



OPPOSITE PAGE PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY KUEHN. THIS PAGE: PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL GONZALEZ (BIRD); ERIC STRIFLER (SHORE)

treatment, and electricity. Thinking about the ways these are not serving us efficiently can be daunting to the individual, but Samuelson urges people to use the local government to effect change. "Good old-fashioned outreach to elected officials," he says, "is the only thing that will get us moving down the right road. For the people to lead and make perfectly clear that we have to change course."

So far, it is Hamptonites who are changing the area's course. The Group for the East End acknowledged the need for clean drinking water and partnered with the Riverhead-based environmental group Long Island Pine Barrens Society (pinebarrens.org) to enact legislation. "It was approved two to one for the county to start putting money back into water quality protection," says DeLuca. "A lot of good can happen that way."

The septic systems in the Hamptons, many of which are old and insufficient, have allowed nitrogen to leak into our waters. "We've worked at the state level to bring funding to change out septic systems that are failing and too close to the water," says DeLuca.

Assemblyman Fred Thiele Jr., who works at the state level, points to the success of the Community Preservation Fund (CPF), which gets its money through real estate transfer taxes. "The Community Preservation Fund has generated \$1 billion for land preservation and has preserved 10,000 acres," says Thiele, who has proposed that the CPF be expanded to focus not only on habitat, but on water quality as well. "A lot of the species on the list are aquatic species. Water quality continues to decline on the East End."

Thiele believes that the list of the species affected

points to the larger issues affecting our world. "Loss of habitat, continuing problems with pollution, and climate change—all of these issues are related, and every level of government has a role to play," he says, insisting that federal agencies need to help state and local governments to exact change. "We're talking about billions and billions of dollars. It requires commitment from every level of government."

Today, the Hamptons still offers sweeping expanses of untouched beaches, the taste of fresh-caught tuna in Montauk in August, and the serenity of baymen coming home in the evening, but it is essential that every member of the community play their part to ensure these are available for generations to come by joining area activist groups like the Group for the East End, Concerned Citizens of Montauk, or Peconic Baykeeper, to name just a few; volunteering during clean-up days; or donating to organizations that protect the local environment. "We have forests and fields and open marshes that still look like they did 100 years ago," says DeLuca. "It's why the Hamptons is a destination. These species are the canaries in the coal mine. They are giving us insight into the ecosystems, and I consider this list a warning about the trends affecting our natural resources and, therefore, affecting all of us."

On the East End, our relationship with the environment is manifold. It's more than nice to live in a beautiful place. The beauty itself is what makes life possible. "We want to protect the environment," says Thiele, "but for us, that's protecting the cornerstone of our economy. And more than that, it's protecting our traditions, our history, and our culture." H

GET INVOLVED!

The South Fork Natural History Museum's premiere forum will center on climate change and its effect on the East End.

BY COURTNEY BOWERS

As species after species continue to suffer dramatic declines in population numbers throughout the Hamptons, the need for local involvement in protection and conservation efforts has never been more urgent. "What we do will come down to money and policies," says Carl Safina, board trustee at the South Fork Natural History Museum and Nature Center (SoFo). "But first we need the best information on what might happen and likelihoods of it happening." Enter "Climate Change: What It Means for the East End," the debut panel and benefit hosted by SoFo. On June 6 from 5 to 7 PM, activists and concerned citizens alike will discuss current research and innovative solutions to mitigate impacts on local marine life, while raising funds for the museum's new climate change programming that is coming this fall. A cocktail reception will commence the evening, followed by special guest speaker Sag Harbor Village Board trustee Dr. Robert Stein as well as environmental leaders Safina, Michael B. Gerrard, Jack Rivkin, and Assemblymen Steve Englebright and Fred W. Thiele Jr. "We invite everyone from the community to join our discussion so we can work together to protect our planet," says Frank Quevedo, SoFo's executive director. Tickets from \$150, 377 Bridgehampton Sag Harbor Tpk., Bridgehampton, 537-9735; sofo.org