The East to West Migration of Steppe Eagles in the Himalayan Mountains

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2014
7:00 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 p.m. program

Presenter: Dr. Robert DeCandido (aka “Birding Bob”)

Location: Lenoir Nature Preserve

Somewhere between 10,000 and 40,000 individuals of the Asian sub-species of Steppe Eagles migrate each autumn along the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains. These eagles breed in China and Mongolia, and instead of heading north to south, migrate west toward Nepal, India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia — some possibly as far as Africa. Along with the eagles are 30 other raptor species including 10 total eagle species that take this same route.

Bob first watched this migration in 1999, but a civil war interrupted his research there. He was able to return in 2011 through 2013 to capture images very close images. On a good day, it was possible to closely see up to fifteen Steppe Eagles rising up in the same thermal. It was also possible to see four different vulture species on migration — these were some of the most endangered species in the world.

Bob with explain why these raptors migrate east to west (and not north to south) — and why some of the same species we see in North America, such as the Golden Eagle, are also migrants in Nepal.
Project FeederWatch

We are continuing with our FeederWatch program in 2014. We still have two openings for someone to lead a session. If you are interested, or if you want to find out the time each feeder watch begins, please contact Carol Lange via email CarolLange@aol.com or telephone at 914-668-5101.

We will be inside the Lenoir Nature Center, looking out the picture windows and counting the birds at and around the feeders. We welcome all to come help the leader identify and count the birds for two hours. It’s also a fun way to socialize on a cold winter’s day!

- Sat., Jan. 4 - Ruth DeFord
- Sun., Jan. 5 - Jackie Bruskin
- Sat., Jan. 18 - Kelli & Michael Bochnik
- Sun., Jan. 19 - Yvonne Lynn
- Sat., Feb. 1 - Walter & Maggie Chadwick
- Sun., Feb. 2 - Mary Harrington
- Fri., Feb. 14 - May Guglielmo
- Sat., Feb. 15 - open
- Sat., Mar. 1 - Fran Greenberg
- Sun., Mar. 2 - Jackie Bruskin
- Sat., Mar. 15 - Girl Scout Troop 1710-Hastings/Ardsley
- Sun., Mar. 16 - open
- Sat., Mar. 29 - Judi Veder & Saul Scheinbach
- Sun., Mar. 30 - Sandra Wright

MOVIE & POPCORN NIGHT

Queen of the Sun

What are the bees telling us?

Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2014, 7:00 p.m.
Location: Lenoir Nature Preserve

This engaging and ultimately uplifting film weaves an unusual and dramatic story of the heartfelt struggles of beekeepers, scientists and philosophers from around the world including Michael Pollan, Gunther Hauk and Vandana Shiva. Together they reveal both the problems and the solutions in renewing a culture in balance with nature.

Queen of the Sun follows colorful, alternative and inspiring beekeepers from all around the globe as they keep bees in natural and holistic ways. From Gunther Hauk in the United States to Massimo Carpinteri in Italy, each has unique philosophical and spiritual insights into their bees and is striving to keep their bees safe from pesticides, and the other causes behind Colony Collapse Disorder.

“What Queen of the Sun is doing, and beautifully, is making a sunny and optimistic case for why the world is worth saving, via gorgeous imagery and poetic appreciations of the bees themselves.” — Ian Buckwalter, NPR
Microbiologist Adrian Lee wrote that quote 30 years ago. Now gene sequencing techniques are enabling scientists to find out exactly how important that “complex microbial ecosystem” is (you’d be surprised).

The germ theory of disease, which states that microorganisms cause infectious diseases, is one of the greatest scientific achievements of all time. Formulated over 100 years ago, it has provided the framework for identifying, controlling and killing” bad” microbes, pathogens, thereby freeing much of humanity from illness. This was accomplished by biologists, chemists, physicists and physicians who rarely paid attention to the “good” microbes living in our large intestine and evolving with us over hundreds of thousands of years.

The “good” microbes are no longer neglected. One hundred trillion bacteria live in our gut, 10 times more than our body cells, and scientists are learning what these helpful microbes (microbiota) do. For example, the bacterium Lactobacillus johnsonii usually lives in our intestine where it helps to digest milk. However, during pregnancy it proliferates in the vagina where it colonizes the newborn, helping it digest breast milk.

Our microbiota protects us against pathogens and affects how our immune system forms, keeping it in check so we don’t develop auto immune diseases like asthma and inflammatory bowel disease. Recent evidence links other autoimmune diseases like type-1 diabetes, multiple sclerosis and even autism, to the activities of our microbiota.

Now there is good evidence that our gut bacteria also play a role in controlling obesity. A team headed by Jeffry Gordon, Center for Genome Science and Systems Biology, Washington University School of Medicine, St Louis, MO, presented the study in the September 6, 2013 issue of Science.

To eliminate genetic and environmental effects on obesity, the researchers used the microbiota in fecal samples collected from four sets of identical twins in which one twin was lean, the other fat. They introduced each sample of gut bacteria into a separate group of germ-free mice. Each mouse was housed separately and fed a low-fat, high-fiber diet. After five weeks, mice receiving fat-twin microbiota (OB) had 15% more body fat than mice with lean-twin microbiota (LN). Gene sequencing showed that the bacteria growing in the mouse guts were the same as those in the human fecal sample they received.

The team repeated the experiment, but now they co-housed each OB-mouse with an LN-mouse. OB-mice living with LN-mice were thinner after 10 days than OB-mice living alone. The bacterial profile of the co-housed OB-mice showed that their microbiota resembled that of the LN-mice. In other words, lean-twin microbiota took over the gut of the mouse previously housing fat-twin microbiota and prevented those mice from getting fat.

Mice are coprophagic (feces eaters), so the scientists expected them to exchange microbes, but were surprised by the microbiota replacement. Gordon said this made sense because the bacterial profile of fat people is less diverse than that of lean people. Therefore, the microbiota of fat people has empty niches that other microbes can colonize, but not the reverse. So why don’t lean microbiota infect everyone and cause a leanness epidemic?

To answer that the team repeated the co-housing experiment; however, this time they used a chow mimicking a high fat, low fiber “American” diet. Now OB-mice co-housed with LN-mice grew fat, and their microbiota did not change. Thus, “lean” microbiota can colonize OB cage mates, but only with the right diet. “There’s an intricate relationship between our diet and how our gut bugs work,” says Gordon. “You have to have the right ingredients.”

While many researchers say any microbial treatment of obesity should be done only when they know which bacterial species are responsible for leanness, others are already gearing up for the rush of fecal transplants from thin to fat people.

If you are thin you might be discarding something quite valuable. —SAUL SCHEINBACH

*Germ-free mice, born and reared under sterile condition, are genetically identical. They have poorly developed intestines, immune systems and weak hearts.
Upcoming Field Trips

Call Michael Bochnik at 914-237-9331 for more information or visit our website: www.hras.org.

All field trips are free and open to the public. Bring binoculars, some are available for loan. Bring lunch and refreshments for all day trips. Dress appropriately for the weather. More details about the trips can be found on our website and in our newsletter.

Car pooling for field trips may be arranged by calling Ruth DeFord Kotecha at 914-478-3695, or by email at rdeford@hunter.cuny.edu.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25, 2014
OWL PROWL AT PELHAM BAY PARK
Meet at Pelham Bay Park at 8 AM; far left corner of the Orchard Beach parking lot.

Pelham Bay Park is known for its wintering owls. Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, Long-eared and maybe a Barn or Barred owl might be found on this trip. We will also search the woods and water for winter birds. American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser should be in the bays. http://www.hras.org/wtobird/pelhambay.html

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 8, 2014
TEATOWN’S HUDSON RIVER EagLEFeST 2014 CROTON POINT PARK
The annual Eagle Fest sponsored by Teatown Reservation salutes the Bald Eagle with live birds, entertaining shows, and informative programs. HRAS will help man an observation site, most likely at the southern end of the Croton Train Station. Come anytime during the day.

More information on the Fest can be found at http://www.teatown.org/teatown-events/eaglefest.html

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2014
BLACK DIRT REGION OF ORANGE COUNTY
(Snow/rain date Sunday, March 1, 2013), Meet at Liberty Marsh, Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge, Pine Island, NY at 9 a.m.

The past few years have seen huge flocks of waterfowl stop in the area known for onion fields and sod farms. Rare birds such as Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose, Barnacle Goose, and Ross’s Goose have occurred. At times, 10,000 Snow Geese may be found as well.

Carpooling from Lenoir Preserve at 7:30 a.m. http://www.hras.org/wtobird/libertymarsh.htm

90th Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count Results

The Bronx-Westchester Count tallied 120 species on Sunday, December 22, 2013. It was an incredibly warm day with a high of 70 degrees! That was a new high temperature for our count, easily breaking the record of 66 degrees in 1990. Spring Peepers (tree frogs) were heard calling at a number of locations and 6–7 Red Bats were reported as well.

Highlights were a count week Semipalmated Plover in Pelham Bay Park and a female King Eider off Scotch Capp Island in Rye. It was the first King Eider on the count since 1956.

Seven Red-headed Woodpeckers set a new High Count (six were in Pelham Bay Park, the other in Woodlawn). Other finds included two Eurasian Wigeons, one in Turtle Cove, Bronx and the other off Marshland Conservancy, Rye. Three Red-necked Grebes were found in the Sound off Rye and Pelham Bay Park had a Rough-legged Hawk. Soundview Park in the Bronx had four Ring-necked Pheasants and 40 Snow Buntings.

Four Black Vultures were over Hastings and Lenoir Nature Preserve. A single Razorbill and a Lesser Black-backed Gull were in Rye.

New high counts were set for Brant, Gadwall, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Monk Parakeet, Fish Crow, and Carolina Wren.

Missed Species included Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal (first miss in 57 years), Virginia Rail, Ruddy Turnstone, and Purple Finch.

Next year's count is scheduled for Sunday, December 28, 2014.

Full results can be found at http://www.hras.org/count/90thbw.html with results from Yonkers and the Rivertowns area.
Once again, it is time to prepare works that you would like to submit for the March 2014 exhibit. As always, artwork in any media, as well as photographs, are welcome.

Exhibitors should keep in mind that works must be inspired by the Lenoir Preserve. There are so many possible subjects — Lenoir wildlife, gardens, trees, structures, volunteers, staff, and visitors involved in activities or just enjoying the serenity — to name a few.

To have your works included, or if you have any questions, please e-mail Kelli Bochnik at KelliB@salesianmissions.org (please put “Seasons” as the subject), or call her at 914-237-9331 before Monday, February 24th.

Works must be READY FOR HANGING, and must be submitted on Saturday, March 1st between 9:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

Dates to Remember

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>By Monday, February 24th</td>
<td>Submit name, title of work(s), media used, and price if you wish to sell.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 1st</td>
<td>Submit work (ready for hanging) between 9:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday, March 8th</td>
<td>Opening Reception, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Gallery Hours</td>
<td>Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Saturday, April 5th</td>
<td>Pick up artwork between 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.</td>
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The myth of biodegradation

**Myth:** Biodegradable products are the preferred environmental solution because waste simply biodegrades in the landfill.

**Reality:** Nothing biodegrades in a landfill because nothing is supposed to.

In the 1991 book *Rubbish!: The Archaeology of Garbage*, Dr. William Rathje of the University of Arizona summarized his innovative techniques of excavating modern landfills as a method of observing human social activities. Among his findings: the dry and oxygen-poor conditions found in modern landfills cause organic matter to mummify rather than decompose.

This fact is actually preferred since uncontrolled biodegradation in a landfill can cause ground water pollution, methane gas emissions, and unstable sub-soil conditions. As a result, modern landfills are kept dry and airtight to prevent biodegradation.

Composting, on the other hand, is the process of controlled biodegradation outside a landfill.

By carefully controlling the input materials (source-separated, mixed organics), and controlling the process (moisture content, oxygen levels), composters transform biodegradable materials into useful products that are used in farming, gardening and soil conservation.

Today, despite national progress on yard waste composting, tons of biodegradable materials (food scraps, wet and soiled paper, leaves, and grass) are still being sent to landfills where they will sit in an airless, dry environment to be mummified.

The phrase biodegradable, like recyclable, merely describes the potential of an object, not its inherent value. If a product is sent to a landfill, and not disposed of properly in a municipal composting or recycling facility, it is still part of the problem no matter what it is made from.

**SOURCE:** BIODEGRADABLE PRODUCTS INSTITUTE
Join The Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester!
Every membership supports Audubon's vital efforts to protect birds, other wildlife and natural habitats. Membership includes a subscription to Audubon magazine and affiliation with National Audubon. As a member, you will also receive our chapter newsletter, The Rivertown Naturalist, and an open invitation to all our guest lectures, field trips and events.

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