

VOLUME 49, NUMBER 7 - SOUTH SHORE AUDUBON SOCIETY

APRIL 2019

#### NEXT MEETING

DATE:	Tuesday, April 9, 2019
TIME:	7:30 р.м.
PLACE:	Freeport Memorial Library
	144 W. Merrick Rd. (at S. Ocean Ave.)
SPEAKER:	Joe Giunta
TOPIC:	Warblers of the NYC Area

Warblers are jewels of the birding world. Their colorful plumage and delightful songs make them the most desired birds to see and identify during spring migration. The presentation at this month's meeting will cover the 35 species of warblers that are regularly seen in our area. We will learn about their distribution, abundance, habits, and ease or difficulty of identification, in a presentation enhanced with slides and bird songs.

A frequent guest speaker for SSAS, the always enthusiastic Joe Giunta has led bird walks for the Nature Conservancy, NYC Audubon, Brooklyn Bird Club, Road Scholars, and the South Fork Natural History Society, and has taught birding classes at Brooklyn Botanic Garden since 2001. He is the owner of Happy Warblers (www. happywarblers.com), a travel and education company, and has birded throughout the United States and Central and South America. 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 *Bird Life: A Guide to the Study of Our Common Birds* by Frank Michler Chapman.

**Parking Lots.** In addition to the parking lot adjacent to the library, there's a lightly used, well-lit, and fairly close municipal lot on the east side of S. Ocean Ave., on the near (south) side of the gas station that borders Sunrise Highway.



**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.

### TWO GRANTS AWARDED FOR OUR NATIVE PLANT SPECIES PROGRAM Betty Borowsky

Native plants are as beautiful as nonnative species and they have the added benefit of being adapted to our environment. They tend to grow more vigorously with less maintenance, while providing much-more appropriate habitat and food to birds and insect pollinators. In addition, native plants can be a natural defense against the storm damage we've seen recently on Long Island (Hurricanes Sandy and Irene, for example). Even rainstorms now routinely cause flooding throughout the region, because with the increase in our population, not only has much of the soil been covered with impenetrable materials so water pools on the surface, but nonnative plants with shallow roots have for the most part replaced our native species. If we use the deep-rooted plants native to Long Island in our homes and community spaces, they will help stabilize the soil, soak up rainfall, and provide pathways for water to penetrate through the soil to help reduce this flooding.

We are happy to announce that SSAS has just received two grants to help us continue our work with native plants. This is the second year we have received these grants. The first is a Collaborative Grant from National Audubon Society for \$1,000, and the second is a \$3,300 grant from the Burke Foundation, which is administered by the National Audubon Society.

Funds from the Collaborative Grant will allow us to continue to partner with Tackapausha Museum and Preserve to refurbish its front garden, not only to beautify the space, but to create a demonstration site for bird- and insect-pollinator friendly native plants. The garden is right in front of the main entrance of the museum, where it is seen by anyone who enters the museum or who is even just planning to park in the lot before they go for a hike in the preserve.

This year's funding will, among other things, allow us to

Plant more native species

Install more plant identification signs in the garden

Enhance our descriptive brochure to include these additional species and distribute them to museum visitors

Create a permanent reference notebook, to be kept in the museum, containing a description and the growth requirements for each plant in the garden

The Burke Grant will be used to restore the entrance of the Francis T. Purcell Preserve, a 65-acre site of grasslands habitat adjacent to the parcel of the Hempstead Plains that's located on the grounds of Nassau Community College. Management of the Purcell Preserve has just recently been transferred to the Friends of Hempstead Plains (FHP), more than tripling the land that can be restored to its original ecosystem and be made accessible to the public (19 acres had already been under FHP's management). The site is badly overgrown with nonnative invasive plants.

SSAS will partner with FHP and other organizations to restore the original prairie habitat around the main entrance of the preserve. Focusing our first restoration efforts at the entrance will allow us to open the Purcell Preserve to the public as soon as early spring 2019. Firsthand experience is a very effective educational tool.

This year's Burke Grant will be used specifically to:

Mainted and the second the main entrance of the Purcell Preserve

A Plant at least 1,100 native seedlings there

Hold a conference on the history and original ecology of the Preserve

Meril Provide native grass seeds to the public

Here a brochure describing the importance of the parcel's conservation as an educational resource and as the repository of rare native plant species

We will have five partners:

① The Friends of Hempstead Plains (FHP; www. friendsofhp.org) is the governing body of the Hempstead Plains Preserve and is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to prairie habitat restoration through education and research. SSAS has had a close working relationship with FHP since its inception in 2001.

② Nassau Community College (NCC) houses the original 19 acres of the Hempstead Plains Preserve. Communications between the FHP Board and members of the NCC community are ongoing. The current President and two other members of the Board are college faculty.

③ BAND (http://bandfdn.org/) is a family foundation that supports environmental conservation. It has a

special interest in worldwide grassland conservation. It recently awarded a \$150,000 grant to FHP to help restore and protect the entire 84 acres of the Hempstead Plains Preserve over the next three years.

<sup>(4)</sup> The Long Island Native Plant Initiative (LINPI; www. linpi.org) is a collaboration of over 30 groups with the mission of protecting the genetic integrity and heritage of Long Island native plant populations. They will provide guidance in selecting the most appropriate species to plant as well as providing the plants themselves, they will assist in arranging the conference, and they will lend us the use of their e-list to publicize our activities.

<sup>⑤</sup> The Long Island Invasive Species Management Area (LIISMA; www.liisma.org) is the Long Island branch of the Department of Environmental Conservation's Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), which assists and organizes local land managers in their efforts to combat invasive species. They will advise on the selection of appropriate native species and make a presentation at the Conference.

We would love to have you join us! We will need help in the garden itself (weeding, watering, etc.), we will need help organizing the conference, and so forth. Last year we had a lot of fun with this, and the gardens are looking very good indeed.

So if you would like to work with us on any aspect of SSAS's program, or wish to know more about it, please contact one of us:



Betty Borowsky Anne Mehlinger Marilyn Hametz

bborow@optonline.net amehlinger36@gmail.com mwhametz@optonline.net \*\*\*\*\*

> 🖌 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. Check 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 www.ssaudubon.org.

Mar. 24	Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve	
Mar. 31	Massapequa Preserve (LIRR N.E. lot)	
Apr. 7	Mill Pond Park (Wantagh/Bellmore, north	
	side of Merrick Rd.)	
Apr. 14	Point Lookout Town Park, S.E. corner (and	
	Lido Preserve afterwards)	
Apr. 21	Happy Easter & Passover — No Walk	
Apr. 28	Hempstead Lake State Park (Southern	
	State Parkway Exit 18 south, Field #3)	
May 5	Norman J. Levy Park and Preserve	
<b>*************************************</b>		
OUR E-LIST http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ssas_list		

#### **BOOKS FOR BIRDERS**

R. U. Abyrdar II with Sy Schiff

As I pull into any strip mall on the south shore of Long Island and hear another person say, "look at those 'seagulls' taking up all that space in the parking lot," I'm going to puke! There's NO such gull known as a "seagull"! In point of fact," gulls are *not* pelagic and any habitat they go to is within sight of LAND! In my effort to achieve this very noble endeavor, we've found the perfect book to achieve this commendable goal: *Gulls Simplified: A Comparative Approach to Identification* by Pete Dunne and Kevin T. Karlson. A perfect book to further the success of my ultimate goal: "NO more 'seagull' chatter!" This



book features hundreds of color photos; it also illustrates the variations of gull plumages for a variety of stages, giving birders or newbies strong visual reference points for each species. NO "seagulls" to be found here! Extensive captions accompany the photos. It con-

tains a wealth of visual information at one's fingertips. Time for Sy to lend clarity to this discussion:

My two favorite authors have gotten together to produce a masterpiece of field identification for American gulls. Gulls take 2 to 4 years to mature, depending on the species, and each of the years can have a different plumage. They have put together a narrative describing all of this, with loads of photographs illustrating the pertinent points for each year.

The introduction, fully illustrated, explains traditional difficulties of gull ID and the approach this book takes, and finally has a short section devoted to gulls and gull-like birds. Gull anatomy is covered in several photographs, profusely illustrated with more detail and clarity than I've seen elsewhere. A two-page spread of all the adult gulls is followed by the same birds as black silhouettes. Studying this along with the species descriptions helps point out the basic differences of the individual gulls when seen from a distance.

After a short introduction, the species are grouped according to broad categories — small to medium-sized gulls and hooded gulls; gray-backed white-headed gulls; large dark-backed gulls; dark horse gulls (rare or unlikely gulls); and finally hybrid gulls. Each year in a gull's life is discussed and pictured. Can't tell the years apart by looking at the photos? No matter. You're told to just lump a few years together. The style is informal and easygoing. None of the "I know it all" comes from these guys.

Each species account begins with a short summary and goes through each bird's annual plumage description. But it all starts with a review of the bird's gestalt, concentrating on the head shape; bill size, shape, and color; wing extension; body view; and eye and eye-ring color. At every point there is a photograph, year by year; details individually described with notes of deviations from other similar gulls. Look at any photo and you're told exactly what it is and why it's not something else.

Rare birds are grouped separately. These are birds not likely to be found, so they are not mixed in with the ones you expect to see. Slaty-backed, Kelp, Black-tailed, Ivory, and Ross's Gulls are more than adequately covered but are put off on the side. They're telling you to concentrate on what's out there and to get it right.

The section on hybrids, while less comprehensive, is great in pointing out those gulls that don't quite seem to be right when you look at them. Calling an odd bird a hybrid because it doesn't fit can be a cop out, but not any more. The odd birds are shown, described, and a summary made of what to look for.

The book ends with 35 quiz photos. These are of single birds and groups of birds. You are challenged to ID everything in the pictures, including some terns. These are meant to challenge your knowledge after reading the book. Some are easy and some are hard to very hard. The answers help explain the ID. You definitely learn something after going through the exercises. One bird is pointed out, described, and analyzed; then it's listed as "we don't know what it is either." No one says gulls are easy.

If you want to be able to ID gulls and only want one gull book, this is it. It's a great addition to birding books.

So, read this wonderfully illustrated book and ENJOY! NO "seagull" chatter anymore!!



#### NEWS ON THE OIL AND GAS DRILLING FRONT

Jim Brown

Given the severe crisis posed to the planet by climate change, it is disheartening and sobering to consider that the fossil fuel industry, buoyed by the present administration in Washington, continues to push for ever more drilling in and around the United States' mainland. We are being threatened not only with increased greenhouse gas emissions, but also with direct habitat destruction.

Years ago, when liquefied natural gas (LNG) ports were first being planned in Long Island Sound and off the south shore of Long Island, the fossil fuel companies spoke of using these offshore facilities to import natural gas into the U.S. to satisfy our "need" for this dirty energy. Actually, very early on it became apparent that the real aim was to further the export of petroleum, particularly fracked gas. The LNG ports were not built because they encountered strong public opposition, led by many grassroots groups in New York and New Jersey. New York also banned fracking in 2014, but oil and fracked gas still pass into and through our state, and indeed throughout the entire nation, via an ever-expanding infrastructure devoted to the extraction, transport, refining, burning, and export of these fuels.

Drilling for fossil fuels used to be sanctified by the "need" of the U.S. to be free of dependence on other countries for oil and gas. It is not so anymore! We no longer fear OPEC and we no longer need to fear a 1970s-style oil embargo, as the U.S. has become the major producer of fossil fuels through opening of huge swaths of our territory to oil and gas drilling. The U.S. currently ranks first in oil production and first in natural gas production. The U.S. is on track to become a net exporter of fossil fuels in a few years. Fossil fuel extraction is also becoming increasingly risky and environmentally harmful as tar sands are mined, shale fracked, and drills seek deeper deposits of oil and gas beneath our oceans. Every last ounce of oil and every last bubble of natural gas is sought by the fossil fuel companies.

In this context of profitable gas and oil extraction, the current national administration is attempting to lease areas for oil and gas drilling in the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Happily, New York has fought back on this. This February the NYS Legislature passed a bill (A2572/S2316) designed to thwart drilling in the OCS by prohibiting drilling-related activities in state waters. Audubon New York, in supporting the bill, noted that the organization "has witnessed firsthand the long-term impacts of other oil spills, like BP's 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, which polluted shorelines from Texas to Florida — killing more than one million birds, harming fisheries, and impairing countless ocean and estuary habitats. An equivalent disaster in the Atlantic Ocean would coat beaches and estuaries in the North Atlantic Planning Area, with a particularly devastating effect on New York State's 117.5 miles of Atlantic Ocean coastline."

Another area that is now up for grabs by fossil fuel companies is the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The 2017 tax bill contained a provision that could open the coastal plain of this northern Alaskan wilderness to oil drilling. The refuge is home to almost 200 species of birds, provides calving grounds for the Porcupine caribou herd and



important habitat for polar bears. National Audubon has described the refuge as "one of our last wild places." Indeed it is! Drilling for oil and gas has no place here. In pur-

suing this destructive act, these wealthy corporations and their political enablers demonstrate they have no shame. Hopefully they can be stopped this time, as they have been in the past. All SSAS members and friends are urged to stay vigilant around this issue and speak out and take action when necessary.

*Editor's note:* See https://www.audubon.org/conservation/arctic-refuge for lots of info about the refuge.

# SSAS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS Belsy Gulotta

Thanks to the much-appreciated and increased support of longtime member Evelyn Bishop, South Shore Audubon Society is offering \$750 Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarships this spring for 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 me at 546-8841 or send e-mail to betsy.gulotta@ncc.edu. Applications are due by **April 30**.

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WELCOME TO VOLUME 49 Michael Sperling

Thanks to our VP's recent look at some of the hundreds of *Skimmer* issues on our website, your longtime editor learned that I've been messing up the volume numbering. As Brien realized, the last one that was correct was September 2017 (Vol. 48, No. 1), after which I twice neglected to update my template. So, we've now jumped from Vol. 47, No. 6 (which appeared in March 2017, 2018, and 2019!) to Vol. 49, No. 7, and I've corrected the volume numbers for the online newsletters.

#### SAVE THESE DATES – DETAILS NEXT MONTH

Saturday, May 4 — Annual Morning in Central **Park.** As usual, Chris Cooper (who was featured in HBO's documentary, "Birders: The Central Park Effect," and started birding with SSAS as a child) has agreed to lead us through the Ramble during peak warbler season. Many of us will meet in Penn Station for an 8:30 A.M. subway trip.

**Wednesday, June 12 — Annual Dinner.** Join us at Pompei in West Hempstead for raffles, awards, etc.

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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., normally on the second Tuesday of the month, to hear what you can do to help preserve your local environment's health and viability, to hear about local issues that you can help to solve, and to see an interesting program.

Whether you are a beginning birder or someone with a large life list, you will enjoy our weekly Sunday bird walks. Check out the special events that are mentioned in this *Skimmer*. Attend them yourself, and bring your family and friends too.

You are warmly invited to be an active participant in this vibrant all-volunteer organization comprised of persons who, like you, care about the earth we live on, about our local environment, and about the creatures that live alongside us.

Our new members since last month's Skimmer are:

Baldwin	David Pace, Ellen Pontecorvo
Bellmore	Maria Freyvogel, Christine Schaefer
East Meadow	? Kocoris, Susan Raeside
East Rockaway	Allen J. Ostroff
Farmingdale	Joe Clark, Denise Robbert
Floral Park	Elizabeth Jagde
Franklin Square	John Kiermeier, Valerie Versheck
Freeport	Marilyn R. Meyer
Garden City	Prof. Carolyn Bauer
Glen Oaks	Rosebelle I. Cadelina
Hempstead	Perpetua Ellis
Hicksville	Cathy Borg, Patricia Walt
Levittown	Ray Barry, Carolyn Basil
Long Beach	Kami Radin
Malverne	Dan Agrest, Judy Pawlusiow
Massapequa	Diane Maxwell, Clara Pazar
Massapequa Park	Barbara Ringel
Merrick	Bill Gatsiadis, Joseph Schuessler
Oceanside	Angela Obrien, Lenore Reinharz, Teri Young
Plainview	Michael L. Atkin
Rockville Centre	Carlene Broderick
Seaford	Phoebe Stutman, Joan Tyrrell
Wantagh	Paul Deutsch
West Hempstead	Rosemary Shortis

#### WILDLIFE FRIENDLY GARDENS

Guy Jacob

Our suburban, heavily populated landscape lacks sufficient natural settings where wildlife can thrive. As homeowners, we can help fill in the gaps by establishing gardens that welcome wildlife.

Providing the four components of habitat — food, water, cover, and places to raise offspring - are key to establishing a garden within which wildlife will flourish. Native evergreen trees provide terrific cover and locations to raise young year-round, and they make for beautiful natural walls that block out unwanted white noise and visual distractions. Since evergreens create shade, be mindful of which perennials and annuals you plant nearby. Dead trees; branch, bramble, and log piles; and even discarded Christmas trees all provide for valuable winter and spring cover. Water sources include ponds with waterfalls, rain gardens, Chinese urns, and birdbaths. Native perennials and biennials will attract and feed pollinators, not only in the warmer months but year-round if you leave on seed heads over the winter. Common milkweed, swamp milkweed, butterfly weed, joe-pye weed, bee balm, foxglove, and rose campion are among the many choices that will transform your property. Plant them and pollinators will come - nature will work its magic naturally.

However, it takes more than just the spatial design and plant choices. Maintaining a sustainable, eco-friendly landscape safeguards the soil, air, and water that native wildlife, pets, and people depend on to stay clean and healthy.

The single most important thing you can do to save money; minimize and even eliminate the need for pesticides and fertilizers; provide habitat for microbes, beneficial insects, and bees; recycle waste; and add rich organic matter to your soil that will sustain and protect plants from disease is to mix homemade compost into your soil annually or biannually. Compost creates healthier soil, which, in turn, produces healthier plants, which reduces the need for pesticides and fertilizers.

Build or purchase a compost bin. Mix carbon-rich leaves together with nitrogen-rich vegetable and fruit waste. Periodically add water and turn over the pile. Within months, harvest your black gold!



Individually, we can make a difference one backyard at a time. Together, our cumulative impact will help heal our natural world.

*Editor's note:* Click on the link at https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds for a list of recommendations for your zip code.

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NAT'L AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP STATUS (844) 428-3826
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#### HLSP: PUBLIC COMMENTS AND GOSR'S RESPONSES

Brien Weiner

The Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) released the public comments on the Hempstead Lake State Park (HLSP) Project Environmental Assessment (EA) on February 22, along with their responses. The comments were revealing; GOSR's responses, however, were not. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) had many objections that were the same as those of SSAS and the Citizens Advisory Committee — objections that were similarly expressed and ignored in both 2017 and 2018. GOSR's failure to respond to federal agencies drew a rebuke from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which oversees the HLSP Project, as evident in a letter obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request.

GOSR, however, seems determined to push on. They are selective in choosing and interpreting comments for response. They do not acknowledge the many commenters who raised the same issues. And in many cases, they merely engage in circular reasoning and point to the EA as if its existence is its own justification.

All the agencies involved in revising the EA — HUD, EPA, USFWS, and ACOE — were concerned with the segmentation of the Living with the Bay Project, and assessing the HLSP Project as functionally independent from the other Mill River projects. If this is permissible because of variety and geographical separation, as GOSR states, then that is because LWTB has lost its vision of a blue-green corridor with room for the river and deteriorated into a hodgepodge of gray-infrastructure municipal wish list projects. The federal agencies all cited a lack of detail for cumulative impacts. GOSR blatantly justifies segmentation with time-line concerns, which is the same reason they refuse to complete a full Environmental Impact Statement. Putting our environment and communities at risk for the sake of spending money before a deadline may not only be more costly later, but also demonstrates GOSR's incompetence and calls for a change of lead agency for environmental review.

All the federal agencies also found that GOSR was deficient in mitigating the loss of wetlands, as the New York

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) found previously. First, the USFWS points out that GOSR's wetlands calculations are incorrect. The ACOE states that impacts cannot be assessed and mitigated without a jurisdictional determination, which GOSR failed to obtain in its hurry to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). HUD states that contaminated sediments were identified in the ponds and that upland soils to be reused for wetlands creation were not tested; as long as testing was deferred, no determination regarding significant impact could be made. GOSR's response is more than troubling: GOSR takes upland soil samples and averages the results with contaminated sediments to come up with values that meet DEC standards. Call it fuzzy math or cooking the books, it goes beyond incompetence to negligence.

Second, GOSR did not seriously consider alternatives, as required by federal wetlands laws. The EPA suggested that the EA evaluate reed beds for nutrient removal and bacteria level reduction, since they might be more effective and efficient than what was proposed. The EPA finds insufficient information for the grading plans, berms, sediment basins, shore-bank stabilization, etc., and concludes that the EA does not meet the requirements for a FONSI. GOSR claims new plantings in six discontinuous areas mitigate loss of wetlands, but birds and other wildlife need continuous habitat. As emphasized by the USF-WS, the EA proposes impacts to open-water, scrub-shrub, emergent, and forested wetlands, resulting in a net loss of 1.72 acres of wetlands. Some mitigation is proposed in the form of emergent wetlands; however, no in-kind mitigation is proposed for other wetland types. According to the DEC's Freshwater Wetlands Regulation Guidelines on Compensatory Mitigation, "It is very often necessary to replace more acreage than has been impacted to fully compensate for losses. Larger acreage may be needed as insurance against the uncertainties associated with trying to create a new wetland. Higher replacement ratios may also be needed to compensate for the long time it will take for a mitigation wetland to function at the same level and provide the benefits of the wetland being replaced."

GOSR claims loss of habitat will be mitigated by improvement in water quality, but besides the false equivalency, that the water quality will be improved is questionable. GOSR's own data shows a 90% pollutant reduction under current conditions. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Elsewhere GOSR either disregards hydraulics and hydrology data or asserts that it is unobtainable. They ignore the DEC standards for dam overtopping and the ACOE recommendation to leave trees on the Hempstead Lake dam to maintain integrity; GOSR may thereby negligently cause catastrophic flooding, and paradoxically defeat its own purpose. GOSR admits to having no data for Hempstead Lake, so they use inaccurate data from a downstream tributary; they claim they couldn't obtain recent data because the weather was too dry — for a flooding project? Data should be collected during the storms that we do have even when the weather is relatively dry, but the past year has been wet. The funds for Hofstra's Mill River program could have been used to involve students in collecting flow data.

Another sticking point for the federal agencies is the lack of a management plan. GOSR engages in magical thinking and states merely that the project would not have proceeded if State Parks did not have a maintenance plan, and that current maintenance operations would continue. They ignore the facts that HLSP has been chronically underfunded and understaffed, and the dams fell into disrepair and invasive plants spread under current operations. The federal agencies note that management plans need to be incorporated in the project and not deferred until completion.

Of course, one of the greatest transgressions of the HLSP EA is the destruction of trees and loss of habitat for birds, and on this SSAS is supported by the USFWS. Here are some of their findings:

"We recommend that the EA include information on wintering waterfowl and waterbird use of the individual ponds, and how the construction activities and final design and water-level management would impact the distribution and use of the ponds by these species." GOSR ignores the significance of how rare freshwater mudflats are in Nassau County and that they are used by an abundance and variety of at-risk shorebirds, wading birds, and dabbling ducks.

"Please note that this time of year restriction (Nov. 1– Mar. 31) does not cover the time of the year that great homed owls or other raptors nest. We encourage con-



sideration of measures to avoid destruction of active nests of these species during any tree removal or planting activities." GOSR informed the CAC that they have permission to drop trees during summer, but they are evasive on this in their response to comments. (*Editor's interrup*-

*tion:* February's *Skimmer* mentions GOSR's claim that they're newly allowed to do tree removal after March 31 instead of having to wait until another November.)

"The EA also states that waterfowl and waterbird use of the NW and NE ponds may be impacted by increased human disturbance related to reduced buffer distances and increased human activity along trails." GOSR is unclear on whether this will be mitigated by additional native plantings.

"Without additional maps or more detailed information regarding the location and distribution of tree removal, it is difficult to assess the habitat value of these trees or how removal may impact plant and wildlife species... In most cases, the EA indicates that mitigation for the loss of trees will be in the form of native flowering plants and shrubs. We recommend that the EA assess the relative value of existing and proposed mitigation habitat to wildlife to ensure that any potential losses are sufficiently offset." According to GOSR's general maps, the trees removed would include stands of valuable native oak and cherry.

The USFWS has more to say on monitoring and measures to protect the endangered northern long-eared bat, and the potentially listed little brown bat, tricolored



bat, yellow-banded bumblebee, and monarch butterfly; on impacts, mitigation, and management for fish; and on the impacts of the education center, kayak launch, and impervious surfaces on habitat and wildlife.

Further, GOSR avoids discussion of alternatives such as repurposing an existing building instead of constructing a new multimillion dollar education center that destroys habitat; providing an emergency spillway to mitigate dam overtopping; and locating floatables collectors upstream to prevent floatables, microplastics, and toxins from entering the watershed at their source. Relocating the floatables collectors would also save valuable wetland habitat and provide learning opportunities for Hempstead High School students. GOSR cites bureaucracy as the reason, but bureaucracy should not trump ecology and the health of our environment and communities. Finally, GOSR states that Park Preserve status will not be considered for the North Ponds, with no explanation beyond that the designation is rarely used, a fact belied by the recent designation of part of the Jones Beach West End as a Park Preservation Area protected from future development. The future of the North Ponds will remain precarious under GOSR's present plans.

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#### **SSAS NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

In accordance with our bylaws, any member in good standing may suggest candidates for officers and directors for the fiscal year that will begin on July 1, who will be elected during our meeting in May. If you might be interested in helping to lead SSAS, please contact committee chairperson Frank Scoblete at 596-3239 or committee members Alene (same number) and Jim Brown (608-1446). Our board meets monthly in Freeport, normally on a Tuesday night.

> LEONARD G. KONSKER CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

> > Konsker and Company, LTD 990 Westbury Rd., Suite 103 Westbury, New York 11590

# 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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Richard Kopsco, Brookside Preserve 825-6792
Wendy Murbach, Membership
Dolores Rogers, Welcoming 426-9012

# **BECOME A MEMBER OF SSAS** Think Globally, but Join Locally!

Option 1. You can join SSAS for a year by sending \$20 payable to South Shore Audubon Society using the form below. Our address is P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031.

Option 2. To join NAS and your all-volunteer local chapter, you can help SSAS by joining Audubon through us for the same price that it costs if you join through NAS (we get \$0 from these dues unless you join through us). Mail the form below and your check payable to National Audubon Society to SSAS at the address above. The special rate for the first year is \$20 per household.

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