

# The BIRD CALL

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

## Bluebirds Bring Happiness and Heartbreak

By Sandy Morrissey

The chance of seeing New York's State Bird, the eastern bluebird, soared this summer with a record 30 pairs nesting in the 190 nestboxes that BRSS's Eastern Bluebird Project supplied and monitored.

### Happiness

The nestboxes are in 36 locations and the bluebird was sighted at 22. A pair even showed up at my home on Leap Day (February 29), a thrilling first for me. While they didn't nest, it gave me great hope for the future.

The best location was in N. Salem where we worked with Girl Scouts doing a service project. Of the 12 houses that went up, eight attracted nesting bluebirds, including the ones at the homes of the leaders. One box was located between a swimming pool on one side and a swing set and trampoline on the other. Truly amazing!

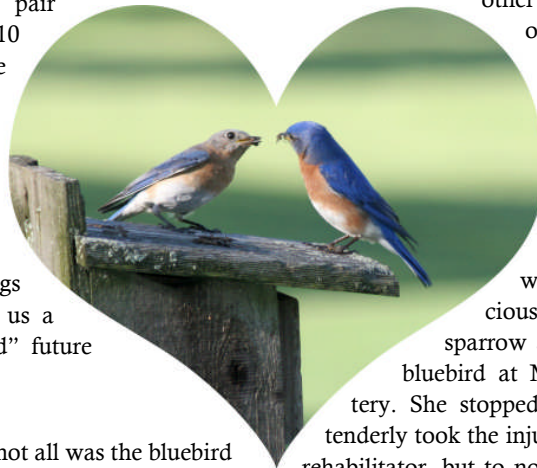
Saxon Woods Golf Course continues to be the best location in lower

Westchester, with five nesting pairs this year. At my home course, Scarsdale Golf Club, a pair nested just 10 yards from the 8<sup>th</sup> tee, giving the golfers great looks at these gorgeous birds.

We estimate 95 nestlings fledged, giving us a bright "bluebird" future next year.

### Heartbreak

However, not all was the bluebird of happiness. Bluebirds get competition from five other cavity-nesters. While nine nesting cheerful chickadee pairs and one tufted titmice pair never ruffled my feathers, the sight of box after box of tree swallows definitely lowered my spirits – and those of our monitors that help. The 59 nesting pairs of tree swallows using our boxes took up more real estate than the dreaded house sparrow.



We had 42 house sparrows pairs trying to rob the bluebirds – and the other native species – of houses, eggs and baby nestlings. Murdering the adults is their first line of attack. New bluebird monitor, Linda Keil, witnessed the ferociousness of a house sparrow attack on a male bluebird at Mt. Hope Cemetery. She stopped the attack, and tenderly took the injured bluebird to a rehabilitator, but to no avail. The story eventually had a happy ending. We kept up our own aggressive sparrow control, and eventually fledged 4 baby bluebirds from Mt. Hope.

Then there are the house wrens, who occupied 18 nestboxes. These

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*Sandy Morrissey is a BRSS Board Member and Chair of its Eastern Bluebird Project.*



*This TV antenna substitutes for a tree snag for this night heron in residential Mt. Vernon.*

## Yellow-Crowned Night Herons Discovered Nesting in Mt. Vernon and New Rochelle

Don't think you have to get up at 5:00 a.m. and go on a bird walk in a remote area to see "uncommon" species. This summer yellow-crowned night herons were discovered nesting in two locations, high above tree-lined residential areas.

The first rookery was discovered when a Mt. Vernon resident, Debbie Daniels, emailed BRSS asking for help identifying large birds that were making lots of "poop" on her street. A "field

trip" to her address revealed three yellow-crowned night heron nests, with immatures still present and adults coming and going with food. Amazingly, there are no parks or bodies of water nearby.

After this sighting was published in *The Journal News*, Bill Conway of New Rochelle contacted us to report nesting yellow-crowned night herons in his neighborhood. While this location is

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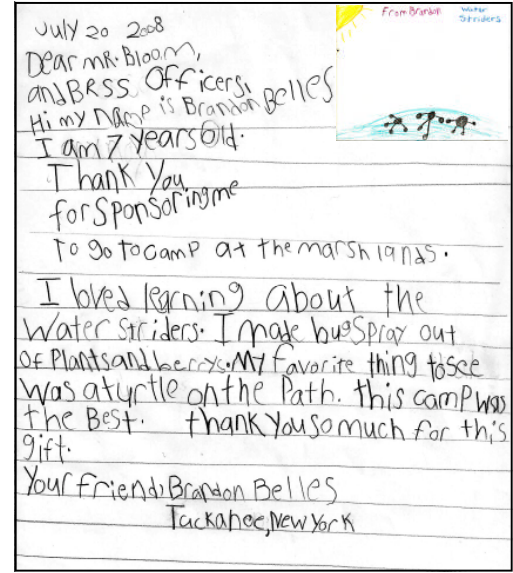
Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.  
is a chapter of the  
National Audubon Society  
serving the communities of  
Bronxville, Eastchester, Edgemont, Hartsdale,  
Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Mount Vernon, New  
Rochelle, Pelham, Scarsdale, and Tuckahoe

## Birdseed Sale Sends Brandon to Nature Camp

Each summer BRSS tries to assist youngsters who could not otherwise have conservation/wildlife camp experiences. Here is a letter we received from Brandon Belles from Tuckahoe, who attended Westchester County's nature camp at the Marshlands Conservancy.

When you finish reading it, we hope you'll agree that this is a valuable program. Our Bird Seed Sale provides the funds for these scholarships. Our fall seed order form is enclosed.

**Please order your  
seed today**



## Night Herons

(Continued from page 1)

just a few blocks from the L. I. Sound, it was still amazing to view seven stick nests scattered in the maple trees in his neighborhood.

When local bird experts were consulted about the Mt. Vernon birds, they thought these yellow-crowned night herons were the first record of them nesting in Westchester in over 20 years. Both Mt. Vernon and New Rochelle residents say the nests have been there for several years. Perhaps the experts didn't know where to look.



Who would guess night herons are nesting on this street in Mt. Vernon?

At least one resident interviewed in New Rochelle is very disgruntled by the mess and smell the nesting herons make. He would like the trees cut down. "They come every year and ruin my property."

Witnessing the droppings on the street, I could see his point. Indeed, the Mt. Vernon resident contacted us because of the excess droppings, but fortunately, she was more tolerant.

It will be interesting to monitor these nests in the future. Will they increase? Will residents interfere. Should we? *Sandy Morrissey*

## Bluebirds

(Continued from page 1)

perky brown birds with a repetitive chatter are notorious for removing bluebird eggs and building their stick nests on top of bluebird nests. This happened at least five times.

Sadly, we witnessed the loss of several broods of nestlings. One was definitely from an attack from a house sparrow and a second brood seemingly perished in the July heat wave.

## Hope

Though facing many challenges, the bluebirds, like all living things, have the survival instinct. With our help, we have high hopes they will continue to increase their population and bring cheer to all who see them.

Thanks to all the monitors who helped keep the house sparrows at bay and special thanks to Joe Jamin who cut the wood for 40 new birdhouse kits.

To join our project or for more information, please email me at sandym@cloud9.net.



Heartbreak: Nestlings suffer from attack by house sparrows.

## FIELD TRIPS 2008 - 2009

Sept 28	<b>Hawk Watch.</b> This is the peak of fall hawk migration. Join the hawk counters. Record day is over 18,000 broad winged hawks	Audubon Center in Greenwich, CT	7:30AM Scarsdale Village Hall or 8:00AM Greenwich Audubon
Nov 2	<b>Fall Migration</b> both land birds and waterfowl. Joint field trip with CWAS	Larchmont Reservoir	8:00AM at Reservoir on Weaver Street
Nov 12	<b>Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge</b> is one of the premier birding spots on the east coast. Joint field trip with Wild Bird Center and CWAS	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, NYC	8:00AM Wild Bird Center on Central Avenue or 9:00AM Jamaica Bay
Dec 14	<b>Greenwich Point</b> , a peninsula jutting in Long Island Sound, is the best spot for winter waterfowl. HRAS will join us	Greenwich Point Park	8:00AM Scarsdale Village Hall
Dec 28	<b>Annual Christmas Bird Count.</b> Join us for a few hours, half a day, or all day to census birds in our area	Lower Westchester	Call Doug Bloom for info at (914) 834-5203
Jan 11	<b>Montauk Point</b> at the eastern tip of Long Island in winter teems with waterfowl and ocean birds	Montauk Point	6:30AM Scarsdale Village Hall
Feb 1	<b>Owl Prowl</b> offers you best chance to see up to 4 species of owls. Hudson River and Central Westchester Audubon chapter will join	Pelham Bay Park, Bronx NY	8:00 Am Pelham Bay/Orchard Beach
Feb 7	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Annual Eagle Fest</b> sponsored by Teatown Reservation salutes the Bald Eagle with live birds, entertaining show and informative programs	Croton Point Park, Croton	10:00 AM– 3:00 PM
Feb 14	Our annual <b>Search for Bald Eagles</b>	Croton Point Park, Croton	8:00AM Wild Bird Center on Central Ave
Feb 20-22	<b>Cape Ann Weekend</b> The best winter location in the NE for birds	Massachusetts	Call Doug Bloom at (914)834-5203
March 22	<b>Edith Read Sanctuary</b> hosts lingering winter birds and early spring migrants. HRAS and CWAS	Edith Read Sanctuary, Rye	8:00 Am At Read
April 5	<b>Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge</b> With CWAS	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, NYC	8:00 Am
April 17-19	<b>Delmarva Weekend</b>		
May 3	<b>Central Park</b>	Central Park, NYC	7:30 AM
May 24	<b>Doodletown Road</b> with HRAS/CWAS		8:00 Am Doodletown
May 31	<b>Shawangunk Grasslands</b> with HRAS		6:00 Am Lenoir Preserve Yonkers

**Fall Programs Sponsored by  
Greenburgh Nature Center  
& Sierra Club Lower Hudson Chapter**

All programs are held at the GNC, begin at 7:30 and are free.

**Wednesday, October 22 - Westchester County and the Environment** John Nonna, Westchester County Legislator

**Wednesday, November 19 – Socially Responsible Investing** Advisors from UBS Financial Services Inc. and Calvert Funds

**Wednesday, December 17 - "Food Matters," the film.** Uncover the true cause of disease. View trailer for movie at [foodmatters.tv/trailer.html](http://foodmatters.tv/trailer.html)

**Winter - Spring Programs Sponsored by  
BRSS Audubon**

All programs begin at 7:30 and are free to the public

**March 19 - Life Between the Tides**, Church Street School, WP. With CWAS.

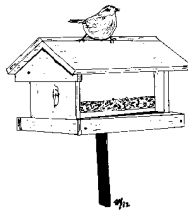
**April 22, 2009—A Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of Roger Tory Peterson's Birth** - James Berry, President, Roger Tory Peterson Institute. Bronxville High School. With HRAS and CWAS.

# Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)  
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Scarsdale, NY 10583

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Deadline for orders is October 7  
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## Join!

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

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## GOING GREEN

### Think Global, Shop Local at the Ramsey Farm

The Ramsey farm on Ramsey Road in Scarsdale is a great place to shop for local produce, and it is quite incredible that we have a farm stand here in the middle of suburbia.

I have been shopping there since we moved here in 1991, when Mrs. Ramsey first ran the stand with her ever pleasant conversation. Now, her son John has taken over with a new Mrs. Ramsey and a new baby daughter just added to the family.

Shop for plants and seedlings in April, local tomatoes and corn and all sorts of other vegetables from mid-July until the end of Thanksgiving week-end, and of course, pumpkins in October are great.



For local apples, go to Wilkens Farm in Yorktown Heights where apples can be picked fresh from the trees.

*By Lika Levi, a new BRSS Board Member*

### Welcome New Members

**Bronxville:** Linda Blakely, Betsy Ellis, Lorraine Lange. **Eastchester:** Yoshihiro-Nanako Sakai, Jeanette Schaeffer. **Larchmont:** Carla Canonico, Rita Ciocci, Sandy Feldman. **Mamaroneck:** Jodi Clinton, Brian Tierney. **Mount Vernon:** Mary Harrington, Martin Pettinati. **New Rochelle:** David Bluhensfeld, Robert Dimmitt, Andrew Francella, Stephane Garceau, William Grabel. **Pelham:** Connie Chin, Anton Dengler, Alice Green. **Scarsdale:** Shannon Casey, James Kloppenburg, Samuel Krinsky, Diane Levy, Walter Lockwood, Raphael Rivero, Manfred Simon, Austin Straus. **Tuckahoe:** The Belles Family. **Yonkers:** Lynn Bacchus, Leonardo Miceli.