



The BIRD CALL

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

Wild Goose Chase

Tales of a Birder going over the edge

By Sandy Morrissey

When my sister visits from Florida, we head out in pursuit of rare birds, particularly “lifers.” We’re both avid “eBirders,” Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s “social media” of the bird world, and we use this to find rare birds.

With the possibility of 4 lifers, we headed to the Connecticut Coast on November 24th. First stop was Sherwood Island, looking for the reported Ash-throated Flycatcher which is a western US bird which should be in Central America at this time, and a Dickcissel which breeds in the interior of the US



Ash-throated Flycatcher

and should be in South America by now.

As we drive around the park, the expression, “looking for a needle in a haystack,” comes to mind. Not a bird stirring, except a few gulls. We find the ranger’s office, and happily he takes us to the flycatcher’s location and hooks us up with Tina, a birder who has been

reporting on the rarities. Regrettably, she hadn’t seen it yet that day and suggests that since it’s turned cold, it might have left. She then gives us specific details about where to find the Dickcissel. It’s hanging out with House Sparrows.

Finding the House Sparrows, Bobbie and I do our Sesame Street routine: “which of these birds is not like the others, which of these birds just doesn’t belong.” Careful scanning reveals a sparrow-like bird with yellowish tinge and fine streaking on the breast - the Dickcissel, our 1st lifer! Its streaked breast

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VERY BIG SEED SALE NEWS!!

1. The pick-up location for seed sale purchases has changed. It will now be at Cornell’s Hardware, 310 White Plains Rd., Eastchester. Please see the enclosed seed sale order form for details or call Doug Bloom at 834-5203 with questions.
2. What has not changed is the extraordinary quality of the seeds we offer. There is nothing finer in the United States.
3. And now for the best part . . . we have managed to cut out some middleman costs and our prices this year not only have NOT gone up, but in many cases they have **gone down** considerably. In some cases the bag sizes have changed, but under no circumstances will the price per pound have increased from our last sale. *In fact, in most cases the price per pound is markedly lower.* We guarantee it.

Want a suggestion as to what to do with your new found savings on seed this year? Consider increasing your donation to Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon. You can do that right on the seed order form. We are all volunteers here at BR-SS and we thank you for your support!

BRSS AUDUBON

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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*

Management Change at the Otter Creek Preserve

By Dave Kaufman

The Otter Creek Preserve is a "hidden gem" of southern Westchester county located in the Village of Mamaroneck. It is accessed off Taylors Lane, a blind ending street off the Boston Post Rd. which terminates at the Long Island Sound. Protected by The Nature Conservancy since 1973, its management has been recently transferred to the Westchester Land Trust, an organization which has a more local orientation. The preserve is just under 35 acres and represents the largest privately owned tidal wetlands, designated and protected as a nature sanctuary in Westchester County. It features woodlands, tidal waters and a tidal marsh habitat. The preserve's dominant features are an extensive tidal saltmarsh and adjacent forested upland, both of which are an important resource for wildlife (over 100 bird species have been documented). Many species of invasive plants are, unfortunately, well established and are currently changing the preserve's upland and wetland ecological communities. The preserve has a loop trail (.75 miles) that runs along the marsh and through the forest, and provides a public, passive recreation opportunity to visitors. However, the preserve's small size and limited parking (space for 5 cars on Taylors Lane) restrict its wider use as a hotspot for visitation. Visitors will likely observe songbirds (common are Catbirds, Robins, Yellow Warblers), raptors, mammals (deer, fox, raccoon, squirrel) and reptiles (snakes and turtles) on regular visits.

The Otter Creek Preserve is located on the coast of the Long Island Sound and, as such, helps to buffer nearby communities from coastal hazards (storms waves, erosion, debris movement, etc.). During storms and high water Otter Creek's saltmarsh can store flood water and its vegetation (*spartina* and *phragmites*) helps to slow or reduce storm surges.

Welcome New BRSS Audubon Members

Bronxville: Amparo Comacho, Linda Kugler, Barbara Marciani, Ginny Martin, Gloria Schroeder, Alfred Sticca, Lynne Teplin, Deborah Yannantuono

Eastchester: Leah Lazzaro, Nancy Weiss

Hartsdale: Judith Brown, Peter Hoerenz, Sally Holec, Gertrude & Henry Rothschild Foundation, Carol Shapiro, Cathy Waldner

Larchmont: Celia Felsher, David Fishman, Richard Kulzer, Mary Ann MacClellan, Anna Paret, Michael Reichgott, John Rooney

Mamaroneck: Betsey Albert, Robin Capossela, Kathleen MacLaughlin, Mr. & Mrs. John Magnan, Raji Mosa, Alice Pernick, Hoan Schoenholtz

Mount Vernon: Michael Bochnik, Vincent Donato, Robin Hill, Theresa Main, Amita Ness, Maureen Newmeyer, Catherine Pucillo, Louise Spencer

New Rochelle: Richard Allen, Mira Bramson, Steve Caruso, Farid Dardashti, Patricia Duffy, Diane Heiman, Margaret Lagana, Vicki Lopachin, Marsha McCormick, Joanne Murphy, Norma Wasserman

Pelham: Carol Gourley, Kanae Juric, John Tiggeloven, R. Winkler

Scarsdale: Diana Asher, Mr. & Mrs. Henry Asher, Richard Cacciato, Fatima Duggal, Elaine Fischer, Marcia Lange, Joel Magid, John Manley, Peter Marks, Francine Naughton, Robert Rosenthal, Anjani Shah, Julia Simonds, Marilyn Weingartner

Tuckahoe: Mary Jean Howland

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Dickcissel should be in Venezuela

makes it a 1st winter bird. Interestingly, all my bird guides say it often hangs out with House Sparrows, so at least it's learned that much, if not its way south.

We decide to try for the flycatcher again. We are thrilled to find it flitting in the tree tops, and it even comes down to pose for the camera. Tina arrives again and shows us two Great-horned Owls that, unbeknownst to us, were hiding in a nearby pine tree.

She asks us if we are going after the Pink-footed Goose that's been seen in the Hartford area. We are actually headed to Hammonasset Beach SP in hopes of seeing a reported Lapland Longspur. She suggests we go for the goose, a super rare visitor to the US. She inquires if we are on the CT Birds listserve (we aren't). Unlike eBird's once-a-day report, CT Birds gives realtime email updates, and therefore you know exactly where a bird is at a given time. This sounds useful. I sign up on the spot.

Back in the car we decide to go for the longspur, as we know there are many other birds at Hammonasset. During the drive, Bobbie remarks that what she does know about the Pink-footed Goose is that it was the last species found in the movie, *The Big Year* (about 3 fanatic birders chasing around the US to see the most birds in a year). Hummmm?

At Hammonasset we find where the longspur was spotted. When a flock of Horned Larks shows up, we do our Sesame Street scan and voilà - one is not like the others! We jubilantly add our 3rd lifer for the day, the Lapland Longspur.

We then check out a few other areas of the park, but honking in my subconscious is the Pink-footed Goose, which regretfully is a 75 minute drive away. I calculate and decide we can make it just before the sun sets. We're off on a wild goose chase.

After some nerve-wracking traffic delays, we arrive. The sun is dropping fast. A birder in the parking lot says the goose is still there, but at the end of the lake.

The lake is covered with hundreds of Canada Geese. This is another needle in a haystack. No time for our Sesame Street routine to scan them all. We race along. Just as the sun drops behind the trees, we spot some birders who help us spot the goose. Victory! Our 4th lifer in one day!



*Pink-footed
Goose should be
in Great Britain*

But wait, there's more! I get another birding day with Bobbie before she returns to Florida. We join the throngs of people who get to see the Painted Bunting in Prospect Park. While not a lifer (we got it in Florida where it belongs), you couldn't help but enjoy the excitement in getting to see America's most colorful songbird in the middle of the concrete jungle. And it must be noted that the Painted Bunting chose the area of the park that was newly planted with NATIVE species. It knows where to find a good meal.



*Painted
Bunting
should be in
Florida*

Now to the "over the edge" part. The CT Birds emails arrive from morning to night. I can't resist reading them. I should take myself off the listserve, as who has time for 20 extra emails a day, but I'm hooked (maybe like my friends who check Facebook constantly). Even though there is absolutely no time for me to chase the Connecticut rarities, I see them through the eyes of Tina and other observers.

Oh, and by the way, I had an appointment in Rye Brook last week. As I left, my Prius pointed itself to Cos Cob where a Townsend's Solitaire was recently reported. Make that 5 new "lifers" in the past 2 weeks.

Sandy Morrissey is president of BRSS Audubon and suggests there should be a warning label on eBird and CT Birds - they are addictive.

PROGRAMS 2016

PLEASE JOIN US! PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

All programs are co-sponsored by Central Westchester Audubon .

Evening programs will begin with refreshments at 7:15 pm and the program begins at 7:30 pm unless otherwise stated.

Wednesday, January 20 - Meet the Animals at the Trove - A Live Animal Program

4:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Presenter: Greenburgh Nature Center

White Plains Library

100 Martine Ave.

White Plains, NY 10601

Bring your children to see and learn about some of the wild animals who make the Greenburgh Nature Center their home.

Saturday, February 13 - Great Backyard Bird Count

10:30 am – 12:00 Noon

Presenter: Lisa Curtis

Harrison Library

2 Bruce Ave.

Harrison, NY 10528

For adults and children age 8 and older. Learn to count birds in your backyard and help researchers protect birds and our environment.

Wednesday, February 17 - All About Owls

7:15 pm Refreshments

7:30 pm Program

Presenter: Jim Eyring -

Scarsdale Library

54 Olmsted Rd.



Scarsdale, NY 10583

Always an entertaining speaker, Jim Eyring, Director of Pace University Environmental Center, will bring live owls to this program.

Saturday, March 5 – The Warblers Are Coming! Get Ready!

12 Noon for FREE Lecture

2:00 pm for a \$50 3-hour workshop

White Plains Presbyterian Church

39 North Broadway

White Plains

Presenters: Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle, authors of *The Warbler Guide* and creators of *The Warbler Guide App*.

The free 90 minute program is titled “The Warblers Guide: The Overlooked ID Points that make Identifying Warblers Easy.” Learn to tell these jewels of the trees by their unique identification points.

The \$50 workshop is titled “The Warbler Guide: A New System for Identifying and Learning Vocalizations.” Learn this new system from its creators.

Pre-registration is recommended for the 2:00 paid workshop.

This program is co-sponsored by the 5 Westchester County Audubon chapters.

Find more information about the programs, the presenters and how to register at www.brssaudubon.org.

Thursday, May 12 - TBD

Report on Fall Bird Seed Sale

Thank you to all the customers who purchased birdseed this fall. This is our main fundraiser during the year. Our profit on the sale was \$4119.57. There were \$1613.25 in donations. Some of the proceeds from the seed sales go towards sending children to the nature camps in the county parks.

Bluebird Monitors Celebrate another Successful Nesting Season



Thanks Bluebird monitors for helping us increase the bluebird population. We had 112 nest attempts, successfully fledged 343 babies and banded 411 nestlings and adults. We had 41 recaptures, of which the star was a 5-year female who was banded as a nestling at Kensico our first year in 2011. She has been recaptured every year since and has produced 14 offspring, one of which has survived 3 years, producing 2 families of her own. That makes our 5-year bird a mother and great-grandmother, all in the same year!



FIELD TRIPS 2016



Please Contact Doug Bloom at (914) 834-5203 for info or to register. Meet at Scarsdale Village Hall unless otherwise specified

January 10, Sunday - Jones Beach

Meet at 7:00 am at village hall. Wintering Ducks, and other birds. Possibly Snowy Owls.

February 6, Saturday - Eagle Walk Eagle Fest

Meet at Wild Bird Center at 8:00 am for our annual Eagle walk or at Croton Point Park at 8:40 am in big parking lot near Gazebo.

February 12-15 - Cape Ann Weekend

Looking for wintering waterfowl.

March 6, Sunday - Read Sanctuary

Meet at Read at 8:00 am. Looking for late migrating ducks and possibly early migrants.

April 3 - Sunday Twin Lakes/Eastchester

Meet at 8:00 am at Twin Lakes. Looking for early Migrants

April 17-Sunday, Cranberry Lake

Meet at 8:00 am at Cranberry Lake. We will be looking for early migrants. Warblers and other songbirds that are passing through.

May 1, Sunday- Central Park

Meet at 7:30 am at 77th street at statue across from Museum of Natural History. Will be looking for spring migrants such as warblers, orioles and others.

May 15, Sunday- Doodletown Road

Meet at 8:00 am at Doodletown Road. Best place to see Cerulean Warblers nesting and other migrants.

May 22-Sunday, Sterling Forest

Meet at 7:00 am at the village hall. We will be looking for early migrants. Warblers and other songbirds that are passing through.

Youth (and Adult Beginner) Field Trips 2016

All field trips are on Saturdays and begin at 9:00 a.m. PLEASE email Dave Kaufman dkaufman43@gmail.com if you plan to attend.

March 19, Read Wildlife Sanctuary – feeder birds, ducks and shore birds.

April 16, Crestwood Lake – water, parkland birds and early migrants (meet in Crestwood Train Station parking lot on the parkway side of the train station).

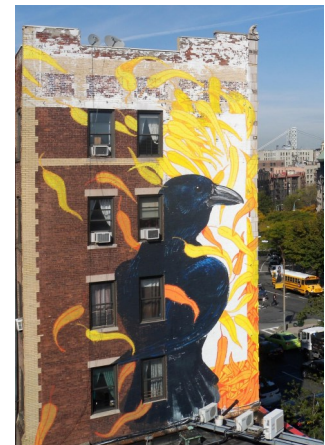
May 14, Rye Nature Center – woodland birds and spring warblers.

June 4, Kensico Cemetery – band nesting bluebirds (meet at cemetery office, 273 Lakeview Ave., Valhalla).



Plan Your Own Field Trip to The Audubon Mural Project in Manhattan

In the fall 2014 gallerist Avi Gitler, the National Audubon Society and business and property owners in Washington Heights and Harlem collaborated on the Audubon Mural Project. Gitler's goal is to commission artists to depict climate-threatened or endangered birds that were identified in the Audubon report. He chose the sites for the murals based on the neighborhoods John James Audubon lived in and enjoyed. After nearly a year of work there were 18 completed murals depicting 30 birds. More information on the project and location (including a map) of the murals may be found at <https://www.audubon.org/news/the-audubon-mural-project>.



**Bronx River-Sound Shore
Audubon Society, Inc.**

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)
P. O. Box 1108
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