



# The *OSPREY*

January/February 2009 — Vol. XXXIV No. 1

## *Nature Program*

**Monday, February 2, 2009**

### **GARDEN CITY BIRD SANCTUARY, A PILOT PROJECT**

**by Alexis Alvey**

The Garden City Bird Sanctuary is the pilot for an innovative program to foster dual use of many of Nassau County's 700 storm-water-storage basins. By planting native plants and trees Garden City Bird Sanctuary is establishing a fully functioning nature refuge for song birds providing both food and cover.

These refuges are becoming critically needed open space for the songbirds that migrate annually along the Atlantic Flyway between Canada and South America.

Alexis Alvey is Nursery & Landscape Specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension in Riverhead. In discussing her techniques and plantings she is hoping to widen the use of these storm drains as wildlife refuges, and teach us all what native plants can be used in our gardens and backyards to protect, feed and attract birds.



*In July bee baum and day lilies bloom in the converted storm-water basin attracting an Eastern Flycatcher.*

Nature programs and membership meetings are held the first Monday of every month (except January) at the Quogue Wildlife Refuge. **These free programs are open to all.** (*Directions are on our website.*)

**7:15 pm – Nature Chat, 7:30 pm – Chapter News,  
8:00 pm – Speaker**

## *Field Trips*

**Saturday, January 24, 2009**

### **LAKES AROUND PATCHOGUE**

**Leader: John McNeil**

See our wintering waterfowl around the lakes in Patchogue. I believe that this is God's little oasis and you never know what you might see. There's always a surprise or two! Please come join me as your trip leader for either a half or full day excursion. We will meet at 9 am at the Swan Lake Club House at Swan Lake in East Patchogue. For more details, contact your trip leader John McNeil at 631.281.2623 or on the day of the field trip, mobile telephone is 631.219.8947.

**Saturday, February 7, 2009**

### **WINTERING EAGLES NEAR PORT JERVIS, NY**

**Leader: John McNeil**

The Delaware River near Port Jervis and the nearby Mongaup Falls and Rio Reservoirs form a significant wintering area for bald eagles in New York State. Because of the long distance involved in driving to the reservoirs, we will leave at 6:30 am and meet in the east end of the parking lot of the old Home Depot store along Sunrise Highway at Route 112 in Patchogue. Bring a lunch. We will return at approximately 5 pm. In case of bad weather, the "weather" date for the trip will be Saturday, February 12th. For more details, contact your trip leader John McNeil at 631.281.2623 at home or on the day of the field trip, mobile telephone is 631.219.8947.

**Saturday, February 21, 2009**

### **MONTAUK POINT**

**Leader: Carl Starace**

Please join me for an exhilarating trip around the Montauk Peninsula in search of wintering waterfowl and pelagic birds. Huge numbers of scoters and eiders are always present at this time. Possibilities include Snowy Owl, Razorbill, Thick-billed Murre, Dovekie, Black-legged Kittiwake, Rednecked Grebe, even Eared Grebe. Remember to watch for the day's weather and dress appropriately. See you February 21st at the Concession building at Montauk State Park. The time will be 8:00 am. For additional trip details, you may contact Carl at his e-mail address: castarace@op-tonline.net or by his home telephone: 631.281.8074

## Christmas Bird Counts

**From Eileen Schwinn**

For most, the annual Christmas Bird Count is a chance to be out of doors, doing what birders love to do the most—observe. For some, it's a chance to get together with long time friends, seen only once or twice a year. For others, it's the chance to meet new friends and learn from them. It's a time to see changes—newly cleared land, where a tangled vacant lot had been or a once thriving business, now closed for good, and "allowed" to become overgrown with brush. The day can be cold, balmy, windy, foggy, snowy, drizzly, filled with downpours, or sunny. It can start at 5 am under a starry sky, listening for owls, or end at sunset, overlooking a pond or marsh. For almost all the partici-

pants, it's a lot about the numbers—how many species and how many birds! How did it compare to last year? What was the best year? What was the best bird THIS year? Time spend in the car, between stops, the talk is always "shop"—"Remember when we saw the (fill in the blank...) three years ago, in the middle of that snow storm?", "This is where we had the (fill in another blank...)—boy, that was a great bird!", "Do dead birds count???"

I participated in three counts this year—each was unique! Different habitats, different car-mates, different birds. No favorites - all super! For the first time, I was out for owls at 5 am. I saw a Bald Eagle, a Great Egret (unusual for this time of year), lots of ducks, all types of sparrows, and

more Carolina Wrens than I can remember! I stood on snow for hours, in the fog for minutes, in the rain, under stars, in fields, on beaches, peered into backyards at filled and active bird feeders, and walked in woods. At press time, I don't have any idea how my "teams" stacked up against the other teams—or even what our count totals were! What I do know, is that I cannot wait to do it all again next year!

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**From Steve Bissetti**

**The Quogue-Water Mill Christmas Bird Count** was held on Sunday, December 14, 2008. Twenty-eight participants searched Hampton Bays, Shinnecock Hills, Tuckahoe, Southampton Village, North Sea,

*Continued*

## ELIAS Field Trips



Grace Scatzo

On October 18, 2008 a large group led by Carl Starace met at Smith Point Park to watch for migrating song birds and hawks, it suddenly turned cold that morning, but with parkas, hats and mittens the group headed out to witness rafts of scoters, Northern Gannets and a few Red-throated Loons.



Sally Newbert

On November 1, 2008 a group went to the West End of Jones Beach. An amazing number of Oyster Catchers were resting on a spit of land near the Coast Guard Station.

# Christmas Bird Counts

*Continued from previous page*

and Noyack (as well as Quogue and Water Mill) to count all the birds they could find from pre-dawn to post-dusk. Their efforts paid off with a tally of 120 species. The count included 22 species of ducks, 9 species of sparrows, 7 species of hawks, 6 species of gulls as well as shorebirds, 5 species of woodpeckers, and 4 species of owls and warblers. Among the most interesting finds were Peregrine Falcon, Virginia Rail, Red Knot, Iceland Gull, Razorbill, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Eastern Bluebird, Swainson's Thrush, American Pipit, Orange-crowned Warbler, Seaside Sparrow, and Pine Siskin.



Jan 3, 2009 - Orient Count - a First! - Great Egret

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**From Steve Biasseti**

**Central Suffolk Count** held on December 27th was, I think, a good day, we ended up with 69 species in my territory from Eastport to Terrell River. Our sightings included: Gadwall, Am. Wigeon, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Pheasant, Red-throated Loon, Common Loon, Great-blue Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Merlin, Bonaparte's Gull, Kingfisher, BC Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, Marsh Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Orange-crowned Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, Field sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Red-winged Blackbird, Pine Siskin, and Am. Goldfinch.



It can be lonely out there...searching for sparrows on Dune Road.



Eric Salzman - Counting ducks in Eastport

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**From MaryLaura Lamont**

**Orient Count** We had 115 species on Saturday Jan. 3, 2009. Sunny but very cold with those brutal NW winds of 30mph. Highlights as I know at this writing are Barrow's Goldeneye, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Rough-legged Hawk, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Purple Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, Razorbill, Woodcock, House Wren, American Pipit, White-crowned Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and Lapland Longspur which hasn't been seen on this Count in a multitude of years! Last year the Spotted Sandpiper was a first ever on the long history of this Count. It was photographed and documented in Greenport. This year, in the same spot in Greenport the Sandpiper was found again on Count Day. Could it be the same bird?



Linda Sullivan and Sue Benson "banging trees" for owls - unsuccessfully.



5 am - Look out owls, here we come! (Jim Clinton Jr, and Mike Higgston)



Long shadows at the end of the day on Cedar Beach and the Orient Count, left to right: Sue Benson, Jim Benson, Eileen Schwinn, Linda Sullivan

Photos, this page, Eileen Schwinn

## NYSOA Meeting in Rochester

### Bob Adamo

Many in our statewide birding community converged on Rochester on the weekend of September 20-22nd to attend the 60th Annual New York Ornithological Association (NYSOA) meeting. The gathering was co-hosted by the Rochester Birding Association and The Burroughs Audubon Nature Club. All the attendees were most grateful for their combined efforts, which made this meeting a rewarding and exciting get together. I will be addressing further NYSOA's annual meetings later in this article.

Following Friday's 1 pm registration was the first of six weekend field trips. This outing provided a chance for early arrivals to look for shorebirds on the mudflats of Salmon Creek, as well as a stop at Burger Park, a good location for migrants with its varied habitats including grasslands, shrubs and ponds.

The reception and buffet on Friday evening preceded four workshops, which, unfortunately, all ran concurrently. I chose the session on Digiscoping, presented by Clay Sutton, a Birding Optics Specialist for Swarovski Optics. Techniques and procedures for successfully combining camera and spotting scope were discussed, and photographic examples were shown to illustrate the results of his advice. The other workshops offered dealt with birding the Finger Lakes National Forest, Bird-scaping (building a bird-friendly habitat around you home) and "Birding like the experts, taking field notes, etc."

Two early Saturday morning field trips were set up so delegates would be back in time for the start of the 9 am business meeting. I went to the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory where we observed its bird banding operation. The first step was removing the captured passerines from the nets, then on to examining, weighting and measuring in the "lab." The last step was their release back into the wild, by the use of empty lemonade concentrate cylinders. The efficiency and dedication of the all volunteer staff, made this operation a wonder to behold. As bystanders we were

afforded very satisfying up-close views of the banded birds which included Nashville and Blackpoll Warblers.

The Delegates Meeting from 9 am to noon dealt with a broad variety of issues. Officers, directors and committee members were elected. Ten of the 14 positions were filled by incumbents, headed by Bill Ostrander as President. John Ozard of the New York State Department of Environmental conservation (NYSDEC) brought us "up-to-speed" on its ongoing avian projects. He made us aware of the restraints imposed on them by state government, which will cause cuts in their staff and bird related commitments.

A report on NYSOA's newest project, the New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC) was given by Carena Pooth, who also introduced Annette Lehner, as the club's newly appointed Adult Co-ordinator.

The Paper Research Session on Saturday afternoon included a diverse selection of topics: New York State records of Arctic Tern; Double-crested Cormorant: Population status and issues of impact biodiversity in the New York Harbor; Golden-winged Warbler Conservation from Canada to South America, with input from GPS/GIS, bears, molecular DNA and Timber Rattlesnakes; Monitoring birds and managing habitats at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; White-throated Sparrow's use of polarization cues on the horizon to calibrate their magnetic compass at sunrise and sunset; Colonial water bird populations on Lake Ontario and the St Lawrence River, 1976-2008; Your piece of the puzzle—how eBird uses your observation to revolutionize field ornithology. While these presentations were all done well and were very informative, many folks noticed the absence of Max Wheat at this year's gathering, and expressed the hope of hearing his works again at our next annual meeting.

The Saturday night banquet is so much more than a meal. It's format is straight forward. The food is served first. The awards are given out next, and then, it is time for the guest speaker. The food was

tasty and plentiful, as it was for the entire weekend! The awards were many and justified!! The guest speaker was dynamic!!!

Earning the John J. Elliot Award for the best article submitted to *The Kingbird* (NYSOA's quarterly journal), was Alex Wilson, for his article "Western Reef-heron (*Egretta gularis gularis*) at Calvert Vaux Park, Brooklyn (*The Kingbird*, Vol 57, No 4, December, 2007).

The Lillian Stoner Award, usually given to one young person, in high school or college, to help defray the expense of coming to our annual meeting, was awarded to 3 deserving students: Shawn Billerman and Tom Johnson, both from Cornell University, nominated by the Cayuga Bird Club and Jeb McConnell, nominated by his professor at SUNY, Cobleskill.

Certificates of Appreciation for Services to NYSOA and individual birders statewide were given to Deep Hollow Ranch (Montauk), Bill and Loretta Groell, John Haas, Curt McDermott, Larry Wilson and Brian Wheeler.

The Gordon M. Meade Award is only given out when someone has provided exceptional service to NYSOA, and is not awarded every year. This year, two outstanding people were chosen for this honor. Valerie Freer, past president of NYSOA, received the award for her efforts as the Steering Committee Chair for the Atlas 2000 Project, which kept her occupied for most of nine years. (As you may recall, Valerie was the person who came all the way down from Sullivan County in August 2007 to fill in for Kim Corwin, to give ELIAS an update on the Atlas 2000 Project.) Brenda Best earned the award because of her intrepid sense of duty, as she handled the combined responsibilities for NYSOA of recording secretary, membership co-ordinator, and publication manager, for the last seven years.

The guest speaker, Peter Harrison, ended the festivities, or should I say, brought them to a rousing finale, as he took us on a magical trip. We relived his 7-year, around the world adventure as a young man who was fueled by the desire to learn all he could

*Continued, next page*

about seabirds. He succeeded in this endeavor, and is now a world-renowned expert on this subject, with his definitive book, *Seabirds: An Identification Guide*, regarded as the "Bible" in this discipline. Earlier in the day, I had found him selling and signing its latest edition. As I approached him to sign my old, beaten up, jacket-tees copy, his eyes and smile broadened, as he told me how good it made him feel to see one of the copies of the original editions still being used. Peter, physically is not a big man, but everything else about him is enormous. His Power Point presentation, with its wonderful slides and his thrilling and very humorous dialogue, was just plain outstanding. He was quite the showman, as he described the events, both on land and sea, of his original undertaking. I made the judgement that he was just as a good a story teller as was Dennis Puleston, who is still number one on my hit parade. After the program, I sought him out to tell him of this, and to my surprise, this pleased him no end. It seems Peter was a naturalist for Linblad Cruises, as was Dennis, and had been on many a trip with him. During this time, they had become good friends, and had even sailed together privately between cruises. Peter stated he was extremely proud to be compared favorably to Dennis, and this, of course, made me glad I didn't keep my, sometimes, big mouth closed.

Hosting NYSOA's Annual Meeting has become quite a daunting and complex affair, evident by the concerned discussion the board of directors had at their November meeting. This resulted in a policy change designed to lessen the amount of work normally done by the host club. At present, no member club has volunteered to host the 2009 meeting or beyond. If this void is not filled quickly, the rich tradition of a full week-end meeting, will, sadly, end. Instead, we will probably just have a centrally located, one day delegates meeting, in order to conduct the necessary business of the association. Sorry to end on such a negative note, but it is, what it is.



## Sending Kids to Camp – Two Scholarships Offered

**E**ASTERN LONG ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY is offering scholarships for two students in grades 7 through 12 to attend New York State Department of Conservation camps for one week. Campers will choose between two camps in the Adirondacks, one in the Catskills, or one western New York State. Campers enjoy fishing, hiking, canoeing, volleyball, and hunter safety training. Activities such as sampling streams for aquatic life and hiking in the dark to listen to the sounds in the woods are designed to bring conservation concepts to life.

A perfect candidate would be interested in the environment, and anxious to learn more, (*Parents do not have to be Audubon members.*) Here is what the candidate needs to do:

- Fill out the form below.
- Write an essay stating why they are a worthy candidate for the scholarship. Include environmental experiences and interests. Also, describe what benefit they might derive from the experience.
- Have a parent attach a letter stating that they are aware of the transportation stipulation.

**If accepted**

- Campers are responsible for their own transportation to and from the camp.
- Campers are responsible for their own physical examination, if the camp requires it.

**For more information, call Evelyn at 631-727-0417.**

Please complete and forward the application by **January 26, 2009** to:

Education Committee  
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society  
Box 206  
East Quogue, NY 1942-0206

*Act quickly,  
the deadline  
is almost here!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever attended an outdoor education/ecology camp?

If SO, what camp, where, and when \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## From Kaler's Pond Nature Center

Jay Kuhlman

There will be two talks at the Center Moriches Library held from 1:30 to 3:00 pm.

The first on **January 11th** is about the continuing search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker presented by Jay Kuhlman who will show pictures of the search in White River National Wildlife Preserve in Arkansas conducted by the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology.

The second on **February 8** is about the birds of winter in the Long Island area. This will be in preparation for the Great Backyard Bird Count which is February 13 to 16. (See adjacent article for more information.)



## Seed Sale

Beth Gustin

The Quogue Wildlife Refuge was filled once again on a cold November weekend with bags of bird seed, bird feeders, bat houses, and other “birdy” items. By the end of the weekend all of the bird seed was sold as well as many of the additional items. Although sales were lower this year, probably because of the higher seed prices, the fundraiser was a success thanks to all of the people who ordered seed and came to the Sale to support ELIAS and the Refuge.

Thanks to all of the volunteers—Peg Caraher, Evelyn Voulgarelis, MaryLaura Lamont (who helped out on Saturday afternoon after leading a frigid field trip in the morning!), Dan and Allyson Wilson, Gigi Spates, Bob Adamo, and Mike, Marisa, Samantha and Floyd from the Quogue Wildlife Refuge.

Thanks also to Gary, Kathleen and the other folks at Wild Birds Unlimited for supplying the seed and feeders and for making the business side of the Seed Sale as simple as it can be! We encourage our members to support them at their store on Montauk Highway in Oakdale.

## JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Count for Fun, Count for the Future  
February 13-16, 2009

**New York, NY and Ithaca, NY** Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)**, February 13-16, 2009. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

“The Great Backyard Bird Count” benefits both birds and people. It’s a great example of citizen science: Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity,” said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. “Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their ob-

servations skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future.”

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards—whether in their own neighborhood or thousands of miles away. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

The data these “citizen scientists” collect helps researchers understand bird population trends; information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible i.e. a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

“The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent-wide bird-monitoring projects,” said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director, John Fitzpatrick. “With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented the fine-grained details of late-winter bird distributions better than any project in history, including some truly striking changes just over the past decade.”

Each year, in addition to entering their tallies, participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Many are featured in the popular online gallery. Participants in the 2009 count are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube; some will also be featured on the GBBC web site. Visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) to learn more.

Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout Troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 or Audubon at [citizenscience@audubon.org](mailto:citizenscience@audubon.org) or (215) 355-9588, ext 16.



## Conservation Column

**“Nobody can do everything but everybody can do something”**

Beth Gustin

Fresh fruit can be a little harder to find in the stores during the winter months. Much of the fruit that we buy comes from Latin American countries that allow excessive use of dangerous pesticides. Some of these chemicals are considered “restricted use” pesticides or are banned altogether in the United States. Studies have shown that migratory songbirds that spend the winter in Central and South America are highly susceptible to the toxic effects that these chemicals have. In particular, a single application of the highly toxic pesticide Carbofuran has been said to kill as many as 25 songbirds per acre. Carbofuran has also been shown to be harmful to humans, which is why the Environmental Protection Agency has banned its residue on imported food. Bananas are sprayed with pesticides more heavily than many other fruits. In Costa Rica for example, 40 pounds of pesticides are applied per acre of bananas, compared with fewer than 5 pounds per acre for most fruits and vegetables grown in the United States.

### What can you do?

Buy fruits and vegetables that are grown in the United States or buy organic. Check those little stickers that are placed on fruit to determine the country of origin. The Latin American countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and Ecuador are known to use high levels of pesticides so try to avoid produce from those countries. Purchase organic and shade-grown coffee which helps to maintain tropical forest acreage.

Keep songbirds in mind when you go shopping. Migrating thousands of miles is difficult enough — it is our responsibility to try to make sure the birds have a healthy place to spend the winter. Buying organic fruits and veggies or purchasing those grown in the U.S. can help to make sure there are tropical forests and plantations that are a little safer for songbirds. And it is certainly in our best interest to consume fruits and vegetables that have the least amount of chemicals applied to them.



## Birds and Wildlife Need You

### Join Audubon's Action Network

**Audubon Action Alerts** are a quick, easy way to get access to your lawmakers, and local media, and to find inside information on issues impacting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. If you aren't already a part of our online action network, sign up today at: [www.audubonaction.org/newyork](http://www.audubonaction.org/newyork).

Action Alerts allow you to take action on issues of priority concern, both nationally and locally, by providing you with easy to send letters and automatically matching you to your specific federal and state lawmakers. Action Alerts are sent periodically on issues of national concern (from the grassroots office of the National Audubon Society) and on a statewide or local level (from Audubon New York, working closely with Chapters around the state). Please sign up today — the more people we can reach with this tool, the more successful we will be in our conservation efforts.

If you provide at least your city, state, and zip code when signing up, we will be able to send you alerts and invitations that affect you most directly. Don't worry — we will not inundate your inbox, your information is confidential and will not be used for other purposes, and you can unsubscribe anytime.

We know that lawmakers care about your views and opinions. As a constituent, you have a unique ability to convey your concerns to them. Helping is easy, won't take much time, and most importantly, will go a very long way in protecting our wildlife!



## Chapter Renewal & Membership

For \$15 a year, you will receive 6 copies of this newsletter. You will also be supporting our local education and conservation activities. (Members of National Audubon who are not chapter members receive one copy of this newsletter per year.)

This is a  Renewal  New Membership

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Make Check payable to:  
**Eastern Long Island Audubon Society**  
and mail to:

ELIAS, Membership  
PO Box 206  
East Quogue, NY 11942-0206



# Christmas Bird Counts, Remembered

**Larry Penny**

Chief East Hampton Natural Resources

**C**HRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS across the country, indeed, across the world, are almost as much an annual ritual as Christmas, itself. I remember a time when there were very few such counts and only a handful of counters to carry them out.

I didn't know about the fabled Montauk count while growing up in Mattituck so it wasn't until the mid 1970s that I became a "regular." That was after I spent 15 years on the West Coast.

My first count was Central Suffolk in December of 1953 or 1954. The count was in its infancy, I was finishing out my teens and was a wildlife conservation major at Cornell University. I came home for the Christmas holidays and my mentor, Paul Stoutenburgh, told me about the count and said that I could go with him. We set out from Cutchogue in Paul's Plymouth station wagon. An hour later, or so, we were at Gil Raynor's house in Manorville. Gil was one of the organizers of the count. We went around with Gil at first—he had already been out listening for owls in the predawn chill and had, if memory serves me right, heard both Screech and Great-horned Owls. A good start to a

long very cold day, at the end of which my feet were wet and frozen. We also had very little idea of how we had done, because there was not après count get together as is commonly the case nowadays.

We counted mostly in pine barren and old field habitats, but also had some ponds, bogs and streams to search. Paul and I had pretty good ears then. We had been schooled on the Kellog and Allen Cornell University bird song LPs. In those days we didn't use tape recorders to play bird songs or distress calls, but we were able to imitate a number of birds and were pretty good tishers and squeakers. We used binoculars, the big bulky kind, and Gil had a telescope that was right out of days of whaling and pirating. It was one of those brass tube collapsible jobs that extend to two and a half feet. Gil would use it like a monocular, adjust the focus by moving ever so slightly the last (thinnest tube) that had the ocular at its end. He could use that piece to zero in on birds in the air the way a skeet shooter would use his shotgun to fix on clay pigeons whizzing by.

There were not cardinals or mockingbirds to count then, and very few feeders to visit. The tally was slow and sparse, but we managed to get the usual winter upland residents such as Tree Sparrows, Field

Sparrows, Siskins, Mourning Doves, and the like...no Wild Turkeys. Unlike today, habitats were not scouted out for days in advance; the day of the count, that was it.

There were only a handful of us, not more than ten, perhaps, as few as six, covering the entire count area. Roy Wilcox used a boat and his car to cover Moriches Bay and the edge of the ocean. North of Roy's route, Dennis Puleston covered the rest of the southern part of the territory including marshes and farm fields. Art Cooley may have participated as well. Paul and I split up from Gil mid-morning to cover areas Gil selected. In the afternoon, Paul and I split up. I walked for miles past this and that woodland, this and that field. When it turned dark I had no idea where I was. The Manorville area and parts on the periphery were very desolate in those days.

Benumbed by the cold—the Central Suffolk count area is notorious for having the lowest Long Island winter temperatures—I kept walking the back roads, becoming ever more certain with each step that I was absolutely lost. There were no cell phones then, no roadside phone booths to call from. Then, just when I was about to give up all hope, a pair of headlights, the only ones I'd seen in more than a half hour, came out of the dark a half mile or so away. They got closer and closer. They were those of Paul's station wagon. He'd been searching every road high and low for me for the last hour or so. He found me. The count was over, we went back to the North Fork.

I've moved so many times since then, I've lost a lot of my records, but somewhere in the annals of the Christmas counts over the century, you will find the findings of that early Central Suffolk count. As I recollect, we recorded between 50 and 60 species, half of what one might expect today. I'd like to say it was fun, but it was hard on the body. I've participated in scores of counts since then, but that's the one I remember the most. Half of the participants are no longer with us; they have become icons in the arena of Long Island natural history since their passing. They were truly great naturalists!

## Enjoy a great bird-watching magazine and Help Support Eastern Long Island Audubon Society



Subscribe to **Bird Watcher's Digest** and you'll receive a useful and interesting birding magazine written by birders, for birders. But even better, you will also support Eastern Long Island Audubon Society.

For every new paid Bird Watcher's Digest subscription sold ELIAS will receive \$10 from BWD.

**Subscribe by phone,  
Call 1-800-879-2473**

Weekdays from 8-5 EST, mention this ad and Eastern Long Island Audubon when you call.

**Or Subscribe Online:**

[www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/subshare.aspx](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/subshare.aspx)

**BIRDWATCHER'S**  
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# Feeder Survey

## Brian O’Keeffe

The Survey will be conducted the 1st week of the month starting on Sunday and ending the following Sunday.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEEDER SURVEY

- Define an area containing feeders that you can see all at once from a window. The area should be one you glance at frequently during your daily routine.
- Don’t include birds seen off premises.
- Predators perching in or swooping through the count area (not just flying over) may be counted if you feel that they were attracted by the birds at the feeder.
- Record the largest number of each species that you see in your count area during the eight-day count period.
- Do not add counts from previous days together. Be specific with the species name, e.g. we can’t use just the name Sparrow, Blackbird or Gull.
- At the end of the count period, record your final tallies and send in the form immediately.

Personal observations and comments are welcome as are suggestions to improve the surveys and reports.



*Song Sparrows with their distinctive stripes and “heart” on their breast are frequent winter feeder visitors.*

### Survey Dates: February 8 through February 15

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
- \_\_\_\_\_ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail immediately after each survey period to:

Brian O’Keeffe,  
12 Union Ave.,  
Center Moriches, NY 11934.

Or to send via the internet, go to:  
[easternlongislandaudubon.org](http://easternlongislandaudubon.org) and

- 1) Click on Chapter Projects
- 2) Click on Feeder Statistics
- 3) Click on To submit via the internet, etc.

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**Look for ELIAS hats  
at meetings  
& events**



# Annual Dinner at Rock Hill Golf Club

On Wednesday, October 22, 2008 about 80 members of ELIAS joined together at Rock Hill Country Club in Manorville to Meet the Raptors that Michael and Marisa Nelson brought to the Annual Dinner. Four raptors accompanied Michael and Marisa, the directors of Quogue Wildlife Refuge; a beautiful and noisy Great-horned Owl, a Kestrel, a Barn Owl and a diminutive Saw-whet owl.

Al Scherzer presented MaryLaura Lamont with this year's Osprey Award. His introduction praised her dedication to environmental causes, her expertise and willingness to share her extensive botanical and avian knowledge.

The dinner committee was chaired by Ridgie Barnett and Peggy Caraher. Other committee members were: Brian O'Keefe, Sally Newbert and Chris Schmitt, with special assistance from Gigi Spates. Thanks Gigi for those environmental reminders and sending everyone home with a CFL light bulb.

The raffle prizes were donated by H2M Labs, John's Pools & Spa, Lillian's Hair Salon & Spa, South Fork Museum of Natural History, Wild Bird Crossing in Bridge-



Photos this page: Sally Newbert

Marisa Nelson introduces the Great-horned Owl to the dinner guests.

Left, Al Scherzer presents MaryLaura Lamont with the Osprey Award.



hampton, Wild Bird Unlimited in Oakdale, Eileen Schwinn, Quogue Wildlife Refuge and both Bob Adamo and John McNeil who donated framed avian photos.

And, of course, thanks to all who joined us

# Seen Along Dune Road



Always a special place to bird, Dune Road hosted a Snowy Owl, and unlike many of its species this Great-blue Heron was still there in late December.



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*The Osprey is prepared by  
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 (631) 281-6008  
 2 E. Moriches Blvd., E. Moriches, NY 11940  
 eliasosprey@optonline.net

**Mark Your Calendars!**

**January**

Sat., January 11 **Lecture, CM Library, Search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker** *See page 6*  
 Sat., January 24 **Field Trip: Lakes Around Patchogue** *See page 1*

**February**

Mon., February 2 **Nature Program: Alexis Alvey, Garden City Sanctuary** *See page 1*  
 Sat. February 7 **Field Trip: Wintering Eagles near Port Jervis, NY** *See page 1*  
 Sat., February 8 **Lecture, CM Library, Birds of Winter** *See page 6*  
 Sat., January 13-16 **Great Backyard Bird Count** *See story page 6*  
 Sat., February 21 **Field Trip: Montauk Point** *See page 1*

*Special note: We would like to explore the possibility of setting up car pools for the field trips. If you would like to be the driver, rider or organizer, please all John McNeil.*



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Published by:  
**Eastern Long Island Audubon Society**  
 P.O. Box 206  
 East Quogue, NY 11942-0206  
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