



EST. 1947

The BIRD CALL

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

Project FeederWatch—One Snowy Morning

By Cece Fabbro

It is early morning, the day after the first meaningful snowfall in December. Flakes are still flying in the dusky predawn light. With coffee cup in hand, I am up to watch the feeder show outside my window.

Four Mourning Doves appear on the feeder tray. I do not see them fly in, so silent are they in the dark. Next, the Cardinals show; two males and two females. They are not so quiet as they call to each other. Even in the dawn light, the scarlet feathered males are picture postcard perfect as they pose in the snow covered rhododendron. A group of White-throated Sparrows and Juncos appear next, scampering about the ground around the feeder. Their distinct, high pitched, back and forth *tseeps* sound like echoes.

I do not yet hear or see the Carolina Wren pair that visits my feeder

almost every morning. Maybe they have overwintered in a warm, dry spot and are unwilling to leave it yet. I do hear a Downy Woodpecker, though. Its *pik, pik, pik* sound lets me know that it is near. As it settles on the suet, a female Hairy Woodpecker swoops down to displace it. Never mind, the Downy is off with a peanut from the feeder tray.

As I go to the kitchen to replenish my coffee I hear the wrens calling. The



Photo Cece Fabbro

This Downy Woodpecker displays the hard-to-see spots on its tail feathers.

pair finally shows up at the feeder. The Tufted Titmice are also calling, darting back and forth from feeder to nearby shrub. They snatch sunflower hearts from the feeder, whisking them off to a nearby shrub to eat.

Chiv chiv calls a Red-bellied Woodpecker as it swoops down for peanuts. Four Blue Jays give the other birds a jolt as they fly in imitating a Red Tail Hawk's call. The Mourning Doves arrive en masse – 30 and counting – as do the House Sparrows – 25 and count-



Photo Cece Fabbro

White-throated Sparrows, a Tufted Titmouse and Dark-eyed Juncos hanging out near Cece's feeders.

ing. It is now Grand Central Station at the feeder. I hear a flock of Robins that winter in our area calling. I have yet to see one or more at the feeder, though. Last spring I had a Robin visit my feeder every day for sunflower hearts. No robins at the feeder so far this winter.

Just as I look away, there is an explosion of birds. A large, dark form swoops in and grabs a Mourning Dove.

(Continued on page 2)

Cece Fabbro, an award winning nature photographer, is a member of the BRSS Audubon Board.

Christmas Bird Count Documents Missing Chickadees

The 86th annual Bronx-Westchester CBC was conducted on Dec. 27. Fourteen BRSS members participated and reported 79 species and 13,951 individuals in the area assigned to us.



An estimated 650 Canada geese were recorded on the fields by the Scarsdale Stables, adding to their high count in the CBC.

Notables were a Snow Goose, a Laughing Gull, a House Wren, 3 Red Head Ducks and 14 Ring-necked Ducks.

Mike Bochnik, the Count Compiler for the entire Bronx-Westchester area, reported 117 species overall.

High counts were recorded for Canada Goose (9045), Gadwall (241), American Robin (1700) and Common Grackle (7109 - due to a huge migrating flock in the West Bronx).

Of note to the many of you who enjoy your feeder birds and may have noticed a decline in numbers this fall, there were low counts for several com-

mon birds, including the Black-capped Chickadee (33-year low), Tufted-Titmice (25-year low) and House Finch (30-year low).

Mike writes, "The rainy spring and early summer, producing a bumper crop of seeds and berries, may have spread out the common feeder birds and account for their low numbers." Let's hope this is true. Cece Fabbro, in another article in this newsletter, wondered about the lack of chickadees.

For more information on the Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count visit www.hras.org/bwcbc.html.

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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*

Birdseed Sale Sends Brandon to Nature Camp

Brandon Belles is just about like most other 8-year-olds. He attends third grade at Tuckahoe's elementary school. He likes baseball, football, jumping on trampolines, playing video games, etc. However, what distinguishes Brandon from the vast majority of kids in Westchester is his deep love of nature and a sincere desire to learn everything he can about the wildlife around him.

Our Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society chapter supported Brandon this past summer for the second year in a row in order that he might attend one of Westchester's Conservation Day Camps. Brandon spent a week at beautiful Cranberry Lake which he enjoyed tremendously.

The Belles family has taken to supporting Brandon's passion with gifts under the Christmas tree such as binoculars and field guides to identify the birds he loves. Brandon thanks them by answering their questions and identifying birds when he can.

An expert in the family at eight years old! Could we have a future field trip leader in the making?

By Jeff Zuckerman



Brandon Belles thanks BRSS for his opportunity to attend a Westchester nature camp.



Support a future naturalist by ordering your birdseed today!

Thanks to all who ordered in our Fall Seed Sale.
We netted over \$2,800 and had \$1,000 in donations.

A snowy day

(Continued from page 1)

It is the large female Red Tail hawk that I often see perched in the trees. All is silent until the hawk leaves with its prey. The birds then return to the feeder as if nothing happened.

I am wondering where are the Black-capped Chickadees this winter? Although I saw several a month or two ago, I see none at my feeder this month. And, why so many House Sparrows this year? I wait patiently for the Cooper's hawk to visit the holly bushes around my house for its daily sparrow meal.

The sun is up now, and it is time for breakfast. Then, it is out to refill the feeders, and on to the rest of my day.



Photo Cece Fabbro

A Carolina Wren fluffs up its feathers to keep warm.

If you enjoy watching your feeder on a regular basis, consider helping scientists count winter birds by signing up for Project Feederwatch (www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw). Also, check out the Great Backyard Bird Count (www.birdsource.org/gbbc) which will take place February 12 – 15.

Upcoming Field Trips

All birders welcome. Please call Doug Bloom at 914-834-5203 (evenings) or 914-713-0630 (10:00—6:00 Tues. thru Sat.) to sign up or for more information and to arrange car-pooling. **Please call—we need to know how many to expect.**

6th Annual Eagle Fest

Croton Point Park, Croton

Saturday, February 6, 9:00 – 3:00

Teatown Reservation salutes the Bald Eagle with live birds, entertaining shows and informative programs.

Search for Bald Eagles

Croton Point Park, Croton

Saturday, February 13, 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Wild Bird Center on Central Avenue. We'll search for Bald Eagles and other wintering birds.

Edith Read Sanctuary—Marshlands

Sunday, March 14, 8:00 a.m.

Meet at Read. Looking for lingering winter birds and early spring migrants.

Brigantine Wildlife Refuge, NJ

Sunday, April 18, 6:45 a.m.

Meet at Scarsdale Village Hall. One of the best birding hot-spots in the East.

Jamaica Bay Wildlife

Sunday, April 25, 9:00 a.m.

Meet at refuge. Fantastic water birds.

Central Park

Sunday, May 2, 7:30 a.m.

Doodletown Road, Bear Mountain

Sunday, May 23, 8:00 a.m.

Adirondack Weekend

June 4-6, Details TBA.

Upcoming Program

Our Beaches

March 18, 2010, 7:30 p.m.

Church Street School, Room 20
295 Church St. White Plains, NY



Beach erosion, a twenty-first century reality, has and will continue to occur, but at an accelerating pace. Join award-winning marine educator, Mickey Maxwell Cohen, as he takes us on a virtual (slide-illustrated) trip to Long Island seashores to examine the causes and effects of this inexorable phenomenon.

Sponsored by BRSS Audubon and Central Westchester Audubon.

Field Trip Reports

Cape May/Brigantine/Sandy Hook

Oct. 2-4 2009

By Sue O'Rourke

Fourteen avid birders enjoyed a weekend birding Cape May, the Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge (known as Brigantine), and Sandy Hook. Trip leaders, Doug Bloom and Andrew Block, and experienced birders, Neil Powell and Orlando Hidalgo, were instrumental in spotting 104 species.

Brigantine's spectacular 8 mile drive through wetlands was a visual treat with countless Great Egrets, swarming Tree Swallows, diving Forster's Terns, intently feeding Dunlins, flocks of cowbirds and red-wings, a lone Red-breasted Merganser, and sunning Laughing Gulls in their non-breeding attire. The highlight was spotting a Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow playing hide and seek in the marsh grass along the water's edge. Royal Terns, Black-bellied Plovers, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, dowitchers, and mosquitoes did not disappoint us either.

Once in Cape May the group birded all the local hot spots. The ponds yielded Pied-billed Grebes, Pintails, Northern Shovelers, Green and Blue-winged Teal, Gadwalls, widgeon, moorhen, coots and more. The

pond's edge tantalized scores of birders at Cape May State Park with the "sound" of a Sora but with a "no see". A lone flying American Bittern was spotted. On the Atlantic we saw Black Scoter, Surf Scoter, and a pod of Bottlenose Dolphin. On the beach a Lesser Black-backed Gull was spotted among the Greater Black-backs. And, flying overhead were scores of Black Skimmers, and a few Caspian Terns mixed in with Royal Terns and others.

On the paths and in the fields we enjoyed hummingbirds, Indigo Buntings, a Brown Thrasher, American Goldfinches,

Eastern Towhees, Common Yellowthroats, kinglets, phoebes, Savannah Sparrows, and American Pipit. The Hawk Watch at the State Park was slow for us, but on our walks we saw Red-tailed Hawks, Kestrel, Merlin, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Osprey, perched and flying Peregrine Falcons, Northern Harriers, and many Cooper's Hawks.

When birding was slow, our group observed and photographed monarchs, buckeyes, painted ladies, box turtles, Carolina mantis, toads, fungi, and wild flowers. Our unplanned stop at Sandy Hook added a flock of sanderlings to our trip list. We all enjoyed the good company and good birding of our Cape May Trip.



This Great Egret was just one of the 104 species seen on this NJ trip.

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

November 15, 2009

By Doug Bloom

There were 25 participants on the trip to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge and we saw 48 species of birds. This was a combined trip with Central Westchester/Hudson River / BRSS and the Wild Bird Center. Some of the highlights were 2 small flocks of Snow Geese, a lot of Brant, Cedar Waxwings and several Horned Grebes.



Northern Shovelers were plentiful at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.

Lions and Tigers and Birds, Oh My!

BRSS participated in the Bronx Zoo's Nature's Air Show on September 26. This educational event featured owls, hawks and vultures on display and taking flight.

Activity stations were set up throughout the zoo for hands-on explorations to learn about birds, including penguin feeding, and even a Bee-Eater Buffet where birds became airborne to catch insect snacks.

Our BRSS representatives, Vicki and Orlando Hidalgo, reported a wonderful response. They encouraged parents and their young "chicks" to join some of our upcoming field trips and events.



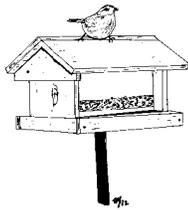
Thanks to Vicki and Orlando Hidalgo who represented BRSS at the zoo's Nature Air Show, sharing our mission, including our program to bring back the Eastern Bluebird, and recruiting new members.

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

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)
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**BIRD SEED ORDER
FORM ENCLOSED**



**Deadline for orders February 3, 2010
Thank you for your support**



Join the 13th annual
Great Backyard Bird Count
Feb. 12—15

Anyone from novice to expert bird-watcher can help count birds for as little as 15 minutes to as long as you want. Help contribute to bird research as a citizen scientist.

For more information and to participate go online to www.birdcount.org

A joint project of the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Long Island Sound gets \$7M Help

U.S. Rep. Nita Lowey helped obtain a \$7,000,000 allocation in the Interior Appropriations Act for the EPA's Long Island Sound Preservation Program to preserve and protect the ecosystems in this area. BRSS and NY State Audubon members attended her announcement on November 2nd.

Join!

Support our environmental mission and receive our newsletter with information about all our programs and field trips. Annual dues are \$20 and include membership in the National Audubon Society, plus its magazine. Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

Name _____

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Please make \$20 check to National Audubon Society and mail to:
BRSS Audubon Society, Inc.
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Welcome New Members

We hope you will join in our field trips and programs.

Bronxville: Kevin McNeill, Volina Lin Mertens, Wendy Murphy, James O'Meara, Katie Ridder, Nadia Taylor, Joe Villanueva, Richard Wight. **Hartsdale:** Judith Baron, Lisa Borowitz, Phillip Evans, Bob Feldman, Acacio Janeiro, Frieda Orenstein. **Larchmont:** Elizabeth Browne, Miriam Cohen, Caryl Herson, Howard Leaf, John & Niss Ryan, Carla Volpe. **Mamaroneck:** Kathryn Colson, Oscar Larbi, Judah Maze, Carolyn Perry, David Weinstein. **Mt. Vernon:** Florence Nicosia. **New Rochelle:** Dina Cannistraci, Bruce & Melanie Riggs, Laura Renken, Nancy Roth. **Pelham:** Bhakti & Ranait Datta, Veronica Kearns. **Scarsdale:** Martin Berlin, Kelly Chung, Richard Cohen, Kristin Friedman, Janet Limauro, Marilyn Locker, Georgette Mitrakos, Geraldine Trent. **Tuckahoe:** Meredith Mathews