

# SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



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FEBRUARY 2017

## NEXT MEETING

*Paul Stessel*

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 14, 2017  
**TIME:** 7:30 P.M.  
**PLACE:** Freeport Memorial Library  
144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)  
**TOPIC:** Annual Members' Night



February is members' night, a chance for any and/or all of us to shine! We have many hobbies and interests that are not focused on birding — cooking, knitting, gardening, quilting, playing an instrument, etc.

I'll be bringing a "bird walk" in our seats, a chance to find 35+ birds while using a pencil and paper, with a prize for the first one to reach 35! Also, I'm going to set up a table of books on native plants and backyard bird feeding, as Audubon is espousing, "saving habitat for birds one backyard at a time!" I will also include a bibliography of the books displayed.

**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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**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.*

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OUR E-LIST [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas\\_list](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list)  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Feathers and Communication

*Betty Borowsky*

We fall in love with birds because they are beautiful, because of their behaviors, and/or because they can fly; feathers are involved in all of these aspects of birds' lives. Among other things, they permit flight, they provide insulation, and they facilitate communication. Amazingly, feathers are entirely unique to birds; they are the only living group of animals that has them.

So I've been thinking about feathers. (What can I say?)

First and foremost, of course, feathers help birds fly. Depending upon their shape and where they are located on the bird's body, they can help push the bird through the air, lend it stability and help steer it in flight, and help put on the brakes when it lands.

Feathers provide insulation, too. In the winter, it sometimes looks like chickadees and other small passerines have put on a lot of weight. Of course they haven't — they have fluffed out their feathers to keep a layer of air close to their bodies to keep them warm. Their own body heat warms the air that's trapped between their skin and the feathers. (We take full advantage of feathers' insulating properties in down blankets and coats.) In fact the evidence from many newly discovered fossils shows that feathers evolved before flight did, so the current idea is that feathers evolved originally for insulation.

But perhaps feathers' most remarkable function is their role in communication. Their colors, their color patterns, and their structures help convey important information among individuals. Feathers can broadcast an individual's species, sex, and readiness to breed. They may also reflect an individual's relative ability to breed (more vibrant colors, for example, probably reflect a good diet and perhaps the ability to produce and care for a healthy brood).

Feathers' colors come from chemicals and from the feathers' structures. In general, the reds and yellows come from chemical pigments. So flamingos' and spoonbills' pink color comes from carotenoids in the algae and crustaceans they eat. And according to <http://>













