

THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREAT SOUTH BAY AUDUBON SOCIETY!



by Jody Banaszak

Hello my little birding friends! Hope this newsletter finds you all well. Hope you also had a great summer and enjoyed the birds. We're starting our bird walks now on Tuesdays and Saturdays. I had a lot of egrets and herons in my back yard this summer. One day I had 4 egrets together in the same spot. They were probably a family. We went on a bird walk at Shinnecock Inlet in September and saw a lot of egrets. I found out that the young ones have yellow legs and feet. When they mature their legs turn black but the feet stay yellow. They were snowy egrets. I don't know which ones I had as I didn't know about the feet until after the fact. I've had the great blue heron and a kingfisher too. Guess there's a lot of bait fish in the canal! The ospreys and some other summer birds will be leaving soon. It was nice to see them all, especially the ospreys and the eagles, who had 2 babies in an osprey nest! Usually the ospreys chase them away but not his time. I never saw an eagle on Long Island until the last few years. I'm looking forward to seeing the winter birds and ducks. My little friend Mal is still swimming around the canal. He was lonely during the summer when the ducks had their broods. Now they are grown and he's back with them all. I wish they never took his white duck mate away.

I was thinking that a good thing you guys could do with your grandchildren, if you're babysitting this school year, is bring them on nature walks. Go to the beach or park and show them the different ducks and birds. My grandson, who is five now, was brought up that way as did I bring up my kids that way. They love the outdoors and nature and all three have boats. Nature is a wonderful and an amazing thing!

We'll be having our meetings and speakers starting this month at Seatuck National Wildlife Refuge in Islip on South Bay Avenue. The schedule is in the



Spotted Lanternfly by Annette Brownell

When we first started hearing reports on the Spotted Lanternfly, I'm sure most people half listened and didn't really take it seriously. I, for one, a very big fan of polka dots, thought the creature was rather pretty and wondered how it could be so destructive. As I learned more about the evils of this insect, they are not so pretty. As a matter of fact, when I see those decorative wings now, I am horrified.

I am not writing this article so much to educate anyone on the Spotted Lanternfly. There is information about it everywhere. My purpose is to encourage – actually beg – you to take this insect and it's ravages very seriously.

This spring I saw nymphs in my yard for the first time. Little black and white polka dotted bugs on My Lilacs! My Lilacs!! Let me tell you about my Lilac bushes. On the south side of my property, the fragrant plants stretch 50 feet. On the north side are Double white French from my grandmother, lavender and 3 Persian (a gift from my neighbor). In the front is another from my grandmother and a larger flowered variety by the front steps. Each year, I have hundreds of blooms. When they are finished, I spend weeks cutting all the dead blooms off and carefully pruning any branches in need. Nymphs on my Lilacs, disguised as a pretty polka dotted insect!!

I never saw the next stage of these monsters. They are crafty. A few short weeks later, the leaves began to curl and wither. Now where my glorious Lilacs stood only 3 months ago, are a row of dead bushes. I noticed other leaf curl, burn and damage on my property. All research pointed to the dreaded Spotted Lanternfly. Article after article talks about what plants they attack, how they bore into the base of the plant and bleed it dry and what their eggs look like. But, who is doing what to stop this pestilence?

Suddenly, 2 weeks ago, I saw one by my Maple tree. I drowned it with insecticidal soap. Then a second one. I did the same. I quickly realized that 2 Spotted Lanternfly in the same place was much more insidious than chance. I



Karen Andres

sprayed the bark of the tree. It came alive with hundreds of these creatures that I hadn't seen, crawling like an army of cockroaches further and further up the tree, on every branch.

2 Things "they" recommend against the Lanternfly – insecticidal soap and vinegar. I got a gallon of vinegar and sprayed the tree, watching them jump and fall. I have scoured my yard, finding infestation on my Pussy Willow. At work, I carry a spray bottle of vinegar. They are everywhere.

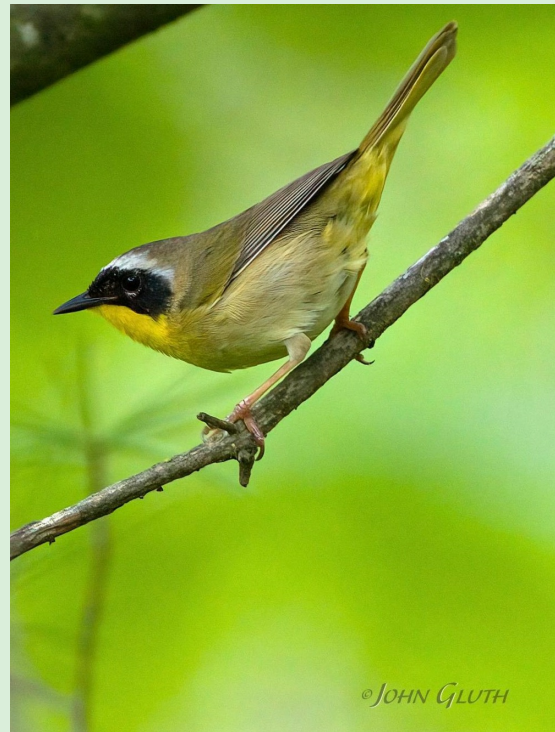
The only hope we have is for everyone to act. People can no longer file the information away or think it is happening somewhere else. This message is for you. Become familiar with the eggs and destroy them. Examine the base of your trees from damage and treat with systemic. Destroy the insects in every stage. Straight white or apple cider vinegar works. You can make your own insecticidal soap with a 50/50 mixture of Dawn dish soap and water.

Jamaica Bay Walk Recap ***by John Gluth***

The chapter field trip to Jamaica Bay on August 17th was attended by a very small group of intrepid souls who really wanted to see some shorebirds, terns, and other waterbirds. They got their wish.

The north end of the east pond was the focus of exploration. We were rewarded with sightings of 5 Caspian Terns, an unusually high number. A good diversity of shorebirds was also present, the highlights of which included a Wilson's Phalarope, 6 Long-billed Dowitchers and 9 Stilt Sandpipers. Other notable sightings included 5 Black Skimmers, a Peregrine Falcon and 1 or two Northern Waterthrush.

It was a fine morning that not even a little drizzle toward the end could dampen. Hoping for a larger turnout for next year's trip, and at least as many good birds as this year.



Yellow Throated Warbler

Connetquot River State Park Celebrates 100 Years ***by Karen Andres***



Great South Bay Audubon is proud to announce their participation in the Centennial Celebration of the Connetquot River State Park Preserve. We will have a table set up with information about the Audubon society, take small groups on an introductory bird walk, bird displays and more.

Come join us on Saturday, October 5th from 10-2.

Here are some details on the park if you are interested in adding them to the blurb. Connetquot River State Park Preserve maintains 3,473 acres of land and water for the protection and propagation of game birds, fish and animals. Deer and waterfowl are numerous, rare nesting birds, including the osprey, are present and there are numerous rare plants, and other interesting flora, such as trailing arbutus and pink lady's slipper in their natural habitats. The preserve also has 50 miles of hiking, bridle, cross-country ski and nature trails, as well as freshwater fly fishing (by permit only) on the Connetquot River.

Brookside Garden Bugs
by Karen Andres



What makes a garden a successful one? Is it the pretty flowers, harvest, or the lack of weeds? I think it can be all of the above, but for our garden its the presence of insects and birds, and what we can do to nurture them. The first to arrive was a swallowtail caterpillar that came in on the Angelica we planted in the rain garden area. As we slowly began to plant I kept an eye out for the insects we were trying to create a habitat for. I was disappointed to see the deer or rabbits decided to sample some of the new vegetation available to them in the garden. So much for planting deer resistant plants. Fingers crossed I bought more asters for the garden to perk up our fall flower display. I don't think I will be getting more carpet phlox though. I think the rabbits (or deer) are eating them to the dirt. I will have to test out substitutions and replant replacements.

I began to notice a different flurry of activity once the scarlet bee balm and woodland sunflowers began to bloom. The amount of bees and variety of the them that have arrived are incredible. We also have a slightly unknown insect called a skipper. Skippers are related to butterflies but don't have the beautiful wings like a butterfly. We have yellow aphids attacking our swamp milkweed as well as the common milkweed variety we have in the garden. The only hope for help is a swarm of ladybugs to come to our rescue, that hasn't happened yet.

I was in the garden last week watering and planting more plants with my husband who asked what the common milkweed was. I told him they grow like a weed and gave him permission to pull them out. At the time I gave them a quick look and didn't see any caterpillars on them. He did just that and when I went back the next day I noticed caterpillars on the few straggly ones that he left. OMG!!! Why did I have them removed? These caterpillars are monarchs! I ran over to the pile of milkweed debris and lo and behold I found several caterpillars of various sizes munching away. I found all I could and brought them on their leaves to the swamp milkweed plants we planted in the rain garden section of the garden. Not only do they need to eat but they need their host plant to house their chrysalis before transforming to the beautiful butterfly they will become. Phew! I think I saved all of them. Last check there were 6 of them munching away. Along with the beneficial insects found in the garden, unfortunately we have destructive ones too. To my dismay I have discovered the undesirable spotted lantern fly. My only hope for help is that they don't care for the plants in our garden.

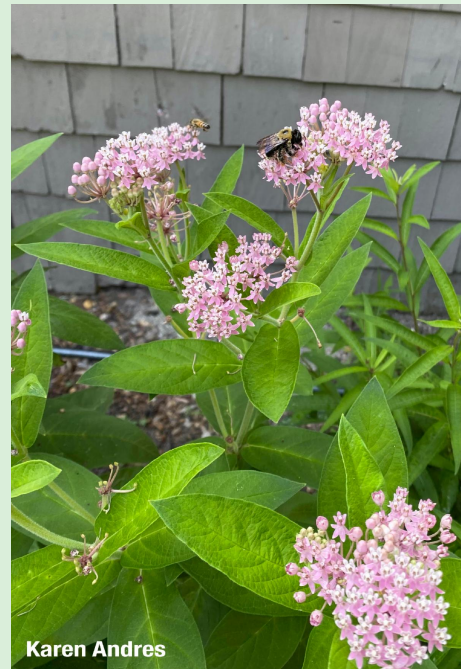
This article wouldn't be complete without a big thank you to the volunteers

that have come out to help weed and plant. We are getting close to having the garden complete. Thanks also go out to the Suffolk County Parks crew who removed all the non native trees and bushes in the old garden and also provided a wealth of knowledge and support in the creation of our beautiful Suffolk County Native Garden.

I happily invite you to come to Brookside County Park to take a look at the garden and enjoy the beautiful trails that meander through the park. It's a hidden gem.



Milkweed Caterpillar



Bee on Swamp Milkweed



Bee on Woodland Sunflower



Blazing Star Skipper



Tuesday Nature Walks 2024 - 2025

Tuesday Sept 24, 9:30 am Suffolk County Farm

350 Yaphank Avenue Yaphank NY. Take Sunrise Highway to exit 57N, Horseblock Rd. Bear right onto County Road 21, Yaphank Ave. Travel approximately one mile to the Cornell Cooperative Extension on left. Turn left onto the entrance road. Take your first right follow down and meet at the visitors parking area on your left.

Tuesday Oct 1, 9:30 am St Joseph Campus Brentwood

Take Sunrise Highway to Brentwood Rd. north approximately 2.5 mi look for the main entrance. Meet in the parking lot in front of building 4.

Tuesday Oct 8, 9:30 am Robert Moses SP

Meet in Field 5 at the northeast corner.

Tuesday Oct 15, 9:30 am Belmont Lake

Exit 38 off the Southern State Pkwy. Meet in the parking lot on the east side of the lake.

Tuesday Oct 22, 9:30 am Jones Beach West End

Meet in the parking lot at the Marina near the Coast Guard Station.

Tuesday Oct 29, 9:30 am Blydenburg CP

Entrance on Veterans Highway just west of the Route 347 merge. Use Blydenburgh entrance not Greengate Park entrance. Meet in the parking lot at the boat ramp area.

Tuesday Nov 5, 9:30 am Sunken Meadow SP

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

Weekend Nature Walks 2024 - 2025

Saturday Sept 21, 8:00 am Robert Moses Hawk Watch & Jones Beach WE

Meet at Robert Moses State Park parking field #5 northeast corner. May require a parking fee.

Saturday Nov 2, 8:30 am Caumsett SP

Northern State to exit 42N (Route35) to 25A west to West Neck Rd.(right turn). West Neck/Lloyd Harbor Rd. into Lloyd Neck. Entrance to the Park on the left. Meet in the parking lot.

Saturday Nov 9, 9:00 am Morton NWR

Sunrise Highway east past Shinnecock Canal. Look for a North Sea Road Noyack sign and bear left on CR52. Stay on CR52 and then turn left at light onto CR38. After 1.4 miles on CR38, turn right onto Noyack Road after 5 miles turn left onto refuge.

Saturday December 7, 9:00 am Montauk

Rte. 25A to Village of Stonybrook, at Carriage Museum, 25A turns right do not turn right, but proceed straight ahead on Main St. to Harbor Rd and park in legal spots by Grist Mill.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Our meeting start time has changed from 7:30PM - 7PM.

Seatuck Environmental Center 550 S Bay Ave, Islip, NY 11751 7PM. Coffee and desserts will be served.

September 19

Joe Giunta will be returning to speak about sparrows.

October 24

Tom Damiani will be returning to give us a lecture on owls, followed by an Owl Prowl at Seaturk. *Due to the time, this is an adult event.*

November 21

Enrico Nardone will bring us up to speed about dams on Long Island, in light of the recent dam failure in Stony Brook.

Please note that, although our general meetings are the 3rd Thursday of the month, our October meeting will be one week later in order to be considerate of Seaturk Foundation setting up for their Bats and brews fundraiser event.



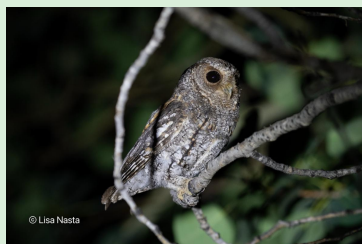
Joe Abraham

Black Crowned Night Heron



Ken Thompson

Monarch Butterfly Larvae



© Lisa Nasta

Flammulated Owl



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Ruby Throated Hummingbird



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Stellar's Jay

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Tech Talk - A Comparative Study on Bluebird Nest Boxes with and without Plexiglass Skylights and their use by Non-Bluebird Species!

by Steve Melcher, Bluebird News Co-editor

Bluebird nest boxes are commonly used by bird enthusiasts and conservationists to support bluebird populations. However, these boxes are often utilized by a variety of other bird species. A recent trend in nest box design includes the addition of plexiglass skylights, intended to provide natural light and reduce moisture accumulation. This article explores the impact of these skylights on the usage of nest boxes by non-bluebird species.

Traditional Bluebird Nest Boxes

Traditional bluebird nest boxes are typically wooden structures with a small entry hole, designed to attract bluebirds by mimicking their natural nesting sites in tree cavities. These boxes have proven successful not only for bluebirds but also for other cavity-nesting birds such as chickadees, tree swallows, and house wrens. The simple design provides a dark, enclosed space that many species find appealing for nesting and raising their young.

Bluebird Nest Boxes with Plexiglass Skylights

The introduction of plexiglass skylights in bluebird nest boxes aims to create a more inviting environment by allowing natural light to enter the box. The idea is that the increased light can make the interior of the box feel more open and less confined, potentially attracting more birds. Additionally, the skylights help in reducing humidity levels inside the box, which can be beneficial in preventing mold and keeping the nest dry.

Comparative Analysis

Nesting Preferences

A study conducted by Cornell Lab of Ornithology observed the nesting preferences of various bird species in boxes with and without plexiglass skylights. The research showed that while bluebirds did not show a significant preference for either type of box, non-bluebird species demonstrated distinct preferences. Chickadees and house wrens were more likely to use traditional, darker nest boxes, which align with their natural preference for more secluded and dimly lit nesting sites. On the other hand, tree swallows showed a higher occupancy rate in boxes with plexiglass skylights. These birds are naturally inclined towards more open and well-lit nesting sites, which the skylights help simulate. The presence of natural light inside the box appears to provide a more suitable environment for these species, possibly due to their preference for visibility and airflow.

Nest Success Rates

The same study also examined the success rates of nests in both types of boxes. Nest success, defined as the percentage of eggs that hatched and fledged, varied between species and box types. For species preferring traditional boxes, such as chickadees and house wrens, the success rates were slightly higher in darker boxes. The increased light in the skylight-equipped boxes did not seem to provide any additional benefits for these species and may have even been a deterrent due to the perceived openness of the nest site. Conversely, tree swallows nesting in skylight-equipped boxes experienced higher nest success rates compared to those in traditional boxes. The natural light and improved ventilation likely created a more favorable environment, reducing the likelihood of mold and keeping the nesting dry and healthy.

Conclusion

The addition of plexiglass skylights in bluebird nest boxes influences their use by non-bluebird species, primarily affecting the preferences and nest success rates of these birds. Traditional nest boxes are preferred by species that favor darker, more secluded nesting sites, such as chickadees and house wrens. In contrast, species like tree swallows, which thrive in well-lit environments, benefit from the enhanced light and ventilation provided by skylights. For bird enthusiasts and conservationists aiming to support a diverse range of bird species, it may be beneficial to offer a mix of both traditional and skylight-equipped nest boxes. This approach can cater to the varying preferences of different species, promoting higher occupancy and nest success rates across the board.

1. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. (2020). Nesting Preferences of Cavity-Nesting Birds.

2. Smith, J. (2021). Impact of Skylight Addition on NestBox Occupancy. *Journal of Avian Research*, 45(3), 214-229.

3. Johnson, L. (2019). Comparative Success Rates in Different Nest Box Designs. *Bird Conservation International*, 29(1), 34-47.

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Hello Great South Bay Audubon members and friends: We are ready to start a wonderful birding season with many activities. We are planning hikes, a dinner, a festival, and presentations related to birding, nature and the environment.

In order to present these activities, we depend on the dues and donations of members and others. In the past people paid dues when they joined. This will still be the case. However, in order to better have members know whether they paid or not, all dues are now due in February. I understand that members for the most part have been unaware of this new policy.

We encourage our participants and former members to please send in your membership dues at this time. You can access a membership application or pay through Pay Pal by going to our website www.greatsouthbayaudubon.org

Thank you and have a wonderful birding season!

Great South Bay Audubon Society Membership

As a member of the Great South Bay Audubon Society you will receive our award-winning, bi-monthly newsletter "The Sandpiper"! Membership also includes access to the beautiful Brookside County Park, with 8 acres of trails for guided nature walks, ponds and waterways, wildlife including deer, foxes, and wild turkey, and the unique opportunity to connect with a community of like-minded individuals with a wealth of knowledge on Long Island's native species.

Annual Membership \$20 Annual Membership Senior (62+) \$15
Renewal \$20 Renewal Senior (62+) \$15

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For the people who do not use or have a computer, we will still have a printable copy of the bi-monthly newsletter available upon request.

They cost \$4 each. We ask that you pay \$24 in advance. Please send checks made out to the GSBAS, PO box 267, Sayville, NY 11782.

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