



The Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society Newsletter

Serving from Fort Salonga in Suffolk County to Oyster Bay and Centre Island in Nassau County

Volume 12, Issue 1
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The mission of the Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society is to protect wildlife and preserve habitat through conservation action, advocacy, and education. This chapter territory serves both Huntington and Oyster Bay townships with its all-volunteer chapter 501c3 non-profit established in 1961.

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Letter from the Editor

By Alexandra Martinez

“You know those ducks in that lagoon right near Central Park South? That little lake? By any chance, do you happen to know where they go, the ducks, when it gets all frozen over? Do you happen to know, by any chance?” asks Holden Caulfield, protagonist of the classic novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. Any English teacher will tell you there is a deeper meaning to this question; Holden is trying to figure out how to weather his own emotional winters.

But on the surface level, I find myself asking the same questions that Holden did about the egrets that populate Centerport Harbor during the spring and summer months. In the Spring, the ice melts, disappears, and the egrets return as if they’ve never left.

“Snow birds.” As New Yorkers, we know the term to mean “one who travels to warm climates for the winter” - those lucky enough to summer in New York and winter down south in a second home. As you probably know, those travelers got their name from the actual snow birds that take flight to warmer areas to soak up the sun in the wintertime. According to the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP), egrets breed here on the island in May/June, but “are rare in New York before April and after November.” Most egrets travel south for the winter and some migrate as far as the West Indies or southern Central America. During mild winters, they might decide to weather it with the rest of us.

As I drive past the Mill Pond daily, I notice less and less of my favorite birds this time of year. My phone is filled with photos of these gorgeously lanky creatures - with their thin black legs, equally long and thin white necks, and their wispy white feathers flowing in the wind like they are in vogue - from May, June, and July. For now, I’ll enjoy the photos and the memories, until I can enjoy their presence again in the spring, in-person down at Heron Park in Centerport.

So for our snow bird friends heading south for the winter like the many feathered friends we love and adore, safe travels, enjoy the warm weather, and we’ll see you in April!



Caption: An egret taking off in Centerport Harbor on May 15, 2021, taken by me. This is just one of hundreds of photos I have of my “Centerport egrets.” See you soon!

The Winter Ducks Have Arrived!

By Christine Suter

“They’ve arrived!” I exclaimed to myself with glee as I watched the small cluster of black and white specks gliding across Huntington Harbor. Although they were far away, I knew immediately by their small size and the way they all dove in unison that the buffleheads had arrived for the winter.

First come the buffleheads and the black ducks, the gadwalls and the wigeons. Eventually the long-tailed ducks arrive fashionably late to the party, resplendent with their calico colors and long pointed plumage. Nothing gives me more joy than hearing the first long-tailed calls of the season. They are particularly chatty ducks with distinctive calls that carry a long way across the water. They also happen to be the deepest diving ducks and can dive up to 200 feet when foraging for the crustaceans and mollusks on which they feed.



There is a quote from the famous writer and conservationist Rachel Carson that reads as follows: “There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night and spring after winter.” For me it is the assurance that the winter ducks will return each year. It is something that I can both count on and look forward to as the cold sets in.

Just as many Long Islanders head south to Florida for the winter, Long Island is like a warm Florida vacation to the many ducks that migrate here from their summer breeding grounds in the Arctic. We’re lucky that Huntington and Oyster Bay happen to be some of the best winter duck watching areas in the Northeast. Oyster Bay National Wildlife Refuge has the greatest winter waterfowl use of any of the Long Island refuges with more than 23 species of waterfowl present and more than 20,000 ducks being reported at one time during peak use.

I first became interested in winter duck watching about seven or eight years ago. I was living with my parents in Huntington at the time, and during the winter I would take daily walks with my mother to keep our spirits up and soak up as much sunlight as we could. One of our favorite places to duck watch is along the causeway leading out to Lloyd Neck. On the coldest and windiest days of the year the long-tailed ducks can be found out there in abundance riding the crests of the waves like Viking ships. On the calmer days there are large rafts of common goldeneye, scaups and buffleheads floating near the shoreline.

I owe my love of winter ducks to my mother who says that her love of winter ducks was inspired by a duck walk she and my father took about 25 years ago with a young woman named Mary Richard. At the time, Ms. Richard was the Executive Director of the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center in Oyster Bay. My mother described her as a promising young woman who was full of life. Tragically, Mary Richard died in a car accident not long after my parents went on that duck walk in late February of 1998. She was only 33 years old.

Ms. Richard’s legacy inspired me to give my own winter duck talk and walk in Oyster Bay this past February, which I will be doing again in February of 2024. Winter duck watching has brought so much joy to my mother’s and my lives that I am eager to spread that joy to others. Winter can be a tough season to endure in the Northeast both physically and mentally and duck watching has become the tonic that gets me through it. It is because of the ducks that I now look forward to the winter. I’m happy when they arrive and always sad to see them go, but I take comfort in knowing that they’ll always come back.

Christine Suter is the Recording Secretary of HOBAS and Assistant Director of Friends of the Bay. On Saturday, February 17th 2024 at 10 am, Christine will be giving a winter duck talk at Friends of the Bay in Oyster Bay, co-hosted by the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and HOBAS, followed by a duck walk along Beekman Beach and West Shore Road in Oyster Bay.

You can register for the event at www.friendsofthebay.org/sign-up-for-event

Photo by [Mathew Schwartz](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Birdy Bits

Carolina Wren, *Thryothorus ludovicianus*, found in the undergrowth of deciduous or mixed woods, and in thickets along forest edges. Also lives in suburban areas, especially where some dense low growth and tangles have been left undisturbed. The adults live in pairs all year, and they may 'duet' at any season, with the female giving a chattering note while the male sings. Diverse songs and calls such as a loud whistled tweedle-tweedle-tweedle-tweedle or tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle tea, whines, chatters, songs and calls can be heard in all seasons. Feeding primarily on insects, spiders, millipedes, snails; also eats berries and small fruits, especially in winter, and some seeds. Sometimes comes to bird feeders for suet and other items. Nests are usually made in any kind of cavity including natural hollows, in trees, old woodpecker holes, nest boxes, and alike. A piece of snakeskin is frequently added to twigs, leaves, and moss. Conservation status: Populations rise and fall in northern part of range, decreasing after harsh winters. Overall population probably stable, perhaps even expanding (Audubon Field Guide, Audubon.org/field-guide). May you be gifted by the sights and sounds of this wonderful wren this winter and throughout the seasons.



Carolina Wren: John D'Agastino/Audubon Photography Awards

Volunteers Needed!



Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society (HOBAS), formerly Huntington Audubon Society, is seeking serious candidates for board of director roles and leadership positions. The nominating committee is eager to meet interested individuals who feel they may have the skill set to further enhance HOBAS' mission; to protect birds and wildlife through conservation action and education or who can support the board in various administrative ways. Members of the HOBAS Board of Directors are all volunteers who attend monthly meetings and serve on committees such as: programs, field trip leaders, public outreach, conservation, education, newsletter, and communications.

HOBAS, established in 1963 as an all-volunteer, not-for-profit, 501 (c)3 chapter of National Audubon Society is looking forward to reinvigorating the board and leadership with new recruits who want to build upon HOBAS' successes. If you have an interest in dedicating your passion and time to a long-established organization of like-minded individuals, who care deeply about birds, wildlife, conservation, and education then please contact Michael Frank, HOBAS' Treasurer, for more information.

Telephone Number: 631-252-1082 / Email: vonfranz77@gmail.com

The Annual Christmas Bird Count



Audubon's 124th Christmas Bird Count will be held from Dec 14, 2023 to January 5, 2024!

The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is the nation's longest-running community science bird project. For more information and ways you can get involved please refer to the following websites:

www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count

www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count/history-christmas-bird-count



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Huntington, NY 11743

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Membership Application

Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Please consider joining or renewing your membership to Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society, a local, all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c)(3) chapter. Your membership directly supports HOBAS' mission to advocate for birds, wildlife and habitat through conservation efforts and educational outreach. You will receive our newsletter and an open invitation to field trips and events. Thank you for supporting HOBAS with your membership!

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Membership Details:

New HOBAS member, chapter only annual \$20.00 **Renewing HOBAS member**, chapter only annual \$20.00

Additional Donation _____

Please make your check payable to: **Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society**

Send your check and application to: **Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society**

P.O. Box 735

Huntington, NY 11743-0735

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Sun. Jan 7th 2024, 8:00AM

Montauk State Park, Montauk

Time for HOBAS's annual trip out to The East End to find all kinds of waterfowl, including scoters, eiders, loons, gannets, and numerous pond ducks. Directions: LIE to exit 70, Manorville. Go south on Route 111 to Route 27. Take Route 27 east all the way to Montauk Point Lighthouse. There may be a parking fee. Meet at the concession building at Montauk Point State Park.

Sun. Feb 11th, 2024, 8:00AM

Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Queens

Jamaica Bay is known for its world-class birding all year, especially in the winter. You just never know what will turn up in the best bird spot in the 5 boroughs. Take Cross Bay Boulevard south from the Belt Parkway. We will meet at the Visitors' Center.

Sun. March 10th 2024, 8:00AM

Jones Beach State Park, Wantagh

Get ready to see winter waterfowl as well as many resident birds. There may be some surprises. Take either Meadowbrook Parkway or Wantagh Parkway to Ocean Parkway. Follow signs for the Coast Guard Station at the West End of Jones Beach. Meet at the parking lot by the restrooms.

Sun. April 21st 8:00AM

Southards Pond Park, Babylon

Named for the family that operated a grist mill on this site, Southard's Pond Park attracts an impressive diversity of birds in early spring. Take the Southern State Parkway to Exit 33. Continue on NY 109-E for 3.7 miles. Turn left on Park Ave. and continue for half a mile. The parking area is on the left.

REQUIRED: REGISTER IN ADVANCE

DR. COBY KLEIN : 585-880-0915.

All participants must [print and sign a waiver](#) to be provided upon arrival

Please visit our [website](#) & social media for updates & additions to field trips & programs!

TRSAC Summer Sanctuary Adventures Interns 2023

By Molly and Jesse Lebolt

Summer Reflections—from two scholarship recipients who shared feedback, in their own words, about the rewarding summer experiences they had as High School interns at the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary and Audubon Center. Thank you to Canon Inc. and to all those who contributed to the summer scholarship initiative 2023. We look forward to enriching youngsters with similar outdoor educational opportunities for summer 2024!

High schoolers happily setting their alarms for 7 AM? Rare. Said teenagers waking up early on purpose in the summer? Unheard of. However, the opportunity to intern at the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary's camp gave us an exciting chance to interact with like-minded people through a nature-focused lens. Throughout the summer, we led hikes while searching for local wildlife, helped the kids build elaborate shelters, and seined for marine organisms in the nearby cove. If we were lucky, our campers would deliver us their latest frog catch or favorite leaf. While the seven-hour days could be physically exhausting, the ability to play a meaningful role in the lives of the campers was well worth it.

Each week opens with a delightful camp-wide nature hike in the trail system. We tramped through the woods, listening to bird calls and shouts of "EARTHWORM!" and "SASSAFRAS!" Later, we would often take the campers to a small pond, where they used dip nets and containers to catch and observe tadpoles and the occasional frog. Once a week, we would take a morning "field trip" to the cove across the street. We taught the campers how to use seine nets, and, acting as young marine biologists, they worked together to bring in shrimp, snails, crabs, and many species of fish. It was nature kid heaven.

This summer, we helped to release twenty Northern Bobwhite at the sanctuary due to their role as natural tick predators. We carried boxes of ten quails each up the trails, and then watched them explore their new home. The kids quickly gained awareness of their presence, so we taught the children to respect and protect them as they became an icon of the camp. "QUAIL!" "CHICKEN!" soon turned into "careful, don't step on the bobwhite!"

Throughout the summer, we learned from our campers as much as they learned from us. They taught us how to catch tadpoles, frogs, and snakes, the proper way to build a stable stick shelter, which logs were most likely to house slugs and termites, and where to find the best wild raspberries. It was a pleasure to share in their excitement and youthful innocence, and we were transported back to our childhoods, unburdened by the complicated stressors of high school life. We're so grateful for this experience and can't wait to return next year!

The Man Behind the Birds



By Alexandra Martinez

"Wild Birds Unlimited is a nature and hobby shop that specializes in backyard bird feeding. It's everything for birds, including houses, bird baths, and food," shares Andy Burke, owner of the Syosset franchise of this company. Andy is both a bird lover and in the bird business. Imagine turning one of your passions into a full-time job? Well, that's what Andy did about seven years ago when he began his own franchise of the Wild Birds Unlimited company in Syosset, Long Island. There are about 350 stores across the United States and in Canada, and thanks to Andy we have one of those storefronts right here within the Huntington-Oyster Bay domain, at 625 Jericho Turnpike in Syosset. In February, the store will have been open and serving bird aficionados of the North Shore since February 2017. Andy learned about the ability to open a franchise as a customer of the original Wild Birds Unlimited store on Long Island - the Oakdale location. He was a club member of that store and while reading the hobby guide one day, noticed franchise opportunities were available.

Growing up in Baiting Hollow, Andy's dad was a troop leader for the Boy Scouts; his youth is full of memories of camp outs, being outside, playing with wildlife and bird watching. To say Andy is a nature lover is to minimize his experience and work within the field. From his childhood memories through the complicated process of opening a franchise, Andy has been consistent in his good work on behalf of nature. He was even kind enough to consider a new Long Island location for his franchise establishment that would not interfere with the established Oakdale location and its customers - choosing a spot as far north and west as he could from the original locale.

For years, Andy Burke and his crew at Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU) have kindly hosted our Annual Bird Seed Sale. I asked Andy about this long standing connection between HOBAS and WBU and the connection began when the store first opened in Syosset. The President of HOBAS at the time, Stella Miller, connected with Andy, even joining his team and partaking in the ribbon cutting ceremony... and the rest goes in the HOBAS history books! After their initial journey together, Stella eventually recruited Andy to the HOBAS board. Thank you for your service, Andy!

Wild Birds Unlimited of Syosset is currently in its busy season. November, December, and through Christmas are the busy months as the cold weather inspires many homeowners to provide extra food and shelter to help the birds beat the cold. And here is a bird food recommendation from the man himself and it just so happens to be the perfect product for the winter months: bark butter! Bark butter is a spreadable food created by the WBU franchise owner, Jim Carpenter. Originally, it was meant to attract the brown creeper. "Brown creepers don't go to feeders. They just run up and down the tree trunk looking for bugs," says Andy, but now "the bark butter has attracted upwards of 150 species of birds that enjoy it.

Wild Birds Unlimited of Syosset also hosts monthly programs; they bring in speakers, although since the pandemic all programs have been via Zoom. However, on December 14th at 7PM they will have an in-store book signing for *Ornithery: For Your Mind, Body, and Soul*, an interactive book to help you learn about birds from around the world, by Holly Merker. Feel free to visit the



WBU website to check out more information regarding this program as well as the many other upcoming programs listed:

<https://syosset.wbu.com/upcoming-programs>. We also recommend you visit this store, especially if you haven't shopped there before. If you're a part of HOBAS, we know you'll enjoy any time spent in the Wild Birds Unlimited Syosset shop; any time spent within or pondering nature is time well spent.

P.S.: Andy's favorite bird is the Carolina Wren, which is fitting since that bird is featured in this issue's edition of Birdy Bits!

Photo Caption: Photo provided by Andy Burke of he and his wife/co-partner/owner of WBU Syosset, Christine Burke.

Thank You

to all of our loyal members (and non-members too) who joined us for 2023's Annual Bird Seed Sale fundraising event. We had another very successful event and we would like to extend our gratitude to all who made that possible. A very special thank you to Andy and the entire staff at the Wild Birds Unlimited store on Jericho Turnpike in Syosset. As always, we could not have done this without their help, support and generosity. Thank you to all! Looking forward to next year and keeping our feathered friends well fed.