

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 44, NUMBER 5 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 2014

NEXT MEETING

John Gaglione

DATE: Tuesday, February 11, 2014
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
144 W. Merrick Rd. [at S. Ocean Ave.]
SPEAKERS: Tom Stephenson & Scott Whittle
TOPIC: The Warbler Guide

At SSAS's next monthly meeting, our guest speakers will be the authors of *The Warbler Guide*, which was published by Princeton University Press last summer.

Tom Stephenson has been birding "since he was a kid." His articles and photographs have appeared in many places, including *Birding* and *Bird Watcher's Digest*, the 17-volume *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, the in-progress 8-volume *Handbook of the Mammals of the World*, and at *surfbirds.com*. He has lectured and guided groups across the U.S. and Asia. A musician and former Director of Technology at Roland Corporation, Tom has worked with several Grammy and Academy Award winners.

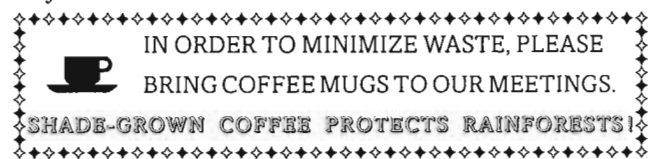
Scott Whittle lives in Cape May, NJ; has 20 years of experience as a professional photographer and educator; and is a MacDowell Colony fellow as a visual artist. In 2008 Scott became the Big Year record holder in New York State while locating 350 bird species, a record that lasted for three years.

Tom and Scott's book covers all 56 warbler species in the U.S. and Canada. It includes over 1,000 photos, visual quick finders, detailed descriptions, song and call finders, sonograms of the songs, field exercises, identification strategies, quizzes, and lots more. See www.thewarblerguide.com for more info and 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 *A Supremely Bad Idea: Three Mad Birders and Their Quest to See it All* by Luke Dempsey.

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.



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.*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Climate Change, Eagles, and Owls – Welcome to Winter!

Jim Brawn

My last column dealt with a very busy fall season, and the current one deals with the beginning of what appears will be an active winter season for the South Shore Audubon Society. The new year has begun with rapid and oscillating weather changes, from warm and balmy days to extremely frigid ones. Today, as I begin writing this message, the weather forecasters say we will finally be leaving the cursed "Arctic vortex," a weather phenomenon that has brought us temperatures not seen here in many years. The recent cold weather has, of course, brought out the whole predictable (pun intended) panoply of climate-change deniers, who refuse to admit that rapid and extreme changes in weather — climate chaos — are caused by global warming. 2013 was an extremely warm year and 2014, despite the Arctic vortex of the last few days, may be as hot as the last.

In our fight against climate change, members of South Shore Audubon attended a rally in Albany on January 8 to urge Governor Cuomo to Ban Fracking Now! Three members of our chapter, Bill Youngfert, Jerry Rivers, and I, accompanied a group of “fractivists” on a bus trip to Albany organized by our anti-fracking coalition partner, Food and Water Watch. Over 2,000 protesters, representing numerous communities and environmental organizations from all over New York State, converged on the Capitol to demand that Governor Cuomo ban hydraulic fracturing in our state. That particular day and site was chosen because it was the day and place our Governor delivered his annual State of the State address.

Hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking” as it is popularly called, is an extreme method employed by gas companies to break up shale rock and extract natural gas. Toxic chemicals, sand, and huge amounts of water are forced under pressure into the earth, cracking the layers of shale, to release the gas. Fracking is environmentally damaging, wasting water, polluting water supplies and the air. The process negatively affects the health of people and wildlife, and has caused earthquakes. The pipelines necessitated by the fracking process require the removal of trees and the fragmentation of forests, harming important bird habitat. Perhaps most importantly, more gas extraction, with fracking also releasing methane into the atmosphere, only contributes to more global warming. Global warming, in turn, creates climate change, aka climate chaos. To date, hydrofracking has not occurred in New York State. So far, the South Shore Audubon Society and the many other actively concerned groups and individuals fighting fracking have been successful. We hope that the Governor continues to hear our message of “Not one well!” Continue calling Governor Cuomo (866-961-3208), especially on Mondays, to urge him to do the right thing and ban fracking in New York.

Raptor watchers have been very active this winter as well. Three Bald Eagles sighted and surveyed by SSAS have excited many people on Long Island. Our chapter’s Research Committee, headed by Joe Grupp, has long surveyed, on a regular basis, the birds at Hempstead Lake State Park. The story of the eagles was covered by *Newsday* on page one (“Eagles Have Landed on LI”) and by several TV and radio outlets. Kudos and thanks to Joe, Steve Schellenger, John Gaglione, Sy Schiff, and the entire Research group! The group not only reported the excitement of the eagles themselves, but spoke to the public’s need to respect the birds, to the necessity of observing proper bird-watching behavior and etiquette so that the eagles might stay with us the entire winter. *Newsday* reported that on the Thursday it accompanied SSAS on its survey of Hempstead Lake State Park, we documented 255 birds from 32 species, including one of the eagles. The work of the Research Committee is indeed phenomenal, not only at Hempstead Lake, but at the numerous other

locations it consistently surveys on the South Shore. [Editor’s note: A two-minute video with interviews of Joe, Steve, John, and others is/was online at <http://fios1news.com/longisland/node/50930>; you don’t need to be a subscriber to view it.]

Eagles on Long Island have been competing for attention this winter with the many majestic Snowy Owls that have appeared along our shore. The irruption of these Arctic raptor visitors has been uncanny and unusual this year. Many birders, including those who have joined some of our bird walks, have been fortunate to see these beautiful birds this season. A Snowy Owl was even spotted on the sand at Long Beach! When word got out that the authorities at JFK Airport had shot and killed several Snowy Owls, the outcry from Audubon members and other concerned citizens was strong and immediate; the airport stopped the killing and declared it would institute a program used by other airports to humanely capture and release the precious northern visitors.

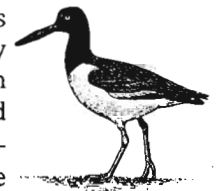


Winter is in full swing, and I urge everyone to enjoy the season and all that SSAS has to offer during this time — whether it be our bird walks, bird surveys, membership meetings and programs, or environmental activism — Join us!

FOR THE BIRDS! VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Editor’s note: The paragraphs below were forwarded to me by Marilyn Hametz, who wrote: “For The Birds! is a TR Sanctuary program in the Hempstead, Roosevelt, and Westbury schools. Volunteers assisting in this program add to its success. I have received a lot of satisfaction and enjoyed volunteering in the program.” See <http://ny.audubon.org/birds-li> for information about this long-running program for children in elementary schools, which in recent years has used a grant to extend its outreach to school districts with many needy students.

The FTB! staff will be holding a volunteer/staff training on **Saturday, February 8** from 10 A.M. to 12 P.M. As many of you know, our program has been focusing more and more on priority species such as Piping Plover and American Oystercatcher (pictured). This training will focus on some of the many changes we have made to the program to accommodate those species and Audubon’s new Strategic Plan. Refreshments will be served. If you are able to attend, please let me know as soon as you can. Also, if you know anyone that might be interested in joining our volunteer team, please forward this to them.



Contact: Richard Santangelo, For the Birds! Education Coordinator; Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center; 134 Cove Road, Oyster Bay, NY 11771; 516-922-3200 ext. 22.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

Our new members since the last *Skimmer* are:

- Baldwin Mary Ann Kloberg, Philomena Visconti
- Bellmore Joseph Langone, Y. Cassese
- Bethpage Doris Emmett
- East Meadow Joanne Barker, Gregory Decampi, Alan Densen
- Elmont Reinhard Schimek
- Farmingdale R. Berger, Sarah Guadagnino
- Floral Park Margaret Devine, Richard Ulrich
- Freeport Elaine Feldman
- Garden City Janet Blohm, Edith Gerber, Jacqueline
..... Reinhard, Jacqueline B. Sandler
- Glen Oaks Virginia Kenmore
- Hicksville Joseph Aversano, Pamela Campagna, Ted
..... Grant, Patricia Nagle
- Island Park Barbara G. Seelig
- Levittown Gate Lane Corp., Shelly Maines, Diana
..... Peragallo, Marcella Sullivan, Genna Tudda
- Lido Beach Nancy Burton, Vincent McGowan
- Long Beach George Bickford, James Dolan, Mary A. Meyer,
..... Irma Rosenson
- Lynbrook Steven Greendlinger
- Malverne Paul Chen
- Massapequa Stuart D. Edwards, Florence Johnston
- Massapequa Park .. Socrates Georgantas, Susan Gibbons
- Merrick Judith Bilello, Carol Foster, Mildred Young
- Oceanside Martha Grimley, Leslie A. Steinman
- Plainview Jonathan Leffel, Julie Nelsen
- Rockville Centre Karen Bogner, Zach Colodner, Thomas Fahey,
..... Jeanne T. McGuirk, Joan Mines
- Roosevelt Cheryl A. Alfred
- Seaford Francis J. Murphy, Carl & Tina Surface
- Valley Stream Jude Giaramita, Christine Hilbert, John M.
..... Mandi, Virginia Mullen, M. E. O'Neil,
..... Rosemary Williams
- Wantagh Deborah Heyman, Peter & Eva Mihalik
- West Hempstead ... E. Torre, Nanette Turner



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VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982
 NAT'L AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201

COUNTRY POINTE AT PLAINVIEW HEARING

Michael Spurling

The March 2012 issue of the *Skimmer* reported on the determination that a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was required for the proposed 143-acre Country Pointe at Plainview development, which would be built on the same largely undeveloped property (containing 95 acres of forest) that Charles Wang wanted to turn into the Old Plainview development in 2007. The Country Pointe proposal is from the Beechwood Organization, which would purchase the property from Wang. Strong opposition led to the postponement last April of the hearing regarding the DEIS, but the following recently appeared in the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's weekly Environmental Notice Bulletin:

"*Notice of Acceptance of Draft EIS and Rescheduled Public Hearing.* The Town Board of the Town of Oyster Bay, as lead agency, has accepted a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Country Pointe at Plainview. A public hearing on the Draft EIS has been rescheduled and will be held on **Tuesday, February 4, 2014** at 7:00 P.M. at the Howard B. Mattlin Middle School, 100 Washington Avenue, Plainview, NY. Written comments on the Draft EIS will be accepted until **February 28, 2014**. The Draft EIS is available from the Town of Oyster Bay, Office of the Town Clerk, Oyster Bay Town Hall, 54 Audrey Avenue, Oyster Bay, NY; the Plainview Public Library, 999 Old Country Road, Plainview, NY; and online at: <http://www.vhb.com/countrypointeatplainviewdeis>.

"The action involves the rezoning and redevelopment of a 143-acre property with 890 units of multifamily housing and 114,330 square feet of commercial space. The site currently is zoned Office Building (OB) and R1 1A One-Family Residence, and contains quasi-municipal, not-for-profit, and recreational uses. The applicant has petitioned for rezoning to RMF 16 Multi-Family Residence, RSC 25 Multi-Family Senior Residence, and General Business (GB). Relief from a number of dimensional requirements of the proposed multifamily zoning districts is requested. Approximately 44 acres of the site would be dedicated to the Town of Oyster Bay for park and recreation use. The proposed development plan also requires modification of restrictive covenants established when the zoning of a portion of the property was changed to OB in 1997. The project is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Old Country Road and Round Swamp Road in Plainview.

"Contact: John Ellsworth, Town of Oyster Bay, 150 Miller Place, Syosset, NY 11791, Phone: (516) 677-5824, E-mail: jellsworth@oysterbayny.gov."

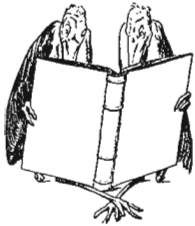
OUR E-LIST http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II

Happy New Year! Did you complete the birding book review survey that we handed out? Please do! We've been enjoying the holidays for the last month and I hope all had wonderful ones.

For the new year, I thought I'd start with a very thoughtful book about the dangers that loss of habitat is causing our songbirds as they migrate south for the winter. The title is self-explanatory: *Silence of the Songbirds* by Bridget Stutchbury. This book will raise eyebrows among bird



lovers everywhere. Not since Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* have we read such a forceful call to action! The author paints a complex picture of the current condition of songbirds and their disappearing habitats, in both wintering and breeding locales. Some very bad news is contained

within these pages. Songbird populations are decreasing at an alarming rate due to both industrialization and development. Surprised? Tropical winter homes and habitats are shrinking, and farmers routinely apply way too many pesticides in their fields, with alarmingly bad consequences: think DDT, etc.!

Ms. Stutchbury cites many factors, some not of the chemical variety, in this array of dangers. For instance, on North American breeding grounds, invasive cowbirds use other songbirds' nests to parasitically lay their own eggs, and house cats kill millions (yes, millions!) of birds every year (keep kitty indoors, please!). In addition, in their migratory travels songbirds meet many treacherous conditions: 21st century perils like city lights that confuse birds' ability to navigate using stars, perilous radio and cell phone towers, and even wind turbines. Our songbirds control plant-destroying insects, and help in plant pollination and seed distribution. As songbirds diminish in numbers, fragile environments will be deeply injured, "shaken to their core!", the author admonishes.

The good news? Yes, there is hope! We can do our part to help birds survive: by buying shade-grown coffee, turning city lights out at night, as well as many other ways (read this book!).

The author's affection for the songbirds she writes about is contagious. She so aptly writes: "We will unravel the mystery of the disappearing songbirds by taking a journey with them!" This begins her exploration of the causes for the decline of migratory birds in the tropics. Central America is the wintering habitat for these birds. Her book is cleverly written around the return journey of migrating songbirds from Central America. She attempts to sound the alarm in a very forceful manner. In doing this, she also is persuasively hopeful, which is a good thing! Few ornithologists know these migratory birds as well as the author does. This is an important and enlightening book; read it! Songbirds are a vital part of our natural

environment. In the end, we protect our children and ourselves by taking steps to save these precious songbirds. We can do it. Enjoy!

OCEANSIDE MARINE NATURE STUDY AREA NEEDS YOUR HELP!

Jim Brown

The Marine Nature Study Area was severely damaged by Hurricane Irene and then by Superstorm Sandy. Damaged were the facility's display boards, greenhead fly boxes, east end boardwalk, and the building facility housing the museum, classroom, and aquarium. We have been informed by the Town of Hempstead that the fly boxes have been replaced and that workers hope to repair the display boards by May. It is also planned that the boardwalk repair will be finished by the spring. The Town is thanked for responding to these particular problems — this is real progress in restoring the MNSA! Unfortunately, however, there is no estimated time for the construction of a new educational building.

Students who come to the Marine Nature Study Area to learn about birds, wildlife, and salt marsh and marine ecology — young people who will be tomorrow's environmental stewards — need to have this important facility completely restored. The classroom, museum, and aquarium are extremely important to the goals of the MNSA, a 52-acre preserve that the Town of Hempstead fortunately saved from development to create this important center for environmental study. SSAS urges our members and friends to contact Mike Deery, Director of Communications for the Town, and urge him to have the Marine Nature Study Area fully restored as soon as possible. Funds must be provided! Mr. Deery can be reached by phone at 812-3310; e-mail at mdeery@tohmail.org; or by writing to Mike Deery, Director of Communications, Office of the Supervisor, One Washington Street, Hempstead, NY, 11550-4923. [Editor's note: As mentioned in an e-mail that Jim sent to our Yahoo! group, you can also raise your voice by signing onto www.change.org/petitions/preserve-the-town-of-hempstead-s-marine-nature-study-area.]

TACKAPAUSHA THANKS

Marilyn Hametz

Many thanks to Betty Borowsky, Jim and Gail Brown, Helen Buckley, Mary Colway, Larry Gumbs, Rich Kopsco, and Laurie Raisher for their help at the Tackapausha Museum Children's Holiday Party on a snowy December 14. The SSAS volunteers had two craft tables for the children to make bird feeders, provided and served refreshments, and gave information on South Shore Audubon and environmental concerns.

The children and their adult escorts enjoyed the animal show, crafts, snacks, and the museum.

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

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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 \$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 these 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.



Renewing? Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS.



Donations to SSAS are always welcome! \$_____

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

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