

VOLUME 44, NUMBER 6 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

MARCH 2014

### **NEXT MEETING**

John Gaglione

DATE: Tuesday, March 11, 2014

TIME: 7:30 p.m.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

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

SPEAKER: Steve Walter

TOPIC: Photographer's Eye on Hawks

At our next monthly meeting, Steve Walter will tell the story of hawks by sharing many of his favorite photographs. Migration in the New York area and identification issues will be emphasized, and the program will also include a look at species and subspecies from around the United States.

Steve has been a naturalist in the New York area for over 30 years. He organized and conducted a hawk watch at Fort Tilden (on the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens) from 1991 through 1995, and served as a regional editor for the Hawk Migration Association of North America. His other projects have included a study of dragonfly migration at Fort Tilden in the 1990s and ongoing surveys of moths at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Muttontown Preserve (Nassau County's largest preserve), and Ward Pound Ridge Reservation (in Westchester). Steve has studied butterfly and dragonfly distribution on Long Island, including documenting a number of locally rare species. 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 *Silence of the Songbirds* by Bridget Stutchbury.

**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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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Winter Thoughts of Two Continents

Jim Brown

As I write this month's column, we in Long Island are in the throes of winter. Although the roads have been well plowed, there is snow piled up everywhere and ice still remains on many of our suburban sidewalks. Snow has been practically unremitting, as has been my efforts to shovel deposits of white powder and gray slush.

Our winter in New York has caused me to reminisce about a trip I and my wife Gail made to South America almost two years ago, to bird, view wildlife, hike, and generally enjoy the culture of Paraguay. We also spent a few days in Rio de Janeiro before we flew home. This relatively harsh winter here has caused me to remember a warmer winter of 2012 in South America—their winter, because we took the trip in July. One day in Asunción, the capital of tropical Paraguay, it was just a few degrees above freezing and we actually had to wear jackets for a few hours and could observe condensing moisture from our breathing. A Paraguayan winter with winds from Patagonia is cold; air currents descending from the Amazon make the weather warm. Nevertheless, a cold winter in Paraguay would still be a warm one here (though we're both getting warmer)! I am told that birding is very difficult in Paraguay during their summer, as the heat makes all activity exceedingly difficult; best to rest in a hammock and sip tereré, the delicious cold tea and traditional drink of the people.

I had long wanted to travel to Paraguay, since I had studied the history and sociology of the country in graduate school. Early in its colonial history, the Jesuits established missions in the area among the native Guarani people. Churches were built and thriving communities created in the jungle. A unique culture flourished in eastern Paraguay until the Jesuits were expelled in 1768. The Jesuits organized the Guarani, armed them, and prevented their certain genocide by Brazilian slave traders. The indigenous people survived and to this day Guarani is spoken by many people in the country, being with Spanish one of the official languages of the nation.

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The history of Paraguay has been tumultuous, with its share of war, dictatorship, and injustice. Just before we arrived in the country, the democratically elected President, Fernando Lugo, was overthrown in what amounted to a coup. Demonstrators and riot police were in the capital on the day of our arrival, but so were the birds! The first bird we noticed was the Great Kiskadee, a beautiful vellow-fronted bird that we observed in the courtyard of our hotel in Asunción. By the end of our trip in Paraguay, through the east, the Pantanal, and the dry Chaco, led by a very knowledgeable guide from FAUNA Paraguay, we had seen approximately 176 different species of birds. Particularly exciting for me was to experience such birds

as the Southern Screamer, White Monjita, Limpkin (pictured), Southern Caracara, Savanna Hawk, King Vulture, Snail Kite, Jabiru, and Cocoi Heron. We found in Paraguay some of our favorite North American friends as well — Ospreys, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Black Skimmers, and Turkey Vultures. And we saw many Monk Parakeets in their original native habitat!

Paraguay has an abundance of bird and wildlife species, some of which I was lucky to observe while touring the country. Our weather patterns may be divergent, our cultures different, but love of the environment exists and endures north and south. We have our own problems here - fossil fuel dependence, pollution, habitat loss, overdevelopment, climate change, etc. Paraguay is experiencing the same basic problems. While I was there, one of the best birding areas just outside Asunción, where we saw our first Snail Kites, was soon to be drastically altered and diminished by a new highway being built by the government to alleviate traffic problems. Rainforests are being decimated and huge soy farms, termed "green deserts," are destroying important habitats. Dedicated environmentalists in Paraguay, like those here, are trying to combat these problems. As I think back this cold winter on our warm winter trip to Paraguay, I also recognize that we all share a precious world in constant need of stewardship.

For more information on Paraguay, its birds, wildlife, and environment, check out the following organizations: FAUNA Paraguay at www.faunaparaguay.com and Para La Tierra at www.paralatierra.org.

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### **♣**★ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ♣★

Wendy Murbach

Our new members since the last <i>Skimmer</i> are: Baldwin Leslie G. Tishler–Buckheit
East Meadow Stanley Diamond
East Rockaway Sylvia P. Tirella
Farmingdale Helen Norjen, Patricia C. Spinoso
Floral Park Elizabeth M. Johnson, Kathleen Mahony
Garden City Diane Musso
Levittown Nancy Cottone, Arline Tagg
Massapequa Marilyn & F. Greg Goodrich,
Laura R. Veltre
Massapequa Park Jonathan L. Anderson, Samuel
Astrof
Merrick Aphrodite Jones
Plainview Gloria Sloan, Johnathan Zeidman
Seaford Marianne Daly
Valley Stream Elizabeth A. Katzer
Wantagh Linda Warner $\mathcal{L}(\mathcal{L})$
Woodmere Leslie Mlawski
NAT'L AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (800) 274-4201
<b>*************************************</b>

### **26TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY**

The remaining dates for our 2013-2014 Waterfowl Surveys, rain or shine, are Saturdays, February 22 and March 22. Volunteers are welcome to participate. If you are interested in spending a full or half day visiting up to 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapegua Park, call Joe Grupp at 481-4208.

### WIND POWER AND EAGLES

Michael Sperling

The January-February issue of Audubon magazine included a column written by CEO/President David Yamold regarding the then-imminent release of a U.S. Department of the Interior 30-year rule that, if approved, "makes

> available permits that fully authorize the wind industry to kill Bald or Golden Eagles (pictured) without prosecution" for up to 30 years. The proposed changes to the existing 2009 rule were released on December 6; SSAS has

signed onto an Audubon letter strongly opposing the rule while reiterating Audubon's strong support of properly sited wind power as a renewable energy source. Details are posted at http://policy.audubon.org/wind-power-0 and I assume this will be mentioned in the next issue of the magazine.

Comments can be submitted online through Audubon's Action Center (http://policy.audubon.org/take-action) or by mail to Secretary Sally Jewell, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

### **WEST POND UPDATE**

Editor's note: As many of you have read in the Skimmer and elsewhere, the manmade West Pond of Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, which was created as part of a dredging deal worked out about 60 years ago by NYC Parks Commissioner Robert Moses and the NYC Transit Authority, was spectacularly breached by Hurricane Sandy. Since then, the freshwater Pond, which was the focus of SSAS's clockwise bird walks, has been a tidal bay having two dead-end trails. As a result, after several post-Sandy bird walks, Steve Schellenger dropped Jamaica Bay from our Sunday morning walk list. SSAS strongly supports the restoration of the Pond.

The following is excerpted from a recap of the December 3 meeting of the Jamaica Bay Task Force that's posted at jamaicabayecowatchers.org. I haven't seen any evidence that the initial target dates were met, but here's the plan:

Tonight's Jamaica Bay Task Force meeting saw a packed room of environmentalists and bay enthusiasts gather at the wildlife refuge to hear a number of interesting presentations and discussions highlighting the intense focus that now surrounds Jamaica Bay. The resounding theme was that there is a lot of funding and plans coming down the pike for Jamaica Bay and that it is good news, but that it is *critical* that the local groups be kept in the loop, as the history in this bay has been that the identification of problems, the advocacy to fix them, and the best concepts to address them have often come from the local groups that are out and about on the bay every day.

Dave Avrin, NPS [National Park Service] Chief of Natural Resources [for Gateway National Recreation Area] gave an update on the status of the breached West Pond. Numerous groups, including the Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers, the Littoral Society, and the Audubon Society [New York City Audubon], have advocated for quick action on the part of the NPS to fix the breach and restore the West Pond to a freshwater source. The groups have presented a plan to incorporate some tidal flow with a newly defined freshwater boundary as a conceptual plan for the park. The pace of progress for many has been much too slow. Dave indicated that a firm was being hired to produce an Environmental Assessment which would allow for public input. In addition, he indicated that funding was available for repair work but that it had to be used by 2015, as this was how the Sandy appropriations were structured. The timeframe at this time is:

- December 2013 agency scoping letters
- End of January 2014 public scoping begins
- Mid February 2014 public scoping meeting to obtain input for alternatives, identify issues and concerns
- March/April 2014 conduct alternatives workshop with stakeholders
- July 2014 release draft EA [Environmental Assessment in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act]

★ Mid August 2014 — conduct public meeting

September — close of public comment period

December 2014 — FONSI [Finding of No Significant Impact, meaning that a full Environmental Impact Statement isn't required] signed and released to public

# SSAS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Betsy Gulotta

Thanks to the much-appreciated support of longtime member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is 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 betsy.gulotta@ncc.edu. Applications are due by April 30. Please help us spread the word.

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Explore the coast with the

### AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

**EARLY SPRING BIRD WALK AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE** (Sat., March 29, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at refuge center and join naturalist Don Riepe for hike around ponds and gardens to look for egrets, ibis, osprey, oystercatchers, and many other early migrants, as well as wintering birds. Contact Don to reserve.

SPRING MIGRATION BIRD WALK AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE (Sat., April 26, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the refuge center and join Don for hike around ponds and gardens to look for spring migrants. Contact Don to reserve. HORSESHOE CRABS AND SHOREBIRDS AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE (Sat., May 17 and May 31, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at refuge center and carpool to Broad Channel beach site to see the annual mating ritual of the horseshoe crab and shorebirds feeding on their eggs. Contact Don to reserve either date.

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET ECOLOGY CRUISE (Sat., May 17, 4 P.M. to 7 P.M.). Join naturalists Don Riepe and Mickey Cohen on a special 3-hour cruise into backwater marshes of the bay. See nesting peregrine falcon & many other bird species. Cost: \$55 incl. narrated tour, wine & cheese, drinks, fruit, snacks.

For information and free field trip brochure, call/write Don Riepe, (718) 474-0896, donriepe@gmail.com, 28 West 9th Road, Broad Channel, NY 11693; www.littoralsociety.org.

# NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER A Walk on the Boardwalk of a Cold Winter Beach

Joe Grupp

Cobwebs on the brain and an urge to walk found me late one afternoon on an empty boardwalk, on a cold windy day, at a Jones Beach that was covered with a few inches of snow. How sensible was it to be there? About as sensible as it was for each of the three others I encountered during my hour plus of walking. It was windy and low-teens cold; it was winter. Fortunately, the wind blew most of the snow off the boardwalk, leaving only a few drifts that were easy to get around and I did not have to slog through deep snow.

Proper clothing and body heat produced by the act of walking kept me comfortably warm as I walked into the wind. Every once in a while, a tiny piece of windblown ice or snow would strike my face, reminding me that it was winter. Clouds playing with a descending sun created a picturesque sky that mentally negated any minor discomfort caused by the elements.

The cloud cover was broken and at times the sun would trace the edges of the breaks in a brilliant light that contrasted those edges with the cloud's darker interior. A

short time later, the sun was mostly hidden, with only a few rays passing through the clouds and those remaining visible as they headed down towards the ocean's surface. Occasionally the breaks be-

tween clouds allowed the entire orb of the red—orange sun to appear and its light would change the atmosphere beneath the clouds to a similar but darker color. Randomly the sky and atmosphere changed color as a result of those phenomena.

Turning back after about a mile and a half, the wind was then at my back. A combination of the light also coming from behind me from a sun beginning to approach the horizon, the deep color of the boardwalk itself, and the wind blowing directly down its length, revealed narrow streams of powdery snow moving faster than I, passing me and continuing on. Each stream of snow was no higher than my boot tops and appeared narrower than that as it moved past and then before me. The motion was sinuous, gracefully oscillating from side to side, snakelike as it moved along. Watching the multiple streams that passed me, I soon realized that there were times when two or more of them coalesced to form a single stream, and times when a single stream would divide and become two. Multiple streams continually moved before me.

A burst of motion suddenly pulled me away from my fascination with the streaming snow and it took me a few moments to realize that I had flushed a raptor, which was holding prey in its talons as it rose into the air. I watched it fly into a small wooded area, where it settled on a snow-covered pile of debris. Having no binoculars with me, it was hard to determine the species of either the bird or its

prey. Determined to identify it, I stood perfectly still for a short time so as not to scare the bird away and then slowly moved to a position where a tree stood between us. Then I used the tree as cover to hide me from the bird as I moved toward it. Reaching the trunk, I slowly looked around it, hoping to see but not scare the bird. It was then obvious that we were aware of each other, as the bird tensed, ready to fly, and I froze in place, my eyes fixed on it and its eyes fixed on me. Even in the dull light of the woods, its head pattern revealed it to be a Peregrine Falcon. We were eye to eye for a time before the bird had enough and flew farther away. I never was able to identify the prey.

I completed my walk, freed of the cobwebs in my brain and amazed at what the frozen windswept beach had to offer that day, when all I wanted to do was go for a walk.

### BIRD-FEEDING ORDINANCE UPDATE

Michael Sperling

In last month's *Skimmer*, I wrote that my Town of Hempstead Councilman had replied to an e-mail from me (not knowing my involvement with SSAS) as follows: "As soon as our legislation is completed, the date of the hearing will be publicized as required." He had offered to contact me directly regarding the hearing date and I accepted, but his staff forgot to do that and consequently the alert to our members that I promised in that *Skimmer* article never happened. Indeed, it appears that the only public announcement regarding the February 4 hearing, at which only three citizens spoke and immediately after which the ordinance was unanimously approved, was that the topic was listed within the agenda that was posted on the Town Board Calendar Web page 24 hours before the regular meeting that included the hearing.

As I'm typing this, I'm awaiting receipt of a photocopy of the ordinance from the Councilman's office, sent via the U.S. Postal Service. According to media reports, the ordinance, which is scheduled to go into effect in early March, establishes \$1,000 fines for the first instance of a Town of Hempstead resident's backyard bird feeding

attracting ten or more Rock Pigeons (pictured), geese, and waterfowl on three days during a 15-day period. A February 5 news release that is posted on the Town's Web site mentions "seagulls" (referred to as gulls in field guides) instead of waterfowl, states that

the ordinance doesn't affect "the use of bird feeders and the casual feeding of birds," and later states that having a "couple of elevated bird feeders" is "still permitted."

Obviously, we need to see the actual wording in order to judge the merits of the ordinance and to determine what, if anything, it says about bird feeders. I will post the ordinance on our Facebook page and e-mail it to our Yahoo Group when it is available (hopefully a week before this newsletter is mailed).



Steve Schellenger

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

Feb. 23	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern		
	State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)		
Mar. 2	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore,		
	north side of Merrick Rd.)		
Mar. 9	Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner		
Mar. 16	Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)		
Mar. 23	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner		
Mar. 30	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)		
Apr. 6	Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner		
<b>\$</b>			

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## AUDUBON NY PROPOSES SANDY RECOVERY PROJECT FOR SOUTH SHORE STATE PARKS

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Editor's note: In late January, our state office e-mailed the presidents of SSAS and Great South Bay Audubon Society to request both chapters' support of a proposal for federal funding. SSAS supports the proposed project (and presumably GSBAS does too); the general explanation and the project's four objectives are reprinted here.

Audubon New York is working on a project proposal for NFWF [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation] Sandy funding, with NYS OPRHP [Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation and NYNH [New York Natural History Council] as partners. Basically we're hoping to work in three state parks (Jones Beach, Gilgo Beach, and Robert Moses) to engage in habitat restoration, stewardship, and research. This would be working to ensure that the natural infrastructure storm protection solutions are constructed in a way that is ecologically sound for the bird habitat we're trying to protect there. The project is just developing, and we'd love to hear what you think about it, and if you think there might be opportunities for your chapters to get involved in some monitoring, outreach, or education pieces, should the project go forward. We're excited about the potential.

Goal 1: Research, pinpoint, and compare alternative solutions to increasing coastal barrier resiliency through expert panel workshops.

Objective: Convene a panel of scientists and engineers with expertise in vegetation, wildlife, geomorphology, and coastal engineering for a multiday work session, to generate resiliency project ideas that strive to maintain coastal processes and habitats while increasing storm resiliency.

Goal 2: Restore and retain rare species habitat, and protect and strengthen exemplary natural communities in and around the park.

Objective: Restore, protect, and strengthen the habitat of the federally listed Piping Plover, the federally listed seabeach amaranth (Amaranthus pumilus), state-listed Least Terns and Common Terns, and the rare interdunal swale community; protection and strengthening of the barrier ecosystem from the threat of invasive species.

Goal 3: Education and outreach to park visitors and local communities.

Objective: Implement educational programming and conduct outreach to park visitors and local communities, to increase support for ecologically based storm resiliency projects, share information on how conservation efforts contribute to storm resiliency, and reduce user conflict to increase resiliency of natural systems.

Goal 4: Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) involving vehicle-use management.

Objective: The underlying purpose of an HCP in this instance is to minimize and mitigate the impacts of vehicle use, which remains a top threat to the viability of the Piping Plover and the seabeach amaranth.

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.

## SSAS NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Michael Sperling

In accordance with our bylaws, any member in good standing may suggest candidates for officers and directors for the fiscal year that will begin on July 1. I have agreed to serve as the Nominating Committee chair for the first time, so if you have suggestions (including yourself), please contact me at mssperling@optonline.net or 221-3921 (evenings) and/or the following Committee members: Jim and Gail Brown, and Marilyn Hametz.

#### HUMMINGBIRD SANCTUARY LAWSUIT

Michael Sperling

Our guest speaker back in December 2008 was Paul Adams, the owner of the 3.5-acre Baiting Hollow Hummingbird Sanctuary (see www.lihummer.org). In the following August (the only month that it is open to the public), SSAS made the first of two very enjoyable trips to the property, for which no fee was charged.

In January, SSAS and other organizations received an urgent e-mail from Paul, seeking "a lawyer willing to provide reduced or even zero cost representation" to defend the Sanctuary against a lawsuit filed by a Riverhead-based attorney on December 23 on behalf of the owners of three neighboring properties. Soon afterwards, a Friends of the Baiting Hollow Hummingbird Sanctuary group was started at www.facebook.com/bhhummingbird, with links to Paul's blog (http://bhhummer.blogspot.com) and to a petition to save the Sanctuary (http://tinyurl.com/1373bo7, where that's a lowercase "L" after the single slash, not a "one"). In addition to awarding of "costs and disbursements" for all three Causes of Action, the lawsuit seeks the following:

- 1. On the First Cause of Action ("Private Nuisance"):
  - A. That said nuisance be abated and removed;
- B. That defendants [Paul's son is named as a coowner] be restrained and enjoined from maintaining a bird sanctuary open to the public as described in the complaint and to the nuisance of plaintiffs; and
- *C.* That plaintiffs recover from defendants jointly and severally Three Million (\$3,000,000.00) Dollars.
- 2. On the Second Cause of Action ["Town Law Section 268 (2)"]: That defendants be permanently enjoined, restrained, and prohibited from using either lot 3 or 4.1 as a bird sanctuary open to the public and in violation of the Zoning Code, and the Suffolk County Sanitary Codes and the Public Health Law.
  - 3. On the Third Cause of Action (Declaratory Judgment):
- A. That the court declare the defendants' use of the right of way [the 3700-foot long, 20-foot wide Terry Farm Road] as a public right of way is unlawful; and
- B. Restraining and enjoining defendants from any such use.

On January 28, Paul blogged that after the lawsuit was filed, "the Town [of Riverhead] issued a Violation Notice claiming that hummingbird sanctuaries are prohibited by the Code; now they are backing off but so far have refused to formally withdraw the Notice." Five days later, he



posted that "I'm very happy, proud, and honored to announce that Regina Seltzer will be representing me and my son in our defense against the

lawsuit brought against us by Terry et al., seeking to close the sanctuary and extract \$3M from us (which would mean replacing the sanctuary by a couple more McMansions). Reggie is a highly experienced, and pugnacious, environmental lawyer with particular expertise in zoning matters. As I've posted previously, zoning lies at the core of the lawsuit."

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R. U. Abyrdar II

The book I will be reviewing this month is *The Ardent Birder: On the Craft of Birdwatching* by Todd Newberry and Gene Holtan. All birders would like to improve their birding skills (I think?); this book will help us in that effort.

This book is one of the most informative about becoming a more skillful birder that I have read. If you're abeginner, hoping to become an intermediate birder, this book is for you! It is aimed at us birders, not at simply

birds. It is written with the knowledge of a biology professor combined with the passion of a poet.

The author is a lifelong devotee of our feathered friends and this book makes that exceedingly clear! The book includes loads of suggestions that will help any birder improve his/her skill sets, particularly in the field. For some of us there will be little new information but it will still be a gem of a read. Mr. Newberry categorizes birders into four interchangeable teams: beginner (rookie), intermediate (minor leaguer), varsity (AAA), and major leaguer! His style is both easy and pleasant. His book consists of 50 essays, with excellent illustrations by Gene Holtan (more than 75, yes, count them!). They are worth examining on their own merits.

The aforementioned essays are both beautiful *and* informative. The text is sparkly, insightful, practical, and reassuring, all at the same time. His sections on field craft can be read by both beginner and major leaguer with profit. There is something for *all* birders within these pages, but I think that the beginner, hoping to move up in his/her skills, will benefit the most.

His section on "philosophical interludes" is very well written. The author's generous wit and wisdom are spread around topics that include, but are not limited to, developing one's birding skills, selecting and using equipment (binoculars and such), and, finally, becoming a competent leader of bird club walks.

His prose shines at times. For example, he asks us to ask the birds themselves our questions, such as "How old are you?" and "Where have you come from and where are you going?" (You can guess where this leads us.) The book is organized around a birder's typical day. As you read, you will appreciate how the author frequently makes us laugh, as do Holtan's skillful illustrations. The final chapter is on how to lead successful bird trips and will be most helpful to major leaguers. You will enjoy this most thoughtful of books. This is the first bird book that I have read that focuses mainly on the birder (that's us). We will all benefit from reading this *very* enjoyable book! Remember, this book is *not* a field guide! Read it and ENJOY!

### **MUTE SWANS**

Editor's note: The following letter by Audubon New York's Executive Director, Erin M. Crotty, was sent to chapter leaders as part of a series of e-mails and conference calls in response to the unveiling of a government plan seeking to eliminate the Mute Swans from New York. SSAS's board decided not to take a public position regarding the plan. I've omitted the portions of the letter that concern opportunities for chapter feedback and added the information that's in brackets.

Dear Chapter Leaders,

I wanted to bring to your attention Audubon New York's position on the DEC's draft plan to control Mute Swans. Some of you may have read an article in today's *New York Times* regarding the State Department of Environmental Conservation's draft plan to eradicate Mute Swans in New York by 2025. The article can be accessed here: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/30/nyregion/a-winged-symbol-of-love-that-new-york-state-wants-banished.html. Mike Burger, our Director of Conservation and Science, is quoted in the story as being supportive of DEC's draft plan, and Great South Bay was contacted for the story as well [so was SSAS, but Jim Brown's comments didn't get published]. As a result of the story, we have received some limited negative feedback.

I wanted you to be aware that our position was fully vetted with National Audubon [Erin is one of their Vice Presidents], is consistent with National's present position (see attached letter), and we internally discussed our position on the draft plan before Mike Burger conducted the interview. We knew full well that our position would be considered controversial by some. [The "attached letter," sent in response to a 2003 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plan, was also signed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, American Bird Conservancy, Environmental Defense, Ducks Unlimited, and 20 less widely known organizations.] Below is our rationale for supporting DEC's plan:

Invasive species are one of today's greatest threats to biodiversity, and management of invasive species is often

necessary to reduce impacts. The Mute Swan is an invasive species introduced from Europe with well-documented, significant negative impacts on native wildlife and their habitats. Those impacts include killing other waterfowl, displacing other waterbirds from critical

habitat, and uprooting submerged aquatic vegetation. More than a decade ago, to address these negative impacts, states along the Atlantic agreed to manage the spread of Mute Swans in the wild. Maryland reduced their Mute Swan population from nearly 4,000 in the year 2000 down to 200 in 2010, and several other states are also controlling Mute Swans. Despite implementing some control measures, the Mute Swan population in New York is growing and spreading, with increasing risks to native wildlife and

their habitats. Audubon supports NYS DEC's proposed Mute Swan plan, which calls for a suite of actions that will allow effective control of Mute Swans, including lethal control, which scientific research has shown is necessary in order to significantly reduce swan populations. Egg oiling or addling alone will not reduce the population. For background information on DEC's Mute Swan plan, please visit this Web site: http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife\_pdf/muteswanreport.pdf.

The DEC plan has 9 components:

- Inform the public about concerns associated with free-ranging Mute Swans.
- ➤ Prohibit the importation and propagation of Mute Swans in (to) New York.
- ➤ Prohibit the release or escape of captive Mute Swans into the wild in New York.
- **➣** Encourage control of Mute Swans in neighboring states and provinces.
- Allow free-ranging Mute Swans to be taken and possessed by licensed persons.
- ➤ Prohibit supplemental feeding of free-ranging Mute Swans.
  - ➤ Increase Mute Swan population control activities.
- Allow property owners and others to conduct Mute Swan control activities.
- ➤ Allow take of Mute Swans by waterfowl hunters in some situations.

I hope this information is helpful to you, and thank you for all you do.

## BROOKSIDE PRESERVE SPRING CLEANUP AND INVASIVES REMOVAL

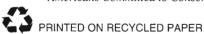
On **Sunday, April 13**, starting at 1 P.M., SSAS will have its spring cleanup at Brookside Preserve, rain or shine. Brookside is a 20-acre freshwater wetland, woodland, and upland area owned by Nassau County that was rescued from oblivion and is managed by SSAS; the adjacent Brooklyn Water Works property, which was purchased by the County in 2012, is still in the process of being formally added to it. PDF files of the trail guide and freshwater wetland guide for children that we published can be downloaded from 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 High School). Please bring gloves, rakes or clippers if possible, and friends of all ages.

### 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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### 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.

><		
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