

# The Sandpiper

## Great South Bay Audubon Society

### A Chapter of National Audubon Society

## Climate Change and a Southerly Shift in Long Island Winter Birds

by Maria Brown, Conservation Committee Chair

Climate changes in North America have been considerable in the northeast since the 1970s. The greatest reported changes have been those observed in the winter months (Rodenhouse et al., 2009). Although we did not have that experience this past winter on Long Island, the northern hemispheric winters have shown a trend of milder conditions with less reported snow cover especially during the early spring season (Brown & Robinson, 2011). Additionally there have been more variable and intense precipitation events documented (Groisman et al., 2005). In the northern latitudes, for many cold-adapted species, these changing climactic conditions create environmental shifts during a season when resources are extremely scarce (Williams et al., 2014).

So what does this mean for winter bird species on Long Island in regards to species changes in response to climate changes on the community level? In North America, the northern range boundaries of many winter birds tend to correlate with isotherms of average minimum temperature (Zuckerberg et al., 2011). Changes in the average minimum

temperature over 20 years of data collected from Cornell University's Project FeederWatch, suggests you may be observing a different cast of winter birds in your own backyard. Data collected on 38 species of birds are showing that more southerly bird species are pushing northward and are thereby restructuring the communities of birds that spend their winters on Long Island and in the northern latitudes (Devitt, 2014). Cardinals, Chipping Sparrows, and Carolina Wrens which were rarely observed 50 years ago, have become common sightings (Zuckerberg, 2011). Prince' & Zuckerberg (2014) evaluated 38 species over a 22-year period from over 53 million American feeding stations in the USA who participate in Project FeederWatch. They concluded that a shifting winter climate has provided an opportunity for smaller, southerly distributed species to colonize new regions and promote the formation of unique winter bird assemblages throughout eastern North America. For Long Island bird enthusiasts, we are likely to continue seeing new southerly species in our backyards during the winter months. As climate models predict even warmer temperatures occurring over the next 100 years, with seasonal climate effects most pronounced in the northern latitudes, we are likely to continue to see an overall trend of milder winters with less snow, a shorter snow season overall, and intense precipitation events which will continue to contribute to the shifting winter bird community we observe on Long Island (Devitt, 2014).

Other issues associated with alterations in winter climate include phenology, the timing of seasonal activities of animals and plants. Common changes and trends that may already be occurring on Long Island include earlier spring



female cardinal photo by Bob Glasser

50 years ago on Long Island, the Northern Cardinal was not nearly as common as today.

## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS AND MONTHLY PROGRAMS

All GSBAS Activities are FREE and open to the public.

Join us and bring a friend.

General Membership Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month, except May, (which is our Annual Dinner), July & August.

Pre-program refreshments begin at 7:00.

Program begins at 7:30 pm.

Held at Connetquot River State Park Preserve.

See page 3 for directions.

## Upcoming Programs and Events

**Monday, May 4, 6 pm**

**Annual Dinner at**

**Captain Bill's Bayview House**

This year's speaker is Shaibal Mitra. There will be a special raffle for the Baltimore Oriole painting by Steve D'Amato.

For more information and to preview the painting, see our website:

[www.gsbas.org](http://www.gsbas.org)

**Thursday, June 18, 6 pm**

**Outdoor Nature Program**

**Brookside County Park**

**59 Brook St. Sayville**

Sweetbriar Nature Center will present

**"Birds of Prey"**

Sweetbriar serves as an "assisted living" facility for the feeding and rehabilitating of injured wildlife. Members of their staff will bring a sampling of animals to Brookside for our community to enjoy.

**Sunday, May 10**

**8:00 am - 11:00 am**

**Connetquot Breakfast and Birding**

Connetquot River State Park Preserve

Sunrise Highway, Oakdale

Continental breakfast hosted by Friends of Connetquot. Reservations required.

Call Connetquot River State Park Preserve at 631-581-1072 to register. Registration fee \$4. plus \$8 parking fee per car - unless you have yearly Empire pass.

*Continued on bottom of Page 7*

## 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: Vera Capogna  
vlvcap@yahoo.com

Mailing Chair: Ken Thompson  
Thank you to everyone who helps mail each issue.

Illustrator: Steve D'Amato  
(as indicated)

Editorial Address:  
Sandpiper  
GSBAS, PO Box 267  
Sayville, NY 11782

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Webmaster: Eric Larson

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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

Over the last few months the dinner committee and the board have been working on getting things ready for the May Dinner. My thoughts right now, of course, are on getting the dinner off in a successful fashion. Each year as I prepare, there are certain members that contact me with great donations for the dinner. I look so forward to see them, catching up, sharing interests. I am reminded again and again at how sharing, caring and giving nature-people are: putting items aside with us in mind, creating works of art for us, or finding something in a museum that they want to share. The words of encouragement and support really mean a lot. I am smiling right now as I think of recently meeting a member of our chapter at Wild Birds Unlimited while I was buying seed. I didn't know him, but he knew me from the Board-walk articles and we got to talking chickens. Very special.

Soon the warm weather will be here to stay and good ole summertime will have arrived. I am excited about the summer evening bird classes we will be hosting at Brookside in August. It would be terrific if some of you folks that don't normally come out came for a show of support and to chat with people who are perhaps newly interested in birding. It's very important that this generation encourage and guide the next in such things as nature observation, concern for the vulnerable and the importance of stewardship of the earth so that we may have raised the next group of capable torch bearers.

My son and his family live in Syracuse. My oldest grandson is just 3 and becoming an avid birder. He can already identify several birds. I was very happy to set him up with a bird feeder, suet, peanuts and a Peterson's guide. At Easter my son was hanging out the door carrying binoculars around. It made my heart really glad to see that my grandchildren will have something at a young age that I didn't get until much older. As a matter of fact, my kids still laugh about the fact that I am an Audubon member – me – who was so afraid of birds that I didn't want to go to the beach for fear of the gulls (which I learned are not called seagulls). I finally got chickens to help me overcome my fear of birds. But, not so with these little ones. Their world will be so much bigger.

We encourage each you to take advantage of the opportunities around you, whether through Great South Bay Audubon or other avenues. We are expanding our events to include more diversified activities because we realize that hiking through the woods at 7am isn't for everyone. Watch for the upcoming poetry workshop and the art show. We hope to meet so many more of you!



American Robin illustration by Steve D'Amato

## Let It Snow - Or Not by Harry Anderson

If you live anywhere on Long Island, how can you forget any of our "winters of discontent," particularly this past winter's assorted surprises. There were also times when the snow blower was used as much as the lawn mower. And there were years when grass was being mowed in December. If you lived in California's central valley recently, you won't forget weather extremes either because sections of the entire area is running out of water, predictably supplied by snow melt run off - there was not enough. They have experienced the worst drought in 100 years in a place where one-third of our produce is grown. Where weather is concerned, fairness and equity never enters the equation and it might be more of a deciding factor in the years ahead.

During the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, many venue slopes were covered with manufactured snow because the Caucasus Mountains did not supply enough of their own. During one ski event the temperature reached 50°, making the course dangerous when it was dangerous enough already. There has even been talk of an end of the Winter Olympics entirely because the snows of yesteryear might become just that. Unless you want to compete in the Nordic Combined and the Super G on the slopes of Antarctica. Last February in Fairbanks, Alaska, where the temperature is typically -40°, it hit 50. You could wear shorts in Juneau. Some parts of Sweden had unaccustomed frigidty instead. Farm lands out west experience devastating drought, while the Thames overflowed and inundated parts of suburban London. It might be that weather prediction itself might be a thing of the past. The new prediction index might consist of just stepping outside on a daily basis and being surprised by whatever's out there. Things beyond current science, and too big (or small) to measure, could be involved in climate change. Chaos Theory calls it, the "sensitive dependence on initial conditions." Conditions we might never even be able know about, let alone predict or measure.

We might be skiing in Miami or growing coffee in New Hampshire, but we will adapt like the blind fish that surrendered its eyesight to life in a dark cave. Any other available choices? The word "adapt" itself comes from the Latin aptare, "to fit." We will just have to fit ourselves into any weather that is thrown our way.

Governments will, of course, act because politicians never ignore a crisis to good to pass up. Usually too late and usually too little. We will simply have to take whatever happens. Sure, watch the weather report on TV, but try to ignore the climatologists who will tell us what the weather might probably be in 2020. But if you need an infallible weather report, keep looking out the window for the "realcaste." I t's no wonder TV weather people are often smiling or laughing.

# 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, 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.

**Tuesday, April 28, Norman Levy & Jones Beach WE, 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 19, Hempstead SP, 9:00 am** • Southern State Pkwy. to Exit 18 (Eagle Ave.) and proceed south to the second parking lot. Turn right and then left into parking lot.

**Tuesday, May 26, Oceanside Jones Beach, 9:00 am** • Southern State Pkwy. to Meadowbrook Pkwy. South to Merrick Road (27A). Go west on Merrick Road a short distance and turn left on Mill Road and bear left (on Main Street) turn right on Atlantic Avenue to Waukena Ave. left to Park Avenue TO Golf Drive (brown signs from Atlantic to Oceanside Marine EC)

**Tuesday, June 2, Shinnecock, 9:30 am** • Sunrise Hwy. East to Exit 65 South to Montauk Highway. Go east (left) and follow signs to Ocean Beaches. Cross Ponquogue Bridge and turn left at the traffic light. Go to end of road to parking lot at inlet.

**Tuesday, June 9, Lakeland County Park, 9:00 am** • Directions: Sunrise Highway to exit 49 Lakeland Ave north to Ronkonkoma, continue North on Ocean Ave. until cross RR tracks then make left on Johnson Ave then 1.7 to park entrance.

## Weekend Nature Walks\*

**Sunday, May 3, Central Park, 7:00 am** • Leaders: John Gluth (631-827-0120), Steve D'Amato (631-264-8413), 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 (631-264-8413) 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.

**Sunday, May 10, Connetquot Birding & Breakfast, 8:00 am** • Leaders: Bob & Edith Wilson, Ken Thompson, Helga Merryman Continental breakfast hosted by Friends of Connetquot. Reservations required - call Connetquot River Park Preserve at 581-1072 to register. Registration fee \$4. plus \$8 parking fee per car - unless you have yearly Empire pass.

**Sat & Sun, May 16 & 17, Sterling Forest and Bashakill, 8:00 am** • Leaders: John Gluth (631-827-0120) Ken Thompson (631-612-8028) From Tappan Zee Bridge, take I-87 to Sloatsburg exit 15A, take the exit for Rte 72 (Sterling Mine Rd.), 1- mile up Rte 17. Continue west on Rte 72 for 3 Miles until you reach Rte 84, Long Meadow Rd. Continue up Long Meadow Rd to Sterling Lake Rd (4 Mi). Turn left there and continue to Park Visitors Center parking lot on Old Forge Rd. Overnight at Wurtsboro Days Inn (845-888-8727).

**Saturday, May 23, Jamaica Bay, 8:00 am** • Leaders: Michael McBrien (631-758-2350) Ken Thompson (631-612-8028) Southern State Pkwy. to Belt Pkwy. to Exit 17, Cross Bay Blvd. South. Continue south for about 2 miles. Look for entrance of refuge on the right (west) side. There are signs for park entrance.

\*Check Website [www.GSBAS.org](http://www.GSBAS.org) for any cancellations, details and updates. Rain and snow CANCELS Midweek and Weekend Nature Walks.

## 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](mailto:info@gsbas.org) or call 631-581-1731, or visit our website: [www.gsbas.org](http://www.gsbas.org). Registration is not required but recommended. Program is free, but donations or joining GSBAS is encouraged.

## Poetry Workshop

The Great South Bay Audubon Society is excited to be offering a Nature Poetry Workshop with Gladys Henderson on October 3, 2015 at Brookside County Park. Details will follow in the July/August issue of the Sandpiper. Stay tuned!



## CHAPTER NEWS

### Brookside Clean Up Report by Annette Brownell

This was a long, hard, messy winter and Brookside County Park took a beating just like our own yards and so many other places. Since the GSBAS has the privilege of being stewards of the park, it is our desire to have her put her best foot forward, especially when visitors come to visit. When we host our June Outdoor Wildlife Program we get many young families from the community visiting for perhaps the first time. Saturday, April 11th was a beautiful day for a clean up. Our volunteer crew turned out to be very small: Three ladies from the Butterfly Garden Club, Janet Gremli, Helga Merryman and Maria Mandell were there, primarily to clean out the garden. Since Annette Brownell and Rick Barns were the only general members to participate, the garden club ladies joined in the general yard clean up also. Additionally, a sweet young lady from Centereach named Gabriella who was doing community work hours for her nursing degree came to aid us. The group was small, but worked hard and got quite a bit done. There is much left to do, but at least for the June Outdoor Program the great lawn will look good.

### My Raptor Adventure by Jody Banaszak

A few weeks ago, my friend Mike and I went upstate to Fort Edwards for the IBA raptor festival. (IBA means important Bird Area). It was a 5 hour ride. We left Friday after work and stayed at a historic inn. I thought, "How great is this?!" When we arrived at this historic inn, we discovered that "historic" was the wrong word. Actually, "inn" was too. We arrived around 9pm and no one was at the old house to greet us and give us the key. Mike called and the girl informed him that the door was open and the key was on the counter. Ok. The "historic inn" was a long, one-floor building with doors at which you parked your car in front of and went inside. We heard some people next door but were so tired we crashed.

The next morning we had breakfast in the old house and off we went to the



*Left to right: Helga Merryman, Annette Brownell, Janet Gremli at work spiffing up Brookside.*

festival. (There had been a bird walk but we were too tired to get up for that!) It was held on a farm in a horse riding arena with a tarp separating two halves. One side was tables with educational information, crafts for kids, vendors and rehab centers with birds of prey. I was so excited as this was a great photo op. There were three tables of great horned, snowy, Eurasian eagle owl, and barn owls, red tailed hawks and a harrier. You could even get your picture taken with your choice of raptor! In the other half of the arena was a stage and chairs where there were speakers every hour on raptors, a wolf, and the IBA people.

One man spoke about falconry. He put his red tail hawk on a boys hand and went to the other side of the arena for the hawk to go to him when he called. The hawk flew up to the rafters and refused to come down. Finally after 15 minutes he got him back with a mouse.

Later that evening was an owl watch, in which we saw no owls, but red tails and a few kestrels. We were looking for short eared and snowy owls. I was very disappointed as I didn't see any snowys this winter and it would have been a treat to see the short eared. After that

we went out to eat and then back to the "inn". The people next door came in late and a woman was making loud noises like they had just come from a bar I assumed. It didn't last long thank God. The next morning, a man from the festival, (the one who lost his hawk to the rafters), was by his car packing up. He said, "I hope we didn't disturb you last night. The owl heard you come in and started screeching"! That's why you should never assume!!!!

P.S. on the way home we saw 35 red tailed hawks, 4 eating something, and 5 turkey vultures.

## WANTED

Great South Bay Audubon Society is looking for people to join our wonderful team of volunteers. Many different opportunities are available requiring just a few hours of time. Please call Vera for more information: 631-563-4969

# CHAPTER NEWS

## March is Migration Month by Janet Gremli

Early Spring on Long Island begins the migration of many familiar birds returning to our area. On Sunday, March 1, 2015, the Young Naturalist Club members were given a lesson on those backyard birds that stay for the winter and those that migrate south. The children gathered around in the Brookside library to listen as Miss Julianne read them a story about migrating species. They were amazed to hear about the long distance the tiny ruby-throated hummingbird travels each year, from as far north as Canada down to Central America. The children

have seen this visitor in our Butterfly Garden on the Brookside property and look forward to its return.

Why birds migrate, how far they travel and what they eat were discussed. The children were given a map of the Northern Hemisphere noting arrival and departure dates of the ruby-throated hummingbird.

Following their lesson, members assembled around the table and chose a picture of a familiar bird to color. As the snow blew down, muffling the sounds outside and carpeting the grounds, the children were completely absorbed in their task of coloring.

Using the beautiful reference books from the Brookside library, and a multitude of colored pencils and crayons, the children were steadfast in embellishing the pictures they chose. Variations in detail by Vanessa, Julianna and Erin could be seen in their renditions of ruby-throated hummingbirds. Josie, Gabby and Joseph chose brilliant reds to illustrate the favored "red bird" or Northern Cardinal. Even three year old Anthony was excited to join in the creativity with scissors, glue and crayons!



*Above: Josie Montegari, 7, proudly displays her perfectly colored red Cardinal picture. Josie used bird guides from the Brookside library to help in choosing the correct colors for her drawing.*



*Left: Anthony Boyle, 3, looks and listens intently as Janet Gremli shows him photos of birds on the iPad. The iPad is used as a teaching tool for bird identification. Interaction with the iPad screen to enlarge photos of the birds allows the children to more easily associate details for bird identification.*

## March General Membership Meeting: For the Birds

In April we had the pleasure of a visit from Gary Fortcher of Wild Birds Unlimited in Oakdale. Gary shared his expertise in the area of backyard birdfeeding. Many questions were answered and explained and we all learned a few new things about backyard birding. Thank you Gary!

## April General Membership Meeting

Remember the angry Bluebird? Well, he's not so angry anymore. As a result of the efforts of conservationists, the Eastern Bluebird population, which in 1970 was almost wiped



out, has made a comeback by about 7% each year. Our guest speaker, William Zitek, explained how nest box trails were established all over the U.S. and talked about the trails he established on Shelter Island at the Mashomack Preserve that hosts 55 nest boxes. Bill Zitek is the NYSBS (New York State Bluebird Society) Long Island Area Coordinator and a NYSBS Director who is based on Shelter Island. This was a very enjoyable and informative program.

## Robert Moses SP Recap by Ken Thompson

A small group of fearless and optimistic birders showed up at Robert Moses State Park hoping for the rain to stop so we could do some birding. As it was raining at the start, we decided to do some "Birding by Car". We would drive the edges of the parking lots and see what we could see. When we got to Field 2 the rain was subsiding. We got out and started to walk and by the time we were done the rain had stopped, so we did manage to squeeze in a morning's birding.

We wound up with thirty species of birds. Highlights were a pair of Oystercatchers in one of the Field 5 parking lot grass islands by the entrance. The real treat was a Peregrine Falcon in the middle of Field 2 parking lot sitting on a traffic cone. It then dropped down into a puddle to drink and bathe, making the best of a wet day.

## Volunteer Highlight

In the spotlight this issue are our wonderful nature walk leaders: without them we would not be the chapter that we are today. Our nature walks are a strong component of our chapter and we owe a great acknowledgment to the volunteers who lead these walks, offer their expertise and make newcomers feel welcome.

A BIG thank you to:

Ken Thompson  
John Gluth  
Bob Grover  
Mike Cooper  
Steve D'Amato  
Alice Heller  
Nicholas Laviola  
Bob and Edith Wilson  
Helga Merryman  
Michael McBrien





# CONSERVATION ISSUES

BY BOB GROVER

## Wow, that was a cold winter!

Casual observers, along with the ignorant conspiracy theorists, have been asking why, with global warming, we could have such a harsh winter. Certainly, it is a reasonable question to ask, based on empirical, albeit parochial, observations. Looking globally, as we pointed out in our previous column, the world is in a period of warmth unprecedented in human history. Not to cherry pick data points, but in March, on a day Long Island was experiencing snow flurries, a research station in Antarctica recorded a temperature of 68 degrees, the highest ever recorded on the southern continent.

So what is going on locally? Why is the eastern United States receiving all the cold and snow? Amazingly, the reason appears to be global warming itself. Over the past several years, there have been record low amounts of arctic sea ice in the summer and fall months. You may have read about this, as it is also putting huge amounts of stress on Polar Bear populations. When the Arctic Ocean has large areas of open water, it absorbs vast amounts of heat from the sun, heat that would otherwise be radiated back to the atmosphere by reflection off the ice pack. This, in turn, completely changes the distribution of heat all through the northern latitudes, and affects the northern jet stream in interesting ways. Recent research has shown that the heat redistribution greatly weakens the upper

atmosphere jet. It then takes a form much like an aging river, which redistributes riverbank sediment by forming meanders. Likewise, the northern jet stream also begins to meander, and the resulting serpentine shape carries loops of arctic air south in winter in what has become popularly known as the polar vortex. These jet stream meanders, known as Rossby waves, are responsible for our crazy weather, and the configuration of northern land and sea masses results in the eastern United States becoming "Rossby wave central" during the winter months.

To continue the river analogy, as meanders continue to grow, they often circle back on themselves and become nearly cut off from the main river. These are called oxbows, or oxbow lakes. The weakened jet stream does something very similar, circling back on itself. Similar to an oxbow, but even more like the Greek letter Omega, these pinched off pieces of jetstream block the west to east flow of weather systems. When these form just off the northeast coast, they jam up all of the continental storm systems, and we get prolonged wet periods, often in the form of snow. These are called "Omega Blocks" and cause us great frustration as they delay the start of our beautiful spring weather.

So, please don't be fooled by some cold weather. The earth is getting warmer, the seas are getting higher, and we caused it all to happen.

## "A Tree Grows In Brooklyn – Hopefully!"

by Annette Brownell

Who remembers Camelot, that wonderful land where everything was ordered? "A law was set a distant moon ago here: July and August cannot be too hot. And there's a legal limit to the snow here, in Camelot. The winter is forbidden till December and exits March the 2nd on the dot." Well, this year March came in like a lion – and well – went out like a lion. Clearly the message has been altered.

There is a lot of talk about climate change. It is often viewed as some distant monster that can only be dealt with by legislation. But what if we personally and locally are the monster that we have to deal with. What if the local dendrophobics are contributing to the problem. The fear of trees. After Superstorm Sandy, a lot of people developed dendrophobia. "That tree looks like it's leaning. Cut it down." "This tree is too close to the house. Cut it down." What ever happened to keeping your trees well pruned? The house next door to me was sold to a dendrophobic. He land cleared a half acre of beautiful woodland, took down every 150 year old oak, destroying habitat for birds and wildlife, ruining both our sound break and wind break and nearly giving me a nervous breakdown.

Did you know that aside from the beauty that contributes to our quality of life, trees offer much more?

New York's woodlands sequester carbon dioxide and produce 260 pounds of oxygen per year per mature tree. In more polluted areas, they step that up. They provide habitat for wildlife and provide renewable energy. Trees protect our watersheds, prevent soil erosion and purify and retain fresh water. (My

neighbor was amazed when his yard flooded during the heavy rain we got!)

Additionally, trees help the economy: 67,000 New Yorkers are employed in the wood product industry and the forest products industry contributes billions of dollars to NYS's gross annual product. The woodlands provide the backdrop for NY's tourism industry.

Scientific studies have determined that a majority of mature woodlands that should regenerate are not. They are approaching the limits of their natural life span and without adequate regeneration the beautiful landscape and its ecological and economic benefits are threatened.

The 3 main factors that have contributed to this condition are: (1) whitetail deer appetites; the deer population has exceeded the carrying capacity of the landscape. Aggressive deer browsing has effectively neutralized the ability of many tree species to reestablish the understory. (2) interfering vegetation; native and non-native plants interfere with the ability of desired species to regenerate. They thrive in shade and resist deer browsing (fern for example). (3) tree cutting methods in forestry; exploitive tree cutting practices that have not led to providing for a healthier understory which promotes seedling regeneration.

What can we do? Plant a tree. Save a tree. Cut vines off trees. Consult an arborist if you think your tree has a problem. Use "tree surgeons" that are interested in saving life by pruning. Plant native. This helps limit disease. Become a tree farmer. You just need 10 acres. Take a moment each day to enjoy the magnificent beauty a tree offers.

# BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

February/March 2015  
Compiled by Helga Merryman

Pop Quiz for Spring and Summer

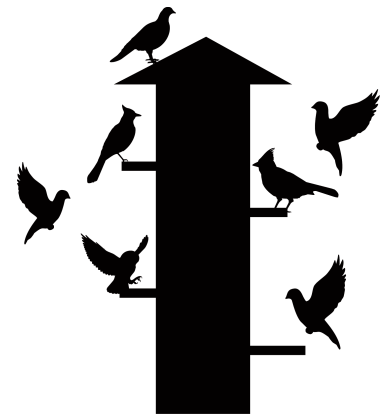
*What do the following things have in common?*

- A bright yellow dandelion poking through the lawn
- A robin pulling up an earthworm
- Butterflies stopping and sipping nectar on milkweed or goldenrod

**Answer:** The common thread is a thought for your surroundings and refusing to contaminate your environment with herbicides and insecticides. Also, consider setting a portion of your property aside to plant local, native plants (some people call them weeds) that attract and nurture wildlife. Maybe one day a dandelion in your lawn will be looked on as a source of pride!!

This was a tough winter and the feeder survey served as a good distraction. Standing out in the compilation of the survey was the lack of Red-breasted Nuthatches. While we missed them, their absence was probably due to the fact that there was plenty of food in their preferred feeding grounds and they had no cause to migrate. There are a number of reasons why a group of birds referred to as irruptive species migrate; among these are poor weather conditions, lack of food and sometimes overpopulation. One of these conditions probably led to the huge number of Snowy Owls we saw last year and the many Rough-legged Hawks that were seen along the beaches this year. Although we welcome these birds, in reality it may not have been a happy event that brought them to us.

For the Feb/March survey we had 16 participants. The following communities were represented, Babylon, Bayshore, Bayport, Bluepoint, Deer Park, East Patchogue, Lindenhurst, Lake Ronkonkoma, Ridge, West Islip and West Sayville. 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. I was so happy to hear from all of you and look forward to starting up again in the fall.



## Survey Data: February/March 2015

Red-tailed Hawk 0/0	American Crow 28/22	Song Sparrow 39/29	OTHER SPECIES
Sharp-shinned Hawk 4/6	Black-capped Chickadee 36/47	White-throated Sparrow 84/76	Canada Geese 0/11
Cooper's Hawk 3/4	Tufted Titmouse 13/18	Dark-eyed Junco 100/83	Mallard Ducks 41/25
Rock Pigeon 23/36	Red-breasted Nuthatch 0/0	Northern Cardinal 85/82	Black Ducks 3/6
Mourning Dove 179/224	White-breasted Nuthatch 20/15	Red-winged Blackbird 32/197	Ring-billed Gull 7/0
Monk Parakeet 6/0	Carolina Wren 17/13	Common Grackle 153/132	Herring Gull 0/12
Red-bellied Woodpecker 16/14	American Robin 39/36	Brown-headed Cowbird 2/8	Ruby-crowned Kinglet 1/0
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 6/1	Northern Mockingbird 12/11	House Finch 80/84	Cedar Waxwing 2/0
Downy Woodpecker 28/20	Brown Thrasher 4/1	American Goldfinch 59/43	Pine Warbler 0/1
Hairy Woodpecker 3/8	European Starling 192/202	House Sparrow 213/208	Tree Sparrow 1/0
Northern Flicker 8/6	Towhee 0/0		Purple Finch 0/1
Blue Jay 49/51	Fox Sparrow 12/16		Boat-tailed Grackle 2/9

## Climate Change *continued from front cover*

breeding and earlier arrival of migrant birds. To complicate things even more, some spring events, such as egg-laying of several song birds and the start of the vegetation period in the northern latitudes correlate with the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) index, which quantifies winter climatic conditions. The results of 50 years of data analysis on 13 plant species suggest that early-blooming of herbaceous species showing greater responses to winter warming is occurring in certain northern latitude locations (Walther, et al., 2002). The temperature response of different bird species is not always synchronous and may have profound ecological consequences in the future. Although birds are great indicators of environmental change, pervasive human impact on the landscape including deforestation both locally and globally as well as urban blight are likely

contributing to winter species compositional changes. Although climate change is a strong influence on the winter bird community structure, it is unlikely that climate change alone is the sole driver and that all of these changes are interconnected. For more information on Project FeederWatch visit <http://feederwatch.org/>

References: Brown, R.D. & Robinson, D.A. (2011). Northern hemisphere spring snow cover variability and change over 1922-2010 including an assessment of uncertainty. *The Cryosphere*, 5, 219-229. Devitt, T. (2014). Climate change alters cast of winter birds. University of Wisconsin-Madison News. Retrieved on 2/14/15 from:

# Great South Bay Audubon Society

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Recording Secretary: Arlene Rawls (516) 712-9514

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Answering the GSBAS Direct Phone:  
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GSBAS Direct Phone Number (631) 563-7716  
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**For wildlife in need of rescue  
please call The STAR Foundation  
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## 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:  
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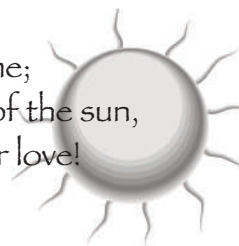
## Nature Walks in Sayville

For those with busy schedules, and/or those who'd rather not travel far to enjoy a nature walk, we invite you to walk the trails of Brookside County Park. Sit by the stream, watch the comings and goings at our bird feeders, visit our butterfly garden, and walk the trails. The members of Great South Bay Audubon Society are proud stewards of this hidden gem. We should all take more advantage of its proximity and enjoy it! The park is open every day, but guides are available every Wednesday and Sunday from 1 - 3. Binoculars are available to borrow. If you'd like, call Vera to confirm there will be a tour guide available: 631-563-4969

Brookside County Park is located at 59 Brook Street, Sayville, diagonally across from Sayville High School.

Behold, my friends, the spring is come;  
the earth has gladly received the embraces of the sun,  
and we shall soon see the results of their love!

*Sitting Bull*



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