



The BIRD CALL

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

Snowbirding Florida's Suncoast

By Scott Mellis

Wintry weather is probably wearing a little thin about now. While vacations are an indulgence these days, South-west Florida offers beautiful respite and a chance to reconnect with nature.

Sanibel Island's **Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge** "is part of the largest undeveloped mangrove ecosystem in the United States" according to the U.S. Dist and Wildlife Service. It is considered one of the top ten birding spots in the country. The refuge provides habitat for over 220 species of birds. A lovely visitor's center prepares you for Wildlife Drive's four mile journey through lakes, bays, and waterways. There are viewing towers and many places to set up the scope. The Roseate Spoonbill's pink plumage makes for great viewing, especially when a huge flock is putting on a pag-

eant. Shorebirds and waders abound and sunset can be blissful (until it gets dark, the no-see-ums make you flee to your car like Keystone cops).

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary's two mile boardwalk is one of Naples' highlights. Beautiful meadow, marsh, and forest ecosystems provide views of painted and Indigo Buntings, Little Blue Heron, and other delights. **Eagle Lakes Community Park**, in Sandy Morrissey's (our BRSS Audubon president) words, has "more birds per square foot than anywhere." 9 AM was like a fantasy painting of "The Birds of Florida." Glossy Ibis, Anhinga, and Bronzed Cowbird a-courtin' were a treat.

Upscale **Marco Island** has some interesting interlopers. Burrowing Owls excavate suburban lawns and stand guard like tough-guy prairie dogs.



*Wilson's Plover in Naples, Florida
Photo by Sandy Morrissey*

Swallowtail Kites and magnificent Frigate birds stage dramatic flybys. **Great Cypress Bend Boardwalk** leads you through primordial swamp to a gator hole that looks like a scene from prehistory.

Adventure awaits, so bring your binoculars and thaw out with some beautiful birds.

Bats in Our Environment

By Bernie Conway

Bats are not blind, they are not rodents, and they do not become entangled in people's hair. Despite being demonized in the movies and on Halloween, bats serve us in an extraordinary way by performing natural insect control.

There are many of us who do not understand the nature of our only "true flying" mammal neighbor . . . the bat. The wings of bats are made up of elongated finger bones and the wing is a sort of stretched hand, with a thin membrane skin that stretches from the front fingers to the back of its back legs down to the end of its tail. This allows the animal to actually flap its wings and fly in the air like a bird, and unlike other mammals.

The bats of the Northeastern United States live in a variety of habitats. They can be found in cities, suburbs, wetlands, forests, fields, and agricultural farming lands. All Northeastern bats eat insects and in large amounts. An individual bat can eat up to fifty percent of its weight in various insects on a single night.

Bats are nocturnal and have adapted to hunt very efficiently. Despite seeing quite well they have an even better strategy to

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Young Birders Group

By David Kaufman & Sandy Morrissey

No Hawks, but Frogs and Newts and Worms, Oh My!

Our first Young Birders' Group outing for the year was a big success, despite no hawks being sighted on the field trip to Butler Sanctuary's Hawk Watch.



A stalled weather front kept the hawks from flying, but not the enthusiasm of our active and inquisitive birders. When the sky revealed nothing but gray emptiness, we decided to explore a forest trail and see what turned up.

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 is a chapter of the National Audubon Society
 serving the communities of
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 Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Mount Vernon, New
 Rochelle, Pelham, Scarsdale, and Tuckahoe*

Reaching Youth is Vital to Creating the Future Protectors of the Environment

By Sandy Morrissey, President

Our youth will someday be our legislators making laws that affect the environment. Will we have clean, sustainable ecosystems, or polluted air, dirty water and declining biodiversity in our plant and animal kingdoms?

What makes an environmentalist? Certainly, being exposed to the wonders of nature at a young age can set the foundation for a lifetime pursuit of its protection. You have to know something to love and care for it.

You might not care about protecting a shoreline for horseshoe crabs if you never saw one dig into the sand to lay its eggs. If a naturalist doesn't teach you, you might not know that millions of shorebirds depend on horseshoe crab eggs to sustain them as they make their marathon migrations along the coast at the precise time the horseshoe crabs are laying their eggs. And, you just might vote to allow a commercial or housing development along a seashore to get increased revenue in taxes instead of voting to keep it protected as vital habitat for horseshoe crabs.

As we went to press the Westchester County nature centers were slated to be closed and the naturalists dismissed. They were eventually saved in the 2012 budget. This crisis brought to the forefront the importance of nature education for our young people.



A naturalist at Read Wildlife Sanctuary inspires our future environmentalists.

Thousands of children visit the nature centers every year for their programs, camps and just a casual stroll in the great outdoors.

Many leave with knowledge, wonder and awe of the plants and animals they learn about. For some, it makes a lasting impression into their adulthood.

At BRSS Audubon, we looked around, saw the graying of our constituency and decided to make a concerted effort to reach out to young people. We started a youth birding



BRSS board member, Bonnie Gould, teaches Girl Scouts how they can help bring back Eastern Bluebirds.

club. We worked to expand our blue bird project that involves hundreds of children building nestboxes, monitoring boxes and even helping with banding. We continue to mentor high school students doing bird research. And, we recently added a school outreach program. We'll be going into two schools in Mt. Vernon once a month and teaching about birds, hoping these "early birders" will get connected with nature.

If we can spark just a few of our youngsters to have a deep concern for the natural world, they will likely be the legislators in the future who will stand up for good environmental policy. They will vote to keep nature centers open.

In this time of blizzards in October and 100-year floods occurring yearly, the need for a strong environmental protection policy is sorely needed. Investment in our youth today will yield the guardians of the future.

PROGRAMS 2012

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

All programs are co-sponsored by Central Westchester Audubon

January 19, 2012, Thursday - Film: "Play Again" - What are the consequences of a childhood away from nature?

This is a moving and humorous documentary following six teenagers who, like the "average American child," spend five to fifteen hours a day behind screens. "Play Again" unplugs these teens and takes them on their first wilderness adventure - no electricity, no cell phone coverage, no virtual reality.

Location: Church Street School, Room 132, 295 Church Street, White Plains, NY. Time: 7:00 pm.

February 16, 2012, Thursday - Memories from Matinicus Rock

Presenter: Benjamin Van Doren

Teen birder Benjamin Van Doren will share his photographs and experiences working with nesting seabirds this past summer on Matinicus Rock, a 22-acre island situated over twenty miles off the coast of Maine. As part of a long-term research and recovery program, Benjamin helped monitor Atlantic Puffins, Razorbills, Arctic Terns, Leach's Storm-Petrels, and a number of other species on one of the most diverse seabird colonies in the eastern United States.

Location: Church Street School, 295 Church Street, White Plains.

Time: 7:00 pm.

March 14, 2012, Wednesday - Harry Potter Critters

Melanie Pearson of the New Canaan Nature Center. Location: The Trove (children's library) at White Plains Library, 100 Martine Avenue, White Plains. Time: 7:00 pm.

April 18, 2012, Wednesday - Forestry is for the Birds: Why forest birds need us to cut down trees

Presenter: Mike Burger, Conservation and Science Director and Interim Director of the Atlantic Flyway, Audubon New York, Ithaca. Michael will provide an overview of the habitat requirements of forest birds during breeding, post-fledging, and migration periods. He will show results of recent research demonstrating the importance of dense, early-successional forest habitats to forest-breeding birds and discuss how natural disturbances, which create that habitat, have decreased. Finally, Mike will discuss Audubon's recommendations about how birds can benefit from habitats created through forest management in our northern forests, and he will give examples of practical forestry applications and techniques that can be used to create high-quality bird habitat.

Location: Eastchester Public Library, 11 Oakridge Place, Eastchester. Time: 7:00 pm.

May 16, 2012, Wednesday—Antarctica

Presenters: Andy and Jane Cahn.

Andy and Jane are lifelong educators and have taught in secondary schools and colleges in Westchester for many years. Retired now, they spend vast amounts of time traveling to some of the most exciting places on earth. Their slides and discussion of Antarctica will make for a most enjoyable and interesting evening.

Location: Eastchester Public Library, 11 Oakridge Place, Eastchester. Time: 7:00 pm.

A big thanks to Mike Vaughn of Hartsdale who cut out 40 bluebird nestbox kits in his home workshop. We are now set to expand our bluebird trails and continue teaching bluebird ecology to youth groups, who will put them together for us.



Welcome To All Of Our New Members

Bronxville

Agnes Boxhill
Dolores D'Arcy
Myrna Gilbert
Mary Grunte
Stella Lay
John Perino
Andrew Sellon
Evelyn Schmidt
Patricia Vaughan

Hartsdale

Erna Brout
Grace Shapiro
Masaaki Tahara

Larchmont

Madeline Gilbert
Mrs. John Hanway
Laura Jofre
Jim Lambert
Diana & Paul Marszalek

Marilyn Masiero

Liz Sabin
David Salmon
Anoush Shehadeh
Ton Stanback
Aysel Toprakli

Mamaroneck

R. Schneeman
Lilian Sicular
Joel Trieger

Mount Vernon

Ronnie Greenfield
Cathy Kawalek
Hazel McDonald
Donna Waldhorn

New Rochelle

Robin Andersen
Marge Banks
Lotte Booth
William Bruenn

Patricia Cohen

Corrina Ferrandino
Robert Frost
Brian Grobos
Nancy Johnson
Nary Kuntz
Pam & Tom Orzo
Thomas Reilly

Pelham

Alice Greene
Ben Marra
Robert Schlitz
Susan & Eric Wahl

Scarsdale

Nancy Bery
Martin Berlin
Robert Brewster
Susan Groner
Randi Guttenberg
Stephen Kaufman

Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Klausner

C. Knapp
Hannah Lewis
Maureen Markey
John Migotsky
Marie Mose
Jane Osborne
Anne Owen
Douglas Rachlin
Anne Reichling
Beth Shabto
Pat Shon
Joan Sidler
Joanne Siegel
Louise Vaccaro
Barbara Volsky
Tuckahoe
Joyce Clark
Jonathan Peter

12th Annual Bird Seed Sale Drive

This your second chance to order seed & at the same time support the work of BRSS Audubon

By Doug Bloom

I want to thank all the customers who bought birdseed through our fall seed sale. Our second seed sale is on right now and ends in early February. These are our main fundraisers during the year. Our profit on the fall sale was \$2546. We had \$1004 in donations.

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 including sending children to Westchester County's summer nature camps. Seed is fresh, top quality and has been sifted to remove all sticks, twigs and empty shells. 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. Better seed attracts more birds.

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.

To order see the form enclosed with this newsletter.

SUPPORT THE PROGRAMS & EFFORTS OF BRSS AUDUBON ! BUY BIRD SEED TODAY!

Young Birders

Continued from page 1

We were already amazed at the huge number of earth worms along the trail – more than I had ever seen in my life, and that's considerably longer than the youngsters. Then a salamander was spotted and inspected (it would be ID'd as a red-spotted newt). Then frogs were hopping everywhere. The "X" on the backs was the sign they were spring peepers. Another frog turned out to be a toad, and lots more of these were found, as were more newts.



Our species list grew longer as we marveled at the diversity of creeping, crawling, hopping, flying and growing things along the moist forest trail. Highlights included the newts, frogs, toads, a gazillion earth worms, grubs, a snail, a slug, crickets, a perfect spider web, chipmunks, a squirrel and intriguing and beautiful growths of moss, lichen, mushrooms, and ferns. A perfect non-hawk watch!

Larchmont Reservoir/Sheldrake Nature Center

The "Young Birders Group" of BRSS Audubon enjoyed a beautiful, crisp morning of birding at the Larchmont Reservoir on Saturday, December 3rd, a 60 acre nature preserve just off Weaver St. in Larchmont. Four intrepid young birders were treated to a nice

mix of wintering ducks (Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck) and water birds on the Reservoir, two species of woodpeckers on the woodland paths, and a far sighting of an American Kestrel soaring above us. We were all excited to get close up, unobstructed views from several angles of a Great Blue Heron fishing in the shallows of the reservoir. We all cheered when he came up with a fish for breakfast! Soon after lowering our binoculars from viewing two fairly common Downy Woodpeckers, a slightly larger woodpecker was seen on a closer branch that turned out to be a Yellow Bellied Sap Sucker – a life bird for several of the participants. I would like to thank Neil Powell who brought his spotting scope so the young birders were able to view a Belted Kingfisher up close and personal.

Upcoming Youth Birding Club Field Trips

All field trips begin at 9:00 a.m.

For help carpooling to locations, contact Dave Kaufman (dkaufman43@gmail.com)

February 11 – Eagle watch – Croton-on-Hudson (meet at far end of Croton train station parking lot).

March 24 – Read Sanctuary, Rye – feeder birds, ducks & shore birds.

April 28 – Harts Brook Park & Preserve, Hartsdale –nesting baby owls and woodland birds.

May 19 – Kensico Cemetery – nesting bluebirds (meet at cemetery office, 273 Lakeview Ave., Valhalla).

Field Trips Report

By Doug Bloom

Meadowlands, September 18, 2011

We had 6 participants and 48 species of birds on a sunny fall day. Some highlights of the trip were 5 species of sandpipers, an American Avocet and a few Merlins and a Peregrine Falcon that flew right over our heads about 10 feet away.

Greenwich Audubon Center, October 9, 2011

We had 8 participants and 36 species of birds on a very sunny day with no clouds in the sky. This makes it very hard to see hawks migrating because there is no contrast in the sky. Highlights were Wilson's Warblers, Pine Siskins and 4 species of hawks including American Kestrel and Cooper's Hawk.

Jamaica Bay, November 13, 2011

We had 23 participants and 33 species of birds. It was a beautiful fall day with little wind. Highlights were 5 Northern Harriers and an American Bittern which flew towards us before veering off. The latter is a very elusive bird usually heard but not seen. There were Brant by the hundreds and 3 species of Grebe — Horned, Red-necked and Eared.

Read Sanctuary, December 7, 2011

We had 11 participants and 38 species. Highlights were a Red-throated Loon, Long-tailed Duck and Purple Sandpiper.

FIELD TRIPS for BRSS/CWAS 2012

Please Contact Doug Bloom at (914) 834-5203 if you are going on trips. Meet at the Scarsdale Village Hall unless otherwise specified.

January 15, 2012, Sunday - Jones Beach

Meet at 7 am at Scarsdale Village Hall. Wintering ducks and other birds. Possibly snowy owls.

February 4, 2012, Saturday - Eagle Fest at Croton Point Park

February 11, 2012, Saturday- Eagle Walk at Croton Point Park

Meet at 8 am at Wild Bird Center on Central Ave. in Scarsdale or at Croton

Point Park at 8:40 am in big parking lot near large pavilion.

February 18-20 Saturday-Monday Cape Ann Massachusetts

Co-sponsored with Saw Mill River Audubon. Join us on this holiday weekend for a winter birding excursion. Contact Saw Mill at (914) 666-6503. Call by January 20 for trip details or emailing office@sawmill-riveraudubon.org

March 18, 2012, Sunday - Read Sanctuary and Marshlands Conservatory

Meet at Read 8 am. Looking for late wintering waterfowl and early spring migrants.

April 15, 2012, Sunday - Larchmont Reservoir and Hommocks Nature Area

Meet at 8 am. at Reservoir. Looking for spring migrants.

May 6, 2012, Sunday - Central Park

Meet at 77th Street at statue across from Museum of Natural History. Looking for spring migrants including warblers and other song birds.

May 20, 2012, Sunday - Doodletown Road

Meet at Doodletown at 8 am. Looking for spring migrants including Cerulean Warblers.

Bats

Continued from page 1

catch their prey when it is very dark. Bats use their ears and ultrasonic sound pulses they bounce off objects and return to their ears as echoes, which they can translate and then move through their environment, a system called echolocation. This adaptation allows bats to avoid hitting objects, and to center in on their prey as they hunt.

There are nine species of bats that can regularly be found during parts of the year in the Northeast United States. Their wingspans range from 10 to 16 inches. The young are called pups. The females have an average of just two pups a year in years they successfully breed. A pup that is born and makes it through its first year will have a life expectancy of six to eight years, with some living as long as 20-30 years.

Bat mating occurs in fall, with the male

sperm remaining dormant until ovulation and fertilization of the eggs in spring. Six to eight weeks later the pups are born, usually late May and early June. The pups cling to their mothers, nursing and feeding, at maternity roosts. By mid-July the pups begin to leave the roosts to fly and hunt, but will continue to nurse from their mothers until able to fend for themselves on their own.

Autumn again brings the mating season and then searching out wintering grounds. Hibernating species use inactive mines or cave systems, while other species head south to warmer climates. When bats go into hibernation their body temperature drops to 40 to 50 degrees, the surrounding temperature of the mines or caves. The heartbeat slows to twenty beats per minute. Once active in the spring their body temperature returns to 100 degrees Fahrenheit, with 1000 heartbeats per minute.

Bats seek out rock crevices, tree cavi-

ties, tree foliage, and human habitation such as houses, churches, quiet or empty warehouses and other buildings to rear their young. Issues arise when bats use our homes and other buildings as places to have summer roosts, or when they accidentally find themselves stuck in our homes. And as useful as they are, the very rare case of rabies or some other disease is certainly enough to not want bats in our homes. With the exaggerated bad press bats have received, most humans fear them greatly and will chase them away. On the other hand, farmers all over the United States erect bat boxes to invite these useful insect eating mammals onto their property. With a warming climate, loss of habitat, and the realization that bats are needed in our ecosystem to maintain balance, the time for bat boxes in suburbia is now. This is a great way to keep these mammals in our neighborhoods and communities, and to enjoy the night sky with these small wonderful animals.

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

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)
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