



SOUTH FORK NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM (SOFO)

Dear SOFO Families *and* Friends,
SOFO's Bi-Weekly Newsletter is Back!
Please enjoy *and* Happy Holidays! December 30, 2020

NATURE NEWS

DUCK OF BEAUTY AND SOLITUDE

By Frank Quevedo

It is that time of year again when waterfowl dominate our freshwater ponds and lakes. One duck in particular, the American Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) is a year-round resident to the South Fork and is one of the most beautiful birds you will ever see. Very seclusive in nature and rarely seen, the American wood duck is a cavity nesting bird and will nest in hollow trees or nesting boxes in proximity to water. The elegant male with its crested head that is iridescent green and purple with a white stripe leading from the eye to the end of the crest is considered the most striking duck in North America. The male also has a narrower white stripe from the base of the bill to the tip of the crest. The ducks prefer riparian habitats, wooded swamps, and freshwater marshes. A great place to view this magnificent waterfowl is Duck Pond in East Hampton, where it stands out among mallards and black ducks. If you do not see one, be sure to look carefully along the edges of the pond under branches of nearby shrubs. This duck loves to hide and prefers lack of disturbance.



FRANK QUEVEDO PHOTO

18th centuries, the coyote expanding its range to Long Island is a natural movement fulfilling a niche that once existed. As balance keepers of an ecosystem, predators rule from the top-down, controlling animal populations that can create havoc on an environment. An example of this imbalance is the overabundance of white-tail deer and eastern cottontail rabbit on the east end. These animals in great numbers can graze heavily and decimate forest understory. As the forest understory disappears, fewer ground nesting birds and other animals that rely on that habitat are vulnerable to unsustainability and extirpation. Currently, SOFO is assisting the Long Island Coyote Study Group led by SEATUCK to monitor the status of the coyote population on Long Island. We have several trail-cams set up at locations in Bridgehampton, where the local coyote has been seen, in the hope of capturing images of this wild North American canine. As a naturalist, I welcome the coyote to the Hamptons with open arms. As this animal slowly establishes itself over time, which it will, there will be a positive resurgence of the rich biodiversity of the east end's natural environment. Stay tuned!



STOCK PHOTO

WELCOME THE COYOTE!

By Frank Quevedo

The coyotes are here! A recent press release sent from the environmental group SEATUCK announced that eastern coyotes (*Canus latrans*) have made their way to Long Island. In July 2013, a photo taken of a coyote on a farm field in Water Mill sparked naturalists into an excited frenzy to better understand the relevance of the sighting. With all our top carnivores including bears and wolves extirpated from Long Island due to bounty hunting in the 17th and

THE "R" RULE FOR SHELLFISH SWEETNESS

By Frank Quevedo

As our marine waters cool down, many of our local bivalves such as clams, oysters and bay scallops go dormant for the winter. This means their me-



STOCK PHOTO

tabolisms slow down and feeding activity stops. To survive without food during the winter season, they begin their overwintering process by feeding and storing their energy reserves in July and August. At the conclusion of their spawning season in mid-summer, bivalves begin to accumulate energy reserves in the form of sugars known as glycogen. This energy reserve will be stored in mantle tissue or other tissue in the body of the shellfish and utilized by the animal during the non-feeding months. It is the glycogen in the bivalves which give the sweet taste to these succulent shellfish during the "R" months. So be sure to follow the "R" rule and harvest and enjoy these sweet succulent shellfish from September through March. In the summer during spawning season, adult shellfish focus on feeding to produce gonad development, therefore tasting milky but still delicious.

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 fifty (50) people, which includes our staff. Please note that we will atw 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. Stay safe and be on the look out for Nature news in your backyard!



FRANK QUEVEDO PHOTO

HAIRY WOODPECKER

(*Plcooides villosus*)

By Frank Quevedo

This photo of a Hairy Woodpecker (*Plcooides villosus*) was a visitor at a backyard feeder in Riverhead. This species comes to most feeders that attract the similar but smaller downy woodpeckers, but visit much less frequently. The Hairy Woodpecker is widespread in North America and is a bird of forests, where it uses live tree trunks both as nesting sites and as a place to forage. If you have a backyard feeder, and want to increase your chances of seeing one, place your feeder further away from your house and closer to surrounding woods. Be sure to distinguish this bird from the downy woodpecker by observing its much longer bill and larger size.



CRYSRAL OAKES PHOTO

ANGLE-WING KATYDID EGGS

(*Microcentrum sp.*)

By Crystal Oakes

These scale-like eggs deposited on an apple tree twig were laid by an angle-wing katydid. Two species have been found and heard in our area, the Greater Angle-wing (*Microcentrum rhombifolium*) and the Lesser Angle-wing (*Microcentrum retinerve*). The nymphs and adults are difficult to find as they live in the upper branches of deciduous trees to feed on the leaves, favoring oak and willow in our area. The adult males use a hard, flattened, overlapping, wrinkled area near the base of the wings to make ticking calls during the summer and fall.



CRYSRAL OAKES PHOTO

PARASITIC BRACONID WASP COCOONS

(*Cotesia sp.*)

By Crystal Oakes

This 'log-pile' of cocoons on this apple twig is the remains of a caterpillar that was parasitized by a tiny wasp belonging to the Braconidae family. Most Braconid wasps measure between 1 to 15 millimeters (.03 to .59 inch). The unfortunate caterpillar was selected by the tiny female wasp (possibly from *Cotesia* genus) where she laid several eggs; most species of Braconid wasp specialize in certain butterfly/moth caterpillar species. The hatched larva fed upon the live caterpillar until ready to pupate. The holes in the cocoons show which pupa emerged as adult wasps. Attracting parasitic wasps using certain flowering plants in an eco-conscious garden introduces a natural predator of caterpillars and greatly reduces the need for chemical pesticides.

DECEMBER 30 - JANUARY 13, 2021 PROGRAMS

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

KEY: A-Adults, T-Teens, C-Children, F-Family, AA-All Ages, *Live Animals

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 10:30AM - Zoom Live Animal Zoom Presentation Meet the SOFO Amphibians — Their Life History & Ecology: AA

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 10:30AM - White Pine & Oak Forest Hike at Wilson's Grove Preserve: A/C8+

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 3PM - SOFO Cleans the Beach — Help Needed: AA

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 10:30AM - Snowy Owls at Shinnecock Inlet: F/C8+

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 3PM - Zoom Presentation Adventures on the Trail — Making a Trail Journal with Maps: AA

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/

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/

YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

Our Young Birders Club meets the third Saturday of every month and is open to anyone ages 8-18 who is interested in learning about birds. We concentrate on birding in local areas since Long Island has so many great habitats that are home to a wide variety of species.

We remain very appreciative of your support, and we welcome you to visit us at the Museum. Reservations only by calling the Museum at 631-537-9735. Daily sessions from 10-11:30 and 1-2:30. Please watch for announcements on our social media pages facebook.com/sofomuseum and instagram.com/sofomuseum, and feel free to email us at 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.