-yearly spectacle that many of us hold in awe.

During peak migration periods, tens of millions of birds may be aloft on a given night. We may not appreciate the magnitude of these events, because they occur under cover of darkness. An understanding of these events, however, is critical for planning bird conservation strategies, such as monitoring nocturnal migrants that may not be surveyed well by other techniques. Andrew's presentation will describe two ways to study migration: listening to flight-calls of passing migrants and interpreting radar imagery.

Andrew's interest in birds developed at an early age and continued through his graduate studies. After receiving a B.S. in natural resources and an M.S. in zoology, in 2007 he obtained a Ph.D. in ecology and evolutionary biology. He combines research with extensive field experience in the U.S., Mexico, and the Antilles, and has co-authored species' accounts for the Handbook of Birds of the World. Join us!

Pre-Meeting Program on Birds. Starting at 7 P.M. most months, Scott Oglesby expands our birding horizons in the room beyond our coffee-break tables. Topic suggestions for future talks are welcome.

Parking Lots. In addition to the parking lot adjacent to the library, there's a lightly used, well-lit, and fairly close municipal lot on the east side of S. Ocean Ave., on the near (south) side of the gas station that borders Sunrise Highway.

IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE
 BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS.
 SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!

SSAS Mission Statement — The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS WANTED

Thanks to another much-appreciated donation from Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is again offering two \$750 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarships this spring to college juniors, seniors, or graduate students who are continuing their studies toward a degree in an area of biological or environmental science, such as wildlife management, forestry, animal behavior, ecology, marine biology, oceanography, mammalogy, or ornithology. Our annual college scholarship program began in 1994 and was named in memory of Jerry two years later. For information, call Betsy Gulotta at 546-8841 or send e-mail to gulotte@ncc.edu. Applications are due by April 30 and we typically receive just a few, so apply if you're eligible or please help us spread the word!

BLACK SKIMMER RECOVERY PLAN

The Black Skimmer (scientific name *Rynchops niger*), the bird species that inspired this newsletter's name in the 1970s, is on New York State's Endangered Species List. It is listed as a "species of special concern," which means it's in trouble but not yet threatened or endangered.

On **Wednesday, February 24**, from 2 to 4 P.M. at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, the New York State Depart-

ment of Environmental Conservation will be holding a meeting to discuss the Black Skimmer Recovery Plan. According to the DEC:

"This meeting will inform concerned stakeholders of the ecological status of Black Skimmer in New York State and the process for developing the recovery plan. Local and expert stakeholders on Black Skimmer ecology will be encouraged to additionally participate on the Black Skimmer Recovery Team. The Recovery Team will provide input and guidance for establishing recovery goals, restoration methods, and monitoring protocols during the development of the Recovery Plan.

"There is no cost to attend but participants are asked to register by contacting either me (Biodiversity Ecologist Jason C. Smith, jysmith@gw.dec.state.ny.us, 718-482-4919), or Citizen's Participation Specialist Thomas Panzone (tvpanzon@gw.dec.state.ny.us, 718-482-4958).

"A list of the most important questions and issues to be addressed and answered during the development of the recovery plan will be sent to registered participants. These issues will include regulatory concerns, threats to the species, restoration and creation of beach habitat, and the potential impacts to existing habitat due to climate change. Opportunity for discussion and comments will be provided to stakeholders in attendance. An agenda is currently being developed and will be circulated prior to the meeting date."

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

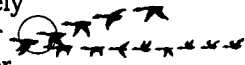
Wendy Murbach

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 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. Check out the special events that are mentioned in this *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

Our new members since the last *Skimmer* are:

Baldwin	Ann Furey, Antoinette Scelzo, Beverly Visconti
Bellmore	Patricia Awe-Bredenkamp, Barbara Bunting, Judy Yanky
Bellport	Elaine Miller
Bethpage	Gloria Balsam, Michael Romano
East Meadow	Barbara Lipper, Alta Marone
Floral Park	Madeline Kiely
Franklin Square	Erika Hetzler
Freeport	Sheila Rindler
Garden City	Christine Adams, Richard Rieger
Hempstead	Richard L. Rosa
Hicksville	J. N. Smith, Mary Weinryb
Levittown	Angelo Manzo
Long Beach	Jay Fagin, C. T. & L. Ferraro
Malverne	Edith Gurevics
Massapequa	Debra Alcamo, Doris A. Keller, Albert Tint, Judith Wolter
Oceanside	Kenneth Weinstein
Plainview	Pearl Garfinkel
Rockville Centre	Nancy Mannion, Victoria Seidman
Valley Stream	Anthony Verriello
Wantagh	Claire Morga
West Hempstead	Sheilah Pincus



BROOKSIDE PRESERVE CLEANUP SCHEDULED

On Sunday, April 18, from 1 to 3 P.M., SSAS will have its annual spring cleanup at Brookside Preserve, rain or shine. Brookside is a 20-acre freshwater wetland, woodland, and upland area owned by Nassau County that was rescued from oblivion and is managed by SSAS. With help from a state grant, we produced a trail guide, educational freshwater wetland guide for children, and a video. The guides have been scanned and are posted at ssaudubon.org.

The Preserve is located on the Freeport–Baldwin border, along Milburn Creek; park at the main entrance on Brookside Avenue just north of Sunrise Highway (turn north at the traffic light that's just east of Freeport H.S.). Please bring gloves, rakes, bags, and/or friends of all ages.



Explore the coast with the AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS AT JAMAICA BAY (Sat., March 27). Join naturalist Don Riepe at 10 A.M. for slide program & hike to look for phoebes, ibis, egrets, oystercatchers, other early migrants. Call refuge to reserve at (718) 318-4340 or call the Littoral Society.

STERLING FOREST WARBLERS (Sun., May 2). See golden-winged, blue-winged, hooded, cerulean and other warbler species. Hike around a scenic lake only 1-hour north of New York City.

HORSESHOE CRAB WALK (Sat., May 15). Meet 9 A.M. at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge for a hike to see the mating ritual of the ancient horseshoe crab. For info & reservations, contact Don.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 11–13). Spend a great weekend of natural history programs at the luxurious Manor House (indoor/outdoor heated pools, jacuzzi, sauna, spacious lobby). Cost: \$345/person includes 2 nights, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, star watch, and free pickup at LIRR station.

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.

**SUNKEN MEADOW STATE PARK
FIELD TRIP REMINDER**

John Gaglione

On Saturday, February 27, from 9:30 to 11:30 A.M., South Shore Audubon will have a free bird walk at Sunken Meadow in search of winter birds and waterfowl (see last month's *Skimmer* for a list of likely species). We will explore two distinct habitats, from the boardwalk overlooking Long Island Sound and on a dirt path around a pond bordered by a wooded area. We will meet prior to the walk time in the northwest area of the main parking lot, in front of the main field house. Dress appropriately; severe weather or snow cancels the walk.

Directions: Take Sunken Meadow State Parkway north to the end and proceed into the park. For more information, you can call me at 731-5012 or Joanne Del Prete at 433-0739 before 9 P.M. We hope you all can join us on this special winter field trip. We may have lunch together afterwards.

Central Park on Saturday, May 1: See the next *Skimmer* for details.

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Lighthouse Commons
911 Montauk Highway, Oakdale
631-218-BIRD (2473)
www.wbu.com/oakdale
Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 9-6; Sun 11-5

Discover a Refuge In Your Own Backyard



All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is well below 25°F. Any questions? Call Steve at 987-8103. Directions and summaries may be found at ssaudubon.org.

- Feb. 21 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Feb. 28 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 7 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Mar. 14 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Mar. 21 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Mar. 28 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Apr. 4 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner (probably parking fee season)

HOG ISLAND ORNITHOLOGY CAMP RAFFLE

Therese Lucas

SSAS is offering a full scholarship to a six-day Audubon ornithology camp on Hog Island, located off midcoast Maine. Chances are only \$1 each for a Field Ornithology program valued at \$895 and are being sold at our general meetings. The winning ticket will be drawn at the March meeting but the winner does not have to be present.

The winner will live in the Queen Mary, authentic, turn-of-the-century housing. Three home-cooked meals a day will be served in an historic island farmhouse that overlooks Muscongus Bay. During the sessions, small field groups will go on a variety of trips and boat cruises, and attend workshops and presentations on topics ranging from migration and the identification of warblers to the restoration of Atlantic Puffins and terns on nearby Eastern Egg Rock. The winner will be responsible for arranging transportation to the program being held from June 20-25. A welcome packet which will help to answer questions about the Hog Island program and prepare you for this remarkable experience is being sent to SSAS. It will be presented to the winner upon its arrival.

The incredible list of instructors includes Stephen Kress, Director of the Seabird Restoration Program; Greg Budney, Curator of the Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Lynne Cherry, author and educator; Kenn Kaufman, author of *Kaufman Field Guides*; Kim Kaufman, Director of Black Swamp Bird Observatory in Ohio; Sara Morris, Director of Environmental Science, Canisius College; and Scott Weidensaul, author and ornithologist. The guest speaker will be Lang Elliott, Director of Nature Sounds Studio.

The Hog Island camp first opened in 1936, with Roger Tory Peterson as its first bird instructor. It is well-known in America's environmental community as a distinguished place of learning.

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PRESERVING PLUM ISLAND

John L. Turner

Located less than a mile from Orient Point, the tip of Long Island's North Fork, lies the 840-acre Plum Island, which is well-known from Nelson DeMille's 1997 novel of the same name and more so because of the Animal Disease Center that exists there and takes up less than 10% of the island. Less well-known is the fact that about 90% of the island is undeveloped and has significant ecological value.

This value is reflected in many ways. The narrow eastern portion of the island serves as a seal haul-out site for as many as several hundred harbor and gray seals during the colder months, making it one of the, if not *the*, most significant haul-out sites in southern New England. The Piping Plover, a federally threatened species, breeds on the island, and Common and Roseate Terns, respectively state-threatened and federally endangered species, rest on the beaches of this undisturbed setting and feed actively in the waters surrounding the island, as do numerous species of loons, grebes, and sea ducks. The shrubby coastal vegetation that covers the island [including extensive thickets of beach plum (pictured) which gave the island its name] provides habitat for several dozen species of breeding birds, as well as habitat for migrating songbirds. A large freshwater wetland exists in the southwestern part of the island.



Unfortunately, the future of the island is uncertain and its significant natural resource values are in trouble. This is because of a decision by the federal government to close the Plum Island Animal Disease Center and sell the island to a private party for development. Proceeds of the sale are to help defray the expense of a new facility [the Department of Homeland Security's National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility], proposed to be built in Kansas.

The seven Audubon chapters on Long Island have joined in an effort [led by John, who is conservation chair for Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society] to reverse this action. We would like to see all or a significant fraction of the island dedicated as a national wildlife refuge, like the federal government has done many times with other surplus properties it owns, including several relatively close to Plum Island, such as Sachuest Point, Block Island, and Nomans Land Island National Wildlife Refuges.

In early January, representatives from the eastern L.I. Audubon chapters met with Congressman Tim Bishop to discuss the fate of the island and to express our position in support of preservation. While indicating his primary goal was to preserve the several hundred jobs that hang in the balance at the facility, Congressman Bishop stated his support for Audubon's position regarding a conservation outcome. In the weeks ahead, we intend to meet with staff from the offices of Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and public officials from the Town of Southold, to discuss the

future of the island. We also hope to work with other conservation and environmental organizations to establish a Plum Island Coalition to galvanize public attention on the issue.

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER

Fox Sparrow

Joe Grupp

Late in the fall, I was birding along a section of the Nassau-Suffolk Greenbelt Trail on a dark and gloomy afternoon. The entire trail stretches continuously about 20 miles, between Merrick Rd. in Massapequa on the south shore of Long Island and Route 25A in Cold Spring Harbor on the north shore. I was birding just two sections of the trail — starting at Old Bethpage Rd., crossing Old Country Rd., and continuing on to the LIE — and returning to my car along the same path. The birding along the trail was about as dull as the overcast weather, as the number of species I observed was small and of the more-common variety. The quality of the observations was not all that great either, as the light was poor and the birds did not perch for long, if at all.

I was well on my way back to the car when I was stopped by a flock of White-throated Sparrows, showing themselves occasionally as they emerged from a tangle of shrubs and vines for a moment or two before disappearing again into the tangle. I had just started to move on when from an opening in the tangle, a rusty-red blur caught my eye. I stopped dead in my tracks, lifted my binoculars to my eyes, and found my blur to be a Fox Sparrow. When it landed, the bird was perfectly framed by weathered gray branches of a long-downed small tree that was partially supporting the vines of the tangle. The branches formed a V shape and the bird was perched head-first into the V, which gave me a mostly side view of its head and the upper portion of its body. The bird's gray and rusty-red face markings, and what could be seen of its white and rusty-red striped breast, seemed highlighted by the weathered gray branches that framed it. The entire setting seemed to gather light, providing a quality image on this dull day.

The Fox Sparrow (pictured, © Sue deLearie Adair) is a late fall, winter, and early spring visitor in our area. It is far from a rare bird at those times of the year but is not one of the most common ones either. The bird I observed had to travel hundreds of miles to get here, as its breeding grounds are in the boreal forest of northern Canada. Thinking and comparing the time, effort, and energy I spent on my bird walk of a very few miles to the time, effort, and energy the bird I observed spent traveling the hundreds of miles to get here from its breeding grounds made me appreciate even more the fact that it was there.



I logged only nine species that day. One species was a Fox Sparrow that brightened a dull day.

SSAS BACKYARD BIRD SURVEY

For several years, SSAS's Research Committee has been conducting a study to document the bird species found in the SSAS area and to estimate their numbers. We greatly appreciate input from anyone that feeds and/or observes birds in their yard or neighborhood.

To participate, simply record the birds that you see in your yard, neighborhood, or at your feeder; the date, time, and the number or approximate number of each species; and fill in the table provided below. If you have more recordings than lines in the table, please attach an additional piece of paper to the table and submit the additional recordings in the same manner. At the end of each month, please mail or e-mail your record to me at the appropriate address listed below, or hand it to me at our monthly meeting. Additional survey sheets are available at SSAS events.

Please do not hesitate to submit your observations, even if you have been able to make only very few. **WE NEED YOUR INPUT!**

Dates: From _____ to _____							
Date	Time	Species	No.	Date	Time	Species	No.

Submitted by: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Please send to: Mr. J. Grupp, Research Chairperson
660 Edgemere Ave., Uniondale NY 11553
or
E-mail: Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com

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

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BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS
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

NAME: _____

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