



The OSPREY

March/April 2010 — Vol. XXXV No. 2

If this is January, There Must be Birds Out There!!

Eileen Schwinn

The hobby of birding means different things to different people. Some view birds from the warmth of their living room or kitchen. Others travel to far away and exotic places to observe. And some become obsessed with keeping lists. Why, some people even fall into all these categories!

Every “lister” (those who write down and keep track of the birds they see) finds it a challenge once the number of birds seen goes into the hundreds. How to keep the hobby fresh and exciting? Well, begin each January with a wiped-clean slate! No birds, no list! Begin again! The adventure repeats!

This January, in a friendly little competition with some folks in Connecticut, we all set out to reach a specific goal by January 31st. Those in CT—90 birds in CT. Those on LI—100 in NY. We live on the shoreline—more birds possible. My birding neighbor and I informally decided to combine our efforts this year, and bird most of the month together—more eyes to see the birds and less gas used to travel about. We each had time scheduled out of state, so we knew there was a lot of ground to be covered to reach our goal.

Jan. 1—after recording the backyard feeders, we drove to Southampton to start the day looking at the rare-for-Long Island Black Guillemot, which had been seen in the company of Long-

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NATURE PROGRAMS

Monday, March 1, 2010
beginning at 7:15 pm

Reptile Conservation Projects, USA

Presented by Peter Warny

This illustrated presentation will discuss various field ecology projects to conserve reptile populations in both rural and urban landscapes.

Topics depicted include habitat management and monitoring, exotic and invasive species, parasites, predation and research on both common and rare species. Areas discussed include: Long Island, the east coast and mid-Atlantic, Piedmont, Appalachians Mountains, Louisiana marshes, Mississippi River and Florida sandhills.

Peter Warny has been involved in reptile ecology and conservation for over 30 years. He travels extensively to reptile conservation field studies and is currently involved in projects in Florida, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Canada.

And yes, he will be bringing a few live guests with him.



Monday, April 5, 2010
beginning at 7:15 pm

Horseshoe Crabs

Kim McGowan

Kim McGowan of the NYSDRC will give us a program about the status of the horseshoe crab on Long Island. The eggs of these crabs are an important food source for migrating birds as they travel north to their breeding grounds.

Thanks go to Dan Wilson for recommending this program to me. Let me encourage anyone else to let me know of any person/program they think would be interesting to our membership! Bob Adamo

Meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge. The directions are on the website. There is a nature chat at 7:15 pm, a meeting at 7:30 and the speaker at 8:00 pm.

Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 17th from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Come and celebrate nature and our lovely planet at the Refuge during this all day affair! The day will include guided nature walks, live animal presentations, crafts for children, environmental exhibitors, and self-guided kayaking and canoeing on Old Ice Pond.

This celebration is offered by Quogue Wildlife Refuge and Eastern Long Island Audubon Society.

A great day for all ages!

No reservations necessary. Rain or shine.

Field Trips

John McNeil

I had to cancel our Eaglefest 2010 field trip because of impending snow. Although very little snow fell here, the National Weather Service predicted hazardous driving conditions, so thinking of our member's safety I decided to cancel the trip. Next year I'll have a snow date. We will venture up on our own if necessary, to view the Eagles along the Hudson River.

Now on a happier note, I have begun to think of spring field trips. Soon the crocuses will be popping and spring migration will be here. I have some exciting field trips planned. In March I am going to do an old favorite. We will visit Belmont and Argyle Lakes and the West End of Jones Beach, hoping to catch some north-bound migrants. In April we will travel along the North Fork to view Ospreys and any other species that decide to pop in. In May I have planned a full month of birding to fill your quest so please come along with our trip leaders for these exciting adventures. We are going to visit the William Floyd Estate in Mastic, Hunters' Garden, Terrell River County Park, Hallockville Farm and Maple Swamp and maybe more. These are excellent birding spots and your trip leaders are very excited to share the pleasure of birding and the spring migration. In June I want to visit Doodletown Road at Bear Mountain State Park again, but this time I am going to go up the day before and if you want to join me, will can have dinner, kick back and sample a few of our favorite libations (informal usage) while talking of birds and birding conquests.

I am working on an email notification list. If you would like to subscribe please send an email to: birdwchr@gmail.com, in the subject line state "Subscribe" and in the text your name and email address. Then you will be placed in my email list to receive time sensitive messages.

I would to remind each member to check the mailing label for your membership expiration date. Please renew. And to those members who have renewed, thank you for your continued membership support.

That's it for now and good birding.

John

**Saturday, March 6, 2010,
Meet at 8 am**

Trip Leader: John McNeil

**Belmont Lake, Argyle Lake,
Ocean Parkway & the West End of
Jones Beach and Robert Moses
State Park**

By this time, the earliest of the north-bound spring migrants will have already arrived in the area. We can expect to find some of these: Red-winged Blackbirds, Grackles, Cowbirds and Killdeer. Mostly, however, we will see birds that have wintered on the Island. Among these, we are especially hoping to find such species as Red-necked Grebe, Eurasian Wigeon, Red-head, Harlequin Duck and Purple Sandpiper. Meet in the east end parking lot at the old Home Depot store along the Sunrise Highway at Route 112 in Patchogue. We will leave the parking lot at 8:00 am. Bring a lunch as we will not return until around 5 pm. For more details, contact trip leader John McNeil at 631.281.2623 at home or on the day of the trip, by mobile telephone at 631.219.8947 or send email to birdwchr@gmail.com.

**Saturday, April 3, 2010
Meet at 8 am**

Trip Leader: John McNeil

**Osprey Along the North Fork
from Riverhead to Orient Point**

Migrating Osprey return to Long Island in the middle of March. For our April trip, we will visit Osprey nesting areas from Riverhead to Orient Point to see how many birds have returned and are starting to nest. Our route brings us by most of the known Osprey nests on the North Fork. Other spring migrants that are often found on this trip are Tree Swallow, Pine Warbler, Great and Snowy Egret. Lingering waterfowl can also be expected. We will leave from the parking lot of the County Center along Route 51 in Riverhead at 8:00 am. Bring a lunch as we will not return until around 5 pm. For more details, contact trip leader John McNeil at 631.281.2623 at home or on the day of the trip, by mobile telephone at 631.219.8947 or send email to birdwchr@gmail.com,



From the Field

Patchogue Lakes: On Saturday, January 9th seven intrepid birders braved the ° temperature with 7° wind chill for this annual outing.

Swan Lake in East Patchogue was the first stop. Because there are springs feeding this lake, the water here stays open. If you are out and about this winter stop by. It can be worth a trip. Some of the highlights we encountered: Ring-neck Duck, Gadwall, American Coot, Ruddy Duck, Common Merganser, Redheaded Duck, American Widgeon, Great Blue Heron, Lesser Scaup.



ANDY MURPHY



Intrepid birders at Roe Blvd.: John McNeil, Andy Murphy and Larry Sturm.

Hooded Merganser and Pied-bill Grebe. At Patchogue Lake along Roe Blvd. The highlights included: Belted Kingfisher, Pied-bill Grebe, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Ring-neck Duck, Hooded Merganser.



Among the many ducks that winter on Long Island, this male Gadwall, seen on Swan Lake, can appear drab from a distance. Up close, the male reveals a remarkable pattern of intricate markings.

JoLeen RichMan—The Story of a Dovekie

Eileen Schwinn

Once upon a time (Dec. 27, 2009), a group of four friends (two from Connecticut, one from Nassau County, and one ELIAS member) took a day trip to Eastern Long Island, in search of a little fresh air and a few good birds. Their day started in fog and inclemency, but ended in a Real Wildlife Adventure.

After a side trip to Sebonac Inlet to see a short-term visitor from The North (a Black Guillemot), the four hit the highway and proceeded to Montauk Point—their real destination for the day. Time was spent in the wind and cold, viewing out from behind the closed Visitor's Center, and the usual ocean-loving waterfowl and gulls were observed. After a few hours, the friends began their trip back home, with plans to check out well-known birding spots in and around the Montauk area. Ditch Plains, Lake Montauk, Montauk Harbor—all interesting but predictable. A trip around the campground at Hither Hills State Park collected no birds, but did attract the attention of a Security Guard, who promptly and efficiently informed the four that they were in an area which was Closed To The Public (tho' they felt it was quite inadequately marked as such...) Ready to call it a day and head west, one member of the group insisted on one last stop to view the Ocean.

The three others grumbled—hadn't there been quite enough Ocean Water seen from all the other stops made that day???—but gave in. They left their car LEGALLY in the Park, and walked down to the shoreline, almost as the sun was setting. After checking out what looked like an interesting piece of driftwood, *She Who Insisted On Stopping* noticed a little "thing" left by earlier waves. "A Dovekie!", called out another of the group. And yes, it WAS a bedraggled-looking, size-of-a-baked-potato bird, just standing there! The group watched as suddenly a wave overtook the little bird and tumbled it! Obviously, this bird was in distress—but what could the group do? While one member raced back to the car for a towel—and a camera—another called The Wildlife Rescue Center of the Hamptons, in Hampton Bays, (631-

728-9453 (WILD) to ask if they had any suggestions as to how to care for this overwhelmed little sea-loving and living alcid. Told that the Center would remain open until the group arrived with its precious cargo, the Four Friends picked the bird up carefully, wrapped it in a towel, placed it in a small box and tucked a blanket around it (to prevent rolling around at each street corner), and proceeded to drive as fast as legally possible to the Rescue Center.

Arriving 50 minutes later (and well after dark) the Dovekie was handed over to the waiting wildlife rehabilitator. The Dovekie looked a little more perky than when he was placed in the box, and as he



nipped at the attendant's hand, the group was told, "That's the third one we've gotten in today. But I gotta tell ya, we haven't had too much luck in saving these guys in the past. They are so waterlogged, their "waterproofing" is gone. We're trying a new method of treatment with this batch—you never know..."

And with that, the four friends left, somberly said their good-byes, and went on their individual ways home. The promise was made to follow-up with the Center the following day and to share any news—good or bad.

Well, most stories DO have Happy Endings, and this one is no exception! A call made the next mid-morning to the Center revealed that the New Method of Treatment was successful, and all three birds, including **JoLeen RichMan** (which is was the group named their Dovekie) had just been released back into the ocean!! Calls were made, and sighs of relief were heard. The Four Friends—and



The Four Friends—Eileen Schwinn, Joan Becker, Richard Becker and Robin Fishman

PHOTOS BY ROBIN FISHMAN



JoLeen RichMan—are happy to share their story with you—and will hopefully Live Happily Ever After for a Very Long Time.

PS—You might also remember a more recent "fall-out" of Dovekies here on Long Island in mid-January. If anything, keep your eyes open while walking or viewing the shoreline following any nor'easter which hits—you may have the opportunity to be part of your own Wildlife Adventure.



Thoughts on Global Warming's Effects on Long Island Larry Penny

Warming, along with rising sea levels, will have quite an influence on the future of Long Island's flora and fauna. We have already witnessed the establishment (reestablishment?) of many species which happened here on their own or were "replanted". The Wild Turkey is the best example of the latter. In a little less than 20 years after its reintroduction here it has become far more common than the native Bobwhite and the Ring-necked Pheasant, introduced here before the turn of the 19th century. The House Finch, Starling, House Sparrow and Mute Swan have all been around for a very long time; they also needed help in getting here.

It's the southern birds that have gotten here and established on their own in the last half a century that may be the precursors of the many new ones to come up and set down roots in the current century. It's not easy to separate those species that are responding to milder winters in the north and those that are just extending the range, regardless of temperature changes. The Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Cardinal, and Turkey Vulture, Glossy Ibis and American Oystercatcher are the more successful of those range extenders that may owe some of their success here to a long-term warming trend.

Long Island habitat will undoubtedly undergo considerable change, as well. When the English and Dutch first settled Long Island, the forest was more like that of New England, with several different birch and willow species as well as hemlock, spruce, and other conifers which have retreated to the north and have been replaced by Appalachian species including several oaks, pitch pine, beech, eastern red cedars, hickories and the like. We expect to see more southern oaks, redbud, persimmon, short-leaf pines, magnolias and the like. It won't happen overnight, but, barring some cataclysmic happening such as an unforeseen spate of volcano eruptions and earthquakes, it will happen.

Where we expect to see the most change in habitats in the next fifty years is in wet-

lands. Since the glaciers retreated 15,000 years ago, the water level has been rising. Tidal wetlands have been migrating shoreward and freshwater wetlands have been expanding. Take Accabonac Harbor, for example, in the hamlet of Springs on the South Fork. Its underpinning is retreatal moraine, stones, soil, and boulders dropped as the glaciers melted away to the north. The seas in the form of Gardiners and Napeague Bays, have been rising and advancing shoreward for more than ten millennia. The salt marshes have been migrating shoreward similarly. Go out a few hundred feet into the bays from Louse Point on the southeast side of Accabonac Harbor's inlet or Gerard Point on the north side and dig down. You will find old salt marsh peat. The original marshes have drowned leaving only the peaty substrate. The living marsh now circles the inner shores of the harbor.

You will see huge glacial erratics exposed here and there. About ten years ago, Ospreys nested on one of them. You will also see several hummocks, treed islands of "fast" land being slowly taken over by the rising seas. As long as the topography landward remains gentle, the salt marsh will be able to continue its landward migration unheeded. But put stumbling blocks in its path, such as bulkheads and raised foundations, and marsh migration will come to an abrupt halt. The rising water will drown the marsh, and what was marsh will become shallow water.

This is not science fiction. It is happening all over Long Island, most notably in Jamaica Bay where the amount of salt marsh has been disappearing at an alarming rate. Steps can be taken to reverse this drowning. Fine sediments dredged from the bay bottom can be sprayed onto the existing marshy islands to increase their elevations artificially, allowing them to keep up with sea level rise.

Freshwater wetlands, especially those at very low elevations along the coastal plain are another matter. They are fed by the fresh water table, the top of the groundwater or upper glacial aquifer as it is known. Beneath the fresh groundwater in

many parts of the plain, especially on the North and South Forks, the saltwater fills the interstices of the subsoils. Saltwater is denser and so buoys up the lighter freshwater resting upon it and interacting with it. The Napeague isthmus on the South Fork, and East Marion and Orient on the North Fork, will become largely wetlands i.e. a mixture of salt and fresh marshes. Dry kettles will become wet, bogs and fens will become ponds, ponds will become larger ponds. Some forests such as the white pine/pitch pine forest of northwestern East Hampton, just east of Sag Harbor, will become wetter and wetter, as the water table over much of that area is only a few feet below grade. Residents with basements are constantly pumping them out.

Fort Pond in Montauk (area wise the second largest pond on Long Island) has never been higher. A small island in its northwest corner where the botanist Norman Taylor found basswood trees growing 85 years ago, is almost completely submerged. Only the trunks of dead trees still stand in homage to what once was, but will never be again.

We should anticipate an increase in birds, including southern birds, associated with freshwater wetland habitats, such as Parula Warblers, Gnatcatchers, Tree Swallows, Bitterns, Sora Rails, but a decrease in species using salt marshes as their primary habit such as Clapper Rails, Seaside Sparrows, Sharp-tailed Sparrows, Willets and the like.

Likewise, salamanders and frogs should prosper. Fiddler crabs and ribbed mussels will have a hard time of it. Phragmites will run rampant.



**If you would be interested
in becoming the program director
or have ideas
about future nature programs,
please call Eileen at 631.728.8342
or another board member
listed on the backcover.**

CONSERVATION COLUMN

Beth Gustin

“Nobody can do everything but everyone can do something”

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) the average American throws out 68 pounds of clothing every year. This puts lots of stress on our already bulging landfills. There are many ways that you can dispose of your unwanted clothing more responsibly.

- Bring your clothing to a drop box sponsored by a charity. We've all seen these in our local parking lots. Some of the clothing ends up in the charity's thrift store but much of it is sold to global traders who then sell it to vendors in less-developed countries such as Zambia, Nigeria, Guatemala and Haiti.

- Dress for Success accepts women's business attire which helps lower income women dress for the professional workplace. There is a drop-off center at the Brookhaven Town Hall.

www.dressforsuccess.org

- Soles4Souls donates used shoes to people in over 125 countries. There is a drop-off location at Timberland at Tanger Outlet Center.

www.soles4souls.org

- Shoe4Africa allows you to send your used running or other athletic shoes to people in Africa.

www.shoe4africa.org

Nike recycles athletic shoes of any brands. The shoes are turned into surfaces for running tracks, indoor gym tiles and playground surfaces.

Patagonia takes back and recycles any of its own clothing brand items as well as any brand that is made of Polartec.

And remember

Be mindful when you purchase clothing to buy things that you'll wear more than a few times. Return clothing that you decide is not quite the right size or that you don't like as much once you get it home so that it doesn't end up sitting in a closet before just being discarded anyway. Use old t-shirts and socks as cleaning rags.

Remembering Peg

Margaret Carahar, a board member of both ELIAS and Quogue Wildlife Refuge, died after a long illness this February. Greatly saddened by her passing, many will remember all her good deeds.



Peg was a one hundred pound bundle of energy, generosity, and determination.

Until her illness slowed her down, she was the busiest person I have ever known. A few years ago, she was still working at BOCES, serving on the Southampton Town Zoning Board, chairing a committee for the League of Women Voters, and serving on both the Audubon and Refuge boards, not to mention birding, biking, gardening, baking, golf, and regular trips to the gym. As busy as she was, she could always be counted on to help with special Audubon and Refuge projects. At one point, when we heard Shelley Vakay was under the weather, it was Peg who promptly organized a group to rake the leaves from Shelley's yard.

When she made up her mind that she wanted to do something, nothing short of a natural disaster could stop her. Last March while we were sharing a house in Florida, she was using oxygen most of the time. When we played golf, she would disconnect it long enough to swing. Without the oxygen, she said it was hard to concentrate on hitting the ball, but that didn't stop her from playing golf every chance she got.

It's hard to believe she's gone, but she certainly left her mark.

Shirley Morrison, Former Osprey Editor

From Kaler's Pond Nature Center

Jay Kuhlman

The first Library meeting took place on January 24th discussing planting native species for wildlife. Seventeen people attended.

Our next talk will be at the nature center on March 21 at 1:30 and will be **Local Ducks Talk and Walk**. This will feature identification of the local and wintering ducks. First field marks and then a walk to Kaler's Pond and the head of the Terrell River. Other nearby areas could be visited.

Plans are ongoing for tree planting for Keith Romaine, a past board member who passed away recently.

From Quogue Wildlife Refuge

The Long Island Mineral & Geology Society

Wednesday March 10th at 7:00 PM

Join us in the Nature Center for a great slide presentation offered by the LI Mineral & Geology Society. Learn about Long Island's formation and why we find what we do on the beaches. View samples of rocks, fossils, and minerals, take a look into a stereo microscope to view the minerals in Long Island sands, and check out a neat demonstration of fluorescent minerals. The president, vice president, and editor of the Society will be discussing activities, programs, and the Annual Gem Show offered by the Society. This is a free program for adults and teens, but please make a reservation. Call Quogue Wildlife Refuge at 631-653-4771.

The Common Eider

Somateria Mollissima

Carl Starace



It has been an especially good winter for viewing this large, stunning looking duck on Long Island. The large rafts of Common Eider, usually seen at Montauk Point, are in place, but so are numbers in the hundreds further west at Shinnecock, Moriches and even Jones Inlets.

The word “eider” comes from an Icelandic/Old Norse word “aedr”. The “down” in eider down is also from the Old Norse word, “dunn”. The female of this species nests in colonies all around the far northern parts of our globe. Here on the eastern seaboard they are found on the rocky coasts of Labrador, Greenland and Iceland. As the female builds her nest she plucks feathers from her breast to create the lining to keep her chicks warm. For generations some farmers in Iceland have left food for the Common Eiders and kept watch over them in order to collect the eider down once the nestlings have fledged. Eider down has long been known to be the lightest, softest and warmest down in the world. It is used to fill fine quality quilts and pillows.

The Common Eider is found in flocks at all times of the year. They tend to congregate by rocky shorelines, jetties and seawalls where they feed on mussels, shellfish, barnacles, crabs, and small fish. They usually begin to appear in smaller numbers in our ocean waters by mid-November. In March they begin migrating north. The Common Eider has a unique look. Its face is slightly wedge-shaped, long and sloping. There is a jutting bump on the forehead. Their bodies are wide and somewhat humped, just a touch smaller than a Brant but bigger than the large White-winged Scoter. Adult males have black caps, long and round tipped bright

yellow bills and a lime-green blush across their napes. Adult male bodies are black-sided and white backed/chested. The “First Winter” males are somewhat different with a pale brownish head, dark face and grayish bill. The chest is white with some white also evident in the wing. The back is primarily dark as are its sides. The winter females that we see are overall a dark rufous in color.

Personally, the Common Eider will always remind me of the cold waters off coastal Maine. It was January and I was in Bath, Maine. I had talked my skiing buddy into a brief stop for a try at some seabirds. I remember the beach being snow covered, the sky bright and clear. It was about mid-afternoon as my friend Martin and I walked towards a massive rock, the size of at least two houses, about 100 yards off the beach. The tide had gone out and some people had climbed up to gaze out to sea. We had soon set up the scope and took turns scanning a large raft of Common Eider and some Black Guillemots. It didn't seem like a very long time, but when we turned towards shore, things had changed dramatically. The 100 yards of wet sand was now covered with a dark, fast moving ocean. We had a decision to make. We chose to drop down off that rock. We pushed hard against a tide that had quickly reached our hips. Reaching the empty beach we quickly ran for the parking lot, and on to the nearest laundromat. Would I climb that rock again at any time of year for a view of a splendid raft of Common Eider? I think you know the answer. I've already experienced Bath, Maine. Good Winter birding to all...*Carl Starace*

If this is January...

Continued from page 1

tailed ducks on Peconic Bay. There were perhaps 6 other birders there when we arrived shortly after 10 am—all people starting with clean slates as well. Found the bird, and off again—now to East Hampton and the Bridgehampton area. Check, check, check. Home for lunch—look at the rare bird internet sites—WHAT! A Snowy owl in our own backyard of Shinnecock Inlet!!!!!! Back on the road again after lunch. Our spouses KNOW we're crazy. “Have Fun”, they say as we leave. Check. May as well drive Dune Road.

End of Day 1—51 species.

Jan. 2—Orient Christmas Bird Count Day—not ideal conditions but a new area to explore and maybe, just maybe, see a bird or two NOT spotted the day before. YES!

2010 total—63.

Jan. 5—another trip to Dune Road—Just for “fun” this time, and oops—add another bird to the list—Clapper Rail!

Jan. 6—After scouting out the NY Rare Bird list, a trip to Nassau County is in order, with stops in Massapequa, Baldwin, Pt. Lookout, Jones Beach, and Belmont Lake. GREAT DAY—we have a friend who runs the Nature Center at Jones, and we were able to access the shoreline quite easily—highlight is seeing another Snowy Owl and a thousand Dunlin along the Jones Beach jetty, seeking protection from the strong winds.

Total—up to 84

Jan. 11—another trip to Belmont Lake—we missed a few birds on the earlier trip—and Connetquot Park. Check, check. Birding alone for part of afternoon to the EPCAL area—what a shame if that area is changed forever—and again, the team effort in the later part of the afternoon.

Total - 95!

Jan. 12—A favorite—Shelley Vakay's backyard! Add Quogue Wildlife Refuge—Super

Continued

...There Must be Birds Out There!!

Continued from previous page

nice bird—a woodcock—made an appearance then came back for an encore a half hour later!!

Total - 98 - so close, so close

Jan. 13—with vacation time looming, and the birds being harder to come by, we made a last ditch effort to observe along the North Fork, starting in Riverhead. No new birds to add in some usually reliable places—uh oh will we make it???? Finally, a Kestrel was seen, posted near a barn. 100th bird at 11:30 am for my neighbor!! I was now at 99 (we had seen a few birds while not out as a team). Check Iron Pier—usually a stray gull.... NOTHING. Now what? Let's try Mary Laura Lamont's backyard—a hot spot for birds. She always keeps well-stocked feeders. As we pulled into her driveway, and as I was reaching for my cell phone to give her a call—BAM—my 100th bird popped into view—an ordinary Grackle—but whew, WE DID IT—**100 birds in only 13 days!!** We both actually ended the day with 101. Vacations came and went—a little birding after returning.

Jan. 31—My total—106 birds (last one for me was the little Dovekie in Timber Point Park, the day after I returned from my trip)

My neighbor's total—110 birds.

Good birds, good company and great fun! And at least it got me out of the house in a cold and dreary month!!



**ELIAS is now on
Facebook.
Check it Out
and Become a Fan.**

Will the last birder leaving New York please take a Piping Plover with them! or Our Government at Work

Larry Sturm has shared his thoughts on the current (and past) state of affairs. With his tongue placed firmly in cheek he submits this for your edification (or amusement).

Well the State of New York at the direction of the Governor has finally scraped the bottom of the barrel or actually in this case the “cream of the crop”. Allow me to expound on the outrage that has been proposed by elected officials.

We all remember the 90's here on Long Island when our power company of “no-choice” (LILCO) wanted to assess the citizens a “solar charge”. Allow me to clarify that incident. LILCO felt that since nuclear power (regardless of how you pronounce “nuclear”) was not going to be the choice of the citizenry, “Solar Power” was looming on the horizon and it looked as if LILCO was going to be left out of the “profit picture”. They felt that if they allowed residents of LI the ability to use the sun without recompense to them it could lead to a financial disaster. Imagine homeless executives wandering the streets, standing by 7-11's across the counties of Nassau and Suffolk hoping that some kindly contractor would hire them! Alas, their fears went awry even though there are hundreds of PSM's (Personal Solar Meters) in warehouses in Hicksville. Their attempt at having the State require those devices for individuals (especially at our beaches and public pools) was thwarted by the ACLU in a very close judicial decision. LILCO however, recovered through the use of a “surcharge” on anyone who breathed air.

Fast forward now to the current financial crisis that has enveloped our country. Unemployment has risen, houses are in foreclosure, members of congress have to share private jets! This has caused many of our elected officials to rethink all the options.

Our visually challenged Governor, David Patterson, has “seen the light” or at the very least has had it described to him. It seems one day one of his aides mentioned that he saw an unusual bird on the way to work that day and attempted to describe

it to the “Governor unelected”. An inquiry, by said governor about the number of individuals who actually “bird”, resulted in a startling revelation. “Millions bird each and every day!” The result is now in the works. Never, ever, ever tell a politician that millions of people are doing something for FREE!

By special legislation there will now be imposed a fee to “Bird”. For all individuals residing in the state over the age of 16 an annual fee of \$25.00 will be required. Non-residents will have to pony up \$50.00 for an annual fee. Transients will be required to pay a daily fee of \$10.00.

Oh it gets worse. If you wish to bird using binoculars there will be an additional \$15.00 stamp required and those individuals with scopes or any other “enhanced vision devices” will be assessed an additional \$10.00 to be added to the “bin” stamp.

Oh it gets even worse. Those individuals caught without the proper license will be subject to fines starting at \$100.00 and going up to \$1,500.00. Individuals without any “assistive device” caught “gazing” (aka bare-birding) may be subject to immediate arrest. Needless to say a “bird feeding” tax is in the works and will be enacted as soon as the governor “sees his way clear” to signing this additional legislation.

There is also talk of establishing a “reward hotline” so that neighbors can make additional money turning in their neighbors whom they have seen birding. There is a possibility that there may even be a “window tax” in future years to cover the possibility of individuals looking at birds from their homes! This last item might be seen to conflict with the “reward hotline”.

The “conga line” of delighted legislators from both side of the aisle could be seen throughout the streets of Albany as they danced their way to the airport to board their jets (not shared) for their return trip to their local districts. Golly they must have forgotten that their limos were down in the parking garage!

Can't wait to see what our Federally elected officials think of this!

2009 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

From Eileen Schwinn

NEITHER RAIN, NOR SNOW, NOR DARK OF NIGHT—wait a minute, just what are we talking about here? No, NOT the US Postal Service! But the dedicated, bundled-up and fun-loving volunteers who participated in the 110th Christmas Bird Counts! This year saw all sorts of weather—except warm, tropical breezes—during the three counts I joined.

The Big Snow started during the Quogue-Water Mill count, December 19th, shortening the day somewhat for most teams. The birds may have been aware of the forecast, because my team, which covered the “Mainland” from Quogue to Hampton Bays, found the variety and numbers of birds down from previous years.

The following week, the Central Suffolk count was held on Dec. 26th. Deep snow still covered the open spaces usually surveyed, but 34 enthusiastic participants saw 105 species, and 17,902 individual birds were counted on a day which ended in torrential downpours throughout the area. Again, the counting day was abbreviated!

The last local CBC, the Orient count, was held the day after New Year’s Day—and again, snow was in the forecast. Driving to my assigned area—in Southold—was in pre-dawn snow squalls! The snow was light, but the day was extremely cold. An early afternoon call home (in East Quogue) relayed the information that the snow was falling much faster and much more heavily than we were experiencing on the North Fork. Again, it seemed as if the birds knew something we mere mortals did not—although a few really nice

birds—Great Horned Owl, White-crowned Sparrow, Brown Thrasher, and Brown Creeper—were seen. Most birds were tucked away, or spotted close to well-stocked bird feeders in private back yards. The number of species and individuals was certainly down in my sector from the previous year. Because of the deteriorating weather, my group elected to end the day early (after stopping for warm soup in the warm home of a participant!)

So, why go out there in the first place—bad weather, few birds, bad weather, wet feet, bad weather—did I mention the bad weather???? Well, we go out there because that’s what crazy bird people do—we make a commitment and try to follow through on it. We know that the knowledge we gather and the in-

formation we share on that snap-shot day of a Christmas Bird Count has value to the overall picture of bird life, and perhaps, future human life as well. And it’s always a reminder of the original reasons for starting the Counts in the first place—instead of KILLING birds on Boxing Day, let’s COUNT them! Imagine how few birds would be left if the “Old” tradition had continued.

Read the results of all the counts on the National Audubon Christmas Bird Count page, and mark your calendars for next year. It is fun? You bet!! Come join us next year and find out for yourself!



Quogue-Water Mill Christmas Bird Count

From Steve Biasetti

The 61st Annual Quogue-Water Mill (QWM) Christmas Bird Count took place on December 19, 2009. Thirty participants on five teams tallied 18,583 individual birds of 114 species (plus 2 count-week species). Among the tough misses were Northern Bobwhite, American Bittern, American Kestrel, Killdeer, Wilson’s Snipe (seen during count week), Palm Warbler, Seaside Sparrow, and Brown-headed Cowbird. (This marks the first time that Kestrel was missed in the history of the QWM CBC.) On the flip side, a number of special birds were recorded, including King Eider, Green Heron, Bald Eagle, Virginia Rail, Black-headed Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Black Guillemot (for the first time in QWM CBC’s history!), and House Wren.

From Beth Gustin

The Quogue-Water Mill Christmas Bird Count took place on the Saturday of the big December snowstorm. I was on a team consisting of Steve Biasetti and three ladies from Huntington Audubon Society. The day started out cloudy and quite cold and the snow started just past noon as predicted. It made for some challenging yet exciting birding and memorable images of the snow blowing horizontally as the wind howled over the marsh. In the hours before the snow really picked up we counted large numbers of Robins and American Goldfinches and had some nice sightings of Eastern Bluebirds (12 total), Cedar Waxwings, and Golden-crowned Kinglets. The highlight of the day was an adult Bald Eagle that we watched fly over a pond at Sears-Bellows County Park. And it wasn’t until after lunch (and wonderful hot cocoa and cookies courtesy of Debbie and Al) at Al Scherzer’s home that we counted our first and only Blue Jay. The experiences of the day reinforced the notion that you never know what you’ll get on a CBC—except some fun birding with some really nice people.



SPRING MIGRATION TABLE

You have probably seen the Grackles and Red-wings already, the others are on the way! This is a general guide to their arrival times. By the end of April arrivals are often predictable to within a few days.

March 1 to 10

Pied-billed Grebe*
Wood Duck
Amer. Woodcock
Killdeer*
Robin
E. Bluebird
Rusty Blackbird
Fox Sparrow
Song Sparrow*

Broad-winged Hawk
Clapper Rail
Virginia Rail
Sora
Upland Sandpiper
Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Purple Martin
Blue-gray

March 11 to 20

Gannet
Bl-cr Night Heron
Snow Goose
Amer Oystercatcher
Piping Plover
Common Snipe*
Belted Kingfisher*
Common Flicker*
E. Phoebe
Fish Crow*
Water Pipit
E. Meadowlark*
Bm-headed Cowbird
Spotted Sandpiper

Gnatcatcher
Myrtle Warbler"
Louisiana Waterthrush
Eastern Towhee*
Chipping Sparrow

April 21 to 30

Little Blue Heron
Common Gallinule
Black-bellied Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Whimbrel
Solitary Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Dunlin

March 21 to 31

DC Cormorant
Osprey
Laughing Gull
Greater-Yellowlegs
Tree Swallow
Golden-cr Kinglet
Savannah Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Field Sparrow

Semipalmated Sandpiper
Whip-poor-will
Chimney Swift
Bank Swallow
Cliff Sparrow
House Wren
Brown Thrasher
Solitary Vireo
Black & White Warbler

April 1 to 10

Great Blue Heron*
Great Egret
Amer. Bittern
Blue-winged Teal
Merlin
Pectoral Sandpiper
Yellow-bel Sapsucker
Brown Creeper
Ruby-cr Kinglet
Pine Warbler
Palm Warbler
White-thr Sparrow*
Swamp Sparrow

Worm-eating Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Parula Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Grasshopper Sparrow
Sharp-tailed Sparrow
Seaside Sparrow

April 11 to 20

Green Heron
Snowy Egret
Yell-cr Night Heron

**These species have populations that winter on Long Island. It is almost impossible to distinguish the spring arrivals.*

On the road with ELIAS members...

From Beth Gustin
Corkscrew Swamp,
Naples, Florida



A Yellow-throated warbler and a Fox Squirrel at Corkscrew Swamp.



From Linda Sullivan at Wakodahatchee, Delray Beach, FL



A Green Heron, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Woodstorks and an Anhinga with a fish all use Wakodahatchee as a refuge.



Feeder Survey

John McNeil

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

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEEDER SURVEY

- Define an area containing feeders that you can see all at once from a window. The area should be one you glance at frequently during your daily routine.
- Don't include birds seen off premises.
- Predators perching in or swooping

through the count area (not just flying over) may be counted if you feel that they were attracted by the birds at the feeder.

- Record the largest number of each species that you see in your count area during the eight-day count period.
- Do not add counts from previous days together. Be specific with the species name, e.g. we can't use just the name Sparrow, Blackbird or Gull.
- At the end of the count period, record your final tallies and send in the form.

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

Please mail immediately after each survey period to:

Feeder Survey c/o John McNeil
168 Lexington Rd, Shirley NY 11967-3212

Or to send via the internet, go to:

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

I cannot express my sincere gratitude for all the responses that I have received. I cannot thank you enough. Right now I am in the middle of doing a complete summary and putting all your results into my computer. The results will be coming soon.

John

RUTH GURINSKY



Survey Dates:

March 7, to March 14, 2010

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 4 to April 11, 2010

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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- _____ Red-winged Blackbird
- _____ Hairy Woodpecker
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- _____ Rufous-sided Towhee
- _____ American Robin
- _____ Brown-headed Cowbird
- _____ Sharp-shinned Hawk
- _____ Rock Dove (pigeon)
- _____ Gray Catbird
- _____ Yellow-rumped Warbler
- _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Other _____



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& Membership**

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

This is a Renewal New Membership

Name _____

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City/State _____

Zip _____

Email _____

Please be sure to include your email. You will receive an email confirmation, a pdf of the first newsletter and occasional updates. And, no we do not share this list!

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Mark Your Calendars

Mon., March 1 Nature Program Reptile Conservation Projects, USA at QWR (pg. 1)
Sat., March 6 Field Trip to Belmont Lake, Argyle Lake, Ocean Parkway & the West End of Jones Beach & Robert Moses State Park (pg. 2)
March 7 to 14 Feeder Count (pg. 10)
Wed., March 10 Presentation by Long Island Mineral & Geology Society at QWR (pg. 5)
Sun., March 21 Lecture Duck Talk and Walk sponsored by Kaler's Pond (pg. 5) at Center Moriches Library
Sat., April 3 Field Trip Osprey along the North Fork from Riverhead to Orient Point (pg. 2)
Mon., April 5 Nature Program Horseshoe Crabs at QWR (pg. 1)
April 4 to 11 Feeder Count (pg. 10)
Sat., April 17 Earth Day Celebration at QWR (pg. 1)

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The OSPREY

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