



The OSPREY

January/February—Vol. XXXVIII No. 1

Thoughts on Hurricane Sandy

Sally Newbert

I think I would be lax if our lead story was not about the hurricane. As an editor, and not a scientist, I will just offer a few thoughts about the events we all experienced. I am sure everyone of you had some loss because of the storm. If you came through it without losing your house, I think you consider yourself very lucky. Most experienced some loss of electricity, phone or internet for a varying amount of time and if you were ok, I am sure a friend or family member was left without one of the vital services.

Then, we all experienced the gasoline shortage, caused not only by the lack of supply, but the inability of the gas stations to pump the gas when their electricity failed. I think, to everyone's surprise as soon as gasoline rationing went into effect, the shortage was over. After the storm we got to a point when it did not matter what the gas cost, just, please, don't make us wait two hours or more. That feeling didn't last long as the gas prices soared over \$4. Then the prices came down again.

Because of the gasoline shortage most people curtailed their birding activities. Exploring the damage to the parks and favorite birding spots was put on hold. Dan Wilson made it over to Dune Road and Cupsogue by boat a few days after the storm. His pictures, one of a dead sea turtle, appear here and on page 2. Even marine mammals had a terrible time in this storm. There were quite a few breaches on the barrier islands. Many dunes were washed away, and many trees down. On the ELIAS walk at the Floyd Estate, Mary-Laura Lamont pointed out a very large and old cherry tree that the storm took down, a favorite of a Peregrine Falcon. A



DAN WILSON

The dock at "old" coast guard station, located opposite Forge River now open from ocean to bay, approx 4' deep at low tide, was normally 8' deep at dock before breach

Peregrine flew over us as we were ending the walk, perhaps he was he looking for a new tree? The Floyd Estate and other flooded areas were inundated with the oil from homes that had their oil tanks overturned by the flood waters.

Carl Safina, who was kind enough to allow publication of an excerpt from his book mused in an opinion piece on CNN Opinion, on the wisdom of building so close to the ocean and bay. Byron Young, the new ELIAS president, asks this and other questions in his editorial on page 2.

It looks like the homes in Westhampton Dunes all made it through the storm, although the ocean did break through at Cupsogue. It also over-washed the barrier beach in several spots between Quogue and Hampton Bays.

In the aftermath of the storm, the town of Riverhead has decided to rent space on the old runways at EPCAL. Every day, even on Thanksgiving, tow trucks have been arriving with storm damaged cars that will



DAN WILSON

A five-foot leatherback Turtle washed up on Great Gun Beach. There was another one on the other side of the breach at the old coast guard station.

be stored on the old runways. Will those cars leak fuel and fluids that will contaminate the ground water? Riverhead just doesn't seem to appreciate that it has one of the last large areas of grasslands on Long Island. You can usually see Meadowlarks when you visit, in addition to Kestrels and Northern Harriers.

While we are on the topic of protecting the water supply, this issue also has an article from Alexandra Millar of the Peconic Bay Keeper's office. She discusses the nitrification of ground water and its causes.

This winter there have been many irruptive species coming to Long Island. Among the visitors: Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, Cross-bills both Red-winged and White-winged. Carl Starace, who is not moving out of the area as quickly as he expected, has written about Evening Grosbeaks, another rare but possible visitor. The first reports of Snowy Owls are trickling in. And, to keep things interesting, a Pelican was spotted near Montauk. So, keep your eyes open for these unusual winter visitors.



Please check the date the mailing panel. If your membership is expired or about to expire please use the membership/renewal form on page 11 to keep your membership current.

Nature Programs

Monday night meetings are held at Quogue Wildlife Refuge. The programs are free and the public is welcome.

Bob Adamo,
Interim Program Chair

Monday, February 4, 2013
beginning at 7:15 pm

Winter Gulls in the NY Metro Area

Our 2013 programs start off with John Heidecker's presentation on gulls. Identifying gulls can be very challenging but fun, since there is so much variation in the way a species can look. It can also be a good reason to get out of the house during those long winter months. The program will give you the tools to identify the three common species of gulls in our area, Ring-billed, Herring and Great Black-backed. Then, the program will go on to aid in identifying some of the uncommon species that visit our area particularly during the winter months.

John is a freelance wildlife photographer who lives in Bellport. He enjoys photographing birds and nature. He is a member of Nikon Professional Services and has presented media programs on Bird Photography at the Museum of Natural History in NYC. His articles and photos have appeared in *Shutterbug*, *Living Bird* and *Birder's World* among others. His photos have been used in Nikon ads and National Geographic promotions.

**Just a reminder:
There is no January meeting.**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Curiosity!

Byron Young, ELIAS President

Mother Nature decided to rearrange Long Island and New Jersey recently with a massive storm that has uprooted much of Long Island's South Shore and the Jersey Shoreline. She does this with some regularity, in geologic time, every hundred years or so. Trying to understand the effects from such a storm is going to be a challenge but it has provided researchers and the cadre of citizen scientists a great opportunity to collect information on the natural rebuilding that is taking place as we look forward to spring. I think we will even learn from man's attempts to put the landscape back in order.

I am curious about how the barrier island will return this spring. Will Piping Plover like the new wash over areas and utilize them as new nesting sites? Will horseshoe crabs utilize the new sandbars in the bay for laying their eggs and feeding migrating shorebirds? How will the shorebirds react to the vastly modified shoreline habitat? Will the animals that inhabited the barrier islands return? Will the barrier island be able to support the surviving deer herd? Did the Red Fox survive or was this Mother Nature's way of balancing nature in favor of the birds that utilize the open beaches for nesting, feeding and resting?

Other areas of Long Island lost mature trees even stands of trees. How is this going to impact the spring bird migration and nesting of local species? From my college days I remember that increased edge in a forest is a good thing under certain circumstances but does that necessarily apply to Long Island's urban forests?

I think this is a great opportunity for us all to add to our understanding of the resiliency of nature, its ability to adapt and fill in newly created niches. I am disappointed by the lack of birds in highly impacted areas but look forward to watching for the birds and animals to return. I urge everyone to note their observations and document these observations whether it be through a feeder survey, a Christmas bird count, a winter waterfowl count, the Great Back Yard Bird Count or just your own personnel observations.

Good birding and may our feathered friends return to us in good order.



More views of Sandy's destruction



Photo taken on Nov. 3 of the breach and new flowing inlet (navigable by small boat) between east jetty (on right) and the camp grounds at Cupsogue County Park. At that time Dune Road was only accessible by boat. It has since then been reopened and the breach is being filled in.



Septic tank and cesspool from Coast Guard Station uncovered at ocean's edge: brown colored debris is millions of Brown Lipped Snails rotting on beach.

Water Quality, A Compelling Concern for LI

Alexandra Millar from the office of The Peconic Baykeeper

The single greatest threat to eastern Long Island's fresh and estuarine waters is nitrogen pollution leaching through groundwater and the principal source of this nitrogen (and other pollutants) are septic systems and sewage treatment plants (collectively known as onsite wastewater disposal systems, OWDS). In Suffolk County, 400,000 OWDS handle raw sewage from approximately 80% of residences.

The Suffolk County Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan: 1987-2005 documented the extent of nitrogen contamination in all three Long Island aquifer layers where nitrogen levels are increasing exponentially. Over the 18-year span (1987-2005), nitrogen levels rose 40% in the upper aquifer and 200% in the deeper aquifer. A report released by Suffolk County in 2011 revealed that large swaths of the aquifer have nitrogen concentrations exceeding the Maximum Contaminant Level, rendering it nonpotable for many public and private water supply wells. In addition to nitrogen, sewage also contains bacteria and pathogens which have been known to cause skin rashes, blue baby syndrome, and hepatitis, among many other things.

Management of our sewage waste is a huge ecological, human health and financial issue, one that planners, politicians, engineers, and environmentalists have grappled with—awkwardly and unsuccessfully—for five decades. Until very recently, the number one concern has been human health, and for good reason.

Groundwater is also the source of 95% of freshwater to Long Island's surface waters (our bays, ponds, lakes, streams, creeks, and the ocean). The marine environment is very sensitive to excessive nitrogen loading, and Peconic Baykeeper is working to make ecological health a top priority.

Percolating with groundwater through Long Island's sandy soil, nitrogen discharged into surface waters triggers

harmful algal blooms, low dissolved oxygen levels, fish kills, loss of eelgrass, reduced water clarity, and explosive growth of invasive weeds. In 2012, the presence of dangerous algal toxins caused emergency closures of shellfish beds earlier than ever before and in locations that had not previously been closed.

Fortunately, there are solutions to our pollution problem. Nitrogen pollution can be drastically reduced at the source using advanced denitrification systems to actively treat wastewater. However, to produce meaningful results, this water quality crisis requires immediate action, universal participation, and creative thinking.

What you can do...

Our commercial and recreational fishing interests, real estate values, tourism and the use and enjoyment of our environment all depend on clean water. It's essential that we take action now to restore our coastal waters.

You can help our waters in a big way; contact your elected officials at the County and State levels and ask them to:

- Enact waterbody-specific numeric nutrient standards to facilitate water quality protection and corrective actions for degraded waters.
- Adopt more stringent effluent nitrogen discharge standards for all wastewater disposal systems.
- Approve advanced treatment systems capable of denitrifying wastewater for single-family homes. Currently, homeowners are forced to use the same antiquated technology responsible for the pollution.
- Provide a homeowner assistance program with grants, low interest loans or tax credits to upgrade failing and outdated OWDS.
- Support large-scale shellfish restoration projects throughout the Peconic and South Shore bays to increase nutrient uptake and to minimize the occurrence of harmful algal blooms.

Alexandra will be writing a follow-up piece in our next issue.



News from our Bluebird trails, or why we keep trying

New York State's beautiful state bird, the Eastern Bluebird, is not often seen here on Long Island's East End.

About a dozen years ago, former ELIAS president Roz James, got our chapter involved in a Bluebird restoration program. The plan was to create trails of Bluebird-friendly nest boxes in areas where Bluebirds used to be commonly seen, or in areas that might be inviting to Bluebirds.

When Roz relocated to Florida, Gigi Spates stepped up to continue the program. While several trails are no longer monitored because of intense overgrowth or tick infestation, two trails have been continually improved and monitored.

Sandy Pond Golf Course on Roanoke Av-

enue, Riverhead has 8 nest boxes, monitored and maintained by ELIAS board member, Chris Schmitt. We are disappointed that Bluebirds are not using those boxes but other cavity nesters including Tree Swallows and wrens, have been making good use of them.

The second maintained trail, at Indian Island Golf Club had, for a number of years, no Bluebirds. Then in 2007 three Bluebirds fledged and, in 2008 there were eight fledglings. In 2009 and 2010 there were no Bluebirds. In 2011 the Bluebirds returned and five Bluebirds fledged. In 2012 a whopping 29 Bluebirds fledged!!!

Hopefully, next year many of these young Bluebirds will return to Indian Island and other East End areas.



CONSERVATION COLUMN

Sometimes its the changes and good each of us can do

“Nobody can do everything but everyone can do something”

Beth Gustin

Hurricane Sandy wreaked havoc on many people's lives. Although the environmental impacts of Sandy may not be as severe as the damage to neighborhoods that we have seen on television or first-hand, there are some things we can do to help those natural areas that were affected by the storm.

Most of us have a favorite place that we like to go birding or walking. Many of those areas have had loads of trash and debris deposited by the storm waters. This winter and even next spring, bring a trash bag with you when you go walking. Every bag you fill will help to clean up these beautiful places and prevent the garbage from re-entering our bays, rivers, ponds, and ocean.

In the week or so after Hurricane Sandy when gasoline was in short supply, I spoke with a woman who, because of the fuel shortage, realized how much extra unnecessary driving she does. She told me that she had changed her driving habits in order to save fuel and was going to make an effort to continue those habits when things got back to normal. If all of us do this, it can be something positive coming out of the devastation.

We may feel that there is not much that we can do personally to help protect our natural areas from severe storms and other threats. Consider donating money to one of our local not-for-profit environmental organizations that have much bigger resources than we have as individuals. These organizations use funds to purchase open space, educate the public and elected leaders of the importance of protecting our natural world, and when appropriate, participate in litigation to

SCHOLARSHIPS for teens to attend DEC Summer Camp

EASTERN LONG ISLAND AUDUBON SOCIETY is offering scholarships to students in grades 7 through 12 to attend New York State Department of Conservation camps for one week. Campers will choose between two camps in the Adirondacks, one in the Catskills, or one in western New York State. Campers enjoy fishing, hiking, canoeing, volleyball, and hunter safety training. Activities such as sampling streams for aquatic life and hiking in the dark to listen to the sounds in the woods are designed to bring conservation concepts to life.

A perfect candidate would be interested in the environment, and anxious to learn more, (Parents do not have to be Audubon members.) Here is what the candidates need to do:

- Fill out the form below.
- Write an essay stating why they are worthy candidates for the scholarship. Include environmental experiences and interests. Also, describe what benefit they would like to derive from the experience.
- Have a parent attach a letter stating that they are aware of the transportation stipulation

If accepted

- Campers are responsible for their own transportation to and from the camp.
- Campers are responsible for their own physical examination, if required.

For more information, call Ridgie at 631-288-3628.

Please complete & send the application in by **January 12, 2013** to:

Education Committee
 Eastern Long Island Audubon Society
 PO Box 206
 East Quogue, NY 1942-0206

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Date of Birth _____

Name of school _____ Grade _____

Have you ever attended an outdoor education/ecology camp?

If SO, what camp, where, and when _____

Applicant's signature _____ Date _____

protect our waterways and environmentally sensitive areas. Make a New Year's Resolution to suggest to your family and friends that instead of purchasing a birthday gift for you this year that they make a

donation to a favorite environmental group. It will probably turn out to be a much more meaningful gift to you.



An excerpt from *The View From Lazy Point* by Carl Safina

Pop.

Pop pop.

Pop pop pop.

Weekend gunners keep a constant banter ringing in from various bearings. During extended stretches of time they allow scarcely a silent minute.

As ducks come slipping gracefully to settle among their companions for the safety in numbers, the guns explode. The lovely ducks' bones shatter, and they stumble, crumble, and tumble, splashing wounded among the deceiving decoys. In the reeds are people having fun with this.

But, okay; I used to hunt rabbits with trained hawks. Some of my friends hunt. I understand that some duck hunters support conservation groups because they want more ducks, duck hunting, and the marshes and all that goes with them. And fishing is just hunting in the water. So it's not that I oppose hunting. (Admittedly, fishing doesn't send all nearby fish fleeing. It doesn't disturb the peace of people in bed on a Sunday morning. You can release a fish you don't want. But still, I'm not categorically against hunting.)

When a cease-fire ensures at midday, I walk to the Cut. A couple hundred yards distant on the opposite shore, three hunters—two fat middle-aged men and a younger guy, all dressed in camo—are gathering up decoys and rolling up their fancy store-bought blind. One of the fat guys is standing with two fistfuls of our Long-tails, dangling by their feet, limp necks swaying. He walks into the dunes and flings the ducks into the grass. The younger guy picks up a few more birds, and he, too, throws them into the grass. Then they leave.

If they killed the ducks and ate them, I wouldn't object. But for all the years I've lived here, slob hunters have left ducks (and plastic shotgun cartridges) scattered on the beach. I have a neighbor—nice guy otherwise—who says his annual donation to a conservation group makes up for his

wasting ducks he doesn't like to eat but likes to shoot anyway.

No gloss will adhere to that mind-set. Turning our wildlife into garbage invalidates any feeble justification. Every ethic tradition, each religion, has long deplored wastefulness. Who still fails to see the sin?

These guys are phonies. They're play acting—like Elvis impersonators or Civil War reenactors—only they are spilling real blood. These hunters act out a ritual that once had meaning but has been hollowed out by changing times and their own hollow heads. Now it's just meaningless and mean.

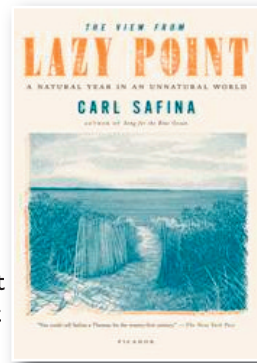
Innocents have always to fear. Not just death, not just predations, not just being kicked around up the food chain; but also people who inflict pain simply because they can. Waste is one symptom of a world with a death wish.

Weeks later, when I notice a nice flock of Goldeneyes and Long-tails in good light and walk toward the Cut for a better look, they flee in panic. I hate to see them interrupt their feeding and waste valuable energy, but I think, "Good for them"; trust is just a killer.

Used with permission of the author. This is the beginning of the Chapter "January".

Editor's Note

Information on New York State Hunting Seasons and Regulations is available on The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation web site: www.dec.ny.gov. Among the regulations is a Health Advisory. "Mergansers are the most heavily contaminated waterfowl species and should not be eaten. Eat no more than two meals per month of other wild waterfowl. Wood ducks and Canada geese are less contaminated than wild waterfowl species, and diving ducks are more contaminated than dabbling ducks."



Nature Walks/ Field Trips

John McNeil, Field Trip Chair

Field trips are free and the public is welcome.

Sat., Jan. 5th, 2013 @ 9:00am

Lakes around Patchogue

Trip Leader: John McNeil

John tells us "these lakes are God's little oases for wintering waterfowl usually with a surprise or two to pique your interest!" Meet at 9 am at the Swan Lake Club House on Swan Lake in East Patchogue. Contact John at 631.281.2623 for details. On the day of the trip, John's cell is 631.219.8947.

Saturday, February 16th, 2013

The Great Backyard Bird Count Walk @ William Floyd Estate, Mastic

(Rain/snow date

Sunday Feb. 17) @ 9:00 am

Trip Leader: MaryLaura Lamont

Let's see what birding activity that William Floyd might have seen in his backyard. Join MaryLaura as she guides you in the varied habitats of the farm fields, woods, creeks and bay where you become a citizen scientist. You, as a participant, will help tally the number of individual birds of each species that you see. The tally is then sent to the **Great Backyard Bird Count** web site where scientists can learn which species are in what location and be able to count their numbers. Contact the trip leader, MaryLaura Lamont, at the Estate at 631.399.2030 for details. The roundtrip is approximately 3 miles.



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Get Involved

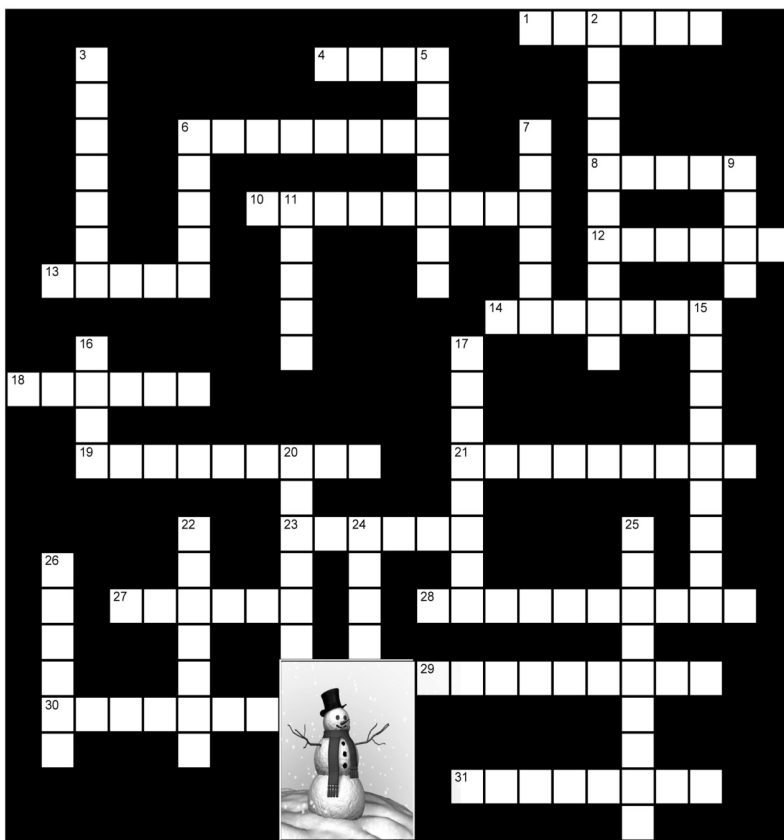
Would you like to submit
an article or a photo?

We would like

to hear from you. Contact:

eliasosprey@optonline.net.

Winter Birding by Tom Moran



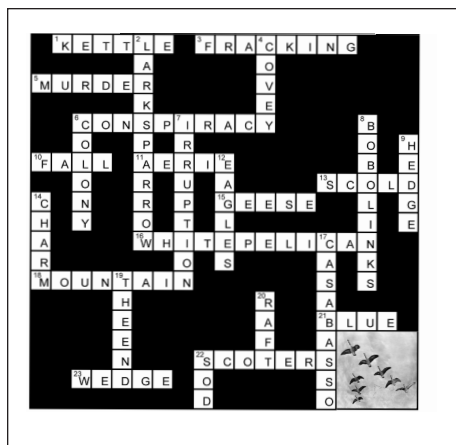
Across

1. Republican presidential candidate who wanted to fire Big Bird!
4. ___ Eider, rules over the Common Eider?
6. Northern ____, a duck often seen our Lakes Around Patchogue field trip, maybe you'll need one to clear your driveway of snow
8. Abbreviation for a local Audubon chapter formerly known as Moriches Bay Audubon
10. An unpredictable movement of birds from their wintering breeding grounds when food supplies are low
12. Large numbers can be seen off Montauk Point, Black, White-winged and Surf
13. ___ Owl, a large invasion of these birds occurred last winter
14. Recent sighting: ___ Loon, seen at Hart's Cove, E. Moriches, maybe should be renamed the Atlantic Loon
18. ___ Merganser, well attired considering the weather
19. Something you should seriously consider wearing while winter birding (2 words)
21. Great web site for being informed immediately about rare species in NY (dash omitted)
23. A cold area that circles the North Pole, has a distinct habitat for birds
27. ___ Tundra, difficult habitat for birds to live, high up on mountains
28. Permanently frozen layer of ground, forms ponds that helps birds in the far north
29. Recent sighting: Red and White-winged were seen this fall in pine areas on the South Shore
30. White-___ Sparrow, a bird that breeds on the tundra
31. An intense snow storm making birds hard to see

Down

2. Something we all need to renew to keep our chapter healthy
3. ___ Kingbird, a surprise sighting at our William Floyd walk this fall
5. A proprietary name for a waterproof but breathable fabric, so you can stay warm and dry
6. Hurricane that caused extensive damage to the tristate area and South Shore birding habitat
7. A cold treeless habitat that lacks a permanent snow cover
9. A high energy food especially good for birds in the winter
11. ___ Duck, not so much when we see this one in the winter
15. ___ Bird Count, winter activity organized by the Audubon Society
16. Socks made of this will help keep your toes warm
17. Recent sighting: ___ Goose, a striking looking goose, but was it from Greenland or an aviary escapee!!
20. Use this to prevent water in your bird bath from freezing
22. Recent sighting: Northern ____, a vagrant from Europe, seen at Deep Hollow Ranch, Montauk
24. Recent sighting: ___ Swallow, a southern bird seen huddling with other birds for warmth at Point Lookout
25. Recent sighting: ___ Warbler, this western bird was elusive during its presence at Alley Pond Park this fall
26. A synthetic material with deep pile, good for winter clothing

Answers to last issue's puzzle Names of Groups of Birds by Tom Moran



Evening Grosbeak *Coccothraustes Vespertimes*

Carl Starace

The species name is from the Latin meaning, “belonging to evening”. It was mistakenly thought at the time that the bird sang only after dark. But in fact they are known to be vocal all day long. Early French trappers on North America’s far western frontier discovered the bird in 1823, and named it, “le gros- bec-errant” meaning, “the wandering grosbeak”. “Gros”, meaning, “great”, for its oversized beak. This wonderfully colored wintertime bird, sporadically seen on Long Island, is always near the top of my wish list. Not once have I come across it birding and only once have I even seen it here on the island. I traveled out to Montauk some years ago to gaze at a single bird that was paying daily visits to someone’s feeder. My first and only experience with a feeding flock of Evening Grosbeaks took place nearly 2 decades ago. I was staying with good friends up in the Berkshire Mountains of western Massachusetts. One morning I looked out their kitchen window to see a mass of bright yellow, black and snow white colors swirling around their two feeding stations full of black oil sunflower seeds. There were close to 3 dozen Evening Grosbeaks and they were making short work of that seed. These birds were so bright and so splendidly colored they literally added some real sparkle to that grey, heavily overcast winter’s day. In just moments this species had become a favorite of mine and yet I have not seen another flock nor have my friends in the Berkshires since then. Why so? The Evening Grosbeak is a North American species that had previously been placed in its own genus as, “Hesperiphona Vespertina,” but it is now in the same genus as the similar looking Hawfinch of Eurasia. The Evening Grosbeak. It is in the Finch family which includes House and Purple Finches, Crossbills and Goldfinches. It has been found to be not be closely related to the Rose Breasted Grosbeak, (a breeder here on Long Island). The Evening’s newer genus, “Coccothraustes”, means, “shatter kernels”, also includes the Hooded Grosbeak of Central America along with the

Hawfinch. How did three closely related species become so distant from each other? Someone’s no doubt working on it.

RANGE: Grosbeaks were a bird of the Northwest United States that slowly expanded eastwards. They began showing up in the Northeast in the 1880s. This truly wandering species is found some years in winter as far south as northern Mexico, Alabama and Georgia. In other years it may be seen at all along our own northern tier states.

DESCRIPTION: It is my belief that this species is far and away the most brilliantly colored of all our wintering species.

Evening Grosbeaks are large, full-bodied finches with oversized conical bills that are pure white in winter but become pale green in springtime. Their wings are short-ish and pointy. The adult male is nothing short of spectacular with his golden yellow feathering on body, upper wing and band across its forehead. The tail is short, black as coal, as are its wing linings. It has a large, snow white shoulder patch. Young males are similarly grey in body and head to females. They also lack the golden yellow band on forehead. Adult female’s bodies are silver grey with just hints of yellow on sides, the rump and nape of neck. The wing lining area closest to its body is a brighter yellow. Its black tail and wing feathers have some patches of white. Its undertail coverts and chin are buffy and white.

DIET: Evening Grosbeaks eat insects like spruce budworm, beetles, and cankerworms in the warm seasons. Their key foods are the seeds and buds of maples and conifers. Other foods are seeds of cherries, chokecherries, apples, dogwood, birch, buds of ash, elms and other deciduous trees and shrubs. It does in winter partake of maple sap and even the salted sand and gravel used on our roadways.

HABITS: They like sunflowers so much they have been known to eat close to one hundred seeds in as little as five minutes. They will roll the seeds over and over in their bills, end to end until each seed lies along the bills sharper edge. The seeds pointy end faces its gullet. When the bird

GEORGE GENTRY, US FISH & WILDLIFE



closes its bill that will shear the seeds husk lengthwise. Evening Grosbeaks are highly gregarious and roam widely in search of foods.

DECLINE: It has been apparent for some years that this species is in serious decline. Between 1988 and 2006 Project Feederwatch showed a 50 percent decline in sightings. Ongoing studies are showing this bird to have a close predator/prey relationship with the pulpwood forest pest known as the spruce budworm. The profound drop in the Evening Grosbeaks winter invasions across the Canadian/U.S. border may be tied to the drop in budworm infestations due in part to extensive use of aerial spraying.

FLIGHT: It has an undulating flight with rapid wingbeats. Their big white shoulder patches are easily discerned.

SONG: Evening Grosbeaks have a good repertoire of calls but their song is a run of jumpy warbles. It does possess a chip call quite like that of our House Sparrow, but one that has been sounded through a live microphone.

All hail the Evening Grosbeak, may you someday return in good numbers.



**ELIAS is on
Facebook
Check it Out and
Click on Like**

New York State Ornithological Association Meeting in Owego, NY

Bob Adamo

The New York State Ornithological Association held its 65th Annual Meeting this past September 29th at the Treadway Inn in Owego, NY.

Once again, due to the lack of a host club, the normal 3-day gathering, was replaced, as the bylaws mandated, by a one-day meeting in order to elect officers, board members and committee members, and to address other association business.

The day started with a choice of field trips. Tom Moran, who accompanied me, and I chose the trip to Oakley Corners State Forest, which was in "fine color." We had a nice variety of birds there, many birds coming in to the Screech Owl calls of Kevin Griffith and the pishing of Bob Spahn. Bob also was successful with his Raven call, but unfortunately his Barred Owl call went unanswered. En route back to the hotel, we had a very productive stop at Brick Pond, highlighted by two perched, immature Bald Eagles.

Lunch was followed by guest speaker, and former NYSOA president, Dr. Kevin McGovern of Cornell's Lab of Ornithology. His program *A Real Murder of Crows: life, love and treachery in your own backyard* was an enlightening presentation on crow behavior.

The afternoon's business meeting started with a roll call, which was answered by 28 delegates, representing 19 (or half) of our member clubs. In addition to this category our membership currently consists of 577 individual members, made up of 528 annual, plus 49 life members.

Elections were held. Officers elected for one-year terms are Gail Kirch, President; Kathryn Schneider, Vice-President; Janet Allison, Recording Secretary and Andy Mason, Treasurer. Directors elected for one-year terms are Seth Ausubel and Mary Beth Warburton. Directors elected for two-year terms are Joan Collins, Mike DeSha, Kevin Griffith, Shai Mitra and Bill Ostrander. Serving on the Nominating

Committee are Andy Mason, Chair; Kevin Griffith and Bob Adamo. The Auditing Committee will be John Cairns as Chair, with Irving Cantor and Peter Capainolo. All of these volunteers will help continue NYSOA's respected place in our state's birding and conservation communities. When a longtime, dedicated worker retires from an important post, replacing him or her can be quite a challenge. In this case, Tim Baird (a former NYSOA President himself) is stepping down from the editor's position of one of our quarterly publications, *New York Birders*. He has been on the job for 9 years. The October 2012 issue will be his last. Not one to leave NYSOA in the lurch, Tim made his intentions known to the board at least two years ago. He is a real gentleman, who did a great job, for which he is deeply appreciated.

There were over 20 reports given at the Business Meeting, including: New York State Young Birders Club updates, information on past NYSOA sponsored quarterly field trips to diverse parts of the state (Fort Drum area, in northern New York, in May '13 is being considered as a possibility) as well as a Conservation Committee report on "fracking" and several other important issues of the day.

Each year NYSOA gives the John J. Elliott Award to the author of the article judged to be the most outstanding to appear in *The Kingbird* (NYSOA's other quarterly publication). This year's winner was Mark Manske for his "American Kestrel Nest Box Management Program in Northern NYS."

The Gordon M. Meade Award for distinguished service to the organization (which is not given our every year) went to Carena Pooth for all her contributions to NYSOA. Over the years she has served as a Director, Vice-President and President. The NYSYBC is a fine example of her commitment to a cause she firmly believes in. Once Hope Batcheller approached NYSOA's Board for support of a young

birders club under the NYSOA umbrella, Carena was a full-fledged backer. She helped develop the club's structure, write its bylaws and the job description for the important position of Adult Coordinator. She helped develop adequate liability/security requirements in order for the YBC to be able to travel statewide, in their pursuit of seeing, and learning about birds. She was the driving force behind the concept of having supporting adults and member club sponsors, a strategy that helps sustain the YBC financially and in many practical applications. Carena also designed the club's website (her real job) and still acts as liaison between the YBC and NYSOA's Board. She has, in effect, been architect, mid-wife, godmother and guardian angel to the YBC, still providing guidance that continues to work extremely well for all concerned, the young birders, and their families, NYSOA and Carena.

At present, the 2013 Annual Meeting venue has not been decided upon. There are some people, statewide, who believe a one-day meeting is all that is necessary...I am not one of them!



**Decals are here.
Ask at the next
meeting.**

Adventures in the field



October 20, 2012

Dune Road

Eileen Schwinn, Leader

Sally Newbert

I don't think any of us could have imagined that this might become a truly memorable trip. The morning was quite foggy and I am sure most of us were wondering if it was even a day to go birding. But, its always worth a chance. Would we be able to see anything through the foggy conditions? The fog lasted late into the morning. As we traveled down Dune Road and made stops along the way at the various pull-offs we were able to catch a glimpse of several American Bitterns. Then we watched as several Saltmarsh Sparrows popped out of the marsh grass and perched. Ten days later Hurricane Sandy hit and possibly changed the topography of this area. We will be anxious to see the area again.



November 17, 2012

Hallockville Farm Museum & Hallock State Park

MaryLaura Lamont, Leader

Saturday dawned a perfect beautiful fall day. From the parking lot of the Farm Museum we watched an American Kestrel sitting and posing for us. A Northern Harrier hunted over the field with its distinctive white rump making it easy to identify. A dark and fast Merlin zipped by. As we proceeded down to the hedgerow several people spotted a small flock of Pipits in the adjacent field. They took off quickly. Several Pheasant ran across the path in front of the group. Cardinals, Robins, White-Throated Sparrows and Blue Jays were all feeding in the bushes and trees. Savannah Sparrows were feeding in the newly planted asparagus field.



Top, walking through the woods, Mary-Laura in the lead. Middle, the remains of a large cherry tree near the

shore at The Estate was one of the victims of the hurricane. A Western Kingbird, in the circle, was spotted near the end of the walk. Sorry the picture is not better.

November 18, 2012

The William Floyd Estate

MaryLaura Lamont, Leader

As a group we had begun to think that this had not been a particularly birdy day. We had heard some Red-breasted Nuthatches and had seen them feeding at the top of a pine tree. There were two Great Egrets, one in the marsh and one by Home Creek. A flock of Cross-bills had flown over, not giving us a very good view. Then, as we were getting rather tired and coming on to yet another field, a Peregrine Falcon, circled and give us the perfect view. Then the group stopped in the middle of the last field. A flycatcher was in the hedgerow in front of us, flying away, and back to its perch. As we checked it out and admired its bright yellow breast, Mary-Laura identified it as a Western Kingbird. This one was the second one she had ever seen at The Estate. The last one had been many years ago, but it had been in the same spot. From not birdy to a possible state record, not a bad day.

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

February 15-18, 2013

16th annual count

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with partner Bird Studies Canada, the four-day count receives sightings from thousands of people reporting more than 600 bird species in the United States and Canada alone. Participating is easy. Enter your results on the GBBC website (or eBird)



Feeder Survey for January & February

John McNeil

The Survey will be conducted the first full week of the month starting on Sunday and ending the following Sunday. This survey takes place from October to June.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEEDER SURVEY

- Define an area containing feeders that you can see all at once from a window. The area should be one you glance at frequently during your daily routine.
- Don't include birds seen off premises.
- Predators perching in or swooping through the count area (not just flying over) may be counted if you feel that they were attracted by the birds at the feeder.
- Record the largest number of each species that you see in your count area during the eight-day count period.
- Do not add counts from previous days together. Be specific with the species name, e.g. we can't use just the name Sparrow, Blackbird or Gull.
- At the end of the count period, record your final tallies and send in the form immediately.

Personal observations and comments are welcome as are suggestions to improve the surveys and reports.

Beth Gustin shared some photos of a young Cooper's Hawk hunting in her yard. Beth was hoping he (or she) would snag a vole, but no such luck, and no dinner for the hawk. A little while later a squirrel help itself to a pumpkin that was on her porch.

If you would like to submit photos, please send them to eliasosprey@optonline.net.

Survey Dates: Sun., Jan. 6 to Sun., Jan. 13

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

Phone _____

- _____ Mourning Dove
- _____ Northern Cardinal
- _____ Blue Jay
- _____ House Finch
- _____ Black-capped Chickadee
- _____ Tufted Titmouse
- _____ Downy Woodpecker
- _____ White-throated Sparrow
- _____ Dark-eyed Junco
- _____ House Sparrow
- _____ White-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Song Sparrow
- _____ Red-bellied Woodpecker
- _____ American Crow
- _____ European Starling
- _____ Common Grackle
- _____ Carolina Wren
- _____ Northern Mockingbird
- _____ American Goldfinch
- _____ Red-winged Blackbird
- _____ Hairy Woodpecker
- _____ Common Flicker
- _____ Rufous-sided Towhee
- _____ American Robin
- _____ Brown-headed Cowbird
- _____ Sharp-shinned Hawk
- _____ Rock Dove (pigeon)
- _____ Gray Catbird
- _____ Yellow-rumped Warbler
- _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Other _____

Survey Dates: Sun., Feb. 3 to Sun., Feb. 10

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

Phone _____

- _____ Mourning Dove
- _____ Northern Cardinal
- _____ Blue Jay
- _____ House Finch
- _____ Black-capped Chickadee
- _____ Tufted Titmouse
- _____ Downy Woodpecker
- _____ White-throated Sparrow
- _____ Dark-eyed Junco
- _____ House Sparrow
- _____ White-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Song Sparrow
- _____ Red-bellied Woodpecker
- _____ American Crow
- _____ European Starling
- _____ Common Grackle
- _____ Carolina Wren
- _____ Northern Mockingbird
- _____ American Goldfinch
- _____ Red-winged Blackbird
- _____ Hairy Woodpecker
- _____ Common Flicker
- _____ Rufous-sided Towhee
- _____ American Robin
- _____ Brown-headed Cowbird
- _____ Sharp-shinned Hawk
- _____ Rock Dove (pigeon)
- _____ Gray Catbird
- _____ Yellow-rumped Warbler
- _____ Red-breasted Nuthatch
- _____ Other _____

PHOTOS BY BETH GUSTIN





BARTH'S PHARMACY

32 East Main St.
Riverhead, NY 11901
Barry D. Barth R.Ph.S.P.
(631) 727-2125
Fax: (631) 727-2199

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Gigi Spates 631-765-1436

Education: Evelyn Voulgarelis 631-727-0417

Webmaster: Annette Oliveira 631-833-4451

Newsletter Editor & Publicity:

Sally Newbert 631-281-6008

eliasosprey@optonline.net

Mark Your Calendars

Sat., Jan 5, 2013

Nature Walk (see page 5)

Lakes around Patchogue

John McNeil, Leader

Monday, Feb. 4

Nature Program (see page 2)

Meet at 7:15 pm

Winter Gulls of the NY Metro Area

John Heidecker

Sat., Feb. 16

Nature Walk (see page 5)

(Rain/snow date

The Great Backyard

Sunday Feb. 17)

Bird Count Walk @ William Floyd Estate, Mastic

@ 9:00 am

MaryLaura Lamont, Leader

Notes: There is no January meeting.

All programs are free and open to all.



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