



# SOUTH FORK NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (SOFO)

Dear SOFO Families *and* Friends,  
Welcome to SOFO's July 3 Bi-Weekly Newsletter!

## NATURE NEWS

### THE EGGS HAVE HATCHED!!

#### SOFO's Purple Martin Colony Update

On Saturday June 27, John She-milt, SOFO's Purple Martin Colony Steward, held a "Meet the Chicks" program at our purple martin colony site behind the Museum. Twenty-seven out of twenty-eight nesting gourds are occupied with developing eggs and newly hatched chicks. To the delight of everyone in attendance, John invited each child to hold a newly born chick as he explained the different stages of the chicks' development. In the coming weeks, all the eggs will hatch and the newly born birds will take flight. By August 1 most of our colony will begin its migration back to Central and South America for the winter. Stay tuned for another update in a few weeks.



and become thick and turn vibrant green. The pads act as a shield to hold moisture, reflect sunlight and protect it from frequent salt spray. As the season progresses, the plant begins to flourish and produces beautiful waxy yellow flowers that most nectar eating insects can't resist. Visit our gardens today as this plant's flower opens only for a single day. A colony as a whole may continuously flower for as long as a month.



### OUR NATIVE CACTI

Long Island's only native cacti, the Prickly Pear Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*), is in bloom now at SOFO's native butterfly garden and native flower garden on the Museum's grounds. This is a low-lying plant, and in winter, can easily be mistaken for a deflated, dried-up plant. But with spring rains, the plant revives and rapidly absorbs water in its oval shaped pads. The pads fill with water

### SOFO SHARK RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PROGRAM UPDATE

The SOFO Shark Research Field team and its shark collaborators have been in the field since mid-May. Although no white sharks have yet been tagged, one large coastal shark was analyzed last week by shark collaborators, Walter Zublinis and Jeff Metzger. The species caught and released was a small blue shark (*Prionace glauca*). A vari-



ety of marine life has been observed in the ocean during the field season to date, including large schools of Atlantic Menhaden, Bluefin Tuna, Striped Bass and Bluefish. Pods of Humpback Whales, Finback Whales and Minke Whales have been seen foraging offshore. Stay tuned... July and August are the most active months for white shark activity.

[JOIN / RENEW](#)

[DONATE](#)

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 twenty-five (25) 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 THE COHEN PAPAGANI FAMILY

### BIRD PELVIS

(inside view)

This photo, which depicts a bone found by the Cohen Papagani Family, is the pelvic girdle (hip bones) of a large bird, most likely a Wild Turkey. A bird's pelvic girdle has more bones fused together than a human; this gives added strength and areas for muscle attachment that allow for flight and walking on two hind legs (bipedal gait). This one large bone is made up of several fused vertebrae from the last thoracic, to lumbar, sacral, and a few of the caudal, and fused with the ilium and ischium. When the pelvic girdle is viewed from the side, the round holes near the front would have held the head of the femur (upper leg bone).



SUBMITTED BY THE RUIZ NORRIS FAMILY

### NORTHERN BLACK WIDOW (*Latrodectus variolus*)

This Northern Black Widow is one of two species found in small population pockets across Long Island. The northern and southern black widow females differ mainly in that the hourglass on the underside of the abdomen of the Southern Black Widow is complete while the Northern Black Widow has a 'broken' hourglass. There are 5 black widow species found across the US including the Western Black Widow, Red Widow, and Brown Widow. They prefer dark, sheltered, and sometimes damp recesses to build their web. This individual was found near some ferns with a brick garden boarder. Thankfully, widow spiders prefer to run away from disturbances. If bitten, contact a doctor or hospital immediately, current medical treatment can lessen the severity



SUBMITTED BY PENNI LUDWIG

### CECROPIA MOTH (*Hyalophora cecropia*)

This Cecropia Moth was found in Sag Harbor. With a wingspan of four to six inches, it is common east of the Rocky Mountains and is the largest moth in North America. It is part of the Giant Silkworm Moth family, which is not closely related to the Asiatic silkworms that are used commercially for textile silk. The caterpillars can eat a variety of deciduous tree and shrub leaves including oak, maple, willow, birch, apple, ash, beech, and elm. They overwinter as a pupa inside a large silk cocoon attached to a branch or twig. All of the calorie consumption happens as a caterpillar, as the mouth parts of Giant Silkworm Moths are vestigial (reduced and unusable) and they do not feed as adults.

## JULY CALENDAR

[Please visit sofo.org/calendar/ for more details.](#)

## ZOOM PRESENTATIONS

**TUESDAY, JULY 14, 11:00am** - Zoom Program: Ticks on Parade - Tick Awareness Talk

Program Presenter: Tamson Yeh, Pest Management Program for Suffolk County Properties

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 4:00pm** - Zoom Program: SOFO's Shark Research & Education Program Team

Update Panel Discussion with SOFO's Shark Research and Education Team

## OUTDOOR NATURE WALKS

**SUNDAY, JULY 5, 9:00pm** - Full Buck Moon Hike with Friends of the Long Pond

Greenbelt Hike

Leader: Dai Dayton, President, Friends of the Long Pond Green Belt

**FRIDAY, JULY 10, 7:00pm** - "The Turtle with Clown Lips"- Diamondback Terrapin

Illustrated Talk with John Turner

Talk Leader: John Turner, noted author, environmentalist, and member of SOFO Board of Directors

**SATURDAY, JULY 11, 1:00pm** - Diamondback Terrapin Search by Land Walk

Leader: Paul King III, SOFO Environmental Educator

**SATURDAY, JULY 11, 6:00pm** - SOFO Cleans the Beach

Cleanup Crew: SOFO Environmental Educators

**SUNDAY, JULY 12, 10:00am-12:00pm** - Diamondback Terrapin Search by Sea

(BYO Kayak)

Program Leader: Melanie Meade: SOFO Education & Outreach Coordinator

**SUNDAY, JULY 12, 1:00pm** - On the Beach - Plovers, Terns, & Other Shorebirds

Program Leader: Rachel Speckenbach, SOFO Environmental Educator

**SATURDAY, JULY 18, 10:00am** - Young Birders Club

Club Leader: Rachel Speckenbach, SOFO Environmental Educator

**SATURDAY, JULY 25, 10:00AM** - Young Environmentalists Society (YES!)

Club Leader: Mare Dianora

**SUNDAY, JULY 26, 10:30am** - Discovering Animal, Vegetable, & Mineral Treasures

at the Seashore

Program Leader: Melanie Meade, SOFO Education & Outreach Coordinator

## 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 World

## 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.