



The Newsletter of the Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon Society
Serving the communities of Bronxville, Eastchester, Edgemont, Hartsdale, Larchmont,
Mamaroneck, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Pelham, Scarsdale and Tuckahoe

Bluebirds: A Summer Treat Returns

At the turn of the 20th century, the beautiful Eastern Bluebird was a familiar spring and summer resident in Westchester. But with the introduction of the more aggressive European species -- English Sparrows and Starlings -- and suburbanization, viable Bluebird nesting sites were severely diminished and bluebirds were virtually eliminated from our area by mid-century. Today, these colorful blue and orange cavity nesters have a brighter future thanks to a band of Bluebird enthusiasts who devote considerable time to setting out and managing bluebird houses to augment nature's nesting cavities.

One of Westchester's most dedicated enthusiasts is BRSS's own vice president, Sandra Morrissey. Sandra has been erecting, maintaining and monitoring Bluebird nesting boxes for about 10 years. Because Bluebirds require open spaces with scattered trees and low or sparse ground cover, nesting pairs are best attracted by placing bluebird boxes in parks, cemeteries, and golf courses. Sandra started by putting up three houses at the Scarsdale Golf Club, where she is a member. This year she counts a total of 158 houses in place that are currently attracting 17 nesting pairs.

Monitoring Nesting Boxes

Monitoring the boxes is a big job that requires a significant commitment of time. In addition to erecting and maintaining the inventory, the nesting boxes must be monitored weekly to check on progress and control house sparrows, paper wasps and to remove unhatched eggs. Bluebirds like most songbirds have a poor sense of smell. They are quite tolerant of human presence and touching the nest or the birds will not make the birds leave.

House sparrows are probably the number one enemy of Bluebirds. Unlike the Starlings, they are capable of entering the 1 1/2 inch round hole of a nest box. They will attack and kill adult bluebirds (sometime trapping them in the nestbox), and destroy the eggs and nestlings. House sparrows are a nonnative invasive pest not protected by law, and so they may be legally removed.

Where to Observe Bluebirds

Though a few of the boxes that Sandra has placed in some 28 locations are on private golf courses or in suitable habi-



Sandra building with Girl Scouts



Kensico Cemetary



Two babies, two eggs



Sunningdale Golf Course

tats of private home properties, most are located in publicly accessible areas. Several nesting box locations that Sandra suggests to observe Bluebirds, include SUNY Purchase, Harts Brook Park and Preserve, Hartsdale; Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla; and Ferncliff Cemetery, Hartsdale. For exact locations, please contact Sandra.

Bluebird Broods and Walks

The first and second week of July will find most of the year's first brood near fledging. However, most nesting pairs will soon produce a second brood, and maybe even later a third brood toward autumn. If you would like to help Sandra in nest box monitoring or perhaps you'd like to simply accompany her on a monitoring round to see Bluebirds, Sandra would be most happy for you to join in the fun. Contact her at 949-2531 or e-mail: sandym@cloud9.net.

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BRSS Helps High School Students

This is the third year that BRSS board member Sandra Morrissey has mentored students in their "Authentic Science Research" program (www.cstl.org). In addition, BRSS helps these aspiring scientists by financing equipment they need to do their research. The following are descriptions of the projects of two students working with Sandra this year.

Will Playing the Eastern Bluebird Song Attract Bluebirds to Nestbox Locations?

By Ruth Torres, junior, White Plains H.S.

My research will investigate the effect of playing a recording of the Eastern Bluebird song near nestboxes. My hypothesis is that playing the song will attract bluebirds to the nestbox locations. The study will be conducted in four locations: The first location will be a place where boxes have been in place but no bluebirds have shown up. The second location had bluebirds the first year, but only tree swallows the second year. I hope that by playing the bluebird song, the bluebirds will show up again to nest, and the bluebird song will inhibit the Tree Swallows from using the boxes. The other two locations will be new installations of birdhouses. In these houses, we will only play the song near half of the houses. These tests will prove whether playing these bird songs will help to attract nesting bluebirds, repel them, or have no effect at all. The result of this research could help contribute to increasing the Eastern Bluebird population.



What is the Effect on Bird Populations When Invasive Vines are Removed?

By Jose Perez, sophomore, White Plains H.S.

I am a student at White Plains High School, enrolled in the voluntary 3-year science research program. My area of interest is ornithology. The experiment I am considering will take place at the Rye Marshlands Conservancy. A bird survey will be conducted both before and after invasive vine removal from trees in three specific areas in order to determine if changes in population would occur. My hypothesis is that the bird population will decreased due to the removal of vines in each of the three sectors. Data will be collected throughout the summer of 2006 in order to record what birds nest in each location, and in the winter of 2006 the vines will be removed. Throughout the summer of 2007 data will once again be collected to analyzed what changes occurred in the bird population.



Spring Program Report

This spring BRSS sponsored two slide presentations. The first, done in conjunction with the Central Westchester Audubon, was held at the Scarsdale Library on March 15th. The title was "Eagles of the Hudson Valley" and the presenter was Eric Lind, director of the Constitution Marsh Audubon Center. Eric reviewed the Bald Eagles life behaviors and how, after being absent in this area for many years, they were returning.

The second program was at the Bronxville Library on May 11th. Peter Salmonsohn, who is an environmental educator at Constitution Marsh in the winter and the education coordinator with the Audubon's Seabird Restoration Program in Maine during the summer, began his presentation by informing the audience of how puffins and terns were lost to the islands of Maine by hunters a century or so ago. This was followed by the intriguing story of how they have been restored through work that was begun 20 years ago.

Bird Flu Update from Audubon New York

With fears and misinformation surrounding bird flu on the rise, Audubon New York has launched a public awareness and educational campaign to provide up to date science-based information regarding bird flu in wild birds and its relationship to people.

One of the primary messages is that there have been no cases anywhere of people contracting H5N1 from wild birds. All known human cases have been the result of close contact with infected domestic bird flocks. There is no known risk of catching bird flu through birding, bird feeding, or visiting live birds at places such as Audubon Centers. People can, and should continue to watch and feed birds without worrying about bird flu. We do advise people to clean their bird feeders regularly, but that is to prevent the spread of any disease from bird to bird.

Constitution Marsh Canoe Trip

A two-hour guided canoe trip of Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary (<http://ny.audubon.org/cmac.htm>) is set for Sunday, Sept. 10. The trip is limited to 15. Reservations required. Contact Doug Bloom before August 20th. The cost is \$20 per person. Meet 10:30 a.m. at Scarsdale Village Hall to car pool. We will return by about 3 pm.

Annual Meeting Election Report

At the BRSS Annual meeting on June 8th at Five Islands Park, New Rochelle, the following officers were elected to a term of two years: Doug Bloom, president.; Sandra Morrissey, vice-president; Jeff Zuckerman, treasurer; Cece Fabro, secretary. Board members elected to the class of '09 were Clare Gorman, Neil Powell, Robert Wirsneck and Roz Wood.

Welcome New Members

Bronxville – Dawn Beach, Kimberly Eierman, Sylvia Essington, Buz Galbraith, Leonard Kahn, Marvin Penn, Lara Simone, Barbara Vaccaro **Eastchester** – Lesley Kawejnsza, Suzanne Ko, Leah Lazzaro, Trudy Whiton **Hartsdale** – Amy Katz, Jonathan Lichter, Joanne Tejera **Larchmont** – Raymond Fink, Victoria Foulke, H.H. Greenberg, Gerald & Marlene Kolbert, Rhoda Lunde, Jose Magalhaes, Mrs. Fried De Metz Herman, Wendy & Michael Raso, Joan Scheuer, Anne Seif, Ross Taylor **Mamaroneck** – Bonnie Kenyon, Dolores Marino, Elise Orfei, Bruce Robertson, Elizabeth Saenger, Barry Singer, Michael Solomon, L.D. Starr **Mt. Vernon** – Rolf Akerman, Carol Dinger, Stanley Grayson, Eddie Jeriod, Denise Valentin **New Rochelle** – Curtis Birnbach, Patricia Cutler, Vaughn Folkert, Audrey Gerstein, Peter Harju, Janet Hartz, Irene Kutsky, Keith Lepp, Otis Searcy, Ruth Stone, Jeannine Williams **Pelham** - Mrs. Peter Andreoli, J. Patrick Cooke, Robert Dieda, Robert Lepple **Scarsdale** – Estelle Capelin, Anne Cohen, T.D. Fellerman, Bonnie & Howard Graff, John Hanish, Stanley Janow, Phyllis Jassey, Thomas Olson, Philip Romano, Susan Saari, R.W. Schoen.

Even though H5N1 is likely to eventually show up in this country, that is not the same as pandemic flu, and killing wild birds is not an effective means of slowing the spread of H5N1.

Many Audubon Centers across the state participate in a banding program, which is part of a nationwide study of migratory songbird populations. This year, these centers will also be participating in an international testing of the birds they are already banding for all types of Bird Flu. State residents can also assist in the monitoring effort by reporting any large die-offs of birds to the nearest regional office of the Department of Environmental Conservation. More information about bird flu and wild birds is available at ny.audubon.org

Tagging Monarch Butterflies is Good Fun and Good Science



Monarch Watch at the University of Kansas is in its 15th season of a monarch tagging program. Tagging monarchs is remarkably simple and fun. Request your monarch tagging kit and instructions in time for the monarch migration later this summer. Your tagging efforts and subsequent recoveries of tagged butterflies contribute to the overall understanding of the dynamic of the monarch population. What's more, later in the following winter you can do your own online search of the Tag Recovery Database to find if any of your tagged monarchs were recovered in El Rosario, Mexico, the monarch wintering grounds, more than 2,000 miles from our area. Visit www.monarchwatch.org for more information and to obtain your tagging kit.

BRSS Newsletter Named *Bird Call*

While virtually all Audubon Chapter newsletters around the country have a name, our newsletter has been nameless, until now. The BRSS board whittled a long list down to three nominees: *Hawk's Eye*, *Warbler* and *Bird Call*. At the recent June 8th BRSS Annual Meeting, members were asked to vote to select the name. The winner with a whopping 66 percent majority is *Bird Call*. Thanks to all who voted.

Bird Call Welcomes Your Ideas and Contributions

Have a topic you'd like to see covered in the *Bird Call*? Let us know, and we'll do our best to meet your request. If you have an article or a letter to the editor you'd like to have published, please send it to us. We encourage your contributions. Please e-mail your submissions to the *Bird Call* editor at robert.wick@verizon.net. We reserve the right to edit for length, and of course, we will secure your approval for all copy we edit.

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May and June Birding Trip Reports

Central Park, May 7

On a beautiful spring day, 14 participants saw 55 species of birds in about four hours including 17 species of warblers such as American Redstarts, Chestnut-sided, Ovenbird, Canada, and Wilson's. Other species that were spotted included Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Veery and Swainson's Thrushes.

Doodletown Road, Bear Mt. State Park, May 21

On another clear day, 14 participants saw 66 species of birds, 17 warblers, including Cerulean, Blue-winged and hooded Warblers. Indigo Buntings and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were also seen.

Adirondacks, June 2-4

During a three-trip we identified 109 species. Underway early on Friday, we stopped at Vischer's Ferry nature area adjacent to the Erie Canal, just off the Northway, to see what was around. Right away we saw a Yellow-billed Cuckoo and later a Philadelphia Vireo. Continuing on to Saranac Lake, and checking into our hotel we went to Paul Smiths Interpretive Center, which that weekend was hosting the 4th annual Great Adirondack Birding Celebration. We ended the day at Bloomingdale Bog hearing an American Bittern, and seeing or hearing several warbler species and Gray Jays.

On a rainy Saturday, we went to Silver Lake Bog and met up with a group from the Great Adirondack Birding Celebration (www.northnet.org/adirondackvic/birdfest.html). Because of the rain, birding was mostly by ear, less by sight. After hiking through the bog to the Silver Lake Overlook we returned to the Paul Smiths to dry out and have lunch.

On Sunday we did Ferd's Bog and heard a Northern three-toed woodpecker and a yellow-bellied flycatcher. By the time we reached Moose River Plains the weather was improving. We heard a Ruffed Grouse and saw a Golden eagle.

Other trip highlights included Common Loons in breeding plumage, a Bald Eagle following a flock of Canada Geese, Black-backed Woodpecker, Lincoln's Sparrow and 19 species of warblers.

Fall 2006 and Winter 2007 Bird Field Trip Schedule

The Fall/Winter birding field trip schedule has yet to be finalized. Later this summer, we will mail the schedule. Bird field trips are great fun for the beginner and expert birders alike. Whether or not you know a Blue Jay from a Bluebird, your life list is non-existent or numbers in many hundreds, you're sure to enjoy getting outdoors and learning more about birds with others interested in conservation.