



# Long Island Botanical Society

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The Quarterly Newsletter

Winter 2020

## Remembering Rich Kelly

Rich Kelly's passion for nature developed during his childhood in New Hyde Park. From an early age he was in the field at every opportunity keeping careful notes on all the organisms he saw. Probably his greatest love was marine mollusks and his seashell collection is considered one of the most extensive and best curated private collections in the New York metro region.

His study of the local flora began in earnest in his 40s. Rich joined LIBS in 1997 and began regularly attending field trips and programs. Before long he was attending monthly Flora Committee meetings and during the next two decades he contributed many noteworthy reports on Long



Rich Kelly (December 6, 1950–September 6, 2019). Rich used this photo in his biography for several articles he wrote for *American Butterflies*, the quarterly publication of the North American Butterfly Association. Photo by Don Riepe, c. 2004: "Rich Kelly as James Bond".

Island's flora published in the *LIBS Newsletter*, the *Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society* and elsewhere. In 2002 Rich chaired the LIBS Program Committee and continued in that position till his death. As in everything, he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the position; aided by his many contacts he booked renowned speakers for 17 years. In 2012 Rich became a member of the LIBS Executive Board and served till his death.

Although it is often difficult to capture a person's character on paper the following pages reveal the incredible life of our dear friend Rich as seen by those who knew him best.

Eric Lamont

A really great naturalist. Not many like him. And a nice guy.

Karl Anderson

Rich is remembered by many as an enjoyable, warm, witty, low-key, well-rounded, consummately skilled naturalist with deep knowledge in many fields. Rich was upbeat and active to the end and those many of us who knew him over the years will miss him exceptionally. There are not enough of his kind in our world. Lamentations.

Rick Cech

Many years ago - too many to remember - Rich, Bob Cook, and I were birding and herping in the NJ Pine Barrens when he turned over a log and found a Worm Snake, which was a life herp for him. I've never seen anyone so happy about seeing a new species. He literally jumped up and down with excitement.

Rich was a complete naturalist, interested in all areas of natural history. He also joined me on many late summer butterfly counts around Jamaica Bay and at the end of the day he always insisted that we stop at the Carvel in Howard Beach.

Don Riepe

What a guy! He was always surprising me with the depth of his knowledge – and he was always ready and willing to share it. I admired him so, not only for his vast scientific knowledge, but his kindness in imparting it.

His courage in continuing life in spite of his affliction was awesome. How many times did I call him and he was out on a field trip – in spite of being deep in treatment.

The world is a better place for having held Rich Kelly. I am grateful for having known him.

Barbara Conolly

## Long Island Botanical Society

Founded: 1986 • Incorporated: 1989

The Long Island Botanical Society is dedicated to the promotion of field botany and a greater understanding of the plants that grow wild on Long Island, New York.

Visit the Society's Web site  
[www.libotanical.org](http://www.libotanical.org)

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## Society News

### Rich Kelly Day at Caumsett.

LIBS has formed an ad hoc committee to plan a yearly event counting Baltimore Checkerspot at Caumsett Historic State Park Preserve, Lloyd Harbor, in memory of Rich. "To witness the flight each year is the best way we can remember Rich Kelly" (Sue and Ken Feustel, see tribute on page 10 of this issue).



Baltimore Checkerspot at Caumsett. Photo by Ken Feustel.

Peak flight days have been between June 20-25. We hope to be flexible in planning for a warm, sunny day (probably a weekday). More details will follow in the LIBS *Newsletter* and website.

**LIBS Election Results.** At the November 2019 meeting at Muttontown Preserve, LIBS members elected the following officers to serve a 2-year term: President—Eric Lamont, Vice-President—Andrew Greller, Treasurer—Carol Johnston, Recording Secretary—Sue Avery, Corresponding Secretary—vacant.

**LIBS *Newsletter* Hits Milestone.** The current (January 2020) issue of the LIBS *Newsletter* marks 30 consecutive years of publishing articles on Long Island's plants. For an historical account of the LIBS *Newsletter* see Vol. 28, No. 4 (Fall 2018 issue).

**Correction.** The Data Table was incorrectly presented in Ray Welch's article "*Gone with the wind?*" in the last issue of the LIBS *Newsletter* (2019, Vol. 29, No. 4, page 28); below is the correct Data Table.

#### Data Table: Comparison of Inner Achenes vs. Outer Achenes

n=11 for both, values are means

	wt. in mg	pappus area (mm <sup>2</sup> )	fall rate (m/sec)
Inner	4.6 mg	129 mm <sup>2</sup>	0.28 m/sec
Outer	7.1 mg	121 mm <sup>2</sup>	0.37 m/sec



**LIBS Membership Renewals for 2020 are due.**

Mail your dues (\$25 individual, \$30 family) to:

**Carol Johnston, LIBS Treasurer**

**347 Duck Pond Road, Locust Valley, NY 11560**

Thank you for promptly renewing your membership thus saving volunteer time and the cost for follow-up notices.

Rich Kelly was one of the broadest, most deeply knowledgeable naturalists I have known. Much of my time with him was on Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Counts, where he led a party with precision, efficiency, and dedication to the task at hand (most notably when he called us back to duty after we all had been thrilled by the discovery of New York's first Grace's Warbler in our count area). Rich generously helped me expand my meager knowledge of Long Island botany, even after his condition worsened, with a palpable passion for plants and for sharing his knowledge. He was a kind-hearted, generous member of the Long Island community of naturalists who has left many friends.

Doug Futuyma

Rich Kelly was an unassuming man. There was nothing pretentious about him. He was a genuine chap - a 'real' kind of guy. Intelligent, skillful but humble. The kind of individual who I could spend time with in the field and we did. A few times. Teaming up on several occasions to do Birding, Insecting, Butterflying, Botany and even some Conservation work. He was a well-rounded naturalist, skillful but never boastful, self-effacing, never interested in drawing attention to himself.

Rich was involved in several Christmas Bird Counts (CBC). It was he who convinced me to join the 2013 Bronx/Westchester CBC. That year, I was inducted into his team with the old, "rookie has to buy breakfast" which I did, despite accusing the lot of a scam - though all in good jest as I could care less about buying breakfast when the camaraderie was good. Rich was an area leader on the Southern Nassau CBC and I only joined the Atlantic Team because of him. He was the one who I partnered up with on one of my earliest Christmas Bird Counts in Suffolk County - the 2010 Montauk Christmas Count. Little did I know then that he was grooming me to take over his territory as he expressed to me later, "It's too much of a drive for me these days."

His sense of humor was unique. A bit of sarcasm and a tad dry but funny. It was sort of "British." If you like British humor, you



Rich Kelly (center). Photo © Andrew Baksh.



Rich in the field at Bayard Cutting Arboretum, Great River, Suffolk Co., NY.

would understand what I mean. He used to say that he had the "patience of a flea" but I disagree. Rich had the patience of a saint. He would take the time to explain and answer questions from anyone who consulted with him. Rich was altruistic, always generous with his time and knowledge.

Some saw him as frugal, I saw him as smart in spending. He had this old "baby blue" tripod that some used to rib him about. It was so shaky that he often had to kneel to use it. When he finally sprung for a new tripod, he still knelt. Old habits die hard.

Rich and I teamed up to participate in several conservation projects including a 2009 planting project at Jones Beach. Together we planted over 300 seedlings. Today many of those seedlings, now trees, act as cover for migrating birds, especially owls. I bet some of Rich's friends did not know that he participated in the replenishing of Japanese pines at Jones Beach West End.

I was very saddened to learn of Rich's passing but if it frees him from the pain he was enduring then I take some solace in knowing that he is now pain free, at peace and in a better place. It was not easy writing this piece about a man I admired for his unassuming brilliance. I will miss you my friend and will always remember you for all the good times we shared and the kindness you showed me always.

Andrew Baksh



"Old habits die hard." Photo © Andrew Baksh.

## Memories of Rich

We bunked together on two extended field trips: Newfoundland and the Sierra Nevada of California and adjacent Nevada.

He was the first to hit the sack, at about 8 PM, and the first to rise, at about 6 AM.

He never liked to waste time standing in long lines, so if there was an opportunity he would rush out of the bus or van and be the first on line, for example at a lunch counter. Others in the group would take the bait and race him to the head of the line. Mostly, he got there first, but he was happy to come in a close second!

Rich Kelly was the most competitive person I ever knew.

In the field he was tireless, yet he did not pursue the longest walks if the purpose was only distance. He was always concentrated on identifying the biota. He would prepare for a trip by studying lists of birds or plants that had been recorded there.

He was completely serious about proper identification, especially of birds. I had only a passing interest in bird ID, so I got into a mock argument with him over whether or not I had seen a Prairie Falcon one day in the Sierra Nevada. It was a fast-flying bird that I saw only for a split second, in retrospect probably a pigeon. When I persisted in calling it a Prairie Falcon he became angry. Finally, to keep peace, I was forced to admit I could not definitively give distinguishing characteristics. He took ID very seriously, and never casually.

Although he was critical of time-wasting he did not like to rock the boat. When service was slow at a local Nevada watering hole and I decided to press the matter with one of the wait staff, he remarked that they would retaliate for my impatience by contaminating the food they served us. We were promptly waited upon and he warily ate what he had ordered.

I don't remember his ever ordering an alcoholic beverage.



Rich Kelly (left), Jane Jackson and Andrew Greller.

For local forays he would be the first in the field for a scheduled trip and often went on to other sites after the trip was over.

We co-led a number of local walks. I would do the botany and he would do all the rest of the biota we came upon. When I fumbled for a common name, or even a binomial, of a long-forgotten plant he would invariably give me the correct name. He was able to do this because he subscribed to the *Flora of North America* publications, which are being issued irregularly over many years. He always had the up to date taxonomy.

I don't know of any other private botanist who owns a set. Most, like me, rely on libraries for reference.

Rich was willing, more than once, to step up and take over the leadership of a scheduled walk if I had to renege at the last minute due to a conflict in timing.

He had an enthusiasm for birds that I had lost way back, after my college years. Attending trip after trip with him identifying birds, I began to recognize them myself. This was also true of butterflies and dragonflies. Soon I became more interested in photographing those organisms than I did photographing plants. I saw he had the same influence on one of my grad students in botany. That student, having taken an undergrad course in ornithology, soon became an expert birder and contributed a number of rare-bird sightings.

Rich kept careful notes on all the organisms he saw on his many local trips. He published the recorded bird sightings in the latest issue of the North Shore Audubon Society's newsletter. If, in an email exchange, the distribution of a particular plant species was being discussed, he could always give the date and location of all his sightings over the years. Likely, he could do the same for the other organisms he recorded.

He and Al Lindberg, variously accompanied by a number of collaborators, including myself, undertook to compile the biota of a Nassau County natural area, visiting a new site each year, once a month for the 12 months. He kept careful records of all the findings. Those were shared with an administrative officer of each park or preserve. Perhaps ten parks were examined in this way.

Andrew Greller

What to write about my friend Rich Kelly? Tribute, list of his accomplishments, testimonial, all seem appropriate, but rather somber or stuffy for me. I would prefer to remember Rich by those good days in the field, that I called “Kelly Trips”. Rich was the ultimate planner. If he was leaving on a long vacation he would have his bags packed and waiting by the door two weeks before he left. If you were meeting him for a day trip he would have everything planned, all you had to do was go along for the ride. But you had better pack light because putting your gear in his trunk was a challenge, fitting it around all his stuff. But you would be chided if you didn’t have enough, especially water. He would have equipment for all contingencies, a case of water, bag of books, extra clothes in case he fell in, etc. All packed and done, we would head off early, breakfast at a great diner (he knew one everywhere), then head to the field.

All the trips followed a general natural history theme but some were more specific than others (botany, birds, bugs, butterflies or herps). Today was a herp day. Although any reptile or amphibian would do, today we were looking for snakes in general but with an eye out for a Timber Rattler and if we were lucky a Copperhead. And so, breakfasting along the way, we headed upstate to an area where the target organisms would likely be found. We arrived around a time when any respectable snake would be up and on the move, and headed to the field. We hiked a large loop trail through likely looking habitat for several hours, seeing a good number of snakes of several species, but couldn’t find the target organisms. Satisfied but a little disappointed, we decided to give up and go to a different preserve to do a little birding on the way home. So, we set out on an uphill trail to do an hour or so of birding. As we walked along this trail, we paid little attention but talked away as we oft-times did, when Rich stopped dead in his tracks and said, for the first and last time that I know of “OH.. %@#\* !!!!!”. Now, Rich’s go-to-word for all dire situations was “OH Crap!”, so when he used the champion of all cuss words, I knew we were in real trouble!!! There, not one foot from Rich’s unprotected ankle was a huge Timber Rattlesnake, coiled to the size of an old automobile hubcap. We carefully moved out of harm’s way and studied that old veteran with its numerous rattles, and moved on, taking careful note of where it was on our trail. We continued on in silence for a while paying close attention to where we were going, when Rich turned to me and exclaimed, “what did I say!” I told him exactly what he had said, he turned bright red, his eyes teared up and we both had a hearty laugh. Eventually we turned around and moved slowly down the trail, past that old veteran, who was still peaceably sunning, and made our way back to Rich’s car. And so we headed home after another good day in the field, having gotten at least one of the target organisms, although not exactly the way we had planned.

Those “Kelly Trips” will be sorely missed, but nowhere near as much as my good friend Rich.

Al Lindberg



If there was a contest of who of Rich’s naturalist friends knew him the longest, I might well win – although inadvertently. After Al and I started going on field trips with Rich, we’d have casual conversations about mutual acquaintances. One time he mentioned going birding with someone named Paul Buckley. I remarked “Dr. Paul Buckley, professor at Hofstra University?” Rich answered “Yeah, that’s him – do you know him?” “Sure, I went to Hofstra in the early ‘70s and had him for several Bio classes.”

Our dialog continued something like this – Rich: I took his Ornithology class, just as I was getting into birdwatching. Me: I took Ornithology too! Rich: I wasn’t a Bio major; I took it for fun with my friend from ROTC. Me, after comparing the year: OMG, you were one of those two Rot-C geeks who showed up in uniform to class!!!

Rich: Yeah, that was me, I stayed in touch with Prof. Buckley for years afterward. Hey, you were on that long trip to the Delmarva Peninsula! Remember when we found the Black Rail – that was something! And the whole class had dinner at Phillips Crab House in Ocean City...

So, Rich and I actually met in college, even if neither of us realized it until almost 30 years later! From then on, we’d occasionally reminisce about the many birding field trips that were the best part of Dr. Buckley’s Ornithology class, and it became kind of our inside joke. I sure will miss that.

Lois Lindberg

Rich was an inveterate note taker and had a prodigious memory. When he and I were in the field he would stop every few minutes to jot down every noteworthy bird, plant or butterfly and more that we had identified since the last note-taking pause. He later religiously compiled his notes into a list and followed through by data-basing all of his lists. I envied his discipline, and exploited it. I often had occasion to write to him and ask “what was the date when we saw that blue grosbeak at the former Pilgrim State Hospital site?” Or “Do you know where we were when you saw your “life” *Rotala ramosior*?” And he would always be able to tell me.

But this listing wasn’t merely a matter of discipline; it was an obsession. He would announce, when we would stop for some ice cream at the end of a hot day in the field in New Jersey, that this was a life Dairy Queen for him. Or getting off the Taconic State Parkway at Ancram, that this was a life exit for him. He even noted, about a familiar road, that he was traveling in a life direction on that road!

Well, sadly, Rich has taken his final life exit, and I miss him immensely, obsessions and all.

Skip Blanchard

Rich was a colleague on our weekly forest phenology observations on the Spicebush Trail at NYBG. Though we had the phenophases of 50 individual plants to observe and record, the presence of Rich with us always made our outings a far more expansive endeavor. His knowledge was encyclopedic and he patiently shared his expertise on all manner of fauna and flora on our route. He also shared his dry wit and tireless dedication to the natural world around us. It has only been a few weeks for us to distill what the loss of his presence means to us, and it is immense. But I also feel that he is still present with us when we embark as a group and with me as I wander elsewhere the world of nature, and I am so grateful for that.

Elizabeth Hardin



A little piece of Rich's life - Thursdays at NYBG in spring and autumn the past several years with the phenology group.



My special memories of the years with Rich are connected with his deep love for and knowledge of birds. He told me he had started his life list when he was 10(!) years old. He introduced me to my first kestrel in the Native Plant Garden at The New York Botanical Garden. Rich was always attuned to bird activity wherever we were. He needed only the call or song to identify a passing bird, and punctuated all our phenology walks with information about the birds around us. His bird watching binocular skills translated smoothly into helping the phenology group learn how to more accurately use binoculars to locate tiny beechnuts on our American Beech Trees. The culmination and apex of this was on May 4th, when he and Kristine Wallstrom identified by sight and call, 34 different bird species during our phenology walk! I miss everything about Rich and feel blessed that we crossed (Forest) paths for these few precious years!

Sandy Wolkenberg



Marge, Alinda, Sheila, Sandy, Dori, Elizabeth, and Kristine taking the picture (April 25, 2019), are mourning Rich's absence at the NYBG's phenology walks on the Spicebush Trail. His knowledge of plants, creatures crawling and flying, added immeasurably to our experiences, as well as his companionship and good humor.



Rich leading the phenology pack in late winter (March 14, 2019).



Rich in Ice Caves at Sam's Point, Shawangunk Mountains (the "Gunks"), upstate New York. Photo by Pat Aitken, 2014: "Rich was in search of a beetle and he found it."

I got to know Rich on a field trip to Sterling Forest, NY. We were walking through a field and he indicated a large flat piece of sheet metal lying on the ground and suggested I lift it up. Not knowing him and his sense of humor and being dumb, I did, only to find two large northern watersnakes hissing up at me. I gave Rich a look, said “oh, cool” and didn’t scream or drop the metal piece. I guess he figured I was okay because we spent a lot of time birding together after that. Many times he had me crying with laughter telling stories about his many adventures in the field while shelling, birding, butterflying or on his botany trips. No names will be shared to protect the guilty.

Anyone who has spent time in the field with Rich has heard him say “what’s that!” when a bird, bug, butterfly, snake, lichen, flew, fluttered or slithered by, or came into view when we turned a corner. So many times he knew exactly what it was or had a very good guess. If he didn’t, he never hesitated to admit it which to me is the sign of someone truly educated and confident in their knowledge. I will so miss hearing his “what’s that!” It was his undying curiosity about the natural world, to never stop learning, and to be so generous in sharing that knowledge, that is so inspiring.

It was always great fun to be birding with Rich and Andy Greller. While most of us were giving directions to view a bird by saying “it’s in the light green leaves next to the red leaves above the squirrel” or “look at the sticky tree at 2:00 o’clock” they would be identifying the tree in Latin. It came so naturally to them.

We almost had a car accident on West Lake Drive in Montauk when Rich started screaming “USNEA!!!! STOP!” I thought I had killed someone. Turns out it was some lichen Rich wanted to collect.



*Usnea strigosa* occurs throughout Montauk, Long Island, and is in the lichen group commonly known as “old man’s beard”.

Rich and I were birding one time at the West End of Jones Beach and since the birding was slow we started (of course) to look for bugs. A young man came up to Rich, wide-eyed, and said “are you THE Rich Kelly from the Bug Guide?” When Rich said “yes” the young man replied “it’s such an honor to meet you, can I shake your hand? I follow you on the Bug Guide...” I can’t remember the whole conversation now but the younger man was effusive in his praise and admiration of Rich. It was a genuine thrill on his part to meet Rich. Rich was a little taken aback and embarrassed but I think he was tickled pink to be acknowledged like that. I immediately christened Rich as the “the Man, the Myth, the Legend” just to keep him in line. It is so immeasurably sad to me now that all we have of Rich is his legend. He was an incredible mentor, a repository of knowledge about the natural world, a storyteller par excellence, and a great friend. He will be missed.

Pat Aitken



Rich (3rd from left) on Plum Island, NY, with birding group.



Rich in familiar pose investigating what’s out there living and growing, from the LIBS Newfoundland trip in 2006. Photo by Kristine Wallstrom, July 11, 2006.

I first met Rich Kelly in 1990 via letters he sent to me with records for the New York State Amphibian and Reptile Atlas, a project I was directing for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. Based on the number of letters and records he sent it was obvious that herps were his passion. I soon learned that in the world of natural history, Rich had many passions. Eventually I had the pleasure of sharing field time with Rich in pursuit of both herps and botanical treasures.

Rich remained active in the Herp Atlas for the ten years of the project and even after it was over continued to submit records to me. But Rich didn't just start recording his herp observations so that he could contribute to the Herp Atlas. He had been recording amphibian and reptile observations for years, so he went through his field notes and submitted records from as far back as 1963, supplying much appreciated historic data! In total he submitted over 1000 records for 50 of the 70 amphibian and reptile species found in NY which included observations made on 439 days. His search took him to 35 of the 62 NY counties, submitting records for 125 Herp Atlas blocks (out of a total of 895 blocks in the state). I remember Rich as one of the top herp atlasers but also as just a nice guy to spend time with in the field

Alvin Breisch



Rich and I first met in 1984 when I started going to meetings of the New York City Butterfly Club which had been founded the year before. I soon learned that Rich and I also shared an interest in mollusks and he was co-author of a guide to the marine shells of Long Island. Rich knew a lot about a lot of topics I am interested in, well beyond the butterflies that brought us together at those early meetings. Rich knew birds, insects, herps, plants, mollusks and mammals (that's just what I know he knew). He was a "Master Naturalist" long before that term was in general usage. I think his interest in beetles was kindled by his long friendship with Skip Blanchard and while I thought of Rich as a novice in the study of beetles it wasn't long before I was sending him specimens of the Coccinellidae (ladybugs) to identify for me.

It certainly is not going to be any surprise on his passing that everyone who knew Rich has nice things to say about him. But that was the case when he was still with us. If anyone ever thought that Rich was anything but a great guy with a keen, dry wit, a gentleman scholar, and a boon companion in the field, I never heard it.

Harry Zirlin



Although I've known Rich for many years and we shared many trips and experiences it's strange what one remembers: chasing snakes on dirt roads in Texas; photographing butterflies and frogs in California; his traveling with a suitcase full of field guides toting the weight limit of 50 pounds; wiring flowers to his wife, Patricia, back home; and sleeping with the air conditioner on full blast. All memories of Rich I cherish.

Peter Post

During the late 80's and into the 90's Rich and I often went on field trips with butterflies as the principal target. Many a time we would kick up a Lep with the ensuing call being "it's just a moth". Within a few years moths became a passion for me but it took Rich a few years more -- and I wouldn't say it became a passion for him -- but he began taking moth pictures and sending them to me for identification, when needed. Another bit of dialogue spoken on those trips was one of us stating "we don't do flies" and the other following up with "yet". I'm not sure that Rich ever got into flies but beetles captured his fancy.

As we got into the 2000's our main areas of interests diverged a bit more. I was heavily into dragonflies while Rich took to botany. As a result our field time together diminished but there was always that cross-pollination, if you will. Though not passionate about it myself (until recently) I did photograph flowers along my travels and for several years Rich would come over to my house in the winter to help with identifications. And I could help a bit with cluing him in somewhat on dragonflies. There was time for discussion of these subjects on the rides over to the monthly butterfly club meeting. While there was always the Muttontown Butterfly Count to bring us back together to the same love, in later years we were both expanding our horizons. This was in part due to an all nature e-mail discussion group we had established (along with others). His input to that -- even his weird humor that I didn't always understand -- is already greatly missed. Our nature discussion will go on, but it will never be the same without Rich.

Steve Walter



Rich in California. Photo by Peter Post, June 2008.

I have a vivid image in my mind of Rich on our Sierra Nevada LIBS trip catching the little Sierra tree frog in his hands so I could get a good look at it. He was always so ready to share! Also a memory of Rich sitting in my kitchen by the window hoping to see the Townsend warbler that was at the feeder one winter, and finally seeing it after several tries just before it disappeared. Rich was such a generous person and he will be sorely missed.

Carol Johnston



Rich and I became friends in 2011 and in the following years we went on many adventures together. I could always count on him for a plant ID and I credit him with kindling my interest in identifying bugs, one that has blossomed into over 10,000 photographs on bugguide.net!



Northern Red Salamander, Sussex Co., NJ. Photo by Seth Ausubel, April 2011.

Rich's knowledge of the natural world and his spirit were a major influence on me and I have many fond memories of him. Once, he took me and a few other friends on a herping expedition to northern New Jersey in early April in search of salamanders. It was a sunny but chilly day. At one stop, he led us to a small but very rocky and rushing stream in the woods. I thought, no way am I going to freeze my you-know-what off and risk broken limbs to look for salamanders here. But Rich went in hands and feet. Within a few minutes I heard him shouting "I got it! I got it!" I saw him stumbling back down the stream, soaking wet and covered in debris, with his hands cupped together and an excited smile on his face. He opened his hands to reveal a vibrantly colored and exceptionally large Northern Red Salamander. All I could say was "WOW!" I was as impressed by his effort as I was by this beautiful animal.

Seth Ausubel



Rich was a keen observer with an insatiable multidisciplinary thirst for knowledge and an endless appreciation and passion for all life forms. We will dearly miss his company and insights in the field and he will remain an inspiration to all of us.

Stéphane Perreault



I don't remember when I met Rich for the first time but it must have been on a LIBS field trip. Over the years he provided me a lot of rare species information from Long Island and I often asked him about species he had seen. He was the first to tell me about finding the invasive species hardy kiwi when he was up in Westchester County doing a butterfly count and from that find we were able to publicize it more and find more locations that have all been controlled. Rich joined me on a number of rare plant forays on Long Island, especially Hempstead Plains, where he was a great help and just enjoyable to be with. I will miss him a lot.

Steve Young

While the Long Island Botanical Society has long attracted those with an interest and curiosity of the plant world on Long Island, there are occasionally some that are noticed as striving to explore the fields with vigor and a keen eye and share it at meetings for all to relish. Rich stood out as an upstanding person, and as one of those dedicated to the Long Island Botanical Society, always on the lookout for field and program leaders, and furthering the very mission of the society. His field observations and efforts to keep the battalion of botanists busy has not only bolstered the Long Island Botanical Society but has enriched our knowledge base of, not just plants, but the myriad of insects of our Long Island home. I already miss him.

John Potente



Rich Kelly (right), Mike Feder (center) and Eric Lamont on ferry to Flowerpot Island, north of the Bruce Peninsula, Canada, June 2015.

*Nature's adventure  
From a looking glass one finds  
We are a morsel  
Methodical search  
Brings richness to all who seek  
Behooven to you  
The renaissance man  
Seeks with intention to find  
Passion in a dewdrop*

Mary Normandia



## Rich Kelly and the Baltimore Checkerspot Success Story

In 2009 when the Baltimore Checkerspot was discovered at Caumsett Historic State Park Preserve in Lloyd Harbor, Rich was the first person we contacted with the exciting news. Rich and a few other butterfly enthusiasts, including Al Lindberg, immediately went up to Caumsett and, after observing 53 Checkerspots, became strong advocates for protecting the Baltimore Checkerspot at Caumsett. Rich's involvement ultimately led to the successful establishment of LI's only known breeding colony of this butterfly.

A meeting between New York State Parks and Checkerspot advocates was scheduled. Rich attended as the expert and was both respected

and listened to when he spoke about this species rare occurrence on Long Island. Once Parks was convinced of the Checkerspot's significance Rich was given the task by Caumsett management to develop a mowing schedule that would allow the Checkerspot to successfully breed. Baltimore Checkerspots are a one brood species that overwinters as larvae. Rich came up with a mowing window that to this day has resulted in Checkerspots flying by the first week of June. To witness the flight each year is the best way we can remember Rich Kelly.

Sue and Ken Feustel

Rich Kelly passed away on 06 September after a two year battle with cancer. Rich was a self-taught master naturalist whose knowledge of birds, insects (especially butterflies and moths), plants, seashells, reptiles and amphibians never failed to completely blow away anyone who was lucky enough to spend time with him in the field.

Rich enjoyed collecting shells close to home and abroad. He enjoyed attending COA [Conchologists of America] conventions and the Philadelphia Shell Show with his family and many shell friends. Rich was a longtime member of the Long Island Shell Club and was instrumental in helping to organize local shell shows, as well as in facilitating the Club's support of the 1991 COA convention on Long Island. He also lent his support to the New York (City) Shell Club, where he gave several presentations over the years. Rich was a skilled field collector who also leveraged his shell collection (below) through an extensive network of shell trading friends all around the globe. He also augmented his collection through mail order and shell show purchases and fondly recalled the "old days" when you waited for pricelists to arrive in the mail and then would pounce via a telephone call to the dealer when a rare item caught your eye. I was always amazed at just how many of those "no longer available classic rarities of the golden days of collecting" Rich keenly picked up during the often brief window of time when they became available to collectors via trade or sale. Rich was especially proud of his Columbelloididae [dove shells] collection which is undoubtedly one of the most extensive in private hands.

Over the last ten years or so, I gave Rich a good-natured hard time about how his birding, botanizing, and butterfly viewing had really pushed his shelling to the back burner. The best way to confront that? If you can't beat them, join them;

so other local shellers and I would go with him to look for birds or butterflies.

Rich was fond of his regular weekly walks with several local birding clubs, as much for the socializing as for the birds, and kept up with them as much as possible through August. In April 2018, despite his illness, Rich battled exhaustion and pulled out all the stops to collect shells for three days in a row with some European shell-trading friends who were visiting from Belgium; that's how much he valued his friendships with other shellers.

In addition to his skills as a naturalist Rich was also a devoted husband, father and a veteran of the US Army. He spent his entire professional career at Verizon (and its corporate progenitors: New York Telephone, NYNEX, Bell Atlantic, etc.) where he worked as a Field Office Engineer in New York City and Long Island, retiring with full benefits at age 56!

Rich will be terribly missed by many in the various fields of Natural History, including Conchology.

Steve Rosenthal



## Rich Kelly: Consummate Naturalist

I first met Rich Kelly on a dike at Lawrence Marsh on the border of southern Queens and Nassau counties some 49 years ago. At the time his birding sidekick was Ken Kelly, who was not related to him. We frequently ran into each other at places like Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge and I would often get the names wrong calling him Ken and his buddy Rich. My confusion would become a running joke between us for the rest of his life. A few years later Ken got his degree in economics and moved to Washington D C where he had landed a job. At the time I was birding with John Mayer, Old George Rose, and Bob Hinze, so Rich decided to throw in with us and make the team five. For at least the next ten years we birded together every weekend all over the New York City region including North Jersey, South Jersey and all of Long Island.

Rich always had a keen wit and great sense of humor. I remember a trip when we decided to chase a Hawk Owl in Laconia, New Hampshire and a Great Gray Owl in Gill, Massachusetts that we had heard of via the grape vine. We decided we could do this all in one day if we left New York early enough using George's big Cadillac. Somewhere in New Hampshire as we were trying to find the spot for the Hawk Owl, we were going down a hill that was covered in black ice. The big Cadillac would not come to a stop as we slid towards a tee intersection and a road with quite a bit of cross traffic. We sailed between the oncoming cars across the intersection, over the shoulder of the road and into a grassy field. After a few moments of stunned silence Rich, with great aplomb, pulled out a road map and said "Hummm let's see where we are". The ensuing peals of laughter relieved the stunned silence and the realization that we had almost been killed. We did manage to see both owls that day.

As the years went by Rich and I became interested in Herps. We made many trips out to Long Island and New Jersey looking for snakes, lizards, frogs, turtles and salamanders. The one species that always eluded us was the Tiger Salamander. On the advice of an old NY naturalist named Sam Yeaton, we went to Manorville on a cold rainy March night. After wading around in a roadside pond for 20 minutes we finally found our first Tiger Salamander. The sight of two grown men in a pond leaping for joy at our discovery would have made quite an amusing video.

As I suppose it is with anyone who is addicted to being a naturalist one always yearns for more. And so, the focus became shells. Unbeknownst to me Rich had been a shell collector before I met him and over his lifetime he amassed a substantial



Rich Kelly (right) and Jim Ash at Lazy Point, Napeague, surveying the rare pale fringed orchid (*Platanthera pallida*). Photo by Steve Young, August 10, 2016.

collection which he continued to add to until his death. Whenever I came back from a trip out of the country he would ask, "Did you bring me any shells?" Rich taught me a great deal about Long Island shells and where to find them. He was also a seminal member of the Long Island Shell Club and played a pivotal role in putting together *Field Guide to the Sea Shells of Long Island* (published by the Shell Club). He was always generous with his time and knowledge so when we were putting together a LI shell collection for the SOFO museum I asked him for help identifying the minute gastropods we had collected. Many of these species are 1/16 of an inch in size and require magnification to identify. Rich came to the rescue and in one day had managed to figure out almost all of them.

Next came the butterflies. It was a time when birders were asking the question, why can't we identify butterflies the same way we

do with birds? Do we always have to kill, spread and pin them to know what they are? Let's try to figure out field marks to accomplish this. And so, the New York City Butterfly Club was formed. Rich, myself and a small group of birders joined. Guy Tudor was elected president; the meetings were held in Guy's apartment and then the fun began. It wasn't long before the membership grew and what a raucous group it turned out to be! A few years later I relocated to East Hampton and no longer could attend the weeknight meetings in NYC. But Rich would call me and fill me in on the shenanigans that took place at the last meeting. And some of it was hilarious. He had a knack for describing what went on.

I guess the final frontier for Rich was botany. I know as with all naturalists he had a general interest in the plants we saw. I know I did. So, when Eric Lamont asked me if I wanted to be a member of a newly formed botanical society, I said yes. I'm not sure when Rich joined but I assume it was around the same time. I would call myself a casual member of LIBS but that definitely wasn't the case with Rich. As usual he threw himself wholeheartedly into it becoming a valuable asset to the society. He became an excellent botanist, led field trips, chaired committees, shared his extensive knowledge of natural history and spread good cheer with his outgoing personality. What more could you ask for?

There are many ways to measure the impact a person's life has had on the people the person has met, known and loved. By any measure Rich Kelly's life was a life well lived.

I will miss him greatly.

Jim Ash

## FIELD TRIP

**February 29, 2020 (Saturday) 10:00 AM**

*North Fork Preserve, Northville, Suffolk County, NY  
Old Growth Forest/Natural Communities*

Joint trip with the North Shore Land Alliance  
Trip leader: Eric Lamont

Nestled among the gentle hills of the Harbor Hill Moraine on Long Island's North Fork is an old growth forest that has not changed much in hundreds of years. The forest is full of swamps and steep slopes making the land unsuitable for farming. The original forest was cut down in the 1700s

but the soil was never turned over and farmed. A second growth forest sprung up and today many of the old swamp white oak trees (*Quercus bicolor*) are 150–250 years old.

Participants will be introduced to the natural history of North Fork Preserve's old growth forest, freshwater wetlands, and other ecological communities. Approx. 2½ miles of easy walking mostly on wide trails. Registration required.

To sign-up, email Eric Lamont and more information will be provided including the meeting place. [Email: [elamont@optonline.net](mailto:elamont@optonline.net)]



## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

**January, February and March 2020: No Meeting at Muttontown!**