



renowned as the “Bard of Birding” and if you read this book’s various stories/tales you’ll soon see why. All these accolades are well deserved. The author is charming and ingratiating, as well as folksy, all at the same time!

As Sy interrupts and shuts me up, his view begins: “This new book by Pete is relatively short (only 111 pages) and is a gleaning of some 33 past columns and articles that have appeared in both magazines and newspapers over the years. Some were current (at the time this book was published) and some are personal recollections. Each had been chosen for inclusion by Pete himself. The subject matter covers any and all aspects of birdwatching, birding, and related subjects. As is usual when reading his stories, it’s a personal style, close up and easy on the senses. None of these stories are subjects from any of his previous books, so for most of us it’s completely new.

“Of course, there is the usual tongue-in-cheek piece that kind of catches you and leaves us with an amused look. Since these short pieces are each a stand-alone story, you can pick and choose and hop around in the book. To get a feel for this review, I started by picking a piece at random. And, it just happened to be of the kind mentioned in the beginning of this paragraph. Read his take on buying a nesting box for his yard. Also, he covers the description and status of the Lawn Flamingo with much clarity.

“The short pieces cover just about any topic that comes to mind; some informative, some serious, most of them quite interesting. For the most part, there is no way of telling when the items were first written. Therefore, his choices show their universal appeal. Birding hasn’t changed, only the tools have, with better optics and better ID books. So, you can enjoy a few timeless short stories from the past. Pete Dunne’s books are always great and this small volume is NO exception!” Sit back, put another log on the fire . . . and read it! ENJOY!



**MID-WINTER THOUGHTS  
FOR SPRING**

*Marilyn Hametz*

Long Island is a fragile ecosystem and our drinking water comes from underground aquifers. What we put on our lawns eventually ends up in our aquifers or runs off into surrounding water.

Pesticides are hazardous to birds, pets, and people (professional landscapers place warning flags after applications). Whether you are making your own plans or sign a contract for lawn and garden care, pesticides can be avoided.

Native plants, which also attract more birds to your garden, are helpful. If you would like a Long Island Lawn Care Guide pamphlet from the I Love Long Island Campaign, please call me at 799-7189.

**NYS OFFSHORE WIND MASTER PLAN RELEASED**

*Editor’s note:* On January 29, I received the following via e-mail from the NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) Offshore Wind Team. The webinars mentioned below were due to take place on February 13, with SSAS participating. Most of you already know that SSAS and National Audubon Society are insisting that the impact on birds be an important consideration in locating wind farms.

Today, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the release of the New York State Offshore Wind Master Plan to responsibly and cost-effectively guide the development of 2,400 megawatts of offshore wind by 2030. This development is a critical component of the State’s mandate to generate 50% of the State’s electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030, while creating thousands of jobs.

This builds upon the recent announcements in the 2018 State of the State address, where Governor Cuomo called for the State to issue solicitations this year and in 2019 for a combined total of at least 800 megawatts of offshore wind power. Governor Cuomo is further directing NYSERDA to invest \$15 million in clean energy workforce development and collaborate with other State agencies to determine the most promising public and private offshore wind port infrastructure investments. Coupled with the Master Plan, these announcements further New York’s commitment to securing a clean energy future here in the State.

NYSERDA is hosting two public webinars to provide an overview of the New York State Offshore Wind Master Plan and the next steps that New York will take to advance offshore wind development. Pre-registration is required to join the webinars and will be capped at 500 attendees per webinar. Materials presented during the webinars will be posted on our website (<https://www.nyserdera.ny.gov/offshorewind>) after February 13.

View the latest news, studies, and upcoming events, and submit questions related to New York State’s development of offshore wind on our website.



**30TH ANNUAL WATERFOWL SURVEY**

The remaining dates for our 2017–2018 Waterfowl Survey are **Saturdays, February 24** and **March 24**, weather permitting. Members are welcome to participate in the surveys. If you are interested in spending a full or half day visiting up to 28 locations from Valley Stream to Massapequa Park, call SSAS’s Bill Belford at 385-1759.



**SSAS Post Office Statement** — *South Shore Skimmer* is published monthly from September through December and February through May by South Shore Audubon Society, P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.



## VOLUNTEER TO HELP LONG ISLAND'S SHOREBIRDS

Amanda Pachomski

*Editor's note:* Amanda is Audubon New York's Long Island Bird Conservation Manager.

Audubon New York coast staff are gearing up for another busy field season and are looking forward to continuing working with local partners on shorebird conservation. Our seasonal staff will work with partners and volunteers to steward and monitor beach-nesting birds and engage local communities in bird conservation.

On February 10, we will kick off our series of spring conservation action days with our annual tern shelter building event. Since 2014, we have helped protect terns on Great Gull Island, a 17-acre island that is located within the Long Island Sound, just a few miles east of Plum Island, NY. Previously used as an army fort, the island now provides critical nesting habitat for the largest colony of Roseate Terns (federally and NYS endangered) in the Western Hemisphere and the largest colony of Common Terns (NYS threatened) in the world. This year, we will build additional wooden "teepee" shelters that staff will later deliver to Great Gull Island for the island's growing tern population.



Our next volunteer event is string fencing on **Saturday, March 31** at 10 A.M. We will work together to install symbolic string fencing around Piping Plover nesting habitat at Centre Island and Stehli Beaches in Bayville. We need a lot of help with this critical event, so please join us if you can! We plan to host two additional conservation action days this spring, including a day trip to Great Gull Island where we'll help locate and map tern nests. To join the Audubon New York coast mailing list or to sign up for one of these upcoming events, please e-mail NYcoast@audubon.org.

Finally, we will be looking for volunteers to assist with the "Be a Good Egg" outreach program. The goal of the "Be a Good Egg" outreach initiative is to reduce human disturbance to beach-nesting birds like the Piping Plover by encouraging beachgoers to share the shore. During our "on-the-beach" outreach events we table at the entrances of priority Long Island beaches and educate beachgoers about our local birds. We ask beachgoers to sign our "Be a Good Egg" pledge to stay out of fenced-off nesting areas, keep trash off the beach, and keep dogs off of nesting beaches. To date, over 9,000 beachgoers have signed the pledge to share the shore with birds! We have been fortunate that PSEG Long Island and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Futures Fund have provided funding to support this program.

This year, our goal is to get 3,000 new pledges. If you haven't yet taken the pledge, please head over to **ny.audubon.org/BGE** to sign the pledge online. This year, we plan to host on-the-beach events during the week-

ends of June and July at sites on both the north and south shores of Long Island. Please e-mail NYcoast@audubon.org to learn how you can volunteer as an outreach steward.



VOLUNTEERS FOR WILDLIFE (516) 674-0982



## OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS LEASING PROGRAM

*Editor's note:* The following (with my editorial corrections) comes from a January 18 e-mail from the federal government's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. Since the 23 meetings mentioned below are being held in 22 state capitals (including Albany, Trenton, and Sacramento) plus Washington, DC instead of closer to the coasts, three Long Island Assembly members scheduled a hearing in Smithtown on February 14 that SSAS and Audubon New York were planning on attending, preceded by a rally opposing drilling.

On January 4, 2018, the Department of Interior announced publication of a Draft Proposed Program (DPP) in support of the 2019–2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program), as well as a Notice of Intent (NOI) to develop a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS).

In order to obtain public input for these two documents, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) will be traveling to 23 cities to host a series of public meetings. The meetings will feature information stations hosted by BOEM experts, who will be available to discuss the National OCS Program and DPP, as well as potential environmental issues. In addition to information stations, attendees will be able to provide handwritten or electronic comments for BOEM's consideration.

BOEM has also launched a virtual meeting room on the BOEM website to allow those who are unable to attend a meeting access to the same information and a means to participate in the commenting process. Citizens can provide comments by visiting **www.regulations.gov** or **www.boem.gov/comment**.

The entire list of public meetings is available at boem.gov/National-Program-Participate and the virtual meeting room is available at **boem.gov/virtual**.

After considering information provided by the public, BOEM will prepare a Proposed Program, which will be published for a 90-day public comment period, to be followed by a Proposed Final Program (PFP).

BOEM will publish a draft PEIS for public comment concurrently with the Proposed Program and a final PEIS concurrently with the PFP.

The draft PEIS and the final PEIS will examine the potential environmental impacts of the program options and alternatives, and will be available to the Secretary of the Interior prior to him making decisions on the Proposed Program and the Proposed Final Program.



# LONG ISLAND WATER UNDER SIEGE

Brien Weiner

Long Island water is under siege, with the double threat of the contamination of our ocean water and the intrusion of our ocean water into our drinking water.

The first part of this one-two punch comes from the Williams pipeline, which would carry fracked natural gas (with its component methane, which is 86 times a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide) along the coast of Staten Island, then cross New York Harbor south of Brooklyn to join existing pipelines four miles off the Rockaways. Indeed it contradicts the spirit and substance of New York's fracking ban, Clean Energy Standard (50% clean energy by 2030), and "keep it in the ground" to prohibit the extraction of, but expand the infrastructure for, fracked gas in our area. The Williams pipeline would bring fracked gas into conflict not only with possible offshore wind energy development, but also with sensitive ecological resources already in a precarious relationship with heavily populated communities.

At a cost of about a billion dollars to National Grid customers, the trench for the pipeline excavated across



New York Harbor would churn up PCBs, dioxin, lead, and arsenic, which would then be washed ashore by the tides, contaminating marine life and the shoreline. The Rockaways'

shoreline provides crucial habitat for numerous priority shorebirds, including the federally and state-listed Piping Plover, Red Knot, and Roseate Tern; the state-listed Common Tern and Least Tern; the state species of special concern Black Skimmer; and the at-risk Saltmarsh Sparrow. In addition, the turbulence and noise of the construction, which would take a full year and at times would be 24/7, would disrupt the migration of whales, dolphins, turtles, seals, and birds.



Further, Williams has an extensive record of safety violations. In the last ten years, Williams pipelines and compressor stations have exploded and/or caught fire ten times, and incidents at other Williams facilities have killed six people and injured dozens. These accidents have released methane into the atmosphere, leveled buildings, and contaminated groundwater.

With the Trump administration's rollback and non-enforcement of regulations, Williams could continue their negligent practices with impunity and the damages could go unmitigated. (And if the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is overturned or weakened, these damages could include many dead birds; see last month's *Skimmer*.) There is also the threat of terrorist attacks either directly on the infrastructure or indirectly through hacking the systems that control the infrastructure.

Polluted or not by a pipeline, the water off southwestern Long Island is already intruding into our aquifer as

our water table drops from drought and heavy usage. Herein lies the second threat to our water: this trend will be exacerbated if New York City succeeds in renewing a permit to reopen groundwater wells in southeastern Queens as a backup to its aqueduct system. While the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) says the Jamaica wells would "improve the resiliency of the city's overall water supply systems by making the groundwater system accessible in response to a water supply shortage," officials in Nassau and Suffolk are concerned that new pumping would result in saltwater intrusion and shifting contaminants in the groundwater, threatening the aquifers that are the sole source of drinking water for 3 million people.

Those opposed to the permit renewal include the Long Island Commission for Aquifer Protection (LICAP), the City of Long Beach, and the Western Nassau County Aquifer Committee. Although New York City's environmental impact statement found no significant adverse impacts for opening the Jamaica wells, it acknowledged that the water supplies of Long Beach and other South Shore communities may not rebound and could be contaminated by salt water. Opponents are requesting that the DEC suspend the permit request until data is available from the \$6 million Long Island Sustainability Study ordered by the governor. Further complicating matters, NYC lacks the funds to treat water from the Jamaica wells to remove contaminants, which would be necessary before the water could be released.

The upshot is to contact our officials and urge them to protect our waters. A petition to Governor Cuomo to stop the Williams pipeline can be found at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/tell-governor-cuomo-to-stop-the-williams-pipeline-in-the-ny-nj-harbor-2>. Public hearings on the Williams pipeline will be scheduled in March. A petition to Cuomo and others to stop the Jamaica wells can be found at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/nyc-leave-our-li-drinking-water-alone>. The Jamaica wells petition is sponsored by All Our Energy, whose director, George Povall, is the guest speaker for our meeting this month.

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## RETURN OF THE OSPREY: JAMAICA BAY, NEW YORK CITY

*Don Riepe*

Before World War II, Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) were common throughout coastal marshes. However, because of the indiscriminate postwar use of the insecticide Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane, more commonly known as DDT, Osprey populations, along with Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, and other raptor populations, were decimated.

DDT was used in the second half of World War II to control malaria and typhus among the troops, but after the war DDT was made available for public sale and it became a widely used agricultural pesticide.

Because raptors are top-line predators, they built up higher concentrations of DDT as it passed up the food chain. DDT interfered with the birds' abilities to produce calcium, resulting in brittle eggs, which would collapse under the weight of an incubating parent. Unable to reproduce, Osprey populations plummeted throughout the 50s and 60s.

Even before it was used as an agricultural pesticide, the dangers of DDT — especially its penchant for killing beneficial insects, such as bees — were known, but ignored.

Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring* brought international attention to DDT's detrimental effect on bird populations and led to a public outcry against its use. Still, it would be another 10 years before President Richard Nixon signed an Executive Order that banned the use and sale of DDT in the United States.

When the federal endangered species list became law in 1973, the Osprey, Bald Eagle, and Peregrine Falcon were all placed on the list. However, because DDT breaks down slowly, the chemical continued to be present in the environment for at least another decade.

As a result, there were still no nesting Ospreys in New York City during the 1980s.

The raptors were successfully nesting out on Long Island and seemed to be spreading westward. In anticipation of an Osprey nesting in Jamaica Bay, my fellow National Park Ranger Bob Cook and I enlisted some volunteers from the New York City Sierra Club and put up a platform on a 20-foot pole in Yellow Bar Hassock marsh in the western section of the bay.



In 1990, we had our first Osprey take up residence, which was probably the first one in all of New York City since the 1960s. We then put up another high platform at another marsh site, which was promptly occupied by another Osprey pair. We quickly realized that if we built them, they would come.

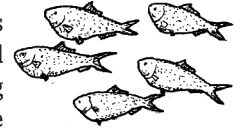
In 1991, we enlisted Chris Nadareski, who was banding Peregrines in New York City. He started banding young Ospreys and Barn Owls in Jamaica Bay as well. Aside

from hoping to get some feedback regarding migration patterns and longevity, another concern was that our Ospreys were getting into trouble by flying over John F. Kennedy International Airport runways. As far as we know, only one of our 200 banded Ospreys has been found dead near a runway at the airport since we started the program.

Over the years, as Osprey numbers increased, the birds began looking for new nest sites — which eventually included the top of a crane, channel markers, an abandoned boat, and even an overturned industrial trash can. Two young Ospreys successfully fledged on top of that can.

Since Ospreys were nesting on low structures like old boats and docks, I started putting up platforms on 6-foot tall 4x4s. Not only were they easier to erect, but it also made it less complicated to monitor and band the young.

As part of the evolving design, we placed Tree Swallow nest boxes underneath each platform. Since Ospreys eat fish, primarily menhaden (pictured), the swallows were not deterred by the presence of a large raptor nesting a foot or so above them. Since swallows eat insects (we always hope they eat lots of greenies and deerflies), the two species got along swimmingly. Every one of those Tree Swallow boxes is occupied each year.



In the early 2000s, with a grant from a private donor [Coley Burke, in 2012 — ed.], biologist Bob Kennedy placed a GPS device on a male Osprey from a nest bordering the West Pond trail at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. That allowed us to track the bird as it hunted each day. He rarely left the bay. Clearly, the fishing was good in Jamaica Bay.

At the end of September, the Osprey (who we named "Coley") flew south to Colombia, South America for the winter. Using Google Earth, we could easily see the spot where Coley was roosting alongside a large lake. In early March, Coley started his long journey north and returned to his Jamaica Bay nest site in early April. I happened to be walking the West Pond trail and saw him fly into the south marsh and greet his mate who had arrived a week earlier. That year another male Osprey nesting in the bay (named "Coley 2") was tagged and migrated all the way to Venezuela for the winter.

This year [2017] I located 29 nest sites in Jamaica Bay, including three that were placed on trees, and Ospreys are now nesting in large numbers across the United States. Clearly, thanks to good legislation and some human assistance, this species has fully recovered.

*Don Riepe is the Littoral Society's Northeast Chapter Director and Jamaica Bay Guardian, and a retired National Park Service employee.*

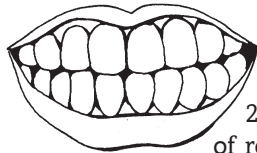
*Editor's note:* This article, with Don's great photos, originally appeared in the Fall 2017 issue of the American Littoral Society's *Underwater Naturalist* magazine and is reprinted with permission.

## FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE: SUPPORT H.R. 3671

Jim Brown

The South Shore Audubon Society urges its members and friends to strongly support H.R. 3671, the Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act. This bill, popularly known simply as the Off Act, was introduced for consideration by the House of Representatives on September 1 by Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii. The Off Act seeks to move the U.S. completely away from fossil fuels and to 100% renewable energy by 2035. The bill, as of February 10, has 26 co-sponsors, six of them from New York. Two Long Island representatives now support the legislation, Kathleen Rice and Tom Suozzi. Over 400 national, state, and local organizations have signed on to promote the Off Act. Organizational supporters include Food and Water Watch, Surfrider Foundation, 350.org, Rainforest Action Network, Friends of the Earth, and Physicians for Social Responsibility. The number of Off Act organizational sponsors is growing and currently includes two local Audubon chapters, North Shore Audubon Society and us.

The Off Act is a powerful and far-reaching bill designed to help save the planet from the projected severe, catastrophic impacts of human-induced climate change. At the 2015 Paris Convention on Climate Change, it was agreed that the nations of the world have to hold planet warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels if we are to avoid serious impacts from climate change. The Off Act seeks to accomplish that goal — putting some teeth in the Paris Climate Accords — through mandating a very aggressive move away from fossil fuels. 100% clean, renewable energy is the goal for 2035, with an interim benchmark of reaching 80% by 2027. The Off Act would require 100% of car sales to be zero-emission vehicles by 2035. Government subsidies to the fossil fuel industry would end, as would the building of new major fossil fuel projects. Money saved from the elimination of these carbon-based industry subsidies would be transferred to the renewable energy sector. Additional funding in support of the Act would derive from taxes on offshore corporate income.



The Off Act also seeks to provide a just transition to 100% clean energy, making sure that poor communities that have historically been targeted and harmed by the polluting fossil fuel industry are helped to rebound and that negative environmental impacts they have experienced are remediated. Providing solid and effective financial and employment aid to displaced workers in the fossil fuel industry is also part of this comprehensive piece of legislation.

This important and daring legislation may not become law immediately, but supporting H.R. 3671, the principles it expounds, and the changes it seeks will help us all stay focused as we combat climate change. It is a battle we

cannot afford to lose. The Off Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act lays it all out for us — which problems must be confronted, what needs to be done, and how the process of transition to 100% renewable energy can actually be attained.

The text of the Off Act can be found at [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov); type in “HR3671” in the search box for “Current Legislation.” You can also use the site to follow the legislation as it progresses.

If your Congressional representative is Kathleen Rice, 4th CD (202-225-5516) or Tom Suozzi, 3rd CD (202-225-3335), SSAS urges you to call her or him and express thanks for supporting the bill. If your representative is either Peter King, 2nd CD (202-225-7896) or Gregory Meeks, 5th CD, (202-225-3461), call and urge him to become a cosponsor of H.R. 3671.



### SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE GRANT FOR MASSAPEQUA PRESERVE

Michael Spurling

The deadly southern pine beetle, first discovered in Suffolk County in 2014 and later found upstate, was identified in Bethpage State Park in 2015. To date, that’s the only confirmed location in Nassau County, but it is widespread in Suffolk, including at Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge and Connetquot State Park Preserve. However, the paved and unpaved paths that connect Massapequa Preserve to Bethpage State Park, and the existence of pines in various places in the Preserve (especially the portion south of Sunrise Highway, which has a pitch pine forest), have raised fears that it will invade the Preserve.

Consequently, the Nassau County Soil and Water Conservation District, whose director cowrote the spiral-bound book *A Seasonal Guide to Bird Finding on Long Island* when she was an Audubon chapter president about 20 years ago, has just been awarded a \$60,644 “suppression and management” grant (via the NYS Environmental Protection Fund) by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to search Massapequa Preserve for the beetle; if it’s found, word is that affected trees would be thinned out and replaced with saplings.

The southern pine beetle is native to the southeastern U.S. but, according to the DEC, “has been expanding its range up the Eastern Seaboard in recent years. Warming of extreme winter temperatures has most likely contributed to this expansion. The adult beetle enters the tree through crevices in the bark and then creates S-shaped tunnels in the cambium tissue, just beneath the bark. This disrupts the flow of nutrients, killing the tree in typically 2–4 months.” For more information about the southern pine beetle and where it’s found, see [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/99331.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/99331.html).



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