VOLUME 37, NUMBER 4 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

DEC. 2006 & JAN. 2007

NEXT MEETING

Enid Klein

DATE: Tuesday, December 12, 2006

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

144 W. Merrick Rd. (at 5. Ocean Ave.)

SPEAKER: Peter Warny with Live Animals

TOPIC: Wellands Zoology & Eco-Phenomena

Our December speaker, also known as "The Reptile Man," will depict and discuss the food chains of various types of wetlands. Join us to learn about malformed amphibians, reptile conservation ecology, exotic and invasive species, parasites, plankton, bioblitzes, and the role of people. Wetlands areas to be mentioned include Bayou de View in Arkansas (where an Ivory-billed Woodpecker was identified in 2004), Tennessee Valley Authority lakes, Audubon sanctuaries, university research sites and field laboratories, biological field stations, natural areas from Maine to Florida, and even places on Long Island. A live animal "Show and Tell" will be followed by Q&A.

Peter Warny is a research associate at the New York State Museum and Western Connecticut State University, and has been involved with conservation biology field projects for over 30 years. Research projects include snake, salamander, and turtle nesting surveys; fish behavioral ecology; and aquatic insect surveys.

Pre-Meeting Program on Birds. Starting at 7 P.M. each month, Scott Oglesby (sometimes with Jim Remsen) expands our birding horizons in the room beyond our coffeebreak tables. Topic suggestions for future talks are welcome.

Parking Lots. In addition to the parking lot adjacent to the library, there's a lightly used, well-lit, and fairly close municipal lot on the east side of S. Ocean Ave., on the near (south) side of the Gulf station that borders Sunrise Highway. Also, SSAS has a verbal pledge from neighboring Citibank that cars will no longer be towed from their lot during our meetings, but we can't guarantee this.

NEXT MEETING AFTER NEXT MEETING

Enid Klein

DATE: Tuesday, January 9, 2007

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

TOPIC: Members' Night

Join us for our second annual after-the-holidays fete, and bring your family, friends, and significant others for an evening of wildlife-related games, food, and getting to know each other better. Members, if your talents lie in the culinary arts, please bring in a favorite finger food, appetizer, or dessert.

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 invite you to bring a sample of your creative talents; talking about them in front of the audience is optional.

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

\$Shade-grown coffee protects rainforests:

SSAS Mission Statement — The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

Therese Lucas

Children can make bird feeders to hang in their yards or outside windows at the SSAS Annual Holiday Party for Children. This year's event will be held on Saturday.

1

December 9 from 1 to 3 P.M. at Tackapausha Museum & Preserve on Washington Ave. in Seaford.

At approximately 2 p.m., Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary & Audubon Center will present a live raptor program. Children will get a chance to look at these beautiful creatures and learn many enlightening facts.



Light refreshments will be served. A table with informative brochures will be available for adults (who will also be entranced by the raptors).

The museum's usual admission of \$2 for adults and \$1 for children (ages 4 to 14; free for younger children) will be charged.

To volunteer to help, please contact me at 221-3921 or tklwings@optonline.net.

^ CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PARTICIPANTS INVITED

SSAS's Wendy Murbach has answered a plea to be the team leader for the Northern Nassau Christmas Bird Count (CBC) quadrant that includes Planting Fields Arboretum in Oyster Bay. This CBC is run by North Shore and Huntington Audubon Societies (the Southern Nassau CBC is several decades older than SSAS and, due to circumstances beyond our control, is not organized by us). If you're interested in participating (for the usual CBC fee of \$5), contact Wendy at Wmrbch@aol.com or 546-6303. The Saturday, December 23 count will begin around 8 а.м. and continue through the day, but you can join it after lunch (ask for Wendy's cell phone number in order to locate her team).

**************************** 🖋 BIRD WALKS 🦋

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 and summaries may be found at ssaudubon.org.

Nov. 26

Jan. 28

Pelham Bay for Owls [pull over to street on extreme right after going through Throgs Neck Bridge toll (Pennyfield Ave 1: meet at 9 A.M.: hiking shoes

	Ave.), meet at 9 A.M., mking snoes
	recommended]
Dec. 3	Zach's Bay Parking Field #4, N.E. corner
Dec. 10	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Dec. 17	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Dec. 24	Season's Greetings — No Walk
Dec. 31	Happy New Year — No Walk
Jan. 7	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Jan. 14	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Jan. 21	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

Hempstead Lake State Park (Exit 18, first lot south of Southern State Parkway,

south end of lot)

Feb. 4 Pelham Bay (9 A.M.; see above)

★★ 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:
Bethpage Theodore Cisek
Cedarhurst Helen Pollack
East Meadow Cecilia Barbier, J. Marcus, Irene Z.
Schwartz
Elmont Melissa Chamberlin, Dulcie Parris
Floral Park Mr. William J. Cassidy
Garden City Suzanne Burston
Hempstead M. Cavoli
Hewlett Kenneth Liao
Hicksville Mrs. Jane Gersch, Ronni Nichemin &
Maria Polanas
Island Park Michael G. McGinry
Levittown Francis Higgins, Janice M. Littell,
Mr. Charles Monell, Mrs. Isabel
Sulsona
Long Beach Cheryl Reich, Mr. Alan Thommasson
Lynbrook Carol Donaldson, Mr. Angelo Vaia
Massapequa Ms. Virginia Kollman, Philip Platzer
Massapequa Park Ms. Susan Carlough
Plainview Ms. Denise Shibilski
Rockville Centre Seymour Algus, Carolyn Klotz, Bob
Scherer

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

Valley Stream Peter Bauer, Harold D. Berger, Laurie

Golan, Clifford Williams

Seaford Anthony Cappello Stewart Manor Arthur Boddicker

Wantagh Harvey Brody, Trish Milos

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER Hermit Thrush

Joe Grupp

A strong gust of wind blew a gathering of leaves across the parking field as I approached the car after a morning of counting birds. The moving leaves were spread out in such a manner that each leaf was separated from the next by a rather large space, yet hundreds of leaves passed by in the short period of time that the wind gust lasted. Each leaf, as it tumbled along the parking field, produced an individual crackly, pleasant sound that, combined with the similar sound from the hundreds of other leaves, was almost musical. The leaves momentarily pulled my thoughts away from the Hermit Thrush as well as the other birds that we counted as we gathered data during a Research Committee survey.

We had observed a total of five Hermit Thrushes that day. Some of the observations were of high quality, others less so. One bird flushed from the woodland floor and landed on a thin branch at about our eye level and not too

far in front of us. Perched on the branch with its back toward us, it was in perfect position for studying the dull brown upper parts and the deep rusty reddish tail. It perched there with its wings drooping as thrushes' wings do. At times it raised its tail, then let it drop back down slowly.

At another location, a Hermit Thrush flushed to a low branch in a shrub, presenting us with a partial side view. This view made the color difference between back and tail more subtle, which demanded more concentration for it to be observed. Its position provided an opportunity to study the bird's dull eye ring and some of the brown spots on the grayish-white to white breast and underparts. A careful observation of the brown spots found them to be in the shape of an inverted V.

Not all of the Hermit Thrush observations were ideal for study purposes. Some allowed only a quick glance at a bird as it flushed or flew before us and then went into the brush or to another location. That gave us just a few split seconds to pick up the field marks necessary for its identification. Others were in poor light and/or partly hidden by branches or leaves.

Hermit Thrushes are early migrants in the spring as they head for the coniferous and mixed forest habitats to the north. They are late migrants in the fall. A few may breed on eastern Long Island and the North Shore, and occasionally, if the winter is mild, a few may be found here during the winter months. They are the only brownbacked thrush that winters in the United States. The brown-backed thrushes include the Wood Thrush, Veery, Swainson's Thrush, etc.

A check of the weekly data that we have collected at this location found evidence of the fall migration of Hermit Thrushes passing through. In late September one Hermit Thrush was recorded and in the first two weeks of October

there was another one. Then, in the last two weeks of October and the first two of November, the numbers of Hermit Thrushes observed were 13, 20, 12, and the count day's 5, respectively. On the day of our survey and observations, there were still some leaves left on the trees waiting to fall and to be blown by yet another gusty wind, and I expected to find a few more Hermit Thrushes in the weeks after the survey, but all the signs seemed to indicate that fall and the Hermit Thrush migration were winding down.

ARTHUR C. SNOW

Certified Public Accountant

41 Front Street, Suite 5 (Second Floor) Rockville Centre, New York 11570 e-mail: ACSnowCPA@verizon.net

If you're interested in purchasing some of the birdseed packages and suet cakes that were offered at our sale on November 5, please contact the SSAS prez at mssperling @optonline.net or 221-3921 to find out what we have.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of the members who volunteered at the sale. Special thanks go to the ever-dedicated Paul Butkereit for organizing the seed sale from his hospital bed, and to Joe Grupp and Bill Hollweg for the extra work they did before and during the sale. We also thank Joan Butkereit, Raymond Conn, Bruce Elkin, Dolores Grupp, Marilyn Hametz, Joe Landesberg, Therese Lucas, Steve Schellenger, Mike Sperling, and John Zarudsky.

SHOP AT OUR ONLINE NATURE MALL

Our Web site, ssaudubon.org, contains a link to the Online Nature Mall, which automatically gives a percentage of your purchases (10%) to SSAS if you visit the site using our link.

The mall is a division of the Thayer Birding Software company. There are over 11,000 products available in the Birds Shop (containing field guides, audio CDs, CD-ROMs, and books on attracting birds), Nature Shop, Gift Shop, Feeder Shop, Gardening Shop, @Home Shop, Binocular Shop, Kids Shop, and Ecology Shop.

19TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The dates for the 2006–07 Waterfowl Survey are as follows, rain or shine: **Saturdays, December 9, January 6, February 3, February 24,** and **March 24**. 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, SSAS's Research Chairperson, at 481-4208.

APPLY NOW FOR A FULL SCHOLARSHIP TO ATTEND AN AUDUBON BIRDING CAMP IN MAINE!

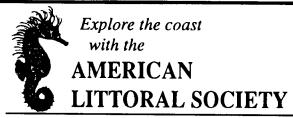
With help from a matching scholarship from National Audubon Society, SSAS has decided to send a young birder (age 14–17) to the Hog Island Audubon Center's "Coastal Maine Bird Studies with Scott Weidensaul." The camp will take place **June 24–30**, **2007**. The following description came from www.maineaudubon.org (which had last June's description, but the brief description in a flyer for 2007 repeats the second sentence below and the program should be virtually unchanged):

"A small group of teenagers interested in birds will experience Audubon fieldwork firsthand. Learn field identification tips, birdsong recognition, conservation practices, and more from nationally known ornithologists. Alongside biologists, monitor endangered piping plovers at their breeding grounds and venture out to a

seabird island with Audubon's Project
Puffin to learn more about conservation and restoration methods. This
one-of-a-kind session combines an
array of field trips to various habitats
with slide presentations, mini workshops, and use of the
camp's animal skins, audio and videotapes, and reference
library. Limited to 13 participants."

The winner of this \$1050 scholarship will need to arrange his/her own transportation. If you're interested in applying, contact Wendy Murbach at Wmrbch@aol.com or 546-6303 by **January 31, 2007**. Financial need will not be considered in determining the winner.





HOLIDAY PARTY (Sat., Dec. 9, 5–10 P.M.). Enjoy good food & drink, Flamenco Dance performance, an "Ugly Auction," and door prizes at our annual party at Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn. Cost: \$35 (still!).

NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACHWALKS. Meet 11 A.M. at Fort Tilden and Jones Beach West End 2, and at 10 A.M. at Robert Moses Field #5 (for Fire Island Lighthouse). Free.

MONTAUK WEEKEND (Jan. 5–7, 2007). See thousands of waterfowl & lots of seals. Visit Montauk Bluffs, Walking Dunes, Oyster Pond, Hither Woods. Evening programs and star watch. Cost: \$345 includes 2 nights at luxurious Manor House.

BELIZE: RAINFORESTS, REEFS, AND RUINS (March 3–11). Visit this small but undeveloped country teeming with wildlife. Travel by van with an excellent Belizean guide. We'll go to Crooked Tree Swamp (great heron show), Tikal Ruins (good birding area as well as Mayan site), and the Jaguar Preserve and beaches down south.

NORTH FLORIDA (April 14–21). Visit Merritt Island Refuge, Orlando Wetlands, Silver River State Park, Ocala National Forest, and other great wildlife areas. Travel by van and see manatees, river otter, roseate spoonbill, Florida scrub jay, burrowing owls, and lots more. 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.

FIRE ISLAND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Back in the March 2004 issue of the Skimmer, we included an article announcing that the federal government had allocated funding for revising the 73-page Fire Island National Seashore General Management Plan (available at www.nps.gov/fiis/parkmgmt/upload/1977GMP_GeneralManagementPlan.pdf), along with the much shorter Fire Island Wilderness Management Plan from 1983 (which covers the seven-mile long Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness, which totals 1363 acres).

It's taken a while, but the process for revising the General Management Plan (GMP) has begun. However, the revision of the Wilderness Management Plan has been postponed until afterwards and SSAS, as a member of the Fire Island Wilderness Coalition that was organized by Joe Zysman, supports the Coalition's attempts to change that decision. First, here are the seven paragraphs about the GMP that appeared in the October/November 2006 Electronic Newsletter that was written and e-mailed by Fire Island National Seashore's staff:

"Throughout the latter part of the summer and into the fall of 2006, Fire Island National Seashore held numerous scoping meetings to hear from the public about the parkrelated issues they consider to be most important. These are generally those issues that have the greatest impact on stakeholders — both visitors to our managed public use areas and community residents and visitors.

"It has been a rather concerted effort and resoundingly successful. By providing numerous methods of submitting comments — including comment cards, rack cards, writing on butcher paper at the scoping sessions, sending in letters, and emailing issues via the park's website — we heard a vast array of opinions. The official close of public scoping will be *January 12, 2007*. But, rest assured that there will be many more opportunities for public input as this process moves forward.

"Fire Island National Seashore hosted a series of public scoping meetings during July, August, and September this year. The purpose of the meetings was twofold. First, we wanted to get the word out that we are developing a new general management plan for the park (the last one was completed in 1977). Second, we wanted to encourage members of the public to share their thoughts and concerns about present and future conditions and activities at

"During the summer months, public open houses were held on Fire Island at Ocean Beach, Davis Park, Sailors Haven, Watch Hill, Cherry Grove, Fire Island Pines, Saltaire, and Lighthouse Beach. In September, three additional open houses were held on Long Island at Mastic Beach, Patchogue, and Stony Brook [announced via SSAS's e-list, since there wasn't time to get the word out via the *Skimmer*]. Over 400 members of the public participated in these sessions, including many representatives of local government, special interest groups, and other organizations.

Fire Island National Seashore.

"The types of issues raised varied widely. We learned that in general, there was broad public support for the National Seashore in both its resource management efforts and public programs. Many meeting participants expressed an interest in seeing a greater NPS ranger presence and more visitor programs. We also learned that there was quite a bit of confusion on the part of the public about how the communities and the National Seashore relate to one another – particularly in the "who's responsible for what" department. This was particularly true when discussing the good, the bad, and the ugly about boardwalks.

"Concerns about coastal erosion, deer, mosquitoes, and invasive species dominated the comments relative to resource management. Vehicular access – both for and against – was the focus of numerous comments from many varying interests including contractors, year-round and part-time residents, and recreational drivers. Access to beaches for disabled visitors was also highlighted as a concern. Another issue noted was the scale and quality of development within the communities.

"Not surprisingly, at some locations certain topics took considerable precedence over others. For instance, at Sailors Haven and Watch Hill, the vast majority of comments focused on the operation and condition of the marinas and associated facilities (e.g., showers). At Lighthouse Beach, a substantial number of people turned

out in support of continued clothing optional use of the beach in that area."

At the November 11 semiannual meeting of the Long Island Audubon Council, we approved a letter to be sent to Senator Clinton, Senator Schumer, and Congressman Bishop that reads as follows (plus a "Dear" and a "Very truly yours"):

"I am writing on behalf of the Long Island Audubon Council, which includes the seven separate Audubon chapters, representing over 6000 members from all parts of the area.

"As you know, NPS [the National Park Service] has recently commenced the revision of its General Management Plan (GMP) for the Fire Island National Seashore, which will establish the guidelines for administration of the area for the next several decades.

"In 1980, the United States Congress authorized the inclusion of a 7 mile stretch of Fire Island in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The existence of a primitive barrier beach environment within 60 miles of Times Square was itself remarkable, and the area remains the only Federal wilderness in New York State and the smallest one managed by the National Park Service.

"Since its establishment, the Fire Island Wilderness Area has been managed in essential conformity with the Wilderness Act. The fundamental requirement of that Act is for the managing agency to preserve the "wilderness character" of an area — which includes providing opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation. The Act also prohibits any structures and installations in a wilderness area, except as may be necessary for its administration.

"Council chapters have expressed their belief that the GMP revision should also include a revision of its Wilderness Management Plan. Substantively, the Council wishes at this time to convey its deep concern for the continued preservation of the FINS Wilderness Area and its character by ensuring that its future stewardship by the National Park Service be in strict conformity with the letter and spirit of the Wilderness Act.

"The surest way for NPS to do so, as reflected in the plan revisions, is to leave the area as it is — adding no new structures or installations of any kind, continuing to remove remains of previous structures incompatible with wilderness, and maintaining current levels of camping and visitation in order to preserve the area's outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

"On behalf of the Council, I invite your close attention to the FINS planning process as it unfolds, and welcome your consideration of our concerns with regard to it."

SSAS Members: You can send comments to Fire Island National Seashore, 120 Laurel St., Patchogue, NY 11772 or fire_island_gmp@nps.gov. Also, you can ask to be put on the GMP e-mail list and/or visit http://www.nps.gov/fiis/parkmgmt/generalmanagementplan.htm for info.

BACKYARD SURVEY DATA NEEDED!

Joe Grupp

For several years, SSAS's Research Committee has been conducting a study to document the bird species found in the SSAS area and to estimate their numbers. We greatly appreciate input from anyone that feeds and/or observes birds in their yard or neighborhood. Please do not hesitate to submit your observations, even if you make only very few.

Simply record the date, time, and the number or approximate number of each species. 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. Survey sheets are available at SSAS events and at ssaudubon.org or you can create your own.

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



"NEW YORK'S LARGEST WILD BIRD SPECIALTY STORE"
621 Fulton St. (Rt. 109), Farmingdale, NY 11735
Located between McDonald's & Dunkin' Donuts

As approved by the Board at its January 2006 meeting, the following legislative measures were the main focus of Audubon New York Government Relations staff in the 2006 legislative session. Status is as of October 25.

Long Island Sound Restoration Act. The Long Island Sound Restoration Act (LISRA) provides important funding for projects that support the guidelines and recommendations of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), and seek to restore and maintain the water quality of the Sound. With its reauthorization in 2005, the LISRA will provide up to \$200 million over 5 years to improve the water quality, reduce nitrogen loading, and ensure a clean and healthy Sound. New York and Connecticut would share up to \$40 million annually for projects throughout the Sound.

Status — The House has proposed appropriations for the Restoration Act at \$1.8 million including \$467,000 for the Long Island Sound Study Office. The Senate has proposed \$1 million for the Restoration Act, with \$470,000 for the Long Island Sound Study Office. We continue to work with members of the New York and Connecticut Congressional delegations to increase this appropriation.

Long Island Sound Stewardship Act. The Long Island Sound Stewardship Act (LISSA) will establish a Long Island Sound Stewardship Initiative to identify, protect, and enhance important sites within the Long Island Sound ecosystem. This historic legislation will protect open space, restore wildlife habitats, and provide for public access to the Sound. The bill authorizes \$25 million annually on a 75%–25% federal to local share for the acquisition of land and conservation easements, and the enhancement and improvement of important ecological sites.

Status — In late September, thanks to the strong bipartisan efforts of Congressmen Israel and Walsh, Senator Clinton, and the NY and CT Congressional delegations, both the House and the Senate passed the Stewardship Act! The President signed the bill into law on October 16, putting the finishing touches on this successful campaign. Audubon will now advocate for full appropriation of the authorized \$25 million in 2007.

Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act. In 2004, the President signed an executive order creating the Great Lakes Task Force and establishing the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) to develop the funding needs for restoration of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The GLRC has developed a comprehensive \$20 billion restoration plan for the Great Lakes.

Status — The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held hearings in March on the recommendations of the GLRC, where David Miller submitted testimony. The House and Senate have both introduced the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act (H.R. 5100, S. 2545), with strong bipartisan New York Congressional cosponsorship, which puts into practice many of the priority recommendations of the GLRC.

Current budget proposals contain cuts to many of the programs necessary to restore the Lakes, including a \$199 million cut to the national Clean Water State Revolving Fund (a \$21 million cut to New York's portion). The President and House proposed \$20.577 million to the Great Lakes National Program Office, a \$1 million reduction from last year, while the Senate has proposed restoring funding to \$21.164 million. The President proposed funding the Great Lakes Legacy Act at \$49.6 million, the House proposed \$29.6 million, and the Senate proposed \$30.6 million.

In late September, thanks to the strong efforts of Congressman Walsh, the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act, one key part of the comprehensive Great Lakes restoration legislation, was reauthorized at \$16 million, a doubling of the previously authorized level of \$8 million. The President signed this legislation into law on October 16, and Audubon will now advocate for full appropriation of this Act in 2007.

Conservation Trust Fund: State Wildlife Grants. Created in 2001, the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) program provides federal dollars to every state and territory to support cost-effective conservation aimed at preventing

wildlife from becoming endangered. These grants support a wide array of projects to restore degraded habitat, reintroduce native wildlife, develop partnerships with private landowners, educate the public, and collect data to find out more about declining species. To ensure that the funds are spent wisely, each state had to develop a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy by October 1, 2005, to direct how it will spend these funds. Last year, this category received an appropriation of \$68.5 million.

Status — The President's budget proposal included \$74 million for SWG, the House has proposed funding at \$50 million, and the Senate has proposed funding at \$67.5 million.

Conservation Trust Fund: Land and Water Conservation Fund (Stateside). Created by Congress in 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides 50% matching grants to state and local governments to acquire, develop, or improve parkland. This fund helps to provide increased recreational opportunities, and protect and preserve wildlife habitat, drinking water, and historic sites. Last year, Congress appropriated \$29.5 million for State Assistance.

Status — The President's budget proposal included \$0 for State Assistance, the House has proposed \$0, and the Senate has proposed \$30 million. We're working with appropriators to secure the Senate figure and keep this important program alive.

Conservation Trust Fund: Forest Legacy. The federal Forest Legacy program (FL) was created to aid states in protecting environmentally sensitive forest lands by purchasing property or conservation easements. It is a voluntary program that works with private landowners who want to protect their land. Last year, this category received \$56.5 million, with \$1 million for the Tahawus project in the Adirondacks.

Status — The President has proposed \$61.5 million for Forest Legacy, the House has proposed \$12.7 million, and the Senate has proposed \$55 million. We are currently working with the DEC[NYS Department of Environmental Conservation] to identify eligible projects, and working with the New York Congressional delegation to increase appropriations for this program.

Conservation Trust Fund: Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Funding. The Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act established a matching grants program to fund projects that promote the conservation of birds in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The law authorizes \$5 million per year for five years to be spent on bird habitat conservation efforts both here and abroad. At least 75% of these funds must be spent on projects outside the U.S., in areas where neotropical migratory birds spend their winters and gain strength for their flights back to the U.S. Last year, this category was funded at \$3.9 million. The Act is up for reauthorization in 2006.

Status — In May, the House passed its version of the reauthorization of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, which increases the funding authorized from \$5 million to \$6 million, reduces the matching requirement

from 3:1 to 1:1 to encourage broader participation in the program, and allows projects in Canada to receive grants. Senate staff report that the bill has been held at the desk and is expected to be passed soon under unanimous

consent. The President proposed \$0 funding for this program, and the House and Senate proposals include \$4 million in funding for the program this year.

Highlands Conservation Act. The overall purpose of the Highlands Conservation Act is to foster state and federal partnerships to protect priority conservation lands in the Highlands Region, which encompasses New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. The bill would authorize \$10 million annually over ten years for such land conservation partnership projects, which would cover up to 50% of the cost of purchasing lands or development rights from willing sellers only.

Status — The House and Senate have both proposed \$1 million for this program.

Endangered Species Act. Established in 1973, the Endangered Species Act has been the safety net that has insured the survival of hundreds of species that faced or were threatened with certain extinction. This landmark act is a true conservation success story that has helped to recover many of America's most vulnerable birds and other wildlife, and remains critically important to the protection of others still threatened. In 2005, the House of Representatives passed a proposal that would repeal many of the most important provisions of the act, including eliminating habitat protection for endangered species, bankrupting the Endangered Species Act by requiring virtually unlimited payments to special interests, and limiting protections for threatened species. In 2006, as revisions of this act are debated, we continue to advocate for this act to be protected and enhanced, to keep America's safety net for our most vulnerable birds and wildlife intact.

Status — Bipartisan discussions among Senate Environment and Public Works Committee staff have stalled. Senators James Inhofe (R-OK) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) may still be considering options including attaching anti-ESA language to an appropriations bill as a legislative rider. Congressman Richard Pombo (R-CA), who sponsored the House-passed Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act [described above], has recently written to Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne (R) suggesting that the new Interior Secretary nominee [Dirk] explore ways to weaken the act administratively.

Editor's note: On Election Day, Pombo, who chaired the House's Resources Committee, was voted out of office. Info on the status of legislation in Albany will be in the next Skimmer, space permitting.