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# The BIRD CALL

Spring 2017

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

## BRSS Annual Meeting June 1st

By Sandy Morrissey

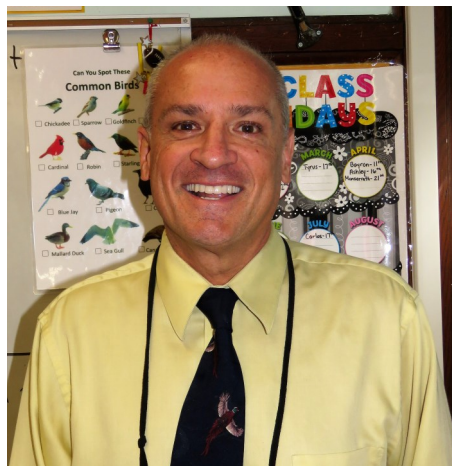
Five Islands Park will be the beautiful setting for our Annual Meeting, thanks again to the very generous hospitality of the New Rochelle Department of Parks and Recreation. The business meeting begins at 6:30 P.M., with an optional guided bird walk at 6:00 P.M.

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 Mt. Vernon teacher Brian McGrath

He didn't plan to be a teacher. Mr. McGrath grew up playing and loving sports, and his dream was to be a coach. But when interviewing for jobs, he found that schools don't hire coaches, they

hire teachers, then get the teachers to coach. After getting a Masters in education from Fordham, he landed at Columbus Elementary School and has been teaching mostly second-graders for the past 27 years. To his delight, he came to the realization that "teaching is coaching." So, he is living his dream.



BRSS members met him six years ago when we arrived in his classroom to get his students excited

about birds. To this day, we are never sure who is more captivated, the students or Mr. McGrath. His students sit at rapt attention, eager to listen and learn. It's clear that Mr. McGrath creates an atmosphere that enhances learning and makes the students feel good about themselves.

He is terrific at following up our lessons with reinforcement activities. For one session, we brought real nests to examine. One of them was a house wren's nest, which is made of a huge stack of sticks. How many sticks, we asked? He volunteered his class to count them and report back to us. We saw pictures of the chart the students made, counting the sticks in groups of tens. Answer for that nest was 1,300 sticks! Each stick is carried through the nest hole, one at a time. Amazing!

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## Welcome "Green" Golf Superintendents

By Sandy Morrissey

We just signed up two new golf courses to participate in our bluebird project, Fenway Golf Club and Elmwood Country Club. The grounds superintendents - Rob Alonzi of Fenway and Chris Alonzi of Elmwood - are cousins. Not too surprising, their fathers (who are brothers) were golf superintendents. It runs in the family, and that's not



*Rob Alonzi - Fenway Golf Club*



*Chris Alonzi - Elmwood Country Club*

unusual. The interesting part is that both fathers were early adopters to a movement to make golf courses more environmentally friendly. They both got their courses, Winged Foot (Robert, Rob's father) and Westchester Country Club (Joe, Chris's father), designated as an Audubon Cooperative

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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*

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After the last session, he has each student write a detailed thank you letter. In it they reiterate all they learned, and include amazing drawings. We always get a little teary-eyed when we read their thoughtful letters.



His interest in nature was first sparked at age 19 when he moved to Florida. He was fascinated with the colorful birds, alligators and other wild creatures in his new environment. Now hooked, he brings this love of nature into the classroom. Over the years, wildlife in his classroom has included a rabbit, turtles, fish, butterflies and frogs.

Most exceptional, he encourages his students to come to our BRSS Annual Meeting so they can go on the bird walk at Five Islands Park. Many of you have seen him there with his students and their parents.

Last year his students presented us their thank you letters at this meeting. This year we are proud to honor Mr. McGrath and give *our thanks* for his own efforts to instill a love of nature in our future leaders. They, after all, will be the ones making decisions about the environment. His students will make the world a better place because he has made their world a better place.

**Election of Board Members**

At the Annual Meeting, BRSS members will be asked to vote to approve the following slate of Directors for the Class of 2020: Doug Bloom, Dave Kaufman, Diane Morrison, Sandy Morrissey and, new to the board, Vern Schramm. An Audubon member since 1995, Vern is a frequent participant of our field trips and an enthusiastic supporter of BRSS.

We thank departing board member, Scott Mellis, for his many contributions, including newsletter articles, the initiative to get Osprey poles installed and other positive directions for the board.

We hope to see all BRSS members and friends at Five Islands Park in New Rochelle on June 1.

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Sanctuary, a new program launched by Audubon International. They were two of the few courses to accomplish this at the time, as the requirements are lengthy and strict.

Coincidentally, I had interviewed Joe Alonzi, in 1997, for an article I was writing about whether golf courses were good or bad for the environment. Among other good efforts, Joe had put up nestboxes on Westchester Country Club and was bringing back bluebirds before we got started with our project. In fact, I can attribute his success as an inspiration to me to put nestboxes on my golf course in 1998. That launched our BRSS Eastern Bluebird Project! His brother, Robert, had put up nestboxes on Winged Foot.

Now the sons are carrying on the “green” tradition. They both welcomed our nestboxes and have high hopes that the bluebird of happiness will nest on their courses.

## Using our “Smarts” in Mount Vernon Classrooms

By Miriam Beveridge

The Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon has a new classroom aid. The 2nd grade classrooms of both the Edward Williams and Columbus Elementary Schools are now outfitted with Smart Board display screens, and the BRSS volunteers jumped to use interactive technology in their classroom programs.



Starting with the first class “What makes a bird a bird,” the BRSS volunteers use the Smart Board’s internet connection to show slide shows to illustrate how birds stay warm in the winter and preen their feathers before takeoff. Next, a variety of videos of birds in flight show the children the great variations in wingspan and flight technique.

Now when volunteers teach about bird beaks and the differences in the diets and habitats of birds, we access countless photos of birds stalking prey, collecting food and feeding their young. When the topic is nests, we are able to access web cams in zoos and sanctuaries to show the children, in real time, the nesting habits of any number of birds. Students take

turns coming to the front of the classroom and tapping on the screen to learn more about their favorite bird, with audio files available to demonstrate bird songs right from the birds filmed in mid song.

This interactive tool has made the students better prepared for the other activities in our program. When the Greenburg Nature Center brings live rescues into the classrooms, the students are more comfortable seeing birds up close. And when the classroom session culminates with a walk around the neighborhood of the school, the kids are so much more aware of all the birds they can find in their midst and are better acquainted with all the things that birds do all day. The teachers report that the students return to the webcams again and again to check up on birds they were introduced to during the BRSS presentations. The new Smart Board enhanced presentations now provide a fuller, lasting birding introduction for all the 2nd grade students and their teachers.



## PROGRAMS 2017

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

### April 26, 2017, Wednesday - What's the Buzz? Helping our Native Bees- Presented by Timothy J. Stanley

In any conversation about bees, the honeybee usually takes center stage. Yet, honeybees are not native to North America. When Europeans arrived nearly 4,000 bees were already here, pollinating the trees and plants and helping maintain the food supply. Our native bees, sometimes described as pollen bees, are not only extremely efficient, but have also developed techniques for pollinating flowers that honeybees are incapable of pollinating! Join us as we explore the little known but fascinating world of native bees and learn how you can take action steps on their behalf. Audiences will leave informed, delighted, and more appreciative of bees.



The founder of Native Beeology, Timothy J. Stanley, is the Assistant Director at the Fresh Air Fund's Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill, NY. He is the Past President of New York State Outdoor Education Association (NYSOEA), an avid photographer, and a lifelong student and teacher of the outdoors. Visit [www.nativebeeology.com](http://www.nativebeeology.com) for much more information and inspiration!

Presentation will be at the Scarsdale Public Library. Refreshments at 7:15pm and program at 7:30 pm.

### June 3, 2017, Saturday at 9:00 am - Help Band Nesting Bluebirds

#### Licensed Bander: Sandy Morrissey

A bird in the hand is .... priceless.

Join us as we band a nest of bluebird babies and attempt to capture and band the adult parents. Participants will learn how we band birds and help with the measurements. Banding our bluebirds helps us answer many scientific questions such as how long do bluebirds live? (we've had a few who've lived 5 years); do bluebirds mate for life? (well, we had one couple who stayed together for 3 years); and how far do bluebirds nest from where they were born? (not far). A great program for both children and adults.

#### Location:

**Kensico Cemetery**

273 Lakeview Ave.

Valhalla, NY

Meet at Cemetery office



## Welcome New Members

**Bronxville** Barbara Biel, Carmella Cammarota, Emily Devine, Renee Duff, Robert Fullerton, Jennie Martel, Miriam Miranda, Susan Orzel-Biggs, Gary Purwin, Judith Robinson, Karen Russo, Penny Willergodt **Eastchester** Reina Luardo **Hartsdale** Phyllis Brown, Melvin Green, Yosuke Imai, Reit Reid, Bernardo Scheimberg, Amy Solomon **Larchmont** Judith Chananie, Linnet Forsyth, Jennifer Geer, Tamara Greenman, Lila Greisman, Norman Hinerfeld, Alexander Joyner, William Robb, Wendy & William Simmons, Kirk White **Mamroneck** Eric Dehais, Sarah Evans, Michael Ludwig, Susan Mines, Angie Scimia, Joan Shapiro, Carole Smyth **Mount Vernon** Georgia Barnes, Mathieu Nicholas, Grace Reis, John Roque **New Rochelle** Robert Andrews, Paul Basch, Diane Brink, Herbert Friedman, Ed Halperin, Luke Hunter, Jaclyn Israel, Kathleen Kehoe, Jerome Leibowitz, R McCormick, Ann Mee, Drake Spencer, Jasmine Tiongson, Audrey Walker, Svetlana Wasserman **Pelham** Liz D'Imperio, Arabinda Guha, Rebecca Hakimian, Blair Nespole **Scarsdale** Mary Caruso, Mark Dalton, Margaret Falk, Maryian Green, Amy Hwang, Ann Lewis, Si Pullman, Nicholas Roberts, Terry Sullivan, Christopher Towle, Geraldine Trent, Laura Vele, Kenneth Weiser **Tuckahoe** David Fuller, Marianne Hiller, Ronald Laitres

## Be a Citizen Scientist! Use eBird!

By Diane Morrison



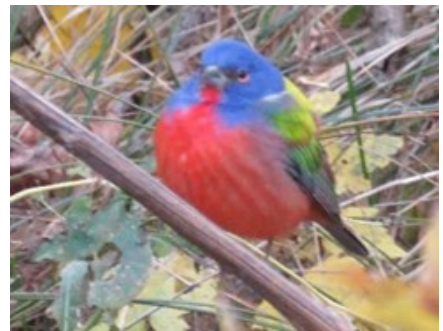
If you are a birder who would like to have your sightings contribute to the scientific community as well as the birding community, setting up an account with eBird is for you. eBird, an online checklist program set up in 2002 by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and National Audubon Society has revolutionized the way the birding community reports and accesses information about birds, their abundance, and their distribution at specific times of year and in specific locations. eBird is now used in every country in the world and the observations of each individual with an eBird account are shared with a global community of educators, land managers, ornithologists, and conservation biologists as well as recreational birders.

If you have an eBird account, you will get rare bird alerts of sightings of rare birds in your area as well as their location. You will also have access to locations of “hotspots,” public birding locations where birders regularly visit and report their sightings. eBird’s goal is to maximize the accessibility of the millions of bird observations made each year by recreational and professional bird watchers and is amassing one of the largest and fastest growing biodiversity data resources in existence. This data is extremely important for scientists in being able to identify trends in habitat shifting, migration, population growth or decline and effects of environmental changes on bird populations.

To join eBird is easy; simply go on to the eBird website - <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>, create an account with a user name and a password and then follow the prompts to enter your observations on a particular day in a specific location. eBird will ask you questions about what time you made your observations, whether you were driving or walking or stationary, how many people were in your party and particularly, the number of each species of bird seen. A pop up list of common birds seen in the area will appear once you type in your location. Then all you have to do is go down the list of birds and enter the number seen of each species. If you believe you have seen a bird not on the list, you may type the species in and eBird will ask you more questions to verify your sighting. eBird would like to have as much information as possible, and photos of birds are especially welcome in regard to rare bird sightings. eBird is a great way for you to save your bird records, keep track of your bird lists, including “Life Lists,” and to share your sightings with other birders. More importantly, you will be making a great contribution to the scientific community with your observations at a time when birds need your help more than ever.



*When a Painted Bunting showed up in Prospect Park in December 2015, hundreds of people found out about this “rare” bird on eBird and showed up to photograph and add it to their “lists.”*



*Painted Bunting in Prospect Park*

## Our Nestbox Monitors Join Ranks of Citizen Scientists

It's nesting time. Our bluebirds and other species are actively setting up housekeeping. This year our nestbox monitors are encouraged to enter their observations in the NestWatch program run by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. They've come out with an "app" which makes it easy to enter data in the field. The information immediately goes to scientists who do bird and other research. Of most importance is how climate change is affecting the nesting patterns and long-term survival of birds.

Thanks to our nestbox monitors who are able to tackle the new technology. We'll be working to put our earlier years of nesting data into a format that the NestWatch program can accept. With years of nesting records, the scientists can answer many questions. Are bluebirds nesting earlier? The data will tell.

By the way, anyone can participate in the NestWatch program. If you see a nest happening in your yard, you can report the nesting activity. Go to [NestWatch.org](http://NestWatch.org) and sign up for a free account. Read the instructions and start entering data. You can do that either on the NestWatch website or, if you have a smart phone or iPad, you can use their convenient new free "app." To download the app, go to the iTunes store or Google Play and search NestWatch. The more "citizen scientists" we have, the smarter we will be about how to take care of our precious Earth.



*It's nesting time! Female bluebird builds the nest.*



*First bluebird eggs of season. Monitor Bob Buchanan and Rockefeller SP naturalist Steven DiFalco watch as monitor Jackie Moore enters nesting data into the NestWatch app.*



*Nestbox monitors training to use NestWatch.*



## FIELD TRIPS 2016/2017



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

### April 29, Saturday- Rye Nature Center/Bedford

Meet at 8 am at Rye Nature Center. Looking for spring migrants.

### May 7, Sunday- Central Park

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

### May 20, Saturday- Doodletown Road

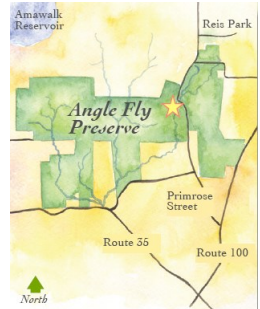
Meet at 8:00 am at Doodletown Road. Best place to see Cerulean Warblers nesting and other migrants.

### May 28, Sunday - Sterling Forest

Meet at 7:00 am at the village hall. We will be looking for early migrants - warblers and other song-birds that are migrating.

### June 10, Saturday- Angle Fly Preserve - Somers

Meet 8 am at Angle Fly. Directions at <http://somerslandtrust.org/angle-fly-preserve/directions>.



## Field Trip Report

To see all Species seen for the year so far go to our web site at <http://www.brssaudubon.org/>

### January 14

On a wintry day 2 participants went to Montauk and saw 53 species of birds. The best sightings were a Sandhill Crane, and some eastern meadowlarks, Merlin and 3 Alcids.

### February 11 Eagle Fest

On a beautiful winter day 34 Species were seen including 6 Bald Eagles, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Merlin, and Great Horned Owl.

### February 19

On a nice winter day 10 participants went to Jones Beach and saw 57 species of birds. We also stopped at 3 other spots on the way back. Some of the highlights were Pink-footed Goose, Cackling Goose, Harlequin Duck, Northern Gannet, 3 species of sandpipers, Horned Lark, Snow Buntings

### March 4

7 Participants went to Greenwich Point in Connecticut and saw 37 species of birds.

### April 9

We went to Larchmont Reservoir and Hommocks Nature Area. 21 participants saw 53 species of birds. Some of the highlights were Warbling Vireo and 3 Warbler species, some Phoebes and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

## Birdseed Sale Results Better Than Ever

By Doug Bloom

Thank you to all the customers who bought birdseed through our February seed sale. We appreciate your continued support. Our profit on the second seed sale was \$3201. Some of the proceeds from seed sales go toward sending kids to the nature camps in the county parks. If anyone knows of kids who might want to do this, please contact a Board Member. The total profit for the two seed sales this year is \$9175. This is our best ever.

We would like to acknowledge the people who gave donations for the seed sale this year.

Louise Abel, Paul Basch, Doug Bloom, Sheryl Breuninger, Ernestine Colombo, Cathy Corbin, Julia De Carlo, Warren Douglas, Nancy Early, Cece Fabbro, Claudia Glaser, Lu Gmoser, Clare Gorman, Elizabeth Harriss, Kathryn Heintz, Emond Herve jr, Emita Hill, Tina Horenz, Phil Horner, Dave Kaufman, Alice La Sala, Kelly Mac Pherson, Bob Maffucci, Valerie Marini, Scott Mellis, Harriett Miller, Diane Morrison, Sandy Morrissey, Peggyann Munnick, Wendy Murphy, Francine Naughton, Suzi Oppenheimer, Donald Pinals, Neil Powell, Karen Raggins, Charles Rubens, Vern Schramm, Mark Sotsky, Jean Stephenson, Eliot Strong, George Vaida, Ellen Valle, Marilyn Varley, Janice Von Mehren, Svetlana Wasserman, Joan Weissman, Bob Wirsneck, Sidney Witter, Phyllis Wittner



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