OUTH HORE KIMMER

VOLUME 47. NUMBER 5 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

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'alentine's Day FEBRUARY 2017

NEXT MEETING

Paul Stessel

DATE: Tuesday, February 14, 2017

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Freeport Memorial Library

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

TOPIC: Annual Members' Night

February is members' night, a chance for any and/or all of us to shine! We have many hobbies and interests that are not focused on birding — cooking, knitting, gardening, quilting, playing an instrument, etc.

I'll be bringing a "bird walk" in our seats, a chance to find 35+ birds while using a pencil and paper, with a prize for the first one to reach 35! Also, I'm going to set up a table of books on native plants and backyard bird feeding, as Audubon is espousing, "saving habitat for birds one backyard at a time!" I will also include a bibliography of the books displayed.

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.

- IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS.
- SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS!

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 Feathers and Communication

Betty Borowsky

We fall in love with birds because they are beautiful, because of their behaviors, and/or because they can fly; feathers are involved in all of these aspects of birds' lives. Among other things, they permit flight, they provide insulation, and they facilitate communication. Amazingly, feathers are entirely unique to birds; they are the only living group of animals that has them.

So I've been thinking about feathers. (What can I say?) First and foremost, of course, feathers help birds fly. Depending upon their shape and where they are located on the bird's body, they can help push the bird through the air, lend it stability and help steer it in flight, and help put on the brakes when it lands.

Feathers provide insulation, too. In the winter, it sometimes looks like chickadees and other small passerines have put on a lot of weight. Of course they haven't — they have fluffed out their feathers to keep a layer of air close to their bodies to keep them warm. Their own body heat warms the air that's trapped between their skin and the feathers. (We take full advantage of feathers' insulating properties in down blankets and coats.) In fact the evidence from many newly discovered fossils shows that feathers evolved before flight did, so the current idea is that feathers evolved originally for insulation.

But perhaps feathers' most remarkable function is their role in communication. Their colors, their color patterns, and their structures help convey important information among individuals. Feathers can broadcast an individual's species, sex, and readiness to breed. They may also reflect an individual's relative ability to breed (more vibrant colors, for example, probably reflect a good diet and perhaps the ability to produce and care for a healthy brood).

Feathers' colors come from chemicals and from the feathers' structures. In general, the reds and yellows come from chemical pigments. So flamingos' and spoonbills' pink color comes from carotenoids in the algae and crustaceans they eat. And according to http:// www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/for-some-species-you-really-are-what-you-eat-40747423/, if you removed carotenoids from their diet their feathers would be gray.

But other colors (generally the blues and greens) are not pigments, but come from the feathers' microstructure. Differences in the microscopic structure of the feathers' surface allow them to reflect only specific wavelengths of light. The feathers' microstructures also cause the iridescence we see in so many birds, such as European Starlings and Common Grackles. Now, a male Mallard has a bright green head — that's its hallmark feature. But have you ever seen it on a cloudy day? On a cloudy day, there's little direct sunlight, so there's little to reflect, and the Mallard's head looks black. Better yet, have you ever seen the Mallard's head when it's sunny, but the bird is between you and the sun? Then it looks bright purple!

Of course, many birds have both chemical and structural pigments (think about the iridescence on the neck of our common Rock Pigeon). One of my favorite birds is the Vermillion Flycatcher. This little guy positively glows red. But if you look at it in bright light, you will notice that the red is not uniform vermillion, but ranges from scarlet through raspberry and carmine. It is significant too that when he sings he typically chooses a highly visible spot that's out in the open — so all those subtle shades of red can be seen in the sun.

Color patterns communicate information too, but can be even more subtle: think about warblers in the fall. One factor that contributes to the seasonal changes we see is that feathers are rather fragile things and wear away during the year. Some birds' individual feather patterns are designed so that newly emerged feathers give their owners one appearance, but as the year progresses, the feathers' edges wear away in a natural process and, in doing so, reveal other colors that form an entirely different color pattern.

The shapes of the feathers help birds communicate too. Just a few examples: the extraordinarily long tail feath-

ers of the male Resplendent Quetzal (pictured) undulate when he flies; the racquet-shaped tail feathers of motmots are swung from side to side to indicate they are ready to fly away. Taking it a step further, some male Birds-of-Paradise can totally transform their appearances during courtship displays by rearranging their odd feathers so they are highly visible (for example, look at this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7QZnwKqopo).

Furthermore, some feathers modify sound. Some *make* sound (such as our Mourning Dove in flight) and some *suppress* sound (such as owls). And some make unbelievably extraordinary sounds with modified feathers (listen to this Club-winged Manakin stridulating: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FHSQQMnOko).

And feathers weigh next to nothing.

ኢጵ WELCOME NEW MEMBERS ኢጵ

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., usually 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 Dora Delellis, Jennifer Evans-Dicrescio, Katherine
Marra, Candace Oshinsky
BellmoreNicholas Cassano, Marsha Laino, Paul R. Medici,
Allie Rand, Charles Sykes
Bethpage Eleanor Behrik
East Meadow
East Rockaway Lori Parker Swanson
ElmontS. Adaikalasamy, Eric Barinka
Farmingdale Robert Desmond, Margaret Sullivan, Judy Vernace
Freeport Elizabeth Pippin, Carol June Wallen
Garden City Vincent Candiano, Margaret Edelman
Glen Oaks Maqbool Bokharif, Ashok Gandhi
Hempstead Karen Burke
Hicksville Claire Haines
Island Park Joseph Abate, Marianne Spahr, Charles Stressler
Levittown Severin Severson
Long Beach Sheldon Gleich, Matt Molloy
Lynbrook Mark Csuti, Marylou L. Toglia, Angelo Vaia,
Scott Yale
Malverne Robert Glaser, Francis T. Hunt, Catherine Wellikoff
Massapequa Carolyn Cumisky, Osvaldo Secchi, Lorilee Todd
Massapequa Park Ira Blatt, Stephen Ferranti, Julie Kapuvari
Oceanside Joseph Wilmot
Old Bethpage R. Ditieri
Plainview
Point Lookout Joseph Volker
Rockville Centre Mrs. S. Kantounis
Seaford
Uniondale Leonard T. Goslee, Alan Poltorak
Valley Stream Richard Truman
Wantagh Ulfert Esen, Gertrude Glass, Heather Glass,
Diana Samboy
3

PHOTO ID ADDED TO MERLIN

Editor's note: In December, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology made the following announcement about an addition to its free Merlin app, which has been downloaded over a million times:

The Merlin team has been working hard on a fun new feature for Merlin Bird ID that we know you'll love. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Visipedia have been collaborating on new advances in machine learning and computer vision, and we are excited to bring Photo ID to all Merlin users. Just snap a photo of a bird, and get real-time ID on your phone. Sound too futuristic? The future is now.

Photo ID is available in the free Merlin app for Android and iOS devices. Download today and be one of the first to try it on your photos.

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JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird-watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at **birdcount.org**. Anyone can take part, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 20th annual GBBC will be held **Friday, February** 17 through **Monday, February** 20. Please visit the official Web site at birdcount.org for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

Bird populations are always shifting and changing. For example, 2014 GBBC data highlighted a large irruption of Snowy Owls across the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and Great Lakes areas of the United States. The data also showed the effects that warm weather patterns have had on bird movement around the country. For info on the results of the 2016 GBBC, take a look at the GBBC Summary, and be sure to check out some of the images in the 2016 GBBC Photo Contest Gallery.

On the program Web site, participants can explore realtime maps and charts that show what others are reporting during and after the count. Be sure to check out the "Explore a Region" tool to get an idea of what you can expect to see in your area during the GBBC.

In 2016, New Yorkers reported 164 species via a record-breaking 7460 checklists. In Nassau County, the following 100 species were reported: Brant, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Common Eider, Harlequin Duck, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, Horned Grebe, Great Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, American Ovstercatcher, Black-bellied Plover, Killdeer, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin (pictured), Purple Sandpiper, Razorbill, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed

Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Great Horned Owl, Snowy Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Common Raven, Horned Lark, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, American Pipit, Snow Bunting, Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Tree Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird, Baltimore Oriole, House Finch, American Goldfinch, and House Sparrow. The location for the highest 2016 GBBC count for each of these in Nassau County is at ebird.org.

29TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The remaining dates for our 2016–2017 Waterfowl Survey are as follows, rain or shine: **Saturdays, February 4, February 25,** and **March 25**. If you are interested in spending a full or half day visiting some or all of the 28 locations, call SSAS's Bill Belford at 385-1759.

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GARAGE SALE - HELPERS AND STUFF NEEDED!

For the first time since 2008, SSAS has a garage sale on its calendar — for **Saturday, April 8**, with a rain date of the 15th. Please start saving things! If you can't bring your items to the Youngferts' home in Franklin Square when it's time for the sale, we expect to be able to help get your items there. Donations are tax-deductible.

Please note that we're not looking for encyclopedia sets, Reader's Digest condensed books, baby equipment, and any small appliances that are not working. If you have small appliances to donate, they should have the

booklet (or a note about where it can be downloaded for free online) and all other parts, and, of course, be clean. We will have an area set up where appliances can be tested before being sold.



Volunteers will be needed to pick up, drop off, and/or sell items. They will also be needed on the day before the sale to help set up, and afterwards to help pack up unsold things to donate to another organization. To volunteer, please write to Nancy at nyoungfert@aol.com.

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

R. U. Abyrdar II with Sy Schiff

I know you're going to say "Another falcon story?" But this one is different — Peregrine Falcons in Colorado (not New York!) — and, in addition, it is a really fascinating tale: Wings for My Flight: The Peregrine Falcons of Chimney Rock by Marcy Cottrell Houle. This book blends adventure, humor, and a touch of romance (I know I've gotten your attention now) in a beautiful tale of determined conservation. It contains vivid descriptions of the author's skydiving theatrics blended in with the seductive beauty and power of the wilderness. It is both well crafted and very compelling (conservation versus economic development) — a story about the contemporary conflict we see all around us every day.

Forty years ago, as you may recall, the Peregrine Falcon was on the U.S. endangered species list and many birders doubted that it would survive! The author begins her journey as a young field biologist on her first serious assignment. She was assigned to observe one of the last remaining peregrine pairs — located at a site slated for development as a major tourist attraction. This book tells the story of her dedicated work at Chimney Rock, as well as the attempted recovery of the peregrine. Ms. Houle spent that first summer watching and studying a Peregrine Falcon aerie in a national forest in southwestern Colorado. Ms. Houle kept at her job for three more summers and it wasn't going to be a picnic! This is her story.

Now Sy adds his take (next three paragraphs): This book is the author's version of her first job as a Forest Ranger, as a newly graduated biology major. It is written to document the life of one of only seven remaining nest-

ing Peregrine Falcons in the mountains of Colorado. This was at the end of the DDT era and before hacking started in an effort to reintroduce peregrines into the wild. The purpose was to accumulate data on the breeding cycle of the falcons (not much was known at the time) so as to attempt to ensure that the eventual hacking programs would be successful. The chosen site was adjacent to ancient Indian ruins, a proposed major recreational development, and an extensive underlying coal deposit. Tribes, environmentalists, and the newly created Endangered Species Act were all aligned against big money, politicians, developers, and local residents eager to capitalize on these rich resources. Into this turmoil, without explanation of the local situation, a very young female arrived at her new job.

The first half of the book explores the research regimen and what was found out about the falcons up until the time they fledged, as well as the difficulties, trials, and tribulations of the situation. A second female Forest Ranger arrives soon after the start and the two last through the first successful season, although not without unexpected difficulties.

This book contains an interesting look at the joys and hardships that wildlife biologists go through in order to document the lives of the birds they study! The story continues until the falcons depart, but not without injuries,



disasters, and a beginning love interest and eventual success. This sounds like a novel, but mixed with a good bit of passionate environmental preaching. This study finds much new knowledge that I found interesting, documents how this knowledge was collected, and

sets the stage for new thinking about how to protect these fascinating raptors.

As this article concludes, I'm happy to report that President Obama has designated Chimney Rock as a national monument! (We sometimes do win the "conservation wars" aimed at protecting our slowly diminishing wilderness.) Read the book ... and ENJOY!!!

JAMAICA BAY DOCUMENTARY COMING TO CHANNEL 13

"Saving Jamaica Bay" tells the story of how one community fought government inaction and overcame Hurricane Sandy to clean up and restore the largest open space area in New York City. Narrated by Academy Award winning actress Susan Sarandon, "Saving Jamaica Bay" underscores the importance of citizen action and the role of urban nature in protecting our cities from the effects of climate change.

The one-hour program is scheduled to be televised on Thirteen (WNET) on **Saturday**, **February 18** at 1 P.M. You can watch the trailer, which includes Don Riepe, at www.savingjamaicabay.com.

🖋 BIRD WALKS 🦋

Joe Landesbero

All walks start at 9 A.M.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. 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.

Jan. 29	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north
	side of Merrick Rd.)
Feb. 5	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern
	State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
Feb. 12	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Feb. 19	Massapequa Lake*
Feb. 26	Mill Pond Park (see above)
Mar. 5	Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parking lot)
Mar. 11 (Sat.)	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
Mar. 19	Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)

*For Massapequa Lake (the southern end of Massapequa Preserve), use street parking on the westbound side of Merrick Road, west of Lake Shore Blvd.

OAK WILT DISEASE

Editor's note: On December 29, I received a press release from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, titled "Deadly Oak Wilt Disease Found in Brooklyn and Several Towns in Suffolk County." There are oak trees in my own backyard and in adjacent ones, and their reputation as great bird attractors is well-earned. Here's the situation:

New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) announced today that the oak tree disease, oak wilt, has been detected in the borough of Brooklyn, Kings County and in the towns of Babylon, Islip, Riverhead, and Southold in Suffolk County. The disease was identified by the Cornell Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic after samples from symptomatic oak trees were collected by DEC Forest Health Technicians.

Oak wilt had previously only been found in Scotia, Schenectady County, until it was identified in Canandaigua, Ontario County, and Central Islip, Long Island earlier this year [2015]. Since then, reports of symptomatic oak trees from concerned tree care professionals, as well as the public, have led to the additional detections. The confirmation of the disease in Brooklyn marks the fourth county where oak wilt has been confirmed in New York.

There is no known treatment to contain and kill the oak wilt fungus other than to remove the infected trees, as well as any surrounding host oak trees. At this time, DEC will remove and destroy oaks that have tested positive for the fungus. Testing for oak wilt must be done during the growing season when the fungus is active, so intensive sampling will take place across Kings, Nassau, and Suffolk counties starting next spring to determine the extent of the disease. Aerial surveys will be conducted beginning in July when signs of oak wilt will be most apparent.

DEC is in the process of issuing emergency orders to establish protective zones encompassing the entirety of Suffolk County and the borough of Brooklyn. The emergency orders will prohibit the removal of any living, dead, standing, cut, or fallen oak trees or any portion thereof, including branches, logs, stumps, or roots, and green oak lumber and firewood (of any species) out of the protective zones unless it has been chipped to less than one inch in two dimensions.

"It is important that these emergency orders are taken seriously," said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos. "Moving contaminated wood without taking precautions will spread this serious tree-killing disease to additional

State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball said, "Oak wilt is a fast-moving disease that can kill a large amount of trees quickly. It is important to follow these emergency orders closely to prevent the disease from spreading and protect our trees."

Property owners in neighborhoods confirmed to have oak wilt will be contacted with information about the dis-

ease and to provide communities with

information about how to help protect remaining oak trees. DEC will schedule public meetings to address questions and concerns once the extent of the disease is determined and management

activities have been identified to control the disease. DEC will also conduct outreach to green professionals on the identification of oak wilt and preventing its spread.

Oak wilt is a serious tree disease in the eastern United States, killing thousands of oaks each year in forests, woodlots, and home landscapes. It is caused by a fungus, Ceratocystis fagacearum. The fungus grows in the waterconducting vessels of host trees, plugging up these vessels and preventing water transport. As water movement within the tree is slowed, the leaves wilt and drop off, and the tree dies rapidly.

DEC asks the public to be on the lookout next summer for oak trees that suddenly lose leaves during the months of July and August, and to report these occurrences to the Forest Health Information Line toll-free at 1-866-640-

For more information about oak wilt or the emergency order, please visit DEC's Web site.

Another note: The info and order are at www.dec.ny.gov/ lands/46919.html. The DEC issued another press release more recently, explaining that oaks should be pruned from October to February, not during the growing season, because "sap beetles, one of the main culprits, are extremely attracted to fresh tree wounds. Pruning oaks during the growing season greatly increases the chances of insects infecting them with oak wilt."

THANKS FROM MARILYN

Marilyn Hamelz

Many thanks to all the SSAS volunteers at our snowy Tackapausha Children's Holiday Party on December 17: Kathi Berlin, Betty Borowsky, Gail and Jim Brown, Larry Gumbs, Ivan Hametz, Anne Mehlinger, Diane Musso, and Kathleen Plona.

We all enjoyed the afternoon but, unfortunately, attendance at the annual event was very poor.

A LETTER FROM DAVID YARNOLD

Editor's note: Three days after Election Day, chapter leaders received the following e-mail from National Audubon Society's President & CEO, David Yarnold. Betty Borowsky requested permission to include it in the Skimmer.

Dear Audubon Chapter Leaders,

This week, we Americans witnessed one of the greatest upsets in political history. Now, as has been the case for 219 years, the United States expects a seamless transition of power — one of the great innovations of a representative democracy. I'm adding my voice to those of leaders across America in saying we wish this new president well and we look forward to working with his administration.

But we all know President-elect Donald Trump ran a campaign that was often at odds with Audubon's goals and its mission. Beyond that, his campaign challenged core values that Audubon holds dear. I want to address both of those points today.

Audubon has persevered and prospered through the tenure of presidents from across the political spectrum. Having seen administrations of all political flavors come and go, I want to assure you that we're well positioned to continue to build on our 111-year legacy. It's easy to talk about being a centrist network when political leadership has your back. But it's even more valuable to be a centrist network when political leadership is in your face.

So, give yourselves the credit you're due: We are a durable, respected, trusted, centrist conservation network with a deep and credible presence in communities all over the nation and the hemisphere. I learned that when I first arrived at Audubon 6+ years ago and I met Bobbie Hagood, the executive director of a land conservancy in South Carolina. I asked Bobbie why Audubon was so effective in a deeply conservative part of the U.S. and she told me, "Because y'all are from here and you understand our way of life."

Because we are homegrown everywhere, we bring an authentic voice to the local and state policies that are likely to hold the greatest opportunities for progress over the next four years. From Sacramento to Helena to Tallahassee to Washington, D.C., Audubon's policy leaders are known as pragmatists. We reflect a network of millions upon millions of people - from all across the political spectrum and of every conceivable background — who see, hear, and cherish birds every day.

You work every day in communities to plant gardens, clean up trash, protect special places and



vulnerable species, fledge new baby birds from nest boxes or beaches, engage people in the joy of birds and nature, prepare the next generation of conservation leaders, and stand up as advocates for birds and the

environment we share. Those are our strengths, and all of those things are more important today than ever

We will work with this new administration wherever we can. And, based on its campaign promises, it seems clear we'll inevitably oppose it as well. And when we do that, we will do it in full throat and with all of the tools we know how to use, while not cheapening or personalizing the civil discourse that makes democracy special.

But this election wasn't just about policy differences. For many, it was about core values of inclusiveness and multiculturalism, of equity and fairness. As Audubon's CEO, here's my top-line message to each of you today as individuals and as leaders in the Audubon network: We value you, we respect you, and we support you. Whomever and wherever you are; however you vote; whether you're White. Black, Asian, Latino, Native, or of another or mixed heritage; whether you're Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Atheist, or of any other faith or tradition; whether you or your family are immigrants; whether you have a disability; whether you are straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, or something else; and whatever your gender, I want to say as clearly as I can possibly say today how much we care for you. That's a core value here at Audubon, and we stand firm in our values today and always.

We'll have lots of conversations to come about how we will continue to make a difference for birds, our communities, and the environment in the days and months ahead. I welcome your questions and ideas.

I have zero doubt that birds are going to remain a powerful constant that can bring people together when we need it most. As Bruce Springsteen famously wrote, "Everybody's got a hungry heart." We will continue to help feed hearts across America as we've always done.

Today, more than ever, you're what hope looks like to a bird.

Thank you, David Yarnold

P.S. from your editor: I'm typing this prior to Donald Trump's inauguration and the U.S. Senate's confirmation hearings for his nominees for environmental Cabinet positions. At www.audubon.org, under the "Take Action" button, you'll find "Speak Up for a Strong EPA," which provides the following editable letter to for you to sign:

I am deeply concerned about the nomination of Scott Pruitt to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

As a constituent who cares about bird conservation, I am very concerned about the threat from climate change to hundreds of species of birds in this country. By confirming Scott Pruitt as EPA Administrator, we would lose ground in the urgent fight against climate change, and jeopardize progress on making our water and our air cleaner.

Pruitt has worked to dismantle protections for clean air and clean water that people and birds need to thrive. The EPA must adhere to science and support common-sense solutions for ensuring a healthy environment and stable climate for people and wildlife.

I strongly urge you to ask tough questions of the nominee and represent the vast majority of Americans — regardless of party affiliation — who support strong action and safeguards for our air, water, and climate.

Thank you.



LATE WINTER THAW BIRD WALK (Sat., Feb. 25, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge center for a slide program and walk along the trails. Learn about the management and ecology of refuge wildlife, and look and listen for the very first signs of spring. For info and reservations, contact Don (leader). With NYC Audubon and Gateway NRA. Free

EARLY SPRING BIRD WALK (Sat., April 1, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.). Meet at the Jamaica Bay Refuge center for a slide program and hike around the trails to look for egrets, herons, Laughing Gulls, Osprey, American Oystercatcher and other early spring migrants. For info and reservations, contact Don (leader). With NYC Audubon and Gateway NRA. Free.

ASSATEAGUE /CHINCOTEAGUE WEEKEND (April 27-30). Travel by car and/or van to this great wildlife area on the Virginia/Maryland Coast. See wild ponies and young, nesting Osprey and Bald Eagle, dolphins, Sika deer, migrating warblers, shorebirds, raptors, and waders. Cost: \$395/person incl. three nights lodging at Refuge Inn; breakfasts; a seafood dinner; boat tour of marshes; safari bus tour of backwater dunes; guided hikes along beach, woods & marshes; plus two evening programs (single room \$130 extra). Transportation not included; van cost approx. \$95 extra. Leader: Don Riepe.

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

BLUE TOURISM SIGNS

Jim Brown

Take action! — Call Governor Cuomo and urge him to remove the recently installed blue tourism signs that the state government has put up along many roads and parkways on Long Island and throughout New York State. Some signs have already been removed from communities in eastern Long Island following complaints. The Federal Highway Administration has repeatedly asked New York State to remove the signs, numbering in excess of 500, so far without success. Aside from being potentially distracting to drivers and therefore dangerous, these large blue signs detract from the natural beauty of our Island and the

Below is a letter sent by SSAS to Governor Cuomo — Please use the letter's talking points and your own views on the tourism signs when you make your call to Governor Cuomo: 518-474-8390.

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo Governor of New York Executive Chambers Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The South Shore Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society representing approximately 1300 households on Long Island, urges you to remove the recently installed tourism signs from Long Island roads and parkways. These signs, a part of the "I Love NY" tourism program, aside from being a distraction for drivers and not in conformity with Federal Highway Administration guidelines, serve no compelling function. These large blue signs also detract from the environment, creating unnecessary distraction and visual pollution along some of Long Island's most beautiful byways. Interjecting this type of excessive and inappropriate advertisement into the environment only harms what it aims to support — the enjoyment of our natural world.

Members of our organization indeed love New York, especially enjoying its unique natural beauty. Please act to support our state's environment by removing these harmful tourism signs!

Sincerely,

South Shore Audubon Society

 NASSAU COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL HOTLINE 571-6306

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