

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 48, NUMBER 1 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2018

NEXT MEETING

Dolores Rogers & Bill Belford

DATE: Tuesday, September 11, 2018
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
 144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)
SPEAKER: John Brokos
TOPIC: Nature... A Gift from Our Creator

For the first monthly meeting since May, SSAS welcomes back John Brokos for “a great collection of nature images that includes a bit of everything — birds, insects, reptiles and amphibians, flowers, other animals, landscapes, the night sky, etc. These are all award-winning images of high impact.” John says that although his presentation’s name is unchanged from his last hour-long talk, nearly all of the slides will be unfamiliar.

John is a Diamond Star Exhibitor who in 1984–86 ranked 12th in the nature salons, where he competed internationally with 100,000 exhibitors including some of the best pro shooters. He is a founding member of the Freeport Camera Club, which still meets in the library. He is a member of the Hall of Fame of The Photographic Federation of Long Island and a Fellow of the Photographic Society of America. Some of his photos are on his website, www.imagesfordecor.com. 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 *Exploring the Other Island: a seasonal guide to nature on Long Island* by John Turner.

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!**
 •••••

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.*



BURKE GRANT REPORT

Betty Barowsky

SSAS members and friends have been busy during the newsletter’s summer break! As reported in the April *Skimmer*, SSAS was awarded two \$1,000 grants to raise awareness of the advantages of planting native species wherever possible, and to create gardens at two sites in our catchment area: Tackapausha Museum and Preserve, and the Hempstead Plains.

We do tend to plant species that we are familiar with — but there are so many benefits of choosing native species! First of all, native species are adapted to local environments, so they tend to do very well with a minimum of active maintenance (extra watering, weeding, etc.). Having grown in our area for thousands of years, they have also developed natural resistance to insect damage. But, in addition, some species have coevolved with native local butterflies and birds, forming close mutually beneficial relationships. The butterflies and birds consume parts of the plants, but in so doing they carry the same species’ pollen from one plant to another. So our native milkweeds are essential to monarch butterflies; our Ruby-throated Hummingbird loves jewelweed, and so forth. We also know that the timing and locations of modern bird migrations coincide with where and when specific native plant species flower.

Last, but certainly not least, some of our native plants are spectacularly beautiful: purple coneflowers, red cardinal flowers, goldenrods, blue vervain, milkweed, and the list goes on. When our native species are planted together, they form a most beautiful display and they attract

butterflies and birds to the garden through the warmer weather.

The grant for Tackapausha was a cooperative grant funded through the National Audubon Society, and the grant for the Hempstead Plains was provided by the National Audubon Society's Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants. The work at Tackapausha is reported on the next page; the work at Hempstead Plains is described below.

The Plants for Birds Burke Grant funded a conference for the public on native plants held at the Hempstead Plains Education and Research Center on April 21, and paid for plants, seed packets containing seeds from native prairie plants, and signage for the new butterfly garden created in front of the center on July 21. The conference was highlighted by a talk on native plants by Jennifer

Cappello-Ruggiero from the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Nassau County, and by a talk on bee biology and diversity by Carl Flatow. Immediately after the conference, attendees had an opportunity to tour the Plains.

The garden was a wonderful community effort. Most of the weeds were removed from two areas in front of the center within two hours, thanks to the many volunteers who came to help. This included the efforts of Boy Scout Scott Henneberger, who took this on as part of his Eagle Scout project. He recruited friends and family to come and help with the job, and he made the butterfly boxes that were installed that day. Other volunteers were students in a Nassau Community College physical sciences class taught by Professor Elizabeth Farrell, as well as members of SSAS and the board of the Friends of Hempstead Plains. One hundred seed packets were assembled by volunteers from the Nassau BOCES Center for Community Adjustment with seeds that they and other volunteers collected from native prairie grasses and forbs at Hempstead Plains. In addition to the butterfly boxes, many species of plants native to the Plains were planted in the garden. Signs identifying the plants will be installed in the fall.

We were gratified to see butterflies hovering around the newly planted garden even as we were working on it!

So native plants not only benefit the environment by minimizing the need for fertilizers and pesticides, but they also provide specific kinds of foods for local animal species, including birds. A further bonus is that since they do require less chemicals and maintenance, they're also more economical to maintain. It's an amazing win-win situation.

If you would like to see which plants are best for your specific home's environment, visit <https://www.audubon.org/native-plants> for a recommended list.

We wish to thank National Audubon Society for stimulating us to encourage native plantings, and all the volunteers who helped provide the conference and make the new butterfly garden. Special thanks to Betsy Gulotta,

who partnered with us from the beginning, expediting all aspects of the conference and the plantings; to Amanda Furcall, the new Director of the Friends of Hempstead Plains, who helped coordinate the work on the garden; and to Marilyn Hametz of SSAS, who wrote the grant application and helped throughout.



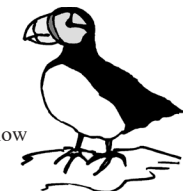
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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., usually on the second Tuesday of the month (third Tuesday this February), 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. 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:

- Baldwin John Kenny
- Bethpage Anna Hughes, Magnolia Syed
- East Meadow Susan Bernstein, S. Millman
- Franklin Square Henry A. Clasen
- Freeport Catherine Collins, Cynthia Gillen
- Garden City Gerald Goldberg, Joan Haskins Ripp
- Hicksville Eleanor Crosio, Elaine Peters, Doris Reilly
- Hollis Davera Banks
- Island Park Kelley Berotti
- Levittown Pat Burns, Tami Cooley, Joseph Pando
- Long Beach Elsa Farbiarz, Brandie Johnson, Michele Knox, Ken Petritz, Barbara Vitale
- Massapequa Lois Garrett, Janet Schnars, Vincent Sorrentino
- Massapequa Park Joseph F. Agovino, Theresa Bartlotti, Edith M. Corso, James Ferris
- Oceanside Mary Alfaro
- Plainview Bert Moskowitz, Zita Rosen
- Rockville Centre Ann Cantor
- Roosevelt Harry D. Vanager
- Seaford Theresa Barrett
- Uniondale David Brown, Bertha Stringfellow
- Valley Stream Mineo Yasufuku
- Wantagh Dorothy Earle, Charles Zegers



HIGH SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

The recipients of our annual graduation ceremony scholarships, arranged by Joe Landesberg, were James Hastings from Freeport H.S., Emily Lennon from Baldwin H.S., Jenna Lopez from South Side H.S. in Rockville Centre, and Ethan Maitra from East Meadow H.S. We congratulate all four and wish them success.

OUR NATIVE PLANTINGS AT TACKAPAUSHA

Marilyn Hametz

Our summer has been active, and the Tackapausha Museum's garden shows it. With a National Audubon Collaborative Funding Grant, South Shore Audubon has added native plants and improved and beautified the garden in Seaford for birds, butterflies, and people.

Anne Mehlinger has put in an enormous amount of effort leading the project with the planning, purchase of plants, donation of plants from her wonderful garden, preparation of the site, and planting. SSAS volunteers who have helped are Betty Belford, Betty Borowsky, Bill Belford, Bill Clifford, Chris Braut, Guy Jacob, Joanne Del Prete, and me.

Even the weather cooperated on our first two weeding, planting, and mulching sessions on the mornings of July 3 and 17. After the working mornings we relaxed, snacked, and socialized.



Tackapausha staff and volunteers water during dry spells and help with maintenance.

Among the native plants added are lowbush blueberry, switchgrass (pictured), New York ironweed, aster, goldenrod, sunflowers, cardinal flower, and honeysuckle.

When completed, the SSAS Tackapausha project will include additional plants, ground signs identifying the plants, and informational materials. If you would like to help, please contact me at mwhametz@optonline.net.

OFFSHORE WIND MEETINGS IN SEPTEMBER

The NYS Energy Research & Development Authority (NYSERDA) has scheduled offshore wind public information meetings to provide updates on NY's plans, including a presentation and Q&A.

The first meeting is at Long Beach City Hall from 6:30 P.M. to 8 P.M. on **September 26**. The second is at the Peninsula branch of the Queens Library in Rockaway Beach from 7:30 P.M. to 9 P.M. the next day. There will also be a public webinar from 1 to 2 P.M. on September 19; registration is required and will be capped at 500 attendees.

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MONARCH ON THE MILKWEED

Anne Mehlinger

Our most recent SSAS weeding session at Tackapausha, on July 31, was especially memorable because Betty Borowsky and I saw the first monarch butterfly on the common milkweed.

There is a nice stand of common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) in the front of the Tackapausha Museum's garden. Milkweed is the only plant the monarch will lay its eggs on because its larva can only eat milkweed leaves. Common milkweed is one of its preferred, native species.


We saw a female monarch and she appeared to be laying eggs. Males have a black spot on the webbing of each hind wing; females do not. There was no spot on this monarch's visible hind wing in my photo enlargement.

We will be on the lookout for eggs and larva at our next weeding session. We hope you will join us. Come for an hour or for the whole morning but do come and help if you can. For future weeding dates and any questions, contact me at amehlinger36@gmail.com.

SSAS THANKS ITS ANNUAL DINNER RAFFLE DONORS

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32ND ANNUAL NEW YORK STATE BEACH CLEANUP

See www.nysbeachcleanup.org for a list of cleanups scheduled for **Saturday, September 15** at Lido Beach, Jones Beach, and throughout NY.

HEMPSTEAD LAKE STATE PARK: DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION DOCUMENTS AND INTERVENTION

Brien Weiner

In the 2017 October and December *Skimmers*, we described our objections to proposed “improvements” at Hempstead Lake State Park (HLSP) including the loss of wetlands, the removal of trees, and the creation of new trails. The project continues to be a volatile issue. For those readers new to the issue, the HLSP project is part of the Living with the Bay (LWTB) project, the original purpose of which was to mitigate flooding along the Mill River from HLSP to Bay Park. LWTB is overseen by the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) and funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development with a grant of \$125 million for Sandy recovery. GOSR has allocated \$34.5 million of that grant to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) for HLSP, much of which is designated for increasing recreational use rather than flood mitigation.

SSAS filed Freedom of Information Law requests to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in December 2017 and May 2018 for documents related to the HLSP project. We were sent a CD of documents and visited the DEC office in Stony Brook to photocopy additional documents. From e-mail correspondence between GOSR and the DEC in August 2017, we learned that GOSR admitted to “segmentation” of the HLSP project from the restoration of the Mill River, while lumping the remaining projects in a “Frankenstein” report. Segmentation is prohibited by the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) because of the need to assess cumulative impacts. We also learned that GOSR was in a rush for a negative declaration of environmental impact on HLSP, but the DEC said there was insufficient mitigation, especially for the wetlands.



We believe that the comments provided by SSAS contributed to the precautions being taken by the DEC, especially since the DEC files included a copy of the SSAS letter that detailed the ways in which the HLSP project met the requirements for significant environmental impact according to SEQRA, and the environmental issues that needed to be addressed. Four other Long Island Audubon chapters and NYC Audubon signed onto our letter.

Nevertheless, there was other disturbing information in the documents:

In GOSR’s Tree Removal Application, 1050 trees will be removed for the Hempstead Lake and South Pond dams; this is less than the original 1200, but still a substantial number (an additional 1800 trees are designated for removal from the North Ponds area and 100 trees for a “greenway” through the park). There are references to an emergency action plan if the dam starts to fail, and to an arborist to prevent damage to the trees during

construction, but during a tour given by OPRHP on May 12 we were told neither of the measures were in place.

The application states that tree removal will take place from 11/1 to 3/31 to avoid impacts on bats and migratory birds, but HLSP is a hot spot for migratory birds in March, as well as nesting grounds for our Great Horned Owls. Further, stump removal will take place year-round, which will disrupt nesting birds and ground foragers. The DEC comments that an absence of data does not mean that rare or state-listed (as endangered or threatened) bat species do not occur; the DEC recommends leaving all snag and cavity trees, and cautions that there may be other species and habitats requiring surveys and permits.

In a North Ponds report, the DEC recommends reducing the dredging of the Northwest Pond to minimize the loss of wet meadow, and mitigating the loss of red maple swamp for the sediment basin in the Northeast Pond. A February 2018 Louis Berger corporation report discusses reusing the dredged material from the North Ponds for the berms. A letter dated March 1, 2018 from the DEC says much of the dredged material will be too contaminated for reuse. DEC meeting notes from March 20, 2018 discuss reusing the dredged material and capping the contaminated parts (adding \$7 million to the cost of about \$9 million). We need clarification regarding disposal or capping of contaminated sediments, and if capping is not financially feasible, we need to know if the alternative is sufficient to prevent further contamination.

The contractor Cashin Associates requested an exemption from cleaning up dioxin because of cost; the DEC thankfully denied the request. All the sediment testing required by the DEC is expensive and we need to know whether GOSR properly allocated the money. The Louis Berger report presents scores for wetlands improvement but does not explain the criteria for its scores.

The plans for the ponds have changed substantially several times. The plans call for constructing concrete sediment basins and bermed edges along wetlands, which goes against recent trends and the goal to restore the Mill River with green infrastructure. Moreover, the plans describe how large volumes of water (and the floatables with them) will flow over the floatables catcher. The plans recognize the need to catch floatables at their source but maintain that it is outside OPRHP’s jurisdiction.

The plans state that the most feasible cleanup will involve capture and removal of all larger floatables and bulk materials along the shores and in low-lying forested areas along the ponds, based on economic restrictions. However, the plans also acknowledge that excavating soils in and around the ponds in order to capture micro-debris and buried debris, or additional efforts to remove submerged debris and debris throughout the woodlands, would increase environmental benefit. We need to know the cost of a more-thorough cleanup. Removing contaminants should take priority over other HLSP goals like kayak launches and a new education center when an older

South Shore Audubon Society
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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.



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