

# 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

### Offshore Wind: Long Island's Contribution to the Fight Against Climate Change

by Michael B. Gerrard



Wind farm, Credit NOAA

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to humanity and to the natural environment. Up to one million plant and animal species face extinction, many within decades, if we do not rapidly reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases. The combustion of fossil fuels is the source of three-quarters of these emissions. Thus we must move rapidly to clean sources of energy.

Part of the needed transition away from fossil fuels is to phase out internal combustion engines in favor of electric vehicles, and to convert much space heating and water heating from oil or natural gas to electricity. This will considerably increase the demand for electricity, even after aggressive energy efficiency measures.

Recognizing the gravity of the climate problem, in 2019 the New York Legislature enacted the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. It calls for 70 per cent of the electricity used in the state to come from renewable sources by 2030 (we are now at about 29 per cent – mostly upstate hydroelectric plants), and 100 percent to come from zero emissions sources (renewables and any remaining upstate nuclear plants) by 2040.

Most of the electricity generated on Long Island comes from burning natural gas, with a smaller amount from oil. The largest portion of this natural gas is from Pennsylvania – mostly from hydraulic fracturing. Virtually all the oil is imported from other states or countries. The extraction and use of these fossil fuels generate considerable amounts of greenhouse gases.

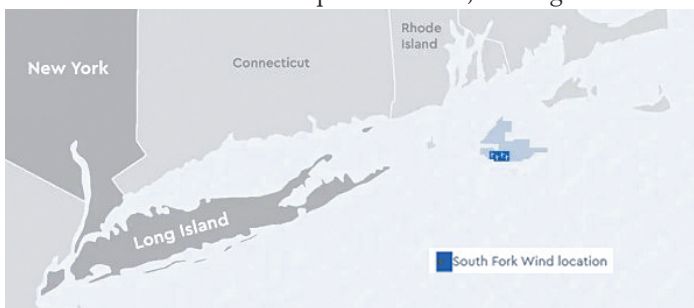
Thus Long Island exports the environmental impacts of the extraction of the fuel that it uses. The combustion of that fuel on Long Island in power plants, motor vehicles, building heating systems, and

other sources generates greenhouse gases that, when combined with everyone else's emissions, are the principal cause of climate change.

However, Long Island is right next to an abundant source of clean energy: the winds blowing over the Atlantic Ocean. This resource causes no pollution and will never run out.

There are now several proposals to build wind farms off Long Island. The one that is furthest along in the process is South Fork Wind. It is in federal waters 35 miles east of Montauk – so far away that its 12 wind towers could not be seen from the shore. It has received several of the needed federal, state and local approvals; the rest are in process now.

The New York climate law requires at least 9,000 megawatts of off-



Location of South Fork off shore wind farm, Credit South Fork Wind

shore wind capacity by 2035. (A much larger amount of onshore wind capacity will be needed, together with a great deal of solar energy capacity, energy storage, and energy efficiency improvements.) South Fork Wind would provide 132 megawatts; it would be the first of several offshore wind farms off Long Island. The state government rightly sees offshore wind as an essential element of its program to meet the requirements of its climate law, and also as a major source of jobs within the state.

Not everyone loves the South Fork project. The cable that would connect the wind turbines to the grid would come ashore in Wainscott. A group there, Citizens for the Preservation of Wainscott, is opposing the project, unsuccessfully challenged it in the state permitting proceedings, and is now suing the Town of East Hampton for granting an easement for the cable. Another group, Win With Wind, has organized to support the project. (I have been providing pro bono legal help to Win With Wind.)

All renewable energy projects have impacts and require tradeoffs, but the impacts can be reduced and the tradeoffs eased. Wind turbines can kill birds that fly into them, but that can be reduced by proper siting, lighting, and operations. Construction of offshore wind farms and the associated cables can disrupt fishing, but that can be minimized by careful timing, special precautions, and working with fishermen's groups.

Whatever the negative impacts of offshore wind, they are far lower than the environmental damage of not building a huge amount of renewables. The alternative is to allow continued fossil fuel use to

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cause ever-worsening climate change that will wreak havoc on today's and future generations of humans, and on the natural world. The people of Long Island should embrace offshore wind as one important way we can contribute to the fight against climate change.

Michael B. Gerrard is Andrew Sabin Professor of Professional Practice at Columbia Law School and founder and faculty director of the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. He practiced environmental law full time in New York City from 1979 through 2008.

## Footnotes on Nature

### Protecting the Blue-spotted Salamander

by Paul King III, SOFO Environmental Educator

This year SOFO partnered with The Amphibian Foundation (AF)



*A Blue-spotted Salamander, Ambystoma laterale, ex situ at the Amphibian Foundation in Atlanta. This animal is part of an assurance colony at the Foundation and once it becomes sexually mature, it will become part of a vital conservation program for the species.*  
(© Amphibian Foundation)

to launch a new conservation program to protect the Blue-spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma laterale*). Blue-spotted salamanders are one of eight species of salamanders that can be found on Long Island. However, due to their limited distribution, they are rarely seen. While Blue-spotted salamanders are found in the northeastern United States and up into Canada their true range is uncertain since they will hybridize with the Jefferson's Salamander (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*). Due to this hybridization, it can be difficult to identify true Blue-spotted's from the hybrids. Additionally, they are threatened by habitat loss and disease.

This summer, with fellow environmental educator Jake Kushner, I was able to help with the Blue-spotted Salamander conservation project. With permission from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, we were able to collect true Blue-spotted Salamander larvae from a stable population on Long Island. After many hot, long days spent in the pond and sorting through piles of leaves we were able to find 18 of these 3-4 cm long larvae. They were then safely transported to the AF in Atlanta to be reared

and studied. Since arriving, the larvae have successfully metamorphosed into young salamanders.

In Atlanta, AF will study the cues necessary to produce healthy Blue-spotted Salamanders in captivity, which could be candidates for release into the wild, should further conservation measures be warranted. AF's Conservation Research Bridge Program will also continue to work with SOFO to monitor the salamanders on eastern Long Island and help determine if the current populations are stable. The goal is to learn more about wild populations and make sure they remain healthy. For more information about the Amphibian Foundation and their work please visit <http://bridge.amphibianfoundation.org/>

If you are interested in learning more about the Blue-spotted, or any



*A Blue-spotted Salamander, Ambystoma laterale, in situ on eastern Long Island, NY. This is a species listed by the state as Special Concern and it only occurs in a limited number of wetlands on Long Island.* (© South Fork Natural History Museum)

of our other native salamanders, I invite you to join us on our annual salamander searches led by Andy Sabin (President of the SOFO Board of Directors who also goes by the nickname "The Salamander Commander"). Here are the dates for Andy's 2022 salamander walks. Keep in mind that these walks are dependent on previous heavy rain.

**Saturday, February 12 at 7:30pm:  
Eastern Tiger Salamander Search**

**Saturday, March 5 at 7:30pm:  
Blue-spotted Salamander Search**

**Saturday, March 12 at 7:30pm:  
Another Blue-spotted Salamander Search**

**Saturday, March 19 at 8pm:  
Spotted Salamander Search**



## South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO) Calendar At A Glance Winter 2022

377 Bridgehampton/Sag Harbor Turnpike  
P.O. Box 455  
Bridgehampton, NY 11932-0455  
[www.sofa.org](http://www.sofa.org) • email: [info@sofo.org](mailto:info@sofo.org)

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)

# January, February, & March

*To enter the Museum  
without a mask  
proof of vaccination is required!*

**For SOFO members: programs are free, unless otherwise stated.**

Level of membership indicates the number of people entitled to a free program.

**For SOFO non-members: there is a fee.**

Please contact us at: [info@sofo.org](mailto:info@sofo.org) for fee information or refer to the SOFO website at: [www.sofa.org](http://www.sofa.org)

If you are not already a member we invite you to join the museum.

Find out about membership levels at [www.sofa.org/membership](http://www.sofa.org/membership)

For full information on the South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO), including entrance fees and hours of operation, please refer to the website: [www.sofa.org](http://www.sofa.org)



**Snowflakes—Saturday, January 8, 10:30AM – Noon: for Children Age9+**  
**Trees in Winter—Saturday, January 15, 10:30AM – Noon: for Children Age9+**  
**A Winter Landscape—Saturday, January 22, 10:30AM – Noon: for Children Age9+**

**From Artist & Art Educator Dr. Quincy Egginton:**

The three SOFO winter workshops I've designed for children age nine and older **Snowflakes, Trees in Winter, and A Winter Landscape** are a series of January programs that address the intersection of art and science.

In the workshops children will be encouraged to observe the winter environment from a close focus on the design of snowflakes, by cutting and collaging, to drawing the large scale form of trees with charcoal, and defining the shapes of the landscape using pen and ink washes.

Children may sign up for a single program or all three. However, we do encourage that they attend all three.

All programs take place from 10:30AM – Noon.

There is a materials fee of \$5 per class. All materials will be provided.

## Calendar At A Glance

*Key: A—Adults T—Teens C—Children F—Family AA—All Ages*

A full description of each program is listed on the SOFO website at [www.sofa.org/calendar](http://www.sofa.org/calendar).  
*Advance reservations are required for all programs.*

### January

**Saturday, January 1,** SOFO closed

**Sunday, January 2, 10:30AM:** Feeding time at the Museum: C6+

**Saturday, January 8, 9AM:** Trail Clean-up, Help Needed: AA

**Saturday, January 8, 10:30AM:** Snowflakes Workshop: C9+

**Saturday, January 8, 2PM:** SOFO Shark Research & Education 2021 Field Season Highlights: AA

**Sunday, January 9, 1PM:** 4.5mile Winter Wildlife Walk at Mashomack Preserve: A/T

**Friday, January 14, 7:30PM:** LTV video, South Fork Sea Farmers presents: KELP IS ON THE WAY!, a prerecorded panel discussion with NY State Assemblyman Fred Thiele prime sponsor of the “Kelp Bill”, Peter Topping Peconic Bay Keeper, Sean Barrett Montauk Seaweed Supply Company, and Dr. Deborah Aller Agricultural Stewardship Specialist Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County

**Saturday, January 15, Dawn to Dusk:** NYSOA Annual Winter Waterfowl Count: A/T

**Saturday, January 15, 10:30AM:** Trees in Winter Workshop: C9+

**Sunday, January 16, 10AM:** SOFO's Young Birders Club: Ages 8-18

**Sunday, January 16 12:30PM:** Seal Walk at Cupsogue Beach County Park: A/C6+

**Monday, January 17, 5:30PM:** Full Moon Walk with Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt: AA

**Saturday, January 22, 10AM:** White Pine and Oak Forest Hike: A/T/C8+

**Saturday, January 22, 10:30AM:** Winter Landscape Workshop: C9+

**Sunday, January 23, 10:30AM:** Feeding Time at the Museum: C3-5

**Saturday, January 29, 10AM:** Creating Explorer Journals—Become A Naturalist: C10+

**Saturday, January 29, 10AM:** Young Environmentalist Society (YES!) Ages 10-16

### February

**Saturday, February 5, 10AM:** Birding with Frank—Winter Sea Ducks: A/T

**Saturday, February 5, 10:30AM:** An Outdoor Workshop for Adults—How to See Nature Through Your Child's Eyes: A

**Saturday, February 12, 9AM:** Trail Cleanup, Help Needed: AA

**Saturday, February 12, 7:30PM:** Andy Sabin's Annual Eastern Tiger Salamander Search: AA

**Sunday, February 13, 11:30AM:** Seal Walk at Cupsogue County Park: A/C6+

**Wednesday, February 16, 6PM:** Full Moon Walk with Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt: AA

**Wednesday, February 16, 7PM:** Nighttime Owl Prowl with Joe Giunta: A

**Saturday, February 19, 11AM:** Behind the Scenes Tour of the Rescue Center Hospital at the New York Marine Rescue Center: AA

**Sunday, February 20, 10AM:** SOFO's Young Birders Club: Ages 8-18

**Sunday, February 20, 10:30AM:** Feeding Time at the Museum: C/AA

### Winter School Break Outdoor Nature Programs 10:30-11:30AM For Children of All Ages

**Monday, February 21**—Nature Scavenger Hunt

**Tuesday, February 22**—Learn About Our Year-round Wildlife

**Wednesday, February 23**—Winter Sensory Walk

**Thursday, February 24**—What Do Bugs Do in Winter?

**Friday, February 25**—How to Identify Animal Sign



*February  
continued*

**Saturday, February 26, 10AM:** Young Environmentalist Society (YES!) Ages 10-16

**Saturday, February 26, 10AM:** Money Pond Nature Hike: A/T/C 10+

**Sunday, February 27, 10AM:** Promised Land Nature Walk at Napeague State Park: A/T/C8+

*March*

**Saturday, March 5, 10:30AM:** Exploring the Dunes: C10+

**Saturday, March 5, 7:30PM:** Andy Sabin's Annual Blue-spotted Salamander Search: AA

**Sunday, March 6, 10AM:** Migration Headache—The Dangers Birds Face: C6-8

**Friday, March 11, Noon: Zoom** For Families and Friends! Foster Your Child's Native Curiosity and Wonder About Nature, For the Future of our Planet: A

**Saturday, March 12, 9AM:** Trail Cleanup, Help Needed: AA

**Saturday, March 12, 10AM:** Vernal Pool Walk—Their Ecological Importance: A/T/C8+

**Saturday, March 12, 7:30PM:** Another Andy Sabin's Blue-spotted Salamander Search: AA

**Sunday, March 13, 10:30AM:** Wolly Bear Caterpillar Search: F/C

**Friday, March 18, 7:30PM:** Full Moon Walk with Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt: AA

**Saturday, March 19, 10AM:** Birding with Frank—Pond & Bay Waterfowl: A/T

**Saturday, March 19, 8PM:** Andy Sabin's Annual Spotted Salamander Search: AA

**Sunday, March 20, 10AM:** SOFO's Young Birders Club: Ages 8-18

**Saturday, March 26, 10AM:** Young Environmentalist Society (YES!) Ages 10-16

**Saturday, March 26, 10AM:** Seal Walk at Cupsogue Beach County Park: A/C6+

**Saturday March 26, 10AM:** Nature Exploration at East Hampton Village Nature Trail & Wildlife Sanctuary: A/T/C6+

**Sunday, March 27, 7:30PM:** American Woodcocks in the Wild: A

### *Andy Sabin's (AKA "The Salamander Commander") Nighttime Salamander Walks*



Bring the family and delight in the magic of a nighttime walk in the woods that surround ephemeral pools—the breeding grounds of our native mole salamanders. To get you into the mood, here are a few photos taken on previous salamander explorations with Andy, as the Spotted Salamander, the Blue-spotted Salamander, and the Eastern Tiger Salamander leave their winter homes and make their way down to the ephemeral (also known as vernal) pools to breed.



*Spotted Salamander*

*Blue-spotted Salamander*

*Eastern Tiger Salamander*



## SOFO news

### SOFO's Purple Martin Colony Update



*Purple Martin chicks - Credit SOFO, Paul King III*

SOFO's Purple Martin Colony in Vineyard Field had an exceedingly difficult nesting season, according to John Shemilt, SOFO's Purple Martin Colony Steward. The nest gourds were installed in late March, and the first returning adult was seen on April 13th but, due to cold snaps in the spring, six females succumbed to starvation.

The first nests were started mid-May, and the first eggs were laid around May 31st. Out of the total of 133 eggs that were laid, 104 of them hatched and 92 young-of-the-year birds fledged. The total nests built by the colony was 26.

After October 31st, there will be no purple martins present in the United States and they will have reached their wintering grounds in Central and South America. The purple martins will return to the United States (Florida) around Christmas time and then begin to slowly migrate North back to Long Island in March/April 2022. We wish our avian friends a safe and happy winter.

### SOFO's Bluebird Nest Box Trail Update



*Bluebird Chicks - Credit PutneypicsFlickrCC by 2.0*

You may know Joe Guinta from the SOFO bird walks he leads or from his nighttime owl prowls—Joe is a long-time friend of SOFO's. But in addition to his bird walks Joe has been SOFO's Bluebird Steward and head of our Bluebird Nest Box Trail Program since 2005. This is how he described the 2021-year report, "It was a very good year for

Bluebirds on the East End of Long Island. It was the second-best year in the last 17 years. Five of our trails had Bluebirds nest successfully." There was a count of 136 Bluebirds fledged.

If you are interested in joining Joe's volunteer team of Bluebird Trail monitors please send an email to [info@sofo.org](mailto:info@sofo.org) with your contact information.

### SOFO Awarded 2021 Suffolk County Grant



The South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO) is delighted to announce it has been awarded a 2021 Legislative Omnibus Museum and Historic Association grant from Suffolk County in the amount of \$5000. The funds will allow SOFO to purchase state-of-the-art equipment necessary to improve our virtual programming capability. The new equipment will enable SOFO to present the highest quality of virtual nature education programs to schools, nursing homes, libraries, and everyone in the community and around the world. Thank you to Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming and the Suffolk County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation for funding this project.

### Site Plan Approval to Renovate the SOFO Barn



*The current SOFO barn*

The renovated space is needed to expand the museum's educational programs, create and house special events, and to provide laboratory space for scientific research.

SOFO is pleased to announce that its site-plan map, designed to convert the existing agricultural barn building on the SOFO property to public museum exhibition space, was approved by the Town of Southampton's Department of Land Management and Planning Division on July 26, of 2021.

*Continued on back page*



## Support Your Local Pollinators

by Melanie Meade, SOFO Education & Outreach Coordinator



*Planting milkweeds, Credit SOFO*

Insect pollinators are essential for plants to reproduce and survive. They are also extremely important to the crops that humans eat. Without pollinators like bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, or even small mammals, birds, or bats, we would not have so many of the things we enjoy—berries, apples, vegetables, and meats (think of the hay for animal fodder)—as food sources.

To help, you can help support your local pollinators by planting native and pollinator friendly plants. To see an example of how you might do this, visit our new Pollinator Garden at SOFO. The garden is a community service project that was created in May 2021 with the help of the Pierson High School Interact Club. The garden preparations required the removal of invasive plants including Garlic Mustard, Mugwort and Mile-a-Minute vine, plus stubborn Bayberry roots and clumps of grass. The students, parents, teachers and SOFO staff prepared the garden area and arranged the plants to create a mixed palette in order to attract pollinators. Thank you to the club's faculty advisor, Sue Denis, for providing refreshments.

The native Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, Blue Lobelia and Echinacea plants are all from a line of local genotype plants known as Provenance Natives donated by Vicki Bustamante of Warrens Nursery.



*Setting out plants, Credit SOFO*

The Pollinator Garden is located along the entrance pathway to the museum. The museum's pollinator habitat areas now include the Pollinator Garden, Native Wildflower Garden, and Butterfly Garden. The gardens need constant care and weeding to keep invasive species at bay, but the nectar plants will grow back each year and attract the pollinators that will keep the gardens buzzing each summer.



*The Pollinator crew, Quinn Cole, Interact Club Faculty Advisor Sue Denis, Ava Garabedian, Abi Corish, Issy Caplin, Keara Murphree, Chad Federico, Justin Gardiner with his Dad, Paul Gardiner, Lily Caplin with her Mom, Emily Caplin, Credit SOFO*



*Continued from page 6*

We are grateful to Martin Architects PC, AI; the Adam Miller Group, PC; and the Town of Southampton's Planning Department for their work on this project. A special thanks goes to The Andrew Sabin Family Foundation and all the generous matching-grant supporters for funding this project. A public opening is planned for some time in the spring of 2022.

### **SOFO Mission**

The mission of the South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO) is to stimulate interest in, advance knowledge of, and foster appreciation for the natural world with special emphasis on the unique natural environment of Long Island's South Fork.

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