

# The Sandpiper

## Great South Bay Audubon Society

A Chapter of National Audubon Society

### Are We Approaching the Tipping Point for Nitrogen Loading in the Great South Bay Estuary?

by Maria Brown, MS, PWS – Great South Bay Audubon Conservation Chair

This past May, as I looked out to the Great South Bay Estuary from the salt marsh at the Long Island Maritime Museum, I was saddened by the reappearance of the brown color caused by the harmful and nuisance algal bloom known as “Brown Tide” (*Aureococcus anophagefferens*). This bloom peaked in the cool temperatures of our coastal waters on the south shore of Long Island until mid-July. Although it may appear as an unsightly landscape to humans, the impacts of Brown Tide go far deeper with the potential for permanently degrading our marine environment and reducing the landings for both shellfish and finfish. With its first appearance in 1985 in the Peconics, Brown Tide devastated the Peconic bay scallop (*Argopecten irradians*) industry and crippled its nursery habitat comprised of eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) resulting in significantly reduced scallop landings and adversely impacted Long Island’s maritime economy. This is the third consecutive year that Brown Tide has bloomed in the Great South Bay Estuary to levels that present a risk for both adult and juvenile shellfish (Dooley, 2015).

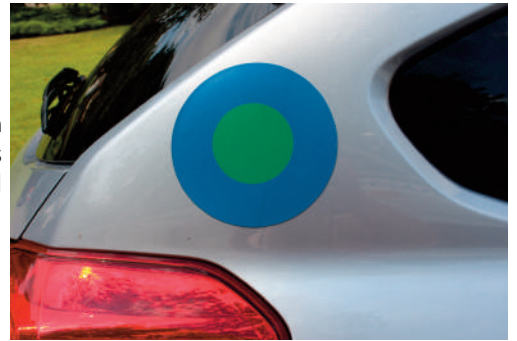
How then, does nitrogen play a role in this cacophony which degrades the ecosystem services of our once bountiful estuary, and what should be done to protect our ability to harvest food from our surrounding coastal waters now and in the future?

A natural nutrient in aquatic ecosystems, nitrogen and phosphorous in excess levels can promote harmful algal blooms which ultimately consume oxygen, normally available to other aquatic organisms; block sunlight, compromising the ability of marine plants to photosynthesize; and in some cases produce toxins such as red tide (*Cochlodinium polykrikoides*) which is the primary agent that causes paralytic shellfish poisoning.

So what is the pathway of the source of nitrogen to our surface and groundwater? Sewage for Long Island is either piped to a sewage treatment plant, or piped to an underground septic system or a cesspool, otherwise known as onsite wastewater disposal systems (OWDS). In Suffolk County, wastewater for 80% of residences is handled via an OWDS. During pump-outs, these systems only remove a small fraction of nitrogen leaving a large portion of the nitrogen to pass to the cesspool and ultimately into the soil and groundwater which feeds our surface waters (ponds, creeks, lakes, streams, and bays).

Fertilizer also contributes to the nitrogen loading in our waterways. Each spring, many Long Islander’s apply nitrogen-rich fertilizer which when not taken up by plants, flows directly into surface waters as non-point source runoff or leaches through the soil into the ground water. Suffolk County enacted Local Law No. 41 in 2007 with the goal to reduce nitrogen pollution by reducing use of fertilizer in Suffolk County. This Law prohibits lawn fertilizer applications from Nov. 1- April 1.

Unfortunately this year, Law 41-2007 may not have reached its goal, failing to protect our local waterways including the Great South Bay. The harsh winter led to a delayed growing season on Long Island with some species delayed in the range of 2-4 weeks as reported by Long Island’s local farmers. As most people are on an “annual cycle” for maintaining their lawns and applying fertilizer, the April



Operation Blue Earth car magnets. The logo is intended to raise awareness of nitrogen pollution.

### 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. Come early to chat with our members and share your birding adventures with us!

#### Saturday September 12 Breakfast & Birding, 8:00 am

Enjoy a continental breakfast hosted by Friends of Connetquot while watching a slide show of the birds of Connetquot River SPP. Afterwards, walk off the breakfast in search of these birds. 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.

#### Thursday, September 17 Gardening with Native Plants

In addition to providing important food and habitat for native wildlife, there are many other reasons to incorporate native plants into your yard and landscape. Lauren Hubbard, Ph D. from the Long Island Plant Initiative will talk about design considerations, soil preparation, site planning and discuss other matters regarding native planting.

#### Thursday, October 15 Owls of Long Island

Owls are fascinating birds. They even intrigue non-birders. Join us as Steve D’Amato discusses and shares photos of our local species of owls including Eastern Screech-Owls, Great Horned Owls, and Barn Owls. Steve will also discuss Snowy Owls and explain why we had such an explosion of them in the winter of 2013-2014.

*continued on bottom of page 6*

## 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

In as much as springtime is the season of rebirth, for many people, September also signals the beginning of a new season, a new school year, and the restart of many programs. But I have to tell you – Great South Bay Audubon Society does not sleep. We may take a 2 month break from general meetings, but summertime has been a season of planning and doing. We had a terrific program on backyard birding, designed to encourage people to check out what is happening in their own backyards. We also had a special opportunity to learn about bats. Once again we had the treat of the summer visiting the hummingbird sanctuary in Baiting Hollow. The beach cleanup is a terrific reminder of the stewardship we have been entrusted with.

We have also been planning and preparing for the coming year. You will find lots of details in this issue. As we widened the circle of events, I truly hope that more people will join us. It is always enriching to meet others, share stories and knowledge –and just fellowship with each other. And - I know for a fact that at our general meetings, someone always wins a home baked raffle gift!

Once again, I have to say on behalf of the board of directors that I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the community and nature.

*The highest love of all finds its fulfillment not in what it keeps, but in what it gives.*  
Father Andrew

## Loving Birds (Not all the Time) by Harry Anderson

GSBAS is for the birds - literally. We watch them, list them, listen to them, protect and count them. As we should. But, in spite of all this, some birds have the capacity of being incredibly annoying. Unlovable.

As beautiful as our American Robin is, the legendary robin in the tree top can drive you bonkers. Peterson's says that their song is "a clear caroling; short phrases, rising and falling, often prolonged." Said prolongation can go on for hours. Try to ignore it as your robin carols in your tree out side your bedroom window at dawn. It can lead you to believe the Chinese philosopher who insisted that the greatest revelation is stillness.

The mockingbird works very hard at mocking us. They can be heard going through their entire repertory at 3 a.m., while perched as high as they can so the sound carries to where ever you are. And it is as loud as it is persistent.

Put up a bird house and it will frequently draw birds you really did not have in mind. You look at the entrance hole one day only to see that it has doubled in size. Some other annoying bird has the desire and the skill to accomplish that.

When Starlings congregate in trees by the hundreds, their metallic commotion sounds like fingernails on a blackboard.

Blackbirds can devastate crops, making farmers wish they were all "baked in a pie."

Feed a few House Finches and soon you will draw a flock and their sole aim is to deplete the feeder as quickly as possible.

Blue Jays can shatter glass with their screech when they get annoyed, which is frequently. They are also talented at driving off the birds you really want to see.

Grackles can arrive in such large flocks that you can hardly see the lawn as the seed you just put down disappears.

Gulls spot your car and then spot it themselves. Soaring gulls over a beach are a calming sight, but when those same birds discover you and your blanket, you'd wish they weren't protected. Never, never walk across a nesting gull colony.

Canada Geese strew their "little cigars" all over the landscape and continue to eat only to add more as their numbers keep growing. They have also succeeded in shutting down Lake Ronkonkoma beaches by polluting the water.

Obviously, all birds are not vexing. Chickadees, titmice and warblers, among others, are benign and seem incapable of being irritable. We should admire and protect them all species, really. But maybe we should leave bird loving to the birds.



# 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, Sept 1, Heckscher State Park, 9:30 am** • Meet in the Field 4 parking lot at the north west end of the field.

Note change from Field 5 to Field 4 due to parking restrictions

**Tuesday, Sept 8, Shinnecock Dune Rd, 9:30 am** • Sunrise Hwy. East to Exit 65 South to Montauk Highway. Go east 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, Sept 15, Oceanside MNSA & 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, Sept 22, Jamaica Bay NWR, 9:30 am** • 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.

**Tuesday, Sept 29, Massapequa Preserve, 9:30 am** • Take Southern State Pkwy. to Exit 30 (Broadway south) to Pittsburgh Ave., go left 2 blocks to Parkside Blvd. Park on street, and walk into the park.

**Tuesday, Oct 06, Robert Moses SP, 9:30 am** • Meet in Field 5 at the northeast corner

**Tuesday, Oct 13, Avalon, 9:30 am** • Rte. 25A to Village of Stonybrook at Carriage Museum, 25A turns right do not turn right, but proceed straight ahead on Main St. to Harbor Rd and park in legal spots by Grist Mill

**Tuesday, Oct 20, Jones Beach West End, 9:30 am** • Meet in the parking lot at the Marina near the Coast Guard Station.

**Tuesday, Oct 27, Heckscher SP, 9:30 am** • Meet in the Field 5 parking lot at the west end of the field.

## Weekend Nature Walks

**Saturday, September 12, Connetquot Breakfast & Birding, 8:00 am** • Leaders: Ken Thompson (631-612-8028) Edith & Bob Wilson, Helga Merryman. Continental breakfast hosted by Friends of Connetquot. Reservations required - call Connetquot River State Park Preserve at 581-1072 to register. Registration fee \$4. plus \$8 parking fee per car - unless you have yearly Empire pass.

**Saturday, September 26, Robert Moses Hawk Watch & Jones Beach West End, 8:00 am** • Leaders: John Gluth (631-827-0120) Steve D'Amato (631- 264-8413) Meet at Robert Moses State Park parking field #5 northeast corner.

**Friday, Saturday & Sunday October 2, 3 & 4 Cape May & Brigantine** • Leaders: Steve D'Amato (631- 264-8413), Ken Thompson (631-612-8028), Vera Capogna (516-639-5430, email vlvcap@yahoo.com) Meet at Brigantine (Edwin B. Forsythe NWR) Parking lot at **1:00 pm** on Friday afternoon. Southern State Pkwy. West to Belt Pkwy West. Take the 1-278/Verrazano Narrows Bridge to Outerbridge Crossing. Take the US-9 S/Garden State Pkwy to Exit 48 towards Port Republic/Smithville at Oceanville on Route 9 look for signs to Refuge (left turn). Those wishing to continue the trip will go down to Cape May - Garden State Parkway to end. If going directly to Cape May on Saturday, we will depart from the West Cape Motel parking lot at **6 am**.

Motels: Jersey Cape Motel: 609-884- 7382, West Cape Motel: 609-884-4280. Contact Vera Capogna with questions or carpool inquiries and to RSVP as soon as possible so she can give you additional info and any updates.

**Saturday, October 24, Caumsett SP, 8:30 am** • Leaders John Gluth (631-827-0120) Ken Thompson (631-612-8028)

Northern State to exit 42N (Route 35). 35 to 25A. 25A west to West Neck Road (right turn). West Neck/Lloyd Harbor Rd. into Lloyd Neck. Entrance to park on left. Meet in Parking lot.

**Sunday, Nov 15, Wertheim NWR, 8:00 am** • Leaders: Alice Heller (631-827-6561), John Gluth (631-827-0120)

From the intersection of Montauk and William Floyd Highways in Shirley, proceed West on Montauk Highway 7/10 of a mile to traffic light (Smith Road) turn left, go over the railroad tracks and make first right into Wertheim. There are signs both on Montauk Highway and on Smith Road at the turnoff into Wertheim.

### Young Naturalists Club Meets first Sunday of the month at 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.

# Hummingbirds, Butterflies, Flowers and a Beautiful Day

## Hummingbird Nature Walk Recap by Alice Heller, Trip Coordinator

On Saturday, August 15, 2015, a very humid summer August morning, GSBAS's Hummer Nature Walk took place with 18 +/- attendees and Field Trip Coordinator, Alice Heller, all meeting Paul Adams at his Private Hummingbird Sanctuary in Baiting Hollow.

First time attendees, and many of us returning attendees, chose to walk around Paul's sanctuary to find ourselves in awe of its beautiful garden setting, and then proceeded to locate a chair or a bench to sit on and quietly await the sighting of our first hummer. Paul's hummers of course do not ever disappoint; the hummers visited all the natural, dazzling array of flowering: plants, container plants and shrubs, in addition to the many tube feeders. Silver spotted Skippers and Black Swallowtail butterflies were plentiful too! Hummers zoomed overhead by us, but then quickly and immediately away and out of sight, only to again reappear shortly. Some attendees chose to meander the trails leading down to the beach of the Long Island Sound and others of us enjoyed sitting on either one of Paul's two deck areas in chairs to take in the sanctuary's serenity and beauty; the back deck area afforded views of the bluffs of the Long Island Sound with busy hummers visiting all of the flowering plants and shrubs in this section, most notably Paul's shrimp plant.

Paul Adams, as always, made himself available to all to answer any and all questions, and to further educate our first time attendees and those of us attendees who come back, year after year, about our Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. We were all treated to yet again another wonderful visit to Paul's special Private Humming Bird Sanctuary.

Please visit GSBAS's website at [www.gsbas.org](http://www.gsbas.org) where you'll find wonderful photographs taken that day and shared by some of GSBAS's attending members, Jody Banazak, Steve D'Amato, and Ellen Merryman. Take particular note of Steve D'Amato's hummer picture at a tube feeder, where it appears the hummer's wings aren't even moving. Using a Canon T5i, Steve points out the fact that the shutter speed of the camera was able to actually stop the wingbeat of the hummingbird in flight. And Steve D'Amato did some research and found: "It said that the normal flight and hovering wingbeats/sec ranged between 40-80 wingbeats/sec but could reach as much



*A hummingbird will beat its wings on the average of 40 - 80 beats PER SECOND!*



*Relaxing in one of Paul's cozy spots surrounded by beautiful plants and flowers are: left to right: Helga Merryman, Edith Wilson, Alice Heller and Pete Natalie (standing).*

as 200 wingbeats/sec during courtship dives."

Also of note, a Brown Thrasher was identified by Steve D'Amato, after Annette Brownell pointed out the bird sitting high on top of one of Paul's evergreen trees. I thought it was an odd place for a Brown thrasher to be sighted, but Steve assured me it was not!

Remember, if anyone would like to make a donation, Paul previously let us know that donations can be made to the Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, specifically to support: Operation Ruby Throat: The Hummingbird Project. Hilton Pond Center is located at 1432 Devinney Road, York, SC 29745, USA if you'd like to make a visit and/or visit via its website: [www.hiltonpond.org](http://www.hiltonpond.org). You can also visit via this link: [www.rubythroat.org](http://www.rubythroat.org). Our Chapter will be making a donation in support of this project!

Mine and GSBAS's sincere thanks to our host, Paul Adams for scheduling this August 2015 GSBAS Hummer Nature Walk. Before leaving, Paul said to me that he looks forward to seeing GSBAS in

August 2016! So mark your calendars for August 2016 to join GSBAS when we visit Paul's private hummingbird sanctuary.

Help our Ruby-throated Hummingbirds migrate (fall and spring) by preparing and putting out sugar water (please note: NOT TO USE prepared mixtures with red dye). Follow this recipe to make your own sugar water:

### Homemade Hummingbird Nectar

1 cup sugar  
4 cups water

- Boil water and sugar mixture on stove.
- Let cool.
- Fill hummingbird feeders.
- Refresh feeders every few days.
- Refrigerate unused nectar.

*Do not add red dye*

## Birding and Bat Classes Bring Some Welcome Surprises

### Recap by Jody Banazak

On August 7th and 14th, GSBAS hosted classes on attracting and identifying backyard birds by sight and sound. For the first session on August 7, fifteen people signed up for a wonderful power point presentation by Vera Capogna and Steve D'Amato. Steve showed the group photos of common backyard birds that they may have seen at their bird feeders or out and about. Vera played a tape of their calls and songs. Some

of us chimed in with facts about the birds as Steve went through the slides. After the presentation, we took a stroll through the woods to look for and listen to birds. We heard a few birds but due to the time of day, we didn't see much. When the mosquitos started to attack us, we headed back to the house. Some of the people stayed and new people joined us for Maria Brown's presentation on bats in our area. By coincidence, that morning, a friend called to tell me that she had a surprise for me. It could have been anything unusual, and it certainly was. It was a



*Maria Brown performing a postmortem examination on the bat brought in by Jody.*

dead, intact bat that she found at the bottom of the steps to her house!!! I couldn't believe it. What were the chances of having a bat to bring to the program that night!? It was 10 am

and had to contain my excitement until 8 p.m.!! I was so excited that I forgot to bring gloves for Maria to handle the bat with. I stopped at Dunkin Donuts to get an ice coffee and was reminded when the guy behind the counter put on a glove to get someone donuts. I asked him if I could have a couple since I left mine home!! When I showed Maria the bat, she was even more excited than I was! We put the bat in the freezer and continued with the program about bats. She had a nice presentation about the hairy little creatures, their habitats, pictures and the different varieties in our area.

After the slide-show we headed out to the bridge over the pond to look for bats. Maria brought one of her students to help. We got to the pond and Maria took out an i-pod with a sonar app. This little computer picked up five different species of bats!! Maria told us that some of the species we spotted weren't very common to our area, which led to even more excitement. Some of us saw the bats fly over the pond too. When asked "How many mosquitos do bats eat?" Maria said, "Up to 2200 a night!" Well they missed a few because the mosquitos began biting again and we headed back to the house.

Now the exciting part: I got the bat from the freezer, Maria put on the Dunkin Donuts gloves and began the examination. Maria determined he was a male Little Brown Bat about 4" tall with a wing span of about 8" wide. He was a cute little fellow, with little claw like feet used to hang upside down, and sharp little teeth. His wings felt like raw silk. The female bat has two teats and nurses her young, which could be 1-2 babies. It was a very exciting evening.

The following week was the second half of the program. Brooke from Wild Birds Unlimited came to give a very informative talk about feeding birds, bird houses and where certain species make their home. She also spoke of the importance of cleaning your bird bath every day. Brooke donated a couple of feeders and some seed before she left! After the talk, Helga showed a slide show of Annette's garden with bird baths, feeders and talked about what kind of plants, trees, and bushes she had growing to attract birds.

After the class, as we were packing our cars, I heard a screech owl! I asked Steve if he heard it when it screeched again. Steve and I both looked at each other with excitement. As the rest of the crew came out to go home, we told them and of course, Bob and Steve started calling them. Then Edith. We heard them in 3 different directions and didn't know where to look first! Vera almost dropped the bags she was carrying in all the excitement. Then we saw one fly off as Edith saw one in a tree just above us. Bob's flashlight was too weak to get a good look but we could see his silhouette. We decided it was a family of screech owls!!

What a great two Fridays at Brookside. I loved Birding 101!!

### Registration Now Open for our Poetry Workshop

GSBAS is offering a first time ever poetry workshop on October 3rd to encourage and enhance poetry-writing skills for those who enjoy the art of writing prose. Gladys Henderson will direct this one-day workshop entitled "AWAKEN THE CREATIVE; WORKING WITH IMAGES", stimulating creative flow using free writing techniques, art and photography as prompts in a stress free and creative atmosphere.

Gladys, a former art teacher and retail executive is also an award-winning poet, receiving first place in numerous competitions and published in many prominent literary journals. Gladys is an active member of the poetry community on Long Island, conducting creative writing workshops, poetry critique workshops and co-hosting a poetry reading venue in Nesconet. She has had published a chapbook of her poetry, *Eclipse of Heaven* and is working on her second collection. Most recently Gladys has been invited to be the feature reader at the Oberon Poetry Prize Awards in September.

This free of charge workshop will be held at Brookside County Park from 2-4. Class size is limited to 12 people. To reserve a spot email Karen Schulte: krnsch1@gmail.com or leave a message on the GSBAS phone: 631-563-7716.

### Fall Seed Sale

**Our Fall Seed Sale Fundraiser will be held on Saturday, October 24, between 10 & 3. See insert for order form and info. Call Johnna with any questions (631-319-6044)**  
**Thank you for supporting Great South Bay Audubon Society!**

# CONSERVATION ISSUES

BY BOB GROVER

## Coevolution

I am fascinated with the notion of coevolution, that species don't evolve in a vacuum, but rather together with various companion species, from microbiota on our skin and in our guts to mammals. In the mammalian category, I am most interested in dogs, and how they came to be domesticated, and to earn the moniker of man's best friend.

The traditional theory of canine domestication held that early humans would occasionally adopt orphan wolves, bring them into their settlements and train them and care for them. In return, the humans obtained amazingly talented hunting companions and a certain degree of protection from predators and enemies.

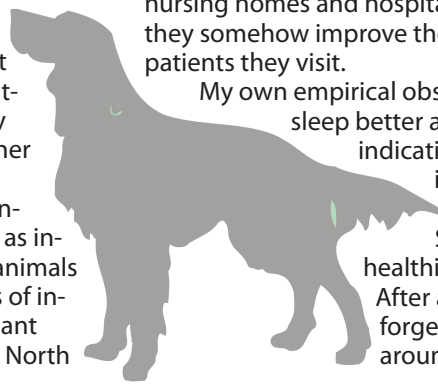
Recent research, however, has largely discarded this traditional belief, since occasional adoption of wild animals rarely results in tame, domesticated adults. This takes generations. Rather, it is now thought that dogs largely domesticated themselves. Wolves and dogs, which are generally considered conspecific, are certainly formidable predators, but they are also scavengers and opportunists. It is most likely that wolves learned to follow human hunting parties to scavenge remains of prey, and eventually began to follow them back to their settlements to further scavenge their waste. At this point in time the canines would have joined a group of human-associating organisms classified, by the famous ecologist Marston Bates, as inquilines, which is the term he coined for those plants, animals and microbiota that follow us around. Other examples of inquilines include the house mouse, Norway rat, various ant and cockroach species, and house sparrows (at least in North

America). But then, over the span of generations, the dogs graduated from the inquilines and further coevolved with humans to become domesticated. The humans were equal partners in this development, benefiting from the sentry role that dogs instinctively provided to their own families. And so, a partnership was forged. In so many ways, dogs were the perfect partner, with formidable fighting and hunting skills, amazing eyesight, hearing and smell, and fierce loyalty. There is even a line of thought that this partnership was the very key to humans being able to outcompete the Neanderthals and drive them to extinction.

The coevolutionary link between humans and dogs cannot be overestimated. Studies have shown that dog owners live longer than non-dog owners, and have lower blood pressure, heart disease, depression, and other health problems. Dogs are also used for service purposes, such as guiding the blind and deaf. Other dogs act as therapy dogs, being brought into nursing homes and hospitals, where studies have proven that they somehow improve the physical and mental health of the patients they visit.

My own empirical observations even indicate that people sleep better and experience more REM intervals, indicating deeper sleep, when a companion dog is sleeping nearby. That is truly an amazing connection.

So, if you want to live longer, stay healthier, and sleep better, adopt a dog. After all, in many ways, they helped to forge our species, and we might not be around without them.



## Great South Bay Nitrogen Loading *continued from front cover*

fertilizer application applied by Long Islander's may not have been taken up by plants if they had not begun to grow yet. To complicate matters, we also experienced a mini-drought period followed by heavy rains which may have provided a dangerous pathway for excess nitrogen to reach our surface and ground waters.

Long Island oyster farmer Chris Quartuccio, and owner of Blue Island Oyster Farms in West Sayville, indicated that last year he had 50% die off of his oysters which are held at his Captree Farm before distribution around the country which he attributes to Brown Tide. Oyster Hatchery owner, Billy Hart, also located in West Sayville, observed a total spawning "shut down" of adult oysters and "no growth" periods this summer during the Brown Tide events. "As soon as the waters warmed above 76 degrees Fahrenheit, the Brown Tide dissipated and the oysters resumed spawning and growth spurts" declared Billy, "but the impacts economically will not be known until the end of the spawning and growing season." Oysters and clams are filter feeders and are extremely important in the overall health of the bay systems around Long Island (Gobler, 2015), and keeping the water clarity high improves the overall quality of the bay for all of the organisms to thrive. Direct Impacts to avian populations from excess nitrogen loading and algae blooms is still poorly understood, but if organisms are experiencing stress at lower feeding levels in the food chain (trophic levels), it may well have adverse impacts to bird populations that commonly interface with the near-shore environment.

In hopes of securing an estuary that will continue to produce food, Chris Quartuccio initiated a Project called "Operation Blue Earth". By distributing car magnets and lawn ornaments with a

green circle (land) surrounded by a blue circle (ocean), the project is designed to spark a conversation between residents of Long Island to discuss the impacts of nitrogen loading on oyster and clam production in our local waters with the ultimate goal of better educating the Long Island community about nitrogen impacts to our aquatic ecosystems, maritime economics, and the potential losses of food resources. Blue Island Oyster Company is funding this campaign and is working closely with Sayville High School's Environmental Club (SWEEP) President, Jack Novak to spread the word and sponsor community outreach events to better educate residents on chemical free lawn care options. To learn more about Operation Blue Earth Friend them on FaceBook!

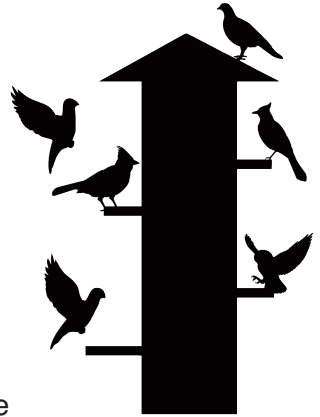
As there is a tremendous amount of research still necessary to better understand the mechanism that take place between human-induced nitrogen loading on ecosystem health, there are still many actions that individuals can do to reduce their nitrogen footprint. For tips on how you can help reduce nitrogen to our wonderful Long Island resources see full article on our website: GSBAS.org. We all need to do our part and each person can make a difference in protecting our water resources for future generations.

References: Dooley, E., C. (2015). Brown tide in Great South Bay puts clams at risk. Newsday Online. Retrieved from: <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/suffolk/brown-tide-in-great-south-bay-puts-clams-at-risk-1.10525168>. Kinny, E.L. and Valiela, I. (2011). Nitrogen loading to Great South Bay: Land use, sources, retention, and transport from land to bay. *Journal of Coastal Research*, 12(4); 672-686. Peconic Baykeeper (2011) The state of Long Island's Bays. Baywatch. Retrieved from: <http://www.peconicbaykeeper.org/siteFiles/News/FC74641B0DCAE122D92A9F3EB5B9E5A6.pdf>. Peconic Baykeeper (2012). A dead bay is not ok! Baywatch. Retrieved from: <http://www.peconicbaykeeper.org/siteFiles/News/29C02A2E2FDA8811085DB1016E2442B8.pdf>. Seagrass.LI (2012). Eelgrass and bay scallops. Retrieved from: [http://seagrassli.org/ecology/fauna\\_flora/scallops.html](http://seagrassli.org/ecology/fauna_flora/scallops.html).

# BIRD FEEDER SURVEY

FALL 2015-SPRING 2016

Compiled by Helga Merryman



A quote from a popular movie said "If you build it they will come" add to that "If you plant it they will come". One of our members was rewarded this year when a pair of Screech Owls decided to raise their family in a nest box he had provided in his yard. Hummingbirds are being reported visiting flowers and sugar water feeders (no red dye added) positioned specifically to attract them. Plant a corner of sunflowers and Goldfinches will be hanging all over them as soon as the seeds ripen. Monarch butterflies are benefiting from milkweed planted in private gardens, offsetting the loss of these plants necessary to this butterfly's life cycle. Leave seed heads on cone flowers and other plants for birds to glean during the fall and winter. These are small steps that both benefit wildlife and bring them closer for our viewing pleasure. Looking back at the end of summer, ask what you wish to build or plant to attract or support wildlife in your garden. It might not be too late to pick up a native perennial to get a head start for next spring.

The GSBAS Feeder Survey has been run for many years. The reward of the survey is to bring awareness of nature to our doorstep and share our observations with others. As fall approaches we welcome past and new participants for our Feeder Survey. Instructions follow.

### 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 below, 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 Carll Ave, Babylon, NY, 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: period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

- |                                |                               |                            |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Red-tailed Hawk _____          | Tufted Titmouse _____         | Red-winged Blackbird _____ |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk _____       | Red-breasted Nuthatch _____   | Common Grackle _____       |
| Cooper's Hawk _____            | White-breasted Nuthatch _____ | Brown-headed Cowbird _____ |
| Rock Pigeon _____              | Carolina Wren _____           | House Finch _____          |
| Mourning Dove _____            | American Robin _____          | American Goldfinch _____   |
| Monk Parakeet _____            | Northern Mockingbird _____    | House Sparrow _____        |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker _____   | Brown Thrasher _____          | OTHER SPECIES              |
| Yellow-bellied Sapsucker _____ | European Starling _____       | _____                      |
| Downy Woodpecker _____         | Towhee _____                  | _____                      |
| Hairy Woodpecker _____         | Fox Sparrow _____             | _____                      |
| Northern Flicker _____         | Song Sparrow _____            | _____                      |
| Blue Jay _____                 | White-throated Sparrow _____  | _____                      |
| American Crow _____            | Dark-eyed Junco _____         | _____                      |
| Black-capped Chickadee _____   | Northern Cardinal _____       | _____                      |

# Great South Bay Audubon Society

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Corresponding Secretary:  
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Jack Finkenbergl  
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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  
PO Box 267, Sayville, NY 11782  
A Chapter of National Audubon

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



## BEACH CLEANUP Volunteers Needed\*

Hi everyone!! It's that time again for the annual Sailors Haven/Sunken Forest Beach Cleanup with GSBAS. This year's date is Saturday, September 26th with the rain date Sept. 27th. If you are interested in helping again or joining us for the first time, please contact me via email: crabnose88@yahoo.com or phone: 631-278-4059.

We had a great time last year and found some very interesting things. It was a beautiful day to be on the beach helping clean up our environment. I have all the supplies needed. Your job is to walk along the beach and pick up garbage. It's as simple as that! There's a concession stand or you can bring your own lunch. Next to the concession stand is the Fire Island National Sea Shore Visitor Center. Hope you can join us.

\*NOTE: The ferry to Fire Island leaves from Sayville and there is NO charge for the round trip ride. --Jody Banazak



Steve D'Amato

## Welcome New Members!

GSBAS would like to welcome our new members.  
We're sincerely glad to have you and look forward to seeing you at our events and programs.

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