

American hobby surveys; only gardening is more popular.

I urge all of you to go out in the spring air and look at these feathered wonders, some of whom will travel pole to pole, most of whom winter anywhere from the tip of South America to right in our backyards. They are small packages of energy, full of stamina and ready to breed in the spring. A lot of them are exceptionally beautiful. Some will spend the summer here on Long Island but many are passing through to the north, stopping here only to rest and refuel. So, get out there and don't miss seeing them.

Don't forget to join South Shore Audubon's bird walks this spring. See inside for our Central Park trip date and the dates of our Birdathon. I promise you will have a good time with interesting people and will see many birds. I'll be looking for YOU.

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.*

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

NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

BROOKSIDE PRESERVE CLEANUP TIME & WATER WORKS APARTMENTS

On **Sunday, April 17**, starting at 1 P.M., SSAS will have its spring cleanup at Brookside Preserve, rain or shine. Brookside is a 20-acre freshwater wetland, woodland, and upland area owned by Nassau County that was rescued from oblivion and is managed by SSAS. With help from a state grant, we produced a trail guide, educational freshwater wetland guide for children, and a video. The guides are posted at ssaudubon.org.

The Preserve is located on the Freeport-Baldwin border, along Milburn Creek; park at the main entrance on Brookside Avenue just north of Sunrise Highway (turn north at the traffic light that's just east of Freeport H.S.). Please bring gloves, rakes, bags, and/or friends of all ages.



Water Works Apartments. As this paragraph was being typed, the developer who owns the former site of Brooklyn Water Works on the southern border of Brookside Preserve was seeking approval from the Village of Freeport's Landmarks Preservation Commission (which meets/met on March 22) to erect a 72-foot tall, 355-foot wide apartment building on a site that has twice been recommended for acquisition as open space under Nassau County's Environmental Bond Acts. SSAS will be represented at the Commission's public meeting.

CONGRATULATIONS, JOE GRUPP!

Therese Lucas

There were many attendees at the February meeting showing faces of deep concentration (and smiles) as they munched their snacks at break time. They were busy deciding which bird song should get their vote. The result was a three-way tie for first place between Joe Grupp, Marcia Specht, and myself. Joe won the tiebreaker! His prize was a \$25 Borders gift certificate for a nature-related item. Participants had a great time creating their songs and members enjoyed the wide variety of entries.

Listed below are the entrants and their songs (original title/revamped entry):

Kerry Da Silva – *Theme from The Monkees/ Theme from The Towhees*

John Gaglione – *Do Wah Diddy Diddy/ There He Was Just A Sittin' in the Tree*

Joe Grupp – *Jingle Bells/ Quack a Dak Dak!*

Marilyn Hametz – *She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain/ She'll Be Flying Along the Flyway*

Therese Lucas – *American Woman/ American Wigeon*

Wendy Murbach – *I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby/ I Can't Give You Anything but Thistle, Goldfinch*

Marcia Specht – *I'm in the Mood for Love/ I'm in the Mood to Bird*

JFK EXPANSION THREATENS JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

In January, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey, through the Regional Plan Association, released the 160-page report, "Upgrading to World Class: The Future of the New York Region's Airports," which is available at www.rpa.org/pdf/RPA-Upgrading-to-World-Class.pdf. For JFK Airport, the worst of the proposals would replace 390 acres of Jamaica Bay's water and marsh with new and expanded runways. According to the January 26 *New York Times*, "At Kennedy, expansion could cost anywhere from \$1 billion to \$3.5 billion, depending on whether one or two runways are added and how they are configured. Among the alternatives would be to fill in part of Jamaica Bay and construct a new runway parallel to the existing runway used by the giant transatlantic passenger jets. Getting approval for that option would entail not only overcoming opposition from environmental groups but also changing the federal law that created the Gateway National Recreation Area, which explicitly prohibits expanding the airport into the Bay." SSAS's board opposes any expansion of the airport into Jamaica Bay.



RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070

FUNKY NESTS IN FUNKY PLACES

Editor's note: The following is a March 9th press release from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology:

The Celebrate Urban Birds project at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is bringing back its "Funky Nests in Funky Places" environmental challenge for the third year — the most popular of its seasonal challenges. Participants have sent in hundreds of images over the past two years, showing nests in wreaths, shoes, signs, farm equipment, traffic lights, and many other funky places. Celebrate Urban Birds is a free year-round citizen-science project focused on birds in neighborhood settings. For the 2011 "Funky Nests in Funky Places" challenge, participants may take photos, do a painting, write a story, or shoot a video showing a bird's nest built in some out-of-the-way or out-of-this-world place.



"We've had such fun with this challenge," says project leader Karen Purcell. "The theme really struck a chord with people. You wouldn't believe how many people showed us bird nests in barbecue grills, garages, garden tools, and signs. We've seen bird nests on statues, wind chimes, a cannon, and even on bathroom fixtures. I can't wait to see this year's entries!"

Prizes include bird feeders, nest boxes, sound CDs, guides, posters, and books, including *Nests: Fifty Nests and the Birds That Built Them*, by Sharon Beals. The first 50 entrants will receive a copy of our "Silhouette" poster, and selected images and videos will be posted on the Celebrate Urban Birds website.

The deadline for entries is June 1, 2011. Visit www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration for more information.

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MASSAPEQUA PRESERVE RESERVOIR

Michael Sperring

As this *Skimmer* was going to press, Nassau County was about to begin removing trees, shrubs, and brush from a length of embankment on both sides of the spillway at the southern end of Massapequa Preserve's reservoir. This has been mandated by the Dam Safety Bureau in Albany due to the deteriorating condition of the earthen dam north of Sunrise Highway, which is being undermined by the plants' roots. Trees having diameters greater than four inches will be spared until a removal permit is granted by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

SSAS BIRDATHON 2011 IS COMING!

This year, SSAS will conduct its 24th annual Birdathon! SSAS raises funds through the Birdathon by having members get cash pledges for each species of bird identified during a 24-hour period in May, when the spring migration is at its peak. Birding expertise and big pledges are not necessary; anyone can join one of SSAS's teams locally for all or part of the time, sponsor themselves, and have fun while helping us find species, or you can do your own Birdathon anywhere.

Mark the dates on your calendar — **Friday, May 13** from 5:00 P.M. until **Saturday, May 14** at 5:00 P.M. The rain dates are one week later at the same time. Team details will be in the next *Skimmer*.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2011-2012 SSAS BOARD

South Shore Audubon Society's officers are elected each year. Directors are elected for 3-year terms. The SSAS nominating committee (chaired by Wendy Murbach) will provide a list of recommended candidates in next month's *Skimmer* (our bylaws prohibit Wendy from another term as president). Suggestions may be submitted to the committee by any SSAS member.

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting on May 10, officers and directors will be elected for our next fiscal year, which begins July 1. All members attending that meeting may nominate candidates from the floor and vote. Officers and new directors will be installed at the annual dinner on June 14.

ORGANIC YARD CARE BUSINESSES

Last year, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation announced its Be Green Organic Yards NY initiative. Homeowners and business owners in many areas of the country are choosing organic yard-care management, which can range from a simple regimen of planting and pruning to the "big picture," including plant selection and soil structure. The organic approach focuses on preventing problems before they occur and building a sustainable, healthy landscape. The goal of Be Green is to help create an organically managed environment for people, pets, wildlife, and plants.

Successfully trained businesses sign an agreement with DEC for the right to use the special logo. In return, they agree to avoid using synthetic pesticides and other prohibited materials when providing Be Green services.

Consumers will be able to recognize Be Green businesses by the special state logo which may be included in their advertising. Representatives of businesses that provide Be Green services will carry Be Green identification cards.

Details, including a list of Be Green businesses, are at www.dec.ny.gov/public/65071.htm.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

BIRD WALKS

Steve Schellenger

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:

- Baldwin Gloria Y. Cornfield, Michael H. Kehrer
Bellmore Ann Sutton
Farmingdale William Farrell, E. A. Kirk
Floral Park Albert Saer
Freeport Elsie Colen, Virginia Staub
Garden City Kenneth P. Lamparillo, Michael Persio
Hempstead Nancy Hertle, Sue Zizza
Hicksville William Boyce, Alvin Goldberg, John Todisco
Island Park Claudette Zink
Levittown Vivian S. Bass, Joanne Ferrier, Frances Hanifin
Long Beach Patricia Tarsia
Massapequa Donald Anding, Joan Brandreth
Merrick The Denicolas, Connie Drew, Christine Healy, Laura Sisti
Old Bethpage W. Tillotson
Plainview Michele Edelman, Adrienne Lebensbaum, Celeste V. Lopes
Rockville Centre Sofia Barucco, Mary Moran, Florence B. Schwartzberg
Seaford Teresa Fjellstad, Anna Mergel
Valley Stream Fred Ostner
Wantagh Irene Diller
West Hempstead Michelina Terrington
Woodmere Gertrude Herman



AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201
VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (631) 423-0982

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

- Mar. 27 Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Apr. 3 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
Apr. 10 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Apr. 17 Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
Apr. 24 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
May 1 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
May 8 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)

OUR ELEVENTH ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On Saturday, May 7, SSAS is planning to be in Central Park for our annual (weather permitting) early May morning bird walk organized by Joanne Del Prete. In previous years, we've recorded 45 to 70-plus species in under three hours (45 last year, including 15 warblers). Save the date and see next month's Skimmer for details.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICANTS WANTED

Thanks to the continued and much-appreciated support of longtime member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is again offering two \$750 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarships this spring to college juniors, seniors, or graduate students who are continuing their studies toward a degree in an area of biological or environmental science, such as wildlife management, forestry, animal behavior, ecology, marine biology, oceanography, mammalogy, or ornithology. Our annual college scholarship program began in 1994 and was named in memory of Jerry two years later. For information, call Betsy Gulotta at 546-8841 or send e-mail to gulotte@ncc.edu. Applications are due by April 30 and we typically receive just a few, so apply if you're eligible or please help us spread the word!

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HOUSE PASSES RECKLESS BUDGET BILL

Editor's note: In early March, National Audubon Society President/CEO David Yarnold sent an unprecedented alert to all Audubon chapters (over 460) that is excerpted below. SSAS has signed onto his urgent letter to U.S. Senators.

All of our environmental progress is threatened right now and we need your help... Here's what's at stake: we are fighting to protect the health of the planet. Recent cuts in the House have *zeroed out* many key conservation programs — programs that protect wetlands and provide grants to states for wildlife programs, for starters. Conservation programs under the budget axe also include the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has been cut to the bone. Once the open spaces we seek to protect from development are gone, we can't get them back.

EPA's budget faces a crippling \$3 billion cut, the biggest in history. Some members of Congress are calling for the outright dismantling of the Environmental Protection Agency. The attacks on EPA also extend to one of those keystone laws I mentioned — the Clean Air Act, also under siege. As EPA moves forward to tighten restrictions on things like soot, smog, and mercury — serious pollutants that affect wildlife and people — corporate polluters and their allies in Congress are moving to block EPA. EPA is also using the Clean Air Act as an important tool in controlling greenhouse gas pollution from cars, trucks, large factories, and utilities.

Letter Being Sent to U.S. Senators

The National Audubon Society stands with our chapters and 21 state offices to share our grave concerns about the funding battle that is currently pending in the Senate. The extreme and reckless bill completed by the House, H.R. 1, devastates many of the programs funded by Congress that help provide for clean air, clean water, and vital natural areas for birds, wildlife, and people. These programs are important to all Americans and we hope that as the Senate moves forward you will soundly reject the draconian cuts contained in the House bill.

The House bill guts the broadly supported Land and Water Conservation Fund, cutting funding by 90 percent. This funding provides protection for lands and wildlife

habitat in our National Wildlife Refuges, Parks, Forests, and other public lands. Each day, 6,000 acres of open space are lost in the U.S. to habitat fragmentation and destruction. Once these lands are lost, they can never be recovered.

The entire Environmental Protection Agency is facing a \$3 billion cut to its budget, the largest in 30 years. Such cuts would jeopardize its ability to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and protect our families and the environment.

In addition to the cuts to critical programs, the House bill actually eliminates two programs that are essential to people, birds, and other wildlife. H.R. 1 removes all funding from the North American Wetlands Conservation fund, a critical program that helps preserve wetlands throughout the country. If H.R. 1 were to pass in its current form, it also would remove any federal funding to State Wildlife Grants, an important source of funding in each state for wildlife programs. These grants help states cost-share many conservation activities.

The upcoming weeks are critical to our nation and our environment. I urge you to oppose the irresponsible cuts contained in H.R. 1.

Sincerely, David Yarnold
President/CEO, Audubon

Editor's 2nd note: Appropriations bill H.R. 1 was approved 235-189 along party lines, except for three Republicans (not from NY) who voted no.



Explore the coast
with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

EARTH DAY RESTORATION CLEANUP (Sat., April 23). Help restore Jamaica Bay. Meet at Refuge visitor center at 9 A.M. and we'll direct you to site in Breezy Point. Bring boots, gloves. Call or e-mail Don.

CHINCOTEAGUE REFUGE / ASSATEAGUE NATIONAL SEASHORE (May 12-15). See eagles, falcons, shorebirds, warblers, plus endangered fox squirrel, red fox, Sika deer, river otter, and more. Cost: \$375 incl. 3 nights lodging, safari bus tour, guided hikes, 2 evening programs, plus an "All-you-can-eat" seafood buffet dinner. Car pooling available.

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISE (Sat., May 28, 4-7 P.M.). Learn about history, ecology, and wildlife aboard the 100' boat "Golden Sunshine" from Sheepshead Bay. See egrets, herons, peregrine falcon, osprey, oystercatcher, terns, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Cost: \$45 incl. narrated tour plus wine & cheese, drink, fruit, snacks. With NYC Audubon.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 3-5). Cost: \$375/person incl. 2 nights at Manor House, 5 meals, 5 guided field trips, 2 evening programs, a star watch plus free pickup at the LIRR station in Montauk. Come see orchids and heather in bloom. Activities will include birding, hiking, geology, ecology, and seining for marine life. With NYC Audubon and NYC Sierra Club.

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

**NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER
A Common Grackle, Two European Starlings,
and Me**

Joe Grupp

I was birding on an early March day, one of the very first days that suggested spring after all the cold and snow of the past winter. An overcast morning was giving way to large patches of blue sky and a pleasant warming sun as the morning progressed. For periods of time, the "konk la ree" song of the Red-winged Blackbirds dominated the air over the small pond around which I was walking. Occasionally, but not often, the song of a Northern Cardinal, Carolina Wren, or Song Sparrow drifted through the air, adding to the hint of spring that was still a few weeks away. Finishing my loop around the pond, there was a lull in the birdsong except for the call note of a Common Grackle.

I looked around as I walked and found the bird perched not very high in a nearby tree. Knowing that it was a Common Grackle, I walked on until the "chack" of its call note, a pause, then another "chack," over and over again, motivated me to take a look at it through my binoculars. I was astounded when I first glimpsed the bird through the glasses and saw the color of its upper breast, throat, and head. It was a brilliant deep blue which brought to mind, except for its bright iridescence, the deep blue color of an Indigo Bunting. The deep blue completely masked the dark color of the feathers. The color of the bird was not what one usually sees.

Knowing that the iridescent blue color I was seeing was not the true color of the feathers, but was dependent on the relative position of where I was standing, where the bird was perched, and the brightness and exact position of the sun in the sky, and after the astonishment of my observation waned, I took a few steps to either side of where I was standing. Each time I did so, the iridescent color and the area of the bird it covered changed to the various degrees of purple iridescence that one usually sees when viewing a Common Grackle in good light. I quickly returned to my original position and spent some time observing the bird and its brilliant color. While doing so, a European Starling flew in and perched on a branch close to the Grackle, then a second Starling on a branch near the first.

The Starlings astounded me a second time as they were washed in a soft yellow iridescent color that gave way to green as it approached the rear of the birds. The yellow and green completely masked the birds' darker feathers. Like the Grackle, the two birds' color was not what was usually seen. The masking was so strong that while studying the birds, I had to look really hard to see the small white speckles on their bodies. Under normal conditions those speckles are easy to see. Just as with the Grackle, when I took a few steps to either side of where I originally stood, their yellow and green iridescent color diminished and did not dominate the dark color of the birds. Standing in my original position, the field of view through my binoculars showed three birds next to each other, all faced in the

same direction — a deep vibrant blue (at least the breast throat and head) Common Grackle and two yellow-and-green European Starlings.

The birds left one at a time, beginning with the Grackle, and deep in thought I did also. My thoughts were about the hundreds, even thousands, of Grackles and Starlings I had seen during my years of birding, and that I had never seen their iridescence as brilliant or saw it mask the real darker color of the birds as intensely as I had just witnessed. I thought also about how astronomically great the odds were for the sun, the birds and me to be in the exact position necessary for the observation to have occurred. If the birds were on different branches, or I was a few steps away from where I was, or the sun was higher or lower in the sky or even dulled by thin clouds, the brilliant observation could not have occurred. Whatever those odds were, they were achieved in the short moment of time of my observation and my world for that moment became a Common Grackle, two European Starlings, and me.

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD WATCH GUIDES

For quite a few years, SSAS's conservation chairperson, Jim Brown, has been obtaining updated national and northeast "Seafood Watch" pocket guides for distribution at our meetings. These guides and others have been available from a variety of aquariums and environmental organizations (including Audubon's former Living Oceans program), and are at www.seafoodwatch.org. They categorize seafood as "best choices" (the green list) "good alternatives" (yellow), and "avoid" (red). The following is taken from the January 2011 northeast guide:

Why do your seafood choices matter? Worldwide, the demand for seafood is increasing. Yet many populations of the large fish we enjoy eating are overfished and, in the U.S., we import over 80% of our seafood to meet the demand. Destructive fishing and fish farming practices only add to the problem. By purchasing fish caught or farmed using environmentally friendly practices, you're supporting healthy, abundant oceans.



You Can Make a Difference. Support ocean-friendly seafood in three easy steps:

① Purchase seafood from the green list or, if unavailable, the yellow list. Or look for the Marine Stewardship Council blue eco-label in stores and restaurants.

② When you buy seafood, ask where your seafood comes from and whether it was farmed or wild-caught.

③ Tell your friends about Seafood Watch. The more people that ask for ocean-friendly seafood, the better!

SSAS ANNUAL DINNER

Kerry Da Silva

Save the date! Our 40th annual dinner will take place on **Tuesday, June 14th** at the Coral House in Baldwin. Look for details in next month's *Skimmer*.

SSAS BACKYARD BIRD SURVEY

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.

To participate, simply record the birds that you see in your yard, neighborhood, or at your feeder; the date, time, and the number or approximate number of each species; and fill in the table provided below. If you have more recordings than lines in the table, please attach an additional piece of paper to the table and submit the additional recordings in the same manner. 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. Additional survey sheets are available at SSAS events.

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

<i>Dates:</i> From _____ to _____							
Date	Time	Species	No.	Date	Time	Species	No.
				Submitted by: _____			
				Address: _____			
				Phone number: _____			
				Please send to: Mr. J. Grupp, Research Chairperson			
				660 Edgemere Ave., Uniondale NY 11553			
				or			
				E-mail: Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com			

