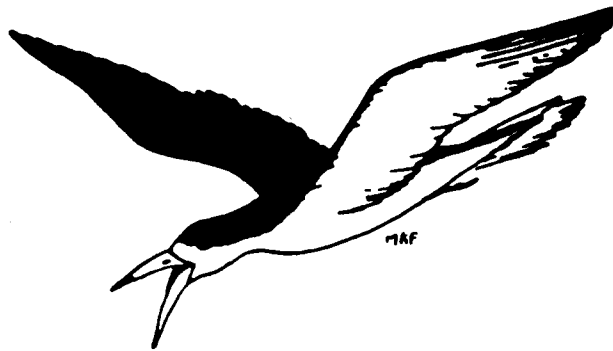


# SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 41, NUMBER 4 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

DEC. 2010 & JAN. 2011

### NEXT MEETING

*John Gaglione*


**DATE:** Tuesday, December 14, 2010  
**TIME:** 7:30 P.M.  
**PLACE:** Freeport Memorial Library  
144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)  
**SPEAKER:** Jim Jones  
**TOPIC:** Raptors of Long Island

This month's guest speaker will discuss the natural history of the species of raptors in our area. The audience will meet five of Volunteers for Wildlife's permanent residents and learn about the injuries that brought them to our hospital. Raptors featured will likely include an American Kestrel, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, and a Red-tailed Hawk.

Jim Jones is a retired high school teacher from the Port Washington School District and serves as the president of the board of Volunteers for Wildlife. Join us!

**Pre-Meeting Program on Birds.** Starting at 7 P.M. most months, Scott Oglesby expands our birding horizons in the room beyond our coffee-break 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 gas station that borders Sunrise Highway.

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◆◆◆◆◆ IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE  
◆◆◆◆◆  BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS.  
◆◆◆◆◆ SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!  
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**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.

### NEXT MEETING AFTER NEXT MEETING

**DATE:** Tuesday, January 11, 2011  
**TIME:** 7:30 P.M.  
**PLACE:** Freeport Memorial Library  
144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)  
**TOPIC:** Annual Members' Night

Join us for an "after the holidays" get-together of fun, food, and friendship, including a bird song contest (see inside). Show off your talents, hobbies, or skills. If you can paint, play an instrument, imitate bird calls, knit, take photographs, sing, or have any other talents or interests, please share them with us. We would also appreciate finger foods from those of you who enjoy the culinary arts.

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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*Wendy Murbach*

I wish all the members of South Shore Audubon Society and your families, a healthy, happy, and loving Holiday Season. I know you will be busy but don't forget to feed the birds, take some time out to be in nature, look at the moon, hug everyone you care about, and know that after December 21st the days begin to lengthen again.

All the best for the Holiday Season and for the New Year to come.

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**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.*

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RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

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AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201

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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. Check out the 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:

- Bellmore ..... Marilyn Cronin, Mary Fonda
- East Rockaway ..... Sheila Sweeney
- Elmont ..... Trudi Boehm
- Farmingdale ..... Ellen Hudson
- Floral Park ..... Barbara Baranello, Iris Heit
- Freeport ..... Belle Sylvester
- Hicksville ..... Mary Kachadourian
- Levittown ..... Dorothy E. Gentile,  
Linda Schaefer
- Lido Beach ..... John Holst
- Long Beach ..... Dianne Grimaldi, Kyle Holder
- Lynbrook ..... Harry Friesleben
- Malverne ..... J. Tully
- Massapequa ..... Tyler Hughes, Ann Musselman,  
Peter J. Roberts
- Merrick ..... Chuck Gilroy, Paul Saueracker
- Plainview ..... Sheryl Mendelson
- Rockville Centre ..... Sandel Senior Center, Michael J.  
Spahn
- Seaford ..... Juliann Lewan
- Valley Stream ..... Marilyn Traub
- Wantagh ..... James Lynch, Jr.; Karen Swyst
- Woodmere ..... Frances Ross



### 23RD ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY DATES

The dates for the 2010–2011 Waterfowl Survey are as follows, rain or shine: Saturdays, December 11, January 8, February 5 & 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, SSAS's Research Chairperson, at 481-4208.

## DRAFT NASSAU COUNTY MASTER PLAN

On October 28, the Nassau County Planning Commission voted to commence the public comment period on the draft 2010 Nassau County Master Plan, with a public hearing scheduled for November 18 (while this newsletter was at the printer). The draft can be downloaded from [www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/planning/MasterPlan.html](http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/planning/MasterPlan.html). Comments, due **December 1**, can be sent to:

Attn: Master Plan Comments  
Nassau County Planning Department  
100 County Seat Drive  
Mineola, NY 11501



You can contact Satish Sood, Deputy Commissioner, at 571-5924, or Sean Sallie, AICP, Planner, at 571-5803 with any questions or concerns.

### Enid R. Klein

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132 ALBERMARLE AVE.  
Valley Stream, NY 11580

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## AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

**NYC AUDUBON WINTER BIRD WALK** (Sun., Dec. 12). Meet 10 A.M. at the Jamaica Bay Refuge for a hike around ponds and gardens to look for raptors and other late fall/winter birds with naturalist Don Riepe. Call (718) 318-9344; e-mail [driepe@nyc.rr.com](mailto:driepe@nyc.rr.com). Free.

**NEW YEAR'S DAY BEACH WALK** (Sat., Jan. 1). Meet 11 A.M. at West End 2 lot, Jones Beach or Fort Tilden, Queens for a hike along the beach & dunes. Coffee, cake & champagne at Fort Tilden afterwards. Free.

**MONTAUK WINTER WEEKEND & SEAL WATCH** (Jan. 7–9, 2011). Stay at luxurious Manor House (heated pool, jacuzzi, spacious lobby & restaurant on premises) during peak winter birding time. See seals, scoters, eiders, loons, etc. Cost: \$365/person includes 2 nights lodging, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, and 2 evening programs.

**CUMBERLAND ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE AND OKEFENOKEE SWAMP** (Apr. 9–17). Travel by van and visit parks and refuges of Southern Georgia coast and Northern Florida. Great birding and wildlife.

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

**NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER**  
**A Lot of Cliff Swallows**

*Joe Grupp*

Fairly early on a nice spring day, we were traveling through country that was mostly farmland, with some rangeland mixed among it. We were headed to the Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge in the southeast corner of North Dakota. Little did we know that we were about to get one of the day's better observations well before we got there.

Rolling along at a fair rate of speed, we noticed an occasional swallow flying over the open spaces. Rounding a bend, the road dropped rather steeply to a bridge over a fast-running stream. It rose again on the other side of the stream to regain the height of the gently rolling land.

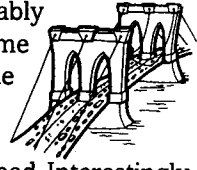
The number of swallows we saw as we looked down towards the bridge increased dramatically from the few we had seen previously. A few were flying low and came close to the car. Their identity became obvious as they passed. Buffy yellow rumps and a white mark on their foreheads shone as beacons from the otherwise darker-appearing birds, identifying them as Cliff Swallows. When perched and viewed through binoculars, more of their color markings are easier to see. Dark-blue wings and back, white underparts, a brownish red throat, and some white streaking on the back, combined with the buffy and white field marks mentioned above, make it the Cliff Swallow a handsome bird to observe. Their numbers increased greatly the closer we got to the bridge and we realized that their comings and goings centered under it, indicating that a colony of birds was nesting there.

Historically, Cliff Swallows built their nests in colonies on sheer cliffs under overhangs of various sizes. They have now extended their nest building to beams and platforms in open barns and other such structures, the vertical sides of buildings especially under overhanging eaves, culverts, and under bridges.

The nest is made of pellets about the size of a marble that are made of mud gathered from the edges of a water source and carried to the nest location by the bird. There they are placed on the site's surface and/or on a previously placed pellet, eventually forming a gourd-shaped nest with a single tubelike opening. The nest is then sparsely lined with grasses and feathers, and three to six eggs are laid in it.

After crossing the bridge, I found a safe place to park and, binoculars in hand, returned to the bridge to observe the activity. Birds were constantly coming and going from under the bridge and there was a certain rhythm to the phenomena. At times many more birds were flying under than away from the bridge and at times many more were flying away from rather than under it. All but a few were entering and leaving from the upstream side of the bridge, so that it appeared that the opening beneath the bridge on that side was inhaling and exhaling birds.

While standing about in the middle of the bridge, I observed the flight of individual birds. Some landed at a muddy spot upstream, took time to make a muddy pellet, and carried it back, disappearing under the bridge. Some flew elongated circular routes, probably catching insects before returning. Some flew out a good distance, gaining altitude before turning and swooping back down to the bridge while the pull of gravity aided in significantly increasing their speed. Interestingly, very few of the returning birds seemed to pass under the bridge and out the other side.



A few returning birds did fly over the bridge and then over the downstream side of the landscape. I was startled by one such bird coming directly at me as I brought my binoculars down from my eyes. Instinctively, I pulled my head to the side while hearing a faint clicking sound and feeling a gentle rush of air on the side of my face. Would it have missed me if I did not pull away? Who knows? Given the swallows' skill of flight, I think it would have missed. I hope so!

After a while, I tried to count or estimate the number of birds actually there. The challenge was to not count the same bird many times because of their continuous coming and going. At first count I got only 38 birds before I gave it up, as I lost track of where the birds went and if any came back, even as there were many more birds to count. A second count reached only 56 before confusion halted the count and there were many more there. It was time to leave. We drove away satisfied with our observation and knowing that we had seen a lot of Cliff Swallows.

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**SHOP AT OUR ONLINE NATURE MALL**

Our Web site, [ssaudubon.org](http://ssaudubon.org), contains a link to the Online Nature Mall, which automatically gives a percentage of your purchases (10%) to SSAS if visited via our link.

The mall is a division of the Thayer Birding Software company, which is partly owned by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. There are over 12,000 products available in the following categories: software, nature sounds, bird books, nature books, binoculars, bird feeders, home/garden, and kids.

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VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (631) 423-0982  
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## NATURE'S MUSEUM STORE IN BELLMORE

Therese Lucas

The Nature's Museum Store in Bellmore is offering a permanent 10% discount to South Shore Audubon Society members on all items purchased in their store or online ([www.naturesmuseumstore.com](http://www.naturesmuseumstore.com)). Just enter the code "SSAS" when you order online or mention South Shore Audubon Society when you make your purchase at the store. In addition, if you order by **November 30**, 10% of the proceeds will come back to SSAS.



The store, located at 2400 Merrick Road, Bellmore (south side, just west of Newbridge Road), carries a beautiful assortment of jewelry and giftware. Their products include museum and nature reproductions, small sculptures, and tabletop products. They are the producers of Erté "Art to Wear" jewelry; these limited edition pieces are made of 14k gold and sterling silver.

Their studio is attached to the store and free tours of the manufacturing facility are available by reservation on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 11 A.M., 1 P.M., and 3 P.M. Call 781-6872 to schedule a tour. Store hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. and Sunday 11 A.M. to 5 P.M.

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## OUR GOVERNMENT & THE ENVIRONMENT

*Editor's note:* To receive e-mail about state and federal issues, sign up at <http://ny.audubonaction.org> and [www.audubonaction.org](http://www.audubonaction.org). The following is the NY portion of an update on federal and state legislative priorities distributed by Audubon New York (our state office) to chapter leaders at the fall Audubon Council meeting in early November.

In the past year, Audubon New York has led efforts to secure passage of two major measures which have become law in New York:

1) *Child Safe Playing Fields Act (A.7937/S.4983)*. This important legislation will prohibit the use of aesthetic pesticides on school grounds and playing fields, reducing the threats to children and birds alike from the use of the chemicals, and saving schools money by moving away from a reliance on costly chemicals. Each year, millions of pounds of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers are used on schools and lawns across the state, creating one of the largest sources of pollution runoff in the state and indeed the nation. This was a major win for our Audubon At Home program.

2) *Smart Growth Infrastructure Policy Act (A.8011/S.5650)*. This critical measure will encourage economic development while preserving the quality of the environment and reducing costs to municipalities, by targeting infrastructure funds to downtowns, main streets, and community areas with existing infrastructure before developing on green spaces. By requiring certain state agencies to make

smart infrastructure investments based on a strong set of Smart Growth principles established in the bill, the state is minimizing the costs of sprawl development while maximizing the social, economic, and environmental benefits achieved. This bill is critically important to alleviating development pressure on Important Bird Areas and other critical habitats.

*2010-2011 State Budget — State Parks Reopened, EPF Cut.* Thanks to our collective advocacy, we were able to ensure the reopening of our 55 Parks and Historic Sites that were closed due to Governor Paterson's misguided budget proposal. We were also able to protect the integrity of the Environmental Protection Fund, the state's primary source of environmental spending, by ensuring that the funding for parks and other agency operations did not get paid from the EPF. While we were able to keep the parks funding out of the EPF, we were unable to protect the EPF from further cuts. Overall, the fund has been reduced to \$134 million, the lowest level of funding in a decade. On the positive side, we were able to undo the Governor's moratorium on open space protection and restore some funding for land acquisition, as well as fully restore funding for the Zoos, Botanical Gardens, and Aquaria (ZBGA) (which provides important support for our nature centers across the state) and the Biodiversity Research Institute.

*The Global Warming Pollution Control Act.* This bill would require 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by the year 2050 from all sources, a goal which scientists say will help us avoid the most serious effects of global warming. This legislation also requires the DEC [Department of Environmental Conservation] to produce a plan that would help humans and ecosystems adapt to a changing climate, and develop a climate action plan with updates every five years. This bill has passed the Assembly and has yet to be voted on by the Senate.

*Supporting a Moratorium on Hydrofracking for Natural Gas.* There are numerous bills in play at the moment to address the threats to the environment from this dangerous technology, and we are supporting two in particular which would ensure that drilling does not move forward until all these concerns are addressed — A.11443 (Sweeney)/S.8129 (Thompson) would suspend hydraulic fracturing for the extraction of natural gas or oil until May 15, 2011; A.10490 (Englebright)/S.7592 (Addabbo) would establish a moratorium on conducting hydraulic fracturing pending the issuance of a report by the federal Environmental Protection Agency on impacts to water quality from hydrofracking. The bills are still moving through both houses.

*Creating a Water Management Plan for New York.* This bill would regulate all users who withdraw more than 100,000 gallons per day and require the creation of a strong water efficiency and conservation program that will ensure we are not wasting this precious resource. This would also implement key provisions of the Great Lakes Compact. This important legislation has passed the Senate and is awaiting a vote in the Assembly.







