

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 **LXV** • DECEMBER 2022 - MARCH 2023

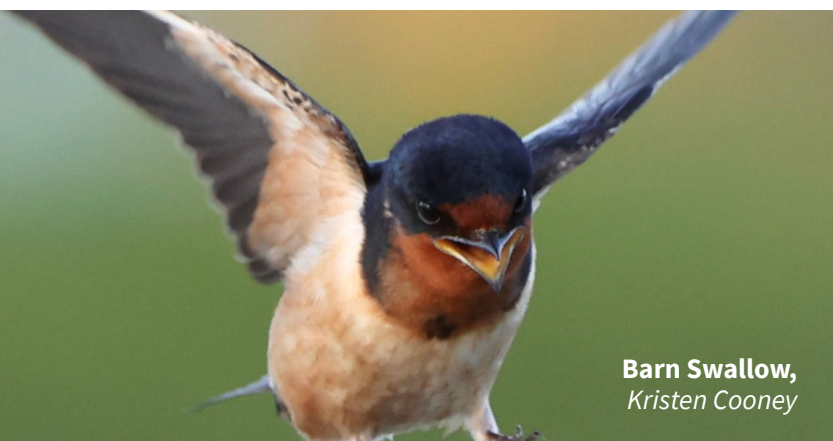


THE SANDPIPER

FEATURE STORY

The Wonders of Bird Feathers

BY JODY BANASZAK



Barn Swallow,
Kristen Cooney

The more I learn about birds and other wildlife the more I am amazed. I was watching a Nature show the other day about animals in Alaska. There was a wolf who ate fish, named a Sea Wolf. He would catch salmon and put them on the shore but wouldn't eat them. Apparently, the fish have parasites that would affect the wolves and even kill them. The crows and Bald eagles would eat the meat and when they were done, the wolf would eat the skins and head. Their bodies would digest the bones. The parasites did not affect the birds! How did this wolf know this??!!

I was going through some old magazines and saw an article about birds' feathers. Of course many birds have different feathers than others, depending on their color and what they do. Hunting, swimming, and camouflage play a big part. There could be 1,500 on a bird the size of a robin or 25,000 on a bird the size of a swan. There are downy feathers for warmth, and primary and secondary feathers for flight. There are many different shapes of feathers too, depending on the bird. Some protect them from exposure to the elements, injuries such as bites and stings. Tail feathers control lifts and help steer the bird when it turns. Some birds' feathers change during molting season and look totally different.

During molting season a Black-headed gull's head changes from black to white with a little black spot behind each eye. Woodpeckers feed on bugs on trees and their tail feathers press against the tree trunk to help with support. Diving birds like Gannets have special feathers so when they dive they don't become waterlogged. Owls have velvety down feathers to create soundless flight. A lot of feathers have certain proteins and pigments like melanin and keratin. White feathers get more worn than colored feathers and coloring agents give more strength.

According to author Christopher Cooney from the University of Sheffield, U.K., the color of birds' feathers that are different from North America and South America, West Africa, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador and Chile, are said to be from the hot temperature, more of a mating season and the foods that they eat all year round such as fruit. Mangos, acerola cherries and other fruits are rich in carotenoids that have yellow, orange and red organic pigments. Yup, birds are amazing!!! Thank goodness for the people who study them.

President's Message

A MESSAGE FROM GSBAS PRESIDENT JODY BANASZAK

Hello my little birding friends! Hope this newsletter finds you all well and enjoying the birds. It is winter and some birds have gone south and some have come down from the north. I'm hoping to see the snowy owl this winter. It's one of my favorites to see at this time of year. We usually see one on our winter bird walk to Jones Beach. My son goes surfing in the winter and brings his truck on the beach. He always sees one and his wife gets good pictures of them for me to paint. At our September meeting our speaker spoke about not raking our leaves because bugs hide and stay warm in them and are also a source of food for the birds in the winter. She also said not to dead head your flowering plants as they provide seeds for the birds too. They also spread to make more plants. I know it's hard because some of you want your yard to be nice and manicured! Maybe just try a section. And don't forget to feed the birds and thaw and clean out the bird baths this winter. They need the energy.

We have some good speakers coming up and our annual Holiday party at Seatuck in December. Feel free to bring something to eat or drink. It's always a good time, especially since we can get back to normal after Covid. I love Christmas with all the decorations and lights. Some people put their Christmas trees in the back yard after the holidays so the birds can hide in them and stay warm, then throw them away in the spring. We are making a GSBAS calendar for 2023 and have gotten some really great photos from our members. Hopefully we will continue with the calendar for years to come so save your best photos. So have a good holiday season, stay warm and enjoy the birds!!!

Just a little note that if you decorate with real green garland, remember to cut one side of it around the window or door, turn it around, and wire it together. This way both sides are hanging down the same! Also remember that GSBAS dues are due in February now and are \$20 for the year. We are also making a calendar this year of pictures that our members have taken. The calendar is \$15 and can be paid by check to our mailing address. Thank you, happy holidays!

Feeder Survey

FALL/WINTER 2022-2023

Writing this in the beginning of October, I was going to comment on the dry summer we just experienced, but Mother Nature did a turn around and we are now experiencing the dregs of Hurricane Ian, the final consequences of which are yet to be seen. I am hoping that it is not too late for the rain to revive the near dead trees and plants. Wonder how birds drink? Here are some examples, birds with conical beaks (finches, cardinals, grackles, etc.) collect water in their beak then force the liquid into their stomach as they flip their heads back, hummingbirds have probing beaks and get enough moisture from the nectar they imbibe, birds with hooked beaks, such as owls and vultures obtain enough moisture from the meat they tear apart and waterfowl that have "strainer beaks" strain out food particles from the water and ingest large amounts of water. Baby birds need to have water but cannot drink so their parents supply water to them. I've always wondered what is the difference between a Bill and a Beak and finally found an answer. The bill is the overall mouth of the bird. It consists of bones, blood vessels, different kinds of tissue, and the Beak or the lips of the bird is a external organ that grows continuously and has a nostril at the end of its structure.

The fall/winter feeder survey starts in November and everyone is welcome to join.

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. Visit greatsouthbayaudubon.org to learn about how the survey works.

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

OTHER SPECIES

Speakers & Upcoming Events

December Year-End Holiday Party • December 15, 7:00PM • Seatuck Environmental Center

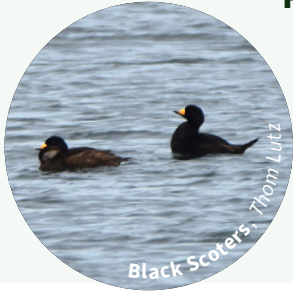
We will have wine, soda, water, and hors d'oeuvres. Members are encouraged to bring a flash drive with bird photos that they've taken throughout the year that we will show on the screen. Please bring no more than ten photos! It's always a fun time so please join us! Bring an appetizer or dessert to share. Enjoy a time of fellowship. RSVP requested.

February Meeting • February 16, 7:00PM • via Zoom

We are very excited to have **Don Riebe** from **Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge** back with us! Don has many wonderful pictures and stories on his exciting environmental expertise in the Jamaica Bay restoration.

March Meeting • March 16, 7:00PM • Seatuck Environmental Center

Chris Paparo, known as the Fish Guy, is probably one of the most fascinating speakers with tons of information, wild photos and wilder experiences. Please join us to welcome in Spring with the Fish Guy. Follow **Fish Guy Photos** on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo and TikTok **@fishguyphotos**



Nature Walks

WINTER 2022-2023

Saturday December 3, 9:00 am, Montauk

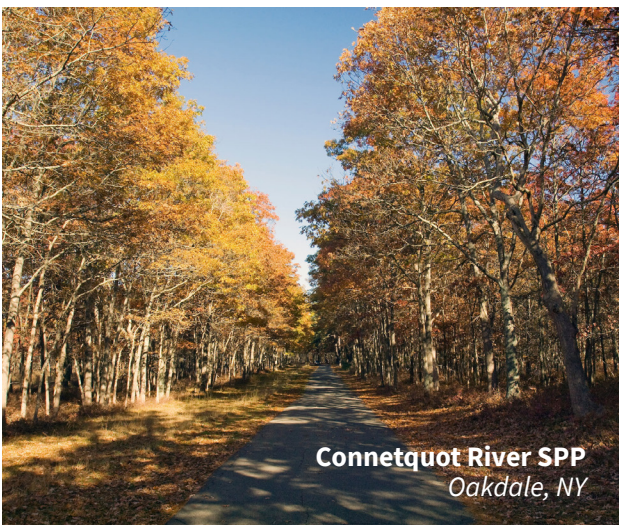
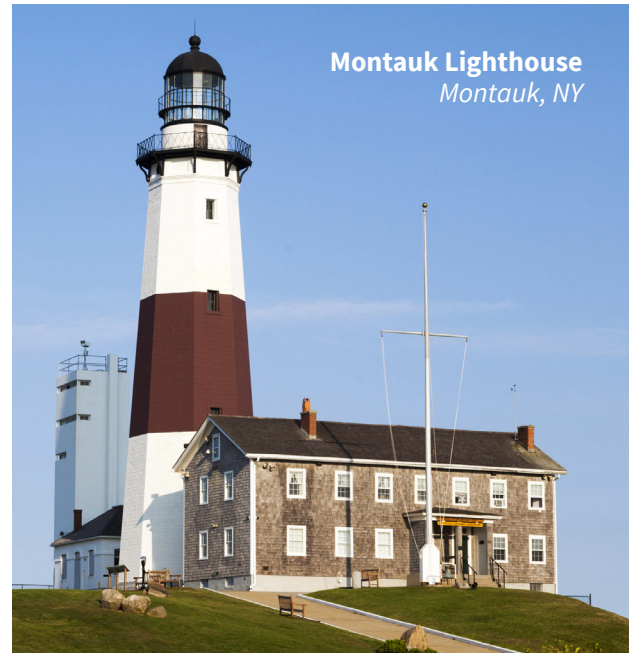
Leaders Bob Grover (516-318-8536) Ken Thompson (631-612-8028)
Meet at Lighthouse parking lot. Latecomers can still join in the vicinity of the restaurant overlook. Directions Route 27 to 27A to end.

Saturday January 7, 9:00, am Montauk

Leaders John Gluth (631-827-0120), Ken Thompson (631-612-8028)
Meet at Lighthouse parking lot. Latecomers can still join in the vicinity of the restaurant overlook. Directions Route 27 to 27A to end.

Saturday January 21, Connetquot River SPP, 8:30 am Bird at the Preserve

Leaders Edith Wilson, Ken Thompson, Helga Merryman, Jack Carlson. Reservations required \$4 at Eventbrite.com search #NatureAdventure, plus \$8 parking fee per car - unless you have yearly Empire pass.



Saturday February 4, 8:30 am, Jones Beach West End

Leaders Mike Cooper (516-523-2369, Bob Grover (516-318-8536)
Meet in the parking lot near the Coast Guard Station at West End.

Sunday March 11, 8:30, Bob Laskowski Memorial Duck Walk

Leader Bob Grover (516-318-8536)
Meet at Brookwood Hall, Islip Town Park in East Islip on Irish Lane between Montauk Hwy and Union Blvd.

Tuesday March 21, 9:30 Sunken Meadow SP

Meet in the main parking lot in front of the main pavilion near the traffic circle.

Tuesday March 28, 9:30 Heckscher SP

Meet in Field 5 western end.

A Closer Walk

BY ANNETTE BROWNELL

I am a backyard birder. When I joined Audubon, I envisioned that I would soon be running through bushes all over the place, my little safari hat in place, identifying birds and their calls. I thought that ornithology would become as second nature as horticulture is to me.

Not so. I am still a backyard birder. And that's okay. Probably, most of us are.

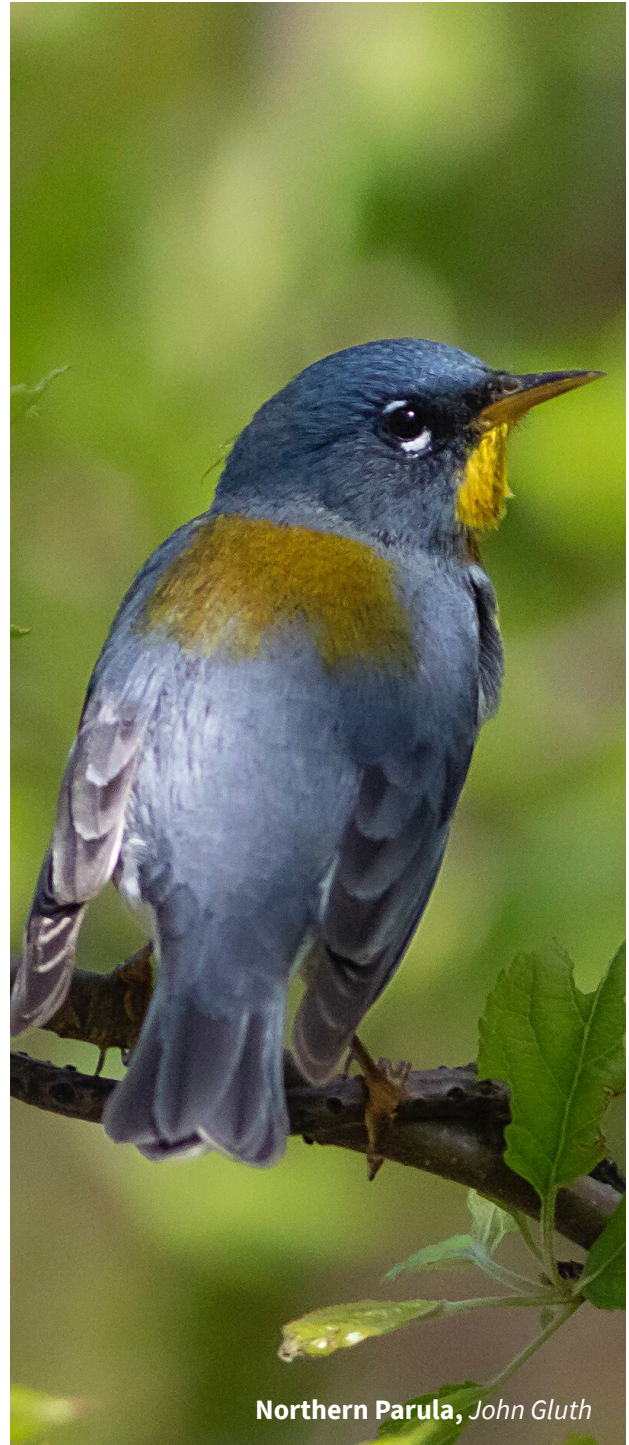
So, why get more involved? Why challenge yourself to go on a bird walk? You may feel foolish and out of place? Why volunteer to fill a position in the organization? Too tired at the end of the day. As of my last article, which was about as desperate a plea as ever there was one, I have been asking myself all the same questions. After all, I love having my cup of coffee outside and just enjoying my backyard birds. I'm good.

And then – early on a Sunday morning I got an email from John Gluth, letting me know that our media people posted a picture of another Robert Moses Park for our walk that Tuesday. I didn't even know that there was another Robert Moses Park. But John did – and he noticed – and took the time to let me know. It really brightened my spirits as I thought how very fortunate I am to have been introduced to some really terrific individuals who I would not have met otherwise. The John Gluths, Ken Thompsons, Mike Coopers, Merrymans, Wilsons of the birding world – to name only a few people who have enriched my life because I showed up. The Shai and Pats.

One freezing Saturday a few years ago, we were being wind blown into popsicles at Jones Beach West End, in search of the Holy Grail – the Snowy Owl. Then someone called “Here comes the Gluthinator.” Striding down the path came John Gluth, scope on his shoulder, seemingly unaffected by the wind and weather. The whole atmosphere turned to joking and informational exchanges. I knew that if I hung close, I was going to see and learn what I wouldn't have on my own. Where would we be without our trip leaders and coordinators?

Now, you may think this article is about my admiration for John (maybe a little heartthrob there), but it is really a reminder that we are made to be relational people. There is great benefit to community. We grow and our community, Island, world does also, when we decide to show up. And we can accomplish! When you go on a bird walk, you meet the nicest people and learn the coolest things.

At general meetings, you have the opportunity to fellowship with other interesting people and meet first class presenters. Volunteering gives that much more of a personal experience of being up close and personal. Involvement puts you at the heart of a community. It's worth it.



Northern Parula, John Gluth

Art & Photography

VIEW OUR FULL GALLERY AT OUR WEBSITE, WWW.GREATSOUTHBAYAUDUBON.ORG



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, *Laura M. Eppig*



Yellow Warbler, *Kristen Cooney*



Pectoral Sandpiper, *Steve D'Amato*



Great Horned Owl Owlet, *Barbara LaGois*



American Goldfinch, *Lisa Nasta*



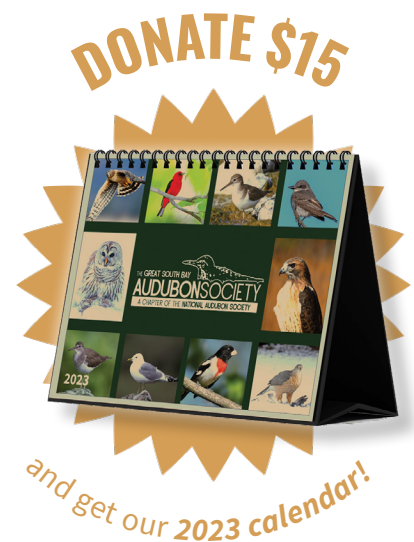
Eastern Screech-Owl, *Chris Braut*

Become a Member!

Join the GSBAS for only **\$20/YEAR.**

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. As a member of the Great South Bay Audubon Society you will receive our award-winning, bi-monthly newsletter "The Sandpiper", and new members will have the opportunity to review a 2023-24 custom calendar with photographs and artwork of current members!

Membership also includes access to the beautiful Brookside County Park, with 8 acres of trails for guided nature walks, ponds and waterways, wildlife including deer, foxes, and wild turkey, and the unique opportunity to connect with a community of like-minded individuals with a wealth of knowledge on Long Island's native species. Your membership dues will also go directly to our local conservation and educational endeavors and support our work at Brookside County Park.



Join the GSBAS!

As a member, 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 + Calendar \$35
- ☐ New Membership Senior (62+) \$15
- ☐ Renewal Senior (62+) \$15

NAME

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CITY/STATE/ZIP

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EMAIL



Tree Swallow. Photo by Joe Abraham





What are you waiting for?

Visit greatsouthbayaudubon.org/membership today.

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Steve D'Amato (631) 264-8413

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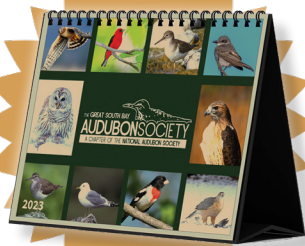
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THE SANDPIPER

DONATE \$15



and get our **2023 calendar!**

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Learn more on **page 6 >>**