

South Shore *Skimmer*

Volume 52, Number 1 • South Shore Audubon Society • Fall 2021

County Executive Praises Michael Sperling Memorial

by Alene Scoblete

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran visited the newly completed Bird Sanctuary dedicated to our beloved longtime SSAS member who served two terms as President and spent decades as Editor of this very publication.

Michael Sperling was a true champion of open green spaces and the betterment of our environment. Michael died suddenly on February 5, 2020.

The Sanctuary is the result of a partnership between South Shore Audubon Society and Nassau County. It is part of Nassau's Adopt-a-Sump Program, to convert stormwater basins into native habitats for birds and other pollinators.

Migrating songbirds will find this Sanctuary a *true* sanctuary—a refuge that provides them with food and shelter along their perilous journey.

"Nassau's Adopt-a-Sump program allows us to work with wonderful

organizations like South Shore Audubon Society to transform land into sanctuaries for our wildlife that protect Nassau's natural habitat," said Executive Curran.

Although now serving its higher purpose as a bird sanctuary, the stormwater basin continues to reduce roadway flooding.



Laura Curran greets SSAS VP Jim Brown as SSAS Board Member Marilyn Hametz smiles at the crowd.

Curran and SSAS Vice-President Jim Brown both spoke of Michael Sperling's dedication to birds, the environment, and the South Shore Audubon Society.

Frank Piccininni, partner and

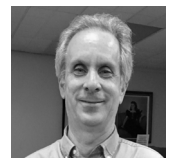
co-founder of Spadefoot Design & Construction, designed and oversaw the creation of the Sanctuary. He explained the ecology behind the design.

Vicki and Evan Goldstein, Michael's sister and brother in law, were in attendance along with about 30 SSAS members, as well as dignitaries from Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Our heartfelt thanks to all those who helped make the Michael Sperling Memorial Bird Sanctuary a reality. ♦

Posthumous Award

The NYS Audubon Council awarded Michael Sperling a posthumous Norm Stotz Award for "Extraordinary Volunteer Service on Behalf of the Audubon Society and the Environmental Cause." ♦



Mike Sperling

And the Winners Are...

High School Scholarships:

Arianna Petsad Ali • Freeport High School
Cameron Formes • South Side High School
Jack Grebe • Baldwin High School

Jerry Bishop Environmental Scholarship:

Alina Campbell • Adelphi University

Our congratulations and best wishes to all!

Coming Attractions

On Zoom & Facebook Live:

Birds of the South Shore with Jay Koolpix • 9/14
Hawks on the Horizon with Michael Farina • 10/11

...

In-Person Program:

Begin Your Birding Experience with Betty Borowsky • 9/11

See page 4 for details!

South Shore Skimmer

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The mission of the South Shore Audubon Society is to promote environmental education; conduct research pertaining to local bird populations, wildlife, and habitat; and to preserve and restore our environment through responsible activism for the benefit of both people and wildlife. ♦

Bird Walks

by Joe Landesberg



Joe Landesberg

Join us on our Bird Walks! To register, call me at 516-467-9498. Limit: 12. Masks and social distancing are required.

All Bird Walks are free of charge and start at 9 AM.

No walk if it rains or snows. Call me in the case of questionable conditions.

Birders are always congenial and welcoming!

September Saturday:

4th – Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area

September Sundays:

- 12th – Hempstead Lake State Park (Parking Lot #3)
- 19th – Jones Beach Coast Guard Station
- 26th – Point Lookout Town Park/Lido Preserve

October Sundays:

- 10th – Mill Pond Park (Bellmore/Wantagh)
- 17th – Hempstead Lake State Park (Parking Lot #3)
- 24th – Jones Beach Coast Guard Station

October Saturday:

30th – Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area

For November & December Bird Walks, check our website & Facebook page:

SSAudubon.org/bird-walks • Facebook.com/SSAudubon

All SSAS Memberships Expire in September!
Renew Today! See page 8 for Membership form.



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Joe Giunta

Math whiz and birding expert Joe Giunta is the birding instructor for Brooklyn Botanic Garden and leads bird walks for an array of clients including NYC Audubon. He has presented a number of fascinating programs for SSAS. Joe coordinates the Hempstead Lake State Park Count Circle of the Christmas Bird Count, an international community science project in which our members routinely participate.

An Interview by Alene Scoblete

How did you get started in birding?

JG: I got started one Sunday by picking up a bag of bird seed in the supermarket. I threw some of the seeds on my backyard table and before I knew it, birds came to feed on the seeds. I said to myself these birds are just beautiful and that I would like to see more.

How did you educate yourself about birds?

JG: I educated myself by looking at the birds in the backyard and then looking them up in a field guide. In 1988 I took a Bird Watching class at Brooklyn Botanic Garden. John Yrizarry was the instructor. I took the class each fall and spring until 2002 when John retired and asked me to be the new instructor.

What about birds attracts you most?

JG: At first it was the sheer beauty. Later it became knowledge about their life cycle, how they nest, how and why do they migrate.

Now it is their song that I appreciate the most. Sometimes I hear just one note and the image of the bird, its life cycle, and everything else including habitat and migration appear in my mind.

What draws you to Costa Rica?

JG: Costa Rica is a country that is perfectly set up for bird watching. They have the lodges, roads, people, great food and most of all—the fantastic birds. The country also has its own bird species enhanced by our overwintering North American migrants.

What are your three most favorite birds and why?

JG: The Eastern Bluebird has to be number one.

Seeing the sunshine bounce off the back of a male Bluebird in spring has no equal. They're like a closely knit family. They build a nest inside of a cavity, raise the young, and stay together for a long time.

Second is the Blackburnian Warbler whose color is awesome. The notes of its song are so high that they rise to heaven!

Third favorite is the Resplendent Quetzal, rated by some as the most beautiful bird in the world. A trip to the highlands of Panama or Costa Rica is not considered complete unless one sees the Quetzal.

Why should anyone care about birds?

JG: I care about birds because they tell us about the earth in which we live. When they are healthy, we are healthy. Their beauty and song add joy and happiness to everyday life.

You are an awesome teacher. In your teaching career, how did you

make math as interesting as you do birding?

JG: I have a gift for math. I could make change in my grandmother's candy store when I was four. I can look at a math problem and just *feel* the answer. When my math students made a mistake, I'd say it's not a big deal, just an opportunity to learn something.

Anything else you'd like to tell us?

JG: Birding keeps me active, alert, and social. I love to be out with the group, seeing and hearing birds and learning. No matter what is happening around us, there is always birding and the joy and happiness it brings to us. ♦

Visit Joe at happywarblers.com.

“I care about birds because they tell us about the earth in which we live.”

Thank You, Donors!

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Coming Attractions



Jay Koolpix

Birds of the South Shore, Part 2 with Jay Koolpix **Tuesday, September 14 @ 7:30 PM**

→ *Virtual Program on Zoom & Facebook Live*

Back by popular demand, photographer Jay Koolpix will show a wide assortment of birds from the South Shore of Nassau County. Jay says, "I wait for hours to capture a special moment of bird behavior—what the human eye cannot see in a split second."

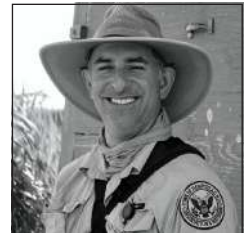
Born in Spanish Harlem and raised in foster homes, Jay mostly worked two jobs at a time until his retirement seven years ago. He first took up macro photography of insects and flowers and then discovered the joys of bird photography.

Hawks on the Horizon with Michael Farina **Tuesday, October 12 @ 7:30 PM**

→ *Virtual Program on Zoom & Facebook Live*

October is the peak of Hawk migration! Mike Farina will tell us where to see them, how to identify them, and what's to know about their habitats—just in time for us to catch these majestic creatures on the move.

Mike is an educator and researcher at MNSA in Oceanside. A recipient of SSAS's Elliott Kutner Conservation Award in 2014, he provides opportunities for young people and students to have hands-on involvement in the Study Area's daily activities, prompting many of them to continue in the field.



Mike Farina



Betty Borowsky

Begin Your Birding Experience with Dr. Betty Borowsky **Saturday, September 11 @ 11 AM**

→ *In-Person Program @ Jones Beach Energy & Nature Center*

Calling all beginning birders! Kick off a lifetime of enjoyment with this one-hour class! Learn what makes birds so special, why Long Island still supports a wide variety of species, despite widespread development, and a few skills to get you started.

Register at jonesbeachenc.org. Come to Parking Field West End 2 and meet Betty at the Amphitheater steps near the Energy & Nature Center. (Apologies for the \$8 parking fee!) If you have binoculars, bring them along! Email questions to: bborow@optonline.net.

- *More Virtual Programs Coming Your Way!* •
- **SAVE THE DATES: November 9 & December 14** •
- Find program updates & links on SSAudubon.org • facebook.com/SSAudubon •

Share the Shore Award

Audubon NY/Audubon CT awarded its inaugural Share the Shore Award to the Town of Hempstead Department of Conservation & Waterways for its dedicated shorebird stewardship.

For over four decades, the TOH has managed beach habitat for vulnerable birds like the Piping Plover, programs for volunteers, paid positions for local youth, and public service messages. Its success is largely due to our own **John Zarudsky**. Congrats!



Volunteers for Wildlife
Wildlife Hospital & Education Center

Rehabilitating injured wildlife since 1982.

Injured Wildlife Hotline: (516) 674-0982

volunteersforwildlife.org

by Frank Scoblete



Frank Scoblete

Some birds are staggeringly beautiful, mostly songbirds. Some birds are fierce and alluring, mostly raptors. And some birds are thoroughly weird.

The weird birds can be ugly weird or beautiful weird or just weird-weird. The Shoebill, a stork that resides in a dense forest along the Congo River, the deepest river on the world at 720 feet, is weird-weird.

At first, I thought of the Shoebill as a truly ugly weird. Now I am not so sure. The Shoebill's image has grown on me the more I've looked at it.

This bird is big, standing five feet tall and has a beak that looks just like the wooden shoes worn by the Dutch of old. The Shoebill's beak comes straight down its face, much like a roadway over flat earth. It almost looks flat.

"I thought of the Shoebill as truly ugly...."

The Shoebill is a carnivore, eating birds (especially baby birds), lizards (including crocodile youngsters), some insects of the large variety, and sundry fish, including the truly disgusting lung fish. Some lung fish are close to three feet long, but the Shoebill gobbles them down.

When Shoebills eat, they chew in a way that brings forth the head of the meal to the tip of its bill where it is unceremoniously severed off. The head then drops to the ground, since the Shoebill only enjoys the body.

How it gets the head to the front of its bill is amazing since the rest of the meal's body is lodged in its throat.

The Shoebill's favorite treat seems to be baby birds. It can stand along the banks of the Congo River and watch a nest up in a tree for hours without moving a muscle. It could be mistaken for a small boulder. Sooner or later a baby bird comes falling out of one of the trees to be immediately devoured by the swift and hungry Shoebill.

"It could be mistaken for a small boulder."

Unlike the friendly stork of mythology, you wouldn't want the Shoebill to be in charge of delivering human infants; not if you didn't want those infants gulped down with only the head remaining for identification.

Adult humans do not seem to interest the Shoebill but still—that beak is awfully scary and the fact that it can't bite our heads off is of little comfort.

The sad part about the Shoebills' story is the fact that, due to encroachment and poaching, the bird is designated as an endangered species. Seems some people think of them as trophies, despite the illegality of killing them or making them pets.

Despite its weirdness, I have come to think of it as a beautifully weird bird and I'd hate to see it disappear forever. ♦

Visit www.frankscolete.com. Frank's books are available on Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, and at libraries.

How We Took Flight

Alvin Friedman, a 93-year-old veteran now living in San Diego, was a driving force in the creation of the South Shore Audubon Society and our first President.

Alvin became a bird watcher because it was required for his journey to an Eagle Scout Badge. The experience led to a lifetime love of birds.

He wrote, "When my wife and I moved to Oceanside, I wanted to open an Audubon Society chapter." However, he needed 25 members. "I gathered my friends and local bird watchers in my living room and behold—the South Shore Audubon Society was founded."

Alvin is an avid backyard birder, attracting about 200 birds per day! He tells us, "Keep up the good work. You make me feel that I have done something very worthwhile."

SSAS members couldn't agree more! ♦

The Wise Owl: Nest Removal



Wise Owl

Most bird nests are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act that makes it illegal to destroy a nest that holds eggs, chicks, or young birds still dependent on their parents.

It's also illegal to keep a nest you've removed or one that has fallen to the ground—unless you have permission from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

I urge you to let nests and trees do what they do best—support our ecosystem. Trees provide food and shelter for birds and help combat our climate crisis by absorbing carbon and reducing heat.

If you must remove a tree, please do so in the fall after young birds have fledged and then see if you can plant a new one elsewhere on your property. ♦

Home, Tweet Home

A donation to SSAS by Jay Koolpix kicked off a partnership between SSAS and the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside to build a home for Purple Martins.

Purple Martins belong to the swallow family and have been in decline. This house, and others like it, help reverse the decline by providing crucial nest sites. Purple Martins nest in colonies, so their new home at MNSA looks like an apartment complex.

Jay Koolpix is thrilled with the new "building" and says there are plans to purchase a scope to aid visitors to MNSA get a better look at the new neighbors.

Thank you, Jay! ♦



Purple Martin House at MNSA

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Through Guy's Eyes

by Guy Jacob

Environmental Rights Amendment to be Determined this November



Guy Jacob

Could a powerfully worded amendment to the New York State Constitution impact our health even as it benefits our natural world? While not a panacea, it certainly has the potential to aid efforts in our advocacy for a clean environment.

The amendment given to voters for consideration this coming November as Ballot Proposal 2 is a 15-word addition to the Bill of Rights of the New York State

Constitution, stating, **"Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment."**

While acts of the legislature could be modified or nullified by subsequent legislatures, our Constitution enshrines our rights more permanently. It's far more difficult to amend the State constitution than it is to amend a law.

Our New York State Constitution requires all amendments to pass two consecutive legislatures before residents vote to affirm it.

The Environmental Rights amendment legislation passed the New York State Legislature in 2019 (first passage) and again in 2021 (second passage). **Now, it is up to the voters to decide on November 2nd** whether to add these rights to the State Constitution. The measure will appear as a question on the 2021 general election ballot.

According to a recent Siena College poll, momentum is on our side: 80% of likely 2021 voters will vote yes for this amendment. New Yorkers understand the value of constitutional protections, and this is good news we should spread far and wide.

SSAS enthusiastically supports this initiative as a member of a state-wide coalition of organizations.

Amending Article 1, Section 19 of the New York State Constitution would be one more tool in our arsenal for environmental protections. To learn more, visit our campaign website at: ourairourwatery.org/

Amendments to our constitution preserve our most basic civil liberties. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by voting YES for this commonsense amendment that's been a long time coming.

Ballot Proposal 2:

FORM OF SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL NUMBER TWO, AN AMENDMENT

Right to Clean Air, Clean Water, and a Healthful Environment

The proposed amendment to Article I of the New York Constitution would establish the right of each person to clean air and water and a healthful environment. Shall the proposed amendment be approved? ♦

YOUR VOTE COUNTS • TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 2 • YOUR VOTE COUNTS

Going Native: Hempstead Plains & Tackapausha

by Betty Borowsky & Louise DeCesare



Betty Borowsky

Native plants not only benefit the environment by minimizing the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and watering, they also provide crucial

foods for local animal species, including birds.

A further bonus is that, since they don't require chemicals or much maintenance, they're more economical to maintain—a win-win situation!

SSAS planted such at Tackapausha Preserve and Hempstead Plains. National Audubon Society provided funds through its Collaborative Funding Program, and the Coleman and Susan Burke Foundation.

Cadres of volunteers did the work. While all Long Island experiences the same kinds of weather, the Island has many kinds of soil. The soil at Tackapausha is rich and retains moisture, while Hempstead Plains is sandy and dry.

Volunteer at our gardens!

So, different kinds of plants were selected based on the nature of the soil as well as the amount of sun the garden would receive. Therefore, our two gardens look quite different!

We hope you visit our gardens and that they inspire you to plant easy-growing native plants at home, thereby attracting

pollinators and providing crucial support to the ecosystem.

SSAS has prepared a reference guide available at Tackapausha and on our website at tinyurl.com/b5y5k2cu. It provides a description of each plant, their care requirements, and value to our wildlife.

Join us twice monthly at Tackapausha to garden and make new friends! Contact Louise: lmdecasare128@gmail.com or (917) 548-6974.

To volunteer at Hempstead Plains, contact Betty: bborow@optonline.net. ♦



Louise DeCesare

You Can Say *That* Again: Timeless Quotes

Bill McKibben:

We've been given a warning by science and a wake-up call by nature; it is up to us now to heed them.

David Attenborough:

Everyone likes birds. What wild creature is more accessible to our eyes and ears, as close to us and everyone in the world, as universal as a bird?

Langston Hughes:

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.*

Margaret Mead:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Emily Dickinson:

*Hope is the thing with feathers –
That perches in the soul –
And sings the tune without the words –
And never stops – at all –*

George Washington Carver:

I wanted to know the name of every stone and flower and insect and bird and beast. I wanted to know where it got its color, where it got its life—but there was no one to tell me.

William Blake:

No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings.

Maya Angelou:

A bird does not sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song. ♦

Eco Tips & Tricks

Skip the plastic wrap...

- ✓ To cover a plate of leftovers, use an upside down bowl
- ✓ To cover a bowl of leftovers, use a right-side up plate

Write for the South Shore Skimmer!

The pay is terrible, but you'll get a byline.

To write for this publication, contact Editors Alene & Frank:
alene.scoblete@gmail.com • frank.scoblete@gmail.com

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See Page 4 for
Upcoming Programs!

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All SSAS Memberships Expire in September!
Renew your membership today!

Join South Shore Audubon Society!

Become a member of our local chapter for **only \$20 per year!** Receive our newsletter, *South Shore Skimmer*, which includes listings for our local outings and programs as well as the latest on environmental issues and initiatives.

To **join or renew** your membership, make your check payable to **South Shore Audubon Society** and send the form and check to: **PO Box 31, Freeport, NY 11520.**

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