

# The BIRD CALL

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

## It's Snowing Owls

By Sandy Morrissey

It's Tuesday of Thanksgiving week and my visiting sister Bobbie and I are making our annual trek to Jones Beach. High on our wish list is a Snowy Owl. We've checked eBird, and one was reported the day before.

My sister has never seen one. I did get this life bird in 2007 when a Snowy showed up across the Hudson at Piermont Pier and stayed for six weeks. I made six trips across the Tappan Zee to pay homage to this *rare* visitor from the Artic north.

Although Bobbie and I have no luck during our long morning walk at the West End of Jones Beach, we drive to a new spot for lunch and serendipitously park next to a guy with a spotting scope aimed at a Snowy Owl!

With our scope and binoculars we gaze in awe and delight. We watch a Great Black-backed Gull dive-bomb it, and then two Peregrine Falcons

take up the same game. The owl bats them off with its enormous wings.

Exhilarated, we head for home. I'm anxious to post our remarkable find on BRSS's Facebook page. Our chap-



*Snowy Owl waves off two attacking Peregrine Falcons. See our Facebook page for a YouTube link to an encounter of a Snowy vs. a Peregrine.*

ter has a field trip to Jones Beach in January, and I think this would encourage people to attend.

When I click on our Facebook page, up pops a picture of a Snowy Owl that was seen **THAT DAY** at Read Wildlife Sanctuary – right here in my own

back yard! Like Dorothy, I didn't need to leave home to find excitement.

From that day, the invasion of Snowy Owls makes national news. They are seen in unprecedented numbers across the country. They go from rare to "pest." Well, not really pest, but we get word that they are shooting them at the NYC airports, as several had collided with airplanes. While saving humans comes first, Audubon members initiate a drive to get the Port Authority to do a trap and release program to save both the birds and people.

### Snowy Owl makes a Snow Angel

A week after my Jones Beach sighting, I get another look at a Snowy. Regretfully, this one did not survive its trek south. It was found on a golf course in northern Westchester, still alive but near death. Kate Murphy, a local animal rehabilitator, got the call and took it to a vet, where it succumbed anyway.

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## BRSS Audubon Working With a Local Community to Create Native Plant Garden

By Cece Fabbro & Clare Gorman

Members of the Tuckahoe Environmental and Tree Committees, BRSS Audubon members and Tuckahoe's Supt. of DPW (who is also a BRSS Audubon Board Member), Frank DiMarco, planted well over 200 plants in the park at the corner of Fisher Avenue and Young Place. The landscaping design was done by Sandy Reyes-Guerra, a landscape architect and member of the Tuckahoe Environmental and Tree Committees. Sandy also selected the plants and trees to be included in the design. The plants were donated by the Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon chapter and were purchased at the Native Plant Center located at Westchester Community College.



The concept was to create a natural environment in the area by the old marble quarry that will attract butterflies and birds, and also be a beautiful spot to sit on a bench and enjoy the area. The design also includes a rain garden as seen in the photo on the left. BRSS Audubon was looking for a way to collaborate with local municipalities in creating native plant areas that would attract all types of wildlife. This park is a perfect spot. Everyone who worked on this

project is looking forward to seeing the park in bloom next spring and summer.

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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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Though this is a sad tale, it has a positive ending. Kate called me to ask if I knew of a place where she could get the Snowy Owl tested to see what killed it. Since it was found on a golf course, she thought it might have been poisoned by chemicals they use.

It turns out I have four dead Eastern Bluebirds stored in a freezer, hoping someday to find a place to have them tested to see why they died together in a nestbox on a golf course. I hadn't succeeded last April when I made some calls about the bluebirds, but a Snowy Owl gets immediate attention.

The owl and the bluebirds will be tested at the Animal Health Diagnostic Center, a department of Cornell's Veterinary School. They agreed to test my bluebirds because I have a scientific research project testing the long-term survival rate of bluebirds nesting on golf courses vs. bluebirds nesting elsewhere. Not only would they take my four bluebirds, they will take any others I have in the future. This is great news. Every nesting season we get some fatalities on the bluebird trail, both on and off golf courses. Maybe now we can learn why.

As for the Snowy Owl, it is going first to the American Museum of Natural History. They found out about Kate's owl on her Facebook page (social media strikes again). They want it for their Snowy Owl collection. Its DNA will be entered into their library for comparison with other Snowy Owls in the country. They also want to collect the parasites found on it. Did the parasites come with the bird from the Arctic or are they local to our area? Internal parts will be sent to Cornell for determination of cause of death.

We've gotten a lot of "snow" so far this year. I'm so happy I'm not a Snowbird and missed all the excitement.

*Sandra Morrissey is president of BRSS Audubon and loves finding "Life" birds with her permanent Snowbird sister who lives in Florida.*



*Sandra with Naturalist Travis Brady of the Greenburgh Nature Center. He stored the bluebirds and helped find the testing sight.*



*Our Snow Angel. It will live on at the Am. Museum of Natural History, providing valuable scientific research. (Photo by Kate Murphy).*

## Welcome New Members

**Bronxville**

Maria Bulis  
Janet Jaidi  
Jean Miller  
Michael Morelli

**Eastchester**

W. Crawford Clark  
Joan Coughlin  
Marcia Kawer

**Larchmont**

Mathew Fish  
Patricia Melrose

## Kevin Messerle

Church Moore  
John O'Gorman  
Lois & Harold  
Weitzner

**Mamaroneck**

Joyce Goldstein  
Michael MacAluso  
Eugene McKenna  
Raji Osa  
Seth Porterfield  
Kay Richards

## Patricia Radulovic

Stacy Styles  
**Mount Vernon**  
Steven Chananie  
Moirra Dooling  
Annie Merola  
Annette  
Miserendino  
Alice Pace  
Estelle Tyner

**New Rochelle**

Zoe Klobus

**Rye**

Tara Czechowski  
Michelle Dudley

**Scarsdale**

M.A. Catherwood  
Wendy Gross  
Robert Reiffel  
Raphael Riverso  
Susan Saari  
Barbara Schwartz  
Elizabeth Stern  
Michael Trupp  
Sarah White

## 14<sup>th</sup> 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 major 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. Due to this summer's poor growing season some prices have changed slightly but the quality remains high. 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.

<b>Black Oil Sunflower Seed</b>	Smaller than stripe sunflower, black oil sunflower gives birds more energy in smaller seed with a thinner shell. All around favorite for chickadees, cardinals, titmice, others.
<b>Hulled Sunflower</b>	The meat of the sunflower seed without the outer shell. Totally edible. No mess of empty shells under your feeder. No clean-up. Perfect for decks and patios.
<b>Safflower Seed</b>	Loved by cardinals but not by squirrels, safflower is a problem solver seed helpful in discouraging furry visitors. All birds except blackbirds (Starlings and Grackles) eat it.
<b>Thistle/Nyjer</b>	A favorite of goldfinch and redpolls.
<b>Patio Mix</b>	Our best seller! A special blend of hulled sunflower and nuts. All shells removed. No mess under feeder. Birds love it. People like the fact that no clean-up is needed.
<b>BirdWise Blend</b>	Unique blend that contains only the seeds birds like best: 60% black oil sunflower, millet and peanuts.
<b>WoodpeckerWise</b>	A perfect balance of peanuts, dried fruit, hulled sunflower and tree nuts. A favorite for woodpeckers and others.
<b>FeederWise</b>	A premium, no-millet blend formulated to attract a wide variety of birds. Less attractive to sparrows and other ground feeding birds.
<b>Peanut Splits</b>	An amazing variety of birds love peanuts. It is a high energy food, a favorite of woodpeckers, jays, nuthatch, titmouse, chickadee and many others.
<b>Millet</b>	Attracts ground feeders such as Juncos, White-throats.
<b>Suet</b>	Particularly attracts woodpeckers and many others. Squirrels do not eat Pure Suet. 12 cakes per case.

**Here is how to order.**

1. Fill out the Order Form (enclosed with this newsletter)
2. Send your Order Form and payment to Doug Bloom  
 Attention: Seed Sale  
 22 Myrtle Blvd  
 Larchmont, NY 10538  
 OR fax your order with credit card info to (914) 713-0652.
3. Make sure we receive your order by February 4, 2014
4. Pick up your seed at  
 Wild Bird Center  
 400 Central Park Ave.  
 Scarsdale, NY
5. For further information or questions—call Doug Bloom 713-0630 (days), 834-5203 (evenings)



## Fall Birdseed Sale Report

Thank you to everyone who bought seed this fall. The fall seed sale netted \$1445.75 in donations and \$2704.75 in profit, for a total of \$4150.50. This is the best we have ever done. Proceeds from seed sales go towards every program we run, our Bluebird project, and scholarships for children to attend nature camps in the county parks. If anyone knows of a child who might want to do this, please contact a Board Member. We are all volunteers. No one at BRSS receives compensation for organizing any of our efforts.



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*Tuckahoe Environmental Committee member and garden designer Sandy Reyes-Guerra*



*Tuckahoe Environmental Committee member MaryAnn Jonaitis and BRSS Audubon Board member Bernie Conway*



Following is a selection of shrubs and one tree that were planted at Fisher-Quarry Park in Tuckahoe. All are ideal candidates for specimen and/or group plantings in a residential setting. All have high wildlife value as well.

***Amelanchier*** is a beautiful four season small tree or multi-stemmed shrub. As one of the first native trees to bloom, it is an important nectar source for emerging bees. The delicate, ethereal white blossoms appear in April. They shimmer and dance as spring breezes toss them about on branch tips. The blooms are followed by juicy, dark blue berries which ripen in June and are snapped up by many species of birds including chickadees, titmice, wrens, orioles, tanagers, thrushes, catbirds and waxwings. In fall, the leaves put on a show as they turn various shades of intense red, orange, and purple. *Amelanchier*, commonly known as Serviceberry, Shadbush, Juneberry, and Shadblow, is easy to grow and transplant. It is drought tolerant once established. Use as a specimen tree or plant in groves of three or more.

***Lindera benzoin***, commonly known as Spicebush, is another multi-stemmed shrub or small tree that comes into flower in April. This shrub's subtle, soft yellow blossoms appear along its branches before the leaves unfold. The flowers emit a subtle, spicy/woody fragrance and are followed by bright red berries which ripen on the female plant in August/September. The berries, which are particularly high in fat, are a favorite of the thrush family as well as many other migrating birds. In addition to its value to birds and emerging bees, Spicebush is a host plant for the Spicebush swallowtail (*Papilio troilus*) and the Prometheus moth (*Callosamia promethean*). Plant this shrub in sun or part shade in moist to average soil. And, plant more than one; you need male and female plants for berry production.

***Cornus sericea***, Red-twig dogwood, is just one member of the dogwood family of small trees and shrubs. These include, in addition to Red-twig dogwood, *Cornus alternifolia* (Alternate-Leaf dogwood), *Cornus amomum* (Silky dogwood), *Cornus racemosa* (Gray dogwood) and *Cornus florida* (Flowering dogwood). As specimen trees or multi-stemmed shrubs for naturalizing in a woodland or wetland, dogwoods provide not only shelter and nesting sites for birds but also high quality berries for over 30 resident and migrating birds. The Red twig dogwood, a multi-stemmed shrub, is ideal for hedgerow planting. It is often grown for its red twig color in winter.

***Liriodendron tulipifera***, the Yellow poplar or Tulip tree, is a fast growing, straight barked, pyramidal shaped shade tree. This stately tree, one of the tallest in eastern North America, is a member of the magnolia family. It's large yellow, orange and lime green tulip-like flowers bloom in May and are a favorite food source for Ruby-throated hummingbirds and native bees. The tree is also a host plant for the Eastern tiger swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*) and the Tulip-tree moth (*Callosamia angulifera*). The seeds are eaten by several sparrows and finches. Although this tree needs lots of room, its branches begin high, making it ideal for understory plantings.

## Youth (and Adult Beginner) Field Trips 2014

### UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

All field trips begin at 9:00 a.m. PLEASE email Dave Kaufman ([dkaufman43@gmail.com](mailto:dkaufman43@gmail.com)) if you plan to attend.

**March 15 – Read Wildlife Sanctuary** – feeder birds, ducks and shore birds.

**April 12 – Twin Lakes Park** – water birds and early spring migrants (located on California Rd, Eastchester).

**May 10 – Rye Nature Center** – woodland birds and spring warblers.

**June 7 - Kensico Cemetery** – band nesting bluebirds (meet at cemetery office, 273 Lakeview Ave., Valhalla).



*Adults are welcome to join our Youth Birding walks. They are in our local area.*



## PROGRAMS 2014

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 pm and the program begins at 7:15pm unless otherwise stated. "Meet the Animals" at the White Plains Library begins at 4:30 pm as noted.

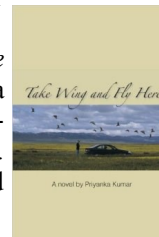
**February 19, Wednesday - Amphibians of the Northeast**  
Presenter is Tom Tying. Tom has studied snakes for four decades and is author of "A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles," a Stokes nature guide.

Location: Eastchester Library, 11 Oakridge Pl., Eastchester.

**March 19, Wednesday - Meet the Animals at the Trove, White Plains Library - 4:30 -5:30 pm.** Presented by the Greenburgh Nature Center. Join us with your children to see and learn about some of the wild animals who make the Greenburgh Nature Center their home. Location: White Plains Library, 100 Martine Ave., White Plains.

**March 27, Thursday - Presenting Author Priyanka Kumar**

Kumar's new novel *Take wing and Fly Here* is the first in her *New West Trilogy*. This is a story about birding where the main character gets involved in a Big Year challenge. Location: Scarsdale Library, 54 Olmsted Rd., Scarsdale. Time: 7:15 pm.



**May 21, Wednesday - TBA**

Tentative Location: Harrison Public Library, 2 Bruce Ave., Harrison.



## FIELD TRIPS 2014



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

**January 5, Sunday - Jones Beach with Hudson River Audubon** - Meet at 7:00 am at Scarsdale Village Hall or Coast Guard Station lot at 8:15. Wintering Ducks and other birds. Possibly Snowy Owls.

**January 18, Saturday - Owl Prowl with Saw Mill River Audubon** - Meeting place to be decided, depending on where owls are. Please call (914) 666-6503 to register and find out where and when to meet.

**February 1, Saturday - Eagle Walk** - Meet at Wild Bird Center at 8:00 am for our annual Eagle walk or at Croton Point Park at 8:40 in big parking lot near Gazebo.

**February 8, Saturday - Annual Eagle Fest** - Meet at Wild Bird Center at 8:00 am or at 8:40 at Croton Point Park in large parking lot near gazebo.

**March 9, Sunday - Read and Marshlands** - Meet at 8:00 am at Read Sanctuary. Looking for late wintering waterfowl and early spring migrants.

**April 27, Sunday - Rye Nature Center** - Meet at 8:00 am at the nature center parking lot. We will be looking for early migrants. Warblers and other songbirds.

**May 4, Sunday - Central Park/ with Hudson River Audubon** - Meet at 7:30 am at 77<sup>th</sup> street at statue across from Museum of Natural History. Looking for spring migrants such as warblers, orioles and others.

**May 18, Sunday - Doodletown Road** - Meet at 8:00 am at Doodletown Road. Best place to see Cerulean Warblers nesting and other migrants.

## FIELD TRIPS REPORT

**September 22 - Connecticut Coast**

Participants went to Hammonasset State park, Milford Point and Sherwood Island Park on a beautiful fall day and had 54 species of birds. Some of the highlights were a Hybrid Little Blue Heron/Tri-colored Heron that has been seen there all summer. Other good birds were a Juvenile Yellow-crowned Night Heron, a flock of Tree Swallows that numbered at least 600 individuals and 3 species of Wren.

**September 29 - Fire Island**

Participants went to the Fire Island hawk watch. We had 39 species of birds. It was a down day for hawks. On the road to and from we had 2 hawks, a Red-tailed Hawk and a Kestrel. Highlights were some Cedar Waxwings, 5 warbler species and a Lincoln's Sparrow.

**October 13- Larchmont Reservoir**

Participants had 30 species of birds on a breezy day. Some of the highlights were about 10 Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Eastern Phoebe, both Kinglets, and White-throated Sparrows.

**November 17 - Jamaica Bay**

We saw 42 species of birds. On a nice fall day, some of the highlights were Barn Owl, Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Sandpiper, White-throated Sparrows and the first Juncos of the fall season.

# Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)  
P. O. Box 1108  
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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 magazine. Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

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Please make \$20 check to National Audubon Society and mail to:  
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