



The **OSPREY**

January/February, 2008 — Vol. XXXVIII No. 1

Nature Programs

Brian O’Keeffe

Join us for nature programs and membership meetings at the Quogue Wildlife Refuge. Everyone is welcome. (Directions are on our website.)

7:15 pm – Nature Chat

7:30 pm – Chapter News

8:00 pm – Speaker or Main Event

January

No members meeting.

Monday, February 4, 2008

Shaibal Mitra, Assistant Professor of Biology at the College of Staten Island, will give a program titled "**Avian Vagrancy to Fire Island: Insights into the Composition and Conservation of Avian Communities.**" Shaibal has studied birds in the northeastern United States and around the world for more than twenty-five years. From 1996-2000 he operated a major bird-banding station at the Fire Island Lighthouse, on the South Shore of Long Island.

Its Time for Our Winter Ducks...

a look back, and the best places to look now

Larry Penny, *Chief, East Hampton Natural Resources*

The winter season is upon us and the winter waterfowl are drifting in flock by flock. It's always a mystery how many of the divers and dabblers will return each year. The Natural Resources Department has been counting the non-breeding ducks, geese, swans, grebes and loons once a month for more than fifteen years. We start in October, sometimes not until November and continue to March, at which time most of the winter resident waterfowl are already leaving. The waterfowl counts vary from year to year, which is a function of a lot of events: the success of the breeding season, the weather, the availability of winter food, and the like.

I grew up in Mattituck thinking that there would always be tons of Scoters, hordes of Mergansers, lots of Butterballs and Old-squaws, ahem, excuse me, Long-tail Ducks. There weren't a lot of Mallards in the 1940s and 1950s on the North Fork, I don't remember any Gadwalls, Pintails or Canvasbacks. Teals were quite scarce, Green-wings

outnumbered Blue-wings, there was hardly a Ruddy, Hoody, Wigeon or Wood Duck. There were very few Canada Geese and quite a few Mute Swans. Maybe, I saw one Brant every ten years. Black Ducks were the most commonly hunted duck on the North Fork at that time.

Then and nowadays on the South Fork it was and is quite a different story. Canvasback are regular. Otter Pond in Sag Harbor has had Canvasback every year since the mid 1970s, never more than ten or twenty, but they are perennial. I remember doing the Orient Christmas Bird Count with the late Roy Wilcox one late December. We had the Sag Harbor to Morton Wildlife Refuge territory. One of our first stops was Otter Pond which is tidal but receives a lot of fresh groundwater feed and fresh water from a stream to the south which enters the pond by way of culvert. There were quite a few "cans" in the pond on that chilly morning, both sexes and immatures. Then Roy called out a Redhead. We looked and looked over each bird carefully, but could see nothing but Canvasback. However, Roy had a very fine reputation and had been doing winter bird counts since the days of the Great Depression. Counts were more informal in those days. We were not going to disappoint Roy or disagree with him.

The best place to see waterfowl in East Hampton in Hook Pond which sits behind the ocean dunes in the Village. It is a fresh pond with a rich bottom flora of water celery, leafy pond weeds and other subaquatics. Fed mostly by groundwater, there is some run off, but it doesn't generally freeze over until mid-January or February. The stream


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Campers Needed!

Each year ELIAS sponsors up to four students in grades 7 to 12 who wish to spend one week in a Department of Environmental Conservation Summer Camp. Campers choose between two camps in the Adirondacks, one in the Catskills or one in western New York. Time is running short. Applications are due by **January 25**. An application form appeared in the Nov/Dec. Osprey. It is also available online. Call Evelyn at 631-727-0417 for more information. 

Field Trips

.....
Saturday, January 5, 2008
.....

Lakes Around Patchogue

Trip Leader: **John McNeil**
Meet at 9:00 am at the Swan Lake Club House at Swan Lake in East Patchogue. See our wintering waterfowl around the Lakes in Patchogue. Your trip leader John McNeil will guide you around the area for either a half or full day excursion. Telephone John if you need additional details at 631-281-2623 or e-mail jpmcneil@verizon.net. State in the subject line, "Field Trip Patchogue"

.....
Saturday, February 2, 2008
.....

Montauk Point

Trip Leader: **John McNeil**
Meet at 9:00 am at the parking lot by the Lighthouse. Montauk Point is our easternmost spot on Long Island to see large numbers of our ocean species of birds that fly from the outer ocean backs. Colder is better, so bring warm cloths, long johns, mittens and a warm hat. Make sure you wear several pairs of socks so that your feet do not get cold. Now, if only the concession stand sold Starbucks! Time permitting we will check out other hot birding places around the area. Bring a lunch and a hot drink to warm your insides.

Please telephone me at 631-281-2623 if you are going to attend or e-mail me at jpmcneil@verizon.net, stating in the subject line, "Field Trip Montauk." This way I will have a tally of participants and a call back telephone number if I have to cancel because of weather.

Please note that this is a 1 1/2 to 2 hour ride from Shirley, depending on traffic. I have to point out that there is road construction after Sunrise Highway ends at Southampton and before the road changes to Montauk Highway. Please leave enough time for travel.



.....
Saturday, March 1, 2008
.....

Orient Beach State Park

Trip Leader: **MaryLaura Lamont**
Meet at 8:00 am in the parking lot of the County Center in Riverhead, off County Road 51. We will carpool through the North Fork to visit various spots along the way to Orient Point. We will spend most of our time at Orient State Park and Orient County Park. Some of the birds we sighted last year include: Wood Duck, Green-winged Teal, Greater Yellowlegs, Harrier, Kestrel and Osprey. For more information MaryLaura may be reached at 631-722-5542


Please join us for these exciting field trips!

All levels of naturalist — including beginners — are most welcome on Eastern Long Island Audubon field trips.

All trips are free to attend. 

Winter Waterfowl Workshop

On Saturday January 19th, 2008, from 9:00 am to noon, Fire Island National Seashore is sponsoring a Winter Waterfowl Workshop at Smith Point Wilderness. It will be lead by MaryLaura Lamont, an ELIAS Board member. It is open to the public. Meet at the Smith Point Visitor Center at 9:00 am.

Participants should dress warmly and bring binoculars to see the various kinds of waterfowl that spend the winter here in the bays and along the ocean. Observers will learn about the three species of Scoters, Mergansers, Loons, Bufflehead and other ducks in the area. Call trip leader MaryLaura Lamont at 631-722-5542 for more info. 

Reports from the Field

November 3: JONES BEACH STATE PARK & POINT LOOKOUT

John McNeil

The rain did not dampen four intrepid birders for making the rounds of Jones Beach State Park and Point Lookout hot birding areas. Sally Newbert, Tom Moran, Diana Rohan and myself explored the various parts of Jones Beach and Point Lookout for later fall and early winter migrants. Some notable species observed were: Gannet, Northern Harrier, White-winged and Surf Scoter, White-throated Sparrow.

At Point Lookout: Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, Semipalmated Sandpiper and rafts of Scoters off the jetties.


At Robert Moses State Park, the rain was coming down fast and hard so we abandoned our field trip at noon. Before leaving, I took a drive over to the western parking lot of Robert Moses and sitting on the pavement was a Peregrine falcon, and several Black-bellied Plover. In all, there are no bad birding days just some that are a wash out.

November 17: SMITH POINT PARK

Quite a crowd gathered in Smith Point Park to enjoy a beautiful crisp day. And what a day it was. We started in the parking lot with Horned Larks, and a female Ring-necked Pheasant. Proceeded to the tower that overlooks the ocean, where there was an array of activity, Gannets flying and diving, rafts of Black Scoters, (some spotted White-winged Scoters,) a small group of Snow Geese flew by and a Red-throated Loon was also spotted flying by.

Proceeding to the Bay we encountered a flock of Bufflehead, a lone female Hooded Merganser and several Swans.

The brush was alive with Myrtle Warblers (ok, ok, just Yellow Rumps). Carl Starace, the leader, pointed out the abundant bayberries that the birds eat. So, next time you go for a walk in the dunes and see those waxy bayberries, keep your eyes peeled for those Myrtle Warblers. He also told us it is the most abundant warbler wintering all along the east coast.

The highlight came on the way back, a White-winged Crossbill had been reported in a backyard along William Floyd Parkway. Bob Adamo and John McNeil had been contacted to verify the species (*see John's article on page 5*). The Crossbill gave us a good show. He was not shy, hung around and chased the smaller birds away from the feeder. The home owner was amazed at how tame this bird was. She was able to stroke its back. Now, that's some rare bird. Wish they all were so cooperative. 



The 60th Annual Meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA)

A special report by Bob Adamo

The 60th Annual Meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) was held October 5-7, 2007 in Batavia, which is located near Buffalo. The meeting was hosted by the Buffalo Ornithological Society (BOS), which did a splendid job of putting together a weekend full of association business, research paper presentations, great speakers, good fellowship and, of course, exciting field trips.

Yes, we just knew we were in for some good birding, when both the early Saturday morning delegates trip and first non-delegate trip later in the morning went to the local waste water treatment plant! This large complex of water impoundments, which we

traversed by car, is particularly good for waterfowl, with Ruddy Ducks and Northern Shovelers being the most numerous species seen over the weekend. The highlight for me, as well as many others were the two, and possibly as many as five Eared Grebes that were so close to the impoundment road we were able to get some exceptional views from our car windows. This outing brought to mind the very successful birding stops we took to the old Montauk dump before it was closed to the "Honey Bucket" trade. The odors generated by both were memorable, although some what different, but the results were the same... garbage in, good birds out!

Friday night's program was given by the Messinger Woods Wildlife Care and Education Center. Four volunteers from this *not-for-profit* corporation, with the aid of seven owls, helped broaden our knowledge of these nocturnal raptors. It is always exciting to see live birds up close and the two Barn Owls, two Eastern Screech Owls along with a Northern Saw-whet, a Great Horned and Barred Owl, also provided wonderful photographic opportunities.

Saturday morning's Business Meeting, called to order by outgoing President Andy Mason, was full, and actually lasted longer than planned.

NYSOA has experienced an overall loss of three member clubs since the 2006 meeting, bringing the new total to 46. Individual memberships, over the last few years, has also gone down, with a drop from 740 in 2003 to 615 in 2007.

The *Atlas 2000* project has been submitted to the publisher and is expected to be available in the fall of 2008. The updated, pocket-sized, *NYS Birding List*, which now numbers 467 species, can be purchased from NYSOA for \$2.00.

At present NYSOA has a \$10,000 balance in its *Member Clubs Award Fund*. This money is designated to assist a member club with a small grant for a project that needs funding. To apply just submit a complete, detailed, written proposal and it will be seriously considered.

Two resolutions were discussed and voted on. The shortened versions of the resolutions appear in the side bar. They are available in their entirety on the NYSOA web site.

Andy's position as President is being filled by Bill Ostrander of Elmira, who has stepped up from his former duties as Vice-President.

Rochester will be the site of our next Annual Meeting. It will take place Sept. 19-21, 2008 and be hosted by two clubs, The Rochester Birding Association and the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club.

Continued on next page

Two resolutions were discussed and voted on.

The following information was supplied by Andy Mason.

Wind Power Development

An ad hoc wind power committee, led by John Confer, had over the past year prepared a resolution on siting of wind projects. Among other provisions, the resolution calls for a full environmental review of projects, including an analysis of the cumulative effects of multiple projects in an area; surveys of breeding birds, wintering birds and migrants; and an open, reviewable process for post-construction studies.

The wind resolution also states that projects along known migratory routes such as ridges and shorelines pose higher risks to birds and that a minimum of 3 years of avian studies should be required locations within 2 miles of the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain, Long Island Sound, the Atlantic Ocean. Also, areas including the lower Hudson Valley, the Susquehanna River Valley, the St. Lawrence River Valley, the Finger Lakes and the Shawangunk Ridge also should require a 3 year minimum for these studies.

The resolution also includes an addendum on the current status of regulatory review of wind projects in the state, and a bibliography of wind power and its environmental effects.

An amendment to the resolution to increase the distance from these waterbodies to 5 miles was defeated. However, an amendment to add Chautauqua Lake to the list of waterbodies was approved.

Spruce Grouse Management

A resolution calling for increased management for Spruce Grouse in the Adirondacks was put forth by Onondaga Audubon Society. This resolution calls on the NY State Department of Environmental Conservation to allocate sufficient funds to "... finalize and implement the recovery plan for Spruce Grouse in NYS, and to provide funds for monitoring of recovery efforts." The resolution further urges The Nature Conservancy to consider active management techniques to ensure that the Spruce Grouse persists on their lands with Spruce Grouse habit.

To read the full text of the resolutions on the NYSOA website.

The banquet speaker will be Peter Harrison, noted author, artist, birder and screen writer who is considered to be the world's authority on seabirds. His book, *Seabirds: An Identification Guide* is regarded as "the bible" on seabirds. On a personal note, I have owned and used this book for many years, and continue to refer to it for help. It is kind of beat up now, but I'm sure he will sign it for me with a knowing smile.

The last order of business dealt with a proposal by Hope Batcheller, age 15, of Petersburg, NY. Hope has asked NYSOA to sponsor a Young Birders Club of NYS. She got this idea from the Ohio Young Birders Club which was started in May, 2006. Directed towards 12-18 year-olds, it schedules field trips, produces a newsletter, has an annual conference, offers scholarships for camps and events, and is based primarily on the ideas of its young members. Hope has already started an online Yahoo! Group for the young birders of NYS, in order to encourage and connect them. Now, by asking NYSOA to provide financial assistance, insurance coverage, web-server space, publicity and much needed adult support, Hope envisions more and more young birders meeting, learning and birding together, in an environment that could help produce our future naturalists.

After lunch, the following research papers were presented:

- David Junkin - Banding of Northern Saw-whet Owls
- Dr. Robert DeJean - BOS April, May and October Counts: Seventy Years, Twenty-million Birds and Still Counting
- Dr. Mark Deutschlander - Orientation and Navigation Mechanisms in Migratory Birds: Research at the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory
- Terry Yonker - Bird Migration and Structure Interaction Along the Buffalo Waterfront
- Dr. Steven Eaton - Birding with Elon Eaton
- William Watson - Post-Breeding Dispersal and Migration of Great Egrets from Motor Island.

While all of the above presentations were excellent, I especially enjoyed hearing Steve Eaton talk about his famous father Elon

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Bob Adamo, the winner of this year's Osprey Award receives congratulations from Al Scherzer and Eileen Schwinn.

Luncheon at Indian Island Golf Club

Sixty folks enjoyed a beautiful afternoon celebrating the 40th Anniversary of ELIAS at the Benefit Buffet Luncheon held at the Indian Island Country Club on October 21.

The Osprey Award – given to someone who has been a member at least five years and who has made a significant contribution to Audubon – was awarded to Bob Adamo. Presenting the award, Al Scherzer noted that Bob has been a Board member, avid birder, and responsible for our programs for many years.

A representative from Senator Kenneth P. LaValle's office presented a citation to ELIAS, which read in part: "congratulations to Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, 40 years of protecting and promoting Long Island's rich natural world. Your commitment, and hard work are deeply appreciated."

Michael Mackey, Manager of Wildbird Crossing, Bridgehampton, and Local Host of LI Morning Edition, WLIU 88.3 FM Radio was the luncheon speaker. He shared many tips to attract birds to your backyard, and described several celebrity encounters. It was generally agreed that the highlight of his talk was when he put on this interviewer-host hat and interviewed our President, Eileen Schwinn. Eileen, exhibiting her natural charm, held up splendidly under pressure

and explained why we all love birding.

Raffles and donations were given by Hampton Jitney, Suffolk County National Bank, Bob Stevens Appliances, Rosemary McAllister, and the family of the late Dennis Puleston. *Thank you all.*



Michael Mackey, host of LI Morning Edition, interviews Eileen Schwinn, ELIAS President

*Senator LaValle
sent a citation
congratulating
ELIAS on
40 years
of good work*



Big Sky

The next installment

Gigi and Don Spates

It was quite difficult to leave Craters of the Moon after a somewhat cursory look at its incredibly strange, blackened landscape. How could we predict that this giant moonscape would provide such lasting memories? We have seen deserts of all types, and mountain ranges large and varied; however, never have we experienced a recently active volcanic wasteland such as this one. But we had promised ourselves to arrive at a reasonable hour at our night's lodging near Idaho Falls. Thus, we hustled east passing by the eerie Department of Energy's Idaho National Engineering Lab, stuck out in the



middle of nowhere. Passing a town called Atomic City, we pressed the accelerator to flee more quickly.

The vista of our new lodging was of the westward flowing Snake River, a long waterway originating in Yellowstone Park, WY, twisting south, west, north across the breadth of Idaho to end up somewhere in Washington state. The lodge is a fishing haven, but for us it was a peaceful sojourn to rest and eat great meals while watching the world drift by. There were people in wonderful, large-prowed wooden river boats, zipping the long lines of their fly fishing poles back and forth as the guide took oars to the fast-flowing Snake. Competing with the sports were fishing birds: Barrow's Goldeneye, riding in the center of the Snake's current; Common Mergansers, one hen with a brood of seven

young, feeding along the quiet edges; Great Blue Herons stalking the marshy backwaters and the now common White Pelicans sailing in from the far river cliffs to land and extract fishy meals from the eddy of the river's curves: no catch and release from this group!

One day we explored up river along a mountain trail to find a side stream spilling and falling, young people climbing down the waterfall's sides, older folks—us—peeking warily over the edge. We waded a channel of the Snake, frigid and clear, as it braided through some little river islands. The waters were alive with fish and us, the fish being better able to tolerate the cold water. We darted in and just as quickly retreated to shore, not unlike a pair of Yellowlegs!

We continued east to Idaho's 31 and 33—these some of the most remote two-laners imaginable—to go up and over the Snake Range crossing into Wyoming. Everywhere

were warnings that the winter would shut down these passages. Smart of us to be doing this in July. What a grand view we had from the top of Teton Pass at 8431 feet down into a huge valley with mountains beyond and big sky all around again. We could see that we had left the rural behind; behold Jackson Hole, hello Starbucks!

We had only one day to spend in Grand Teton National Park, and well-spent it was, seeing Trumpeter Swans right where a guide book said they would be! We also learned that Trumpeters and other waterfowl take advantage of thermal springs here to be able to overwinter at this altitude. At a parking area we pulled in to hike to lovely Taggart Lake at the foot of the Tetons, their grandeur towering in the background. The trail there was not unusually difficult, nor steep, rather

the heat of the day with a beating sun provided the challenge. To counteract the heat we dipped our hats in the crashing mountain stream that crossed the trail at several places, and put the caps back on our heads, water and all. Wow, what refreshment! Then, ascending to the lake we treated the other end of us to a barefooted wade into the cold mountain waters while gazing at the high mountains with cascading waterfalls from the glacier melt.

After an overnight at the northern end of Teton at the busy Flagg Ranch Resort, administered by the Park Service, we proceeded to adjacent Yellowstone National Park via its south entrance. Ten or so miles along the forested parkway we pulled over to enjoy the 29 ft. Lewis Falls and to wade again—yes, this is a favorite pastime. We began in a meandering side stream of typically cold mountain water; then reached the junction with

the Lewis River, the waters of which are thermal: the mixing of the waters was just the right excuse for total immersion. Down the road we spotted our first bison, a dark form, a burly male shaded by trees and unconcerned by tourists.

Next we walked through a huge geyser basin. West Thumb, an

old volcanic crater, now a bay, part of the much larger Yellowstone Lake, the largest lake at high elevation, 7,733 ft., in North America. This geyser basin, a large area of varied hot springs and mud pots, lies next to and flows into Yellowstone Lake, the bottom of which has its own hot springs and hydrothermal vents. What a treat to see that each thermal feature in the loop trail is different in shape, depth, and colors that are created partly by heat-loving microorganisms. As luck would have it a young elk wandered from upland down and around the hot pools, somewhat unnerved by the many visitors, but comfortable enough to remind us human beings that this was its home. Then, on the scene came a snowshoe hare, moving helter-skelter like the Mad Hatter, brown

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A Pair of White-winged Crossbill Find a Feeder in Shirley

John McNeil

What I believe is the rarest of the two crossbill, a White-winged Crossbill found a good home in the birdbath feeder of Kathy Spano of Shirley. Kathy lives near Smith Point Bridge on a canal; with several bird feeders in her backyard, she observes the coming and going of some of the locals in the area. On a Monday morning, Kathy spotted a different species feeding at her outside diner. After searching the bird books and telephoning her birder son in Boston, they came to the conclusion that this new patron was a White-winged Crossbill. Kathy telephoned me on Monday afternoon, November 11th.. With this telephone call, I asked my wife Roberta to drive me over to Kathy's home so that I could confirm this sighting. Going into her backyard, there was Kathy sitting next to the birdbath feeder, talking to the bird while stoking the birds back. I could not believe my eyes when I saw this. This was a young male, a White-winged Crossbill being petted like a cat, enjoying every minute of the stoking. In "The Birder's Handbook" by Ehrlich, Bobkin, and Wheye, it states that this bird can be tame while feeding and this might explain how Kathy was able to stroke the birds back with her finger. It was also indicated that a bird may supplement its diet with salt on the side of the road, they become loopy and are sometime hit by passing cars.

It has been many years since I have seen this species and most often they are on the top of pine trees, making it difficult to clarify the field marks. However, to be given the opportunity to see this bird so close was unbelievable. I asked Kathy if I could have permission to telephone some other birding friends, and by the next day, Bob Adamo and Carl Starace joined me to observe the bird again. We all could not believe how close we could get to the bird without it flying away, while we were clicking away with our cameras.

Over the next few days several other birders from Eastern Long Island Audubon had the chance to observe the bird. Bob Adamo reported to me that a female joined the male at the feeder on Wednesday November 17th and on Saturday morning; members of ELIAS were treated to the male feeding at the birdbath feeder.

Just before Thanksgiving, I received a telephone call from Kathy informing me that the birds were no longer at the feeder. Where they went I do not know. However, I will be checking the pines at Smith Point Park a little more closely.

I personally would like to take this moment to thank Kathy for letting me and members of ELIAS have the chance to observe her unusual visitor to her backyard feeder.

Thank you again Kathy for your generosity.

John.



NYSOA Conference

Continued from page 5

Howard Eaton, noted NYS author and educator of the 19th and 20th Centuries.

Notably absent was the presence of Max Wheat, who normally brings the paper session to a close with his insightful and inspiring poetry. Upon returning home, I spoke with Max who reassured me that he and Virginia are fine and would certainly be attending next year's meeting in Rochester.

Saturday night's Keynote Speaker was Dr. Hector Galbraith, who spoke on the impact of global climate change on avian populations. Born and educated in Scotland, Dr. Galbraith, an Avian Ecologist, came to the US in 1990, and now lives in Vermont. He operates Galbraith Environmental Services, a scientific consulting company that researches the likely effects of climate change on ecosystems as well as the risks posed by contaminants in the environment. While his sense of humor seemed to be much more robust than Al Gore's, his message unfortunately was not. As in *An Inconvenient Truth*, "We are in the fight of our lives."

The trip home was delightful. In addition to the changing fall colors, we made a stop at Letchworth State Park and the new Glass Museum in Corning. Prior to the major flood that devastated this part of NY State in the early 1970's, we had camped at Letchworth and had visited the old Glass Museum in Corning. Letchworth, also known as *The Grand Canyon of the East*, is still as grand, but could sure use some rain. At present, the river bed at the base of the dam is almost completely dry, with a narrow flow of water running along only one side of the gorge. *Grand*, is also the right word to describe the relocated glass museum. We were only able to cover about half of what the museum has to offer in our allotted time of four hours, but we look forward to seeing the remainder of the exhibits, at a more leisurely pace, in the near future...possibly after the Rochester meeting...*will I see you there?*



Kaler's Pond Nature Center

The Kaler's Pond Audubon Center will sponsor four programs at the Center Moriches Library.

The first is Sunday, January 20th, 1:30-3:30 pm. **The Roof of Africa** will be a visual journey to the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro by Pam Musk. She is the director of Centers and Education for Audubon New York. She retells the most recent of her climb to the summit through photographs and anecdotes. Learn about the climactic changes through forest scrubland and alpine desert. You will hear about the plants and animals that change along the way to the snow capped peak of the tallest mountain in Africa.

On Sunday, February 10th, 1:30-3:30 pm at the Center Moriches Library, John McNeil will present **Sights and Sounds of Your Backyard Birds**, a multimedia approach to learn the sounds, habitats and visual characteristics of the most common birds in this area's backyards. This is an audience participation presentation in preparation for those who would like to participate in the citizen science project The Great Backyard bird Count. This will be held the following weekend sponsored by Cornell and Audubon. There are door prizes for those who attend.

March 2 same time and place will be **Shorebirds of Long Island** given by Carolyn Spillman, Audubon New York's L. I. Bird Conservation Coordinator. She will discuss breeding behaviors to look for in the spring and the habitat requirements and protection. As well as learning about these birds you can get involved, and help beach nesting birds.

Look for more information on the final winter program on April 13, **Gardening for The Environment**, in next newsletter.



Conservation Column


"Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something."

Plastic bags are unfriendly to the environment in several ways. First, the bags are produced from petroleum and natural gas, which adds to our consumption of these resources and creates harmful emissions in the manufacturing process. Second, the bags take up huge amounts of space in landfills across the country, many of which are reaching their capacities. Third, the bags that don't make it to the landfills often end up as roadside garbage, stuck in trees, or polluting our waterways, causing harm to marine life. Americans use approximately 84 billion plastic bags each year, the production of which consumes an estimated 12 million barrels of oil annually.


There are ways in which we can reduce the number of bags that we use and throw away. Bring a reusable tote bag to the grocery store. Some stores sell inexpensive reusable sacks and give customers money back each

time they use the bag. How about buying a canvas tote bag from your favorite non-profit organization or requesting a tote bag as a thank you gift from those organizations that offer one with membership renewal? This helps the environment and the non-profit! I recently bought two tote bags from the Quogue Wildlife Refuge to give as gifts (and one for myself of course).

If you receive in the mail or in your driveway a pack of store advertisements packaged in a plastic bag, call the phone number on the bag and request that delivery to your home be stopped. No more bags of junk mail littering our communities!

These suggestions take just a small amount of effort but can mean a big reduction in the billions of plastic bags that we use and throw away each year. The Suffolk County legislature recently passed a law requiring large retail stores to provide recycling bins for plastic bags, so if you do use the bags, **recycle them!** 

Seed Sale Report

The annual Seed Sale fundraiser to benefit ELIAS and the Quogue Wildlife Refuge was held the weekend before Thanksgiving and was a big success! The Refuge was filled with bags of seed on Saturday morning and was empty by Sunday afternoon. We thank everyone who purchased seed, feeders, bat houses, hats, shirts, and holiday items. The volunteers enjoyed talking to everyone who stopped by the Refuge over the weekend. Huge thanks go out to all of the volunteers who hauled the seed into the building early Saturday morning (Brian O'Keefe, Gigi Spates, Bob Murray), everyone who helped with sales (Peg Caraher, Evelyn Voulgarelis, Lloyd Booth, Dan Wilson, and Allyson Dyer), and the last of us who packed up the few remaining items late on Sunday (Sally Newbert), and Mike and Marisa Nelson who did a lot of everything all weekend. Thanks also to Samantha Dettmer, who organized all of the seed orders. Last but not least, a very big thanks to Michael and Bruce at Wild Bird Crossing in Bridgehampton for supplying the seed and other sale item and for being so pleasant to work with! We appreciate their support and encourage our members to support them. 







BARTH'S PHARMACY

32 East Main St.
Riverhead, NY 11901
Barry D. Barth R.Ph.S.P.
(631) 727-2125
Fax: (631) 727-2199

58 Sunset Ave.
Westhampton Beach, NY 11978
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Please mail immediately after each survey period to
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Or to send via the internet, go to:
 easternlongisland.audubon.homestead.com
 and 1) Click on Chapter Projects; 2) Click on Feeder Statistics;
 3) Click on To submit via the internet, etc.

Survey Dates: January 12-18, 2008

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ Phone _____

_____ Mourning Dove

_____ Northern Cardinal

_____ Blue Jay

_____ House Finch

_____ Black-capped Chickadee

_____ Tufted Titmouse

_____ Downy Woodpecker

_____ White-throated Sparrow

_____ Dark-eyed Junco

_____ House Sparrow

_____ White-breasted Nuthatch

_____ Song Sparrow

_____ Red-bellied Woodpecker

_____ American Crow

_____ European Starling

_____ Common Grackle

_____ Carolina Wren

_____ Northern Mockingbird

_____ American Goldfinch

_____ Red-winged Blackbird

_____ Hairy Woodpecker

_____ Common Flicker

_____ Rufous-sided Towhee

_____ American Robin

_____ Brown-headed Cowbird

_____ Sharp-shinned Hawk

_____ Rock Dove (pigeon)

_____ Gray Catbird

_____ Yellow-rumped Warbler

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_____ Other _____

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_____ Gray Catbird

_____ Yellow-rumped Warbler

_____ Red-breasted Nuthatch

_____ Other _____

PLEASE JOIN US.

We would welcome your help monitoring the birds in our area.


- Record the highest number of species you see in your count area at any one time.
- Don't include birds seen off premises or just flying through your area.
- Don't add counts from previous sightings together.
- Estimate the number of birds if there are a large number. Everyone has a different idea of the size of a "flock."
- Be specific with the species, e.g. don't use sparrow, blackbird or gull, etc. We need to know what kind.
- Send in surveys even if you only saw common birds. It is just as important to record the usual species as it is the unusual birds.
- Don't worry if you miss a survey because of other commitments, or if you can only watch before work, on weekends, etc. Your participation will still enlarge our database.

Big Sky

Continued from page 6

now in summer coat but unmistakable with its ungainly broad feet. Now we've had several encounters with animals quite unique to us Easterners, yet, we have seen more, many more, of the ubiquitous tourist than any wildlife; we are certainly walking the thin line between the wild and Disneyland in this, the first national park.

A quick look at our watches confirms that we are so far behind schedule. But what was that on the edge of the parking lot? A noisy disturbance gets Gigi's attention and a look through glasses confirms a Clark's Nutcracker: striking in appearance, grey with dark wings, its pesky, noisy personality has earned it the nickname "mountain crow".

In our next and, hopefully, last episode we will drive north. *And then there were the bears!* 

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Winter Ducks

Continued from page 1

to the north feeding it runs through a bird sanctuary and the land around it is half fairways and roughs, part of the Maidstone Club course which been around for more than three-quarters of a century. This pond never goes dry.

Here in December one is apt to find ducks rarely seen in other parts of East Hampton, and rare to some other parts of Long Island. Common Mergansers and a Hooded Merganser or two are invariably found here. They are primarily small fish eaters and the pond has a lot of baitfish that remain active throughout the winter. American Wigeon, Gadwall, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, are among the more unusual ducks to overwinter in this pond. Canada Geese, Mallards and Black Ducks, also make good use of the pond; it is shallow and the geese can reach to the bottom in most places by tipping up.


What I find most interesting about this pond, however, is that it is a regular stopping place for Tundra Swans, nee Whistling Swans. In most years there are four to eight of them by the middle of December. I was first introduced to them there by the late Chris McKeever in ca. 1976. Chris, like Roy, did count after count, year after year, going way back to his membership in the New York Bird Club in the 1930s. Like Roy, Gil Raynor and the other Long Island naturalists and birders of that era, Chris also did the New York State Federation of Bird Club's January waterfowl count which I first ran into while a student in wildlife conservation at Cornell University in the mid-1950s. Chris used to tell the story of a young man stopping by to attend one of the bird club meetings. He had a small squunched up portfolio of pages with watercolors of birds and maps and wondered if the club would be interested in such a thing. It turned out to be, of course, Roger Tory Peterson, who was about to publish his very first bird guide.

The refuge north of the pond always has a Wood Duck or two and Mallards of every size and color. These birds are regularly fed and so are a bit lazy and complain a lot, but you can get right up to them to get good looks at them. You will very often see a Black Duck x Mallard hybrid among them,

as well, plus bizarre oversized Mallards and albinos, forerunners of the famous Peking Ducks first developed by the Chinese more than a thousand years ago, then made famous in the United States under the name Long Island Duck in the 20th century. The Big Duck in Flanders recently moved back to its original site on NY State Route 24, owes it origin to the Chinese. (You wonder if Roy Wilcox was inspired to become the great naturalist that he became by observing the behavior of Peking Ducks while growing up on the family duck farm.)

The numbers of diving ducks that feed on subaquatic vegetation such as Scaup, Canvasback, and Goldeneye have dwindled in East Hampton waters over the years. When I first started doing my waterfowl counts in East Hampton in the 1970s, there were always Scaup and Canvasback in Northwest Creek east of Sag Harbor, Three Mile Harbor and Accabonac Harbor, all tributary to the Peconic Estuary. There was also a lot of eelgrass growing on the bottom of those harbors as well. The eelgrass has practically disappeared from those waters and so have the eelgrass eaters. Goldeneye can still be found offshore in Northwest Harbor and Gardiners Bay where some eelgrass still survives, but there numbers are nothing like in the old days when Paul Stoutenburgh and I used to hunt them over decoys in the bay off of Nassau Point.

I'm sure the waterfowl that come here know nothing about the so-called Hamptons mystique. If they get here at all it's usually because they have been here before, or their parents have. One wonders about those Tundra Swans. Are they like the old rich who have been travelling to summer in East Hampton Village without fail each year since the Long Island train began to run there from New York City before the turn of the 19th century and have now almost permanently settled along the ocean south of the highway. These swans may have a similar heritage and enjoy wintering in the Hamptons as much as those who summer here.

Who knows? 



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Mark Your Calendars!

January

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- Sat. Jan. 12 to Fri., Jan.18 Feeder Survey - p 10
- Sat., Jan. 19 FINS Waterfowl Workshop - p 2
- Sun., Jan 20 Kaler's Pond Program, The Roof of Africa - p 8

February

- Sat., Feb 2 Field Trip to Montauk - p 2
- Mon., Feb 4 Nature Program, FI Insights into Avian Vagrancy - p 1
- Sun., Feb 10 Kaler's Pond Program, Your Backyard Birds - p 8
- Sat. Feb 16 to Fri. Feb. 24 Feeder Survey - p 10

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- Sat., March 1 Field Trip to Orient Point - p 2
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