

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOL. 10, NO. 3

NOVEMBER 1979



NOVEMBER MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13
FREEPORT MEMORIAL LIBRARY
8:15 P.M.

Guest Speaker: Alex McKay
"Photography Through the Eyes
of a Naturalist"

Mr. McKay will give a short lesson in the art of nature photography using slides of wildlife, flora and natural settings. He will discuss problems frequently encountered in nature photography as well as the techniques that are used to overcome them.

Mr. McKay teaches photography for BOCES. He is a past president of the Huntington Audubon Society and a trustee of the Suffolk County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. His photos have been published in Adirondack Life and The Long Island Naturalist.

Please join us for a highly entertaining evening.

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PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR COFFEE
CUPS TO THE MEETING
.....

AUTUMN SPECTACULAR

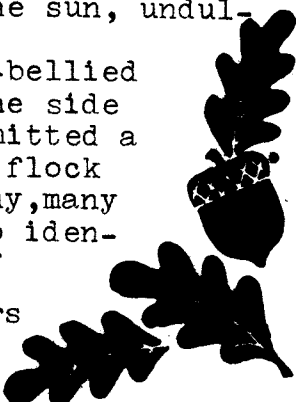
by El Glaser

What would you do if you were a bird and there had been a cold front for five days and this Sunday of October 14th at West End dawned cold and clear and blustery? You would probably decide it was a good day to head South.

The forty or so birders who braved the cold and wind were awestruck witnesses to the birds' response to nature's offering of favorable flying weather. Adjectives are hardly adequate, but "spectacular," "wondrous," "overwhelming" give a hint of the splendor and excitement of the day. One could not capture it all because there were too many, too quickly. All of us saw many more than we could have imagined or anticipated.

One of our first sightings on-the-wing was a red-headed woodpecker. There were many sharp-shinned hawks flying fairly low, one after another in a steady wave. Other hawks spotted were the Coopers, sparrow hawk, marsh and red-tailed hawk. Many yellow-shafted flickers, their beautiful golden underparts lit by the sun, undulated by.

An immature yellow-bellied sapsucker clinging to the side of a telephone pole permitted a more leisurely view. A flock of cedar waxwing and many, many warblers too numerous to identify, robins, a flock of double-breasted cormorants, a flock of skimmers



AUTUMN SPECTACULAR (continued)

very high and distant on the horizon, a flock of tree swallows, a mockingbird, a magnolia and palm warbler, a junco, a brown creeper, a white-breasted nuthatch, a female towhee, a black-crowned night heron, a Nashville warbler (most obligingly visible and beautiful), a white-winged scoter, a black-backed gull, a horned lark, a phoebe.....

The stars of the day - the ones that charmed and thrilled us the most - were the little ruby-crowned kinglets that hopped and danced at our feet, seemingly fearless and friendly, within touching distance.

It was a day we'll long remember with a special kind of awe and gratitude. Nature provided the magnificent show, but Elliot and Paul, with their skill and expertise and their scopes, made it much more meaningful and valuable. So, many thanks to you both from all of us!

LETTERS

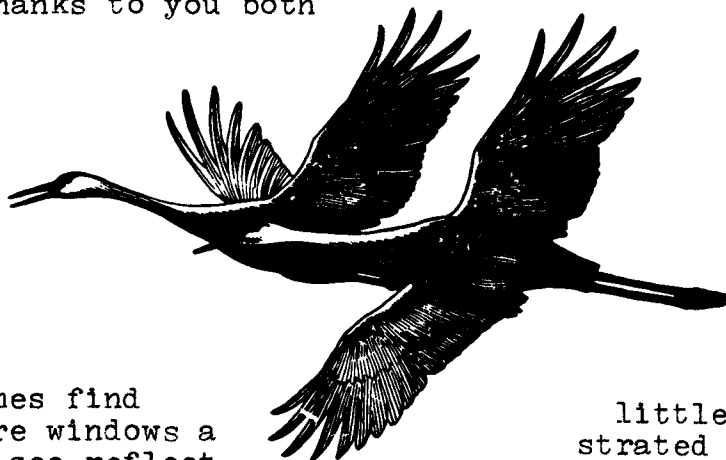
To the Editor,

So much bad news comes out of Alaska these days that I thought it would be fun to hear something else. From an article in the October 7 edition of The New York Times comes the following:

"...the truck drivers who use the road to haul supplies to the oil-fields at Prudhoe Bay often carry bird books and binoculars. 'I've seen eider duck, trumpeter swans, ptarmigans and cranes,' said Dick Wright, a trucker..."

Another interesting item is that bears love oranges and will pull truck doors open to get at them. Maybe the Florida and California tourist industries are missing a bet.

Marianne Weinstock
Baldwin



HAWK DECALS
PROTECT BIRDS

Those who feed birds sometimes find their large picture windows a liability. Birds see reflections of trees or shrubbery in the glass and fly into the window, often with tragic results. Predatory birds such as hawks have even been known to chase smaller birds directly toward the windows.

S. Dillon Ripley, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, who is an ornithologist, has evolved a practical solution. He has designed a decal that is a silhouette of a diving falcon. Placed high in the corner of a large window, the decal produces an automatic reaction from birds when they see it and they quickly change course.

The decal is \$1.50, plus 55¢ for postage and handling. Orders may be sent to the Smithsonian Institution, P.O. Box 2456, Washington D.C. 20013. (Reprinted from The New York Times)

THE ONE-MILLION
DOLLAR SQUIRREL

Squirrels do not spend all their spare time raiding bird feeders, as one unfortunate

little furry fellow demonstrated recently. On October 18 he visited an electric substation near Philadelphia and caused a fire and explosion that resulted in an estimated \$1 million in damages and delayed thousands of travelers.

"We found the squirrel," said an Amtrak spokesman. "Its hair was totally burned off and there we had it -- dead proof."

The fire and explosion delayed twenty Amtrak trains and sixty to seventy commuter trains.



TRANQUIL OASIS BUZZES WITH ACTIVITY

by Pat Davis

Childrens' colorful drawings hanging in the multi-purpose room, handsome wildlife exhibits displayed on shelves at the entrance, bird feeders surrounding a small wading pool built by the local garden club, a twelve-acre oasis of green with only the sound of chattering birds intruding on the quiet - this is the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary.

In contrast to the gentle tranquility outside, the office inside is buzzing; phones ringing, children building bird feeders, little "Indians" tie-dying t-shirts, volunteers addressing envelopes, plus a myriad of other activities.

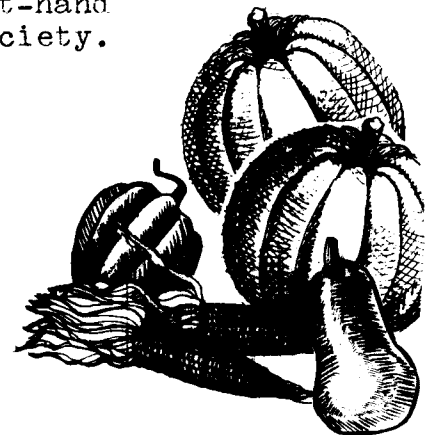
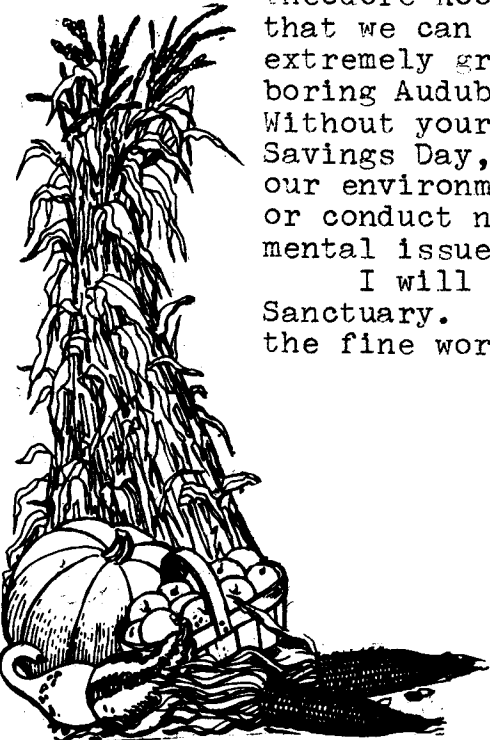
We schedule approximately ten School Services Programs (SSP's) per week with an average of thirty children per program. Our programs include the Woodland Treasure Hunt for Children 3-8 in which a number of stuffed mammals are hidden in the woods for the children to find. As the children locate each animal, the creature's adaptations, lifestyle and food habits are discussed. The children "taste" each animal's food (i.e. spaghetti is substituted for worms).

The Birds of a Feather Program is popular with children of all ages. Four children from each class are chosen to wear bird costumes and the other children try to guess their identities. The instructor then talks about each bird's special features (i.e. type of feet, beak, food habits, migration, feather structure).

The Indians of the Forest Program demonstrates how the early Indians used nature rather than abused it like the white man. The children bake bread over an open fire, tie-dye t-shirts and headbands with natural dyes, drink natural teas, weave on a loom and shape clay pots.

These are just a few of the programs offered by the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary. Our fees are minimal so that we can reach as many children as possible. We are extremely grateful for the sponsorship of the three neighboring Audubon societies, one of which is our own SSAS. Without your generosity during the year and on Bird Seed Savings Day, we would not be able to improve and expand our environmental education programs, refurbish our museum or conduct numerous adult workshops on relevant environmental issues.

I will keep you up-to-date on future events at the Sanctuary. I hope you will visit us to see first-hand the fine work being done through your Audubon Society.





CONSERVATION
by Tom Torma

Often we wonder what we personally can do to help preserve or improve the natural environment. As a group of people who spend a great deal of time at outdoor activities, we have unique opportunities to monitor the environment. We should become aware of changes in the world around us and keep our eyes open for anything unusual. A large fish kill or a large bird kill, for example, can be signs of something wrong in the environment. In the spring dead fish are often found along the shore. This is winter kill due to lack of oxygen under the ice. But, at other times, a fish kill could be caused by chemicals or other forms of pollution. If you should come upon such a kill, you can take a sample fish and wrap it in foil (not plastic) and call the Department of Environmental Conservation. The sample fish might be needed to investigate the reason for the kill.

Birds sometimes reflect conditions in the environment. Robins found dead on a college campus alerted the world to the dangers of DDT. New chemicals, many of which are dangerous, are introduced every week. If you come upon something odd, like a baby bird with three legs, or hear reports of malformed fledglings, it should be investigated. Deformities do appear naturally, but when they occur in large numbers, it could be a sign of environmental trouble.

Are you a teacher or librarian? You can help by checking for inaccuracies in books. Nature books for children often misrepresent animals. Wild animals, especially predators, are depicted as bad, while domestic animals are good. Appraisal, published three times a year, reviews children's books (address: Longfellow Hall, 13 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA. 02138). Parents can monitor the books their children read for accuracy in environmental matters among other things.

Do you have time to spare? If so, how about doing some volunteer work. Asa Starkweather needs help with bird rescue. He will give you the training you need to get you started. Bird rescue can be a rewarding experience as well as a valuable service. If you're interested, call Asa at 599-5824.

The Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary can always use some help. Why not give them a call at 922-3200.

A great way to help maintain the environment is to be informed. Do your homework on environmental issues and write your congressman. The men we send to Washington are interested in our views, and our letter writing can influence them.

We can also help our environment by just enjoying it. By hiking, fishing or taking part in our Sunday bird walks, we can appreciate the world around us. If we enjoy the outdoors we will naturally try to maintain it. Consider bringing a friend along. New people are always needed in the environmental effort.

We all have different talents and abilities. Let's put our assets to the best possible use.

WEEKEND PROGRAMS AT MUSEUM

The Tackapausha Museum in Seaford offers nature programs and live animal demonstrations every Saturday and Sunday at 11 A.M. and 3 P.M. The programs are available to everyone for the Museum's 25¢ admission fee.

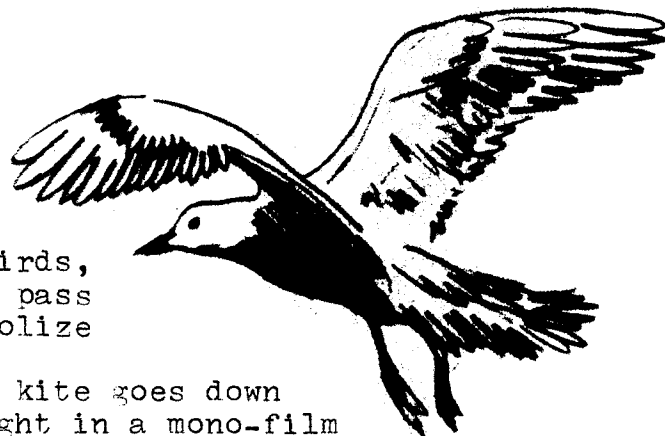
- Nov. 10 & 11 "Snakes and Lizards"
- 17 & 18 "Orchids"
- 24 & 25 "Tortoises, Turtles and Terrapins"

The Museum is on Washington Ave., in Seaford, just north of Merrick Rd. and about 1/4 mile south of Sunrise Hwy.

BINOCULAR SAVINGS are available through the club. Save 30% to 50% on Bushnell and Bausch and Lomb binoculars and scopes. See us at meetings and birdwalks or call the committee members listed: Barbara Tancredi 11 A.M.-1 P.M. 775-1790; Bill Herzog 7 P.M.-9 P.M. 791-7886; Asa Starkweather 599-5824; Joan Butkerei 593-4554

BIRD RESCUE

by Asa Starkweather



It has been a long time since I reported on "bird rescue." Actually, that doesn't mean that there are fewer birds to be rescued. Birds being birds, they are frequently in trouble as they pass through the "people places" that monopolize the environment.

Kite strings left in trees when a kite goes down are unseen snares. A herring gull caught in a mono-film kite string thirty-five feet in the air over a street was dead from his struggles before we got him down. A cat bird had cotton kite string lashed about one wing so that the wing was reduced to the thickness of a pencil! The lashing was so tight and snug, with two knots - don't ask me how- that it took rescue by extension ladder and a good deal of work with very sharp, pointed scissors before he could fly away.

Plastic six-pack holders should be completely cut up so that there are no remaining rings. One herring gull, two ducks and a Canadian goose trapped in these holders have been my personal experience.

Most birds are harmless when you pick them up. Some will try to grab one's hand, but, with most birds, this is a harmless gesture, birds being smaller and weaker than humans.

There are certain birds, however, that you must treat with caution. Swans are dangerous and unpredictable. Their long necks and heavy bills are potent weapons. Their wings are also lethal. Herons, too, have to be treated with respect. They obtain their food by stabbing with their long beaks and protect themselves by stabbing at the eyes of would-be predators -- and, since we are predators, we are no exception.

But, I was surprised when I captured a great black backed gull. Great black backs are predatory on other gulls and most shore and wading birds, so they have sharp, hooked tips on their bills. This one, with a broken wing, grabbed my left hand and the hook was in the back of my hand. It didn't penetrate the skin, but there was no pulling away. I gripped him with my left arm, opened his bill with my right hand. Then I covered his head again. When birds can't see they are quiet.

I am interested in getting some at-home people geographically distributed in our South Shore area who would be willing to do bird rescue. It would save me long trips and would cover for me since I am frequently not at home.

Bird rescuers should be reasonably handy, not afraid to pick up birds and willing to be tender and supportive. They should take the bird to a local veterinarian who will treat wild birds free of charge. I will train anyone interested in bird rescue. Let me know.

FIELD TRIPS: Starting time - 9:30 A.M.
No walk if it rains, snows or temperature
is 25 degrees or below.

- NOV. 11 West End #2, N.W. corner
18 Tobay, J.F.K. Sanctuary
25 Pelham Bay Park (meet at toll
on Throg's Neck Bridge 9 A.M.)
- DEC. 2 West End #2, N.E. corner
9 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
16 Zach's Bay Pkg.Fld. #4 N.E.
corner
- JAN. 6 West End #2, N.W. corner
13 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
20 Tobay, J.F.K. Sanctuary
27 Zach's Bay Pkg.Fld. #4 N.E.
corner
- FEB. 3 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
10 West End #2, N.E. corner

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All members are cordially invited
to submit material to the Skimmer.
Any news, notices of interesting
events, stories of personal ex-
periences, letters, opinions, etc.
will be welcome contributions.

It's your newsletter. Let us hear
from you!

DECEMBER NEWS DEADLINE
IS NOVEMBER 15

SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 31
FREEPORT, N.Y. 11520



FIRST CLASS MAIL