

# THE GREAT SOUTH BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY

A CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

## Mission Statement

The 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.

ISSUE LXI • December 2021 - February 2022



## THE SANDPIPER

# What's Happened, What's Happening, What Will Happen & What Won't

 by Annette Brownell

We have had a busy few months. In August, Great South Bay Audubon stepped into the cultural arts realm and hosted Lumiere Ballet Russian Dance School at Brookside County Park as they performed “The Blue Bird of Happiness,” Lumiere’s ballet adaptation of Maurice Maeterlinck’s fairy play, “The Blue Bird.” Maeterlinck’s story shows a significant understanding of nature and reminds us that there truly is nothing new under the sun. The evening was lovely as the ballet dancers (adults and children) leapt and twirls across the grass stage with the lake in the background. It was really enjoyable to have the opportunity to partner with Lumiere to express how nature has influenced the arts. Thank you to Legislator Piccirillo for making the funding for this available.



Bluebirds & Ballerinas with Lumiere Ballet

We had our first in person general meeting in September, since the beginning of the Covid nightmare in early 2020. The meeting was held at Seatuck Environmental Center in Islip. Miguel Valentin, master beekeeper, was our guest. He shared how he got involved with bees through his grandfather, as a young boy in Puerto Rico, his working as a NYC detective and bee rescuer for the City and about the dangers that are facing bee survival now. We had the opportunity to see live bees and buy some blueberry/locust honey.

General meetings, scheduled for the third Thursday in October and November at Seatuck, with Bob Labuski and Joe Giunta, will have happened by the time you read this and I hope some of you will be able to say you were there.

Also in September, we partnered with Islip Arts Council to host a Buddy Merriam concert at Brookside County Park. Another beautiful afternoon - the sound of Buddy’s mandolin and bluegrass music wafted through the air as about 100 people in spite of tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes and raging forest fires, Nature is not out to get us, really - even if it frequently does. But we seem bent on being out to get Nature.

Still to come is our December get together. This event will be also be at Seatuck on December 16 (third Thursday). Some of our members will be making short presentations of some of their photography. We will enjoy snacks, stories and a little fellowship before we go back into Zoom meeting mode for the cold winter months. For the months of January, February and March, we will hold our monthly meeting remotely, via Zoom, safe and warm while continuing to share about birding and environmental issues of concern. You can read more about the speaker line up in this newsletter.

As if we could, but a recent study indicated that plant and animal species are becoming extinct 1,000 faster since our history began. The “Sixth Extinction” is now the latest global anxiety. We either crowded species other than ourselves out of existence or allowed species that shouldn’t be where they are in the first to take over.

Sadly, what will not be happening – as you know already, is our dinner. The board of directors didn’t feel that people would be comfortable enough to venture into a closed room setting at this time. We polled several people who agreed with our determination, as did speaker Mike Bottini. Captain Bill’s has been very generous in allowing us to cancel 4 times. However, they have informed us that this is it.

We must hold our dinner in 2022 or lose our deposit. We are going back on the schedule of the first Monday night in May. Please mark your calendars to join the event.

# President's Message

by Jody Banaszak

Hello my little birding friends! Hope you are all well and dealing with this Covid thing. It's such an inconvenience and really putting a toll on people. I can't wait for it to go away and hope it does soon. I almost wish I was a bird. They fly around without a care in the world. Find a nice place to live that doesn't cost anything and build it themselves the way they want. They eat what they want and don't gain weight. They don't have to deal with potholes and bad patch up jobs that make your whole car rattle when you go over all of them. Or the idiots on their cell phones or the ones who weave in and out of traffic or don't put on their lights when it's foggy, dark or raining. No wonder there's so many accidents. Then there's the litterbugs. I stopped at the light by hospital road and looked to my left to see so much garbage that people throw out of their car windows. One day while I was stopped at a light, a couple walking by had just stopped at a nearby 7 eleven. The guy unwrapped his ice cream and threw the wrapper on the ground. I yelled out the window at him that he dropped something and he looked at me like I had 2 heads! Why can't they save it until they get home?

I was watching a show on the Nature channel the other day about rabbits and hares. The Antelope Jack Rabbits, which are really hares, live in North America in a dessert environment, with cacti, grasses and some bushes. Harris hawks like to eat them and hunt in groups. A group of three spotted a hare. One hawk followed it and flushed it out while the others waited until the right moment to pounce. It was amazing how they coordinated it. Every time I watch these shows they add something about global warming. Some people don't believe there's a global warming problem, but most do. I always save articles about it. I have found some from 2017 and we still have the some of the same problems because nothing has been done. One article was from August 2019 about some lakes and ponds and harmful blooms. Their safety tips were not to swim, fish, boat or wade in the areas with blooms. Don't eat the fish caught in these areas, rinse the water off yourself, don't drink it and don't let your pet swim where there are blooms. How fun is that? Does anyone remember the days when we could swim in lakes without a care in the world? I remember going to Fire Island when I was a little girl on our family boat. We would leave early, go to the other side of the bay and drift for crabs. I was about 8 or 9 years old and would stand on the bow of the boat and direct my dad where the crabs were. The bay was so clean and clear that I could see them in the seaweed! When we got a bushel we would head over to Lega Beach, which is now Davis Park, beach the boat on one of the sand spits and spend the day. There are no longer sandpits, as they washed away over the years. Yup, erosion, climate change and global warming. We have to do our part to help our planet!!

We've started having our monthly meetings at Seatuck again, but will have our January, February, and March meetings via zoom, then continue meetings at Seatuck. Hope you can make it. Since this newsletter has been quarterly, I have to mention Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, a Happy and Healthy New Year, and Happy birding!

## Phobia, Phobia

by Harry Anderson

According to a questionnaire a number of years ago, right up there on the list of things people fear most is being bitten by a snake. There is even a name for an irrational fear of them - ophidiophobia. A few romantics claim it goes back to that infamous reptile in the Garden of Eden. Unlikely, since the fear is shared by people who never even heard of the Genesis. If one has been bitten by a copperhead or a rattler, anxiety is understandable. But the fear can be present in people who have only seen pictures of snakes or heard stories about them. What is closest and presumed dangerous seems to worry us most. That might be a problem.

The media are rampant with such perceived immediate threats, and so-called "nature shows" frequently reinforce stereotypical menaces: man eating sharks, venomous spiders with inch long fangs, stinging jellyfish, the octopus and grizzly bears.

In spite of tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes and raging forest fires, Nature is not out to get us, really - even if it frequently does. But we seem bent on being out to get Nature. As if we could, but a recent study indicated that plant and animal species are becoming extinct 1,000 faster since our history began. The "Sixth Extinction" is now the latest global anxiety. We either crowded species other than ourselves out of existence or allowed species that shouldn't be where they are in the first place to take over.

Being anxious about scorpions is understandable, even if usually a bit irrational. On a more perilous scale, it's getting way past the time when we should be anxious for the earth itself, not about just what's on it. We might need to broaden our imagination before the Earth does indeed go flat like a deflated balloon. We need an extinction phobia?

# Mid-Season Recap

of GSBAS Tuesday Nature Walks

We have had a good first half of our fall Tuesday Nature Walks. Some of the highlights were...

## Sept 07, 9:30 Connetquot SPP

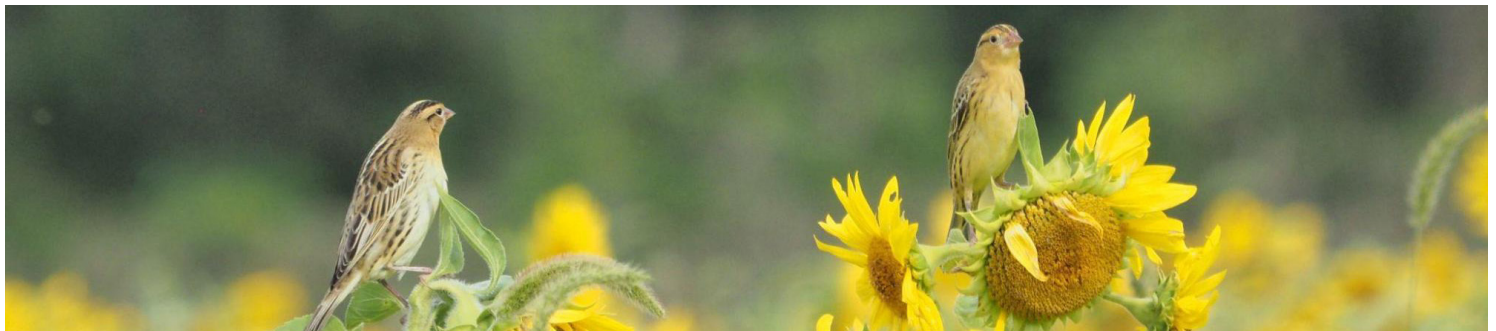
Common Hawks over the park buildings, then at Heckscher we checked out the shorebirds in the puddles.

## Sept 14, 9:30 am Shinnecock Dune Rd

A trip to Dune always produces a good sighting of shorebirds and some waders, Great and Snowy Egret and Great Blue heron.

## Sept 21, 9:30am Oceanside MNSA & Jones Beach

Our trip to Oceanside continued the wading bird theme with Little Blue Heron, Great and Snowy Egret and Yellow-crowned Night Heron and at Jones beach a large flock of American Oyster catchers topped off the morning.



## Sept 28, 9:30 am Suffolk County Farm

A nice fall morning at the County Farm, we were treated to flocks of Savannah sparrows and Palm Warblers bathing in the roadside puddles. Then we saw Bobolinks feeding in the sunflower field.

## Meetings & Presentations

### FOR WINTER 2022

**December 16** meeting at Seatuck will be our holiday meeting with food, refreshments, raffles, members photos and a good time will be had by all!!!

**January 20** meeting. Speaker will be Dr. Artie Kopelman, President of the Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island. He will be speaking about the seals, whales and dolphins that frequent Long Island waters. We will learn where they can be found and how we can see them.

**February 17** Speaker will be Frank Vincenti from the Wild Dog Foundation. They are a group that specializes in Carnivores in the dog family, in particular. He will speak about the foxes and coyotes that frequent Long Island.



## Oct 5, 9:30 St Joseph Brentwood Campus

We started the morning watching A pair of Cooper's Hawks in aerial combat with a Peregrine Falcon and then being chased by a large flock of Crows. The woodlands produced a good number of woodland birds to finish the walk

In summary we had over sixty species of birds in some very nice settings with an enthusiastic group of folks. These walks are called Nature Walks because we see and identify more than just birds. Someone is always pointing out some wildflower or woodland wildlife, and it is a group effort to identify and share knowledge of what we have seen. Come join us for the rest of our season. Check our website for location dates and times. We also do weekend walks once a month also on the website.

# Bird Window Collisions

by Jody Banaszak



Photo: Black Skimmer Bob Glasser

A man from Water Island on Fire Island, sent me a photo of a little bird that died when it flew into his window. It was a Golden Crowned Kinglet. There's a lot of warblers, and of course, other birds on Fire Island. Very sad to see these beautiful birds crashing into windows and dying. I found an article about the Blackburnian Warbler. They are long distance migrants and most spend the winter in South America in the Andes. There have been a large number of window strikes in New York City at the World Trade Center complex. Building collisions kill up to a billion birds each year. The Bird -Safe Building Act could help prevent many of these deaths. You can help by urging Congress to support this important law. This also can be avoided by getting bird silhouettes and putting them on your windows. They can be found online, at Birds Unlimited in Oakdale or making them yourselves.

Help save our little beauties!!

## Life Scout Service Project at Brookside

by Annette Brownell

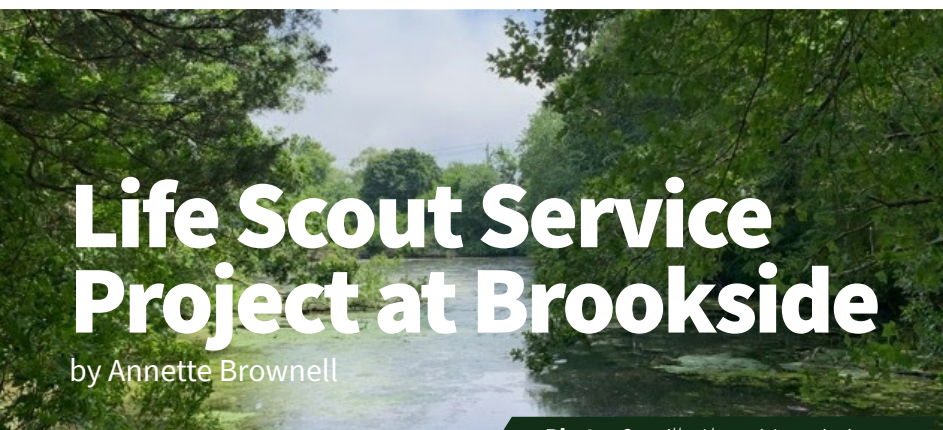


Photo: Sayville Alumni Association

One Saturday, I stopped by Brookside to discover a bunch of cutting tools on the ground and voices coming from the trails. Since we have had some very sad vandalism where the trees have actually been cut down to make a bridge, I followed the voices.

I was met by a group of young fellows, some scouts and some friends just helping, as Life Scout Vincent Palumbo repaired trails through the woods.

What a welcomed sight! My son is an Eagle Scout and I know how much work the trail to Eagle is. I chatted with the boys and couldn't thank them enough for doing such a nice job, but also for being upstanding young men, choosing to spend a Saturday giving to their community. I also came to find out that Vincent had a summer job working for the County and was the person responsible for the wonderful upkeep our park received this summer.

We are very grateful that while there are others climbing on our roof, ripping out our windows and desecrating the building, there is a generation of young men who will become the future "watchmen on the wall" for our communities.

## Audubon Conservation Activist Members Wanted!

Members who would like to join our Audubon Activist group should leave their name and email with Jack Finkenberg: [Jfinkenb2@gmail.com](mailto:Jfinkenb2@gmail.com)

We'll be setting up a meeting to discuss future conservation issues for Great South Bay Audubon. You can also contact Jack at **631.661.1278**

Photo: Lorraine Minns

# Art & Photography

VIEW OUR FULL GALLERY AT OUR WEBSITE, [WWW.GREATSOUTHBAYAUDUBON.ORG](http://WWW.GREATSOUTHBAYAUDUBON.ORG)



**Carolina Wren**, *Jacqueline Perazzo*



**Willet**, *Bob Glasser*



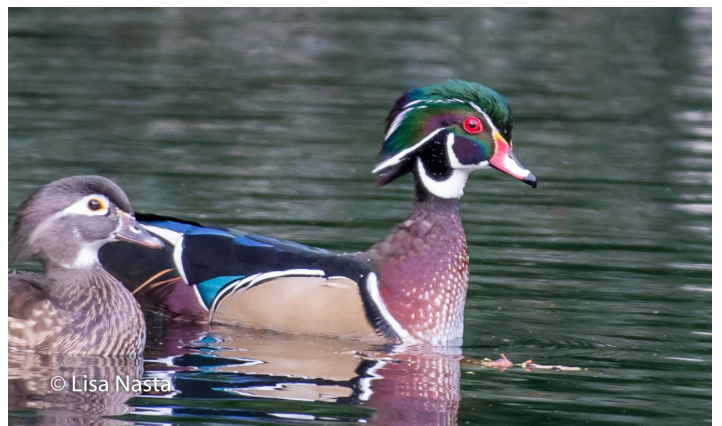
**Snowy Owl**, *Garrett Camasi*



**Indigo Bunting**, *Laura M. Eppig*



**Petrel**, *Peter Priolo*



© Lisa Nasta

**Wood Ducks**, *Lisa Nasta*

## FEATURE STORY

# Patch Birding South Shore Roots

by Bob Grover

I was inspired to write this by my friend Bobby Berlingeri, who wrote about his experiences growing up in Lido Beach (The Kingbird, 70:1), and how they inspired his love of birds and nature. This essay is mostly based on the eulogy I delivered at my Dad's funeral a decade ago. I delivered that talk with no notes—just from the heart—so regrettably, I have no record to rely on. Maybe this article will help me to recreate that talk.

When I was a child, my family would spend weekends at Cedar Beach, in southwest Suffolk County. The Captree Bridge connecting the mainland to Captree Island and then to Ocean Parkway by way of the drawbridge, had not yet been constructed, so we had to go all the way from Babylon to Wantagh, and south over those bridges, through Jones Beach, and east to Cedar. My father was an ocean lifeguard and avid surfer, so we would spend long summer days there sitting on the beach and playing in the surf. One day, when I was only about five, I decided to expand my horizons and explore. I wandered west a few hundred feet and was suddenly attacked. Little did I know at the time, nor was I capable of understanding, that I had wandered into the famous (though not yet at the time) Cedar Beach Tern Colony. I was freaking out and crying hysterically when my Dad, who had been watching, scooped me up in his arms and carefully walked me out of the colony. I recall asking him, "What are these birds and why are they so mean?". He replied that they were terns, and that they were not mean. He explained that they were defending their nests and that they were beautiful seabirds to be appreciated. From that moment on, I was fascinated by wildlife and nature. A couple of years later, the town opened Overlook Beach, to the east of Cedar. In addition, the state opened the Captree Bridge, taking about a half hour off our trip to the beach. My Dad wanted to try out the surf there so that was our destination on one beautiful, clear summer day. By then, I had begun to acquire some rudimentary knowledge of geography. As we sat on our beach blanket, I looked across the ocean, but I saw land not too far away. I was astounded. "Is that Europe?", I asked. My dad explained that it was the end of Fire Island, and how that island had grown five miles from a former position all the way east by the barely visible lighthouse, due to the movement of sand and surf. And now, from that moment on, I was also fascinated by coastal geology. Slowly but surely, my educational and vocational pursuits were being forged. Before long, I was reading Charles Darwin, Marston Bates, and others, which just jazzed me up further. As time went on, my Dad's interests started to shift from surfing to sailing, and this opened an entire new aspect to my pursuit of natural history. More on that shortly. The transition to sailing was gradual, and we kept up a tradition, on Sunday mornings after church in late winter and early spring, of going over to Captree State Park to walk down the dock and enjoy an ice cream cone. On one memorable Sunday, we were driving back home, going north across Captree Island, when my Dad calls out, "'Look at the Snowy Owl, it looks just like the cigar box!'. The owl was flying north, paralleling us, so we got great looks. I was mesmerized, and my Dad talked about it for days.

When I was a young teen, my Dad bought me a surfboard, not like the wooden boards he used to build, but a modern fiberglass board, which hangs proudly in our den today. A couple of years later he bought me a 16-foot Lyman skiff with an outboard. Very quickly that boat taught me the meaning of the term "chick magnet", but I digress. I used to load my surfboard onto the skiff and shoot across the bay to Cedar Beach to surf Full circle. That trip brought me across the eelgrass beds in the shallows off Lindenhurst, which were locally called The Flats. I got into the habit of slowing down and staring into the clear bay waters at the abundant marine life. Before too long I was purchasing a mask, snorkel, and fins to keep on the boat. Instead of staring, I would anchor and dive down into this amazing ecosystem, collecting all manner of invertebrates to bring home and identify. This also gave me time to just sit and study the diving behavior of my once-feared terns and gain insight into their natural history.

My boat opened other avenues of nature exploration, as well. I could anchor and wade in to various bay islands, some man-made dredge spoil islands and some natural flood tide deposits from former tidal inlets, of which I learned there were many before they were all filled in to construct Ocean Parkway. I still have a collection of old maps and nautical charts depicting the location and configuration of those inlets. Exploring those islands taught me lessons like there are no such things as "sea gulls", but rather more specific names of individual species, and that the immature plumages of these birds was not dirt! The south shore of Long Island provides myriad opportunities to learn about the natural world, and my wife Michelle and I made a point of keeping that tradition and lore alive in our two sons, both now fathers and educators. My quest to learn about nature continues to this day, but it is all because of the foundation constructed for me by my father.

# GSBAS Feeder Survey: Fall 2021

By the time you read this, winter will have begun and I'm sure the birds, squirrels and other wildlife will have started to feast on the fruit and berries in my yard. I know from the past that crabapples are the number one favorite and I'm curious to see what the runners up will be. Two of my viburnums have clusters of red berries and I have seen birds and squirrels nibbling on the luscious looking red fruits of the Kousa dogwood. An old pear tree in the back hosts woodpeckers, and the fallen fruit attracts bees. We have not used weed killers or insecticides or any other type of toxic material on our property for over 50 years, after noticing too late that putting weed killer down caused the Fowlers toads to disappear and sadly, I've rarely seen them in our yard since. I'm happy to say we had a small colony of Dekay's brown snakes taking up residence for a few years (they love to eat slugs!!) and an occasional Fence lizard. Reptiles and amphibians are supposedly very sensitive to herbicides and insecticides. I would rather have the toads and the weeds! If we poison our environment what is that doing to ourselves and our families?

It is now ok to feed the birds. We did not have any of the Mysterious Bird Disease in New York! Just a reminder that the feeder survey runs from November to March

### How Does the Survey work?

- 1) The counting period is 5 months from November to March, you are welcome to join the survey at any time.
- 2) During the first 15 days of each month, 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, example, if you see 10 Cardinals on the 1st, 5 on the 8th, and 3 on the 10th only report the largest amount seen, (10 Cardinals). The birds may actually be at your feeder or attracted to your yard by feeding activity.
- 3) Using the form provided, use 1 form per month to record the largest number of individual species seen. Add any extra species to the list.
- 4) No later of the 19th of each survey month, mail your completed form or list to Helga Merryman, 38 S. Carll Ave., Babylon, N.Y., 11702. You can also send 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.

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

## Become a member!

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

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# In Memory of Gretchen Stang

by Annette Brownell

Over the last few months, we have received several donation from the friends of Gretchen Stang. I did not know Gretchen, but her friends told me a little about her. Gretchen loved the Bay and sailing and she loved her birds. From the things her friends told me, it was evident that she had a loving and giving heart.

With all humbleness, I say that it is an honor for Great South Bay Audubon to be honored by her memory. Thank you to "the friends of Gretchen Stang." We are pleased to use these funds to do exactly what she loved to do - feed the birds. The feeders at Brookside are maintained by volunteers and we use a high quality bird seed from Wild Birds Unlimited to keep our little friends healthy and unstressed from environmental changes.

