

VOLUME 26, NUMBER 2 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

OCTOBER 1995

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Carole A. Adams

This is one of those more difficult messages to write. I feel like I'm in a time warp. Keep in mind that I'm writing this Skimmer article the first week of September so you might read it the last week of September. Nothing unusual here; this is standard operating procedure.

My problem is that as of this writing, Congress will be going back to work to deliberate the future of the Endangered Species Act along with a number of other very serious issues that affect all of us, directly or indirectly. My hopes are that we did all we should have and could have done to protect the Endangered Species Act from being dismantled, to halt the clearing of our old forests, to save the Arctic Refuge from oil leasing, etc., etc.

Let's look at what we did for the Endangered Species Act. We put labels on our medicine bottles and sent them to the Endangered Species Coalition, carrying the message that we want the Endangered Species Act strengthened (nearly one quarter of U.S. prescriptions are based on substances derived from nature). We put our signatures on the Environmental Bill of Rights Petition to send to Congress, "opposing any measures that would roll back the environmental progress of the last 25 years." We wrote letters and we made phone calls to oppose any reauthorization bill that would weaken the Endangered Species Act. Did we do enough? Is there more to be done?

The answer is "there is always more to be done." When did you last write to a politician or newspaper expressing your views regarding environmental or conservation issues? Regardless of how things are going in Congress, it is never too late to make your voice heard. Just make it loud, make it clear, and make it fast!

What else can you do? Practice the three R's — reduce, reuse, and recycle. Join the Armchair Activists — it's free, for now (call or write Betty Borowsky to sign up). We must all be actively involved in these efforts to protect our environment, and I emphasize our environment. This is our air, our water, our land, our habitat. Write letters, make phone

NEXT MEETING

Sandy Brenner

DATE: Tuesday, October 10, 1995

TIME: 8:00 p.m. ②

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

Merrick Rd. & S. Ocean Ave.

SPEAKER: Peter R. Warny, Jr.

TOPIC: Reptiles and Amphibians —

An Overview of Ecology and

Conservation Projects

Pete Warny will present a slide-illustrated talk on declining amphibian populations and rare, endangered, and common turtles, snakes, and salamanders. Pete is a field herpetologist who will be bringing live animals from the recently visited southern Appalachians and our local area to demonstrate their anatomy and habits for us. This program promises to be unusually different. See you there!

IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE
BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS

calls, take a stand. Now is not the time to sit back and wait and see. You won't like the outcome, I assure you. It is not "them" against us. "They" represent us. We must let "them" know what we want "them" to do. "They" are our President, our U.S. and State Senators, our Representatives, and our Assemblymen. Make things happen.

See you out there on our walks and at our meetings.



All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains. Any questions? Call Elliott at 486-7667.

Sept. 24	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Oct. 1	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Oct. 8	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Oct. 15	Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
Oct. 22	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Oct. 29	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
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** WELCOME NEW MEMBERS **

Marion Yavarkovsky

We welcome 115 new members this month. Please join us as we get into gear for a new season of bird watching, ecological involvement, and just plain good times.

[For information on joining the South Shore Audubon Society, please call our Membership Chairperson, Marion Yavarkovsky, at 379-2090. The best time to call is after 4 P.M., Monday through Friday.]

Amityville	Barbara Lloyd
	Mr. Joshua B. Baron
Baldwin	Mr. Victor H. Cohen, James Ely,
	S. Fazzolare, Mrs. John Maxwell,
	A. Sacco, Elizabeth Schaeffer
Bellmore	Mr. Charles Gunyan, Marie V.
	Maglina, Howard F. Marchant
Bethpage	Karen C. Cliszis, Miss Ruth M.
	Laverty, Mr. Richard Tscherne
East Meadow	J. Harris, Ms. Edna Lenchner,
	Michael Mc Carthy,
	Nancy & Vladimir Polchaninoff
East Rockaway	Mrs. Joan Carneglia,
•	Mr. Larry Schloth
Elmont	Paul Amore, Mr. John Kaz
Farmingdale	
	Susan E. Santomero
Franklin Square	Mr. Daniel Busacca
Freeport	Mr. William E. Bateman, Patricia A.
1	Lugo, Mr. Paul E. Martin
Garden City	Emmett Campbell, M.D.; Mrs. Susan
	E. Edelman; Mr. Thomas Lanese;
\sim	Ms. Donna Obrenski, Judith
harmal	Pechenik; Mrs. J. Van Meter;
\ /	William J. Wilson:
	Ms. Suzanne F. Zolfo
Glen Oaks	Mr. A. Gratzer, Marilyn Levy,
Carl Carlo IIII	Rev. Shirley A. Willis
Hemostead	H. D. Becker, Wolfgang Fuerst,
Transporter	

Arnold Samberg

Hewlett Adam Rafalowicz

Hicksville	Gerard Austin, Linda Clemente, Patricia Rogo Davis, Kenneth J.
Levittown	Droesch, Samuel K. McCafferty Betty Hallbert, Jacob Kozlick, E. Mock, S. Sorbello
Long Beach	Frances V. Alex, Robert Coyle, Mrs. Catherine M. Crittenden,
	Irving Leiner, H. Nagle,
Lynbrook	Ms. Ellen Pontecorvo Mrs. Janet McDougall, Ms. Carol Mc Tigue, Mr. James J. Mummery
Malverne	Edward Berlin, John Guiheen, Jocelyn Nuttall
Massapequa	Ms. Jackie M. Chazey, Ms. Barbara M. De Vincent, Alice Lenz,
	Mr. Louis Nevola, Mrs. J. S. Strumwasser, Gretchen VanHorne,
alle	Barbara A. Zaner
Massapequa Park	
Merrick	Mr. George D. Garfield, Donald H. Glantz, James Malichek, Mr. Jerry
	Nuzzo, Lynda S. Walz
Oceanside	Master Joseph A. Fama, Ms. C.
	Johnson, Diane R. Prochilo,
	Ms. Joanne Vagelatos
Old Bethpage	R. Brennan
	Robert A. Fuchs, Mrs. Jean M.
	O'Leary, Irwin S. Parness, Ms. Lea
	Sorace, M. Corinne Wyllins
Rockville Centre	Judith Anderson, Mr. Gus Lanzo,
	Seth Schniebolk, Sal Vallario
Roosevelt	
	Miss Tammy L. Allen,
	Mrs. Mary F. Healy
Valley Stream	. Mrs. Florence Calabro,
	Mr. Lawrence W. Cort, K. Forte,
	Albert Greifenberger, Mary
	Hamilton, Mrs. Mattia Saraceni,
****	M. Sydney, Rosemary Tambouret
Wantagh	
&	Paraszczuk, Miss Jeneenn S.
	Wagner, P. Westermeier
West Hempstead	. Gloria Berkowitz; Isaias Collado;
1	Fernando Forero; Mr. Carl Hansen;
	C. Strauch, Jr.; Mrs. Mary C.
	Valitutto; Gail K. Vitale;
4	Jean Werhner
Woodmere	. Alice Carroll
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THANKS AGAIN, JERRY & EVELYN

Carole A. Adams

A great big THANK YOU to Jerry and Evelyn Bishop for your continued generosity and support. You are the Great Egrets of South Shore Audubon Society.

BATTLE OF THE NYS BUDGET 1995

Tensie Whelan

[Editor's Note: The following comes from the July/August issue of Eco-Politics, the newsletter of the New York League of Conservation Voters Education Fund. Tensie Whelan is their Executive Director; she was previously a Vice President of National Audubon Society.]

How did the environment fare in the 1995 state budget? Not too badly, given the difficult financial times. Although some details are still murky, we can celebrate full funding of the Long Island Pine Barrens Plan, substantially restored funding to the Environmental Protection Fund (which provides for land acquisition and solid waste management), and partially restored funding to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). In addition, the Governor restored eight of the eleven Adirondack Park Agency positions initially slated for elimination during the thirty-day budget amendment process.

According to a timetable established in 1993, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) was scheduled to increase to roughly \$50 million in 1996. The Governor proposed diverting \$18 million from the EPF, draining capital needed for important land acquisition projects in the Hudson Valley and Adirondacks. The Legislature voted to restore \$10 million, bringing the fund up to \$42 million. The battle over cuts to the EPF mobilized environmentalists from across the state who successfully pressured legislators to defend state funding for open space.

The Legislature ultimately cut the 1995–96 DEC budget in almost every area, with the exception of fish, wildlife, and marine resources programs. The Governor proposed a 9% cut in spending for these programs from the fiscal 1994–95 level, which the Legislature voted to restore. The Legislature was responsible for reducing the Governor's proposed allocation for solid and hazardous waste management programs. Funding for this last category is presently 5.2% less than the previous year.

Environmental enforcement was targeted for a 4.5% cut. The Governor's budget would have forced the disbandment of the Bureau of Environmental Crimes, whose primary responsibility is to enforce environmental laws. When the Legislature restored \$387,500 to environmental enforcement, it stipulated that the money must go for staff at the Division of Environmental Enforcement, Division of Law Enforcement, and the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. This enabled agents and top staff to stay, although many middle managers have been or will be let go, curtailing the activities of the Bureau.

The Legislature partially restored funding for forest and land conservation programs. Both the Legislature and the Governor agreed upon cuts to the operating budget for the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. A dramatic 60% decrease in that agency's capital projects budget will severely reduce funding for state parks infrastructure.

Finally, Governor Pataki called for an \$85 million reduction in funds for mass transit in New York City. Approved in

full by the NYS Legislature, this reduction will have serious implications for transit fares, ridership, and, subsequently, air quality.

Congratulations are due to the Assembly, which insisted on restoring funding for the Environ-

mental Protection Fund and the Department of Environmental Conservation, and to the Governor and the Senate for producing a compromise budget that minimized harmful cuts.

Next year, however, we hope that the Environmental Protection Fund, the Office of Parks and Recreation, and mass transit funds will be restored to appropriate levels.

[The article included a table showing the 1995–96 DEC Operating Budget, in millions of dollars, as shown below.]

Program	1994-95	Governor	Legislature
Air & Water Quality	45.3	42.1	42.3
Solid & Haz. Waste	69.6	66.2	66.0
Enforcement	35.0	33.4	33.8
Fish & Wildlife	42.0	38.2	42.0
Forest & Land	30.3	29.0	29.5

COSTA RICA TO BE REVISITED BY SSAS

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South Shore Audubon Society and Osprey Tours, Inc., are joining hands again to return to the "Switzerland" of Latin America, Costa Rica. Our first trip in 1994 was so successful and fun that we are going to visit a different part of this small rich country so we can see new flora and fauna. Our next birding and natural history trip is scheduled for January 11–21, 1996.

Osprey Tours staff, along with a local bilingual naturalist/guide, will take you to five different locations in the southern part of Costa Rica. These will include the paramo of the central Volcanic Sierra with its unique tropical alpine vegetation and the highland birds that frequent that habitat. Other highlights include a visit to Los Cosingos, the farm owned by Alexander Skutch, the co-author of *The Birds of Costa Rica*; sand and mudflats along the Pacific coast; Wilson Botanical Gardens; and La Amistad Biosphere Reserve. La Amistad (Friendship) covers over 1.5 million acres between Costa Rica and Panama and boasts 70% of Costa Rica's wildlife.

Join us! We will be traveling with two tour directors who have been visiting Costa Rica since the inception of ecotourism, as well as our Costa Rican guide. Of the 830 bird species seen in Costa Rica, we could see over 150. We did in 1994! The lodging will range from elegant rustic to excellent. The food will vary from Costa Rican fare to fine dining.

Price per person is \$2039 double occupancy, based on six participants meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica. Single supplement is \$116. For a copy of the full itinerary and further information, send your name, address, and phone number to Osprey Tours, Box 832, West Tisbury, MA 02575.

FIRE ISLAND RAPTOR BANDING & BIRDING

On the morning of Saturday, October 7th, we will once again visit Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary's banding station and explore the western end of Fire Island National Seashore. Each September and October, Sanctuary staff band and track Sharp-shinned Hawks, Merlins, Peregrine Falcons, Northern Harriers, American Kestrels, and other raptors. After learning how and why these birds are netted, measured, and banded, we will take turns hiding in the banding station, while the rest of our group goes birding near the lighthouse.

Last year, in soggy weather, some of us saw the morning's only banding volunteer, an American Kestrel (the odds are there'll be more activity this time), but we all saw quite a few raptors and songbirds. We will assemble at 9:30 a.m. in the northeast corner of Robert Moses State Park's lot #5, which is the easternmost parking lot (take Southern State Parkway Exit 40 south to the end and turn left/east at the traffic circle; parking costs \$4). SSAS's Special Events On-Site Coordinator, Mandy Neet, plans to lead us to the banding station, rain or shine (a downpour cancels).

Thomas Allen Stock

[Editor's Note: Last winter, I attended one of the many Hofstra University continuing education courses/trips led by Smithtown's Thomas Allen Stock, who was kind enough to send me a few of his essays, along with a list of about 200 others, some of which have been published. He also leads outings for the local Nature Conservancy and Sierra Club chapters. I've shortened the following essay slightly, omitting people but not birds.]

At Robert Moses State Park on the western end of Fire Island, just west of the lighthouse, there is a bird blind and banding station. It is managed by the Audubon Society. Inside this blind, the entire landscape has been reduced to a three inch slit running across the front and sides of the box, facing all directions except west. During fall migration, hawks use Fire Island as their route south. Banders intercept them here to tag them for scientific purposes.

Hanging on the wall inside the blind is a clipboard on which numbers are written every half hour at the beep of someone's lithium watch. All sounds became magnified as five of us sat on a bench peering out the slit, armed with binoculars. The temperature was taken along with wind speed and direction, and noted on the chart. Each time a bird was sighted, one person clicked off a tick on a chrome-plated hand counter. There was a count for American Kestrels, Redtailed Hawks, Merlins, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Broad-winged Hawks, Ospreys, Marsh Hawks (Northern Harrier), and those rare Peregrine Falcons. Each half hour the numbers were recorded on the chart.

Just outside the blind to the north, two mist nets were set up with a tethered pigeon (Rock Dove) and European Starling in the sandy center. These nets have very thin webbing which birds have trouble seeing. Once a bird gets tangled in the net, someone from the blind runs out, untangles it, and brings it in for identification and banding. Then it is released. Strings were attached to the pigeon and Starling that led to the blind. When a hawk approaches, someone would pull a string, causing one of the birds to flutter. This action would draw the attention of the hawk, who hopefully would fly into the net. We sat waiting and watching. Flickers passed by constantly. I spotted a Common Loon.

Suddenly a Merlin was spotted. Dave jerked the cord and got a pigeon fluttering and tumbling. If the Merlin spotted it, Dave would switch to the Starling. I guess the Starling was the clincher. The Merlin came in low, like a plane about to touch down on an imaginary runway. It was headed right for the net. A second later, it changed course and veered right over the top of the net. These birds have fantastic eyesight.

Another Merlin came in from exactly the same approach, and this one hit the net. As soon as the bird hit, there was an explosion as the door of the blind flew open. Kelly ran out to remove the bird. Kelly's goal was to get the bird out unharmed and into the blind as fast as possible. While she was out there, she suddenly froze as Dave called to her that another Merlin was coming in. After it passed, she resumed and got the bird free.

Kelly brought the bird back into the blind and there, close up, I saw the huge eyes and flat head of a Merlin for the first time. The eyes took up a very large proportion of its head. It was magnificent. Being face to face with true wildness in the confines of this blind was a special experience for me.

The bird was banded, sexed, and discussion as to its age took a few minutes. All this information went onto the clipboard. Then the moment of release. This was the moment when the "wild" of the bird reexpressed itself. Marilyn [England, of National Audubon's Scully Science Center] held it around the wings, placed it out the slit on the south side, and released. It exploded away, circled, and headed west once more.

After four hours in the blind, I had had enough. It was getting hot and crowded. During this time I watched two dozen birds get caught, banded, and released. Most of all, I enjoyed the camaraderie of the people inside the blind.



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621 Fulton St. (Rt. 109), Farmingdale, NY 11735
Located between McDonald's & Dunkin' Donuts

ACCOUNTANT NEEDED

South Shore Audubon Society's looking for an accountant to continue the pro bono work that has been done for us by Jeffrey Liebowitz for the last few years

 tax returns and annual chapter financial reports. For further details, please call Carole Adams at 731-4425.

Help Wanted

*********************************** THEODORE ROOSEVELT SANCTUARY

134 Cove Road Oyster Bay, NY 11771 (516) 922-3200

Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bird Sanctuary is owned by the National Audubon Society and operated by the Community and three local Audubon chapters, including South Shore Audubon. The following programs are open to the public. Space is limited and registration is required (except for the wildlife festival). All program fees are required at the time of registration.

Thursday, September 28th (7:30-8:30 P.M., adults) — The Wildlife of Venezuela. Learn about the natural areas of Venezuela — the savannas, rainforest, and mountains of a beautiful country — and our trip there in March. Free.

Sunday, October 15th (8:00-10:00 A.M., family) - Hawk Banding. We meet at the ranger station near the Fire Island Lighthouse, and observe migrating hawks and other live raptors. Visit the banding station and learn of our research. TRS members \$5, nonmembers \$7.

Monday, October 16th (7:00-9:00 P.M., age 12 and over) - Owl Prowl. This is one of our most popular programs. You'll see live owls and learn about their natural history. We will walk through the woods calling for wild owls and are likely to get a good look at one. TRS members \$5, nonmembers \$7.

Saturday, October 21st (8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., adults) — Ornithology Workshop. Designed for beginners and intermediates, the fundamentals of avian field marks, natural history, song, and identification techniques will be taught with slides, equipment, banding, and more. TRS members \$20, nonmembers \$25.

Sunday, October 29th (6:00–8:00 P.M., ages 4–6 & 7–9) — Halloween/Nocturnal Animal Party. Every year, children join us in costume to take a night walk, see live nocturnal animals (bats, owls, fox, etc.), play night games, and have a great time. Be sure to reserve space soon; we fill up early. TRS members \$3, nonmembers \$5.

Annual Wildlife Festival at Planting Fields Arboretum. On November 4th and 5th, from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M., there will be crafts, face painting, nature walks, activities, environmental organizations (including SSAS), vendors, food, and lots of animals live and in the hand. See eagles, big reptiles, fox, opossum, flying hawks, owls, and lots of other fuzzy, furry, and scaly creatures. Admission fees to be announced.

JOIN US AT CONNETQUOT

Our second 1995 tour of 3473-acre Connetquot River State Park Preserve, this time led by Connetquot's Elizabeth Venuti, will take place on Saturday morning, October 14th, starting at 9:30 A.M. Once again we will be limiting our group to 40 people; please call Michael Sperling at 541-0805 after 7:30 P.M. to register. We expect to see beautiful fall foliage (which arrives earlier near the cool river), seasonal deer, and migrating birds.

Directions. Take the Southern State Parkway to Exit 44 (Sunrise Highway, Route 27) east for about two miles. Make a U-turn at the very first traffic light (5 at Pond Road) and slowly head back west on Sunrise Highway. There's an unmarked deceleration lane just before the entrance to Connetquot; you'll see a big cleverly hidden sign as you turn into the entrance. Admission to Connetquot is by permit only and costs \$1, so indicate that you're part of South Shore Audubon's group; we'll meet in the parking lot. If the weather is questionable, call Connetquot that morning at 581-1005.

CHAPTER FINANCIAL REPORT

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Each year, SSAS returns the Chapter Financial Report form sent to us by National Audubon Society. Our retiring volunteer accountant, Jeffrey Liebowitz, calculated the following numbers. Because some expenses weren't paid by us until after the fiscal year ended, we're showing a significant profit that's not really there.

Assets Revenues NAS Chapter Dues Share 10,665

Grants/Contributions	2,073
Educational Events	7,961
Fund-raising Events	185
✓ Interest and Investments	
Sales (Birdseed, Binoculars — Net Profit)	
Other (Dues, Subscriptions, Annual Dinner)	
Total Income	31,474

Expenditures	
Administration	1,805
Newsletter/Postage/Mailing	6,203
Education Programs & Events	8,904
Grants/Contributions to NAS (Birdathon)	1,668
Scholarships	2,385
↑ Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary	1,060
Annual Dinner	4,252
Conferences	1,639
Total Expenditures	27,916
Net Increase in Operating Funds	3,558

CONSERVATION REPORT Time for Action

Betty Borowsky

Congress has reconvened. The introduction of antienvironmental initiatives continues at a great rate, and it is possible that you will be reading some of this too late. If the budget has not yet been passed, and/or the following initiatives are still under discussion, I urge you to contact your representatives to tell them you are adamantly opposed to the dilution of environmental regulations.

Where to begin? The environment is on the line again. There are many new legislative initiatives that seek to do away with the protective laws and regulations that have successfully held off additional pollution and destruction of habitat, and have actually reversed environmental damage during the past 25 years. The outstanding initiatives are:

H.R. 1977. This is the Department of the Interior Appropriations Bill passed by the House of Representatives (the Senate passed a less awful Interior bill; the differences are being worked out). It extends a moratorium on the listing of new endangered and threatened species. The Environmental Protection Agency's total funding is reduced by 32%, and amendments attached to the bill would "limit EPA's ability to regulate sewer systems, wetlands, water pollution, refineries, oil and gas manufacturing, radon in water, and pesticides in processed food." [This quote comes not from an environmental group, but from The American Society of Mechanical Engineers' Washington Hotline column in September's ASME News.] The implementation and enforcement of Section 404, the wetlands component of the Clean Water Act, would be eliminated. President Clinton has indicated that he is against H.R. 1977, but since this will be part of a larger appropriations bill, unless the President understands the strength of the public's opposition to it, he might let it pass along with the rest of the bill.

S. 851. This is the Senate's Wetlands Regulatory Reform Act of 1995 and is an attempt to eliminate protection of up to 75% of the nation's wetlands.

H.R. 925 / S. 605. This "Takings Law" bill would require taxpayers to pay corporations and other landowners to comply with endangered species, wetlands, and western water laws.

H.R. 1868. The House Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill reduces funding for population programs and related assistance by 40%. All funding for the United Nations Population Fund would be eliminated, and an international gag rule on family planning providers would be implemented. Population pressure continues to be the number one factor in the destruction of the environment.

Opening the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to Oil Exploration. The thinking behind this is that the nation will realize \$1.4 billion in income from leasing the land to oil companies. Since this plan is tied to the budget, the President will have to exercise his veto power to prevent opening up this last pristine environment to disruption.

More. Unfortunately, there are other initiatives as well. To learn about these and/or to learn more about the ones mentioned above, and especially to learn where these initiatives are in Congress, you may call National Audubon Society at 202-547-9009 or their weekly Actionline tape at 800-659-2622.

Please write to your legislators. Your correspondence really is taken into account — how are they to know how we feel unless we contact them?

You may also call the Council on Environmental Quality (202-456-6224; fax 202-456-2710), President Clinton (202-456-1111), Senators D'Amato (212-947-7390) and Moynihan (212-661-5150), and your Congressman [probably Peter King (541-4225) or Daniel Frisa (248-3264); call me at 764-3596 if you're not sure]. There is now a toll-free 800 number for the U.S. Capitol; dial 800-972-3524 and ask for your Senator or Congressman.



NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN BIRDING EXPEDITIONS

Naturalist Debbie Becker's free birding expeditions at the Bronx's NYBG have been expanded to include Saturdays in September and October. Friday walks start at 1:30; Saturday walks start at 12:00. Admission to the Botanical Gardens is free from 10 to 12 A.M. on Saturdays; call 718-817-8700 for more info. Topics are as follows: September 29 & 30, Hawking the Skies; October 6 & 7, Broad-winged Hawks; October 13 & 14, Migrating Warblers; October 20 & 21, Migration at the Wetlands; and October 27 & 28, Migration at Twin Lakes.

Michael Sperling

Last month's Skimmer reminded me that this all-volunteer chapter can never have too many volunteers, especially in mid-August. Although I hope that my regular printer and post office people (Jenny Krivanek & Sal Navasaitis, respectively) can continue to do 90% of the three monthly Skimmer trips forever (or at least until I retire as editor), I'd like to add some more names to the backup list. Our printer's located in Island Park; if you're sometimes available on Monday mornings and/or Friday afternoons to provide Skimmer transportation, please give me a ring. About 2000 newsletters are mailed on Mondays (Tuesday if there's a holiday) in Freeport; if you're available and can handle heavy sacks of mail, please call 541-0805 after 7:30 p.m.

SEARCHING IN MAINE FOR NEWLY SPLIT BIRD SPECIES

Michael Higgiston

My friend Bob from Olympia, Washington is a hotshot lister and a good friend, too. He called me in June and told me he was planning a birding trip to the east and was wondering if I cared to join him in the pursuit of life birds. We hadn't seen each other in 18 months and I'm always interested in new life birds for my list, so I agreed immediately. We arranged to meet in Maine on a Friday night and begin birding the following morning. Our hotel was situated near I-95, just south of Portland. That Saturday morning found us walking the trail at Scarborough Marsh, looking for the Sharp-tailed Sparrow. This bird can readily be seen at Oceanside Preserve, but the impetus behind this trip was the American Ornithologists' Union's decision to split the Sharp-tailed Sparrow into a north and south species, allowing listers to count the species twice for their life lists. The coast of Maine in early June is the nesting site for both sparrows, making for relatively easy logistics and unhurried comparisons between the sparrows.

Scarborough Marsh is the largest salt marsh in Maine. It is nearly 3000 acres, with mudflats, brackish marsh, and salt meadow, traversed by five tidal rivers and other creeks and streams. The southern race of Sharp-tailed Sparrow nest in and around the marsh. Less than a mile past the Nature Center is a pull-off parking area that leads to a trail and a footbridge. Past the footbridge, the trail continues to a forested area. Halfway between the bridge and the forest, we found numerous Sharp-tailed Sparrows flying back and forth low over the marsh. A little patience on our part allowed us to get good looks at perching birds at the top of the grass.

After completing our search, we set off for the town of Thomaston and Weskeag Marsh, a ride of 2-1/2 hours, mostly through small Maine coastal towns along Route 1. We had been pleasantly surprised at the relative ease with which we were able to see this sparrow at Scarborough. My previous experience with the Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Oceanside was a most frustrating one, as the bird preferred to stay hidden. Since we were on a tight time schedule, the quicker we saw these birds, the better for all concerned. Nothing could have been easier than our spotting the northern race of this species. We followed the directions laid out in A Birder's Guide to the Coast of Maine by Elizabeth and Jan Pierson and stopped the car exactly where they recommended. We got out of the car and saw the bird immediately, flying on the other side of the road, landing in some well-spaced reeds that afforded us good views of the sparrow. We thereafter meandered throughout the marsh near the road as we sought better views and came away very satisfied. The northern race has a more ocher-colored chest than the southern race and the streaking on its flanks and belly are not as well delineated. The gray area on the back of its neck is much more extensive than for the southern race.

We backtracked along Route 1 to Portland and left for Mount Washington in New Hampshire. The AOU's decision to separate the Gray-cheeked Thrush into Gray-cheeked Thrush and Bicknell's Thrush, and the relatively close proximity of Mount Washington to the coast of Maine, caused us to extend our birding trip. The Bicknell's fills a very narrow niche; it can be found between 3000 and 6000 feet above sea level in tangled brush and much hiking is often required merely to get into position to search for the bird. Mount Washington afforded us the possibility of driving directly to the area where the bird nests to begin our search, allowing us to forgo the hiking portion. Research into the Bicknell's has found that the bird is quite active late in the day. We played a tape of the Bicknell's to see if the bird was in the area and the bird responded almost immediately. We worked an area of the mountain along the road for about 200 feet. Numerous birds were calling, but were well hunkered down in the brush. As we came close to leaving, Bob spotted the bird about 30 feet up in a pine tree along the side of the road by the pull-off. We had unrestricted views of the bird singing.

After dinner, Bob and Hal (the third member of our group) decided to return to the mountain to hear the thrushes sing. I took the opportunity to shower and take a well-deserved rest in the lodge's library, reading and being afforded wonderful views of Mount Washington through the wrap-around windows. It was so very peaceful, quite a different ending to a very hectic day.

BIRD SEED SAVINGS DAY REMINDER

Michael Sperling

Our first Bird Seed Savings Day this year is Sunday, October 22, 1995, from 9:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. at Tackapausha Museum in Seaford. All preorders should be sent to Paul Butkereit by October 10th [see last month's Skimmer for the seed order form and bird feeder price list or contact me (541-0805, after 7:30 P.M.) or Paul (623-0843, late evenings) to get a copy]. HELP IS NEEDED to take orders, sell bird feeders, and carry seed around the parking lot. A



GUIDED SOUTH SHORE WETLANDS CHARTERS



Black-bellied Plover, Yellowlegs, and Bluewinged Teal are just a few of the rainbow of migratory shorebirds found along Long Island's South Shore bays this fall.

Enjoy the sights and sounds and a taste of homemade clam chowder and tea with 30 yr. veteran, captain & bayman Captain Barry, with a stop at a local bayhouse.

For information call Captain Barry 785-7171 Accommodating Parties up to 4 Persons ^

1995-1996 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

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

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

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