

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 50, NUMBER 7— SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

APRIL-AUGUST 2020

NEXT MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, April 14, 2020
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: ONLINE
SPEAKER: Ken Elkins
TOPIC: Nature's Symphony

Join Zoom Meeting:

Meeting URL: <https://audubon.zoom.us/j/139626916>

Phone: +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 876 9923

Meeting ID: 139 626 916

MEETING AFTER NEXT MEETING

DATE: Tuesday, May 12, 2020
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: ONLINE
SPEAKER: Ken Elkins
TOPIC: Bird Nests

Join Zoom Meeting:

Meeting URL: <https://audubon.zoom.us/j/765794097?pwd=dTh6TC9rVWR6VXNGSXdFQnUwQkFqUT09>

Phone: +1 312 626 6799 or +1 646 876 9923

Meeting ID: 765 794 097

Password: 974914

You can click on links to the Zoom meetings from the SSAS website under Next Monthly Meeting or from the SSAS Facebook page.

SSAS is delighted to offer our members online programs, graciously hosted by expert Ken Elkins, so that we can remain connected to nature and to each other as we practice social distancing to limit the spread of COVID-19. Each program is appropriately timed with the music of spring migration and the magic of nesting and raising young. Ken will answer your questions after each presentation.

NATURE'S SYMPHONY: There's a lot to look forward to in spring, including the welcomed hullabaloo of birdsong. Listening to the soundscape around us, we'll take note of familiar neighborhood voices, distinctive migrant songs, and the wonders of nature's lesser-known musicians: frogs, toads, mammals, and insects.



BIRD NESTS: We see birds as they're feeding and hear them singing, but their lives in and around the nest are hidden high in the trees or dense in the brush. The feat of building a nest is impressive, and we'll explore some of the most unique and creative nest builders. Then we'll also get a glimpse into their secret lives of feeding and raising their young.



Ken Elkins is currently Community Conservation Manager for Audubon CT. His interest in birds started when he was ten years old, while watching the birds at his grandmother's feeders in Vermont, and he has been obsessed ever since. After earning a degree in Environmental Biology and Interpretation from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, he held the position of Director of Education for the Connecticut Audubon Society before moving on to National Audubon. Ken co-developed the nationally recognized Bird Tales program and training materials with dementia care specialist Randy Griffin, and he trained over 100 dementia care staff and volunteers to implement it. Ken is also past President of the Connecticut Ornithological Association and is a Regional Coordinator for the 2018-2020 Connecticut Bird Altas project. Join us!



BIRDING DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The following is excerpted from the National Audubon Society's article Birding is the Perfect Activity While Practicing Social Distancing at <https://www.audubon.org/news/birding-perfect-activity-while-practicing-social-distancing>

OSPREY CAMELOT

Will the Queen have two lovers like last year? Will her heirs survive their rivalry? Watch the new Jay Koolpix Osprey Cam at Marine Nature Study Area, now LIVE ONLINE. (The MNSA cams continue to operate even though the Study Area is closed.) In addition to sharing his wonderful photos with us, Jay generously donated the Osprey Cam to MNSA and made a donation to SSAS that will be used to install a Purple Martin house at MNSA too. You can link to the Osprey Cam and MNSA's live Peregrine Cam from the website below. At the time of this writing, the Ospreys are occasionally mating and the Peregrines are sitting on four eggs: <https://sites.google.com/view/marine-nature-study-area/cams/mnsa-live-cams>

For swashbuckling adventure and heartwarming family values, you can also read David Gessner's Return of the Osprey: A Season of Flight and Wonder, and, Soaring with Fidel: An Osprey Odyssey from Cape Cod to Cuba and Beyond. For a Peregrine page-turner, try Alan Tennant's On the Wing: To the Edge of the Earth with the Peregrine Falcon.



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.

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

SSAS has been selected as the beneficiary of the @StopandShop Community Bag Program! Each time the \$2.50 reusable bag is purchased at the Stop & Shop at 460 Franklin Avenue in Franklkn Square or 905 Atlantic Avenue in Baldwin during the month of April, we will receive a \$1 donation. After April, we can still receive a \$1 donation if customers specify South Shore Audubon on the Giving Tag.

THANK YOU

SSAS thanks the following donors for their generous contributions to the Michael Sperling Memorial Fund (our work on Mike's memorial will resume after the coronavirus pandemic is over):

- All Booked Up
- ASME: The American Society of Mechanical Engineers
- Audubon New York
- Genesee Valley Audubon Society
- Louise Harrison
- Northern New York Audubon Society

SSAS thanks the following donors for their contributions beyond our membership fee to help us continue our mission:

- Elizabeth Bailey
- Dorothea and Peter Bruno
- Genevieve Cameron
- Mary and Steve Greenfield
- Diana Ihman
- Bruce Kopit
- Jeanne Peta
- Pearl and Seymour Weinstein

SSAS NOMINATING COMMITTEE

In accordance with our bylaws, any member in good standing may suggest candidates for officers and directors for the fiscal year that will begin on July 1. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, our election cannot take place until we can safely hold in-person general membership meetings. If you are interested in helping to lead SSAS, please contact committee chairperson Betty Borowsky (764-3596) or committee members Jim and Gail Brown (608-1446)..

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FRACKING WASTE: A RADIOACTIVE NIGHTMARE

Guy Jacob

Most of us would associate fracking with methane gas, a greenhouse gas that is up to 84 times more potent than CO₂. That fracking robs us of a clean energy future is not novel news. But few of us are familiar with the radioactive risks that fracking also presents. And while fracking itself is illegal in NY, both fracking infrastructure and fracking waste present a clear and present danger to the Empire State.

Fortunately, there's a bill in our state legislature that would bring this toxic nightmare to an end. Senator Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach) moved the Fracking Hazardous Waste Bill (S.3392 May/A.2655 Englebright) out of his Environmental Conservation Committee on March 3, and sent it to the Senate Finance Committee. When we met with Kaminsky on March 6, he was expecting a full Senate vote of approval within one month.

In 2019, the Senate passed the same bill, but the Assembly never acted on it. Had the Assembly passed it in 2019, dangerous human and wildlife exposure to toxins and radioactivity from fracking waste could have been averted this year. Instead, by continuing to categorize fracking waste transported into New York as nonhazardous, our state endures the immoral lead of a federal exemption that plagues each state that doesn't say "enough is enough." Because of our state's legislative inaction, NY has tied its own hands against protecting its citizens and its environment.



Because the fossil fuel industry is exempt from disclosing its chemical fracking concoctions, we only have information from companies that have voluntarily revealed their fracking recipes. Many of these chemicals, including benzene and toxic heavy metals, are known or suspected carcinogens. What's worse, when the watery chemical mix makes its way back to the surface as waste, it brings with it Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM) that were hidden deep in the earth. This is a long kept secret of the fossil fuel industry. According to a 1982 paper written by the American Petroleum Institute's Department of Medicine and Biology, "Almost all materials of interest and use to the petroleum industry contain measurable quantities of radionuclides that reside finally in processing equipment, product streams, and waste."

How much radiation is safe and how much are we being exposed to? Brine, or liquid waste water from oil and gas production, contains two primary isotopes of radium: radium-226 and radium-228. Named after French scientists Marie and Pierre Curie for their landmark research into the nature of radioactivity, a picocurie is a measure for the intensity of radioactivity contained in a sample of radioactive material. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's industrial discharge limit for each radium isotope is 60 picocuries per liter. The EPA sets 5 picocuries per liter as the safe

drinking water limit for these isotopes, and the EPA also defines levels of radium-226 and radium-228 above 60 picocuries per liter as radioactive. While radium-226 and radium-228 levels in brine at multiple oil and gas extraction sites are much higher, the most potent radium levels are found in brine from the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania: 28,500 picocuries per liter. Therefore, radium coming out of Marcellus is 475 times the dangerous radioactive limit set by the EPA!

Drill cuttings are rock and other earthen material brought to the surface during the drilling process in preparation for fracking that also contain NORM. However, the NY Department of Environmental Conservation does not regulate NORM as radioactive waste and permits its disposal at municipal solid waste landfills. Radium-226 is the main radionuclide of concern in NORM. It is water-soluble with a half-life of 1,600 years, which means it accumulates in landfills and waterways where waste is discharged and where runoff from roads makes its way into bodies of water.

Even though fracking itself was banned in NY five years ago by Executive Order, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), between 2011 and mid-2015, nearly 600,000 tons of solid oil and gas waste and over 23,000 barrels of liquid waste were sent from the Keystone State to NY landfills. What's more, over 335 tons and 1,320 barrels of fracturing fluid waste was disposed of at NY landfills between 2011 and 2013, along with another 970 barrels of produced water (brine) from Marcellus operations. Produced water from Marcellus wells also contains varying amounts of carcinogenic chemicals left over from fracking. Three landfills in NY still accept solid oil and gas waste from PA. Moreover, according to PA DEP data, one landfill has also accepted over 473 tons of "unused fracturing fluid waste" between March 2017 and September 2018.

To add insult to injury, these industrial wastes are used to keep road dust down and for de-icing winter roads, thereby smearing toxins and radioactivity on our highways and wherever precipitation causes these contaminants to migrate.

This is cognitive dissonance on steroids!

The consequences of fracking coalesce into the perfect intersection of multiple environmental dangers, the compound effects of which spell trouble for our future. From earthquakes to poisoning our groundwater, our rivers and lakes, our forests and private property, to robbing us of a clean energy future, to exposing all of us to carcinogenic pollutants, fracking spares nothing on its path to profits.

Likewise, there is simply no justification for supporting a ban on fracking and its waste without also advocating for a rejection of all fracking infrastructure. Neither fracking, nor fracking infrastructure, nor the hazardous waste it generates belongs anywhere in NY.



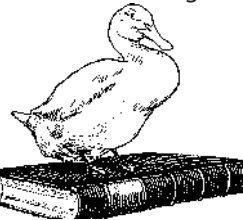
Accepting this waste and allowing its lethal voyage through our environment is immoral and must be stopped. The time has come to send S.3392/A.2655 to Governor Cuomo's desk.



BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II and Sy Schiff

This month we present a very appropriate book, one on spring migration! The author is none other than Kenn Kaufman. It was released just a few months ago and the title is *Season on the Wind: Inside the World of Spring Migration*. A perfect time to lie back and read this fine book! Kenn's birding life is now spent in northern Ohio next to Lake Erie. This area is sometimes called "the warbler capital of North America." Kenn is very well known by birders and nature lovers alike. He has written many fine guides and nature books that are prized by many! The book covers the birding life of this region, which is near Magee Marsh and home to the "biggest week in North American birding!!" It is on the Mississippi Flyway and draws a vast number of migrating birds in the spring. (Sy's review begins now!)



An interesting book of a personal narrative of one birder's view of his local migration experience. Kaufman moved from his home in Arizona to the southwestern shore of Lake Erie in Ohio (as he says, he met a girl from there and married her). The location, as opposed to Point Pelee on the north shore, was on the south shore and just as exciting but less well known. He starts by discussing locations for concentration and fallout of birds. He then gets around to the prime place on Lake Erie where he has relocated.

The place is almost a perfect spot and he explains in great detail the whys and wherefores. The details also include why the location is a great birding spot amid prime waterfront property and how it continued. A story in itself. Included is the efforts to place a huge wind farm on the site and the the efforts to stop it at least temporarily. There is a good bit about wind turbines, their negative effect on the environment, and big corporations' thrust to get them up. Very interesting!

But the main part of the book is about the movement of birds coming in waves from the south on weather fronts and the fallouts that occur when the wave hits the waters of the lake. He goes through the steps taken to help and accomodate the throngs of birders coming to see them. There is now the mile long "Boardwalk" that covers an area offeing phenomenal looks at birds low down, at close range. It confines the visitors to a pleasant place and keeps the surrounding area from being trampled by hordes of people. A 700-car parking lot is at one end. Mind boggling.

A ten-day birding festival came into being. How and when and what it means to that part of Ohio is covered.

Millions of dollars to the economy. Thousands of people come from all over the country plus significant foreign visitors. Kaufman's involvement in all this comes through.

As mentioned in my first sentence, a lot of the book is about his personal interaction with the migrants. So there is talk of warblers and thrushes and night flights and now radar tracking. His interaction with a Kirtland's Warbler and the use of Twitter to get the word out is all in the new birding experience. In some respects, the book is all over the lot, but it comes through as his personal experience with birding. An interesting guy with an interesting book.

(Paul says:) I'm back, so read it and enjoy!



HEMPSTEAD LAKE STATE PARK UPDATE

Brien Weiner

As of this writing, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has not approved permits for tree removal or wetlands work for the Hempstead Lake State Park (HLSP) Project, nor has it responded to SSAS comments. Our comments focused on failure to meet DEC standards for dam repair and on inadequate and corrupted testing for toxins, as well as destruction of habitat in one of only two NYS designated Important Bird Areas in Nassau County. The HLSP Project has the potential to cause dam failure, catastrophic flooding, and watershed contamination -- consequences that are beyond irony for a coastal resiliency project funded with a Sandy recovery grant. They reflect the tragedy of a systemic failure of our environmental laws.

Indeed, to make a bad situation worse, on March 26, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a sweeping relaxation of environmental rules in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The EPA stated, "In general, the EPA does not expect to seek penalties for violations of routine compliance monitoring, integrity testing, sampling, laboratory analysis, training, and reporting or certification obligations in situations where the EPA agrees that COVID-19 was the cause of the noncompliance and the entity provides supporting documentation to the EPA upon request." This is in addition to rolling back the Clear Air and Clean Water Acts, the National Environmental Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and many other environmental laws -- rollbacks that preceded the coronavirus pandemic.

There will be health and economic consequences stemming from environmental degradation that will persist long past the pandemic, even if rules are restored. Inaction on the environment has filtered down to all levels of government as state environmental legislation and budget funding are stalled and even local recycling programs are suspended.

And paradoxically, our open space is more precious to us than ever as we practice social distancing. We need it for our physical and mental health, for exercise and relief from anxiety.

HLSP hangs in precarious balance as an oasis of green in a suburban sea of gray, for both people and wildlife. Its trees anchor a complex ecosystem, an example of which was provided by longtime SSAS member John Holly in a letter to Governor Cuomo:

"Picture how you would feel if your Grandchild were bitten by a rodent while playing in the Park. This scenario is a possibility in Hempstead Lake State Park. Natural predators like Hawks and Owls keep areas, like our parks, free from rats that gravitate to poison-free spots like trash containers near playgrounds. The State has scheduled the cutting of hundreds of trees in Hempstead Lake State Park, habitat of Great Horned Owls. If the trees go, so will the Owls, leaving the rats to proliferate. There is no environmental reason to cut down these trees. Not only are the trees habitat to Owls and Hawks and Songbirds, but trees are essential to our air quality."



Although SSAS can provide comments on deficiencies in the Environmental Assessment of the HLSP Project, we need grass roots action to move our leaders. We need to let them know what HLSP means to us in this time of social distancing and to the many migratory and nesting birds that are about to fill the park. We need to tell them that the trees attract birds and birders and other nature lovers who will provide a much-needed boost to the local economy in the aftermath of COVID-19. Remind them of all the birders, photographers, and residents who travelled to HLSP last year to watch the heartwarming and almost heartbreaking drama of our nesting Great Horned Owls. Our owlets, who were injured when they fell out of their nest, were saved because people knew when to step in and when to step back -- people in harmony with nature.

So with thanks to John, we can follow his lead and write to or call Governor Cuomo, State Senator and Environmental and Conservation Committee Chair Todd Kaminsky, whose district includes HLSP, and other local officials. We can write letters to the editors of our local newspapers. The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery cancelled a March 30 meeting with the project's Citizens Advisory Committee and declined to hold the meeting online, but they stated that work on the HLSP Project continues. Ignoring public input and bulldozing their way forward pre-dates COVID-19.

Our health and our families are our priorities, and our environment is essential to both. We're in this together and we need to make our voices heard.

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PLUM ISLAND REPRIEVE

The Preserve Plum Island Coalition, of which SSAS is a member, reached a milestone in December, when, for the first time since Plum Island was put on the auction block in 2009, a Plum Island protection bill made it through both the House and Senate and was signed by the President.

Plum Island has been given a one-year reprieve from sale to the highest bidder. In the meantime, the Coalitoin continues to work with stakeholders to prepare a plan for Plum Island's Reasearch and Conservation Districts, and to call on Governor Cuomo to protect Plum Island from sale.

Plum Island provides critical breeding and foraging grounds for over 200 bird species, including listed species such as Piping Plover, Roseate Tern, and Common Tern. In addition, as many as three hundred Harbor and Grey Seals haul out on Plum Island during the winter months. For more information and a petition to save Plum Island, visit www.preserveplumisland.org.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

Our new members since the Dec. 2019-Jan. 2020 Skimmer are:

- Garden City Margaret A. Menger
- Long Beach Michae Cohn
- Lynbrook Robert J. Florio, Barbara Andrzejewski
- Merrick Rita C. Hines, Mary J. Baker, Lorraine Glass
- North Bellmore Christine Schaefer
- Wantagh Dan Turner



DARK SKIES

Our cities and suburbs glow at night, and our artificial lights are fatal attractions for migratory birds. They cause birds to collide with buildings, to be diverted from their course, and to become exhausted flying around lights like moths near a flame. Fortunately, there are programs like Lights Out, a national effort to reduce this problem.

Artificial lights also confuse turtle hatchlings trying to reach the ocean, distract bats, and cause salamanders to be less active searching for food and to experience lower reproductive rates. Tree frogs stop calling for mates. Insects are fatally drawn to light and declining insect populations negatively impact all species that rely on them for food or pollination. Nocturnal animals sleep during the day and are active at night, and light pollution turns night into day.

Artificial light at night negatively affects human health too by suppressing melatonin production and altering our circadian rhythm. This increases the risk for obesity, depression, sleep disorders, diabetes, breast cancer and more. Nighttime lighting also increases energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

So this spring, help our birds, our environment, and our community by only using lighting when and where it is needed. If safety is a concern, install motion detector lights and timers. Properly shield all outdoor lights. Keep your blinds drawn to keep light inside. And sleep well.

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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Wendy Murbach, Membership.....	546-6303
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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: _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____ (Zip+4)

PHONE NO.: _____

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Chapter Code R15 (South Shore Audubon Society)