



The **OSPREY**

March/April, 2008 — Vol. XXXVIII No. 2

Nature Programs

Brian O’Keeffe

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

7:15 pm – Nature Chat

7:30 pm – Chapter News

8:00 pm – Speaker or Main Event

MONDAY, MARCH 3, 2008

Beach Nesting Birds of Long Island by Carolyn Spilman

More than 400 pairs of Piping Plovers breed on Long Island, over 10% of the global population. These vulnerable Long Island nesters are a federally threatened species and are a focus of Audubon NY’s Long Island Bird Conservation Program. Learn about these birds, their identification, breeding behavior and habitat requirements as well as how you can help with monitoring efforts and habitat protection. Carolyn Spilman is the Long Island Bird Conservation Coordinator in Southold with special interest in the effects of human activities on wildlife populations.

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2008

Peru – A Country that will Astound You by Carl Starace

Take a visual Journey through Ancient Ruins, along Amazon tributaries and out into Peru’s Pacific waters to the remote Ballestas Islands. Carl Starace, a highly visible and active member of the birding community will present a slide show of his travels in South America.

The Last of the Grasslands

MaryLaura Lamont

UNFORTUNATELY, in the Town of Riverhead there lies a vast tract of great grassland habitat. I say unfortunately because Riverhead wants to develop all of it, and their concept of open space consists of soccer and ball fields. Grasslands are the fastest disappearing habitat all over America and therefore all the plants, animals, insects and birds that depend on the grasslands are in severe decline. The 700+ acre grassland site at the old Grumann (U.S Navy) Facility is now known as EPCAL. There is a group of dedicated people who have formed a Coalition to try and save about 500 acres of grasslands. Eastern Long Island Audubon, as well as North Fork Audubon and Great South Bay Audubon have all signed on to the Coalition. Although some (2) of the Town Board members have at least listened to the Coalition it still seems that it’s full steam ahead to develop fast and furious, without any regard for the birds and animals that are the last of their kind on Long Island.

These grasslands at EPCAL support the largest concentration of nesting Grasshopper Sparrows in the entire State of New York. It also has the last remaining nesting population of Eastern Meadowlarks on Long Island. American Kestrels and Field Sparrows nest in the woodland shrub borders of the grasses. Horned Larks, like the Grasshopper Sparrows and Meadowlarks, nest in the open grassland areas. Vesper Sparrows, Harriers, Whip-poor-wills and Nighthawks have all been documented in the past as nesters there. All of these birds are in severe decline and are listed by National Audubon as Species of Special Concern or Threatened Species. Even in winter these grasslands provide significant and critical wintering habitat for grassland dependent species such as

the Short-eared Owl, another severely declining species.

You would never know that any of these rare birds nest or winter at EPCAL. Until just recently, all the articles and ads in the papers (both local and national) talk about development of Ski Mountains and huge lakes (this project was already approved by Riverhead). None of the papers discuss the Short-eared Owls, the little Grasshopper Sparrows and why they are in such decline. Nothing is mentioned about the endangered Tiger Salamanders that are found on site.

So what can we all do about this environmental tragedy about to happen? You can sign onto the Coalition. The Nature Conservancy is the group who is organizing everything and if you have your own group please consider signing onto the Coalition. You can help out as an individual by letting your Suffolk County Legislator and State Assembly people know the EPCAL grasslands should be saved as they support critically rare habitat for severely declining species. Pressure needs to be put on Riverhead to think about the environment for a change instead of racetracks and ridiculous ski mountains.

As you read this now the ripping up of the grasslands is happening. In a portion of the old runway area where we found nesting Grasshopper Sparrows and Meadowlarks last summer there now is a huge pile of earth and debris. And just the other day, a Short-eared Owl perched on a stick right next to the wasted earth. It is not too late yet to stop the destruction of the last and largest remaining grassland habitat on Long Island. Please do it “For the Birds”.



••••• **In out next issue watch for**
Restoring Southampton’s Wild Places

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Membership Update

John McNeil

I would like to thank our chapter member supporters for renewing their January membership without me sending out notices. If you have not renewed your yearly membership that expires in January, please do so. This will save the mailing cost of a renewal notice being sent to you. Also, when renewing, please include your internet e-mail address so that I can send you a confirmation thank you. All membership expiration date(s) are on your mailing label of every issue of "The Osprey." All memberships have an expiration of either January or July. Please consider renewing early.



Field Trips



Saturday, March 1, 2008

Orient Beach State Park

Trip Leader: **MaryLaura Lamont**

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

Saturday, April 5, 2008

Bayard Cutting Arboretum

Trip Leader: **John McNeil**

Meet at 10:00 am in the parking lot. The Arboretum is located at 440 Montauk Highway in Great River, NY.

There is a parking fee. Empire Pass honored. The Bayard Cutting Arboretum was donated to the Long Island State Park Region by Mrs. William Bayard Cutting and her daughter, in memory of William Bayard Cutting, "to provide an oasis of beauty and quiet for the pleasure, rest and refreshment of those who delight in outdoor beauty; and to bring about a greater appreciation and understanding of the value and importance of informal planting."

The arboretum development began in 1887 based on plans by the landscape architectural firm of Frederick Law Olmstead.

Wildflowers and daffodils are featured in many native woodland locations combined with the site's ponds and streamlets. There are many opportunities to observe land and aquatic birds and occasional glimpses of fox, raccoon and other small wildlife.

We will enjoy the natural beauty and be on the lookout for Spring Migrants!

Saturday, May 17, 2008

Upstate: Bashakill Marsh/ Delaware + Hudson Canal Trail

Trip Leader: **Carl Starace**

Bashakill Marsh is the largest freshwater marsh in southern NY State, both it and the D+H Canal Trail are outstanding sites to see spring migrants. Join us, meetup is 7:30 am at Bashakill Marsh. For directions and more info go to the ELIAS website. Carl's e-mail is castarace@optonline.net, phone is 631-281-8074. This is really a beautiful area just to gaze upon.

Please join us for these exciting field trips!

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

All trips are free to attend.



Earth Day 2008

Join ELIAS and Quogue Wildlife Refuge

**at The Refuge
Saturday, April 19
from 11 am to 4 pm**

- Guided walks
- Canoe and kayak rides
- Crafts for kids and adults
- Birds of prey & reptile demonstrations
- New exhibitors
- All ages invited

Reports from the Field



LAKES AROUND PATCHOGUE

John McNeil

Our January 5th Lakes around Patchogue field trip was a great success. Twenty two ELIAS members gathered at the Swan Lake club house (most pictured above) to look over the lake to observe our winter visitors. Great numbers of Wigeon, Canada Geese, Gadwall, Ruddys, and a few Red-headed Ducks to name a few were seen. We were not disappointed at Patchogue Lake off of Roe Boulevard. Looking north, Pintail Ducks and Canada Geese were in fair numbers, and looking south, Ruddy Ducks and Mallards. Then we drove over to Pine Lake to look over the Ring-neck Ducks hoping to see the Eurasian Widgeon if one should happen to alight. We were not that lucky, but you can always live and hope. West Lake was empty, so we say good bye and ended a little past noon.

In all, I feel it was a good outing and maybe next year it will be even better.



Carl, right, with 2 members of the group watching the Barnacle Goose. Right: One of the Bluebirds at TR State Park



MONTAUK

Carl Starace

February 3 took us to Montauk for a great day of birding. It doesn't get much better than standing right below the Lighthouse in sunlight, out of the wind, with surfers dropping down the faces of large cresting waves and just beyond those breakers are Scoters (all 3 kinds, Surf, White-winged and Black) and Eiders in the thousands. The day started with a Merlin atop an Osprey nest on Cranberry Hole Road, Napeague. At the Lighthouse we found a fair number of Razorbills, [8], and a Kittiwake among the thousands of Scoters and hundreds of Common Eider.

The Barnacle Goose and two Killdeer were in the south field by the Dude Ranch and a flock of Bluebirds greeted us over the top of the ridge at Teddy Roosevelt State Park. Along East Lake Drive we stopped for some Tree Sparrows and then found a very cooperative group of Common Redpolls, [15], some Purple Sandpipers and Great Cormorants.



Montauk Welcomes European & Southwestern Visitors



Unusual visitors to Montauk this year included an Ash-throated Flycatcher (usually found in the American Southwest) a Pink-footed Goose, (shown behind the Canada Goose) and a Barnacle Goose (right). Both geese usually winter in Europe and are thought to have come in with a migrating flock of Canada Geese from Iceland.



Photos: Acadian Flycatcher & Pink-footed Goose, Bob Adamo; Barnacle Goose, Sally Newbert

Kaler's Pond Nature Center

Jay Kuhlman

The center is quiet now, but we are planning events for the spring through next fall. These will include many aspects of interest to schools, scouts weekends, and programs for children and adults.

March 2, Sunday 1:30 to 3:00 pm at the Center Moriches Library. **Shorebirds of Long Island** given by Carolyn Spilman, Long Island Conservation Coordinator Audubon New York. Learn about shorebirds, their identification, breeding behavior, habitat requirements and protection. This will include how to get involved in Audubon N. Y.'s Conservation Program.

April 13, Sunday 1:30 to 3:00 pm Center Moriches Library. Pam Musk, Director of Centers and Education for Audubon, NY.

Tips for creating and maintaining a garden that is environmentally friendly. Topics include water use, pesticides, invasive plants and how to attract birds, butterflies and other wildlife. We will then have a hands on experience at the Kaler's Pond Audubon Center to create a new garden.

April 27, Sunday 2:00-4:00, Earth Day/Arbor Day at Kaler's Pond Audubon Center. Celebration will include: planting trees and shrubs, singing and a live wildlife presentation. We will share tips on immediate and practical ways to lessen our impact on both our local and global environments.

www.kalerspondauduboncenter.org

New Hats & Bumper Stickers are now available!



They can be purchased at ELIAS meetings & events

Save the Date!

Birdathon - Saturday, May 10th

EASTERN LONG ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY's twenty-fourth annual Big Day of Birding is set for May 10th. This event will pit any and all birdwatchers against the elements – sun, wind, rain, sleep (or lack thereof) in an effort to count as many bird species as possible within a 24 hour period.

Why do we do this? Just for fun? Well partly – after all it is lots of fun. But the main impetus for counting birds on May 10th is to raise money for our organization. Birdathon is an important fund raising event for our chapter, allowing us to sustain our programs in environmental education, conservation advocacy, and nature appreciation.

What can you do to help?


First, you can sponsor our birdwatching teams by making a financial pledge for each bird species seen or heard. Usually our totals range from 160 to 180 species.

Second, you can make an outright donation to Birdathon.

Third, you can form a team of your own to count the birds. The rules are simple: Let us know beforehand that you will be participating; only count birds whose identity you are certain of; confine your explorations to Suffolk County. You can also send a list of species seen in your own backyard. You are welcome to participate for as long or as short a time period as you would like on May 10.

Fourth, you can join one of our teams out in the field for all or part of the day. All levels of birdwatchers – including beginners – are invited to participate.

Look for the pledge form in the next issue of the Osprey


If you would like to take part in any of the ways mentioned - or have questions about the event - please contact Beth Gustin (631) 848-9883. 

Conservation Column

Beth Gustin

Many of us supply food for birds in the winter, but overlook another important resource – fresh water. Heated birdbaths and water “jigglers” (gadgets that keep water moving in your birdbath and therefore less able to freeze) are two ways to provide fresh, unfrozen water. If you do not have either of these devices, remember to replace the water in your birdbath on warmer late winter and early spring days and keep the bath clean. On one recent

morning, after several days of freezing temperatures, my birdbaths were inundated with birds – Yellow-rumped Warbler, Song Sparrow, House Finch, White-throated Sparrow, Chickadees, Cardinals, and Cedar Waxwings. Supplying fresh water will increase the variety of species that are attracted to your yard – last year an Ovenbird showed up at my birdbath!

Remember, a fresh water source is just as important in the winter as it is in the summer. The birds will thank you! 



A Yellow-rumped Warbler enjoys a drink and bath at Beth's East Moriches birdbath.

Big Sky

Part 3 — The Last Installment

Gigi and Don Spates



Gigi and Don, daughter and boy friend on the Mad Mile of the Gallatin River

Though we ended Part II with our need to step up our travel pace to be able to exit Yellowstone Park by dark, we are most easily distracted! Right across the road from the Big Thumb Geyser Basin, movement in a burn area of tall, blackened tree stalks caught our attention. It was several Three-toed Woodpeckers working the tree trunks, the male with its distinct yellow cap and black-and-white barred back. Three-toeds are common to somewhat recently burned forest where they forage for insects under the bark of dead trees. Here was a fine example of the importance of fire in the Yellowstone ecosystem. This species of woodpecker needs dead trees and the great 1988 fires of Yellowstone give them ample supply.

Because the probability of seeing large mammals is greater along the eastern side of Yellowstone's figure-eight loop, off we went. Forget large mammals, we wanted bears and here is how bear-watching works in the national parks: you drive along until you see either a bear, or, more likely, several cars pulled over on the roadside. The question is asked, "What have you got?" If the answer is "bears", you join the onlookers. Now this is a pretty tacky 'wilderness experience' but, it really works: big bears, GRIZZLIES, just out there foraging and we just watching. The rule is that if the bears notice you, you're too close. It is difficult to imagine that they would not notice the assembled group. Indeed, the scene here is that those big brown guys choose to "ignore" us as

non-threatening presences. Certainly this would be different if we were some of the recently introduced wolf population.

Truthfully, the other mammals were also important to us: for example, the enormous male bison striding slowly down one side of the road (why? —because he could!), like a hulking Hummer SUV. We watched herds of bison with the still-orange-colored youngsters contrasting with the dark-figured adults, reminiscent to us of when we were first married living near bison in the Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma. We travel along seeing more grizzlies, and even further there is a huge male bison in his wallow, showing his dominance.

The effort to keep the plains bison viable since the slaughtering days of the 1800's has been a difficult one. As we learned just recently, most bison are not genetically pure; rather, for ranching purposes, they have been crossed with cattle. A prairie preserve attempting to reassemble native wildlife in northeastern Montana had to go to great lengths to find pureblooded bison.

An interesting bird observation, also along the road, led to some enlightenment for us easterners: a female Ruffed Grouse with many young was cautiously considering crossing the road. As we watched, we researched our state bird book which aptly commented that "western birds will move out of your way slowly, grouching all the time" unlike eastern ruffed that jump up with a bang at the sight or sound of a person.

Though short on time we just could not miss seeing the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Dominated by two massive waterfalls, several canyon-edge points give good views down its near vertical, yes, 'yellow' stone walls.

We have still a few miles to go before reaching the northern boundary of the ancient volcano's caldera we call Yellowstone, the origin of the park's geothermal features. We make one last stop. In the fading evening light the side of a canyon in near-darkness is lit by a stark-white ribbon of water cascading over the edge of what is here called the Black Canyon of the Yellowstone. What a magnificent end to the day, topped off by a great nearly nose-to-beak look at a bright yellow and dark grey MacGillivray's Warbler, singing and dancing its way through a wild rose thicket.

Into Montana now we stop at Chico Hot Springs for an overnight, a great meal, and, of course, a dip in their outdoor hot springs pool. The next day it's into the metropolis of Big Timber (pop. 1768) where we check into the Grand (and only) Hotel. The wedding party has booked the entire hotel! What wedding party, you may ask. Why the one that brought us out west to begin with!

The next day finds us ricocheting down the Gallatin River attempting to appreciate the scenery as we negotiate what they have charmingly named the Mad Mile. By now our party of two, us, has increased by two. On the previous night, the Fourth of July, we had driven sixty miles to pick up our daughter and her boyfriend at the Bozeman airport, not a mile of which was not lit with brilliant fireworks in this Big Sky landscape. Bright and early the following day the four of us whitewater rafted, with others so inclined, to the tune of five different people plunging out of the rubber rafts and into the rocky waters—one being the big man himself, Don, going over twice!

This will be an authentic western wedding,

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Recap of ELIAS Christmas Bird Count

Quogue-Water Mill Steve Biasetti

On Saturday, December 15th, twenty-five volunteers participated in the 2007 Quogue-Water Mill Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This Count spans the territory from Quogue Village to Mecox Bay, from Peconic Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. Fertile birding grounds include Dune Road, Shinnecock Inlet, Meadow Lane, Hubbard Creek County Park, the Southampton Village ponds, Big Fresh Pond, Scallop Pond, North Sea Harbor, and Mecox Bay. Weather conditions were fairly comfortable for the day (in CBC terms): temperatures hovering around 32 degrees F, skies mostly clear, and moderate winds from the north.

As it turned out, the 2007 Quogue-Water Mill CBC was a banner day, as 123 bird species (and 22,013 individual birds) were tallied. The number of bird species is the highest total since 1978 (the first year in which National Audubon has data for this count). Three species were recorded for the first time on the Quogue-Water Mill CBC: a Eurasian Wigeon at Cooper's Neck Pond, 2 Semipalmated Plovers in Hubbard Creek County Park, and 10 Pine Grosbeaks in Shinnecock Hills. Other highlights included Redhead, American Bittern, Great Egret, Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Willet, Razorbill, Monk Parakeet, Long-eared Owl, Northern Shrike, American Pipit, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll, and Pine Siskin.

Orient MaryLaura Lamont

Despite the awful morning weather of horizontal rain, strong winds and thick fog, the Orient Christmas Count on Dec. 29, 2007 tallied 116 species for the day. A total of 22,686 individual birds were counted by 57 participants. Terrific highlights included 1 Prairie Warbler at Orient, 1 Spotted Sandpiper in Greenport, 1 Sedge Wren on Shelter Island and 1 Laughing Gull in Southold. Other highlights were Black-crowned Night Heron, Wood Duck, Common Merganser, Peregrine Falcon, Iceland Gull, House Wren, Marsh Wren, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Meadowlark, and Redpoll. The afternoon turned out fine so despite the nasty morning weather, the results were excellent.

Sagaponack Hugh McGuinness

Seventeen hearty souls braved the elements on Dec 16 to conduct the Sagaponack Christmas Bird Count. Despite the rain for most of the day and the gale force winds until 1 pm, 116 species were recorded. Highlights included 2 Tundra Swans at Hook Pond, 6 Wood Ducks, 3 Common Eiders, 2 Rough-legged Hawks, 3 Merlins, 1 Peregrine Falcon, 1 Laughing Gull, 1 immature Little Gull, 1 Lesser-black-Backed Gull, 1 Dovekie, 3 Razorbills, 3 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, a Marsh Wren and 5 Eastern Bluebirds.

Montauk Hugh McGuinness

MEGA-HIGHLIGHTS: Pink-footed Goose, Barnacle Goose, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak

The Montauk Christmas Bird Count, took place on Dec 15, recorded 135 species, despite the lack of a party to Gardiner's Island, and a cold and brutal north wind. Amazingly, three species new to the count were recorded: the Pink-footed Goose at Deep Hollow Ranch; the elusive Ash-throated Flycatcher, which was seen in a yard near Rita's Stables; and two Lesser Yellowlegs the north end of Accabonac Harbor. Other highlights from the count included the Barnacle Goose at Deep Hollow Ranch, a Blue-winged Teal in the outflow of Pussy Pond in Accabonac, 1646 Common Eiders, 7769 White-winged Scoters, 4 Red-necked Grebes, an immature Black-headed Gull at Lake Montauk inlet.

Note: If you would like to be added to Hugh McGuinness' East End Birds please send an email to: hmcguinness@ross.org. You will receive periodic updates detailing who has seen what, and where.

Central Suffolk

First Of Many Christmas Bird Counts

Brian O'Keeffe

My eleven year old son Ryan and I enjoy spur of the moment treks outdoors. A weekend does not go by where at the very least we are walking along the canal in Center Moriches. We look forward to many of the ELIAS planned birding activities usually lasting through the morning hours. We have never spent a full day sunrise to sunset of birding. So we were a little hesitant to sign

up for the Christmas bird counts.

The morning was cold and overcast but no precipitation when five of us met in a parking lot in Riverhead and quickly we recorded some seagulls. We walked to one of Riverhead's fresh water locations and recorded some waterfowl. On to Cranberry Bog Park and then a dead end with a threatening sign not be loitering in this area after dark. Jim Clinton and Andy Murphy both with many years experience seemed concerned and disappointed with the numbers we were spotting. Definitely down from previous years. We finally had some success spotting a variety of birds in larger numbers by the McDonalds along the canal. One rather fast swimming duck required some analysis and discussion and a consult of our field guide. Definitely a Ruddy Duck! At this point I realized this was like a year's worth of birding compressed into a single day. We went into more wooded areas like Hunter's Garden and spread out. I didn't get to see the Golden-crowned Kinglet, but kept pace in the fields across from the sod farm with the Eastern Bluebirds. A Rough-legged Hawk put on a majestic show for us. At this point, Ryan left for warmer conditions and a hot lunch. Andy and I pressed on and experienced another lull in sightings. We drove along the sod farms and walked into the Pine Barrens with little success. What a diverse area we have been assigned! We headed back into Riverhead and recorded some Woodpeckers and Flickers near a fenced LIPA site. We spotted a Great Blue Heron. All told we recorded almost 500 birds and 30 different species. My son and I both agree that this will now be an annual event for us. ***I hope more people join us next year for their first of many Christmas Bird Counts!***

From Eileen Schwinn, team leader, Central Suffolk

A total of 42 hardy individuals, including four feeder surveyors, took part in Central Suffolk CBC on Saturday, December 22, where a total of 123 species were seen. 23,009 individual birds were seen and recorded from among the 11 teams, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Brookhaven Lab, and Calverton area. We thank all the participants and look forward to seeing them and any interested others next year!



Citizen Science

Lisa D'Andrea, East Hampton Assistant Natural Resources Director

Feeding the birds is one of the things that help me get through the long, cold, and somewhat dreary winter months out here in East Hampton. City people marvel at how year-rounders can possibly stand living "out here" especially in the winter. I in return marvel at how they can possibly stand living in the city for long stretches with little or no nature around them. I love my yard and my birds that come to visit!!

When I was growing up in Pennsylvania my mother started feeding the birds and my younger brother went through an intense "interest in birds" phase which I am sorry to say did not last that long but his interest was contagious and I started watching the birds. When I left home, I forgot about the birds. After my schooling, I moved around quite a bit and lived in cities for awhile. It wasn't until my husband and I settled in East Hampton that I started feeding the birds. That was in 1986. Then, a friend told me about Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch. She urged me to enroll in the program. At first I didn't want to make the commitment. That meant I had to know my birds and I had to put time aside to count them from November to March. Oh, I knew the usual feeder birds pretty well but I had never really learned to identify the sparrows. You know, one sparrow looks like another, right? Little Brown Jobs. Participating in Project FeederWatch taught me to be much more observant. I learned to identify the sparrows. As a consequence I became more interested in birds in general and wanted to learn and see more. It was not long before my husband and I were walking through the woods in the spring listening to, looking for, and identifying woodland birds.

When I first began watching the birds, I was very protective of them. I hated to see a hawk come and try to kill one of "my" birds. On occasion I would hear terrible screaming and I would run out of the house to scare the hawk away. Now I view things quite differently. As my knowledge and love of birds increased I developed a special admiration

for raptors. They are amazing birds and they are an integral and important part of the web of life. Now, when a Sharp-shinned Hawk comes swooping into my yard I watch it just like I watch my other birds. I have the feeders placed where there is ample brush and cover for the birds to dart in and out of as they feed. I try to level the playing field, if you will, for the feeder birds. Besides, if the birds feel threatened or too exposed they won't come to a feeder. Early on, I had had a tube feeder by a large spruce tree. The Sharpie got so adept at swooping in at the feeder and navigating into the spruce tree that the birds

stopped coming to feed altogether. When I relocated the feeders near ample brush, shrubs and evergreens, they resumed feeding. I was treated a couple of weeks ago to a Sharp-shinned Hawk taking a bath (alone of course!!) in the birdbath! (I have a birdbath with a heater and dripper.) I have never even seen one come for a drink of water let alone take a bath. This Sharpie was in no hurry and lingered on the bird bath for five or more minutes taking a leisurely bath and preening. I was able to run and get my camera and take some photos of it. I imagine she had just eaten and was not hungry. The other morning I went out to feed the birds and there were NO birds waiting for me which is a sure sign that a Sharpie is somewhere nearby. Sure enough as I approached the feeding area I saw the Sharpie clutching a mourning dove. I readily backed off. After about a half an hour, I saw a squirrel and some Blue Jays coming to check if seed had been put out. I figured the Sharpie had finished her meal and had taken off. I went out and she was still there just standing on what was left of the dove!!! She flew off with her quarry. What amazed me was that the birds "knew" somehow that she was not "dangerous" at that point and they were coming to



The Sharpie bathing and feeding

feed even though she was just twenty feet away. Another time, I observed a Sharpie sunning and preening in a tree fairly close to the feeder. No birds were in sight at first but as the Sharpie continued to sit and preen Black-capped Chickadees started coming to the feeder with the Sharpie only a few feet away. They, too, must have sensed she was not on the hunt and therefore not a threat to them.

Because I was closely watching the birds for Project FeederWatch I happened to be one of the first in East Hampton to notice and report the eye disease that swept through the House Finch population. Before the disease appeared I had scores of house finches. Then the eye disease hit and the population plummeted. Project FeederWatch asked participants to report the eye disease and Cornell Lab began tracking and documenting the spread of the disease from the east coast westward. It was largely because of citizen or non-professional participants that the disease was able to be tracked. To this day the house finches have not recovered to their former numbers and Project FeederWatch is still tracking and documenting cases of the disease.

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WATERFOWL CENSUS

A Day in Field

Bob Adamo

The 2008 Waterfowl Census, which ELIAS participated in, was held on January 12th. I assisted Carl Starace in counting all the waterfowl seen in his sector which covered both the ocean and the bay, from Shinnicock Inlet west to the Post Lane Bridge.

There were some nice birds that day, including Great Cormorant, Northern Gannet, Common Eider, Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, and a Snowy Owl, which Carl, arriving on territory a tad late did not see. The raptors, who weren't in the official tally, were still nice to see.

We had two other birds that really excited us. The first was a large, mostly white, hawk shaped bird which was perched in a tree at the water's edge...except that said edge was on the opposite side of Shinnicock Bay. The

best we could do with it's *Jizz*, was to agree that it looked less like a Red-tailed Hawk, and more like either an adult Goshawk, or, and I advance this possibility very guardingly, a white-phased Gyrfalcon. Since we were looking at the bird from Dune Road, we called Eileen Schwinn, whose sector we were "poaching" on. We described the area as best we could, but with poor cell phone reception, and less than perfect landmarks, she and her crew, could not locate the spot, much less the bird — hence the mystery went unsolved.

The second bird of interest, a Dovekie, was found in very good shape...but dead (somehow that doesn't sound right— but you know what I mean). This specimen now rests in a freezer at The Quogue Wildlife Refuge. How it got there was pure serendipity! Later in the afternoon as Carl and I were counting the Common Goldeneye in the bay off Tiana, a young lady, Julie Nace, approached and asked if we had seen the Snowy Owl. After telling her about my encounter with the bird in the morning, we added that we had passed that same location twice that afternoon without seeing the owl. Julie then asked us if we would like to see a

picture of a dead Dovekie that she and her family found earlier in the day on Dune Road near Shinnicock Inlet. We, of course, gave a resounding "YES", and followed her back to her car, where we met her husband and two children. She showed us a very good digital image of the alcid species, *Alle alle*. We thanked them, and told them about the Monk Parakeets (which we thought the kids would like to see) near Tully's Fish Market. We raced toward the Inlet. We missed the bird on our first pass. We turned around and proceeded slowly. However, the Nace family, unbeknownst to us, had followed — to make sure we didn't miss our quest. Now wasn't that nice of the Naces... Ugh! Seriously though, we lucked out, the Dovekie was still there on the shoulder of the road, opposite the fishing piers. As we mentioned before, the bird was in fine looking shape, so in it



One of the Monk Parakeets at Tully's Market

went, into a used sandwich "baggie", and then into my "Little Playmate", which still held another "baggie" filled with ice... can't you feel someone's hand in all of this?

Carl and I have since exchanged emails with Julie, and learned that they finally got to see the Snowy on their third try, all the way from Huntington mind you, but could not find the Monk Parakeets. Which leads to this sad note. I recently stopped by Tully's only to find out that the two Monk Parakeets were found dead one morning after a recent storm. It is presumed that they were electrocuted because of the frazzled condition of their bodies. The pole that supported their nest, also supports high voltage wires, as well as a bank of transformers, which during times of wind and rain can be very hazardous to any object that come in contact with the water induced tracking electrical current. A local policeman had told Mary, the manager of Tully's, that a pair of Monk Parakeets within the past few years, at a different location in Hampton Bays had met a similar fate.

On a brighter note, I had an adult White-crowned sparrow on my patio yesterday.

Big Sky *continued from page 5*

minus the gunfire, and our first introduction is at the rehearsal dinner served appropriately at a working ranch. We watch as a llama acts as shepherd and protector for a group of sheep in an adjacent pasture and gaze further to admire grazing cattle in the foothills of the Crazy (yes, that is their name) Mountains.

The wedding day arrives, our reason for being here, allegedly, so it is off to Thompson Ranch several miles down a dirt road. Pausing for the steers, which have the right of way by size and demeanor, crossing unguarded railroad tracks, we arrive. Arrive at the junction of the Boulder and Yellowstone Rivers where a huge open-sided barn stands ready for the party and kegs of beer cool in the rushing river water. Here comes the wedding party, the ladies in gowns, of course; the men in brand new jeans and black vests! Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore, nor in New York. Our daughter, no longer with river water in her hair, looks beautiful as her best friend's maid of honor. Indeed we all are decked out. We eat, we celebrate, we enjoy this cowboy weddin' and Don and Gigi become dancin' fools to the sounds of a great western band.

And that's our story of Big Sky and Wide Open Spaces.

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Spring Migration Table

This table is intended as a guide to the arrival of spring migrants. From Feb. through mid-April species often arrive a week or two earlier or later than the indicated dates. By the end of April arrivals are often predictable to within a few days.

Feb 21 - 28	Laughing Gull	Myrtle Warbler"	Willet	Eastern Wood Pewee
Common Grackle*	Greater-Yellowlegs	Louisiana Waterthrush	Short-billed Dowitcher	Swainson's Thrush
Canada Goose*	Tree Swallow	Rufous-sided Towhee*	Least Tern	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Red-winged Blackbird*	Golden-cr Kinglet	Chipping Sparrow	Common Tern	Cedar Waxwing
	Savannah Sparrow		Ruby-thr Hummingbird	Red-eyed Vireo
March 1 - 10	Vesper Sparrow	April 21 - 30	Eastern Kingbird	Tennessee Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe*	Field Sparrow	Little Blue Heron	Great C'd Flycatcher	Magnolia Warbler
Wood Duck		Common Gallinule	Least Flycatcher	Cape May Warbler
Amer. Woodcock	April 1 - 10	Black-bellied Plover	Long-billed Marsh Wren	Cerulean Warbler
Killdeer"	Great Blue Heron*	Semipalmated Plover	Catbird	Blackburnian Warbler
Robin	Great Egret	Whimbrel	Wood Thrush	Bay-breasted Warbler
E. Bluebird	Amer. Bittern	Solitary Sandpiper	Veery	Blackpool Warbler
Rusty Blackbird	Blue-winged Teal	Least Sandpiper	White-eyed Vireo	Yellow-breasted Chat
Fox Sparrow	Merlin	Dunlin	Yellow-throated Vireo	Wilson's Warbler
Song Sparrow*	Pectoral Sandpiper	Semipalmated Sandpiper	Warbling Vireo	Canada Warbler
	Yellow-bel Sapsucker	Whip-poor-will	Blue-winged Warbler	Indigo Bunting
March 11 - 20	Brown Creeper	Chimney Swift	Black-thr Blue Warbler	White-crowned Sparrow
Gannet	Ruby-cr Kinglet	Bank Swallow	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Lincoln's Sparrow
Bl-cr Night Heron	Pine Warbler	Cliff Sparrow	Ovenbird	
Snow Goose	Palm Warbler	House Wren	Northern Waterthrush	May 21 - 31
Amer Oystercatcher	White-thr Sparrow*	Brown Thrasher	Yellowthroat	Sooty Shearwater
Piping Plover	Swamp Sparrow	Solitary Vireo	American Redstart	Wilson's Petrel
Common Snipe*		Black & White Warbler	Hooded Warbler	Black Tern
Mourning Dove*	April 11 - 20	Worm-eating Warbler	Bobolink	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
Belted Kingfisher*	Green Heron	Nashville Warbler	Orchard Oriole	Willow Flycatcher
Common Flicker*	Snowy Egret	Parula Warbler	Northern Oriole	Olive-sided Flycatcher
E. Phoebe	Yell-cr Night Heron	Yellow Warbler	Scarlet Tanager	Mourning Warbler
Fish Crow*	Broad-winged Hawk	Black-thr Green Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	
Water Pipit	Clapper Rail	Prairie Warbler	May 11 - 20	<i>*Species known to winter on</i>
E. Meadowlark*	Virginia Rail	Grasshopper Sparrow	Red Knot	<i>Long Island. It is almost im-</i>
Bm-headed Cowbird	Sora	Sharp-tailed Sparrow	White-rumped Sandpiper	<i>possible to distinguish these</i>
Spotted Sandpiper	Upland Sandpiper	Seaside Sparrow	Roseate Tern	<i>wintering birds from spring</i>
	Rough-winged Swallow		Black Skimmer	<i>arrivals.</i>
March 21 - 31	Barn Swallow	May 1 - 10	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	
Dble-crested Cormorant	Purple Martin	Least Bittern	Black-billed Cuckoo	
Osprey	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Ruddy Turnstone	Common Nighthawk	

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Feeder Survey Report Forms

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

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

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.com and

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

Survey Dates: March 22-30, 2008

Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ Phone _____

- _____ Mourning Dove
- _____ Northern Cardinal
- _____ Blue Jay
- _____ House Finch
- _____ Black-capped Chickadee
- _____ Tufted Titmouse
- _____ Downy Woodpecker
- _____ White-throated Sparrow
- _____ Dark-eyed Junco
- _____ House Sparrow
- _____ White-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Song Sparrow
- _____ Red-bellied Woodpecker
- _____ American Crow
- _____ European Starling
- _____ Common Grackle
- _____ Carolina Wren
- _____ Northern Mockingbird
- _____ American Goldfinch
- _____ Red-winged Blackbird
- _____ Hairy Woodpecker
- _____ Common Flicker
- _____ Rufous-sided Towhee
- _____ American Robin
- _____ Brown-headed Cowbird
- _____ Sharp-shinned Hawk
- _____ Rock Dove (pigeon)
- _____ Gray Catbird
- _____ Yellow-rumped Warbler
- _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Other _____

Survey Dates: April 19-27, 2008

Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ Phone _____

- _____ Mourning Dove
- _____ Northern Cardinal
- _____ Blue Jay
- _____ House Finch
- _____ Black-capped Chickadee
- _____ Tufted Titmouse
- _____ Downy Woodpecker
- _____ White-throated Sparrow
- _____ Dark-eyed Junco
- _____ House Sparrow
- _____ White-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Song Sparrow
- _____ Red-bellied Woodpecker
- _____ American Crow
- _____ European Starling
- _____ Common Grackle
- _____ Carolina Wren
- _____ Northern Mockingbird
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- _____ Brown-headed Cowbird
- _____ Sharp-shinned Hawk
- _____ Rock Dove (pigeon)
- _____ Gray Catbird
- _____ Yellow-rumped Warbler
- _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Other _____



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Nursery, 2369 Route 50, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4738, or call 518-587-1120. The operator will be able to answer questions or direct you to an office for more information on how and what to plant.



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Continued from Page 7

I read online that 2007-2008 may be a year for major boreal irruptions of such birds as Red-breasted Nuthatches, Bohemian Waxwings, Redpolls, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks. The article stated that they do not entirely understand the mechanism of irruptive movements but it is most likely in response to shortages of food supply. For the first time in twenty-two years I have not one but at least three Red-breasted Nuthatches. They especially relish the suet! I have only had two Evening Grosbeaks come to my feeder in the last twenty-two years. They fed for two days and were gone. Evening Grosbeak populations have plummeted in the past forty years. Cornell Lab, in a newsletter, this year reports that instead of FeederWatchers asking or lamenting "Where are the Evening Grosbeaks?" they are getting letters/emails from FeederWatchers reporting Evening Grosbeaks in numbers they haven't seen in years. I hope that is a good sign. I will continue to closely watch my feeders and maybe I will be lucky to get some other boreal visitors. I am content, though, with my Red-breasted Nuthatches. 

Mark Your Calendars!

March

Sat., March 1
Sun., March 2
Mon., March 3
March 22-30

Field Trip: Orient Beach State Park - p 2
Kaler's Pond Program: Shorebirds of LI - p 4
Nature Program: Beach Nesting Birds of LI - p 1
Feeder Survey - p 10

April

Sat., April 5
Mon., April 7
April 19-27
Sat., April 19
Sun., April 27

Field Trip: Bayard Cutting Arboretum - p 2
Nature Program: Peru, An Astounding Country - p 1
Feeder Survey - p 10
ELIAS Earth Day Celebration at QWR
Kaler's Pond Earth Day Program - p 8

Events to watch for in May

Sat., May 10
Sat., May 17

ELIAS Birdathon & International Migratory Bird Day
Field Trip: Upstate: Bashakill Marsh,
Delaware + Hudson Canal Trail

*For updated sightings and other current birding information on LI check out
LIBIRDING.com*

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