



# SOUTH FORK NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (SOFO)

Dear SOFO Families *and* Friends,  
Welcome to SOFO's May 29 Weekly Newsletter!

## NATURE NEWS

### MAY FLOWERS

The month of May's mix of sunshine and rain has produced many colorful flowers like this purple and white beach pea, a common coastal plant. Its long trailing stems wind across sand and gravel beaches and weaves among beach grass meadows. The purple butterfly shaped flowers are arranged in what is known as a raceme – a line of stalked flowers along one side of the stem. The plant produces seeds in a seedpod and can also spread by growing rhizomes- specialized stems that grow horizontally under the soil. Native to Europe, Asia, North and South America, this plant is a true ocean traveler. Its seeds can withstand long months and even years floating in salt water until they reach a sandy shore where waves and sand scrape away their hard outer coating and they can begin to take root and grow. Take care not to eat this sea pea, however, as its seedpods contain toxins that are harmful to humans in large doses.



colors to match nearly any tree they find themselves on. This combined with their habit of rarely leaving the safety of the treetops makes them a very unusual frog to see in the wild. However, around this time every year, gray tree frogs will leave the trees to breed in our local ponds. They might still be difficult to spot, but they make their presence known with their call, a pulsing trill. This frog was found calling on a tree by the small pond just outside the museum.



tle laid her eggs near the road last fall. The eggs hatched and the baby turtles stayed in the nest hibernating until warmer temperatures woke them in spring. Now, they are heading to their home pond on the other side of the road. Painted turtles live in ponds, lakes and rivers, and if they had made this journey as hatchlings last fall, they likely would not have survived. Nature has kept them safe all winter. Now you can help by being on the lookout for turtles on the move!

### GRAY TREEFROG

The gray treefrog is our only true tree frog here on the South Fork. Masters of camouflage, these frogs have the ability to change their skin

### PAINTED TURTLE HATCHLING

This Painted Turtle hatchling can't look both ways before crossing the road so you can give him a helping hand. Stop safely, look, carefully pick him up and take him across in the direction he was going, and place the hatchling in the leaves several feet from the road. Finding a tiny turtle like this one in May tells you that a female painted tur-

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SOFO is happy to announce that, in line with the issuance of the latest State Executive Order, we are now able to offer our outdoor nature walks for up to ten people, which includes our staff. Please note that we will at all times follow stringent six-foot distancing separation protocols required by the Department of Health for the safety of our participants and environmental educators. We will provide masks and gloves for all attendees. Please dress appropriately for tick protection. [Please check our website calendar for more details about upcoming nature walks.](#)

## JOIN OUR BACKYARD WATCH CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT

We are calling on all of our young environmentalists to observe and document nature awakening in your own backyards. We ask you to send us pictures of your findings with the date you discovered them, and your name and any notes you would like to include. We are happy to feature observations sent in by our fellow environmentalists with details about the nature sightings they shared with us. Please send your photographs and notes to [info@sofo.org](mailto:info@sofo.org). Stay safe and be on the look out for Nature news in your backyard!



SUBMITTED BY ELLEN G. K. RUBIN



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SUBMITTED BY JENNIFER SENFT

### OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) with possible WEAKFISH (*Cynoscion regalis*)

The Osprey is also called the Fish Hawk and is found across the globe. This individual may be dining on a Weakfish, but they are not picky about which fish they eat. They are so specialized for catching fish that they are in their own taxonomic family separate from hawks and eagles, and owls. Their feet are supremely adapted to catch and hold onto slippery fish with a reversible front toe, rough toe pads, and very curved, smooth-round talons (claws). They hunt by hovering 30 to 100 feet over water and diving talons first to catch their target. Not every attempt is successful but Ospreys have been recorded catching fish 3 feet below the water and some impressive catches have weighed four pounds or more.

### RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) with EASTERN COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus floriddanus*)

The Red-tailed Hawk can be found across North and Central America with darker coloration in the western US. They can hunt using their spectacular eyesight to spot mice from 100 feet up in the air but usually prefer to watch from a favorite perch for a variety of small animals. It has been observed that many Red-tailed Hawks will stay with the same breeding partner, usually in the same territory year-round, for life, which can be up to 30 years in the wild. The unfortunate Eastern Cottontail is the only species of rabbit in our area but they breed quickly. They can have 3 to 4 litters of young per year that average 4 to 5 young but could be up to 9 young per litter.

of fruits and berries (including poison ivy berries), seeds, and sometimes visit at suet feeders. When flying, the underwing of eastern flickers is a noticeable yellow while the underwing of western flickers is an orange-red. The male flickers have a noticeable 'moustache' (called a 'malar' by ornithologists) which is black in the eastern US and red in the western US.

### BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) MALE

The Brown-headed Cowbird is listed as a breeder in our area but don't go looking for their nest! They are known as a 'brood-parasite' since female Brown-headed Cowbirds lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, making another species hatch and feed the young cowbird. Females have been recorded laying eggs in 10 to 12 nests per season, with individual females seeming to prefer certain species as hosts.

## ZOOM ONLINE PROGRAMMING

There is no charge for these programs. [Please visit sofo.org/calendar/ for more details.](#)

**SATURDAY, MAY 30 2:00pm** - Conscience Point Shellfish Lab Tour with Ashley Oliver

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3 4:00pm** - Backyard Birds: Downy Woodpeckers *and* Friends

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10 4:00pm** - Who's Who in the Garden:

Identifying Common Insects

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17 4:00pm** Endangered Species: Knowing is Caring

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24 4:00pm** - Backyard Herpetology:

Reptiles *and* Amphibians of the South Fork

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 1 4:00pm** - Virtual Tour of the East Hampton Nature Trail at Duck Pond

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 14 11:00am** - Ticks on Parade

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 22 4:00pm** - SOFO Shark Research and Education Program:

Team Update

## PLEASE JOIN US THIS JUNE FOR A SPECIAL FOUR-WEEK ZOOM PRESENTATION FEATURING ERIK THE REPTILE GUY *and* HIS REPTILE EDVENTURES

There is a nominal fee for these programs. [Please visit sofo.org/calendar/ for more details.](#)

**SATURDAY, June 6 11:00am - 12:00pm** - "The Greatest Reptile & Amphibian Show"  
An Introduction to Reptiles *and* Amphibians

**SATURDAY, June 13 11:00am - 12:00pm** - Turtles, Tortoises, *and* More Turtles

**SATURDAY, June 20 11:00am - 12:00pm** - Frogs *and* Toads from Northeast America

*and* from around the World

**SATURDAY, June 27 11:00am - 12:00pm** - Snakes of the World

## CHRIS PAPARO: FISH GUY

There is a nominal fee for these programs. [Please visit sofo.org/calendar/ for more details.](#)

**TUESDAY, JULY 7, 7:00pm** - From Plankton to Whales:

Why our local waters are worth protecting

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 15 7:00pm** - Long Island's White Shark Research

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 7:00pm** - Exploring Long Island's Underwater Worlds

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 7:00pm** - Birding with the Fish Guy

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 7:00pm** - Long Island's Tropical Drifters

## OUR YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALISTS SOCIETY (YES!) NEWS

Our YES! Group meets bi-weekly via Zoom. Click here to see the latest projects and activities!

[sofo.org/yes/](https://sofo.org/yes/)

## SOFO's SHARK RESEARCH *and* EDUCATION PROGRAM NEWS

The sharks are back! Click here to follow the latest developments and upcoming shark tagging expeditions.

[sofo.org/sofos-shark-research-education-program/](https://sofo.org/sofos-shark-research-education-program/)

We remain very appreciative of your support, and we look forward to welcoming you back to the Museum as soon as we can. Please watch for announcements on our social media pages [facebook.com/sofomuseum](https://facebook.com/sofomuseum) and [instagram.com/sofomuseum](https://instagram.com/sofomuseum), and feel free to email us at [info@sofo.org](mailto:info@sofo.org) so we can keep connecting as we all continue to explore our natural world and strive to raise environmental awareness by providing the inspiration and tools for all of us to become caring and responsible stewards of our planet.