

favorite words and phrases. I'd like to add that all of the people listed on the back page are volunteers. As editor, I'd be happy to hear from anyone who could contribute articles or drawings to this newsletter, do an occasional Monday morning or Friday afternoon trip to our printer in Island Park, or carry trays of *Skimmers* to Freeport on a Monday (Tuesday, if Monday's a post office holiday)].

BALD EAGLE TRIP

The Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County Marine Program, based in Southold, is sponsoring a Bald Eagle Exploration trip on March 1st, from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. Their newsletter was sent to SSAS and contains the following announcement:

Accomplished naturalist, author, and educator John Turner [also co-founder of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, SSAS member, and speaker at our March 1996 meeting] will return to lead this trip, the third in a series of seasonal birding cruises. Departing out of Greenport [from Kokomo's Dock] on the *Sunbeam Express*, the cruise will cross Long Island Sound and travel up the Connecticut River to look for the majestic Bald Eagle, as well as other raptors and interesting wildlife along the way.

To register, call 852-8660 (advance registration is required; last year seven SSAS people went on a bitterly cold and windy day, and saw 27 Bald Eagles). Cost is \$30 for adults and \$15 for children ages 12 and under.

HOUSE FINCH DISEASE SPREADS TO OTHER SPECIES

[The following was sent to your editor by SSAS member Jeannette Miller, who spotted it in the Hampton Roads Bird Club's newsletter, *Bird Notes*. House Finch Disease was discovered a year or two ago; it came from Maryland poultry and causes blindness. It was originally thought that other species were immune; the eastern House Finches, whose numbers are decreasing, are genetically similar — they're all descended from cage birds that were released in the 1940s by New York pet shops that had been selling them as "Hollywood Finches."]

According to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Autumn 1996 newsletter, there have been reports of *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* ("House Finch Disease") in American Goldfinches in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Maryland, and Michigan, and one report in Michigan in a Downy Woodpecker. This disease is directly related to unclean bird feeders and birdbaths. Since many birds eat and poop in the same spot, it is imperative that we who choose to feed birds accept the responsibility of soap and water scrubbing of feeders and baths at least once a month.

BIRD WALKS

Elliott Kuhnert

All walks start at 9:30 A.M. except for Pelham Bay; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Any questions? Call Elliott at 486-7667.

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|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jan. 26 | Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot) |
| Feb. 2 | Pelham Bay for <i>Owls</i> (pull over to street on extreme right after going through Throgs Neck Bridge toll; meet at 9 A.M.) |
| Feb. 9 | Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge |
| Feb. 16 | Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner |
| Feb. 23 | Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot) |
| Mar. 2 | Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner |
| Mar. 9 | Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge |
| Mar. 16 | Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot) |
| Mar. 23 | Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner |
| Mar. 30 | Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner |
| Apr. 6 | Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot) |
| Apr. 13 | Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge |
| Apr. 20 | Hempstead Lake State Park (Exit 18, first parking lot south of Southern State Parkway) |
| Apr. 27 | Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner |
| May 4 | Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot) |
| May 11 | Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge |
| May 18 | Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner |



Explore the coast
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AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

NEW YORK AQUARIUM (Saturday, March 22)
Meet at 10 A.M. at Aquarium entrance for 2-1/2 hour "behind-the-scenes" tour. Cost: \$12 (kids \$8).

SOUTH FLORIDA AND THE DRY TORTUGAS
(April 26 – May 4) A tour of the Everglades including visits to Shark Valley, Flamingo, Loxahatchee Refuge, and Marathon Key, plus a three-day boat trip to the Tortugas Islands during peak migrant bird fallout. Activities include birding, snorkeling, butterfly watching, and having fun. Cost: \$1450, all-inclusive.

ICELAND (June 21 – July 3) Tour the open wilderness by van; explore bird cliffs, geysers, glaciers, and volcanic areas; and stay at farmhouse inns. Great birding and photography opportunities. Leaders: Rob Villani and Don Riepe. Cost: \$2795, all-inclusive.

For information and free brochure
contact: Don Riepe
28 West 9th Road
Broad Channel, NY 11693
(718) 634-6467

CONSERVATION REPORT

Betty Borowsky

In an effort to educate politicians and the public about the close relationship between population growth, environmental degradation, and disease, National Audubon is expanding its Population and Habitat Campaign. National has assigned a staff person to deal with the issue at the federal level [Lindsay Aun, (303) 499-5155], and the New York State Field Office has hired someone expressly for this purpose [Alison Heaphy, (518) 869-9731].

We believe this is an extremely important issue, and this month we abstract some key facts from *Why Population Matters*, produced by the National Audubon Society:

✦ "Wild habitats that shelter endangered plants and animals are giving way to human activities and needs. Tens of thousands of species may be disappearing each year — a rate thousands of times higher than is natural." Species that are not threatened today will inevitably become endangered tomorrow if this continues. Species extinctions not only signal the permanent loss of open spaces with the concomitant reduction in quality of life, but also remove the potential use of these species for the improvement of human health. Many life-saving drugs have been extracted from exotic species; undoubtedly many more remain to be discovered.

✦ "Humanity is rapidly changing the earth's atmosphere and thus its climate." There is strong evidence that excess consumption of fossil and other fuels (burning oil, forests, and other organic materials) has increased the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide functions like a blanket over the earth, keeping warm air from dissipating into space. Increasing the concentration of carbon dioxide increases the thickness of the blanket, and this increases the average temperature of the earth ("global warming"). Burning organic materials has also increased the concentrations of harmful gases (the various nitrogen and sulfur oxides, plus ozone and others) which destroy buildings and are harmful to the lungs. Increases in particulates (tiny balls of soot and dirt) may be responsible for the upsurge in asthma incidence and deaths. It is important to note that while much of the responsibility for this rests with the industrialized nations, many of the so-called third world nations are becoming industrialized as well. China in particular is becoming an important producer of the world's goods.

✦ "Population growth is a factor in the recent upsurge of infectious disease. By living and interacting in densely populated settlements, human beings make it easier for disease-causing microorganisms to move from one host to the next. Crowding, travel, and the increase of livestock — all associated with population growth — increase the opportunities for the spread of infection."

The fundamental principle that ties overpopulation to environmental destruction is pretty simple: the normal activities of a few people have little effect on the environ-

ment, but if you increase the number of people, and allow them to continue the same activities, these normal activities will start to impact the environment. For example, one campfire in the Adirondacks has virtually no impact on the environment. Not much wood is used up and so relatively little smoke, with its attendant load of gases, is released into the atmosphere. A few campfires might even be somewhat helpful, since burning a couple of dead branches returns phosphorus, potassium, and micronutrients essential for plant growth more rapidly to the soil. But when many campfires are burning at once, too many dead branches (and often a few live ones) are removed, eliminating the branches' slow degradation into compost, and the air fills up with so much smoke that it can impact our health. Years ago we burned leaves in the fall in our village; this is not permitted today. In addition to the threat of a fire, there were days when there was so much smoke generated that air quality standards were breached. In general, the same principle applies to just about all human activities.



The relationship between uncontrolled population growth and its detrimental environmental effects was first pointed out clearly about 30 years ago by Dr. Paul Ehrlich, in his seminal book *The Population Bomb*. His message has gone largely unheeded, however, and since the date of publication the population of the world has grown by over a billion people. It is up to us to work out effective and humane strategies for controlling population growth.

TEXTILE RECYCLING PROGRAM

The Town of Oyster Bay announced a pilot textile recycling program last November. To participate, place used textiles in any paper or plastic bag (include overcoats, jackets, raincoats, belts, handbags, ski clothing, shirts, pants, skirts, dresses, suits, curtains, sheets, bedspreads, towels, pillowcases, paired shoes, and draperies; *do not include* rugs, carpets, pillows, industrial uniforms, disposable clothing, diapers, hospital or medical garments, painter's drop cloths, rags, shop towels, wiping rags, or anything that is wet or has grease, mold, chemicals, or food waste on it).



Bring the bag to the Town's Old Bethpage Solid Waste Disposal Complex, located on Bethpage-Sweet Hollow Road off Round Swamp Road, south of the Old Bethpage Village Restoration, any weekday between 7 A.M. and 3 P.M. or on Homeowners' Cleanup Days. Please note that many charities also accept and recycle these items. For more information, call the Town of Oyster Bay's Department of Public Works' Division of Environmental Control at 677-5853.

AUDUBON CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS

SSAS will as usual be awarding two full scholarships, one to an adult and one to a child age 10–14, to attend an Audubon camp this summer. Applicants or their parents should be members in good standing and be interested in sharing their camp experiences with fellow members, the community, and/or schools; we typically get only a few applicants, so apply! Financial need is not a basis for receiving a scholarship; the winners must provide their own transportation. In addition to our scholarships, there are scholarships available from National Audubon Society (the Carl W. Buchheister Scholarship, for a teacher or activist; and another one for a professional classroom teacher); the deadline to apply for the NAS ones, which are for the Maine camp, is March 3rd. Please contact SSAS's Education Chairperson, Suzanne Lancer, at 536-6574 between 7 and 9 P.M. for details about all the scholarships; the deadline to apply for the chapter's ones is March 1st.

This year, the SSAS adult scholarship is for the Audubon Ecology Workshop in Connecticut. Here's the description, taken from last year's NAS brochure (by the time you read this, Suzanne should have copies of the 1997 edition): A Pileated Woodpecker (pictured) may be your alarm clock



as its drumming breaks the silence of the New England forest. This is one of nearly 100 avian species you could see during your stay here — though you'll do much more than identify birds. Our purpose is to learn how birds

and all other species are tied together in an intricate web of life. You'll take leisurely hikes in our beautiful 510-acre nature sanctuary in Greenwich, through magnificent deciduous and hemlock forests, across lush meadows, alongside (and sometimes in) life-filled lakes, ponds, and streams. And you'll explore beach, intertidal, and marine ecosystems on Long Island Sound. Lecture and lab work supplement field studies, while optional classes might include nature photography and microcomputer use. There's also ample time for stargazing, book browsing, meadow lounging, and camp camaraderie. Many educators come to improve their professional skills in sessions that emphasize practical teaching techniques for school classes, youth groups, and local Audubon chapter education programs. These workshops offer total immersion in the major natural habitats and ecosystems of New England. Rustic facilities include a library, auditorium, and double-occupancy rooms furnished with private baths. Dates are June 29 to July 5; July 6–12, 13–19, and 20–26; July 27 to August 2; and August 3–9 and 10–16.

The Maine camp occupies the 333-acre Todd Wildlife Sanctuary on Hog Island in Muscongus Bay. The primary aim of Audubon's Youth Ecology Camp is to instill a love and respect for the natural world. Participants learn by doing — if we talk about something, we'll also see it, feel

it, touch it, experience it. Fifty young campers, led by ten instructors, hike through cathedral-like spruce–fir forests, search for organisms in tide pools, and learn about seabirds, seals, and other wildlife. The evenings are filled with night hikes, stargazing, special guests, and songfests. The Youth Ecology Camp will be offered from July 30 to August 9 and August 12–22.

CHAPTER FINANCIAL REPORT

Each year, SSAS returns the Chapter Financial Report form sent to us by National Audubon Society. Our rookie volunteer accountant, Ben Borowsky, calculated the following numbers. His predecessor put items under different categories, so anyone trying to compare this to previous reports is in for a challenge.

Assets

☛ Cash (Checking, Savings, etc.)	\$9,274
☛ Investments (Stocks, CDs, etc.)	72,335
Total Assets as of 6/30/96	81,609

Revenues

☛ NAS Chapter Dues Share	10,502
☛ Grants/Contributions	1,005
☛ Educational Events	570
☛ Fund-raising Events	28,694
☛ Interest and Investments	3,126
☛ Sales	1,236
Total Income	45,133

Expenditures

☛ Administration	3,653
☛ Newsletter/Postage/Mailing	5,163
☛ Education Programs and Events	891
☛ Fund-raising	19,410
☛ Contributions to National Audubon	1,530
☛ Scholarships	1,950
☛ Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary	3,845
☛ Other (Binoculars, Brookside, Donations, etc.)	3,354
Funds Pending Distribution	4,100
Total Expenditures	43,896
Net Increase in Operating Funds	1,237

SSAS Mission Statement — *The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education, and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.*

SSAS Post Office Statement — *South Shore Skimmer is published monthly from September through December and February through June by South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.*



NORTHERN HAWK OWL

Mike Higglston

A Northern Hawk Owl had been reported in central Vermont for a few weeks and I was anxious to try to see the bird. It's not often that one gets a chance to see this bird in such accommodating conditions. It was only about a five hour drive to the bird's location, the weather was reasonable with temperatures in the 40s, and there was no snow to be encountered. Since one usually finds the hawk owl at the Canadian border in the winter, certainly not the most optimum of situations, I felt fortunate that our present conditions were so favorable.

The Northern Hawk Owl inhabits the open coniferous forests of the far northern regions of Eurasia and North America. It can usually be seen perched on a post or top of a tree that commands an excellent view of the surrounding area. The hawk owl is diurnal in habits, mostly hunting by day. It is the most hawkish of the boreal owls, hunting not only like an owl by perching on a post or tree and surveying the surrounding area, but also responding to prey like a hawk by flying swiftly through the forest, soaring like a falcon, or hovering like a kestrel. Though generally considered resident, its movements sometimes depend on the fluctuations of the voles and lemmings, its main prey. Populations seem to retreat south regularly and birds are reported annually in the areas south of the boreal forest belt. They prefer to take up residence in groves of tall trees in cultivated areas and farms, and like to take mice from the hay put out for cattle. Peterson's field guide reports that a few of the hawk owls winter in the Canadian border states during flight years, while accidental sightings of the bird have been made in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Nebraska.



Three Northern Hawk Owls had been reported in central Vermont during the month of December. The locations of these three owls were very close together and I thought the situation afforded me the best opportunity to see these very elusive birds. I broached the idea to Bill Hollweg (Turtle Bill, but known in my house as Bill the Birder) and he seemed interested. Of course, our families both asked those most damning of questions and the first is always phrased in the form of an accusation: "You're driving five hours to see a bird and then driving five hours back home?" Then there's a pause and they decide to be comedians: "How do ya know it's gonna be there? Did you make a reservation? HaHaHa!" The final question has something to do with our sanity and is best left unsaid. So, with our families' loving encouragement ringing in our ears, we set out on the Saturday morning between Christmas and New Year's.

We left at 6 A.M. with bagels and coffee, and drove the NYS Thruway to Glens Falls. We then turned eastward toward Vermont, skirting the south end of Lake Champlain. Upon reaching Vermont, we found ourselves driving through farmland, rolling hills, and small towns. Excitement began to build when we reached the sign announcing the town of Bridport six miles ahead. The directions elicited from the Rare Bird Alert instructed us to drive north out of Bridport, turn right on Cross Road, and continue to the intersection of East Road, about a mile. There a horse farm was located and the bird had been frequenting the area in and around the horse farm. As we approached the sighting area, Bill joked that he hoped the bird was the kind we liked, one that was already staked out by other birders for us to view. We worked our way slowly along Cross Street toward East Street and I began scanning the high points of the landscape. I zoomed in on a round black ball on the top of a telephone pole and spotted the bird. I pointed it out and we both started laughing, remembering Bill's joke. We drove down the road a bit to get binoculars and gloves from the trunk, and returned to the bird and had long satisfying looks at the Northern Hawk Owl. The bird was very approachable and we stood on one side of the country road while he perched on a telephone wire on the other side. We even left the owl to follow a small flock of Tree Sparrows in the trees that lined both sides of the road. The flock also included a Downy Woodpecker, some Northern Cardinals, and some Black-capped Chickadees. We returned to view the owl once more before turning homeward, another treasure hunt successfully completed.

BIRDSEED SALE REMINDER

Our second and last birdseed sale is/was **Sunday, January 26th**, from 9:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. at Tackapausha Museum, on Washington Avenue in Seaford (between Merrick Road and Sunrise Highway). Although it's too late to preorder, bird feeders and extras of all 17 seed packages will be available. Proceeds benefit Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary. **HELP IS NEEDED** (see Treasurer's Message) to take orders and carry seed around the parking lot. To volunteer, just show up; you'll receive lots of thanks, a free fast-food lunch, and maybe a mention in the next *Skimmer*.

Seed - Feeders
Houses - Baths
Books - Gifts

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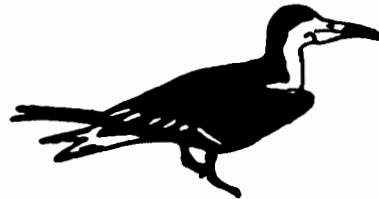
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Americans Committed to Conservation



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