NEXT MEETING
DATE:      Tuesday, May 11, 2021
TIME:      7:30 p.m.
PLACE:     ONLINE
SPEAKER:   John Turner
TOPIC:     The Diamondback Terrapin:
           The Turtle with the Clown Lips

In May, our iconic diamondback terrapins emerge from their overwintering sites in the bottoms of harbors and bays. Join us to learn about the biology and ecology of the species and what we can do to protect it here on Long Island.

John is Seatuck Environmental Association’s Conservation Policy Advocate and Four Harbor Audubon Society’s Conservation Chair, and he was a co-founder of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society. His long career included serving as Director of Conservation Programs for the Long Island Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, as Director of the Division of Environmental Protection for the Town of Brookhaven, and in legislative positions with the New York State Senate and Assembly.

The Zoom meeting invitation will be posted on our website and Facebook page.

WATERFOWL ABANDONMENT: AN ANTHROPOGENIC DISASTER FOR NATIVE AND NON-NATIVE BIRDS ALIKE
John Di Leonardo

Every year, hundreds -- if not thousands -- of domestic ducks and geese are cruelly and illegally abandoned to the wild on Long Island, often following school hatching projects or Easter photoshoots. Now that many schools are going virtual and gatherings are limited, you might think this wouldn’t be an issue during a pandemic, but suburbanites have found new reasons to purchase and abandon these animals. Citing an egg shortage, some are “panic buying” baby birds like they did toilet paper, not realizing that ducklings won’t be mature enough to lay eggs for six months after purchase. Others say they thought the birds would break the monotony of isolation, but with many people going back to work, they can no longer give these animals the care they need.

It’s a huge problem, and the impact on local ecosystems is serious. In 2020 alone, my organization Long Island Orchestrating for Nature (LION) rescued more than one hundred domestic ducks abandoned in the Town of Hempstead, despite fowl keeping being illegal in the municipality -- as it is in all Nassau municipalities without special exception from a Town Board. Many of these birds were sick and injured, with broken or deformed legs and wings. They suffered from frostbite, fungal and bacterial infections, and were riddled with parasites. This is not only tragic for the birds, it can also be disastrous for ecosystems.

Just like our companion and farmed animals, ducks and geese were domesticated by humans thousands of years ago. Years of selective breeding have produced animals vastly different from their wild counterparts, both physiologically and psychologically, just like dogs and wolves. Domestic waterfowl depend entirely upon the care of humans to survive. Bred for either egg or meat production, they have large bodies and small wings, rendering them flightless and unable...
to escape predators or find open water when ponds freeze.

They also lack the survival instincts of wild birds; many were raised in incubators and never learned even limited skills from their mother. When abandoned on ponds, they do not know how to forage for naturally occurring food and often starve to death. They are routinely attacked and killed by predators, including raccoons, foxes, snapping turtles, and cruel humans. Most die within the first few days of being dumped. If they make it until winter, they face diminishing natural food sources and frozen ponds and cannot migrate to find water. These abandoned animals often become frozen in place on the ice -- those who don’t freeze to death or are attacked, die of dehydration or starvation.

When introduced into nature, non-native species disrupt natural ecosystems, which rely on the migratory behavior of wild ducks and geese and the natural recovery period that comes with their absence. They can also spread disease to native species. Should these domestic ducks and geese breed with wild birds, their offspring will likely be flightless as well, further disrupting the ecosystem and exposing the young to the same dangers as their domestic parent. The National Park Service has noted that “threats from invasive species play a critical part in [the] loss of native biodiversity,” and recognizes that invasive species frequently “start out as pets.”

For these and many other reasons, fowl abandonment is a crime, punishable by a year in prison, a one-thousand dollar fine, or both. Abandoning a Muscovy Duck also violates a federal order in addition to state law.

Community members can protect domestic and wild birds alike by reporting sightings of domestic waterfowl in public parks and waterways to local SPCAs (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and rescue organizations like LION who rehabilitate and find reputable homes for abandoned birds and can guide you on how to help them yourself.

If your child’s school is holding a hatching project or you hear about someone who is considering buying a duckling for Easter, please speak up. There are few humane ends for these animals: those sent back to hatcheries are often killed right away and municipal shelters in Nassau do not accept fowl. Even upstate sanctuaries are bursting at the seams.

The best way to avoid having to place these baby birds is by remembering that they are not science experiments or Easter photo props. They are thinking, feeling individuals, and, just like dogs or cats, require lifelong care. Domestic ducks can live 10-15 years with proper care and the oldest domestic goose lived to be a few months shy of 50.

To get involved in efforts to rescue waterfowl in your community, contact John@humanelongisland.org.

About the Author: John Di Leonardo is an anthrozoologist, a New York State-licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator, and president of Long Island Orchestrating for Nature (LION), a leading Long Island animal advocacy organization and one of the nation’s only domestic waterfowl rescues. The New York Times and New York State Humane Association have recognized LION’s work for waterfowl and the Long Island Herald and Long Island Pulse have profiled its work locally. John is also a Senior Manager at PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), the world’s largest animal rights organization. Learn more at www.humanelongisland.org.

SSAS Bird Walks are back! Registration is required by calling me at 516-467-9498. Walks will be limited to 12 participants. Participants will be required to wear a mask, keep a minimum of 6 feet from other people, and sign a waiver that they understand potential risks. We also recommend that you bring hand sanitizer and avoid sharing binoculars or spotting scopes.

All walks start at 9 A.M.; no walk if it rains or snows or temperature is below 25°F. Call me 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, directions, and lists from recent walks. Directions and lists of what we’ve seen in recent years are also posted at www.ssaudubon.org.

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SHOREBIRD VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Town of Hempstead Department of Conservation and Waterways needs your help to protect Piping Plovers, Least and Common Terns, Black Skimmers, and American Oystercatchers that nest between Point Lookout and Atlantic Beach. Volunteers will help prevent disturbances to nesting areas, and record the presence of Piping Plover chicks and any incidents of predation. Volunteers can also educate beachgoers on sharing the shore. Help is particularly needed on evenings, weekends, and holidays from May through August. If you are interested and can volunteer regularly, call John Zarudsky, Conservation Biologist, at 516-486-5272.

This is an excellent opportunity to observe the many personalities and daily dramas of our beach-nesting birds, and to see rare terns and sandpipers on migration, with occasional sightings of dolphins and whales -- all while social distancing.

A recent study by Audubon’s Science team looked at nearly 400 sites where Audubon stewarded birds on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts, including Piping Plovers, Least Terns, and Black Skimmers. The authors found that the populations of these vulnerable coastal birds grew 2 to 34 times faster at stewardship sites, compared to birds in protected areas without known stewardship. Volunteer and make a difference!

MICHAEL SPERLING MEMORIAL

SSAS created the Michael Sperling Bird Sanctuary by converting a Nassau County Stormwater Basin into a living tribute of native plants and wildlife habitat to honor our treasured President, Michael Sperling, who passed on February 5, 2020. We thank those who have generously contributed to his Memorial Fund. If you would like to make a donation to help us with the Sanctuary and similar projects, please make out your check to South Shore Audubon Society and write Michael Sperling Memorial Fund on the memo line. Mail your check to P.O. Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520-0031. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so your donation is fully tax deductible.

To learn more about Mike and the Sanctuary, and to see photos, videos, and a complete plant list, visit https://smpilconsulting.com/the-michael-sperling-memorial-bird-sanctuary/. The webpage will be updated to include a short film about the Sanctuary, information about Sanctuary events, and spring photos.

CREATE YOUR OWN BACKYARD BIRD SANCTUARY (AND HELP SSAS)

SSAS is delighted to announce an exciting partnership with the up-and-coming restoration contractor and design firm Spadefoot Design and Construction, LLC. Spadefoot helped us create the Michael Sperling Bird Sanctuary and we are now offering to restore bird habitat in your own backyard! Imagine birding while sipping your morning coffee in the comfort of your own home. Spadefoot Design and Construction will generously work free of cost for any of our supporters who donate $200 or more to SSAS. Included in this gift are an individualized design consultation, a visual rendering, and a plant list to create your at-home bird sanctuary. Further, your contribution will be earmarked for future restoration projects and maintenance of the Michael Sperling Bird Sanctuary. Visit https://www.spadefootny.com or call (516) 225-8545.

JOIN US IN THE TACKAPAUSHA GARDEN
Louise DeCesare

Welcome again to our new season at the native garden at Tackapausha Museum Preserve at 2225 Washington Avenue Seaford (next to the Stop & Shop on Merrick Road). We meet the first Saturday morning and third Tuesday afternoon of every month. Hours may vary to avoid summer heat and will be posted on the SSAS Facebook page and by email.

You will be alerted to cancellations (rain or other conditions), by email as soon as we know. If the weather is bad, it is likely we will not meet, and you will be informed. Please share your telephone number as an additional contact to make sure we can reach you.

Last year we had some newcomers, and we also look forward to seeing some old faces joining us for this new season! We are still observing the same Covid protocols for safe gardening -- masks, 6-foot working distance, and individual areas to work. If you feel ill or have been around anyone who has tested positive for Covid, we ask that you stay home and stay safe. Everyone should bring his or her own garden tools. We have bags but if you have buckets, knee pads, and/or garden stools, they are helpful when working! Be mindful of the sun and bring sunblock, sunglasses, a hat to cover yourself, and some water.

We welcome everyone to “drop in,” even if you only have an hour or so to help out. If you know you will definitely be coming, please send me a quick RSVP at Lmdecesare128@gmail.com or call (917) 548-6974, so we can better plan our gardening activities. Otherwise, just come if you find you have the time!

To learn more about the native plants in the Tackapausha garden and how to grow them, there is a print-
ed guide in the museum. You can watch our video, Native Plant Garden at Tackapausha Museum, at http://www.ssaudubon.org/video. For information on plants indigenous to your local area and the birds they benefit, visit the National Audubon Native Plants Database at https://www.audubon.org/native-plants.

CONSERVATION UPDATES
Brien Weiner

Hempstead Lake State Park

We are sad to report that the Sierra Club’s lawsuit to stop the destruction of woodlands and wetlands at Hempstead Lake State Park (HLSP) was dismissed on February 22, 2021 by NYS Supreme Court Justice Sharon M.J. Gianelli. The HLSP Project is funded by a Sandy recovery grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and overseen by the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery. SSAS’ history in opposing the project can be found at https://www.ssaudubon.org/conservation-policies-and-positions. SSAS initiated the lawsuit in January 2020, but the legal fees became prohibitive; we thank the Sierra Club for taking the 78 challenge and taking a stand on our State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), which, for too long, has favored developers. Indeed, in the case of HLSP, the Court ruled:

“Judicial review of an agency determination under SEQRA is limited to whether the lead agency identified the relevant areas of environmental concern, took a hard look at them, and made a reasoned elaboration of the basis for its determination… The Court’s role is not to second-guess the agency’s determination.”

It is a tragedy and a travesty that our environmental laws and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) failed to protect a designated NYS Important Bird Area and the last and largest area of open space in western Nassau County.

Massapequa Preserve

We received encouraging news from the NYS Division of Environmental Remediation regarding the Navy Grumman groundwater plume:

“While the original plan outlined in the NYSDEC December 2019 Amended Record of Decision (AROD) included the discharge of a portion of the treated water to Massapequa Creek, this may not actually be the case now. Both Northrop Grumman and the Navy are planning on using local recharge basins to manage the treated water and return it to the aquifer system. However, the final disposition of the treated water will be determined during the pre-design investigation.”

SSAS, Sierra Club, and other allies recommended preserving Massapequa Creek and recharging the aquifer in comments to the DEC in July 2019.

BOOKS FOR BIRDERS:
SUMMER READING LIST
Paul Stessel and Brien Weiner

Whether you are looking to start a new hobby or kick back on the beach, there is something for everyone in these summer reads.

How to Attract Birds to your Garden: Foods They Like, Plants They Love, Shelter They Need by Dan Rouse. Help your local wild birds by providing them with a safe garden environment.

How Birds Behave: Discover the Mysteries of What Backyard Birds Do 365 Days of the Year by Sharon Sorenson. A well-documented, beautifully photographed, year-long daily account of what 150 common backyard bird species do and how their behaviors change over the course of a year.

Birder on Berry Lane: Three Acres, Twelve Months, Thousands of Birds by Robert Tougias. A month-by-month guide to the birds that flock to the peaceful New England backyard of a noted writer, birder, and naturalist.

A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds by Scott Weidensaul. An epic reflection on what we’re learning about the greatest natural phenomenon on the planet -- and what we must do to preserve it.

Field Notes from an Unintentional Birder by Julia Zarankin. A memoir of the author’s unlikely transformation from total nature-novice to bona fide bird nerd and the unexpected pleasures of discovering one’s wild side and finding meaning in midlife through birds.

Saving Jemima: Life and Love with a Hard-Luck Jay by Julie Zickefoose. For fans of Wesley the Owl, the story of a sick baby bird nursed back to health and into the wild by a renowned writer/artist.
JERRY BISHOP ENVIRONMENTAL SCHOLARSHIPS  
Betty Borowsky and Betsy Gulotta

Sponsored by SSAS, two $1000 scholarships are offered to college juniors or seniors or graduate students earning a degree in the areas of biological or environmental science. To receive an application, contact Professor Gulotta at Betsy.Gulotta@ncc.edu or download one from http://www.ssaudubon.org/bishop-scholarship. Applications are due by April 30, 2021.

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LEAD YOUR CHAPTER!

Any member in good standing may suggest candidates for officers and directors for the 2021-2022 term, which will start in June 2021. We are still looking for a President and new voices. If you are interested in helping to lead SSAS, or have a special skill to contribute, please contact Nominating Committee members Betty Borowsky (764-3596), Gail Brown (608-1446), or Wendy Murbach (546-6303).

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OUR WEBSITE http://www.ssaudubon.org

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

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People are always looking for the meaning of life. Indeed, people are usually looking for the meaning of everything. Brilliant people such as Einstein and Stephen Hawking are looking; stupid people such as conspiracy theorists are also looking. Conspiracy theorists think they have found it in some powerful plotting person or some powerful plotting group of people.

I'm looking too. I am looking and I have been looking since I was 17 years old, which was long, long ago. Have I found it? No.

Many people have looked to birds to find such meaning. Birds fly not only in the sky but in our dreams, fantasies, and desires. In our fears too. Many human beings look to birds for omens and information about everyday things.

We all know the dire meaning from the arrival of a Blackbird, Raven, or Crow into our lives. In short, make sure you have your funeral expenses paid for yourself and perhaps for grandma, if you see one of these birds.

In stories, poems, and friendly gossip, you can see the strength of the bird superstition in the world from the distant past right up until the present; when your neighbor found one of those black birds dead on his stoop, that could be a frightening moment. Much of bird mythology is upsetting but some bird myths are quite nice.

Many religious Christians love the story of the White Dove descending above Jesus' head as a symbol of peace between God and man. In Judaism, the Eagle protecting her young was a symbol of God's love and protection of his people.

While the Owl is often thought as the symbol for wisdom, it is also associated with the evils of ancient witchcraft. It was also associated with the devil. I love Owls so I am a little afraid of throwing my lot with them.

My favorite small bird is the colorful Cardinal, a family of which resides in the bushes in my Japanese garden. I see them every day, even in the coldest winters.

There is a strong myth connecting Cardinals and death -- a good myth thank heavens, because it's bad enough that I love Owls. I don't want to become too popular with Satan.

If someone you loved, admired, or simply liked recently passed away, the visitation of a Cardinal is thought not only to symbolize that person, but for many believers it is thought to be a short-term reincarnation of that deceased person, sending the message that he or she is all right and is thinking about you.

I do not know how many birders believe any of these myths, but the good myths, meaning the ones that are uplifting as opposed to horrifying, could be comforting for them.

My Cardinals visit me every day. At this stage of my life, I have many relatives, friends, and acquaintances who have passed on. Maybe all those visits are in fact loving messages for me.

Scobe's Yay or Nay

This is my “review” section where I will publicly take a look at various things that I usually take a look at without telling anyone I have taken a look at them. These can be books, articles, documentaries, short stories, or films.

Today, most people, including birders, have wider tastes than in the past. In fact, our tastes have become so wide that we, as a population, have become rather wide too, but that's probably from addictive junk food.

Yay stands for good. Nay stands for not-so-good.

So today I wish to inform you of a television show titled Zoo based on a James Patterson novel titled Zoo. I like science fiction and even before our Covid-19 pandemic I would read novels and watch movies about pandemics. Of course, my intelligent and insightful self never thought any of that nonsense would actually happen in real life.

The premise of Zoo is terrific. The animals, including all the birds, decide to kill all the human beings on earth. Correct. Little Chihuahua from down the block wants to eat your face off. (Actually, I think all those barking, scratching annoyances want to do that anyway.) Hummingbirds would go for the eyes, of course.

The first season was a Yay. The leader of the human group was a pretty blonde French woman with a normal face. They killed her off quickly and introduced a new attractive woman in the second season. Then, as the show progressed, something really weird happened. The lips of all the women on the show went from normal, to puffy, to puffier, to puffiest. From normal to pouty to poutier, to poutiest. Just like that!

Those of you old enough might remember those huge red wax lips from long ago. Like that. Some producer or director or who knows who must have told the actresses that the men who watch the show really like puffiest, poutiest lips. And so puffiest and poutiest they became.

It got to the point where I was constantly shouting out to my wife, the Beautiful AP, “Oh, God, they puffed up the lips of another actress! Her lips look closer to the Blob than to a human!”

It got to the point where I lost track of the story line. Birds attacking people? Who knows? I couldn’t follow the story, I could only follow the lips.
Finally, my wife came into the room, put her hand on my shoulder, and said, “This show is driving you crazy. Stop watching it. Read a book about a pandemic or something.”

I stopped watching it. Yet my sleep has now been disturbed by lip-mares.

The Zoo deserves a huge, lip-glossed Nay!

Frank Scoblete’s web site is www.frankscoblete.com. His books are available from smile.amazon.com (where you can support SSAS), Barnes and Noble, Kindle, eBooks and at bookstores. If you want to comment about something you have seen just send Frank an email at fscobe@optonline.net and vote Yay or Nay.

SSAS MEMBER ALERT:
NEW MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DATE

All SSAS-only members will renew their membership in September. National Audubon Society members will need to check their renewal date and renew directly through NAS.

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 to our next online meeting from 7:30–9:00 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.

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 the last Skimmer are:

Baldwin................................ Anthony & Annmarie Deluca,
                               Michael Devlin
Bellmore.......................... Steven Biegler, Angela Martin,
                                Kim Musgrove
Bethpage.......................... Paul Kelly
Cedarhurst........................ Frank Rizzo
East Meadow...................... Joy Brann, Harvey Fischer,
                                John A. Rodger Jr. Foundation
East Rockaway..................... Julia Romano
Elmont................................ Michael Gerbasi

Farmingdale..................... Daniel Looney, Seth Socolow
Fioral Park..................... Nam Forster, Sara-Jane Kintzer,
                              John O’Connell, Francine Yesner
Franklin Square................ Mary Conlin
Freeport........................ Richard Holdsworth, Regina McEwen,
                              Helga Wright
Garden City...................... Sue Davis,
                              Grace Charitable Foundation
Hewlett.......................... Eddy Abrevaya
Hicksville....................... Rosemary Cuccaro, Charles Gornell,
                              Amber Krauss
Island Park..................... Edward Fale, Sally Wolff
Levittown....................... Gasper & Teresa Scaturro
Lido Beach...................... Carolyn Olson, Susan Russo
Long Beach...................... Carol Alpern, John Broderick,
                              Matthew Scaglione
Lynbrook........................ Annette Monzert
Malverne......................... Miguel Cane,
                              Philip & Kathleen Fracassa,
                              Alene Scoblete
Massapequa...................... Kenneth Addy, James Burke,
                               April Maffeo, Kristin Mancuso,
                               Karen Maul
Massapequa Park............... Constance Diamond, Mary Cramsie,
                               Caitlyn Heaney, Clare Kaiser
Merrick.......................... Sharon Cordova, Jeffrey & Felise Fox,
                               Linda Gornell, Harriet Jonquiere,
                               Linda Krisch, David McDonough
Oceanside....................... Anu Kikas, Angela O’Brien
Plainview......................... Devang Jai
Rockville Centre............... Carol Eisenberg, Jill Hissong,
                             Julia Anne Merker, John Morahan
Seaford.......................... Louise Beckert, Rita Pumpluns
Valley Stream................... Norma Brown, Sharon Kugler,
                              Mohammad Sajid,
                              Raoul & Joan Vergosen
Wantagh.......................... Arthur Miller, John Pierce
West Hempstead................ Judy Clark

DON’T SHOOT BIRDS AT CLOSE RANGE!

As nesting season provides wondrous opportunities to observe and photograph birds, it is incumbent upon us to respect their space and follow ethical bird photography guidelines: see https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/audubons-guide-ethical-bird-photography.

MAY IS WETLANDS MONTH

Wetlands provide habitat for birds and protect us from storms. Unfortunately, our coastal marshes are being impacted by habitat fragmentation, rising sea levels, and human development. Audubon New York is restoring wetlands at Idlewild Park, Mastic Beach and Sunken Meadow. To read more, see https://ny.audubon.org/conservation/long-island-sound-area-salt-marsh-projects-aim-create-more-resilient-coastline. Tell your elected officials to support funding and fast action to save our coastal marshes!
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.

Renewing? Please send NAS renewals directly to NAS.

☐ Donations to SSAS are always welcome! $_______

Yes, I’d like to join: ☐ SSAS only ☐ National Audubon too

NAME: ____________________________________________
ADDRESS: ________________________________________

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