

# SOFOnaturalist



Each quarter SoFo features eco-links, written by a member or friend of the Museum. If you wish to submit an article please contact us.

## eco links

### Piping Plover Confusion

by Eleni Nikolopoulos, South Fork Natural History Museum (SoFo) Nature Educator

It's summertime, the perfect time of year for going to the beach and cooling off in the ocean. If you love visiting the beaches in the Hamptons in the summer months, you are not alone. Each year thousands of people visit our beaches hoping to relax. So, it can seem very annoying when half the beach is closed off with snow fencing bearing signs about a tiny endangered shorebird, the Piping Plover. It's frustrating to beachgoers who have never heard of a Piping Plover, and frustrating to the coastal stewards, birders, and naturalists, who spend their days monitoring the birds. In truth, it's all a big misunderstanding, where everyone is frustrated and heated arguments can break out.



An adult Piping Plover standing in a tire track on one of our local beaches.  
Photo Credit: John Papajohn

In season, coastal stewards from various government and nature organizations patrol the beaches for plovers on a daily basis. In the spring, they spend their day walking miles of beach looking for these tiny shorebirds and inspecting the sand for 'scrapes'. Scrapes are little indentations in the sand that indicate a pair of Piping Plovers may be nesting in the area soon. The coastal stewards protect nesting plovers by putting up string fencing, exclosures (see photo), and snow fencing to make sure that humans and other predators stay away from the birds and allow them to raise their chicks in peace.

In Southampton Town, plovers have been on an upturn the last few years. Piping Plovers are



Coastal Stewards erect exclosures around Piping Plover nests. The plovers are able to walk in and out of the exclosure, but predators and other larger animals cannot enter. This conservation technique is very successful.

Photo Credit: John Papajohn

protected under both the Endangered Species Act and New York State Environmental Conservation Law. There are fewer than 4,000 Piping Plovers on the entire Atlantic Coast. The Piping Plover is listed as threatened by the federal government and endangered by

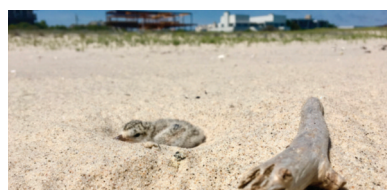


Newly hatched Piping Plover chicks still in the nest. A small indentation in the sand on the middle of an open beach is the Piping Plover's idea of a nest.

Photo Credit: John Papajohn

Many beachgoers confuse the many species of shorebirds on our beaches. Sanderlings look similar to Piping Plovers but are vastly different. Sanderlings tend to congregate in colonies, chasing the receding waves and looking for tiny invertebrates to eat. While plovers also eat invertebrates, they are usually seen alone and feed from the wrack line rather than chasing the outgoing tide. It is common for people to confuse Sanderlings and Piping Plovers, leading to the misconception that there are tons of Piping Plovers on our beaches and they don't need protecting.

Many people also confuse the Least Terns and Piping Plovers, since they are both mentioned on the signs on our beaches. Once you get to know them, you will never confuse a Piping Plover and a Least Tern again. Piping Plovers do not congregate, their nests are few and far between, and they make a small peep when they are disturbed or if you approach their nest. They may try to lead you away from their chicks using a "broken wing" display, which means they fake having a broken wing, and run away, looking like an easy meal for a predator, in order to lead you away from their nest. Once they get far enough away, they fly out of danger, and now the predator is far away from the chicks. It is completely brilliant and a very successful parenting technique.



A Least Tern chick in the nest. These chicks will stay in their nest waiting for their parents to return with fish.

Photo Credit: John Papajohn

New York State. Once you have seen a plover's nest, it is easy to imagine why they are endangered. They nest in the center of the beach with no protection whatsoever. As more people spend time on the beaches and spread out into previously uninhabited areas, there is more risk that the Piping Plover's nests will get destroyed.

The Least Terns, on the other hand, have a different method of parenting. They nest in large colonies. If you happen to get too close to one of their nesting colonies, multiple Least Terns will swoop down, come dangerously close to hitting you in



the head with their beaks, and, only at the last minute, they swoop back up into the air and poop... usually with amazing aim.

Whether it's for the Piping Plovers or the Least Terns, the snow fencing that you see seemingly cutting off the beach is actually there just to block vehicles and dogs. This is because plover chicks freeze as a defense mechanism, since they are unable to fly; plus



*An adult Least Tern swooping to protect the nesting colony (not in view).*

*Photo Credit: John Papajohn*



*Symbolic string fencing can be seen on our beaches. This fencing is put in areas where there is evidence of nesting Piping Plovers and Least Terns. It is possible that there are nests within these string fences and you should NEVER walk within this fencing.*

*Photo Credit: John Papajohn*

they are sand-colored and easily run over by beach drivers who won't even see them. Until the chicks have fledged, the snow fencing also keeps them safe from getting caught in tire tracks. As a pedestrian, you are still welcome to walk through the pathways in the snow fencing as long as you don't harass the birds. Just to be clear—this is snow fencing that runs perpendicular to the beach, not to be confused with string fences, which may contain a nest and are clearly marked DO NOT ENTER.

For the most part, the fences and signs are not inhibiting—they are there to protect the birds and in addition they encourage people to become invested and care about the survival of these species. What better way to do so than through direct observation? It is my personal hope that, with more education and understanding about our local shorebirds, we can work together as a community to maintain the quality of their habitats so we will have Piping Plovers here for years to come!

#### *Editor's note:*

*To learn more about the endangered Piping Plover and see the chicks' development in person, join Eleni, and the lead Coastal Steward from the Town of Southampton, on Saturday, July 1, Sunday, July 23, and Saturday, August 12—on all these dates, or on just one—when you participate in the SoFo program "Observing Endangered Piping Plovers—An On-Site Experience" for adults and children. Please see the attached SoFo Calendar At A Glance for times, or look for a more in-depth description of each program on the SoFo website: [www.sofa.org](http://www.sofa.org) under the heading Calendar. Reservations are required for each program.*

## *SoFo's Butterfly Check List, we need your help!*

*by Crystal Oakes & Xylia Serafy, South Fork Natural History Museum (SoFo) Nature Educators*

People are drawn to butterflies because of their beauty and the symbolism their life cycle represents—the wonder of how something so insignificant can transform into something so delightful.

The more we learn about butterflies and the importance of the environment, the more we find we don't know a great deal about the butterflies that inhabit our area. Over 60 species of butterflies can be observed on the South Fork of Long Island, and they are very important to the success of our native plants and food crops as pollinators. Nearly 90% of all plants need a pollinator to reproduce. With bee populations declining, the role of the butterfly as a pollinator has become even more vital. Without these pollinators, many plant species would be unable to reproduce, resulting in a decline in the abundance of the wildflowers we all know and love, and affecting not only us but the animals around us as well.

Butterflies play a number of roles in the ecosystem, and their presence is an indicator of a healthy environment. In the food chain, the fauna most responsible for passing energy from plants to animals that don't eat plants are insects. So many animals depend on insects for food—spiders, rodents, reptiles, amphibians, and many of our favorite backyard birds—that removing insects, in general, from an ecosystem will cause a catastrophic collapse in the food web. As butterfly populations decrease, so will the populations of the animals that rely on them; for example, it takes 6,000 caterpillars to raise one brood of Black-capped Chickadees.

Some butterflies are becoming more abundant and some less so due to local and global changes in environments. Help SoFo track these changes as we collect data to revise our *Butterflies of the South Fork* checklist. The checklists SoFo offers are valuable tools for both beginner and expert nature observers to identify local species by narrowing down much larger field guides to focus more on our local area. To help SoFo with this Citizen Scientist project, we need as many pictures of the butterflies seen locally as possible. We are specifically interested in butterflies found in the Southampton and East Hampton townships. Please take as clear a picture as you can of the outside and/or inside wings, if possible, depending how the butterfly is resting. Please attach the image (original size) to an email; then we can zoom in on the field marks (pictures inserted into the body of an email are much harder to zoom in on) and send the email to [info@sofo.org](mailto:info@sofo.org).



*Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Photo Credit: Xylia Serafy*




*Continued after calendar*

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[www.sofa.org](http://www.sofa.org) email: [sofo@hamptons.com](mailto:sofo@hamptons.com)

Find us on Facebook  Twitter  Instagram 



A full description of each program is listed on the SoFo website:

[www.sofa.org/calendar](http://www.sofa.org/calendar)

# July, & August, September

## *Museum Admission & Program Information*

### **SoFo Members**

Admission to the Museum is free. Programs are free unless otherwise specified.

*Advance reservations are required for all programs.*

### **Non-Members**

Museum Admission Only – Adults \$10, Children \$7.50 (Ages 3-12),

Ages 2 & under free

Museum Admission & Program – Adults \$15, Children \$10 (Ages 3-12),

Ages 2 & under free

*Advance reservations are required for all programs.*

To make reservations and find out about meeting places, please call SoFo at 631.537.9735  
or email to [sofo@hamptons.com](mailto:sofo@hamptons.com).



*Piping Plover Chick*

*Learn about the endangered Piping Plover & see plover chicks as they develop.*

***Saturday, July 1, at 9 am***

***Sunday, July 23, at 9am***

***Saturday, August 12 at 9 am***

—on all of these dates, or on just one—

with SoFo Nature Educator, Eleni Nikolopoulos

& the Town of Southampton Lead Coastal Steward

when you participate in SoFo's

***“Observing Endangered Piping Plovers  
An On-Site Experience” for Adults and Children***

Please see a more in-depth description for  
each program on the SoFo website: [www.sofa.org](http://www.sofa.org) under the heading Calendar.

Reservations are required for each program.



# Calendar At A Glance

Key: A—Adults T—Teens C—Children F—Family

A full description of each program and time frame is listed on the SoFo website at [www.sofa.org/calendar](http://www.sofa.org/calendar)

*Advance reservations are required for all programs.*

## July

- SoFo Young Birders Club—New Members Welcome! Ages 8-18: Date, Location, Time • TBD
- 1 • Observing Endangered Piping Plovers—An On-site Experience: A/C • 9am
  - 1 • “Meet the Martins”—The Purple Martins: A/C All Ages • 10am
  - 2 • Birding by Ear with Eric Salzman: A/T • 8am
  - 2 • Make Your Own Fish Print T-Shirt & Learn About Local Fishes: F • 10am
  - 3 • East End Classic Boat Shop Visit—SoFo Exclusive Tour: A/C10+ • 10am
  - 8 • SoFo’s 28th Annual Summer Gala Benefit • 6-10pm  
VIP Cocktail Reception: 6-7pm, Evening Reception: 7-10pm
  - 9 • Full Buck Moon—One-Hour Hike: F • 9pm
  - 15 • COME DRAW WITH US!—Workshop: A/T • 10am
  - 15 • SoFo Science/Nature Book Club—*Blessed Unrest* by Paul Hawken • 10:30am
  - 15 • Who Eats What? Help Ashley Feed the SoFo Animals: F/C6-8 • 3pm
  - 16 • Bluebirds & Binoculars: A/T • 8am
  - 16 • Shapes in the Sky—All About Clouds: F/C5+ • 10am
  - 18 • Lost Ladybug Search at Quail Hill Farm: F • 10am
  - 19 • COME DRAW WITH US!—Workshop: A/T • 10am
  - 20 • Southampton Trails Preservation Society—Presentation & Hike: A/T • 3pm
  - 22 • Interpretive Nature Walk with Jim Ash—Birds & Plants of Vineyard Field: A/T • 9am
  - 22 • Nature Paddle in Sag Harbor’s Back Bays with a Wildlife Biologist: F • 9am
  - 22 • Learn to Weave a Simple Basket—Workshop for Children: Ages 9-12 • 10am
  - 22 • The Benefits of Landscaping with Native Plants—Talk & Walk: A • 2pm
  - 23 • Observing Endangered Piping Plovers—An On-site Experience: A/C • 9am
  - 23 • Children’s Art Workshop—Amazing Live Insects & Invertebrates: F/C8+ • 10:30am
  - 29 • Birding with Frank—Shorebirds: A/C8+ • 8am
  - 29 • Children’s Art Workshop—“Painting with Nature”: F/C7-12 • 10am
  - 29 • Carnivorous Plants of Long Island & Their Natural Habitats: A • 3pm

## August

- SoFo’s 3rd Annual Climate Change Symposium & Reception: Date, Time TBD
- SoFo Science/Nature Book Club—Book/Date/Time TBD:  
Call Carol at SoFo at 631 537-9735 for information
- SoFo Young Birders Club—New Members Welcome! Ages 8-18: Date, Location, Time TBD  
Call Carol at SoFo at 631 537-9735 for information
- 5 • Alewife Brook Nature Paddle with a Wildlife Biologist: F • 9am
  - 5 • Who Eats What? Help Ashley Feed the SoFo Animals: F/C3-5 • 10:30am
  - 5 • Seascape Painting—Art Workshop: A/C12+ • 10:30am
  - 5 • Summer Water Birds for Beginners: A/C7+ • 6:15pm
  - 6 • COME DRAW WITH US!—Workshop: A/T • 10am
  - 7 • Tick-Borne Disease Presentation by Southampton Hospital: A/T 6:30pm  
What You Need to Know—Symptoms, Tests & Treatments! Plus Free Tick Kit
  - 7 • Full Sturgeon Moon—One-Hour Hike: F 8:30pm
  - 12 • Observing Endangered Piping Plovers—An On-site Experience: A/C • 9am
  - 12 • SoFo’s Box Turtles & Their New Outdoor Home: F • 10am
  - 12 • Basket Weaving Workshop for Adults & Teens: A/T15+ • 2pm
  - 13 • *Song of the Water Boatman*—Pond Insects Workshop: C6-11 • 10:30am
  - 13 • COME DRAW WITH US!—Workshop: A/T • 10am
  - 19 • Marine Biology Boat Trip—Hands-on Trawling with the Experts: A/C8+ • 9:45am
  - 19 • Introduction to Ichthyology & Fish Dissection: F/C8+ • 10:30am
  - 20 • Offshore Birding Adventure with Frank & Captain Greg: A • 6am-1pm



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- August*
- 20 • On-site Vernal Pond Exploration—Who Lives There? F • 10am
  - 21 • Partial Solar Eclipse—Safely View Eclipse with an Astronomer & Talk • 1-4pm
  - 26 • Children's Art Workshop—"Drawing with Nature": F/C7-12 • 10am
  - 27 • Bay Seining with Al "Big Time" Daniels: F • 10am
  - 28 • Replacing Hamptons Suburbia with Green Villages & Hamlets • 7pm  
within a Managed Landscape, *Restructuring the Hamptons Settlement Pattern*  
with Bill Chaleff of Chaleff & Rogers Architects
- 

*September*

SoFo Science/Nature Book Club—Book/Date/Time TBD:

Call Carol at SoFo at 631 537-9735 for information

SoFo Young Birders Club—New Members Welcome! Ages 8-18:

Date, Location, Time TBD

- 2 • Snapping Turtles—Andy's Annual Prehistoric Monster Hunt: F • 10am
- 2 • Evening Beach Exploration at Fresh Pond: F • 6:30pm
- 6 • Birding with Frank to Celebrate World Shorebirds Day: A/C8+ • 10am
- 6 • Full Harvest Moon—One-Hour Hike: F • 8pm
- 9 • Let's Collect Sea Shells & Make a Sea Shell Magnet: F/C3-5 • 10:30am
- 10 • Celebrate Grandparents Day!—Bring Your Grandparents to SoFo • 10:30am  
Grandparents Admitted FREE! Children's story-time at 10:45am
- 15 • Astronomy of the Milky Way—Montauk Observatory Talk & Sky Viewing • 7pm
- 16 • Paddling Georgica Pond with a Wildlife Biologist: F • 9am
- 16 • Take Part in International Coastal Cleanup Day with a Beach Cleanup: F • 10:30am
- 17 • Seaweed Art & Science: A/T • 11am
- 23 • Birding with Frank—Fall Migration: A/C8+ • 9am
- 23 • Bats! A Quogue Wildlife Refuge Presentation • 10:30am
- 23 • Pine Barrens Perambulation—An Exploratory Interpretive Nature Hike: F • 2pm
- 24 • COME DRAW WITH US!—Workshop: A/T • 10am
- 30 • Mapping the Recent Geology of Long Island in 4-D • 10:30am  
with Dan Davis, Chair of the Dept. of Geosciences, Stony Brook University

A full description of each program and time frame is listed on  
the SoFo website at [www.sofa.org/calendar](http://www.sofa.org/calendar)

*Advance reservations are required for all programs*





# South Fork Natural History Museum & Nature Center

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www.sofo.org • info@sofo.org

## Membership Form

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal

☐ Gift Membership

☐ Donation

### Membership Categories

☐ \$60 Individual

☐ \$100 Family

☐ \$200 Friend

☐ \$350 Supporter

☐ \$500 Patron

☐ \$1,000 Benefactor

☐ \$5,000 Founder

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Business Circle Categories

☐ \$100 Library

☐ \$1,000 Advocate

☐ \$2,500 Supporter

☐ \$5,000 Patron

To learn about member categories with benefits, and to join, please go to <http://sofo.org/membership>.

To learn about business circle categories and to join online, please go to <http://sofo.org/membership>

### Membership Information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*Name as you would like it to appear on SoFo materials and in SoFo's Annual Report.*

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**Please send me:**

E-mails about nature walks and programs: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Digital Newsletter/Calendar (need e-mail address): ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please make your check payable to SoFo.

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The South Fork Natural History Museum & Nature Center (SoFo) is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, environmental education organization chartered by the New York State Department of Education. Your membership/donation is tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.





*Silver Spotted Skipper*  
Photo Credit: Xylia Serafy

Please include the specific location (or as close as you can) where the picture was taken and by whom and let us know if we can use your picture (crediting you) in future publications. The date the picture was taken is also very important because there are a few species of butterflies whose only noticeable difference is the time when they are seen flying on the South Fork. Butterflies are active from April to first

frosts in November and are most active and visible on sunny days with little or no wind. It is important to send in a picture for every butterfly you were able to observe that day, even if they repeat between days/observations, in order for us to get the most accurate results possible.

We hope you can take a few minutes on sunny days to take pictures of the butterflies visiting your gardens or on your hikes around the South Fork. Check SoFo's website for species information and species counts as well as the best pictures sent in for the week and month. Join Xylia on Saturday, July 22 at 2 pm for a presentation and walk about the benefits of planting native wildflowers for our local pollinators.



*Spring Azure* Photo Credit: Crystal Oakes



*Monarch on Eastern Joe Pye Weed*  
Photo Credit: Xylia Serafy

## *SoFo Welcomes its New Advisory Council at May 20 Reception at Andy Sabin's Waterfront Retreat*

by Diana Aceti, Director of Development

On May 20, SoFo was very pleased to welcome our new Advisory Council, dedicated Ambassadors of the museum who are leaders in their fields, with a cocktail reception hosted by Board President, Andy Sabin, and attended by SoFo's Board of Trustees. Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres catered by Peter Ambrose, wine donated by Michael Cinque — Amagansett Wines & Liquors, and Andy's tours of his beautiful retreat in East Hampton.

SoFo's premiere Advisory Council represents a milestone marking our 28th year as a leader in nature education. Last year, SoFo pre-



*Advisory Council Member Nick Martin & Family, SoFo July 8 Gala Benefit Honoree Peter Beard & Daughter Zara Beard, and Kathy Qian*



*Board President Andy Sabin & Peter Beard*



*Board President Andy Sabin, Advisory Council member Debra Halpert & David Greenberg*

*Continued on back page*

sented 260 educational programs, many focusing on environmental stewardship and sustainability. We were pleased to host 55 Long Island school visits, and to launch our free After School Bilingual Enrichment Program at local schools and at SoFo, made possible by grants from the All For the East End (AFTEE) Fund at the Long Island Community Foundation (LICF) and an anonymous organization that has supported SoFo for three years.

We send a very special thank you to our Advisory Council members for their commitment and continued involvement.



*SoFo Executive Director Frank Quevedo, Board Vice President Jim Ash & Pam Ash, & Board Member Peddrick Weis*

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The SoFo *Naturalist* is published  
quarterly as a benefit of membership

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Printed on Recycled Paper with Soy Ink

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Non-Profit  
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Permit #5  
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