

# SOUTH SHORE SKIMMER



VOLUME 49, NUMBER 2 — SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

OCTOBER 2018

## NEXT MEETING

Dolores Rogers & Bill Belford

**DATE:** Tuesday, October 9, 2018  
**TIME:** 7:30 P.M.  
**PLACE:** Freeport Memorial Library  
144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)  
**SPEAKER:** Michael Farina  
**TOPIC:** Our Changing Tidal Wetlands: What the Birds Are Telling Us

This month, Michael Farina, Conservation Biologist for the Town of Hempstead for over 18 years, will be discussing the changes to our coastal shores, local and afar, and how studies and observations involving tidal habitat birds are giving us an idea of what the future may hold.

He currently works at the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside, as a researcher and also as an educator sharing his knowledge with visitors and students of all levels. A recipient of SSAS's Elliott Kutner Conservation Award in 2014, he has provided many opportunities for young people and students to have hands-on involvement in the daily activities that are conducted at the Study Area; many participants continue their education into conservation and sustainability, with a few going on to careers in these fields. Join us for Michael's PowerPoint presentation to see his photos and learn about our wetlands.

**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 *Do Birds Have Knees* by Stephen Moss.

**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 side of the gas station that borders Sunrise Highway.

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-  IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE WASTE, PLEASE •  
• BRING COFFEE MUGS TO OUR MEETINGS. •
- SHADE-GROWN COFFEE PROTECTS RAINFORESTS! •
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## U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE PROPOSES RULES THAT WEAKEN THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

*Editor's note:* As we were going to press, participants in Audubon's action network were sent a link to the editable sign-on letter to the U.S. FWS that's below; the comment deadline is/was Monday, September 24. Go to <https://action.audubon.org/signup/join-our-action-network> to receive future alerts and be heard; there probably will be a link to this alert at <https://www.audubon.org/take-action>. See [https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=u.s.-fish-and-wildlife-service-and-noaa-fisheries-seek-public-input-on-&\\_ID=36286](https://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ref=u.s.-fish-and-wildlife-service-and-noaa-fisheries-seek-public-input-on-&_ID=36286) for their spin on what they're on the verge of approving.

I strongly urge you to reject proposed rule changes that would weaken the Endangered Species Act's (ESA) ability to conserve vulnerable birds and other wildlife.

The ESA has been a successful tool to protect and recover the most imperiled birds and other wildlife. It has prevented the extinction of 99% of listed species, while helping put these species on the path to recovery. While there are opportunities to simplify practices to achieve better and faster conservation outcomes, many of the proposed changes would only make it more difficult to protect and recover wildlife. I am particularly concerned about proposals that would no longer ensure protections for threatened species, allow reference to economic considerations in the listing process, and the changes to designating unoccupied critical habitat.

First, removing the blanket 4(d) rule risks leaving threatened species without protections, especially without any timelines for putting them in place, and it will likely increase conflicts while reducing conservation incentives. Second, allowing references to economic considerations during the listing and delisting process undermines the intent of the ESA, distracts from science-based decision making, and adds unnecessary analysis that redirects limited agency resources. Third, changes to critical habitat designations, such as those around unoccupied habitat,

will tie the hands of wildlife experts without adding conservation benefits.

Again, I urge you not to take steps that would weaken the ESA and this vital tool to protect and recover our country's imperiled birds and other wildlife.

### \*\*\*\*\* OUR COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION

*Jim Brown*

Placed in almost every issue of our newsletter is our mission statement, where SSAS commits 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.*” The heart of our mission is conservation, in all its forms. Our broad goals and all our specific programs and activities relate back to conservation, to preserving and restoring our environment. Whether we are sponsoring, presenting, or attending educational programs; educating beachgoers about the needs of shorebirds; bird-watching and noting down what we see; planting bird-friendly gardens; writing letters to public officials; or attending hearings, rallies, and protests — we are continually engaging in important conservation work.

The last few years have been notable for the sheer volume of different conservation issues we have had to confront. Our Audubon chapter has continued to educate and to conduct citizen science research. SSAS has also worked to improve and preserve habitat, and engaged in activism in the interests of conservation. All this we have done in the context of concerted corporate-backed attacks on environmentalists and the very concept of environmentalism. EPA funding cuts, climate change denial, attempts to gut the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Endangered Species Act, pillaging national monuments, gas pipeline construction throughout the country, drilling for fossil fuels in the Atlantic Ocean, opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling, clear-cutting forests for solar panels, preserving the habitat of Hempstead Lake State Park, plastics pollution of our oceans — these are some of the critical issues we have had to face in the last couple of years. Some of these issues even date back further than that.

We urge our members to get involved in our conservation work, which is the heart — indeed the totality — of what SSAS does. Educate yourself, educate others — pass along the ethic of conservation. If you have not yet attended one of our membership meetings, remember, you're cordially invited! Our chapter's programs and activities can be found not only in the *Skimmer*, but also on our website ([www.ssaudubon.org](http://www.ssaudubon.org)) and Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/SSAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/SSAudubon)).

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OUR E-LIST [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas\\_list](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list)  
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### SUPPORT SSAS VIA AMAZON

SSAS recently registered with AmazonSmile, where Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to charities selected by customers. Prices are the same as at the main Amazon site, so please bookmark <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7300504>.

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**BIRD WALKS**

*Joe Landesberg*

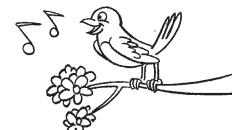
All walks start at **9 A.M.**; no walk if it rains. Call me at 467-9498 in case of questionable conditions or for other info. Check [www.facebook.com/SSAudubon](http://www.facebook.com/SSAudubon) (you don't need to have a Facebook account) for cancellations, changes, and lists from recent walks. Directions and lists of what we've seen in recent years are at [ssaudubon.org](http://ssaudubon.org).

Sep. 23	Jones Beach West End #2, N.E. corner
Sep. 30	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)
Oct. 7	Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve
Oct. 14	Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and Lido Preserve afterwards)
Oct. 21	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north side of Merrick Rd.)
Sat., Oct. 27	Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside
Nov. 4	Hempstead Lake State Park (see above)
Nov. 11	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)

### Contemporary Hearing Aids

As a member of the Audubon Society, we know how important it is to hear the high frequency chirps and other sounds of the birds.

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## JONES BEACH LEGAL SETTLEMENT PROVIDES SAFETY FOR ENDANGERED BIRDS

*Editor's note:* Here's the press release behind a local environmental story that received significant news coverage, followed by selected paragraphs from the settlement. Shortly after the 2016 lawsuit was filed, SSAS was invited to sign on, but our board narrowly decided to decline, partly because we would not have significant input in any settlement. Fortunately, the settlement looks like a good one for Jones Beach's birds. Unfortunately, cats will continue to be a problem in other state parks, an issue that has long been a focus for NY Audubon chapters and staff.

Based on a judicial order and settlement entered on August 6, the Piping Plovers that nest annually at Jones Beach State Park in New York will no longer face the risk of predation from feral cat colonies inside the park's boundaries. The plover, a small shorebird, is federally protected under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as a threatened species in the Atlantic Coast region, and is listed as endangered under New York law.

A lawsuit filed by American Bird Conservancy (ABC) in March 2016 alleged a violation of the ESA based on a concern that New York State Parks was not doing enough to ensure that feral cats do not harm the protected Piping Plovers and their chicks. Subsequent discussions between ABC and New York State Parks led to a settlement that provides protection to the plovers from cat predation.

Under the order and settlement, the cats currently living in colonies at Jones Beach will be humanely trapped and removed from the park by the end of the year to a sanctuary where they will be cared for. If the cats cannot be humanely relocated immediately, a limited number of cats will temporarily remain in a fenced area at the park. State Parks has also agreed that any new cats found in the park will be trapped and removed so new cat colonies do not exist at the park in the future. The agreement means that the plovers and their chicks will no longer face the possibility of predation from cats.

"We are delighted to reach this agreement," said Mike Parr, President of American Bird Conservancy. "By removing the cat colonies, New York State Parks has ensured a much safer environment for the plovers to help them nest successfully in the future."

Rose Harvey, Commissioner, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, said "Jones Beach State Park is simply not an appropriate place for stray or abandoned cats. We are pleased this agreement with American Bird Conservancy strikes a sensible balance between protecting the Piping Plover and relocating the feral cats that have been dropped off in the park in as humane a manner as possible."

"Cats make wonderful pets but harm wildlife when allowed to roam outdoors," said Grant Sizemore, Director of Invasive Species Programs at ABC. "Every year, cats



kill an estimated 2.4 billion birds in the U.S. alone. Feral cats, listed among the world's most harmful invasive species, are particularly problematic. As a result of this settlement, we're thrilled that the Piping Plovers at Jones Beach State Park will be better protected from feral cats."

State Parks is committed to maintaining a safe environment for the Piping Plover and regularly takes steps to protect their habitat, including preseason fencing of plover nesting areas, signage, monitoring, exclosures on nests, public education and outreach, driving restrictions, and predator monitoring.

ABC was represented in the case by lawyers from the New York Office of Goodwin Procter.

Definitions: "Colony Cats" shall refer to twenty-three cats that, as of the date of this Stipulation and Order, are present at Field 10 of Jones Beach State Park and that have previously each been identified, as well as vaccinated, spayed or neutered, and ear-tipped. "Field 10 Contained Area" shall refer to the temporary construction and use of a fenced area... where the entry and exit of cats will be prevented.

State Parks will promptly remove in as humane a manner as possible all cats from JBSP by March 31, 2019, but to the extent that State Parks is unable to do so, it will utilize its best efforts to remove all cats as soon as is reasonably practicable thereafter, and will continue to provide for removal of any cats introduced to JBSP in the future, except as provided below with respect to the Colony Cats.



Starting December 31, 2018, and until all Colony Cats are removed from JBSP, State Parks will monitor Field 10 Contained Area on a weekly basis to ascertain whether any Colony Cats have escaped from, or any new cats have been added to, the Field 10 Contained Area. State Parks will remove from JBSP any new cats that have managed to enter the Field 10 Contained Area as soon as is reasonably possible. Likewise, State Parks will remove from JBSP any Colony Cats that escape the Field 10 Contained Area.

State Parks will put up signs and provide notice on its website stating that the dropping off or feeding of cats in JBSP is prohibited and will engage the NYS Park Police to assist in enforcing the prohibitions... State Parks will use reasonable efforts to advise cat advocates and affinity groups known to State Parks that it is prohibited for them to interact with the Colony Cats at any time and/or to enter the Field 10 Contained Area after it is constructed, except pursuant to a Volunteer Service Agreement with State Parks.

On December 31, 2018, and on a quarterly basis thereafter until all Colony Cats are removed from JBSP, State Parks will report to ABC on the number of the Colony Cats, escapes, additions, and any enforcement actions State Parks has undertaken during that quarterly period with respect to the presence of cats at JBSP.

# AUDUBON LAWSUIT SEEKS TO RESTORE PROTECTIONS FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

*Editor's note:* We didn't have room for this May 24 press release in our first issue after summer break, so here it is, minus a bunch of quotes from Audubon's coplaintiffs which you can find at <https://www.audubon.org/news/audubon-lawsuit-seeks-restore-protections-migratory-birds>.

A coalition of national environmental groups, including the National Audubon Society, American Bird Conservancy, Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, today filed litigation, National Audubon Society v. Department of the Interior, in the Southern District of New York, challenging the Trump administration's move to eliminate long-standing protections for waterfowl, raptors, and songbirds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA).

In a legal opinion issued in December 2017, the Trump administration abruptly reversed decades of government policy and practice — by both Democratic and Republican administrations — on the implementation and enforcement of the MBTA.

The Act's prohibition on the killing or "taking" of migratory birds has long been understood to extend to incidental take from industrial activities — meaning unintentional but predictable and avoidable killing. Under the Trump administration's revised interpretation, the MBTA's protections will apply only to activities that purposefully kill birds. Any "incidental" take — no matter how inevitable or devastating the impact on birds — is now immune from enforcement under the law.

The risk of liability under the MBTA has long provided the oil and gas industry, wind energy development companies, and power transmission line operators with an incentive to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to minimize bird deaths. For example, in an effort to protect migratory birds and bats and avoid potential MBTA liability, the wind industry, conservation groups, and the U.S. FWS worked to develop comprehensive guidelines aimed to ensure best practices for siting and developing wind farms. The Trump administration's new policy eliminates this incentive for industries and individuals to minimize and mitigate foreseeable impacts of their activities on migratory birds, putting already-declining populations of our nation's songbirds and other migratory birds at risk.

The MBTA also protects birds from fossil fuel development. Oil pits kill hundreds of thousands of birds – if incidental take liability is eliminated, industry need no longer take measures to protect birds from these hazards. In addition, when the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon disaster spilled more than 210 million gallons of oil in the Gulf of Mexico, more than 1 million birds were killed in the four

years following the blowout. BP paid \$100 million in fines under the MBTA that supported wetland and migratory bird conservation. The new interpretation would bar the federal government from seeking such mitigation under the MBTA for devastating oil spills in the future.

The National Audubon Society, American Bird Conservancy, Center for Biological Diversity and Defenders of Wildlife are being represented in the litigation by the public-interest law firm of Meyer Glitzenstein & Eubanks LLP.

"One of the first conservation laws, the MBTA sparked 100 years of conservation leadership in this country," said Sarah Greenberger, senior vice president of conservation policy for the National Audubon Society. "It defies all facts for the Department of the Interior to suggest that this law is somehow broken when we have a century of evidence that says otherwise."

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NAT'L AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (844) 428-3826

# **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

*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 (third Tuesday this February), 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.

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 last month's *Skimmer* are:

Bethpage .....	Marie Tedesco
East Meadow .....	Arlaine Furcht
Freeport .....	Gemma Bartholomew
Garden City .....	Linda Sullivan
Glen Oaks.....	Joseph Butera
Long Beach .....	Constance Rose
Massapequa .....	Ellen Deutsch
Oceanside .....	Marie Springer-Oliva
Rockville Centre .....	Jeffrey Feinberg
Seaford .....	Jenni Zepnick
Uniondale .....	Edward Rieger
Wantagh .....	Jacqueline Hulkower



## Kingfisher

## **PLUM ISLAND UPDATE**

*Michael Sperling*

Our guest speaker last December, Louise Harrison of Save the Sound, did a program about 843-acre Plum Island, a federally owned, Audubon-designated Important Bird Area located less than a mile east of Long Island's North Fork that is 80% undeveloped and houses the Animal Disease Center that is in the process of being superseded by a new facility in Kansas. In 2010, SSAS and Long Island's other Audubon chapters were founding members of the Coalition to Preserve Plum Island ([www.preserveplumisland.org](http://www.preserveplumisland.org)), which now has over 100 organizations. Here's what's happened so far this year.

In January, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound reported the following: "A federal district court judge has ruled that our lawsuit over the potential sale of Plum Island can go forward. CFE/Save the Sound and six other organizations and individuals [including Soundkeeper, Inc.; Peconic Baykeeper; Group for the East End; and Long Island's John Turner — ed.] filed suit against the Department of Homeland Security and General Services Administration (GSA) in July 2016. We argued that in their pursuit of auctioning the federally owned Plum Island to the highest bidder, the agencies violated multiple federal laws by failing to adequately consider the environmental impact of such a sale. Homeland Security and GSA tried to get the lawsuit dismissed. But late last week, Judge Denis Hurley of the Eastern District of New York rejected each one of the agencies' arguments. The suit will go forward — and we'll be able to speak up for the rights of the threatened wildlife that call Plum Island home and people like you who value natural beauty, fishing, and history."

In February, the Coalition started a letter-writing campaign to NY Governor Andrew Cuomo: "I am writing to urge that you use your powers to block the sale of Plum Island by the federal government to the highest bidder. The island is magnificent for its wildlife, unique habitats, historic structures, and its top-notch research laboratory, and I do not want to see these resources lost to the bulldozers of a private developer. All of our elected officials on Long Island and in the region feel the same way too. And that's why our U.S. Senators and Representatives from New York have cosponsored legislation in Congress to halt the sale of the island. But that legislation is mired in Washington, DC, gridlock. Please step in now and say 'no' to the sale of Plum Island. Time is running out. I would like to see a brighter and smarter vision for the future of the island — one that preserves precious New York landscape and history, endangered wildlife, and good quality jobs."

In May, the Coalition's Steering Committee drafted a new letter to Governor Cuomo; SSAS signed on. According to Louise Harrison, "there hasn't been a direct response from his office" as of early September.

In June, Save the Sound's Plum Island Newsletter reported that "Recently we were informed that several organizations had been contacted by the Department of Homeland Security and told that their long-planned tours of the island had been  cancelled. Additionally, after years of coordinating bird counts on Plum Island, Audubon New York was informed they could no longer monitor this Important Bird Area and The Nature Conservancy was told that their planned archaeological mapping studies could no longer move forward. The public relations officer for Plum Island shared that 'headquarters had made the policy change' and he could not go into details. Save the Sound is talking with elected officials about possible responses to this denial of public access and research."

On August 10, Save the Sound reported good news: "The U.S. General Services Administration announced today that it intends to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the sale of Plum Island, New York. The scoping process will likely begin next year, and the new statement will result in a new record of decision that supersedes the decision issued in 2013. The agencies also stated that they anticipate addressing requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the Coastal Zone Management Act. Any sale of the island would now occur no earlier than 2023, they predict." More info is at <http://www.ctenvironment.org/2018/08/10/new-plum-island-seis-announcement/>.

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## **NEW BIRD STAMPS**

The U.S. Postal Service is scheduled to release "Birds in Winter" booklets on September 22, with drawings of Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, and Red-bellied Woodpecker (five stamps per species; all four visit SSAS backyards).



**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.

## BOOKS FOR BIRDERS

Sy Schiff with R. U. Abyrdar II

In 2004, the executive director of Seattle Audubon dreamed up an idea to boost appreciation for and about birds — amazing stories about birds on the local public radio station. “BirdNote” would feature two-minute essays written by birders, vetted by ornithologists and filled with sounds from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s library. Fourteen years and 1,500 essays later, “BirdNote” has over 1.3 million listeners. Now we have the book, *BirdNote: Chirps, Quirks, and Stories of 100 Birds from the Popular Public Radio Show*, edited by Ellen Blackstone. It pairs 100 of these essays with cute (some would say charming) illustrations by artist Emily Poole. Each essay is brief but packed with wit and fascinating science. There’s always some value in fun facts! (Now it’s Sy’s turn to bedazzle you!)

Starting in 2005 as a 2-minute feature on a local National Public Radio affiliate, these short programs now encompass over 150 stations [see [www.birdnote.org](http://www.birdnote.org) — ed.]. Not just words, but photos and sound from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Macaulay Library. The genesis of all this is explained in the book’s short introductory paragraphs. Not noted in the book is the fact that Ellen Blackstone has a weekly post to BirdChat that points to the week’s subject and time of broadcast. She points to a web page with the printout and the photos and sounds. So if you don’t or can’t listen to the radio, you can still get the whole thing anytime at your leisure on your browser.

Getting to the book: This is not necessarily a bird book, although its subject matter is all about birds. It’s been prepared for a listening audience in a different media.



The audience is an interested general public, hopefully interested in conservation, outdoors, and wildlife. Therefore the writing is basic, without jargon or multisyllabic words, and aimed at a less sophisticated audience than a birding group. It’s also written in a down-to-earth way to get your attention in the 2-minute space allotted.

The book is a compilation of 100 of the printouts of the radio shows, but without the photos or sounds. To make up, a painting of each bird is included. The paintings are artistic, lovely, but hardly to be classified as “bird paintings.”

Subject matter is all over the lot: A study of the red spot on a gull’s bill and its visual clue to chick feeding led to studies of animal behavior and earned a Nobel prize for the researcher. Another passage explains why bird poop is white. In a bit about crow parentage, the crows vigorously defend their young and you are advised to give the young a wide berth. Then there is a piece on storks and babies.

If you want a quick read about any and all kinds of birds, sometimes containing obscure notes on the species covered, then BirdNote does fill that role. It’s light reading and an easy book to pick up to fill in a few moments of

your time. Each essay is stand-alone and you can skip and choose at your leisure. Enjoy.

Now that you’ve been bedazzled, read it and enjoy!!!

## THE BLOB: NOTHING CAN STOP IT!

Coming to a Beach Near You

Brien Weiner

A rainbow of toxic algae is choking the country’s waters — red tide on the Florida coast, blue-green blooms in Florida and the Great Lakes, and rust tide around Long Island — as a result of warmer water, heat waves, and extreme weather from climate change; increased nitrogen and phosphorus runoff; leakage from sewer systems; and other pollution.

In Florida, red tide has lasted for about 10 months, leading the governor to declare a state of emergency, and tons of dead marine life have been removed from shores. Hundreds of sea turtles, including the threatened loggerhead and the endangered Kemp’s ridley, manatees, and shorebirds have been killed or sickened. Osprey populations have been reduced. Red tide causes respiratory irritation and other illnesses in humans. The consequences for the environment, the economy, and public health have made their way into the election arena.

In August, 50 miles of Lake Superior shoreline was covered by green algae, closing beaches. Blue-green algae, which is also occurring in Lake Erie and Florida’s Lake Okeechobee, produce toxins that can sicken both people and their pets. Algae blooms have become more widespread and worse over recent years: toxic algae in Lake Erie that shut down the water supply in Toledo, Ohio in 2014; algae that produced toxins off the West Coast in 2015; and an unusually high number of blooms in New York’s Finger Lakes and Utah Lake near Salt Lake City.

On Long Island, rust tide is suffocating fish and shellfish in the Peconic Bay, Great South Bay, and Long Island Sound. Tens of thousands of caged oysters and fish were killed in Old Fort Pond in Southampton; a separate rust tide spread between Sayville and Bellport, and it has also appeared in Port Jefferson Harbor, Conscience Bay, Three Mile Harbor in East Hampton, and in the open waters of Long Island Sound. It was sighted in Jones Inlet at Jones Beach. Rust tide is a mixotroph, which means it can make its own food through photosynthesis or feed on other algae or nitrogen from septic systems and farms.

Most homes and businesses in Nassau have sewer systems but 75% of those in Suffolk rely on cesspools or septic systems, which leach waste and nitrogen into the ground. Nassau’s Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant releases 52 million tons of treated sewage daily into Reynolds Channel, which feeds into the Great South Bay. In late August, hundreds of dead fish were floating in East Rockaway’s waterways, from Bay Park up the Mill River to Hempstead Lake. Officials blamed heavy rains



that caused an influx of fresh water that reduced oxygen levels, but environmentalists are investigating whether nitrogen and phosphorus pollution caused or contributed to the die-off.

There is no way to eradicate algae blooms except in small bodies of water. Spraying clay that combines with algae can cause them to sink, but it also kills sea grass and small crustaceans. In Florida, an experimental Ozone Treatment System processes 300 gallons of water per minute, breaking down toxin-infested water, injecting it with ozone, and pumping out clean water.

While algae blooms are an annual occurrence, they are covering larger areas for longer periods of time, intensified by agricultural runoff and warmer weather. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation proposes land acquisition and investment in Long Island's septic system replacements. Communities and industries have proposed strict zoning laws and requiring wastewater treatment plants to use advanced systems or reuse 100% of their water. Nevertheless, the amount of human-based nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen from fertilizers continues to grow with coastal development.

As with coastal flooding, the only effective solution seems to be managed retreat and letting the shoreline restore itself, while climate change is addressed at all levels of government by reducing carbon emissions and warming temperatures. Both are unlikely (especially with recent rollbacks on emissions standards for cars and coal plants in the U.S., and increasing use of SUVs and fossil fuels worldwide). But until then, algae blooms will increasingly kill coastal recreation, tourism, and fishing; they will kill or sicken marine life, the birds who depend on it, and, moving up the food chain, eventually us.



### THE BOOKCASE The Monarchs of the Air

Frank Scoblete

Let me lay it on the line: I love raptors. Many are killers — hunters of other birds and wildlife such as mice, rabbits, and fish. Many raptors are beautiful in wing and body or, in the case of vultures, they can be facially hideous-looking creatures who eat carrion, those packages of decomposing wildlife that met their maker by natural causes, accident... or by the razor-sharp claws and beaks of, well, other raptors. [A Harpy Eagle is pictured above. — ed.]



Two books of note have been recently published about my favorite birds: *Raptors: The Curious Nature of Diurnal Birds of Prey* by Keith L. Bildstein and *Birds of Prey: Hawks, Eagles, Falcons, and Vultures of North America* by Pete Dunne with Kevin T. Karlson. Both books are excellent, although I prefer Pete Dunne's masterwork.

Bildstein's book is really a textbook that can be used in any ornithology class. It is rife with information about my beloved birds based on their physical characteristics

and lifestyles (yes, birds have lifestyles). There are multiple charts and graphs, and good summations at the end of chapters for those students and readers who prefer to get their information in bite-sized chunks, kind of how vultures take their meals. There are some good pictures in a center spread. For many readers the book might be exhaustive to read, although I enjoyed it.

Pete Dunne, the author of our second book, is now one of my favorite authors and I want to thank SSAS's Paul Stessel for turning me onto this fine writer. Mr. Dunne has the ability to convey information in a wonderful way. His writing displays knowledge and humor, and is often characterized by great personal stories. Every field has its top dogs, the writers who set themselves apart, and Dunne has certainly done that. I always read his articles in BirdWatching magazine and I've now read several of his books. He never disappoints.

Dunne's book has wonderful pictures, supplied by contributor Kevin T. Karlson, of just about every raptor. I like to sit and just turn to a page at random and look at the marvelous pictures and read about these magnificent birds. This is a book that can be read in many sittings, here and there, in any room in the house. (Yes, even in a room my wife, the Beautiful AP, says is too indelicate to mention!) It is encyclopedic in the best way possible.

If you like raptors, these are two books you will like as well. And if you don't like raptors, give the Pete Dunne book a try and you might just become a convert!



### MONARCH CATERPILLARS AT TACKAPAUSA

Bill Belford

On August 28, during our ongoing weeding project at Tackapausha Preserve, we discovered three monarch caterpillars. Monarch caterpillars are white with yellow and black stripes. They feed only on milkweed plants, and the toxins they absorb from the plants make them inedible to most predators. The bright colors of monarch butterflies and their caterpillars act as a warning to would-be predators. The problem at Tackapausha was that the caterpillars were on a questionable plant! So we decided to move them to the common milkweed. Several days later, we found the three caterpillars again and they seemed to be doing well. Hopefully they will soon form chrysalises, transform into butterflies, and be on their way to Mexico.

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