

# SOFO naturalist



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

### Welcoming Haven: Gardening for Habitat

by Melissa Ozawa, Perfect Earth Project

Every May, I look forward to seeing bobolinks return to a nearby meadow. These migrating birds, with their cheerful, upbeat songs, fly from as far south as Argentina before settling down for the season in grassy meadows up north where they shelter and nest, gobble up insects and seeds, and seek out water to drink and bathe. I'm lucky there is habitat for them nearby, but as we build on more land and create inhospitable landscapes (I'm looking at you, sterile lawns laden with chemicals), there are fewer and fewer places for bobolinks and other migrating birds to call their summer homes. We've developed 95% of land in the lower 48 states, which has contributed to the biodiversity emergency we are facing now. We've lost three billion birds since 1970 and 40% of insects are facing extinction.

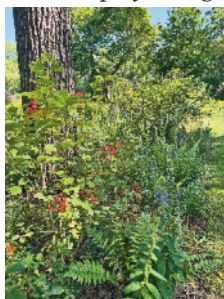
But all of us can do something to help. At Perfect Earth Project, the nonprofit founded by Edwina von Gal, we are teaching people how to ecologically care for your land—without chemical fertilizers and pesticides and with joy. No matter the size of your property, we can all create a welcoming—and beautiful—habitat (food, water, shelter) for the wildlife we all love. Here are some ways:

#### Food

##### Grow native plants

As we say at Perfect Earth, native plants need so little and give so much. Research by Doug Tallamy and Desiree Narango shows that if you grow at least 70% of them on your property, you'll provide enough food for birds, butterflies, and bees. Think 2/3 for the birds: so for every three plants you buy, make sure two are native.

To maximize habitat, diversify your plantings. Grow native trees (native oak trees, for example, support more than 900 species of insects), shrubs (fruiting varieties, like native blueberry and viburnum, feed birds and other wildlife), and flowers (a succession of blooms ensures there will be a steady stream of nectar and pollen for pollinators throughout the growing season). Don't cut back perennials for the winter. Seedheads feed birds and they also look striking in the winter landscape. Here are some native plant resources (<https://perfectearthproject.org/where-the-pros-go-to-source-native-plants/>) to find the right plant for the right place in your own yard.



Fruiting shrubs, like American cranberrybush viburnum (*Viburnum trilobum*) feed birds, Cedar Waxwings, Bluebirds, and Hermit Thrushes, to name a few. Here, it is paired with the native blue cardinal flower (*Lobelia siphilitica*), a favorite of hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. Photo: Perfect Earth Project

#### Celebrate nibbled leaves

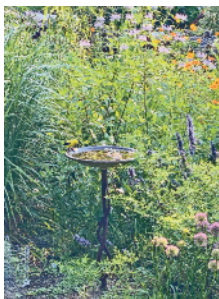
Nibbled leaves are not something to be ashamed of, but should be a point of pride. "Every living thing has to eat," says Edwina. "And most, unless they're a total carnivore, eat plants." So let insects eat too. Those caterpillars munching on leaves, for instance, become the butterflies and moths we all love. "Leaves are the salad bar for nature," she says. Plants evolved to feed wildlife, says Edwina. They can tolerate it. So when you see nibbled leaves in your yard, rejoice. You're feeding the ecosystem. But if you're not quite ready to throw a party when you spot nibbled leaves yet, follow Edwina's advice and practice the 10-step rule: When you see a nibbled leaf, take 10 steps back and you won't notice it anymore.

#### Water

Like humans, animals and insects need water to survive—to drink and bathe themselves. Some also need water to create shelter, such as some bees, birds, and wasps, which build nests out of mud. Others need water to reproduce, like mosquito-eating dragonflies and damselflies and amphibians (such as frogs and salamanders), which lay eggs in water. While a pond creates its own rich ecosystem, you can also add water to your property in smaller ways:

##### Bird bath

When choosing a bird bath, make sure it's not too deep or slippery for birds to perch. Be sure to clean it regularly (once or twice a week) to prevent disease and parasites and deter mosquitoes from breeding there. Use a vinegar solution (1 part vinegar to 9 parts water) and rinse thoroughly before adding fresh water.



Edwina would look forward to seeing the same goldfinch return each day to the bird bath in her garden one summer. "It always seemed to come just when the light was at its most beautiful."

Photo: Perfect Earth Project

##### Bee beach

Don't forget the butterflies and bees! Since they can't land on open water, Edwina set up "bee beaches" around her yard to give them a safe place to drink. Bird baths often have slippery, steep edges that make it difficult for bees or butterflies to perch and sip. A bee beach, on the other hand, is designed for insects and their short legs. It's a shallow dish filled with a few inches of water and pebbles or rocks, even plants and soil, for easy, safe access. Learn more about the bee beaches Edwina set up in her yard here (<https://perfectearthproject.org/prfct-moment-bee-beach/>).

Continued on next page

Continued from page 1



Edwina filled this bee beach with large pebbles, so bees have a place to perch to drink. She positioned it around thirsty plants, so the slow drip of water would irrigate them.

Photo by Allan Pollok-Morris

### Shelter

Insects and animals all need shelter to nest, hide from predators, stalk their prey, and hunker down in bad weather. Here are some easy ways to create shelter in your yard.

#### Leave the leaves and stems

“Ask yourself: WWND (what would nature do),” asks Edwina. No one cleans up the leaves beneath trees in the natural forests or cuts down perennials in fall, why do we? Native bees nest in standing dead vegetation, like perennial stems. Fallen leaves provide vital shelter for insects (butterflies, moths, fireflies, and beetles) and provide insulation for nesting ground bees. And—bonus!—when leaves (and other biomass like grass clippings) decompose, they feed your plants. Embrace a closed loop system on your property. Keep all biomass on site. It’s what nature intended. Soil feeds plants, which are eaten by insects and animals, which are eaten by larger animals, whose waste goes back to feeding the soil. It’s the natural cycle: Eat, poop, and die, as Edwina says. And the cycle—unless we mess it up—continues.

#### Plant a soft landing

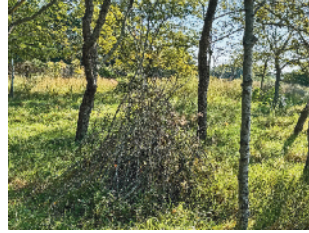
A soft landing is a mix of native herbaceous plants (violets, Virginia bluebells, wild geranium, to name a few) planted within the dripline (the area extending down from the tips of the branches) of a native tree. Not only does this living mulch help keep weeds at bay, but it also provides a safe home for butterflies and moths to overwinter and looks incredibly beautiful. Learn more from experts Heather Holm (<https://www.pollinatorsnativeplants.com/softlandings.html>) and Leslie Pilgrim (<https://neighborhoodgreening.org/soft-landings/>).

#### Let snags stand

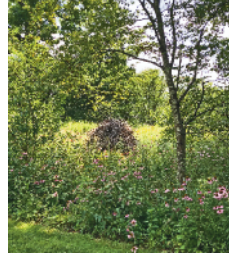
Leave dead trees, fondly known as snags, for fungi and insects, which attract woodpecker and other cavity-nesting birds, as well as other critters. Trim any branches near your house or car, but otherwise let it be. Dead trees provide habitat for more than a thousand species of wildlife. Take a cue from Stoneleigh garden in Pennsylvania and showcase a “tree sculpture (<https://perfectearthproject.org/a-tree-sculpture-at-stoneleigh/>),” as they call the towering London Plane tree snag in the front of the house, with pride and plant native vines to climb up it.

#### Build habitat stacks

Edwina gathers garden debris—branches, stems, twigs—and turns them into artful habitat structures. She builds walls out of logs, creates haystacks after cutting back her meadow, and weaves “nests” out of fallen branches. She also created what she calls a “wren tent” out of brush found on her property. The structure got its name when she noticed the wrens flying into it for protection when she walked past it with her dog Clover. At Chanticleer Garden in Pennsylvania, gardener Chris Fehlhaber builds artful habitat stacks out of cuttings from the meadow. He’s spotted bumble bees, songbirds, and snakes taking shelter in the stack. Read more about how to make them here (<https://perfectearthproject.org/habitat-piles-turning-garden-debris-into-shelter-and-sculpture/>).



Edwina built this wren tent out of fallen branches from her property. It provides protection for birds, especially wrens, from predators. It will eventually decompose, enriching the soil. Photo: Perfect Earth Project



Turn what would conventionally be trash into horticultural art. At Chanticleer Garden in Pennsylvania, Chris Fehlhaber creates sculptural habitat stacks out of the clippings from the meadow. Photo: Perfect Earth Project

### Plant thickets

When you plant thickets, a dense group of shrubs, you’re creating a perfect habitat: food, shelter from predators for eating and nesting. “The thing about thickets is that they’re perfectly designed for small birds to maneuver within them,” Edwina says. “But big birds or other predators cannot.”

To learn more about habitat gardening including ordering or downloading our Nature-Based Gardening booklet (<https://perfectearthproject.org/nature-based-gardening-booklet/>) and Gardening for Habitat workbook (<https://perfectearthproject.org/gardening-for-habitat-workbook/>), visit PerfectEarthProject.com where you can also sign up for our newsletter to learn about events and news.

If you live on the East End between Montauk and Hampton Bays, sign up for a free Living Lands site visit (<https://perfectearthproject.org/living-lands-long-island/>).

Melissa Ozarwa is the director of content and communications at Perfect Earth Project.

## SOFO news





### In Memoriam – Larry Penny

We are saddened by the recent loss of Larry Penny. He was one of the original founders of the South Fork Natural History Society in 1989 and a noted East End naturalist and educator; his weekly column “Nature Notes” was featured in the East Hampton Star for many years. He served as East Hampton Town Natural Resources Director for 28 years. “He was a very good naturalist; I really admired him for his work, his writing, and his dedication to stopping development.” *Andy Sabin, SOFO President.*

A memorial nature walk for Larry will be held at the SOFO Museum on May 10, 2025, at 9 am. Please join us if you can. Light refreshments will be served after the walk.

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  Instagram 



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

[www.sofa.org/calendar](http://www.sofa.org/calendar)

# April, May, & June

**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). Advanced registration is required for all programs.



*Peregrine Falcon*



*Trawl Net Haul*

## SOFO Spring Nature Cruises – Observing Bay Wildlife Above and Below the Water

Sunday, April 13, 10:00AM-1:00PM:

Nature & Bird Watching Cruise with Stony Brook Southampton: A/T/C8+

Saturday, June 14, 10:AM-1:00PM:

Marine Biology Cruise on Shinnecock Bay: A/T/C8+

# 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.*

April

**Saturday, April 5, 10:00-11:30AM: FREE,** The American Chestnut Story and Elliston Park Chestnut Tree Survey. Co-sponsored with April Gonzalez, Horticulturist: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, April 5, 1:00PM:** Make Your Own Nature Greeting Card: A/T/C5+

**Saturday, April 5, 4-5:00PM: FREE,** East End Environment Lecture with Mike Bottini, Seatuck Environmental Association-Latest Results of the Long Island Mammal Survey: A/T/C8+ Light refreshments will be provided.

**Sunday, April 6, 1:30-4:00PM:** Pop Up Pond Workshop: AA

**Saturday, April 12, 10:30AM:** Vernal Pool Exploration: A/T/C8+

**Saturday, April 12, 8-9:00PM: FREE,** Full Pink Moon Hike. Co-sponsored by Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt (FLPG) and South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO). RSVP: [info@longpondgreenbelt.org](mailto:info@longpondgreenbelt.org)

**Sunday, April 13, 10:00AM-1:00PM:** Nature & Bird Watching Cruise with Stony Brook Southampton: A/T/C8+

**Sunday, April 13, 11:00AM:** Make a "Stained Glass" Window: A/T/C5+

## Spring School Break Week - FREE, Outdoor Walks for All Ages

**Monday, April 14: 10:30AM:** Scavenger Hunt

**Tuesday, April 15: 10:30AM:** Spring Bingo

**Wednesday, April 16: 11:00AM:** Dedication of the New Marine Exhibit, Light refreshments will be provided FREE Admission all day

**Wednesday, April 16: 11:30AM:** Animal Signs

**Thursday, April 17: 10:30AM:** Animals and Weather

**Friday, April 18: 10:30AM:** Searching for Sleeping Insects

**Wednesday, April 16, 1-3:00PM:** SOFO's East End Outdoor Nature Education with Crystal at Wolf Swamp Preserve, Southampton: C 3-7

**Saturday, April 19, 10:00AM: FREE,** Young Birders Club: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, April 19, 11:00AM:** Let's Make a Bug Hotel!: A/T/C5+

**Saturday, April 19, 5-6:00PM:** The Natural History of Long Island with Tara Rider at the Bridgehampton Museum, Fee: \$20. RSVP at [bhmuseum.org](http://bhmuseum.org) Co-sponsored by SOFO: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, April 19, 7:30PM:** Search for Singing Frogs - Spring Peepers: A/T/C5+

**Tuesday, April 22, 3:00PM: FREE,** Earth Day Beach Clean Up with SOFO: AA

**Saturday, April 26, 10:30AM: FREE,** Birding for Beginners: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, April 26, 10:00AM-4:00PM: FREE,** SOFO's Annual Earth Day Celebration. Enjoy Free Admission 10AM-4PM, Birding for Beginners Walk 10:30AM, Children's Activities and Face Painting 10AM-2PM, and Meet Animal Ambassadors from the Evelyn Alexander Wildlife Rescue Center 2-3PM (Tickets: Members \$5, Non-members \$12): AA

**Saturday, April 26, 11:00AM-1:00PM: FREE,** SOFO's Young Environmentalists Society (YES!) Presents: Ivohiboro, the Lost Forest (Madagascar), A Documentary Film Screening and Q & A with Stony Brook University Department of Anthropology Scientists at Sag Harbor Cinema. Co-sponsored by SOFO, Stony Brook University and Sag Harbor Cinema: A/T/C10 and up

**Sunday, April 27, 11:00AM-2:00PM:** Join us for an exclusive members-only open house as part of SOFO's Earth Day Weekend celebration!: AA

**Sunday, April 27, 8:00AM:** Birding with Joe Giunta—Spring Migration @ Promised Land: A

**Sunday, April 27, 10:30AM AND 1:30PM:** Meet the Frogs, Story Time with Crystal: AA

May

**Tuesdays at SOFO Weekly Yoga Class, Beginning May 20, 3-4:00PM:**

Root to Rise, Outdoor Gentle Yoga with Karen Meyer: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, May 3, 10:00-11:30AM:** Walking Dunes Geology & Maritime Botany Walk: A/T/C8+

**Saturday, May 3, 10-11:30AM: FREE,** Creating Bird Habitats —A Gardening and Bird Walk at Inlet Pond Preserve, Greenport. Co-sponsored with North Fork Audubon Society (NFAS): A/T/C10+

**Saturday, May 3, 11:00AM:** Coastal Creations—Beach Combing and Fine-Line Shell Art: A/T16+

**Saturday, May 3, 7-8:30PM:** What Goes Buzz in the Night? An Outdoor Workshop: A/T/C10+

**Sunday, May 4, 11:00AM:** Family Gardening Fun: F

**Sunday, May 4, 1:30-4:00PM:** Pop Up Pond Workshop: AA

**Saturday, May 10, 9:00AM: FREE,** Memorial Nature Walk for Naturalist and SOFO Founder Larry Penny: A/T/C8+

**Saturday, May 10, 10:00AM:** Beginner's Nature Photography Workshop with Fish Guy Chris Paparo. Workshop fee \$75: A

**Saturday, May 10, 10:30AM: FREE,** Birding for Beginners: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, May 10, 4-5:00PM: FREE,** East End Environment Lecture with Jake Kushner, SOFO-Salamander Tracking Study Update: A/T/C8+ Light refreshments will be provided.

**Sunday, May 11, 11:00AM:** Spring Beach Walk: AA

**Saturday, May 17, 10:00AM: FREE,** Young Birders Club: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, May 17, 11:00AM:** Planting Fun for Everyone: AA

**Sunday, May 18, 11:00AM-12:30PM:** Enrichment Learning by Making with the New York Marine Rescue Center: A/T14-18

**Wednesday, May 21, 1-3:00PM:** SOFO's East End Outdoor Nature Education with Crystal at Northwest Landing Road, East Hampton: C 3-7

**Saturday, May 24, 8:00AM:** Birding with Wayne Whitmore at Promised Land: A

**Saturday, May 24, 9:30AM:** Black Racer Snake Search with Andy Sabin: AA

**Saturday, May 24, 10:00AM:** Salamander Seining and Some Frogs Too, with Andy Sabin: AA

**Saturday, May 24, 10:00AM:** Beginner's Nature Photography Workshop with Fish Guy Chris Paparo. Workshop fee \$75: A

**Saturday, May 24, 4-5:00PM:** East End Environment Lecture with Dr. Tobey Curtis, NOAA-Tracking Sharks in New York Waters: What to Know Before You Hit the Beach: A/T/C8+ Light refreshments will be provided.

**Saturday, May 24, 8:00PM:** Horseshoe Crab Tagging with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE): AA

**Sunday, May 25, 10:30AM AND 1:30PM:** Fantastic Flowers, Story Time with Crystal: AA

**Friday, May 31 8-9:30AM: FREE,** Joint Bird Walk with North Fork Audubon Society (NFAS) and Frank Quevedo, SOFO Executive Director, at Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island: A

**Saturday, May 31, 9:30AM:** Black Racer Snake Walk and Talk: A/T/C5+

June

**Sunday, June 1, 1:30-4:00PM:** Pop Up Pond Workshop: AA

**Saturday, June 7, 10:00AM:** Beginner's Nature Photography Workshop with Fish Guy Chris Paparo A

**Saturday, June 7, 10:30AM: FREE,** Birding for Beginners: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, June 7, 2:00PM:** Weird and Wonderful Heroes of Pollination: A/T/C8+

**Sunday, June 8, 11:00AM:** Sea Creature Art in Celebration of World Oceans Day's: A/T/C5+

**Wednesday, June 11, 9-10:00PM: FREE.** Full Strawberry Moon Hike. Co-sponsored with Friends of the Long Pond Greenbelt (FLPG). RSVP: info@longpondgreenbelt.org

**Saturday, June 14, 8:00am: FREE,** Memorial Bird Walk for Eric Salzman. Co-Sponsored by Eastern Long Island Audubon Society (ELIAS): A/T/C8+

**Saturday, June 14, 10:AM-1:00PM:** Marine Biology Cruise on Shinnecock Bay: A/T/C8+

**Wednesday, June 18, 1-3:00PM:** SOFO's East End Outdoor Nature Education with Crystal at Spinney Road Trail, Flanders: C 3-7

**Saturday, June 21, 10:30AM-12:30PM: FREE,** Dragonfly Field Day at Mashomack Preserve, Shelter Island. Co-sponsored with The Nature Conservancy at Mashomack Preserve: AA

**Saturday, June 21, 10:00AM: FREE,** Young Birders Club: A/T/C10+

**Saturday, June 21, 11:00AM:** Grassland Appreciation Walk: A/T/C5+

**Sunday, June 22, 1:00-3:00PM:** Create Art with the New York Marine Rescue Center: AA

**Saturday, June 28, 10:30AM:** Meet the Martins with Purple Martin Steward John Shemilt: AA

**Sunday, June 29, 10:30AM AND 1:30PM:** Terrific Turtles, Story Time with Crystal: AA

SOFO Featured on  
**Extraordinary World with  
Jeff Corwin on CBS**

SOFO was featured in a February 22, 2025 CBS episode of Extraordinary World with Emmy®-winning conservationist Jeff Corwin. Jeff joined SOFO Executive Director Frank Quevedo and several young naturalists for a birding adventure and then visited the marine touch tank with a few budding marine biologists. The episode focused on Long Island's wildlife and included wildlife rescue efforts by the New York Marine Rescue Center at the Long Island Aquarium in Riverhead.

**New Marine Exhibit Dedication**

Join us on Wednesday, April 16, 2025 for the Grand Opening and dedication of our new marine exhibit tank at the museum. Admission is free for the day. A "window into the bay", the exhibit showcases the seasonal fish, invertebrates and shellfish of our bay ecosystems. With more than double the exhibit space of our original marine touch tank we can now accommodate greater numbers of visitors to our most popular exhibit, including anyone requiring wheelchair access. The new tank was made possible by grants from the Suffolk County Omnibus Department of Arts & Culture and the Hollomon Price Foundation. A dedication will take place at 11:00am, followed by light refreshments.

**SOFO Welcomes Two New Staff**



Photo: Chris Paparo@fishguyphotos

Hi! My name is Rebecca Rogers, and I started working at SOFO as an Environmental Educator this past February. I graduated from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science in 2014. After graduation, I worked for the Illinois Natural History Survey at the Lake Michigan Biological Station in Zion, IL studying yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*). After my time in Illinois, I moved back home to Michigan and worked for the MI Department of Natural Resources as an Aquatic Invasive Species Technician. We used acoustic telemetry to track Grass Carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) and their movements in Lake Erie. I then moved to Long Island to pursue a master's degree at Stony Brook University – Southampton, School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, studying Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). I love the diverse environment of the South Fork, and love teaching visitors about the unique place we live in. When not at work, I spend as much time outdoors as possible, usually at the ocean beaches surfing.



Hi, my name is Sydney Mantione, and I started working as a full time Environmental Educator at SOFO in January 2025. I first started as a volunteer in February 2024 and then began working part time from June to December, while I was attending Stony Brook University. This December, I earned my bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Environmental Law, Waste Management, and Public Policy, as well as a

minor in Ecosystems and Human Impact. My experiences at Stony Brook University combined with my time at SOFO have furthered my passion for environmental education, outreach, and advocacy. I have always had a love for the outdoors and learning about the natural world, and I look forward to sharing this love with the public!

**Of Milkweeds and Monarchs**

by Dave Taft



Ask anyone to name a familiar insect. Stack the deck a little by asking about one that migrates. Invariably, someone will tell you about the Monarch Butterfly and its incredible journey to Mexico and back. Any grade-schooler can tell you about the insect's brilliant warning colors, perhaps even

its peculiar interest in milkweed. At nature centers, naturalists hang monarch kites and posters on walls, lead monarch walks, sell monarch paraphernalia, and some even tag the butterflies. The monarch and its habits are a feel-good mantra for nature-lovers nationwide.

But no Monarch lives in a vacuum. The butterfly has a host of requirements for its survival. Not the least of these, the often-overlooked milkweeds that feed its young. Milkweeds are herbaceous and perennial, that is, they are not woody and grow back from their rootstocks each year. In fall, the plants support erect seedpods; each packed to splitting with seeds and downy fuzz. These seeds and their silky parachutes have been the vehicle for idle "wishes" blown to the wind by countless generations of children. Earlier in the summer, the flowers of milkweeds are a delight to the eye and even more delightful to the nose. In fact, to many, the scent of Swamp Milkweed is one of the loveliest in the flower kingdom.

Most of us have passed a milkweed; a few of us may even have taken a minute or two to check the plants for Monarch caterpillars. Interestingly, although the milkweed leaves are toxic to most insects, the Monarch Butterfly will lay its eggs only on the milkweed plant. When the eggs hatch into caterpillars they will feed on the poisonous milkweed leaf without succumbing to the toxin. In fact the toxin is taken into the caterpillar's system, and when the butterfly develops the toxic substance remains. The orange color of the Monarch is a warning sign to predators who have learned that Monarchs are poisonous to eat. Many other species of butterflies find the milkweed plants attractive but only use the flowers of the milkweed from which to obtain nectar.

There are four species of milkweed commonly found on the South Fork. The Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and Blunt Leaved Milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaules*) can all be found in varying habitats throughout the area. Both Common Milkweed and Butterfly Weed are found growing in sunny, dry fields. As the name implies, Swamp Milkweed grows best in wet fields and along the edges of marshes. Blunt Leaved Milkweed grows in openings in dry woods.

Milkweed flowers are spectacular. Both Common Milkweed and Swamp Milkweed are lovely shades of pink, Butterfly Weed sports flowers that are florescent orange, and Blunt Leaved Milkweed is purple. In all four species, dozens of complicated flowers seem to explode from the plants like tiny fireworks. Interestingly, next to orchids, the milkweed family has devised some of the most elaborate methods to ensure insect pollination. Each complex flower is composed of five cup-like structures that resemble a crown. Insect feet that land on these structures invariably slip off the slick structures and land in a narrow slit between the cups. This is no accident, since the milkweeds position their male and female organs within these

slits. An insect strong enough to extract its foot from the slit removes two small sacks of pollen called pollinia, which are firmly attached to the insect's foot. Another slip of the foot is all that is necessary to deposit these pollinia into the female part of the flower. Pollination is accomplished; the plant is ready to produce seeds. Sadly, insects too small to remove their feet from the slits pay dearly for their last sip of nectar. Looking at milkweed flower head will occasionally reveal unfortunate imbibers, their feet still stuck between the flowers.

The next time you follow the carefree flight of a Monarch Butterfly, pay close attention to the plant it lands on. In many ways, milkweeds are common and easy to overlook, but to many naturalists they are, significant plants worthy of appreciation.

Dave Taft is the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Unit Manager at the Gateway National Recreation Area and a naturalist who likes to draw, paint and spend time outdoors.

*This article originally appeared in the SOFO Naturalist, Spring, 2003. Vineyard Field, located behind the museum, is part of the Long Pond Greenbelt Preserve and is a great place to observe butterflies and other insects that depend on milkweeds, especially Monarchs.*

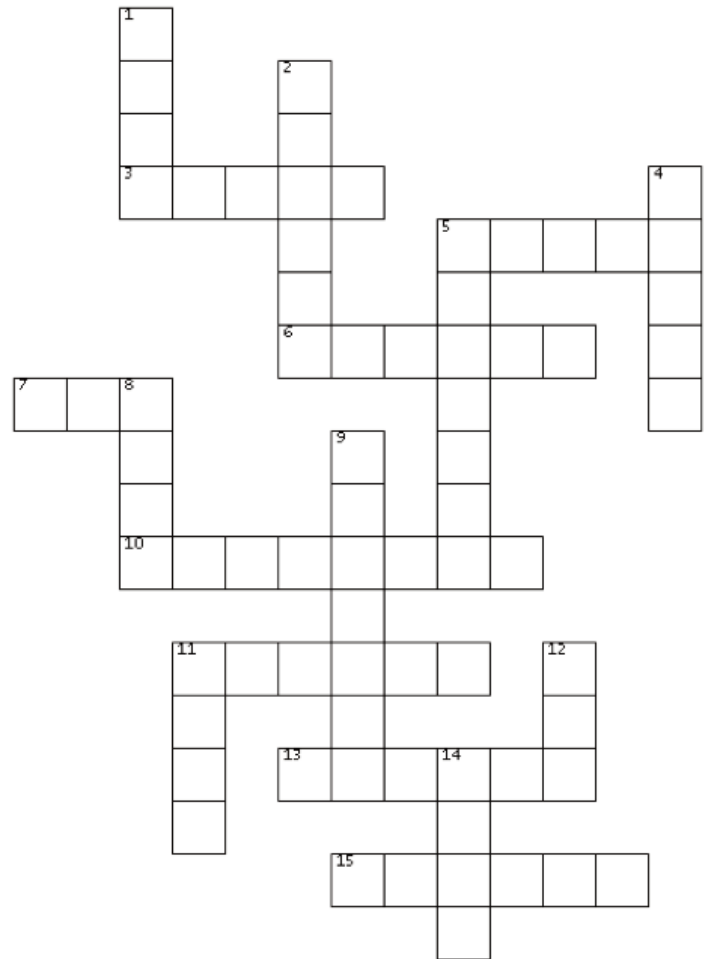
## Think Spring Crossword

### ACROSS

- 3. water habitat for birds
- 5. Spring begins in \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. days get \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. hides behind clouds
- 10. baby amphibians in the pond
- 11. gentle wind
- 13. St. Patrick's Day bird on Long Island
- 15. newly hatched birds

### DOWN

- 1. trees are "popping" with these in Spring
- 2. seasonal pond habitat
- 4. birds start doing this
- 5. what some birds do in spring and fall
- 8. home for a bird
- 9. April showers bring May \_\_\_\_\_
- 11. sound bees make
- 12. what baby fish are called
- 14. plants need this for seeds to grow



Grass Pink Orchid



Purple Martin chicks

**Crossword Answers**  
 Across 3. Shore 5. March 6. Longer 7. Sun 10. Tadpoles 11. Breeze  
 13. Osprey 15. Chicks  
 Down 1. Buds 2. Vernal 4. Chirp 5. Migrate 8. Nest 9. Flowers  
 11. Buzz 12. Fry 14. Rain

## 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.

### South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO) Board of Directors

Andrew E. Sabin,  
*President*  
James T. Ash,  
*Vice President*  
Jonathan Sabin,  
*Treasurer*  
Kimberly Goff,  
*Secretary*

David Beard  
Steve Englebright  
Ray Iwanowski  
Jeffrey Keil  
Greg Lippmann  
Jonathan Marvel  
Steven McKenna  
Russell Mittermeier  
Kenneth C. Ramos  
Carl Safina  
Samriti Seltzer  
Scott Seltzer  
John Turner  
Peddrick Weis  
Wayne Whitmore

### *Advisory Council*

Nejma Beard  
Peter Boyd  
Michael Cinque  
Leslie Clarke  
Nick Combemale  
April Gornik  
Alex Guarnaschelli  
Kerry Heffernan  
Jane Held  
Nick Martin  
Mark Masone  
Ada Samuelsson  
Irene Tully

### *Staff*

*Executive Director*  
Frank Quevedo  
*Director of Development  
& Special Events*  
Diana Aceti  
*Education Director &  
Calendar and Newsletter*  
Melanie Meade  
*Membership Associate and  
Environmental Outdoor  
Education Specialist*  
Crystal Posschl-Oakes  
*Young Environmentalists  
Society (YES!) Director*  
Mare Dianora

*Environmental Educator,  
Reptile & Amphibian  
Specialist*  
Jake Kushner  
*Environmental Educator  
& Aquarist*  
Rob Gelling  
*Environmental Educator &  
Digital Marketing and  
Social Media Coordinator*  
Erin Hwang  
*Environmental Educator &  
Outreach Coordinator*  
Rebecca Rogers  
*Environmental Educators*  
Sydney Mantione  
Victoria Panuccio  
Moe Kennedy  
*Front Desk Receptionist*  
Melody Koncelik




### South Fork Natural History Museum (SOFO)

P.O. Box 455, Bridgehampton, NY 11932-0455  
(631) 537-9735  
email: [info@sofo.org](mailto:info@sofo.org)  
[www.sofo.org](http://www.sofo.org)

The *SOFO Naturalist* is  
published quarterly

Address Service Requested

Dated Material  
 Printed on Recycled Paper with Soy Ink

BULK RATE  
Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Permit #5  
Bridgehampton,  
NY 11932