

THE KINGFISHER

A Publication of the North Fork Audubon Society, Inc. Mattituck, NY
www.northforkaudubon.org

Volume XXX IV Number 4

Fall 2015

Owl Prowl!

*Date: Sunday, October 25
5:30 p.m.*

*Location: Red House at Inlet Pond County Park
65275 Route 48, Greenport*

October is a great time to hear or see owls on the North Fork. They are setting up their wintering territories and becoming quite vocal about the whole business.

We will start out with a short presentation on owl biology and folklore and then we will strike out into the woods to look for these denizens of the night.

Meet at the Red House at Inlet Pond County Park at 5:30 p.m. We should be done before 7:00 p.m.

Pollinator Garden Program

*Date: Friday, November 13
7:30 p.m.*

*Location: Red House at Inlet Pond County Park
65275 Route 48, Greenport*

NFAS Board Member Mark Haubner will discuss creating a pollinator garden for bees and butterflies in your back yard. He did this in his own yard this past summer with great success. He will also discuss creating a bird sanctuary as he is also in the process of doing - beginning with a few stray sunflower seeds.

Save the Date! Join us for brunch at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 6 for the NFAS Annual Holiday Party. Our theme will be Audubon's Christmas Bird Count.

Identifying Hawks In Flight

*Date: Friday, October 2
7:30 p.m.*

*Location: Red House at Inlet Pond County Park
65275 Route 48, Greenport*

If you love being outdoors on clear fall days with crisp northwest winds, then you will love to learn how to identify hawks in flight. Falcons, Buteos, Vultures, Harriers, Accipiters and Eagles are diurnal migrants that pass through our area every fall and early October is the best time to spot find them. This program will focus on identifying hawks in flight, which requires a different skill set for the birder, one not based on traditional field marks. This program will describe hawk migration and identification, using techniques employed at hawk watching sites.

Pat Hanly, the presenter, is a local North Fork birder, hawk-watcher and hawk enthusiast. Pat is the new compiler of the Orient Audubon Christmas Bird Count, one of the oldest continuing Audubon counts in the country. He was also a past counter at the Fire Island Hawk Watch.

Field Trip to Watch Hawks at Dune Road in Hampton Bays With Pat Hanly

*Date: Saturday, October 3
7:30 a.m.*

Meet at Starbuck's in Mattituck to Carpool

As a follow up to Pat's program the evening before, he will lead a field trip to look for hawks on the barrier beaches at Dune Road in Hampton Bays. Finish approximately noon in Hampton Bays.

President's Message

I am happy to share with you the news that Suffolk County is now in the process of re-siding the Red House with cedar shakes. A ramp leading to our meeting room is also planned. We are very pleased that renovations have begun and that Inlet Pond County Park will have a fresh, new look. Thanks to all at the County who worked to make this happen.

Sibbie O'Kane

US ACE Plan Allows for Continued Disposal of Dredge Spoil in Long Island Sound

Ten years in the works, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (US ACE) has just completed a Draft Dredge Material Management Plan (DMMP) for Long Island Sound (LIS). The governors of New York and Connecticut, realizing that marine life and the water quality was being jeopardized, charged US ACE with preparing a plan to explore and implement alternatives to open water disposal of dredge spoil in the LIS.

To the dismay of environmental groups, citizens and many of New York's elected officials, the DMMP allows for the continued dumping of dredge spoil in LIS, much of which will be generated from sites in Connecticut.

It is foolhardy to continue to dispose of dredge spoil, which may be contaminated with heavy metals and other toxins, into a water body facing so many other threats, including pollution and rising sea temperatures.

Initially, anyone who wanted to comment on the plan was given only one week to review the DMMP and its companion Environmental Impact Statement before the first of only two hearings on Long Island. After strong public outcry, the US ACE held an additional public hearing in Riverhead on September 16. The public comment period was also extended from September 18 to October 16, 2015. NFAS will be submitting comments opposing the plan.

The documents are available for review at:

<http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/ProjectsTopics/LongIslandSoundDMMP.aspx>.

Written comments can be sent to:

Meghan Quinn

LIS DMMP/PEIS Project Manager

Corps of Engineers, New England District

696 Virginia Road

Concord MA 01742-2751

Tuesdays With Tom

October 20 - Robert Moses Fire Island Hawk Watch

Join Tom on a trip to Fire Island to see what hawks and other migrants are around the viewing platform set up at Robert Moses State Park. Be sure to bring lunch as we will be there up to lunch time. This hawk watch has been going on for over 30 years! There will be volunteers there who can help ID hawks as spotted.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Tanger Mall in front of Office Max. We will carpool from there. To register for this walk, call Tom at 631-275-3202 or email tdamiani3@optimum.net.

November 17 - Discovering Dune Road!

If you haven't birded Dune Road yet, do this walk! If you have birded there before, let's do it again! It is a great place to see a variety of birdlife throughout the year. Expect this field trip to last until about lunch time.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Mattituck Shopping Center near the bus stop. We will carpool from there. To register for this walk, call Tom at 631-275-3202 or email tdamiani3@optimum.net.

December 15 - Indian Island County Park

Every year Tom combines birding with Christmas shopping! The birds at the park are varied. Wintering ducks, resident and wintering passerines, and the occasional hawk or owl make for a fun day of birding. Be sure to dress warmly and wear appropriate shoes for going off trail.

Meet at Indian Island County Park at 8:00 a.m. To register for this walk, call Tom at 631-275-3202 or email tdamiani3@optimum.net.

Recycle those Feed Bags!

Please recycle your woven plastic feed bags (bird, poultry, horse, etc.). NFAS member Dale Leavay is creating tote bags with them.

"Thank you for helping me as we work together to save the earth," Dale says. Contact Dale at missdale@optonline.net or call 631-484-7287 and she will pick up.

The understory—that's the story

Hazel Kahan

Once upon a time, when people who are now gray-haired weren't, the sight of a white-tailed deer on the North Fork was a breathtaking delight. Farmers would drop their tools and children would run home to tell their mothers, and the next day their classmates, what they had just witnessed. In those halcyon days, before we fully understood the dynamics of Nature, tamed the land with our gardens, fences and pools, deer were exotic and we thought our world was fine, and would stay fine. There was no Lyme disease. There was little or no crop damage. Nobody worried about deer-vehicle collisions. ourselves fortunate that such wild creatures graced our lands.

But today, only forty years later, the deer population on the North Fork has exploded. We have eliminated the large predators that once kept deer populations in balance with their environment so that



Deer-decimated Forest Ruth Oliva Preserve.
(Courtesy: Tom Rawinski)

today there are simply too many deer. Their presence today no longer delights us as it once did. Instead, we despair at how deer have altered our forests, farms and waterways and the ways we live, play and work.

The destructive impact of deer is most visible in our forests: deer are large mammals and they travel through the forests in groups, eating the leaves as far as their necks can stretch—to about 6 feet, creating a visible “browse line”. They rub their antlers on the tree saplings. They trample the understory. They create trail networks. They eat most of the understory - its small plants, flowers and bushes. They relish acorns and beech nuts, and the little saplings that grow from them.

Because of their preference for native plants, deer have provided invasive plants with a competitive advantage. Once the lowbush blueberries, lady's slipper orchids and other wildflowers are gone, the understory will no longer be able to support as many birds, butterflies, and other insects, all essential links in the ecological chain. This also means that the oaks and other grand foundation trees of our forests won't be replaced when they fall down or die. Our forests are disintegrating. Reducing deer impact in these forests – by human intervention - is imperative; many believe that saving them is a moral obligation.

Deer impact on our waters is more recently understood but equally alarming. Land development, fencing and the decimated understory, have driven deer into our creeks and inlets, facilitating runoff from the forest into the North Fork's headwaters and other wetlands. The Southold Town Shellfish Advisory Committee reports serious presence of deer fecal bacteria in our waters, with concentrations in the headwaters and other wetlands. This has worrying consequences for our food—shellfish in particular—but also for our drinking water since a weakened understory is unable to absorb the nitrogen that a healthy understory can.



Harriman State Park. (Courtesy: Tom Rawinski)



Mashomack enclosure with ravaged understory outside the fence. (Courtesy: Tom Rawinski)

Although the impacts of deer on our health—through tick-borne diseases and traffic accidents—may not directly affect our environment itself, once balance is restored to the deer-Nature relationship, it follows that these threats to our health will be greatly reduced.

It is challenging to simultaneously hold two ideas in one's mind: to think of white-tailed deer as the beautiful, wild creatures they are, and, at the same time, to acknowledge how profoundly destructive they are to our ecosystem. Can we love the deer and, at the same time, agree we must help to bring them into sustainable co-existence with their, and our, natural environment? This is the challenge I have been grappling with.

Hazel Kahan is a writer, activist and host of North Fork Works and Tidings on WPKN radio. She is a member of the North Fork Deer Management Alliance (NFDMA) and lives in Mattituck.

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME.

Please join Dr. Zitek in supporting our annual membership appeal.

When I moved with my family to the North Fork in 1967 to practice veterinary medicine, a good portion of my practice was devoted to treating wildlife for here, on the northern branch of the Long Island fishtail, lived a wonderful array of wild animals and birds that we shared this area with. This is one of the things that attracted me to the North Fork. The area was probably 80% agriculture and there was great pride in the contribution that Suffolk County made to food production.

During the course of practice, many times, I consulted with the members of the North Fork Audubon Society about the identity or natural history of birds brought to me. As time went on, I learned of their programs and the actions they were taking in dealing with local environmental concerns facing this unique and fast growing area of Long Island. Little did I think of how our habitat was changing and how we were contributing to that subtle and, in many cases, undesirable transition.

The National Audubon Society was already speaking to the many emerging environmental issues and, through its magazine, educating us not only about birds and animals but, how we were affecting their habitats—and ours. I found that with equal energy, the North Fork Audubon Society tackled and discussed issues and educated people not only about how to enjoy their environment but, how to protect it from the constant assault of “progress”. Monthly educational events and programs announced in the “Kingfisher” shared the knowledge of the natural world with the community.

Think of all the concerns we have about the animals , birds and trees and plants not only here on Long Island but, those we share with the nation, and then think a bit harder on the effects of climate change, sea level rise, loss of habitat, algal blooms due to improper disposal of our waste water and over-use of fertilizers, etc., deteriorating fresh water quality and the burgeoning population placing a strain on all animals (including us), fish, plants, etc. Are you concerned?

I know that I, as an individual, can be concerned and voice my opinions—but, will I be heard? Fortunately, as a North Fork Audubon Society member, I can join with others and my voice can be heard through a group that has an outstanding history of environmental action and education— one of the most outstanding and credible voices for the environment and the creatures that live in it.

My grandchildren are here for a visit this week. I want them to live in and enjoy a healthy environment and I more than appreciate Audubon's effort on their behalf—I am a member.

William E. Zitek, DVM, 9/1/15

Please use the enclosed envelope for your renewal.

With a membership renewal of \$30 or more we offer a reusable Chico Bag. Why? As reported recently in Smithsonian Magazine, up to 90% of seabirds have plastic in their stomachs and a new report from the Ocean Conservancy states that more than half of all sea turtles on Earth have consumed plastic.

NFAS Continues to Push for a Plastic Bag Ban in Southold Town

Perhaps the phrase that best describes plastic's impact on our environment is "plastic is a substance the earth cannot digest." We know that plastic photo-degrades, breaking into smaller and smaller pieces, making its way into the food chain. It is ingested by marine life and birds. It never goes away.

It has been over a year since NFAS participated in a town sponsored public forum on banning single-use plastic bags in Southold. During that forum, speaker after speaker called on the board to initiate legislation that would eliminate single-use plastic bags in Southold.

Since that July 2014 forum, East Hampton and Southampton Towns, as well as Patchogue Village, have enacted bans. Yet the Southold Town Board has not moved on this issue, citing potential impacts on the business community.

On Tuesday, September 8, NFAS secretary Anne Surchin presented the Southold Town Board with over 1,000 signatures calling for a ban. She was joined by several members of the community who implored the board to act. Although two members of the Town Board said they would consider a ban, Supervisor Russell stated that he would not consider a ban at this time, once again citing the business community's opposition. He then called on the Suffolk County Legislature to institute a county-wide ban.

A county-wide ban is a great long-term goal, but in the meantime, Southold should impose a ban. The more communities that act individually, the more likely a county-wide ban will be enacted. At the very least, as one speaker suggested, the Town should draft legislation and hold a public hearing to ascertain how the community feels. We believe there will be overwhelming support, even from members of the business community. Even *The Suffolk Times* called for a ban in their September 17 editorial entitled "Time Is Overdue to Ban Plastic Bags in Southold."

NFAS will not give up the fight to eliminate single-use plastic bags in Southold. If you would like to volunteer to help us achieve this goal, please contact us at info@northforkadubon.org.

Why Use ebird?

Experienced birders are quite familiar with ebird, a joint venture of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, but those of us who are novice birders might not know how important this tool is for gathering data about where different species of birds are at any given time. This information helps scientists assess patterns and threats, which in turn can help formulate policies aimed at protecting our avian friends, like identifying Important Bird Areas and working to preserve them.

A great example of how ebird was utilized was gathering data for National Audubon's recent Birds and Climate Change Report (<http://climate.audubon.org/>). Much of the data analyzed was generated from thousands of "citizen scientists" from all over North America, who reported sightings in real time.

In addition, ebird is a way for individuals to keep track of their own sightings and to access data generated by other birders. Those who have smart phones can download the App, but anyone can participate who has access to the internet. To learn more about ebird, please visit <http://ebird.org>.

Some Thoughts on "Pollinator-aide"

By Mark Haubner

Does anyone know the moment they "get bit by a bug:" whether it's for mountain climbing or motorcycle racing or...creating a pollinator garden in your yard, giving bees and butterflies a fighting chance on a planet which is becoming more and more inhospitable?

I can put the several "AHA!" moments together which caused me to sacrifice an entire summer's free time to provide a haven for our imperiled pollinators. There will also be a bird sanctuary in my back yard before long - my simple efforts of transplanting five stray sunflower plants from my compost heap to large pots behind my bedroom window brought two pairs of American Goldfinches within a matter of days and now they come by every day to have lunch here. Even my wife is impressed. The Energy Returned On Energy Invested in this case is 100-fold and I can't wait to share it with anyone who will listen.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Fall 2015

Friday, October 2 7:30 p.m. - Hawk program, Red House

Saturday, October 3, 7:30 a.m. - Hawk Watch bird walk, meet at Mattituck Starbuck's for carpooling

Tuesday, October 20, 8:00 a.m. - Fire Island Bird Walk, meet at Tanger Mall for carpooling

Sunday, October 25, 5:30 p.m. - Owl Prowl, Red House

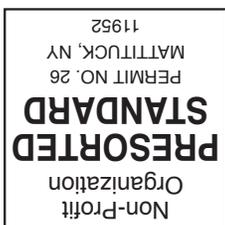
Friday, November 13, 7:30 p.m. - Pollinator Garden program, Red House

Tuesday, November 17, 8:00 a.m. - Bird walk, Dune Road, meet at Mattituck Shopping Center for carpooling

Sunday, December 6, 1:00 p.m. - Annual NFAS Holiday Party

Tuesday, December 15, 8:00 a.m. - Bird walk, Indian Island, meet at Indian Island

All programs held at Inlet Pond County Park are presented by North Fork Audubon and Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone



North Fork Audubon Society, Inc
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