

FIRE ISLAND WILDERNESS PLAN

Jim Brown and Joe Zysman

Editor's note: Three years ago we had articles about the participation of SSAS in the Fire Island Wilderness Coalition that was organized by Joe Zysman in response to plans to update the management plans for Fire Island National Seashore. The first three paragraphs below are Joe's explanation of the current status; they're followed by the letter that SSAS's Conservation Chairperson, Jim Brown, submitted to the National Park Service on September 2, 2010. The deadline for comments was September 6. For info about the proposals, see www.nps.gov/fiis/parkmgmt/generalmanagementplan.htm.

The National Park Service (NPS) is developing a new "General Management Plan" (GMP) for the Fire Island National Seashore (FINS) and a "Wilderness Management Plan" (WMP) for the Wilderness Area within it. These new plans will replace existing plans.

Before the new plans are finalized, NPS will issue a formal Draft Plan for public review, which will contain several alternative proposals, including a "preferred alternative." Following further public review, final GMP and WMP plans will be completed, probably by the end of 2011.

NPS has recently issued its informal "Preliminary Management Alternatives" for these plans and has invited public comment on them. This does not designate a preferred alternative; however, public responses — or the absence of responses — will influence the selection of the "preferred alternative" for the Draft Plan, and may lead to its selection as the core of an approved Final WMP.

Regarding the creation of a new "Wilderness Management Plan" (WMP) for the Wilderness Area of Fire Island, we urge your agency to thoughtfully consider the comments below of the South Shore Audubon Society. Our organization is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society that represents approximately 1,500 families from the south shore of Long Island.

The Wilderness Area of Fire Island is extremely important to the South Shore Audubon Society and its members. The seven-mile stretch of Fire Island from Smith Point to Watch Hill was designated a federal wilderness area by Congress in 1980 and is the first and only federal wilderness in New York State. This wild section of Fire Island has been enjoyed by our members and many others over the years. The land provides important habitat for birds and other wildlife, as well as offering the possibility of a true "wilderness experience" to those who love nature.

Several different alternatives are being considered for the future management of the Fire Island Wilderness Area. Actions contemplated now will determine how the Wilderness will be managed during the next 20–30 years. The final "Wilderness Management Plan" that is adopted should be in conformity with the provisions of the 1964

Wilderness Act, an act designed to preserve the "wilderness character" of our nation's wild places, while providing "outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation." The South Shore Audubon Society hopes the new WMP to be adopted will choose an alternative among those being suggested that will accomplish the cherished goals of the 1964 landmark legislation.

We feel that over the past thirty years the Wilderness Area has been basically well managed. Among the alternatives being suggested for the area at the present time, our Society supports Alternative #1, "Status Quo/Current Management." We do feel, however, that the Old Burma Road, which provides basic access to the interior of the wilderness, should be better maintained along its entire length. This historic pathway through the swale is currently overgrown and is exceedingly difficult to even locate in places. Maintaining, in a minimally intrusive way, this simple footpath is necessary to help visitors better enjoy their experience in the wild.

We strongly object to ideas contained in Alternative #4, "Exploring New Opportunities for Public Use." We oppose the use of increased signage and trail markers, the increase in the number of camping permits, establishing a system of designated campsites, and restoring the bay-side boardwalk. All of these changes would diminish, severely, the wilderness experience. We oppose this 4th alternative as being inimical to the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act.

Thank you for considering and weighing our input into this important process of developing a new Wilderness Management Plan for Fire Island. We fervently hope that the Wilderness will be maintained for perpetuity, for all future generations to enjoy as a truly wild place on Long Island. Please keep us informed as this process of formulating the new WMP continues.

PLAN
For the Future

HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS
Joe Landesberg

The SSAS continued its yearly awards to graduating high school seniors who have demonstrated a commitment to be of service to our environment. The following students each have received an award of \$250.00:

- * Michelle Evans, Baldwin High School, Baldwin.
 - * Ben Kutner, South Side High School, Rockville Centre. Ben was president of SSHS Environmental Club for three years.
 - * Milagros Rodriguez, Freeport High School, Freeport.
- All three students expect to continue their studies in science this fall in college.

NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

NATURE WALK AT HEMPSTEAD PLAINS

On **Saturday, October 23**, as a sequel to this month's general meeting, SSAS will be having a special field trip, led by Betsy Gulotta, to view the flora and fauna of the Hempstead Plains. We will meet at 9:30 A.M. for a walk that we expect will end at around 11.

Directions. Take the Meadowbrook State Parkway to Exit M4 (also used for Hempstead Turnpike/Nassau Coliseum). Continue on the exit road to Charles Lindbergh Blvd. west. Go a short distance on the boulevard to the first exit on the right, which is for Nassau Community College's East Campus parking lots. At the first intersection (Perimeter Road intersecting itself), you'll see a sign and parking for Hempstead Plains.



UPDATING NEW YORK'S ENDANGERED SPECIES REGULATIONS

Laura McCarthy

Editor's note: The following information from Audubon New York's Grassroots Coordinator concerns a press release issued too late for last month's *Skimmer* and a deadline that, unless extended, is too early for this issue. Please join SSAS's free Yahoo! group (see p. 2) if you are interested in receiving timely information for voicing your environmental opinions to our government.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is updating the state's regulations to clarify the framework for endangered and threatened species. According to DEC's press release of August 5, these updated regulations would do the following:

- 🐾 establish criteria for listing and delisting species, and requirements for restoration and recovery plans
- 🐾 establish timelines, procedures, and standards for reviewing applications for construction projects and other projects that might impact endangered and threatened species
- 🐾 define the "taking" of a protected species to include the adverse modification of habitat, conforming to New York court decisions interpreting the term
- 🐾 call for applicants to develop a mitigation plan that results in a net conservation benefit to the listed species

There is much more detail in the regulations, so please go to the DEC link below and read the provisions. Audubon New York is reviewing the regulations and will be preparing a comment letter as soon as possible that we will share with chapters and Audubon activists.

To access the proposal, the text of the regulation, and related links, go to www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/34113.html#part182.

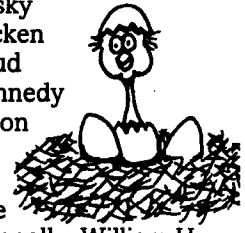
Public comments will be (were) accepted through Sept. 20, 2010. To comment, write to Dan Rosenblatt, NYSDEC, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4750 or send an e-mail to wildliferegs@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

Our new members since last month's *Skimmer* are:

- Atlantic Beach M. Sanello
- Bellmore Iris T. Kunofsky
- East Meadow Thomas Glacken
- Elmont Rolard Renaud
- Franklin Square Elisabeth Kennedy
- Freeport Joseph Hudson
- Hewlett Joseph Crici
- Hicksville Helen Black
- Levittown Jana Fanizzie
- Lido Beach Elizabeth Connolly, William H. Rosenblum
- Long Beach Michael Caruso
- Massapequa John A. Valerie, Rita Wygand
- Merrick Alice Meyer, Mattia Saraceni
- Plainview D. F. Kontje
- Roosevelt Lancelot Clarke
- Valley Stream Debra Evans, Evelyn Leach



SAVE THE DATE

Therese Lucas

... on your new **Audubon calendar**. You can keep track of SSAS general meetings which are held the second Tuesday of our meeting months and SSAS Sunday morning walks. Check the newsletter for particular dates and times.

The 2011 Audubon calendars should be available by the end of September at meetings and walks. The discounted cost is \$10 each for the Songbirds, Nature, Wildflower, and Engagement Calendars. The new John James Audubon Birds of America Calendar, which beautifully reproduces many of his paintings, is \$12.

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All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains. Any questions? Call Steve at 987-8103. Directions and summaries may be found at ssaudubon.org.

- Sep. 26 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Oct. 3 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Oct. 10 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
- Oct. 17 Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
- Oct. 24 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Oct. 31 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner*
- Nov. 7 Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)

*Note: State budget cuts have closed Jones Beach's West End except for birding and fishing. Show your binoculars and/or field guide at the booth for access.

HOW TO HELP NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRDS

Editor's note: This article is part of a series available at www.audubonathome.org.

Melodious, conspicuous songbirds, Northern Mockingbirds are common in suburban and rural neighborhoods across much of the United States from California to New England. They can be attracted to even heavily urbanized areas by planting native shrubs and bushes for nesting, foraging, and roosting sites.

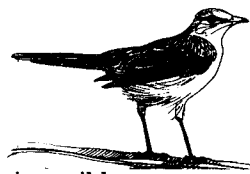
What Northern Mockingbirds Need

Food: Mockingbirds are omnivorous; eating a variety of native and exotic fruits, as well as small invertebrates including insects, spiders, and earthworms. They forage on the ground, on lawns, and in low trees, shrubs, and bushes. In winter their diet is predominantly fruit; in summer arthropods. Insects, beetles, ants, bees, wasps, and grasshoppers are among their favorite animal foods, while elderberries, hollies, mulberries, sumacs, hackberries, wild cherries, wild grapes, serviceberries, and greenbrier are preferred fruits. Mockingbirds will defend fruit-bearing trees or shrub patches during winter.

Nesting: Nests are sited 3 to 9 feet high in bushes, shrubs, or small trees. These birds will also nest in isolated clumps of vegetation, especially in suburban areas, where they seem to suffer less predation than rural nests or nests in larger patches of vegetation.

Shelter: Mockingbirds are presumed to roost and sleep on sheltered branches of trees and shrubs.

Other: They will drink and bathe at a birdbath or small pond. Predation from cats and collisions with picture windows pose threats. Low-flying mockingbirds also frequently collide with automobiles.



How You Can Help

- Plant fruiting native shrubs and bushes, including elderberries, hollies, mulberries, and wild grapes.
- Remove and avoid planting multiflora rose bushes. Mockingbirds eat the fruit and spread the seeds, facilitating invasion by this exotic invasive plant.
- Provide raisins, grapes, or chopped fruits on a platform feeder.
- May also come to mealworm feeders.
- Avoid using pesticides that may kill insects used as food, or herbicides that destroy shrubby patches used as foraging habitat.
- Plant thick patches or rows of diverse native bushes, shrubs, and low ornamental trees.
- Encourage neighbors to plant bushes and shrubs to provide additional habitat.
- Maintain bushes and shrubs with minimal pruning to provide ample roosting, sleeping, and resting cover.
- Provide a birdbath or small pond for bathing and drinking. Make sure to keep birdbaths clean and free of mosquito larvae.
- Keep cats indoors to keep them safe from outdoor hazards and to protect birds. Remove feral cats from neighborhood.
- Screen windows or make them visible so mockingbirds can avoid colliding with them (www.audubonathome.org/SafeWindows.html).
- Whenever possible, plant patches of shrubs far away from busy roadways.

***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.*

NASSAU HUB TRANSPORTATION COMMENTS NEEDED

Nassau County has initiated *The Nassau Hub Study Alternatives Analysis/ Environmental Impact Statement*. Funded through a Federal Transit Administration grant, the Study will identify transportation issues within this 11-square-mile central portion of the County and make recommendations for improvements that will enhance the existing transit network, provide new transportation choices, address congestion issues, and support economic development efforts.

For details, go to www.nassauhub.com; there are many resources available there, including a Travel Questionnaire designed to assist The Nassau Hub Study Team in understanding travel choices, patterns, and preferences in and around Nassau County.

