



# The BIRD CALL

Winter 2017

Newsletter of the Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.

## Wanted: Environmental Regulations

By Sandy Morrissey

Sorry, no pretty pictures of bluebirds in our lead article. We have an image from China, which along with India has made the news this fall for issuing several red-alert days for poor air-quality. This is what you get when you don't have good environmental regulations.

Our president-elect is on record saying the EPA shouldn't exist. He has taken the first step by putting Scott Pruitt, a climate-change denier, in charge of the agency. As Oklahoma's attorney general, Mr. Pruitt is currently suing the EPA on behalf of big oil and gas. Meanwhile, Oklahoma is now experiencing earthquakes because of extensive fracking. He's on record, along with our president-elect, that he wants to get rid of the Paris agreement, a global plan signed by 118 countries to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse emissions.

Clean air, water and a healthy ecosystem don't happen by volunteerism. Businesses are in business to make money, and humans want conven-

ience and comfort and at the cheapest price. As industrialization advanced and the human population multiplied, it became clear we needed "regulations" to protect ourselves.

An episode of a new Netflix series "The Crown" features the 1952 "Great Smog" in London, caused by extensive coal burning, resulting in thousands of deaths and the creation of the first Clean Air Act, and, some say, the beginning of the



*Will America look like this if the EPA is prevented from enforcing clean air regulations?*

environmental movement. Whether or not the portrayal of Churchill as an initial "denier" of coal's contribution to the tragedy is fact or fiction, the parallel to modern day's events doesn't escape me.

We now have leaders who want to bring back Big Coal! Why we aren't putting all the coal miners to work building solar panels escapes me.

Good regulations helped improve the air quality in New York City. As a newly-wed in the early 70s, I lived in a high rise and would go up to the roof to sunbathe (dangers of skin cancer had not reached me). Every 20 minutes the incinerator would belt out thick black smoke and soot. I would bury my face in my towel and take short breaths to block the bad effect, but I still wanted my "tan." A year later I would stroll my brand new first-born baby to the city park and be sickened to see specks of soot on her delicate face. We moved to the suburbs soon after. I read today how much the air has improved. One "regulation" which has contributed significantly is NYC Clean Heat, enacted in 2012. Buildings must phase out using heavy heating oils and switch to a less polluting energy.

As for the climate-change deniers, an Audubon member who has lived

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## A Tale of Two Migrants, the Long and Short of It

By Diane Morrison

When we look out of our window one late fall morning and see the first harbingers of winter, what we usually see are birds...birds we usually do not see during the warmer months, but somehow, these birds appear at the same time every year in our yards. One example of one of these birds is what we have come to call the "Snow Bird" or, the Dark-eyed Junco. One day you may see one or two birds usually (males) and within a week or so there are large groups of them hopping on the ground and foraging. The junco's

modern scientific name, *J. Hyemalis* means "winter junco," "juncus," Spanish for "rush" and the Latin "hyemalis" - "of the winter." Over most of the eastern United States, juncos appear as winter sets in and then retreat northward each spring to summer breeding grounds as far north as northern Canada, Newfoundland and Alaska. However, some juncos in the



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*Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.  
is a chapter of the National Audubon Society  
serving the communities of  
Bronxville, Eastchester, Edgemont, Hartsdale,  
Larchmont, Mamaroneck, Mount Vernon, New  
Rochelle, Pelham, Scarsdale, and Tuckahoe*

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in her home in Mamaroneck on the L.I. Sound for 30 years told me she can "see" climate change. The water would only come to a high point on her property in extreme weather events. Now it frequently reaches high points. The sea is rising!

When I fill out our annual report for National Audubon, I feel good about what our chapter accomplishes – bird walks, educational programs, youth outreach, our bluebird project – but we are always weak in the category of "advocacy." I think that must change in the coming year. If indeed the new administration tries to throw out the regulations that protect our air, water, and ecosystems, as Audubon members, we must speak out and get our voices heard. Let's hope not through the din of dense smog.

*Sandy Morrissey is president of BRSS Audubon*

## New Method to Keep You in the Loop

We have a new way to reach out to our members and would love for everyone to be a part of it. Perhaps we want to let you know that Snowy Owls can be seen at Jones Beach. Or we want to remind you of an upcoming evening program or weekend field trip. The only problem is that if we don't have your email then we cannot include you in this initiative. If you are not already getting these reminders please send your email to [jeffzuckerman2000@yahoo.com](mailto:jeffzuckerman2000@yahoo.com).

Our sincere promise . . . WE WILL NEVER SHARE YOUR EMAIL WITH ANYONE!

## Bluebird Monitors Celebrate a Successful 2016 Season



*Spirits were high among the Bluebird monitors as we gathered to celebrate another successful nesting season. Over 325 bluebird nestlings fledged from our nestboxes. We recaptured a record 60 adults, giving us valuable information about long term survival (we had two 5-year birds and eight 4-year birds), pair bonding (we had a case of incest), and dispersal rate (bluebirds do not nest far from their natal box). Thanks so much to all the people involved in our Eastern Bluebird Project. We couldn't do it without you!*

### Welcome New Members

**Bronxville** Joyce & Rory Braunstein, Betsy Ellis, Sally Ellis, Robert Frank, Ruth Goedrich, Christopher Goff, Elizabeth Jones, Lorraine Marshall, Jean Miller, Matthew Pauley, William Renner, Marshall Ries, Angela Romagnoli, Birgitta Sherman, Patricia Vaughan, Constance Welling, Karen Wolfgang-Swanson **Eastchester** Joan Deery, Maryann Petix **Hartsdale** Isabel Chiu, Anish Dewan, Jon Lamb, Rosemarie Meyer, Dora Pella **Larchmont** Thomas Amlicke, Stephen Gilbert, Patrycja Gosk, Caryl Herson, Henry Kandler, William Klein, Ashlyn Lovejoy, Jennifer & Sophia Reidy, Bernard Sherak, Claudia Useda, Joan Wanderer **Mamaroneck** Steve Brill, James Camera, Denise Coleman, Jane Daych, Marilyn Harley, Barbara Hill, Geoffrey Kauffman, Laura Horner, Lloyd Landa, Elizabeth Saenger, Joan Schoenholtz, Debbie Sullivan **Mount Vernon** V Cramer, Robin Hill, Harold Lederman, Laura Lord, Kathleen Offner, Dawn Russo **New Rochelle** Madelyne Berry, Aaron Cohen, Marge Cohen, Sandra Edlitz, Harry Freda, Lorraine Helfer, Walter Hoffmann, Sally Kane, Alfred Maiello, Herb Rubin, Melba Shapiro, Christine Vaughn, Joyce Veishlow **Pelham** Chris Albanese, Jane Simone Cooke, Kevin Duffy, Karen Garbarini, Matthew Goldberg, John Higgs, Kate Hommel, B Karan, Daniel Murdock, Aidan Sisk, Trevor Southlea Katherine Struby, Pat Wakeham, Anne Weber **Scarsdale** Jina Accardo, Ruth Bahar, Jane Barnstead, Aslan Bilimer, Robert Brewster, Shelley Cohen, Anne Cotty, Selma Engel, Elana Fine, Morgan Greco, Susan Knapp, Hannah Lewis, Pamela Miner, Sandy Muscillo, Mark O'Friel, Yusuf Salim, Rona Shamoon, Sylvia Suarez, Richard Toder, Valerie Torcia, Barbara Troetel, Freda Turnof, Anna Vikki, Elizabeth Waltzman, Elaine Weir **Tuckahoe** Minnie Allen, James Blair, Neal Donohue, Joseph Harbeson, Miriam Sanchez.

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Appalachian Mountains remain there all year long, breeding at the higher elevations, but these residents have shorter wings than the migrants that join them each winter because they do not migrate, therefore, do not need longer wings for long flights. Juncos are considered a resident to medium-distance migrant, as those that breed in Canada and Alaska migrate to the southern United States in winter. Northern birds migrate further south, arriving in their winter quarters between mid-September and November and leave to breed back in the north from mid-March onwards, with almost all gone by the end of April or so. In winter, juncos are one of the most common birds seen at feeders. Dark-eyed Juncos are primarily seed-eaters, and seem to prefer millet over sunflower seeds at feeders. During the breeding season however, Dark-eyed Juncos also eat insects including beetles, moths, butterflies, caterpillars, ants, wasps and flies. Juncos migrate at night, as many birds do to avoid predators such as hawks, and at very low altitudes in flocks of up to 100 individuals and they prefer to forage and roost in groups during the day. Dark-eyed Juncos prefer forests and wooded areas but during winter and on migration they use a wider variety of habitats, including open woodlands, fields, roadsides, parks and gardens to forage. It is not known whether Juncos return to the same spot to over-winter, but one particular bird was recorded to be at least 11 years old when it was recaptured and rereleased during banding operations in West Virginia in 2001. It had been banded in the same state in 1991! Although they may not travel as far as many other migratory birds might, the Dark-eyed Junco is still a sign that winter is coming when it arrives and a signal that spring will be here soon when it leaves us.

In comparison, when April arrives, we begin to put out feeders for a very different kind of migrant we expect to see in our area soon...the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Ruby Throated Hummingbirds are the only hummingbird regularly seen throughout most of the Eastern United States. A flashy green and red little jewel, these tiny birds love to feed on the nectar of tubular red and orange flowers, tiny insects, as well as sugar water put into hummingbird feeders. Hummingbirds are largely tropical birds, but have expanded their ranges to include food resources and nesting space in the United States and southern Canada. Hummingbirds are carnivores (nectar is the fuel to power their fly catching activity), and depend on insects that are not abundant in subfreezing weather, so they must retreat back home to Central America in the winter or risk starvation. Ruby-throats begin migrating north as early as January, and reach the coast of Yucatan to add a thick layer of fat by eating insects and spiders in preparation for flying to the United States. Most of these birds cross the Gulf of Mexico, typically leaving at dusk for a nonstop flight of up to 500 miles, which takes approximately 18-22 hours. Some hummingbirds land on offshore oil rigs or fishing boats to rest. Some also may island hop across the Caribbean and the Florida Keys. Other birds will avoid the Gulf and follow the Texas coast north however. Male hummingbirds depart Mexico first, followed by the first females about 10 days later.



The migration is spread over a three month period, which may prevent a catastrophic weather event from wiping out the entire species. As a result, some birds will arrive at a location very early, with the bulk of the population arriving later. Once in North America, the migration proceeds at an average of 20 miles per day, following the earliest blooming of nectar flowers and is complete by late May. Banding studies show that each bird tends to return every year to the same place it hatched, even visiting the same feeders. The reverse migration may begin as early as mid-July. To avoid the cold, and the scarcity of food when flowers stop blooming and insects stop flying, hummingbirds go south. The peak for the migration is usually late August and early September, so by mid-September, all of the Ruby-throated hummingbirds at your feeders are birds that are migrating through from farther north and not the birds you have seen in the summer. The number of birds migrating south may be twice that of the northern migration as it includes all the immature birds that hatched during the summer, as well as surviving adults. For a young hummingbird, there is no memory of past migrations, but only an urge to put on weight and fly south and look for a good place to spend the winter. Once a bird learns a route, it may retrace it every year as long as it lives. There is evidence that fewer Ruby-throats cross the Gulf of Mexico in fall than in spring, with most following the Texas coastline back into Mexico. The hurricane season may be a factor. So the next time you fill your hummingbird feeder, or plant cardinal flower or bee-balm in your garden, you may see the same hummingbirds you saw previously. And may continue to see them for many years if you're lucky...the oldest known Ruby-throated Hummingbirds a female and was at least 9 years old when she was recaptured and rereleased during a banding operation in West Virginia.

*Diane Morrison is a BRSS board member and enjoys feeding the birds at her home in Scarsdale.*



## PROGRAMS 2017

PLEASE JOIN US! PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

### March 29, 2017, Wednesday - Foraging for and Learning about Wild Edible Plants

#### Presented by Steve "Wildman" Brill

This hands-on environmental program focuses on common wild plants, putting people in touch with their environment and motivating them to understand science and to practice conservation. Adult and children's audiences get to see, touch, smell, and taste representative species of the wild edible and medicinal herbs, greens, fruits, berries, nuts, seeds, roots, and mushrooms that make up the backbone of our local ecosystems. Many of the specimens are the same "weeds" people remove or destroy in their backyards or gardens. Steve "Wildman" Brill is an American naturalist, environmental educator and author. He gained notoriety in 1986, when he was arrested in New York City's Central Park for eating a dandelion.

Presentation will be at the Scarsdale Public Library. Refreshments at 7:15pm and program at 7:30 pm.



### April 26, 2017, Wednesday - What's the Buzz? Helping our Native Bees

#### Presented by Timothy J. Stanley

In any conversation about bees, the honeybee usually takes center stage. Yet, honeybees are not native to North America. When Europeans arrived nearly 4,000 bees were already here, pollinating the trees and plants and helping maintain the food supply. Our native bees, sometimes described as pollen bees, are not only extremely efficient, but have also developed techniques for pollinating flowers that honeybees are incapable of pollinating! Join us as we explore the little known but fascinating world of native bees and learn how you can take action steps on their behalf. Audiences will leave informed, delighted, and more appreciative of bees.

The founder of Native Beeology, Timothy J. Stanley, is the Assistant Director at the Fresh Air Fund's Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill, NY. He is the Past President of New York State Outdoor Education Association (NYSOEA), an avid photographer, and a lifelong student and teacher of the outdoors. Visit [www.nativebeeology.com](http://www.nativebeeology.com) for much more information and inspiration!

Presentation will be at the Scarsdale Public Library. Refreshments at 7:15pm and program at 7:30 pm.



***PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WINTER SEED SALE. THE TWO SEED SALES ARE OUR ONLY FUNDRAISERS. THE SALES ALLOW US TO OFFER PROGRAMS AND FIELD TRIPS FOR FREE, SPONSOR STUDENTS TO GO TO ECOLOGY CAMPS, AND THIS NEWSLETTER.*** Details for the sale are on the enclosed flyer.

Please call Doug Bloom if you if have any questions regarding pickup of the seed or anything else regarding the seed sale.

Thank you to those who purchased birdseed during our Fall seed sale. Our profit on the sale was \$3231. There were \$1631 in donations. Special thanks to John Fix ay Cornell's True Value for hosting our two seed sales. We Could not do this without him!





# FIELD TRIPS 2016/2017



Please Contact Doug Bloom at (914) 834-5203 for info or to register. Meet at Scarsdale Village Hall unless otherwise specified

**January 14, Saturday- Montauk**

Meet at 6:30 am at Village Hall. Looking for winter water-fowl and other wintering birds.

**February 11, Saturday-Eagle Fest**

Meet at Croton Point Park at 9 AM.

**February 19, Sunday- Jones Beach**

Meet at 7 am at Village Hall. Looking for wintering birds, possibly Snowy Owls.

**March 4, Saturday - Greenwich Point, CT**

Meet at 8:00 AM at Greenwich Point. Looking for late winter migrants.

**April 9, Sunday - Larchmont Reservoir**

Meet at 8:00 am at Larchmont Reservoir. We will be looking for early migrants. Warblers and other songbirds that are migrating.

**April 29, Saturday- Rye Nature Center/Bedford**

Meet at 8 am at Rye Nature Center. Looking for spring migrants.



**May 7, Sunday- Central Park**

Meet at 7:30 am at 77<sup>th</sup> street at statue across from Museum of Natural History. Will be looking for spring migrants, such as warblers, orioles and others.

**May 20, Saturday- Doodletown Road**

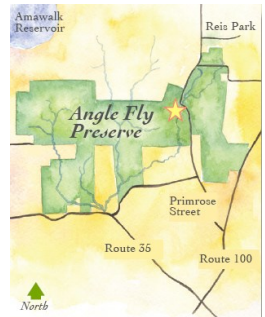
Meet at 8:00 am at Doodletown Road. Best place to see Cerulean Warblers nesting and other migrants.

**May 28, Sunday - Sterling Forest**

Meet at 7:00 am at the village hall. We will be looking for early migrants - warblers and other songbirds that are migrating.

**June 10, Saturday- Angle Fly Preserve - Somers**

Meet 8 am at Angle Fly. Directions at <http://somerslandtrust.org/angle-fly-preserve/directions>.



## Cooperation in Action

In 2013 BRSS Audubon, in conjunction with the Village of Tuckahoe Department of Public Works and Tuckahoe Environmental/Tree Committee, planted native plants in Quarry Park on Fisher Ave. in Tuckahoe. BRSS Audubon donated the plants and several board members plus Tuckahoe DPW and the Environmental/Tree committee did the planting. The garden has grown and has become a wonderfully peaceful place to visit.





**Bronx River-Sound Shore  
Audubon Society, Inc.**

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)  
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