Bird Architecture

Presenter: Anne Swaim  
Date: Wednesday ~ May 23, 2012  
Location: Lenoir Nature Center

Birds are the most consistently inventive builders, and their nests set the bar for functional design in nature.

This presentation will cover all sorts of birds’ nests, as well as tips on what to do with nests that are in awkward locations and baby birds that are out of their nests.

Anne is the Executive Director and Staff Naturalist of the Saw Mill River Audubon Society.

Refreshments served at 7:00 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

HRAS Members Night

Date: Wednesday ~ June 27, 2012  
Location: Lenoir Nature Center

HRAS members are encouraged to share favorite nature slides and digital photos, taken during the past year, with us. Please bring no more than 10–20 images, and prepare a five-to-ten minute presentation. You may expect to see photos from HRAS field trips as well as members’ nature and birding trips.

Selected volunteers will be recognized for their special contributions during the past year. We count on our volunteers to keep our chapter strong, vital and active. Also, officers of the Hudson River Audubon Society will be elected.

Refreshments will be served at 7:00 p.m. Program begins at 7:30 p.m. For those who wish, there will be a leisurely walk around the Preserve at 6:00 p.m. — meet behind the Nature Center.

This is the final meeting of the season. Have a great summer!
Pond Life

What makes a pond? Who lives in and around a pond? Join us on Saturday, May 12, at 10 a.m. as we look and learn about ponds.

The program consists of a brief indoor session followed by a trip to the Lenoir Nature Preserve pond for some exploration.

Who will be at the pond, a frog, a turtle or a dragonfly? Learn about the fascinating creatures who call a pond home. After the outdoor session, we will have a craft session for children.

Please join us for this exciting program as we learn the mystery of the pond.

Educator/Naturalist: Walter Chadwick
Location: Lenoir Nature Preserve
Date: Saturday, May 12, at 10 a.m.

Dragons & Damsels

Dragonflies and damselflies, insects that predate the dinosaurs, are fascinating creatures. Aerial acrobats, flying jewels and fearsome predators are just a few ways to describe them.

This informing and entertaining program introduces you to their life cycle, the various species in our area, and where to find them. After the field session, we will have a dragonfly craft session.

Please join us on Saturday, June 23, at 11:00 a.m. for this interesting program.

Educator/Naturalist: Walter Chadwick
Location: Lenoir Nature Preserve
Date: Saturday, June 23, at 11 a.m.

What is growing at the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden

I am always stunned that someone would come and think it is okay to cut flowers in a Nature Preserve! Unfortunately, we did not get to see the stunning tulips that were just about to bloom. They were taken from the garden. It is a sad loss and we hope to keep it from happening again by adding some educational signs in the garden.

What is blooming at the garden? Let us start with a spring ephemeral that found the garden and decided to stay: our wonderful recent member, Spring Beauty Claytonia spp. This is a grass-like spring flower with edible chestnut tasting corms that sink deep into the ground. This is a good defense, as it makes very difficult to dig them up. They are known to have an uneven number of chromosomes so that each plant will produce a different number of flowers. Ah the flowers! You can see the pink lines in the petals that point to the nectar. They are signaling to any bug, bee or butterfly to come hither, it will not be disappointed.

Another native spring ephemeral that has come to the garden to my absolute delight is Virginia Bluebells, Mertensia spp. This is a member of the Borage family that is primarily pollinated by bumblebees. The flowers turn from pink to an amazing shade of blue as they uncoil and mature. Pictures don’t do it justice.

— MARY T. HARRINGTON
Science Watch: Feathers on Display

“Our evidence that Microraptor was largely iridescent thus suggests that feathers were important for display even early in their evolution.” – M. Sharkey

SAUL SCHEINBACH

Long before birds took their first flight non-avian dinosaurs* were sporting feathers. The 150-million-year-old feathered fossil, Archaeopteryx, is generally considered by paleontologists to be a major link between reptiles and birds. But all agree it couldn’t fly. So what was this non-aerial creature and others like it doing with feathers?

Insulation, sex (mating displays), camouflage, and species recognition has each in turn been posited by scientists for the early role of feathers. Now a study published in the March 9, 2012 issue of Science indicates that sex did play an important role.

A team of ten American and Chinese scientists headed by Quango Li from the Beijing Museum of Natural History closely examined a Microraptor fossil specimen with extremely well-preserved feathers on the right forelimb, left hind limb and tail that was recovered from Liaoning Province, China. Microraptor was a pigeon-sized, four-winged, non-avian dinosaur first discovered in 2003 that lived about 130 million years ago. With claws on all four limbs, it probably glided from trees, but like Archaeopteryx was incapable of powered flight.

The team collected 26 tiny samples from the feathered areas of the fossil and looked at the melanosomes — minute cell particles that synthesize the dark pigment melanin. They used a scanning electron microscope to examine the sausage-shaped melanosomes, which are 100 times smaller than the width of a human hair, and compared their orientation with those obtained from feathers of five extant bird species.

The Microraptor melanosomes were found to be arrayed end-to-end, densely packed and in sheets like those found in the dark, iridescent feathers of living birds, leading the researchers to conclude that Microraptor was “black with a glossy, weak iridescent sheen”, similar to a modern crow (Corvis bracyyrhynchos). The fine detail of the fossilized feathers preserved in this specimen further revealed that the extremely long tail feathers, equal in length to the body, did not end in a teardrop shape as had been previously thought but in two streamers.

Shiny, strikingly colored feathers with a streamer-like tail that surely hampered flight — such results indicate that Microraptor’s feathers played a major role in some kind of sexual display. According to Matthew Sharkey, one of the researchers, “The idea is that when you see bright colors on birds and when you see things like ornaments, like a peacock’s tail, things that are really showy but hindered ability, it was probably something to display to a potential mate.”

Other non-avian dinosaurs like Caudipterx zoui and Protoarchaeopteryx robusta that lived around 145 million years ago also had feathers on their arms and tail, but like Microraptor couldn’t fly (www.hras.org/sw/sciencedino3.html). So it seems feathers were used for sex before they were used for flight.

Sexual selection must have been an important force in the early evolution of feathers just as it is today.

*Non-avian dinosaurs are extinct ancestors of living birds. The latter are now considered “avian dinosaurs” by most paleontologists.
Field Trips for May and June 2012

Outdoor activities such as birding and hiking with a group are a wonderful way to share your interests with like-minded people to learn more about nature, and to enjoy many preserves and natural areas.

Hudson River Audubon Society field trips are free and open to non-members. Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Some are available for loan for those who need them. Dress appropriately for the weather. For more information call Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331 or e-mail at Bochnikm@cs.com

Friday, May 4, 2012
Tibbetts Brook Park Evening Walk
Meet at 6:00 p.m. at the flagpole

Our popular evening walk is back! Meet in front of the bathhouse near the flagpole. This leisurely walk around both ponds should turn up the first Baltimore Orioles of the season, early warblers such as Yellow-rumped, Yellow, Pine, and Palm. The ponds may have the first egrets or night-herons as well. For directions: www.hras.org/wtobird/tibbetts.html

Saturday, May 5, 2012
Central Park
Meet at 8:00 a.m. across the street from the Museum of Natural History on Central Park West.

The place to be for spring migration! Loads of warblers and other spring migrants may be seen, some with close views. For directions: www.hras.org/wtobird/centralpark.html

Saturday, May 12, 2012
Rockefeller State Park
Meet at 8 a.m. at the park’s parking lot off Route 117 in Sleepy Hollow

It’s the height of spring migration and this state park is well-known for both its migrants and a long list of breeding birds. There is a parking fee after 8:00 a.m.

For directions: www.hras.org/wtobird/rockefel.html

Sunday, May 13, 2012
Mother’s Day Warbler Walk
Meet at 8 a.m. at Lenoir Nature Preserve, 19 Dudley St, Yonkers

A Hudson River Audubon tradition! We will walk around the park; and will include a visit to the butterfly garden. Refreshment served afterwards at the nature center.

Saturday, June 30, 2012
Butterfly Walk at Lenoir
Meet at 10 a.m. at Lenoir Nature Center, 19 Dudley St, Yonkers

We search the grounds and visit the Beverly Smith Butterfly garden in search of colorful and amazing butterflies.

Sign up for our email list for e-reminders of upcoming programs and field trips. Please go to hras.org, then click on the link in the home page.

Join us on Facebook. We have two pages you may like and subscribe to:
- Hudson River Audubon
- Beverly Smith Butterfly Garden
Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas, Trip Report

Wednesday, April 11, 2012
Kelli and I headed down to the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas for a short trip with four friends to see some of the special wildlife (mainly birds) that are found there. A number of Mexican species hop over the border to be found nowhere else inside the States (a few of these species might also be found in the area of SE. Arizona). Our friends included Fran, Carol, Judi and Saul who are all board members of the Hudson River Audubon Society.

Thursday, April 12, 2012 – The first day of birding
We met at breakfast at 6:30 a.m. and were ready to head out by sunrise which was a little after 7 a.m. We had a short ride down to Estero Llano Grande State Park World Birding Center in Weslaco. In the parking lot, we were greeted by Great Kiskadees, Great-tailed Grackles, and a Couch’s Kingbird. We then quickly found a couple of Plain Chachalacas in the trees.

We walked down to the tropical area, once an old trailer park, and added White-winged Dove and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers to our observations. Then, the wind really picked up and a light rain started. We waited it out under some trees and then made our way to the visitor’s center. The path had a singing Olive Warbler. The gardens had 2 to 3 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and our first Buff-bellied Hummingbird. The feeders had Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Cardinal, a Plain Chachalaca posing for its picture on the railing and a Black-crested Titmouse. This titmouse once was considered the same species as our local Tufted Titmouse but was split again into a full species in 2002.

The pond in front of the visitor’s center was teeming with bird life. We quickly spotted our first Neotropic Cormorant followed by Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Least Grebes, an immature White Ibis, Black-necked Stilts and Long-billed Dowitchers. Common Gallinules and American Coots patrolled the waters. A Roseate Spoonbill flew in and settled on the far side of the pond. Fran’s scope provided us with great looks. Saul then spotted a few lingering Cinnamon Teals in amongst a number of Blue-winged Teal, I had thought we’d miss them as they usually depart their wintering grounds by now.

We walked the trails over to Alligator Lake where we found two alligators, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and an Anhinga.

The trails had both Texas Spotted Whiptails and Rose-bellied Lizards scurrying about.

A walk along the dike to view Llano Grande was productive. We found a group of American Avocets, a large fish with its back partially out of the water which we believe was an Alligator Gar, and two Crested Caracaras. The caracaras put on a flight display as they chased each other, finally landing on a distant electric tower.

It was difficult to leave for lunch, but we pried ourselves away. A few of us spotted a Brown-crested Flycatcher on the way out. Other birds seen here also included: Gadwall, Mottled Duck, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, Green Heron, Turkey Vulture, Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Purple Martin, Barn Swallow, Carolina Wren, Marsh Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Long-billed Thrasher, European Starling, and House Sparrow.

After dinner, we decided to head back to Estero Llano Grande State Park to have a better look at the tropical area. We were rewarded with a pair of Harris’s Hawks overhead, a pair of Altamira Orioles with a long hanging nest attached to a telephone wire; and a Ladder-backed Woodpecker. We also enjoyed looks at some of the birds seen earlier. It was a great first day.

to be continued next issue...
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.

**SIGN ME UP AS A NEW MEMBER.**
**ONE YEAR FOR $20.**

Name  
Address  
City  
State  Zip Code  
Telephone

**CHAPTER # C9Zr200Z**

Send check and this application to:  
National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 422250  
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250  

Please make check payable to National Audubon Society.

---

**HRAS BOARD MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS**

**President**  714-884-4740  
Saul Scheinbach  judisaul@aol.com  
Michael Bochnik  BochnikM@cs.com  

**Vice-President**  914-237-9331  
Paul Oehrlein  paul200bea@optonline.net  

**Secretary**  714-884-4740  
Judi Veder  judisaul@aol.com  

**Membership/Conservation**  914-237-9331  
Michael Bochnik  BochnikM@cs.com  

**Education**  914-237-5791  
Walter Chadwick  mrcnaturally@optonline.net  

**Publicity**  914-965-7541  
Jeanette Johnson  JNTT3456@aol.com  

**Programs/Seasons**  714-549-2380  
Lynn Shaw  lynnshaw@gmail.com  

**Butterfly Garden**  914-589-3293  
Mary T. Harrington  TCTallon@aol.com  

**Circulation**  914-376-2401  
William Van Wart  

**Hospitality**  914-237-9331  
Kelli Bochnik  kellimike@verizon.net  

**FeederWatch**  914-668-5101  
Carol Lange  carollange@aol.com  

**Fundraising**  
Jackie Bruskin  jrbruskin@optimum.net  

**Board Members**  
Frances Greenberg  franny@diagraphic.com  
Carolyn Whittle  whittleine@earthlink.net  
Frank & Dana Fazzino  frankdahfizer@gmail.com  
Lenoir Liaison  914-968-5851  
Danniela Ciatto  dac4@westchestergov.com  

**Rivertown Naturalist Editor**  
Sandra Wright  tralac@yahoo.com

---

HRAS BOARD MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS

President  714-884-4740  
Saul Scheinbach  judisaul@aol.com  
Michael Bochnik  BochnikM@cs.com  

Vice-President  914-237-9331  
Paul Oehrlein  paul200bea@optonline.net  

Secretary  714-884-4740  
Judi Veder  judisaul@aol.com  

Membership/Conservation  914-237-9331  
Michael Bochnik  BochnikM@cs.com  

Education  914-237-5791  
Walter Chadwick  mrcnaturally@optonline.net  

Publicity  914-965-7541  
Jeanette Johnson  JNTT3456@aol.com  

Programs/Seasons  714-549-2380  
Lynn Shaw  lynnshaw@gmail.com  

Butterfly Garden  914-589-3293  
Mary T. Harrington  TCTallon@aol.com  

Circulation  914-376-2401  
William Van Wart  

Hospitality  914-237-9331  
Kelli Bochnik  kellimike@verizon.net  

FeederWatch  914-668-5101  
Carol Lange  carollange@aol.com  

Fundraising  
Jackie Bruskin  jrbruskin@optimum.net  

Board Members  
Frances Greenberg  franny@diagraphic.com  
Carolyn Whittle  whittleine@earthlink.net  
Frank & Dana Fazzino  frankdahfizer@gmail.com  
Lenoir Liaison  914-968-5851  
Danniela Ciatto  dac4@westchestergov.com  

Rivertown Naturalist Editor  
Sandra Wright  tralac@yahoo.com

---

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.

**SIGN ME UP AS A NEW MEMBER.**  
**ONE YEAR FOR $20.**

Name  
Address  
City  
State  Zip Code  
Telephone

**CHAPTER # C9Zr200Z**

Send check and this application to:  
National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 422250  
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250  

Please make check payable to National Audubon Society.

---

**HRAS BOARD MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS**

President  714-884-4740  
Saul Scheinbach  judisaul@aol.com  
Michael Bochnik  BochnikM@cs.com  

Vice-President  914-237-9331  
Paul Oehrlein  paul200bea@optonline.net  

Secretary  714-884-4740  
Judi Veder  judisaul@aol.com  

Membership/Conservation  914-237-9331  
Michael Bochnik  BochnikM@cs.com  

Education  914-237-5791  
Walter Chadwick  mrcnaturally@optonline.net  

Publicity  914-965-7541  
Jeanette Johnson  JNTT3456@aol.com  

Programs/Seasons  714-549-2380  
Lynn Shaw  lynnshaw@gmail.com  

Butterfly Garden  914-589-3293  
Mary T. Harrington  TCTallon@aol.com  

Circulation  914-376-2401  
William Van Wart  

Hospitality  914-237-9331  
Kelli Bochnik  kellimike@verizon.net  

FeederWatch  914-668-5101  
Carol Lange  carollange@aol.com  

Fundraising  
Jackie Bruskin  jrbruskin@optimum.net  

Board Members  
Frances Greenberg  franny@diagraphic.com  
Carolyn Whittle  whittleine@earthlink.net  
Frank & Dana Fazzino  frankdahfizer@gmail.com  
Lenoir Liaison  914-968-5851  
Danniela Ciatto  dac4@westchestergov.com  

Rivertown Naturalist Editor  
Sandra Wright  tralac@yahoo.com

---

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.

**SIGN ME UP AS A NEW MEMBER.**  
**ONE YEAR FOR $20.**

Name  
Address  
City  
State  Zip Code  
Telephone

**CHAPTER # C9Zr200Z**

Send check and this application to:  
National Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 422250  
Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250  

Please make check payable to National Audubon Society.