

South Shore

# Skimmer



Volume 56, Number 2 • South Shore Audubon Society • Winter 2026

## ***Black Skimmer Fundraiser Experience***

*by Kate Goodenough & Brien Weiner*

We would like to offer opportunities for individuals to experience birds on the beach in a unique way. Black Skimmer research has been ongoing in the South Shore Audubon area since 2018. Our area is unique and very important to migratory species that return to Long Island to breed during the spring and summer. It provides places for ground-nesting species like the American Oystercatcher, Black Skimmer, Common Tern, and Least Tern to nest while they share the shore with the beach-loving public. We are offering two different experiences (2–4 people or 1–2 people per experience) for individuals to spend a memorable day with birds and also contribute to science and conservation. The experiences can be tailored to any level of activity from sitting back in the shade and observing to active participation in adult and chick banding.

### **Adult Black Skimmer Capture and GPS Tag Deployment**

Want to get up close and personal with skimmers? We are working on a project to monitor Black Skimmer movements for a population of breeding skimmers in the SSAS area. We are interested in making the connection between nesting colony and places where birds forage in the back bays by tracking individual movements using GPS tags. We have an opportunity for 1–2 individuals to take part in adult capture and GPS tag deployment. The time frame for this experience would be within a 4–6 week period from early July through early August 2026. The exact dates will depend upon when skimmers start nesting and will be incubating eggs.

**SSAS**

*A Chapter of the National Audubon Society*  
**SSAudubon.org**

*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.*



*Photo of Black Skimmer family by Jay Koolpix*

The GPS deployment and adult banding activities will start around 7 AM to take full advantage of cooler temperatures in the morning. Adult capture will range across 4–5 days, and we will halt activities when sand temperatures rise above 85 degrees. Since skimmers are mainly night foragers, they will be returning to the colony and switching with their mates to sit on their nests just after dawn to about 10 AM. We want them up off their nests to be caught by the loop carpets, which are arrays of monofilament nooses attached to wire mesh designed to entangle birds' legs and feet. The adult capture experience will begin with training on how to properly handle a bird like the skimmer. Participants will be divided into groups with tasks that could involve holding birds while they are being banded and while personnel take body measurements. There will be opportunity for handling a bird and possibly releasing them after the skimmers are harnessed with GPS tags. Everyone will have plenty of opportunity to observe the process and take plenty of photos. Beverages and snacks will be provided. Interested individuals will also have the opportunity to attend a post-banding dinner with lead ecologist, Dr. Kate Goodenough.

*(Cont. on page 4)*

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*Newsletter questions or comments?  
Contact [ssaseditor@gmail.com](mailto:ssaseditor@gmail.com)*

## Save the Dates!

## Bird Walks

by Joe Landesberg

### Audubon Christmas Bird Count

The CBC occurs from December 14 to January 5 every year. Add to a century of community science! To learn more and sign up for a count, visit <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count>

### Great Backyard Bird Count

Count as many birds as you can find in your favorite places during February 13–16, 2026. Participating is easy and fun for all ages! For more information and a step-by-step guide, visit <https://www.birdcount.org/>

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Join us on our Bird Walks! **To register, text me your name and contact information at 516-467-9498.** Bird Walks are free of charge and start at 9 AM. No walk if it rains or snows. Text me regarding questionable conditions. **You must register with a text number to be notified of cancellations or other changes.**

### December

Sunday 12/7: Jones Beach Coast Guard Station (Meet in parking area)  
Sunday 12/14: Mill Pond Park (Bellmore/Wantagh | Meet at gazebo)  
Sundays 12/21 & 12/28: No walks

### January

Sunday 1/4: Hempstead Lake State Park (Meet in parking lot #3)  
Sunday 1/11: Jones Beach Coast Guard Station (Meet in parking area)  
Sunday 1/18: Mill Pond Park (Bellmore/Wantagh | Meet at gazebo)  
Sunday 1/25: Massapequa Preserve (Meet at east end of train station)

### February

Sunday 2/1: Massapequa Lake (Merrick Road)  
Sunday 2/8: Point Lookout Town Park/Lido Beach Passive Nature Area  
Sunday 2/15: Mill Pond Park (Bellmore/Wantagh | Meet at gazebo)  
Sunday 2/22: Hempstead Lake State Park (Meet in parking lot #3)

### March

Sunday 3/1: Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens  
Sunday 3/8: Massapequa Lake (Merrick Road)  
Saturday 3/14: Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area  
Sunday 3/15: Norman J. Levy Park & Preserve  
Sunday 3/22: Massapequa Preserve (Meet at east end of train station)  
Sunday 3/29: No walk

### April

Sunday 4/5: No walk  
Saturday 4/11: Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area  
Sunday 4/12: Point Lookout Town Park/Lido Beach Passive Nature Area  
Sunday 4/19: Hempstead Lake State Park (Meet in parking lot #3)  
Sunday 4/26: Jones Beach Coast Guard Station (Meet in parking area)

**For Directions to listed Bird Walks:** [SSAudubon.org/directions.asp](https://SSAudubon.org/directions.asp)

### Thank You, Donors!

Jim & Gail Brown

Brian Ohst

Katheryn Podwell

Randall & Elizabeth Shannon

Take a bow!

Photo of Wilson's Phalarope  
by Bill Belford



**Wildlife Hotline: (516) 674-0982**



(formerly known as  
Volunteers for Wildlife)  
has been dedicated to the  
preservation of Long Is-  
land's wildlife and natural  
habitats since 1982

<https://wildlifecenterli.org/>

## Winter Programs on Zoom

For program links, visit our website & Facebook page:  
SSAudubon.org • Facebook.com/SSAudubon

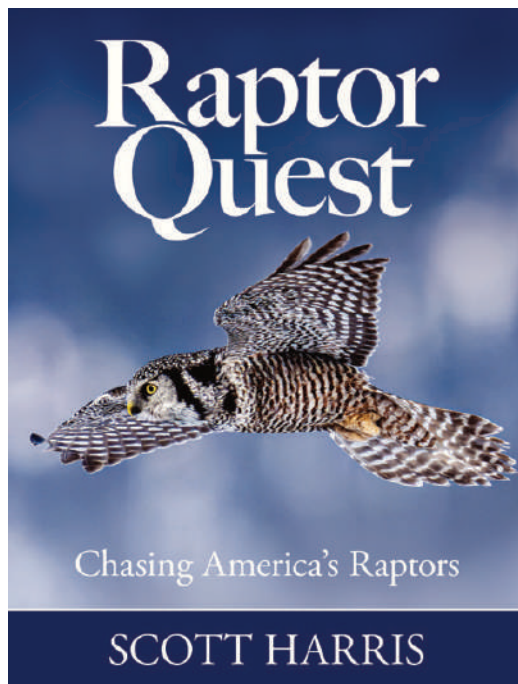
### **Raptor Quest with Scott Harris** **Tuesday, December 9 @ 7:30 PM**

Join us as Scott Harris recounts 17 months spent chasing 53 raptors across 34 states—his version of a Raptor Big Year. His book *Raptor Quest* is about his adventures, misadventures, successes, and failures—from days -36 degrees to over 100 degrees, from getting on the bird just in time to the frustrations of missing one by minutes. It's about the birds, of course, but it's also about the people he met, the things he learned, and why he's already working on his next adventure.

Scott became an avid birder when he and his wife, Randi, retired to South Carolina in March of 2020. Birding was a hobby he never imagined himself participating in, but now can't imagine living without. He has since added a fascination with mammals and sold his photographs around the world. In addition to his writing, Scott hosts a podcast—NaturallyScott—that focuses on birds, wildlife, and the great outdoors. And he just signed a book deal for his next book, *Why We Love Birds: 52 Birders on Birding*.

Visit his photo gallery at <https://www.naturallyscott.com/>

*Raptor Quest* is available at Amazon.com



### **Why Fly? Flightless Birds of the World** **with Todd Green** **Tuesday, January 13 @ 7:30 PM**

Flight is the one of the most unique adaptations birds possess, but some have lost the ability to fly. Whether you are a backyard birder or a dinosaur nut, join us for a virtual lecture with Dr. Todd Green, an avian paleontologist who will guide you through Earth's grounded birds. He will fly through the life history, anatomy, and evolution of animals such as the water-savvy penguins, recently extinct dodos, and towering terror birds.

Todd is an assistant professor of anatomy at New York Institute of Technology College of Osteopathic Medicine at Arkansas State University, where he investigates comparative and functional anatomy of extinct and extant archosaurs, a group that includes avian dinosaurs (birds), non-avian dinosaurs, crocodylians, and pterosaurs. Todd's research focuses particularly on the group of birds known as palaeognaths, which include tinamous, moas, elephant birds, ostriches, rheas, kiwis, emus, and cassowaries. To better interpret the biological roles of anatomical structures in the fossil record, he studies modern analogs from ontogenetic, ecological, and evolutionary perspectives. In addition to his scholarly activities, Todd serves on the SSAS Board of Directors and as a scientific consultant for various scientific education projects (e.g., The Cassowary Kid: Life with Living Dinosaurs, Hope for the Wild: Cassowaries, Dinosaur Empire).

*Photo of Common Ostrich by Todd Green*



(Cont. on page 4)



(Cont. from page 3)

**Those Wise Guys of LI . . . Owls!**  
**with Dianne Taggart**  
**Tuesday, February 10 @ 7:30 PM**

Fascinating, mysterious, and beautiful—owls are all these things and we see many here on Long Island. Using lots of photos as well as fun and interesting facts, longtime LI birder Dianne Taggart will tell us all about these magnificent and wonderful birds.



Dianne has been birding on LI for over 35 years. Now retired, she spends time spreading her love of birds and birding. She speaks at libraries, Audubon chapters, and anywhere anyone wants to learn about our birds.

## *We'll Miss You!*

Dolores Rogers is retiring from the SSAS Board. We would like to thank her for her many years of welcoming new members, building our community, and inspiring us to conservation action. Here is a tribute from Jay Koolpix:

"Years ago, I first crossed paths with Dolores Rogers at the Oceanside Marine Nature Study Area. What began as casual chats about birds and nature soon grew into thoughtful, inspiring conversations. Every now and then, Dolores would nudge me with the idea of joining SSAS and sharing a bird presentation. Eventually, I took her advice—and I'm so glad I did. That simple encouragement opened the door to one of the most rewarding parts of my life. Thanks to Dolores, I've found such joy and fulfillment through my involvement with SSAS. Thank you, Dolores!"

*Photo of Royal Terns by Bill Belford. With large numbers seen on migration and climate change, they may soon be breeding on Long Island.*



(Cont. from page 1)

## **Black Skimmer Chick Roundup**

Every season, we get together in mid-August to band Black Skimmer chicks with unique bands that allow us to follow individuals throughout their lives. This is a way for researchers to better understand survival both from the juvenile stage until skimmers return to breed and throughout their lifetime. Thanks to banding, we know skimmers can reach the age of 23! And thanks to plastic field-readable bands, we can track skimmer movements outside of New York to wintering grounds in Florida, Mississippi, and even Cuba!

For chick banding activities, we have tentative plans for August depending on how the 2026 breeding season progresses. The roundup will be a one-day event with a large group of volunteers to capture 100–200 skimmer chicks. The banding experience will include active participation in learning how to hold a skimmer chick and helping out with banding activities. Dr. Goodenough will provide a short presentation on how skimmer chicks will be captured for banding, the banding process, and how to properly hold a skimmer chick. We will also be collecting fecal samples for DNA metabarcoding to study the chicks' diet, so there will be a need for people to assist with that by watching skimmer chicks in a pen and collecting the samples as they provide them. Plan to wear old clothes that you don't mind getting dirty! There will also be an opportunity for a post-activity meal with Dr. Goodenough.

## **Get Involved!**

We are seeking to learn where our shorebirds go, why they return, and what makes our beaches more successful for nesting than other locations along the Atlantic flyway. We will also study how the Bay Park Conveyance Project has affected water quality and the birds' foraging in the Western Bays. The more trackers and equipment we can purchase, the larger our sample size.

For the experiences described above, we are asking for donations of \$1500. We are also offering the opportunity to adopt a bird for the price of a tag—for \$350 you can choose a skimmer or an oystercatcher, name the bird, and receive a photo and a link to a map to follow your bird's movements. Fund a tag and virtually tag along on a shorebird journey!

If you are interested in a skimmer experience or adopting a bird, please contact Brien Weiner at [ssaseditor@gmail.com](mailto:ssaseditor@gmail.com) or 516-220-7121. We are also accepting donations of any amount. Checks should be made out to South Shore Audubon Society with shorebird tags in the memo line.

# Long Island's Disappearing Wild Bird Habitats

by Russ Comeau

The South Shore Audubon Society has identified six critical habitat areas currently at risk across Long Island. We must all do our parts to help save these vulnerable natural places for future generations and wildlife.

**1. Jamaica Bay.** An important stopover on the Atlantic Flyway, with 20,000 acres of salt marsh, islands, coastal woodlands, shrublands, grasslands, and wetlands in Queens and Brooklyn with headwaters in Nassau County. The ecology of Jamaica Bay is improving in some ways, deteriorating in others, and hangs in the balance, suffering from lackluster National Park Service (NPS) conservation management. Over 15 environmental organizations have now formed a new coalition to combine their bird conservation and habitat preservation expertise to help revitalize this urban estuary.

In June 2025, the NYS Senate and Assembly did their part to send a Jamaica Bay bill to Governor Kathy Hochul to sign into law—or veto—before December 31, 2025. This much-needed bill would authorize the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to conduct a comprehensive five-year study of Jamaica Bay to determine its ecological restoration needs. The DEC has not conducted a study of Jamaica Bay in over 20 years. Yet Jamaica Bay experiences severe amounts of disturbance and degradation from a wide variety of sources. A full study is needed now, so that the latest scientific findings can serve to justify and stimulate new project funding to restore and protect Jamaica Bay as a natural refuge for New Yorkers and for NYC's wildlife. This is especially important because hard-won legacy funding sources of the past 20 years are running out.

**2. Woodmere Club.** A 100+ acre former golf course site in the Five Towns area. The villages of Lawrence and Woodburgh have indicated their support for the developers' latest plans, which balance development of 34 acres with preservation of 70+ acres of coastal wetlands critically important to egg-laying diamondback terrapins, horseshoe crabs, and nesting bay and marsh birds. But the development cannot move forward without the Town of Hempstead's approval, and sadly, the TOH has kept publicly silent to date about its decision on the latest plans.

**3. Hempstead Plains.** In April 2025, Las Vegas Sands canceled a large-scale casino development project at the Nassau Hub, which threatened ecological harm to the adjacent Hempstead Plains Preserve. "Although [Sands] will not be pursuing a casino in New York . . . [the company is] obligated to develop the site with residential, entertainment and hospitality components," said Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman, adding that so far, Sands has paid more than \$70 million to the county for a lease to control the site (*Newsday*, Oct 17, 2025).

**4. Stillwell Woods.** This 270-acre preserve in Woodbury is in the process of being transferred to the Town of Oyster Bay by Nassau County. Let's ensure it will remain a perpetually preserved haven for wildlife and passive recreation. A much-needed land survey of the preserve is currently in progress. SSAS supports this petition and urges all to sign and share it: [www.change.org/p/save-our-stillwell-woods-preserve](http://www.change.org/p/save-our-stillwell-woods-preserve). (See a related article on page 6.)

**5. EPCAL.** This 1,644-acre site in Riverhead includes 1,050 acres of grassland (the largest grassland in downstate NY). EPCAL supports one of the highest diversities of rare plant and animal species in NYS. Yet it has constantly faced the threat of random and ill-planned development. Now is the time to get the EPCAL grassland under stewardship with a habitat management plan so this rare habitat and its rare species won't be threatened again.

**6. Plum Island.** Located off Orient Point, this 840-acre island includes rocky shorelines, sandy beaches, wetlands, and upland shrub, grassland, and maritime forest habitats. In September 2025, the federal government, which owns the island, approached Suffolk County to explore the possibility of the county taking ownership of Plum Island. County Executive Edward Romaine is collaborating closely with Rep. Nick LaLota (R-Amityville), who has been the driving force in Washington to ensure Plum Island's preservation. A statement from Sen. Chuck Schumer's office confirmed that his office has been in communication with the federal administration and LI municipalities and organizations as well (*Newsday*, Sep. 3, 2025).

(Cont. on page 6)



(Cont. from page 5)

Nassau and Suffolk are in the 30 most populous (top 1%) of the 3,144 counties in the US, right up there with Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx. The future portends higher density development across LI.

Let's work together while we still can save these last remaining wild bird habitats to achieve some balance between relentless development and habitat preservation.

## ***Stillwell Woods Conservation Campaign Moving Forward***

*by Guy Jacob*

Our efforts to protect Stillwell Woods Preserve are making headway! The Town of Oyster Bay (TOB) has not yet submitted draft legislation to the NYS Legislature to finalize the transfer of the preserve from Nassau County to the town, which is providing all stakeholders with opportunity to find common ground.

Our change.org petition ([www.change.org/p/save-our-stillwell-woods-preserve](http://www.change.org/p/save-our-stillwell-woods-preserve)), currently at 2,363 signatories, is our strongest testament to Long Islanders' ongoing commitment to secure Stillwell's future—one that safeguards Stillwell's forest, native plant meadow, and scenic trails. Our petition makes four demands to secure Stillwell's protection: a comprehensive survey; a project plan for the TOB's \$12 million budget; categorization of the proposed transfer as a Type 1 action, likely resulting in a comprehensive environmental impact study; and a strong additional protective covenant to annul grandfathered development privileges.

These demands are consistent with the mandates that Nassau County included in their Intermunicipal Agreement (IMA) to transfer the preserve. Unfortunately, Nassau County is not holding the TOB accountable for the county's own directives, which has caused confusion and tension.

The TOB is contractually obligated to complete a survey, which they refused to comply with when repeatedly asked to do so during the first six months of 2025. The precise language of the IMA requires a survey prior to a transfer through alienation of parkland legislation, which abides by the strict limitations preceding covenants have established:

1.2 Permitted Encumbrances. (a) The Premises is to be transferred subject to (i) any state of facts an accurate survey may show and any variations between the location of records lines, (ii) covenants, restrictions, reser-

vations, easements and agreements of record, (iii) laws and governmental regulations that affect the use and maintenance of the Premises.<sup>1</sup>

The TOB has since reconsidered and agreed to complete the survey. TOB Supervisor Joseph Saladino made this promise to our group of residents when we met with him and town attorneys on July 15, 2025. We were pleased to learn that Saladino also personally promised Assemblyman Steve Stern, whose Assembly district (AD 10) fully encompasses Stillwell Woods, that a survey will be completed.

The TOB Board approved the budget for the survey at their September 9, 2025 meeting. Resolution No. 574-2025 for \$97,000 to fund the survey was unanimously approved. GDB Geospatial will conduct the survey, which will take about two months to complete.

We cannot overstate the importance of this survey as a foundation for both habitat and trail protection. The TOB has grandfathered development privileges. Without a survey that unequivocally delineates the current boundaries between TOB athletic fields and the forest, native meadow, and trails, we will have no documentation (which must be included in alienation of parkland legislation) to prevent the current or a future TOB administration from eliminating habitat for more ballfields, a dog park, parking lots, buildings, or other infrastructure.

We applaud the TOB Board and Supervisor Saladino for his leadership in taking this critical step. We look forward to working with the town on the next essential steps to safeguard habitat and provide trail protections for Stillwell Woods Preserve and the special groundwater protection area on which its forest and meadow sit.

For more information, this *Newsday* article demonstrates the progress in our efforts to protect Stillwell Woods Preserve. The article has links to other *Newsday* articles about Stillwell as well as a link to our petition:

<https://www.newsday.com/long-island/towns/stillwell-woods-park-preserve-boundary-i0frbms3>

**ACTION ALERT: Sign & share our petition!**  
**[www.change.org/p/save-our-stillwell-woods-preserve](http://www.change.org/p/save-our-stillwell-woods-preserve)**

1. Intermunicipal Agreement Between the County of Nassau, New York and the Town of Oyster Bay, New York in Relation to the Transfer of Stillwell Preserve, <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/DocumentCenter/View/46296/IMA-Stillwell-Woods-Preserve>



## *Climate News Update: The United Nations, the Trump Administration, and Governor Hochul*

*by Jim Brown*

COP 30, the UN-sponsored Conference of the Parties in Belém, Brazil this November, will analyze how well—or how poorly—nations of the world are dealing with climate change. Leading up to the conference, UN Secretary General António Guterres once again sounded the alarm that most governments are failing to adequately address ongoing climate chaos. He recently drew attention to the fact that the earth has already passed 1.5° C (2.7° F) of global surface warming above pre-industrial levels. A major goal of the Paris Climate Agreement, negotiated ten years ago, has been to keep the heating below 1.5° C. This limit has now been breached, threatening dire consequences for life on earth, especially if tipping points in critical areas like Greenland, Antarctica, coral reefs, and the Amazon rainforest are triggered. This seems likely, if the temperature overshoot is not quickly reversed.

Guterres reported that less than one-third of nations (62 out of 197) have formulated climate action plans as required by the Paris Climate Agreement. The US, under the current Trump Administration, has once again removed our nation from the Paris Agreement and its requirement to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The administration has embarked on a policy of extreme fossil fuel extraction, at the same time cutting support for renewable energy, particularly offshore wind and solar power. Most nations are inadequately confronting climate change, as the Secretary General pointed out. Our own federal government has gone one alarming step further, enshrining climate change denial as national policy.

In New York State, Governor Kathy Hochul appears to be buckling on climate policy under pressure from Washington. She is now considering greenlighting several fracked gas pipelines pushed by the Trump Administration. Two of the pipelines—the Williams NESE pipeline and the Constitution pipeline—were both rejected by NYS years ago. These projects, if constructed, would essentially gut the state's climate action initiatives legislatively mandated by the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The act requires the state to reduce greenhouse emissions 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050. A goal of the act is to achieve 70% renewable energy by 2030, to achieve the necessary emissions reductions. Aside from recent support given to fracked gas pipelines, Governor Hochul is additionally considering abandoning the basic timeline for emissions reductions and renewable energy growth contained in the CLCPA.

Given the worsening climate crisis that we are facing and the inaction of many levels of government, worldwide, to take necessary steps to confront the issue, it is imperative that we act locally and set an example by pursuing a sane climate policy. NYS has done so in the past. Climate activists fought hard and the state eventually banned fracking and halted harmful, polluting pipelines within our borders. Success can be achieved again. We can halt the bullying of our state by the fossil fuel industry and climate change deniers by taking action now.

South Shore Audubon members and friends are urged to **call Governor Hochul** and demand that she fully support the CLCPA and its important climate goals, and reject Trump's fracked gas pipelines planned for our state. Call a special hotline created by our ally Food and Water Watch at **1-866-872-5958**. Feel free to call often—and you can leave a message at any time—morning, noon, or night!

## *Jay Koolpix Environmental Scholarship* *by Betty Borowsky*

We are very happy to announce the 2026 Jay Koolpix Environmental Scholarship of \$2,000 for a college junior, senior, or graduate student who is taking courses toward a degree in an area of biological or environmental science. This includes wildlife management, forestry, animal behavior, ecology, marine biology, oceanography, mammalogy, ornithology, or the field of sustainable and renewable energy.

To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must be residents of one of the areas listed at [www.ssaudubon.org/areas-we-serve.asp](http://www.ssaudubon.org/areas-we-serve.asp) and/or attend a college in Nassau or Suffolk County.

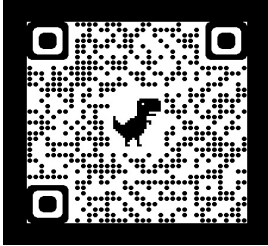
Previous winners have used their scholarships to help pay for books, travel to field sites, specialized equipment, or other educational needs.

Applications are available at our website, [www.ssaudubon.org](http://www.ssaudubon.org), and are due by April 30, 2026. They should be emailed to either Betsy Gulotta, [betsy.gulotta@ncc.edu](mailto:betsy.gulotta@ncc.edu), or Betty Borowsky, [bborow@optonline.net](mailto:bborow@optonline.net).

For more information or assistance with application forms, do not hesitate to contact Betsy Gulotta or Betty Borowsky at the email addresses above.

*South Shore Audubon Society*  
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Visit Our Website:



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## ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

*Join us on our Bird Walks!*

### 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 field trips 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 11520-0031**.

→ **All memberships expire in September.** ←

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Circle One: JOIN or RENEW

***Donations are tax deductible.***