



EST. 1947

The BIRD CALL

Winter 2018

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

You Can't Eat Money

By Sandy Morrissey

In this space a year ago, I lamented that our president-elect promised to roll back environmental regulations. A year later, here's a partial list of his actions:

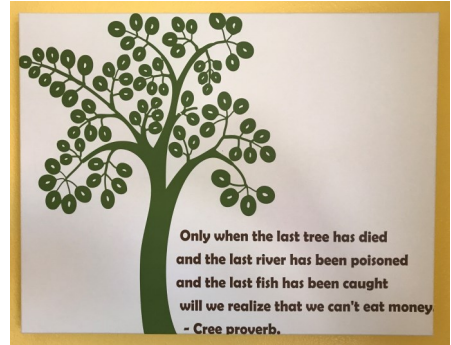
- Appointed a person to lead the Environmental Protection Agency who does not believe in environmental regulations.
- Withdrew from the Paris Agreement – the world's best chance to slow global warming.
- Announced intended repeal of the Clean Power Plan – which worked to lower emissions of fossil fuel plants.
- Opened the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for business. It can be leased for oil & gas extraction, coal mining, logging and grazing.
- Slashed the size of two Utah National monuments – Bears Ears and Grand Staircase. All the

above could now happen there.

- Reversed a ban on an insecticide (chlorpyrifos) set to go into effect. Already banned for home use, it was set to be banned in agriculture. Now it will continue to be used on fruits and vegetables.
- Declared climate change not a threat to national security. Floods from rising seas, frequent hurricanes wiping out power grids, wildfires sweeping across the landscape apparently no big risk.

As far as I can determine, all these decisions are based on the pursuit of MONEY! Every one of these changes is supposed to result in more jobs and money. "We will usher in a bright new future of wonder and wealth."

This summer I came across the poster pictured here – depicting a different future. It struck me as so relevant for our time:



Not all doom and gloom

To keep sane, I look for signs of hope. Any promising ray catches my attention. As depressing as the current administration's policies are, government isn't the only game in town.

- Despite the push to go back to black-lung producing coal, more jobs are now in the clean power sector than fossil fuels. I was amazed to read this.
- Volvo is phasing out the internal

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Nick Lerner: Outstanding Golf Course Superintendent and Friend of BRSS

By Jeff Zuckerman

The now widely-recognized Eastern Bluebird Project of our Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society succeeds because of the many participants involved at every level of the project. The driving force behind all of it is, of course, our president Sandy Morrissey. Even Sandy, however, could not coordinate what she does without the funds we raise from our seed sales twice per year. Then it takes Girl Scouts to build the bluebird boxes with the materials we have purchased. Finally, it takes an army of volunteers to place and monitor the boxes for eight months of the year.

However, without the cooperation of many private Westchester properties to place our boxes, sadly we would have no project at all. For many reasons golf courses are perfect locations for bluebird boxes. And central to everything we do is receiving the permission and assistance of the golf course superintendents of the courses we use.



Nick Lerner, 46, is our friend and mentor and has been the Golf Course Superintendent at the Bonnie Briar Country Club in Larchmont for almost 15 years. Although we "intrude" virtually every single week on a busy country

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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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combustion engine. All its cars will be hybrid or all electric beginning 2019. Hopefully other car makers will catch up.

- My little hometown (population 1,500) in southeastern Ohio is getting a large solar energy project that will generate jobs and electricity for the area. It will be located on former strip mine lands!
- A line in a friend's Christmas card: "We installed solar panels in April."
- There is a growing movement of investors who want to divest of fossil fuel industries and invest in renewables. Gov. Cuomo stated it was his hope for the NY pension fund. The World Bank just announced it would stop funding gas and oil exploration. Will the fossil fuel industry go the way of the cigarette industry? That would certainly be good for the health of the planet.

What you can do

Some new year's resolutions to consider:

- Don't sit back and take it. Advocate. Send postcards or emails to your legislators, the governor and the president demanding policies that protect the environment.
- Opt for an alternative energy provider. While Con Ed delivers the energy, you can choose the energy company that provides it (called an ESCO – energy supply company). Go to coned.com and click on Save Energy and Money.
- Make your next car a hybrid or all electric (much fewer to zero bad emissions)
- Vote!

Sandy Morrissey is president of BRSS Audubon and plans to visit Bears Ears and Grand Staircase in April, before the energy companies arrive.

Mockingbird Flavors

By Vern Schramm

The insistent, repetitive predawn songs of the Northern Mockingbird are a sure sign of spring. You might as well get up because you can't sleep with that noise. There is also the reminder that someone is up before you. You might find some sympathy for this singer, as only the lonely, unmated males sing before dawn in the spring.

The Northern Mockingbird is a one-of-a-kind species in North America, unless you want to consider other mimic thrushes like the Gray Catbird. But to our eyes, the Northern Mockingbird is a distinct and welcome individual species. The casual fluttering flight, wing flares with little directed purpose, defending the holly berries through the winter so it can feast in the coldest months, chasing the robins out of the mockingbird's favorite maple tree, defending the winter bird-feeder apple against all comers, and aggressively chasing away all predators from its nesting site are endearing traits that keep us entertained throughout the year. There is no migration for the Northern Mockingbird, we can see them every day, all year.

Travel to South America reveals a different mockingbird landscape. In the evolving earth, North America and South America were separated until about 10 million years ago, when volcano action built islands and filled the void to form the Isthmus of Panama land-bridge. The single ocean became separated into the Atlantic and Pacific, leading to distinct development of marine wildlife. Bird species also developed independently on both sub-continent. Wildlife migration occurred between North and South America, with the most active migrations about 3 million years ago. Many species from North and South America mixed, but not the mockingbirds. The Northern Mockingbird decided not to migrate to the south. The South American mockingbirds developed to suit their own local environments and had no



Northern Mockingbird

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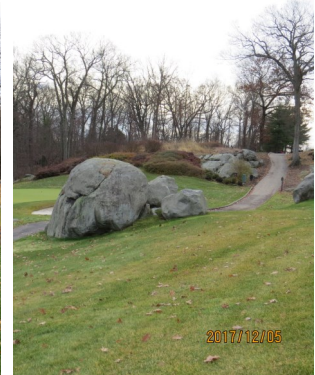


club, there is never a time that Nick and his staff are not friendly, courteous and helpful in providing us with whatever we need to monitor our boxes. We, in turn, treat the course with the respect it deserves, and endeavor to be almost invisible during the short time we are out and about.

Nick went to high school in Deep River, CT, and worked for one summer as a laborer at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, CT, before entering college. While earning a BS at the University of Massachusetts (in Plant and Soil Sciences with a minor in Business) Nick interned for two summers at the Connecticut Golf Club in Easton, CT. After college he took a Second Assistant position at Montammy Golf Club in Alpine, NJ. Moving up to a First Assistant position he worked at Lakeover National Golf Club (now Glen Arbor Golf Club) in Bedford Hills for two years. In 1997 he began a six year First Assistant position at the Canyon Club (now Brynwood Golf & Country Club) in Armonk. It was a great day and a huge personal goal was attained when Nick was named as Golf Course Superintendent in 2003 at Bonnie Briar. Nick has been married for nearly twenty years and has a six year old son.

If you ask Nick what got him started in this business he will tell you an interesting story of a high school science teacher who also operated a landscaping business. Combining his golf playing days in high school with working in that teacher's business, Nick found that he loved being outside and creating beautiful things with nature.

When Nick arrived at Bonnie Briar fifteen years ago conditions on the course were not what they are today. The club began to make important and noticeable investments in equipment and labor to bring the course in competition with some of the truly top tier courses in Westchester. Those of us who are fortunate to monitor the bluebird boxes there can attest to the pristine conditions and attention to detail that Nick has shepherded. Landmark features of the course are significant rocky outcroppings which Nick exposed. They give the course an unmistakable character. In addition, Bonnie Briar has the luxury of 25 acres of undeveloped land which allows for extensive wildlife on the course.



Perhaps the most unusually interesting feature of the course is what Nick has accomplished with the water necessary to irrigate the high level of turf conditions expected by members of Bonnie Briar. For the past two years the course has been completely self-sufficient in its need for city water. Prior to that time Bonnie Briar was purchasing almost \$200,000 of water annually to maintain the course. Working with the Town of Mamaroneck a galley was built to re-route water sometimes released from the Larchmont Reservoir. Rather than the water not being utilized, a portion of it now ends up in two ponds no one ever sees deep in the woods of the golf course. From there, the irrigation water is channeled to the entire golf course. And, as a side note, it is fascinating to view a completely wireless irrigation system from Nick's office, housed in a new maintenance facility, which allows him to control any sprinkler on the course spanning 150 acres!

There is so much to learn from a seasoned pro like Nick Lerner who schools himself in the myriad of technological advances/changes present in his field every year. For example, the evolution of equipment has allowed for the mowing of turfgrass shorter than ever before. There are much more sensitive products used by superintendents today offering greater plant protection and far fewer residual effects on the soil and environment. Nick told us that he can often use biologicals, products that come without even a warning label. That is something that could not have been said fifteen years ago when he came to Bonnie Briar. Such products are better for workers, animals, plants and golfers. He told us that grasses are constantly being modified to achieve better results for what superintendents are striving for in our northern climate.



Nick with Cora

When we were done interviewing Nick our heads were spinning from all the things he needs to concern himself with. How nice, then, that he cares enough to help us provide a suitable home for our beloved bluebirds. This is a consummate professional with a deep and loving passion for everything living. We are honored to be partners with Nick Lerner and Bonnie Briar.

PROGRAMS 2018

Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 7:30 pm - How to Plant a Bird Friendly Garden

Presenter - Kim Eierman

Location - Scarsdale Public Library. Refreshments at 7:15 pm.

Kim Eierman is the Founder of EcoBeneficial. She is an Environmental Horticulturist specializing in ecological landscapes and native plants. Based in New York, Kim teaches at the New York Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, The Native Plant Center in NY, Rutgers Home Gardeners School and several other institutions. Kim is an active speaker nationwide on many ecological landscape topics, presenting for industry conferences, "green events," Master Gardener groups, garden clubs, nature centers, Audubon Society chapters, beekeeping groups, and other organizations interested in environmental improvements. Kim also provides horticultural consulting to homeowners and commercial clients.



Saturday, May 12, 10:00 am - Learn How to Help the Declining Monarch Population and Other Local Butterflies

Location - Greenburgh Nature Center

Besides increasing environmental threats to the Monarch population, those that survive face many challenges in their natural life cycle, including other carnivores who eat them in their egg, caterpillar and chrysalis stage. You can help by raising them safely in your home until they reach the adult stage. It's easy, fun and educational for the whole family. This program will teach you how to do it, plus how to help our other local butterflies.

Since the only thing Monarch caterpillars can eat is milkweed, all families attending will be sent home with a milkweed plant to get them started attracting Monarchs to their yard and providing Monarchs with their vital food source.

Space is limited to the first 70 people who reserve. Please sign up by emailing brssaudubon@gmail.com.



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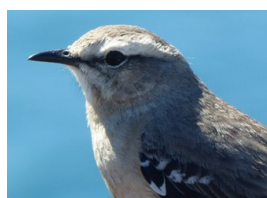
need to migrate north to nest.

Visibly distinct species of mockingbirds evolved in South America with several common examples in Argentina. The Patagonian Mockingbird is the most like its northern cousin. The Chalk-browed Mockingbird is well-named; can you see where it gets its name? A third species, the White-banded Mockingbird carries a striking white band on its wings and tail. It is smaller, longer and thinner than its relatives and is the most distinct from the Northern Mockingbird. But it is still an obvious member of the family. The long tail feathers are divided evenly into three segments, white on the outsides and dark in the middle. In flight, the white wing and the appearance of 'three tails' makes it easy to recognize.

The South American cousins of the Northern Mockingbird identify themselves immediately as mockingbirds in appearance and behavior. The friendly features, the casual flight patterns, their curiosity and feeding style are all familiar from what we know of the Northern Mockingbird. Bird watching at home, even with the most common species, sharpens our skills to appreciate similarity and differences in birds when we travel. Fitting the geography of bird species into a grand scheme of natural history and sharing our sightings is a continuing joy of bird watching.



Patagonian



Chalk-browed



*White-banded
(Cornell Ornithology)*



FIELD TRIPS 2018



Please Contact Doug Bloom at (914) 834-5203 for info or to register.

January 7, Sunday - Jones Beach

Meet at 7 am at Scarsdale Village Hall. Looking for wintering birds. Possibly Snowy Owls



May 6, Sunday- Central Park

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

January 20, Saturday - Read Sanctuary

Meet at Read at 8:00 am. Looking for wintering birds.

May 12, Saturday - Angle Fly Preserve- Somers

Meet at Angle Fly at 8:00 am. Looking for Spring migrants. See more information at <http://somerslandtrust.org/angle-fly-preserve/about-angle-fly-preserve>



February 10, Saturday - Eagle Fest

Meet at Croton Point Park at 9 am. Looking for Eagles.



May 19, Saturday - Doodletown Road

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

March 4, Sunday - Greenwich Point, CT

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

April 8, Sunday - Larchmont Reservoir

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

May 27, Sunday - Sterling Forest

Meet at 7:00 am at the Scarsdale Village Hall. We will be looking for early migrants. Warblers and other songbirds that are passing through.

Fall Bird Seed Results

Thank you to everyone who purchased seed this fall. We are the beneficiaries of \$5571 in donations and seed sale profits. This is the best we have ever done. All proceeds go to the publication of this newsletter, sponsorships of children to attend environmental camps, programs, our Bluebird Project, and more. Thank you for your continued support.



Time to purchase bird seed for the winter. The order form is included in this newsletter. It looks to be a very cold winter. Please feed the birds and support the activities of the BRSS Audubon.

BRSS Audubon receives \$750 NY Audubon Collaborative Funding Grant

The funds will be mostly used for our Mt. Vernon “Learn Birds are Cool in School” program. We meet with 2nd graders for 5 sessions. In one session we have the Greenburgh Nature Center bring live birds. That session is always the biggest hit!



Join in on the Great Backyard Bird Count. All are encourage to participate. This year the count will be held on February 16 - 19, 2018. More information may be found at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/>.

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