

SCOBE SQUAWKS
Birds and Bugs

Frank Scoble

I love birds. I hate bugs.

Now there are people who love bugs; they study bugs; they touch them, hold them, they even talk lovingly to them; and these people are called entomologists or maniacs. The bugs I hate the most are mosquitoes; those flying little derringers of disease, death, and itchy lumps on one's skin.

I am a man beloved by mosquitoes. They attack me ceaselessly when I am outdoors or, if one or more have the brazenness to swoop into my house, they have an unquenchable lust to suck every last drop of my blood and leave me, the formerly scratching now lifeless husk, on my bed or floor.

Let me give you an example: My wife, the Beautiful AP, and I recently took a leisurely bird walk at our favorite nature preserve at Jamaica Bay. I lathered myself in diethyltoluamide (or deet as it is known in the trade) in the hopes that my vicious little enemies would leave me alone. That stuff is supposed to work, right?

Wrong! When I got home I had the traditional bites on my exposed skin but these monstrous creatures had even penetrated my clothing, thereby making the rest of my body look as if I were turning into the elephant man.

On that walk in that beautiful environment, I wanted to see birds, beautiful songbirds and those awesome raptors dominating the sky, but instead I succumbed to a flying, buzzing, biting bug. We left the walk somewhat early when I started moaning about my lot in life. I am (I will admit) a good moaner.

Why are mosquitoes attracted to me? It could be my sweet blood or blood type (type "O" is one of their delights) but it can also be the type of bacteria I have on my skin. Yes, these little beasts are attracted to a certain type of bacteria that about 20% of us have. I must have it in abundance.



Mankind almost extinguished some of the most wonderful birds on our planet — the eagles, Ospreys (pictured), and Peregrine Falcons, among other raptors — trying to eradicate disease by using DDT, which certainly did kill those little bugs that cause a host of diseases including Zika, West Nile, malaria, dengue, and the new one, eastern equine encephalitis, also known as EEE or Triple E.

Killing the mosquitoes back then was great (in my humble opinion) but discovering that our raptors were laying eggs with shells that were so brittle they broke apart before the offspring could get a wing-hold on life was not so great.



What am I to do now? I'm buying mosquito-repellent clothing because I'm itching to never have them bite me again.

Visit Frank's web site at www.franksoble.com. His books are available from smile.amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, as e-books, and in bookstores.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Wendy Murbach

Our new members since last month's *Skimmer* are:

- Baldwin Eric Schneider
- East Meadow Benjamin Bilder
- Freeport Amanda Laky, Mark Talty
- Garden City Richard Rutigliano, Anne Schoeffel
- Glen Oaks Antoine Gauthier
- Hewlett Marc Goodman
- Hicksville Leonard Mongiello
- Island Park Amy Singer
- Levittown Edward G. Bennett
- Long Beach Robert Knight
- Oceanside Mary Drangel
- Point Lookout Karen Federico
- Rockville Centre R. Grogan
- Valley Stream Linda Bassalay
- Wantagh J. N. Crowell & H. Greene



TACKAPAUSHA HOLIDAY PARTY

Marilyn Hametz

Join us at the South Shore Audubon Annual Holiday Party for Children with the Tackapausha Museum on Saturday afternoon, **December 14**. The party, also fun for adults, includes a wildlife show, nature crafts, and refreshments.

This special event is a great time to visit the museum with your children or grandchildren. Admission is \$5 per person (adults & children).

SSAS will be providing the refreshments and helping guests make bird feeder nature crafts. If you would like to enjoy the event as a South Shore Audubon volunteer, please contact me at 799-7189 or mwhametz@optonline.net.

Tackapausha Museum and Preserve is located at 2255 Washington Avenue (between Merrick Road and Sunrise Highway) in Seaford, telephone 571-7443.



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MOVEMENTS TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND STOP THE WILLIAMS PIPELINE GAINING FORCE

Jim Brown

In last month's column ("Welcome, Greta") I wrote of young activist Greta Thunberg's recent arrival in the United States to attend a number of climate actions planned in New York and throughout the country beginning on September 20. I ended the piece by expressing the hope that her message to our hemisphere would resonate and result in success. Indeed it has! Demonstrations in Manhattan and other parts of the state and nation were huge, attended by hundreds of thousands of climate activists young and old. Demonstrations and rallies have continued in the several weeks following the initial New York City Strike for Climate, a march and rally that filled the streets and parks of Lower Manhattan as never before. As I write this, the climate-fighting organization Extinction Rebellion is daily engaged in numerous provocative actions of civil disobedience throughout the world, including large protests in London and New York. Greta Thunberg is not responsible for all of this activity, of course, but it seems that the youth movement she — and others — have created and fostered has grown and synergistically merged with a number of ongoing parallel and intersecting climate action movements. This increased activity directed toward fighting climate change, this strengthening of people's response to the climate emergency we are facing, is a hopeful development indeed.

A local piece of the global movement to halt climate change, the campaign to Stop the Williams Pipeline, has also lately gained momentum. The Williams Pipeline is a planned 23-mile-long pipeline that would bring fracked gas under New York Harbor from Pennsylvania to the Rockaways. This planned project is unnecessary and expensive, and its construction will harm both human life and marine wildlife. Toxins such as PCBs, dioxin, lead, and arsenic would be released during the excavation of the trench that would have to be dug across the harbor. These pollutants would most certainly wash ashore and adversely affect marine life and the shoreline. Construction of the pipeline would create turbulence, vibrations, and noise which would risk altering the migratory patterns of whales, seals, turtles, and birds. Critically, the Williams Pipeline would also lock us into more than a generation of fossil fuel infrastructure — building it would be antithetical to the need to fight climate change and convert our energy sources to 100% renewable ones.



The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) denied the necessary permits for the Pipeline to go forward on May 16. On May 29, Williams reapplied for those permits after tweaking their application. The DEC has until May 2020 to rule again on this latest attempt by the fossil fuel company to gain approval

for the ill-advised project. Following the newest Williams application submission, over 25,000 comments were registered by the public. There had been 45,000 comments similarly submitted regarding the previous failed application. 90% of all comments were in opposition to the pipeline. Governor Cuomo has publicly voiced his opposition to the Williams Pipeline, in line with public sentiment and the carefully considered decisions of the DEC.

Gas company National Grid has pushed back against the rising opposition to the Williams Pipeline, declaring that the project is needed in order to guarantee adequate supplies of natural gas to its market on Long Island. National Grid has instituted a moratorium on new gas hook-ups and even denied services to certain existing customers, prompting New York State Attorney General Letitia James to launch an inquiry into National Grid's threats and fear-mongering. Governor Cuomo has stated that "if they're extorting people, and wrongfully turning off gas service to homes to create political pressure, I'm not negotiating over that. That's extortion. That's a crime." Environmental groups and various governmental agencies have published data demonstrating that National Grid's ardent support of the need for fracked gas supplied by Williams is baseless — no more fuel is now required, and any increased demand in the future could and should be met by renewable sources, such as solar, geothermal, and wind.

Unfortunately, some public officials on Long Island, including both County Executives and six Long Island State Senators, have fallen for the false narrative advanced by Williams and National Grid. The Senators, led by Todd Kaminsky, Environmental Conservation Committee Chair, have asked the DEC to grant "emergency" approval to the pipeline. The position taken by all these officials is a disappointing step backward in the fight against climate change. Agreeing to now construct more expensive fossil fuel infrastructure like the Williams Pipeline is wrong and dangerous. It also directly contradicts the goals of the recent climate legislation passed by the very same Senators that are now supporting Williams and National Grid. The political power of the fossil fuel industry should never be underestimated.

We have responded to National Grid's campaign on misinformation and intimidation. On September 23, during that week's series of climate actions throughout the world, members of the coalition to Stop Williams held a well-attended rally and press event in Mineola. SSAS was well represented at the event, which also included members from Food and Water Watch, Long Island Progressive Coalition, North Shore Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Green Parties of Nassau and Suffolk Counties, Sunrise Movement, New York Communities for Change, Sisters of St. Joseph, League of Women Voters, and others. Speakers at the rally urged Governor Cuomo and the DEC to permanently block the proposed Williams Pipeline and shared with the press a copy of our letter to that effect

