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The

# BIRD CALL

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

## Test Shows Gilbertson Nestboxes Help Deter House Sparrows

By Michael Jaramillo &amp; Joshua Luisto

We have been conducting an experiment with the Gilbertson Box (PVC Box) to see if the design of the box helps ward off House Sparrows from nesting inside the box. House Sparrows have been a huge problem for Eastern Bluebirds by attacking them in their nestbox and killing them, and then taking over the nestbox. In order to see if the Gilbertson Box will prevent any House Sparrows from nesting, the boxes were placed in the most heavily infested areas containing House Sparrows.

After three months of observing the Gilbertson boxes and writing down our observations, we have noted that the three species of birds that nested inside the boxes were the Tree Swallow, House Wren, and House Sparrow. The bird that nested in most of the boxes was the Tree Swallow.

It should also be noted that out of the 26 nestboxes that were placed in the selected locations, 15 boxes contained Tree Swallows, 9 boxes were left

empty, 2 boxes contained House Wrens, and 3 House Sparrows attempted to nest.

The locations where the House Sparrows attempted to nest had a certain factor that could have contributed to their nesting there. The location at the Westchester Community College had only 1 Gilbertson box and even though Maple Moor Golf Course had 5 boxes placed, they were all spread out from one another. It is speculated that the House Sparrow will attempt to nest there if there are no other boxes or areas for them to nest in. What we also observed from the results gathered is that Tree Swallows are the most likely inhabitants of the Gilbertson box.

But what still needs to be tested is if the Eastern Bluebirds will decide to nest inside the Gilbertson box. If this is tested as true, then the Bluebirds will have a new home where they will not have to worry about any ongoing attack from the House Sparrows.

We would like to thank the Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon Society for their donation to allow us to pur-



*Tree Swallows nested in 15 of 26 Gilbertson nestboxes that replaced the traditional style. Last year we had 21 House Sparrow pairs attempting to nest in these 26 locations. The Gilbertson boxes reduced that number to just 3, proving a great deterrent for House Sparrows. However, we still did not increase the number of Eastern Bluebirds. None chose the Gilbertson box. Maybe with the reduced House Sparrow population, they try the box next year.*

chase the Gilbertson boxes for our experiment. We would also like to thank the people that allowed us to place the boxes in the locations to be monitored and we would like to thank our mentor, Mrs. Morrissey, for helping us in our project.

*Joshua Luistro and Michael Jaramillo are students at White Plains High School in its Authentic Science Research Program.*

## Visit Our New Redesigned Website at [www.brssaudubon.org](http://www.brssaudubon.org)

Our redesigned and updated website is now online. Visit it at [www.brssaudubon.org](http://www.brssaudubon.org).

Visitors can expect to find all the latest chapter news, including upcoming field trips, programs, our newsletter, and a photo gallery where we can share wildlife photos from our area.

Our Eastern Bluebird Project has its own section and will have up-to-date information on where the bluebirds are nesting in our area.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Bronx River - Sound Shore Audubon Society website. It features a navigation menu with links for Home, About, Field Trips, Programs, Newsletter, Student Project, and Photo Gallery. The main content area includes a welcome message, the BRSS logo, and a brief description of the society. There are also sections for 'Upcoming Events' and 'News' with specific dates and details.

It includes printable forms for our seed sale and others like those used by bluebird monitors.

The website was designed by William McGough, a spring graduate from Bronxville High School, and now a Freshman at Notre Dame. He has had his own computer consulting business since 7th grade. Designing websites has been his major business since 9th grade. Good luck to William at ND.

Sandy Morrissey is currently the webmaster and welcomes comments and suggestions. You can reach her at [sandym@cloud9.net](mailto:sandym@cloud9.net).

**BRSS AUDUBON**

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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*

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

*All programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments served a half-hour prior to the program.*

### Return of Terns to Great Gull Island

*Sunday October 25, 2009, 3:00 p.m.*

*Bronxville Public Library*

*Speaker: Helen Hays*



Great Gull Island lies at the eastern end of L.I. Sound off of the coast of Connecticut. After occupying the island for centuries, the terns left when a fort was built in 1897. The American Museum of Natural History purchased the island in 1947 and then began a project to get the terns to return. Helen Hays has been in charge of this project for the last 40 years, and she will relate how they achieved its success.

Sponsored by BRSS Audubon and Central Westchester Audubon.

### Darwin and Evolution in the 21st Century

*Sunday, November 22, 2009, 3:00*

*Bronxville Public Library, Bronxville*

*Speaker, Dr. Saul Scheinbach*



This year marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth. Darwin's 19<sup>th</sup> century idea that organisms evolve through natural selection has not only survived 150 years of scientific scrutiny, but is at the center of 21<sup>st</sup> century biology. Dr. Saul Scheinbach will provide some background in modern biology to help us better understand evolution, and will show us why, "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution."

Dr. Scheinbach spent his career working at a food company on various projects related to industrial microbiology, which he also taught along with other biology courses at nearby colleges. Currently he is the vice-president of the Hudson River Audubon chapter, but his favorite position is that of science writer for the chapter. In his Rivertown Naturalist column, ScienceWatch, he reports on recent findings that may interest Audubon members. In his reports he also tries to explain the workings of science to non-scientists.

Since his days as a graduate student, evolution has been for him a fascinating subject, and rightly so. It forms the foundation for all of biology.

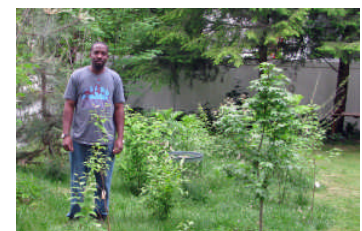
## Fall is the Time to Plant Native Plants

Red twig dogwood (*cornus sericea*) is a beautiful shrub that is native to New York. It is truly a four-season plant, with super red stems in winter and nice green foliage along with white flowers in spring. Flowers turn into lovely white fruit in summer and fall. Bluebirds, catbirds, robins and other fruit-eating song birds love the berries.

Red twig dogwood grows 5-9 feet tall and up to 10 feet wide. It has a fast growth rate and is adaptable to a variety of soils. Plant in medium sun, but it can tolerate shade if necessary.

Red twig dogwood is super low maintenance and an excellent backyard shrub for your wildlife habitat.

*By Tim Mack*



*Tim Mack runs Tim's Birdscaping business in Hartsdale. To contact him or visit his "birdscaped" property, call 917-208-5507 or [tygercrane212@aol.com](mailto:tygercrane212@aol.com).*

## FIELD TRIPS 2009 - 2010

*All birders welcome. Please call Doug Bloom at 914-834-5203 (evenings) or 914-713-0630 (10:00—6:00 Tues. thru Sat.) for more information.*

Day	Field Trip	Location	Meeting Time
Oct 2-4	<b>Brigantine/Cape May Weekend</b> Looking for Fall Migrants. Hawks, Shorebirds and Waterfowl	New Jersey	Call Doug Bloom at 914 834-5203 for more info
Oct 18	<b>Hawk Watch</b> looking for hawks in migration and other fall migrates	Greenwich Audubon	8:00AM at Greenwich Audubon
Nov 15	<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 HRAS/CWAS	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, NYC	8:00AM Wild Bird Center on Central Avenue or 9:00AM Jamaica Bay
Dec 27	<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 at 914 834-5203 for info
Jan 10	<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 6	<b>6<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 – 3:00
Feb 13	Our annual <b>Search for Bald Eagles</b>	Croton Point Park, Croton	8:00AM Wild Bird Center on Central Ave
March 14	<b>Edith Read Sanctuary-Marshlands</b> hosts lingering winter birds and early spring migrants. CWAS	Edith Read Sanctuary, Rye	8:00 AM At Read
April 18	<b>Brigantine Wildlife Refuge</b>	New Jersey	6:45 AM Village Hall
April 25	<b>Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge</b> with HRAS/CWAS/WBC	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, NYC	Meet at refuge at 9:00AM
May 2	<b>Central Park</b>	Central Park, NYC	7:30 AM at Central Park Central Park West and 79th St
May 23	<b>Doodletown Road CWAS</b>	Near Bear Mountain	8:00 AM Doodletown
June 4-6	<b>Adirondack Weekend</b>	Upstate New York	

### Birds of Prey

Educational Show Presented by  
Hawk Creek Wildlife Center

At

The Bronx Zoo  
Sept. weekends 12/13, 19/20, 26/27

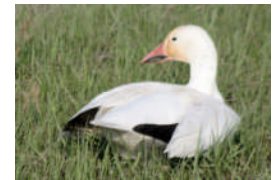
Crafts, games, other educational activities in  
addition to the Birds of Prey show

More info at [www.bronxzoo.org](http://www.bronxzoo.org)

### Brigantine and Cape May Weekend: October 2—4

Hope you can join us on this trip to two of the top birding hotspots in America. We will leave early on Friday, with the goal of reaching Brigantine (located on the Jersey Shore, just north of Atlantic City) by 10:00 a.m. After spending the day, we will head to Cape May. We will stay at Cape Harbor Motor Inn. Please make your own room reservations.

Both locations are noted for their fall migratory birds. Hundreds of thousands of shore birds will stop at these locations. Cape May Hawk Watch is world famous. Fantastic birding! Join us.



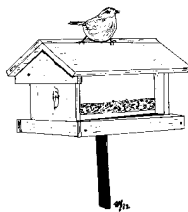
*Snow geese will be arriving at Brigantine at the same time as the BRSS birders.*

# Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)  
P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

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**BIRD SEED ORDER  
FORM ENCLOSED**



**Deadline for orders is October 6  
Thank you for your support**



## 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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
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Please make \$20 check to National Audubon Society and mail to:  
BRSS Audubon Society, Inc.  
P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

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## Support BRSS and Our Local Birds with our Fall Seed Sale

Our fall Bird Seed Sale is an important fund raiser. Minor changes this fall will make it even better.

First, after reviewing the latest research on bird feeding, we improved our seed mixes and added new ones to help you attract more colorful birds to your backyard.

Secondly, the bags themselves are more environmentally friendly and conducive to recycling. The "large" bags are slightly smaller (e.g., 16 lbs. versus 20 lbs.), making them easier to handle and store. But note, because of the smaller poundage per bag, you may



*A cardinal and redwing blackbird find plenty to eat at a well-stocked feeder during a snow storm.*

wish to order additional bags.

All funds raised from the sale of bird seed goes to support your local chapter activities.

### Welcome New Members

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

**Ardley:** Miriam Sussman. **Bronxville:** Bonnie Caffray, John A. Corry, Robert Fullerton, Mary Harrison, Dorothy Hillis, Daniel M. Latham, Joanna Lou, Maryrose M. Nihlen, Lisa Pieroni. **Eastchester:** Brian & Patricia McEnery, Joan Schulman. **Hartsdale:** Sam Gandy, Marilyn J. Krizansky, Edward Walther, Richard Weiss. **Larchmont:** Paul Luftig, M. L. MacKey. **Mamaroneck:** Maryla Birdsell, Philip Horner, Richard Lann. **Mount Vernon:** David Acosta, Jeffrey Halpern. **New Rochelle:** Jeannette Allan, Louis J. Carroscio, Bob Gilman, John W. Pike, Moira Tobey. **Pelham:** Alison Eckstein, Timothy Glaesemann, John Moschetto, Carmela Stabile. **Scarsdale:** Robert Brewster, Leonard Kerson, Ashwatha Narayana, Mark & Mindy Sotsky, Stephen Sprague, Ethel B. Sutton, Joan Thompson. **Yonkers:** Ernest Hammer.