



EST. 1947

# The BIRD CALL

Spring 2023

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

## BRSS Annual Meeting June 1

By Sandy Morrissey

After a 3-year Covid hiatus, we will happily return for an “in person” Annual Meeting at Five Islands Park in New Rochelle. We thank the very generous hospitality of the New Rochelle Department of Parks and Recreation for allowing us to use this beautiful setting. An optional guided bird walk starts at 6:00 P.M. and the business meeting begins at 6:30 P.M. It’s a great opportunity to meet and chat with other members. Wine and cheese plus other light refreshments will be served. All BRSS members and friends are encouraged to attend.

### Our Honoree is Kevin Crowe

Again, choosing a local grassroots environmental activist, we are honoring Larchmont resident Kevin Crowe. He volunteered to help us install a Purple Martin tower in Willow Park in Larchmont. A retired carpenter, he had all the skills and tools required to get the job done. He understood Nylock nuts, turnbuckles, eyebolts and whatever the heck a swedge is. It took three days (each ending with the setting sun) and several trips to the store to complete the task. His helpers were in awe and amazed at his knowledge and skill.

He came to us through a connection we had with Larchmont-Mamaroneck Pollinator Pathway, an organization he is passionate about. They promote the rebuilding of the food chain (and the environment) by encouraging, supporting, and helping to plan the addition of more pollinator-friendly gardens in public and private places. They host an annual garden tour to demonstrate the positive results. Kevin was inspired and launched into this activity after reading Doug Tallamy’s book, *Bringing Nature Home*, which he highly recommends.



Additionally, he serves on the Mamaroneck Sustainability Collaborative Committee, which advises the Town of Mamaroneck on environmental issues. He also helped organize two “Repair Café” days, which are all about repairing things and keeping them out of the landfill. People bring their broken items and find tools and skilled experts to help repair them.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Henry May Honored by Audubon Council of New York



BRSS board member Henry May received the prestigious Norman Stotz award from the Audubon Council of New York for exemplary leadership and volunteer service for the Audubon Society. His contributions are many. He helped set up and teaches in our “Learn Birds are Cool in School” program. Hen-

ry persevered for 9 years to help get a strong Tree Code passed in Mt. Vernon, resulting in it regaining its “Tree City” designation. He currently sits on its Tree Advisory Board. After trees, Henry took on helping Monarch butterflies. He learned all he could, realized that milkweed was a key to their survival, and then went on a mission to spread the word, educate, and pass out hundreds of milkweed plants to schools and other organizations. Henry recently had a milestone birthday but NONE of us can keep up with him. Congratulations, Henry. We are so lucky to have you on our Board.

*Congratulations*

**BRSS AUDUBON**

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

**Board of Directors  
and Committee Members**

*Officers*

*PRESIDENT*

Sandra Morrissey 391-3695  
sandym10530@gmail.com

*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

*CONSERVATION*

Maria Albano 420-8521  
Miriam Beveridge 725-8608  
Leslie Brill 400-9136  
Bernie Conway 413-210-0041  
Johnny Flores 917-345-8698  
Ted Kavanagh 646-334-1775  
Tim Mack 917-208-5507  
Henry May 667-6144  
Erin Provenzano 845-531-8109  
Vern Schramm 576-2578  
Susan Williams 917-385-9727

*HOSPITALITY*

Diane Morrison 725-7351

*PROGRAMS*

Doug Bloom 834-5203  
Leslie Brill 400-9136  
Bernie Conway 413-210-0041  
Erin Provenzano 845-531-8109

*NEWSLETTER*

Clare Gorman, Editor  
claregorman@yahoo.com

*WEBSITE*

Erin Provenzano 845-531-8109

*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*

*Continued from Page 1*

We need more Kevin Crowes in this world. We are so happy he lives in the BRSS community!

**Election of Board Members**

At the Annual Meeting, BRSS members will be asked to vote to approve the following slate of Directors for the Class of 2026: Maria Albano, Doug Bloom, Diane Morrison, Sandy Morrissey, and Vern Schramm.

We hope to see all BRSS members and friends at Five Islands Park in New Rochelle on June 1.

**What Would the Bluebirds Do Without the Girl Scouts?**



Thanks Valhalla Girl Scout troop for making 3 new homes for our bluebirds!



Thanks White Plains Girl Scouts for making 4 new homes for our bluebirds!

## Spotlight on Our Board Members

In the next several issues we will introduce you to our Board members. Below are short biographies of two of our most prolific article writers: Ted Kavanagh and Vern Schramm.

### Ted Kavanagh



Born in Cyprus and a dual US-Canadian citizen, Ted Kavanagh has lived in Pelham since 2002. He holds a Masters degree in geology and worked in the mining industry, based in Denver, Colorado, for ten years before establishing a marketing office there for an Australian bank. After working for 30 years for a series of banks in Denver, Toronto and New York, Ted retired in 2021.

His interest in birds followed what is probably a typical trajectory. After seeing the variety of birds that were attracted to a backyard feeder he put out in 2012, Ted began to join local bird walks in the Bronx and Westchester, including BRSS walks at Larchmont Reservoir, Edith Read, Rockefeller SP and farther afield. One thing led to another, and he was invited to join the BRSS board in 2018.

In addition to watching birds in their backyard and locally, Ted and his wife Toni have since joined birding expeditions on six continents, most recently in Australia where their eldest son relocated in 2022.

### Vern Schramm

A native of South Dakota, Vern's training and work in biomedical research carried him to Boston, Australia, California, Philadelphia and New York. Vern and his wife Deanna have resided in New Rochelle for 36 years. Always a student of nature, he became more engaged in bird watching during annual summer visits to the small town of Meriden, New Hampshire. Morning 6 am bird walks with a long-time friend kindled his interest in species recognition, habitat, and bird song. A long-time Audubon member, Vern often joins Doug Bloom as part of Doug's frequent guided bird tours around Westchester County and Central Park. His appointment on the Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon Chapter Board provided an outlet for his daily hobby as an avid backyard and local birder. Vern has been inspired to contribute occasional bird stories to the Bronx River Sound Shore newsletter.



Using the love of birdwatching as an additional excuse for travel, Vern and Deanna have joined international guided bird-watching tours in South Africa, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Peru, New Zealand, Brazil, and Antarctica. Why watch birds? Awareness of the avian environment enhances every walk, drive or glance out the window. Walking in nature or even a stroll in your neighborhood takes on a deeper dimension when the variety of bird life is appreciated. Service to the Bronx River Sound Shore Audubon Chapter fosters engagement of young and old in conservation, especially in protecting and growing the environment for our bird friends.

## Winter Seed Sale Results

Thank you to all the customers who purchased birdseed through our Winter seed sale. We run two seed sales, which are our only fundraisers during the year, so your support is very important. The sales fund our newsletter, Bluebird project, classroom programs, and more. Our profit on the second seed sale was \$4394. In addition, you generously gave \$2221 in donations. This brings our total income from profits and donations for the two seed sales to more than \$12,000. Thank you for allowing us to continue our work at BRSS Audubon.

Thank you to the following who gave donations for the seed sale this year:

Paul Basch, Mary Alice Becker, Doug Bloom, Sheryl Breuninger, Leslie Brill, Steve Cadenhead, Ernestine Colombo, Cathy Corbin, Maria Cornacchia, Jim Cowen, Julia De Carlo, Gail Doolin, Robert Everett, Cece Fabbro, Margaret Falk, Clare Gorman, Elizabeth Harriss, Kathryn Heintz, Lee Hemphill, Edmond Herve, Lois Hertzberg, Marjut Herzog, Emita Hill, Tina Hoerenz, Melisa Horlick, Phil Horner, Ted Kavanagh, Debra Kenney, Steven Kessler, Ruth Kotecha, Marilyn Krizansky, Stephen Landon, Wendy Long, Kelly Mac Pherson, Marianne Makman, Barbara Marciani, Valerie Marini, Dave Margulis, James Matison, Michelle Mc Nally, Scott Mellis, Sandy Morrissey, Wendy Murphy, Ingrid Nardoni, Francine Naughton, Cindy Olsen, Suzi Oppenheimer, Dorothy Patterson, Katie Pettus, Donald Pinals, Neil Powell, Rachel Pullman, Karen Raggins, Jamie Randol, James Richey, Barbara Roca, Tracy Ronnermann, Ehud Rybak, Yusuf Salim, Vern Schramm, Joan Shapiro, Joan Sharp, Sheldrake Environmental Center, Summer Shetenhelm, Adrienne Skinner, Mark Sotsky, Barbara Spiridon, Jean Stephenson, Marc Straussberg, Victoria Stumer, Caroline Sutton, Odette Tin-Aung, Ellen Valle, Marilyn Varley, Toni Viscio, Jan Von Mehren, Lisa Wagner, Joan Weissman, William Wertheim, Sidney Witter, Josette Zichello, Jeff Zuckerman



## FIELD TRIPS



Please Contact Doug Bloom at (914) 834-5203 for info or to register. **LIMITED TO 20 PEOPLE.**

### May 7, Sunday - Central Park

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

### May 13, Saturday - Rockefeller Preserve

Meet at Rockefeller parking lot at 8 AM. Looking for spring migrants.

### May 20, Saturday - Doodletown Road

Meet at 8 AM at Doodletown Road. It is a great place to see Cerulean Warblers nesting and other migrants.

### May 27, Saturday - Sterling Forest

Meet at 8 AM in parking lot at Visitors Center lot. We will be looking for early migrants.

## The Seriema: One of the Last Remnants from “The Age of Reptiles”

By Alex Pinnock

Terror Bird



Seriema



In the grasslands of eastern to southern South America, there lives a very unique bird with an interesting family tree. Meet the Seriema, a small, terrestrially-hunting bird that kills its larger prey (lizards, snakes) by picking it up and slamming it down onto the ground. Although it sounds very similar to my personal favorite bird, the African Secretary Bird, it is only a matter of convergent evolution that they adopted similar body plans, hunting styles, and retained flight ability. What makes the Seriema special though, is that it is the last of the Cariamiformes, a set of mostly flightless birds which were very diverse in the earlier parts of the Cenozoic. The most famous of the Cariamiformes are the Phorusrhacids, or better known as the “Terror Birds.” These giant flightless birds lived in the Paleocene up to the early Pleistocene mostly in South America (same place where you find the Seriema today). These creatures had massive bone-crushing beaks and were the apex predators of their time. They were able to take the apex predator niches of their non-avian dinosaur cousins soon after the KPG extinction event where the non-avian dinosaurs went extinct. Sadly, this new Cenozoic world was not a place for these modern dinosaurs. In the Great American Biotic Interchange, where animals from North and South America were able to converge, the “Terror Birds” were outcompeted by the new upstart apex predators of North America: The big cats. Some smaller members were able to hang on until the Pleistocene, but then the reign of the dinosaurs finally concluded. If you ever have the chance to see a Seriema in the wild, take a minute to realize the legacy that was left in its wake and how the time period we live in is truly “The Age of Mammals.”

*Alex is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student at The Masters School and one of our bluebird nestbox monitors.*

## Wish Cedar Waxwings Were Visiting Your Yard? Invite Them With Berries

By Cynthia Roberts



Would you like to see more spring migrating birds stop at your yard? A bird feeder will help, but planting native shrubs and trees with berries will attract some special guests. A flock of 17 cedar waxwings, black-masked beauties alighted in my dogwood tree. Their wing and tail tips that appear dipped in brilliant red and yellow wax. Never having seen one in my neighborhood, I watched them perch on a dogwood tree from which they swooped onto our new winterberry holly bushes. Fruit lovers, they spent the afternoon

Photo credit: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/noindex/photo/305837211-480px.jpg>

*Continued on Page 5*

## Goodbye Snowbirds

By Vern Schramm

As late autumn nights bring freezing temperatures and snow threatens, a winter visitor arrives at our backyard feeders. The Dark-eyed Juncos revel in cold temperatures, especially when snow falls. The Slate-colored Junco is the color variant most common and familiar to our New York neighborhoods. Other regions of the country are home to different color variants including the Oregon, Pink-sided, White-winged, Gray-headed, and Red-backed Juncos. Similar except for eye color, the Yellow-eyed Junco is a resident of southern Arizona. All Juncos share the outer white tail feathers and darker central feathers that immediately identify Juncos in flight.

The contrasting cloaks make the Slate-colored Junco stand out against white snow, giving them their common name of Snowbirds. Snow or not, Juncos eagerly scratch for seeds that have fallen to the ground and prefer to scurry in ground cover looking for snacks. Early spring breezes from the south alert the Dark-eyed Juncos to their travel schedule. Before departure, larger groups gather to fatten



at backyard feeders. Suddenly, following warm winds from the south, the juncos are gone. Spring migration takes the juncos north from as near as the Adirondacks to mid-Canada and even to latitudes in the north of Alaska. Seeds keep the juncos fed during the winter, but on arrival at their nesting grounds, the summer diet includes insects and caterpillars. Mother junco selects a nest site in a concealed site on the ground to build a grass-lined nest to raise a brood from 4 or 5 eggs. By the time northern winters arrive, the family is ready to return south to become our next generation of winter snowbirds.

## Planting Westchester-New Resource for Birders and Gardeners Alike

By Cynthia Roberts

Planting Westchester is a new free Westchester County website to aid residents in making our ecosystem greener and healthier. This online resource provides “how to” guidance for giving our feathered friends essential food and shelter. Whether you are installing flowers in balcony or patio pots, adding shrubs to your yard, wildflowers to your flower garden, or trees to your yard or neighborhood park, this website can help select the most eco-friendly species. <https://www.westchestergov.com/planting-westchester>

As you probably know, most spring nestlings require an insect diet for survival. Many of these juicy caterpillars, the larval forms of moths and butterflies, will only eat the leaves of native trees and shrubs. Native plants are those that have co-evolved in our ecosystem, supporting the food web for our local insects, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and birds. Our insect populations, however, are threatened by a lack of native plants as gardeners have favored planting species introduced from other regions of the world. The changing climate also presents challenges to plant and insect populations, and therefore bird populations.

The website section entitled “Native Plants” will lead you to nursery sources, planting instructions, and is a fabulous online resource for enriching your yard with native plants. These will enable your yard to better support biodiversity, especially the insects our birds need to feed spring chicks. And, of course, the Planting Westchester website includes links to wonderful online Audubon resources.

Within the Native Plant section is a tab: “Plants for Birds”:  
<https://www.westchestergov.com/native-plants/what-should-i-plant>

---

*Continued from Page 4—Cedar Waxwings*

devouring the red berries.

Winterberry holly (*Ilex verticillata*) is a deciduous holly shrub, meaning that it loses its leaves in the winter, but it retains bright red berries that bejewel its branches into late winter/early spring. If you plant them, please remember that all hollies need at least one male plant amongst the females for pollination in order to produce fruit.

For much more information about what to plant to attract birds, go to the new free online County resource, Planting Westchester: <https://www.westchestergov.com/planting-westchester>

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

(formerly Scarsdale Audubon Society)  
P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

NON PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
WHITE PLAINS, NY  
PERMIT NO. 7033



Stay in touch with BRSS Audubon in the following ways:



Visit our website  
[brssaudubon.org](http://brssaudubon.org)



Find us on Facebook  
Search Bronx River  
Sound Shore Audubon  
Society

## 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 extraordinary magazine. Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

**\*NEW MEMBERS form only. Please RENEW membership online at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make \$20 check to National Audubon Society and mail to:**

BRSS Audubon Society, Inc.  
P. O. Box 1108  
Scarsdale, NY 10583

C0ZR080Z