A quarterly publication of the South Fork Natural History Museum (SoFo) • Autumn 2017

SOFO naturalist

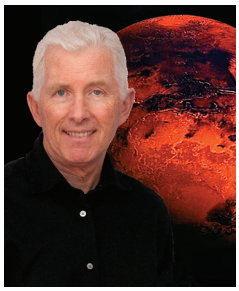
28 YEARS OF NATURE EDUCATION

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

The Journey is the Reward — How I Got Hooked *on Space*

by Paul Stengel



Paul Stengel, Photo: B. Sherer

The Duggan truck was right on time, just like it was every morning at 7:20 am, always a favorite of kids, especially because it meant jelly donuts and custard-filled pastries, with crullers for older folk. That was the kick-off arrival in the morning ritual for campers at Wildwood State Park. Next the iceman with a great chunk of ice for every campsite ice box, followed by the milkman who knew well our addiction to chocolate milk, and finally the *Daily News* truck. Most days at WSP seemed to blend together, filled with a common core of sentient impressions—scents from cooking morning eggs or dinner on Coleman gas stoves, sounds of younger campers nearby organizing a game of punch ball, searching for the best sticks for toasting marshmallows over an evening fire—while older teens checked the ropes of the family tent, lest they be too taut and rip apart in a sudden rainstorm. The pace was markedly slow, tranquil, leisurely... and that's the way Mom and Dad Stengel liked it, and it had kept them returning summer after summer since the 1940s.

But the morning of July 29, 1955 was different. Again, the *Daily News* truck dropped our copy at the usual spot and, as usual, I scanned the headlines—and pictures, since that was their trademark—"The Picture Newspaper." President Eisenhower proclaimed that the "United States would launch an artificial satellite in orbit around the Earth." Wow! Science fiction came to life...I was 12 years old and I never forgot that morning. That headline is frozen in my mind and was the beginning of a lifetime of fascination with space.

Earthrise Apollo 8, the first manned mission to the moon, entered lunar orbit on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, 1968. That evening, the astronauts-Commander Frank Borman, Command Module Pilot Jim Lovell, and Lunar Module Pilot William Anders-held a live broadcast from lunar orbit, in which they showed pictures of the Earth and moon as seen from their spacecraft. Image Credit: NASA

In retrospect, I believe this fascination—call it curiosity—was nurtured by my childhood experiences of the natural world around me... tracing a caterpillar as it devours a leaf, watching a seemingly undisciplined colony of ants organize to achieve a goal, scurrying to see who amongst my friends could collect the most lightning bugs in a glass jar, being awestruck by uncountable stars in the night sky, especially when it's very dark, so dark you, literally, cannot see your hand in front of your face. Collectively, these early experiences generated a sense of wonder of the natural world that remained with me for a lifetime.

Apollo 15 was the first of the Apollo "J" missions capable of a longer stay time on the moon and greater surface mobility. Commander Dave Scott salutes the American flag at the the Hadley-Apennine lunar landing site.

Fast forward to the '60s and the Apollo Lunar missions. I was by then a high school physics teacher. In my lifetime, no other single government program galvanized our country and stimulated science and technology more than the Apollo Program... the race to beat the Russians to the moon. Kids everywhere were excited. NASA announced space milestones almost daily, and television and print news organizations made it their patriotic duty to keep the country well informed. Overnight, America was introduced to its new heroes… astronauts.

Space was cool. Suddenly it was okay to study math, science, do homework... even build model rockets. Teaching physics was a natural fit for me. I had fun and I hoped my students did too. NASA missions were always woven into my lessons: rockets, spacecraft, space travel, unmanned explorers and manned projects. Periodic NASA "Tele-Lectures" brought the latest space missions into my classroom, live from NASA Langley Research Center; on the maiden launch of Columbia STS-1, the physics lab opened at 6:30 am for a "Space Shuttle Breakfast" while students watched the countdown on the then three TV networks.

Apollo 15 Commander, Dave Scott

The first orbital mission of the Space Transportation System lifts off from the Kennedy Space Center on April 12, 1981. Image Credit: NASA

Retired now, my curiosity about astronomy and space exploration remains as strong as ever and, as a NASA Solar System Ambassador, I still enjoy the thrill of sharing this fascination with others. I will always remember the delightful way a student of mine responded to the question "Where are you from" and the answer was his town, his state, the United States, the Earth, the Milky Way, the Universe. All this makes sense—and to think that watching a caterpillar slowly inch its way up a plant stalk could result in a desire to explore the unknown.

Editor's Note:

Be sure to catch Paul Stengel's lecture, "Next Stop, Mars" on Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at 7 pm at the Rogers Memorial Library, 91 Coopers Farm Road, Southampton, NY, cosponsored by the Montauk Observatory and the South Fork Natural History Museum. Keeping the space theme going, we hope you will join us at the South Fork Natural History Museum for SoFo's Free Family Thanksgiving Open House, "Space: The Next Frontier," on Saturday, November 25, 2017 from 10 am – 4 pm, cosponsored by the Montauk Observatory. Enjoy a day of family fun and educational events related to astronomy and outer space, a portable planetarium show, and a special tasting of the iconic drink, Tang – "Tang was used by early NASA manned space flights. In 1962, when Mercury astronaut John Glenn conducted eating experiments in orbit, Tang was selected for the menu; it was also used during some Gemini flights and has been carried aboard numerous space shuttle missions." Wikipedia

From My Window Small But Mighty—*The Downy Woodpecker*

by Melanie Meade, SoFo Nature Educator and Coordinator

From my window I can see … a Downy Woodpecker clinging to a tall Oak tree! The Downy Woodpecker can travel upside down along an oak branch as if it were a highway. This smallest member of the woodpecker family is common year-round on Long Island. Woodpeckers are adapted for climbing trees, with two toes on their feet facing forward and two toes facing backward and a stiff tail, which they use as a brace.

Downy Woodpeckers *(Picoides pubescens)* are 6-6.5 inches long and have black-and-white stripes on the wings and back, white bellies and a short bill, about half the width of the head. Size and bill length are field marks that distinguish the Downy from the similar but slightly larger Hairy Woodpecker. Males in both species have a red patch on the nape of the neck.

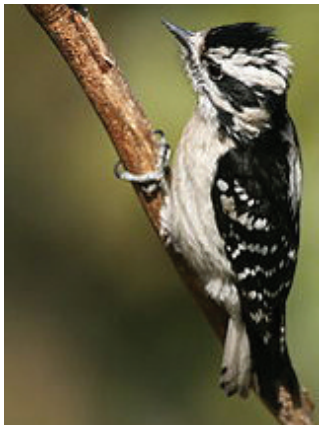
Many woodpeckers feed on wood-boring insects by hammering holes in tree bark to get at the insects below. Others specialize in feeding on tree sap (Yellow-bellied Sapsucker) or probe the ground for ants and ant larvae (Northern Flicker). In winter, the small size and weight of the Downy means it is able to perch on plant stalks and extricate insect larvae from inside galls on goldenrod stems. Seeds and berries are also on the menu, so a mixed seed and animal fat (suet) feeder will definitely attract woodpeckers in winter.

The sound of a woodpecker drumming carries through the forest and has a role in territorial behavior as well as in finding food. Males tap on hollow branches to announce their territory, and both sexes tap to attract their nearby mate to a possible nest site. Nest cavities are made in the dead limbs of trees or in hanging snags and are used for only one nesting season.

These sometimes-noisy woodpeckers occupy an important niche in forest ecosystems. Old woodpecker nest holes are used by secondary cavity-nesting birds like the Screech Owl, may become winter larders filled with acorns for Gray Squirrels and Eastern Chipmunks, or be enlarged by raccoons for winter dens and homes to raise young kits.

So the next time you take a walk in the woods and hear a woodpecker's hammering, look a little closer, notice the field marks, and if it's a Downy, say "Thank You" to one of Nature's smallest forest caretakers.

Male Downy Woodpecker



Female Downy Woodpecker

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28 YEARS OF NATURE EDUCATION

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

www.sofo.org/calendar

October, November, & December

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.

SoFo cleans up Long Beach, August 2017. From left to right, volunteer Summer Williams, and staff members Eleni Nikolopoulos, Ashley Federici, Melanie Meade, and Xylia Serafy

SoFo Cleans the Beach

The South Fork Natural History Museum (SoFo) is proud to announce our new initiative,

"SoFo Cleans the Beach." Our staff has already begun attacking the garbage on our local beaches and we are hoping that you will join us! We will be out on the beach the second Saturday of every month at 8 am (see SoFo website for locations). We'll also be keeping a tally of what type, and how much, trash we are finding—information that you can track on our website.

Please join us and help keep our hometown beaches clean!

(See SoFo website for beach locations)

October 14 – 8 to 9am

November 11 – 8 to 9am

December 9 – 8 to 9am

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.sofo.org/calendar

Advance reservations are required for all programs.

Sofo's Young Birders Club, ages 8-18 will meet monthly.
Contact Frank Quevedo for information at sofoexdir@optonline.net

October	4&5	• Hook Mountain Hawk-Watch in New York, Overnight Adventure: A •	TBD
	5	• Full Moon Hike—The Hunter's Moon: F •	7:30pm
	7	• Long Pond Greenbelt 19th Annual Family Celebration •	10am-1pm
	7	• Andy's Annual Salamander Log Rolling: F •	10am
	8	• Passerine Fall Migration Walk for Adults with Joe Giunta: A •	7:30am
	8	• Interpretive Nature Walk in Sagg Swamp with biologist Dr. Keith Serafy: A/C8+ •	10:30am
	9	• Painting with Fall Leaf Colors: F/C 3-7 •	10:30am
	14	• SoFo Cleans the Beach—See SoFo website for beach location: F •	8am-9am
	14	• Mineral Scavenger Hunt in Montauk: C8–12 •	10:30am
	15	• Go Batty for Bats—See Specimens of Bats & Make a Detailed Bat-Themed : C 8+	10:30am
	17	• The Wellness Foundation presents "Fall into Wellness Potluck" : F •	6pm
	21	• COME DRAW WITH US! Nature Drawing for Beginners: A/T •	10am
	21	• Bring the Stars Inside—Make a Fall Constellation Projector: F/C 8+ •	10:30am
	22	• Nature Prints—A Walk & A Workshop: F •	10:30am
	22	• Make Animals & Rocks Using Polymer Clay: A/C 6+ •	1pm
	28	• Mapping the Recent Geology of Long Island in 4D with Daniel Davis, Chair of Dept. of Geosciences, Stony Brook University: A/T •	10:30am
	28	• Turkey Trot for Tots—Nature Walk & Turkey Leaf-Craft: C 3-5 •	10:30am
	28	• Hand Paint a Dried Gourd for Halloween: C All Ages •	1pm
	29	• Climate Change Survival Game: F/C 8+ •	10:30am
November	4	• Late Fall Bird Migration at Hither Hills with Joe Giunta: A •	8am
	4	• The Fascinating Life of Lichens—A Walk in the Woods with Lichen Expert Dr. James D. Lendemer, Assistant Curator, Institute of Systematic Botany, NY Botanical Garden: A/T •	10am
	4	• Basketry for Thanksgiving: F/C 6+ •	10:30am
	4	• Full Moon Hike—The Frost Moon: F •	7pm
	5	• Fall Forest Memory Jars: F •	10:30am
	11	• SoFo Cleans the Beach—See SoFo website for beach location: F •	8am-9am
	11	• COME DRAW WITH US! Nature Drawing for Beginners A/T •	10am
	11	• *Bummer,* "The Little Lost Lamb Who Finds Love" & Poems About Nature, *Dog Hill Poems*—Readings: C/A •	4pm
	12	• Water Wonders—A Tiny Drop of Water: F/C 6+ Learn While You Create a Water Journey Bead Bracelet •	10:30am
	18	• Nature & Bird Watching Cruise—Birding with Frank: A/T •	9:45am-1pm
	18	• Nature Adventure at the Walking Dunes: F/C 3+ •	10:30am
	19	• Sleepy Salamanders—All About Amphibian Hibernation: F/C5+ •	10:30am
	24	• Southampton Trails Preservation Society Annual Walk-It-Off Hike: F •	10am
	25	• Thanksgiving Open House—"Space: The Next Frontier":F •	10am-4pm

December	2	• Winter Sea Ducks—Birding with Frank: A/T •	7:30am
	2	• Searching for Seals at Cupsogue Beach: F •	10am
	2	• Interactive Storytime with Eleni; "The Shortest Day": F/C 3-5 •	10:30am
	2	• Owls by the Light of the Moon—Annual Foray with Joe Giunta: A •	7pm
	3	• Walking the Winter Beach to Search for Nature's Treasures: F/C 6+ •	1pm
	3	• Full Moon Hike—The Cold Moon •	6pm
	5	• Next Stop-Mars! Presentation by Paul Stengel at Rogers Memorial Library, Southampton: A/T •	7pm
	9	• SoFo Cleans the Beach—See SoFo website for beach location: F •	8am-9am
	9	• SoFo's Annual Decorate a Holiday Tree for the Birds: F •	10:30am
	16	• COME DRAW WITH US! Nature Drawing for Beginners: A/T •	10am
	16	• Beginner Winter Water Birds along Dune Road, Hampton Bays: A/C6+ •	10am
	17	• *Possum's Harvest Moon*—Autumn Story & Craft: C 3-5 •	10:30am
	23	• Buffet for the Birds: Learn & Create: F •	2pm
	26-29	Winter School Recess at SoFo Programs for Children of All Ages **10:30am-11:30am** **26** • Animals Active in Winter—A Listening Walk **27** • Do Whales Have Belly Buttons?—Questions you never thought to ask **28** • Do Shrubs Shiver? **29** • Is it Nature? A Scavenger Hunt	
	30	• Animal Origami—Learn the Ins & Outs of Paper Folding: F •	10:30am

A full description of each program and time frame is listed on the SoFo website at www.sofo.org/calendar

Advance reservations are required for all programs

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South Fork Natural History Museum & Nature Center

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❑New Member ❑Renewal ❑Gift Membership ❑Donation

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❑$500 Patron ❑$1,000 Benefactor ❑$5,000 Founder ❑Other_____

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

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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.

SoFo news

SoFo's 28th Annual Summer Gala, Saturday, July 8, 2017

by Diana Aceti, SoFo Development Director

We would like to thank all of our supporters who helped ensure the success of SoFo's 28th Annual Summer Gala Benefit, A Journey into the Wild, which welcomed 500 guests on July 8, 2017 to benefit educational and environmental programming initiatives. The event honored leaders who are redefining wildlife conservation in the 21st century: Alan Rabinowitz, the CEO of Panthera; Ocearch's Founding Chairman Chris Fischer; and artist, author and photographer Peter Beard and his wife, Nejma Beard. Peter Beard created and donated a limited edition of 200 posters entitled The Very Rare Trionyx Turtle from Lake Rudolf 1965/2015 to benefit the Gala.

The benefit was chaired by Anke & Jürgen Friedrich and Susan & David Rockefeller with special co-hosts Chef Alex Guarnaschelli, Debra Halpert, and Chef Kerry Heffernan, with guest auctioneers sports talk show host Ann Liguori, and cosmetic dentist, Dr. Gerry Curatola.

Honorees Alan Rabinowitz from Panthera and Chris Fischer from Ocearch Photo credit: Rob Rich/SocietyAllure

Eric Goode, Andy Sabin, Scarlett Magda, and Peter Beard attend the 28th Annual SoFoSummer Gala Photo credit: Rob Rich/SocietyAllure

Jürgen Friedrich, Zara Beard, Susan and David Rockefeller, Photo credit: Rob Rich/SocietyAllure

The evening featured a VIP Cocktail Reception with a Special Tasting Menu by Leading Chefs Peter Ambrose, Endless Summer Grille; Arjun Achuthan,The Hayground School; Marco Barilla, Insatiable Eats; Keith Davis, The Golden Pear; Greg Grossman, Oreya Restaurant & Lounge; Kerry Heffernan, Grand Banks Restaurant; Matt Ketcham, Ketcham's Seafarm; David Loewenberg & Sam McCleland, The Bell & Anchor; and Andrew Schor, East Hampton Grill. Our alcohol sponsors included Amagansett Wine & Spirits, Montauk Brewing Company, Channing Daughters Winery, Doña Sarita Mezcal, and Keith's Nervous Breakdown Ultra-Premium Cocktail Mixes. Media sponsors included Dan's Hamptons Media, the East Hampton Star, Hamptons Magazine, The Independent, and the Sag Harbor Express. We send a special thank you to Sponsor Brown's Alfa Romeo, and Goody Bag Sponsors Godiva Chocolatier, Dr. Fedorenko True Organic, and Rejuvenation Dentistry's Revitin Prebiotic Toothpaste.

Holiday Toy Drive

The South Fork Natural History Museum will begin its Holiday Toy Drive on Saturday, November 25, 2017 at SoFo's Free Family Thanksgiving Open House, "Space: The Next Frontier." The Drive will run from November 25 to December 20. If you are able to donate to the Drive this year, we are asking for unwrapped new toys and gift cards for teens. The recipient of the Drive is Heart of the Hamptons (HOH). The Heart of the Hamptons assists more than 6,000 people each year. Their headquarters in Southampton is home to a food pantry, clothing room, and an outreach office. Services include a multi-faceted assistance program offering crisis intervention, medical assistance funding, aid for seniors, school supplies and summer lunches for school children, and a meals program for the homebound.

Grant Award. SoFo Panels Restored!

by Frank Quevedo, SoFo Executive Director and Ashley Federici, SoFo Nature Educator

SoFo visitors utilizing our upgraded spotting scopes to see what they can find in Vineyard Field. Photo: Xylia Serafy

Continued on back page

SoFo news

Thanks to the public funding provided by the 2016 Suffolk County Omnibus Grant, the South Fork Natural History Museum's observation deck panels have been restored. The $5,000 award has made it possible to restore the 40 x 2.5-foot observation panels with UV-resistant outdoor fabric. It also enabled us to add three-angled spotting scopes and two 8 X 42 binoculars for viewing wildlife from the deck. The restoration of the deck panels allows us to continue educating children and adults on the sensitivity of the Long Pond Greenbelt Preserve and the ecological processes of Vineyard Field. Thank you to County Executive Steve Bellone, Legislator Bridget Fleming, and everyone at Suffolk County Parks and Recreation for this long-awaited upgrade.

Example of one of the newly renovated Deck panels. This one describes the "Old Field" habitat found in Vineyard Field, the field behind the museum. "Old Field" habitats are disappearing as the result of accelerated housing development.

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