



THE **OSPREY**

January/February 2020 — Vol. XLV, No. 1

Horseshoe Crabs: A Disappearing Keystone *New Research May Hold Some Hope*

Gina Mulhearn-Cappiello
*Pike's Beach Site Coordinator for
NYSDECI/ CCE HSC Network*

The early Romans are credited with the architectural development of the 'keystone'. It was the last, but, most important stone that when placed in an arch, supported the whole structure. Remove the stone, the arch would collapse.

In nature the same concept exists. Some species roles in the ecosystem can have a disproportionate effect on other organisms in the system.

The aim of this story is to highlight the key role the horseshoe crab plays in our Eastern Long Island environment, and how it's current demise will impact us. Horseshoe crabs were around long before the dinosaurs and have survived ice ages and asteroids almost unchanged.

Limulus polyphemus, (our horseshoe crab), is found along North America's eastern coast from Maine to Mexico.

The New York region population has trended downward for several years and now in 2019 its status is rated "poor", according to The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

The feeding frenzy at Pike's Beach included Red Knots, Dunlins, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, Semi-Palmated Sandpipers, and other migratory shorebirds. Photos was taken by the author in 2008. There have been no birds at Pike's for the past two seasons... shocking and sad.

The eggs of the horseshoe crab play an important role in the food for migrating shorebirds. There are an estimated million migratory shorebirds that use the Atlantic Flyway. They converge on our local bays to feed and rebuild energy reserves prior to completing their northward migration.

Red Knots, Dunlins, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, Semi-Palmated Sandpipers, and other species of migratory shorebirds feed on horseshoe crab eggs almost exclusively during their stopover. A study shows that; "each bird will eat thousands of eggs per day. A Sanderling weighing 50 grams, for example, can eat one horseshoe crab egg every five seconds for 14 hours a day."

The eggs of horseshoe crabs are also a key food source important to local fish, including striped bass, weakfish, flounder and Atlantic croaker, and smaller fish including striped killifish and Atlantic silversides, also blue crabs, American eel and sea turtles.

Horseshoe crabs value approaches a half billion dollars a year to the biomedical and commercial fishing industries.

Some 600,000 horseshoe crabs are harvested each year for their unique blue blood. Their blood is the 'gold standard' globally for detecting endotoxins. You've been touched by this testing. All

Continued on page 11



IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

ALL MEMBERSHIPS

NOW RUN FOR THE

CALENDAR YEAR.

PLEASE RENEW

FOR THE NEW YEAR!

MANY THANKS TO
THOSE WHO HAVE
ALREADY RENEWED

PS: CHECK YOUR

EXPIRATION DATE

ON THE MAILING PANEL.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Happy New Year!

Byron Young

I hope everyone had a great Christmas with family and friends and is ready for an exciting new year of birding adventures. May the New Year be full of your favorite birds and a couple of new ones to add your life list!

While your life lists remain intact, each New Year begins with a clean birding slate that needs to be refreshed. For the more adventurous birders January is always a fun month to see if you can top one hundred birds. After that it is searching for a new bird or new encounter with an old friend at your feeder or one of the northern overwintering species that grace us with their presence. The spring migration is usually announced in March with the arrival of the Osprey. Then peaks in May and June with the full migration of warblers and other Neotropical birds. The summer provides an opportunity to relax a bit and enjoy the local birds and their new families such as Hummingbirds, Baltimore Orioles, local warblers, Osprey and maybe a Bald Eagle family. In late summer, the southward migrating shorebirds begin to reappear, first the adults and then their young, which are always a challenge. Following in short order is the full fall migration of the birds who have spent their summer in the northern boreal forests raising their young and are now headed for warmer climates to the south.

Each season brings an exciting array of birds to seek and enjoy, whether it be at your backyard feeder, a local park, or one of our walks. We again have a full slate of walks scheduled for 2020, please watch for announcements of these walks in *The Osprey*, on our website, or on Facebook. We begin 2020 as usual with a search for overwintering waterfowl in the lakes around Patchogue, then a chilly trip to

Montauk in search of sea ducks, other more northern oceanic birds such as the Razorbill, and the smaller birds that like to hang out around Montauk Point in the winter. Our trip to the Morton Wildlife Refuge in March is always a treat, especially when the birds come to hand for some offered seeds.


As the winter turns to spring, our field trips take on a more local character as we begin to search from early spring migrants. Birding activities reach their peak in May as we search for migrating warblers and early nesting birds. The summer takes us to the marshes and

Each season brings an exciting array of birds to seek and enjoy, whether it be at your backyard feeder, a local park, or one of our walks.

beaches along the south shore looking for migrating shorebirds as they head south for the winter. This is followed by a search for confusing fall warblers, migrating hawks and a rare visitor or two that has been blown off course by fall storms. Finally, we look

forward to the return of our wintering waterfowl and the cycle begins again, winter birding, spring birding, summer birding, and fall birding.

My point here is to enjoy the annual journey in search of our birding friends whether it be at your feeder, on one of our walks, advancing your life list while chasing the latest rare visitor or simply birding while out enjoying the abundance of open space available to us. As I write this piece, I am watching several Blue Jays, a couple of House Sparrows, Juncos and a Cardinal in the shrubbery outside my window. They are either waiting their turns at my feeders or telling me that I need to refill them.

Best wishes in your search for birds in 2020 and may the New Year be a happy one. 

February & March Meetings

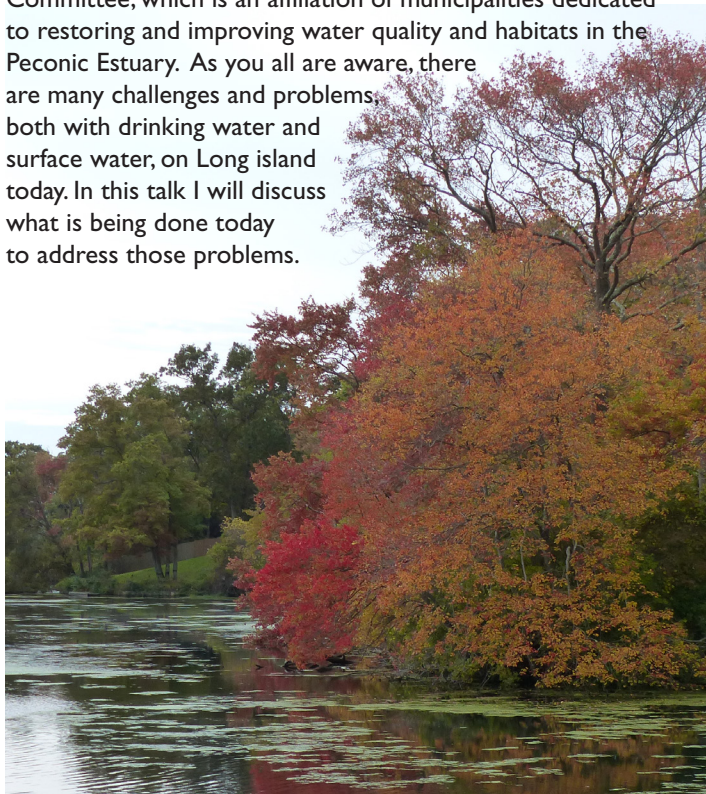
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2020 AT 7:15 PM

How's the Water?

Pat Aitken

My interest in birds began as a child, when my mother pointed out a Towhee in Shu Swamp when I was still a toddler. Birds were always something I paid attention to and watched, but I didn't really become a "birder" until a few years ago. Wish I had paid more attention to the birds I saw when I was young, but I do remember Evening Grosbeaks at my backyard feeders in Oyster Bay.

I'm now the Coordinator for the Peconic Estuary Protection Committee, which is an affiliation of municipalities dedicated to restoring and improving water quality and habitats in the Peconic Estuary. As you all are aware, there are many challenges and problems both with drinking water and surface water, on Long Island today. In this talk I will discuss what is being done today to address those problems.



MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020 AT 7:15 PM

New York Breeding Bird Atlas


Julie Hart

New York Breeding Bird Atlas Project Coordinator
New York Natural Heritage Program

It has been 20 years since the last breeding bird atlas in New York State, and a lot has changed! The third atlas will take place from 2020-2025 and involve thousands of volunteers



from across the state. This talk will cover the history of the atlas, the importance of atlas data, and how you can get involved. Learn how the third atlas will differ from previous atlases, including how we will be using eBird for data entry. Ebird will make it easier to track progress and allow anyone to enter data anywhere.

Atlasing is a great excuse to explore new areas and provides an intimate look into the daily lives of birds. Whether you are a beginner or advanced birder, this unique opportunity will strengthen your birdwatching skills while contributing valuable data to a large conservation-oriented project. 

**Meetings are held at
Quogue Wildlife Refuge,
3 Old Country Road, Quogue, NY**

**Directions are on the website:
www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org**

Meetings are free and open to all.

"Home of the 99 cent Suet Cake"



Eastern LI's Largest Wild Bird Store

Feathered Friend & Wild Delight Bird Seed
100's of Bird Feeders and Bird Houses in Stock!

Garden Center – Plants – Organic & Low Impact Remedies
Pet Food & Supplies – Beekeeping – Home Brewing – Canning
Equine – Poultry – Livestock – Animal Feed – Farm & Stable Supplies
Husqvarna Power Sales & Service – BBQ Fill – U-Haul Truck Rentals



1122 Osborn Ave. • Riverhead • 631.727 3100 • www.talmagefarm.com

Preserve Plum Island Coalition Applauds Passage of Federal Legislation to Temporarily Halt Sale of Plum Island

From The Preserve Plum Island Coalition

Southold, New York – In December the United States Senate passed the FY2020 appropriations budget bill, including language already passed by the House, which defunds any Government Services Administration (GSA) activities involving the sale of Plum Island for the next year. President Donald Trump signed the bill into law Friday night.

This is the first time that a bill aimed at protecting Plum Island has passed both the House and Senate and made its way to the President.

While the bill prevents the GSA, the federal agency tasked with auctioning Plum Island to the highest bidder, from using any of its funding to market, process, or sell Plum Island over the next year, it is only a temporary delay until 2021. The Preserve Plum Island Coalition will continue efforts for permanent protection.

In a bicameral and bipartisan effort over the past several years, lawmakers from both sides of Long Island Sound have been working to delay a sale and ultimately repeal the misguided 2009 law that initiated the federal government's sale of Plum Island. The 2009 law is a result of the 2008 plan to relocate the animal disease research facility on Plum Island to Manhattan, Kansas. (See what federal lawmakers and advocates are saying at the end of the release.)

The Preserve Plum Island Coalition would like to thank our congressional champions, the countless concerned citizens and stakeholders, and lawmakers from around the country who worked to make this positive and important step forward towards permanent protection of Plum Island.

Plum Island is an 840-acre island in the eastern end of Long Island Sound that provides habitat for several federally endangered and threatened species of flora and fauna, including Piping Plover. The waters surrounding it provide fish for endangered Roseate Terns and are home to federally-listed marine species such

as Kemps Ridley sea turtles and Atlantic sturgeon. Seals haul out on its rocks, one of the largest such assemblages in southern New England.

WHAT ADVOCATES & LAWMAKERS ARE SAYING:

Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY):

"I've long maintained that the sale of Plum Island would be a huge loss for Long Island and New York. The 840-acres of unique habitat, which is home to a variety of rare wildlife must be preserved. This new delay in the sale of Plum Island is a step in the right direction, and I remain committed to continuing to fight tooth and nail until we prevent this ecological treasure from ever falling into the hands of a developer who would rip apart its natural beauty."

Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):

"This provision is a welcome step in the right direction—delaying the sale of Plum Island for one year. Our work is far from over, and I am committed to continued efforts to permanently repeal the outdated and wrongheaded mandate to sell Plum Island to the highest bidder. Plum Island should be protected and preserved—it is an environmental treasure with pristine beaches, miles of natural shorelines, and critical habitats for hundreds of types of plants and animals. We cannot allow this ecological gem to be devastated by private developers."

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY):

"New York is home to some of our country's most treasured natural sites, with Plum Island being one of the most beautiful and significant. Unique endangered species live on the island and we must protect this wildlife and their homes. I am pleased that the year-end appropriations bills included a provision to delay the sale of Plum Island for a year, but this is not enough. It should never be sold off. I will continue to fight in Congress to preserve Plum Island's natural beauty and environmental importance."

Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT)

"This is a big win. For the first time since the sale of the island was put into motion,

we have placed a firm legislative ban on its sale. Plum Island is an ecological gem and home to hundreds of species of wildlife and important historical sites, and I've fought hard against efforts to sell this treasured island. I want to applaud my colleagues for our successful effort in protecting this island, and I'll continue to use my seat on the Appropriations Committee to prevent this island from ever being sold."

Congressman Lee Zeldin (R-NY 1):

"Not only does Plum Island offer our region a diverse wildlife and ecosystem and critical habitat for migratory birds, marine mammals, and rare plants, but it is also an essential cultural and historical resource. The current law, which mandates the sale of the island to the highest bidder, is the wrong path forward, because it does not provide for public access and permanent preservation of the island, or the continued use of the research infrastructure. The state-of-the-art research facility at Plum Island must not go to waste, and preserving this island's natural beauty while maintaining a research mission will continue to provide important economic and environmental benefits to Long Island. I applaud my colleagues for adopting my amendment to halt the sale of Plum Island for 12 months and look forward to continuing to work with them in a bicameral, bipartisan fashion to pass my stand-alone, long-term legislation—the Plum Island Preservation Act—to permanently protect the island."

Congressman Joe Courtney (D-CT 2):

"This week's appropriations agreement included a great deal for our Long Island Sound community—including investments in Long Island Sound environmental work and increased funding for Sea Grant. However, the inclusion of our bipartisan amendment to restrict the GSA from marketing the sale of Plum Island was certainly a welcome achievement. We still have more work to fully repeal the sale of Plum Island, but the language included

Continued from previous page

in this agreement the result of our continued efforts working across the aisle and across Long Island Sound to protect this ecological treasure.”

John Turner, spokesperson for the Preserve Plum Island Coalition:

“While we have more work to do in D.C. to get a full repeal of the original law that requires the sale of Plum Island, the 12-month delay is the best holiday present for the effort to permanently protect this environmental and historical gem. Thanks to all the House and Senate members who are working to keep the island safe from the shovels of developers.”

Greg Jacob, policy advisor for The Nature Conservancy:

“The Nature Conservancy thanks Congress for taking this significant step that prevents the sale of Plum Island for the next 12 months. We value the leadership of members in both houses as we work together in support of the conservation of this important resource, which provides habitat to wildlife and unique opportunities to learn about our natural resources. We look forward to working with the House and Senate in the next session to ensuring a more permanent solution, starting with a full repeal of the mandate to sell Plum Island.”

Leah Schmalz, chief program officer for Save the Sound:

“After years of advocacy we are thrilled that Congress put the brakes on Plum Island’s sale. We are thankful for the efforts of our Senators and Congressmen and women, our allies in the Preserve Plum Island Coalition, the states of New York and Connecticut, and each citizen who fought tirelessly to make this legislation possible. But we aren’t counting our Piping Plover chicks before they hatch. Much work remains as we all continue fighting for the permanent protection of this historically and ecologically significant oasis in Long Island Sound. We look forward to our renewed efforts in the new year.” 🦆

Winter Walks

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2020, MEET AT 8:30 AM

MONTAUK – THE END!

Leader: Eileen Schwinn

Meet at 8:30 am at the lower parking lot at Montauk Point. (Heated restrooms are available at this parking lot). The tip of Long Island is the go-to winter place – if you are an ocean-loving sea bird! Huge rafts of birds are usually seen from the (closed) restaurant patio, as well as other points along the shoreline. We will be visiting other well-known birding spots in Montauk, all dependent upon which birds have been reported in the area – rare geese, shorebirds, overwintering hardy songbirds are all possibilities. Plan to spend at least three hours on this field trip – and dress for the weather! Please contact Eileen Schwinn, trip leader, for information, and please let her know if you plan to attend this field trip (beachmed@optonline.net).

SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2020, MEET AT 8:30 AM

ELIZABETH MORTON NWR

This is always a special walk. Just at the edge of winter, you will be greeted by lots of hungry birds, that eat right out of your hand. Frequently there are pockets of over-wintering birds. Great photo ops as you are close to the birds. Meet at the Refuge parking lot at 8 am. It is roughly a 2 mile walk to the beach and around the refuge. Dress warmly and appropriately. Bring binoculars! Bird seed will be provided.

The Elizabeth Morton NWR is off Noyac Road on the way to Sag Harbor (if you are coming from the west).

THE FARMERS MARKET FARM STAND

Just
West of
Buoy One



Proprietor: John Carson

76 Montauk Highway, Westhampton, NY 11978 • 631.375.0612

Featuring Blue Duck Bakery Breads & Pies

And the finest-fresh seasonal local produce — including our own hand-pressed lemonade, fruit jams, raw honey, maple syrup, chowder, fruit and savory tarts.



The Ash-throated Flycatcher at Yaphank Farm. Photo by Eileen Schwinn



One male Harlequin Duck was in the Shinnacock Canal and found during the Quogue to Watermill Christmas Bird Count. Photo by Sally Newbert

And the winds blew...

Sally Newbert

It was a busy fall with quite a few exotic birds to be chased. Two Pelicans were brought into the Evelyn Alexander Rescue Center in early December. The Pelicans had been seen in Montauk near Gosman's Dock for a few months but when the cold finally hit two of them were brought in for medical attention. Both were sitting on the beach and easy to catch (a bad sign), one in worse shape than the other with frostbite on a foot and on its pouch. Both had been banded in North Carolina. Evelyn Alexander Rescue Center arranged for them to be flown to a rehab center in Florida where they will be released into a Pelican colony. It is thought that the hurricane winds took them off course.

An exciting catch that lasted about 2 days was an Ash-throated Flycatcher on the Yaphank farm. Usually a bird of the Southwest and into Mexico, it must have caught the westerly winds to arrive here. It is not unlike the Great-crested Flycatcher, but the coloring is a bit paler. It is larger than the Willow, Alder and Least Flycatchers.

On to the star of the show, but certainly not the showiest, was a visit from a Golden-crowned Sparrow. After it was reported, the crowds gathered. In all probability it too followed the westerly winds from its home range on the west coast where it breeds as far north as Alaska and winters from Washington State to the Baja. It landed in Sayville at Brookside Park, home of Great South Bay Audubon where it has stayed for quite a while hanging out with White-throated Sparrows and Fox Sparrows. It is a young bird and has not yet developed a bold



The Pelicans at Montauk, looking healthy before the cold weather came in. Thanks to the Evelyn Alexander Rescue Center they were taken to Florida to be released. Photos in Montauk taken by Janis Hurley.

golden crown for which it is named. Although it is possibly the most unusual bird, and started drawing crowds almost immediately, it is a real LBJ. I don't know if anyone has checked, but maybe it is still there. There was lots of cover, food and friends.

The Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) yielded a few birds of note. On the Quogue to Watermill CBC, compiled by

Steve Biasetti, a Northern Saw-Whet and a Snowy Owl were spotted. Two unusual ducks, a Eurasian Wigeon and a Harlequin Duck were seen. Several out of season birds included a House Wren, an Eastern Phoebe and a Tree Swallow were also counted.

On the Central Suffolk CBC, compiled by Eileen Schwinn, another Snowy Owl was seen along with a 6 Saw-Whet Owls.

The unusual sightings included a Thick-billed Murre, 150 Razorbills and a Yellow-breasted Chat. Wild Turkeys, Turkey Vultures and Eastern Bluebirds all set records for high counts on the Central Suffolk CBC.

For one more rare bird check out Janis Hurley's story of the Painted Bunting's Long Island visit on page 11. 🐦



Birders watching and waiting for the sparrow to appear. Photo by Eileen Schwinn

The Star of the Show!

The crowds gathered at Brookside and waited patiently for the Golden-crowned Sparrow to appear.



The Golden-crowned Sparrow at Brookside. Photo by Byron Young

Eastport Feeds Inc.

Bird Seed

Black Oil Sunflower Seed

Suet

Nutrena Products

Triumph® Horse Feed

Vitality® Horse Feed

Hay • Feed • Bedding

140 East Moriches Blvd.

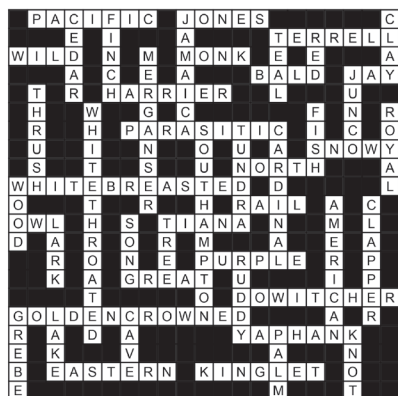
Eastport, NY 11941

631.325.0077

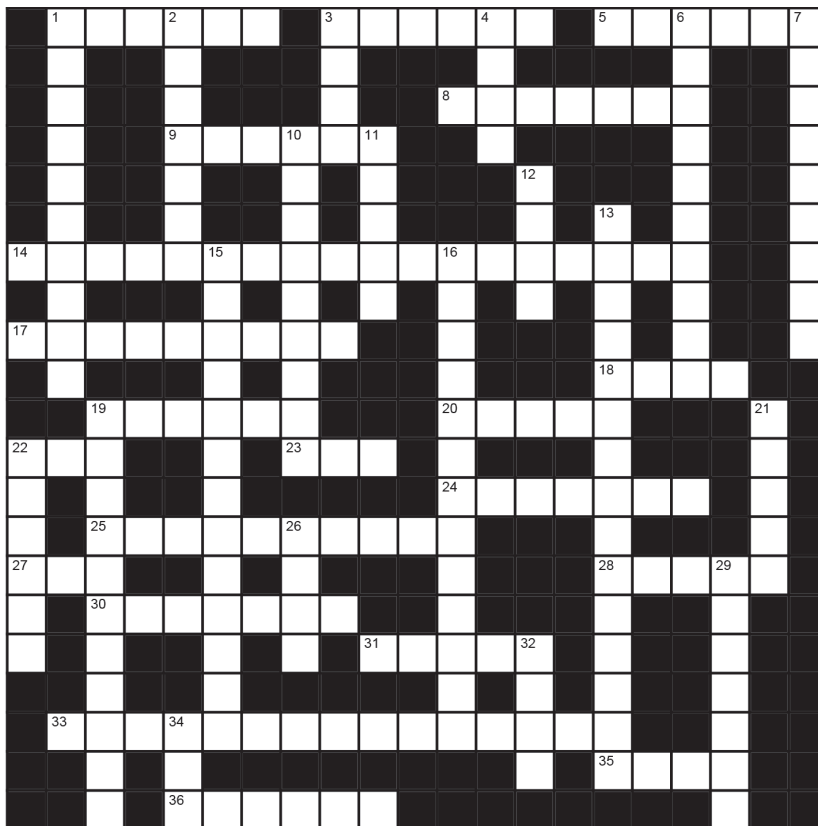
Our mission is to be an inspiration to those who feel a sense of kinship with Long Island by encouraging an appreciation for the natural world and a commitment to the environment.

Something to do on a cold day

Answers to Nov/Dec puzzle
by Tom Moran



Winter Birding Tom Moran



Across

- 1 Wilson's Storm _____
- 3 Atlantic _____, try Eastern Egg Rock, ME
- 5 Eastern (Rufous-sided?) _____
- 8 American or Least _____
- 9 Nickname for Anhinga
- 14 The drab brownish one
- 17 _____ Hawk
- 18 The _____ bird, name of NYSOA's publication
- 19 _____ Duck, rare to regular visitor; check those Ring-necked Ducks carefully!
- 20 3 | Across-State Park
- 22 ____-throated Flycatcher; seen in Yaphank in November
- 23 ____ Farms, good places to check for grasspipers and geese
- 24 _____ Tern/Spoonbill
- 25 _____ River State Park
- 27 aka Alcid, an irruption of them last January
- 28 Bald or Golden _____
- 30 _____ Tern
- 31 _____ 20 Across State Park
- 33 Great or Lesser
- 35 Pacific _____, Feb/Mar at Oyster Bay last year
- 36 _____ Egret

Down

- 1 _____ Goose, look for one on 23 Across
- 2 _____ Egret, check Florida to see its unique dance
- 3 _____ Warbler
- 4 White-faced _____, was seen in May at Heckscher
- 6 Look in damp, shady areas, short, cocked tail
- 7 _____ A. Morton NWR, come out for our field trip there in March and have a bird land on your hand!
- 10 _____ Solitaire, Jan/Mar 2017 in Southold
- 11 Common _____, gurgling croak
- 12 Tundra _____, try Hook Pond in Feb
- 13 Seen at Sheepshead Bay, Jan 2019
- 15 Black-bellied _____, June/July 2018 at Kings Park-
- 16 _____ Kite
- 19 _____ Murre along with Common and Razorbill at Shinnecock Inlet last Jan
- 21 Sandhill _____ May/June last year at Napeague
- 22 _____ Lane, North Fork, check out the geese there
- 26 American _____ Sparrow
- 29 _____ Longspur
- 32 How you feel when you miss your target bird!
- 34 A fun activity to participate in during the winter, abbr.



The Return of the Eagle

Larry Penny
with photos by **Jane Ross**

According to *Bull's, Birds of New York*, the Bald Eagles last nested on Long Island on Gardiner's Island in 1936. They almost became extinct in the "Lower 48" shortly thereafter. Then in 2006 on a Montauk Christmas Bird Count visit to Gardiner's Island, in the Town of East Hampton, MaryLaura Lamont saw two adults and what looked like an immature with them. She also saw a very large tree nest.



Thirteen years later, several Bald Eagle nests were reported on Long Island, including two more in East Hampton, one on the west shore of Accabonac Harbor in the hamlet of Springs, on a long-standing Osprey nesting platform. Later on in the early summer, another pair of Bald Eagles were found nesting in a tall conifer in the vicinity of Georgica Pond by Jane Ross, a long-standing naturalist on the South Fork and an avid photographer. She was able to take several photos of this pair of the nesting eagles, as well as a single offspring they brought up, throughout the rest of the summer and into the fall.

Jane also followed the course of the two Bald Eagle chicks at Accabonac Harbor, one of which fledged early, while the other still occupied the nest into late August. There was a bit of a squabble early on between one of the several pairs of Ospreys nesting on the shores of Accabonac Harbor and the intruding Bald Eagles. In the end, however, the several pairs of Accabonac Ospreys, as well as the single pair of interloping Bald Eagles, all did well. The absence of salt



marsh mosquito fighting helicopters most certainly contributed to this success.

This year the Long Island Bald Eagles were back in force with at least eight nests all which were successful. While Bald Eagles are known to rob Ospreys and other fish-eating birds of their prey, the Ospreys continued to increase their lot on the Island, so at least for now, all is well. The lone Osprey nest established on a high pole on the long-standing wooden GATR towers left over from World War II on a high hill east of Lake Montauk failed. A pair of Ospreys used to regularly nest on a platform erected on Brushy Island in the northwest corner of Fort Pond, but that nest is long gone and in the last couple of years, that island has altogether sunk beneath the surface.

The great thing about Ms. Ross's discovery at Georgica Pond was that off and on through the years, during the annual winter December bird counts dating back into the 1970s and earlier, the spot other than Gardiner's Island where you were most likely to find a Bald Eagle in the winter was Georgica Pond and, *Voila*, a pair finally nested there in 2019. Had those winter visitors been sizing it up all those prior years? Now, if only a pair of the scions from the East Hampton Bald Eagles decided to nest on the shores of Kellis Pond in Bridgehampton, the pond and its hamlet would certainly welcome such a happening. 🦅

The 23rd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count is for Everyone

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, February 14-17, 2020, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must create a free online account to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

In 2019, Great Backyard Bird Count participants in more than 100 countries counted more than 6,800 species of birds on more than 200,000 checklists!

During the count, you can explore what others are seeing in your area or around the world. Share your bird photos by entering the photo contest, or enjoy images pouring in from across the globe. You can even add photos and sounds to your checklist.

Your help is needed every year to make the GBBC successful!

Then keep counting throughout the year with eBird, which uses the same system as the Great Backyard Bird Count to collect, store, and display data any time, all the time.

Why count birds?

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn


a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document and understand the complex distribution and movements of so many species in such a short time.

Scientists use information from the Great Backyard Bird Count, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, such as the Christmas Bird Count, Project FeederWatch, and eBird, to get the "big picture" about what is happening to bird populations. The longer these data are collected, the more meaningful they become in helping scientists investigate far-reaching questions, like these:

- How will the weather and climate change influence bird populations?

- Some birds, such as winter finches, appear in large numbers during some years but not others. Where are these species from year to year, and what can we learn from these patterns?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- How are bird diseases, such as West Nile virus, affecting birds in different regions?

What kinds of differences in bird diversity are apparent in cities versus suburban, rural, and natural areas?

The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Birds Canada and many international partners. The Great Backyard Bird Count is powered by eBird. The count is made possible in part by founding sponsor Wild Birds Unlimited. 



Great Backyard Bird Count
23rd Annual • Feb 14-17, 2020

Count birds in your backyard, local park, or wherever you spot a bird, and submit your observations online.
birdcount.org

Cornelia Wehn Photo: Jenny Burdette / Great Backyard Bird Count

Audubon BIRDS CANADA OISEAUX CANADA The Cornell Lab of Ornithology Sponsored in part by: Wild Birds Unlimited

Horseshoe Crabs: A Disappearing Keystone New Research May Hold Some Hope

Continued from page 1

vaccines, insulin, heart stents, pacemakers, chemotherapies, and Pet Scans to name just a few, have been tested on horseshoe crab blood.

Our local bay men also harvest the horseshoe crabs each spring during their breeding cycle, selecting for females rich with eggs. They use the crabs as bait for American eel and whelk.

Regulated by the NYSDEC, harvest is capped at 160,000 individuals. However, moratoriums in States surrounding New York have put pressure on our local population, raising their market price and leading to illegal poaching.

Add to this unknown impacts of climate change, and known impacts of habitat loss and bay acidification, and we are risking losing these important creatures.

My husband and I have been site coordinators for the NYSDEC and Cornell Cooperative of Suffolk County's Marine Horseshoe Crab monitoring program for the last 15 years. Our site is Pikes Beach in Westhampton. It is the largest count site of the 33 sites on



Long Island. In 2008 we witnessed an abundance of horseshoe crabs and a feeding frenzy of birds, including many of the endangered Red Knot, see photo on page 1.

The past two seasons at Pikes Beach has been startling to us, because of the lack of feeding birds.

So, what can be done to help our local horseshoe crabs? And how can you help?

Cornell Marine's Dr. Matt Sclafani and Scott Curatolo-Wagemann are now working on funding a program for this spring to test alternative baits with our local bay men.

Tests will range from totally artificial bait material to baits containing dramatically smaller portions of the crab, reducing the harvest needs.

I feel this is the best route to success. The bay men are a part of our culture here on the East End. Working with them to solve this problem and move to sustainable practices is best.

We could use your help funding this important project.

We don't need too much money to accomplish this testing, so if you can spare a few dollars, please do.

Read more on Cornell's website and donate here; www.backtothebays.org/hsc-fund. If you scan this QR code with your phone to go directly to the donation site!

Care to find out more?

For a fun 'hands on experience' come out on the full and new moons next May 7th and May 22nd. Walk the beach under the moonlight and see the horseshoe crabs do their thing yourself. It is a great group of people who participate; restauranters, scientists, girl scouts, high schools, writers, lovers of nature all.

Get information on the site near you at www.nyhorseshoecrab.org

In closing, if you are walking the beach and see a horseshoe crab upside down, gently give 'em a flip! 🐦



Painted Bunting

Photo & Story Janis Hurley

The Painted Bunting, a bird which is in the cardinal family, is native to North America. But I would never have expected to see it here on Long Island! I had been following ebird reports of one located out in Montauk, and meant to travel out to find it. After a few days, the reports stopped coming about the Montauk bird. Within a day, I noticed a Painted Bunting being reported at Jones Beach in Nassau County. Could it be the same bird? A couple of days passed before I was out that way. I went with a few friends who are also photographers. We located the bird almost immediately!

The Painted Bunting showed itself quite nicely popping in and out of the tangles while eating seeds. He was right near a playground and didn't seem too disturbed by the activity. I was able to photograph him in shade, underbrush, and in sun. I'm using the pronoun "he" although I don't think people know for sure if the bird is male or female. The male Painted Bunting does not get his flamboyant coloring until his second year, and until then looks almost indistinguishable from the female. The male Bunting is so beautiful that he is nicknamed "nonpareil", meaning "without equal".

I am very grateful to have seen this gorgeous Bunting, especially since their usual territory is southern States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. 🐦

THE OSPREY

Published by
Eastern Long Island Audubon Society
A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
P.O. Box 206
East Quogue, NY 11942-0206

Non Profit Org
U.S. Postage

PAID

Permit No. 3
Center Moriches, NY 11934

Address Service Requested

Please check the date on your label.

All memberships are now renewable in January. Please renew your membership to keep our club strong.

ELIAS OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President:
Byron Young 631-821-9623

Vice President & Field Trips:
Eileen Schwinn 631-728-8342

Recording Secretary:
Chris Schmitt 631-727-2860

Corresponding Secretary:
Gigi Spates 631-765-1436

Treasurer: Tom Moran 631-849-4434

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Bob Adamo 631-369-1958

Ridgie Barnett 631-288-3628

John McNeil 631-281-2623

Sally Newbert 631-281-6008

Suzi Stewart 516-443-4906

Evelyn Voulgarelis 631-727-0417

COMMITTEES/PROJECTS

Field Trips: Eileen Schwinn 631-728-8342

Programs: Suzi Stewart 516-443-4906
and Bob Adamo 631-369-1958

Conservation &
Bluebird Restoration:
Gigi Spates 631-765-1436

Education: Evelyn Voulgarelis 631-727-0417
& Suzi Stewart 516-443-4906

Newsletter Editor & Publicity:
Sally Newbert 631-281-6008
eliasosprey@optonline.net

2020 Chapter Renewal/Membership

Membership is \$20 a year, you will receive 6 issues of *The Osprey* and you will be supporting our education and conservation activities.

This is a Renewal New Membership

I would like to make a donation of _____ in addition to my membership

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Please include your email to receive reminders of programs, trips, or weather related cancellations.

This list is not shared.

Make check payable to: **Eastern Long Island Audubon Society**

and mail to: ELIAS Membership,
PO Box 206
East Quogue, NY 11942-0206

EASTERN LONG ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY

From the Barrens to the Bays

Serving Eastern Brookhaven, Western Riverhead & The Hamptons

www.easternlongislandaudubonsociety.org