OUTH HORE SIMMER

VOLUME 43, NUMBER 8 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

MAY-AUGUST 2013

NEXT MEETING

John Gaglione

DATE: Tuesday, May 14, 2013

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

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

SPEAKER: Rudy Gelis

TOPIC: Birding and Conservation in Ecuador

In the past decade, Ecuador has become more accessible for ecotourism than ever before due to infrastructure improvements, plus numerous Ecuadorians are now feeding birds, making great birding trails and gardens. This month's program will explore the firm link between birding, tourism, and local efforts in conservation and environmental education. A combination of excellent photos and brief videos, the presentation is based on over a decade of living and working in Ecuador.

Our guest speaker, Rudy Gelis, earned his biology degree at Berea College in Kentucky, studied nesting Andean Condors in Argentina and penguins in the Falkland Islands, and has been a resident of Quito, Ecuador for over a decade. In Ecuador he has studied the nests and breeding behavior of Long-wattled Umbrellabird, Red-winged Wood-Rail, Fiery-throated Fruiteater, five species of antpitta, Masked and Bluish Flowerpiercers, Barred Hawk, plus many dozens more. He started Pluma Verde Tours (www.plumaverdetours.com) to offer tailor-made itineraries for both bird-watching and wildlife trips. Applying his strong background in botany and great interest in all of the natural world, Rudy leads birding and natural history tours throughout much of Ecuador and Peru. Join us!

Pre-Meeting Book Discussion. Arrive a half-hour early to participate in a discussion led by R. U. Abyrdar II (aka Paul Stessel) of the book that he reviewed in the previous *Skimmer.* This month's book is *Of a Feather* by Scott Weidensaul.

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 under-construction gas station that borders Sunrise Highway.



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\$\text{\$\text{Shade-grown coffee protects rainforests!}
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SSAS'S 42ND ANNUAL DINNER

Join us for an evening of good food and good company. Our gathering will be at Pompei Restaurant in West Hempstead on **Tuesday**, **June 11**. The cocktail hour will begin at 6:30 P.M. As usual, awards will be presented and raffle drawings will occur. Your dinner registration form is inserted in this newsletter. Join us!

Jim Brown

On March 10, I and four other members of the South Shore Audubon Society (Rich Kopsco, Diana Ihmann, Jerry Rivers, and Marianne McCarthy) took a bus trip to Pennsylvania to see firsthand the fracking sites in that state. The trip was organized by Food and Water Watch, our coalition partner in the fight against high volume hydraulic fracturing. About 30 people from Long Island were on the trip, which began very early on the first day of daylight saving time and ended back on Long Island in the evening - a long day. Other groups represented on our bus were the Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society, the Long Island Sierra Club, and the North Shore Land Alliance. In Pennsylvania our bus was joined by some young people from Binghamton. If fracking ever comes to New York, it will come to the Binghamton area first—they are on the front lines.

On the trip we visited residents of Dimock and Montrose, communities in Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania that have experienced the negative impacts of fracking. To see the effects of this extreme gas drilling process was eye-

opening. Fracking has ruined their water and marred their landscape. The only drinking water that is now left to many residents has a strong vile odor and is not potable. Those whose water has been contaminated must now purchase bottled water to drink. A stream we viewed appeared not normal, being of a strange vibrant green color. One woman showed us a bowl coated with silica and other toxic material, substances that she had skimmed from a pond on her land, deposited on the top of her pond by gas drilling activities. The gently rolling hills of the region are now blighted with industrial structures and swaths of clear-cut land that permit the passage of numerous gas lines. The gas industry has invaded a peaceful rural area, bringing noise and pollution. Huge derricks, gas wells, noisy compressors, and pipeline construction are everywhere. The fragmentation of forests adversely affects wildlife, including birds, as habitat is drastically altered. Animals such as deer routinely come into contact with toxic pollutants, sometimes licking and ingesting poisonous salt-laden deposits around gas industry facilities.

Residents of the Marcellus Shale region of Pennsylvania who have experienced the ravages of fracking urged us New Yorkers to stand firm and prevent this extreme type of gas extraction from coming to our state. Their lands and their lives have been ruined by this industry, and they want to see the gas companies stopped. Some of those harmed by fracking have received compensatory payments from Cabot Gas — the company operating in Susquehanna County — but only on the condition that they honor gag order agreements. Economic and environmental damage is occurring in Pennsylvania. If big money is being made on this gas drilling, it is not staying in Dimock and Montrose. The communities are far from rich, and their land is becoming impoverished.

The trip to the gas fields of Pennsylvania, a region portrayed in the recent film "Gasland," was certainly disturbing in some ways. It was painful to see the devastation wrought on the land, people, and wildlife of this neighboring state. But it was also heartening to witness the raw courage and resilience of the people, as they met with us and strongly presented their case and their desire to see fracking banned.

Fracking and LNG (liquefied natural gas), as important environmental issues confronting us, have now merged. Clean Ocean Action and other groups including our own chapter had warned some time ago that LNG facilities were increasingly being proposed with the idea of gas export in mind. Gas from the Marcellus Shale deposits is not needed for "energy independence" for the United States, but rather is increasingly sought for purposes of export to other countries around the globe. Natural gas currently brings the highest prices and profits in places like Europe and Asia. On December 20, 2012, President Obama signed a law permitting deepwater LNG ports to export, not just import, natural gas. This connection between fracking and LNG was also evidenced in a Janu-

ary 2013 leaked draft report of a New York State energy plan that mentioned the export potential of LNG. In a small victory for environmentalists, this section was removed from the final draft report. What this means for us is that as we fight fracking we also combat LNG facilities off our coast and vice versa. Any constructed LNG facility can readily be oriented toward export of fracked natural gas. Groups who previously have concerned themselves with combating a greedy and voracious gas industry on land are now working with groups who have as their main focus the preservation of our oceans. Now we are all working closer together on the same problem — how to prevent the fossil fuel industry, powerful as it is, from ruining our environment as it pursues its own monetary interests.

Governor Cuomo remains an important factor regarding these important issues. He can ban fracking in New



York and he has the power to halt the LNG facility planned by Liberty Natural Gas just 19 miles due south of Jones Beach. Continue to call Governor Cuomo at 866-961-3208 and urge him to ban fracking. Also

urge him to veto any LNG facility planned for our waters. Speak up for our land and our ocean!

Editor's note: On March 6, the New York State Assembly approved A.5424, a bill that would establish a two-year moratorium on fracking, by a vote of 103–40. Of the nine members whose districts include SSAS's territory, only four voted yes. The bill (as S.4236) awaits action by the NYS Senate's Environmental Conservation Committee.

WHAT TO DO WITH DISPLACED YOUNG WILDLIFE

Most young wildlife that you come across are not orphaned. The parents are temporarily away finding food or are staying away to avoid attracting predators and will later return. If you are concerned that a bird or animal may be orphaned, watch from a distance for a while to see if the parents return. If you have to chase it, it doesn't need your help!

A nestling songbird is only partially feathered and cannot yet run, hop, or move about easily. It should be returned to the nest. If you can't find or reach the nest, make one from a berry box or strainer (something with drainage), line it with grasses, and secure it up in a tree close to where you found the bird. The parents will continue to feed it.

If you are certain a young songbird is orphaned, leave a message for Volunteers for Wildlife at 674-0982 for assistance and follow the emergency instructions at www.volunteersforwildlife.org.

JOIN OUR BIRDATHON!

Jim Remsen

This year SSAS will conduct its 26th 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 height and over 125 species may be identified in our area.

If you aren't going with my team, why not try your own Birdathon? Do a variation on the usual theme of seeing as many species as you can during the count period. Use your imagination. Limit yourself to your back-

yard, a favorite park or preserve, "couch potato" Birdathon. (For this one, you count as many bird species as you can on television during the 24 hours!)



Mark the dates on your calendar if you haven't already — Friday, May 10 from 5:00 P.M. until Saturday, May 11 at 5:00 P.M. — and join us (or go it alone, in which case you choose the turf). Birding expertise is not necessary and your teammates will be happy to point out the birds for you. Rain dates are one week later at the same time.

Please note: In the event of questionable weather, I will decide whether or not to cancel the Birdathon by 3 P.M. on Friday, May 10. If you have any uncertainty about whether it will be postponed, please call me at (631) 957-0949 or (631) 748-8942 by 3 o'clock.

We need Birdathon prizes! As we have done in the past, we will make everyone who brings in at least one pledge (sponsoring yourself counts) eligible for a prize drawing to be held at our annual dinner (attendance not required). If you would like to donate a prize, please contact me. Our schedule of starting places is as follows:

Friday, May 11 at 5 P.M. Meet us at Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot). We will go to Jones Beach's Coast Guard station next, heading home after sunset.

Saturday, May 12. Meet us at Mill Pond, Merrick Road, Wantagh at 5:45 A.M. Other planned birding locations are Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parking lot) at approximately 8:30 A.M., followed by Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area and Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Please try to notify me so that we will know to expect you.

Sponsors are the heart of the Birdathon. These are people who agree to give you 25¢, \$1, or any amount for each species you identify (they may also give you a flat pledge not based on number of species). Ask anyone you know, and don't forget yourself!

Note on Submitting Pledges. Pledges must be received by June 10 to be eligible for prizes. Pledge forms, if you want them, are available at SSAS events or via e-mail to mssperling@optonline.net. Send pledges to James Remsen, Jr., 8 Venetian Blvd., Lindenhurst, NY 11757. Good luck!



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.

Apr. 28	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)	
May 5*	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner	
May 12	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north	
	side of Merrick Rd.)	
May 19	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge	
May 26	Memorial Day Weekend — No Walk	
June 2	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern	
	State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)	
June 9	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside	
	Summer Break	
Aug. 18	Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)	
Aug. 25	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside	
this are the Armantian adding last month?		

*Please note: As mentioned in last month's Skimmer, SSAS is participating in Screen-Free Week with a special activity for children on our May 5 bird walk. For further information and to register your children, please contact Marilyn Hametz at 799-7189 or marilynexpl@yahoo.com.

REMINDER: ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On **Saturday, May 4**, SSAS is planning to be in Central Park for our 13th annual (weather permitting) early May morning bird walk. As usual, Chris Cooper (who was featured in last year's HBO documentary, "Birders: The



Central Park Effect," and traces his birding roots to SSAS) will lead us through the twisting, hilly maze of the Ramble and adjoining areas of the park. In previous years, we've recorded 45 to 70-plus species in un-

der three hours [48 last year, including Chestnut-sided Warbler (pictured) and only 8 other warbler species].

The cost of the walk is \$5, which is a tax-deductible donation to SSAS (refundable if we rain out or you cancel in advance). Please send your check payable to South Shore Audubon Society, along with your phone number and e-mail address, to Joanne Del Prete, 20 Ceil Pl., Bethpage, NY 11714-4503 (phone 433-0739, jdelprete47@optonline.net).

A group of us will be aboard the local Babylon line train that is due in Penn Station at 8:12; you can look for Joanne toward the west end of the platform in Massapequa, boarding at 7:12. We plan to depart from Penn's LIRR waiting room at 8:30 to meet Chris at Belvedere Castle at around 9:15. Please buy a MetroCard for the subway. The walk usually ends around noon. You can bring lunch or buy it in the park, or head back home after the walk if you prefer. Joanne's cell (476-3761) will be on that day only. Join us!

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II

This month's installment is the last of the season. You will have all summer to catch up on your bird reading. They're all fun to read! This month I'm reviewing Soaring with Fidel: An Osprey Odyssey from Cape Cod to Cuba and Beyond by David Gessner. My thanks go out to Anne Mehlinger for recommending this book to me for review. So, here goes...

The author has written a very engaging book about raptor migration—focusing on his beloved Ospreys. They are fascinating birds, filled with personality and character. He pursues them down the Eastern Seaboard

as they migrate the "thermal highway" that is the ospreys' road for their winter migration into Central and South America. The book is a triumphant adventure of Gessner's own 7,000 mile migration into Cuba and

eventually South America. What he does and whom he meets along the way make this a particularly fascinating read. It is both funny and authentic at the same time. A thrilling birding adventure!

While he does focus on only one species, the effort is about bird migration and the passion for birding as well. As he thinks migration, the vexing question for Mr. Gessner is: Why do Ospreys migrate to Central and South America every winter? And what do they do when they arrive? His tracking took him on one specific route, from Cape Cod to Cuba and back. While he delves into the science of tracking migrating birds, it's his car and binoculars approach to the subject that will hold your interest. He spends many a day watching Ospreys and chatting with other birdwatchers, both known and unknown. His writing is beautiful and spiced with grace and humor. While the author describes the birds' antics, he also writes about the people he meets on his journey. These assorted birders are a kind, colorful, sometimes brilliant, nature-loving group. Gessner provides the reader with a thoughtful and loving examination of these "fish hawks," whom he portrays as beautiful creatures.

This is a true-life adventure in which he blends ornithology, international intrigue, beer, smokes, and derring-do into a terrific book that teaches us all to devour life while at the same time pursuing science. This book is a wonderful page-turner that you won't be able to put down! His memorable descriptions of Osprey behavior will brighten your birding passion. These adventures, following a variety of Ospreys, made incredible reading for me! This book has given me wings; read it and ENJOY!!

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SEE ANY BANDED DYSTERCATCHERS?

Audubon New York's Long Island Bird Conservation Coordinator, Kerri Dikun, asks us to keep an eye out for the 3000+American Oystercatchers that have been banded since 1999. You can help promote the conservation of this Atlantic Coast species by reporting bands to the Working Group at http://amoywg.org/banding-re-sighting.

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JAMAICA BAY SUNSET CRUISES (Sat., May 25 and Sun., June 23, 5–8 P.M.). Meet at Pier 2 in Sheepshead Bay. Enjoy narrated cruise aboard 100-foot "Golden Sunshine." Visit backwater marshes near JFK Airport & learn about 13,000-acre Wildlife Refuge. See nesting peregrine falcons, ospreys, egrets, shorebirds & waterfowl. Cost: \$55 incl. refreshments.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 7-9). Cost: \$385 includes 2 nights lodging at the luxurious Manor House (indoor/outdoor heated pools, jacuzzi, spacious lobby), 5 full meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, and star watch.

CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH (August 15–18). A fun-packed, nature-focused weekend in beautiful Cape Ann, Massachusetts. We hope to see pelagic species such as sooty and greater shearwater, Wilson's storm petrel, and common eider — not to mention minke and humpback whales, basking shark, and family pods of dolphins. Includes three nights' stay in historic Gloucester, a half-day whale watch boat trip, an evening Essex River cruise, easy canoeing on Ipswich River, birding at Parker River Wildlife Refuge, guided hikes, plus a lobster dinner. Cost: \$395. Limited to 40. Leaders: Don Riepe, Mickey Cohen.

For information and free field trip brochure, call/write Don Riepe, (917) 371-8577, donriepe@gmail.com, 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; www.alsnyc.org.

NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER Cape Henlopen State Park: The Rest of the Trip

Joe Grupp

Last month, in this column, I wrote of a single species that we observed at Cape Henlopen State Park in Delaware, the Brown-headed Nuthatch. That species was a focus and a highlight on that trip. Fortunately, there were also other interesting observations to be made that day.

The day was clear, warm in the sun and a bit chilly but winter-jacket comfortable in the shade, a perfect-weather late winter day. Much of the time while we were there, a number of Turkey Vultures drifted fairly low over the dunes, beaches, and pine-shrouded uplands. Off and on they caught our attention as they teetered from side to side, as Turkey Vultures do when gliding through the air. For most of the day they were not part of our focus but were just part of what was there.

At one point later in the day, we ventured down to the beach that edges Delaware Bay. While we were observing



a few species of birds floating on the bay, I happened to notice that a number of the Turkey Vultures were landing, one by one, along the beach not too distant from us. I was a bit surprised that a few of the birds stayed relatively still, resting, while others began to walk along the wrack line left by the tide, moving its

mostly organic materials with their bills. Occasionally they paused and appeared to be eating some small bits of most likely dead marine life that they found there. After a while, one by one, most of the flock settled down on the beach with the other resting members of the flock that then numbered about two dozen birds.

My concentration then focused on the few Turkey Vultures that were still active and slowly getting closer and closer to the waterline. The water near the shore was obviously very shallow, as evidenced by a few naturally deposited piles of sand that appeared as small islands or peninsulas jutting out into the bay and being washed by a few of the bay's waves. One of the vultures eventually walked out onto one of the small sandbars while foraging and then, to my amazement, continued walking right into the water like a heron or egret might. Eventually at least two more followed at different locations along the shore. Standing there then, and as I write now, I have no idea if wading into the water is a common behavior for a Turkey Vulture but I do know that it was a major surprise to me.

We had other good observations on our trip. There was a small flock of Eastern Bluebirds that were accompanied by some Yellow-rumped Warblers that were in constant motion near an old gun emplacement that now serves as a Hawk Watch site in season. We spotted a Bald Eagle resting on a sandbar near where the vultures walked and Carolina Chickadees flitting among the pines, to mention a few of our sightings.

Leaving the park, we began our trip home by taking the ferry from Lewes, Delaware to Cape May, New Jersey. We birded from the deck of the ferry, as a few other birders also did, during the crossing of Delaware Bay. Black Scoters were the theme for the crossing, hundreds of them. They floated on the bay in rafts and strings, and were scared into flight as the ferry approached them but was still a fair distance away. Those nearest the boat rose into the air first, followed by the rest of the birds in a chainlike reaction. A few Surf Scoters flew by in small flocks of two to six birds, the white markings on their heads heralding their approach. We spotted a few more seabirds on the crossing but the crossing was really all about the Black Scoters.

Disembarking from the ferry, we made a quick stop for a fast-food supper where the hot coffee and hot fries helped to warm bodies that got slightly chilled while birding from the deck of the ferry. Then we headed to the Garden State Parkway for the 3½ hour drive home in the darkness that then enveloped us. It was definitely more fun birding than doing that drive!

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 e-mail Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com.

I LOVE MY PARK DAY AT HEMPSTEAD LAKE

Saturday, May 4 (also our Central Park date) is New York's annual I Love My Park Day. SSAS will be joining the Hempstead Lake State Park Alliance from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. in a cleanup of the shoreline of Northwest Pond, with pick sticks, gloves, and trash bags provided. Information and the registration form are at http://nysparks.com/events/event.aspx?e=31-7335.0. Registration is at the trail head in the parking field on the east side of Eagle Avenue, just north of Southern State Parkway Exit 18.

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BE A GOOD EGG: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Kerri Dikun

The beaches of New York and New Jersey provide critical habitat for migratory and beach-nesting bird species throughout spring, summer, and fall. Ensuring that these birds are undisturbed so that they can nest, rest, and refuel is important to their survival. To help reduce dis-

turbances to beach-nesting and migratory shorebirds, Audubon New York is participating in a "Be a Good Egg" project.

Adapted from work pioneered by Audubon North Carolina, this project

aims to use education, social marketing, and citizen science to decrease human threats to shorebirds and seabirds while on our beaches.

Audubon New York is currently seeking skilled birders to participate in shorebird migration surveys on the beaches of Long Island. We are also looking for outreach volunteers (no birding skills required) to help us take education and outreach straight to the beaches to help support Piping Plovers, Least Terns, and other beach-nesting species.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at KDikun@audubon.org or 922-3200 (Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary), ext. 31. To learn more about the "Be a Good Egg" project and to take the "share the beach" pledge, please visit www.goodeggnjny.org or www.facebook.com/GoodEggNJNY.

PLOVER VOLUNTEERS WANTED

John Zarudsky

The Town of Hempstead's Department of Conservation and Waterways needs your help in ensuring the protection and survival of Piping Plovers, Least and Common Terns, and Black Skimmers that nest between Point Lookout and Atlantic Beach. Audubon volunteers will help prevent disturbances to nesting areas, will record the presence of plover chicks and any incidents of predation, and can give beachgoers educational literature pertaining to Piping Plovers and terns. Help is particularly needed on evenings, weekends, and holidays from May through August. If you're interested and are able to volunteer regularly, please contact SSAS member John Zarudsky, Conservation Biologist, at 486-5272.

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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 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:

Seaford Rose Marie Mintzer Uniondale Mildred Isherwood Valley Stream... Andrew Mando

NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2013-2014 SSAS BOARD

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting on May 14, officers and directors will be elected for our next fiscal year. All members attending that meeting may nominate candidates from the floor and vote. The SSAS nominating committee (chaired by Wendy Murbach) recommends the following candidates: President, Jim Brown; Vice President, Marilyn Hametz; Treasurer, Joe Landesberg; Corresponding Secretary, Therese Lucas; and Directors, Emma Carpenter and Rich Kopsco (through June 2016).

Directors & Officers Insurance. In accordance with state law, this paragraph informs our members prior to the election that SSAS obtained D&O insurance for its board at an annual cost of \$575 via a one-year policy from Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company that was renewed on October 18, 2012.

HURRICANE SANDY AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from a letter sent to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers NY District Commander Paul Owen by Audubon New York.

As the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) prepares to move forward with numerous storm recovery projects in the coming months, and begins to develop a long-term coastal resiliency plan for our region, we are very interested in working with you to ensure these projects maximize protection of both human and natural infrastructure.

It is clear that the decisions we make in response to the damage will have lasting impacts on our environment. To minimize these impacts, we ask that the USACE prioritizes a mix of 'hard' engineering innovations and enhancement of natural infrastructure and barriers. This balanced, complementary approach to storm risk reduction, which promotes protection and restoration of natural features like wetlands, marshes, dunes, barrier islands, and beaches, provides a cost-effective solution that reduces flood risk to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, while enhancing ecologically and economically important coastal habitat.

New York's beaches and salt marshes provide globally significant habitats for birds and other wildlife, supporting some of the world's highest diversities of migrating and breeding bird congregations. For example, Long Island supports 10% of the global population

of the federally threatened, state endangered Piping Plover (pictured), as well as the largest breeding colony of the federally

endangered Roseate Terns in North America and notable numbers of breeding Common and Least Terns – both statethreatened species.

We have observed significant changes to beach, dune, and island habitat throughout the region that have occurred as a result of this storm. Many traditional areas that provided habitat for federally and state-listed species have changed, but new habitat was also created by the loss of vegetation and deposition of sand. Piping Plover populations in the NY–NJ recovery unit have declined 27% from 2007–11. Productivity in 2012 was the lowest since 1986. With proper stewardship, the altered shoreline and new habitat present an opportunity to enhance populations of beach-nesting birds and, by working with partners across the region, there could be the opportunity to meet recovery goals for the endangered Piping Plover while also providing additional future protection for coastal communities and infrastructure.

The proposed USACE projects (i.e., Jones Inlet to East Rockaway Inlet, Fire Island to Montauk Point, Rockaway Inlet to Norton Point, and East Rockaway Inlet to Rockaway Inlet) include areas where Piping Plovers nest or have nested historically. As such, we ask that USACE adhere to the following guidelines and principles as you move forward with recovery and rebuilding:

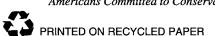
- *Reference and follow closely the recommendations of the recovery plans for federally listed species and the applicable biological opinions, including establishment of buffers around known nesting sites and forage areas for beach nesting birds.
- * Promote natural processes and avoid hard solutions, such as creating artificial dunes or erecting sand fencing and vegetation plantings, in natural areas like state parks. In particular, we strongly support the current decision to monitor the breach at Old Inlet rather than close it.
- * Avoid engineering projects that impact inlets, and hard structures such as seawalls, riprap, jetties, or revetments should not be used in or around inlet habitats.
- * Prioritize offshore sediment sources for beach nourishment/restoration projects. Flood tidal shoals, inlet spits, or other sand sources around inlets should not be mined for sediment – removal of such sediment causes damage to important spawning areas for invertebrates, and disrupts critical roosting and foraging habitat for birds; moreover, such actions may lead to increased erosion on adjacent shores.
- * Prohibit dredging of new navigational channels and in undisturbed inlets and shoals.
- *For existing navigation channels, deposit maintenance dredged material within the inlet; near-shore placement may minimize impacts on beach and dune habitats, while more closely mimicking natural sand bypassing processes.
- *Off-Road Vehicle use in reconstruction projects should be prohibited in beach and inlet areas during nesting or critical migration periods and use should also be limited when areas are used by overwintering species.
- *Hard stabilizing structures (e.g., seawalls, revetments, jetties, riprap, etc.) should only be considered in situations concerning heavily developed lands.
- * Closely monitor nesting activity in newly created habitats formed by Sandy to determine where nesting will occur this season and to protect these areas during recovery efforts.

On the topic of monitoring, we stand ready to work with your agency, as well as state and federal partners, to aggressively monitor and assess potential habitat, identify and protect new nesting areas, and increase outreach in communities that are unfamiliar with sharing the shore with beach-nesting birds to educate them on the environmental and economic importance of protecting these species and natural infrastructure. We understand that the USACE will need to undertake a monitoring program as part of many recovery projects, and we are well positioned to assist with this if funding was available to hire seasonal technicians to monitor recovery projects so that impacts to priority beach nesting birds are reduced and limited.

South Shore Audubon Society P.O. Box 31 Freeport, NY 11520-0031

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Americans Committed to Conservation



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Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$20 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 by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get \$0 from your dues 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.

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