

species of animals and plants face extinction today. Environmental health and diversity have declined since Earth Day celebrations were inaugurated by that optimistic group of environmentally conscious pioneers who organized those early Nixon-era ecology teach-ins.

We have advanced on some issues since the first Earth Day. The damage to the environment posed by DDT was recognized — the role played by Long Islanders in that battle was critical — and Bald Eagles, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcons were brought back from near extinction. Important laws to preserve the environment — the Endangered Species Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Clean Water Act, and others — have been passed and are still in force today, though these living documents are often threatened like the environment they seek to conserve. It cannot be denied that our environment, and birds, which we Audubon members perhaps most treasure, are currently under extreme stress as we confront the environmental crises of the 21st century.

But a new season is arriving; spring begins! Let us enjoy the March equinox, the month of April, and the eventual return of the migrating warblers. As we appreciate the arrival of spring, let's celebrate Earth Day and make sure we capture and maintain the optimism of those 1970s ecologists, as we study our current environmental problems, formulate solutions, and act to preserve and protect our earth!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

Our new members since the last *Skimmer* are:

- Bethpage Carmela Roscigno
- Cedarhurst Shalom Maidenbaum
- East Meadow Laura J. Lopez
- Farmingdale Patricia Mocia
- Floral Park Linda F. Chiesa, Arlene Malone
- Franklin Square Kathryn Bruchhauser
- Garden City Taylor Hare, Werner T. Ziermann
- Glen Oaks Dorothy Camporale
- Hempstead Georgia S. Laudani
- Lawrence Annegret Schoell
- Lido Beach Bernard & Judith Weitz
- Malverne Judith Alesse, Bette J. Herrmann
- Massapequa James Stubenrauch
- Merrick Lisa A. Tarricone, Jane Weisbrot
- Oceanside Anne Weinlich Miltenberg
- Seaford Vinay Hathiramani
- Wantagh Doris J. Nolan, Mary A. Weiss



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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.

MUTE SWAN MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE
 On February 28, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation announced that it was considering changes to the original draft plan that sought to eliminate Mute Swans throughout the state. The DEC will schedule a second public comment period when the revised plan is released.

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EARLY SPRING BIRD WALK AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE (Sat., March 29, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at refuge center and join naturalist Don Riepe for hike around ponds and gardens to look for egrets, ibis, osprey, oystercatchers, and many other early migrants, as well as wintering birds. Contact Don to reserve (with NYC Audubon).

SPRING MIGRATION BIRD WALK AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE (Sat., April 26, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the refuge center and join Don for hike around ponds and gardens to look for spring migrants. Contact Don to reserve.

HORSESHOE CRABS AND SHOREBIRDS AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE (Sat., May 17 and May 31, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at refuge center and carpool to Broad Channel beach site to see the annual mating ritual of the horseshoe crab and shorebirds feeding on their eggs. Contact Don to reserve either date.

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET ECOLOGY CRUISE (Sat., May 17, 4 P.M. to 7 P.M.). Join naturalists Don Riepe and Mickey Cohen on a special 3-hour cruise into backwater marshes of the bay. Learn about the history & ecology of the bay and see nesting peregrine falcon, osprey & many other bird species. Cost: \$55 incl. narrated tour, wine & cheese, drinks, fruit, snacks.

For information and free field trip brochure,
 call/write Don Riepe, (718) 474-0896, donriep@gmail.com,
 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693;
www.littoralsociety.org

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER Ruddy Turnstones Earn a Living Turning Stones

Joe Grupp

Having an early morning appointment in Glen Cove, we decided to put binoculars in the car so we could spend an hour or so birding before returning home. It was an early March day but the weather was blustery like midwinter, with the temperature well below freezing. We knew of a few local beaches in the area of our appointment where the waters of Long Island Sound and/or the waters of a bay were visible and could be birded from a car.

The last stop of our exploration was on the side of a road, where we looked down, from a height of eight to ten feet, onto a stretch of beach along Long Island Sound. The wind was strong, blowing at us from across the water, and cold, which did not bother us as we sat in the heated comfort of our car. Gulls, a few ducks, and some shorebirds seemed to be just as comfortable as we were, as they rested, foraged, bobbed up and down in the rough water, or glided on the air currents provided by the wind that struck our small height of land.

Through our binoculars, we spotted a few Ruddy Turnstones among a scattering of Sanderlings near the water's edge. A few of the Turnstones were foraging, turning over stones and small bits of debris left behind by the last high tide or even small pieces of ice, as they searched for whatever food might have been hidden there.

We were just about losing interest when a nearby Turnstone caught our attention as it moved toward a dark round object, a little larger than a large marble, while it continued to flip stones, etc., along the way. Reaching the object, a strong flick of the bird's bill caused the object to fly a very short distance through the air and land upside down in the sand. An opening on the object's now-exposed underside had a slightly orange,

fleshy, slowly moving appendage centered in it and we then knew that the object was a fair-sized snail. The bird stood motionlessly for a few moments before stepping toward it. Standing next to the snail, motionless again for a few moments, it then thrust its bill into the opening between the fleshy appendage and the snail's shell. It probed there awhile before removing its bill. After a pause, it repeated the process. Waiting for it to repeat the process again, we were surprised when instead of thrusting the bill into the snail's shell, it used its bill to flick the fleshy morsel out of the shell and through the air, where it landed a short distance away. Once again, the bird paused motionlessly for a short time before walking over and devouring the morsel of food that it extracted from the shell. A few moments later, it returned to the shell, probing its interior, most likely devouring whatever was left inside.

We then watched the bird continue its walk down the beach, turning over stones, etc., one by one. We thought



the bird had just devoured a pretty large meal but apparently it was looking for more. Perhaps it was just looking for dessert. Regardless of the reason, Ruddy Turnstones do earn a living turning stones.

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SSAS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Betsy Gulotta

Thanks to the much-appreciated support of longtime 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.

VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982

BROOKSIDE PRESERVE SPRING CLEANUP

On **Sunday, April 13**, 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 in 2012, is still 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 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 High School). Please bring gloves, rakes or clippers if possible, and friends of all ages.



BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II

BIRD WALKS Steve Schellenger

Did you know the official bird of Nassau County is the Osprey? In honor of this fact, I'll be reviewing the fascinating Return of the Osprey: A Season of Flight and Wonder by David Gessner. April is the time of year when the Osprey return from their winter sojourn in Central or South America, so this review is totally fitting.

This book describes a glorious six months of Ospreys nest building and raising their young on Cape Cod, the author's home territory. The Osprey is sometimes called the "fish hawk" or "sea eagle," and ekes out its living totally from the sea.

This very informative book is part memoir and part homage to a bird that almost became a casualty of DDT. The author focuses on the human collision over our natural world. He writes with passion, humor, and respect for our pristine (not despoiled by human conduct) environment. He attempts to connect the lives of these Osprey, as he observes them in breeding sequence, with his own life cycle.



As the book progresses, he stakes out several Osprey pairs' nests in and around his native patch, Dennis and Sesuit Bay, Cape Cod. This raptor had been a common sight on the Cape until the advent of pesticides and DDT. Since Rachel Carson and others fought the battle against this terrible chemical and it was banned, the Osprey has made an incredible comeback! Once a common sight all along the New England coast, it has now reappeared in increasing numbers.

While Mr. Gessner explores the salt marshes near his home, he is fascinated with the fertility of these unique birds. He supplements this focus with citations from his own environmentally heavy reading. This book clearly illustrates how the Osprey commits to a single place, season after season. We humans have increasingly tried to interfere with this majestic avian commitment.

This book is a welcome addition to the natural history of these "sea eagles" of the New England coast. The author is quite adept at using textured anecdotes and graphic details to delve into the life and history of these raptors of the sea. The book is beautifully written, not only for learning about the Osprey, but also for learning about the human condition itself. As he trudges through the marshes, backwaters, and beaches of the Cape, he is all the while observing Osprey in their great recovery from the ravages of DDT. He teaches us how to "taste" nature and makes us want to take a very long walk in a very wild place. These messages are strung together using these Ospreys as glue. His overall message makes us want to know more. David knows his Osprey! Read it and ENJOY!

OUR E-LIST http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list

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 lists of what we've seen may be found at ssaudubon.org.

- Mar. 23 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Mar. 30 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Apr. 6 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
Apr. 13 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
Apr. 20 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Apr. 27 Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
May 4 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)

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OUR FOURTEENTH ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On Saturday, May 3, 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. In all previous years except last year, we've recorded 45 to 70-plus species in under three hours (31 last year, including an unusually low 6 warbler species). Save the date and check next month's Skimmer for details.

SSAS BIRDATHON

This year, SSAS is scheduled to conduct its 27th 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 an SSAS team 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 9 from 5:00 P.M. until Saturday, May 10 at 5:00 P.M. The rain dates are one week later at the same time. Details will be in the next Skimmer.

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South Shore Audubon Society's
43rd Annual Dinner
Tuesday, June 10, 2014

At

Pompei Restaurant and Caterers
401 Hempstead Avenue
West Hempstead, NY 11552
(516) 485-8620
Cocktail Hour 6:30 PM
Dinner 7:30 PM

*

Honoring Mike Farina, Town of Hempstead Conservation Biologist

*

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. (1½ miles).



Dinner Registration Form

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Number of people _____ Amount enclosed _____

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

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Americans Committed to Conservation



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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 \$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 these 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.



Donations to SSAS are always welcome! \$_____

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

NAME: _____

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