



The

# BIRD CALL

Newsletter of the Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.

## BRSS Annual Meeting is June 2—Join Us

Five Island Park will be the beautiful setting for our Annual Meeting, thanks again to the very generous hospitality of the New Rochelle Department of Parks and Recreation. The business meeting begins at 6:30 P.M., with an optional guided bird walk at 6:00 P.M.

It's a great opportunity to meet and chat with other members. Wine and cheese, plus other light refreshments will be served. All BRSS members and friends are encouraged to attend.

### Honoree is Green Advocate

This year BRSS Audubon honors someone in our community who has been working at the grass roots level to accomplish things in an environmentally hands-on way. Frank DiMarco has been the Superintendent of Public

Works for the Village of Tuckahoe for the past three years. This new job sparked a keen interest for Frank in the environment, and he began investigating ways to make Tuckahoe's Department of Public Works (DPW) more environmentally responsible. He and DPW mechanic, Joe Tavolilla, converted the village's two garbage trucks to run on used vegetable oil. The vegetable oil is collected from Tuckahoe restaurants and other businesses and is filtered by Joe. The program has been a huge success.

Last year Tuckahoe built a new DPW building. It has a natural concrete floor made without chemicals or epoxy. The building has motion lights, low voltage fluorescent fixtures, a storm water separator (which separates contaminants in



*Our honoree, Frank DiMarco, has Tuckahoe "Going Green."*

the DPW yard), and a rain garden. The mechanic's garage is heated with vegetable oil as well.

Frank has been an active member of both the Tuckahoe Environmental and

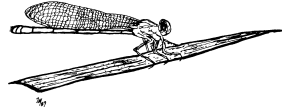
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### Upcoming Programs

## Dragons and Damsels

Two programs—an indoor presentation to learn about dragonflies and damselflies, then an outdoor field trip to a pond at Lenoir Preserve for hands on experience. Great for children.

Thursday, May 19, 7:30 p.m.  
Bronxville Public Library



Sunday, June 12, 10:00 a.m.  
Lenoir Preserve, Yonkers

Presented by Walter Chadwick, Educator, HRAS.

Aerial acrobats, flying jewels, dragonflies and damselflies are fearsome predators that have been studied by NASA and the United States Military. Learn about their life cycle, our local species, both common and uncommon, and where to find them at our May 19th indoor program.

Be sure to bring the kids to our outdoor program on June 12.

### Upcoming Field Trips

## The Warblers Are Here!

### Central Park

May 1

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at West 72<sup>nd</sup> Street at statue across from Museum of Natural History. We'll be looking for spring migrants including warblers, vireos, grosbeaks.



### Doodletown Road

May 15

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Doodletown. Looking for spring migrants including Cerulean Warblers and other warblers.

### Wallkill

May 22

Looking for spring migrants including Grasshopper Sparrows and Bobolinks.

*Please call Doug Bloom for information on trips and to arrange carpooling at (914)713-0630 days between 10 and 6 Tuesday-Saturday, evenings from about 6:30-10 p.m. All birders welcome, from beginner to expert. All trips with Central Westchester Audubon.*

**BRSS AUDUBON**

**P. O. Box 1108  
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www.brssaudubon.org**

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*Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.  
is a chapter of the National Audubon Society  
serving the communities of  
Bronxville, Eastchester, Edgemont, Hartsdale,  
Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Mount Vernon, New  
Rochelle, Pelham, Scarsdale, and Tuckahoe*

## A Tweet from the BRSS President

*By Sandy Morrissey*

If a bird goes "tweet" in the forest, and no one hears it because everyone is zoned into Facebook, Twitter and Blogspot, is there a risk this lovely songster will never be heard? This is my present conundrum.

I recently attended our Audubon New York Council meeting. Among the many presenters was a representative from National Audubon Society with the charge of getting our local chapters on Facebook, Twitter and any other "social media" we could manage. This is the new way to spread our environmental mission, she stressed.

Until recently, I, along with most of my peers (let's just say we are of the grandparent age), felt no need to put ourselves out there on Facebook. As for Twitter, my family and friends know I can't say anything in under 140 words, let alone just 140 characters.

However, when a person held up a sign in Egypt saying "thank you Facebook," that got my attention. If Facebook can help create a revolution, I better understand it and try to use it.

Additionally, a dear family friend of 40 years died suddenly. I was contemplating how I was going to break the news to my children when my oldest called and said simply, "We know. Our system works faster than yours." A friend had texted my youngest who then told the other two siblings, one with a text and the oldest with a phone call (the older

one being not quite as wired as the two younger ones).

If this is how the younger generation works and we want them to hear our environmental mission, we must go there whether we want to or not. When I became president of BRSS last spring, I stated one of my goals was to do more to involve the younger generation, our youth, knowing that they are the ones who will be the conservation leaders of tomorrow.

So, in I plunged. I just finished reading two books on social media for non-profits. I bought the "Missing Manual" for Facebook (no way I am going there without learning everything I can about the privacy controls). I worked my way through setting up a blog for our BRSS Bluebird Project and got us a Twitter account to send alerts about rare bird sightings or local environmental threats. I even managed to get a Gravatar!

You can find the links to all these goodies on page 6 of this newsletter.

The question is, will I ever get outside to check on my bluebirds? Will I get to hear the birds singing?

You'll know from the Tweets.



*Sandy's Gravatar—a globally recognized Avatar!*

## Annual Meeting

*Continued from page 1*

Tree Committees. He led the effort to do a complete tree inventory of all public trees within the Village using a GPS system. He is a certified tree steward having completed training given by Cornell, has been instrumental in Tuckahoe purchasing substantial native trees, has implemented the use of structural soil in the plantings of sidewalk trees, and was involved in the writing of the new Tuckahoe tree ordinance which protects public and private trees that are at least ten inches in diameter.

Space will not allow a complete listing of the things Frank has done to reduce Tuckahoe's carbon footprint or heighten awareness of our environment. From increasing recycling by 48% his first year, to leading Arbor Day celebrations involving elementary school students, there seems to be no end to his

efforts. Tuckahoe is now a model of what a municipality can and should be doing.

Frank will be the first to tell you that he could not have done any of this without the help of the Tuckahoe Mayor, Board of Trustees, and especially his DPW crew.

Frank DiMarco lives in Tuckahoe with his wife, Gina, and their three daughters. He has been a tremendous asset to the Village of Tuckahoe. BRSS Audubon is proud to honor him this year.

### Election of Board Members

At the Annual Meeting, BRSS members will be asked to vote approval of the following slate of Directors for the class of 2014: Doug Bloom, Dave Kaufman, Diane Morrison, Scott Mellis, and Sandy Morrissey

We hope to see all BRSS members on June 2nd at Five Island Park in New Rochelle.

# Youth Birding Club Takes Flight

By *Dave Kaufman*, BRSS board member and Leader, Youth Birding Club

## Edith Read Wildlife Sanctuary, March 9

A note of thanks to all 10 young birding participants, family members and Audubon Leaders for contributing to the success of our 1st monthly field trip.

We met at 9 a.m. and were introduced to one of the Westchester County Naturalists, Andrea. She drafted the young birders to help her clean and re-stock the feeders outside of the Nature Center. She also spoke to us about successful habits of Birders, emphasizing quiet, slow exaggerated movements, and wearing clothing that does not stand out from the natural environment.

We moved inside the Nature Center where the Audubon Leaders who were present were introduced. We especially thank Neil Powell, Bernie Conway, and our photographer, Nadia Valla for helping out.

All student participants were then given a birding field book, "Birds of New York" and a laminated poster of "Northeastern Backyard Feeder Birds" to use at home, compliments of Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon, and the Wild Bird Center in Scarsdale. We then participated in a short informational

session where bird identification techniques were discussed. The young birding participants volunteered great ideas regarding these skills. To review, we discussed Plumage Color, Bird Song, Shape & Silhouette, Bird Size, Shadows on the Ground and Wing Span.

To demonstrate the tremendous variation of wing spans of different birds, two young helpers, Alex and Jake, extended a 20 foot measuring tape with the wing span of various birds marked at different points on the tape, ranging from the smallest wingspan (4.5") of a Ruby-throated Hummingbird to the glider sized (10 feet) wingspan of the California Condor.

We next positioned ourselves at the plate glass window of the Nature Center which overlooked a number of feeders. In addition to the standard seed, nuts and suet, one feeder was filled with whole peanuts still in their shells. Though I was hoping to see elephants feeding at that feeder, the Blue Jays were very happy separating the peanuts from their shells. The young birders were rewarded for each correct bird identification with a



*Young Birders spot Red-breasted Mergansers on Long Island Sound. We are hoping these young birders will be tomorrow's conservationists.*

"Munchkin" donut hole. Needless to say, we soon had many smiling, happy young birders.

The group then moved across the road from the Nature Center to the shore of the Long Island Sound. Neil Powell set up his spotting scope, and aside from the usual large number of Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, we also got a nice look at a Great Black-backed Gull and several Red-breasted Mergansers swimming in the L.I. Sound.

## Hart's Brook Park & Preserve, April 9

The second field trip of the "Young Birders" was held on a brisk but sunny morning at the Hart's Brook Park. We had a good turnout of seven enthusiastic youngsters, including several new children.

Our field trip was led by Sandy Morrissey, the president of BRSS Audubon who was quite familiar with the environs. Donut holes were devoured and binoculars were distributed before the group set out in search of the nest of a Great Horned Owl, who historically returns to nest in the same dead tree for the past several years.

Along the way we listened to the songs of, and eventually visually identified, the Red-bellied Woodpecker and the Northern Flicker. We saw numer-

ous Robins, Blue Jays, Crows, Northern Cardinals, and a Tufted Titmouse or two.

We quietly approached the nest tree and examined it from several angles, until Sandy could just barely identify the eyebrows of the owl, sitting deep in its nest hole.

Most participants required multiple looks through the spotting scope to be sure that they were able to distinguish the well camouflaged owl from its tree hole lair.

We then hiked through the park on well-marked paths to the old Ice Skating Pond and were treated to the sequential landings of six Canadian Geese

who plopped down right before us in the pond before engaging in what appeared to be mating behavior!

**Upcoming Youth Trips**

May 14, 9:00 a.m.  
Kensico Cemetery  
Banding Bluebirds

June 11, 9:00 a.m.  
Marshlands Conservancy  
Woodland and Shore Birds

Visit [www.brssaudubon.org](http://www.brssaudubon.org)  
for more information



*Canada Geese made quite a show when they landed on the pond.*

Sandy next led the group to a grassy area near the parking lot where several bluebird nestboxes of different types were located. She spoke to the group about the importance of bluebird conservation and the challenges in encouraging bluebirds to nest successfully.

We are going to learn much more about bluebirds on our next trip on May 14<sup>th</sup> to Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, where there are numerous bluebird nestboxes. Sandy is a licensed "bird bander" so we hope she will be able to demonstrate her techniques on the nestling bluebirds. Looking forward to seeing you all on May 14th.

# Courtship and Rivalry in Birds

By *Orlando Hidalgo*, BRSS board member

I'll begin by saying that this past winter has been quite tough to deal with for all of us in one way or another. For me it was especially so due to the injury that I sustained while at work, slipping and falling on the ice resulting in a torn meniscus to my left knee. After doctors' visits and MRIs, off I went to arthroscopic knee surgery. Of course, what is required after this kind of surgery is time to heal, then followed by physical therapy, and of course time off from work. So now what to do with all this time I had on my hands?

Being an avid birder and a member of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, I received an e-mail from the lab offering a wonderful course in bird behavior enti-



itled "Courtship and Rivalry in Birds." It was an online course advertised as taking five weeks to complete, which is relatively a short time, consisting of five modules. "Well," I thought, "what a wonderful way to pass my healing and recovery time from knee surgery."

So I enrolled. The course instructor is a gentleman named Kevin McGowan, who is one of the world's foremost experts on the behavior of Crows. He earned his Ph.D. in Biology from the University of South Florida in 1987, where he studied the social development of young Florida Scrub-jays.

This course helped me to understand, as an example, the different ways the Red-winged Blackbird conveys information

to other birds of its own species. Let's take the song spread behavior. The loud song says, "All you guy's stay out of my territory. I own it, ladies come and look." The head forward posture says, "I'm willing to fight." The yellow epaulets say, "Doesn't my red look nice." The red epaulets raised forward say, "I'm talking to you."

So its behavior is at the same time both aggressive to males and attractive to females. I also learned that male Red-winged Blackbirds can mate with up to 15 females in one breeding season, depending on the size of the territory, of course, and availability of food.

What a wonderful course this truly is, and I highly recommend it to anyone, novice or experienced, who wishes to enhance their knowledge and passion for birds, such as I do. It also was a great way to pass the time while healing and recovering from arthroscopic knee surgery. This course is full of information on bird behavior, while being fun, rich and rewarding all at the same time.

Keep on birding and learning.

## Dauids Island – Past and Future

By *Doug Bloom*, BRSS Vice President

The 120-acre Davids Island off the shore of New Rochelle has a varied past and an uncertain future. Fort Slocum was built on the island and Hart Island in approximately 1862, and since then it has been used as a confederate prison camp, a military hospital, a school for army chaplains, a coastal artillery post, and an army information school. Hart Island housed a Nike missile site and serves as a Potter's Field (burial ground) for NYC.

Since Fort Slocum closed in 1965 the island and buildings now owned by the City of New Rochelle have fallen into disrepair. However, the unique location has attracted interest from many potential real estate developers, including Donald Trump, who want to build

luxury condos on the island and construct a bridge to the island from Glen Island Park.

In 2001 Westchester County expressed a desire to buy the island from New Rochelle, clean it up to use as a park and preserve its importance to Long Island Sound. Bronx River – Sound Shore Audubon has been working with the county, New Rochelle and other environmental groups to make the island a permanent park but the cost of removing and/or presevering existing buildings was large. In 2005 Congresswoman Nita Lowey secured over \$4 million in federal money for the island clean up, which has taken over four years to do. The cleanup is basically completed.

In February the Davids Island Task Force held a public hearing to discuss possible future uses for the island. A variety of uses were suggested including a children's museum, a maritime center, a par 3 golf course, solar or wind farm, and a concert venue. Most speakers before the Task Force wanted to prevent development and to use the island for park and recreational purposes. There would be no motorized vehicles allowed on the island.

The lack of vehicle access to the island is an obstacle to wide spread public usage, as is the need to include new water treatment facilities on the island. The idea of building a bridge was turned down as not feasible.

Our Audubon chapter will continue to advocate for park and recreational use and to monitor future actions to insure that this unique island remains free of commercial development.

# Ethics of Native Plant Gardening

By *Bernie Conway*, BRSS board member

As landscape designer Colston Burrell has said, "Gardening is a human construct." It is wise to use the plants that grow regionally to the areas where we live here in the northeastern United States. Plants that have evolved for millennia in the same habitat where they are currently found, not in cultivation, are defined as native plants, as stated by author and landscape architect Carolyn Summers.



*A Monarch nectars on native milkweed.*

The reasons for gardening with plants native to where we live are their beauty in our garden spaces, their versatility and performance, the regional identity they preserve, the lessening of soil disturbance, and to promote habitat restoration where the landscape has changed. Native plants help prevent invasive plants from establishing and naturalizing in areas, if they are already there.

We all love Spring and Summer, with all the baby birds chirping and parents out collecting insects for these young birds. Just think for a minute of having few to no birds in your yard, hiking trail, or park. Without native plants in these areas, there would be fewer insects and of course less food for those birds and animals we love to see.

The Karner Blue butterfly needs to feed on *Lupinus perennis* (eastern lupine). However, *Lupinus polyphyllus* (western lupine) has overtaken in disturbed areas and the eastern lupine is endangered. The Karner Blue butterfly larva can only survive on the eastern species, so in effect, it dies if the plant is not there.

When invasive Norway Maples (*Acer platanoides*) leaf out earlier than the native maples, they shade out the Spring ephemerals such as Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*), and we lose vital early nectar for insects and food for migrating birds.

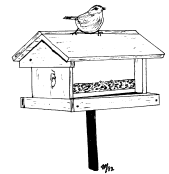
I could go on and on with examples, but what is the lesson of all of this? Well, we need to have the native biodiversity of flora and fauna to simply have a healthy balance in our local ecosystems, not just for nature, but for us the people who are here.

We can learn a lot from the land we live on. The native foods that feed the birds can also feed us. The more we learn of the natural native world around us, the healthier and stronger our society can and will become.

## Welcome New Members

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Bronxville</b><br>Deborah Depalermo<br>Dorothy LaManna<br>James Marker<br>Judith Mukae<br>John Prill<br>Louise Wekstein             | Katherine Gray<br>Manuel Pereira  |
| <b>Eastchester</b><br>Arnold Michel<br>Lewis Syken   | <b>New Rochelle</b><br>Marge Cohen<br>Burton Flax<br>David Jordan<br>Peter Murphy<br>Jack Renick<br>Patricia Richardson<br>John Weiser<br>Nora Wolloch<br>James Zumpano |
| <b>Hartsdale:</b><br>Susan & David Seal<br>Isidore Shiffman  | <b>Pelham:</b><br>Charles Calhoun<br>The Childs<br>Brenda Harms   |
| <b>Larchmont</b><br>Margaret Cashman<br>Jacqueline Cooperman<br>Mr. & Mrs. John O'Keefe  | <b>Scarsdale</b><br>Ann Berdy<br>Ethel Conrad<br>Melissa Gottesman<br>Carol Gurin<br>Ann Lewis<br>Paul Podell<br>Joe Robinowitz   |
| <b>Mamaroneck</b><br>Viola Beecher<br>Leslie Brill<br>Bonnie Dayton<br>Berit Julier<br>Victor Mason<br>Susan Monaco<br>Anthony Mustich | <b>Tuckahoe</b><br>Maybelle Callender   |
| <b>Mount Vernon</b><br>Elizabeth Evers   |   |

## Thanks for Supporting Our Seed Sale



By *Doug Bloom*

We would like to thank everyone who bought bird seed this year. The second seed sale had \$967.50 in donations and \$1,528.40 in profit, for a total of \$2,495.90. For the two seed sales we made \$5,414.65.

We especially thank the following people who made donations: Phyllis Wittner, Wilma Reidy, Ruth Gyure, Lu Gmoser, Bob Wirsneck, Diane Morrison, David Kaufman, Mark Stotsky, Judith and Don Pinals, Gloria Havender, Sandra Morrissey, Neil Powell, Claire Gorman, Lois Kroll, Meredith Matthews, Cece Fabbro, Doug Bloom, Kristin Friedman, Thomas Leissl, Chris Broda, Warren Douglas, Ken and Peggyann Munnick, Evelyn Berry, Mike Raffia, Laura Lee Strasser, Vern Schramm, Ellen Valle, Scott Mellis, Elaine Abrams, Harriett Miller, Heather Seal-Breslin, Elaine Faver, Richard Slingerland, Sheema Bhattacharya, Valerie Marini, Elizabeth Paul, Peter Thorp, Jill Martin, Jonathan Lichter, Ruby Morgan, Lika Levi, Marilyn Varley, Sue O'Rourke, David Seal, Emita Hill, Rob Canora, and Drew Panko.

### Go Native!

Get your Native Plants from the Native Plant Center's Annual Wildflower and Native Plant Sale  
April 30, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
Held at Westchester Community College

The BRSS board wants to encourage you, our members, to consider planting more natives be they trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses and/or sedges. Whether you are planning to create or enhance a butterfly and bee garden, create a healthy habitat for resident and migrating songbirds, restore or mimic a forest understory, create a meadow, a rain garden, or enhance a streambed or pond with plants that like to get their feet wet, there are native plants for you.

For a list of plants available at the sale please visit [www.nativeplantcenter.org](http://www.nativeplantcenter.org).

Also, check out your local garden nurseries for their offerings of native plants.

# Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)  
P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

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Save the Date  
**BRSS Annual Meeting**  
Thursday, June 2



## Join!

Support our environmental mission and receive our newsletter with information about all our programs and field trips. Annual dues are \$20 and include membership in the National Audubon Society, plus its magazine. Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please make \$20 check to National Audubon Society and mail to:  
BRSS Audubon Society, Inc.  
P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

C0ZR080Z

## BRSS now has Four Ways to Keep Informed and Go Green

Want to know rare bird sightings, bluebird nesting happenings, notifications of impromptu field trips to see nesting owls, bluebird banding or other time sensitive events? We are now using "social media" to get our environmental mission out.

Help us save postage and printing expenses. Sign up to get our newsletter online. Email [brssaudubon.org](mailto:brssaudubon.org) with the subject, "I want to go green." You will get the newsletter in living color in your email. You'll also get notifications of field trips and programs.



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*Eastern Bluebirds are back and nesting. The bluebird above was banded at Kensico Cemetery last year and returned. It is now fighting Tree Swallows for a nestbox. Follow all the excitement along our BRSS bluebird trails on the links offered here.*