VOLUME 46. NUMBER 8 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

MAY-AUGUST 2016

NEXT MEETING

Paul Stessel

DATE: Tuesday, May 10, 2016

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

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

SPEAKER: John Brokos

TOPIC: Nature... A Gift from Our Creator

At our last monthly meeting until September, SSAS welcomes back photographer John Brokos for a one-hour slide show of approximately 140 "exhibition-quality" images, with brief commentary on each. The program includes birds, insects, other animals, plants, and landscapes from all over the east (Canada to Florida), plus several astronomy photos.

Some of the 30,000 photos that John has on file can be seen on his Web site, www.imagesfordecor.com. Years ago, he competed in international Salon Exhibitions, where he was ranked in the top 25 for pictorial color work and 12th as a Nature Exhibitor. He is a member of the Hall of Fame of The Photographic Federation of Long Island and a Fellow of the Photographic Society of America. 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 and Sy Schiff reviewed in the previous Skimmer. This meeting's book is Good Birders Don't Wear White: 50 Tips from North America's Top Birders, which was edited by Lisa White.

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.

IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS.

SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!

Parking Lots. In addition to the parking lot adjacent to

SSAS Mission Statement — The mission of South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and preserve and restore our environment, through responsible activism, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE No Tennis Tournament at Hempstead Lake State Park!

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Betty Borowsky

If you recall, the South Shore Audubon Society initiated a campaign to prevent a planned tennis tournament at Hempstead Lake State Park this year on the grounds that, at the least, it would greatly disturb bird habitat during the height of the spring migration in our area (it was to be held in May), and that, at worst, the changes necessary to host the event (such as the installation of bleachers, etc.) would do irreparable damage to the park.

I am very happy to announce that the tournament has been cancelled. I do not know whether it was our protests that made the Parks department reconsider this. or whether there was some other reason for their decision. All I know is that your calls, e-mails, and letters sure didn't hurt. So thank you very much for your efforts on behalf of the park.

When we thought the tournament was going to be held, I asked you to take photos and send them to us. While not as urgent now, it would still be wonderful if you took photos and sent them to us — especially photos that document the presence of our birds. We would love to see them. Photos may be sent to ssasweb@optonline.net.

With the enormous damage to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge caused by Hurricane Sandy, Hempstead Lake State Park has become the premier birding location in our area. It has been designated an IBA (Important Bird Area) and hosts an incredible variety of birds throughout the year.

SSAS conducts bird walks there several times a year, and our members visit the park individually all the time. I meet one or more of you almost every time I go there.

So come to the park with us on our formal bird walks, on I Love My Park Day (see Jim Brown's article on p. 6), and, of course, enjoy it on your own. With any luck you will spot one of the glory birds; there are Great Horned Owls, Osprey, Wood Ducks, Common Nighthawks, and Bald Eagles. But even if you don't see one of those, the spring migration will bring you our beautiful warblers with their unique calls and songs, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, vireos — really, it's a very long list. And some of them will stay all summer: Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Yellow Warblers, and many others.

This is the season when if you're working indoors you can't focus; and after work it's all you can do to make yourself come indoors to eat and rest, in case you miss something. Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr., our Poet In Residence, captured the beauty of the spring migration perfectly in his poem *Fiesta*:

Comes with warblers, waves of warblers moving up the continents: Yellows [pictured], 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

I hope you enjoy the season to its fullest.

LIKE US! http://facebook.com/SSAudubon

At South Shore Audubon Society's general meeting on May 10, 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 Brown and Marilyn Hametz) recommends the following candidates: Betty Borowsky, president; To Be Announced, vice president; Joe Landesberg, treasurer; Arlene Rawls, recording secretary; Therese Lucas, corresponding secretary; and Brien Weiner and Somebody Else, directors (for three-year terms).

Directors & Officers Liability 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 \$868 via a one-year policy from Mount Vernon Fire Insurance Company that went into effect on November 12, 2015.

ት**ጵ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS** ት**ጵ**

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 Memorial Library from 7:30–9:30 P.M. on the second Tuesday of the month (September through May) 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.

Check out the weekly bird walks and other 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 Howard Batsford, Ellen Heldt Bellmore...... Gary Strumeyer East Meadow..... Joan Levy Farmingdale Gail Kampfer, Tahitia Kremer, Kathleen Mayer Floral Park...... Janet G. Afflerbach, Linda Nicholson, Jack Wille Freeport...... Russell Holland Levittown Lawrence Berke Long Beach Cindy Bell, Bert Krashes Lynbrook Kathryn Alessi, Cynthia Ferri, Linda Mcintyre Massapequa...... John W. Grover, Edward Wernersbach Massapequa Park Viola Aasen, Edward Fuhrmann Merrick..... Edward Caragol, Thomas Mackay Oceanside..... Lisa Tobin Plainview..... Leona Fein, Frank Siegel Rockville Centre Austin Akner, Theodora Sacknoff Seaford...... Kara Gallagher Uniondale...... Yolene Keyes Valley Stream...... Marie Caruso, Myong Lee Wantagh Raymond Cody, Carmel Davanzo, Nancy Kaplan

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BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

Avery Scott

A Message from R. U. Abyrdar II: For our final column of the 2015–16 season, we've given the honor of this review to our 2016 American Birding Association "Young Birder of the Year," Avery Scott. Sy and I say "have a wonderful summer; see you again in the fall."

The Armchair Birder: Discovering the Secret Lives of Familiar Birds by John Yow is a unique book indeed. While other books may regale the reader with tales of exciting and interesting birds encountered, Yow's book is based entirely on the author's experience with the birds in his backyard, a large, undeveloped property in Georgia; during the course of the book, the author leaves his own property only once. Is Yow's book a great piece of literature reminding us not to forget the fascinating birds in our own yards, or a boring, dry monotony? Your dedicated reviewer is here to find out!

Yow's book is organized by season, presenting ten essays per season on the various birds the author has encountered in his backyard. The essays follow the same

general structure, opening with a paragraph or so about the author's own experience with the bird in question, then going into details of the species' life history, and finally returning to the author's personal anecdote. This format is helpful in that it allows one

to read by dipping in and out, reading an es-

say here and there. However, this format can be tedious, since it provides the same scientific information for each bird in the same order, causing the book to sometimes feel like a field guide.

The author draws heavily on the ornithological greats such as Arthur Cleveland Bent and John James Audubon, which brings a more informational, factual element to the book. Each essay is accompanied by one of Audubon's paintings, adding a nice artistic touch. However, at times it feels as if Yow is simply reiterating the research of early ornithologists.

John Yow's writing style is colorful and he is a master of painting a vivid image in his reader's mind. His downfall is that he writes about birds that are indeed common on his rural property in Georgia, but fails to acknowledge that the birds he sees in his yard — Bald Eagles and Sandhill Cranes, for example — are not likely to frequent feeders in suburban neighborhoods.

The title of the book — *The Armchair Birder* — is exceptionally accurate, since Yow remains in his backyard for the entire duration of the book. The tone of the book follows suit, as his writing has a very domestic, tame feel to it, which left this reviewer feeling restless and longing for adventure.

The Armchair Birder will most likely leave something to be desired for hard-core birders who leave their homes with the specific goal of finding and observing birds. However, it is a fine read for birders who are just beginning to discover birds in their backyards. It will inspire them, bring them scientific knowledge, and cause them to contemplate the lives of the birds that visit their feeders. Surely it is a pleasant read for those just embarking on a path to avian enlightenment.

Join us for another evening of good food, good company, and lots more. Our gathering will be at Pompei Restaurant in West Hempstead on **Wednesday**, **June 15**. The cocktail hour will begin at 6:30 P.M. Your dinner registration form is inserted in this newsletter.

★ BIRD WALK5

Joe Landesberg

All walks start at **9** a.m.; no walk if it rains. Call me at 467-9498 in case of questionable conditions or for other info. Directions and lists of what we've seen are at ssaudubon.org.

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*For Hempstead Plains: Take the Meadowbrook State Parkway to Exit M4 (also used for Hempstead Turnpike/Nassau Coliseum). Continue on the exit road to Charles Lindbergh Blvd. west. Go a short distance on the boulevard to the first exit on the right, which is for Nassau Community College's East Campus parking lots. At the first intersection, you'll see a sign and parking for Hempstead Plains and its Education Center.

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FOR THE BIRDS! VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Audubon New York's For the Birds! program is looking for volunteer teachers and assistants. For the Birds! is an elementary education program that teaches environmental awareness and appreciation of nature through the study of birds. During a 4-, 8-, or 16-week session, public and private school students in grades 2 through 4 learn about their natural environment through classroom lessons, outdoor field trips, and a conservation project designed to improve bird habitat in the local community. For the Birds! exposes students, usually for the first time, to the idea that their own neighborhoods provide valuable habitat to birds and other wildlife.

According to Education Coordinator Diana Ngai, For the Birds! Long Island is currently in Roosevelt and Westbury (the latter is slightly outside of SSAS's territory, but our members are welcome to help there too). Bird-friendly habitat gardens are done on each school's property and all of the field trips take place at Jones Beach. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Kathryn D'Amico, the Volunteer Coordinator, at kdamico@audubon.org. Training will be scheduled.

THE 2015 SHOREBIRD NESTING SEASON

John Zarudsky

As we approach and look forward hopefully to a successful nesting season for our Piping Plover and colonial nesting terns and skimmers for 2016, here is a brief recap of the 2015 nesting season.

In our local Point Lookout – Lido Beach area, there were 11 pairs of Piping Plovers, which produced 7 fledglings for a productivity of 0.63 young per pair. To the east across Jones Inlet at West End, Long Island State Parks staff surveyed 33 pairs accounting for 45 fledglings; a productivity of 1.36 young per pair. For all of Long Island, surveys accounted for an estimat-

ed 303 pairs yielding a productivity of 1.51 young per pair

(the recovery goal is to have 1.50 young per pair).

Editor's interruption: I asked John why the Piping Plover productivity at Point Lookout and Lido Beach was noticeably lower than elsewhere last year. His reply was that there were problems with roaming cats, American Oystercatchers entering exclosures, tidal flooding of a nest that had chicks, and possibly avian predation.

At east Nickerson Beach, which supported a large colony of Common Terns and Black Skimmers, Common Terns averaged 622 total individuals during June and Black Skimmers 462 adults. Late-season counts in September for skimmers reached as high as 600 adults. To learn more about the migratory movements of Black Skimmers as part of the Black Skimmer Conservation Management Plan, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Jason Smith directed a banding

operation, with the Town of Hempstead Department of Conservation and Waterways, New York City Audubon, and other volunteers helping, that resulted in the banding of over 100 Black Skimmer juveniles, of which 77 were additionally marked using yellow-colored leg bands.

Colorful American Oystercatchers, which nested from Point Lookout to Lido Beach Towers, averaged 50 pairs.

Least Tern nesting at Nickerson Beach's west sanctuary and sites westward accounted for an average of 43 individuals. At Jones Beach, Common Terns averaged 53 individuals and Least Terns 163. For all of Long Island, Least Tern counts amounted to over 2000 pairs.

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.



JAMAICA BAY SUNSET ECOLOGY CRUISE (Sat., May 21, 5 to 8 p.m.). Join us aboard the 100-ft "Golden Sunshine" for a 3-hour narrated cruise into the backwater marshes of Jamaica Bay. Learn about the history, ecology, and wildlife of this 18,000-acre preserve. See nesting Osprey, terns, egrets, herons, oystercatchers and more. Cost: \$55 incl. wine & cheese, drink, fruit, snacks. Leaders: Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe.

HORSESHOE CRAB WALK (Sun., May 22, 9 A.M. to noon). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge visitor center and carpool to nearby site to see horseshoe crabs come ashore to mate and lay eggs. Leaders: Mickey Cohen, Don Riepe. Free.

MONTAUK SPRING WEEKEND (June 3–5). Trip fee of \$395/ person includes 2 nights at luxurious Manor House (double occupancy), 5 meals, 5 guided hikes, 2 evening programs & star watch plus free pickup at LIRR station in Montauk.

CAPE ANN WHALE WATCH (August 11–14). Spend three nights in lovely Gloucester, MA. Trip cost: \$425/person (double occ.) incl. 3 nights lodging, 1/2 day whale boat, Essex River Evening Cruise, lobster/seafood dinner, easy canoeing on Ipswich River & guided hike to scenic Halibut Point shoreline. 11TH ANNUAL SHOREBIRD FESTIVAL AT JAMAICA BAY (Sat., Aug. 20, 8 A.M. to 5 P.M.).

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 Plan Thwarted, Then an Extraordinary Find

Јое Сгирр

In mid-January we embarked on a week-long motor trip to visit a cousin in Georgia and as we headed home visit a friend in South Carolina, and make half-day stops at various wildlife refuges, parks, etc. One of our planned stops in South Carolina was to be at the Francis Marion National Forest as we motored from my cousin to our friend. It was a place that intrigued me since we visited the nearby National Audubon Society's Francis Beidler Forest Sanctuary and Center some time ago. Depending on Visitor Centers (VC) for maps, points of interest, bird lists, etc., we were dismayed to find that the VC at Francis Marion was not only closed upon our arrival but also surrounded by an imposing fence and locked gate. Wasting some time trying to find a forest road we knew about, we realized that the locked VC thwarted us from realizing the centerpiece of our outdoor plans. We salvaged some of our limited time when we stumbled upon the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) while searching for the forest road. There we explored its waters and marshes from a pier that jutted out onto them, on what had become a very cold day.

After a visit to our friend and other outdoor exploration, we were still looking for a substitute for our thwarted plan. As I drove north my wife found it, in the National Geographic Guide to Birdwatching Sites, Eastern U.S., which we had with us. It was a refuge with a wonderful name — the Mattamuskeet NWR — and it would require an additional day on the road to visit. Over 100,000 waterfowl winter there, among them thousands of Tundra Swans. Tundra Swans breed in the northwest Arctic and then thousands winter at Mattamuskeet. Tundra Swans. usually in low single-digit numbers, do visit Long Island at times but one usually has to drive some miles to view them. I say usually because a few years ago a pair spent the winter in a pond at Massapequa Preserve. Thousands of Tundra Swans sounded like a good reason to spend that extra day on the road.

Good but not interstate-type high-speed roads got us to the somewhat remote refuge, located on the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula in North Carolina. Turning into the refuge entrance road, we were greeted by a large flock of hundreds of American Coot. Part of the flock was walking among the grasses at the road's edge; part were still down the embankment and in the waters that appeared to be the edge of a marshy lake. They were concentrated all around us and we chased them off the road as we slowly drove forward. A glance out onto the "lake" and there they were, a mass of hundreds of Tundra Swans on the waters and the marshy vegetation. They were distant but well within binocular range, through which the mass became an enormous group of individual birds. Tundra Swans in pairs, individually, and in small

numbers were scattered among the waters and marshy areas; a few were on the embankment at the road's edge. We stopped by a pair that was a little more than an arm's length from the car, rolled down the passenger-side window, and relaxed, observing them. One of the pair was standing alert, neck stretched out and head turned so it could watch us. The second appeared to be sleeping; its neck was lying on its back in a sinuous manner, its head lying on its side on the highest part of the back. I have no idea where the birds are as I write this but their image is now the desktop on my wife's computer. The small yellow spot at the base of the bill near the eye, diagnostic of the species, is so easy to see in the photo.

A stop at the VC provided us with a map and other information about the refuge, including places to walk and bird. Using the map, we followed a road on the opposite side of the watery marshy area from where we came in. At the VC I learned that it was not a lake but a large impoundment where the water level is controlled for the benefit of the birds. The swans were there because the water level in the main lake, due to a wet spell, was too high for them to reach the bottom vegetation they need to feed on and the controlled level in the impoundment provided a food supply they could reach.

We chased a small flock of six to eight Eastern Meadowlarks forward as we drove slowly, stopping at times to view them. At another impoundment we attempted a bird walk but its waters were iced in, and it was quiet and cold, so we gave it up. At one point, hidden by trees, something caused hundreds of waterfowl to rise into the air, calling out as they did so. We could only get glimpses of them through the trees but did pull over, roll down the windows, and just listened to the music of their wild calls.

Having reached the refuge's entrance road from the direction we came, the lake itself was hidden by trees, etc. It was not until we started to continue our journey towards home that we viewed Mattamuskeet Lake, the largest natural lake in North Carolina, having a maximum length of eighteen miles and maximum width of seven. Our route, Highway 94, took us across the lake on an approximately 5-mile-long causeway. A stop at a viewing platform there had me looking through binoculars at a distant part of the lake, where I spotted numerous distant white spots – distant Tundra Swans! The lake and refuge is truly an extraordinary place, a refuge for wildlife and for us an extraordinary find!

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CONSERVATION NOTES Get Outdoors and Volunteer This Spring and Summer!

Jim Brown

Conservation often requires real work, which can fortunately also be immensely enjoyable. This spring and summer there are some wonderful, exciting volunteer opportunities that are available to South Shore Audubon Society members and friends.

The first is **I Love My Park Day** at Hempstead Lake State Park, from 9:00 A.M. to noon on **Saturday, May 7**. I Love My Park Day is a statewide event with the goal of improving and enhancing New York's parks and historic sites, and to bring visibility to the entire park system and its needs. SSAS members have been involved in this important annual event for several years at one of our favorite places — Hempstead Lake State Park. Once again our work involves a cleanup of the shoreline of one of the park's ponds. Volunteers should meet at the parking lot on the east side of Eagle Avenue at exit 18, north of the Southern State Parkway. All ages are welcome to participate. Please bring garden gloves, water, and snacks.

Come and 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 (pictured), and many other bird species, is an Important Bird Area, one that South Shore Audubon treasures! Park info can be



found at http://parks.ny.gov/parks/31/details.aspx.

Registration is required — online ahead of time at http://parks.ny.gov/events/event.aspx?e=31-15820.0 or at the park on May 7. If you have any questions, call 516-766-1029. See you there!

Another opportunity that will be available to us during the late spring and summer months is participation in the **Be a Good Egg** project at some of our local beaches. Volunteers are needed to bring to the larger public the message that we should all be "good eggs," and share the beaches with threatened and endangered bird species such as Piping Plovers and Least Terns, and species of special concern such as American Oystercatchers. Come to the beach and help our state organization, Audubon New York, get the word out, and to have beachgoers sign the pledge to responsibly share the beach with our avian friends!

My wife Gail and I have participated in this program, and we found it exceedingly rewarding. We got to spend a delightful day on the beach, with a comfortable canopy and chairs within reach, with other volunteers and Audubon staff. We talked to people coming to the beach about the importance of birds and the joy of birding. We gave out some bird-related objects — "free stuff" — supplied

by Audubon New York to people coming to the beach as we explained the need to protect breeding and migrating shorebirds. Many people — of all ages — were eager to sign the pledge to share the beach with birds and thereby become "good eggs." Educating the public about bird conservation is a necessary task, but also a satisfying and enjoyable one, especially when the day is shared with other dedicated volunteers and Audubon staff. I urge everyone to consider coming to one of our South Shore beaches to participate in this signature Audubon program.

Scheduling is being done by Kathryn D'Amico, Audubon New York's Volunteer Coordinator, who can be contacted at kdamico@audubon.org. The 2016 Be a Good Egg Outreach Days, all from 9:30 A.M. to 3 P.M., are:

Saturday, June 11: Point Lookout Sunday, June 12: Lido Beach Saturday, July 2: Lido Beach

Sunday, July 3: Jones Beach Field 2 (not West End 2)

Saturday, July 16: Jones Beach Field 2 **Sunday, July 17**: Point Lookout

GREAT GULL ISLAND STEWARDSHIP DAY

Editor's note: The following invitation was sent to me by Audubon NY's Long Island Bird Conservation Manager, Amanda Pachomski. For info about the nearly 50-year-old Great Gull Island Project (whose director, Helen Hays, was SSAS's speaker in 2004), visit greatgullisland.org.

Audubon New York and the Long Island Sound Study are offering a unique volunteer opportunity (for ages 16+) to visit Great Gull Island and map endangered Roseate Tern nests on **May 21**. We will take a boat over to the island from the Orient by the Sea marina in Orient, NY at 8 A.M. and return to the dock at 5 P.M. We have limited space on the boat, so please be sure to register in advance at http://tinyurl.com/greatgull.

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.

NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Editor's note: "Bird-Friendly Communities and Native Plants" was the theme for the spring meeting of the NYS Audubon Council (consisting of the state's chapters and Audubon NY), echoing one of the five core strategies of National Audubon Society's 2016–2020 strategic plan. We've provided our own lists of useful books and bird-attracting native plants in the Skimmer in the past two springs; instead of repeating those, below you'll find background information from audubon.org (the next three paragraphs) and a top-ten plantings list (minus the descriptions, photos, etc.) from North Shore Audubon Society (which serves most of northern Nassau County). I encourage you to visit http://newyork.plantatlas.usf.edu for the New York Flora Atlas, at which you can get lists by county, with the option of viewing only native plants.

Over the past century, urbanization has taken intact, ecologically productive land and fragmented and transformed it with lawns and exotic ornamental plants. In that time, the continental United States has lost a staggering 150 million acres of habitat and farmland to urban sprawl, and that trend isn't slowing. The modern obsession with highly manicured "perfect" lawns alone has created a green, monoculture carpet across the

country that covers more than 40 million acres. The humandominated landscape no longer supports functioning ecosystems, and the remaining isolated natural areas are not large enough to sustain wildlife.

Native plants are those that occur naturally in a region in which they evolved. They are the ecological basis upon which life depends, including birds and people. Without these natives and the insects that co-evolved with them, local birds cannot survive. Unfortunately, most of the landscaping plants available in nurseries are alien species from other countries. These exotic plants not only sever the food web, but many have become invasive pests, outcompeting native species and degrading habitat in remaining natural areas.

Landscaping choices have meaningful effects on the populations of birds and the insects they need to survive. Homeowners, landscapers, and local policy makers can benefit birds and other wildlife simply by selecting native plants when making their landscaping decisions.

10 Native Plants to Attract Wildlife to Your Garden: Bee balm (Monarda didyma), butterfly weed, viburnums [eight natives, of which arrowwood and mapleleaf are mentioned; your editor's prized arrowwood has lately been attacked by the nonnative viburnum leaf beetle], cardinal flower, flowering dogwood, highbush blueberry, black-eyed Susan, bayberry (Myrica aka Morella pensylvanica), winterberry holly [compatible male and female plants needed], and serviceberry (Amelanchier arborea).

OUR SIXTEENTH ANNUAL CENTRAL PARK WALK

On **Saturday, May 7**, 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 from 31 to 70-plus species in under three hours. Last year we had just 37 species, 11 of which were warblers: Black-throated Green, Yellow, Prairie, Black-and-white, Magnolia, Pine, Palm, Yellow-rumped, Northern Parula, American Redstart, and Ovenbird. The non-warblers included Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Goldfinch, Warbling Vireo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Hermit Thrush, Chipping Sparrow, Chimney Swift, Great Egret, and Northern Flicker.

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 (jdelprete47@optonline.net, phone 433-0739).

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, due to board there at 7:12. 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!

Staircase Alert: Our usual route to Belvedere Castle includes a 30-step climb from the 79th Street Transverse.

Editor's note: A press release from Audubon New York's Executive Director, Erin M. Crotty, was sent to chapter leaders on April 1, accompanied by the highlights below.

The final state budget includes historic levels of funding for the environment. The budget includes \$300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (a historic funding level; SSAS signed a petition supporting it); over \$90 million in New York Works funding to support state parks; \$40 million for DEC's New York Works program, including stewardship and access projects on DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) lands; and \$350 million for the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act to provide grants to municipalities to undertake clean water and drinking water projects over the next two years.

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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