

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 46, NUMBER 4 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

DEC. 2015 & JAN. 2016

NEXT MEETING

Paul Stessel

DATE: Tuesday, December 8, 2015
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)
SPEAKER: Samantha Rosen
TOPIC: Winter Seal Rescue

Have you ever wondered which seals are in New York waters? Would you know what to do if you saw one stranded on a local beach? Join the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation's Samantha Rosen for a program on the various seal species and their unique behaviors. We will be answering commonly asked questions such as: What should I do if I see a seal on the beach? What happens to the seal once it is admitted into rehab?

The Riverhead Foundation runs New York's only marine mammal and sea turtle rescue program. Sam is their education coordinator and a stranding technician; she grew up in Oceanside and earned her biology degree in Maryland at Salisbury University a few years ago. Join us!

Pre-Meeting Book Discussion. Arrive a half-hour early to participate in a discussion led by R. U. Abyrdar II (aka Paul Stessel) of the book that he and Sy Schiff reviewed in the previous *Skimmer*. This meeting's book is *I'd Rather Be Birding* by June Osborne.

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.

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•  IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE
• BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS. •
• **SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!** •
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NEXT MEETING AFTER NEXT MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, January 12, 2016
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
TOPIC: Annual Members' Night

Join us for a get-together of fun (including our traditional Jeop-Birdy!), food, and friendship. Show off your talents, hobbies, or skills, whether or not they are bird-related. If you can paint, play an instrument, imitate bird calls, knit, take photographs, sing, or have any other talents or interests, please share them with us. We would also appreciate finger foods from those of you who enjoy the culinary arts.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Population Bomb, Forty-Seven Years Later

Betty Borowsky

In 1968, Dr. Paul Ehrlich and his wife Anne wrote a book that changed our thinking about the future of the world.¹ These scientists had concluded that the number of people on the planet would increase so much in the following ten to twenty years that, among other dire consequences, there would be widespread famine ("hundreds of millions" of people would die of starvation), especially in undeveloped countries. This apocalyptic prediction seemed quite reasonable at the time, given the history of humans' population growth (see Figure 1, taken from www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/science/ocr_gateway/understanding_environment/population_pollutionrev1.shtml) and the then-current agricultural capacity of the world, and the predictions in the book led to measures to limit population growth in many countries.

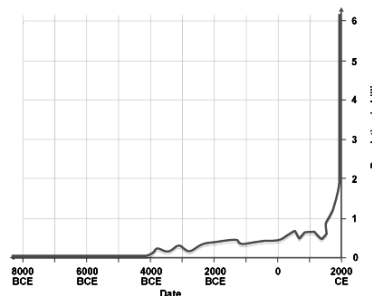


Figure 1. Increase in the Number of People on Earth Over the Past 10,000 Years

gateway/understanding_environment/population_pollutionrev1.shtml) and the then-current agricultural capacity of the world, and the predictions in the book led to measures to limit population growth in many countries.

Well, overall, the Ehrlichs' dire prediction about mass starvation did not come to pass (thank goodness). It's not that people no longer die of hunger; the United Nations estimates that, sadly, 10.9 million children in developing countries die of starvation each year.² But that is many fewer than were predicted at the time. This has led many people to discount everything the Ehrlichs said. But we need to appreciate that the essence of the Ehrlichs' message remains unchanged.

Of course, many things have happened to our species since 1968, but perhaps the two most important factors that have allowed us to avoid mass starvation are: 1) the rate of population growth has decreased; and 2) we have increased the amount of food we produce.

When *The Population Bomb* was published, the population growth rate was about 2.0% per year; it is now around 1.1% per year.³ In addition, the "Green Revolution," a variety of agriculture methods that include the introduction of high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice, improved irrigation, and the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides, has about doubled crop yields.⁴ But I think it's very important to realize that while we haven't yet gotten to the point that the Ehrlichs predicted would occur in the 1980s, we will get there eventually if the population continues to increase. That's because, from an ecological perspective, the human species is no different from any other, and it is a basic tenet of population ecology that the environment can hold only so many individuals of a specific species at one time, because some factor limits the number of individuals the environment can support. The logistic growth curve in Figure 2 (taken from <http://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/population-ecology-at-work-managing-game-populations-50937864>) shows that typically a population increases exponentially until it reaches the number of individuals the environment can hold (the carrying capacity). All things being equal, the actual number of individuals

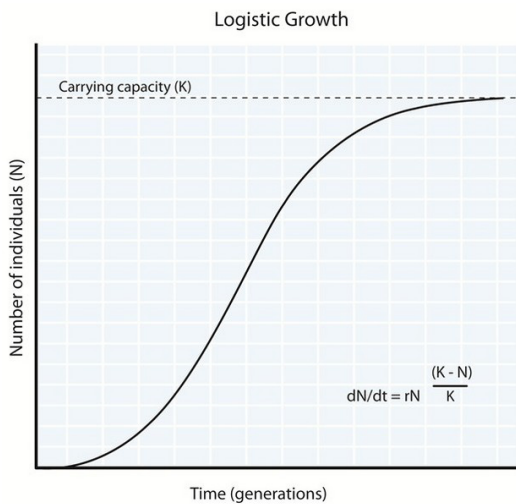


Figure 2. The Carrying Capacity of the Environment Limits the Number of Individuals That Can Survive in a Specific Area

of that species will fluctuate around the carrying capacity from there on in.

So, viewing the situation in ecological terms,

we've increased the carrying capacity of our species since 1968 (increased the number of people the earth can support), so we haven't yet reached the point of catastrophe.

Even though our rate of growth has slowed, however, the number of people on the earth has increased enormously. In 47 years, we have more than doubled the earth's population. In 1968 there were 3.537 billion people on the earth, and there are 7.380 billion people today.⁵ That's a lot of people! Furthermore, it is turning out that some of the methods used to increase crop yields are also damaging the environment (a topic for future discussion). So we are certainly not out of danger.

However, it seems to me that the situation is brighter now than it was 47 years ago. In theory, at least, we have a good chance of avoiding major famines if our growth rate continues to decrease and if we can keep the earth's population below its carrying capacity.

¹Ehrlich, Paul R. *The Population Bomb*. San Francisco: Sierra Club/Ballantine Books, 1968.

²<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/food/childhunger.shtml>.

³<http://datatopics.worldbank.org/hnp/popestimates>.

⁴<http://www.fao.org/docrep/x0262e/x0262e06.htm>.

⁵<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population>.

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 Memorial 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.

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.

u BIRD WALKS u

Joe Landesberg

All walks start at 9 a.m.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Call me at 467-9498 in case of questionable conditions or for other info. Directions and lists of what we've seen are at ssaudubon.org.

- Nov. 22 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
Nov. 29 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
Dec. 6 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Dec. 13 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Dec. 20 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Dec. 27 Happy Holidays! — No Walk
Jan. 3 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
Jan. 10 Pelham Bay Park*
Jan. 17 No Walk
Jan. 24 Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)
Jan. 31 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
Feb. 7 Massapequa Lake**
Feb. 14 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)

*For Pelham Bay Park (where we hope to see owls): Wear hiking shoes — it's a hilly forest walk to the bay. Take Throgs Neck Bridge to I-695 north to I-95 north. Take I-95 to exit #9, Hutchinson River Parkway north. Take first exit #5, Orchard Beach Rd., go past traffic circle, and continue on Orchard Beach Rd. to end. Turn left on Park Dr. to enter park. Go past another traffic circle and enter parking lot through toll gates (free); meet at far left corner of parking lot (northeast corner). See www.mappery.com/Pelham-Bay-Park-NYC-Map for reference.

**For Massapequa Lake (the southern end of Massapequa Preserve), use street parking on westbound side of Merrick Road, west of Lake Shore Blvd.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US!

SSAS's board would like to extend its thanks and appreciation to those members that have already responded to the SSAS donation letter (our first such letter in many years). The support that you give to SSAS enables us to continue to help people and their communities in the areas of education, conservation, and preservation.

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.

VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY FOR CHILDREN

Marilyn Hametz

The South Shore Audubon Annual Holiday Party for Children with the Tackapausha Museum will be Saturday, December 12. At the party, from 1 to 4 P.M., we will be providing light refreshments and will have tables for nature crafts. Wildlife demonstrations are part of the party.



If you would like to enjoy the event as a South Shore Audubon volunteer, please contact me at 799-7189 or marilynexpl@yahoo.com.

This special event is also a great time to visit the museum with your children or grandchildren. Admission is \$5 per person (adults & children). Tackapausha Museum and Preserve is located at 2255 Washington Avenue (between Merrick Road and Sunrise Highway) in Seaford, telephone 571-7443.

FREE AUDUBON BIRD GUIDE APP

Editor's note: The announcement below is from an e-mail sent by the National Audubon Society in October; previously the app wasn't free.

We want to thank you for being a part of Audubon and what better way than with the free Audubon Bird Guide, the must-have app for anyone interested in birds. This award-winning app instantly turns your mobile device into the most trusted field guide in North America.

- 821 in-depth species profiles
• More than 3,200 bird photos
• Quick bird IDs with filters by shape, region and color
• Thousands of bird calls, differentiated by region and season
• Seasonal and migratory range maps
• Recent local bird sightings through eBird
• Sightings posted by Audubon NatureShare friends and followers

So what are you waiting for? Download the free Audubon Bird Guide (at www.audubon.org/apps) and get birding!

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Lorraine Bondi



New York Agent/East Coast Agency Director

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NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

CONSERVATION ISSUES UPDATE

Jim Brown

The South Shore Audubon Society has been confronting a number of important conservation issues in recent weeks. Below are some of the issues and activities of our board and members.

Port Ambrose Vetoed by Governor Cuomo! On November 12, members of SSAS, along with many Long Island residents, public officials, and climate activists, witnessed an exciting event in Long Beach that was an important victory for the environment: Governor Cuomo listened to the people, did the right thing, and vetoed the Port Ambrose Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility! The hard work over many years of the anti-LNG coalition — including the South Shore Audubon Society, Clean Ocean Action, Surfrider Foundation, Green Party, Food and Water Watch, Sierra Club, and other groups — finally paid off with a victory!

Liberty Gas's planned deepwater port would have been built in waters roughly 18 miles off of Long Beach, constituting a threat to Long Island's wildlife, environment, and people. Aside from the physical danger posed by supercooled explosive gas and possible collisions with the huge tankers employed in delivering (and probably eventually exporting) LNG, liquefied natural gas is just one more dirty fossil fuel that contributes to global warming, sea level rise, and climate change.

Audubon scientists predict that more than half of 588 North American bird species — 314 in all — are at risk from climate change. Some of these birds may indeed be facing extinction if global warming is not halted. For this reason, and for all the reasons given by Governor Cuomo at his press conference — terrorism concerns, threat to the fishing and tourism industries, possible crises created by LNG facilities during storm events, etc. — we applaud his veto of Port Ambrose! The South Shore Audubon Society commends the Governor for taking a strong stand for the environment in opposing LNG, just as he did when he banned fracking in New York State. Thank you, Governor Cuomo!

West Pond of Jamaica Bay — Breach Issue. As many SSAS members are aware, the breach at the West Pond of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge has yet to be repaired. However, there is reason for optimism in that the National Park Service (NPS) has chosen, as a preferred alternative, to close the breach and restore the area to its pre-Sandy condition. Following are the official comments written and submitted to the NPS on behalf of SSAS in support of the preferred plan to close the breach:

"The South Shore Audubon Society, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society representing approximately 1500 households on Long Island, supports the National Park Service's preferred Alternative B to fix the breach at Jamaica Bay's West Pond. Alternative B is designed to restore the West Pond and the loop trail to their pre-Sandy

condition, a result that our organization has sought since the original creation of the breach in the wake of the October 2012 superstorm.

"The restoration of the West Pond to its pre-Sandy environment is welcomed by our Audubon chapter. The SSAS has long realized what a treasure the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is. Until the formation of the saltwater breach, we routinely held well-attended bird walks around the Pond along the loop trail, enjoying the richness of birdlife attracted to the salt water of the bay, the fresh water of the West Pond, and birds inhabiting the surrounding forested areas. The South Shore Audubon Society looks forward to the acceptance of Alternative B for the restoration of the West Pond, and for speedy work to be accomplished to repair this worldwide acclaimed Important Bird Area. The repair should enable the West Pond to provide habitat supporting its former diversity of species and number of birds."

Protect Our Public Lands Act. SSAS is urging the passage of the Protect Our Public Lands Act (POPLA), H.R. 1902, introduced by Representative Mark Pocan of Wisconsin in April of this year. It has been referred to the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. The bill seeks to ban hydrofracking on public lands. Public lands that have already been impacted by fracking or are threatened by fracking include Allegheny National



Forest (Pennsylvania), Arches and Canyonlands National Parks (Utah), Chaco Culture National Historic Park (New Mexico), and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (Pennsylvania

and New Jersey), among others. Audubon members are asked to call their U.S. Representatives (Long Island House members Peter King, Steve Israel, Kathleen Rice, or Gregory Meeks) and urge them to sign on as sponsors. There is no good reason why our national parks and other public lands should not be protected from the effects of the environmentally harmful technology that is fracking!

Feral Cats at Jones Beach. Given the problems with feral cats at Jones Beach, where a number of cats have been abandoned by their owners, our chapter is urging support of the American Bird Conservancy's petition to "remove feral cat colonies from Jones Beach State Park." The petition addresses Commissioner Rose Harvey, urging her "to immediately remove all feral and free-roaming cats at Jones Beach State Park. The continued presence of feral cats in this park constitutes a real threat to native wildlife, most importantly the threatened Piping Plover (50 C.F.R., 17.3). To protect these nesting, endangered birds, the cats need to be immediately removed, taken to a shelter, and given an opportunity to find a true forever home." The petition can be found at: <http://abcbirds.org/get-involved/take-action/> (scroll horizontally to the "No More Feral Cats at Jones Beach" link).



LONG ISLAND'S WATER SUPPLY NEEDS HELP

Marilyn Hametz

Long Island's Sole Source Aquifer, the groundwater under the island we live on, is our only drinking water supply. What happens in the aquifer also affects the surface rivers, streams, and ponds. The quality and, in some areas, the quantity of water is in steady decline. There are myriad pollution problems, the threat of saltwater intrusion, and millions of gallons of water wasted each year.

Our multiple water districts and suppliers deliver our drinking water, but the water quantity and quality crises must be resolved Island-wide if the drinking water supply is to remain sustainable. Yet, no centralized Long Island leadership capable of managing and protecting Long Island's water resources exists.

Water for Long Island, with which South Shore Audubon has been working, will be holding the **2015 Groundwater Symposium: A Lifeline for Long Island's Water – An Aquifer Compact?** on **December 4** at 9 A.M. at the South Huntington Public Library. The symposium will consider what is happening to groundwater across the Island and explore effective oversight alternatives being used elsewhere in New York State and across the U.S. For more information about Long Island's drinking water supply and registration for the symposium, visit www.waterforlongisland.org.



must be resolved Island-wide if the drinking water supply is to remain sustainable. Yet, no centralized Long Island leadership capable of managing and protecting Long Island's water resources exists.



Explore the coast with the **AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY**

DEAD HORSE BAY, NY'S BEST KEPT SECRET (Sun., Dec. 6, 10 A.M. to 12 P.M.). In Floyd Bennett Field, hike the trails & shoreline with Mickey Cohen. Explore the nature & fascinating history of this area. Sturdy footwear essential. For info & reservations, call (718) 474-0896; e-mail bmcohen2@gmail.com.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY (Sat., Dec. 12, 5 to 9 P.M.). Donation \$55 incl. food & drink (beer/wine), an "Ugly Auction," silent auction, flamenco dance group. At Presbyterian Church in Broad Channel. Nature walk at Jamaica Bay Refuge at 3 P.M.

WINTER BIRDS & SURVIVAL (Sat., Dec. 19, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at Jamaica Bay Refuge for slide program and hike to see overwintering birds. Learn how they & other wildlife survive frigid conditions of winter. Contact Don to reserve. Free.

NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACHWALK (11 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at Fort Tilden in Breezy Point for brisk hike along beach, dunes & woods. Look for Saw-whet and Snowy Owls. Champagne, coffee & cookies afterward. No reservation necessary. Free.

MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND: SEALS, SEABIRDS AND SEASHORE (Jan. 8–10). Cost: \$395 incl. two nights at luxurious Manor House (heated pool, Jacuzzi, spacious rooms & lobby), 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs plus star watch. Leaders: Mike Bottini, Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe.

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

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II with Sy Schiff

Enough of these endless birding tales — for a while, anyway. This month's book that we have chosen for review is National Geographic's *Birding Essentials: All the Tools, Techniques, and Tips You Need to Begin and Become a Better Birder* by Jonathan Alderfer and Jon L. Dunn. This book will make a better birder of all of us! However, it will benefit both novice and intermediate birders most of all!

Birding is the fastest-growing wildlife-based, nature-loving outdoor activity in the U.S. This book is both comprehensive and authoritative. It will give birders, like you and me, a general background on what birding is as well as what birding is all about. In the process, it attempts to give us an overview of our passionate hobby.

In the early sections, the authors begin with discussions of field guides and binoculars; excellent starter topics. The first helps us tell what we're seeing and the second helps us to see what we're looking at. The U.S. distribution maps and eBird type abundance distribution charts are well illustrated, with detailed explanations for their use; they help to point the way to where to find more information.



The section on "Parts of Birds" is not simply a few line drawings with arrows pointing to these parts as in most guides; instead, it's a long, comprehensive set of photographs. Each photo is very carefully labeled. This makes it very useful for learning anatomy and identification, which we all can find helpful. For example, two side-by-side Lesser and Greater Scaup photos name the parts and help us separate these ducks in the field. This is a bonus for what could have been a rather boring discussion. The section "How to ID Birds" follows a similar pattern (if it's successful, continue the same way).

"Variations in Birds" points out the difference in male and female plumage plus the difference between breeding and nonbreeding plumage. This means learning multiple visuals per species. All of these aspects are illustrated with plenty of pictures.

No book on "birding essentials" would be complete without a section on "ID Challenges." While this section is rather short, it does discuss ibises, flycatchers, hummingbirds, and terns, among others. This is not an ID book but the section is designed to point out the problems and pitfalls of identifying difficult birds and how to deal with them.

As the book winds down, the authors include an essay on "Nomenclature" — what it is, how it came about, and how it has been modified. All in all, this book is a pretty good introduction to "birding essentials." It is also a very interesting and useful "required" book! Read it... and learn how to become a better birder! We will all be the better for the effort.

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

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Americans Committed to Conservation



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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

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ADDRESS: _____

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