Birding by Ear using the iKBS (I Know Bird Songs) app

Date: Wednesday, May 28, 2014
7:00 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 p.m. program
Presenter: Larry Underwood, PhD Biologist
Location: Lenoir Nature Preserve

Dr. Underwood has been a professor, field biologist, author, and avid birder. His credentials include 30+ years as a professor of biology for over thirty years at various universities.

Together, he, his son — a budding app designer and birder — and his stepdaughter Lea Cullen Boyer — recently retired as long-time curator at the Lenoir Nature Preserve — have developed an app called iKBS (I Know Bird Songs).

Dr. Underwood worked with the Cornell Ornithology Lab, using what he referred to as “their awesome bird call sound room” in his research.

He says that iKBS uses an “active learning” approach, which differentiates it from other approaches. He will elaborate on this during his talk.

Welcome Mindy!

HRAS is pleased to announce the arrival of Lenoir Nature Preserve’s new curator Mindy Quintero.

Mindy holds a Master's degree in Natural Resources Management. She has worked with the Westchester County Conservation Division since 2006. She is also a board member of the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County (www.fcwc.org), a non-profit coalition of environmental groups.

Mindy is the proud mother of a 18-month-old daughter. In her down time, she likes gardening, photography, and outdoor activities.
Members’ Night Nature Slide Show

Wednesday, June 25, 2014 -- 7:00 p.m. refreshments
7:30 p.m. program at Lenoir Nature Preserve

HRAS members are encouraged to share their favorite nature slides and digital photos, taken during the past year (no more than 10 to 20 images and a 5- to 10-minute presentation).

For digital photos, pictures must be on a CD, USB drive, or memory card: contact Michael Bochnik about format. 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 to HRAS during the year. It is our volunteers who keep our chapter strong, vital and active.

In addition, officers of HRAS will be elected.

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

We look forward to seeing you at the first Fall program on Wednesday, September 17 (please note: this is the third Wednesday in September).

10 Easy Things You Can Do to Save Endangered Species

1. **Learn about endangered species in your area**
   The first step to protecting endangered species is learning about how interesting and important they are.

2. **Visit a national wildlife refuge, park or other open space**
   These protected lands provide habitat to many native wildlife, birds, fish and plants. Wildlife related recreation creates millions of jobs and supports local businesses.

3. **Make your home wildlife friendly.**
   Reduce your use of water in your home and garden so that animals that live in or near water can have a better chance of survival. Disinfect bird baths often to avoid disease transmission. Place decals on windows to deter bird collisions.

4. **Native plants provide food and shelter for native wildlife.**
   Attracting native insects like bees and butterflies can help pollinate your plants. Invasive species compete with native species for resources and habitat. They can even prey on native species directly, forcing native species towards extinction.

5. **Herbicides and pesticides may keep yards looking nice but they are in fact hazardous pollutants that affect wildlife at many levels.**
   Many herbicides and pesticides take a long time to degrade and build up in the soils or throughout the food chain.

6. **Slow down when driving**
   Roads divide habitat and present a constant hazard to any animal attempting to cross from one side to the other. So when you’re out and about, slow down and keep an eye out for wildlife.

7. **Recycle and buy sustainable products**
   Buy recycled paper, sustainable products like bamboo and Forest Stewardship Council wood products to protect forest species.

8. **Never purchase products made from threatened or endangered species**
   Overseas trips can be exciting and fun, and everyone wants a souvenir. But sometimes the souvenirs are made from species nearing extinction.

9. **Harassing wildlife is cruel and illegal**
   Shooting, trapping, or forcing a threatened or endangered animal into captivity is also illegal and can lead to their extinction.

10. **Protect wildlife habitat**
    Perhaps the greatest threat that faces many species is the widespread destruction of habitat. Endangered species habitat should be protected and these impacts minimized.

**Celebrate Endangered Species Day, May 16th, 2014**
**Science Watch: A Walking (Sloooow) Ecosystem**

“Sloths are bizarre.” — J. Paul

An ecosystem is a community of organisms interacting with non-living components in the environment. Rainforests and deserts are ecosystems. So are sloths. Sloths are also notoriously slow. The leaves they eat are nutrient and calorie poor. So sloths have evolved a slow metabolism to make miserly use of their small energy budget. They have also figured out how to get energy from an unlikely source — their own fur.

Writing in the January 22, 2014 issue of the *Proceedings of the Royal Academy B*, a team of biologists led by Jonathan Pauli and M. Zachariah Peery, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, started out trying to answer a potty question. About once a week the three-toed sloth (*Bradypus variagatus*), but not its cousin the two-toed sloth (*Choloepus hoffmanni*), leaves the safety of its home tree and descends to the forest floor to defecate. A squatting sloth is a sitting duck, prey to harpy eagles, jaguars and coyotes. Half of all sloth mortality occurs at this time. So why not just stay in the canopy like their cousins? Pauli et al. think they have the answer.

Sloth fur hosts a variety of invertebrates and microbes, including the pyralid moth (*Cryptoses spp.*). The moths subsist on green algae (*Trichophilus spp.*) that only grows on sloth fur. The algae can grow there because each hair shaft is specially adapted to hold water. The moths’ life cycle is completely dependent on the sloth. When it descends to defecate, gravid female moths leave the sloth and lay their eggs in the fresh dung. There the coprophagous larvae develop into adults and fly up into the canopy to spend their entire lives on another sloth.

The sloth-moth-algae relationship seemed to be an example of commensalism: one side (moths and algae) benefits, while the other (sloth) neither benefits nor is harmed. Pauli et al. however, believed that the sloth wouldn’t be so altruistic, putting itself at great risk by leaving its favorite tree and using up about eight percent of its scant daily energy budget for nothing. They suspected that the sloth was “farming” the algae to gain some extra energy, and the tripartite relationship was an example of mutualism, i.e., everyone benefits.

To find out, the team captured ten three-toed and ten two-toed sloths and vacuumed off all the fur inhabitants. The three-toed sloths had 3.5 times more moths in their fur than the two-toed sloths. As dead moths decompose, they release nutrients, especially nitrogen-containing ammonium (NH₄⁺), which fosters the growth of algae. Chemical analysis of fur rinse water showed higher NH₄⁺ levels coming from the fur of three-toed sloths. Three-toed sloths also had fifty percent more algae on their fur than two-toed sloths. The team found that the algae are readily digestible and contain three times the amount of fat present in leaves.

Were sloths consuming algae? Sloth stomach contents showed significant levels of algal cells. Evidently, the potty trips are worth the risk because they increase moth numbers which in turn enhance the growth of algae. The latter provide a high energy source lacking in the leaves the sloth eats. “It seems like the sloths are potentially obtaining something in terms of a nutritional input from cultivating or at least helping algae to grow on their fur,” said Pauli.

The authors conclude that a series of “linked mutualisms” involving sloths, moths and algae creates an ecosystem. The moths are decomposed by fungi living on sloth fur. That decomposition provides the link between the non-living environment and the living zoo that is the sloth’s fur.

— Saul Scheinbach
Upcoming Field Trips, May–June 2014

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. Non-members/newcomers are welcomed.

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 contact Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331 or bochnikm@cs.com.

Maps and Directions for most trips can be found on our Where to go Bird Watching in Westchester web page at http://www.hras.org/wtobird/whereto.html

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.

FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2014
EVENING ON THE BRONX RIVER
Meet at the Crestwood Train Station, southbound side lot at 6:30 p.m.

The Bronx River Parkway Reservation was Westchester County’s first parkland and it parallels the parkway. The area near the Crestwood Train Station is one of the more productive areas for birding. Enjoy a leisurely bird walk along the river as we search for Baltimore and Orchard Orioles as well as Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers. Will be looking for spring migrants such as warblers, orioles and others.

SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2014
WARBLER MIGRATION
Meet at Rockefeller Preserve at 8:00 a.m.
Parking fee in effect after 8:00 a.m.

This New York State park is located on Route 117 between Route 9 and 9A/100. Spring migration will be in full swing. Any or all of the colorful spring warblers might be seen as well as breeding birds such as Eastern Bluebird and Pileated Woodpecker.

SUNDAY, MAY 11, 2014
MOTHER’S DAY WARBLER WALK
Meet at Lenoir Nature Preserve, 19 Dudley Street, Yonkers, at 8:00 a.m.

Meet us for our 24th year of this Hudson River Audubon tradition. Spring migrants will be searched for; followed by refreshments at the nature center.

SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2014 (RAIN DATE MAY 18)
BIRDATHON
Bird like crazy to raise money for our chapter.
See pledge form in this newsletter

Lenoir Preserve’s Summer Program 2014

NATURE WEEK
Children can enjoy a week of fun-filled adventure. They’ll create nature-related arts and crafts, cook with a solar cooker, explore the forest, meadow, butterfly garden and dragonfly pond habitats, build a terrarium, plus much more.

For children entering grades 1–5.
Dates: July 14–18, 2014, Monday–Friday
Times: 10 a.m.–3 p.m.
Cost: $275

AFTERNOON NATURE STUDY
All programs begin at 1:00 p.m., are for all ages, and are free unless otherwise noted.

Tuesday, July 8: Fairy Houses
Friday, July 11: Aqueduct Hike/History
Wednesday, July 30: Nature Art
Thursday, July 31: All About Butterflies
Tuesday, August 5: Papermaking
($3 fee; pre-register by August 1)
Friday, August 8: Nature Mobiles
Wed., August 13: Symmetry in Nature

For questions and to register call (914) 968-5851
Lenoir Preserve, 19 Dudley St., Yonkers, NY
parks.westchestergov.com
The Rivertown Naturalist

Join a team and spend all day raising money for the chapter!

Hudson River Audubon’s BIRDATHON will be held Saturday, May 17th (rain date May 18th) to raise money for the chapter. You can help by making your pledge today.

A BIRDA-THON is like a walkathon, bikeathon, or any other “thon” in that we ask people to pledge X amount of money per lap, mile, or as in our case, bird species seen, within a 24-hour period. The combined list for the teams should be between 100 to 150 species. Pledges can be given for a flat rate such as $25.00 or you can pledge per species such as 25 cents/bird. If we see 120 species your pledge will come to $30.00. We will send out reminders after the bird-a-thon on how much you pledged.

Thank you for your generous support!

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It was only after being on the HRAS board for several years that I realized how much Bill Van Wart does. His position — circulation chairman — simply doesn’t begin to describe how much he does to keep HRAS going. Yes, he does deal with both the printer and the post office (valiantly!) to get the newsletter published six times a year. But there’s so much else he does — he’s always there to volunteer when it counts.

Bill recently lost his stepmother, Marion Van Wart. To honor her memory, he made a generous donation to HRAS. We are grateful to Bill for choosing HRAS as his way to commemorate his stepmother, and grateful for all that Bill does for HRAS.

— Fran Greenberg for HRAS Board
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.

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