

Have a Healthy, Happy, Prosperous, and Green New Year.

All the best,
Wendy Murbach



Explore the coast
with the
AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

VALENTINE'S DAY HIKE: FOR THE LOVE OF DUCKS
(Sun., Feb. 14). Meet 10 A.M. at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge for slide program and hike around ponds and gardens to look for winter birds and waterfowl. For reservations, contact Don.

EARLY SPRING MIGRANTS AT JAMAICA BAY (Sat., March 27). Join naturalist Don Riepe at 10 A.M. for slide program & hike to look for phoebes, ibis, egrets, oystercatchers, other early migrants. Call refuge to reserve at (718) 318-4340 or Littoral Society.

MERRITT ISLAND REFUGE, FLORIDA (Apr. 17-24). Visit this great refuge along with Cape Canaveral National Seashore, Fort DeSoto State Park, Viera Wetlands, and Orlando Wetlands during peak spring bird migration. See many Florida specialties, including whooping and sandhill cranes, Florida scrub jay, painted bunting, roseate spoonbill, crested caracara, as well as manatees, armadillos, many butterflies, and reptiles/amphibians.

STERLING FOREST WARBLERS (Sun., May 2). See golden-winged, blue-winged, hooded, cerulean and other warbler species. Hike around a scenic lake only 1-hour north of New York City.

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.

AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201

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

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. 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:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Atlantic Beach | Beatrice R. Sheldon |
| Baldwin | Peter Bertash, Gladys Schwartz |
| Bellmore | Martha Chamberlain, Michael Kelly, Harold Studer |
| Cedarhurst | Elaine S. Sacks |
| East Meadow | Andrea Kalman, Theodora Zavala |
| East Rockaway | Richard Ettlinger, Peter Radics, Michelle Weinman |
| Farmingdale | Virginia Nanni |
| Floral Park | Elizabeth Donlon, Steve Mikowski, David Paris |
| Garden City | Corinne Connolly, Gerald Goldberg, Jack M. Marshall, Margaret Menger, Stephanie Wise |
| Glen Oaks | Sal Castronovo |
| Hempstead | David Brancato |
| Hewlett | Julian Price |
| Hicksville | William C. Brodmerkel, Mary Cavallo, Linda Kaprinski, Geeta Khale, Suzanne Walsh |
| Lawrence | Allan Simon |
| Levittown | Leah Draluck |
| Lido Beach | Magda Delaguila |
| Long Beach | Martha Bellantoni, Patricia Flynn, Amy Goldenberg, Shauna L. Spicer |
| Lynbrook | Arlyne Barschow, Desiree Burton, Jesse Combs, Geraldine Coney, Richard Zimmerman |
| Malverne | Natasha Feduik, Henry Herb, Jeanne Smythe |
| Massapequa Park | Joseph Giacoppo, Anita Halberstadt |
| Merrick | Marian Abruzzo, Bobby Cirino, Perri M. Lembo |
| Oceanside | Lori Raffaniello, Dennis Salerno |
| Plainview | Linda Landman |
| Point Lookout | John Krush, Rebecca Krush |
| Rockville Centre | Terry Bain, Ann Ferrara, Jessica Sherwood |
| Uniondale | Denise Kingsbury, Ruth Mask |
| Valley Stream | Eugene Orange, Barbara F. Stenson |
| Wantagh | Robyn A. Beiner-Pan, Sidney Marshak, Doris O'Kane, Peter Tudra |
| Woodmere | Manuel Finkelstein |



All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Any questions? Call Steve at 987-8103. Directions and summaries may be found at ssaudubon.org.

- Jan. 24 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
(and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Jan. 31 Massapequa Lake*
- Feb. 7 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Feb. 14 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern
State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Feb. 21 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
(and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Feb. 28 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
- Mar. 7 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- Mar. 14 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north
side of Merrick Rd.)
- Mar. 21 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
(and Lido Preserve afterwards)
- Mar. 28 Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)

*Note: For Massapequa Lake (the southern end of Massapequa Preserve), use street parking on westbound side of Merrick Road, west of Lake Shore Blvd.

**COUNTY'S OPEN SPACE AND
PARKS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEMBERS BOOTED**

Shortly after losing the recount in his campaign for reelection as Nassau County Executive, Tom Suozzi removed four members of the nine-member Open Space and Parks Advisory Committee (OSPAC), including George Peters, who had been appointed through the efforts of County Legislator David Denenberg circa 2004, while George was president of SSAS. The Committee was created in 2001 by the unanimous approval of the County Legislature and has a say in every open-space purchase and sale in our county.

Suozzi, with assistance from the presiding officer of the County Legislature, Diane Yatauro (now the minority leader), took advantage of an ignored rule that requires the reappointment of OSPAC members every two years. In place of George, Rich Schary, Monte Leeper, Charles Bevilacqua, and an existing vacancy, they appointed county employees whose work has involved open space. As of when this is being typed, it is unclear if proper procedures were followed in the replacement of the four members.



NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

Although I have been participating in SSAS bird walks for only several years and, to be honest, have much to learn, it recently occurred to me that I already have garnered many great memories from these events.

I will not soon forget a large Snowy Owl flying out over the Atlantic at Point Lookout in a pea-soup fog after tolerating our gazes for too long. Earlier memories include a Red-tailed Hawk diving with talons extended over Norman J. Levy Preserve in Merrick and my first Yellow-shafted (Northern) Flicker there. Observing comical Bufflehead ducks (pictured), American Coots, stalking Great Blue Herons, and almost-tame Tree Swallows chirping at me at Jamaica Bay, as well as a large flock of American Oystercatchers beaching at Jones Beach West End, were magical moments. I remember my first Horned Lark there, a masterful Peregrine Falcon and little Ruddy Ducks at Mill Pond, and Glossy Ibises at the Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area.



How can I forget the Great Horned Owl stoically watching a pair of crows attempting to harass it and a large bee colony thriving in a tree trunk, both seen at Hempstead Lake State Park? Also appreciated there were its busy Downy Woodpeckers, pristine-colored Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and a pair of Double-crested Cormorants on a pond platform, one on each side of a large slider turtle and all enjoying the sun.

I can recall all those coy, doglike seals I saw bobbing their heads in beach and bay winter waters to see who was around, and the Osprey I saw carrying a fish backward. And what about that raccoon observed soundly sleeping high in a tree at Massapequa Preserve? When I sometimes have trouble sleeping at night, all I need do is think about the many jewellike and very busy warblers seen at Central Park and the next thing I know is that a new day is dawning.

Unlike many birders, I prefer to focus primarily on enjoying the moment rather than increasing my count, and can watch migrating Eastern Phoebes and observe the yellow tail bars on flocks of Cedar Waxwings for a good amount of time. I am not embarrassed to say that the majestic Great Black-backed Gull is one of my favorites and that our very common Mallard ducks, the females courted by males with their little mating water dances and peeps, are truly lovely creatures.

Special thanks for these experiences go to our very instinctive walk leader Steve Schellenger and to Elliott Kutner, who paved the way for me, as well as to Joe Landesberg, Joe Grupp, John Gaglione, Scott Oglesby, and many other SSAS members who so generously share their knowledge.

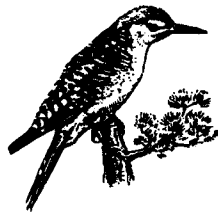
Enjoy the moments! These are experiences that money cannot buy but participating in SSAS bird walks can. You will be welcomed most warmly.

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER Three Good Observations

Joe Grupp

Not every time one goes into the field, to a park, preserve, or other natural area, is one lucky enough to find a bird or an action by a bird or birds that adds a certain amount of excitement to the trip. Many times the trip is routine, especially if one is familiar with the area. That does not mean it is uninteresting, but rather just sort of the same as the other times when birding there. Once in a while, however, there is a bird and/or an observation that is interesting or exciting enough so that you feel that it was a good observation and that you were lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time to observe it. On the Research Committee's weekly avian population survey, at Hempstead Lake State Park on December 10, 2009, we were lucky to have made not one but three of those good observations.

Well into the survey, our observations were pretty routine and then someone spotted a Red-bellied Woodpecker (pictured), which is no exceptional find by itself. It was the action of this bird that caught our attention and even made it a bit difficult to find at first. On a branch in a mid-sized leafless tree, there was a large, almost soccer-ball sized, gray, papery nest, that had an opening near the bottom and was made by a colony of bald-faced hornets during the summer months. The nest was situated so that the woodpecker could perch on a nearby vertical branch and gain partial access into the nest's interior through the bottom, either by the opening made by the hornets or by its own pecking actions — we could not tell which. What made the bird hard to see at first was that its entire head was up into the nest with only the body showing, and at times the black-and-white striping on its back and wings blended perfectly with the gray of the nest. At times the bird was well past its shoulders into the nest, most likely feeding on the eggs, larvae, or even adult hornets or some other insects, etc., that were now calling the nest their home. It was quite an observation watching that bird almost disappear into the hornets' nest. At times it pulled entirely out of the nest, paused motionlessly, only to partially reenter it again.



A short time later, as we walked south down the dirt service road through the wooded area, we came upon a mixed flock of birds feeding not too far from us. There were American Robins, Black-capped Chickadees, White-throated Sparrows, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Downy Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, and a "what-is-that" bird. Before us was a bird in almost constant motion, pausing ever so briefly as it moved about. The bird was fairly close, low moving, and pausing on the branches of shrubs, long hanging vines, and lower tree branches. Each time it briefly paused, we were able to pick out some of its

characteristics. Its motion was warbler-like; it had dull greenish-gray plumage above and a very dull yellowish breast with real-blurry, hard-to-see, stripes. The most obvious characteristic was a flash of yellow from under the bird just before the tail. A check of a field guide found it to be an Orange-crowned Warbler, a bird not frequently seen in our area. It is a bird that many birders would travel a few miles to see.

Winding down our survey, we passed through the woods that is down an embankment from the park road that runs along the end of Hempstead Lake. As we did so, one of our group spotted a low-flying raptor with prey in its talons settling into a tree on the lake side of the road. We scampered up the embankment to the edge of the road and the bird flew to the edge of the woods at the southwest corner of the lake near the road. Slowly and carefully we worked our way towards it. When we got close enough that we had a good view through our binoculars, we stood and watched it feed. It pulled small bits of flesh off the carcass with its sharp hooked bill. It took us a bit of time to determine the prey but then we knew that a Red-tailed Hawk was dining on a squirrel.

The team that was with me in the field that day consisted of Jeannette Miller, Steve Schellenger, Rick Kopitsch, and Joe Landesberg. Together we identified and counted birds for our weekly survey. Together we had three good observations.

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.

CARPPOOLING TO MEETINGS?

SSAS's Marilyn Hametz has volunteered to attempt to organize carpools to our monthly meetings; it's the green thing to do, of course, and hopefully will make it possible for us to arrange transportation for those of you who are unable to drive to Freeport at night. For starters, she would like to hear from members who are willing to be full-time drivers or to alternate driving with someone else. We urge you to contact Marilyn at marilynexpl@yahoo.com or 799-7189; please indicate which town you're from.

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Americans Committed to Conservation



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BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS
Think Globally, but Join Locally!

Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$15 payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** using the form below. Our address is P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.

Option 2. To join NAS and your all-volunteer local chapter, you can help SSAS survive NAS's major dues-share cutbacks by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get \$0 unless you join through us). Mail the form below and your check payable to **National Audubon Society** to SSAS at the address above. The special rate for the first year is \$20 per household; \$15 for students and seniors.

➔ **Renewing?** Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS (we now get \$0 for all NAS renewals).

Donations to SSAS are always welcome!



Yes, I'd like to join: SSAS only National Audubon too

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NO.: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Chapter Code R15 7XCH (South Shore Audubon Society)

