



The Sandpiper

Great South Bay Audubon Society
P.O. Box 267, Sayville, NY 11782

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS AND MONTHLY PROGRAMS

All GSBAS Activities are FREE and open to the public. Join us and bring a friend.

Programs are held at 7:00 pm on the third Thursday of each month, except May, which is our Annual Dinner, and July and August. Meetings are held at Connetquot State Park Preserve.

See page 3 for directions and additional details.

Jan/Feb Programs

January 16, 2014

Dr. Artie Kopelman, CRESLI's president, and SUNY Distinguished Service Professor, will provide an informative photographic overview of the cetaceans, pinnipeds and pelagic birds that abound in our waters. The status of our knowledge, the status of the species, and the research being undertaken will be explored.

February 20, 2014

Identifying common winter gulls in the NY Metro Area—great black-backed, ring-billed and herring.

John Heidecker is a free-lance wildlife photographer who enjoys photographing birds, wild flowers and wild orchids, plants, scenic, insects & spiders, his family and friends. The program will go over identification of the three most common species in our area. After gaining some confidence on these participants will learn the id points to look for on the rarer gulls such as Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous, Iceland, Bonapartes, Laughing Gulls and others that can show up in our area.

Volunteer Open House Brookside County Park Saturday, February 1, 2014, 1-3 pm

Great South Bay Audubon Society needs volunteers for

- fundraising such as seed sale chair
- public outreach such as representation at environmental fairs and festivals
- program chair
- Brookside County Park stewards
- photography and articles for the newsletter
- and just about anything else!

If you think you can help or maybe you have your own ideas about how you can contribute please attend the Volunteer Open House.

Volunteer Highlight

Arlene Rawls has been on GSBAS nature walks and attended general meetings. When word got out that we were in need of volunteers, in particular a membership chairperson, Arlene was the first to raise her hand and offer to help. It wasn't until she was in training for the position that we realized that Arlene lives in Nassau County! Distance is no barrier for Arlene as she recently stepped up to fill in a vacant spot of the GSBAS' Board of Directors. We have been very thankful for Arlene and we look forward to her revamping our membership and sharing her innovative ideas with the board.

Mission Statement

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

The Sandpiper

Editor: Lenora Daniel

Mailing Chair: Ken Thompson

Illustrator: Steve D'Amato
(As indicated)

Thank you to all those who help mail each issue.

Editorial Address

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Sayville, NY 11782

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Deadline for March/April issue is February 10th.

President's Message, by Judy Davis, Chapter President

Happy 2014! Another year has come and gone and with it many changes at the GSBAS. We said good-bye to several hard working volunteers and cherished friends and welcomed new board members and chairpersons ready to help take us in a new direction. This issue of The Sandpiper is the first under the helm of our new editor, Lenora Daniel. You, too, can be a part of the changes. Please feel free to send Lenora any of your stories, articles, or poems. Her contact information is on the back page.

Our Annual Appeal is under way. We are very touched and greatly appreciative of the generosity of our members and friends. There is no deadline for donating so please feel free to send in your Annual Appeal gift at any time.

I recently had a chance to catch up with Cathy Wilvert, who has been reintroducing the Northern Bobwhite Quail in Connetquot River State Park Preserve. This year, Cathy waited until June to get the day old chicks and she kept them for three months instead of just seven weeks. Cathy continued her practices of minimal human exposure and went so far as to build a "tunnel" that led from the flight pens directly into the Preserve. This kept the birds from stressing out as they did last year when it was time to get them into the transport cages. These provisions enabled Cathy to raise and release close to 600 Northern Bobwhite Quail. Unfortunately, extending the length of time the quail were kept safe in the flight pens increased the expenses. The GSBAS continues to financially support this project through our continuing Adopt-a-Quail program. "Adoption" forms are available on our website, www.gsbas.com.

Keep a lookout for our revitalization letter, which will be mailed to all our members the beginning of January. It briefly outlines our goals for the future and it invites you to join us. I hope you'll join us at our Volunteer Open House at Brookside County Park on Saturday, 1 February 2014 from 1 to 3 pm. Many of our volunteers will be on hand to share their experiences and discuss the volunteer opportunities that are available. If you've never been to Brookside before, this is a perfect opportunity to visit our beautiful park. If you can't attend the open house but would like to discuss volunteering please give us a call or email.



Sleeping Snowy Owl. Photo Courtesy of Ken Thompson. For more go to Ken's Nature Walk page at <http://www.gsbas.org/FieldTripReports.asp>

Great South Bay Audubon Society Activities

General Membership Meetings and Programs

Directions to the Connetquot State Park Preserve: Approaching from the East the entrance is on the north side of the Sunrise Highway (Route 27), opposite the Sunrise-Montauk Highway merge. From the west, exit Sunrise Highway (Route 27) at Oakdale-Bohemia Road, cross over Sunrise Highway, merge on to west-bound Route 27 and watch for the Park entrance on the right. Meetings are held in the Park building. **Please do not park on grass or in the circle in front of the building. Park near garages in the rear of the building. There is a handicap ramp at this entrance.** Call GSBAS direct at (631)563-7716 for details and updates. **Note:** Join us at 7:00 p.m. for pre-program refreshments and casual conversation. Our bird experts will be on hand to field your questions, discuss equipment and share their favorite birding spots.

Louis Titus Memorial Tuesday Midweek Walks *

Tuesday, March 11th, 9:30 a.m. Sunken Meadow State Park.

Meet in the northwest corner of the main parking lot.

Our Weekend and Midweek Walks are the centerpiece of the Great South Bay Audubon Society. Everything we do centers on what's out there to be enjoyed and if need be protected. Please join us on these walks into nature. Our guides will gladly answer your questions.

Weekend Nature Walks *

Saturday, January 11th, Montauk Point, 8 a.m. Leaders: John Gluth - 277-9298, Bob Grover - 669-4365.

Meet in the lighthouse parking lot.

Saturday, January 18th, Connetquot Breakfast and Birding, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Hosted by Friends of Connetquot. GSBAS trip leaders: Bob and Edith Wilson, Ken Thompson, Helga Merryman. RSVP required - call Connetquot State Park Preserve at 581-1072 to register. Registration fee \$4.00 plus auto entrance fee into State Park Preserve.

Saturday, February 8th, Jones Beach West End, 8 a.m. Leader: Mike Cooper - 821-2855. Meet in the parking lot by the Coast Guard Station.

Saturday, March 1st, Bob Laskowski Memorial Duck Walk, Islip Ponds, 8 a.m. Leader: Bob Grover - 669-4365. Meet in the Brookwood Hall parking lot off Irish Lane in East Islip. The focus is on wintering ducks on local lakes.

***Note: Rain and snow cancels nature walks.**

Conservation Issues, by Bob Grover

2013: Trends or Anomalies?

What a strange year! In the natural world nothing seemed to follow what we have come to consider normal patterns, particularly where birds were concerned. Some events were exciting, allowing us to see species locally that rarely visit. Other events were downright depressing. But at the same time, even the exciting events were troubling, as they caused us to worry about the long term welfare of some amazing creatures.

It all began in the fall of 2012, actually, with an unprecedented influx, or irruption, of winter finches, especially Red and White-winged Crossbills and Common Redpolls. It seemed that every grove of pine trees was teeming with crossbills. These finches surely spiced up the local 2012 Christmas Bird Counts, and, as the invasion continued well into the early spring of 2013, allowed year listers to tick off several boreal finch species on Long Island in two consecutive calendar years. Irruptions of northern species in our area is generally considered to be a result of poor seed crops in the Canadian conifer forests. The magnitude of this year's irruption, however, certainly begs the question of whether some more permanent factor was at play. So far, in the winter of 2013, the winter finches have not made a return appearance locally. Maybe that is good news.

Just as we recovered from the winter finch excitement, the time for spring migration arrived. In anticipation, hoards of birders gathered in all of the parks and beaches, eager to see scores of warblers and other passerines. But the typical influx of colorful songbirds never happened. Instead, the birds seemed to trickle through. May was more like early April in terms of migratory activity. There were reports of adverse winds in the Gulf of Mexico that caused tens of thousands of birds to drop and perish in the sea, while others struggled to the Gulf Coast too exhausted to fly. First the boreal finches boon and then the neotropical migrant bust. Is something at play here? Will these migrant birds rebound next spring? These are puzzles we are anxious to see solved.

GSBAS' Ed Davis Memorial Beach Cleanup, by Carol Jansch, Beach Captain

Sunken Forest / Sailors Haven on Fire Island

Saturday, September 21, 2013

Under sunny skies last Saturday, fifteen GSBAS volunteers scoured the beaches on Fire Island as part of the New York State Beach Cleanup, which is a part of the International Coastal Cleanup, and coordinated by the Northeast Chapter of the American Littoral Society (ALS). Our GSBAS team removed a variety of debris from the beaches and dunes, each piece being identified and documented. As our cleanup was going on, thousands of other volunteers across New York also participated in the cleanup, including Billy Joel and Gov. Andrew Cuomo who were in Oyster Bay cleaning up the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Park and Beach.

What did GSBAS volunteers find?

The collection this year was a bit different from other years, with more lumber and home items, which I think was due to the storm, and less "new trash" as well. Since the beach was flatter, and the sand firm in spots, there was not the usual collections of debris, a lot of times we had to dig around or move piles of seaweed and branches to find items. We did find a lot of balloons and ribbons which we all know are detrimental to sea life. We also observed the extensive changes to the dunes. Over 1,100 items were collected by GSBAS and listed in our report.

(continued on next page)



Beach Cleanup Crew after a hard day's work at Sailors Haven. Photo Courtesy of Carol Jansch.

Why is this cleanup so important?

(The following is from the ALS)

- Making up approximately \leq of all marine debris, plastics persist in the environment for many years and are especially harmful to wildlife. Ingested plastics can cause internal injury, intestinal blockage and starvation.
- Thousands of birds and marine animals die each year from entanglement in monofilament fishing line, strapping bands, and 6-pack ring holders.
- Marine debris can cause injury to beachgoers and pose a navigation hazard to boaters.
- Pollution from marine debris also compromises the productivity of wetlands which act as nurseries for commercially and recreationally important fish and shellfish.
- Marine debris compresses and kills the salt marsh grass which supports the estuary's food chain, filters pollution, and protects the coast from wave damage.

What happens with the data?

All the data sheets that were filled out during our cleanup was consolidated and sent to The Ocean Conservancy for analysis. The resultant studies produce strategies to combat marine pollution and to inform policy makers, the media, and the public about solutions to the problem.

What we have learned from our continued efforts in cleaning up the shores of the Atlantic ocean is that we can and do make a difference.

Thank you to all of our volunteers and I look forward to next year!

For more information:

American Littoral Society - <http://www.alsnyc.org/>

Fire Island National Seashore <http://www.nps.gov/fiis/index.htm>

Bob Laskowski Fellowship

Earlier this year, the Great South Bay Audubon Society received an additional donation from the Bob Laskowski Foundation. This donation was designated to go to the Town of Islip to pay for a college intern at the South Shore Nature Center. At the time of the donation distributions, the Town of Islip had closed the Center. There was no longer a director of the center nor the need for an intern.

In keeping with Bob's original desire to help a college student whose future plans involve the environment, the GSBAS decided to create the Bob Laskowski Memorial College Fellowship. The recipient of this fellowship is Angelika (Angel) Fieseler. Angel is in the BS/MS Urban Ecology program at Hofstra University. Her research is, "Wildlife Predation and TNR. Does feeding cats matter?"

Angel's research will consist of locating ~6 managed feral cat colonies. The level of management will range from well managed with a specific caretaker and regular feedings to a haphazardly managed colony with no specific caretaker and irregular feedings. Angel will trap 5-10 cats per colony and outfit them with a video camera on a remote controlled breakaway collar. Each camera will record for approximately 2.5 hours. Using the retrieved videos, Angel will be able to document the creatures predated upon by the feral cats. Angel will also perform scat analysis at each colony to further research what creatures have been ingested by the feral cats. The research project will take place from May through October 2014.

The GSBAS is very excited about this research project as we have always been concerned about the damage done to the native wildlife by managed feral cat colonies.

Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz- Calling All Birders! By Ken Thompson

Spring 2014 kicks off the first year of this three-year Spring Migration Blitz; the Blitz window will span early March through mid-June, with more specific timeframes identified for each state or province to account for the northward migratory progression. Target dates for New York State are March through April.

If you'd like to contribute data to the Spring Migration Blitz effort, bird as you normally do, focusing on potential Rusty Blackbird habitat during the Blitz time frame established for your region. You can seek out the best-known places for Rusty sightings or explore uncharted territory. Make sure to report ALL of your observations to eBird – we want to know both where you saw these birds and where you didn't. Check out the newly revamped website of the International Rusty Blackbird Working Group (<http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/>) for information about identification, vocalizations, habitat preferences, and types of data to collect to support this initiative. Also, check with your NYC/LI coordinator Derek Rogers (drogers0031@gmail.com) for additional ways you can help with the Blitz efforts in your region, or contact Spring Migration Blitz Coordinator Judith Scarl (jscarl@vtecostudies.org) to get involved in the broader Blitz initiative!

Thanks for "Getting Rusty" with us this spring! Like us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/rustyblackbirdspringblitz>) to follow up-to-the minute information about our Blitz, and happy birding!

Bird Feeder Survey: Fall 2013-Spring 2014, by Helga Merryman

An interesting article in the Dec. National Geographic talks about “The Great Backyard Bird Count” formerly only in the U.S. and Canada and now encompassing the whole world. Some of the facts that caught my eye, the most reported bird was the Northern Cardinal, the biggest increase 2012-2013 was the Red-breasted Nuthatch (note that we had none reported on our count) and no surprise, the House Sparrow was the most widespread. Of course this count is held for only 4 days in February, just before the birds begin their northward migration and is a part of what has become known as “Citizen Science”. The largest flock was an estimated five million Red-winged Blackbirds, wow! I hope the viewers were under an umbrella. Remember GSBAS has it’s own survey that you may choose to join at any time.

For the November survey we had 13 participants, Caruso, Cafarelli, Fogarty, Heiserer, Horman, Kremer-Parrott, McNeil, Merryman, Puglielli, Thomas, Unterschuetz, Wilson and welcome to Lee Stocker who has joined us for this survey. Eight areas were represented, Babylon, Bayport, Deer Park, East Patchogue, Ridge, Ronkonkoma, West Islip and West Sayville. We wish to welcome everyone back for another survey season.

How does the survey work?

- 1) The counting period is 5 months from November to March. You may choose to participate for only one month, several months or the full period of five months.
- 2) During the first 15 days of each month, keep your feeders filled. Whenever you view your feeders, count the number of each individual bird species you observe. Report the **largest number of each individual species seen at any one time**, e.g., if you see 10 Cardinals on the 1st, 5 on the 2nd, 3 on the 3rd - report the largest number observed, i.e., 10. These birds can actually be at your feeder or attracted to **your yard** by the feeding activity.
- 3) Make five (5) copies of the form printed in the Nov/Dec issue of the Sandpiper, use(1) form per month to record the largest number of individuals of any species that you see at one time.
- 4) No later than the 19th of each survey month, mail your completed form to me, Helga Merryman, 38 South Carl Ave., Babylon, N.Y., 11702. You can also email your sightings and photos to me at elder55owl@optonline.net, please put FEEDER SURVEY in the subject line. I will compile the information and the results will be published in the following issue of The Sandpiper.

SURVEY DATA: NOVEMBER 2013

Red-tailed Hawk 1
 Sharp-shinned Hawk 5
 Cooper’s hawk 2
 Rock pigeon 9
 Mourning Dove 174
 Monk Parakeet 17
 Red-bellied Woodpecker 7
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 2
 Downy Woodpecker 21
 Hairy Woodpecker 3
 Northern Flicker 4
 Blue Jay 40
 American Crow 9
 Black-capped Chickadee 35
 Tufted Titmouse 15
 Red-breasted Nuthatch 0
 White-breasted Nuthatch 6

Carolina Wren 18
 American Robin 21
 Northern Mockingbird 16
 Brown Thrasher 1
 European Starling 383
 Towhee 0
 Fox Sparrow 1
 Song Sparrow 24
 White-throated Sparrow 61
 Dark-eyed Junco 37
 Northern Cardinal 44
 Red-winged Blackbird 74
 Common Grackle 230
 Brown-headed Cowbird 19
 House Finch 15
 American Goldfinch 28
 House Sparrow 175

OTHER SPECIES

Brown Creeper 2
 Golden-crowned Kinglet 2
 Ruby –crowned Kinglet 1
 Hermit Thrush 3
 Cedar Waxwings 25
 Yellow-rumped Warbler 20
 Boat-tailed Grackle 7

Great South Bay Audubon Society
Call Direct: 631-563-7716

Officers

Term 2012-2014

President Judy Davis
(277-5179)

Term 2012-2104

Vice-president: (Position Pending)
Treasurer: Annette Brownell
(665-4405)

Corresponding Secretary:
Genevieve Lee (581-2470)

Board of Directors

Term 2013-2016

Jack Isaacs (567-7631), Nicholas Laviola
(678-7866), Vera Capogna (563-4969)

Term 2011-2014

Steve D'Amato (264-8413)
Jack Finkenberg (661-1278)

Open Seat

Term 2012-2015

Juliane Wohler (581-1731)
Open Seat

Editor, *The Sandpiper*, Lenora Daniel
(647-5297)

The editor is also on the board.

Committee Chairs

Hospitality: Mary Plant

Conservation: Lenora Daniel

Membership: Arlene Rawls

Publicity: Helga Merryman (669-6473)

Beach Clean Up: Carol Jansh (567-4965)

Education: Juliane Wohler, Janet Gremlin,

Jack Finkenberg

Audubon Activist: Open

Nature Walks: Larry Merryman

Programs: Open

Librarian: Vera Capogna

Annual Dinner Chair:

Annette Brownell

Sandpiper Mailing: Ken Thompson

Email responder: Juliane Wohler

Answering the GSBAS Direct Phone:

Steve D'Amato

**For wildlife in need of rescue
please call The STAR Foundation
(631)736-8207**

Email us: info@gsbas.org

Great South Bay Audubon Society Membership

Become a member of Great South Bay Audubon Society.

Your contribution will support GSBAS conservation efforts, educational programs and our stewardship at Brookside County Park. Please make checks payable to

“Great South Bay Audubon Society” and mail to

GSBAS, P.O. Box 267, Sayville NY 11782

New Membership or Renewal \$20

Senior (62+) Membership or Renewal \$15

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

- We would like to welcome all new members to our Chapter and those coming into GSBAS from another chapter.
- Guided tours of Brookside are given every Wednesday and Sunday from 1 to 3 p.m. See our facility, walk the nature trails and become acquainted with the history of the property. We are located 59 Brook Street, Sayville. It's diagonally across from Sayville High School.
- Please submit articles, poems, essays or backyard research for our newsletter. Deadline for next newsletter is February 10, 2014.
- Call (631)563-7716 If you have any *Sandpiper* questions. Leave a message.

Great South Bay Audubon Society
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A Chapter of National Audubon



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