



EASTERN LONG ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY – *From the Barrens to the Bays*
Formerly Moriches Bay Audubon, established 1967

***THE* OSPREY**

Early Spring 2022 — Vol. XLVII, No. 1

WHERE TO NEXT?

We'd love to see you here on LI

*The strange,
mysterious and
on-going
tale of Steller's
Sea-Eagle*



Man by the Sea
by John Charles Putrino

See Story Page 4

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION — SEE BACKCOVER!

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Waiting for Spring

Byron Young

As I write this it is 29 degrees outside with a light snow falling with more cold weather and snow on the way. When will Spring be here? A male Cardinal seemingly oblivious to the cold is perched in the bush outside my window trying to decide whether to stay on its perch or go get some food. It looks like the food won out.

Like many of our fellow Audubon Chapters we are struggling with plans for the future. Our normal activities have either been canceled, modified, or restricted in some fashion. Zoom has allowed us to remain in contact though not our first choice. It looks like Eastern Long Island Audubon will stay with the Zoom format at least through the winter. Hopefully, this pandemic will subside enough that we can return to in-person meetings sometime during 2022. Following the advice of the Health Advisories and working with the Quogue Wildlife Refuge we will return to in-person meetings when it is safe. On April 4 Polly L. Weigand, will be our speaker. She is has agreed to do either an in-person or Zoom. Maybe this will be the first in-person? We'll let you know.

We are planning our usual suite of bird walks for the upcoming months, while looking forward to the Spring migration. We will join with Quogue Wildlife Refuge

to celebrate Earth Day on April 23, 2022 from noon to 3 pm. Come on by and enjoy the festivities. If anyone is interested in volunteering to help at the ELIAS table, please reach out to me. My email address is youngb53@optimum.net.

ELIAS maintains and monitors two bluebird trails, one at Indian Island Golf Course and one at Sandy Pond Golf Course. If anyone is interested in learning more about these efforts or is willing to help, please let me know, I can put you in touch with either Gigi Spates or Christine

.....
*Join ELIAS at the
 in-person
 Earth Day Celebration
 Saturday, April 23
 from noon to 3 pm
 at Quogue Wildlife Refuge*

Schmidt. Basically, it would be cleaning the nest boxes before the Bluebirds return and then monitoring them to record nesting activity. With extra help we might be able to put out a few more nest boxes.

I want to acknowledge the success of our

2022 Calendar. Thanks go to the many Chapter Photographers who contributed photographs and Special Thanks to Sally Newbert our Osprey Editor for putting the Calendar together. This is always a difficult yet rewarding task to select the photos for the calendar. We are looking to do this again for next year, so keep your cameras at the ready. Mailing the calendar to all members in good standing allows us another avenue to remain connected, to remind folks to renew their membership, and hopefully bring joy each month as we view birds seen locally. We all receive many calendars but we hope this one is special. Again, thank you to our photographers and our members support for this project.

The male Cardinal is back sitting on its favorite perch in the sun outside my window. I am not sure whether he is simply warming himself or reminding me to go fill the feeders. The way he is looking at me I think my feeders need filling.

Everyone Be Safe!

Byron

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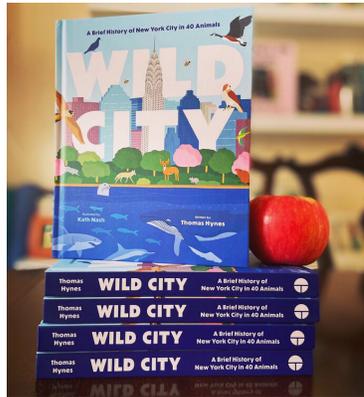
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March Zoom Program

MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2022 AT 7 pm

Wild City - A Brief History of New York City in 40 Animals

From Central Park to Green Wood Cemetery, from Pale Male to Monk Parakeets, Thomas Hynes will share with us – via Zoom – a number of note-worthy visitors-with-feathers to The Big Apple. The author of *Wild City - A Brief History of New York City in 40 Animals*, will present his Top Ten (and perhaps more!) Celebrity Birds of New York. Based in Brooklyn, Mr. Hynes is a contributor to a number of noted publications, including *Untapped New York*, and *Scientific American*. His knowledge and wit can also be read in his recently published book. Illustrated by Kath Nash, this compilation of animal sightings appeals not only to adults but to children as well! Come join us for a fun reminder of what makes New York City so WILD!



You will need to register this program. Invitations are available on the website easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org

Go to the program page and click on the link. You will receive an acknowledgment from Quogue Wildlife Refuge and on the day of the program, a reminder. This is a free program and all are welcome.

We hope to return to live meetings on Monday, April 4 when Polly L. Weigand, CCA, Science and Stewardship Manager, Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning and Policy Commission will talk about Pine Barrens prescribed fire programs.

EARTH DAY CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, APRIL 23RD FROM NOON TO 3:00 PM



Come and celebrate nature and our lovely planet. This celebration offered by Eastern Long Island Audubon Society, & Quogue Wildlife Refuge will be an in-person outdoor event at the Refuge!

- ★ Bird Walks by ELIAS
- ★ Live animal presentations
- ★ Crafts, environmental exhibitors
- ★ Kayaking & canoeing on Old Ice Pond.

A great day for all ages!
Check the QWR website for up-to-date schedule of events.

No reservations necessary.

Rain or shine.

Saturday Nature Walks

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2022, 8:30 am

Nature Walk at Elizabeth Morton NWR

This is always a special walk. You will be greeted by lots of hungry birds that eat right out of your hand. Frequently there are pockets of over-wintering birds. Great photo ops as you are close to the birds. Meet at the Refuge parking lot at 8:30 am. It is roughly a 2 mile walk to the beach and around the refuge. Dress warmly and appropriately. Bring binoculars! Bird seed will be provided. The entrance to the The Elizabeth Morton NWR on Noyac Road to the west of Sag Harbor.



SAT. JUNE 11, 2022 AT 8:00 am

Save the Date for SOFO Bird Walk

We will join with SOFO (South Fork Natural History Museum) to explore the field behind the museum looking for breeding birds. There have been Bluebirds, Indigo Bunting and several warblers breeding there and a well cared for Purple Martin colony. This is a free program, but you will need to register with the museum at (631) 537-9735.

WHERE TO NEXT?

We'd love to see you here on LI

The strange, mysterious and on-going tale of Steller's Sea-Eagle

Sally Newbert

The last few issues of *The Osprey* have had articles about avian vagrancy. The Roseate Spoonbill on the North Shore, the Wood Stork in Westhampton and winter finches we hoped would come south, (I do not think they made it this far south this year). But this time it is the strange and more mysterious tale of the Steller's Sea-Eagle. Let your mind wander to the cold Sea of Japan, eastern Russia or Korea, all home to the world's heaviest eagle with an eight foot wing span, weighing between 11 to 20 pounds. Suddenly this eagle, twice the size of the Bald Eagle, if you can imagine, appeared in Boothbay Harbor. With its stunning white patches and white tail and a huge orange beak — just right for tearing fish apart — has captured the imagination of birders and sent many of them scrambling on a field trip to Maine.

One photographer in Maine, John Putrillo, who calls himself Man by the Sea, has been following the eagle since it arrived near Boothbay Harbor. His Instagram, Manbythesea, and Facebook page both feature images of the eagle.

The New York Times reported “that birders have been following this bird since it was first spotted on Alaska’s Denali Highway last August, the bird has slowly wandered further east. It was identified in Quebec and New Brunswick in July. It has a distinctive white spot on its left wing was used to identify this particular bird. After several months of evading human notice, it reappeared in Nova Scotia. It’s



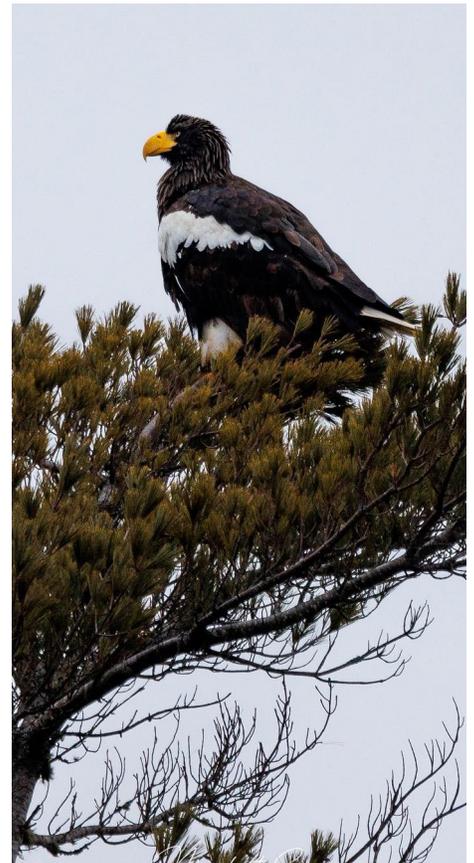
The Steller's Sea-Eagle near Boothbay Harbor. Photos by John Putrillo Man by the Sea used with his permission

nuts. It really is. It's one of those head-scratching things,' said Nate Swick of the American Birding Association.

Also reported in the Times, Phil Taylor, a biologist at Acadia University, spotted the eagle while scanning ducks in Falmouth, Nova Scotia. 'I knew exactly what it was, immediately,' said Dr. Taylor, who studies bird migration. 'I couldn't believe it. Something like this is just one in a million.'

It is likely that the same bird made a southern detour in the spring in South Texas. However, because it was seen only while perched, the unique wing pattern could not be confirmed. 'At this point, anything is likely,' Mr. Swick said. "The fact that it might have made a stopover in Texas is as plausible as anything else."

The bird was spotted again mid-February a little north and west of Boothbay Harbor. If it can make it from Alaska to



Texas without being noticed, who knows where it will show up next.

I started to ask around to see if I could find any Long Island birders who had gone looking for this bird. After a bit of sleuthing and advice from Eileen Schwinn I contacted Mike Scheibel - a long time birder and received this answer.

“After procrastinating for several hours on New Year’s Eve morning, enticed by an on-site report from my birder sister-in-law in Maine, and mulling over the phrase “once in a lifetime”, my wife Lynne commanded that I get in the truck immediately and head north. I did!

Arriving in Bath, ME after dark, I booked a room and celebrated New Year’s Eve with an early dinner at a local Pub and lights out at 8 o’clock. Awake long before sunrise I drove about twenty minutes to Reid State Park where the Steller’s Sea-Eagle had been sighted the afternoon before, I pulled up to the entrance gate, which was locked, to await Divine intervention or a Park Ranger, which ever appeared first. Moments later a car pulled up behind me, a veteran birder dressed in camo and his brother had just driven through the night from Tennessee, and I thought I was crazy

The Ranger arrived first, producing a healthy dose of Down East encouraging disbelief and the key, Happy New Year! For several hours perched atop a rocky outcrop

overlooking the Atlantic Ocean in the company of an increasing number of birders, dog walkers and other enthusiastic teetotalers, we enjoyed Razorbills, Guillemots and a very distant Snowy Owl.

Finally, around 9 o’clock, through the magic of the internet, word came down from the heavens, the bird was back at Five Islands wharf about ten minutes away, where it had been the previous morning. A chaotic scramble down the rocks to our vehicles ensued as we rushed to meet our destiny. Somehow, we each found a place to park, and joined the growing throng of birders descending on a normally quiet commercial fishing dock where the local lobstermen apparently don’t get the holiday off.

Scope in hand, I immediately spotted the eagle perched close by, affording an excellent view. Only one problem, it was a Bald Eagle. Then someone shouted, not there, across the harbor atop a tall conifer, Sir Steller himself, or herself? Spectacular is the word that comes to mind, but somehow it falls short in adequately describing the regal Steller’s Sea-Eagle, life #980!

Happy New Year, indeed!”

Mike Scheibel

Art Cooley dies at 87

Art Cooley left his mark on the East End. He was one of the Co-Founders of Environmental Defense Fund which initiated the legal battle that led to banning DDT bringing back the populations of Osprey, Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon.

While a high school science teacher in Bellport he created a year-long ornithology course leaving in its wake many of today’s birders. Erin King, one of his students, remembers him “I had no idea when I took Mr. Cooley’s ornithology class in high school that it would inspire a lifelong love of birding. His passion and enthusiasm were contagious. When a Killdeer built a nest on the top of our school roof he took the entire class outside to climb up a ladder and peek over the edge to see for ourselves. Although decades have passed since I sat in his class the memories of our field trips have not faded a bit. We would travel along Dune Road in a school bus with Mr. Cooley standing up in the front window and when he spotted a bird he would promptly direct the bus driver to stop even if it was right next to a ditch and we would all pile out. I wish everyone could have had Mr. Cooley as a mentor. In a way, his presence is in nearly every bird I see.”

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Project SNOWstorm

Everyone seems to love owls and the Snowy Owl is the *piece de resistance* of a trip to the beach in the winter. Where have they come from, why are they here and where are they going? We may never get any detailed information about the owls that we share our shores with but other owls coming into Pennsylvania and the midwest are being tracked. Little backpacks with transmitters and solar panels are being attached to them in order to track their movements as they travel.

Project SNOWstorm was the brainchild of David F. Brinker of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Scott Weidensaul, research director for the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Millersburg, PA, and Steve Huy of Frederick, Maryland. The institutional home is the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in central Pennsylvania, which provides the 501 (c)(3) nonprofit umbrella under which SNOWstorm operates.

Project SNOWstorm takes a unique approach to studying Snowy Owls. It is funded entirely by relatively small, tax-deductible contributions from the general public. It is without large foundation, institutional or agency support typical of major research programs.

Despite that, Project SNOWstorm has grown in just eight years into one of the largest studies of Snowy Owls anywhere in the world, and by far the largest and most comprehensive one to examine the winter ecology of, and human-related threats, to this iconic species. What they do translates directly into conservation action for Snowy Owls.

The team of more than 40 scientists, banders, wildlife veterinarians and pathologists all donate their time to Project SNOWstorm, so the money that is raised from their supporters can go as far as possible, underwriting the costs of tracking technology, laboratory analysis and other unavoidable expenses.

Project SNOWstorm is grateful for the ongoing support they've received from so many of you over the years.

After the transmitter is put on the

owl Project SNOWstorm receives a signal with the location of that owl. The transmissions are dependent on solar power and cell phone towers. The owl's nesting areas can be far from cell phone towers making transmissions spotty and lost for long periods of time. But, once the solar power kicks in and the owl is within range the transmitter will download a whole summer's worth of data.

Near Québec two new owls, Nicolet and Odanak, have been fitted with transmitters this year, but Project SNOWstorm is keeping a close eye on returnees from past winters. Two in the upper Midwest, Columbia and Fond du Lac, sent back detailed reports.

Columbia returned Nov. 25 and uploaded part of her migration data from last spring, then went dark while her battery recharged. Two days before Christmas she transmitted another 9,400 GPS points, bringing her travel data up to date, and we now know that she nested last summer in northern Baffin Island, in the eastern Canadian Arctic.

She lingered there through early October, then began meandering her way south, largely retracing her spring movement north, down the Melville Peninsula in Nunavut and moving well inland from the western shore of Hudson Bay through central Manitoba and into southeastern Saskatchewan by the beginning of December. From there, Columbia hooked a left, flying southeast across northern North Dakota by Devil's Lake, just past Grand Forks and into western Minnesota. On Dec. 23 she was just north of Crookston, MN.

Fond du Lac (FDL)

The last time Fond du Lac (FDL) checked in she had just flown the width of Lake Superior and made landfall on Manitou Island, on the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan's Upper Peninsula on Dec. 12. From there she crossed the Upper Peninsula, then moved down along Green Bay to Lake Winnebago in eastern Wisconsin, just north of her namesake town of Fond du Lac.

Fond du Lac did a little ice riding on a

drifting floe on Lake Winnebago for about five hours.

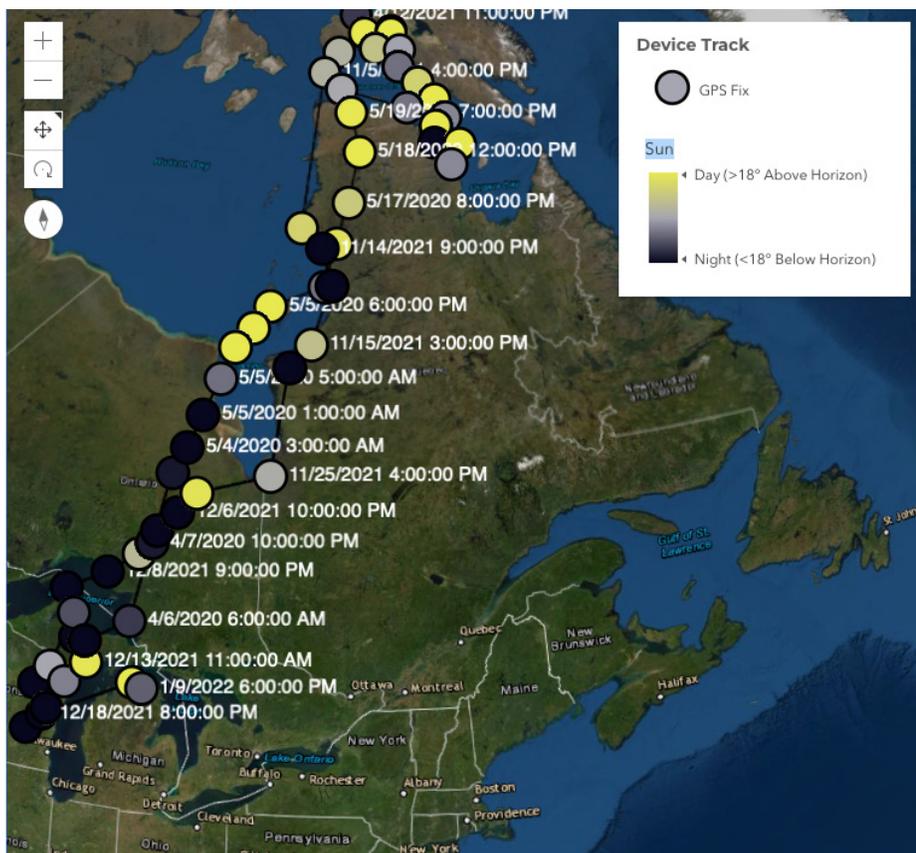
As of December there was virtually no ice cover on the Great Lakes (well, 1.4 percent according to NOAA) but there were ice floes on Winnebago, and Fond du Lac found one, as evidenced by the very distinctive "ice riding" pattern in her data, showing evenly spaced half-hourly locations as the ice FDL was perching on drifted to the north on Dec. 19. She got restless and moved east to the mouth of the Manitowoc River on Lake Michigan on Dec. 22, and the next evening she was just south of the town of Kewaunee. (SNOWstorm supporters with a long memory may recall an owl by that name, tagged near Kewaunee in 2014.)

It's been a while since we've heard anything from other returned owls — Wells in the St. Lawrence valley; Stella in southern Saskatchewan; Alderbrooke, who checked in Dec. 1 from Lac St.-Jean in Québec but didn't upload any data; and Amherst, who was still way up on James Bay on Dec. 14. All had low battery voltage, and unless they've had a good deal of sun it may be a while before they reconnect and bring us up to date — especially those like Wells with very old transmitters that may be struggling more than usual with short days and the low northern solar angle. Sunshine has been in short supply across much of the northeastern U.S. and southeastern Canada, so we may have to be patient.

One thing Project SNOWstorm will be watching is what happens every first of the month when the transmitters are supposed to send up a signal flare, so to speak, even if they don't have enough juice to transmit data — just a little "Here I am!" connection. That's how they heard from Alderbrooke last month, and perhaps this time will get more information on her situation.

For more information

www.projectsnowstorm.org



Detailed maps (this one for Fond du Lac) for each owl are available on the the Project SNOWstorm website. The solar powered transmitters are frequently out of range for long periods but will come to life once the owl is in cell phone range and gets enough sun to power the transmitter.

Snowy Owl Etiquette

Snowy Owls, coming down from the Arctic, can be remarkably approachable, especially young birds early in the winter. But because they are often so naive around humans, it's easy for birders, photographers and the general public to approach them too closely. What is an exciting encounter for people can be continual — and at times even dangerous — harassment for the owl. The bird may be chased into traffic (something snowies don't understand) and a flushed owl is liable to be attacked by another raptor like an eagle, or mobbed by crows.

Tracking data confirms that these owls are primarily nocturnal, and when undisturbed by humans they rarely move much in the daytime. An owl flying from spot to spot in daylight usually isn't "just moving around" like a lot of people assume, but responding to pressure and harassment, even if it's not immediately

evident to observers.

Here's how to be a good observer:

- * Keep your distance.
- * Respect private property.
- * Do not feed an owl, ever.
- * Keep your distance.

Just because the owl may tolerate a fairly close approach doesn't mean you should push the envelope. If the owl is visibly reacting to your presence — fidgeting, repeatedly staring at you, head-bobbing or changing position — you're too close, and need to back off immediately.

Needless to say, if you've flushed the owl you were much too close — and should reconsider your behavior next time. Remember even with the best of cell phones, photos are impossible unless you are way, way way to close to the bird - so *don't even try!*

Fortunately, a vehicle makes a terrific blind, so stay in your car whenever possible. (It's also a lot warmer on a frigid day.) Use a spotting scope and a telephoto lens, and be content to watch from a safe distance. Be patient, and if you can time your visit late in the day, when the owl typically will become more active, it may approach you, especially if you're positioned near a favorite perch.

And watching from a distance — when you're not interfering with the owl's natural behavior — has its own particular rewards. Researchers spend countless hours watching owls, picking up clues to the surroundings from the owl's behavior. Is it staring off in one direction consistently? Perhaps there is a red-tailed hawk, bald eagle or another snowy owl hidden over a rise in that direction. Has it raised itself up almost vertically, and is focused with laser intensity on one place? Get ready for it to make a lighting attack on prey.

The Ottawa County (MI) Parks Department has produced a video about how to watch Snowy Owls without causing a problem for the birds. Similarly, the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology has a great video on proper behavior when observing all owls, including snowies.

* **Respect private property.**

Many landowners who host Snowy Owls report problems with visitors ignoring common courtesy (and sometimes even obvious "No Trespassing" signs) to get close to owls. Do not cross private property without permission. And in coastal environments, Snowy Owls often roost in fragile dune habitat that is generally closed to foot traffic. Obey all closure or off-limits signs.

* **Do not feed an owl, ever.**

One of the most damaging things anyone can do (usually to attract the bird for a close-up photo, but sometimes out of a misplaced belief that the owl is starving) is to feed a Snowy Owl. Because they have little innate fear of humans, Snowy Owls can very quickly become very habituated to people tossing them mice. Once they associate people with food, the owls are drawn into dangerous situations, such as swooping close to roads. They may also approach people who may harm them, either from fear and ignorance, or from malice.



A flooded area in Mastic Beach. Photo: Samantha Dietz/Audubon

Marsh Restoration Will Benefit a Threatened Long Island Community

Healthy marsh at Mastic Beach will provide new habitat for birds and help protect the community

Article by Samantha Dietz, Salt Marsh Monitoring Technician

Looking out over the saltmarsh in the Mastic Beach Hamlet of the Brookhaven community, you might think the area unused and forgotten. Abandoned homes stand beside dirt roads marred by deep potholes and inundated with seawater that regularly floods the area.

The truth, however, is that the Mastic Beach salt marsh is teeming with life, and on the precipice of incredible change.

In 2012, Hurricane Sandy caused significant damage to both local infrastructure and the saltmarsh. However, the environmental threats to the Mastic Beach community didn't stop with the hurricane.

Healthy marshes act as a sponge that soak up excess water and release it slowly, helping to mitigate the impact of tides, storm surge, and even excess rainfall or snowmelt. In Mastic Beach, however, the marsh was being squeezed by human development and sea level rise, and as a result, flooding into the community.

Both community residents and town leaders realized that this had to be addressed. In 2018 the Town of Brookhaven received the first of two National Coastal Resilience Grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to restore the saltmarsh in Mastic Beach. "The expansion and protection of healthy marsh at Mastic Beach will provide

new habitat to rapidly declining species, all while creating a healthier, higher-functioning coastline that will help protect the community during storm events and as the ocean continues to rise," said Alan Duckworth, Environmental Analyst with the Town of Brookhaven.

Before restoration begins, scientists needed to get a thorough picture of the health of the landscape. Once a baseline has been established, restoration plans to improve the area can be fully developed. During the 2021 breeding season, Audubon partnered with SUNY ESF's Saltmarsh Habitat and Avian Research Program to assess the diversity and abundance of bird species using the marsh. The results were surprising!

Thirty-four species were detected during surveys, including a particularly exciting find: the Saltmarsh Sparrow, a rapidly declining species that has become a priority species for conservation groups.

To know that Saltmarsh Sparrows are present at this site, and in relatively high numbers, is a happy surprise for everyone working on the project. It indicates that improving this marsh is an important investment for this bird and many other species – from the Clapper Rail to American Oystercatchers.

As coastal development on marsh habitat continues, birds face an increasing threat of decline, or even extinction, from habitat loss. The expansion and protection of healthy marsh at Mastic Beach will provide

new habitat to rapidly declining species, all while creating a healthier coastline.

"The restoration of the natural habitats found in Mastic Beach — including the salt marshes—is the beginning of an incredible moment of change for our community. The beauty and power of the water that surround our community is what compels many of us to live here, but



Saltmarsh Sparrow. Photo: Frank Lehman/Audubon Photography Awards

also places our properties and lives at great risk. In a low-income town that has been historically underserved, we see an urgent opportunity, not only to restore and protect the land and the eco-system, but also to improve equitable access for our community, so that everyone — salt marsh sparrows, kids, families and adults alike — can benefit from what our beautiful waterfront has to offer," said David Yun, Mastic Beach Conservancy.

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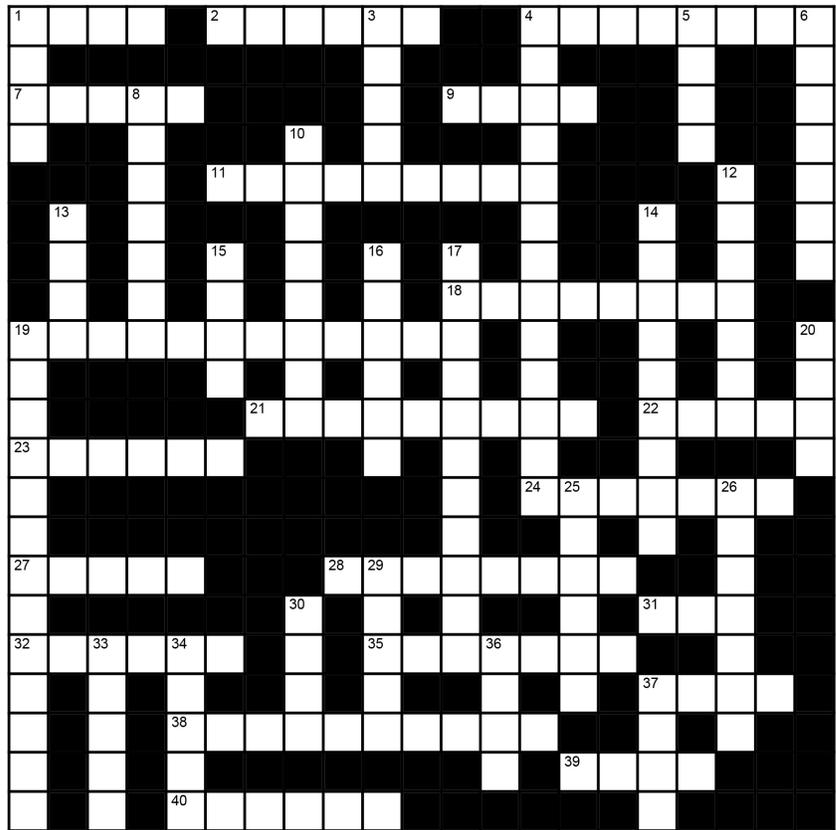
Our mission is to be an inspiration to those who feel a sense of kinship with Long Island by encouraging an appreciation for the natural world and a commitment to the environment.

Black, White & American

Answers to Fall/Winter 2021 puzzle
by Tom Moran



Winter Wonders Tom Moran



Across

- 1 North _____ Preserve, location of a long lasting Northern Shrike
- 2 Eastern _____ seen at Georgica Cove in January
- 4 _____ Gull, one of the unusual gulls seen at Bellport Yacht Club this winter
- 7 Wilson's _____ seen at Swan River Preserve, Patchogue with a few Virginia Rails!
- 9 _____ Turkey
- 11 Black-capped _____
- 18 _____ Widgeon, female seen at Patchogue Lake this winter
- 19 _____ Warbler
- 21 _____ Falcon, can be seen at Ponguogue Bridge
- 22 and 30 Down - a near adult put on a spectacular show at Shinnecock Inlet this winter
- 23 _____ Gull
- 24 Small alcid seen from Montauk Point this winter
- 27 Tiana _____, one of the locations that a Thick-billed Murre was seen this winter
- 28 _____ NWR
- 31 Snowy _____
- 32 and 3 Down _____ Gull
- 35 Dabbling duck common on south shore ponds and lakes
- 37 Big Reed _____, where a Common Gallinule was sighted this winter
- 38 _____ Duck, not a Lesser Scaup, has white stripe across bill
- 39 and 29 down America's symbol
- 40 _____ Duck, with a little something extra on the back of the head

Down

- 1 _____ Crow, *eh, eh*
- 3 and 32 Across - _____ - backed Gull
- 4 _____ - _____ Kinglet
- 5 Yellow-breasted _____, two! found at Montauk this winter
- 6 Keep your eye on the _____
- 8 Northern _____
- 10 Tufted _____
- 12 _____ Bunting, seen a few winters at Montauk
- 13 _____ - breasted Grosbeak
- 14 _____ Vireo
- 15 Red-shouldered _____ seen along Sunrise Hwy this winter
- 16 Name of ELIAS' newsletter; look on the cover
- 17 _____ Nuthatch, Merganser
- 19 "Yeah, Yosemite Sam... The roughest, toughest, he-man stuffest hombre" is ever crossed the Rio Grande" and I say that you're a _____ - _____ Sapsucker...
- 20 _____ Owl, Swallow
- 25 Baltimore _____ seen on a Winter Waterfowl Count this winter
- 26 _____ Gull, one of the unusual gulls seen at Bellport Yacht Club this winter
- 29 and 39 across
- 30 and 22 across
- 33 Lesser or Greater _____
- 34 Great or Snowy _____
- 36 Christopher, a great architect, Carolina, House, Winter...
- 40 _____ Warbler, a tail bobber

Christmas Bird Counts

Central Suffolk CBC

Eileen Schwinn

A big Thank You to all who were able to join this year's Central Suffolk Christmas Bird Count, which took place on December 27, 2021! The Central Suffolk count covers the area encompassing Calverton/Riverhead, Westhampton, Smiths Point, Wertheim, Terrell River, Shirley, Mastic Beach and Yaphank. There were 41 participants, and three feeder-watchers. The total species count for the day was 123, a total of 15,217 individual birds recorded. Compared to last year, that is a slight decline (126 species in 2020) but a considerable decline in the individuals (25,012 in 2020). Weather and food sources, perhaps, played a part, with this year's December considerably warmer than last year, and many sea birds and ducks still up north. Many other local CBC counts reflected a drop in total numbers as well – and we should all be aware of this saddening trend.

The various teams started as early as 5:40 am, and most were completed by 4:30 pm. Some teams were out "Owling" an hour earlier, with much success in finding owls – Eastern Screech, Great Horned and Northern Saw-whet. The 20 teams out in the fields, woods and beaches, spent over 60 hours on foot, nearly 35 hours in their cars, and walked almost 41 miles. They drove 234 miles – in total for the day.

Long-time participants – and a number of Newbies! – added to the success of this year's count! The full results, species by species, not only for this 2021 CBC but dating back to the Central Suffolk (NYCS) starting date of 1 Jan 1955, can be found on the National Audubon Society Website.

The goal is to enjoy the day, and I'm sure everyone did. And if this sounds at all appealing to you, please mark your calendars with Save the Date for 27 Dec 2022!!

Quogue to Watermill CBC

Steve Biasetti

I would like to thank all twenty-eight participants on five teams that tallied 11,968 individual birds of 107 species in 73rd Annual Quogue-Water Mill (QWM) Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on December 19, 2021.

In the Count's seventy-three years, spanning 1949 through 2021, 204 bird species have been recorded overall. Two new species – pink-footed goose and clay-colored sparrow – were encountered during this year's count.

Twenty-two species have been recorded in all seventy-three years. Another five (5) species have been recorded in all but one year, and were observed again this year: Long-tailed Duck (missed in 1955), Dunlin (1949), Belted Kingfisher (1957), Downy Woodpecker (1956), and White-throated Sparrow (1952).

In addition to the two new species (Pink-footed Goose and Clay-colored Sparrow), there were several other uncommon birds recorded during the 2021 Count. A Lincoln's Sparrow was observed for just the second time, a Snowy Egret made its third appearance overall, Turkey Vultures were seen for the fifth time, all since 2012, and American Oystercatcher, Rusty Blackbird and Common Raven were each recorded for the ninth time in Count history. Continuing the list of uncommon birds were Lesser Black-backed Gull (11th time), Fish Crow (14th), Laughing Gull (15th), White-crowned Sparrow (17th), Bald Eagle (17th, including last 13 years), Snowy Owl (18th), Peregrine Falcon (19th), and Great Egret (20th, all since 1994).

Among the few tough misses were American Tree Sparrow (missed for the 5th time overall but third time in the past four years), Eastern Meadowlark (missed for the 7th time overall but fourth year in a row), Surf Scoter & Horned Lark (12th each), and Bonaparte's Gull (14th). Other species that fit the category by being recorded in at least 60% of the seventy-three annual counts, but not this

year: Red-breasted Nuthatch, Common Grackle, Wilson's Snipe and American Bittern.

The QWM CBC began in 1949, but had few participants for its first 25 years. In fact, the count did not reach 10 participants until 1971, and did not exceed 20 participants until 1976. In the early years of the count, it would be reasonable to assume that overall numbers were handicapped by the low number of participants. Hence, the QWM CBC did not reach 100 species for the first time until 1974. Averages for the first 25 years (1949-1973) were 4.4 participants, 73.8 species, and 8,634 individual birds. The period spanning 1974 to 2021 shows averages of 25.2 participants, 107.3 species, and 23,946 individual birds. Over the entire term of the QWM CBC (i.e., the 73 counts between 1949 and 2021), averages are 18.0 participants, 96.0 species, and 18,702 individual birds.

As I have done in recent annual analyses, I prefer measuring the 2021 QWM CBC numbers against those since 1974, when the Count regularly included at least 10 participants and exceeded 100 species annually. The 2021 count compares favorably for number of participants (28) and sits roughly at the average for species (107). For the sixth straight year, however, the number of individual birds recorded (11,968) was distressingly low. In fact, the 2021 QWM CBC found the lowest number of individual birds since 1973. This troubling trend merits sober consideration as we attempt to make sense of the Christmas Bird Count data in the Quogue - Water Mill area.

I hope you will join us in the field for the 2022 Count (tentatively scheduled for Sunday, December 18th, 2022).

Field Trips to Shinnecock & Dune Road



Photo: Bob Gunning

Eileen Schwinn, Field Trip Leader

Hardy souls braved the cold, but sunny day on Feb 6, for the ELIAS Field Trip - and were rewarded with 26 species of birds! Thank you to all who made the trip!!

Starting at the western side of Shinnecock Inlet, we were pleasantly surprised by a rather low flying juvenile Bald Eagle who headed east, right over our heads, and was photographed by Bob Gunning! After viewing both the bayside and ocean end of the Inlet, we proceeded to Ponquogue Beach Pavilion, where Snow Buntings came out to greet us. The group then continued on to Tiana Beach

Pavilion, where we searched in vain for Alcids – but the sea was rather empty. A few folks then continued on to Hot Dog Beach, a noted “hiding spot” for sparrows, and our trip concluded.

Our next Field Trip is scheduled for March 12, 2022, to Elizabeth Morton NWR in Noyack, near Sag Harbor. Details and registration information to be sent as we get closer to that date. Here’s a listing of the birds we saw, and don’t worry if you saw some I missed, or you missed some we saw – visit the route another day!

Stay well, keep on Birding, and see you in the field!

- 2/6/22
Shinnecock & Dune Road
- Brant*
 - Mute Swan*
 - American Black Duck*
 - Common Eider*
 - White-winged Scoter*
 - Long-tailed Duck*
 - Red-breasted Merganser*
 - Sanderling*
 - Dunlin*
 - Herring Gull*
 - Great Black-backed Gull*
 - Red-throated Loon*
 - Common Loon*
 - Northern Harrier*
 - Cooper's Hawk*
 - Bald Eagle*
 - American Crow*
 - Carolina Wren*
 - European Starling*
 - American Robin*
 - American Goldfinch*
 - Snow Bunting*
 - Dark-eyed Junco*
 - White-throated Sparrow*
 - Savannah Sparrow*
 - Song Sparrow*

Suffolk County Parks Piping Plover Site Summaries

The Piping Plovers had a pretty good year last year. Seventy-eight pairs fledged 109 birds.

See the detail on the chart.

Site	No. of Adult Pairs	No. of Nest Attempts	No. of eggs laid	No. of eggs hatched	No. of Fledges	Productivity fledges/pair
Cedar Beach	1	2	8	4	3	3.0
Cedar Point	5	9	32	12	4	0.8
Cupsogue	9	11	38	26	7	0.78
Hubbard	0	0	0	0	0	NA
McAllister	5	6	21	5	1	0.2
Northwest Harbor	1	1	4	3	1	1.0
Old Field	5	5	14	11	2	0.4
Peconic Dunes/ Goldsmith Inlet	4	5	19	11	8	2.0
Shinn. East	1	1	4	4	1	1.0
Shinnecock West	14	19	70	46	24	1.71
Smith Point	33	44	167	95	58	1.76
Site Totals	78	103	377	217	109	1.40

THE OSPREY

Published by
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
P.O. Box 206
East Quogue, NY 11942-0206

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2022

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