NEXT MEETING

John Gagliano

DATE: Tuesday, November 18, 2014
REASON: Library Is Closed on Veterans Day
TIME: 7:30 P.M. to 9:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
144 W. Merrick Rd. [at S. Ocean Ave.]

SPEAKER: Lloyd Spitalnik

TOPIC: Wildlife Through the Seasons:
A Journey Through the Lens
of a Nature Photographer

At our next meeting, we will journey through the four seasons with noted photographer Lloyd Spitalnik. We'll visit places like Central Park, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Jones Beach, Sterling Forest, Barney’s Lighthouse, Cape May, and many other locations in or near the New York metropolitan area. We will focus primarily on birds, but some mammals and insects will be featured. Our area abounds in wildlife that many are not aware of. Please join us as we journey through the seasons and view these wonderful creatures of nature through the lenses of one of our area’s top photographers.

Lloyd, a well-known birder and accomplished photographer who started out birding with SSAS and helped lead several of our annual Central Park trips many years later, lives and works in New York City and the surrounding area. His photographs have appeared in Audubon, Natural History, Birder’s World, WildBird, and Birderly magazines, as well as in The New York Times and Daily News. He has had images published in World Wildlife Fund songbird calendars and Audubon trail guides. Lloyd is one of the three authors of Visions: Earth’s Elements in Bird and Nature Photography, which was published in 2012 and contains 460 photographs on its 240 pages.

Pre-Meeting Book Discussion. Arrive a half-hour early to participate in a discussion led by R. U. Abyardar II (aka Paul Stessel) of the book that he reviewed in the previous Skimmer. This month’s book is The Falconer of Central Park by Donald Knowler.

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 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!

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
Climate Change and Where We Live, Part I:
Is It Really Happening?
Betty Borowsky

On Sunday, September 21, about 300,000 people (including some SSAS members) marched in Manhattan ahead of the United Nations’ Tuesday meeting, when the UN would be holding a convention to discuss eight areas affected by global warming: agriculture, cities, energy, financing, forests, industry, resilience, and transportation.

People are concerned that the temperature of the earth is increasing, and that this is causing a multitude of disruptions throughout the globe: from decreasing hard pack ice that allows polar bears to hunt seals, their preferred prey; to altering the distribution and migration patterns of at least a score of birds; to drought in California; and so on.

On a personal note, I remember the snows accumulating during the winter and lasting for many weeks when I was a little girl living in Brooklyn. While we still have snowstorms in our area, they usually melt within a few days. I remember how absolutely thrilled I was, when I was in college, to see a mockingbird in Queens. At the time I thought it was an aberration — a bird that just got misdirected somehow — because in those days this bird was a keystone species of the southeastern part of the United States (i.e., To Kill a Mockingbird, the famous novel by Harper Lee which was made into a movie and play). Now Northern Mockingbirds are about as common as
Blue Jays in our area and they stay around through the winter as well.

But these are anecdotes. What hard evidence do we have that in fact the earth is warming? The first graph below, from NASA (http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/graphs_v3/), contains the annual mean and five-year running means (to smooth the curve) of temperature measured directly since about 1880.

Temperatures going back two thousand years have been estimated using many indirect but reliable sources, such as tree ring widths, pollen grain distributions, coral growth patterns, and so on. The second graph, from NOAA (http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/paleo/pubs/moberg2005/moberg2005.html), connects the estimates from the earlier years with the more recent data, and shows something even worse: not only is the earth warming, but the rate of warming may have accelerated since the early 1800s. ("Instrumental" refers to the data taken directly, beginning in about 1880.)

So the great body of evidence shows that the earth is warming up. Should we care about this? Personally, I'm not a big fan of cold weather — maybe we should just enjoy the warmer weather? And the actual increase in temperature doesn't seem too much: "Earth's average temperature has risen by 1.4°F over the past century, and is projected to rise another 2°F to 11.5°F over the next hundred years" (www.epa.gov/climatechange/basics/).

Well, in my view, we on Long Island should care a great deal. As the earth warms, sea level rises: the glaciers melt and the meltwater swells the ocean, and the volume of the water increases as its temperature increases as well. The NOAA website states: "Records and research show that sea level has been steadily rising at a rate of 0.04 to 0.1 inches per year since 1900. This rate may be increasing. Since 1992, new methods of satellite altimetry (the measurement of elevation or altitude) indicate a rate of rise of 0.12 inches per year. This is a significantly larger rate than the sea-level rise averaged over the last several thousand years" (http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/sealevel.html).

We are on an island, and most of Long Island is in fact at sea level. Even now, based on the "surge" maps that Nassau County publishes that indicate the likely level that seawater will reach in the event of various intensities of hurricanes, if we experience a category 4 hurricane at high tide, the water is expected to rise to a level halfway between Sunrise Highway and Southern State Parkway (www.nassaucounty.gov/agencies/oem/Docs/PDF/nys_storm surge_zones.pdf).

And I don't have to remind you of the damage Sandy caused. I think the significance of Sandy really struck home with me when so many people had to go to the emergency shelter at Nassau Community College, and the shelter was manned by volunteers from the Red Cross.

So rising sea levels are a very real threat to Long Island, and decelerating the increase in global warming must be a top priority for us. 

SSAS Post Office Statement — South Shore Skimmer is published monthly from September through December and February through May by South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.
Broad-wings in the east distant! Kettle over the S-curve in the dirt road! Raptors streaming! More Broad-wings streaming into the original kettle! So went that and similar calls at the Corpus Christi Hawkwatch when the Broad-winged Hawks were flying they were migrating from the eastern United States and Canada to Central and South America. We, my wife and I, spent a full week in late September on the hawkwatch platform there, and at times observed thousands of migrating Broad-winged Hawks gliding through the sky and a comparatively few other raptors using similar or different methods of flight. Trained professional counters, in a disciplined and prescribed manner, counted and recorded the species and their numbers as they flew by. The official count on Monday, the second full day we were there, was 87,797 Broad-winged Hawks plus 174 raptors of other species. Obviously we did not see them all, but the spectacle we did see was one of nature's greatest shows. That count of Broad-wings was the largest total day count of this fall's migration.

The Broad-wing's method of migratory flight and the geographical location of Corpus Christi are responsible for the large numbers of birds that pass over the area during migration. Broad-winged Hawks [illustration by Steven D'Amato] very seldom beat their wings during migration; they hold them extended and depend on rising columns of warm air, called thermals, and updrafts such as winds blowing up and over mountain ridges, etc., to gain altitude, and the prevailing unimpeded winds to push them towards their destination. At times hundreds of, even a thousand or more, birds gain altitude by circling in the same thermal. The visual phenomenon of the circling birds is known as a kettle, an extraordinary sight to observe.

Corpus Christi is located on the Gulf of Mexico in the southern part of Texas. The Gulf's evenly heated waters prevent thermals from forming above them and act as a barrier to the hawk's migratory direction. The Gulf Coast, being the length that it is, acts as a barrier not only in the area of Corpus Christi but all along the coast. Migrants stopped by the Gulf and pushed west by the prevailing northeast winds follow the coast inland, increasing their numbers as they meet other migrants arriving at the coastal barrier from the north. Eventually all funnel down through Mexico to Central and South America. Most Broad-wings breed in the northeast U.S. and Canada, and migrate towards the Gulf, which results in about 95% of the entire Broad-wing population passing through the Corpus Christi area during the fall migration each year.

Our time on the platform was spent scanning the sky, trying to find and observe migrating birds or locating birds other people had found. There were no secrets on the platform; if someone found migrants they pointed them out. There were stretches of time when the skies were empty, but then there were also long stretches of time when where one looked they could find birds in the sky. Birds in the hundreds were in kettles, gaining altitude. Birds were streaming across the sky in broad fronts, pushed by the winds towards their winter homes. Streaming birds formed new kettles as they lost altitude and then found a thermal where the rising air could push them higher once again. The sky was filled with kettles and streams formed by thousands of birds.

At times birds were everywhere. Some were quite far away and/or high. They were sometimes difficult to find. In the binoculars, they looked like specks that would seem to appear and disappear as I slightly adjusted the focal knob. They were called "flies" on the platform by some. Concentrating on them for a while revealed hundreds of migrating raptors. The best observations came when a kettle and/or stream drifted close to or over our location. Then all you could see were birds on set wings going round and round in the thermal and/or birds streaming overhead. At times there was a continual flow of birds that seemed to be endless both in length and in the time that it took to pass over. Set wings that gave the birds their cross-type silhouette added to the visual impact of the observation. Slowly the kettle or stream would drift by, to be replaced by another stream or kettle or just empty sky.

At times observations would result in an excitement that spilled over to others on the platform. "Amazing!" "Incredible!" "Oh my gosh!" "They keep coming!" "Wow!" "There's more!" Those comments and others came involuntarily from veteran hawk watchers as well as the less experienced. They were all spontaneous outcries prompted by the scene. Perhaps the remark that I enjoyed most was one that seemed to be a tradition among the counters and the more-regular observers; when an outstanding flight of migrants were somewhat distant and a closer look would have provided a more dramatic observation, we would hear "Here birdee, birdee, birdee! Here birdee, birdee, birdee, birdee!" In the written word it all may sound crazy. In actuality it celebrated why we were all there.

We knew, even before our arrival, that our chance of seeing large numbers of Broad-winged Hawks was just about certain. Most of the Broad-wings usually migrate through Corpus Christi during the last two weeks of September and that was when, by design, we were there. Nothing is certain on a daily basis, however. The official count on Friday, the last day of our watch, was 1 Broad-winged Hawk and 14 other raptors, and we were left with the memory of THOUSANDS OF BROAD-WINGED HAWKS!! UNDESCRIBABLE!! AWESOME!!

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OUR E-LIST http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list
NASSAU HUB TRANSIT PLAN

SSAS has been represented at meetings concerning the development of the Nassau Hub for quite a few years. The recently completed Nassau Hub Study Alternatives Analysis Report can be found at www.nassauhub.com; below are excerpts from its 236 pages.

In 2003, the Nassau County Planning Department began efforts to position the County to be eligible for federal grants related to improving, upgrading, and extending the transit network within the County, specifically the Study Area. The results were documented in the 2006 Nassau Hub Major Investment Study Final Report (the MIS) that examined and analyzed the demographic, economic, and transportation issues within an area known as the “Nassau Hub.” The MIS concluded that the County should further study potential transit and related land use improvements.

The Nassau Hub Primary Study Area occupies an approximately 11.7 square-mile area in the heart of Nassau County. Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) 3, Modern Streetcar, is recommended for advancement for a more detailed study. Modern streetcars are steel-wheeled passenger vehicles that generally operate along tracks laid in the street right-of-way and are typically powered by overhead electric catenary wires. The alignment would turn eastbound onto the south side of Charles Lindbergh Boulevard on exclusive right-of-way and continue to Museum Row and the Nassau Community College West Campus, using the campus parking lots. A modern streetcar station would be located at Museum Row/Nassau Community College. The alignment would continue south past the Physical Education Complex, using the parking lots and vacant land, crossing Charles Lindbergh Boulevard to access the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

New traffic signals would be placed on Quentin Roosevelt Boulevard and Charles Lindbergh Boulevard to allow the transit vehicles to cross from the west side of Quentin Roosevelt Boulevard to the south side of Charles Lindbergh Boulevard, to avoid conflicts with southbound through-traffic on Quentin Roosevelt Boulevard and traffic using the Charles Lindbergh Boulevard ramp to southbound Quentin Roosevelt Boulevard.

Along Charles Lindbergh Boulevard there are jogging/bike paths. In sections of Charles Lindbergh Boulevard where an exclusive right-of-way is proposed, these jogging/bike paths would be shifted or relocated to accommodate an exclusive transit right-of-way. The alignment would continue south, traveling through the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum property to Hempstead Turnpike. A modern streetcar station would be located at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum property. Along Fulton Avenue in the Village of Hempstead, either the curb lanes or a dedicated center lane would be used for transit vehicles. This operation would require taking some on-street parking. Alternative 3 would have 14 stations. The average station spacing is 0.5 mile.

The Initial Operating Segment (IOS) that has been identified for first-phase implementation has been defined as a financially feasible first phase of the LPA for near-term implementation. The IOS is also proposed as an early phase to provide a reasonable timeframe for some large-scale development proposals, which are currently in flux along segments of the LPA corridor, to become better defined. The IOS is proposed to operate initially using premium bus technology, similar to bus rapid transit (BRT) vehicles. When proposed developments are completed and funding is identified and available, the balance of the LPA alignment would be constructed and BRT/premium bus vehicles would be replaced with modern streetcars. The IOS would have 10 stations, with an average station spacing of 0.5 mile.

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.
THOUGHTS, NEWS, AND OPINION FROM YOUR CONSERVATION CHAIR

Jim Brown

The People’s Climate March that took place on Sunday, September 21 was an awe-inspiring event! The number of participants is estimated to have been between 300,000 and 400,000 people — people dedicated to fighting global warming and climate change. Hopefully the sheer number of engaged and committed people who came out for the event will move world leaders to take more effective action to save our planet from rapidly advancing catastrophe. There can be no doubt that many, many people “get it,” understand the gravity of the situation, and realize that humanity must move away — rapidly — from the unnecessary dependence on climate-changing fossil fuels. Renewable energy sources are available to solve this environmental crisis. We only need to defeat the barons of coal, gas, and petroleum to institute a sane energy policy. Short-term profit-seeking in the energy industry can no longer (if it ever could!) be justified. Our future demands an end to “business as usual” if we and our planet are to survive.

A number of South Shore Audubon members attended the march — Wendy Murbach, Mary Colway, Rich Kopsco, Diana Ihmann, Marilyn Hametz, Anne Mehlinger, and Joanne Del Prete were some of our members who made it into the city for this historic event. We enjoyed the camaraderie, music, street theater, and general excitement generated by the massive demonstration of activism. Our attendance at the People’s Climate March is a natural expression of our values. The South Shore Audubon Society has long realized that global warming is a critical issue for humans and wildlife alike. Our love of nature, and especially our concern for conserving the rich diversity of bird species, propels us to take action in defense of the environment. May our experience at the recent Climate March further energize us, and may we, and all others who love nature, be successful in reversing the effects of global warming and climate change.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

Bellmore ................. Nathan Rind
Farmingdale ............. International Union of Operating Engineers Local 138
Franklin Square .......... Kevin McCabe
Garden City ............. Neilia Amato, Joan McManus
Hewlett .................. Russell Fichera
Island Park .............. James Brown
Massapequa .............. Mary Hayman, Michael Zito
Massapequa Park ....... Joanne M. Hawthorne, Esq.
Wantagh ................. Stephen Zegers

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abuadeel II

After several reviews about books that deal with the zany and daring side of birding, I’m returning to our roots, an informative and educational opus on birding. This month I’m reviewing Pete Dunne on Bird Watching: The How-to, Where-to, and When-to of Birding by none other than Pete Dunne himself! The author is one of the superstars of North American birding. He is an articulate spokesperson for the birds and those that enjoy watching them. He has won numerous awards for promoting the cause of birding. Furthermore, he was the director of the Cape May Bird Observatory for over 35 years, one of the premier birding destinations in North America.

For those of us that profess a desire to improve our birding skills (from rookie to varsity), this book is for all of us! This entire book made for exciting and worthwhile reading, but my review will concentrate on the first three chapters: “Backyard Birding: Front Seat Adventure,” “The Tools of the Trade: Binoculars and Field-Guides,” and “The Fundamentals of Birding.”

If you want to become a better birder, this is the place to begin. What the author is trying to tell us is “that he is not offering those of us who are rookies cut flowers, but instead he's giving us tips on growing our own.” Reading this book will not only prepare us to know a few birds, but rather give us pointers on how to go about observing almost any bird, anywhere. This is a book that both ends of the birding spectrum will appreciate and find useful. We will learn how to move beyond the rookie or beginner’s level of this fascinating pastime into the more sublime reaches of varsity or expert birding. This book is all about the art and science of bird-watching; it summarizes the years of Dunne’s experience and brings together hundreds of interesting tidbits from all his published writings. As you read this book, you will be overwhelmed by his valuable information, including how to attract birds to your yard by feeding, birdscaping, and providing water; then he jumps to the tools of his passion (or is it his obsession?), tools needed to see and identify the newest arrivals to your yard. Perhaps the most important chapters in this book are on choosing birding binoculars and acquiring a useful field guide (or several!). Another interesting and useful chapter (they all are) is on the fundamentals of birding itself.

The author has an affable, knowledgeable, and conversational writing style that entertains as it educates. This book really demystifies the art of birding! To sum up, this is a fantastic introduction to bird-watching. And while this most interesting and useful book is made to order for beginners, older and more experienced birders will also find much in it that is useful. You'll feel that you're picking the master's brain. Read it! And ENJOY!!!
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BROOKSIDE PRESERVE FALL CLEANUP  
On Sunday, November 16, starting at 1 p.m., SSAS will have its fall 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. PDF files of our trail guide and children’s freshwater wetland guide 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 work gloves and spend an hour or two with us.  

ALBANY LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP  
Editor’s note: The following summary from Audubon New York’s Executive Director, Erin Crotty, was sent to chapter leaders at the beginning of last summer. Three newsletters later, we have room for it here.  
The New York State Legislature concluded its 2014 session on June 20, 2014, and I wanted to provide you with an update on how our priorities fared this session. Overall, we had a productive session. Below please find the highlights.  

Successes  
تان Increased Funding for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). As we reported in April, through our advocacy we were able to redirect funding in the EPF to support the state’s LIP for grassland birds! In addition, through our collective efforts we were able to increase the EPF to $162 million (up from $135 million last year) and see more funding go toward our priorities, including the ZBGA [Zoos, Botanical Gardens, and Aquariums] program, open space, and farmland protection.  
△ NY Works Funding for State Parks and DEC. In addition to the EPF successes, we also helped advocate for NY Works funding for State Parks and DEC [Department of Environmental Conservation] infrastructure projects. $1.5 million has been dedicated to natural resource stewardship projects at State Parks, supporting several that directly advance our Audubon in the Parks priorities, such as invasive species removal and grassland habitat restoration at Green Lakes State Park (east of Syracuse). Additionally, $6 million was dedicated to infrastructure improvements to improve outdoor access at DEC lands, with new funding for land acquisition in, and creation of an informational kiosk at, the Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area [north of Saratoga Springs].  
△ The Community Risk and Resiliency Act. Through the efforts of Audubon and our partners, we were able to secure passage of this comprehensive measure that will require that state infrastructure, financing, and permitting decisions take into account future climate risks, including sea level rise, storm surges, and flooding, during the application and review process. It also requires the DEC to develop regulations to establish formal sea level rise projections in the state. Earlier this month [June], we issued an action alert on this important bill with over 1,000 Audubon members taking action! In the coming weeks we will be encouraging the Governor to sign this bill into law [signed September 22].  
△ Legislation to Reduce Light Pollution. Another priority bill that passed will establish new lighting efficiency standards and require full cutoff lights for outdoor lighting in the state. We have worked for several years to advance this bill, which we believe will help reduce impacts to migrating birds. We have had a long-standing policy resolution on this issue [referred to the chapter-approved agenda that Audubon New York pursues] and it’s exciting to achieve progress. We’ll also be working to encourage the Governor to sign this measure into law [hasn’t yet].  
△ Trap, Neuter & Return Bill Stalled. Late in the session, legislation was introduced in both houses that would have provided funding for the practice of Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) for management of feral cats. We have long been concerned with this untested practice at managing feral cat colonies. While the bill passed the Assembly, thanks to strategic pressure from our staff and chapters, and an untraditional alliance of concerned organizations, the measure was not voted on in the Senate.  

Progress But Not Passage  
△ Forestry Stewardship and Habitat Conservation Tax Credit. This measure passed the Senate but was not acted on by the Assembly. The bill would establish new income tax incentives for forest and agricultural landowners to enroll in sustainable forestry or other conservation programs. We will be working to advocate that this type of program be included in next year’s state budget.  
△ Natural Gas Infrastructure Mapping. The Assembly passed this bill, which would have required the New York Department of Public Service to use GIS information to map natural gas associated infrastructure, including smaller volume gas gathering lines, and to share this information with DEC for planning purposes to reduce habitat fragmentation. The Senate did not act on this measure, and we will be working with the sponsors to advance this legislation next session.
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! **Town of Hempstead residents who feed birds should contact the Town about its new ordinance.**

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2014-2015 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

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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 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.

$<unce. Donations to SSAS are always welcome! $
Yes, I'd like to join: SSAS only National Audubon too
NAME: ________________________________
ADDRESS: __________________________________________(Zip+4)
PHONE NO.: ________________________________________
E-MAIL: ____________________________________________
Chapter Code C4Z150Z (South Shore Audubon Society)
$<unce.