

bill. The Town of Oyster Bay's SEA Fund II would provide \$15 million for open space and parkland acquisition, and \$15 million for park improvements. For details, visit <http://www.co.nassau.ny.us/legislat/pressrel/12Aug27-04.html> and www.oysterbaytown.com (under "Town News," read "Town to Put Environmental Bond Issue on November Ballot").

Birdseed Sale, Sunday, November 7: Our annual birdseed sale will take place in Tackapausha Museum's parking lot in Seaford from 9:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. The order form was in last month's *Skimmer* and preorders are/were due on **October 21**, but some extra seed will be available on the sale day. If the deadline hasn't passed, you can ask Michael Sperling for a form (mssperling@compuserve.com or 541-0805 evenings) or download one from ssaudubon.org. Volunteers are needed and appreciated!

17TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The dates of the 2004-05 Waterfowl Survey are as follows, rain or shine: **Saturdays, December 11, January 8, February 5, February 26, and March 26.** Volunteers are welcome to participate in the surveys. If you are interested in spending a full or half-day visiting up to 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park, call Joe Grupp, Research Chairperson, at 481-4208.

TO FAHNESTOCK NEXT JUNE

SSAS's Mary Jane Russell has arranged for us to spend a rustic weekend next spring at Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park, on **June 4 and 5.** The cost of this outing is expected to be \$60 for SSAS members and \$65 for nonmembers. The park and its Taconic Outdoor Education Center (where we'll stay) are located off the Taconic Parkway in the highlands of Putnam County, about 90 minutes from Long Island.

Fahnestock is part of an Audubon Important Bird Area and consists of over 13,300 acres of oak, hickory, and hemlock forest, with lakes and ten miles of trails. The June date will allow us to use Fahnestock's rowboats and we'll try to arrange an easy canoe trip along the shore of the Hudson River at the nearby Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary.



Three meals prepared by students of the Culinary Institute of America will be provided for all registrants (lunch and dinner on Saturday, breakfast on Sunday). Rooms typically have five beds, so be ready to share your sleeping space with your fellow SSAS members and friends. SSAS's first weekend there was in October 1998, which was before they added indoor plumbing to the heated/electrified cabins.

A \$10 deposit, payable to South Shore Audubon Society, will hold your reservation. Please call Mary Jane at 766-7397 if you're interested. We must have 35 advance registrants for this trip to occur.

BIRDATHON 2004

Jim Remsen

The seventeenth SSAS Birdathon took place from 5 P.M. Friday, 5/7/04 until 5 P.M. Saturday, 5/8/04. Since 1988, our chapter has raised funds for our conservation programs by tallying the number of species seen by observers in 24 hours at the peak of spring migration. It was another successful year for SSAS, with a total of \$2,912.85 raised for South Shore Audubon's programs and numerous members rewarded with prizes at our annual dinner for their efforts. Everyone involved had a great time. We thank everyone who contributed, regardless of how small the dollar amount. It all adds up. To all the birders who went out at all hours of the day (or evening), we thank you as well.

At the head of the thank-you list must come team leaders Paul Butkereit, Joe Grupp, Elliott Kutner, and Ken and Karen Wenzel. Year after year, these people lead our teams, and we cannot do it without them.

The fall migration is in progress, so it's time to get out and enjoy it! You can be sure that when these species return again next spring, SSAS members will be here to tally them in our eighteenth annual Birdathon.

 OURE-LIST http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list

 OUR WEB SITE (incl. online store) www.ssaudubon.org



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- HOLIDAY PARTY** (Sat., Dec. 4, 5-10 P.M.). Annual fun event at Floyd Bennett Field. Hike @ 3 P.M. Donation \$35 incl. all food & drink, "Ugly Auction," great door prizes, flamenco dancing.
- NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACHWALK**. Meet 11 A.M. at Jones Beach West End 2 parking lot. Leader: Jeff Gottlieb. Free.
- MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND** (Jan. 7-9). Our 20th year! Enjoy 2 nights at luxurious Montauk Manor, 5 meals, 5 hikes, 2 evening programs. Cost: \$325.
- FLORIDA EVERGLADES** (Jan. 29 to Feb. 6). Tour by van the best birding & wildlife areas of Everglades National Park & southern Florida.
- COSTA RICA** (March 3-12). Visit LaSelva, Poas Volcano, Monteverde Cloud Forest, Carara Biological Reserve, Manuel Antonio National Park. Leader: Don Riepe

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

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER

Hawk Watches

Joe Grupp

Each year, as the first of the leaves begin to change color in our area, when what was once all green now appears with some small patches of reds, yellows, oranges, and combinations of those colors, a restlessness begins in a vast amount of the bird population and the phenomena of the fall migration begins. The volume of birds and the number of species passing through any particular geographic area like ours will increase as time passes, reach a maximum, and, in a few months as the last of the leaves fall, leaving barren winter branches, diminish to just a few. For the birder it is the opportunity to search for birds that may be present only during migration. For any birder with any degree of interest in raptors, a hawk watch is an excellent place to observe those birds as they literally stream by at times.

For the past few years, I have made an effort to visit two famous hawk watches in the northeast, Cape May in New Jersey and Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania, during the fall season.

Cape May is noted for the number of raptors that pass over it each fall. The birds usually migrate on northwest winds, which push them not only south but also east, where they eventually are confronted by the ocean which they are reluctant to fly across. This causes their numbers to build along the coast as the birds continue south. Those numbers are again concentrated as the south end of New Jersey narrows, becoming Cape May peninsula with the Atlantic Ocean on one side and an approximately 13-mile-wide Delaware Bay on the other, funneling the birds by the hundreds over the hawk watch area on good days. Annual counts began there in 1976.

Hawk Mountain is most likely the oldest hawk watch in existence and initiated the research and conservation efforts we are familiar with today. Counts began there in 1934 and have been recorded annually except for three years during World War II. Its location on a ridge in the Kittatinny Mountains, on the eastern edge of the north-south positioned Appalachian Mountains, is in the middle of a major raptor flyway. Winds from the northwest are forced upward as they pass across this mountain chain, and rising air currents, called thermals, are created by the uneven heating of air at different spots on the mountainsides and valleys. Using those winds, the birds migrate with little effort as they are lifted by the rising air and blown south by the northwest wind. Significant numbers of raptors pass over Hawk Mountain each year, using little of their own energy.

Hawk Mountain and Cape May are only two of the many hawk watches that are in operation during the migratory season. Others are located in many areas of the United States, one nearby at Fire Island on the east side of Robert Moses State Park, and still others are in Canada and

Mexico. An umbrella organization, the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), collects the counts from each hawk watch and that data can be accessed by anyone as it is posted online at hawkcount.org. The mission of HMANA is to conserve raptor populations through the scientific study, enjoyment, and appreciation of raptor migration. HMANA is currently collecting data from 140 active sites in North America.

A recent impulsive visit to Cape May resulted in the observation of a good flight of raptors and the motivation for this article. On the trip to the Cape, I thought that I might just have the wrong day, as the winds were more favorable the day before and were forecast to be so on the following day. Even sitting on the hawk watch platform, there was talk that it was probably going to be a great day tomorrow. Surprise! Surprise! The winds may not have been ideal, but individuals of 12 species totaled 725 raptors migrating through anyway. That was only about half of the 1481 of the day before, but a few more than the 717 of the next day. Of course I didn't see them all; only the official counters really do. They came from the north as single birds or in small groups, with intervals of time when no birds were present.

A few times a Cooper's Hawk worked the marsh very close to the platform, providing an excellent study. Sharp-shinned Hawks occasionally floated low overhead and once a Cooper's and Sharp-shinned floated side by side, their differences displayed in textbook fashion. Merlins twice put on a show. One was eating from whatever it held in its talons as it winged its way south. Later another swooped down and scattered every resting flock of birds, going from flock to flock across the pond, then over the beach and finally over the hundred or more Rock Pigeons

(pictured) that roost on the old military bunker just offshore, turning the near sky into a jumble of fleeing birds. If a Merlin could smile, I think this one would, as its behavior was so characteristic of the species. The major surprise of the day, and officially probably a first over the platform and a life bird for me, was an immature Parasitic Jaeger that drifted in from over the ocean. They are open-water birds not normally seen on shore. There were other good observations along with those mentioned, all of which made it a pretty good day at the hawk watch.



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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:

- Baldwin Ivy Bates, L. Pittaluga
- Bellmore Anita Gordon, Unice Williams
- Floral Park Phillip Gribbins
- Franklin Square Victor J. Caraddo
- Hempstead Isabel A. Wildeman
- Hicksville Jennie Clary, Leon M. Gish
- Holbrook Sandy & Richie Ponzini
- Island Park Jack Weissman
- Long Beach Marilyn Schurin
- Lynbrook Richard Glassberg
- Massapequa Evelyn Mutterperl, Adele & Peter Portanova
- Massapequa Park John F. Chalupa
- Mineola Maureen J. Kelleher
- Plainview Lydia Hellman, Peter Parle, Paul E. Sonkin
- Rockville Centre Mr. Earl Shatzkin
- Stewart Manor Adelaide Callahan
- Valley Stream Maria P. Burke
- Wantagh Howard Cohen



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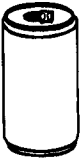
THANKING OUR LATEST DONORS

In the May and September issues, we thanked all of the chapter members who had responded to the first fundraising letter we'd sent in two years. We'd also like to thank the following:

- *Anonymous in Floral Park
- *Janice & Lillian Eastland
- *Pearl & Seymour Fahrer
- *David S. & Joan Macdonald (donation in honor of Joe & Dolores Grupp's 50th wedding anniversary)
- *Nathan & Shirley Schuchman (donation in memory of SSAS's Maurice Toby)
- *Marion H. & Bill Schurade

WHY SSAS COLLECTS ALUMINUM TABS

For several years, SSAS has been collecting aluminum can tab tops. The tabs are brought to Seaford Beverage on Merrick Road by Dolores Rogers and others, and are used to support the Camp for Kids Campaign. The campaign, sponsored by members of the transplant team of the Division of Transplantation Services at University Hospital and Medical Center in Stony Brook, allows a few underprivileged children with kidney disease to spend two weeks in 4500 acres of wilderness at the Frost Valley YMCA Camp in the Catskills.



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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 and summaries may be found at ssaudubon.org.

Oct. 24 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner*
Oct. 31 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner*
Nov. 7 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Nov. 14 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner*
Nov. 21 Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner*
Dec. 5 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 recommended]

*From Oct. 16 through Nov. 21, you can avoid the \$6 weekend fee at Jones Beach by arriving before 9:30 A.M.



RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070



NASSAU COUNTY POLLUTION HOTLINE 739-6666



MIGRATION: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Editor's note: This article is reprinted from the September/October 1996 issue of *Bird Watcher's Digest* and was written by, yes, David M. Bird. I added the clip art.

While you are reading this, millions of birds all over North America are eating to the point of obesity and experiencing a nocturnal restlessness. Some will set out on voyages that take them thousands of miles south of their breeding grounds. At some locations like Cape May, New Jersey, up to 12 million birds will fly over during one night!

Bird migration still remains a mysterious phenomenon, and ornithologists continue to strive to comprehend how and why it occurs. For example, there will be [were?] no less than three symposia on aspects of migration at the 22nd International Ornithological Congress in Durban, South Africa, on August 16–22, 1998.

But professionals are not the only people to wonder about the marvels of bird migration. Bird watchers everywhere also scratch their heads as they personally witness these perennial fall and spring behavioral rituals. Naturally, certain questions arise time and again. So, to help you sleep better at night, I have formulated ten commonly asked questions and attempted to provide answers to them.

1. How do birds ready themselves for migration? Contrary to popular opinion, a shortage of food does not cause migration. If that were so, why would birds about to head south be so darn fat in the first place?

Birds generally indulge in two behaviors just before migrating. First, they accumulate great quantities of fat as

fuel for the long-distance flight. Bobolinks (pictured) and Blackpoll Warblers, for example, almost double their weight in fat deposits. They need to do so because a typical bird loses 0.9 percent of its body weight per hour while migrating! Ruddy Turnstones flying from Alaska to Hawaii use up a half gram of fat for each 100 kilometers (62 miles). Blackpoll Warblers flying across the Atlantic Ocean from New England to South America have enough fat reserves to fly nonstop for 105 to 120 hours, and the tiny Ruby-throated Hummingbird, weighing 4.5 grams, uses 2 grams of fat to fly nonstop for 26 hours.



The second behavior is called *zugunruhe*, or nocturnal migratory restlessness. It occurs twice yearly in migratory birds. Captive migrants demonstrate a daily rhythm in which they sleep for a short period in the evening and then awaken and flutter about vigorously through a good part of the night. Nonmigratory birds do not exhibit *zugunruhe*.

Both excessive feeding and nocturnal restlessness are controlled by the onset of shorter days. So you need not fret about your feeders preventing birds from migrating. If anything, your food provisioning only helps the birds on their way.

2. Do birds feed on the way? This depends on the species and the length of the journey. Some birds that can double their body weight in fat likely make nonstop trips, while those that carry low to moderate fat reserves of 13 to 25 percent are short-range migrants that refuel on a regular basis. Some songbirds fly for several nights in succession and exhaust their fat supplies, while others fly only a few hundred miles and then rest and refuel for one to three days. Shorebirds typically select three to four strategically located feeding or staging areas on their flight south. Among the raptors, migrating Peregrine Falcons and Merlins commonly prey on migrant shorebirds and songbirds along coastlines, while southbound Broad-winged Hawks soar day after day on rising air drafts without feeding.

3. How fast do birds travel? For most long-distance migrants of all sizes, the speed ranges from 43 to 68 kilometers (27 to 42 miles) per hour. Ducks pursued by aircraft can fly at 90 kilometers (55 miles) per hour, but most migrating birds are not being chased by a huge, metallic "predator"!

Scientists using a Doppler radar unit (like the kind police use to nab speeders) determined the flight speeds of 13 species of migrating birds ranging from pelicans to sparrows, flying at low altitudes in level flight. Their mean air speeds varied between 24 and 60 kilometers (15 and 37 miles) per hour. Speed has little to do with body size too. Hummingbirds, starlings, and geese can all fly up to 79 to 90 kilometers (49 to 55 miles) per hour. However, wind has everything to do with it. Migrating birds constantly adjust their flight speed in accordance with the assistance or resistance of wind.

The fastest flying bird was an Eider Duck clocked at 80 kilometers (50 miles) per hour in steady flight. Swifts when

feeding cruise along at 23 kilometers (14 miles) per hour, but when migrating they almost double their speed. For the purpose of migration, the diving speed of the Peregrine Falcon, purportedly recorded at 360 kilometers (223 miles) per hour (it's likely half that), is irrelevant.

If you're a Purple Martin landlord, consider this feat. A female martin removed from her colony and released 375 kilometers (232.5 miles) to the south at 10:40 P.M. was back feeding her young the next day at 7:15 A.M. That's 8.6 hours at a speed of 43 kilometers (27 miles) per hour!

Not all strong fliers are in a hurry, though. The four Golden Eagles nesting in James Bay, Quebec, that Serge Brodeur and I monitored during spring and fall migration using satellite telemetry averaged a distance of only 65–68 kilometers (40–42 miles) per day.

4. *How far do birds fly?* There are two ways to answer this. First, how far do birds have to travel to get where they're going, and second, how far can they fly nonstop?

Some Arctic shorebirds like the Red Knot fly from Baffin Island to Tierra del Fuego, well over 13,000 kilometers (8,000 miles). The longest migration record appears to belong to an Arctic Tern banded in North Wales that traveled a distance of 18,056 kilometers (11,195 miles). That's one-way, too! Some Arctic Terns literally circumnavigate the globe, covering distances of 35,000 kilometers (21,700 miles) from one breeding season to the next.

Size is not important, either. Take the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, which can fly nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico, a distance of 1,000 kilometers (620 miles). Crossing large bodies of water is really the only way to measure nonstop flight distances. European songbirds like Northern Wheatears have to cross 2,000 to 3,000 kilometers (1,240 to 1,860 miles) of open ocean with or without favorable winds. Some falcons and bee-eaters traverse more than 4,000 kilometers (2,480 miles) of the Indian Ocean.

Many North American songbirds will fly nonstop for 80 to 90 hours. It's apparently the equivalent of running a four-minute mile for 80 hours.

5. *How high up do birds fly?* Studies of fall migrants above Cape Cod, Massachusetts, found that the most frequent altitude was between 450 and 750 meters (1,476 and 2,461 feet). Virtually 90 percent of these small passerines flew no higher than 1,500 meters (4,921 feet) but the odd one crept up to 2,400 meters (7,874 feet). A flock of Whooper Swans was observed migrating at a height of 8,800 meters (28,871 feet)! How high birds choose to fly can depend on cloud cover, i.e., they fly higher in overcast skies. They also tend to fly higher during the night and when crossing over land.

6. *Do some birds hitch rides on others?* I know you'd like to believe this. The idea of hummingbirds riding on the backs of Canada Geese originated many years ago with native hunters who purportedly observed small dark "birds" abandoning the freshly killed carcasses of Canada Geese. To date, though, there has been no firm evidence that avian hitchhiking occurs.

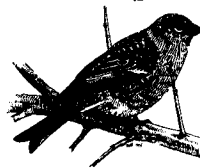
7. *Do birds migrate only during the day?* Well, I have given that answer away. Many birds choose to migrate at night, but not all. Birds of prey fly by day to catch the rising currents of warm air, while swifts, swallows, and hummingbirds need the daylight to feed while migrating. But a lot of other small birds, like orioles, thrushes, warblers, and flycatchers, take off after dark and migrate in the cool, stable night air. It makes sense for them. They're less likely to get eaten by hawks and gulls, and they've got all day to feed. And overheating of muscles due to exertion is less likely to occur during the cool of the night.

If you don't believe me, set up a spotting scope on a full autumn moon and watch the black specks flitting across it.

8. *Is migration always from north to south and vice versa?* There are two possibilities here. Sometimes migratory movements are reversed because of adverse weather or contrary winds. Studies at Atlantic Coast banding stations showed that in the fall thousands of migrating songbirds will fly northward, sometimes for hours and occasionally for days, owing to strong winds from the south. Sometimes birds have actually overshot their destination and are heading back north toward it.

I often get telephone calls in the fall from people witnessing flocks of Canada Geese heading mysteriously northward. In most cases, though, these are likely just local movements from feeding to resting areas and vice versa.

But sometimes migration goes up and down, in a vertical sense. In the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, Pine Grosbeaks (pictured; copyright Sue Adair), Brown-capped Rosy-Finches, and juncos breed in the alpine or subalpine zones in summer and then head down to lower levels in winter. In Idaho, the Blue Grouse feeds on needles and tree buds at high mountain altitudes in the winter. When spring hits, they move about 300 meters (984 feet) down in elevation to eat developing leaves and flowers.



9. *Do birds migrate in mixed flocks?* A good number of species, normally antagonistic in the breeding season, become gregarious during migration and form flocks, sometimes with several species. Mixed flocks of shorebirds are common in the fall. However, the traveling company of some species is limited by flight speeds, as well as by roosting and feeding habits. Common Nighthawks and Chimney Swifts stick to their own species, for example. You won't see waxwings or crossbills mixing in with other species either, but you might see Cedar and Bohemian Waxwings flocking together and, similarly, Red and White-winged Crossbills. Raptors are generally solitary fliers that are sometimes observed in "flocks" because of their common use of rising air currents. Pelicans, swans, geese, cormorants, cranes, and storks seldom travel in mixed flocks.

10. *Why do some individual birds go while others stay?* Although migration does offer lots of advantages too numerous to describe here, occasionally some individuals

