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The

BIRD CALL

Spring 2020

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

BRSS Annual Meeting Rescheduled September 10

It is no surprise that we had to cancel all our scheduled spring bird walks and programs due to the Covid virus. Likewise, we just rescheduled our Annual Meeting to September 10. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us then. It will be at Five Islands Park in New Rochelle, as usual, and as usual, we will elect officers, board members and honor an individual making significant environmental efforts at the grass roots level.

Honoree is Madelaine Eppenstein

Doing a “tree-mendous” job making Scarsdale greener and safer, is Madelaine Eppenstein. A Westchester resident for 35 years, and now retired lawyer, she is one of the go-to people to get conservation jobs done.

Among her major accomplishments is getting over 1000 native trees and shrubs planted in Scarsdale. How did this come about? We can thank the Blizzard of 2014! Madelaine became aware for the first time that the town stockpiled snow in the Harwood Park wetland between the library and the high school. It didn’t melt till May. Apparently, routine dumping of snow there had killed trees, clogged the stream and made the degradation of the area an eyesore.

At this point, Madelaine had joined the Friends of the Scarsdale Parks (FOSP) and was president. She discovered in past board minutes that the FOSP had been aware and working on this issue since 1987. She was alerted that the



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Bluebirds on the Rebound

By Sandy Morrissey

While we go through this stressful time, we look for good news wherever we find it. Fortunately, the bluebirds of happiness knew we needed them and have come through for us.

The nesting season is in full swing. While some of our locations are closed to us, most are open for monitoring. I consider it a “safe” activity, as we go alone, touch only our own cars and the nestboxes at the location, all of which are in open spaces.

We are finding nesting bluebirds at locations where they were missing for several years, and discovering not one, but two or more nesting pairs in some places. As this publication goes to press, we have bluebirds in almost half our locations. And it is still early.

One of the biggest comebacks is on golf courses, which were the hardest hit by the parasite in 2017. Of the 13 courses with our boxes, 10 have nesting bluebirds.



We have many bluebirds taking up golf.

We have hope for the others, some of which we can’t get on at this time.

New Locations and Monitors

We are excited about two new locations added this spring. At Ward Acres Park, we

installed two boxes in the area where the new native plant meadow will be created. A male bluebird was spotted there before the boxes went up. Let’s hope it finds a girlfriend and stays.

Pelham Country Club recently created an environmental committee and consulted with BRSS for advice to make the grounds more environmentally friendly.

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NYS DEC had a grant that gave free trees if qualified. She used her lawyer skills, won the grant, prepared FOSP's 15-page report to the town, and convinced the town to dump the snow elsewhere. Since then, every year she has applied and won the grant for the free trees, and there has been a Scarsdale Community Planting Day every spring involving hundreds of volunteer children and adults – and over 1000 native trees and shrubs planted.

She is currently vice-president of the Scarsdale Forum and works tirelessly on many issues to make Scarsdale greener and more sustainable. She advocates for best practices for village parks, recreation fields, and open green spaces including a no-pesticide policy. The committee she chairs submitted recommendations for traffic-calming, including making the village more walkable and bikeable.

An avid gardener, with a garden tour-worthy garden, she advocates for using native plants. FOSP maintains the pollinator garden at Hyatt Field Park that FOSP planted as a demonstration garden for the youth who use the park. She works with FOSP on a long-range plan for the improvement and maintenance of the Scarsdale Library pond and gardens. She involves high school students in FOSP projects with the same goal as BRSS Audubon, get them to appreciate the out-of-doors, with hopes it leads them to protecting the environment as adults.

Madelaine first intersected with BRSS Audubon with its bluebird project. A member of St. Andrews Golf Club, she learned that BRSS was putting nestboxes on golf courses and advocated for the course to join the movement. The first year we put up the boxes, bluebirds showed up.



All towns and villages could use more "Madelaines." Join us in honoring her achievements at our September Annual Meeting.

Election of Officers Board Members

At the Annual Meeting, BRSS members will be asked to vote to approve the following officers for a two-year term: Sandra Morrissey, President; Doug Bloom, Vice President; Diane Morrison, Secretary; and Jeff Zuckerman, Treasurer.

The membership will also be asked to vote for the slate of Directors for the Class of 2023: Doug Bloom, Diane Morrison, Sandy Morrissey, Vern Schramm and new to the board, Maria Albano. In addition, we are proposing two other new board members: Susie Williams for the Class of 2021, and Leslie Brill for the Class of 2022. All three new board members come to us through the interest their children have in birds. All have children attending our youth bird walks. Since a major BRSS mission is to involve younger generations in Audubon, what better way than to engage these young parents.

Going off the board is Dave Kaufman. He was a major contributor to our youth initiative, being there when we formed our youth bird walks and leading many of them. His arrival at walks with donut holes and spare binoculars was always a great start before we headed down the path.

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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Of course, we suggested bluebird nestboxes. On the day we put up the boxes, like magic, a bluebird appeared just as the last pole went into the ground. Fingers crossed it will also find a mate and stay.

Thanks to ALL our monitors who check our boxes and the volunteers who help build them. We couldn't do it without you. We were sorry to have to cancel three Girl Scout nestbox-making programs in the spring, but we know they will reschedule this fall. Girl Scouts are always looking to make the world a better place.



Sixth grader, Joshua Antelmi, will be monitoring the new boxes at Ward Acres Conservancy.

This Rockefeller SP bluebird feasts on a tasty caterpillar. The "Rock" is a great place to spot bluebirds.



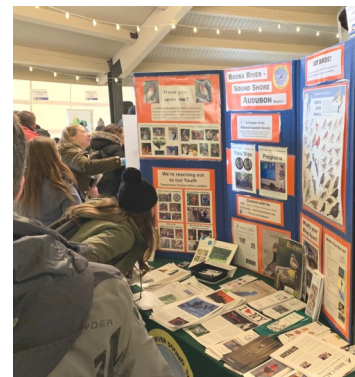
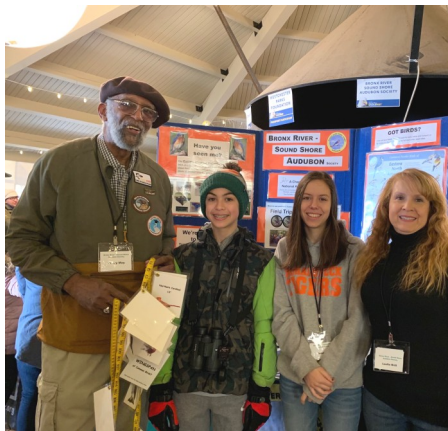
Pete Charles, grounds staff, and Joan and Joe Solimini were on hand when new boxes went up at Pelham CC. Joan organized enthusiastic members to monitor the boxes.

EagleFest 2020

By Doug Bloom

February 8 was EagleFest at Croton Point Park. It was a beautiful sunny day for the event. According to Teatown over 4000 people attended the event. In all locations there were probably 100 to 150 eagles seen. There were

demonstrations on birds of prey and other environmental topics. The bird walks at Croton Point Park all had at least twenty to fifty participants. With all the warm weather this past winter there was no ice on the river for eagles to sit on. Early in the afternoon Bill, Hillary and Chelsea Clinton and her daughters stopped by and went through the tent chatting with people in attendance.

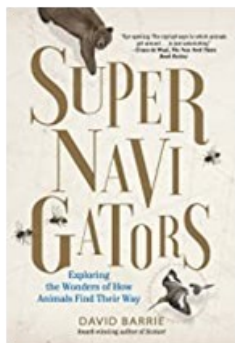


THANK YOU FOR PURCHASING SEED AND FOR YOUR DONATIONS!
Thank you to all of our customers who bought birdseed and made donations during our February seed sale. Since these are our main fundraisers during the year, we appreciate your continued support. The combined profit and donations from our two seed sales in October and February came to more than \$10,000. Pretty special!

SAVE The DATE Please mark your calendars – BRSS Annual Meeting, September 10, at scenic Five Islands Park in New Rochelle. The business meeting begins at 6:30 P.M., with an optional guided bird walk at 6:00 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.

You Can go Home Again! – Two Books on Migration

By Ted Kavanagh



Supernavigators: Exploring the Wonders of how Animals Find Their Way – David Barrie; April 2019, 301 pages

Few feats of endurance compare with the twice-annual migrations of birds, flying south in the fall in search of food and shelter, and northward to their breeding grounds in the spring. Among the champion migrators, Bar-tailed Godwits fly *non-stop* for 7,250 miles between Alaska and New Zealand! A group of Arctic Terns tracked with geolocating devices covered a distance of over 56,000 miles one year during the 275 days they were away from their breeding colony, traveling an average of

200 miles each day. Two books published last year explore migration in very different ways.

David Barrie, a British geographer, explores in *Supernavigators* the many mechanisms of migration – notably in birds but also in butterflies, whales, bats and fish. Some of the latter stories are more astounding than those of the birds which, after all, make the first of their many migrations as “adolescents” alongside adult birds, so presumably have the benefit of received wisdom. Each Monarch butterfly, by contrast, emerging in August or September from its gold-spangled chrysalis in the northern US or Canada, somehow knows to fly thousands of miles southward to roost on a mountainside in Mexico. It will make the southern trek only once in its life, then retrace its path north in the spring in search of a milkweed plant on which to lay its eggs, then perish a few weeks later.

How does a Chinook salmon, after spending up to eight years in the Pacific Ocean, know to begin what will be a one-time journey of as much as 1,900-miles up the Yukon River back to the very gravel-bed on which it was spawned? Barrie explains the many migratory “tools” – magnetism, “star charts” scent, etc. – and also how those mechanisms have evolved from simple attributes in rudimentary life-forms (avoiding or being attracted to light, for example), to more complex capabilities amongst the higher species. He discusses how humans have lost touch with their own innate migratory skills, some of which are preserved amongst the islanders of the South Pacific who successfully traverse hundreds of miles of open ocean with only the stars, clouds and ocean currents to guide them.



A Season on the Wind: Inside the World of Spring Migration – Kenn Kaufman; April 2019, 288 pages

Kenn Kaufman, a noted birder and author of a dozen field-guides and other birding-related books, has written *A Season on the Wind* with a more narrow focus. After living for most of his adult life in the US birding mecca of southeastern Arizona, Kaufman recently relocated to northern Ohio, which might be considered a relative birding “wasteland.” Au contraire – while the landscape at the western end of Lake Erie has been transformed by agriculture and industry, there remain pockets of what was once “the Great Black Swamp” – a 100-

mile by 50-mile habitat that reached as far west as Indiana. Those pockets of wetlands, the remnant woods and what remains of undisturbed shoreline along Lake Erie continue to host year-round resident species, and attract a wide variety of migratory birds. Kaufman chronicles the progressive arrival of the birds over the course of one spring. He knows each habitat intimately. He sees the first waterfowl landing in the stubbly farm-fields as the days lighten, the first raptors circling northward, and the first songbirds. The climax of the migration is the arrival of the warblers. Northern Ohio features one true “birding bucket-list” destination – Magee Marsh – one hour east of Toledo on the south shore of Lake Erie. Birders congregate there each spring to witness the arrival of 30-40 warbler species, all in their breeding finery, with hundreds of birds resting each day before making their nighttime flight north across the lake. A mile-long network of boardwalks through the wetland provides for easy viewing of the birds, though photographers and their tripods make for congestion during the peak weekends.

We in the New York area have our own springtime hot-spots – Central Park, Marshlands, Doodletown Road – but Kaufman’s book is a great reminder of how the bird arrivals create their own natural calendar. While focused on one small area of the country, his book will have birders everywhere thinking about what awaits all of us as the days grow longer.

Ted Kavanagh is a BRSS board member and trained geologist. In 7 years, his birding has progressed from hanging out a bird feeder at his Pelham home to world travel to see birds. A year ago he took (mimicking the Bar-tailed Godwit) the world’s longest passenger flight – Newark to Singapore, 10,000 miles, 19 hours non-stop.

The Catty-Pillar Lesson by Miss Irma – A Master Teacher

By Henry May



My recent concentration about Milkweed and the Monarch Butterfly has acted as a “trigger” causing me to recall an incident I observed in the late 1960s! At that time, I was the representative of an Education Division of a corporation that was working with Head Start staffs and other community-based Early Childhood Education Centers around the country.

Now, after fifty years, I am remembering the occasion of a visit to a Head Start center in North Carolina. I was standing in front of a small single-family house that had been converted into a Head Start center. I was there to meet the Director. I remember walking up a few steps and opening the door to find a lady and about fifteen “little people” in the room,

Ms.I: *“Boys and girls this is the man from New York. I told you he would be visiting us. His name is Mr. May. Can we welcome him?”*

Children: *“Hello, Mr. Maaaayy.”*

HMay: *“Hello everybody. Thank you for that welcome.”*

Ms.I: *“My name is Irma Billings, but everybody calls me Miss Irma. Mr. Warner said you would be coming; he had to leave to pick up the lunches from the pantry center. He will be back in about fifteen minutes. We are getting ready to take our afternoon walk. Come, walk with us. Mr. Warner will be here when we get back.”*

We left the building together, and you could tell that this was something the children did often. They stopped and waited before going around the corner. They knew how to walk together. They seemed to enjoy the walk. There were no stragglers. Miss Irma was in the center of the group pointing out different things as they walked along and I followed at the back, observing what was happening.

Ms.I: *“Stay away from that fence, you know that dog is back there,.. we don’t want him barking and making a whole lot of noise. Look at that Robin over there pulling on that worm.”*

Girl: *“Miss Irma, Miss Irma, Jimmy got a worm in his hand. He say he gonna squeeze it. Uggh!”*

Ms. I: *“What!... Thanks for telling me. James, what you got in your hand?”*

James: *“I got a worm, Miss Irma.”*



Ms.I: *“Lemme see that worm you got. James, that aint no worm, that’s a ‘Catty-pillar.’ You got a beautiful, fat, Catty-pillar! Looks like he’s been eating pretty good, but he still might be a little hungry. Where’d you find him?”*

James: *“I found him over there on that bush.”*

Ms.I: *“Oh yes, that’s the only kind of bush he lives on. He nibbles on the leaves, and when he is finished eating, he makes some glue and sticks it onto a branch where he can hang while he covers himself in a little house of his own.”*

Ms.I: *“His house is really a case he builds around himself. It does not have any stair steps, windows or doors. He’s all closed up in there by himself changing, and he won’t come out until he has completely changed.”*

James: *“Changing? What do you mean? Changed to what?”*

Ms.I: *“Yes, it changes. Won’t be no Catty-pillar anymore. When he comes out he will have changed into one happy, beautiful butterfly! He might come back one day so you can see him, just-a flapping his wings, and flying all over the place, so happy to be alive. Come along children, lunch is here, let’s get our hands washed and cleaned.”*

As the children marched toward the house for lunch, I was surprised to see James walk over to the bush and shake the Catty-pillar onto a leaf. He turned and skipped along to catch up with the other children, ready to wash his hands and have lunch.

Miss Irma did not reprimand or belittle James. She didn’t give him any orders. I think she knew, that as tough and rough as James was, his inner spirit would cause him to recognize the importance of life, even for a Catty-pillar. It was difficult for James to do anything else but return the Catty-pillar to a leaf!

As smart as I thought I was, and as good as I might have been at teaching, I realized that I had been privileged to witness a “Master Teacher” at work.

Henry May is a BRSS board member and was a high school teacher, among other careers. He is on a mission to help Monarchs by getting people to plant milkweed and to get garden centers to carry milkweed plants and seeds.

Learn how you can help Monarchs in the enclosed insert.

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