

VOLUME 45, NUMBER 8 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

MAY-AUGUST 2015

#### **NEXT MEETING**

John Gaglione

DATE: Tuesday, May 12, 2015

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

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

SPEAKER: Joe Giunta

TOPIC: Breeding Birds of Orange, Sullivan, and

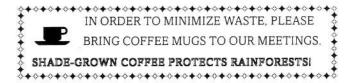
**Ulster Counties** 

For our last monthly meeting until September, we will have a slide-illustrated presentation that compares three counties just north and west of New York City. Included will be the top parks to visit and the fantastic breeding birds that can be found there. A strategy will be presented to cover the entire area in one bird-filled weekend.

Joe Giunta, a native New Yorker and frequent SSAS speaker, has been birding the New York City region for over 25 years. A former math teacher and program chairman at Fort Hamilton High School, Joe is the birding instructor for the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. He has led bird walks for The Nature Conservancy, New York City Audubon, Brooklyn Bird Club, and South Fork Natural History Society. He is a captain in the Brooklyn and South Nassau Christmas Bird Counts, and has participated in breeding bird surveys for New York State. An enthusiastic traveler, he has birded extensively in Central and South America. Joe is the owner of Happy Warblers LLC, a birding and educational travel company. 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 *Songbird Journeys: Four Seasons in the Lives of Migratory Birds* by Miyoko Chu.

**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.



### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Watching the Flowering Trees

Betty Borowsky

One of the wonderful things about spring is watching the trees flower as the weather warms up.

If you think about it, it's pretty amazing that plants have flowers in the first place. They themselves cannot see or smell; yet the angiosperms (the scientific name for the flowering plants) produce some pretty spectacular flowers. The showy flowers are designed to attract animal vectors and have the animals (insects, birds, and bats) carry their pollen to another flower of the same species. It's like sending an e-mail to a specific address. The advantage of this system is that since pollen is carried to flowers of the same species, less has to be produced by the plant, and the plant can save energy.

On the other hand, trees, for the most part, are wind pollinated. So their flowers tend to be fairly inconspicuous, but produce a great deal of pollen, much of which never arrives at a flower at all. Another problem with wind pollination is competition for space on the stigma, the place on a flower where pollen has to be deposited in order for fertilization to occur. If, when pollen from the correct tree arrives at the stigma, it is already jammed with pollen from another species, the "right" pollen may not have room to attach, and there will be no seed produced.

So trees with wind-pollinated flowers minimize pollen competition by pollinating at different times. The principal environmental cue for a flower bud to open is day length. As days get longer, the relative amount of light (or dark) triggers a specific tree to produce its flowers. So the production of flowers and, therefore, pollen is staggered through the spring.

The trees flower in the same order every spring; but things can be delayed by cold weather, as they were this

year. Normally the red maples flower very early. I've seen them flowering at the end of February in some years. This year, they flowered on about April 7. Typi-



cally, the last trees to flower in Nassau County are the oaks (pictured). They usually are finished pollinating by about May 5.

So this is going to be a very interesting year. We already know that the red maples were delayed; will all the trees be equally delayed and flower in the same sequence as usual? In other words, will the oaks be pollinating in June? Or will everything speed up now that the warmer weather is here, and cause the trees' pollinating periods to overlap?

We are about to find out how nature adjusts the calendar for pollinating trees after a very harsh winter.

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.

### CELEBRATE NEW YORK STATE PARKS – JOIN SSAS FOR A FUN-FILLED MORNING

Jim Brown

Come join us at Hempstead Lake State Park to celebrate the fourth annual I Love My Park Day. I Love My Park Day is an exciting statewide event to improve and enhance New York's parks and historic sites, and bring visibility to the entire park system and its needs.

Spend a morning with Audubon friends and other Long Islanders as we improve important habitat with this cleanup. Hempstead Lake State Park, home of Bald Eagles, owls, Wood Ducks, and many other bird species, is an Important Bird Area, one that South Shore Audubon treasures! Park info can be found at www.nysparks.com/regions/long-island/default.aspx. Details on the cleanup are below.

**Saturday, May 2**, from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Those interested should meet at the field on the east side of Eagle Avenue. Volunteer opportunities include the cleanup of the Northwest Pond shoreline, Northeast Pond shoreline, as well as trail cleanup. All ages are welcome to participate. Please bring garden gloves, water, and snacks.

Registration is required — online ahead of time at https://ptny.wufoo.com/forms/i-love-my-park-day-volunteer-registration-al/ or at the park on May 2nd.

With any questions, please call (516) 766-1029.

#### **★★** 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:

Baldwin	Catherine Gladstein
Cedarhurst	Scott Joshua Dere
Farmingdale	Laurelee I. Hawkins, Belinda Kremer
Floral Park	Linda Nicholson, Mary O'Reilly, Joyce Shivers
Garden City	Gerardo Mancia, Rauch Foundation, Charles Tastensen
Hewlett	Joyce Caracciolo
Hicksville	James & Margaret Tiberg
Levittown	
Long Beach	Emily Craft
Lynbrook	Joseph Kolodny
Massapequa	
Massapequa Park	William Barnes, Kevin Rennard, Fred Scheferston, Margaret Schultz
Merrick	Pat Christy, Douglas Glover
Plainview	Stephen Deutsch, Michelle Kies, Janet Ostrowski, Sheryl Saltiel
Rockville Centre	Emilee Samtani
Seaford	Renee Malewski
Valley Stream	Terese L. McDonald
Wantagh	Daniel Dreiss, Joan Kemnitzer, Linda Scheiner
West Hempstead	Regina Mascia, M. Rosen, Virginia Ross
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#### **SSAS'S 44TH ANNUAL DINNER**

Join us for another evening of good food and good company. Our gathering will be at Pompei Restaurant in West Hempstead on **Tuesday**, **June 9**. The cocktail hour will begin at 6:30 P.M.

Your dinner registration form is inserted in this newsletter.

### THOUGHTS, NEWS, AND OPINION FROM YOUR **CONSERVATION CHAIR**

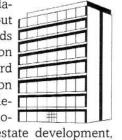
### Bird Conservation - Acting on Many Fronts

Jim Brown

Jonathan Franzen, noted writer and environmentalist, has recently written a very provocative article on climate change and conservation issues for the New Yorker magazine ("Carbon Capture: Has climate change made it harder for people to care about conservation?"; April 6, 2015). Franzen is active in his local Audubon societies, and his essay analyzes, in a critical but reasoned manner, National Audubon's recent report on birds and climate change. Audubon's report stated that climate change was "the greatest threat" to American birds and that "nearly half" of our avian species would be seriously threatened by 2080 due to habitat loss engendered by global warming. I recommend that everyone read both the National Audubon report (climate.audubon.org) and Franzen's New Yorker article. Both are important statements about climate change and what we can do to further the important Audubon goal of bird conservation.

The New Yorker essay acknowledges the importance of global warming while also pointing to the general adaptive capabilities of birds. Adaptive abilities are a positive factor, but also important to bird conservation are the very real pressures on bird populations that are not linked to climate change, such as collisions with buildings and

other manmade structures, and predation by outdoor cats. Franzen points out that over three billion American birds perish from collisions and cat predation each year. Other pressures on bird populations include lead ammunition used by hunters, habitat loss from deforestation and the expansion of monoculture farming, excessive real estate development,



pesticides, etc. The threats to birds are indeed legion! We must combat global warming and prepare for the results of climate change that we - and birds - currently and in the future will surely experience. We must also engage on other important fronts if we are to have a real impact on bird conservation. I urge you all to become involved in these conservation efforts - there are many to choose from! Jonathan Franzen has expressed our conservation mission very well: "To prevent extinctions in the future, it's not enough to curb our carbon emissions. We also have to keep a whole lot of wild birds alive right

**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.

### **BACKYARD SURVEY DATA NEEDED!**

For over a decade, 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 email Birdstudyjoeg02@aol.com.

#### NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2015-2016 BOARD

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting on May 12, 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 Mike Sperling, with Jim & Gail Brown) recommends the following candidates: Betty Borowsky, president; Paul Stessel, vice president; Joe Landesberg, treasurer; Arlene Rawls, recording secretary; Therese Lucas, corresponding secretary; and Mary Colway and Anne Mehlinger, directors (for three-year

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 \$842 via a one-year policy from Mount Vernon Fire Insurance Company that went into effect on November 17, 2014.

### LONG ISLAND BIRD CONSERVATION MANAGER - APPLICATIONS WANTED

Audubon New York's Long Island Bird Conservation program aims to better protect at-risk birds in New York, with the overall goal of reducing threats and stabilizing bird populations on Long Island, with an emphasis on coastal birds. The Long Island Bird Conservation Manager is part of the science department and leads Audubon New York's bird conservation efforts here, including conservation, stewardship, and monitoring, and also assists with outreach and advocacy to reduce threats to priority bird species and Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Interested candidates need to apply online at http://careersaudubon.icims.com (scroll to the location "US-NY-Oyster Bay"); questions can be directed to Jillian Liner (Director of Bird Conservation) at jliner@audubon.org.

#### **BOOKS FOR BIRDERS**

R. U. Abyrdar II

As this season of book reviews comes to an end (interesting and enjoyable, I hope), I have picked a final book, recently published, by a young and entertaining author, The Thing with Feathers: the Surprising Lives of Birds and What They Reveal About Being Human by Noah Strycker. It is an entirely entertaining and profound — even enchanting — look at the lives of birds, peering into their nests (no, I mean their exciting world) and their deep connection with humanity. This is a fascinating book!

The author illustrates interesting behavior in the avian world. Yet he goes a step further; he even compares them with human behavior, from unexpected to downright startling!

What makes humans different from birds? Birds are highly intelligent animals (think corvids), yet their intelli-

gence is dramatically different from our own and has been little understood until very recently. As we become aware of more secrets of bird life, we are discovering fascinating insights into memory, rela-

tionships, game theory, and the nature of intelligence itself. The various chapters examine wanderlust in Snowy Owls, how Turkey Vultures track down their food (sight or smell?), the caching ability of nutcrackers, as well as the deft artistry of bowerbirds in Australia and other mysteries — revealing why birds do what they do and, at the same time, offering a glimpse into our own human nature.

Mr. Strycker draws from his personal experiences, upto-date ornithology, and some interesting historical perspectives. He spins captivating stories about the birds all around us, and illuminates the amazingly intimate coexistence of both birds and humans. He does it all with humor, style, and poetic grace. This book simply crackles with interest! As I read this tome, there were fascinating facts about many of our favorite birds that I found exciting to learn about. Even fun! All these stories were passionately written, comparing us with birds. This book is chock full of many fascinating anecdotes that make you want to check them out on YouTube.

The author relates these accounts of bird behavior in a way that is so much more than simply straight ornithology. He writes in an accessible, almost poetic style. His love of all birds is evident throughout, with his own brand of both warmth and humor. He is not afraid to anthropomorphize, but gives us a "heads-up" when doing so. To sum up, he seems to think like an ornithologist while writing like a poet. A thoroughly engaging book that you will not be able to put down, just as I wasn't able to! Read it... And enjoy!!!

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Joe Landesberg

All walks start at 9:30 A.M.; no walk if it rains. 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.

Apr. 26	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner	
May 3	y 3 Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve	
May 10	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern	
0.50	State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)	
May 17	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside	
May 24		
May 31	THE	
June 7	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside	
June 14 Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parkir		
	Summer Break	
Aug. 16	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside	
Aug. 23	Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)	
Aug. 30	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner	

### IT'S SSAS BIRDATHON TIME!

Here is your opportunity to help birds and their environment. You can do this easily by joining an SSAS Birdathon team (birding expertise not required) or starting one of your own. You may also do an individual Birdathon for any number of hours or sign on to be a donor.

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!

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. 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 longestrunning team, which in peak-migration years will identify about 130 species in Nassau and Queens in five or six locations at a leisurely pace, are as follows:

*Friday, May 11.* Meet us at Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot) for birding north and south of Sunrise Highway (eat dinner first, with or without the team).

Saturday, May 12. Meet us at Mill Pond, Merrick Road, Wantagh at 5:45 A.M. After a breakfast break, the planned



locations are Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parking lot) at around 8:15 A.M., Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside at around 1 P.M. (bring lunch), and Jones Beach's West End 2 at 3 P.M. If you have any questions or

want us to look for you, please contact the team's leaders, John Gaglione at 731-5012 or our perennial Birdathon chairperson, Jim Remsen, at 631-957-0949, prior to the Birdathon.

#### WE'RE GOING TO SHU SWAMP

On **Saturday, May 23**, weather permitting, starting at 10 A.M., SSAS's Joanne Del Prete will be leading us through Shu Swamp, which is described in *New York's 50 Best Places to Go Birding (In and Around the Big Apple)* by John Thaxton, *Walks and Rambles on Long Island* by Alice M. Geffen & Carole Berglie, *Short Nature Walks on Long Island* by Rodney & Priscilla Albright, and *A Seasonal Guide to Bird Finding on Long Island* by Howard Barton 3rd & Patricia I. Pelkowski (in the section about spring).

The Charles T. Church Nature Sanctuary (its official name) is the jewel of the several properties owned and managed in the Mill Neck/Locust Valley area by the North Shore Wildlife Sanctuary, Inc. Tracing its origins back to 1929, the small but beautiful preserve features both wetlands and uplands, with most of the wildlife drawn there by the clear waters of Beaver Brook, which is



fed by many springs and seeps. Shu is an old Dutch word that means "cascading waters." It's a lovely place to walk, with a two-mile trail along a marshy estuary that is a habitat for nesting Great Horned

Owls and Wood Ducks (pictured), mink (also pictured), muskrats, and brown trout. It's also home to evanescent spring flowers such as the trout lily, marsh marigold, dwarf

ginseng, and a rare shrub called heartsa-bustin' that is found nowhere else in New York. A lengthy plant list can be found atwww.nswildlifesanctuary.org/charles.html;we'll identify some of them while we're birding.

Directions. From Route 107, take Route 25A east to Wolver Hollow Road. Turn north to its end and turn right on Chicken Valley Road. Next, turn right in 1.6 miles on Frost Mill Road, which will seem to end at a stop sign at a T-shaped intersection. There, turn left (north) to continue on Frost Mill Road. The parking lot will be on the left, immediately before an LIRR overpass. There aren't any bathroom facilities; bring binoculars and insect repellent. Any questions? Contact Joanne at 433-0739 or jdelprete47@optonline.net.

### BIRD PLANTINGS FOR YOUR BACKYARD

Plant trees and shrubs that offer food and protection for birds! Birds need a constant and varied food source, so plant a variety of early and late blooming flowering plants for a steady food supply. The plants will also attract insects for spring and fall migrants to feed on. Native species are better adapted to local soils and climates; they require less water, fertilizer, and pest control. Let plants grow naturally and create a controlled untidiness in your naturescape. For ideas, you can obtain the following books and others from Long Island's public libraries (search for the subject "gardening to attract birds" at http://encore.alisweb.org) or online bookstores (your editor recommends the search engine BookFinder.com).

- Long Island Native Plants for Landscaping: A Source Book by Karen Blumer (1990; long out-of-print but in many libraries; not specifically focused on birds)
  - Attracting Birds & Butterflies by Barbara Ellis (1997)
- Attracting Birds to Your Backyard by Sally Roth (1998)
- The Audubon Backyard Birdwatcher: Birdfeeders and Bird Gardens by Robert Burton (1999)
- The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds by Stephen W. Kress (2006) or his The Bird Garden (1995)
- Backyard Birding: Using Natural Gardening to Attract
  Birds by Julie Zickefoose and BirdWatcher's Digest (2011)
- → Backyards Are for the Birds by Edward R. Ricciuti (1998)
- → Bird Gardens: Welcoming Wild Birds to Your Yard by Brooklyn Botanic Garden (1998)
- → Birds in Your Backyard: A Bird-Lover's Guide to Creating a Garden Sanctuary by Robert Dolezal and Birds & Blooms (2004)
- Garden Secrets for Attracting Birds: A Bird-by-Bird Guide to Plants by Rachael Lanicci (2010)
- Gardening for Birds & Butterflies by Birds & Blooms (2012)
- Gardening for the Birds: How to Create a Bird-Friendly Backyard by George Adams (2013; this is the fifth edition of his Birdscaping Your Garden from 1998)
  - ✓ Natural Gardening by Jim Knopf et al. (1995)
  - Songbirds in Your Garden by John K. Terres (1994)



Explore the coast with the

### AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

HORSESHOE CRAB & SHOREBIRD WALK (Sat., May 23, noon to 2 P.M.). Meet at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and carpool to American Ball Field Beach Site to view annual mating ritual of the primordial horseshoe crab Wear boots, bring binoculars. Kids welcome. To RSVP, contact Don. 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. With NYC Audubon & NYC Sierra Club. To purchase tickets visit https://jamaicabayecologycruise.eventbrite.com. 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.), 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs, and a star watch. View full itinerary and purchase tickets at https://spring-montaukweekend.eventbrite.com. CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH (Aug. 13-16)

JAMAICA BAY SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL (Sat., Aug. 29) CHINCOTEAGUE REFUGE & ASSATEAGUE (Nov. 19–22)

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.

Phone: (516) 931-1445 Fax: (516) 931-1467 E-Mail: lgk1cpa@aol.com

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### SHOREBIRD VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Audubon New York is looking for volunteer beach docents. Help us increase awareness of beach-nesting birds (such as Piping Plovers) while spending a day at the beach! Being a volunteer involves talking to beachgoers about beach-nesting birds, the importance of sharing the beach, and encouraging beachgoers to sign a "Share the Beach" pledge. It's also an opportunity to connect with people about birds and share what you know! Interested in volunteering for one of our scheduled beach days (listed below)? Please e-mail Laura McCarthy at Imccarthy@audubon.org.

Lido Beach Town Park: May 24 & July 5 Point Lookout Town Park: May 25 & July 12 Jones Beach State Park: July 4 & 11

Also: 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.

Interested in Helping to Monitor Shorebirds? Audubon is participating in International Shorebird Surveys and is looking for volunteers to cover some of our survey routes. Submissions are made electronically through eBird's International Shorebird Survey portal (ISS eBird) using your regular account; it's a great way to help contribute data.

We're also encouraging birders to pay special attention to **shorebird legs** this season! Band and flag resightings are very important to shorebird managers, and help us learn a lot about migration patterns and survival. To learn more about the survey protocol, submitting data, and reporting band sightings, please e-mail Emma Carpenter (ecarpenter@audubon.org), who is one of SSAS's directors, for more information.

#### 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.

# DUR 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.

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 (only the western half is open, due to ongoing 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 Metro Card 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!

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## NATURE TALES FROM A WANDERER I Got It - No I Don't!

Joe Grupp

A family event found me walking among our nation's rarest pine trees on a hiking trail of the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve in San Diego, California. Binoculars were left back in the hotel, as the walk was simply for family members to appreciate the scenery and walk the trail as it wound around and under the pines, eventually dropping from high ground down to a Pacific Ocean beach. The scenery, near and far, was as good as scenery gets and for our walk dominated what we were aware of.

Stopping at one point for a few moments, I became aware of a small bird that hopped out onto the trail a short distance in front of me from the dry, low, shrubby habitat, known as chaparral. My birding instinct immediately took over and I visually zeroed in on the bird, looking for any kind of naked-eye detail I could find. Being in an unfamiliar place far from home, I felt a bit of excitement, having no idea of what it could be and I heard myself say "Got it." In the next instant I heard myself say "No I don't" as the bird went back into the brush again. About all I got was a glimpse of a dark, larger sparrow-type bird, leaving me clueless as to the species. That behavior and my response to it repeated itself in at least two other places on the trail.

Later in the week, my wife and I, binoculars in hand, were able to spend a day birding and exploring a few other natural areas in San Diego. A good portion of that day's afternoon was spent at the Cabrillo National Monument, located on a headland that separates the Pacific Ocean from San Diego Bay. From spots on the headland there are lookouts where you can see San Diego in one direction and across the waters of the Pacific Ocean to the horizon



in the other. There are lookouts along that high ground where people gather to whale watch or just enjoy the view. Roads used to explore the property sometimes drop down to the ocean. A historic area with a Visitor Center, a monument to

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo (the first European to set foot on the west coast of the U.S.), and a lighthouse are focuses on the height of land.

It was while we were exploring the lighthouse area that the same type of bird as seen at Torrey Pines hopped out onto the trail fairly close by. I quickly got my binoculars on it, found myself once again saying "Got it" and, just as quickly as before, "No I don't" as the bird then disappeared back into the brush. Determined to identify the bird, we both hung out there for a while and also returned to that general area where a few trails intersect, and the bird or one like it popped out occasionally and just as quickly popped back into the brush, and the mantra went on, "Got it – No I don't."

Atthetrailintersection we successfully picked up enough of the bird's detail to be fairly sure that the bird that we wished would remain in the open for at least a short time was a California Towhee. Research in the field guides we were carrying pointed out that the species has a dull-streaked and buffy throat. We were then hopeful we would get an opportunity to view that mark. After a time we returned to our car and followed a road down to the beach.

Near the end of the road there was a small parking area for a beach-ocean view lookout. There were not more than a dozen parking spaces there and we were about to pass it by, as it was getting late, when I spotted what could be our elusive bird hopping about on the asphalt. Parking quickly, we got out of the car and once again played our now infamous game of "Got it - No I don't," but then we had three, sometimes four birds that were not very tolerant of one another to work with. The birds were in almost constant motion, hopping onto the asphalt and back into the brush or chasing one another, but occasionally they paused long enough so we could study them. Observation still was not easy but every once in a while we got a bird in a position and in the right light so the dull-streaked buffy throat was evident. Occasionally we were also able to spot another subtle field mark, the dull rusty feathers found under the tail. All blended into the overall dull gray-brown color of the bird.

We spent a bit of time watching the birds come and go, the two dull field marks blending into the dull gray—brown birds still challenging us. They were continually returning to the asphalt and leaving for short periods, at times hopping along the asphalt and even under parked cars. We could not tell what the attraction was, though it seemed to be related to the human activity there, perhaps food being dropped. Eventually it was time to go back to the hotel for dinner.

I have reason to believe that the birds are fairly common in the developed as well as the more natural areas of the region and that we had not identified a rare or even uncommon species. In spite of that, we were thrilled by the satisfaction of completing the chase and instead of having to say "Got it — No I Don't," we could then say "Got it — YES WE DID!"

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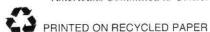
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