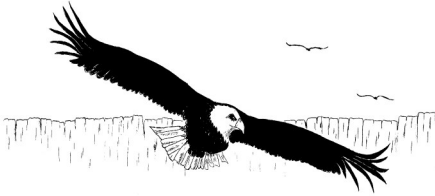


The Rivertown Naturalist

NEWSLETTER OF THE HUDSON RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY



January/February 2015, Vol. 42, No. 3

The 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, wildlife, and habitats, and to be an advocate for a cleaner, healthier environment.

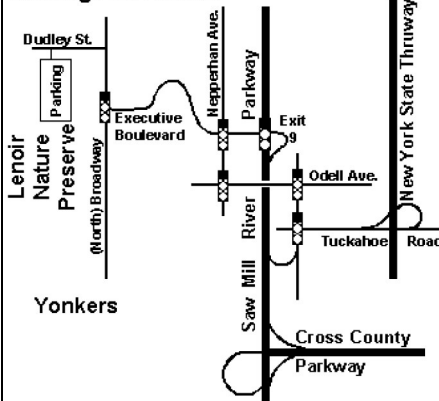
www.hras.org

Directions to Lenoir Preserve

The Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester meets at Lenoir Nature Preserve on Dudley Street in Yonkers, NY, (914) 968-5851.

By car: Take Saw Mill River Parkway to Exit 9, Executive Blvd. Cross over Nepperhan Ave and continue to follow Executive Blvd to its end at North Broadway and turn right. Dudley Street is the first left. Entrance and parking lot are on the left.

Hastings-on-Hudson



THE NATURE OF YONKERS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28

PRESENTED BY WALTER CHADWICK

HRAS EDUCATOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER

See a Yonkers that most people don't know exists. Yonkers has a variety of habitats – rivers, forests, meadows, and more that are home to birds, mammals, insects, and other wild creatures. It is the largest city in Westchester County, and you are sure to be surprised to learn about its hidden abundance of wild flora and fauna.

LENOIR NATURE CENTER

7:00 PM - REFRESHMENTS

7:30 PM - PROGRAM

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14th Annual "Seasons at Lenoir" Art & Photography Exhibit

It's time to prepare your best works for the March 2015 exhibit. As always, art in any media is welcome.

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 submit your work(s), or if you have any questions, please e-mail Lynn at Lynnbshaw@gmail.com (please put "Seasons" on the subject line), or call her at (718) 549 2380 before February 23rd.

By Monday, February 23: Submit name, title of work(s), and media

Saturday, February 28: Submit work between 9:30 am and 12:00 pm at Lenoir Nature Center

Saturday, March 7th: Opening Reception, 11:00 am–2:00 pm

Gallery Hours will be Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:00 am–4:00 pm.

On the Wing: Upcoming Field Trips, Jan - Mar 2015

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.

All Hudson River Audubon Society field trips are free. Non-members and 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. Car pooling for field trips may be arranged in advance by calling Ruth DeFord Kotecha at 914-478-3695, or by email at rdeford@hunter.cuny.edu.

For more information call Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331.

Saturday, January 31, 2015

Jones Beach

Winter birding at the beach can be very rewarding. Snow Buntings, Snowy Owls and Horned Larks can be found on the beach. The ocean can hold grebes, loons, and scooters. The rocky jetties may yield Purple Sandpipers and the waters around them Harlequin Ducks and Common Eiders. The bay hosts thousands of Brant and the parking lots might have Iceland and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The pines in the median may hide Saw-whet Owls and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Dress for cold windy weather. Directions can be found at <http://www.hras.org/wtobird/jonesbeach.html>

Saturday, February 21, 2015

Shawangunk Grasslands NWR

Note: Deep snow at the refuge may cancel this trip.

Meet at the refuge at 5:00 PM. As many as a dozen Short-eared Owls winter at this former airport. As dusk settles on the refuge the owls come out at start to roam the refuge for prey. Sunset is at 5:40 PM. Before dusk, we'll look for other wintering birds such as the Northern Harrier (Marsh Hawk) and the Rough-legged Hawk. Dress warm. We will be returning after dark. <http://www.hras.org/wtobird/shawangunk.html>

Saturday, February 28, 2015

Edith G Read Sanctuary, Rye

Meet at the far end of Playland Amusement Park's parking lot near the lake at 8:00 AM. We will look for lingering winter waterfowl, loons and grebes on the sound, Purple Sandpipers on the jetties and early spring arrivals.

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

Saturday, March 7, 2015

Evening Timberdoodle Walk

Meet at the far end of the Croton Point Park Ball fields at 5:45 PM. We will look for American Woodcocks and other early spring arrivals.

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

Project FeederWatch

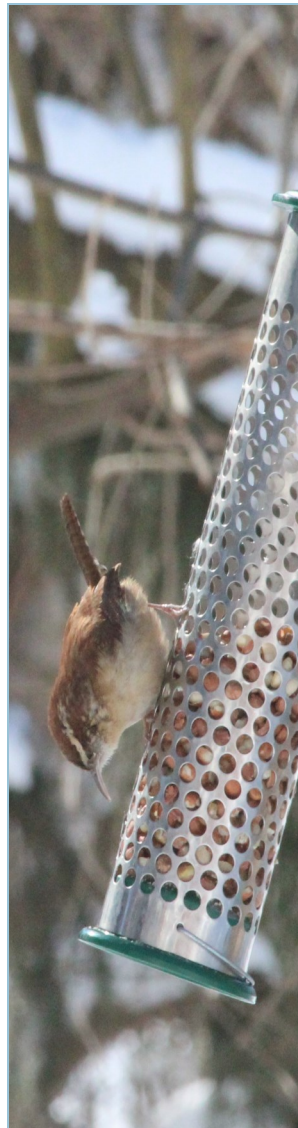
The 2014-2015 Project FeederWatch season is nearing the half-way point. We still need some volunteers to lead some of the sessions. It really is fun, relaxing, and everybody helps, so please don't be shy! Hudson River Audubon Society members will be counting feeder birds from the observation room at the Lenoir Nature Center through March.

This Citizen Science Project is performed in conjunction with the Cornell University Ornithology Lab and helps track bird populations throughout the country.

The day leaders are encouraged to bring some refreshments, such as bagels, donuts, beverages, etc.

We count the birds every two weeks for two hours, two days in a row. Feeder Watch times are chosen by the day's leaders and will be announced by e-mail approximately a week ahead of time.

If you are interested in being a leader for a day, or if you have any questions, please contact Carol Lange at (914) 668-5101, or email CarolLange@aol.com.



Winter 2015 Schedule

- Sat. Jan. 17: Saul Scheinbach & Judi Veder
- Sun. Jan. 18: Fran Greenberg

- Sat. Jan. 31: Stan Cho
- Sun. Feb. 1: Jackie Bruskin

- Sat. Feb. 14: Kelli & Michael Bochnik
- Sun. Feb. 15: Cathy & Larry Mazzella

- Sat. Feb. 28: **OPEN**
- Sun. Mar. 1: Mary Harrington

- Sat. Mar. 14: **OPEN**
- Sun. Mar. 15: Ruth DeFord

- Sat. Mar. 28: May Guglielmo
- Sun. Mar. 29: Saul Scheinbach & Judi Veder

Hudson River Audubon Society Co-Sponsorship: Deer in Westchester County



HRAS will co-sponsor a forum on the local deer program with the League of Women Voters of the Rivertowns on Sunday, March 8, 3:00 p.m., at Mercy College (main building, large lecture hall).

The speakers will be Dr. Mike Rubbo of Teatown Lake Reservation, Mayor Peter Swiderski of Hastings-on-Hudson, and Ms. Melissa Shandroff, science teacher at Hastings High School.

Topics to be addressed include environmental impacts of deer overpopulation, political and practical aspects of the deer immuno-contraception program in Hastings, and an experimental study of the effects of deer in Hillside Woods by Ms. Shandroff and her AP science students.

Annual Movie & Popcorn Night

THE LOST BIRD PROJECT

Wednesday, February 25, 2015 (weather permitting)

7:00 PM

The Labrador Duck, Heath Hen, Carolina Parakeet, and Passenger Pigeon are all extinct and have left a hole in the American landscape and in our collective memory. Moved by their stories, sculptor Todd McGrain set out to bring their vanished forms back into the world by permanently placing his elegant, evocative bronze memorials at the location of each bird's demise. This film tells the story of how these birds came to meet their fate and the journey that led McGrain to their final habitats.

Directed by Deborah Dickson. 63 min.

Upcoming Speakers

Wednesday, March 25: How the North and South Came Together to Create Lenoir Preserve

Presenter: Virginia Carnes

Wednesday, April 22nd: Bird Migration Through Urban Landscapes

Presenter: Dr. J. Alan Clark

January – March 2015 Program Schedule at Lenoir Nature Preserve

01/15/15-04/30/15, Thursdays, 10:30 am -11:30 am: **Nature Story time**, \$2/child. For ages 2-5 with a parent/caregiver.

01/24/15, 1 pm, Saturday: **Snowshoe Hike**

01/31/15, 10 am-3 pm, Saturday: **Pinecone Feeders**

02/17/15-02/20/15, 10 am-2 pm: **Winter Break Nature Camp**, \$40/day, \$140/session. Pre-register by 02/10.

02/21/15, 1 pm, Saturday: **Terrariums for Everyone**. Adults will create and learn how to care for air plant terrariums while the kids learn about ecosystems and make a mini necklace terrarium. \$15/adult, \$5/child for materials. Pre-register by 2/07.

02/28/15, 1 pm, Saturday: **The Lenni Lenape of Lenoir**: Learn how the Native American tribe of Yonkers, the Lenni Lenape, lived, hunted and played! Appropriate for all ages.

03/07/15, 1 pm, Saturday: **Who's Making Those Tracks?**: Learn how to identify our local animals by their tracks. We will then go for a hike to identify tracks in the snow and mud and make our own tracks!

03/14/15, 10 am-3 pm, Saturday: **Map & Compass Spring Treasure Hunt**: Use your navigation skills to discover treasure at the preserve. We will supply the map and compass and show you how to use them.

More programs and activities through April 2015 in the next newsletter

ScienceWatch: Helping the Wimpy Neighbor

The breeding territories of male songbirds are bounded by invisible lines which they vigorously defend to block any encroachment by neighboring males. Once the lines are established peace generally ensues, and each male can get down to the business of raising his family. He need only be concerned with an occasional outside male trying to take over his territory. But what if it's his neighbor's territory that's being usurped? Now research published in the February 26, 2014 issue of *Biology Letters* answers this question.

The study by evolutionary biologists Sarah Goodwin and Jeffrey Podos, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA, shows that the male will intervene if the intruder is more robust than his neighbor, forming a coalition to drive the intruder out.



The song of male chipping sparrows (*Spizella passerina*) is fairly easy to identify although the trilling rate may vary. Trilled songs are not easy to produce and males that can trill faster are perceived by females as being superior.

Goodwin and Podos began their study in the spring of 2012 with the aim of measuring responses of males to the playback of songs at slower and faster rates within their territories. They set up speakers and played a slow song one day and a fast song the next for each of 24 males. They also recorded the responses of the resident males to the stimulus song and to a stuffed male placed near the speaker during the playback.

As expected, the resident attacked the model more vigorously when the stimulus song was faster. Unexpectedly, in nine of the 48 trials, a neighboring male (ally) entered his neighbor's territory to help repel the simulated intruder. Also unexpected was the resident male's acceptance of his neighbor's intrusion, resulting in a coalition.

When the researchers examined relative trill rates in each case where a coalition was formed, they found a consistent pattern. The ally initiated a coalition only when the simulated intruder's trill rate exceeded that of the neighboring resident. Additionally, in all but one instance the trill rate of the intruder exceeded that of the resident, and often it was even faster than the ally.

These findings show that male sparrows eavesdrop on males in surrounding territories and will become allies when they perceive a threat to themselves in the appearance of a more aggressive intruder on a territory containing a weak male. To a male sparrow, a stronger neighbor means one that might oust him from his own territory. "We interpret this to mean that the ally not only prefers a lousy neighbor, but also specifically does not want that lousy neighbor replaced by a more serious contender," said Podos.

"This behavior, the formation of territorial defense coalitions, has been rarely documented in birds." – S. E. Goodwin

The results also suggest that male chipping sparrows can assess the relative strengths of neighbors and intruders by their trill rates, compare them with their own and decide whether or not to join forces with the neighbor.

Biologists have long believed that the selective advantage in males forming coalitions to gain sexual partners helped spur the increase in intelligence and brain size in dolphins. Now we see the same phenomenon in a tiny bird with a tiny brain.

Clearly there is a lot going on in bird's brains that we have yet to discover.

—SAUL SCHEINBACH



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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 the National Audubon Society. 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 _____

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