



THE OSPREY

Winter 2023 — Vol. XLIXI, No. 4

New York State Ornithological Association Annual Meeting

By Tom Moran

SEPTEMBER 2023

New York State Ornithological Association, NYSOA, held its annual meeting in Tarrytown on September 22-24, 2023. The meeting had over 300 attendees. NYSOA's statement describing the purpose of the meeting is: "Birders and birding leaders from across the Empire State... gathered for a weekend celebrating the birds and birders of New York." The conference included the following activities to further these goals: keynote speakers, workshops, field trips, vendor/environmental tables, Young Birder presentations and, for NYSOA delegates, as distinguished from conference participants, participation in the NYSOA delegates' meeting.

Bob Adamo, our chapter's long-standing delegate, was unable to attend this year. Despite this, he continued contributing this year through his participation on NYSOA's nominating committee. As such, he, with others, developed the list of candidates for the officers and directors for terms ending 2024 and 2025. Eileen Schwinn and I were this year's delegates.

The highlight for many attending this year's conference was the scheduled keynote speaker, David Allen Sibley. NYSOA's preview of David Allen Sibley is as follows: "The Sibley Guide to Birds, published in 2000, was the realization of a lifelong dream for David Allen Sibley, who began painting birds when he was seven years old... The Sibley Guide to Birds contains over 6,600 original illustrations by Sibley, now recognized as America's leading ornithologist illustrator..."

He displayed some early drawings, reviewed the difficulty of moving from

black pencil to colored drawings and paintings and finally using computer graphics to capture birds in a way to assist identification in the field.

The other keynote speaker was Tom Stephenson, coauthor along with Scott Whittle, of *The Warbler Guide*, described as "groundbreaking" by Princeton University Press. This should be in every birder's library who wants to improve warbler id skills. His topic was Learning Bird Sounds.

Stephenson discussed how to improve recognition of warblers, with the focus on bird song. He eschewed the popular approach of playing a tape where the name is given and the song played. He, instead, recommended using pictograms of birdsong recordings discussed in an approachable way in his book.

He had a very good rapport with the listeners. He was interactive with the attendees, which, considering how many there were was made it a difficult task. His supportive responses to a range of questions encouraged participation.

Attendees were provided the opportunity to attend workshops of their own choosing. These were broadly categorized into groups including birding skills, photography skills and art. These included:

♦ **Eastern Bluebirds**, Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon, Sany Morrissey which discussed chapter's success at increasing the Bluebird population in Westchester County by

successfully increasing the number of birds over the last 25 years.

- ♦ **Sea watching on Long Island**. The speaker, Shai Mitra, discussed shoreline birding after major storms, with an emphasis specifically of the South Shore of Long Island, from Robert Moses SP to Montauk.
- ♦ **eBirding & Atlasing Tutorial**, Julie Hart & Jared Feura, Julie and Jared provided a hands-on session in how to use eBird in general, and how to participate in the ongoing NYS Breeding Bird Atlas.
- ♦ **Digiscoping Tips from Zeiss**, Bill Graham, Zeiss representative, discussed how to take quality pictures by digiscoping using both a cell phone and a mirrorless camera.

Continued on page 6



David Allen Sibley addresses the crowd
Photo: Tom Moran



THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Yard Birds!

Byron Young

Watching the comings and goings of my neighborhood bird friends keeps me entertained and refreshed. Whether it is watching a pair of Hummingbird's squabbles over the space around my Salvia plant or a flock of Blue Jays invading a fresh supply of seed. The activity around my feeders got me to thinking about all the birds I have seen in and around my yard over the years.

Checking my e-Bird submissions I found that I had seen 83 species of birds in and around my yard since 2006 when I started keep records for e-Bird. It is always exciting to add a new bird to my yard bird list. However, it is equally as exciting and entertaining to watch the regulars interact with each other and their cohorts.

The summer is usually a quiet time but as fall approaches and birds begin to migrate into our area setting up their routines for the upcoming cooler month. The Blue Jays arrive in numbers as the weather cools, and they seem to station lookouts around the area so they can communicate when fresh food is put out, especially peanuts. As soon as I put out peanuts in the shell, I hear the Blue Jays begin to call from all around the neighborhood. Yes, they compete with the squirrels and a couple of chipmunks for the peanuts, but they make short order of the peanuts that they can find and then carry away. Finding the peanuts is not the problem however securing them from their competitors is

another story. It is always entertaining to watch ten or more Blue Jays competing for peanuts. Once gathered they fly off either to hide their treasure for another day or to have their feast in peace and quiet. That is if Blue Jays are ever peaceful and quiet.

The smaller birds, Black-capped Chickadee's, Tufted Titmouse, White-breast Nuthatches, maybe a Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-throated Sparrows, Juncos, occasionally a Brown Creeper find their opportunity to collect sunflower seeds and smaller seeds to either eat in place or carry off for another day. I always like watching a White-breasted Nuthatch collect a sunflower seed and then scurry up the oak tree adjacent to my feeders looking to hide its treasure in a crevasse. I expect to one day see a sunflower sprout from an oak tree (not really).

Some of the birds I have seen do not partake in the bird feeders but are seen passing over such as Canada Geese or a Turkey Vulture. I have seen an occasional Bald Eagle gliding over our neighborhood which is always a great sighting. I do have a Coopers Hawk and a Sharp Shinned Hawk visit the yard looking for a meal. Most of the small birds have a wary eye for these predators and dive into the many small shrubs scattered around the yard to escape.

Then there are the various woodpeckers:

the common Downy Woodpecker, an occasional Hairy Woodpecker, the Red Bellied Woodpecker, and an occasional Flicker. They will collect some of the seeds but would rather have a suet cake.

I am sure that all of you get a great deal of pleasure watching the birds at your feeders. On top of the food that you put out remember to put out water for them as well. Last summer was particularly difficult with the lack of rainfall, maybe not so much currently. In the winter try to remember to put some warm water out for the birds.

Good Birding!



Winter Trips

JANUARY 6, 2024
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Second star to the right and then straight till morning... J.M. Barrie

Local Twitching – a Consummate Passion

Eileen Schwinn

As part of the continuing saga of rarely seen and (usually) difficult birds to find on our local, Suffolk County area, here's another example of the, at times, overwhelming challenges to "Get the BIRD"!

This Summer has been one of wonderful species appearing in unusual and at times difficult to reach places. Pelagic birds, defined as birds who spend "...a large portion of their lives on the open ocean", are usually seen, well, over the ocean.

The easiest way to see most is while bobbing along on a boat, or by spending time viewing through a heavy-to-carry bird scope at an ocean front location, sometimes for an hour or more, just looking out to see what the sea holds for those who look! Having done both a number of times over the past years, I was shockingly surprised to read a birding report of a Pomarine Jaeger on a local, Southampton Town Public Beach. ON the beach, not flying PASSED the beach! It seems this fellow was first mistaken to be a Frigatebird – but was quickly and correctly re-identified as a Jaeger.

Appearing late afternoons, and early mornings at an extremely popular beach, filled with people, dogs and, at times, pick-up trucks, a Pomarine Jaeger is pretty high on the "I've never seen this bird up close, and on land" list for most birders. The challenge? Its location was on one of two man-made inlets along the Atlantic Ocean – Sagg Main Beach. The beach is highly restricted during most waking hours,

to the lucky residents of Southampton Township, who purchased parking permits. The bird's appearance also coincided with the infamous Trade Parade, which clogs all roads every morning and evening! What to do? What to do? Well, being the thoughtful birder that I am (?), I contacted my birding friend, whom I shall call Birding Tom (to protect his anonymity....) since I do have the much coveted Required Resident Beach Parking Permit attached to my car!

Our plan was to meet in Bridgehampton, car-pool to Sagg Main AFTER the Trade Parade thinned, and see the bird. Well, we dipped. Reports of the Jaeger being present later in the day – now at Mecox Bay, had us rethink and replan – meet the next morning in Hampton Bays, car-pool to Mecox and try again. Well, we dipped again. Again, after multiple reports of the bird still hanging around, our new plan? MEET at Mecox, but this time, be there at the height of the Trade Parade hour of 7:00 am. Back road knowledge is a definite asset for pursuing, so I actually arrived at 6:40 am, AND THERE WAS THE POMARINE JAEGER!!! Another two birders were there – one from Queens, one from Bayshore. But where was Birding Tom????? Other birders appeared and the Jaeger remained. Again, WHERE WAS BIRDING TOM????? The bird flew – and, uh oh, how do I tell Birding Tom, "Man, you shoulda been here 15 minutes ago...", the universal dipping birder's lament.

OK – here comes Birding Tom, walking up from his ok-to-park-here-for-now car – "You JUST missed it!" – Big GROAN! Another birder, who had a short but OK view of the bird, decided to venture to the shoreline from our hill-top location, and scan the beach to the east. WHAT LUCK! He started waving like crazy – he refound the bird! Well, in all the years I've known him, I NEVER saw Birding Tom run like Forest Gump to the shoreline, with his scope over his shoulder, no less! YES, fist pump, YES – a decent, ID-able view of a Pomarine Jaeger on land. I strolled to the shore. Other birders appeared and joined us. Happy, happy people. We saw two birders across the man-made inlet, both looking in the wrong direction for the desired bird. Knowing them both, I phoned and helped point them in the correct direction! More happy, happy people. And, five minutes before the Ticket Hour of 9:00 am, the crowd dispersed. The Pomarine Jaeger joined a group of Great Black-backed Gulls, dwarfed by them, and just hung out there, apparently undisturbed by passing by walkers, joggers and dogs!

The Jaeger remained an additional day or so, appearing in the mornings and late afternoons. And then, as birds tend to do, it took off and was never seen again at either location. Probably trolling the seas at this very moment, harassing a passing gull or tern for a free meal. But Birding Tom and I – well, the third time was a real charm!

Not very colorful or very attractive, but boy, what a rare find on a beach!

Hanging with his buddies. Photos: Eileen Schwinn



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All the photos were taken right here on the East End of Long Island by members of ELIAS.

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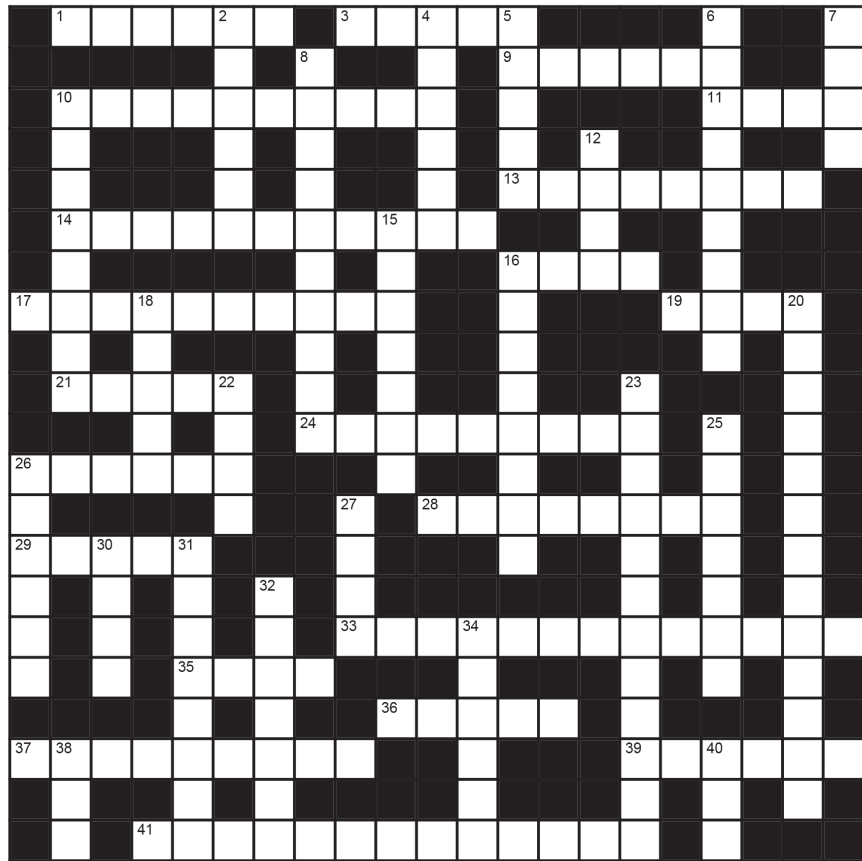
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Something to do with a cupper Tom Moran



Across

- 1 Something to wear in Florida while birding
- 3 _____ Goose, white with black wing tips and a short neck
- 9 _____ Warbler, Goose, Jay (although this should still be Gray)
- 10 See Cory's or... _____ from a Cupsogue ocean watch if lucky
- 11 King _____, the celebrity at Timber Point
- 13 (16 across) _____ colony is at Irmisch Park, Lindenhurst
- 14 _____ Hawk
- 16 _____ (13 Across) a colony is at Irmisch Park, Lindenhurst, or a religious person who practices self denial
- 17 _____, smallest of our three local Laridae
- 19 _____ Turkey, or what a birder becomes after seeing a lifer!
- 21 A type of 10 Across
- 24 Not so Common in NYS
- 26 Eastern _____, tail bobs, says its name
- 28 _____ Sparrow. An honest bird.
- 29 Rockin' _____, performed by Bobby Day in 1958, the birthday of a famous puzzle maker.
- 33 _____ Sparrow. *Oh, Canada...*
- 35 Buteo by another name
- 36 (26 Down) _____ not sparrow
- 37 Short-billed is much more common here
- 39 Common Ringed _____, found at 40 Down, only fourth NYS sighting!
- 41 _____ (31 Down) yank, yank!

Down

- 2 Wood, Hermit _____
- 4 Northern here, Loggerhead further south _____
- 5 Greater or Lesser, where's the head peak?
- 6 _____ Duck, a real jester
- 7 (17 Across) _____
- 8 Wave's coming, run away!
- 10 European _____
- 12 _____ boys, they march on St. Stephen's Day, celebrating this bird, once considered the symbol of the past year
- 15 Winter duck, male is gray with black rump patch
- 16 You'll be doing this if you miss this warbler for the year
- 18 Pied-billed, Eared...
- 20 Not Great. No waterproof feathers causes them to pose with wings out to side
- 22 _____ Swallow
- 23 _____ Warbler. Unrecognizable comparison of summer to winter plumage!
- 25 _____ Tern, Large red bill. A somewhat unusual number were seen this August on the south shore
- 26 _____ (not House) (36 Across)
- 27 If a birder doesn't (19 Across) about a lifer, they may do this... Or American or Fish
- 30 Me or an Eagle
- 31 (41 Across) _____, although I've never seen one eat one or sit on one
- 32 _____ Owl
- 34 _____ Swan
- 38 A wise bird, Athena's symbol
- 40 Me or _____ Inlet where 39 Across was seen

Answers to this puzzle are on page 11.

Bird Stories – Books for Gift Giving

Eileen Schwinn

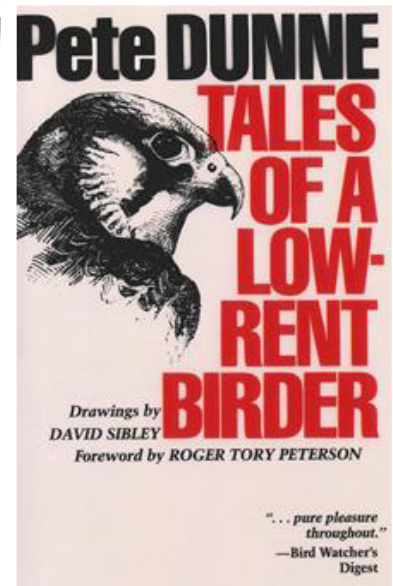
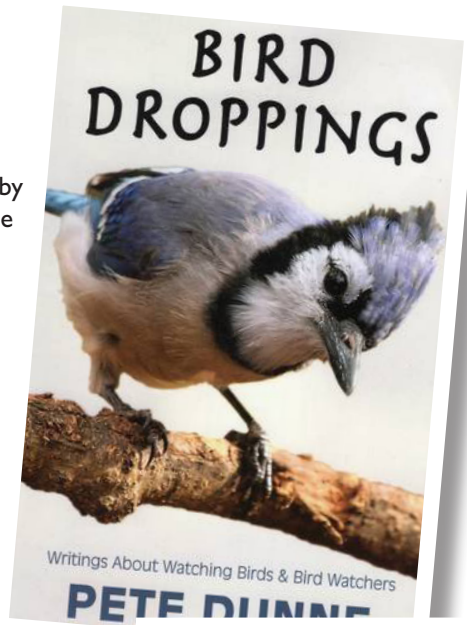
The holidays have passed, but its never too late to give some thought to gifts for your birding friends, family, or maybe even yourself! I'd like to share two books that I recently "re-discovered" on my dusty old book shelf! The name Pete Dunne should ring a bell or two in your heads. Not only the co-author of over a dozen specific birding books, he has been a frequent columnist of the New York Times, and several birding magazines. He is the former director of the Cape May Bird Observatory where he has made his home. He is well known for his skill as a birder – but equally important is his ability as a wordsmith – and has brought the wonderful world of birding into our easy chairs!

I pulled "Bird Droppings - Writings About Watching Birds and Bird Watchers" off the shelf – who could resist buying a book with that title in the first place? Published in 2016, this compilation of 33 essays touches on such titles as "Why are there birds?", "Field trip guidelines", and "Lawn Flamingo" make you wish for more – "Why you are lucky to be a birder" and "Letter to the jerk in the blue shirt". Almost self explanatory, the short essays make for a perfect glovebox companion for waiting in the car while a spouse or significant other heads into the hardware store or walks the shops at Tanger during

the cold days ahead. The forward by Ted Floyd is worth the price of the book alone.

If you want to go back in time a little further, pick up a copy of "Tales of a Low-Rent Birder – 19 Flights of Fancy by America's Second-Best-Known Bird-watcher". Published in 1986, you might pick a copy at a second hand shop or at a library or book store resale shop. (And who doesn't like to give the gift of recycled stuff to a friend or relative?). What I found most amazing is, almost in passing, Mr Dunne's observations on birds and their numbers in those 1980's is very numbing and sobering. We've come a long way, sadly, and perhaps the point of these books is we all better be aware of just how much we've lost in the birding world, and we better Fix It, and fix it soon.

Both books are guaranteed to bring a smile, and perhaps a tear or two – but if you don't see yourself or a friend in any of the compilation of essays, you need to get out more - AND SEE THE BIRDS!!



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Continued from page 1

- ♦ **Improving Your Photography**, Tom Warren and Joe Watson, discussed camera types especially the SLR and new mirrorless models as well as some technical features of the cameras and software to improve photograph quality
- ♦ **Writing Nature**, Kathleen Williamson discussed nature writing through the inspiration and imitation of the style of an author that the writer found particularly powerful.
- ♦ **Birds and Windows**, Aniko Totha, American Bird Conservancy, she gave advice on reducing bird window collisions for homeowners. ABC estimates that of all bird deaths caused by window strikes, 44% are caused by residences and other similar buildings. To learn more <https://abcbirds.org/solutions/prevent-home-collisions/> I spoke with her at the ABC's booth and she also discussed wind turbine bird strikes including possible solutions. Check out the ABC's website!

Hallway booths were provided to vendors and environmental groups in the halls that bordered the main meeting room. These included local artists, NYS Audubon chapters (Bedford, Montezuma, Central Westchester, Hudson River, Chemung, Putnam, Orange County), and some environmental groups (American Bird Conservancy, Westchester Parks, Hudson Valley Birding, NYSP Piping Plover, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Bronx River Sound Shore, eBird/Merlin, NYS Young Birders.

One of my favorites was New York City, Dept. of Environmental Protection. The



Field trips went to Marshlands Conservancy (left)

Eileen and Tom, our ELIAS delegates, enjoyed the field trip to Lenoir Preserve. (below)

representative, Christopher Nadareski, appeared in an episode of Chris Cooper's National Geographic's series "Extraordinary Birder" concerning Peregrine Falcon nesting on NYC bridges. He had an impressive display of bird skins, one of which I noticed was a Kentucky Warbler, a somewhat uncommon bird for New York State!

What would a birding conference be without some field trips?! Sixteen walks were planned for Saturday and Sunday. Planned trips ranged from a kayak outing(!) (canceled, though, because of the weather), walks on estates now managed by local governments, walks in parks and preserves.

Eileen and I attended the Marshlands Conservancy walk, led by Tom Burke and Gail Benson, and Lenoir Preserve, led by Michael Bochnick. Weather conditions were not ideal as it rained off and on during both trips. Despite this, turnout was good, everyone was convivial, and some good birds were seen including Lincoln Sparrow, Forster's Terns, Northern



Harrier, Marsh Wren, Bald Eagle, Cape May, Northern Parula, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, and Black-throated Blue Warblers.

Two of ELIAS's members were recognized for their recent contributions. Pat Aitkin has served as NYSOA's president and is relinquishing that role to Anne Swaim of Saw Mill River Audubon. Darlene Massey was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for landowners who generously allowed access to their property. Darlene was fortunate enough, in no small part due to her excellent gardening skills, to have attracted a Calliope Hummingbird to her yard November 7-23, 2022. The rarity of this species attracted over 300 birders. Not only were they welcomed onto her property, coffee and treats were provided(!), which was going above and beyond!

Continued on page 9



Bird skins displayed by Christopher Nadareski. One was a Kentucky Warbler, an unusual bird for New York State.

Photo: Tom Moran



Continued from page 6

New York State Young Birders Club provides youthful birders field trips throughout the state and the opportunity, through a members' field work and guidance by the coordinators, to make scientific contributions.

Young Birders participated in the conference in two ways: providing an entertaining, competitive quiz and a scientific paper prepared and presented by one of the group.

Emma Murphy, a Young Birder from Long Island, gave a scientific presentation regarding the angle of descent and position of wings regarding diving Belted Kingfishers into water of different depths and clarity. The field work required, the organization of the data, the statistical analysis and the maturity of presentation was, in addition to being informative, served as a reminder what good work the Young Birder group does and justifies our board's continued support for this organization.

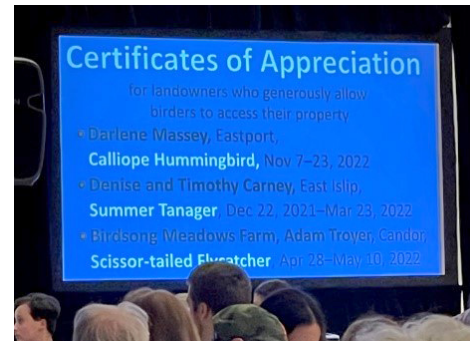
After the opening night's meet and greet, the Young Birders presented a quiz for the attendees organized by teams at tables. They cropped pictures they had taken throughout the year to make identifications challenging. So challenging in fact, that, after showing a very limited view of a Piping Plover, the crowd grew somewhat vocal. One Young Birder began waving her arms, shouting "order in the court." People laughed and all returned to good humor. Hysterical!

There are 18 partner organizations. Our Chapter, in fact, is one of a few clubs that has supported the Young Birders since its inception in 2010. To learn how to become more involved young birders should check out: <http://www.nysyoungbirders.org/>

A significant part of the conference is the NYSOA Delegates' Meeting. Pat Aitkin, outgoing president of NYSOA, ran the meeting. An especially interesting presentation was given by Angelena Ross, NYS DEC, which described DEC's effort to reestablish Spruce Grouse in the Adirondacks. The project seems to be succeeding in increasing the population of this beautiful species in the Adirondacks, one of its historic territories.



Anne Swaim (left) future president pictured with outgoing president Pat Aikin take the podium. Photo: Tom Moran.



Two ELIAS members received recognition from NYSOA. Photo: Tom Moran.

Other issues included the following. The meeting also welcomed two new Audubon chapters to NYSOA: Central Westchester and Putnam Heights. Andy Mason, for the Conservation Committee, pointed out that NYSOA was available to support local members with conservation efforts. NYSOA is continuing the data collection for the Breeding Bird Atlas. Some personnel changes on some projects such as the Records Committee and a request for additional editors for NYSOA's *Kingbird* publication were discussed.

Anyone can attend a NYSOA Annual Meeting – it's really for all levels of birding experience. (As an ELIAS member, you are able to participate.) More information about NYSOA, including their annual conference, may be found on their website: NYSBIRDS.ORG.

As given on NYSOA's website, "The objectives of the New York State Ornithological Association are to document the ornithology of New York State; to foster interest in and appreciation of birds; and to protect birds and their habitats." Using a variety of activities over the course of the conference as discussed above, these issues were addressed and participants are now better able to accomplish the goals that we all share. Kudos to Saw Mill River Audubon for hosting a well-run event. ELIAS's participation in NYSOA allows our chapter to be more effective in accomplishing the shared goals our group has with NYSOA and all the other members in New York State.

**Answers to Tom Moran's Puzzle on page 6
Something to do with a cuppa...**



THE OSPREY

Published by
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
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