# OUTH HORE KIMMER

VOLUME 47, NUMBER 6 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

**MARCH 2017** 

### **NEXT MEETING**

Paul Stessel

**DATE**: Tuesday, March 14, 2017

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

**PLACE:** Freeport Memorial Library

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

SPEAKER: Michael S. Scheibel
TOPIC: Eagles on Long Island

The return of the Bald Eagle as a nesting species in the Long Island region and throughout New York State is one of the most successful wildlife restoration stories of our time. Our guest speaker will present the history and current status of Bald Eagles on Long Island, including nest sites, courtship, food preferences, and longevity.

Mike Scheibel has been the Natural Resources Manager for The Nature Conservancy of Long Island at the Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island since 1996. He received his B.S. degree in wildlife science from Cornell University, and worked for nearly 20 years as a wildlife biologist for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, specializing in endangered species projects on Long Island. He helped develop the Long Island Colonial Waterbird Survey in the early 1980s and collected data that led to the listing of the Piping Plover and the Least Tern as endangered in NY. 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 *Wings for My Flight: The Peregrine Falcons of Chimney Rock* by Marcy Cottrell Houle.

**Parking Lots.** In addition to the parking lot adjacent to the library, there's a lightly used 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!

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE Perilous Times for the Environment

Betty Borowsky

Regardless of your political affiliation, if you are a member of the Audubon Society (and perhaps even if you are just reading this) you care about birds. And if you care about birds, then you know how important it is to preserve the environment in which they live.

These are perilous times for the environment. While as far as we know nothing has been changed yet, past statements and actions by nominated or newly appointed directors of the federal agencies charged with minimizing environmental pollution, conserving nature, and protecting endangered species suggest that they desire to do just the opposite if they can.

Here are just two recent examples.

① Scott Pruitt has been nominated to be the Director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). According to the *Washington Post*, Pruitt has spent much of his energy as attorney general (of Oklahoma) fighting the very agency he has been nominated to lead. Among many other things, the EPA determines the maximum permissible levels of many contaminants that can be permitted in our air and drinking water, including the greenhouse gases associated with global warming.

Editor's interruption: On February 3, first-term Congressman Matt Gaetz (from Florida) introduced H.R. 861, "to terminate the Environmental Protection Agency," with three original cosponsors (Congressmen from Kentucky, Mississippi, and Georgia). The bill has been assigned to four committees for simultaneous consideration (Energy and Commerce; Agriculture; Transportation and Infrastructure; and Science, Space, and Technology); you can follow it at https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/861. Four days later, Gaetz introduced a bill "to terminate the Department of Education." His district includes Pensacola; his father is President of the Florida Senate. The EPA was proposed by President Richard Nixon and began operation on December 2, 1970, after Nixon signed an executive order.

② The House Natural Resources Committee Chairman, Rob Bishop (from Utah), has said he "would love to invalidate" the Endangered Species Act. Had there been no ESA to protect it, the Bald Eagle would have been extinct by now, instead of thriving and increasing in number. In fact, three eagles spent some time at Hempstead Lake State Park last year, perhaps deciding whether to breed there. Many other species remain threatened, including our own Least Tern and Piping Plover. Until now, efforts to get rid of the ESA would have been vetoed. Now it seems very likely that there will be no veto.

The environmental protections we have in place now have been hard won. Furthermore, it is much easier to prevent something from happening than to reverse it. In that spirit, the president of the National Audubon Society, David Yarnold, has urged everyone to contact their representatives as soon as possible to tell them they strongly oppose any changes that will erode the authority of the EPA or any other agency or law that is protecting our natural resources. The board of the South Shore chapter is passing this request on to you. The only way your representatives will know how you feel about the environment is to tell them about it right now. It is very, very easy to lose habitat; it is very hard to protect it, and even harder to restore it.

You may be interested in the following site, which, as of this writing, details three areas of special concern (and has a link to sign up for advisories from Audubon's Action Network): http://www.audubon.org/takeaction.

For your convenience, here is the contact information for the Senators and Representatives who represent the South Shore Audubon Society catchment area.

Senator Charles Schumer (D) 780 Third Avenue, Suite 2301 New York, NY 10017 (212) 486-4430 322 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-6542 www.schumer.senate.gov

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D) 780 Third Avenue, Suite 2601 New York, NY 10017 (212) 688-6262

478 Russell Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-4451 www.gillibrand.senate.gov

Our catchment area spans House Districts 2 through 5. The Representatives for these districts are below, but to find out who your specific representative is, you can refer to www.house.gov.

Peter King (R) (2nd Congressional District) 1003 Park Boulevard Massapequa Park, NY 11762 (516) 541-4225 339 Cannon House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-7896 peteking.house.gov

Thomas Suozzi (D) (3rd Congressional District) 478A Park Avenue Huntington, NY 11743 (631) 923-4100 226 Cannon House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-3335 suozzi.house.gov

Kathleen Rice (D) (4th Congressional District) 229 7th Street, Suite 300 Garden City, NY 11530 (516) 739-3008 1508 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-5516

kathleenrice.house.gov

Gregory W. Meeks (D) (5th Congressional District) 67-12 Rockaway Beach Boulevard Arverne, NY 11692 (347) 230-4032 2234 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-3461 meeks.house.gov

# 29TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY

The remaining dates for our 2016–2017 Waterfowl Survey are (were?) as follows, rain or shine: **Saturdays, 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.

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

# LEONARD G. KONSKER CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

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### **BIRDERS I HAVE KNOWN**

Sy Schiff

Ernest A. Choate's The Dictionary of American Bird Names is a monument. It stands alone. There is nothing like it. It is indispensable for birders who wish to understand, and not merely know, the names and classes of birds. The dictionary offers etymological origins of every name, as well as Latin and scientific counterparts. The book is ornamented with Thomas Bewick woodcuts. The jacket notes call the text "picturesque and richly anecdotal" and this is both true and an understatement. Choate's dictionary has wit and authority in its linguistic details and in its fieldwork. The author is both a scholar and a birder, and has managed to include mythic, historical, and common origins. Thus the book is not only a history of the names of American birds; it is a history of America. Included are a biographical appendix, a bibliography, and an English/Latin glossary. The book is sized to fit a pocket or backpack, and has been updated to reflect the changes made on the 1983 American Ornithologists' Union's "Check-list of North American Birds." Roger Tory Peterson said "no informed birder should be without" this book. The truth is, rather, that no birder can be informed without it, and best of all, it is affordable, transportable, and a joy to read.

The above paragraph is from a rather unique description of the book. Ernie, as every one called him, was a high school principal in Philadelphia with a summer home in Cape May, New Jersey. He was a lovely man and opened his home to the visiting hoard from Philly for the Cape May Christmas Count. This was before he retired and produced the book. My first count as a teenager was there. About 20 or so of us came with sleeping bags. I had come with a senior mentor; therefore I got a preferred spot — on the floor — to sleep. At that time there was only one coffee shop in Cape May open at 6:00 in the morning. We drove over for breakfast to "The Greasy Spoon" and it certainly lived up to its name. I can still taste it.

For the first session, a couple of us younger birders were assigned to Ernie to flush out the birds from hedgerows while Ernie stood on the outside and called the birds as they came out. Hard work, thorns, brambles, and vines; worth it, because we got a Gray Catbird (pictured), a great bird at that time, and a welcome approval from a top birder.

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### 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., 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.

menus too.	
Our new member	rs since the last <i>Skimmer</i> are:
Bellmore	M. Berman, Michael McDonald,
	Heidi Russ
Bethpage	Michele Zito
East Rockaway	Gene Philcox
Farmingdale	Joanne Bihary, Karen Williams
Floral Park	Charles A. Annunziato
Garden City	Kerry Couture, Imelda Gallagher
Glen Oaks	Thomas Monaghan
Hewlett	Kenneth Kornblau
Lawrence	Ilene Bierman
Levittown	Marcella Beiling, Suzan Goldstein
Long Beach	Jean Mauro, Barbara McCauley
Malverne	Ronald Kuriloff, Bill McCullough
Merrick	
Point Lookout	Dr. Richard L. Weiss
Rockville Centre	Richard Boyle, Leonor Molina
Valley Stream	John Chandler, Willett Lafleur, Elton
	Mohammed
Wantagh	Bryan Thompson
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OUR E-LIST http	p://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list
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NAT'L AUDUBON	MEMBERSHIP STATUS (844) 428-3826

### THIRD TUESDAY IN APRIL

Please note: Due to Passover, our April monthly meeting is scheduled for a week later than usual, on April 18.

**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.

# PROTECTING THE AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS OF LONG BEACH

Brien Weiner

The issue arose at our December general meeting that there were American Oystercatchers nesting unprotected during the summer on the beaches of the City of Long Beach. String fences, signage, and protective boxes for the nesting birds, placed by the Town of Hempstead Department of Conservation and Waterways, were removed in favor of cones. Cones are inadequate: they can be easily knocked or blown over and moved by unauthorized employees or visitors to the beach, defeating the purpose of any protection they may provide. To make the nesting areas smaller when the beaches are crowded or when visitors need more space for activities is to place stress on and threaten the survival of one of Long Beach Barrier Island's iconic species and local treasures, beloved by birders, photographers, and residents alike, who also contribute to the local economy. The nesting oystercatchers have many fans who come to the beach specifically to watch them; an Internet blog and a Facebook group follow their progress. The Internet blog (see https:// leebythesea.me/), created by SSAS member Lee Winters, provides eloquent essays and excellent photography documenting the oystercatchers as they nest, hatch, forage, and defend themselves against avian predators, human disturbances, and nature's elements — a daily drama that will endear these birds to anyone watching their struggle to survive and raise their families.

The North American population of American Oystercatchers is on the 2016 State of the Birds Watch List, which was compiled by the North American Bird Con-

servation Initiative and includes species most in danger of extinction without significant conservation action (see www. stateofthebirds.org/2016/resources/species-assessments/). This species is listed as a "species of special concern" in several coastal

states and as a "yellow" species (indicative of a national conservation concern) by Audubon. Oystercatchers are shy birds that are sensitive to human disturbance and to loss, degradation, or development of their beach habitat. They are also vulnerable to attack by gulls and typically do not nest alongside gulls — further restricting the nesting habitat available to them. Storms and high tides can swamp eggs or nestlings when the birds are forced to nest close to the high-water mark. On the Long Beach Barrier Island, they can also be predated by feral cats from feeding stations; dogs brought illegally to the beaches or service dogs let off leash; and raccoons and crows, attracted by the remains of food left or buried by visitors. Oystercatchers are further vulnerable to being run over by the many vehicles that traverse the beach — lifeguards, EMT,

police, public works, maintenance, and trucks for raking — especially since the chicks nestle and blend into the sand. Cones are insufficient markers of nesting and foraging areas, and do not substitute for signs posting speed limits.

South Shore Audubon sent a letter detailing our concerns to the City Manager of Long Beach, Jack Schnirman, who immediately referred us to the Commissioner of Public Works, John Mirando. Jim Brown, Lee Winters, and I met with Mr. Mirando, who was both sympathetic and practical. We received assurances that string fences, signage, and protective boxes would be provided for the crucial period from nesting through fledging, since oystercatchers tend to return to the nest area after hatching, and like to have shelter from the sun and wind. The fences will provide about a 20-foot buffer zone around the nests.

We thank the City of Long Beach for their prompt response in accommodating both South Shore Audubon and the American Oystercatchers, furthering the conservation of the species. Finally, we urge our members to enjoy the unique privilege of watching the oystercatchers, and the wonder of birth and growth and the continuity of life in our midst.

VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982



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. For info and reservations, contact Don (leader). 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 National Recreation Area. 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. MONTAUK WEEKEND (June 2-4). See www.littoralsociety. org/montauk-spring-weekend.html for details.

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.

### **BOOKS FOR BIRDERS**

Sy Schiff with R. U. Abyrdar II

As we begin to move closer to spring, our winter "feel good" raptor stories are giving way to "be a better birder" books! This month our book is *Better Birding: Tips, Tools & Concepts for the Field* by George L. Armistead and Brian L. Sullivan, a book that reveals the techniques expert birders use to identify a wide variety of bird species in the field quickly and easily! It features hundreds of stunning photos and composite plates throughout. It will greatly simplify identification by organizing the birds we see into distinct groupings. These skill-building techniques focus not just on traditional elements such as size, shape, and plumage, but also on creating a context around each bird, including behavior, habitat, and taxonomy — parts of I.D. often glossed over in our typical field guides.

The Introduction outlines the scope and thrust of the book, and covers a number of topics in depth. Two top-

are covered with great clarity, namely the difference between "birders" and "birdwatchers," and "what is a spe-

cies?" Unless you are a purest, for the most part, the first is of little importance. However, the last is

of much controversy. The authors offer competing viewpoints, give some history of past thinking, and present the best of the present thinking on the subject. Do they answer the question? Maybe, but one comes away with a full understanding of where we stand today.

This, of course, leads to a discussion of taxonomy — what it is and how it is determined — which leads to the viewpoints of the "lumpers" and "splitters." Both are discussed and my impression is that the authors believe the "lumpers" have a better case. Lumping is on much firmer ground. Splitting is finding a place in a moving target, namely evolution, and whether it has happened in sufficient detail yet. If their analysis is correct, we could be looking for a number of lumps, some of which are already under way (redpolls and perhaps sharp-tailed sparrows).

The book is organized differently than most books on the subject. It covers 20 select groups of birds as a unit that are closely allied and that present I.D. challenges within each group. Can you use the information to I.D. birds in the field? No! The information is covered in great detail with lots of photographs. No bird is going to hang out long enough for you to review the information. The idea is to present you with the wherewith to study the group in advance, to know what is important, and to advance your knowledge. A few examples of what's what are given below.

All of the white herons are covered in great detail and each species is covered separately. So, you have all this detail in your head and you run through it when you see a bird. But, while the field guides tell you what and where to

look at to get an I.D., here you need to look at the whole bird and get a match on an entire image.

The I.D. section on longspurs covers the drab fall and winter plumages, since the breeding birds are quite striking. The four North American species are quite similar in appearance, difficult to see in the habitat they occur in, and extremely wary. There is a certain amount of plumage variation and some overlap. Detail of same makes it difficult to come to grips with how to pick out a rarity and how to I.D. it. (The tail patterns are all unique and very difficult to see, but this detail is not specifically mentioned.)

If I [Sy] seem to be picky, that's because I was looking for something that the book is not. It's a wonderful overview of species that require information on plumage, habitat, etc. It is also a great addition to knowledge of groups not often encountered, such as murrelets. petrels, and cowbirds. As an armchair book, I give it very high marks. Read it; you will learn a lot. If you get a decent photo of a rare bird, this book is the place to go to verify the picture.

Read it... and ENJOY!

# GARAGE SALE – HELPERS AND STUFF NEEDED!

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

Items that are popular at garage sales on Long Island include the following:

Books

Small pieces of furniture

Small appliances (please see next paragraph)

Craft supplies

House plants

Assorted decorative items

Tools

Kitchen equipment

Seasonal and holiday items

Pet supplies (fish tanks, dog bowls, etc.)

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 other organizations. To volunteer, please write to Nancy at nyoungfert@aol.com.

### LESSONS FROM THE ECUADORIAN RAINFOREST AND SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS ON THE FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING

Jim Brown

As most people are now aware, global warming has reached alarming levels. Arctic sea ice and the Greenland ice sheet are rapidly disappearing. A loss of these huge areas of reflective ice and the concomitant increase in dark, heat-absorbing ocean water may create a tipping point causing catastrophic and irreversible climate changes.

If current trends do not improve, methane, a greenhouse gas much more potent than carbon dioxide, would also be released in large amounts \( \square{1} \) throughout the melting tundra of the Northern Hemisphere, creating a further, even more rapid warming of the planet. To avert climate disaster, our use of fossil fuels must change, and change quickly. Carbon — oil, gas, and coal — must be left unburnt in the ground if we are to solve this human-created problem in time. We are unfortunately currently on track to see earth's temperature increase by more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), enough to cause irreversible climate changes. We are losing the fight against global warming; when exactly the fight will be over is currently not known but our trajectory toward failure - without deep, far-reaching changes — seems clear.

What is to be done? A recent article published by the National Audubon Society ("A Pipeline Runs Through It," by Tom Clynes, Audubon, Winter 2016) is instructive. Clynes investigates the issue revolving around the attempts to prevent oil exploration in the rich, biodiverse Amazon region of eastern Ecuador. What has happened so far in Ecuador is roughly as follows: The president, Rafael Correa, with much popular support following his election in 2006, attempted to obtain funds from the international community in exchange for not pursing oil exploration and development in the Yasuni region of his country, one of the most productive and biologically diverse rainforests in the world - a carbon sink of international importance as well as being a beautiful, pristine ecosystem. Ecuador was seeking \$3.6 billion, which was roughly half of the amount of money the country would have received for the oil. Initially there was much hope that this important piece of rainforest could be saved from development, and that Ecuador would also receive funds for important economic and social programs without having to rely on additional fossil fuel extraction.

This attempted "pay-to-preserve" initiative ultimately failed for a variety of reasons. European nations backed off because they were not granted the control over the funds that they felt entitled to, and oil companies, powerful in Ecuador, seemed to have convinced the Ecuadorian president that oil development would be good for

the country. Despite widespread and strong opposition, Correa has gone ahead with oil development in the Yasuni region. Scientists and indigenous people in the area have already noticed a decline in the wildlife, as development of oil extraction infrastructure has begun in the region. Ecuador now also finds itself deeply in debt to China for the money it borrowed to undertake the oil exploration and development, and for social and economic programs. An upcoming national election may or may not change current Ecuadorian policy regarding oil development in the Yasuni region.

To me this Ecuadorian story seems like a missed opportunity, an opportunity to win a battle in the fight against global warming. We also may have lost an opportunity to save an important and beautiful rainforest. Nevertheless, what has transpired in Ecuador points us to important elements that are needed to combat global warming and climate change. Funds will necessarily have to flow from the developed nations, the richer nations of the earth, to the poorer countries, so they will be able to protect important environmental resources while at the same time providing a decent life for their people. Also, the power of fossil fuel corporations to control the trajectory of economic and social development throughout the world will have to be eliminated. Blind, short-term profitseeking through fossil fuel extraction must cease if we are to survive this climate crisis.

Achieving these goals will not be easy. United States policy on climate change is critically important globally. Previous U.S. political administrations, strongly influenced by the fossil fuel industry's wealth and power, were ineffective as they dragged their feet regarding the issue of global warming. The current one is actually engaged in climate change denial. A radically new direction is needed, and fast.

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## 🖋 BIRD WALKS 🦋

Joe Landesberg

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.

Feb. 26	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north
	side of Merrick Rd.)
Mar. 5	Alley Pond Park (76th Ave. parking lot)
Mar. 11 (Sat.)	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
Mar. 19	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern
	State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
Mar. 26	Mill Pond Park (see above)
Apr. 2	Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
Apr. 9	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)
Apr. 15 (Sat.)	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
Apr. 23	Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)
Apr. 30	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner

### **SSAS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS**

Betsy Gulotta

Thanks to the much-appreciated support of longtime member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is offering \$500 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarships this spring for two college juniors, seniors, or graduate students who are continuing their studies toward a degree in an area of biological or environmental science, such as wildlife management, forestry, animal behavior, ecology, marine biology, oceanography, mammalogy, or ornithology. Our annual college scholarship program began in 1994 and was named in memory of Jerry two years later. For information, call Betsy Gulotta at 546-8841 or send e-mail to betsy.gulotta@ncc.edu. Applications are due by April 30.

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

### SEA-LEVEL RISE PROJECTIONS FOR LONG ISLAND

Editor's note: The following is excerpted from a February 6 press release.

The Department of Environmental Conservation announced today that New York has adopted official sealevel rise projections that will help state agencies and coastal communities better plan for the impacts of a changing climate.

"New York is already experiencing the impacts of our changing climate in the form of severe storms and weather events, and our sea levels are rising about two times faster than the global average," said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos. "Thanks to Governor Cuomo's leadership and the Community Risk and Resiliency Act, New York is out in front, building resiliency into permitting and funding actions, and providing key information, like sea-level rise projections, to help local governments, business owners, and planners ensure public safety and prevent the loss of property and services."

Governor Cuomo signed the Community Risk and Resiliency Act (CRRA) in September 2014. CRRA requires the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to adopt sea-level rise projections for the state. These projections will guide future planning efforts and must be considered by applicants for certain permit and funding programs, but they will not have any impact on federal flood insurance rates or independently create any new design standards or permit requirements.

The adopted projections are based on peer-reviewed research conducted by scientists at Columbia University, Cornell University, and Hunter College as part of the New York State ClimAID study, which included consideration of the possibility of rapid melt of land-based ice on Antarctica and Greenland. Recently published research

confirms that such rapid melting of land-based ice is occurring and could result in high rates of sea-level rise, especially if greenhouse gas emissions continue unabated. The adopted regulation includes high projections of approximately six feet of sea-level rise by 2100. Many scientists fear that the likelihood of this rate of sea-level rise or even more — will increase dramatically if current plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power plants and vehicles are curtailed at the federal level.

The best available science makes it clear that significant sea-level rise will continue to occur along New York's coastline. DEC's regulation provides a full range of projections to allow decision makers to consider the possibility of rapid sea-level rise when planning long-term land-use change and critical infrastructure. The regulation specifies a range of projections for three separate regions.

In drafting the proposed regulation, DEC conducted extensive public outreach, including focused meetings with stakeholders and five public meetings in New York City and Albany, and on Long Island. DEC also received feedback on the regulation during two public comment

CRRA requires the development of guidance on how to incorporate sea-level rise and future flood risk into applications for specified permits and funding programs. DEC and other agencies are currently developing this guidance, which will assist agency staff and applicants, such as local governments, to understand the impact of changing water levels and the associated risks likely to occur over the life of their projects. A draft of the guidance will be issued for public comment in the near future.

The text of the Quality Services Proposed Regulations and support documents are available on DEC's website and will be available in the State Register. The original 2011 ClimAID research report and the 2014 update, which were funded by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, are available at NYSERDA's website (https://www.nyserda.ny.gov).

In addition, the New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse (www.nyclimatescience.org) has aggregated links to extensive climate-related information that can help prioritize future community and conservation planning efforts in the state.

Your editor again: The adopted sea-level rise projections can be found at www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/103877. html. The page shows "low," "low-medium," "medium," "high-medium," and "high" projections for different time intervals. For the Long Island region, the projected increases compared to the average sea level from 2000-2004 are as follows:

> 2020s: 2 inches to 10 inches 2050s: 8 inches to 30 inches 2080s: 13 inches to 58 inches

2100: 15 inches to 72 inches

# 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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