



EST. 1947

# The BIRD CALL

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

## LEAVES – ARE YOU “LEAVEN ‘EM” IN PLACE YET?

By Cece Fabbro

With summer winding down and fall just around the corner, it's time to pull out that fall garden “To Do” list. For me, at least in the past, the most onerous fall cleanup chore was the raking, blowing and bagging of leaves. That is, up until 10 years ago, when as part of my commitment to “go green” I began to see all those leaves as a valuable resource instead of a waste product. I started by keeping them, shredding them and using them as mulch in my shrub and perennial beds. After several years of doing this I observed, not surprisingly, a dramatic change in the quality of my soil and the improved health of my plants. Specifically, I noticed the following:

- My soil exhibited a light and fluffy texture and less compaction;
- There was a dramatic increase in the soil's absorption and retention of water and a decrease in rain runoff;
- An increase in microbial activity, particularly fungal, and earthworm and other arthropod activity;

- A reduction in the need for fertilizers since the leaves are a natural and free fertilizer;

- A reduction in yard waste that the Town needs to pick up and dispose of.

Now, I won't deny that some time and effort was involved in setting up a system to process the leaves, but after that initial investment all was easy sailing and the system became a routine part of fall cleanup. Those who use lawn care contractors can have them do this with minimal training.

Wondering how I handle my leaves? This is how. First, my lawn care crew collect and bag all the leaves that fall on my grass, driveway area, and foundation planting areas in the front. (The leaves that fall in the back area and the woodland I leave as they fall). Then, in mid November, we spread all the collected leaves (which include those bagged and left for Town pickup by my neighbors) over the driveway, and run the mower over the piles until all leaves are shredded. The shredded leaves are then rebagged in large black contractor bags for me to

use as mulch which I do soon thereafter.

Each one of the three different areas of my property: the front yard, the backyard, and the way back are handled a bit differently since my yard is a NWF Certified Habitat and I am an avid garden for wildlife advocate. My front yard is on the formal side so I try to keep it “neat” looking and use the shredded leaves as a 2” mulch for my shrub and perennial foundation plantings. Since my backyard is a series of native tree, shrub, and perennial gardens, I leave the leaves as they fall. I do this because certain caterpillars, like those of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly, overwinter in the leaf litter beneath the shrub. I leave these leaves until late spring when I slowly rake only the top layer of the leaves away, adding them to my leaf compost pile. Others are left in place to break down on site. In the woodland area, I just let the leaves fall where they might and let nature take its course. Since all my large trees, understory trees, and shrubs,

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## THANK YOU FOR A GREAT SUMMER EXPERIENCE!

This July I was very lucky to attend an ecology summer camp at the Rye Marshlands, thanks to Bronx River Sound Shore. I had so much fun! We went frog catching by a little pond, and we also went down to the marsh and saw fiddler crabs. At the marsh, there is a beautiful view of the Long Island Sound. We also went seining in the sound with a HUGE net. The first two days we were up to our armpits in mud! It was great! I had the nicest group leaders, Angela

and Jelissa, who are college students and are very smart. I am totally looking forward to going back to ecology camp next summer. THANK YOU SO MUCH for making it possible!

Sincerely,  
Julien duChateau  
Tuckahoe Middle School



*Julien is on the right*

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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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and perennials are native to our area, they have evolved to recycle their leaves. I mean, who ever heard of anyone fertilizing a forest?

If my system of handling leaves is a bit too involved for you, there are other, easier ways of using your leaves. For example:

**Shred leaves directly in place** on the lawn into fine pieces. They will break down over the winter, fertilizing your grass and preventing soil compaction.

**Set up a wire compost bin** (either make your own or buy one from a garden center or catalogue) somewhere on your property, add

leaves and wait. They will break down over time. And then can be used as (free!) mulch.

Have **excess shredded leaves**? Add as brown matter to your compost pile if you have one.

The sooner we all start using our leaves by mulching in place or composting on site, the sooner we can start saving tax dollars and keep our environment cleaner by keeping leaves out of our landfills. Using brown helps us go green. And, going green results in saving green for all of us.

*Cece Fabbro, a professional photographer, is a BRSS Board Member, and an avid gardener and birder.*

## BRSS Annual Meeting



*From left to right:  
Sandy Morrissey,  
Pres. BRSS Audubon,  
Honoree Henry May, BRSS  
Audubon Board  
Member, Jeff  
Zuckerman, Treasurer,  
BRSS Audubon.*

Over 60 people attended our BRSS Annual meeting this fall. Henry May, our honoree, received many accolades not only for his contributions to BRSS Audubon but, also for his tireless efforts to help the community of Mt. Vernon. Board President, Sandy Morrissey, remarked that if we gave a Humanitarian Award, Henry would certainly deserve it. Both she and Treasurer Jeff Zuckerman wore tee shirts that Henry had made for one of his parent-involvement programs he did in Mt. Vernon. We elected a new member to the board, John Flores, as well as returning board members Bernie Conway, Cece Fabbro, and Henry May to the class of 2016.

### Welcome New Members

**Bronxville**

Roberta Itzkoff  
Patricia Krasnauskay  
Catherine Olian  
Nell Twining

**Eastchester**

Peter McCartt  
Scorpion Patrol Pac 353  
**Harrison**  
Chris Murray

**Larchmont**

Peter Formato  
Cindy Olsen  
Suzanne Prigoda  
Melanie Rush  
Mary Spollen  
Trinity Retreat House  
**Mamaroneck**  
Carol Blucher  
Lois Herzberg  
**Mount Vernon**  
Helen Leonard

**New Rochelle**

Kathleen Carroll  
Sarah Davis  
Walter Hoffmann  
Jaclyn Israel  
Peter Upman  
**Pelham**  
John Brice  
John Kiernan  
**Rye:**  
Angela Castaldo

**Scarsdale**

Alex Dalal  
Mimi Feinberg  
Martin Katz  
Robert Mayo  
Sandy Muscillo  
Beth Weiler  
**Tuckahoe**  
Frank DiMarco  
**Yonkers**  
Karen Russo

# Rescue bird returns to nest

## And other highlights of the 2013 Bluebird Season

By Sandy Morrissey

Last fall I reported on a dramatic bluebird adoption that took place in July of the nesting season. Four starving nestlings, whose parents had disappeared, were moved to three separate nestboxes with nestlings their same age. I was happy to report that all survived, both the adoptees and their new siblings, except for the tiniest one that was the runt of the brood.

This spring we were delighted to learn that not only did one of the adoptees survive the winter, it returned and had its own family. It nested in the very same box where it was placed last summer. It went on to have two broods of its own, producing four in the first clutch and three in the second. What a happy ending!

We actually had a second successful adoption this year. Cece Fabbro, a newly trained bander, discovered a dead female sitting on a nest of 4 eggs, but a 5<sup>th</sup> had hatched and the nestling was



*The band number proved this was one of the adoptees that survived.*

begging for food. After waiting to see if a male was around (he wasn't), she moved the nestling to another box which had hatched only one nestling. The adoptive parents accepted this new responsibility without a peep, and we are happy to report that both nestlings fledged successfully.

[Please do not try this at home! We are licensed to handle the birds. It is illegal if you don't have a license, and it is generally best not to interfere with nature. In our case, the bluebirds are in a human created situation, and we have lots of experience with the nesting behavior of bluebirds.]

### Hanging Nestbox Works

We've had an experimental hanging nestbox in Mt. Hope Cemetery for several years. Tree Swallows and House Sparrows had used (or tried to use) it, but until this summer, no bluebirds.



*Look! No pole!*

Monitor Linda Keil discovered 4 eggs and an incubating female in early June. For whatever reason, only one egg hatched, but that nestling did succeed in fledging. We will try more hanging boxes next

spring. Some locations do not want to deal with having to mow around our poles and this will solve the problem. We also might find more locations on golf courses, where we must be sure to have nestboxes and poles in out-of-play areas.

### "Wings" attract a bluebird

White Plains High School student, Arielle Hazi, attached blue plastic wings on 26 nestboxes as an experiment to see if they would help attract bluebirds to locations where we had boxes, but no bluebirds. The study was too small and not long enough to prove anything definitive, but we did have one bluebird male trying to nest at Carlson's



*Was the male attracted to the blue fake wings?*

Florist. In the past we had only attracted Tree Swallows, but this year a male bluebird claimed the box and sang his heart out trying to entice a female. He was there for about two weeks, but then gave up or was driven away by Tree Swallows who claimed the box and nested there, as usual. It's a hard-knock life for some bluebirds!

### Successful nesting & banding season

Overall, our BRSS Eastern Bluebird Project can be proud that we helped fledge almost 300 bluebirds. We banded or recaptured almost 400 nestlings and adults. We are learning from our banding data. We recaptured 11 birds we banded in 2011, our first year. Of these, all except one had been nestlings in 2011, making them now 3<sup>rd</sup> year birds. We recaptured one bird which had been an adult in 2011, making it at least a 4<sup>th</sup> year bird. It will be exciting next year if we get any birds we banded in 2011. One of my most frequently asked questions is how long do our bluebirds live. Our banding time will tell!

*Sandy Morrissey is BRSS president and founder of its Eastern Bluebird Project. If you want to get involved, please contact her at [sandym@cloud9.net](mailto:sandym@cloud9.net).*

## Birding for Youth

By Dave Kaufman

The Youth Birding Group of the BRSS Audubon society is looking forward to its third year of local bird walks for children in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade through middle school. As the father of middle school aged boys, I clearly appreciate how our Audubon activities compete with our children's school work, athletic activities and family time, not to mention Xbox, Wii, and social media platforms. By the time the weekend rolls around, the last thing my kids want to do is wake up early on Saturday morning to go traipsing in a nearby park for 2 hours with binoculars around their

necks. I understand their reticence, but I firmly believe we have a responsibility as parents to give our children a love and appreciation of the natural world around them. Personally, I'm not above coaxing, cajoling, negotiating, bribing or even forcing my sons to wake up, get out of the house, step into nature and look at birds. My 14 year old has blown away his science teacher with his ready knowledge of local bird identification and ornithology picked up on these walks – and he doesn't even work at it. Spending time with my boys on these Youth Birding outings is often the highlight of my week. I hope one day my sons will

admit they feel the same way. Please join us with your children. Our bird walks occur once a month on Saturdays at 9AM, always at a local green space within a 20 minute drive of our homes and last not more than two hours. Our children learn to identify birds by their plumage and calls, learn about their habitat, and get to experience some of the most beautiful areas of Westchester County. We supply Birding Field Guides, binoculars and Duncan Donut Holes to all who participate. A schedule of walks is listed in our "Bird Call" newsletter as well as on the BRSS Audubon website. Bring birds into your children's lives – come on a hike with us!

## Youth (and Adult Beginner) Field Trips 2013/2014

### UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

All field trips begin at 9:00 a.m. PLEASE email Dave Kaufman ([dkaufman43@gmail.com](mailto:dkaufman43@gmail.com)) if you plan to attend

**September 21 – Marshlands Conservancy** - field, woodland & marsh birds.

**October 19 – Crestwood Lake, Bronx River Parkway** – water and parkland birds (meet in Crestwood Train Station parking lot on parkway side of train station).

**November 17 – Sheldrake Environmental Center/Larchmont Reservoir** – water and woodland birds (meet in Sheldrake parking lot).

**March 15 – Read Wildlife Sanctuary** – feeder birds, ducks and shore birds.

**April 12 – Twin Lakes Park** – water birds and early spring migrants (located on California Rd, Eastchester).

**May 10 – Rye Nature Center** – woodland birds and spring warblers.

**June 7 - Kensico Cemetery** – band nesting bluebirds (meet at cemetery office, 273 Lakeview Ave., Valhalla).

*Adults are welcome to join our Youth Birding walks. They are in our local area.*



## Gatorland is for Birds

By Scott Mellis

Orlando, FL: Twenty years ago, the Gatorland theme park created a 10 acre breeding marsh, complete with boardwalk and observation towers, to propagate their reptiles. Local birds soon discovered they were safe in the trees and shrubs because the gators would let no predators through. Springtime at the rookery is home to thousands of nesting birds preening, displaying beautiful breeding plumage, and hatching chicks - often within arms reach of enraptured birders and photographers. This beautiful spot is definitely worth a visit!

Photo by Melanie Mellis— iPhone4 attached to Leupold Yosemite 6x binoculars via Kowa iPhone digitoscope adapter



# PROGRAMS 2013-2014

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

All programs are co-sponsored by Central Westchester Audubon

Evening programs will begin with refreshments at 7 pm and the program begins at 7:15pm unless otherwise stated. The Live Hawk program will begin at 7 pm and Meet the Animals at the White Plains Library begins at 4:30 pm as noted.

## October 15, Tuesday - Bioluminescence

Presenter: Bernie Wides, Docent at American Museum of Natural History. How do they do it? Let's explore the diversity of organisms that glow. Most of all known bioluminescent groups inhabit the world's oceans. At certain depth, nearly all organisms glow. On land, things are quite different. There are bioluminescent fungi and insects, but no flowering plants, birds, reptiles, amphibians, or mammal that glow. In this program, we'll review mushrooms, fireflies, the Bioluminescent Bay in Puerto Rico, coral reefs, deep ocean critters, and live flashlight fish.

Location: Rye Nature Center.

## November 21, Thursday - Live Hawk Program

Presenter: Jim Eyring, Assistant Director of the Pace University Environmental Center in Pleasantville and Master Falconer, returns to thrill us with his presentation of live owls, hawks and falcons in a free-flying demonstration. Even if you have seen him before, you will find



that each presentation is different. Jim's enthusiasm and storytelling skills will capture the attention of all. Location: Church Street School, 295 Church St., Time: 7 pm.

**February 19, Wednesday - Amphibians of the Northeast** Presenter is Tom Tynning. Tom has studied snakes for four decades and is author of "A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles," a Stokes nature guide.

Location: Eastchester Library, 11 Oakridge Pl., Eastchester.

**March 19, Wednesday - Meet the Animals at the Trove, White Plains Library - 4:30 -5:30 pm.** Presented by the Greenburgh Nature Center. Join us with your children to see and learn about some of the wild animals who make the Greenburgh Nature Center their home. Location: White Plains Library, 100 Martine Avenue, White Plains. Time: 4:30 pm.

**April 16, Wednesday - TBA**

Tentative Location: Harrison Public Library, 2 Bruce Ave., Harrison.

**May 21, Wednesday - TBA**

Tentative Location: Harrison Public Library, 2 Bruce Ave.,

# FIELD TRIPS 2013/2014

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

## September 22, Sunday - Connecticut Coast/ With Saw Mill River Audubon

Hammonasset SP, Milford Point, and Sherwood Island, Cove Island Park.

Meet at Scarsdale Village Hall at 7:00 am or at Hammonasset at 8:30 am. Easy walking along trails; migrating shorebirds, Herons, raptors and land birds.

## September 29, Sunday - Fire Island

Meet at Scarsdale Village Hall at 7:15 am. Looking for migrating hawks and land birds.

## October 13, Sunday - Larchmont Reservoir/ With Hudson River Audubon

Meet at the upper parking area at 8:00 am. Across from entrance is sign that says Westchester Water Works Plant.

## November 17, Sunday - Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Meet at Wild Bird Center at 8:00 am or at 9:00 at refuge. We will be looking for early migrant waterfowl and late fall Migrants. Co-sponsored by WBC / Saw Mill River Audubon.

## December 22, Sunday - Christmas Bird Count

Contact Doug Bloom to volunteer for this important bird survey. Volunteer for a few hours or all day.

## January 5, Sunday - Jones Beach/ With Hudson River

Meet at 7:00 am at Scarsdale Village Hall or Coast Guard Station lot at 8:15. Wintering Ducks and other birds. Possibly Snowy Owls.

## January 19, Sunday - Pelham Bay Daytime Owl Prowl/ Saw Mill River Audubon

Meet at 8:00 am at Orchard Beach in far left corner of parking lot. Will be looking for wintering owls, and also other wintering birds.

## February 1, Saturday - Eagle Walk

Meet at Wild Bird Center at 8:00 am for our annual Eagle walk or at Croton Point Park at 8:40 in big parking lot near Gazebo.

## February 8, Saturday - Annual Eagle Fest

Meet at Wild Bird Center at 8:00 am or at 8:40 at Croton point Park in large parking lot near gazebo.

## March 9, Sunday - Read and Marshlands

Meet at 8:00 am at Read Sanctuary. Looking for late wintering waterfowl and early spring migrants.

## April 27, Sunday - Rye Nature Center

Meet at 8:00 am at the nature center parking lot. We will be looking for early migrants. Warblers and other songbirds.

## May 4, Sunday - Central Park/ With Hudson River

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

## May 18, Sunday - Doodletown Road

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

# Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, Inc.

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)  
P. O. Box 1108  
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## Join!

Support our environmental mission and receive our newsletter with information about all our programs and field trips. Annual dues are **just \$20** and include membership in the National Audubon Society, plus its magazine. Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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Please make \$20 check to National Audubon Society and mail to:  
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P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583  
C0ZR080Z

## 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Bird Seed Sale

The BRSS Bird Seed Sale is your opportunity to buy premium quality bird seed and help us raise funds for our BRSS Audubon educational and environmental programs. **This is the BRSS Audubon's major fundraiser.** Our mixes contain only the seeds that local birds prefer, without any "filler" seeds often found in cheaper mixes sold at grocery and hardware stores. A study by the US Fish and Wildlife Service showed that the favorite foods for birds in our area are sunflower seed, peanuts and millet. They are all available on our seed sale.

### WOULD YOU LOVE TO SEE THE BEAUTIFUL PHOTOS IN THIS ISSUE IN COLOR?

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