

The Rivertown Naturalist



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Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester, Inc. is a non-profit chapter of the National Audubon Society serving the communities of Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington and Yonkers.

Our mission is to foster protection and appreciation of birds, other wildlife and habitats, and to be an advocate for a cleaner, healthier environment.

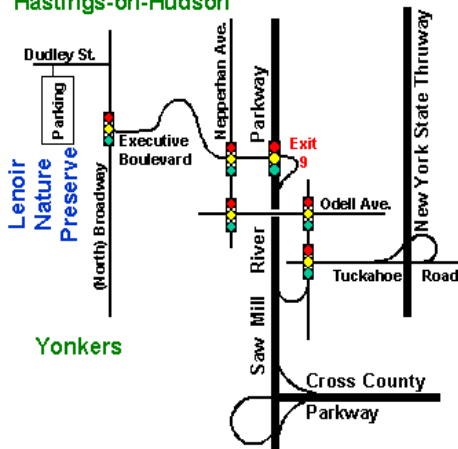
www.hras.org

DIRECTIONS TO LENOIR PRESERVE

Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester, Inc. holds its meetings at Lenoir, a Westchester County Nature Preserve 19 Dudley Street in Yonkers, New York (914) 968-5851.

By car: Take Saw Mill River Parkway to Exit 9, Executive Blvd. Take Executive Blvd. to its end at North Broadway and turn right. Go ¼ mile on North Broadway and turn left onto Dudley Street. Parking lot is on the left.

Hastings-on-Hudson



Program:

Bird Trivia Wednesday, Sept 27th

Part-II

Refreshments: 7:00pm, Program 7:30pm

In a continuation of last year's popular program, Hank Weber, will again fascinate you with interesting bird facts and tidbits – a combination of science and trivia. You may know him as the former owner of the Wild Bird Center on Central Ave. or from his articles in *Bird Watcher Digest* magazine. Hank provides little-known details in a light-hearted and appealing fashion.

Learn little-known, but amazing facts about our feathered friends

Informative! Entertaining! Surprising!

Ghosts in the Park

Wednesday, Oct 25th

Refreshments 7:00pm; Program 7:30pm



Virginia Carnes, historian, Curator for Westchester Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, presents fascinating tales of strange and eerie events that have occurred in Westchester County Parks. And you thought parks were peaceful, natural retreats. Now you will learn the true stories of ghosts, goblins, ghastly crimes, even murder, that have and continue to haunt our parks.

Come and learn the spooky, creepy and ghostly side of Westchester County parks. Just in time for Halloween.

Don't Leave Home Without It!



“There is still so much we need to understand and learn about the relationship between intelligence and brain size, as well as the structure of a bird’s brain, but this study clearly shows that bird brains are not simply birdbrains at all.” – C. Kabadayi

The ability to plan ahead had long been considered exclusively a human ability— until we learned that great apes did it too. A decade ago scientists showed that bonobos and orangutans could perform the equivalent of taking an umbrella in case of rain. The apes could choose and save tools for future use (<http://hras.org/sw/swmarch07.html>). Corvids are the only non-hominids that also appear to “think” beyond the moment. For example, western scrub jays (*Aphelocoma californica*) will preferentially cache food in a place when they know they would otherwise go hungry the next day.

That apes save tools they know they will need to collect a food reward the following day clearly demonstrates true planning ahead. But some have argued that the scrub jay results are more equivocal. The jays may simply be performing a special form of food-gathering and storage. If the jays appeared to be thinking about future events, it was only because they were motivated by their current state of hunger, performing instinctive behavior like a squirrel burying nuts and not planning ahead.

Now Mathias Osvath, a cognitive scientist at Lund University, Sweden , and his student Can Kabadayi, have answered the skeptics by getting ravens to use novel behaviors not normally associated with food gathering or caching to get future rewards. Their study, published in the July 12, 2017 issue of *Science*, shows that another corvid, the raven (*Corvus corax*), can make decisions for the future on a par with apes.

Ravens do not use tools in the wild. So Osvath and Kabadayi trained five captive ravens to use a stone of a particular shape and weight as a tool to retrieve food (a dog kibble) from a puzzle box. The next day, the ravens were only shown the puzzle box, which was then taken away. An hour later they were presented with a tray of objects including the correct stone tool. Fifteen minutes after they made a choice they were again shown the puzzle box. The stone tool had no value of its own, yet the birds chose it 86% of the time. When the waiting time was extended to 17 hours (overnight), the birds still chose the correct object 89% of the time. Remarkably, the ravens were capable of delayed gratification. They overwhelmingly chose the tool—and got the delayed reward—even when the tray contained a smaller, less desirable dog treat than the one in the puzzle box.

The scientists then challenged the ravens to do another task they don't perform in the wild— bartering for a food reward. The birds were trained to immediately get a reward when they handed the trainer a blue bottle cap (token) placed on the ground. An hour later a different handler showed them a tray of objects including the token, which they could barter for food either 15 minutes later or overnight. The birds chose the token and exchanged it for food 78% of the time when the delay was 15 minutes and 96% of the time when they had to wait overnight.

When they knew they would get an immediate reward the birds did even better. In those experiments they had to pass by either the puzzle box or the bartering handler before approaching the tool tray or the token tray, respectively, and they made the right choice 100% of the time.

These studies are similar to ones Osvath and others have performed on great apes. The ravens performed as well or better than the apes. According to Osvath, the ravens outperformed orangutans, bonobos and especially chimpanzees in the bartering experiments, and even did better than 4-year-old children! “If they [ravens] find the task interesting enough, they all line up, and almost fight over who gets to take part in the study,” says Osvath.

“To be able to solve tasks like these, one needs a collection of cognitive abilities working in concert, such as inhibitory skills and different forms of memory. That ravens show similar functions, and combine them in ways similar to apes, despite their last common ancestor as far back as 320 million years ago, suggests that evolution likes to re-run good productions,” concludes Osvath.

According to Norse mythology, the omniscient god Odin had a pair of ravens called “thought” and “mind” perched on his shoulders symbolizing his ability to see into the future. Evidently, the Norse knew what we are now discovering.

■ -- *Saul Scheinbach*

Mark Your Calendar – Upcoming Programs



We have planned some great programs planned for the coming months. Mark your calendar. Be sure to attend.

Wed., Nov 15th Program: **Birds in Art**
Elana Kaplan, Metropolitan Museum



Wed., Dec 20th Program: **Bird Collection at the Bronx Zoo**

Kevin Hills, Manager

Hudson River Audubon Upcoming 2017-2018



Call Michael Bochnik at 914-237-9331 for more information
Visit our web site at 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 web site and in our newsletter.

Saturday, September 16, 2017

Lenoir Nature Preserve

8 AM Walter Chadwick Memorial Nature Walk

Meet at the Nature Center. We will look for birds, butterflies, dragonflies and nature. We'll end up at our hawk watch site at 10AM in front of the mansion

10 AM Broad-winged Hawk Migration

We will search the skies for Broad-wing Hawks making their 4,300 mile migration to South America. This is the peak weekend for seeing large numbers of Broad-Wings.

<http://www.hras.org/wtobird/lenoir.html>

Saturday, October 7, 2017

Lenoir Nature Preserve

The BIG SIT and Hawk Watch

19 Dudley St. Yonkers

Meet at 10 AM behind the Lenoir Mansion.

The object of the "BIG SIT" is to tally as many bird species as we can in a day from a single fixed position. We'll be on the Lenoir lawn (at our hawk watch sight) overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. Bring a chair, drink and snacks and join us anytime on that day and help us find the birds! Be sure to read the nice story about our Big Sit in the Sept/Oct issue of *BirdWatchers Digest* magazine.

Saturday, October 28, 2017

Lenoir Nature Preserve

Hawk Watch

19 Dudley St. Yonkers

Meet at 10 AM behind the Lenoir Mansion

<http://www.hras.org/wtobird/lenoir.html>

Saturday, November 18, 2017

Jones Beach – Late Fall Migrants

Meet at 8AM

at the Coast Guard Station in West End II

This is a good time for a rarity or a western stray to show up. A variety of bird should be seen from seabirds, ducks, hawks, shorebirds and late land migrants.

<http://hras.org/wtobird/jonesbeach.html>

Saturday, December 2, 2017

Croton Point Park

Meet at 8 AM in the large parking lot

We will search the meadow for American Pipit and other grassland birds.

<http://hras.org/wtobird/croton.html>

Saturday, December 23, 2017
Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count

A census of birds in the area. Help gather information on local bird populations in the 90th year of the count.

There is no central meeting place for this event. Different groups of volunteers will start at various locations throughout southern Westchester and the Bronx and canvas their area for birds.

For more information, call the Count Compiler, Michael Bochnik at 237-9331, or visit <http://hras.org/bwcbc.html>

Saturday, January 27, 2018
Pelham Bay Park
Meet at Pelham Bay Park at 8 AM; far left corner of Orchard Beach parking lot.

Pelham Bay Park is known for its wintering owls, such as Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, and Long-eared. 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, March 10, 2018
Evening Timberdoodle Walk
6 PM Croton Point Park Ball Field
Look for displaying American Woodcocks
<http://hras.org/wtobird/croton.html>

Saturday, March 31, 2018
Jones Beach – Early Spring Arrivals
Meet at 8AM at the Coast Guard Station in West End II
This is a good time for a rarity or a western stray to show up. A variety of bird should be seen from seabirds, ducks, hawks, shorebirds and late land migrants.
<http://hras.org/wtobird/jonesbeach.html>

Saturday April 28, 2018
Nature Study Woods
Meet at 8 AM at entrance along Webster Avenue at Flandreau Ave at 8:00 a.m. (~ 806 Webster Ave)
Local early spring migrants

Friday to Monday, May 4 – May 7, 2018
The Delmarva Peninsula
Drive down Thursday to Cambridge, MD
Friday – Blackwater NWR, MD
Saturday – Chincoteague NWR, VA
Sunday – Milburn landing SP, MD
Monday – Bombay Hook NWR, DE
We'll visit Delmarva – DELaware, MARYland and Virginia to search for American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warblers.
Details on accommodations and full itinerary to follow.

Saturday, May 12, 2018
Birdathon
Bird like crazy in Westchester County to raise money for our chapter. Details to follow.

Sunday May 13, 2018
Mother's Day Warbler Walk
Lenoir Nature Preserve 8 AM
19 Dudley St. Yonkers
Meet us for our 25th year of this Audubon tradition. Spring migrants will be searched for; followed by refreshments at the nature center.
<http://www.hras.org/wtobird/lenoir.html>

Saturday June 23, 2018
Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge
Meet at the refuge at 8:00 AM

Hawk Watch Season Begins

Learn to identify majestic raptors as they soar overhead on their annual southern migration

As hawks, falcons and eagles begin their southern migration the Hawk Watch Site at Lenoir Preserve is the best local to observe this spectacular.

In a typical year, we spot 2-5,000 hawks, falcons, eagles. This includes about 20 species of raptors including up to 60 Bald Eagles and a few Golden Eagles. Often the most numerous species seen is the Broad-winged Hawk. Their peak migration period is mid-September when as many as a 1,000 individual birds have been sighted in a single day.

Volunteers maintain the Hawk Watch on weekend days and are available many weekdays as well. The watching takes place on the lawn directly behind the Lenoir mansion where there is an unobstructed view down to and across the Hudson River to the New Jersey Palisades as well as many miles up and down the river.



Recent Rare Bird Sighting

Some birders seem to have all the luck. Although some say their luck is just the result of years of preparation. When Michael and Kelli Bochnik recently moved into their new house, they were curious about what birds would visit their new home. How long would it take the birds to discover their birdfeeder? What species would appear?

Imagine their delight when, within the first week, they spotted a pair of pink flamingos standing gracefully on their front lawn. An unusual sighting. If this sighting is accepted by the records committee, it would be the first record ever for this species in Westchester County, maybe in all New York State.

Unfortunately, they were too surprised to take photos which would have definitely documented the sighting.



Feeder Watch Season Fast Approaching

Once again, we are participating in Project FeederWatch - a fun citizen science project sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The name explains it all. We sit snugly inside the Lenoir Nature Center watching and identifying the birds that visit bird feeders located just outside a large picture window. We count the number of birds of each species that we see during a two-hour period. This data is sent to Cornell where it is combined with data from thousands other FeederWatch sites around the country to provide real time information on the number and variety of our wild birds.

The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming. Some believe that the social aspects and the delicious food treats (for humans) may attract more volunteer watchers than the birds do. You can participate for only a few minutes or stay for the entire watch. It's flexible. So join us. It is a pleasant way to spend a few minutes on a cold winter day. This is a great way for beginning and novice birders to hone their ID skills and learn more about the habits of our local birds. But be warned, it can become addictive.

Below is a schedule of the Feeder Watch dates and the volunteers who "host" on those days.

Sat., Nov. 11 and Sun., Nov. 12 (Jackie Bruskin) Sat., Dec. 9 (Kelli and Michael Bochnik)
Sat., Nov. 25 and Sun., Nov. 26 (TBA) Sun., Dec. 10 (Cathy and Larry Mazzella)

If you are interested in hosting a 2-hour FeederWatch session (entails choosing the time, checking off the tally sheet, and possibly donating some bagels or cookies, etc.), please contact Carol Lange at 914 668-5101 or CarolLange@aol.com. You do not need to be a host to participate! FeederWatch begins Nov. 11 and continues every 2 weeks until April 1.

Email reminders will be sent out a few days prior to each session with time info.

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Join National Audubon Society. Become a Member Today

For only \$20 you can become a member of the National Audubon Society and of our local chapter. Your small contribution supports nature and environmental causes and rewards you with a subscription to the award-winning *Audubon* magazine as well as our chapter newsletters filled with information on local activities, lectures, programs and field trips.

Becoming a member is easy.

Go to our website: www.hras.org Click on the **Membership** link in the upper right corner and follow the instructions. That's it. Or you can also join by mailing a check made out to Hudson River Audubon Society to HRAS, P.O. Box 616, Yonkers NY 10703

Join today!

While you are on our site, look around and see everything that is happening in your area.

