

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.

March/April Programs

March, 20, 2014

Birding By Backyard

Ginny Fields (former President of GSBAS) will be showing a slide show of photographs taken in her back yard or through her window using birdfeeders as magnets for attracting a multitude of birds (some VERY unusual). Having obtained many up close and personal shots, Ginny proves that you don't have to go far to enjoy bird watching! She'll share some tips and hints to improve the birding in your own backyard.

April 17, 2014

The Lost Bird Project

Join us for popcorn and the film, "The Lost Bird Project," which follows sculptor Todd McGrain as he endeavors to create large sculptures of the five bird species that went extinct during modern times: the Carolina Parakeet, Great Auk, Passenger Pigeon, Labrador Duck, and Heath Hen. "These birds are not commonly known," Todd McGrain says, "and they ought to be, because forgetting is another kind of extinction. It's such a thorough erasing."

Mark Your Calendars Now For the Annual May Dinner Fundraiser

When: Monday, 5 May 2014

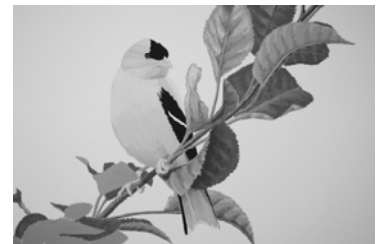
Time: 6 pm Cocktail Hour, 7 pm Dinner

Where: Capt. Bill's Bayview House, Bay Shore

Tickets: \$45/pp includes hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, appetizer, salad, entrée, dessert, soda, coffee, tea. There will be a cash bar.

Speaker: Dr. Ivan Rothman is back by popular demand with this program: I'm Alive!

New & Exciting: For the first time, we are offering a special chance to win an original, framed painting by artist in residence, Steven D'Amato. Only \$10 per raffle tickets allows



A preview of Steve's painting.

you an opportunity to win this magnificent painting of a male American Goldfinch in breeding plumage. This special raffle ticket will be attached to the bottom of your dinner invitation and will be available for purchase at our March and April general meetings and at the dinner. You need not be present to win.

Donations: Donations of nature related items to be used as raffle prizes are greatly appreciated. Please bring your donation to a general meeting, to Brookside most Wednesdays and Sundays between 1 and 3 pm, or contact our Dinner Chairperson, Annette Brownell at 631-665-4405.

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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The Sandpiper is published bimonthly.

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Deadline for May/June issue is April 11, 2014

President's Message, by Judy Davis, Chapter President

I'm so excited! Our Annual May Dinner Fundraiser is almost here. See the article on the front page to learn about our new raffle this year that will give everyone a chance to win Steve D'Amato's painting. The dinner will be a bittersweet event for me as it is my last day as President of the GSBAS. But...who can resist enjoying an evening with dear friends, a fabulous speaker, delicious food, and many prizes. Look for your invitation in the mail mid-March. I look forward to seeing you.

Some of you may be aware of the recent brouhaha over the NYS DEC's Draft Management Plan for Mute Swans in New York State. This draft plan can be accessed on the NYS DEC's website: www.dec.ny.gov. Mute Swans are a non-native, invasive species brought to North America from Eurasia for ornamental purposes in the late 1800s. According to the NYS DEC, "Mute swans can cause a variety of problems, including aggressive behavior towards people, destruction of submerged aquatic vegetation, displacement of native wildlife species, degradation of water quality, and potential hazards to aviation." The plan is to eliminate free-ranging Mute Swans by 2025. However, responsible owners may continue to keep them in captivity. Audubon New York, "supports the humane management of invasive species to reduce the threats they pose to the environment." The GSBAS holds the same position as is evident in our mission statement: *The primary mission of the GSBAS is to advocate for the conservation of habitats for native birds and other native wildlife on Long Island.*

Recently, our friend Paul Adams who created a Hummingbird sanctuary on his property, was served with a lawsuit by his neighbors along with complaints to the Town of Riverhead. We have spent many peaceful mornings observing Hummingbirds on Paul's property during our annual August trip. Saddened by this news, the GSBAS began searching for someone who could help. While we did put Paul in touch with the wonderful attorney who helped us save the South Shore Nature Center, another attorney has taken up his cause. We wish our dear friend, Paul, the best of luck in battling this ridiculous lawsuit.



Thirty new and seasoned volunteers attended the GSBAS volunteer open house on February 1, 2014. Everyone had fun socializing and learning about the exciting volunteer opportunities. If you are interested in finding out more but could not attend please call Judy at 277-5179.

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 westbound 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 *

March 11 9:30 am, Sunken Meadow State Park. Meet in the northwest corner of the main parking lot.

March 18 - no trip.

March 25 9:30 am, Jones Beach West End. Meet at the Coast Guard Station parking lot.

April 1 9:30 am, Jamaica Bay. S.S. Pkwy to Belt Pkwy to Cross Bay Blvd. Exit onto Cross Bay Blvd South and look for refuge signs.

April 8 9:30 am, Heckscher State Park. Meet in the west end parking lot # 5.

April 15 9:30 am, Hempstead Lake State Park. S.S. Pkwy to Exit 18 (Eagle Ave), proceed S. to 2nd parking lot. Turn right and then left.

April 22 9:30 am, Gardiner Park. Entrance on S side Montauk Hwy (27A). From west, 1/2 mile east of Robert Moses Pkwy. From east, 1 mile west of Brightwaters Canal.

April 29 9:30 am, Jamaica Bay. See April 1 directions.

May 6 9:00 am, Belmont Lake State Park. Exit 38 off S.S. Pkwy. Meet in parking lot east side of lake.

May 13 8:00 am, Hempstead Lake State Park. See April 15 directions.

Weekend Nature Walks *

Saturday, March 1 Bob Laskowski Memorial Duck Walk, Islip Ponds, 8:00 am.

Leader: Bob Grover (669-4365). Meet at the Brookwood Hall parking lot off Irish Lane, East Islip. The focus is on wintering ducks on local lakes.

Saturday, April 19 Connetquot State Park, 8:30 am. Leaders: Bob Grover (669-4365) and Ken Thompson (631-612-8028). See directions for General Membership Meetings at Connetquot.

Saturday, April 26 Valley Stream & Jamaica Bay, 8:00 am. Leaders: John Gluth (277-9298) and Steve D'Amato (516-454-7861). S.S. Pkwy to Exit 15 S, North Corona Ave. No. Corona Ave to Hendrickson Ave (.07 miles), turn right at Hendrickson Ave. Hendrickson Ave to Fletcher Ave (0.3) miles, turn right at Fletcher Ave. Fletcher Ave north to Valley Stream State Park entrance on right (0.2 miles). Park at far end of lot.

Sunday May 4, Central Park, 7:00 am. Leaders: John Gluth (277-9298) and Nicholas Lavolta (678-7866). 77 St and Central Park West. Come early to get parking spots.

Saturday May 10, Alley Pond, Forest Park and Jamaica Bay, 7:00 am. Leader: Mike Cooper (821-2855). Northern State Pkwy. to Exit 23, which reads: Cross Island Parkway, Union Turnpike and Alley Pond Park. Go to Union Turnpike (NOT Alley Pond Park). At the signal light, turn right onto Union Turnpike. Proceed to the next signal light which is Springfield Blvd and turn right. Go about 4 blocks to 76th Ave. Turn right onto 76th Ave. and proceed to Alley Pond Parking lot on your left.

Saturday May 11, Connetquot Breakfast and Birding, 8:00 am to 11:00 am. Hosted by Friends of Connetquot. GSBAS trip leaders: Bob & Edith Wilson, Ken Thompson and Helga Merryman. RSVP required - call Connetquot State Park Preserve at 581-1072 to register. Registration fee \$4.00, plus mandated auto entrance fee into State Park Preserve - \$8.00 - (free with Empire Pass).

Note: Rain and snow CANCELS Midweek and Weekend Nature Walks.

Conservation Issues: *Extinction: Past and Present*, by Bob Grover

North America must have been a very interesting place to visit during the last Ice Age. Of course, no one did, as there were no people anywhere to be found yet until the ice began to recede. Or so we think. Before human colonization, North America's assortment of large animals, known as megafauna, were orders of magnitude more diverse than it is at present, with the likes of Mastodons and Woolly Mammoths roaming most of the continental United States. All told, paleontologists have identified 36 large mammals present then; species that met their demise as the glaciers melted. Coincidentally, or not, those extinctions were largely correlated in time with the human colonization of the continent, at least in the big picture. So the debate that has raged since at least my high school years centers on whether the extinctions were caused by newly introduced humans hunting them for food, clothing and bones, or alternatively, by the same climate change factors that facilitated our distant ancestors' colonization.

Human colonization of North America occurred ten or fourteen thousand years ago when the glaciers were receding, but when there was still enough of earth's water locked up in continental ice so that sea levels were much lower. These lower seas created a land bridge across the present day Aleutian Archipelago, linking Asia to Alaska, which the earliest Pale Indians used to gain access. These Asian colonists then worked their way down through the western states and Great Plains, south into Mexico and Central America. Anthropologists have assembled a most probable timeline of these movements, but it still has many discontinuities, and the dates are continually pushed backwards.

Over the years, hundreds of Mastodon and Mammoth fossils have been found, and in many cases cuts and markings on the bones have been consistent with human predation.

North America is not the only continent to have suffered significant megafauna extinctions coincident with human colonization. Australia has a parallel history, with major shifts in climate and resulting environmental conditions at about the same time humans arrived. The Australian extinctions also included several species of large, flightless birds, including the magnificent Moas. A recent research paper, applying some clever statistical analysis, concluded that these extinctions were brought about by a combination of human predation and climate change. Is there a lesson to be learned here?

For reasons that are unclear, human habitation of North America progressed much more rapidly from north to south than it did from west to east. That phenomenon provided an excellent opportunity for some researchers from the University of Missouri to mine the northeast United States fossil record for evidence of extinctions prior to the arrival of people. Two important conclusions emerged. First, many large mammals became extinct in the northeast before the arrival of humans. Second, many of the 36 species that died off were of little or no interest to the human hunters as they worked their way east. Certainly, this is not a definitive answer to the question at hand, as clearly many large mammals were extensively hunted in the Great Plains, for example, and if that was those species' major stronghold, ripple effects could occur at the edges of their ranges.

For now, I think it is safest to conclude that North American megafauna extinctions, like those in Australia, were due to a combination of human predation and environmental change. Ironically and sadly, it seems that human predation and climate change continue to drive some of our iconic animals to extinction. The difference now, however, is that the climate change, or at least the pace of it, is almost certainly brought about by industrial society.

(continued on next page)

Take the plight of the Magellanic Penguin. These endearing birds are burrow nesters, a strategy shared by birds as diverse as Bank Swallows, Belted Kingfishers, and Burrowing Owls. The penguins' colonies range around the southern coast of South America. Their colonial habits make them an easy target for hunters, and they have suffered heavy hunting pressure until recently, when they were afforded some degree of protection. Still, their population is declining. Magellanic Penguin chicks are born with a downy coat, as expected, but do not develop the waterproofing necessary for their seafaring lifestyle until they are getting ready to fledge. Recent climate changes have resulted in more frequent storms and rainier weather. As a result, the penguin chicks are getting waterlogged, causing hypothermia and, often, death. It is still too soon to determine if this species will be able to survive, but in the best case, they face tough times ahead.

The Nature Connection, by Vera Capogna

Lately I've been reading a considerable amount of material regarding the healing power of nature. Getting outside, away from the noises of indoors and inhaling fresh air certainly has its benefits. Not that I had to read it to believe it--I live it all the time. During stressful times, I head over to any one of the ocean beaches. As soon as I walk past the dunes and see the vastness of the ocean, hear the screaming gulls and the ocean's roar, my body immediately relaxes, my brain calms, and my whole being is lifted.

Prominent naturalist Richard Louv, author of *The Nature Principle* believes: "We can be happier, healthier and smarter if we weave more nature into our lives." He states that many studies have strongly suggested that the best mind-body medicine is spending more time outdoors.

A recent article from *Women's Health* magazine explains how some doctors are now writing "nature prescriptions" to help prevent and treat conditions such as heart disease, depression and diabetes. One such physician feels that "nature therapy can be a powerful intervention" and actually hands her patients maps of parks with instructions on which trails to take, depending on their particular illness.

A neuroscientist from the University of Utah that has found that "modern multitasking overtaxes brain areas that are involved in suppressing distractions, thinking creatively and developing a sense of identity." A cure for the overworked brain: "Getting out into nature allows those parts of the brain to restore and replenish themselves," he says.

If you have any reservations regarding the healing power of nature, join us on one of our nature walks and see how good you feel afterwards!

"The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quiet, alone with the Heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature." –ANNE FRANK



Photograph by Vera Capogna

Birding 101 – New Birder Tips, by Jack Finkenberg

Well I've been a new birder for about 40 years now, so I think I might have a few tips for you folks who are just starting out. One of the recurring problems I've found is that people don't know how to set up their binoculars for viewing. I've heard people say they just can't focus their "bins" (binoculars) clearly.

Here's how I go about it. Find something about 20 or 30 feet away with a clear outline. Something like a birdbath or the wall edge on a garage. Now hold your bins up to your eyes and close your right eye.

Using only your left eye look through the left tube of the bins and focus on that clear object using the **center focusing wheel** of the bins. Make sure the image you are looking at is as clear as possible with your left eye. Now close that eye and look through the bins with your right eye and focus on the same image with the right eye, looking through the right tube, by turning **the focusing wheel at the back edge of the right tube** just in front of your right eye, not the center focusing wheel. Make sure you are getting as clear an image as the one you got using your left eye. Now open both eyes and using just the center focusing wheel both eyes will be in focus. You may have to pull the two tubes of your bins closer or further apart to get a full view in each tube at the same time. Now if you had problems with these directions, please bring your binoculars to our 3rd Thursday meeting or to one of our field trips and we will be glad to show how easy it is. Good birding to you!



*Bob Glasser demonstrating his binocular technique.
Photograph by Vera Capogna*

A Winter's Day in Montauk, by Janet Gremli

On a recent winter's day in January, I was lucky enough to be introduced to a hidden little treasure of a trail in Montauk called Amsterdam Beach State Park. The park is located on the south side of Montauk Highway, across from Deep Hollow Ranch. This 122 acre parcel, formally known as the Montauk Moorlands, was acquired jointly by New York State, Suffolk County and the Town of East Hampton in 2005. The park has multiple trails of varying lengths for the hiker to enjoy. The trails are wide and clear and easy to navigate with signage placed in strategic locations.

I followed a meandering path that covered a mix of hilly terrain with vistas overlooking the vastness of the park and deep hollows that were paralleled by flowing streams. Ponds dotting the trail could be identified through the dense undergrowth by the sun's reflection off their surface. Following a short deer trail deep within a thicket, a secret pond still half frozen and shrouded by American Holly was found. The trail rambled through shad trees camouflaged by the black, grey and brown striations of their bark and ended on a bluff overlooking the wide expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. To the west, below the cliffs, was Cavett Cove. Directly to the east lies Lily Pond, and in the distance the Andy Warhol Preserve, owned by The Nature Conservancy. Looping back beneath the canopy of leafless oak branches, dozens of wintering robins could be heard and seen darting amongst the briers. With my trek completed, I had found another beautiful way to embrace winter on Long Island.

BIRD FEEDER SURVEY: DECEMBER 2013/JANUARY 2014 by Helga Merryman

The other day when the sun came out it shone on a pristine snowfall, making a perfect backdrop for the birds to stand out in their vivid colors. Today, in contrast, digging out after a particularly heavy-wet snowfall and the sun nowhere to be seen, I observed how drab the birds at our feeders looked. According to research, the color in bird feathers is basically caused either by pigment or refraction of light caused by the structure of feathers and sometimes a combination of both. If you have ever observed the gorget (throat feathers) of a Ruby-throated hummingbird, it sometimes appears black, but when it is at the correct angle the structure of the feathers act as a prism, splitting the light into component colors, and we observe the brilliant "ruby red". This is an example of refraction. There are basically three types of pigment responsible for color in feathers: melanins, porphyrines and carotenoids. The red color of a Cardinal's feathers are caused by pigments acquired by eating carotenoids. But whatever the cause of the bird's color it is our joy to observe them and we welcome you to join our survey.

We were happy to have had 15 participants for the December-January survey including, Azzaretti, Cafarelli, Caruso, Elsebough, Fogarty, Heiserer, Horman, Kremer-Parrott, Merryman, McNeil, Puglielli, Stocker, Thomas, Unterschuetz and Wilson. The 11 areas represented were Babylon, Bayport, Deer Park, East Patchogue, Holtsville, Lindenhurst Ridge, Ronkonkoma, Sayville, West Islip, and West Sayville.

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 Sept/October issue of the Sandpiper or just send a list your observations. Use one (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 Helga Merryman, 38 South Carll Ave., Babylon, NY, 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.

Counts for each species: Dec. #/Jan.

Red-tailed Hawk 1/0	Carolina Wren 11/15	<u>OTHER SPECIES</u>
Sharp-shinned Hawk 0/4	American Robin 35/3	Great Blue Heron 1/2
Cooper's hawk 2/6	Northern Mockingbird 8/10	Turkey 0/1
Rock pigeon 23/44	Brown Thrasher 1/1	Woodcock 1/0
Mourning Dove 146/158	European Starling 188/161	Herring Gull 2/0
Monk Parakeet 9/6	Towhee -/-	Kingfisher 1/0
Red-bellied Woodpecker 9/13	Fox Sparrow 2/4	Brown Creeper 0/1
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 6/3	Song Sparrow 23/31	Golden-crowned Kinglet 0/1
Downy Woodpecker 19/31	White-throated Sparrow 68/86	Raven 3/0
Hairy Woodpecker 3/2	Dark-eyed Junco 30/83	Cedar Waxwing 1/0
Northern Flicker 4/4	Northern Cardinal 34/65	Warbler species 1/0
Blue Jay 20/53	Red-winged Blackbird 28/14	Purple Finch 1/0
American Crow 8/12	Common Grackle 0/12	Boat-tailed Grackle 5/0
Black-capped Chickadee 22/34	Brown-headed Cowbird 2/2	Hermit Thrush 1/0
Tufted Titmouse 9/17	House Finch 51/7	
Red-breasted Nuthatch 1/3	American Goldfinch 28/46	
White-breasted Nuthatch 3/2	House Sparrow 154/119	

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

Officers

Term 2012-2014

President Judy Davis
(277-5179)

Term 2012-2014

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

Corresponding Secretary:
Genevieve Lee (581-2470)

Recording Secretary
Peggy Marsh (667-3556)

Board of Directors

Term 2013-2016

Arlene Rawls (516-712-9514)
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 (284-3713)

Conservation: Lenora Daniel

Membership: Arlene Rawls

Publicity: Helga Merryman (669-6473)

Beach Clean Up: Carol Jansh (567-4965)

Education: Juliane Wohler, Janet Gremli,

Jack Finkenberg

Audubon Activist: Open

Nature Walks: Larry Merryman (669-6473)

Programs: Peter O'Connor (466-4360)

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 April 11, 2014.
- Call (631)563-7716 If you have any *Sandpiper* questions. Leave a message.

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P.O. Box 267, Sayville, NY 11782
A Chapter of National Audubon

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