



# The Sandpiper

## Great South Bay Audubon Society

A Chapter of National Audubon Society

### Sustainable Gardening

by Maria Brown, MS, PWS, GISP, Conservation Chair

When it comes to gardening on Long Island, what are the most sustainable and eco-friendly choices for plant materials? Native plants are the most sensible choice and are defined as any plant that occurs and grows naturally in a specific region or locality and typically a plant that naturally occurred in an area before disturbance by humans. These are typically not as readily available in local garden centers. Typically, non-native, ornamental plants are the most plentiful to choose from. These plants are also called "introduced or naturalized", because they easily adapt to our local habitats and then disperse into the wild. Some non-native plants become invasive. Invasive plants are non-native plants that compete with native plants for life sustaining resources; water, nutrients, and space. Invasive plants tend to form monocultures and decrease local biodiversity.



*Wildlife such as the monarch butterfly benefit from the presence of native plants.*

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS and MONTHLY PROGRAMS

All GSBAS Activities are FREE and open to the public.

Join us and bring a friend.

General Membership Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month, except May, (which is our Annual Dinner), July & August.

Pre-program refreshments begin at 7:00.

Program begins at 7:30 pm.

Held at Connetquot River State Park Preserve. See page 3 for directions. Come early to chat with our members and share your birding adventures with us!

#### Thursday, June 16, 2016

Our Annual Outdoor Program at Brookside County Park, 59 Brook Street, Sayville

We are happy to announce that **STAR** (Save The Animals Rescue)

will present a program on wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. They will be bringing a few ambassador animals to assist them, as well as other species of wildlife that they have rescued and rehabilitated. **STAR's** mission is to provide a safe haven for every injured or orphaned Long Island animal in need of medical care or rehabilitation that they can accommodate, and to return as many healthy animals as possible to their natural habitats.

Bring a lawn chair or blanket to sit on.

Brookside County Park is located on the north side of Brook St. in Sayville, diagonally across from Sayville High School.

Directions from the west and east via Sunrise Highway:

Sunrise Highway to Locust Avenue South, to Montauk Highway. Left onto Montauk Hwy. Quick left onto Brook Street. (traffic light) Continue 2 miles, just past Sayville High School. The entrance to the park is on the left. Look for large white sign that says "Brookside County Park". Park in the High School Parking lot or on Brook St.

### Advantages of Native Planting

- Plant biodiversity is a main benefit of native planting.
- Native plants maintain and support additional wildlife habitat (nesting and cover) for songbirds, butterflies, and mammals.
- Native plants create wildlife food resources (evergreens provide winter cover and berries).
- Native plants have little or no fertilizer requirements because they are adapted to local soil types which in turn protects water resources.
- Native plants require little or no biocide applications which also protects water resources.
- Native plants have no or low irrigation requirements.
- Native plants provide native buffers, edge habitat, and/or stop-overs along interrupted wildlife corridors due to development.
- Native plants are aesthetically pleasing! "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" Is this your mindset?

### Disturbing Facts

- One of the greatest sources of pollution to our surface waters and drinking water (sole source aquifer) is nitrogen loading from fertilizers and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's = carcinogenic) from biocide applications (SSERCMP, 2001, Peconic Baykeeper 2006, 2007).
- Most homeowner pesticide applications are 60% more toxic to animals and humans than those biocides used in the aerial spraying by the Suffolk County Vector Control!

### What to Do

- Homeowners along freshwater and saltwater shorelines can and should protect surface waters by bayscaping.
- Reduce the manicured lawn area within five feet of the shoreline by planting with native wetland species.
- Benefits include filtering and reducing nonpoint source runoff of fertilizers and biocides into waterway (taken up by roots of plants and typically broken down to less harmful substances), prevention of flooding onto property, and increasing wildlife habitat.

*continued on bottom of page 6*

## Mission Statement

*The primary mission of the Great South Bay Audubon Society is to advocate for the conservation of habitats for native birds and other native wildlife on Long Island.*

### The Sandpiper

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The Great South Bay Audubon Library is located at our Brookside Headquarters, 59 Brook St. in Sayville. It can be accessed Wednesday and Sunday from 1 to 3pm



**Our Spring Nature Walks are well underway. Please join us!**  
It's great to get out into the fresh air, get some exercise, socialize and hear the spring birds call. Our walks are listed on Page 3. No RSVP needed. (except for August Hummingbird Trip) Just show up!

## The Board-Walk by Annette Brownell

A South African saying says "to make peace with an enemy you must work with that enemy, and that enemy becomes your partner."

How does that work for us bird and nature lovers? I am proud – and sometimes exhausted – that GSBAS members and board are aware of, concerned and involved with so many matters of conservation on Long Island.

I'm sure you have read or heard about the continued and more heated issues with feral cat colonies on state land, and especially at Jones Beach. As this situation comes to yet another boiling point, some of you are probably feeling like this is such an old story and maybe you are tired of lack of resolution.

I think that as long as we continue to do what doesn't work, it is not going to work. As many of you know, I come from a cat advocacy position – a "cats indoors" position. I spend a lot of time and money getting kittens off the streets so they don't become the feral cats of tomorrow. I would love nothing more than to see feral colonies disappear.

But what can we do to heal and change the situation – how do we work with our enemy? First, identify who that enemy is. Mainly, I think that enemy is Ignorance. Second, in such an emotionally charged situation, we must educate with truth and compassion. Nasty jokes, under the breath comments and exaggerated facts only weaken our position. Third, we have to be an advocate for change and figure out how to work with those on the other side of the fence. Think about it. Let's brain storm profitable ideas and see if we can't create some climate change of our own.

There is never enough space to mention all the things that are happening. Good things. There is more and more vocal discussion about legislation in regard to plastic bag use. That would be terrific! Write to your county legislative representative to let him/her know you support a ban. Throw in a comment about balloons. We can do all this!

Speaking of all we can do – GSBAS doesn't sleep in the summer months. Coming up is our June outdoor program, the hummingbird trip in August (reservations a must), the beach clean up, Library Dedication and more.



## Does Size Matter? by Harry Anderson

*"Shakespeare says we are creatures that look before and after: the more surprising that we do not look round a little, and see what is passing under our very eyes." - Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, 1836*

The Nobel Prize in Physics for 2015 was awarded to two physicists for their work in neutrinos, those enigmatic subatomic particles we do not know enough about. It now seems that they do have mass after all - that discovery is what the Nobel was for. One step closer. Just to what we are not sure, but scientific investigation will fortunately persist in its passion to know more.

Neutrinos are produced by nuclear fusion in the sun, and 65 billion pass through every square centimeter of the earth, every second without doing anything. Yes, and they pass through us too, and the birds and the bees and the little foxes. Doing nothing? How can something do nothing? Guess it's one of those other elusive factors - "the unknown unknowns."

We seem to spend more time and money exploring outer space than inner. There are popular movies about exploring on Mars, but it is highly unlikely there will be one on exploring for neutrinos. Microscopic things don't seem to have the impact as things at the other end of the size spectrum, in spite of the fact that viruses and bacteria will get to us sooner than an asteroid. Elephants grab our attention quicker than Shigella sonnei, a microorganism that can make you very unwell. Unless you are stomped by one, elephants are hardly known to make people really sick.

There are more things on earth we can't see than there are those that loom large, and those parts of creation we do not easily detect have designs of their own and, like it or not, we are part of them. Maybe we should spend more time looking into electron microscopes and less time at telescopes. A virus called "Zika" has now shown us that again.

# Great South Bay Audubon Society Activities

## General Membership Meetings and Programs

All General Membership Meetings are held at Connetquot River State Park Preserve in the beautiful and historic main building. The entrance is in the back of the building; please park near the garages. There is a handicap ramp at this entrance. Please do not park on the grass or in the circle in front of the building.

Join us at 7:00 p.m. for pre-program refreshments and casual conversation. Our bird experts will be on hand to field your questions, discuss equipment and share their favorite birding spots.

**Directions to the Connetquot River State Park Preserve:** Approaching from the East, the entrance is on the north side of the Sunrise Highway (Route 27), opposite the Sunrise-Montauk Highway merge. From the West, exit Sunrise Highway (Route 27) at Oakdale-Bohemia Road, cross over Sunrise Highway, merge on to westbound Route 27 and watch for the Park entrance on the right.

## Louise Titus Memorial Tuesday Midweek Walks

**Tuesday, May 3, 9:00, Belmont SP** Exit 38 off the Southern State Pkwy. Meet in the parking lot on the east side of the lake.

**Tuesday, May 10, 9:00, Massapequa** Take Southern State Pkwy. to Exit 30 (Broadway south) to Pittsburgh Ave., go left 2 blocks to Parkside Blvd. Park on street, and walk into the park.

**Tuesday, May 17, 9:00, Hempstead SP** Southern State Pkwy. to Exit 18 (Eagle Ave.) and proceed south to the second parking lot. Turn right and then left into parking lot.

**Tuesday, May 24, 9:00, Oceanside & Jones Beach** Southern State Pkwy. to Meadowbrook Pkwy. South to Merrick Road (27A). Go west on Merrick Road a short distance and turn left on Mill Road and bear left (on Main Street) turn right on Atlantic Avenue to Waukena Ave. left to Park Avenue TO Golf Drive (brown signs from Atlantic to Oceanside Marine EC)

**Tuesday, May 31, 9:30, Shinnecock and Dune Rd.** Sunrise Hwy. East to Exit 65 South to Montauk Highway. Go east and follow signs to Ocean Beaches. Cross Ponquogue Bridge and turn left at the traffic light. Go to end of road to parking lot on right at inlet.

**Tuesday, June 7, 9:00, Lakeland County Park** Directions to Lakeland Park Sunrise Highway to exit 49 Lakeland Ave north to Ronkonkoma, continue North on Ocean Ave until cross RR tracks then make left on Johnson Ave, then 1.7 to park entrance

## Weekend Nature Walks

**Saturday, May 7, 7:00 am, Central Park** Leaders: John Gluth (631-827-0120), Steve D'Amato (631-264-8413), Nick Laviola (631-678-7866) Meet on Central Park West at 77th Street (opposite the Museum of Natural History).

**Sunday, May 8, 8:00 am, Connetquot River SPP Birding & Breakfast** Leaders: Bob & Edith Wilson, Ken Thompson, Helga Merzlyman. Continental breakfast hosted by Friends of Connetquot. Reservations required - call Connetquot River State Park Preserve at 581-1072 to register. Registration fee \$4. plus \$8 parking fee per car - unless you have yearly Empire pass.

**Saturday, May 14, 7:00 am, Alley Pond Park** Leaders: Mike Cooper (516-523-2369), Steve D'Amato (631-264-8413) Northern State Pkwy to Exit 23, which reads: Cross Island Parkway, Union Turnpike and Alley Pond Park. Go to Union Turnpike (NOT Alley Pond Park). At the signal light, turn right onto Union Turnpike. Proceed to the next signal light which is Springfield Blvd and turn right. Go about 4 blocks to 76th Ave. Turn right onto 76th Ave. and proceed to Alley Pond Parking lot on your left.

**Sat & Sun, May 21 & 22, 7:00 am, Sterling Forest and Bashakill** Leaders: John Gluth (631-827-0120), Ken Thompson (631-612-8028) From Tappan Zee Bridge, take I-87 to Sloatsburg exit 15A, take the exit for Rte 72 (Sterling Mine Rd.), 1-mile up Rte 17. Continue west on Rte 72 for 3 Miles until you reach Rte 84, Long Meadow Rd. Continue up Long Meadow Rd to Sterling Lake Rd (4 Mi). Turn left there and continue to Park Visitors Center parking lot on Old Forge Rd. Overnight at Wurtsboro Days Inn (845-888-8727).

**Saturday, May 28, 8:00 am, Jamaica Bay** Leaders: Michael McBrien (631-758-2350), Ken Thompson (631-612-8028) Southern State Pkwy. to Belt Pkwy. to Exit 17, Cross Bay Blvd. South. Continue south for about 2 miles. Look for entrance of refuge on the right (west) side. There are signs for park entrance.

## Young Naturalists Club

**Meets first Sunday of the month at 1:15pm, Brookside County Park, 59 Brook St. Sayville**

The Young Naturalists Club focuses on learning about nature and stewardship of a natural area. Outdoor activities include crafting nature boxes and pinecone feeders, nature scavenger hunts, hiking the trails, gardening, and maintaining bird-feeding stations. Indoor activities include examining birds' nests and feather displays and special presentations on subjects such as the Northern Bobwhite Quail, local marine creatures, and bird watching. For details on upcoming Young Naturalists Club activities, please email [info@gsbas.org](mailto:info@gsbas.org) or call 631-581-1731, or visit our website: [www.gsbas.org](http://www.gsbas.org). Registration is not required but recommended. Program is free, but donations or joining GSBAS is encouraged.

# CHAPTER NEWS

## Rare Opportunity to Attend New York State Fall Council Meeting-- Right Here on Long Island

Please support the Audubon Council of New York, by joining us at its upcoming Audubon Council of New York State's Fall 2016 Council Meeting, which, via its scheduled speakers, presented programs and workshops, connect our Chapters and members, and their important grass-roots level work to Audubon New York's work.

There are currently a total of 27 local Audubon Chapters in New York State, seven of which are from Long Island. Audubon New York and staff will be present, so here's an opportunity to meet your state representatives and a chance to meet many of your neighboring up-state New York Chapter representatives, who will also be attending.

The meeting is being held at the Holiday Inn in Plainview, NY on October 28th, 29 and 30th 2016. The theme will be: Sharing our Seas and Shores: With a partial focus on the L.I. Sound; Wind Energy; Important Bird Habitat (NY's Priority Coastal Birds: Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher and Least Tern); Plum Island selloff. Additionally, there will be terrific field trips planned right in our own backyard!

Lastly, to be noted the last council meeting was held here on Long Island 17 years ago! For more information you can email me: ah@braunsteinturkish.com. --Alice Heller, Fall 2016 Council Meeting Planning Committee and Secretary, Audubon Council of New York State and your Past GSBAS President

## Young Naturalist Club "The Art of Nest Making"

On Sunday, March 6, 2016, a seasonably warm and sunny day, Young Naturalist Club members enjoyed the art of nest making. Investigating nests found in the local area, the children determined some of the many materials birds use for nest making. A walk through the grounds at Brookside presented a bounty of resources and ideas for creating their own nests. Using twigs, moss, dried leaves, pieces of litter, string, and dried flowers,

many variations of nests were constructed. Jake especially liked using pieces of moss and dried leaves for his nest while Amelia chose dried grasses and feathers. Lizzie decorated her nest with pine needles and helped three-year old Scarlet to attach sticks and ferns to her creation. When all the nest making was completed, the children were quick to remark that the birds were certainly much better at nest building--and that was *without* using glue!

-Janet Gremlil

## Future Fundraising for Great South Bay Audubon "Cash for Causes"

Stop & Shop has introduced a simple fundraiser that doesn't cost anything more than what you are already spending at the grocery store. Here's how it works:

Great South Bay Audubon Society registers with Stop & Shop as a not for profit organization. We purchase gift cards at a 5% discount and sell them at face value. \$50 that you spend earns the organization \$2.50. It doesn't sound like much, but if you spend \$100 a week on groceries, in the course of a year GSBAS will have profited \$255.

If you are interested in participating in this program, please contact Annette Brownell at 631-665-4405 or [nettiesbaskets2@optonline.net](mailto:nettiesbaskets2@optonline.net).

## Art Show Recap "Humble Beginnings"

In February GSBAS hosted a mid winter art show at Brookside County Park. My original vision was that the building was going to be packed with artwork and people displaying art of every medium. It would be so busy that proper lighting would be a problem and champagne



Sharing their creativity, Jake is mentored by Jody.

and cocktails were flowing. Well, it was a bit more modest than that – but it was still terrific! Several artists brought their work and most stayed the day to socialize. We had all types of mediums ranging from drawings and photographs to wood, metal, mosaic and ceramic sculptures. We served punch and snacks.

The day was just so pleasing and personal. There was a mix of regular Audubon members and new folks displaying their art and we had a variety of people from across the Island come to visit. Certainly something we will do again. -Annette Brownell

## Library Dedication

Our Library Dedication to be held on June 12 is fast-approaching.

Over the last few years we have been re-organizing our member's library, located at Brookside. To honor our late-great member Larry Merryman, we are dedicating our library to him. Larry was an advocate for education and it was an honor and a privilege for us to have him as such an active and important member for so many years. Please join us as we dedicate and name our library in his honor. Refreshments will be served.

## Duck Walk Thank You

GSBAS hosted our annual Bob Laskowski Duck Walk on Saturday March 5 led by Bob Grover. We had a nice-sized group follow the path from Brookwood Hall in East Islip to several bodies of water, making our way into Babylon



# CHAPTER NEWS

where Karen and Jack Finkenberg graciously hosted a luncheon. Thank you Bob for sharing your expertise with the group and thank you Karen and Jack for a delicious meal, terrific conversation and your hospitality. Our society is very fortunate to have members such as we have.

## Great South Bay Audubon Showcases Photography at Local Libraries

Photographs of various species of Long Island birds by our members are being showcased at libraries around Suffolk County. Spearheaded by Chapter member Bob Glasser as a way of introducing community members to the many species of birds that inhabit this island, and also as a way of gaining exposure for our chapter.

The roving presentation consists of 16 photos, identifying the bird(s) shown and listing the location where the photo was taken. The main goal of the display is to motivate people to visit the many places on Long Island where birds can be seen, and develop a love

for birds and nature that will perhaps foster a desire to preserve this beautiful but endangered planet of ours. At this point all photos in the exhibit were taken on Long Island -- nothing especially exotic, but that is because we want to emphasize that there are many beautiful birds very close to home. No photographers' names are mentioned; there is a sign that credits the photos to members of the Great South Bay Audubon Society.

Just finishing its exhibit at Bayport-Blue Point Library, the display will be moving on to Middle Country Library starting in May. Check our website for future library listings.

If you are a photographer interested in displaying your photos, email Bob at [robertglasser@optonline.net](mailto:robertglasser@optonline.net) or call the Great South Bay answering machine at 631-563-7716 and leave a message with your contact info.

photo by Tim Meyer Jr.



Some of the group getting closer views of the ducks through the telescope.

## Barnegat Lighthouse State Park Brings Great Birding and Photo Opportunities

by Steve D'amato

I was invited to go to New Jersey to visit Barnegat Lighthouse State Park and Inlet by fellow chapter member, artist, photographer, and birding buddy, Bill Madigan. We went down to Barnegat on a Friday night and stayed overnight in order to get an early morning start at Barnegat Lighthouse State Park. Barnegat is about ¾ the way between Long Island and Brigantine and takes about 3 hours driving time.

Saturday went very well. Though none of the birds I observed were new to me personally, I was able to get closer to and photograph many with which I had never been able to get that close to before. These were the Harlequin Ducks, Brant, Dunlin, Purple Sandpipers, and Ruddy Turnstones. I took a total of 623 digital images, in which I would estimate 95% were actually good. In the Long Island area, we usually see Purple Sandpipers at places like the jetties at Point Lookout or near the Coast Guard Station at West End, Jones Beach (where I saw my first group on November 11, 1987). In my lifetime, the "Long Island" Purple Sandpipers were always much further out on the jetties and the images in the only photographs (slides) I was able to take were less than ½ the size of those which I was able to take at Barnegat.

My Ruddy Turnstone slides

were closer than the Purple Sandpiper slides, but nowhere near as close as these digital images I took of these birds. The digital images I took of the Harlequin Ducks were somewhat startling. These birds, which passed by us in groups of 6-7, were almost as close to us as Mallards, and the beauty of the drakes is stunning.

There was a surprise we found on the beaches. Running along the sand was the Ipswich race of the Savannah Sparrow. This variation of the Savannah Sparrow is a light-colored race adapted for sandy beach environments. These sparrows were a little closer than the few I have seen/photographed on the barrier islands along the south shore of Long Island. Though the size of the images of those sparrows between Bill Madigan's and my digital cameras were about the same, the resolution of his were much better.

But, that's what you get with a 400mm f4.0 lens without an image extender vs. my 300mm f4.0 lens with a 1.4 image extender.

Some of the other exciting things we observed was an immature Bald Eagle, which actually lowered its legs and started descending as though potentially going after prey, and streams of Northern Gannets over the bay.

This trip was a bird lover's dream and a wildlife photographer's heaven.



The spectacular markings of the male Harlequin Duck--seen clearly in this photo by Steve D'Amato.

# CONSERVATION ISSUES

BY BOB GROVER

## Imperiled Coral Reefs

In several of these columns over the past few years, we have discussed how coral reefs are having great difficulty in adapting to global climate change and, in particular, the warming of the oceans. We have discussed how warming waters allow more carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) to become dissolved and how that reacts with water to form carbonic acid, lowering the pH of the water. The resulting acidic brine makes it difficult for numerous marine invertebrates including many corals, to produce their limestone shells and skeletons. We have also discussed coral bleaching, which is an adverse reaction of reef building corals to elevated water temperatures. It now appears that the phenomenon of coral bleaching may be the more immediate threat, largely due to a climatic “double whammy”.

Reef building corals are extremely unique animals. The amazing colors of coral reefs are imparted, not by the coral organisms themselves, but by symbiotic algae, called zooxanthellae, which inhabit the corals' tissues. The algae enjoy a safe, comfortable home, free from predation, while taking advantage of the CO<sub>2</sub> produced by the corals through respiration. The corals use this CO<sub>2</sub> in the process of photosynthesis through which they produce oxygen and sugars, both of which are advantageous, in fact necessary, to the corals. For reasons that are poorly understood, elevated water temperatures cause the algae to abandon the coral tis-



sues, thus leaving them white, or “bleached”. If the waters cool back down, due to a seasonal or storm event, the symbiotic algae often return and the corals may recover. But without the algae for a protracted period of time, the corals die.

We have also discussed, in this column, the phenomenon of El Nino, a climatic event which warms the tropical pacific, usually for a period of a few years. Therein lies the double whammy. In addition to the long term warming of the ocean by global climate change, we are currently in the grips of a severe El Nino, about the only tangible benefits of which are warmer than normal winter in the northeast U. S. and reduced tropical cyclone activity in the Atlantic. But this El Nino is wreaking havoc with the coral reefs in all oceans. In Australia, for example, the famous Great Barrier Reef is being devastated, and there is legitimate concern for its long term sustainability. To make matters worse, El Nino events seem to be on the increase, and coral reefs are still reeling from severe bleaching events in 1998 and 2010. The prediction is for serious widespread bleaching in the

Caribbean this summer. Stay tuned for that. One prominent coral reef researcher has gone as far as to predict the total demise of coral reefs on planet Earth by 2040. And we aren't just talking about a few species of corals, we are talking about entire ecosystems, which support millions of species and provide untold ecosystem services.

What a tragedy it will be if future generations are deprived of the opportunity to see the amazing splendor of coral reefs in anything other than historical footage.

## Sustainable Gardening *continued from front cover*

### How to begin:

- Determine the texture of your soil (sandy, sandy loam, loam, silty loam, clay) If you are not sure, bring a sample to your local garden center.
- Determine the pH and nutrients in your soil (purchase test kit at local garden center).
- Use native plant resources and speak with your local garden center owner to determine the best plants for your yard and for intended purpose. (bayscaping, buffer or butterfly garden).
- Maintain the genetic integrity of native plants by purchasing propagated local stock.
- Never plant an invasive species. Check local botanic garden or native plant society websites for lists of garden plants that are invasive in your area. If they are growing in your yard, remove them. There is power in numbers. Work with your neighbors to promote biodiversity in community gardens, schools and parks.
- National Wildlife Foundation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat™



*Milkweed: host plant for the monarch butterfly and an important nectar source for many other butterflies and pollinators.*

program provides all of the information you need to create a certified, biodiverse haven for wildlife around your home using native plants and other resources. Among other things, use NWF's online interactive planner to:

- Get regionally specific gardening tips and ideas.
- Find the answers to dozens of backyard wildlife and natural gardening questions.
- Look through detailed native plant databases.
- Search the photo gallery to see other homeowners' certified habitats throughout the country.
- see website: <http://www.nwf.org/backyard/>

### How to Create a Biodiverse Garden: Tips from Janet Marinelli, author and expert on biodiversity and sustainability

- Reduce the size of your lawn. Think of lawn as an outdoor living space and keep only as much as you absolutely need.
- Model your garden on a plant community native to your area by replanting the shrubs, ferns and wildflowers found in native forests beneath shade trees on your property.
- Choose plants to feed and shelter birds, butterflies and other local wildlife year-round. Learn which plants offer food for various butterflies and their caterpillars, and which shrubs offer fall fruits to migrating birds.

Everything is Connected!

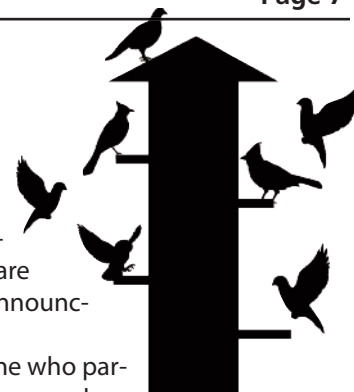
# BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

Compiled by Helga Merryman

It's the beginning of April and today is so crystal clear that it wipes out memory of the gloomy days that preceded it. Winter, not reading the calendar and not aware that it was supposed to end two weeks ago, froze the water in my bird bath last night. But spring is fighting for it's position; daffodils, forsythia and hyacinths are blooming and fruit tree buds are ready to burst open. Cardinals are spewing out cheery whistles, Carolina Wrens are calling their "teakettle, teakettle" and Robins are announcing "unique New York", these harbingers proclaim that Spring will again emerge the winner.

All too soon the Feeder Survey is finished for the 15/16, fall/winter season, I wish to thank everyone who participated, and look forward to hearing from you again in the fall. For anyone unfamiliar with the survey and wish information, the instructions will appear in the September/October Sandpiper.

The 13 participants for this last period were, Banaszak, Caruso, Fogarty, Heiserer, Harmon, Kremer-Parrott, Merryman, McNeil, Nasta, Puglielli, Thomas, Unterschuetz, and Wilson. The 11 areas reporting were Babylon, Bayport, Bluepoint, Deer Park, East Patchogue, Islip, Lake Ronkonkoma, Lindenhurst, Ridge, West Islip and West Sayville.



## Bird Feeder Survey: February/March

Red-tailed Hawk 1/2	American Crow 29/33	Fox Sparrow 4/4	Great Blue Heron 2/0
Sharp-shinned Hawk 4/4	Black-capped Chickadee 21/36	Song Sparrow 25/36	Canada Goose 5.0
Cooper's Hawk 6/1	Tufted Titmouse 10/8	White-throated Sparrow 41/44	Mute Swan 2/0
Rock Pigeon 12/21	Red-breasted Nuthatch 0/1	Dark-eyed Junco 23/51	Mallard Duck 42/6
Mourning Dove 104/87	White-breasted Nuthatch 10/11	Northern Cardinal 45/53	Hooded Merganser 2/0
Monk Parakeet 0/0	Carolina Wren 17/13	Red-winged Blackbird 9/86	Ring-billed Gull 8/0
Red-bellied Woodpecker 10/12	American Robin 5/39	Common Grackle 154/78	Eastern Screech-Owl 0/1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1/0	Northern Mockingbird 11/19	Brown-headed Cowbird 4/6	Cedar Waxwing 0/30
Downy Woodpecker 25/25	Brown Thrasher 1/0	House Finch 127/58	Boat-tailed Grackle 7/7
Hairy Woodpecker 4/5	European Starling 284/125	American Goldfinch 29/53	500+ Scaup species observed on Great South Bay from Sandra McNeil's home.
Northern Flicker 2/3	Towhee 2/0	House Sparrow 154/158	
Blue Jay 32/46		OTHER SPECIES:	

## Using Technology To Help Improve Bird Identification Skills by Mike Cooper



Technology has come a long way in the past few decades, and birding technology has advanced right along with the overall trend. Back in "the day" we used to wait for 6PM on Thursday night to call in to the New York Rare Bird Alert, pencil and pad ready to scribble down the week's birding highlights. Of course, now we can get updates within minutes, via e-mail text messaging or by logging in to listserves or Facebook.

While planning out a recent winter trip to Arizona, I took advantage of all these venues to research where to go and what I might see. But I also hit upon an idea that I haven't seen mentioned before- using web cams to brush up on ID skills.

I know that web cams have been popular among birders for years now. Most of these give birders remote views of nests- raptor nests tend to be most popular. Personally, though, as much as I like seeing Bald Eagles or Ospreys flashing into view with fish and serving up dinner for the nestlings, there generally isn't enough variety there to hold my interest for long. Feeder cams at places like the Paton Hummingbird Center in Patagonia, Arizona or Sabal Palm Sanctuary near Brownsville, Texas were more up my alley.

The Sabal Palm cam shows a near continuous stream of birds- Green Jays, White-tipped Doves, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Black-crested Titmouse and more. One day a flock of Chachalacas set up camp on the feeder- six Turkey sized birds crowded onto one platform feeder.

Over at the Paton Center things were a little quieter. But even though January was a little early for the hummingbird rush- the hummingbird feeder drew in birds that I hope to see on my up-

coming trip: Gila Woodpecker, Broad-billed and Anna's Hummingbird, while the other cam, featuring a suet feeder, produced things like Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Myrtle and Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warblers, Orange-crowned Warbler and Bridled Titmouse.

One surprise was the quality of the images that these cameras provide- easily good enough to identify the birds present. In cases where IDs might be challenging, like on some of the female hummingbirds, for instance, I cross referenced what I thought I saw with e-bird reports for the area for that time period. So when I thought I was seeing female Anna's Hummingbird, I checked e-bird and sure enough, birders on the scene were reporting Anna's Hummingbird on the same date. Not exactly confirmation, but close enough.

So here's my tip- if you're planning a birding trip, especially to one of the "known" birding hotspots, do a Google search to see if you can find any feeder cams nearby. Brush up on your ID skills, learn what to expect and whet your appetite for your adventure before you leave home.

The Paton Hummingbird cams can be found at <http://tucsonaudubon.org/work/patons/443-hummercam.html> Scroll down to the bottom of the page for the link to the suet cams. Sabal Palms link: <http://sabalpalmsanctuary.org/feeder-cam/> You'll have to wait through a short advertisement before you see the feeder cam. For ebird, go to <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/> and Explore Data.

Enjoy some good armchair birding!

# Great South Bay Audubon Society

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