As I write this month’s column, spring is approaching. Within a few days, daylight saving time begins and I’ve reminded myself to set our clocks ahead by one hour. “Spring ahead, fall back” as the expression goes. It’s especially important this coming Sunday, as I’m scheduled, along with some members of our chapter and other anti-fracking folks, to meet a bus at a very early hour to travel to Pennsylvania to observe the effects of high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing firsthand. I’m looking forward to the trip and am heartened by the recent passage by the New York State Assembly of a bill that would extend the moratorium on fracking for two years.

By the time you are actually reading this column in the Skimmer, spring will officially have arrived and, along with the new season, its longer periods of daylight. Increasing sunlight is one of the salient aspects of spring—a great gift following the relative darkness of winter and a harbinger of summer. Changes in our bird populations also accompany the season. Piping Plovers return to Long Island, as do the Ospreys. I especially like to see the Canada Geese paired up along the Loop Parkway as I drive to and from work, and then the young goslings as they begin to grow and mature. I realize that there may be an overabundance of these large birds on Long Island, but to me they are a springtime delight. And spring always brings us so many types of vibrant and musical warblers who visit us yet again.

Spring is a very active season for the South Shore Audubon Society. We have a couple of cleanups scheduled this year, one at Brookside Preserve and one at Hempstead Lake State Park. The spring activity at Brookside Preserve also involves the removal of invasive plant species and work in the County’s newly acquired Water Works Property adjoining the preserve. Bird walks will be held on our usual weekly basis, including trips to Mill Pond Park, Alley Pond Park, and Jamaica Bay. Bird
surveys continue at our feeders and in areas along the South Shore. We are sponsoring a birding trip to Central Park in May to see its rich population of migrating warblers. Spring also brings the annual Birdathon, where we spend an evening and a day birding practically nonstop. SSAS members can volunteer to protect Piping Plovers and Least Terns along our beaches. We are also sponsoring a two-part banding program at Tackapausha, with actual banding demonstrated on Saturday, April 20. Our April membership meeting will feature a timely presentation on hydrofracking.

Everyone is urged to participate in all our activities as we enjoy the gifts of springtime. Nature’s gifts at this time of year are prodigious and wonderful. Hopefully, this spring we will joyfully and gratefully experience nature in the activities we pursue, and be able to offer our own gifts to nature in the environmental goals we realize.

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS
R. U. Aydelot Il

This month I’m reviewing Of a Feather by Scott Weidensaul. In this book the author skilfully traces the colorful history of North American birding; not an easy task, to be sure! We travel with the frontier ornithologists who collected eggs between border skirmishes and we meet the society matrons who organized the first effective conservation movement. We discover the luminaries with questionable pasts, such as convicted blackmailer Alexander Wilson and the endlessly self-mythologizing John James Audubon, and we chart the progress of an awkward schoolteacher named Roger Tory Peterson as he creates A Field Guide to the Birds in 1934, thus prompting the fantastic and explosive growth of modern-day birding.

This book is feisty and spirited, as well as compulsively readable. It celebrates the passions and achievements of many birders, from the fledgling ornithologists of yesteryear to the millions, yes millions, of Americans who have changed a once eccentric (still?) occupation into one of our most cherished pursuits. Mr. Weidensaul keeps things racing along with fantastic stories of personalities who crisscrossed America chasing birds, as well as birding information, politics, and human relations. All of his tales are thoroughly inspiring and fun to read. His manner is engaging and his knowledge of the birding “world” couldn’t be greater! This book provides an excellent historical context, and will delight us all and encourage others to join our passion for birds. Read it ... and enjoy!

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 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.

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:

Atlantic Beach .......... Janet Jordan, Andrew Schlossberg
Baldwin .................. Rebecca Belvedere
Bellmore .................. Heidi Lockett
East Rockaway .......... Arthur Parrinello, Robert Summers
Floral Park ................ Richard Cantale, John Devine
Freeport .................. Christopher Wilson
Hempstead ............... Janet Churik, Ida Rowe
Hewlett .................. Arthur Mintz
Hicksville ............... Jean Doolittle
Island Park ................ Daniel T. Telford
Levittown ................ Karen Molinet
Long Beach .............. Joel Berger, Marie Ventre
Lynbrook ................ Joan Hoffman, Colleen Piazza
Malverne ................ Mary J. Meyran
Massapequa .............. Mary Castonguay
Merrick .................. Marilyn Gaeta
Seaford .................. Debra Benson
Valley Stream ........... Mary Borkowska, James Minor
West Hempstead ....... Helen Duryea, Phyllis Thaler
Woodmere ............... Michael Morgenstern

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.

SSAS Post Office Statement — South Shore Skimmer is published monthly from September through November and January through May by South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.
BROOKSIDE PRESERVE SPRING CLEANUP AND INVASIVES REMOVAL

On Sunday, April 14, starting at 1 p.m., SSAS will have its 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; the adjacent Brooklyn Water Works property, which was purchased by the County last year, is in the process of being formally added to it. PDF files of the trail guide and freshwater wetland guide for children that we published can be downloaded from ssauudon.org.

The Preserve is located on the Freeport-Baldwin border, along Millburn 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 High School). Please bring gloves, rakes or clippers if possible, and friends of all ages.

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SSAS BIRDATHON 2013 IS COMING!

This year, SSAS will conduct its 26th annual Birdathon! SSAS raises funds through the Birdathon by having members get cash pledges for each species of bird identified during a 24-hour period in May, when the spring migration is at its peak. Birding expertise and big pledges are not necessary; anyone can join one of SSAS’s teams locally for all or part of the time, sponsor themselves, and have fun while helping us find species, or you can do your own Birdathon anywhere.

Mark the dates on your calendar — Friday, May 10 from 5:00 p.m. until Saturday, May 11 at 5:00 p.m. The rain dates are one week later at the same time. Team details will be in the next Skimmer.

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JOIN SSAS DURING SCREEN-FREE WEEK

Marilyn Hamelz

Screen-Free Week, taking place this year from April 29 through May 5, is a national celebration with activities for children to reduce screen-based entertainment and reconnect to the outdoors and nature. South Shore Audubon will be participating with special activity for children on our May 5 bird walk at Jones Beach’s West End. For further information and to participate, please contact us at 799-7189 or Marilynexpl@yahoo.com.

Editor’s note: Formerly known as TV-Turnoff Week and Digital Detox Week, Screen-Free Week (www.screenfree.org) is a program of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood.

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VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982

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NAT’L AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201

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EARTH DAY & ARBOR DAY AT TACKAPAUSA

On Sunday, April 28, starting at 1 p.m., SSAS will join Friends of Tackapausha in celebrating Earth and Arbor Days with live wildlife programs, trail walks, and crafts. County-owned Tackapausha Museum and Preserve, which due to budget cuts has no full-time staff, is located at 2225 Washington Ave. in Seaford, just north of Merrick Rd.

Phone: (516) 931-1445
Fax: (516) 931-1467
E-Mail: lgk1cpai@aol.com

LEONARD G. KONSKER
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Fax (516) 627-8504
SWSGARAGEDOORS@GMAIL.COM

Steven W. Schellenger
Licensed and Insured

Explore the coast with the
AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS AT JAMAICA BAY (Sat., March 30, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Hike around East and West Ponds and gardens to look for osprey, ibis, egrets, oystercatchers, phoebes, other migrants. Contact Don to register. Free.

SPRING MIGRATION WORKSHOP AT JAMAICA BAY (Sun., April 28, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Guides: Don Riepe, Tod Winston. Meet at Refuge Visitor Center for slide presentation on spring migration, followed by hike around ponds and uplands. Contact Don to register. Limited to 25. Free.

STERLING FOREST WARBLERS, NY (Sat., May 4, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Guides: Don & Tod. Explore woodland & pond habitat of 20,000-acre preserve. Look for nesting warblers (incl. golden-winged, cerulean, hooded, prairie, and blue-winged), wildflowers, reptiles & amphibians. Transport by van/ carpool. Limited to 16. Cost: $70. Call NYC Audubon, (212) 691-7483.

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISES (Sat., May 25 and Sun., June 23, 5–8 p.m.). Meet at Pier 2 in Sheepshead Bay. Enjoy narrated cruise aboard 100-foot "Golden Sunshine." Visit backwater marshes near JFK Airport & learn about 13,000-acre Wildlife Refuge. See nesting peregrine falcons, ospreys, egrets, shorebirds & waterfowl. Cost: $55 incl. refreshments.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 7–9). Cost: $385.

For information and free field trip brochure, call/write Don Riepe, (917) 371-8577, donriepe@gmail.com, 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; www.alnyc.org.
NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER
Brown-Headed Nuthatch
Joe Gupp

Passing through the entrance to Cape Henlopen State Park in Lewes, Delaware, we headed directly for the feeder at the park’s nature center. We came to the park to explore the beaches, walk the trails through the pines, and take in the scenic views while birding there. Our first goal, however, was to attempt to find a Brown-headed Nuthatch.

This nuthatch is a bird of the southeastern U.S. and is at the northern limit of its range at Cape Henlopen. Once when we were exploring a natural area in Alabama, where I had hoped to find the bird for the first time, and after looking for it unsuccessfully, I inquired at the park’s visitors center as to where there was a good chance of finding one. A park ranger directed us to a feeder where they “always” show up. I prefer finding my life birds in the wild, but running out of time, we located the feeder but were not treated to the appearance of a Brown-headed Nuthatch. We came up empty a couple of other times when in the South. We finally got our first one at the very feeder we were heading to at Cape Henlopen. That feeder was also a reliable place to find a Brown-headed Nuthatch on subsequent trips to the park. I still have not seen one in the wild. [Your editor was unable to find clip art!]

The feeder is only a few steps across a lawn from the nature center parking field, and before we completed those few steps we had our bird. We made it a point to walk close to the feeder without scaring the birds away, stopping at a point where we had a good view of the birds at the feeder with the naked eye and an excellent view through the binoculars. The Brown-headed Nuthatches were just part of the mixed flock of birds feeding there.

The Nuthatches were in a somewhat constant motion, as they would fly to the feeder in a direct line, perch at one of the feeder’s seed ports, look around, take a seed, look around again, and take off like a shot into one of the pine and cedar trees that surrounded the feeding area. There they pecked away at the seed they had just picked up and ate it. Then they would repeat the procedure all over again and again.

Every once in a while, one would spend a longer time at the feeder looking around before taking a seed, or would drop to the ground or onto some other object, remaining motionless while doing the same. It was then that the birds could be studied in detail and their brown heads were more evident, especially through the binoculars, than they were otherwise. It was somewhat more difficult to see the whitish or dull light buffy spot on the nape (back of the neck), as the brown of the head bordered it on either side. The spot was distinctly evident, however, when the bird was faced so it could be seen from behind. Observing these birds in detail took a bit of patience, as they were still for only short periods of time. We spent some time at that feeder, but considering how seldom we see the species, that time was well spent.

A bit of research when we returned home revealed some interesting facts about the species. They, along with the Pygmy Nuthatch of the West, are the smallest of all the nuthatches in the world. At times they use a piece of bark as a tool to pry up another piece of bark, where they may find an insect, its eggs, or larvae for food, and carry the “tool” from tree to tree for the same purpose. A breeding pair may be assisted by “helpers,” nonbreeding members of the species, in the nesting and bringing up of the breeding pair’s young. Except for a very small number of birds in the Bahamas, the total population of Brown-headed Nuthatches is confined to the southeastern U.S. Their habitat is certain types of pine forests of the South. Pine Warblers (pictured) favor the same type of habitat and they compete with the Nuthatches for food, etc., each species in turn attempting to chase the other away. They do not migrate, but spend most of their lives on or near a territory.

The research also turned up the disturbing fact that the species’ population has declined about 45% over the last 35 years. It is presently listed on the Audubon WatchList, which is a list of America’s most imperiled bird species. Human activity such as logging, woodland fire suppression, and forest fragmentation has reduced the size of the habitat that the species requires.

The time spent at the feeder provided us with some great observations. The time spent in research at home provided us with food for thought.

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RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

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Bird Walks
Steve Schellenger

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

Mar. 24 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
Mar. 31 Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parking lot)
Apr. 7 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Apr. 14 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
Apr. 21 Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
Apr. 28 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
May 5 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner (see article about Screen-Free Week on p. 3)
May 12 Mill Pond Park (see above)
May 19 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
June 2 Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)
June 9 Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
SSAS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS
Betsy Gulotta

Thanks again to the much-appreciated support of long-time member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is 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 betsy.gulotta@ncc.edu. Applications are due by April 30. Please help us spread the word.

JAMAICA BAY EXPECTED TO GET SANDY FUNDING

Rich Kopsco and Paul Stessel represented SSAS at the well-attended January 29 meeting of the Jamaica Bay Task Force, its first meeting since Hurricane Sandy. The guest speakers included NYC Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland regarding wastewater treatment plant repairs, Gateway National Recreation Area Superintendent Linda Canzanelli regarding the future of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge’s West Pond and other issues, Len Houston and Dan Falt of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the previous restoration projects faring well and future beach replenishment, and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Regional Director Venetta Lannon regarding water and air pollution caused by Sandy. It was announced that some funding from the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act that Congress had just passed would be used for repairs to the breached West Pond and beach replenishment. The meeting’s presentations can be found at http://jamaicabayecowatchers.org.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2013–2014 SSAS BOARD

South Shore Audubon Society’s officers are elected each year. Directors are elected for 3-year terms. The SSAS nominating committee (chaired by Wendy Murbach) will provide a list of recommended candidates in next month’s Skimmer. Suggestions may be submitted to the committee by any SSAS member.

At South Shore Audubon Society’s general meeting on May 14, officers and directors will be elected for our next fiscal year, which begins July 1. All members attending that meeting may nominate candidates from the floor and vote. Officers and new directors will be installed at the annual dinner on June 11.

OUR THIRTEENTH ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On Saturday, May 4, SSAS is planning to be in Central Park for our annual (weather permitting) early May morning bird walk, organized as usual by Joanne Del Prete (433-0739) and led as usual by Chris Cooper (who was featured in last year’s HBO documentary, Birders: The Central Park Effect). In previous years we’ve recorded 45 to 70-plus species in under three hours (48 last year, including 9 warblers). Save the date and check next month’s Skimmer, our Facebook page, our Yahoo! Group’s e-mail, and/or ssaudubon.org for details.

I LOVE MY PARK DAY AT HEMPSTEAD LAKE
Paul Stessel

On Saturday, May 4 (also our Central Park date), South Shore Audubon will be working to beautify Hempstead Lake State Park, one of our favorite birding “patches.” We will be helping nature in the park. We will meet at 10 o’clock in Field #3 (the parking lot where our bird walks begin) and move on from there. Bring work gloves; a rake would be helpful. All children must be supervised by a parent or guardian. School and scout groups are welcome, as well as other community organizations. Please call the park office at 786-1029 if you or your organization will be able to help, and ask for a Volunteer Service Agreement form. We bird this park on a frequent basis and it should be our responsibility to keep it as nature intended. Remember: “When hiking or birding, leave nothing but footprints and take away only memories.”

JAMAICA BAY SPRING MARSH PLANTING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The salt marsh, shorelines, and upland areas in Jamaica Bay are disappearing at an estimated rate of 40 to 50 acres per year. Everyone is invited to join the American Littoral Society’s Northeast Chapter for planting on Black Wall and Rulers Bar marsh islands. In addition to improving water quality and protecting the salt marsh, the Marsh Restoration Initiative preserves migratory stopover and breeding grounds for over 330 species of birds, preserves estuarine nursery and habitat for over 100 species of finfish, and improves the recreational environment.

Volunteers are needed in the planting of several acres of marshland in April and May. A solid starting date has yet to be determined; a notification will be sent out as soon as the information is available to those who register at http://restoremashes.eventbrite.com.

NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

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South Shore Audubon Society’s
41st Annual Dinner
Tuesday, June 11, 2013
At
Pompeii Restaurant and Caterers
401 Hempstead Avenue
West Hempstead, NY 11552
(516) 485-8620
Cocktail Hour 6:30 PM
Dinner 7:30 PM
*
Conservation and Scholarship Awards, Raffles and 50/50 Raffle
*
Dinner price $38.00; deadline June 1
*
Hot and cold hors d’oeuvres during cocktail hour. Wine and soda, salad, penne alla vodka,
Entrees: chicken, fish, beef or eggplant rollatini, dessert, coffee and tea. Cash bar.

Mail your dinner registration and check payable to South Shore Audubon Society,
to South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520.

Directions: Southern State Parkway to exit 17N, north on Hempstead Ave. (1 ½ miles).

Dinner Registration Form

Name_________________________________________ Phone _______________________

Address ________________________________________________________________

Number of people_________________________ Amount enclosed ___________________

6
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!

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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
2012-2013 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Jim Brown, President & Conservation .................. 609-1446
Marilyn Hametz, Vice President & Publicity .......... 799-7189
Joe Landesberg, Treasurer ................................. 536-4808
Anne Mehlinger, Recording Secretary ................ 798-1412
Theresa Lucas, Corresponding Secretary ............ 221-3921
& Greening of Long Island ............................. 708-1120
Jonathan Staller, Director (6/15) ...................... 295-1137
Paul Stessel, Director (6/15) ............................. 295-1137
Steven Schellenger, Director (6/14), Field Trips
& Brookside Preserve Co-Chairperson ............... 987-8103
Don Temple, Director (6/14) ............................. 420-1244
John Gaglione, Director (6/13) & Programs ....... 731-5012
Richard Kopcsko, Director (6/13) & Brookside
Preserve Co-Chairperson ................................. 825-6792
Betty Bowdsk, Education ................................ 764-3596
Gail Brown, Hospitality .................................. 432-8156
Anne-Marie Conn, Electronic Communications .... 671-7685
Joseph Grupp, Research .................................. 481-4208
Betsy Gulotta, College Scholarships ................. 546-8841
Wendy Murbach, Membership ............................. 546-6303
James Remsen, Jr., Birdathon ......................... 631-957-0949
Dolores Rogers, Welcoming .............................. 599-1224
Michael Sperling, Skimmer Editor ..................... 221-3921

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

Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending $20 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 by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get $0 from your dues 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.

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

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