



EST. 1947

The BIRD CALL

Fall 2018

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

Celebrate the “Year of the Bird”

2018 has been declared the “Year of the Bird” by National Audubon Society, National Geographic and many other organizations and governments, including Westchester County. It commemorates the 100th Anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which is credited with saving millions, if not trillions, of birds. The goal is to get the public more engaged with birds. If you care about birds, then you will care about protecting our environment, something under constant threat.

BRSS Audubon is joining this effort to get people more aware of the birds around them and make the connection between the well-being of birds and the natural world we live in and depend on. We will hold a program to celebrate the “Year of the Bird” at the Greenburgh Nature Center on Saturday, October 20, from 10:00 to 12:00 noon. It is free and open to the public.

The program is filled with hands-on activities that will be fun and educational for the whole family. What makes a bird a bird? Feathers! What is a wingspan and what is yours? Birds use birdsong to find a mate. Can you find your mate? A bird’s beak determines what it eats. What do you eat if your beak is shaped like a spoon? Birds use a variety of different materials to make a nest. Can you build a nest without using your hands? What colors and behaviors of birds will you discover on a mini bird walk on the grounds of the GNC? What’s the best way to help birds?

At the midway point (11:00), we will meet at the Birds of Prey exhibit for their daily feeding, plus learn about the importance of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and how it is now threatened after 100 years.

We hope you’ll join this celebration of birds, and perhaps we’ll open a few more eyes to the joy and wonder of birds and their connection to the planet we all share.

What: BRSS Audubon “Year of the Bird” Celebration
Date: Saturday, October 20, 10:00 to 12:00 noon
Place: Greenburgh Nature Center, 99 Dromore Rd., Scarsdale
Registration: Required. Please email brssaudubon@gmail.com
Cost: Free and open to the public



Snowy Egret is one of the many species brought back from the brink of extinction because of the passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Let’s celebrate!

Summer Fun

By Artemis and Scout Caporoso

This summer we went to Marshlands Conservancy Nature Camp. Some things we did there were going on hikes and nature walks through the marshlands, digging trenches near the lodge, and visiting the frog pond where, if we got lucky, we would even see or catch and release some frogs! We also made clay and fed the birds and turkeys. Our favorite things to do were going seining down at the beach, which was catching fish in a large net. We also made wooden bows out of trees and branches we cut ourselves, and we played deer tracks, a fun hide and seek game.

Sometimes after long walks through the marshlands we would cool off by hanging out at one of the beaches, such as the Secret Beach. Sometimes we would go and play games in the beech tree forest. We also hung out by the cave, which is basically a short underground tunnel that we could go through for fun. During camp, we would occasionally see deer passing by. We would also see lots of other wildlife like turkeys. And lots of mosquitoes. We would get really muddy and also have to do tick checks at the end of the day. One day we went crabbing at the Secret Beach. We caught lots of tiny crabs with our hands and then let them go. Overall, we had a fun time at Marshlands Conservancy Nature Camp, mosquitoes and all!

Artemis (age 12, grade 7) and Scout (age almost 9, grade 4)



BRSS AUDUBON

**P. O. Box 1108
Scarsdale, NY 10583
www.brssaudubon.org**

**Board of Directors
and Committee Members**

*Officers**PRESIDENT*

Sandra Morrissey 949-2531
sandym@cloud9.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Doug Bloom 834-5203

TREASURER

Jeff Zuckerman 395-3083
jeffzuckerman2000@yahoo.com

SECRETARY

Diane Morrison 725-7351

*Committees**MEMBERSHIP*

Clare Gorman 395-3083
claregorman@yahoo.com

FIELD TRIPS

Doug Bloom 834-5203
Neil Powell 437- 8348

YOUNG BIRDERS GROUP

Dave Kaufman, Chair 777-1633

CONSERVATION

Miriam Beveridge 725-8608
Bernie Conway 413-210-0041
Cece Fabbro 472-6596
Johnny Flores 917-345-8698
Dave Kaufman 777-1633
Ted Kavanagh 646-334-1775
Henry May 667-6144
Bill O'Connell 479-9026
Erin Provenzano 845-531-8109
Vern Schramm 576-2578

HOSPITALITY

Diane Morrison 725-7351

PROGRAMS

Bernie Conway 413-210-0041
Diane Morrison 725-7351

NEWSLETTER

Clare Gorman, Editor
claregorman@yahoo.com

WEBSITE

Sandra Morrissey
sandym@cloud9.net

*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*

Annual Meeting Honors Joan Heilman and All the Bluebird Monitors

Over 50 people attended our BRSS Annual Meeting in June. We honored our dedicated Bluebird Monitors and gave a special honor to Joan Heilman, who has spent her lifetime helping the bluebirds. We approved the following officers for a two-year term: Sandra Morrissey, President; Doug Bloom, Vice President; Diane Morrison, Secretary; and Jeff Zuckerman, Treasurer. We also elected the following slate of Directors for the Class of 2021: Miriam Beveridge, Clare Gorman, Jeff Zuckerman and, new to the board, Ted Kavanagh and Erin Provenzano.

**FCWC Honors BRSS Audubon at its Annual Meeting**

At its 53rd Annual Meeting the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County (FCWC), five Audubon Society chapters were honored for their work in protecting birds and the places they need, and for educating the public about the importance of birds.

Each was presented with the "Green Seal Award" - Given in recognition of outstanding environmental leadership and advocacy in Westchester.

In addition, BRSS received a Congressional "Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition" from Congressman Eliot Engle.

Henry May represented BRSS at the award ceremony. He spoke and described some of the many fine things our chapter was doing. He reported, "It was a positive experience for everyone who came. I had the feeling that the attendees would return to the work they are involved in with energy and inspiration."

County Executive George Latimer also attended the FCWC annual meeting and declared it was the "Year of the Bird in Westchester County." (See our lead article and how BRSS Audubon will celebrate the "Year of the Bird").

Taking Care of Bees-ness

By Erin Provenzano

Growing up, I was affectionately nicknamed “Bumblebee” by good friends, and I still cannot resist the rich sweetness of raw golden honey. So it only seemed natural that with the ringing in of the new year, my friend, Lauren, and I decided we would become beekeeping partners when the 2018 season began.

Weeks were spent with library books, both old and new editions, in pursuit of bee knowledge—from the basics of the hive order to the complexity of the waggle dance (a very sophisticated form of communication). Lauren and I jotted notes and arranged beekeeping mentors for ourselves and tried to memorize as much information as possible, until finally the big day arrived.

It was mid-April and our journey began in Kingston, NY as we picked our package of bees up from Hudson Valley Bee Supply. From that moment, everything changed. We were automatically co-parents to a group of 10,000 buzzing individuals, one of which was the queen. After installing the package into the hive, in which you literally shake the bees into their new home, the wonderment begins.

Within two weeks, the comb is already drawn out and each cell adorned with an egg, which resembles a small grain of rice. Just three weeks after the egg is laid, a new bee emerges from the cell, ready to contribute to the matriarchal society. As a beekeeper, you do not want to disturb your hive too much but you also do not want to neglect them. There is definitely a sweet spot when it comes to how frequently the colony should be inspected.

If you are not paying close enough attention to the size of your hive, your bees may quickly run out of storage space. When your bees run out of storage space, they begin looking elsewhere. When bees begin to look elsewhere and leave your hive, this is called a swarm.

By the time Lauren and I realized we needed to provide the bees with more space, our bees were already preparing to flee. We put a honey super on the hive, which is extra storage space for the bees, specifically intended for honey storage. But we put our super on the hive in early June when unknowingly we should have put the super on in early May. That slight miscalculation of a few weeks made enough of a difference that half of our hive, including the queen, left in search of more space. What clued Lauren and I into this phenomenon was an increased production of honey, decreased sighting of eggs/larvae, and an observation of swarm cells. Swarm cells look like peanut-shaped cups and conceal developing larva of prospective queen bees within them.

By this point, Lauren and I had concluded that our days of amateur beekeeping were already coming towards a close, the outlook of our hive looking slim and directionless. We closed up the hive for a few weeks and hoped for the best. Those few weeks could not have passed by soon enough. Wedging the hive tool underneath the lid of the hive and prying it open, we could only have faith in what had transpired within. For one, the bees were still working, communicating, and foraging. That was the first glimmer of hope. As we took out each frame, and scoured the cells with our eyes through our screened veils, the hope welling in our chests was getting deeper. Until finally a frame, as the morning sunlight poured into its cells, revealed the rice-shaped pearls the queen had recently laid. These eggs were laid by a queen who was made by the intervention of the worker bees left behind by the swarm.

The legacy of the hive was foreseeable once again and it was all because these workers had risen above their adversity and taken matters into their own tarsus claws (a.k.a. bee hands). That morning reminded me of a valuable lesson: “believe in yourself and the rest will fall into place.”



Camp Scholarship Recipients Have Terrific Experiences

This summer BRSS Audubon gave out four scholarships for ecology camps. Two went to children attending the Westchester County camp at the Marshlands. The other two were given to teachers who attended National Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp in Maine. Their camp session was titled, "Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week."

In this newsletter is the feedback we got from our four campers. We can see from their enthusiasm and experiences at the camps that our scholarships were well worth the investment.

Special thanks to all the BRSS Audubon members who support our Bird Seed sale (going on now!). We use these funds to offer these wonderful experiences, and we are confident the attendees will give back by sharing what they learned and being strong advocates for the environment.

About Hog Island Camp

Hog Island camp is not limited to teachers. They have many different sessions during the summer, including a session just for teens and one for families. All camp sessions are five-night/six-day programs led by expert ornithologists, artists, and educators. Most sessions fill up quickly. Registration opens October 15 for the 2019 sessions. Check out what is offered at <http://hogisland.audubon.org/>.

Hog Island - Breathing life into Education

By Carolyn Paradiso

On our first day, we played team building games and sang how Hog Island changes you forever. It seemed hyperbolic at the time, but I must say it truly seeps into your soul and energizes your outlook. After several years of stressful shifts in education, it was gratifying to be inspired again.

The workshops were a perfect blend of practical skills to bring to our classrooms and self-indulgent learning experiences. It was difficult to pick and choose from so many options. The Sensory Feast, Scavenger Hunt, and other hikes helped us see new ways to bring wonder and awe to nature walks. Sunrise photography sessions prompted us to observe and appreciate the subtle changes of daybreak. Earth Science labs were messy and fun helping us recall that laughter belongs in the classroom. These sessions along with seaweed classification and pressing, journal making, storytelling, bioluminescence hunting, ponding, Cornell birding, observing the night sky, singing nature folk songs, and the list goes on fill our day and night nourishing your enthusiasm. We were given an approach that was simple, powerful, and practical to help us see how to take advantage of the nature in our neighborhood. It needs to be consistent and heartfelt, not grandiose, to have an impact. Our heads would spin when we realized how much we packed into one day and how many ideas were sparked in our heads.

The captain took us for a boat ride along Egg Rock to observe the Puffins. I fell in love with these little guys. We enjoyed Puffin Project lectures with Stephen Kress, Derrick Jackson, and our very own Pete Salmansohn, and felt swept away with such passion and perseverance. My class will be adopting a puffin and studying up on their journey.

We studied the intertidal zone creatures working together to collect and observe the many diverse creatures before returning them to their home. Watching the majestic bald eagles swoop around the island is breathtaking when we think of the struggles they went through to survive. However, watching the staff's efforts to keep them from eating the last of the nesting osprey babies was a sobering reminder of the circle of life. With conflicting feelings of admiring both predator and prey, I tucked a feather from the evidence of a kill found on one our hikes into the memory catcher we made at the beach.

Communing with mentors, peers, and nurturing staff was uplifting and much needed. A re-energized desire to bring the children into natural settings to appreciate and feel connected to the beauty, cycles, strength, and balance of the world is the most significant take away from the educator's camp. Being awed noticing the succession of new life in an area of storm fallen trees reminded us to clear the trees and make way for the possibilities. Feeling inspired and wanting to pay that forward to enrich our students' lives is how the spirit of Hog Island affects you forever. This was a remarkable experience that I will carry with me.

Thank you Audubon for caring so much about our planet and providing me with this incredible centering experience.



Carolyn Paradiso, a New Rochelle teacher, is all smiles as she holds a lobster she found in the intertidal zone.

Hog Island Educator's Camp a Dream for Scholarship Recipient

By Sanaa Basheer

Thank you very much for nominating me for the Audubon Society Scholarship to the Educator's Camp. When I learned I was granted a full scholarship, I was on cloud nine and super excited!

Through emails I reached out to educators traveling up to Maine. I met a wonderful teacher and we decided to travel together. It took us about four and half hours traveling up the New England coast. Once we arrived we were warmly welcomed by smiling faces. We drove down a long, dusty road to a dock and unloaded our belongings.

Immediately after stepping onto the rocky road, I smelled the salt in the atmosphere and felt the sun beaming on my face. The scenery was breathtakingly beautiful. Beautiful blue green water surrounded a majestic island. Tall coniferous trees kissed the sky. Birds chirping happily in the far distance. I couldn't take my eyes off its beauty. Standing there on the boat as it sailed across to the island was soothing as it calmly rocked back and forth.

Once I reached the island I was immediately embraced by a woman named Trudy, an older lady with long, thick, salt and pepper, gorgeous hair down her back. While embraced I felt like I've known this woman for years perhaps in another life. Trudy guided us to an open picnic area where we enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and beverages. Through all the chatter of meeting new people I couldn't take my eyes off the architecture, the bird sculptures carved into trees, and a hammock perfectly nestled between two trees overlooking the ocean.

Next, we were led to our cabins. As we ventured to our temporary home, I was taken by the enormous veins of the trees that seem to be pulsating from underneath the earth. I stayed in the cabin named the Crows, in a room titled, Magnolias. There were three of us in the room, Sawdayah, a farmer in Brooklyn, Roopa, a teacher from Alabama, and me. I met my roommates, and we all shared our initial excitement, and we connected almost instantly.

After we were all signed in and settled, we heard the bell signaling it was time for dinner, family style, which was delicious. We meet in the Fish house after dinner, a quintessential New England styled home. We all gathered in a circle where we introduced ourselves. Next, we discussed the objective of the trip and a synopsis of the following days. To my surprise we were serenaded by Trudy and her husband Craig. They ended the circle with beautiful folk songs that I can still hear whispering in my ears. I felt as though I was floating, and this was within two hours of being on the island.

Over the next few days we focused on lessons and curriculum to teach students about everything from birds to ocean life to global warming. Interconnecting and interweaving the pertinent aspects of taking care of the earth because all life and plant souls are connected. Each day was meticulously planned, not a minute was wasted. We conducted classes in nature through hiking rigorous trails and caves, and we explored and visited cabins that once were inhabited by the famous Emily Dickinson. We took a boat trip past Egg Island where we saw the infamous puffins hovering above the sea gathering fish for their young. Seals were sloshing about aggressively hunting schools of sea creatures. For the first time ever I dissected a squid, almost ate squid ink (I chickened out at the last moment). I made seaweed impressions and had the pleasure of viewing some seaweed impressions from the 1600s.

My favorite part of the trip was just the calmness and tranquility of the island. From watching the osprey protecting her nest to the sounds of the waves seemingly dancing up along the coast. It was meditative and just what my psyche needed. I was mesmerized and encompassed by it all. Exploring the woods and simply sitting still in the space and just taking in all the sounds, looking up at the trees so strong, sturdy, frozen at the base yet swaying softly, gently against the sky. Sketching caterpillars crawling on the leaves, and spiders webbing their prey. It was the miniscule ordinary things that brought me the most peace.

Upon leaving I felt a pang in my heart. I wasn't ready to depart just yet. I really needed more time to just be still and try desperately to hold on to the smell of the salt in the air, the golden finches fluttering to the feeders, the chipmunks and minks sneaking about, and the waves calling out my name.

Attending the Educator's Camp has led to new friendships, new life experiences, and new and welcomed emotions. I immediately started to plan my next trip back to the island which subsided my glum emotions for a moment. I truly had one of those trips that will forever change me.

Again, thank you BRSS Audubon Society for granting me this trip of a life time! I am forever changed and grateful.



Sanaa Basheer, Mt. Vernon teacher (and also a yoga teacher), takes in all the beauty and tranquility of Hog Island Audubon Camp.

2018 Bluebird Nesting Season Ends on a High Note

By Sandy Morrissey

While our number of bluebird nest attempts was held to only 76 nests, from the impact of the devastating parasite in 2017, I have good news to report. Both the number of bluebirds banded and the number of nestlings that fledged increased from last year.

Best of all is the increase in the success rate of nest attempts. It was normal to have a nest success rate between 75% and 80% every year since I started keeping good statistics in 2011. Our number of nest attempts also climbed every year, as we added more nestboxes and built on the success of the year before.

Then 2016 hit us with our first big decline in success rate. We dropped to a 60% success rate, and I blamed the cold spring. Last year, 2017, we also had a cold spring and witnessed many dead adult bluebirds in our nestboxes. After testing, it was determined the cause was a bad parasite. Worst hit were golf courses, where the success rate plunged to 40%.

In this “Year of the Bird,” our bluebirds showed their resiliency. Even though we had fewer nest attempts, the great news is we went back to an 80% success rate.

The best news is from the golf courses. While many of them still didn’t get bluebirds this year, we did have successful nest attempts on eight golf courses, four of whom were hit hard with the parasite last year.

While I didn’t see a single bluebird on my own golf course – the place where this whole bluebird project got started, I remain hopeful that next year the bluebird of happiness will return!



A male bluebird at Apawamis Country Club brings a tasty insect to its nestlings. Happy to see it isn't a pillbug, which was blamed last year for spreading the parasite.



Girl Scout Lily Williams had to wait 4 years to get bluebirds nesting in the nestbox she made with her Girl Scout troop in 2015. That's something to smile about.



We helped a “single mom” feed her hungry nestlings by supplying mealy worms daily. Three fledged successfully.

Northern Cardinals, Mr. and Mrs. Happiness

By Vern Schramm

Few birds delight more backyard birdwatchers than the Northern Cardinal. A splash of red near the feeders is welcome in all seasons, and the Cardinals are happy to oblige, summer or winter. Falling snow seems to attract them, or perhaps the white-weather canvas allows them to paint a more colorful appearance. The Northern Cardinal is distributed over most of the eastern United States. Its popularity caused it to be the only bird to be selected as the state bird for seven states: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia. Not in New York, where the Cardinal lost out to the Eastern Bluebird. The official name was Cardinal until 1983, when Northern Cardinal was considered more appropriate to distinguish it from other members of the cardinal family. Unlike the Eastern Bluebird, which remains beset by habitat loss, disease and predation, Cardinals are thriving. The population is estimated to be 100 million with no sign of decline. Widespread backyard feeders have likely contributed to population growth and increased distribution of the Cardinal population. Cardinals thrive in human habitats. Consider the New York distribution reports of the Cardinal in 1910. It was a common resident of southeastern New York counties west of the Hudson River, but not in Westchester County. Today, it would be a rare day to miss seeing the Cardinals at the backyard feeders of Westchester County and even more to the east. In all seasons, Mr. and Mrs. Cardinal enjoy time at the sunflower feeder. Mrs. Cardinal receives extra attention during mating, when Mr. Cardinal carries and offers one seed at a time to impress Mrs. Cardinal. Appropriately, this gentlemanly



Continued on Page 7



FIELD TRIPS 2018



Please Contact Doug Bloom at (914) 834-5203 for info or to register.

Sept. 22, Saturday - Brigantine NWR-Cape May, NJ

Meet at 6:30am at Scarsdale Village Hall. Looking for late migrants including shorebirds and other birds.

Sept. 29, Saturday - Larchmont Reservoir/with Bedford Audubon

Meet at 8:00am at upper parking area at the Reservoir. Looking for fall migrants.

Oct. 6, Saturday - Hawk Watch Greenwich Audubon Center

Meet at 9am at Greenwich Audubon. Looking for Hawks and other fall migrants.

Oct. 21, Sunday - Marshlands/Read

Meet at 8am at Read Sanctuary. We will be looking for late migrants.

Nov. 10, Saturday - Jamaica Bay

Meet at 7am at Scarsdale Village Hall. Will be looking for late migrants and early waterfowl.

Dec. 23, Sunday - Christmas Bird Count

Contact Doug Bloom to volunteer for this important bird survey. Interested birders may do a few hours or all day.

Jan. 6, Saturday - Montauk

Meet at 6:30am at Scarsdale Village Hall. Looking for wintering birds. Possibly Snowy Owls.

Jan. 18, Saturday - Jones Beach

Meet at Scarsdale Village Hall at 7:00am. Looking for wintering birds.

Feb. 9, Saturday - Eagle Fest

Meet at Croton Point Park at 9am. Looking for eagles.

Mar. 3, Sunday - Connecticut Coast

Meet at 7:00am at Scarsdale Village Hall. Looking for late winter migrants.

Apr. 20, Saturday - Larchmont Reservoir/Hommocks

Meet at 8:00am at Larchmont Reservoir. We will be looking for early migrants; warblers and other songbirds that are passing through.

May 5, Sunday - Central Park

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

May 11, Saturday - Rockefeller Preserve

Meet at Rockefeller parking lot at 8:00am. Looking for Spring migrants.

May 19, Saturday - Doodletown Road

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

May 25, Saturday - White Memorial Park, CT

Meet at 7:00am at the Scarsdale Village Hall. We will be looking for early migrants; warblers and other songbirds that are passing through.

May 31 - June 2, Friday-Sunday - Delmarva Peninsula

looking for spring migrants

PROGRAMS 2018

Sunday, October 21, 2:00pm - Birding the Hudson Valley

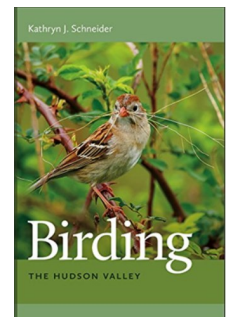
Author Kathryn Schneider presents her new book

Author, ecologist, and birder, Kathryn Schneider, will discuss her new book *Birding the Hudson Valley*. Three years in the making, Kathryn wrote her book to help backyard birdwatchers hone their skills, become better birders, connect to the birding community, and see more birds. It tells birders where and when to bird and leads them to terrific birding destinations from Troy to New York City.

Her talk will examine the methods she used to identify the best birding sites in the Hudson Valley, and end with her thoughts on how birders can use their pastime to protect the beautiful natural areas that make the Hudson Valley a special place for both birds and people.

Location: Chappaqua Performing Arts Center, 480 Bedford Rd., Chappaqua

Jointly sponsored by all five Audubon chapters in Westchester County as part of the "Year of the Bird" celebration.



Continued from Page 6

behavior continues during incubation of the eggs. If Mrs. Cardinal decides to raise more than one clutch in a summer, a common practice, Mr. Cardinal feeds and teaches the newly fledged birds while she warms the next clutch. Northern Cardinals mate for life, and the lifespan can be as long as 15 years. Their partnership is apparent during feeding hours. Often, one Cardinal appears first at the feeder...but keep watching...the partner is sure to appear in a few seconds. As the sun sets, dark shapes still appear at the feeders. Almost certainly it will be the Cardinals, always the last bird pair to get a snack before bedtime. The cheerful good nature of the Cardinal couple, together with their expressive crests moving up and down to express their happiness, give them a special place in the hearts of all birdwatchers.

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

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

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
WHITE PLAINS, NY
PERMIT NO. 7033



Stay in touch with BRSS Audubon in the following ways:



Visit our website
Brssaudubon.org



Find us on Facebook
Search
Bronx River Sound Shore
Audubon Society

Join!

Support our environmental mission and receive our newsletter with information about all our programs and field trips. Annual dues are **just \$20** and include membership in the National Audubon Society, plus its extraordinary 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