



The Sandpiper

Great South Bay Audubon Society

A Chapter of National Audubon Society

Top Predators on Long Island?

by Maria Brown, Conservation Committee Chair

Coyotes, once only found in the arid southwest and prairies of the Midwest are now common in New York. They are only recent migrants believed to have entered from Canada through the Adirondacks (Bogan, 2014). Eastern coyote, a hybrid of the western coyote, gray wolf, northern wolf, and/or domestic dog, first reached the borders of New York City with the first road kill found in Van Cortland Park, Bronx in 1994 (Keller, 2006). By 1999, the first juvenile male coyote crossed over to Manhattan Island and made its way into Central Park. By 2008 there were numerous accounts of coyote in the Bronx and in 2009, the first resident lone male coyote was documented approximately 1-mile east of JFK Airport. Numerous coyote were sighted in 2010 in Central Park followed by the first Staten Island coyote confirmed in 2011.



The first confirmation that coyote had returned to Suffolk County after an absence of more than 100-years was announced by the New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC) on July 3, 2013. This coyote was observed in a cultivated field off Blank Lane in Water Mill (Wright, 2013) and was confirmed to be a single, juvenile male with no associated family unit. A breeding population has been confirmed on Fishers Island which is approximately two-miles off the coast of Connecticut and 15-miles from the North Fork of Long Island (NYSDEC; Personal Communication, October, 2013). Since Long Island is the last major landmass in the continental United States yet to be occupied by coyote (Curtis et al, 2007), understanding where they may take up residency presents an interesting geospatial problem. It is expected that they will arrive by bridge, tunnel, rail or by swimming/rafting. Once coyote numbers increase in Suffolk County, the public will need to be informed on how to live with a top predator on Long Island, a new concept for native Long Islanders (Smith, 2010).

At the Long Island Pine Barren's Research Forum held at Brookhaven National Laboratory on October 3, 2014, American Museum of Natural History scientist Mark Weckel addressed this important topic. Camera traps set in the boroughs of

New York City have confirmed far more coyote in the Bronx than previously known. Additionally, a breeding pair have been observed at the base of a bridge leading from the Bronx to Queens suggesting that it is only a matter of time before they arrive and become established in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Planning now for when they arrive will provide a way to best educate the public on how to live happily and safely with top predators in our backyards, and will allow scientists to plan for assessing how ecosystems will respond

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 8:00 pm on the third Thursday of each month, except May, (which is our Annual Dinner), July and August.

Pre-program refreshments begin at 7:00. General Membership Meetings are held at Connetquot River State Park Preserve. See page 3 for directions.

Upcoming Programs

March 19, 2015

Get expert tips on backyard bird feeding by Gary Fortcher, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited in Oakdale. Gary will discuss how different types of seed attract different species of birds, different feeding options, the importance of maintaining your feeders, and more. Question and answer to follow.

April 16, 2015

William E. Zitek, DVM, Long Island Area Coordinator and Board Member of the NYS Bluebird Society, will talk about his involvement with the Bluebird Nestbox trail revitalization on Shelter Island and the North Fork and how it improved the Eastern Bluebird population there.

GSBAS Annual Dinner

Mark your calendar now for our annual May dinner/fundraiser.

Monday, May 4th 2015 at Captain Bill's Bayview House

Dinner will include hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, appetizers, salad, entrée, dessert, soda, coffee and tea. There will be a cash bar.

We are very excited to announce that our speaker this year is Shaibal Mitra. Shai is an Assistant Professor of Biology at the College of Staten Island, with research interests in avian ecology, evolution and conservation. Among several other activities, Shai is co-compiler of the Captree Christmas Bird Count right in our back yard.

After the great success that Steve D'Amato's American Goldfinch painting brought last year, Steve has graciously agreed to paint another picture for us this year. One lucky person is going to win a beautiful Oriole painting! The special raffle ticket will be attached to the bottom of your dinner invitation as was last year and will also be available for purchase at our March and April general meetings and at the dinner.

We are looking forward to another successful and fun event and sincerely hope you can attend.

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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

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The Great South Bay Audubon Library is located at our Brookside Headquarters, 59 Brook St. in Sayville. It can be accessed Wednesday and Sunday from 1 to 3pm

Please consider joining us on one our Nature Walks listed on Page 3. Our experienced leaders are always willing to share their expertise. Everything we do centers on what's out there to be enjoyed and, if need be, protected.
Hope to see you soon!

The Board-Walk by Annette Brownell

Everyone has a tale of winter's harshness – inconveniences, lost work, damage from ice -- as each year seems to be colder than we recalled the last. Still, there is a wonder to the season.

The other evening as I walked back up to the house from locking up my chickens, I noticed the sky was overcast and the moon was fairly fuzzy. It began to snow and the world took on that quietness that happens when the snow falls. I looked up at the snow gently falling through the sky... through the bare trees... all around and I thought, "How lucky am I! What a world we have been given." That night around 2am I looked out my window on the moon-drenched yard. There were bunnies running around, and just strolling through my neighbor's yard was my local fox. His thoughts probably weren't as benign as I am imagining, but he was lovely. In the mornings I go out to feed the chickens and fancy myself some great tracker as I analyze whose tracks are going in what direction in the snow as if I am the first to ever discover such a thing. Marvelous! Nature is fabulous.

As this season wears on, we are continuing to buckle down some of the events that we are planning for. I hope you will be able to participate in the Brookside spring clean up on April 11. Many hands make light work. This will pave the way to several other activities in the spring, summer and into the fall, such as the library opening and dedication, our June outdoor program, a fall art show and some other possible events we are planning. We are in hopes that our members really begin to take advantage of the park we are so fortunate to be stewards of. Watch for event dates in both *The Sandpiper* and on the website.

We had such an overwhelming response to our annual appeal. Even though it arrived at a time when people were so busy, it was really great to see that in one week we received so many donations! Not just that, but many people wrote little notes of encouragement and appreciation. It is really spirit lifting to read each thought and suggestion. I don't have to tell you again that these appeal funds are used to support educational and conservation programs and efforts that we work on all year. It is an encouragement to know that people out there in birdland care and pay mind. I hope that some of you that don't find yourself at the monthly general meetings will join us for a firsthand experience. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you so much for your support!

A Bird's Tale by Harry Anderson

A number of years ago we bought a pair of African Finches at Macy's, very small colorful birds with seed breaker beaks. At the time they cost about two bucks for the pair. Yes, I know they were non-native species with all those attendant issues. But our kids were decidedly native species and they wanted them.

The cage with assorted accouterments was obviously extra and it all cost at least ten times as much as the birds themselves.

There is no such thing as a care free pet. With the Finches, seed was obviously necessary, and to my dismay so was the at least weekly cage cleaning. It was a challenge to get the birds to hop up on a perch so I could replace the sandpaper bottom cage liner. There was always detritus left behind that had to be removed by hand. Unpleasant.

Then came the brilliant idea. Why not simply vacuum up the stuff. I plugged in the Hoover canister vac, put it on a chair, opened the door and carefully snaked the hose into the cage, making sure the birds were high up on a perch. But when I turned the vacuum on, the Finches went nuts. One flew down to the bottom of the cage, and, yes, it got sucked right up into the vacuum. It must have traveled up that tube at 40 mph.

What now? For both me and the bird. I opened vac and took out the bag. I carefully slit it open with a razor blade. As I pulled the flug aside, there was the Finch, dusty but none the worse for the ride of its life. I carefully took it out and blew the dust off. Back into the cage it went, but I swear the other bird was cowering in the corner, anticipating something outrageous.

Both Finches continued to live out their normal lives, one with a singular tale to peep about.

Great South Bay Audubon Society Activities

General Membership Meetings and Programs

All General Membership Meetings are held at Connetquot River State Park Preserve in the beautiful and historic main building. The entrance is in the back of the building; please park near the garages. There is a handicap ramp at this entrance. Please do not park on the grass or in the circle in front of the building.

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.

Directions to the Connetquot River 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.

Louise Titus Memorial Tuesday Midweek Walks*

Tuesday, March 17, Sunken Meadow State Park, 9:30 am • Meet in the northwest corner of the main parking lot.

Tuesday, March 24, Heckscher State Park, 9:30 am • Meet in Parking Field 5 in the west end.

Tuesday, March 31, Jones Beach West End, 9:30 am • Meet at the Coast Guard Station parking lot.

Tuesday, April 7, Jamaica Bay NWR, 9:30 am • Southern State Pkwy to Belt Pkwy, Exit 17, Cross Bay Blvd. South. Continue south for about 2 miles. Look for entrance on the right (west) side. There are signs for park entrance.

Tuesday, April 14, Robert Moses State Park, 9:30 am • Meet at Robert Moses State Park parking field #5 northeast corner.

Tuesday, April 21, Gardiners Park, Bayshore, 9:00 am • Entrance on south side of Montauk Hwy (27A). From west, 1/2 mile east of Robert Mose Pkwy. From east, 1 mile west of Brightwaters Canal.

Tuesday, April 28, Norman J Levy Park & Jones Beach West End, 9:00 am • Southern State Pkwy to Meadowbrook Pkwy south to Merrick Road (27A). Go east on Merrick Road approximately 1/8 mile and turn right into the Norman J. Levy Park.

Tuesday, May 5, Belmont SP, 9:00 am • Exit 38 off the Southern State Pkwy. Meet in the parking lot on the east side of the lake.

Tuesday, May 12, Massapequa Preserve, 9:00 am • Take Southern State Pkwy. to Exit 30 (Broadway south) to Baltimore Ave., go left 2 blocks to Parkside Blvd. Park on street, and walk into the park.

Weekend Nature Walks*

Saturday, March 7, Bob Laskowski Memorial Duck Walk, 8:30 am • Leader: Bob Grover (516-318-8536) Meet at Brookwood Hall Islip Town Park in East Islip on Irish Lane between Montauk Hwy. and Union Blvd.

Saturday, April 18, Connetquot River State Park Preserve, 8:30 am • Leaders: Bob Grover (516-318-8536) Ken Thompson (631-612-8028) Meet in parking field. Entrance is on the westbound side of Sunrise Highway (Rte. 27) west of Pond Road. If coming from west to east, must go all the way to the next overpass to cross over bridge, then head westbound and stay in right lane to entrance.

Saturday, April 25, Valley Stream SP & Jones Beach West End, 8:00 am • Leaders: John Gluth (631-827-0120), Steve D'Amato (516-680-4002) S.S. Parkway to exit 15S, North Corona Ave. No Corona Ave to Hendrickson Ave (.07 mi) turn right at Hendrickson Ave. Hendrickson Ave. to Fletcher Ave (.3 mi) turn right on Fletcher Ave. Fletcher Ave North to Valley Stream State Park entrance on right (.2 mi). Park at far end of lot.

Sunday, May 3, Central Park, 7:00 am • Leaders: John Gluth (631-827-0120), Steve D'Amato (516-680-4002), Nick Laviola (631-678-7866) Meet at 7 a.m. on Central Park West at 79th Street (opposite the Museum of Natural History). One of our best trips!

Saturday, May 9, Alley Pond Park, 7:00 am • Leaders: Mike Cooper (516-523-2369) Steve D'Amato (516-680-4002) 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.

Young Naturalists Club

First Sunday of the month, 1:15pm, Brookside County Park, 59 Brook St. Sayville*

The Young Naturalists Club focuses on learning about nature and stewardship of a natural area. Outdoor activities include crafting nature boxes and pinecone feeders, nature scavenger hunts, hiking the trails, gardening, and maintaining bird-feeding stations. Indoor activities include examining birds' nests and feather displays and special presentations on subjects such as the Northern Bobwhite Quail, local marine creatures, and bird watching. For details on upcoming Young Naturalists Club activities, please email info@gsbas.org or call 631-581-1731, or visit our website: www.gsbas.org. Registration is not required but recommended. Program is free, but donations or joining GSBAS is encouraged.

*Check Website www.GSBAS.org for any cancellations, details and updates. Rain and snow CANCELS Midweek and Weekend Nature Walks.

*The YNC will not meet in April 2015 due to Easter Sunday.

TRIP REPORTS

Triple Treat at Montauk

by Ken Thompson

We had our kickoff of GSBAS weekend field trips at Montauk Point on January 10. Eight hardy birders showed up on a cold windy day. The temperatures were in the teens with the winds out of the WNW at 10 knots increasing to 15 to 20. It was cold but not as cold as we have had on other trips.

Birding at the point was pretty quiet excepting for the steady stream of Common Eiders flying from the west to the east all morning long. There were thousands of them; they were everywhere you looked. Seeing masses of birds is one of the reasons we go to Montauk in January, the seabirds tend to congregate and put on a show.

On our way to Dune Rd. after finishing Montauk, Bob Grover spotted a large bird soaring overhead. We all pulled over to look at what was determined to be a Golden eagle, treat number one. That is a great find for Long Island. Later on Dune Rd, we pulled into Triton Lane and someone pointed out a Snowy Owl to us, treat number two. A little further down Dune Rd. we spotted an American Bittern sunning itself in a roadside ditch, treat number three.

Jones Beach by Mike Cooper

On February 7th, ten Great South Bay birders came out for our annual West End Jones Beach trip. Crusty snow made getting around a little tricky, but we managed to find 44 species, with a couple of nice winter sightings. A large finch flock dropped in and allowed us to get nice looks at Common Redpolls. Redpolls are irruptive, and don't move into our area every winter so these were a nice treat. Several of us saw one or possibly two different Rough-



legged Hawks. Other raptors included several Northern Harriers, and singles of Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed, Merlin, and possibly a glimpse of the Northern Goshawk that had been hunting in the area for the past few weeks. We ran into several large groups of Horned Larks, each of them containing a couple of Laspall Longspurs.

The bay near the Coast Guard Station



Brave birders at Montauk: Front row left to right: Edith Wilson, Bob Grover, Lorraine Fogarty, Helga Merryman. Back Left to Right: Tim Dunn, Bob Wilson, John Gluth and Ken Thompson as photographer.

produced nice looks at the usuals- Horned Grebes, loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, Bufflehead and Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw) and a distant flock of a hundred or so Common Eider. Over at the field 10 fishing piers, a couple of Ruddy Turnstones fed under the docks, and off on one of the bay islands a large congregation of Harbor Seals was hauled up on an island.

Breakfast and Birding

by Ken Thompson

We held our annual winter Birding and Breakfast on January 15. This is a function sponsored and supported by three organizations. NYS Parks is the host at the Connetquot River State Park Preserve. Great South Bay Audubon Society provided the nature walk leaders. The

Friends of Connetquot supplied the breakfast and moral support.

Breakfast was at 8:00; the room was full. Coffee and juice and tea were served along with fruit, cake and bagels. After a hearty breakfast we started with



Common Loon (top) and Long-tailed Duck were among the highlights of the Jones Beach trip.

a presentation by Pam Hunter, of potential winter birds that might be seen. Pam reviewed the ducks that would probably be on the pond and some of the land birds we might see as we walked the park trails,

After breakfast we headed to the pond. At the pond, with a very cooperating sunny day, we saw most of the ducks that was presented in the earlier session. Highlights were Common Mergansers, Canvasbacks, Northern Pintail, Red Head and all the expected regulars. We spent time making sure everyone saw all the ducks that were there.

Then we walked the trails and again saw almost all the birds that were presented in the morning. The selection for the presentation by the park staff was spot on. Highlights were both Red and White-breasted Nuthatches. There were chickadees and titmice and White-throated sparrows hanging around the feeders. We saw a couple of different woodpeckers: Red-bellied, Downy and a highlight was a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker which gave everyone great looks. Some groups saw a Red Fox scamper across the paddock, and some folks saw a Bald Eagle fly over the main pond.

It was a beautiful winter day with mild temperatures and bright sunshine. Everyone had a good time and the birds were very cooperative. We saw over thirty species of birds. Winter birding can be fun. NYS parks and GSBAS and Friends of Connetquot would like to thank everyone for coming and enjoying our park.

CHAPTER NEWS

Beaks, Mouths, Noses and Nares

**Young Naturalists Club Report
by Janet Gremli**

On Sunday, January 5, 2015, the Young Naturalists Club enjoyed a lesson on beaks, mouths, noses and nares. Do you have a nose? Do you have a mouth? What about birds? Where are their nose and mouth? The children listened as Miss Lois lead the discussion using bird carvings as models. The children learned why the beaks were shaped differently and guessed at the types of foods best suited for the various beaks. Using drawings of bird heads without beaks, the children identified and attached the beak belonging to each bird head. The children then drew their own bird and beak pictures. The new word learned today was NARES.

The six children and six adults then joined in a hike along the trails, collecting litter and seeking birds. It didn't take long before our hike leaders, Elizabeth, Toussaint and Spiro spotted a Great blue heron wading in the shallow waters of Green's Creek. A beautiful sight to see, the stunning bird gracefully parted ways and flew in the direction of the Great South Bay.

Donations for the May Dinner Needed

Spring will be here before we know it and shortly thereafter – The annual May Dinner. Once again, we are requesting donations of bird, gardening and nature related gifts in the way of books, stationery sets, artwork, planting items, etc. as well as other nice items that people would like to win. Please call or email Annette Brownell to make arrangements for pick up or drop off of items; 631-665-4405 or nettiesbaskets2@optonline.net

Save the Date!

Help Needed at Brookside

We are very fortunate to be the stewards of Brookside County Park and be able to call this our "Audubon home".

Our annual Brookside spring cleanup is scheduled for April 11 from 10 am – 2 pm. It is a great time to work with and meet other Audubon members, as well as community members, such as high school students, boy scouts and girl scouts that are working on community



Outdoor Fun! Young Naturalist Club members (left to right) Victoria Bellas, Juliana Bellas, Vanessa Roe and Josie Montegari enjoy the view from the porch at Brookside during the Dec. 2014 meeting.

service hours.

We are planning several Brookside activities throughout the warm weather months and want our home to be in tip-top shape.

Please bring tools – rakes, shovels, gloves, clippers. We would like to clean

up the waters there also, so if some of you have waders, let me know. Plan to stay for a barbecue following the cleanup. Please RSVP so we know the approximate amount of food to buy.

Email Annette:
nettiesbaskets2@optonline.net

The 53rd Captree Christmas Bird Count Results

December 14, 2014 (115th CBC Season) by Shai Mitra & Patricia Lindsay

The Captree CBC has documented winter bird populations in southwestern Suffolk County since 1962. On 14 December 2014, a record-high 57 participants enjoyed mild weather and tallied 125 species. Highlights included 1 Barnacle Goose, 1 Cackling Goose, 2 Eurasian Wigeon, 1 Barrow's Goldeneye (new to count), 1 Great Egret, 2 Bald Eagles, 5 Black-legged Kittiwakes, 2 Snowy Owls, 2 Northern Saw-whet Owls, 1 Blue-headed Vireo (new to count), 2 Common Ravens, 2 Orange-crowned Warblers, 1 Pine Warbler, 1 Palm Warbler, 1 Common Yellowthroat, 2 Lapland Longspurs, 1 Nelson's Sparrow, 2 White-crowned Sparrows, 108 Boat-tailed Grackles, 3 Common Grackles, 9 Pine Siskins, and 6 Purple Finches. Documentation for the most unusual of these species has been collected and is available for review.

The species total greatly exceeded our 10-year average of 117 and the 53-year average of 116 and nearly matched our 10-year max of 126.

As noted above, good weather and strong coverage (57 participants this year was an all-time maximum) contributed to this year's high total, and these factors undoubtedly also helped us to set numerous 10-year and all-time maximum counts. In contrast, bad misses and unusually low counts were really very few this year.

But beyond good detection, we also benefited from the presence of several irruptive species, notably Northern Saw-whet and Snowy Owl, Purple Finches, and Pine Siskins. Interestingly, our methodology also was able to document exceptionally large totals for several common, widespread species that had staged striking coastal flights last fall: Hairy Woodpecker (40 vs. 10-year average of 17), Downy Woodpecker (123 vs. 10-year average of 69), and White-breasted Nuthatch (87 vs. 10-year average of 28).

Summary data for the 222 species recorded to date on the Captree CBC can be found on our website: GSBAS.org. Click on the Clubs and Projects tab.



CONSERVATION ISSUES BY BOB GROVER

In Your Face, Naysayers

The leading headline on the front page of the *New York Times* on January 17, 2015, read "2014 Breaks Heat Record, Challenging Global Warming Skeptics". As I write this, we sit well north of the snow line and the flurries are falling outside my window, while they are getting record snows in Boston, but we have explained that previously in this column. The statistics don't lie. 2014 was the warmest year worldwide since record keeping began in 1880, surpassing the previous record setter of 2010, itself barely edging out the now third place 2005. Stunningly, the 10 warmest years all occurred since 1997! If you still question the stark reality of global warming, your ranks have drastically diminished, leaving you alone with an ignorant game show host and some bombastic conspiracy theorists. Meanwhile, although we may all enjoy better summer tanning conditions, researchers report in a recent "Climate Change" that these atmospheric alterations will likely cost U. S. coastal areas one trillion dollars by 2100 from increased storm surges and sea level rise.

There May Have Been a Second Shooter

In past *Conservation Issues*, we have discussed ancient mass extinctions, and the likelihood that the demise of the dinosaurs was caused by earth's collision with a massive asteroid or comet. The crater has been located on the Yucatan Peninsula, and the signature iridium layer has been detected worldwide, leaving little doubt of the collision. But there has always been an alternative hypothesis lurking in the shadows that a massive volcanic eruption was the cause. An ancient volcano in India has drawn attention of late. In December, researchers reported in *Science* that the Deccan Volcano was in a state of eruption around the same time, 66 million years ago, and it erupted continuously for an astounding 750,000 years, straddling the extinction of the dinosaurs. A volcano of that magnitude would emit enough carbon dioxide to turn earth into a greenhouse, and the sulfur gasses would have rendered the air unbreathable and acidified the oceans. To put it into *Star Trek* terms, earth was not a Class M planet during this period. This theory has some legs, but the im-

pact did occur as well. So, I am willing to accept both causes, a second shooter, if you will, leading to the death of all but the most resilient dinosaurs, which went on to radiate and become our beloved birds.

Sandy, et al. Revisited

Conventional meteorological wisdom has always held that hurricane damage in the Northeast U. S. is typically dampened due to the storms' interactions with colder northern air masses and, often, interaction with land as they move up the coast. In southern latitudes, hurricane strength is typically rapidly diminished shortly after landfall, as the system degenerates into clusters of thunderstorm cells. However, in the January, 2015, issue of the *Journal of Coastal Research*, Dr. Nicholas Coch, an eminent coastal scientist from Queens College, presents eye-opening research showing that this southern hurricane paradigm does not apply north of the Carolinas. Dr. Coch has gone back and reconstructed the histories of hurricanes of 1821, 1893, and, of course, the famous Long Island Express of 1938, using meteorological reports and newspaper accounts. In addition, he has made interesting comparisons of those historic storms to the more recent hurricanes, Irene, of 2011, and Sandy, of 2012. The storms from this group with the best historic accounts, 1938, Irene and Sandy, were similar in that they caused extensive, record setting damages hundreds of miles inland in upstate New York, New England and even Canada. In most cases, these storms encountered cool polar air masses on their left sides and warm maritime air on their right. It appears that this temperature gradient actually fuels those storms as they move inland, much in the same fashion that tornados are fueled in the Midwest. On the coast, Dr. Coch has determined that the standard Saffir-Simpson scale on hurricane intensity is a poor predictor of damage in the Northeast. This is due, in part, to the shape of our coastal embayments. The New York Bight and Harbor, Long Island Sound and Narragansett Bay are all funnel shaped. This greatly amplifies storm surge heights and damages. Dr. Coch's research is beginning to change how we think about, and prepare for, hurricanes in the Northeast.

Top Predators on Long Island? *continued from Front Page*

to their presence. Habitat suitability modeling will help define geospatially where the coyote will "prefer" to live. An evaluation of where people live in proximity to those "preferred sites" will allow wildlife managers to prepare educational and outreach materials for the general public. It will also allow scientists to target pre-survey locations based on the sites likely to be populated by coyote for natural resource assessment inventories so that baseline data can be compared to future natural resource inventories once coyote become established.

There may be valuable ecosystem services that the eastern coyote may provide in Suffolk County. Javier Monzón, from Stony Brook University asserts that "coyote in areas of high deer density are genetically more wolf-like, suggesting that natural selection for wolf-like traits may result in local adaptation at a fine geographic scale" (2012). The results of his research may have broad implications for the natural control of deer and red fox population via natural colonization of coyote on eastern Long Island in the near future. Additionally, coyote establishment in Suffolk County may lead to decreased feral cat populations which will ultimately protect both residential and migratory avian species. Studies in California urban areas

showed that coyote establishment reduced cats in some habitat fragments which then resulted in an increase in nesting success for songbirds. Thus, the coyote serves as a top predator by removing an important smaller predator, the cat, resulting in birds and perhaps other species subsequently increasing in number (Urban Coyote Research, 2014). Although some birds may benefit from the expected reduction in feral cats, there may be adverse impacts to ground nesting birds. Evidence suggests that coyote destroy nests of northern bobwhites and wild turkeys. Coyote also depredate adult quail and turkeys according to Fred Guthrie from Texas A&M.

Awaiting the arrival of a top predator on Long Island presents an opportunity to predict where we can expect coyote to establish as breeding pairs and family units, evaluate pre-colonization resources and then re-evaluate natural resources once they have established themselves, and lastly evaluate people's perceptions and become involved in the process that will be necessary to provide education and outreach to communities regarding safety and in sharing our landscapes with these animals.

Citations: Bogan, D. (2014). Rise of the eastern coyote. *New York State Conservationist*; pp20-23. Guthrie, F. (2014). Coyotes and upland gamebirds. Retrieved on October 6, 2014 from: <http://agrillife.org/text-natwildlife/coyotes/table-of-contents/coyotes-and-upland-gamebirds>. Monzón, J. (2012). Rapid Evolution of Northeastern Coyotes. Dissertation, Stony Brook University. Urban Coyote Research (2014). Coyote relationships with other wildlife species. Retrieved on October 6, 2014 from: <http://urbancoyotersearch.com/coyote-relationships-other-wildlife-species>.

BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

December 2014 / January 2015
Compiled by Helga Merryman



Sightings of raptors in the vicinity of our homes seems to be becoming a fairly common event. Song birds are prey for many hawks especially Sharp-shinned and Cooper's who are built for maneuvering through trees with their short rounded wings and long tails. It is not unusual to see them near our birdfeeders although they are not looking for sunflower seed. Alisa Kremer-Parrott observed a Cooper's hawk feeding for over an hour on a Rock Pigeon that it killed in her yard. We once had a Merlin or Pigeon Hawk perched in a tree in front of our house devouring a song bird. In the past Merlins were called Pigeon Hawks because in flight they resembled pigeons, in medieval days noblewomen used them for falconry and they were labeled "Lady Hawks", their main prey being Skylarks, (this was in Europe). Sandra McNeil reported three Northern Harriers (Marsh Hawks) eating a rat-like carcass on her lawn (she lives near the bay). I thought this was strange behavior because I usually see them alone, but upon researching, I discovered that the Harriers roost together in groups on the ground during winter, sometimes with Short-eared Owls, so it is not surprising that they would eat together. Dr. Caruso had a nice surprise, a mature Bald Eagle roosting in a tree near his house and then flying through his yard, neighbors wanted to know what he was putting in his bird feeders to attract an Eagle. Bald Eagles were reported to have nested successfully on Long Island this past year and sightings are becoming more common, so keep your eyes open, you never know what will turn up.

The GSBAS Feeder Survey has been run for many years. Everyone is welcome to join at any time during the survey period. The reward of this feeder survey is to bring awareness of nature to our doorstep and share our observations with others. I can see from the responses to our feeder survey that our mission is fulfilled.

For the Dec/Jan survey we had 17 participants, welcome to newcomers Jean Rogers and Pat Crevoiserat, we are happy to have you join us. The following communities were represented, Babylon, Bayshore, Deer Park, West Islip, Lake Ronkonkoma, West Sayville, Ridge, Bellport East Patchogue, Sayville, Lindenhurst and Islip Terrace.

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 Sandpiper or just send a list of your observations, 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 Helga Merryman, 38 South Carl Ave, Babylon, N.Y., 11702. You can also email your sightings and photos to me at eider55owl@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: Winter 2014/2015

Red-tailed Hawk 3/1
Sharp-shinned Hawk 4/7
Cooper's hawk 2/5
Rock pigeon 27/28
Mourning Dove 233/181
Monk Parakeet 0/7
Red-bellied Woodpecker 17/21
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 2/3
Downy Woodpecker 30/26
Hairy Woodpecker 3/8
Northern Flicker 5/4
Blue Jay 57/69
American Crow 18/18
Black-capped Chickadee 42/58
Tufted Titmouse 17/18

Red-breasted Nuthatch 1/0
White-breasted Nuthatch 20/20
Carolina Wren 21/21
American Robin 2/16
Northern Mockingbird 15/18
Brown Thrasher 1/2
European Starling 200/273
Towhee 0/0
Fox Sparrow 7/6
Song Sparrow 26/64
White-throated Sparrow 70/83
Dark-eyed Junco 60/107
Northern Cardinal 63/78
Red-winged Blackbird 13/13
Common Grackle 10/61

Brown-headed Cowbird 6/7
House Finch 121/103
American Goldfinch 48/50
House Sparrow 324/248

OTHER SPECIES

Mallard 0/27
Northern Harrier 3/0
Herring Gull 5/15
Raven 1/0
Pine Siskin 3/1
Purple Finch 5/1
Chipping Sparrow 0/2
Boat-tailed Grackle 6/3

Great South Bay Audubon Society

Officers

President: (Position Pending)
Vice-president: (Position Pending)
Treasurer: Annette Brownell (631) 665-4405
Corresponding Secretary:
Genevieve Lee (631) 581-2470
Recording Secretary: Arlene Rawls (516) 712-9514

Board of Directors

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Jack Finkenberg
Audubon Activist: Open
Nature Walks: Ken Thompson (631) 612-8028
Programs: Peter O'Connor (631) 466-4360
Librarian: Vera Capogna (631) 563-4969
Annual Dinner:
Annette Brownell (631) 665-4405
Mailing: Ken Thompson (631) 612-8028
Email Responder: Vera Capogna (631) 563-4969
Answering the GSBAS Direct Phone:
Steve D'Amato

GSBAS Direct Phone Number (631) 563-7716
GSBAS Email address: info@gsbas.org

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



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 \$20 ☐ New Membership Senior (62+) \$15
☐ Renewal \$20 ☐ Renewal Senior (62+) \$15

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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- 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 pm. See our facility, walk the nature trails and become acquainted with the history of the property. We are located at 59 Brook Street, Sayville, diagonally across from Sayville High School.

Volunteer Highlight

Always jumping in when needed, Jody Banazak has been the person to call on in our times of need. Jody quickly jumped in to take over the beach clean up, she monitors the Kestrel nest boxes at Connetquot River State Park Preserve, is a member of the Butterfly Garden Club and is very helpful with anything that needs fixing at Brookside!! She is always willing to help out in any capacity.

In addition to the above, Jody is also a talented artist and is generous enough to donate her beautiful paintings to our May dinner each year.

Thank you Jody!!!

Great South Bay Audubon Society
PO Box 267, Sayville, NY 11782
A Chapter of National Audubon

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