



EST. 1947

The BIRD CALL

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

Bluebirds Do It the Old-fashioned Way

By Sandy Morrissey

Since the bluebird population hit its nadir in the 1970s, they have made a steady rebound thanks to bluebird enthusiasts across the country who have put up nestboxes to provide human-made housing to replace the natural tree cavities that were taken over by non-native house sparrows and starlings.

The bluebird population is now in a healthy state, and until this summer, I would have said that its sustained success depended completely on people supplying the housing.

While I continue to think the bluebirds couldn't get along without us, I was amazed this summer to discover that many bluebirds must be successfully finding nesting cavities in trees and rearing their young without our help.

Evidence of this is two-fold. First, I witnessed two active bluebird nests in natural tree cavities.

One was on Baxter Road in North Salem. I wasn't so surprised at this, as the bluebird population in northern Westchester has always been larger, seemingly because they have much more open space than we do in lower Westchester. However, in July I also saw bluebirds nesting in a natural tree cavity on Bonnie Briar Country Club.



A very rare sight! This bluebird found a natural tree cavity on Bonnie Briar golf course.

That is right here in crowded lower Westchester.

The second indication that bluebirds are nesting in tree cavities is from my banding data. Last year



Bluebird nesting in natural tree cavity in North Salem. Note the tree is dead. If possible, leave dead and dying trees uncut in your yard to make homes for birds and other wildlife.

two-thirds of the adults we captured in our nestboxes were "recaptures." That is, they were "ours" (banded in a previous year). Since we band all the nestlings, and all the adults we can capture, we expect in following years the percentage of "recaptures" to go up every year, and indeed it has since we started banding in 2011.

This year was different. While we had about the same number of captured adults, the percentage of "recaptures" was under 50%.

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Birds in Maine: More Than just Gulls

By Catie Beveridge

Summer trips to Maine are a real treat for any birdwatcher. Not only on the coast, but also on shore, many birds from all over migrate or take up residence. If you have a chance to travel along the Maine coastline, you'll be treated to Ospreys, Double-Crested Cormorants, and even some Bald Eagles! The elusive Atlantic Puffin lies further out to sea on seven different islands, thanks to Project Puffin, run by the Seabird Restoration Program. They have a live webcam feed available to watch at www.projectpuffin.audubon.org/audubon-live-cams. On the mainland, Bald Eagles, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, loons, and even an occasional Great Horned Owl make appearances throughout the spring and summer. Sometimes, wood ducks, warblers, and Belted Kingfishers pop up to take a turn too. Maine's state bird is the Black-capped Chickadee, and you won't have trouble finding him. In the early hours of the morning, you can hear them from all directions. Overall, if you are looking for an even mix between shore and land birds, Maine is the perfect place to bird.

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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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Where were all these new bluebirds coming from that weren't "ours?"

It is most unlikely that they came from nestboxes not in our BRSS bluebird project because there aren't a lot of other nestboxes around, at least that we know of. And, secondly, banding data taught us that bluebirds do not stray far from "home." Most bluebirds we recapture were originally banded within a mile of their present location. The Kensico Cemetery bluebirds hang out in Kensico or surrounding cemeteries, but none has been found more than 2 miles from there. The golf course bluebirds usually stay on the same golf course – though occasionally "change clubs." No bluebird has traveled more than five miles from its original nest, so our new bluebirds aren't coming down from northern Westchester.

Since I began banding our bluebirds in 2011, we have sent over 1,500 nestlings out into the world, and they all (at least the survivors) need to find housing the next year. My theory is that this expanded population has had some success in finding natural tree cavities.

All this means a bluebird family could be nesting in your yard someday if you have some open area and trees or snags with holes! So don't cut down that dying tree, unless it is going to cause serious damage. It will make a great home for our bluebird of happiness.

Sandra Morrissey is president of BRSS Audubon and founder of its Eastern Bluebird Project.

BRSS Annual Meeting

Over 50 people attended our BRSS Annual Meeting in June. Carolyn Cunningham, our honoree, received many deserved tributes for her life's dedication to improving the environment. We elected returning board members Miriam Beveridge, Clare Gorman, Elizabeth Poyet, Bob Wirsneck and Jeff Zuckerman to the Class of 2018 and new board member, Bill O'Connell, to fill a vacant position in the Class of 2016.



Carolyn Cunningham, second from right, with her family.

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How Many Sticks in a House Wren Nest?

The House Wren will fill up an entire nestbox with sticks. Considering that it has to maneuver each stick into a small hole, it's an amazing feat. We asked Mr. McGrath's 2nd grade class from the Columbus School in Mt. Vernon to count the sticks in one nest. Each student got a handful, counted them out in groups of ten and made a chart to help count them up. Can you believe the little bird can bring in 1,300 sticks to make its nest! And it does this in just a few days! Thanks, Mr. McGrath's class, for helping us research this.



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Our honoree, Carolyn Cunningham, receiving a proclamation from State Senator, George Latimer.



Students from Mr. McGrath's class in our "Learn Birds are Cool in School" program attended, as well as Catie Beveridge (back, left), initially involved in our Youth Birding group and now a contributing writer for our newsletter.

PROGRAMS 2014/2015

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, September 16, 2015 - The East to West Migration of Steppe Eagles and Other Raptors in Nepal

Speaker: Robert DeCandido, PhD

Dr. DeCandido started his research on the east/west migration of Steppe Eagles and other raptors in 1999. Interrupted by a civil war, he was able to return to photograph these amazing birds in 2011-2014. We will enjoy his remarkable photographs, not only of Steppe Eagles but of four vulture species in migration and a total of 8 vulture species in the area. These are some of the most endangered bird species in the world. Dr. DeCandido will explain why these birds migrate from east to west (and not north to south) and why some of the same species we see in North America, such as Golden Eagles, Ospreys and Peregrines are also migrants in Nepal. You can find out more about Dr. DeCandido, his research and birding activities by visiting his website: www.birdingbob.com.

Harrison Public Library - 2 Bruce Ave. Harrison, NY



Steppe Eagle: *Aquila n. nigripes*
4th Year - 22 November 2014
Thulakarka, Nepal
Robert DeCandido PhD
rdony@earthlink.net

Wednesday October 21, 2015 - Native Plant Garden of New York Botanical Garden

Speaker: Michael Hagen

The 3.5 acre Native Plant Garden at the New York Botanical Garden celebrates the beauty of plants native to northeastern North America. Nearly 100,000 native trees, shrubs, wildflowers, ferns, and grasses were planted in a carefully planned contemporary design that harmonizes with the natural landscape. Many of the plants here provide shelter and sustenance for wildlife, making this garden a magnet for squirrels, chipmunks, frogs, and a colorful array of birds and butterflies. Michael Hagen is the NYBG's curator of the Native Plant Garden and the Rock Garden. He previously served as Staff Horticulturist for Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring, NY and Garden Manager at Rocky Hills in Mt. Kisco, a preservation project of the Garden Conservancy.

Greenburgh Nature Center - 90 Dromore Rd. Scarsdale, NY



16th Annual Winter Bird Seed Sale

The BRSS Bird Seed Sale is your opportunity to buy premium quality bird seed and help us raise funds for our BRSS Audubon educational and environmental programs. **This is the BRSS Audubon's only fundraiser.** Our mixes contain only the seeds that local birds prefer, without any "filler" seeds often found in cheaper mixes sold at grocery and hardware stores.

A study by the US Fish and Wildlife Service showed that the favorite foods for birds in our area are sunflower seed, peanuts and millet. They are all available on our seed sale.

Welcome New Members

Bronxville
Helen Davis
Linda Howitt
Warren Hueber
John Isaac
Janice Kearney
Lisa Lewis
Sondra Luger

Andrew Marshall
Christopher McCormick
Pamela Morrill
Eastchester
Suzanne O'Rourke

Hartsdale
Laurence Doyle
Joseph M. Famelle
Phyllis Tarloe
Larchmont
Galena Hunt
Leslie Newman

Max Schapiro
Helen Werner
Mamaroneck
Clarice Curry
Marcia Warner
New Rochelle
Jean Kostellich
Ira Orenstein

Mario Roberto
Pelham
Carol Brown
Cathy Corbin
Eugene Linden
Scarsdale
Edmond Cotty
Joseph Dorn

Jan Flanzer
Susan Gall
Sarah Kagan
Susan Kutzin
Esther Lo
Karen Otten
Mary Rubens
Deana Schiffer

Nancy Steger
Arlyn Tepper
Elizabeth Waltzman
Tuckahoe
Summerfield
Baldwin
Christina Driver



FIELD TRIPS 2014 /2015



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

September 20, Sunday - Larchmont Reservoir / Hommocks

Meet at 8:00 am at the upper parking lot at reservoir. Will be looking for fall Migrants

October 4, Sunday - Greenwich Audubon Center

Meet at Greenwich at 8:30 am. Looking for migrating hawks and land birds.

October 25, Sunday - Marshlands and Read Sanctuary

Meet at 8:00 am at Read. We will be looking for late migrants and possibly some late shorebirds.

November 15, Sunday - Connecticut Coast

Meet at 7:30 am at Village Hall. We will be looking for late migrants.

December 27, Sunday - Christmas Bird Count

Contact Doug Bloom to volunteer for this important bird survey. Volunteer for a few hours or all day.

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 - 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 2015/2016

All field trips are on Saturdays and begin at 9:00 am.

PLEASE email Dave Kaufman

(dkaufman43@gmail.com) if you plan to attend.

Sept. 26, Marshlands Conservancy – field, woodland and marsh birds.

Oct. 17, Crestwood Lake – water and parkland birds (meet in Crestwood Train Station parking lot on the parkway side of the train station).

Nov. 14, Sheldrake Environmental Center – Water and woodland birds (meet in Sheldrake parking lot).

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).



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

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)
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