

SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 45, NUMBER 7 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

APRIL 2015

NEXT MEETING

John Gaglione

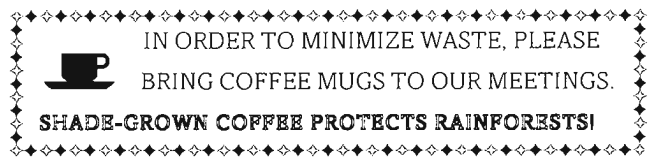
DATE: Tuesday, April 14, 2015
TIME: 7:30 P.M.
PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library
144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)
SPEAKER: Don Riepe
TOPIC: Iceland: Puffins, Glaciers, Waterfalls

Iceland is an amazing place with numerous bird cliffs, volcanic formations, majestic waterfalls, and open space. It's a country of only 325,000 people and lots of seabird colonies. Almost everyone speaks English. There's very little traffic, virtually no crime, good highways, great accommodations, and everyone accepts U.S. dollars and credit cards. Our guest speaker has led seven field trips to Iceland and will show photographs of much of the flora and fauna, volcanic landscapes, glaciers, and overall incredible scenery. Join us!

Don Riepe has an M.S. in Natural Resource Management from the University of New Hampshire. He is currently the Director of the Northeast Chapter for the American Littoral Society, and serves on the Advisory Committee of New York City Audubon and the Rockaway Waterfront Alliance Board. He is co-chair of the Jamaica Bay Task Force and a long-standing member of the Wildlife Hazard Task Force at JFK Airport. His past work included a 25-year career as a resource management specialist and manager of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge for the National Park Service. In 2003 he was named the "Jamaica Bay Guardian" by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). An avid photographer, his photographs have been published in many magazines, including *National Wildlife*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, and *New York State Conservationist* (published by DEC), and in *The New York Times*.

Pre-Meeting Book Discussion. Arrive a half-hour early to participate in a discussion led by R. U. Abyrdar II (aka Paul Stessel). This month's book is *Identify Yourself: The 50 Most Common Birding ID Challenges* by Bill Thompson III,

which was reviewed in our February newsletter (Paul took a well-earned break in March).



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Betty Borowsky

Welcome spring! This has been an especially harsh winter in the northeast, and I have never looked forward to spring more. We birders are always eager for spring anyway, of course, because it brings so many spring migrants to our area; but most appreciated, it brings our warblers in their full, exquisite courtship colors and songs. Even if you are new to birding, this poem, written by Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr., our Poet-in-Residence, will express what this means for us.

Fiesta

*Comes with warblers,
waves of warblers
moving up the continents:
Yellows, Bay-breasteds
Black-throated Blues, Greens,
Myrtles, Magnolias
flourishing wing-tail skirts of white and yellow,
Redstarts flashing flamenco fans of orange and red,
Chestnut-sideds displaying headdresses of the sun
Then, Blackburnians
flown from flames of Aztec fires,
Prothonotary emblazoned with Inca gold*

We are proud to have Max Wheat as the first Poet-in-Residence of the South Shore Audubon Society. His poems have long expressed our shared deep appreciation of the environment, and the animals and plants that live in it — as well as our struggles to preserve it.

Max Wheat was born in Geneva, New York, and attended Hobart College there. A post-World War II student, he graduated in 1951 with a major in English and a minor in Education. Max earned an M.A. in English from NYU and an M.S. in Education from SUNY New Paltz.

Max has been an effective leader in two public arenas: writing poems, and encouraging poetry writing and appreciation in others; and supporting environmental conservation on Long Island.

Max has published several poetry books and chapbooks, such as *Art Gallery*, *Following Their Star: Poems of Christmas and Nature*, *God-Hawk*, and perhaps his most famous one, *Iraq and Other Killing Fields: Poetry for Peace*, for which the Nassau County Legislature declined to name him Poet Laureate. This decision was effectively reversed by poets on Long Island, however, and he was named the first Poet Laureate of Nassau County for 2007–2009. The poets continue to name the Poet Laureate every two years through the organization they formed under Paula Camacho of Farmingdale, the Nassau County Poet Laureate Society. It is now functioning as the search committee for naming the fifth Poet Laureate, who will assume office in June.

Max is the recipient of many other prestigious honors and titles as well. Among others, he is listed with Poets and Writers, in 1980 he received the first Herman Melville Annual Award from the New York State Marine Education Association, he received the Poetry Prize of Appalachia in 1990, in 1996 the Nassau Association for Continuing Community Education presented him with the Outstanding Teacher of the Year award, in 1998 he received a Certificate of Achievement from the Performance Poets Association, and he was given the Art and Literary Award of the New York State Outdoor Education Association in 2013. He was also honored by the New York State English Council as a Teacher of Excellence. He served as Program Chairperson for the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association and in 2005 was honored with its Long Island Poet of the Year Award.

Max is well-known for his support of the Paumanok Poets; his tireless encouragement of young writers; his writing workshops in the Port Washington and Syosset Public Libraries for Taproot Workshops, Inc. (based at Stony Brook University), which are aimed at participants 55 and older; and for a Continuing Community Education poem-writing course for Farmingdale Public Schools.

In addition to his participation in SSAS, Max is very active in other conservation organizations. He is founder and former editor of *New York Birders*, the newsletter of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs (which became the New York State Ornithological Association after Max's tenure). And putting his two areas of interest together, he conducts nature poetry writing workshops for the Friends of Hempstead Plains at Nassau Community College and the Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center at Jones Beach State Park.

In short, then, we are very pleased to have a poet of Max's stature formally linked to SSAS, and we look forward to many years of promoting, protecting, and, especially, to enjoying the environment together.

Note: "Fiesta" is the only poem in *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*, edited by Kevin J. McGowan and Kimberley Corwin, and published December 2008. Available from Cornell University Press.

OUR FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On **Saturday, May 2**, SSAS is planning to be in Central Park for our annual (weather permitting) early May bird walk. As usual, Chris Cooper (who was featured in HBO's 2012 documentary, "Birders: The Central Park Effect," and traces his birding roots to SSAS) has volunteered to 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 under three hours (excluding a dismal 31 in 2013). Last year we had 55 species, 15 of which were warblers (including Black-and-White Warbler, pictured).



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 on the platform in Massapequa at 7:12 (as of now, only the western half of the station is open, due to ongoing major renovations). We aim 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. You can bring lunch, buy lunch in the park or elsewhere, or head back home after the walk if you prefer. Joanne's cell (476-3761) will be on that day only. Join us!

Ntaba African Safaris



Lorraine Bondi

New York Agent/East Coast Agency Director

Join me 10/30/2015 to 11/9/2015 for our Out of Africa Safari.

Optional add-on to Botswana and Victoria Falls 11/9/2015 to 11/13/2015.

Lots of birding and the Big 5.

lorraine@ntabatours.com; (917) 653-8430

www.ntabafrica.com

VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982

SSAS BIRDATHON

Here is your opportunity to help birds and their environment. You can do this easily by joining a Birdathon team or starting one of your own. You may also do an individual Birdathon or sign on to be a donor for one of the participating teams. All monies collected go to the work done for birds and their environment. All team members need is comfortable clothing (layers are good, as temperatures and conditions change as the day goes along), shoes, sunscreen (hopefully), and a variety of food and beverages (no excuses needed for the amount of junk food you pack for energy...).

The Birdathon has been one of the major fund-raisers for South Shore Audubon Society. Pledges can be made for a flat rate or per species (for example, 5¢ per species, with 100 species seen, equals a donation of \$5). If ten American Robins are seen, that counts as one species. Each Birdathon participant collects his/her own list of donors through friends, family, neighbors, and/or co-workers. Once the Birdathon is complete, the total number of species seen by the individual or his/her team is used to calculate the donations to be collected.

This year's Birdathon (our 28th) will take place from 5 P.M. on **Friday, May 8** to 5 P.M. on **Saturday, May 9**. Birding locations are chosen by each team; you can use one location or whatever number of locations you pick. Light or intermittent rain does not cancel the Birdathon. If the Birdathon cannot be held, the rain dates will be May 15 and 16.

Locations and estimated times for SSAS's main team, which in peak-migration years will identify about 130 species in Nassau and Queens in six locations, will be in next month's *Skimmer*. If you have any questions, contact our Birdathon chairperson, Jim Remsen, at 631-957-0949.



All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Call Joe at 467-9498 in case of questionable conditions or for other info. Directions and lists of what we've seen are at ssaudubon.org.

- Mar. 29 Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parking lot)
- Apr. 5 Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
- Apr. 12 Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
- Apr. 19 Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
- Apr. 26 Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
- May 3 Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
- May 10 Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)

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

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II

This month the book I'm reviewing is about songbird migration. Since I've already reviewed several books about raptors on migration, I thought it was time to look at our most numerous of feathered friends, the songbirds. So here I go:

Our book for this month is *Songbird Journeys: Four Seasons in the Lives of Migratory Birds* by Miyoko Chu. To enhance our interest in this author, it should be noted that she is an enthusiastic ornithologist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, as well as former editor of the Lab's *Birdscope* newsletter and past assistant editor of *Living Bird* magazine, also by the Lab.



This was her first book. As you read, you'll find it to be the most enjoyable (I think) blend of birding lore and ornithological knowledge that you have ever read. To begin, Ms. Chu conveys the wonder of these bird migrations, which she follows through all four seasons, as well as chronicling the efforts of scientists to track these birds using both new technology and their own unique ingenuity. She suggests that only by following individual birds and understanding where these birds go can we learn how to preserve their much-threatened habitats. In a nutshell, it's all about conservation of habitat and more open spaces.

She begins with "Spring," as birds leave the shores of the Yucatan Peninsula for a nonstop flight across the Gulf of Mexico. "Summer" finds birds busy mating, nesting, and raising young on the abundant food resources that are their ultimate reason for these migrations. In "Autumn" the reverse of their spring trek occurs, although it is rather more leisurely and protracted. Lastly, in "Winter" the birds have reinserted themselves into their off-season habitat. Here they interact with an entirely different group of species from that of their summer neighbors. The author allows us to view her examination of the science of studying migration and enhances the book with stories from the field researchers. If that isn't enough, she adds to her seasonal accounts by supplying us with a list of "hot spots" for observing the birds in that phase of the seasonal cycle. In looking at these songbirds in migration, she touches on some of the hazards that these birds encounter on their perilous journeys.

If there was one thing I missed in reading this book, it was color photographs! A minor thing, perhaps. Read it... and enjoy!!

SSAS Post Office Statement — *South Shore Skimmer* is published monthly from September through December and February through May by South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.



NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER A Rainy Day Backyard Observation

Joe Grupp

It was on one of those rainy days we had in the late fall or early winter, not long before the snows of late January–February started to fall, that my attention was attracted from the comfort of my dining area to the pretty nasty conditions in our backyard about mid afternoon. There was a pretty steady rain most of the day that started as a drizzle and turned into a soaker. A continual flow of birds were taking advantage of not only the seeds in our feeder, but those scattered to the ground by the feeding birds or dropped by them under a few of the shrubs and hedges in our yard. Many of the birds also found shelter in those same shrubs and hedges when the rain came down pretty hard. The birds were nothing out of the ordinary, just the usual backyard feeder birds. There were birds like the Northern Cardinal, House Finch, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee, and others.

Outnumbering them and at times dominating them all was the imported House Sparrow. The House Sparrow was successfully introduced to North America around the mid-1800s and now resides just about anywhere we humans do, to the detriment of a number of native species. At times, fifty or more were scattered across the ground and on the feeder, outdoing most other species in the quest for food. As the day progressed and I occasionally looked out the window, I saw that the House Sparrows began to look as if they were soaking wet; their feathers were turning a deep dark brown. They appeared much wetter than any of the other species in the yard.

I left the window I was looking out of after a while, only to be called back to it by the drumming of an exceptionally heavy downpour on the house roof. The rain was coming down in very large windblown drops at an extraordinary rate and the yard was just about empty of birds. The very few that remained seemed to be struggling to find shelter in the shrubs while two House Sparrows were trying hard to stay out of the rain under the slight roof overhang of my hopper-type feeder. I was riveted to the window, both by the ferocity of the windblown rain and by the birds looking for shelter. My wife was doing the same from a back-door window when she called me over to the door.

Our back door opens onto a porch whose door to the yard is a few steps away. Above the frame of the porch door is a narrow ledge that supports three small glass panes between the roof and the frame. Through the glass panes could be seen six House Sparrows trying to stay out of the rain using the shelter provided by a slight overhang of the porch roof. We were amazed to find them there, as in all the years we have lived in our house never did we



see a bird perched there or even make an attempt to do so.

Our amazement didn't stop there, because as we were watching a strong wind blew the rain towards the porch door and the birds backed away from it until they were pressed up against the glass, spreading their feathers upon it. The wind gusted a few more times, blowing heavy rain droplets towards the birds, and each time the birds backed up as far as they could, pressing up against the glass, again forcing their feathers to spread out on it, in an obvious attempt to stay out of the rain.

While watching the House Sparrows, a single bird of a second species caught my attention because it was the only active bird in the yard during the downpour. I noticed it as it flew to the feeder, picked up a seed, and went to a tree branch to consume it. I quickly realized that it was a Black-capped Chickadee. A chickadee is a very small bird and the drops of rain were quite large and multiple. I watched it make a number of trips back and forth to the feeder, wanting to see what would happen if a windblown large drop of rain hit it. Never once did a drop seem to do so and the bird's feathers looked the same as they would on a nice sunny day.

When the rain let up a bit, the birds became as active again as they were before the downpour. The sparrows looked as wet as they did before and the chickadee as dry. I left the window surprised and intrigued by what I had witnessed.



Explore the coast
with the

AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

EARTH DAY SHORELINE CLEANUP (Sun., April 26, 11 A.M. to 2 P.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge center and help clean the refuge for migrating shorebirds and horseshoe crabs. Bring gloves and wear boots.

SPRING MIGRATION WORKSHOP – JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE (Sat., May 2, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Learn about bird migration and hike trails with Don Riepe. See warblers, tanagers, terns, herons, osprey, many other species. Photo presentation & walk. To reserve, contact Don. Free.

JAMAICA BAY ECOLOGY CRUISE (Sat., May 30, 3 P.M. to 6 P.M.). Learn about the history, management, ecology, and wildlife of the bay aboard the 100' boat "Golden Sunshine" leaving from Pier 2, Sheepshead Bay. See nesting egrets, herons, ibis and many other species. Cost: \$55 includes narrated tour of backwater marshes, wine & cheese, fruit, snacks. To reserve, contact Don.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 5–7). Hike the "Walking Dunes," Lighthouse Beach, Montauk Bluffs, and Shadmoor State Park. Cost: \$395/person includes 2 nights lodging (double occ.) at luxurious Manor House, 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, and star watch.

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.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

Our new members since the last *Skimmer* are:

- East Meadow Joy Kissell
- Garden City Dr. Bernard M. Klersfeld
- Levittown David McDonald
- Long Beach Linda Murphy, Kathleen Thibodeau
- Massapequa Park Gabriella Hutchings
- West Hempstead Butch Flobeck
- Williston Park Avery, Geoffrey, and Lauren Scott
- Woodmere D. Nussbaum



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 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Betsy Gulotta

Thanks to the much-appreciated support of longtime member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is again offering the \$750 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarship 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**.



PLASTIC BAG RECYCLING & ORGANIC LAWN CARE

Editor's note: The following questions and answers come from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's collection of "Myth Busters," which is archived at www.dec.ny.gov/public/45772.html.

Q: *Supermarkets accept only plastic grocery bags for recycling — right?*

A: Actually, you can now bring a lot more.

Since January 1, 2009, larger retail and grocery stores in New York State must make collection bins for plastic bag recycling available to customers in a visible, easily accessible location. In addition to plastic shopping bags, most stores also accept:

- Plastic retail bags with string ties and rigid plastic handles removed

- Plastic newspaper bags
- Plastic dry-cleaning bags
- Plastic produce bags
- Plastic bread bags
- Plastic cereal bags
- Plastic frozen food bags
- Plastic wrap from paper products (paper towels, etc.)
- Plastic stretch/shrink wrap
- Plastic zipper-type bags with plastic closing mechanism removed

All materials must be clean and dry, with all food residue removed.

These items cannot be recycled with plastic bags:

- Plastic bags with strings, rigid plastic handles, closing mechanisms, or food residue
- Plastic soil or mulch bags
- Plastic bubble wrap
- Plastic food containers
- Plastic bottles

So if you forget your reusable shopping bags on occasion, no need for a huge guilt trip. Next time just remember to bring them to the store, along with your plastic bags and wraps for recycling.

Q: *A beautiful lawn requires synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides?*

A: No, no and no.

The beauty of any lawn is more than "turf deep." Lawns maintained with repeated fertilizer and pesticide applications may look perfect but this perfection is achieved at the high cost of soil vitality, environmental quality, and human health, and will vanish without continual chemical fixes.

Studies have shown that the chemically dependent lawn is more prone to disease and less able to handle stresses from drought, heat, and insects. In addition, lawn chemicals and toxins build up in soils, leach into our water supplies, kill non-target species such as bees and birds, and can be absorbed by children and pets.

To get a lush, green lawn that is not dependent on chemicals, start by building healthy soil. Healthy soil is alive, containing fungi, insects, earthworms, and many living organisms too small to see such as bacteria, microbes, and protozoa. Synthetic fertilizers kill these invisible but essential organisms.

Get the soil's nitrogen and pH tested. Growing lawns need nitrogen, half of which can be supplied just by leaving grass clippings on the lawn. The rest can be added by top-dressing with compost or the addition of slow-release, organic forms of nitrogen. Slow-release fertilizer does not "burn" the grass, as it must be broken down by soil bacteria before it becomes available. Good sources are blood meal, cotton seed meal, and fish meal.



RARE BIRD ALERT (212) 979-3070



