



EST. 1947

The BIRD CALL

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

BRSS Annual Meeting June 5th

By Sandy Morrissey

Five Island Park will be the beautiful setting for our Annual Meeting, thanks again to the very generous hospitality of the New Rochelle Department of Parks and Recreation. The business meeting begins at 6:30 P.M., with an optional guided bird walk at 6:00 P.M.

It's a great opportunity to meet and chat with other members. Wine and cheese plus other light refreshments will be served. All BRSS members and friends are encouraged to attend.

Honoree is Mary Davis

Our honoree, Mary Davis, has spent most of her adult life as a



dedicated environmentalist and nature educator.

Mary's nature educator career launched when her daughter's school was looking for someone to teach ecology. Mary created a cur-

riculum from scratch, and this set her on her path in life. She had been in a business career, but realized she wanted to work in the outdoors world. She went back and got a Master of Science in Environmental Education.

The Nature Conservancy hired her as a consultant where she wrote program guides, such as "Exploring Your School Yard." She then worked six years for the Audubon Center in Greenwich as an Environmental Educator Specialist. She continued to create and teach ecology programs for people of all ages.

Alison Beall, former curator of Marshlands,

Continued on page 2

LET'S HEAR IT FOR NATIVE BEES

Text and Photos by Cece Fabbro

I believe that by now most of you, our readers, are aware of the precipitous decline in honey bee populations as a result of Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Did you know, however, that our native bees are also in trouble? Why, you may ask, should we care about all these bees?

We should care about bees and other pollinators as well, because over one-third of the food we eat and 85 percent of flowering plants that exist are pollinated by birds, butterflies, bees and other insects. Furthermore, an astonishing 90 percent of flowering plants in temperate zones are pollinated by native bees. There are over 4000 native bees in North America that can be found throughout the continent, anywhere and everywhere there are flowers offering nectar and pollen. More bee species are found in the drier areas west of the Rockies than are found anywhere else in the US. California leads with the greatest diversity of bees, over 2,000 species. In our suburban gardens north of New York City more than 100 species can be found.

In 2013 I decided to take my own survey to see how many native bee species visited my property and what flowers, trees, and shrubs they visited. Since my one-third acre includes several perennial gardens, wooded areas, and lawn (90 percent of the trees, shrubs and flowers are native to the eastern US), I expected to find many species of bees sipping nectar and carrying pollen from early spring to frost. That I did find. Identifying the family, genus, and species was another matter, however. So many of the small bees resembled each other. The site bugguide.net came to my rescue in helping me identify the bees.

Continued on page 4

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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*

Continued from Page 1

knew of Mary's educational programs and suggested she talk to her boss in the Westchester County Parks Department. She was hired on the spot.

Among her many achievements as Director of Conservation for the County was starting the Children's Summer Ecology Programs at the County Nature Center, which continue to this day. Indeed, we and other Audubon chapters give scholarships to send children to these camps.

Another crowning achievement was creating the "Volunteers in the Parks" (VIP) program. She found adults willing to commit to taking school groups on educational field trips to the county parks. In exchange, these volunteers got about a year's worth of free training on a variety of environmental topics. It was a win-win program. Our current president of BRSS, Sandy Morrissey, credits Mary with teaching her most of what she knows and propelling her along a similar path as a nature educator.

Still another accomplishment was setting up "biodiversity days" at the parks. The naturalists took time out to collect data about what species were using the parks. With this data, they set up Natural Resource Management plans for each park, including such things as best times for mowing.

Mary is currently working at Sheldrake Environmental Center, where she created a program similar to the VIP program.

As a sign of her grit, and "can-do" attitude, Mary is dealing heroically with the repercussions of a freak accident which left her with a severe spinal injury in 2013. She is striving to walk again, but meanwhile, she has returned to work with vim and vigor. Her legacy will live on in the many school children and adults she has inspired and educated with her love of the natural world.

Thanks retired board member

Long time board member, Roz Wood, decided she needed to retire from her service. She was our Publicity Chair, and she worked hard to keep up with the transition to the digital world. Thanks, Roz!

Election of Officers and Board Members

At the Annual Meeting, BRSS members will be asked to vote to approve the following officers for a two-year term: Sandra Morrissey, President; Doug Bloom, Vice President; Diane Morrison, Secretary; and Jeff Zuckerman, Treasurer.

The membership will also be asked to vote for the slate of Directors for the Class of 2017: Doug Bloom, Dave Kaufman, Scott Mellis, Diane Morrison, and Sandra Morrissey. In addition, Miriam Beveridge will be installed to fill a vacated position in the Class of 2016. Miriam, new to the board, got involved with BRSS Audubon through her daughter who joined our Youth Birders Group.

We hope to see all BRSS members and friends at Five Island Park in New Rochelle on June 5.

Mt. Vernon Kids “Learn Birds Are Cool In School”

We are repeating our bird school program in two elementary schools in Mt. Vernon. We visit four 2nd grade classes five times during the year. The children, teachers and Audubon volunteers Bonnie Gould, Henry May and Sandy Morrissey all love it. With a grant from Audubon New York, we get the Greenburgh Nature Center to bring in live birds for one of the sessions.



A bird in the hand is worth a million words!



The shape of the beak determines what the bird eats.

Winged Predators and Prey

By Henry A. May

Sandy Morrissey, Bonnie Gould and I had just finished a morning session introducing the world of birds to the students in two second grade classes at the Edward Williams Elementary School in Mount Vernon.

The project is sponsored by Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon and this is our third year working with the young students and their teachers. Sandy Morrissey received a grant which underwrites the materials used in our work with two classes at two schools.

We were signing in at the Columbus Elementary School security desk, which is the other school we work with, when the security guard told us that some bird had attacked and eaten a pigeon a few days ago where they could see it on the top step landing of the front entrance door!

Everyone knows we are Audubon “bird people” and this was something they wanted to tell us about. Sandy told them that what they saw and witnessed was probably a hungry hawk having dinner.

Later that afternoon, after a session with a class of second grade students, as we were about to leave, Ms. Tammy Ambrosino, who is a member of the custodial staff, approached us and told us that she had taken photographs of the event with her phone. She showed us the pictures and said “That bird was out there eating and pecking at that pigeon for an hour and a half. It wouldn’t leave!”

It seems “Our World of Birds” work is sensitizing students, teachers, and other school personnel!



Photograph by Tammy Ambrosino

Youth Initiatives



On the left Cub Scouts from Pack 24 in Scarsdale built 2 homes for bluebirds.



On the left Girl Scout Daisy Troop 1060 from Carmel built 3 nestboxes

I was able to identify three families of bees: *Apidae* (which includes some of our most commonly known bees such as Bumble Bees and Honey Bees); *Halictidae* (the Sweat Bees); *Colletidae* (Yellow-faced Bees), and some of the individual species within the families. Most bees were observed nectaring and pollinating throughout the season.

APIDAE

The easiest species to identify, other than the Honey Bee, were the **Bumble Bees** and **Carpenter Bees**. Bumble Bees are large, robust and very hairy (0.4 – 0.9 inches). They are black with black, yellow, white, brown or orange bands. They are the first bees to emerge in spring and the last to disappear in the fall. They visit flowers throughout the season. I was able to identify two species of Bumble Bees: the Common Eastern Bumble Bee (*Bombus impatiens*) and (*Bombus citrinus*).

The **Large Carpenter Bees** (*Xylocopa*) are large (0.5 -1.25 inches), robust, black bees that are easy to be confused with Bumble Bees. Carpenter Bees are much less hairy than the Bumble Bees and are shiny in comparison. Male bees of this species are territorial and may buzz around humans. Like all male bees, however, they are unable to sting, a good thing for bee-watchers. You will find these bees visiting sturdy open-faced flowers or hovering around wood decks.

Small Carpenter Bees (*Ceratina*) are tiny to small (0.1 -0.6 inches) sturdy, shiny, sparsely-haired black, blue or green weakly metallic bees. They can be identified by the shape of their abdomen which appears almost cylindrical with a blunt end. These bees visit a wide variety of flowers for nectar and pollen. I found them covering my asters and goldenrods in late summer and fall.

Mining Bees (*Andrena*) are moderate sized (0.3 – 0.7) bees black, metallic green or blue, moderately hairy with bands of pale hair on their abdomens. They are springtime bees; some emerging before snow has vanished. Look for mining bees in your yard in spring as they regularly nest in lawns and near or under shrubs. They pose no risk to people because their weak stingers cannot penetrate human skin.

Cuckoo Bees (*Nomada*) are slender, sparsely haired, red or black bees with yellow or white markings that resemble small wasps. They are distinguished by their antennae which appear thick in comparison with other bees. They can be found along forest edges in spring. This genus lays its eggs in the burrows of other bees.

HALICTIDAE

Other than the small carpenter bees, the **Sweat Bees** were the most common bees I saw during the summer. These bees are so named because they are attracted to human sweat and drink it for its salt content. (Thankfully, not one bee landed on me the entire time I was surveying my property). They are small to moderate sized (0.1 - 0.6 inches) bees mostly dusky black, dull green or blue. Some species (*Agapostemon* and *Augochlora*), however, are brilliant metallic green or blue. The genus *Augochlora* can sometimes be found around aphid colonies feeding on the honeydew secreted by the insects. The other sweat bees I identified were those in the genus *Halictus* and *Lasioglossum*.

COLLETIDAE

Yellow-faced Bees (*Hylaeus*) are yellow-faced or “masked” bees, named for their pale faces. They are black with bright yellow or white markings on the face, thorax and legs. They lack body hair and pollen baskets and are frequently mistaken for wasps. Females carry both pollen and nectar in their stomachs.

This year I will again be out looking for bees. In fact, I have already started. In addition, I will be looking out for the flower flies and other species that mimic but are not bees. I hope you too will take some time while you are gardening or just out and about to observe the variety of bees that visit your property.

Welcome New Members

Bronxville	Leo Dreyfuss	Noah Davis	Bob Maffucci	Alfred Maiello	Scarsdale	Emile Zen
Michael Devries	Vicki Grant	Barry Dichter	New Rochelle	Henriette Moureau	Jay Dearbeck	Tuckahoe
Elizabeth Harriss	Daniel Hernandez	Terese Guyette	Elvira Arbusto	Karen Phelan	Stanley Federman	Grogan
Cherry Lawrence	Brian Petersen	Victoria Horowitz	M. Benedetto	Eugene Tozzi	Kathrine Hernandez	
Airlie Lennon	KathleenPetrausch	Eric Marcus	William Bruenn	Suellen Tozzi	George Kondos	
Deirdre Rylander	Paul Wharton	Liz Orgel	Daniel Eisenberg	S. Wasserman	Aurelia Masarsky	
Ronald Schwartz	Larchmont	Laurence Preston	Anthony Halaris	Pelham	Amanda McGowan	
Hartsdale	Sanford Bell	Mamaroneck	Jonathan Halpern	Sharon Pietrzak	Martin Payson	
Gene Chamlin	Caroline Birenbaum	Anne Auld	R. Knowlton	Beth Prather	Dawn Rakowski	

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO MAKE YOUR PROPERTY MORE “BEE-FRIENDLY”

Plant a diversity of plants, preferably native, that provide a lot of nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinators. Make sure your plants overlap in bloom and that you have plants blooming in early spring, spring, summer, late summer and fall. Plants that are native to our area are best choices since the bees and plants evolved together.

Do not use pesticides in your yard and encourage your neighbors to do likewise. Pesticides are lethal to bees as well as other pollinators.

1. Provide water in a shallow bird bath when the weather is hot and dry.

2. It's OK to be a bit of a “messy” gardener. Leave some ground areas unmulched. Find a place on your property for downed tree limbs. Find a place for a brush pile. Since many of our native bees are ground nesters or nest in wood, this will provide them and other pollinators areas to nest and overwinter.

This year take some time to observe the bees and other pollinators that visit your property. If you are planning a garden or enhancing an existing garden, think about implementing the four steps above. In making your property more “bee-friendly” you will be surprised at the diversity of bee species that visit your garden.

LIST OF PLANTS IN MY GARDEN THAT I FIND PARTICULARLY ATTRACTIVE TO BEES AND OTHER POLLINATORS

Spring - Redbud tree, Serviceberry, Spicebush, Tulip tree, Red oak, wildflowers: hepatica, marsh marigold, Virginia bluebells (photo right), Virginia waterleaf

Late spring - Hollies, including opaca, winterberry, inkberry, Pagoda dogwood, Crabapples, Black cherries

Early to middle summer - Button bush, Elderberry,



Coneflower (photo above),
Swamp milkweed, Cardinal flower,
Blue lobelia

Late summer - Clethra, Joe-Pye weed,
helianthus,
Rudbeckia

Fall bloomers - Goldenrods and asters



Virginia bluebells



Goldenrods and asters

BRSS Youth Birder Teaches Others About Birds to Earn Her Girl Scout Silver Award

Catie Beveridge loves birds. She found her way to our Youth Birder group, where she is an active participant. At the same time, she is a Cadette Girl Scout working on her Silver Award. She is getting help from BRSS member, Sandy Morrissey, who is advising her on fun and educational activities she can do with other kids to teach them about birds. At a recent event, she taught other Girl Scouts about birds' beaks.



Catie Beveridge, second from left, uses kitchen utensils to demonstrate different shapes of beaks.



Youth Birding Group of Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon Spring Report

By Dave Kaufman

The Youth birders were off to an enjoyable start when we met on March 15th at the Rye Playland parking lot and walked the access road to the Edith Read Nature Sanctuary. We had a good turnout of children and their parents for this early spring fieldtrip—Dunkin Donut holes were shared for sustenance, binoculars distributed, spotting scopes shouldered, and we began our walk. A plethora of water birds were seen on Playland Lake including Red Breasted and Hooded Mergansers, Buffleheads, and Canvasback ducks. A discussion of whether we saw Greater or Lesser Scaup is still continuing.....A great blue heron was seen fishing off Bloomer Island in the middle of the Lake. The group took refuge in the Nature Hut where we were able to get close on views through the large window of the feeder birds, allowing us to clearly differentiate between the song sparrows, white throated sparrows and house sparrows. We spoke about the poor parenting practiced by the brown headed cowbirds, and delighted in the antics of a pair of Northern Cardinals. A quick hike back down the road to the Long Island Sound beach required use of our Spotting

Scopes to “identify” a few Common Loons, way out on the water. Our two final field trips will take place at the Rye Nature Center on May 10th and the Kensico Cemetery on June 7 to check out our Bluebird boxes and to help Sandy band the fledgling blue birds. Happy Birding!



Youth Birders at Read Sanctuary observing feeder birds

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) if you plan to attend.

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.

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.

May 21, Wednesday - Bird Architecture

Presenter: Anne Swaim, Executive Director of Saw Mill River Audubon

Explore the amazing variety of bird nests with this multimedia presentation from Anne Swaim, Executive Director, Saw Mill River Audubon. From the massive nests of eagles to walnut-sized hummingbird nests, from cavity-nesters inside trees to ground-nesters to birds that weave intricately woven baskets that hang

from branches, birds are master builders! Find out about how different birds develop from eggs to nestlings to fledglings and what to do if you find a nest or young birds in need of help.

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

(Refreshments at 7:00 p.m. and program begins at 7:15 pm).



FIELD TRIPS 2014



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

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 77th 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

January 5- Jones Beach

Participants went to Jones Beach and we saw 50 Species of birds including a Snowy Owl, a flock of Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, all three Scoters, Gyrfalcon, and Lapland Longspur.

January 18- Daytime Owl Prowl

Participants joined us on the prowl and we saw 44 species of birds. We did not see any owls but we had a very good look at a Peregrine Falcon, Long-tailed Duck, Piping Plover, Red Knots, Purple Sandpipers and Sanderlings.

February 8 - Eagle Fest

Participants at Croton Point Park saw 24 species of birds including a Short-eared Owl, about 15 Bald Eagles, a flock of Snow Buntings and Horned larks. Overall, some 3000 people saw 126 eagles for the day.

March 8- Read and Marshlands

Participants saw 46 species of birds including Canvasback, Wild Turkey, Great Horned Owl and 6 species of sparrows.

Yearly Birdseed Sale Report

Thank you to everyone who bought birdseed this year. The second seed sale saw donations totaling \$1436.25 and \$2359.55 in profit, for a grand total of \$3795.80. The two seed sales combined raised \$7671.38.

The following people made donations: Louise Abel, Elaine Abrams, Sheema Bhattacharya, Doug Bloom, Chris Broda, Rob Canora, Suzanne Clephane, Warren Douglas, Cece Fabbro, Elaine Faver, Ed Fennessey, Steve Frantz, Christopher Gorman, Clare Gorman, Ruth Gyure, Elizabeth Harriss, Emita Hill, Phil Horner, Dave Kaufman, Lois Kroll, Alice La Sala, Thomas Leissl, Kelly Mac Pherson, Valerie Marini, Harriett Miller, Sandy Morrissey, Diane Morrison, Peggyann Munnick, Sandy Muscillo, Suzi Oppenheimer, Anne Owen, Drew Panko, Elizabeth Paul, Don Pinals, Neil Powell, Elizabeth Poyet, Mike Raffia, Wilma Reidy, Barbara Roca, Vern Schramm, Laura Lee Strasser, Mark Stotsky, Bob Wirsneck, Phyllis Wittner, Ellen Valle.

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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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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR BUTTERFLY COUNT

The North American Butterfly Association (NABA) runs a Butterfly Count Program, similar to the Christmas Bird Count run by the National Audubon Society. This year the count is on July 5th, with July 6th the rain date. No butterfly expertise is necessary. Count participants mostly meet at the Starbucks on S. Moger Ave. in Mt. Kisco, although other arrangements can be made. A counter can leave whenever it suits them, but almost everyone usually participates for the entire day. This is a fun and educational experience and participants will contribute important scientific data. Anyone interested should contact Jeff Glassberg, 973-285-0907 or glassberg@NABA.org. Jeff Glassberg is author of *Butterflies through Binoculars* and a founder of the NABA.

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