# OUTH HORE KIMMER

VOLUME 47. NUMBER 2 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

OCTOBER 2016

#### **NEXT MEETING**

Paul Stessel



DATE: Tuesday, October 4, 2016

REASON: Yom Kippur Begins on the 11th

**TIME**: 7:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Freeport Memorial Library

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

**SPEAKERS**: Isabel Fernandes & Dennis Fleury

TOPIC: An Evening With Wildlife

At our next meeting, we'll be presenting the speakers before the coffee break, so that children who need to go home before our typical 9:30 quitting time can join us.

Isabel and Dennis, the co-directors of Tackapausha Museum and Preserve, will be bringing an assortment of animals (including birds of prey) for us to view and learn about.

Isabel holds a B.A. in wildlife management from Cobleskill University; is a state-licensed wildlife rehabilitator and falconer; is the wildlife care coordinator at Sweetbriar Nature Center; has rescued, rehabilitated, and released more wildlife than most have ever seen; and is an arachnophile with an international collection of over 30 spider specimens. Dennis holds a B.A. in education from Cortland State University, is a state-licensed wildlife rehabilitator and veterinary assistant, and has been rescuing animals since early childhood. Both once worked for Audubon NY at the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary, and both received SSAS's Elliott Kutner Conservation Award at our annual dinner last June. 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 *Falcons Return: Restoring an Endangered Species* by John Kaufmann and Heinz Meng.

**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.

**NOVEMBER MEETING.** Because the library is closed on the 8th for Election Day, we'll be meeting on the 15th.

IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE

BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS.

SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Cals!

Belty Borowsky

Let me begin by saying that I love cats — both in general and individually. Cats have grace and beauty, are wonderfully entertaining to watch, and if they decide you'll do, can become affectionate companions.

Many years ago I adopted a kitten. I had heard an odd, loud, persistent crying in the hall where I was working, and went out to investigate. And there was this tiny little kitten meowing louder than I thought could be possible (it wasn't the meow that cats make when they merely want to call your attention to something; if you know cats, you know that special distress cry). When I picked her up, she looked deeply into my eyes, then curled up in my arms and turned on her purring machine (and if you know cats, you know there's a difference between purrs — this was the one that's so strong it shakes their bodies). Really, it was love at first sight, for both of us.

So we decided to live together. I would let her out during the day, and she would follow me back to the house at night. To the consternation of my landlady, I even took her with me when the family spent a year in Europe. Believe me, she had plenty of food, attention, toys; everything.

BUT she caught birds. I know this because for some reason she brought them to me. She brought one home about once every other week; and of course it's entirely possible that she caught many more that she never told me about. This was very distressing to me, especially because so many were still alive when she brought them home. As far as I know she never ate them; and if I had

permitted it, she would have played with them, catching and re-catching them each time they tried to fly away until they died. I rescued as many as I could, and tried to dissuade her from that behavior, but I never could.

Now, at the time, I did not think too deeply about this. I was unhappy about my own cat's behavior, but I never considered the impact that that behavior might have on bird populations overall if all cats behaved this way. I knew she enjoyed being free during the day, but I never thought "well, if my cat is catching birds at the rate of about one every two weeks (that I know about), how many are being caught by all the pets that are allowed to roam free; and, in fact, how many are killed by cats that are entirely feral?"

Well, we do have a number for that: it is estimated that cats kill between 3.1 and 4 billion birds each year in the United States (https://www.sciencenews.org/article/cats-kill-more-one-billion-birds-each-year). Now, while

most of the birds my cat brought home were sparrows, some were much rarer, including migrating warblers. And we lived in an urban area. By the way, cats also kill between 6.3 and 22.3 billion mam-

mals in the United States each year.

Once I saw another cat catch a bird. The bird was feeding on the ground, and for a long time was unaware of the cat's presence. The cat was such a good hunter that it snuck up on the bird slowly, crouching low on its haunches, as they do, while staring fixedly at each tiny movement of the bird. Suddenly the bird saw the cat near it and flew up. And then, to my utter astonishment, the cat leapt up and caught that bird in its front paws while the bird was in flight. When I saw the bird fly up, I would have bet a lot of money on it escaping — but the cat was an expert.

So what do you do when you love birds *and* cats?

The South Shore Audubon Society recommends the following:

- Me recommend that pets be kept indoors.
- We discourage people from feeding cats who are not their pets (my cat had two litters within the first year, a total of nine kittens, that mercifully I was able to find homes for).
- We urge the various parks departments to remove any cat shelters, and to prevent people from feeding or leaving food for cats in the parks. Parks should offer especially safe havens for migrating birds.

Understand that we do not advocate harming cats, but support actions that will exclude them from parks and discourage their presence in the environment in general. We believe that with these measures we can have birds and cats, and enjoy them both.

*References.* Some interesting background information from the National Audubon Society:

"Cat Owners Turn a Blind Eye to Pets' Violence" at www.audubon.org/news/cat-owners-turn-blind-eye-pets-violence

"Feral Cat Predation on Birds Costs Billions of Dollars a Year" at www.audubon.org/news/feral-cat-predation-birds-costs-billions-dollars-year

#### 

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.

Sep. 18	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
•	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
Oct. 2	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern
	State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
Oct. 9	Columbus Day Weekend — No Walk
Oct. 16	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Oct. 23	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Oct. 30	Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner
Nov. 6	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north
	side of Merrick Rd.)
Nov. 13	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)



Explore the coast with the

## AMERICAN LITTORAL SOCIETY

JAMAICA BAY SUNSET ECOLOGY CRUISE (Sat., Sept. 24, 4 to 7 P.M.). Join us aboard the 100 ft "Golden Sunshine" out of Pier 4, Sheepshead Bay for a 3-hour cruise into backwater marshes. Learn about the history, ecology & wildlife of this 13,000-acre preserve and see nesting Osprey, terns, egrets, herons, oystercatchers & more. Cost: \$55 includes narrated tour plus wine & cheese, drink, fruit, snacks. Leader: Don Riepe. In partnership with NYC Audubon & Gateway NRA.

**HAWK MIGRATION HIKE** (Sat., Oct. 8, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at Bldg. 1, Fort Tilden, Rockaway at peak migration time for a short hike along the beach and dunes and a visit to the hawk watch platform on top of Battery Harris East for great views of the bay, ocean, and NYC skyline. Free.

CHINCOTEAGUE REFUGE / ASSATEAGUE NATIONAL SEASHORE (Nov. 10–13). A great natural history weekend on the Virginia coast. See wild ponies, Snow Geese, Bald Eagles, migrating hawks, waterfowl, shorebirds & lots more. Cost: \$395 (\$180 single room supp.) incl. lodging at luxurious Refuge Inn, breakfast, Safari bus tour of back dunes area, 5 guided hikes, evening programs, plus an "all-you-can-eat" oyster and seafood dinner. In partnership with NYC Audubon.

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.

#### **FLEA MARKET UPDATE**

Our flea market plan has shifted from fall to spring. Please save stuff to donate to us; details to come in 2017.

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R. U. Abyrdar II with Sy Schiff

Last month's book was a brief one concerning the saving of the Peregrine Falcon from the brink of extinction. It was written by participants in the midst of this "do or die" moment. Our book this month moves on to a journalist's re-creation of this amazing success story! It is written, not in the moment, but as a memoir of what occurred. It is also a bit (?) longer, as memoirs usually are. A grand retrospective, if you will. The author looks back on how a small group of New York biologists brought the Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle, as well as other raptors, back from the brink!

Now that we've gotten your attention, let us introduce this month's book: Flight Paths: A Field Journal of Hope, Heartbreak, and Miracles with New York's Bird People, by Darryl McGrath. Ms. McGrath is an environmental journalist, not a scientist, so her style differs drastically from that of our previous book's authors. She writes with a reporter's style, somewhat like that of an article in the "New Yorker." Just remember; she is a journalist at the core. She conveys the successes of the past in breeding captive raptors and how these lessons learned might be used in dealing with similar emergencies in the future.

The restoration of the Peregrine Falcon to the wild has long been covered by scientists, starting with the success of the captive breeding program at New Paltz and Cornell Lab of Ornithology (as discussed in last month's book) and its aftermath. Our present book relies more on a reporter's instinct to retell the story in a retrospective mode. The author uses interviews with the original players, now some 35-40 years later. Thus, there is a different and more personal touch to her approach. She also goes on to point out recent environmental problems and what might be done about these. The approach this book uses is vastly different because the participants involved get full treatment and equal time with the action. Each individual that played a role in the story is identified and their history retold. Thus, it becomes a personal saga and you get to really know the principal players! This is definitely a New York State achievement! (Applause here!)

Other subjects covered in a less comprehensive manner are what is being done (much still ongoing) about the Bicknell's Thrush, Common Loon, acid rain, etc. The

California Condor is also briefly mentioned! The author ends her retelling with an environmentalist's pitch for the future. This is a book told with interesting stories as well as committed scientists. Read it... and enjoy!! We should all be very thankful for their success!

# "BE A GOOD EGG" PROGRAM A SUCCESS THIS SUMMER!

Jim Brown

Kathryn D'Amico, Volunteer Coordinator of the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary & Audubon Center, has reported that Audubon New York's "Be a Good Egg" Program had its most successful season ever this year. On 12 beach outreach days, 28 volunteers and 7 Audubon New York staff members were able to obtain 2314 pledges to "Be a Good Egg."

Members of the public going to Long Island beaches are asked to share the beach with our shorebirds, some of them threatened and endangered species. Beachgoers who agree with this goal then sign a pledge to respect the protective fencing around the birds, and to make sure that



predator-enticing garbage is discarded properly and that dogs are not brought to beaches where birds are nesting. Those that sign the pledge to help with shorebird conservation become "good eggs."

On Saturday, July 17, several volunteers from South Shore Audubon, North Shore Audubon, other Long Islanders, along with Audubon New York staff, brought the "Be a Good Egg" initiative to Point Lookout. Peggy Maslow, Mike Schwartz, Adam Cresko, Seren Bagcilar, Laura McCarthy, Kathryn D'Amico, Gail Brown, and myself enjoyed a delightful — though extremely hot — day in the sun talking to the public, handing out conservation-related materials, and obtaining several hundred pledges. It was especially rewarding to see the positive reactions of the children to the birds. We were helped with that not only with the models of the plovers and nests we displayed, but by the cooperating oystercatcher family strategically located just behind our beach tent.

In another article in this month's *Skimmer* [see next page], Conservation Committee member Brien Weiner discusses in detail the many threats faced by shorebirds on Long Island and what must be done to preserve endangered and threatened species such as Piping Plovers, Black Skimmers, and American Oystercatchers. Survival statistics for these birds nesting on Town of Hempstead beaches were not generally good this past summer.

One thing that must be done by individuals and groups such as Audubon is to educate the public about these birds and their survival needs, so that their numbers will grow, so these species can survive. "Be a Good Egg" is an important Audubon conservation initiative, and I urge everyone to participate next year in this summer outreach activity along our beaches!

#### **OUR SHOREBIRDS NEED OUR HELP**

Brien Weiner

The summer of 2016 was my second serving as a volunteer Piping Plover and general shorebird monitor on the beaches from Lido to Point Lookout for John Zarudsky of the Town of Hempstead Department of Conservation and Waterways. It was an experience that was at once educational and rewarding, thrilling and heartbreaking. Given that there were 12 piping plover nests producing a total of 28 chicks, only 12 of which survived to fledge, for a productivity ratio of 1 chick per pair (1.25 is needed to maintain breeding population; 1.5 is the goal for recovery), the results were seemingly dismal. But given the incessant threats these birds face, it is amazing that any survive at all. The Piping Plover is listed as a federally threatened and New York State endangered species.

Two of the initial twelve nests were abandoned, one with four eggs close to hatch date. Cat tracks were found around the abandoned nests, as well as in areas from which Piping Plover chicks disappeared. Necropsies performed on dead chicks (and in the summer of 2015, on one dead adult) suggest they were killed by cats. In the summer of 2015, necropsies on four dead chicks that collapsed in front of conservation staff indicated that the chicks were dehydrated and malnourished from the stress of evading cats. There are at least three known feral cat feeding stations between Lido and Point Lookout, and contrary to popular belief, well-fed cats will not ignore birds but are all-the-more energetic hunters. It is difficult to trap the cats, especially with the recent staff reductions to an already minimally staffed conservation department (which the Town of Hempstead says is not downsizing but "rightsizing"). When a cat is trapped, the TOH practices TNR (trap, neuter, and release); and while the cat is not returned to the beach, it is released elsewhere to become some other birds' problem.

Other threats to Piping Plovers include crows, gulls, oystercatchers, raccoons, dogs, flooding of nests from storms and tides (exacerbated by sea-level rise from climate change), and human activity, especially the constant flow of vehicles on the beach — lifeguards, EMT, park maintenance, and county police — which often do not observe posted speed limits. When Piping Plover chicks perceive a threat, they will squat motionlessly in the sand; that they are well-camouflaged makes them even more vulnerable to being run over. Often the job of a monitor is one of traffic cop.

Predation by cats and raccoons on our Black Skimmer colonies at Nickerson Beach this summer was tragic.

The skimmers in the west sanctuary, about 120 birds, had all but a few of their nests destroyed by raccoons; when the skimmers re-nested in the east sanctuary, their nests were destroyed

by cats and raccoons. Cats and raccoons drove the

original east sanctuary nesters, about 450 birds, out onto the open beach, where some of the eggs, chicks, and fledglings were picked off by gulls, crows, and oystercatchers; abandoned by parents; or placed in the path of vehicles. In sum, I counted about 85 fledgling skimmers in 2016, compared with about 300 fledglings in 2015; the number of adults was constant at about 600. The Black Skimmer is a New York State species of concern and Nickerson has historically been their stronghold.

So, what can we do to protect the local treasure of our nesting shorebirds? Until we can solve the ultimately human-created cat and raccoon problem, we can only put up string fences, signage, and exclosures around Piping Plover nests. We can educate the public to respect protected areas, avoid lingering near nests and young, keep dogs off the beach, and avoid leaving or burying trash and food scraps that attract predators that then prey on eggs and chicks. Finally, I urge Audubon members to volunteer as monitors; we not only protect at-risk species, but we are privileged to witness the daily dramas of the individual birds, with their different personalities and endearing idiosyncrasies, and to appreciate their struggles to survive and successfully raise their families. You will fall in love with these birds as I did.

#### **IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER**

Sy Schiff

I met the late Millard Lindauer, an older local birder, through birding friends. We quickly discovered we had both come from Philadelphia. We began to discuss birding in Philly and although we never met there, found we had a number of mutual still-active birding friends. This led to birding together and eventually he began telling me stories of the old days.

In 1935 (many years before), Millard decided to travel to Louisiana to try to see the last of the Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. He had gotten the name and details of the guide who knew where the bird could be found and would take you out into the swamps where it was. After a long trip halfway across the country (before the interstates and through rural roads), he arrived and located the guide.

When he approached him, the guide was in an uproar. He had taken a party out several days before and they were the worst people he had ever dealt with. He vowed never to take anyone else out and wouldn't budge. Millard was a rather mild-tempered man and, try as he could, he couldn't persuade or move him. Other birders who came after him received the same reception. As far as Millard knew, no one else ever got to see the birds again.

#### MASSAPEQUA CREEK AND THE GRUMMAN PLUME

Michael Sperling

While this *Skimmer* is at the printer, the 30-day public comment period will be ending for a report whose three recommended remedial options include, as the cheapest (costing \$268 million instead of over \$500 million for the others), using Massapequa Creek to dispose of the treated waste from the groundwater contamination (chlorinated volatile organic compounds) whose southward spread from Grumman's site in Bethpage to a five-squaremile area up to 800 feet deep has been in the news for quite a few years. The proposal would quadruple the flow

of water in the Creek for possibly more than 200 years, sent there from a one-acre treatment plant to be built in the northern end of Massapequa Preserve that would be fed by 16 wells to be dug along the Southern State Parkway. The other two remedial options involve upgrading the Cedar Creek Water Pollution Control Plant and sending the contamination there via a new 12,000-foot sewer pipe.

To quote the DEC: "In response to Chapter 543 of the Laws of 2014, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) tasked one of its Engineering Consultants (HDR, Inc.) with developing and evaluating options to achieve hydraulic containment of the groundwater contamination associated with the Grumman Aerospace — Bethpage Facility in Bethpage, New York. The report, called the "Remedial Options Report for the Grumman Aerospace — Bethpage Facility," was recently completed and submitted to NYS DEC. The report includes estimates of the cost, scope, and timetable for three alternatives to contain the plume. The report is available at http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8431. html."

The report includes a table of "Massapequa Creek Stream Flow Statistics" based on 68 years of data from the U.S. Geological Survey. The median and mean stream flows are 6.2 cfs (cubic feet per second) and 8.4 cfs, respectively, with a range from 0.83 cfs (in 1995) to 57 cfs (in 1959). The proposed project would add approximately 31 cfs of treated water, for a new mean flow of 39.4 cfs.

The report provides five "pros" and four "cons" to the Massapequa Creek option:

- $\ensuremath{\textcircled{1}}$  Construction using proven, standard construction methods
  - ② Land available along Southern State Parkway
- ③ Water main(s) can be excavated in land along SSP, and directional drilling can be used to pass beneath roads and highways
- Minimal disruption to surrounding residential and commercial area
  - ⑤ Improve water quality and flow in Massapequa Creek
- Disruption to Massapequa Preserve during construction of treatment plant and discharge infrastructure

- 2 Massapequa Creek may need improvements to effectively convey an additional 19 mgd (million gallons per day)
- 3 19 mgd of fresh water from a sole-source aquifer will be discharged to Ocean. Over the projected 200-year period of performance of this remedy, that equates to over 730 billion gallons of fresh water extracted from a sole-source aquifer that would be discharged to Ocean.

4 Potential permanent changes to Massapequa Creek, such as measurable differences in water temperature [colder] and salinity [lower], reduced ability to convey stormwater, and possible alterations to the current creek biota.

According to the report, there's an alternative to its three remedial options: "Direct reuse of the water after wellhead treatment has been proven to be an effective approach to achieve the Remedial Action Objectives and protect the health and welfare of the public and the environment. The treatment of this water would be no different than what has been done by many water purveyors in Nassau County for many decades. This approach would be safe and effective but would require considerable planning and cooperation between stakeholders and water providers to implement. The primary advantage of this option would be the elimination of the need to 'dispose' of the treated water that after treatment would be suitable for drinking. This option, although not within Chapter 543 of the Laws of 2014, would provide a long-term manageable solution, reduce the overall costs, and not result in a loss of Nassau County's precious water resources." SSAS is urging the DEC to pursue this option.

# \*\*\* WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ትវ

Wendy Murbach

Our new member	rs since the last <i>Skimmer</i> are:
Baldwin	Carmen Litwack, Doris Reichert,
	Ellen Miller-Scully
Bedford	Patricia T. Mutolo
Bellmore	Jeanette Byrnes, Celeste Schaffren
Farmingdale	Correen A Bieler, Diane Krieger, Wren Wilson
Floral Park	Autumn Bradley, John Goodman,
	Robert Poncel
Franklin Square	Florence J. Reiss
Garden City	Mane Ramos
Garden City Park	Johnda Ferrari
Hempstead	Marianne Baker
Hicksville	Henry Skorupski
Massapequa	Geoffry Alster, Dorothy Barritt, Margaret Del Re, Joan Dukich, Diane Gleave
Massapequa Park	Vincent J. Muscarnera, Geraldine Pike
Merrick	Marsha Grossberg, Susanna Inge
Seaford	Eloise Dimino, Barbara Martorana
Valley Stream	Robert Sinram
Wantagh	Barbara Kitay, Donna Matson,

Carmela Murphy

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#### JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE **GARDENS RESTORATION STATUS**

Editor's note: Below is a letter from Patti Rafferty, the Chief, Resource Stewardship, for the Gateway National Recreation Area. It was e-mailed to me on August 27 via the e-list associated with https://groups.google.com/ group/jamaica-bay by the person she was responding to, Dan Mundy, Sr., who cochairs the Jamaica Bay Task Force with Don Riepe; SSAS attends Task Force meetings. Prior to Sandy, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge was one of our most frequently visited sites for decades; we still occasionally schedule Sunday bird walks there.

The North and South Garden restoration project is ongoing. Below is an update that addresses your concerns. Overall I would ask for your patience — invasive treatment and restoration of native habitat is a long-term process and commitment. We are in it for the long haul and know that it will take time to get the initial work completed, and a long-term commitment to manage this restoration project and control invasives, and along the way things won't always look pretty or perfect, but incrementally progress is being made.

An initial treatment of woody invasives with herbicides in the South Garden was completed in late fall and early winter of 2015. Herbicides were applied by cut stump and basal bark method. Invasive trees that received basal bark applications are not scheduled for removal. Cut stump applications result in removal of some or all of the invasive vine, shrub, or tree. When vines are cut, only the lower 6-10 feet of the vine is removed. We want to ensure there remains within the site vertical structure, since it will be years before the native trees that we are planting become part of the canopy structure.

In the South Garden, initial herbicide treatment of vines has not yet occurred. In an ideal world that would have occurred last fall; however, by the time we were able to get the contract executed and in place, it was too late

> in the growing season to be effective. This spring and early summer, we did not want herbicide application during the nesting season. In consideration of avi-

> > an use (especially nesting and fledgling birds), we provided our contractor with clearance

to do herbicide treatment of vines in South Garden anytime after July 15, 2016. We provided clearance for treatment work to begin in North Garden anytime after August 15, 2016. The contractor has chosen to come back at a time when they can work in both North and South Garden to facilitate more effective use of their equipment and staffing. I don't yet have a specific date when the team will be back working in the area.

Mechanical clearing of invasive vines was completed over approximately 1.5 acres of the South Garden in early May. That area was planted with approximately 2400 native trees and shrubs by volunteers in mid May. In some of the lower elevation (wetter) areas of the May planting we have had mortality - we apparently did not get the right plants in that area. Again — this area has not yet had herbicide treatment of vine material (vines were removed mechanically which removes the aboveground plant but does not kill the plant). That work will occur when the contractor returns later this summer.

Even after all the initial invasive treatment of the South and North Garden is completed, weeds and vines will come back. We have contracted through this project for two additional herbicide treatments. We realize that we may need additional chemical treatment beyond that and will need to engage stewards to help with long-term control.

In addition to herbicide and mechanical removal of invasives, high-density native planting is aimed at quickly (within 5-10 years) achieving canopy closure so that the planted native vegetation can outcompete lightdependent invasive species. This strategy is designed to help decrease the intensity of effort needed for long-term invasive management of the site.

The north end of the parking lot is one area that we designated for a mulch pile for this project. Time, staffing, and equipment availability did not allow us to mulch material in May as it was being cut and stockpiled. That will be done; however, there will continue to be a mulch pile at the north end of the parking lot for some time. We want to ensure that the mulch has sufficiently digested to destroy seed viability so that we do not spread invasive seed sources.

We will be out at the end of October to plant the remainder of the South Garden. North Garden planting is scheduled for spring and fall of 2017.

I hope this information addresses your questions. If you have additional questions or concerns, please let me know.

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**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.

#### **BLACK SKIMMER PER 19TH CENTURY BOOK**

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from American Ornithology; or, the Natural History of the Birds of the United States, by Alexander Wilson and Charles Lucian Bonaparte (from 1825 to 1833, the latter updated Wilson's volumes from 20 years earlier). The book, which can be downloaded for free, uses "Shearwater" in its entertaining description of a species that it also refers to with the modern-day name, Black Skimmer.

This truly singular fowl is the only species of its tribe hitherto discovered. Like many others, it is a bird of passage in the United States; and makes its first appearance, on the shores of New Jersey, early in May. It resides there, as well as along the whole Atlantic coast, during the summer; and retires early in September. Its favorite haunts are low sandbars, raised above the reach of the summer tides; and also dry flat sands on the beach, in front of the ocean. On such places it usually breeds along the shores of Cape May, in New Jersey. On account of the general coldness of the spring there, the Shearwater does not begin to lay until early in June, at which time these birds form themselves into small societies, fifteen or twenty pair frequently breeding within a few yards of each other. The nest is a mere hollow, formed in the sand, without any materials. The female lays three eggs, almost exactly oval, of a clear white, marked with large round spots of brownish black, and intermixed with others of pale Indian ink. These eggs measure one inch and three-guarters by one inch and a guarter. Half a bushel and more of eggs has sometimes been collected from one sandbar, within the compass of half an acre. These eggs have something of a fishy taste, but are eaten by many people on the coast. The female sits on them only during the night, or in wet and stormy weather. The young remain for several weeks before they are able to fly; are fed with great assiduity by both parents; and seem to delight in lying with loosened wings, flat on the sand, enjoying its invigorating warmth. They breed but once in the season.

The singular conformation of the bill of this bird has excited much surprise; and some writers, measuring the divine proportions of nature by their own contracted standards of conception, in the plenitude of their vanity have pronounced it to be "an awkward and defective instrument." Such ignorant presumption, or rather impiety,

ought to hide its head in the dust on a calm display of the peculiar construction of this singular bird, and the wisdom by which it is so admirably adapted to the purposes, or mode of existence, for which it was intended. The Shearwater is formed for skimming, while on wing, the surface of the sea for its food, which consists of small fish, shrimps, young fry, &c., whose usual haunts are near the shore, and towards the surface.

That the lower mandible, when dipped into and cleaving the water, might not retard the bird's way, it is thinned and sharpened like the blade of a knife; the upper mandible being at such times elevated above water, is curtailed in its length, as being less necessary, but tapering gradually to a point, that, on shutting, it may offer less opposition. To prevent inconvenience from the rushing of the water, the mouth is confined to the mere opening of the gullet, which indeed prevents mastication taking place there; but the stomach, or gizzard, to which this business is solely allotted, is of uncommon hardness, strength, and muscularity, far surpassing, in these respects, any other water bird with which I am acquainted.

To all these is added a vast expansion of wing, to enable the bird to sail with sufficient celerity while dipping in the water. The general proportion of the length of our swiftest hawks and swallows to their breadth is as one to two; but in the present case, as there is not only the resistance of the air, but also that of the water, to overcome, a still greater volume of wing is given, the Shearwater measuring nineteen inches in length, and upwards of fortyfour in extent. In short, whoever has attentively examined this curious apparatus, and observed the possessor with his ample wings, long bending neck, and lower mandible occasionally dipped into, and ploughing, the surface, and the facility with which he procures his food, cannot but consider it a mere playful amusement, when compared with the dashing immersions of the tern, the gull, or the fish-hawk, who, to the superficial observer, appear so superiorly accommodated.

#### SHARED-USE PATH HEADING TO WEST END 2

Editor's note: I found the following Negative Declaration in the August 31 issue of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's *Environmental Notice Bulletin*, which is posted on the DEC's Web site each week:

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYS OPRHP), as lead agency, has determined that the proposed Jones Beach State Park Shared Use Path will not have a significant adverse environmental impact. NYS OPRHP will create a shareduse path in Jones Beach State Park to connect the current terminus of the Ocean Parkway Coastal Greenway Shared-Use Path with the rest of the park to the west. The proposed path will provide transportation and recreational opportunities to bicyclists and pedestrians. A new paved surface and guide rail will be constructed next to Bay Drive between the West End 2 parking field and Field 1 and utilize the existing boardwalk to connect to the East Bathhouse. Minor improvements associated with this project include resurfacing portions of pavement in existing parking areas, modification to the curb, and upgrading drainage, traffic signs and striping.

### **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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