#### SOUTH SHORE

# WATERFOWLERS

ASSOCIATION, INC.

DECEMBER 2012

Web site: sswa.org

P.O. BOX 217

**BRIGHTWATERS, NY 11718** 



# January's Meeting is Changed to WEDNESDAY, January 2<sup>nd</sup> NOT January 7<sup>th</sup> (due to Library Scheduling) Mark your calendar with the correct date

# The Duckboat Show that Almost Wasn't

Sounds like a really bad Dr. Suess story. October 28th was the scheduled date of our Annual Duckboat Show and Waterfowl Festival, with a rain date of Nov. 4th. All things were going as planned until about a week before, news came to me that we are expecting a hurricane, Sandy, on show weekend. What to do? I racked my brain trying to listen to every weather report, trying to figure out when the storm would hit. The day before the show I contacted my officers to get their input. Some said use the rain date, some said we should try to have the show, due to the advertising and getting the word out. What to do, what to do???? Then I heard a little voice over my shoulder, literally. Jean my wife came up behind me and said she overheard all the calls to the boys. She then said, "I think you should have the show, because if the storm is as bad as they report it to be, there might not be a Cedar Beach Marina to hold the show on the rain date." A more brilliant statement was ever made. How right she was, because cedar beach marina was trashed by that b\*\*ch Sandy.

I spread the word that the show is to go on. I must have answered over 100 phone calls in relation to the show. Vendors, members, and visitors asking if it is a go. We arrived the morning of the 28th to grey overcast skies. The rains held out until the ride home from the show. Thirteen vendors showed up, seven duckboat entries, and we had 207 people through the gate. We made about 2/5 of our regular funds, thanks to member renewals, and raffle ticket sales. It is better than no show, but we will have to tighten our belts this year. (This is the exact reason we created an amendment for an emergency fund.)

I want to thank the vendors and visitors who came to the show. I have to give a great big thanks to the men and women of the SSWA, who came down to work the show. I know you all had a lot more important things to do, in preparation of Sandy hitting landfall. You all are truly dedicated members, and without your help, we could not have had a show. YOU ALL ARE THE BEST. THANK YOU AGAIN.

Curt Matzinger, Show Chairman

# 9th SSWA Dinner is in the Works

March is usually the time for the Annual SSWA Dinner at Fisherman's Catch Restaurant in Point Lookout. Sandy trashed the restaurant. I was told it "should" be open April 1. We are working on the Waters Edge Restaurant out in East Moriches, or the Elks Lodge where the SASI dinner is to be held. Nothing is set in stone. We are trying for the first or second Saturday in march. If you are interested in attending, and want to be put on the list, Call Curt at 631-661-0379 and I will keep you up to date on what we come up with. (You are not obligated to attend.) I just need a tentative head count so I can get prices. I will assume that past attendees might be interested, so you are automatically on the list. New participants need to call me. We have a good time and a lot of fun. Call me today.

### Our Veterans Say Thank You

I received a letter the other day from my friend Bill. It came from the men and women of the VA hospital in Northport. They thank us for all the magazines and newspapers that he drops off from our club. I've been asking our members to bring their used hunting and fishing magazines to the club for the past couple of years now. I drop them off at Bill's and he places them in the racks in the various wards. He tells me within an hour they're all gone. They get circulated around the floors and enjoyed by all. The veterans tell Bill that even they can't do it anymore, they enjoy reading about the great outdoors. So keep bringing in the magazines to the meetings and Bill will make sure they get delivered.

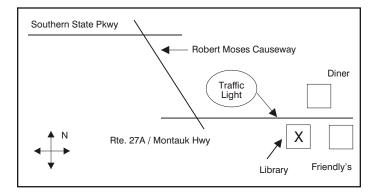
### South Shore Waterfowlers

#### Voice of the Long Island Waterfowler

The South Shore Waterfowlers meet at 7:30 p.m. on the 1st Monday of each month from September through April. If the 1st Monday falls on a holiday, the meeting will take place on an alternate date (to be announced). (A library holiday is the same as a U.S. Postal holiday.)

Meetings are held on the first floor conference room of the Brightwaters/Bayshore Library located on Montauk Highway (Rte. 27A) in Brightwaters/ Bayshore (see map below).

For additional information, please call John (631) 874-7459 or Ron (631) 862-8518.



# South Shore Waterfowlers Association — Officers —

• President
• 1st Vice President and Membership Ron Sineo 631-862-8518
• 2nd Vice President Richard Franks, Jr. 631-603-6295
• Secretary Ron Pliszak (631) 902-2220
• Treasurer
<ul> <li>Sergeant at Arms, Newsletter Editor, Duckboat Show Chairman, Historian, and Club Dinner Chairman Curt Matzinger</li> </ul>
631-661-0379

### S.S.W.A.'s BUDDY Program

Ben Sohm, a member of the SSWA, came up with an idea at our Sept. meeting, to get fellow hunters without access to boats, to experience hunting from a duckboat. At our Dec. member meeting, members with boats were paired up with members who didn't have a boat. What a great idea. I was paired up with Brent, a fellow SSWA member. We went out on Dec. 15th. We were joined by our secretary Ron, and gunned at Point Lookout. We set up and had a good time. We limited on brant, and added some buffies also to the bag. Fired way too many shells for the birds bagged (our sights must have been knocked loosenot as easy as sporting clays huh). We ended the morning with some moose omelettes out in the bay. Check out the web for some pics of the hunt. All the other pairs, if you could send me some pics of your hunts, I can get them on the web as well (sswa.org). Any members who would like to be added to the list of non-boat hunters, give me a call and I will try to get you out in a boat (if available). Call me at 631-661-0379. Curt

# 2012 Youth Waterfowl Day a Big Success

This year's Youth Day was a combination of two locations, Flanders and Southaven Park. It took place at Southaven Park due to Sandy trashing the Flanders property. All the blinds were ruined. There will be no hunting this year at Flanders, as well as the Cedar Point property for sea ducks (they were washed out as well).

There were about 11 kids attending this year. They were assigned blinds and after a quick breakfast, off they went. They managed to harvest about 7 ducks. Kudos to Kelly, Nicole, the DEC officers, DU, Southaven Park guys, and SSWA for putting on a nice day for the kids. We served lunch when they returned from the woods. Even though they were without their number 1 mentor this year, the others did a good job teaching the "youts" all facets of waterfowling. Decoy set up, calling, when to shoot, bird ID, were some of the skills the kids learned. They had a great day and the adults had fun too. This is a great program for starting kids on the path to waterfowling. Check out the pictures on the web (sswa.org). Great job Kelly and Nicole.

### Grass Island a.k.a. the "Al McCormick Marsh Project" . . . A Brief History

by Ron Sineo

In 1985, Ducks Unlimited announced a "new" regional Director for Long Island. Craig Kessler, a past president of SSWA stepped into this new role. In 1985, D.U. also developed the "M.A.R.S.H. Program," anacronym for Matching Aid to Restore State's Habitat. Under the MARSH program, funds made available to NY State by DU for local projects would be matched by money from the NYS DEC. SSWA Life member Steve Sanford who was the DEC wildlife biologist for Long Island at that time, worked collaboratively with Craig Kessler to develop the first MARSH project ever, on Long Island. The proposal was to restore a man-made island in Great South Bay (Grass Island) that was property of the Town of Babylon. This Island had been created from dredge spoil left over from years of navigational dredging. Grass Island had become ecologically useless to migrating wildfowl, even though it was located in the Atlantic Flyway. What had

once been a productive salt marsh had become 30 acres of biological wasteland. With a profile over 20-feet high, it had been overtaken by phragmites and other invading plant species. DU and the DEC were committed to split the \$35,000 price tag to reclaim the island. The plan had three phases. In the first phase the phragmites was to be removed. In the second phase, 8 freshwater wetlands would be excavated, and in the third phase, natural vegetation would be established to support a variety of waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds and songbirds throughout the year. This plan was presented to the SSWA at the November, 1989 meeting bySteve and Craig. SSWA readily agreed to become a partner in this project. Once the legal go-ahead was received, no time was wasted in getting down to business. With approximately two weeks of heavy equipment work the group was able to create eight freshwater ponds and then SSWA volunteers planted the aquatic and upland nesting grass vegetation so vital to the project's success. Once completed, the four partners, DU, DEC, Town of Babylon, and SSWA held a dedication ceremony at the site on Grass Island on May 23, 1992. As the sign indicates, it was dedicated as the AI McCormick Marsh Project. Al himself was present and was honored at the dedication that day.

Unfortunately, the story does not end here. It seems that phragmites is an insidious plant. Burning it to the ground did not eradicate it. Slowly but surely, the phragmites began to re-gain its foothold on Grass Island again, even though we thought it had been beaten and burned into submission. By the 2003-2004 hunting season, many SSWA members reported that Grass Island conditions were rapidly deteriorating. In early April of 2004, representatives of SSWA, DU, Town of Babylon, and NYS DEC



took a boat ride to Grass Island. The singular purpose of this visit was to evaluate the progress of the "Al McCormick Project." The overall view of the group was that the upland region was doing well. Most of the trees, plants, and grasses that were planted on the higher ground had taken hold. The same could not be said for the many ponds that were dug on the Island. Low water levels in the ponds had allowed phragmites to colonize in them. The phragmites crowds out the good grasses and plants, resulting in a less diverse habitat. Everyone agreed that something should be done about this problem. Many options were discussed, from burning, mowing, and disking, to use of approved herbicides. It was decided that herbicides would be the best way to handle the problem. The plan was to spray the phragmites first, and then mow or burn the dead plants. We also agreed to dig the center of the ponds deeper, hoping that they would hold more fresh water to help prevent the regrowth of phragmites. And finally, we would once again plant native grass and other plants in and around the ponds. We moved forward with a joint request for permits to apply herbicide and then to conduct a controlled burn of the dying and dead phragmites. For the next several months, the Town of Babylon tabled the request. Perhaps we will never know all of the details, but by July, 2005, more than 14 months after the paperwork was filed with the town, we were still waiting for approval to deal with the phragmites. In truth, nothing ever came from this phase 2 initiative to try and restore the habitat on Grass Island. The town was reluctant to allow herbicides to be used, and was impossibly restrictive about its burn rules. This resulted in no permits ever being issued.

#### It Must Be Me!

by Ron Sineo

Have you ever said that to yourself . . . or at least thought it? Next you wonder and ask what am I doing wrong? Well things are not always what they seem. I'd like to tell you a true story that happened when I was a young teenager. It was the Thanksgiving holidays and I was with my Uncle Dan in Skowhegan, Maine. He owned a 25 acre farm which he was closing up for the winter. I was there to help . . . naturally! When we had finished the big stuff, he had promised to take me hunting. I had the only gun I owned with me. A 20 gauge field grade Marlin over/under with double triggers. Uncle Dan told me to get ready because we were going rabbit hunting! Now I had shot at a grand total of 3 cottontails in my brief hunting career, and I had hit two of them. Imagine my surprise when my uncle told me we were going for Snowshoe Hare. I had never even seen one before. Well, it was a short drive to the neighbor's farm. A hefty 6 footer by the name of Claude, and his 28 year old son Tomas (pronounced toe-MAS) were there waiting for us with 2 beagle hounds. I quickly got ready, as did my uncle, and the dogs were released, and we were on our way down a farm trail. The picture you see here is of a snowshoe hare, but it doesn't do justice to the critter. They are typically at least 20-24 inches long, they have enormous hind feet, and weigh upwards of 4 pounds. Notice their ground clearance. They are the 4-wheel drives of the rabbit world. Now I know that you, the reader, are wondering why this is not a waterfowl story. I apologize. If you try to stay with it, I think you will like it. If you have ever hunted rabbits you should get a kick out of this, and if you have ever hunted both cottontails and snowshoes, you will smile knowingly as this story unfolds.

When you hunt cottontails (Long Island rabbits) over beagles, this is what usually happens. The dog catches a whiff of the rabbit, and starts yelping loudly and takes off after the rabbit as fast as he can follow. The rabbit is now very frightened, and runs helter-skelter through the briars and low ground cover, trying to put distance between himself and the dog. The dog is faster, and starts to gain ground. Realizing this, the rabbit doubles or circles back, reversing his direction, in an attempt to outfox the dog. The dog finally closes the distance so that the rabbit is literally running for his life. Meanwhile, as soon as the dog startsyelping, the hunter should lookaround for a nearby clear shooting lane, and then get in position to try and shoot the rabbit when it circles back. Before long the dog has chased the rabbit back toward the hunter. The hunter must take care when he shoots because sometimes the dog is not too far behind. On occasion the dog can actually catch up to the rabbit by himself! Usually the hunter will geta shot or two at the rabbit before that happens. Okay, so much for the hunting lesson . . . let's get on with the story.

So the four of us, Claude, Tomas, My Uncle Dan, and I are all on this trail, when first one, then both dogs start yelping and take off like it was a race. My uncle and I stand still, since we are on an open trail, and I check that my 20 gauge is loaded. Next thing we know, both Claude and Tomas have disappeared! We look around, but they are nowhere to be found. In a few minutes the dogs'yelps start to get louder again, and we are both straining to look for any motion on the trail in front. Next we hear a gun shot, followed a minute later by Tomas who emerges from the nearby woods, holding onto the hind legs of an enormous rabbit. Wow! Before I could even get a good chance to inspect this monster of a rabbit, the dogs were at it again! I said to my uncle, "what should we do?" He said, "come over here by me, and get ready" so I did. I also took notice that once again, the other two had disappeared. Well it was an instant replay of the first rabbit episode. First, the sound of the dogs faded, then after a while they began to get louder, and then a single shot rang out, signaling that another rabbit had been taken. When the farmers returned the second time, my uncle said something to them which I couldn't hear. I imagined he must have said, "hey how about showing the kid where to stand or something so he might get a chance". I imagined this because after a bit, the dogs were at it once again. Only this time Claude said, "follow me kid . . . hurry." Well, I followed, all excited, and 50 feet into the woods we encountered one of those stone walls so typical of the upstate NY and New England countryside. Claude pointed at a spot which looked like a deer crossroads, and he told me to keep my eyes and ears open and wait right there. He then left me and went back the way we had come. As the sound of the dogs got louder, I tensed, and was straining to see something . . . anything. And then I spotted the rabbit. He had rocket launchers on him. He was running on the deer trail which crossed in front of me, and he was moving from right to left. As he got close to the wall, he launched



(Grass Island - Cont'd. from page 3)

I must admit that as a Board member of the SSWA, I feel a certain "ownership" or perhaps "protector-ship" would be a better description, when it comes to Grass Island. Grass Island was the single largest habitat restoration project that SSWA has ever been a part of. For several years after its completion, we all beamed with pride. We created poster boards with photos and we boasted of our good deeds at the shows we attended. The fact remains that although we had the best of intentions, we did not win the battle against the phragmites on Grass Island. We dedicated the project over 20 years ago, and science has come a long way since then. Today, there are herbicides that will effectively and safely deal with the phragmites. They have been used in several places on Long Island with great success and with the full support of the DEC. It is my feeling that it may be time to re-visit the Grass Island project once again.

I had an opportunity to talk it up a bit when I attended the Atlantic Flyway 2012 Summer Conference in Virginia this past July. I mentioned our little project to Bernie Marczyk, the Director of DU Conservation Programs for the Atlantic Region, out of the Annapolis Office. He told me he would have someone get back to me. I kind of put this information on the back burner until I received a call from Kurt Andersen, a DU biologist from Maine. He is involved with wetlands projects on the Northeast Atlantic coast. He asked more about Grass Island and wanted to set up a preliminary meeting. We scheduled it for Thursday, November 15, 2012. Curt Matzinger and I met with DU Biologist Kurt Andersen and Wayne Roberts (DU Regional Director for Connecticut and Long Island). The meeting was encouraging; Kurt Andersen outlined for us that he is looking to tie together a series of initiatives on the Atlantic coast. He told us about a location in Staten Island, and another on the Jersey shore. He was very interested in Grass Island (since it can be viewed as an extension of the other two). Unfortunately, since Ocean Parkway was closed to traffic (because of hurricane damage), we were not able to drive to a location where we could even look out at Grass Island. We left that meeting with some hope that the Grass Island Restoration Project may still find some support down the road. In the short term, however, I am not optimistic that anything will develop. After all, these same locations, the South Shore of Long Island, coastal Staten Island, and the Jersey shore were absolutely hammered by Hurricane Sandy. Any money pumped into these areas in the foreseeable future will go to repair damage for human residents, not our feathered friends. Still, Kurt Andersen e-mailed me and asked me about the possibility of a late January meeting as a follow up to our last one. It would seem there is still a spark that glows.

Keep an eye out for future reports about the Grass Island Project. While it may be on a back burner for the moment, we are hopeful that it will gain momentum after the coastal states have had some time to heal.

#### (It Must Be Me - Cont'd. from page 4)

his body into the air, his hind feet brushing the top of the stone wall so as to push off and be airborne again, but with more momentum. It seemed like he was doing 60mph. I swung the gun in his direction while he went airborne the first time, and fired a shot. I knew that I was behind him, so I whipped the gun barrel in front of him as he was soaring away, and fire again. This time he tumbled out of the air. I realized what a lucky shot I had just made. I also thought to myself what great shots those farmers had to be. After all, they fired just one shot each time. I got to the rabbit, picked him up, let him dangle head down, and started to walk out of the woods. As I spotted the others, my face was just about splitting from the big grin I had. Claude and Tomas instantly burst my bubble by poking fun at me, saying that I took two shots to kill this rabbit. I decided that I definitely didn't like these guys. After all, I was just a kid, and they were busting chops.

Soon, it was time to call it an afternoon, so we began to hoof it back to the cars. When we were within a few hundred feet or so, the trail opened up to be wide enough for 2 cars to pass each other with room to spare. Just then and there, the dogs started yelping again. This time we all stayed right there on this wide trail. After a while, the distant yelping sounds began to get closer and closer. And then I spotted the rabbit. He was sitting on his haunches in the middle of the trail with his ears pointed up. He had stopped running so as tolocate where the dogs were! Then the rabbit ran about 75 feet and stopped again to listen. When the rabbit stopped again for the third time, he was only about 35 yards from us, standing still and tall, with his ears pointed. Tomas shot once and killed the rabbit. Then he turned to me and said with a smirk, "You see, one shot, one rabbit!" Well, now I finally understood. These guys waited until the rabbit stopped and posed and then they shot. It is no wonder that they were breaking my shoes about having to fire 2 shots. Apparently, these snowshoes were so fast, they could keep out in front of the dogs. So the rabbits stopped long enough to confirm that they were still safe. It was at these momentary stops that the hunters would shoot, and collect the prize. Once this notion sunk in, I defended my 2 shot kill by protesting, saying that it was more difficult to hit them when they were flying, but I don't think they really believed me. Heck, I'm not even sure my uncle believed me. Try as I might, I could not get those two farmers to believe that I had shot my rabbit "on the wing." Their disbelief only frustrated me further, and it took me a quite a while to calm down. Later, on the car ride back to my uncle's place, I was able to laugh about the whole thing. The joke was, indeed, on me! I also took something constructive away with me about this adventure. Perhaps you could call it the moral of this story, and that is that things are not always what they seem!

### Quack's Tips

Ask 10 guys what the most important items to put in a blind bag are and you will probably get 10 different answers. Here are Quack's top 10 choices in no particular order.

- 1. Communications A hand held VHS battery operated marine 2-way radio is essential when hunting in the marine district. (These are available at boat and marine supply stores for under \$100.) When hunting on fresh water or the mainland, your cell phone will suffice. Put it in a zip lock sandwich bag and, for all hunting situations, take the time to write down important telephone numbers such as the local marina, bay constable, harbor master, local tow truck, and taxi company. Keep these numbers in the zip lock bag too.
- 2. Spare Keys Make a spare set of vehicle, trailer lock, engine lock, and house keys, etc., and put them in your blind bag. We all know someone who has gotten back to the launch ramp and then couldn't find his keys.
- 3. Dry Clothing This varies with the person. At least keep a spare pair of dry gloves (in a zip lock bag) some will also appreciate a pair of dry socks. If you waders spring a leak, your feet will not warm up without dry socks. A wool watch cap or balaclava is good to have as well. Many of us hunt with a camo cap of some sort. We've all had one blow of our heads while we were under motor.
- 4. A Small Utility First Aid Kit. Once you have one, customize it. Remove the seemingly useless stuff, and replace it with other things: such as aspirin or Advil, band aids, butterflies, etc.
- 5. Emergency Survival Kit Use something like a 1 quart Chinese soup container with a lid. In it put some stick matches, a short fat candle, a small leather-man tool, a space blanket, a whistle, at least 10 feet of strong 1/8 inch nylon cord, etc.
- 6. Toilet Tissue wait until a roll at home is more than half gone, and then take it and collapse the inner cardboard flat so that it becomes more like a thick wallet than a round roll. Put it in a zip lock bag. Besides the obvious use, it will help to start a fire, even in very wet conditions.
- 7. WD-40 a very useful item. (comes in a small travel size) It is a desiccant, and will dry out wet electric wires,

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as well as lubricate all kinds of stuff. If you are hunting in wet conditions, wipe your gun down then spray it with WD-40 before putting it back in its case.

- 8. Spare Ammo Most blind bags have a place to keep 6 or more shot shells in loops. Select 3 duck loads and 3 goose loads and leave them in the loops of your bag. When Duck hunting, if you hear geese, you may have time to swap out #2's for BB's and vice-versa.
- 9. Flashlight a small, high quality AA battery operated flashlight. Not for every time hunting use. Rather, for emergency situations. Keep the batteries out of the flashlight; put 2X the AA batteries in a zip lock bag with the flashlight.
- 10. Field I.D. Book Every blind bag should have a good field I.D. book. If you shoot a duck, even if you don't know what it is, you should be able to identify once it is in your hand.
- 11. (Editor's Addition A fiberglass rod or old aluminum arrow shaft to remove a stuck FIRED shell from your gun. Stick down barrel to remove stuck shell. Remember to do this only to a fired shell. Used many times during youth day and with new hunters.)

— South Shore Waterfowlers Association —						
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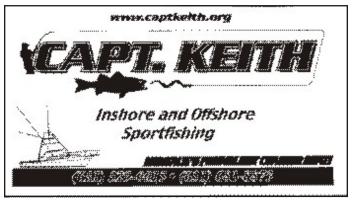
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### — South Shore Waterfowlers Association —

#### CALENDAR OF UP-COMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

January 2 — SSWA Meeting, Brightwaters Library (NOTE DAY CHANGE)

February 4 — SSWA Meeting, Brightwaters Library

March 4 — SSWA Meeting, Brightwaters Library

March? — 9th Annual SSWA Dinner (see article on page 1 and remember to sign up)

March? — Gun Show at IBEW Hall, Hauppauge (to be announced)

April 1 — Last SSWA Meeting, Brightwaters Library (Election of Officers)

April 28 — SASI Dinner (see Flyer Insert for more info)



We proudly support the Wounded Warriors

#### HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

VOICE OF THE LONG ISLAND WATERFOWLER



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