

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 4 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

DEC. 2003 & JAN. 2004

NEXT MEETING

Enid Klein

DATE: Tuesday, December 9, 2003

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)

SPEAKER: John S. Brokos TOPIC: Nature, As I See It

Our December program will be a showcase of nature slides that starts at the newcomer's level and works its way up in difficulty into sophisticated work, ending in the most difficult of all photography—astrophotography. Tips will be provided on how to get really great results with your own nature photography.

Award-winning photographer John S. Brokos has been SSAS's guest speaker on many occasions and is the perennial host of our members' night meetings. He is currently president of the Freeport Color Camera Club, and was chairman of the Cosmopolitan Chapter of the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and president of the Photographic Federation of Long Island (PFLI). He was honored as a Fellow of PSA, PFLI, and the Metropolitan Council of Camera Clubs. Many of his works have been published in magazines, calendars, postcards, etc.; some can be seen at www.ImagesForDecor.com.

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

SHADB-GROWN COFFEE PROJECTS AND STATEMENT 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.

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

NEXT MEETING AFTER NEXT MEETING

Enid Klein

DATE: Tuesday, January 13, 2004

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

TOPIC: Members' Night

On members' night, we encourage everyone in SSAS to share with us his or her creative side. Whether you are an artist, musician, poet, writer, photographer, carver, or simply want to share your ideas about birds, wildlife, nature, or the environment, we welcome your participation. Bring a sample of your creative talents. Please contact Enid at 561-0004 if you would like to participate.

SSAS's photographers were featured at last winter's members' night, bringing us scenes from Caleb Smith State Park, Alley Pond Environmental Center, the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside, Jones Beach's West End, Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve, and Rocky Mountain National Park. Included were slides of Snowy and Burrowing Owls, Rainbow Lorikeet, Clark's Nutcracker, Redtailed Hawk, Mourning Dove, Great Egret, Turkey Vulture, falconers, deer, flowers, butterflies, grasshopper, spider, dragonfly, frog, and sunset. Join us!

ANNUAL SSAS CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY PARTY

Therese Lucas

The raptors are coming! The raptors are coming!



They will be arriving at Tackapausha Museum and Preserve in Seaford on **Saturday, December 13**, to take part in a program presented by Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary. Before the show, children will have the opportunity to make gifts for wildlife. The party is from 1 to 3

P.M., with the TRS program beginning around 2 P.M.

Refreshments will be served. The regular admission to the museum will be charged (\$2 for adults, \$1 for children ages 4 to 14, and free for under 4 and accompanied by an adult). Volunteers are needed. If you can help, contact me at 631-225-6377 or TKLWINGSII@ aol.com.

Directions. Tackapausha Museum is located on Washington Avenue in Seaford, just north of Merrick Road. From the Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway, either take Sunrise Highway east for three traffic lights and turn right on Washington, or take Merrick Road east for four traffic lights and turn left on Washington.

★★ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ★★

Wendy Murbach

One of the wonderful perks that you get from an Audubon membership is the chance to be a part of your local Audubon chapter, South Shore Audubon Society.

You are automatically a valued member of this active and friendly chapter, so please come out to the next meeting at the Freeport Library from 7:30-9:30 P.M. on the second Tuesday of the month to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment's health and viability, to hear about local issues that you can help to solve, and to see an interesting program.

Whether you are a beginning birder or someone with a large life list, you will enjoy our weekly Sunday bird walks led by Elliott Kutner, birder extraordinaire. Check out the special events that are mentioned in this *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

Our new members since the last Skimmer are:

Our new members since the last <i>skimmer</i> are.		
Bellmore Shelly Plotkin, Barbara Russell,		
Christopher Spofford		
East Rockaway Marie Juan		
Floral Park S. Zeldin-Schneider		
Garden City Karen Bingham		
Glen Oaks Helen Siff		
Great Neck Robin Fishman		
Hicksville Joseph Greco		
Jackson Heights Beryl & Perry Sporn		
Long Beach Gary Morse		
Lynbrook Edwin Centeno		
Massapequa Theodorous Family, James M.		
Thompson		
Massapequa Park Dr. Anton Armbruster, Joanne		
Chris & Family, Ira Schack,		
John Turner		
Oceanside Ted Fischer, June M. Titus		
Plainview Evelyn Jensen, Elaine		
Schirmer		

Rockville Centre Dr. Barbara Hayes, Doris

West Hempstead Jeffrey Browning

Rosenberg

THE RETURN OF THE "HOLIDAY LIGHT SPECTACULAR"

Michael Sperling

Those of you who read the September Skimmer (now available at ssaudubon.org) saw a long list of reasons why SSAS and other Audubon chapters oppose the Holiday Light Spectacular's presence at Jones Beach's West End, which is an Important Bird Area whose plants and wildlife are, for the fourth year, going to be subjected for about six weeks to the nightly effects of around 60,000 slow-moving

polluting cars, vans, and buses. The vehicles' 300,000 occupants will be viewing about 135 guy-wired generator-connected light displays up to 150 feet wide and 30 feet tall that turn an area of natural beauty into a two-month exhibit of modern-day commercialization. Last year, almost 90% of the proceeds went to Clear

Channel Entertainment, not New York State Parks. The annual permits have all been issued without public review. SSAS will be sending letters to local newspapers to voice our objections to the show's location and we hope our members will help us get the word out to their friends and family.

As a result of the meeting SSAS attended last February and an e-mail I sent to NYS Parks, I was a recipient of the following via e-mail on November 7:

"Thank you for your note concerning the status of the Holiday Lights program. The agency had previously identified concerns and issues associated with the Holiday Lights program. Audubon chapter members shared similar concerns and provided further information. Information on these issues was evaluated within the agency's review process, which resulted in its determination to continue the Holiday Lights program at Jones Beach. The program will be in the same location as in the past. Alternative locations for the Holiday Lights were again evaluated, including Bay View Drive (within the park). Use of Bay View Drive was not feasible due to the close proximity of habitat to the road itself. Installation of displays along road shoulders in many areas would require significant habitat disturbance and, as a result, Bay View Drive was deemed to be not feasible.

"The permit contains the following conditions which can be specifically attributed to the input by Audubon chapter representatives: (1) specific time for the erection or "standing up" of displays (October 30); (2) a written monitoring protocol is being refined by Parks' environmental staff; (3) limiting displays to existing areas along road shoulders that are mowed or devoid of vegetation, and indicating that these areas represent the capacity for displays which is not to be exceeded; (4) Parks environmental staff will inspect the area at least once per week during the installation to make certain (a) the displays do

not infringe into the natural areas, and (b) the contractor is following other aspects of the environmental guidelines; and (5) the contractor will be responsible for prompt restoration of any undeveloped or habitat areas that Parks identifies as damaged during the event or preparation for the event.

"Installation began October 30. It appears the contractoris making a concerted effort to avoid significant intrusion into natural areas, and stay on the mowed area of the shoulder and in the median. Monitoring is already taking place and, in fact, has been taking place Wednesday through Sunday. This schedule will remain in place until Nov. 21, at which time monitoring will take place every day throughout the event. Three times a week, bird species and numbers will be recorded. Issues identified with installation or during the event will be followed up promptly. The program will not be expanded. The agency has also determined that unless the findings from monitoring point to significant adverse impacts on habitat or birds, the Holiday Lights program will remain at its present location.

"Please feel free to contact me regarding monitoring and issues relating to environmental impacts. For all other matters, such as special use permit, revenue, and general operational considerations, please contact John Norbeck.

"Our appreciation is extended to Audubon for its concern and interest, in particular those participating in the meeting in February."

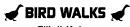
Tom Lyons, Director, Environmental Management Bureau, NYS Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, Agency Bldg. 1, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12238; 518-474-0409; 518-474-7013 fax; Thomas.Lyons@oprhp.state.ny.us; cell 518-441-8504.

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THANKS TO THE HALLOWEEN, BROOKSIDE, AND BIRDSEED VOLUNTEERS

We'd like to give recognition to the SSAS members who helped out at three of our recent special events.

- At the Halloween Party for children at Tackapausha: Alice Blaustein, Therese Lucas, Wendy Murbach, Doris Pirodsky, Marcia Specht, and Karen Weinstein.
- At the fall cleanup at Brookside Preserve: The Butkereit family, Betsy Gulotta, Charlie Kiefer, Christine Marzigliano, Lou Paolillo, George Peters, Doris Pirodsky, Agnes Priddy, Laurie Raisher, and John Zarudsky.
- At the birdseed sale at Tackapausha: The Butkereit family, Joe Grupp, Bill Hollweg, Therese Lucas, Wendy Murbach, Chris Schmitt, and Michael Sperling.



Elliott Kutner

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. Directions may be found at ssaudubon.org.

Nov. 23	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Nov. 30	Hempstead Lake State Park (Exit 18, first
	lot south of Southern State Parkway,
	south end of lot)
Dec. 7	Pelham Bay for Owls [pull over to street
	on extreme right after going through
	Throgs Neck Bridge toll (Pennyfield
	Ave.); meet at 9 A.M.; hiking shoes
78	recommended]
Dec. 14	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Dec. 21	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Dec. 28	Season's Greetings — No Walk
Jan. 4	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Jan. 11	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Jan. 18	Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
Jan. 25	Pelham Bay for Owls (9 а.м.)
Feb. 1	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Feb. 8	Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
Feb. 15	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Feb. 22	Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve



Explore the coast with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

HOLIDAY PARTY (Sat., Dec. 6). Ryan Visitor Center at Floyd Bennett Field (5–9 p.m.). Cost: \$35 includes food, drinks, "Ugly Auction," and Flamenco Dance performance.

NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACH WALKS (Jan. 1). Meet 11 A.M. at Jones Beach West End, Fire Island Lighthouse, Fort Tilden, Rockaway Beach. Champagne at Fort Tilden. Free.

MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND (Jan. 9–11). Cost: \$305 includes 2 nights at luxurious Manor House (heated pool, jacuzzi, spacious lobby), 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, star watch, free pickup at LIRR station. See seals, many species of sea ducks, loons, etc.

EVERGLADES & SOUTH FLORIDA (Feb. 28 – Mar. 7). Cost: \$1,495 includes airfare, lodging, sunset boat, barbecue, "Butterfly World," van rentals, lunches, guided hikes. See Painted Bunting, Purple Gallinule, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, gators, American crocodile, much, much more. ICELAND (June 18–30). Cost: \$2,895 includes airfare, vans, food, lodging, park fees, ferry, boat tour, and guides. You'll see many glaciers, waterfalls, volcanic formations, great land-scape scenery, and closeup views of puffins and other nesting birds.

For information and free field trip brochure, call/write Don Riepe, (718) 318-9344, donriepe@aol.com, 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; www.alsnyc.org

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER Discovering a Refuge

Joe Grupp

A few drops of autumn rain strike the windshield as we turn into the entrance of Mississippi Palisades State Park in Savanna, Illinois. We were drawn there by two natural features, the Mississippi River and its palisades — the cliffs that line the sides of this part of the river. The rain becomes a little more than a drizzle as we get out of the car and walk to a platform on a cliff's edge, overlooking the wide Mississippi and the cliffs that line its banks, which are at times some distance from shore. The autumn leaves have passed their prime; some branches and trees are bare, making it fairly easy to spot the first birds of our trip --- a small flock of the familiar Black-capped Chickadee. The rain becomes heavier and our choices are to continue to explore or to seek shelter. We do a little of both until the cold rain becomes heavy and we choose the shelter of our rented car.

Having most of the day before us, we decide to drive around and explore the area. Traveling south from the park, we periodically pass U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service signs indicating the location of observation points, boat ramps, etc., and then come upon a large Visitors' Center. Stopping there, we find that we have accidentally discovered a portion of the 284 mile long Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The refuge, founded in 1924, is bordered by and is part of four states: Illinois and Iowa on its lower reaches, and Wisconsin and Minnesota on the upper. It is the longest refuge in the continental United States. The river and its bottomlands make up much of it.

The Mississippi of the refuge, in places, resembles the historic river that was present before we humans started to tinker with it. Most of the river has been dammed and its shores diked for a good portion of its length, but here and upriver it has only been dammed. We are there at a time of high water and the lack of dikes allows the river in places to spill out of its channel and wind its way among the higher woodlands in all kinds of graceful, sinuous paths, creating bottomlands just as the old Mississippi once did. We find one view that takes us back in history, as

a replica of a Mississippi steamboat makes its way to a crude landing and lowers its large bow gangplank, allowing a single passenger to disembark as the

sound of its calliope drifts through the air. This is a refuge but it also is a working river.

The bird list for the refuge totals 269 species, the majority of which are the same as we have in the SSAS area. We do see White Pelicans which have not yet migrated, but we are here a little too late in the year to see birds like the Dickcissel, Grasshopper Sparrow, and others that are common during the summer months, and too

early for the flocks of Tundra Swans that migrate through and the Bald Eagles that winter here. We are satisfied, though, with a fair-sized list of birds, because we really came for the river, the palisades, and to explore the park, all of which we accomplished while finding a large refuge besides.

On our last evening there, standing on the same platform as on our first rainy day, we watch the sun set beyond the opposite shore. Deep red colors spread across the sky and are reflected off the water, turning the Mississippi and its backwaters a delicate pink. We stay until all the color is gone from the sky, aware at times that we also look over an extensive refuge that protects fish and wildlife, and extends up and down the river far beyond our view.

^</u> PROPOSED BYLAWS AMENDMENT

At our December 9 general meeting, SSAS's board will ask our members to vote on the following amendment to our bylaws (revised language indicated in bold letters):

Article III, Section 1 (last sentence): All officers and directors must be members of the **South Shore** Audubon Society.

We are seeking to replace the current wording, which specifies National instead of South Shore, because National Audubon Society no longer requires that chapter members or leaders be members of NAS. Please make an effort to attend the meeting and vote on this amendment.

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The dates of the 2003-04 Waterfowl Survey are as follows, rain or shine: December 6, January 3, January 31, February 21, and March 20. Volunteers are welcome to participate in the surveys. If you are interested in spending a full or half-day visiting 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park, call Joe Grupp, Research Chairperson, at 481-4208. JOIN US!



"NEW YORK'S LARGEST WILD BIRD SPECIALTY STORE"

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

PRIORITY ISSUES AND NEW YORK'S **CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION**

Editor's note: The following was distributed at the fall meeting of the Audubon Council of New York State by NAS's Janine Clifford, who is based in Washington, DC and is the regional grassroots coordinator for northeastern chapters. To receive Audubon alerts, you can contact SSAS's Mary Jane Russell (please see back page).

National Audubon Society Priority Issues in 108th Congress & New York Congressional Delegation Positions as of October 17, 2003. For more background information on these issues, please visit www.audubon.org and select the "TAKE ACTION" button.

Arctic Drilling. Good news! On Thursday, October 16, Senator Peter Domenici (R-New Mexico) and Representative Billy Tauzin (R-Louisiana) — leaders of the House-Senate Conference Committee tasked with crafting a final energy bill for 2003 — held an impromptu press conference where they announced that provisions to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling have been removed from the conference committee's bill! Turns out, in the face of steadfast opposition from conservation supporters like you, they simply could not muster enough support in the U.S. Senate to ensure passage of a final energy bill that would include the drilling provisions. So, for the second year in a row, despite tremendous pressure from pro-drilling special interests, the House-passed provisions to turn the Arctic Refuge into another oil field have failed! Many thanks for your help in making this victory possible! And let's enjoy it while we can; undoubtedly this issue will be back again in 2004!

Here's how your NY Congressional Delegation voted on drilling in the Arctic Refuge this year:

Voted to Open the Refuge to Drilling: Reps. King, Fossella, Reynolds, Quinn, and McHugh

Voted Against Opening the Refuge to Drilling: Senators Clinton, Schumer; Reps. Bishop, Israel, McCarthy, Ackerman, Meeks, Crowley, Nadler, Weiner, Towns, Owens, Velazquez, Maloney, Rangel, Serrano, Engel, Lowey, Kelly, Hinchey, Boehlert, McNulty, Slaughter, Houghton, Sweeney, and Walsh

Clean Air. The U.S. Senate is expected to once again have the opportunity to stop any further erosion of the Clean Air Act — a critically important national law that



works to protect the quality of the air we breathe — by voting on an amendment backed by Senators John Edwards (D-NC)

and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT). Known as the Edwards-Lieberman Clean Air Act Amendment, which will be debated during the Senate discussion of a larger funding bill, it would prevent states from being forced to comply with new, relaxed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations that weaken existing clean air laws and regulations.

Both Senator Schumer and Senator Clinton support the Edwards-Lieberman Clean Air Amendment. There is no similar measure up for debate in the U.S. House.

Environmental Exemptions. Much like last year, the U.S. House passed a measure this year granting the U.S.

Department of Defense exemptions from environmental laws, including portions of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Senate did not pass it, so now members of a House–Senate Conference Committee must make the final determination as to granting DoD such exemptions. While a final decision was expected by mid-October, Congressional insiders are reporting that the committee has reached an impasse and may not be able to reach an agreement before Congress adjourns this year. That's good news, as it gives us more time to encourage members of the conference committee to oppose granting the exemptions!

Two New York members of Congress have been named to this conference committee: Senator Clinton, who opposes the exemptions, and Representative McHugh, who supports the exemptions.

An Action Item: Please contact Representative McHugh and urge him to oppose granting DoD or any government agency an exemption from environmental laws! Remind him that the President of the United States already has the power to exempt agencies from our national laws when security is at risk!

Clean Water Act. The U.S. Congress has a chance to reinstate Clean Water Act protections for all of America's waterways by supporting the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act, bill number S. 473 in the Senate and H.R. 962 in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Act reaffirms the original intent of the Clean Water Act, which is to restore, maintain, and provide clean, safe, swimmable, and fishable water; and reinstates protections for isolated wetlands that provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and help with flood control and filtering pollutants from our water, making it safer for birds, wildlife, and, most importantly, people. Remember, the more cosponsors a bill has, the better chance it has to move through the legislative process!

Currently, both Senator Schumer and Senator Clinton have signed on as cosponsors, or supporters, of the bill. And in the House, cosponsors include Reps. Weiner, Israel, Hinchey, Velazquez, Rangel, Ackerman, Lowey, Maloney, Serrano, Towns, Owens, McNulty, Engel, Boehlert, and Slaughter.

An Action Item: If your Representative is not included on this list, please contact your lawmaker and urge him/her to sign on as a cosponsor to H.R. 962, the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act!

Funding for Critical Conservation Programs... National Forests... State Wildlife Grants... National Wildlife Refuges... Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Fund... Added Protections for Refuges and Endangered Species... National Forests/Roadless Rule... Added Protections for Wildlands... Coastal Protections... Population... Urban Stormwater... We've run out of space in this *Skimmer*...

SLEEPING BIRDS

Editor's note: The following article by David M. Bird comes from the January/February 1998 issue of Bird Watcher's Digest.

Admit it. When darkness descends in your neighborhood, you secretly wonder where the birds are spending the night — especially when it is a chilly winter night.

Let's begin with the black-capped chickadee. These little fur-balls usually sleep amid some foliage like a coniferous hedge. Occasionally they use a cavity in a tree or even an old open nest made by some other bird in the spring. I suspect that they are even more flexible than that, based on observations of other species closely related to them. One Carolina chickadee spent cold Tennessee nights huddled in a gourd. A little farther north in the United States, tufted titmice roost in old woodpeckers' holes, in cavities in stubs and posts, and in bird boxes. And in Siberia (any readers out there?) willow tits pass winter nights in old rodent burrows beneath the snow.

Winter wrens are not shy. They'll gladly huddle together for warmth on a cold night. Examples in Britain include nine observed sleeping together in an old nest of a song thrush, ten squished together in a coconut shell, and 46 in a nest box. In the United States, a flock of 31 winter wrens piled into a nest box — less than 6 inches square — so tightly that they sat upon one another in two or three layers with their heads pointing inward.

Small birds do this out of necessity, not by preference. Two pairs of eastern bluebirds were observed fighting one another for possession of a nest box, but when the temperature dropped suddenly in January, the birds forgot their quarreling and slept in the box together. Studies of leg-banded wrens (the same species as our winter wren) show that on mild nights they sleep alone, but on cold nights the potential bedfellows may call to one another and even seek out leaders who know the best spots for pajama parties! In fact, some country folk in Britain use the behavior of tomtits to forecast the weather. The jingle goes: "When tomtits cluster, soon there'll be a bluster." In the world of small birds, to sleep alone on an exceptionally cold night could invite death.

Birds face two life-draining enemies on freezing winter nights — convection caused by cold wind sucking heat from their bodies and radiation loss during exposure to clear, cold night skies. Birds must therefore seek out the warmest, most protected spots in which to spend the night. This may be a sheltered vale or the lee side of a building. Conifers are favored for their dense foliage. An abandoned open nest either of their own species or another will do. Birds may even roost in human structures, e.g., on porches, under eaves, amid thick ivy on walls. In some cases, birds will even enter vacant houses or those of a friendly homeowner. One European robin became so trusting that it learned to enter a glassed-in porch before the homeowner closed the door for the evening. The

benefit? A nice safe roosting spot for the night in a eucalyptus tree. But here's the cute part. When it wanted to exit in the morning, instead of beating itself crazy against the windowpanes, it just waited patiently for the kindly man to open the door!

Back to those cold (so I'm told anyway) Tennessee winter nights. Clever mockingbirds there are no strangers to human structures. One pair slept on separate perches in a garage, two spent the night on porches, and another even zipped down a chimney at dusk.

And which birds are among the first to retire for the evening? The same ones that become active latest in the day: the woodpeckers! Actually, a number of species hit the hay early despite there being plenty of daylight left. Exceptions in the winter probably include the tinier species, which need every hour of their waking day to feed their faces and fatten up their bodies during prolonged periods of nasty precipitation or very cold nights.

How long a bird rests at night depends on the individual, as well as a multitude of factors, e.g., species, sex, age, latitude, season, weather, and cyclical behavior such as nesting. Some generalizations are possible. Among the perching songbirds, males retire later (hey, that sounds familiar!). Again, woodpeckers are the exception.

Sometimes the hour for retiring is variable. A study of communally roosting brown-headed cowbirds in 1975 showed that the main factor determining bedtime was the total amount of solar radiation to which the birds had been exposed during the day and not the ambient light level. In other words, the brighter the day overall, the more solar radiation, and the later the birds began roosting in the evening.

If you have cardinals in your backyard, you'll know that they mostly appear at your feeder first thing in the morning and again at dusk when the sun has disappeared over the horizon. Twilight feeding, one could call it. According to Graham Martin, author of *Birds by Night* published by T. & A. D. Poyser in 1990, "Twilight begins or ends at the time of sunset or sunrise."

Aside from nocturnal species such as owls, kiwis, some parrots, and the *Caprimulgiformes*, e.g., oilbirds, nightjars, frogmouths, etc., crepuscular activity is not common in most birds. There are exceptions, though. Martin describes four examples of crepuscular behavior in "diurnal" species: the dawn chorus of passerines, display flights of woodcocks, dusk hunting of falcons and bat hawks, and dusk feeding in skimmers. Sometimes waders and waterfowl on their wintering grounds continue feeding well into the night, but only occasionally.

I know what you readers in Siberia and Alaska are thinking. What about those birds that live in the land of the midnight sun? Bedtime varies with the species, but many take their rest when the sun is at its lowest above the horizon. During the winter months when the sun stays below the horizon for about 100 days, only five species are

brave enough to withstand the extreme cold: willow grouse, ptarmigan, snowy owl, gyrfalcon, and raven. Martin explains that extensive cloud cover is rare there, so the birds gain the full benefit of moonlight. The aurora borealis and the luminance of the snow also enhance light conditions for the birds' feeding activities. Finally, as you can well imagine, in such open terrain none of those birds, two of them being ground feeders anyway, has to worry too much about colliding with obstacles.

Back to the south. In the autumn, the rules of flying by day and sleeping by night change for many migrating birds. Have you ever trained your binoculars or even better, a scope, on a full moon in late August and early September? In sporadic fashion, tiny dark shapes rush frantically across that large white globe; they are songbirds participating in night migration. The phenomenon is poorly studied, but even within a given species, some individuals are day migrants, while others migrate at night. Still others fly continually throughout the 24-hour cycle. Proposed advantages for night migration include the reduced likelihood of predation, the freeing of daytime hours for feeding, the availability of the fixed pattern of the stars as a navigational cue, and better atmospheric conditions to pick up sound signals from the earth and from other migrating birds. Recently, scientists have proposed that cooler nighttime temperatures can help migrants avoid overheating on long flights.

But there is a strong negative for birds passing near our major cities. It is said that millions of songbirds don't survive the arduous journey because cities along waterfronts become death traps for them. According to a joint report, "Collision Course: The Hazards of Lighted Structures and Windows to Migrating Birds," by the World Wildlife Fund (Canada) and the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP), more birds will die from collisions with lighted buildings in one year than were lost in the Exxon Valdez oil spill. These birds get fooled by the light emanating from city skyscrapers, especially during inclement weather.

The solution is, of course, simple: turn off the office lights at the end of the day. Working at night? Draw the blinds or use task lighting. It can't hurt the electricity bill either.

The city of Toronto, located on Lake Ontario where southerly migrating birds congregate, has a particularly bad problem, so FLAP was founded by Michael Mesure to convince businesses to urge workers to take those simple preventive steps. A recent astonishing find was that gulls there appear to be actually herding the songbirds into the lighted buildings, so that the stunned victims become easy pickings for the omnivorous scavengers.

One thing is certain. If you want to know how and where birds sleep or what they do at night, you'll definitely have to quit your day job!

Editor's sequel: One of the current Conservation Policy Resolutions approved by the Audubon Council of New York State (i.e., all of NY's chapters) is titled "Reducing Bird Collisions" and concerns skyscrapers, communications towers, and wind turbines.

55AS BACKYARD BIRD SURVEY

The Research Committee is conducting a study to document the bird species found in the SSAS geographical area and to make some estimates as to their numbers. We request input from anyone that feeds and/or observes birds in their yard or neighborhood. If you would like to participate, we would greatly appreciate it.

Simply record the birds that you see in your yard, neighborhood, or at your feeder; the date, time, and the number or approximate number of each species; and fill in a table like the one below. At the end of each month, please mail or e-mail your record to me at the appropriate address listed below, or hand it to me at our monthly meeting. Full-page survey sheets are available at SSAS events.

Please do not hesitate to submit your observations, even if you have been able to make only very few. WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

Please mail your data to Mr. J. Grupp, Research Chairperson, 660 Edgemere Ave., Uniondale NY 11553 or email Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com.

Submi	itted by: _		
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South Shore Audubon Society P.O. Box 31 Freeport, NY 11520-0031

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