



# The BIRD CALL

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

## Should Bluebirds Take Up Golf?

By Sandy Morrissey

Our Eastern Bluebird Project continues to increase the number of bluebirds in our area. To do this, we rely heavily on golf courses. In densely populated lower Westchester, they are often the only open space available.

But do the chemicals used on golf courses harm the bluebirds and affect nesting success? We hope to help answer this question with data we gain from banding our bluebirds. We just completed our second year, and we recaptured 26 bluebirds that were banded last year. Because their bands tell us where they nested and their age, we can compare our golf course bluebirds to the other bluebirds.

**They like their home course**

In general all our bluebirds did not venture far from their previous

year's nest location. The bluebirds banded as adults last year tended to

*Continued on page 2*



*BRSS has bluebird nestboxes on 15 golf courses. Is this good for bluebirds?*

## Common Ground County Fair

Rural Living with Maine Organic Farmer & Gardener Association

By Bernie Conway

This article is about the amazing experience I had in Unity, Maine this past September at an annual event for all those who care about organic gardening and farming, animal husbandry, herbalism, sustainable forestry, or who care about social activism.

The resources, events, and classes offered are many. These include cooking, herbs, health and whole life, traditional arts, fiber and fleece, farming, gardening, and forestry. There are opportunities to learn how to forage for wild plants, or to learn the process of wet and dry seed saving, basic horseloggging, general goat care, dairy goats for mutual profit and joy, beekeeping, working animals in the woods, backyard grain growing, choosing the right fleece, learning to make a canoe paddle, hide tanning demos, and so much more.

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## The Sherman Tank of Suet Feeders

By Scott Mellis

Alright, "critter's gotta eat", but after two suet cakes were decimated and my feeder ripped to shreds, something had to be done. The Lifelong® Raccoon Proof suet feeder by Llewellyn Enterprises provides a great solution. You can load suet and/or seed and a wide variety of birds will visit and enjoy. It's really solid, easy to use, easy to clean, a fair value, and probably suitable for home defense. You can find more info and several helpful video at [www.lifelongfeeders.com](http://www.lifelongfeeders.com).



**BRSS AUDUBON**

**P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583  
www.brssaudubon.org**

**Board of Directors  
and Committee Members**

*Officers**PRESIDENT*

Sandra Morrissey (h) 949-2531  
sandym@cloud9.net

*VICE PRESIDENT*

Doug Bloom 834-5203

*TREASURER*

Jeff Zuckerman 395-3083  
jeffzuckerman2000@yahoo.com

*SECRETARY*

Diane Morrison 725-7351

*Committees**MEMBERSHIP*

Clare Gorman 395-3083  
claregorman@yahoo.com

*FIELD TRIPS*

Doug Bloom 834-5203  
Neil Powell 437- 8348

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Dave Kaufman, Chair 777-1633

*CONSERVATION*

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Frank Di Marco 231-0214  
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Bonnie Gould 723-6332  
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Henry May 667-6144  
Scott Mellis 235-5145  
Bob Wirsneck 834-1409

*HOSPITALITY*

Diane Morrison 725-7351

*PROGRAMS*

Diane Morrison 725-7351

*PUBLICITY*

Roz Wood 698-3568  
rozandalan@gmail.com

*NEWSLETTER*

Clare Gorman, Editor  
claregorman@yahoo.com

*WEBSITE*

Sandra Morrissey  
sandym@cloud9.net

*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*

*Should Bluebirds Take Up Golf?*

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return to the same property, and in a few cases, to the exact same nestbox. The bluebirds banded as nestlings sometimes relocated farther from their birth nesting sites, but the farthest distance was about five miles.

**Avid golfers**

Bluebirds that changed their nesting location from last year chose one that looked similar. The golf course bluebirds chose another golf course, and the non-golf course bluebirds chose non-golf locations. There were exceptions: one bluebird gave up golf and one bluebird joined a golf club. Interestingly, of the golf course bluebirds that stayed on golf courses, five stayed at the same club and three changed clubs (perhaps the dues were too high).

**How likely to score?**

We analyzed the overall success/failure rate of nest attempts (defined as laying at least one egg and having at least one baby nestling leave the nest successfully). Over our two year period, the average success rate of all nesting attempts was 78%. Sadly, a lot can go wrong between laying that first egg and a nestling taking flight.

**Are golf bluebirds on par with non-golf nesters?**

We compared the success/failure rate of golf course bluebirds and non-golf bluebirds. Golf bluebird success rate was 76% and non-golf nesters was 80%, which was slightly better. Golfers will tell you it's a very hard game.

**Can golf bluebirds survive the game?**

While golf courses are perfect bluebird habitat with large open areas, can bluebirds survive the chemicals used to maintain the fairways and greens? When four of the first five bluebirds we recaptured this spring turned out to be bluebirds that were banded on golf courses last year, we were most encouraged. But when we tallied the final numbers for the



*Jeff Zuckerman and Clare Gorman help band our bluebirds at Lake Isle Country Club. More golfing monitors are needed. Do you golf?*

year, the non-golf course bluebirds had a higher rate of recapture: 7% of the golf course bluebirds banded in 2011 were recaptured in 2012, compared to 10% of the bluebirds banded on non-golf locations.

This did not look as favorable for golf courses. However, we realized a flaw in the research results. Golf courses are harder to access for banding purposes (dodging golf balls is serious business). We could and did spend much more time trying to capture bluebirds on non-golf locations, and this could explain why the rate of recaptures was higher there.

**And the answer is**

The fact that we had bluebirds that were known to spend a nesting season on a golf course and survived to a second year is good news. We've had great success attracting bluebirds to our nestboxes on golf courses, and once there, they seem to flourish. We will continue to gather this banding and nesting data, but so far, we don't think our bluebirds should give up golf.

*Sandy Morrissey is BRSS president and founder of its Eastern Bluebird Project. Golfers are especially needed as monitors for our nestboxes on golf courses. If you can help, please contact at sandym@cloud9.net.*

# PROGRAMS 2013

**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 7:30 pm.

**February 20, Wednesday - Fabulous Snakes and Reptiles of the Northeast.**

Presenter: Tom Tying

Tom has studied snakes for four decades and is author of "A Guide to Amphibians and Reptiles," a Stokes nature guide. His informative presentation will **NOT** include live reptiles.

Location: Eastchester Public Library, 11 Oakridge Place, Eastchester. Time: 7:00 pm.

**March 20,, Wednesday - Wild Animal Program 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 18, Thursday - Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast: A Natural History**

Presenter: Carol Gracie is a naturalist and photographer. She is retired from The New York Botanical Garden. After marrying a tropical botanist, Carol decided to work with her husband on botanical research projects in South America. Carol is a co-author, with her husband Scott Mori, of the two-volume *Guide to the Vascular Plants of Central French Guiana*. She has five newly discovered plant species named for her. After working for two decades in the tropics, Carol's original love of temperate flora was rekindled, and in 2006 she co-authored (with Steve Clemants) *Wildflowers in the Field and Forest: A Field Guide to the Northeastern United States*. Her latest book, *Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast: A Natural History*, was published in March of 2012.



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The wildflowers that brighten our woodlands in spring are more than just a delight for the eye and a lift for the winter-weary spirit. Each has a role in the environment, with often interesting interactions with pollinators and seed dispersers. Learn about

the life histories of some of your favorite spring wildflowers. Topics will include adaptations for early blooming, medicinal and other uses, the origin of wildflower names, and pollination and seed dispersal.

Location: Bronxville Public Library, 201 Pondfield Rd., Bronxville. Time: 7:00 pm.

**May 22, Wednesday—The Arctic**

Presenters: Andy and Jane Cahn.

Andy and Jane Cahn, two seasoned educators and world travelers, offered us a most informative and interesting presentation on their trip to Antarctica this past year. They have recently returned from a trip to the Arctic and have agreed to share that experience with us as well.

No penguins this time . . . but plenty of polar bears!

Location: Eastchester Public Library, 11 Oakridge Place, Eastchester. Time: 7:00 pm.



*A joint project of the National Audubon Society and Cornell Lab of Ornithology*

Join the 16th annual  
**Great Backyard Bird Count**  
**Feb. 15 – 18, 2013**

Anyone from novice to expert birdwatcher can help count birds for as little as 15 minutes to as long as you want. Help contribute to bird research as a citizen scientist. For more information and to participate go online to [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

## Welcome To All Of Our New Members

**Bronxville**

- Patricia Cook
  - C.L. Doyle
  - Peter Hartmann
  - Francis Kelly
  - Melissa Metro
- Eastchester**
- Naomi Pool
- Hartsdale**
- Jane Lawrence
  - Herberta Schacher
- Larchmont**
- Thomas Amlicke
  - Sheila Davaney

**Stephen Grimm**

- Kevin Messerle
  - Church Moore
  - Chris Templeman
  - Linnet Tse
- Mamaroneck**
- Henriette Abraham
  - Raji Mosa
  - Therese Sheridan
- Mount Vernon**
- Ann Martini
  - Ewing Leon
  - Jean Stephenson
  - Beula Ticknor

**New Rochelle**

- Diane Brink
  - Vanessa Casimir
  - Stephanie Flanagan
  - Zoe Klobus
  - Trish Lapointe
  - Karl Molan
  - John Raeside
  - Bunny Reyman
  - Richard Reynolds
  - Ruth Slater
- Pelham**
- Ben & Joe Martucci
  - Anna O'Keeffe

**Rye**

- Michelle Dudley
- Scarsdale**
- Eliane Gama Almedia
  - Ruth Bahar
  - Steve Belich
  - Robert Brewster
  - The Colbrans
  - Terry Gilder
  - George Hatch
  - Scarsdale Public Library
  - Leonard Spivak
- Tuckahoe**
- Christine Denton
  - Eugene Listi

## Local Bird Sightings

These photos were taken by BRSS Audubon member Suzanne O'Rourke at Twin Lakes in Eastchester in December. One is a Bluebird with a band on it. Hopefully one of the ones we banded.



*Great Horned Owl*



*Northern Pintail*



*Banded Bluebird - Can you see the band ?*

### *Common Ground County Fair* *Continued from page 1*

There were featured speakers. This year was the celebration of the fifty year publication of *Silent Spring*, and the life and legacy of Rachel Carson. Each day had a keynote speaker, Friday was Shannon Hayes of Sap Bush Hollow Farm in West Fulton New York. Her speech was titled *Unraveling Consumerism*. Saturday's keynote was by Jay Feldman of *Beyond Pesticides; Fifty Years Since Silent Spring; Thirty Years of Organizing for a World Free of Toxic Pesticides*. Sunday's keynote by Sarah Smith of *Grassland Farm* in Skowhegan Maine was on *Farming Family and Community*.

There were also two farmers markets at both gates of the fairgrounds with farm fresh food, plus many vendors with organic foods. Crafts and trades were for sale.

It was my first time at this amazing place. I arrived at this rural area of Maine by country roads. Walking to the entrance you pass through a pine forest where sustainable forestry is occurring.

People can volunteer in any area of the fair. The website offers advanced registration for volunteering, free of course, for morning, afternoon, or evening shifts. I decided to volunteer. I had chosen to work with the compost tent. My task each morning was to bicycle to the compost stations around the fair and collect compost, bring new empty bags to a station or sometimes man a station. One morning I helped to sort through recycling

materials that were gathered at the tent, then put in proper bins, and brought cart loads of fresh compost to the pile.

After a four hour volunteer shift I received a meal card for the Common Kitchen, all organic cooked food, made by volunteers and donated by the local community farms. The food is good.

Around the fair I saw the crops and orchards that are on the property. This is the land of Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA). They have farmers in training living on the land. During the fair you can pick and eat vegetables and fruits and use the demonstration tools. Attending a foraging class, the instructor talked about which wild plants were edible, such as getting vitamin C from the needles of pines and furs.

I watched how animals are used in the forest to pull out cut trees. The branches are left behind to decay. The understory is not destroyed since no machinery is used. I also watched movies on climate change and on beginning farmers and how they are achieving their goals. The folk tent offered dancing and social events so everyone could have fun, meet, and interact with each other. There was so much more to explore that I suggest you go and experience this place for yourself next year in. Check out <http://www.mofga.org/theFair> for more information.

## Annual Bird Seed Sale Drive

*This your second chance to order seed & at the same time support the work of BRSS Audubon*

Thank you to all of the customers who bought birdseed through our fall seed sale. Our second seed sale is on right now and ends in early February. These are our ONLY fundraisers during the year. 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. *To order see the form enclosed with this newsletter.*

## FIELD TRIPS for BRSS/CWAS 2013

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

### **January 6, Sunday - Jones Beach**

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

### **January 20, Sunday - Montauk**

Meet at 7:00 am we will be looking for wintering ducks and other birds. Possibly some alcids, like razorbills and dovebies

### **February 2, 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 9, 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. The Annual Eagle Fest runs from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm and features different exhibits, live raptor shows and sites to see eagles.

### **March 16, Sunday - Read and Marshlands**

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

### **April 7 Sunday - Larchmont Reservoir / Hommocks**

Meet at Larchmont Reservoir at 8:00 am at upper entrance. Has sign opposite entrance that says Westchester Water Works Plant.

### **April 21 Sunday - Sterling Forest**

Meet at 7:15 am at Village Hall. Will be looking for early spring migrants, such as warblers, vireos, and other land and songbirds.

### **April 28-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 that are passing thru.

### **May 5, 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 19, Sunday - Doodletown Road**

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

### **June 7-9, Adirondack Weekend trip**

We will try to see many of the northern forest birds such as Boreal Chickadee, Black-backed Woodpecker and Gray Jays.

## BRSS Audubon Youth Birding Club Field Trip Schedule 2013

All field trips begin at 9:00 a.m. For help carpooling to locations, contact Dave Kaufman ([dkaufman43@gmail.com](mailto:dkaufman43@gmail.com)).

**March 9** – Read Wildlife Sanctuary – feeder birds, ducks and shore birds.

**April 13** – Sheldrake Environmental Center/Larchmont Reservoir. Looking for water birds and spring mi-

grants. Meet in parking lot of upper entrance opposite sign that says Westchester Water Works Plant.

**May 11** – Rye Nature Center – woodland birds and spring warblers.

**June 8** - Kensico Cemetery – nesting bluebirds (meet at cemetery office, 273 Lakeview Ave., Valhalla).

## Recent Field Trip Sightings

We encourage all to join our field trips. They are free and the birders leading them are very knowledgeable. Here is a list of a few recent field trips and what was found:

### **9/16 Meadowlands**

We had 46 species of birds. Highlights were Kestrels and Peregrine Falcons, also Eastern Phoebe, Black-throated Green Warbler.

### **10/6 Fire Island**

We saw 50 species of birds at the Fire Island hawk watch. Highlights were Several species of raptors as well as Royal Terns, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Both Kinglets and a Lot of Yellow-rumped Warblers

### **10/21 Larchmont Reservoir**

We had 41 species of birds including Green-winged Teal, Osprey.

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THIS ISSUE IN COLOR?**

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