

RIVERTOWN NATURALIST

Summer 2020 Vol.49, No 6



Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester, Inc is a non-profit chapter of National Audubon.

Our mission is to foster protection and appreciation of birds, other wildlife and habitats, and to be an advocate for a cleaner, and healthier environment.
www.hras.org

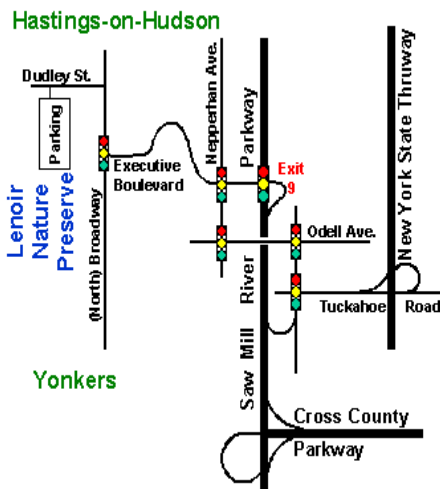
DIRECTIONS TO LENOIR NATURE PRESERVE

Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester, Inc. holds its meetings at Lenoir Preserve a Westchester County Nature Preserve, 19 Dudley Street, Yonkers,

Directions:

Take Saw Mill River Parkway to Exit 9, Executive Blvd. Take Executive Blvd. to its end at North Broadway and turn Right.

Go ¼ mile on North Broadway and turn Left onto Dudley Street. Parking lot is on the left



Social Distancing

Covid-19 is making many changes. For a month, the White Plains Post Office, where we have our mailing permit, stopped accepting bulk mail. Our May-June issue couldn't be mailed. It can be read online: www.hras.org Now that we can send out printed versions, here is our first ever Summer issue.

Note: To comply with the current need to maintain proper social distances, we cancelled all our scheduled programs and activities through the summer. That includes all monthly programs, field trips and other activities that might make it difficult to maintain proper distances. There were two exceptions. The first was our popular Bird-A-Thon which did take place on May 16th in a modified form. The results are printed inside.

Also, by popular demand, the second event, our annual Member's Night, will take place with a modified format. See below for details

Member's Night Wednesday, June 24, 2020 7:30 PM

Our chapter is blessed with many exceptional photographers. Their photos of birds, mammals, and other natural beauty rival those seen in glossy magazines. Once a year we ask them to share their best photos with us.

In a normal year they would show their photos to a packed crowd at Lenoir Preserve, but social isolation frowns on crowds. Don't fear. You can still marvel at their excellent photos. But this year we will do it via a virtual Zoom meeting on the internet. - all the same amazing images but without the crowds. If you are bored being isolated at home, join us. Wednesday, June 24th at 7:30PM

If you want to be part of our Zoom meeting, send an email to greenberg.fran@gmail.com requesting access and sign information

If you would like to share your best photos with our internet gathering, send 5-7 of your best photos to:

Michael Bochnik. Email address: BochnikM@cs.com

The preferred format(s) is/are in **Powerpoint**

Deadline for submitting your photos: **June 20, 2020**

If you have any questions, please call Michael: 914-237-9331

Please limit the number of photos. If we receive too many, will arbitrarily edit out some, maybe your favorite.

Join us to enjoy nature without leaving home

President's Message - *On Birding Alone*



We've been social distancing since mid-March. I did it on my own occasionally, but these past months it's been mandated by the NYS Department of Health. I much prefer that I could have made my own choice than to have it state imposed, but the coronavirus pandemic hasn't given any of us the option.

I've used the time to discover my inner Thoreau, that nature loving essayist who cherished self-reliance but returned to the family home several times a week for dinner and didn't refuse his mother's help with laundry.

Our American hero of solitude had his limits, and I've got mine. I'm lucky not to live alone, so while my social distancing has involved more than my comfort level with isolation, I'm not lonely. I'm lucky to be a birder and to live in a county with a lot of public land and a strong Audubon Society presence (us and four other chapters). I couldn't have learned one sixteenth of what I know if I hadn't taken walks with experts. But there is a level of awareness I have when I'm on my own, a receptivity to my non-human surroundings that I don't when I'm with others. We humans are deeply social creatures; even as I walk around Marshlands Conservancy with only three Great Egrets and two Ospreys in sight, I know how much was done by others to give me a pleasurable feeling of being alone in nature. Trails are maintained; the land is accessible; there's a parking lot. The ospreys are easily seen, thanks to the platforms erected for their nests.

On my own, I listen to cheeps, chirps, clucks and song more intently. I know the sources of some; not others; sometimes I find the bird making the sound, and it stays in my memory the way it wouldn't if I was told: that's a willet. I see, I hear it: I have the pleasure of putting two pieces of a puzzle together. I'm alert, I'm concentrated. I'm the intruder in a bird's world, but more tolerated than a group of noisy humans. If I hold still for ten minutes, better even if I'm sitting down, I seem, from a bird's point of view, to melt into the background. Birds that flushed when I first entered their territory may return. The bold human-tolerant species like Black-capped Chickadees and Gray Catbirds may even approach within five feet of me. They know what I am, but for the moment, it's peaceful co-existence.

We don't know when social distancing rules will be lifted or, if they are, if they might be re-imposed by a resurgence of Covid-19 infections. Our programs will be suspended whenever social distancing is mandated.

To find out when other programs will start, visit www.hras.org. If you haven't already, subscribe to our email notification list there (hras.org).

What else to do? You can walk the trails in all county and state parks; their playgrounds are closed. On-line, Audubon New York, www.ny.audubon.org, is great - you can sign up for webinars, follow conservation news and more. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has great web cams of nesting birds. (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/all-cams/>).

- Fran Greenberg

BIRD-A-THON RESULTS

Pandemic or not – the Bird-A-Thon must go on! It's been our spring fundraising event for 40 years. We spent a full day seeking as many species as we can. It was the peak of bird migration. Weather was perfect, sunny and mild. If there had been a southern wind, we might have broken some records.

We did well, finding 121 species, combining sightings of all participants.

We observed the rules. Birded solo except for household members. Wore masks. Kept 6' apart. Westchester parks & preserves are open. However, that means on a beautiful day, the parks are thronged with people escaping stay-at-home orders. Mike and Kelli almost got shut out of

Cranberry Lake Preserve because there was no parking available. They did spot 69 species at Marshlands, where they began birding at 5:30 AM, and a total of 101 species for the day.

In addition to the common species, highlight sightings included Barred Owl, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Oystercatcher, Willet, Least Terns and 22 species of Warblers.

A new team, the Bird Nerds, consisting of two household members and a friend, combed their sightings by phone for a total of 82 species. We also welcome the first-time participants: Kathy Guida and James Judy, Dick Leonard, Laura Rice, Katie Rubright as well as returning -thoners: Debbi Dolan and Matt Turov, Ruth DeFord, Saul Scheinbach and Judi Veder, Sandra Wright, Joe Rothstein and others.

In addition to being fun, our Bird-A-Thon is a fund raiser for the chapter. Please consider making a donation to HRAS. Supporters often contribute a fixed amount, such as \$25 or \$30. Or they pledge a fixed amount per species seen. For the 121 species found, a donation of 25 cents per species would amount to a total of \$30.25. It is not too late to donate. Check made out to Hudson River Audubon can be mailed to PO Box 616, Yonkers, NY 10703.



“Ribbons of Remembrance” at Lenoir Preserve

Westchester County recently installed a memorial in Lenoir Preserve dedicated to the 1,000 residents who have lost their lives to COVID-19. Located in a peaceful natural setting near the mansion, overlooking fields and the Hudson River, the memorial is a simple but powerful way to remember a loved one.

Inside a birdhouse you will find purple ribbons and permanent markers used to write the names of loved ones who died from the virus. Members of the community are urged to come on their own

time, create a personal ribbon, and pay their respects by hanging that ribbon on a nearby tree.

“Ribbons of Remembrance” honors every fatality as a human being rather than a statistic.

COVID-19 Virus spurs interest in birding

Many antidotal reports suggest that the self-isolation has resulted in many people rediscovering simpler, more comforting at-home activities such as baking, arts and crafts, reading, gardening, and jigsaw puzzles. Now the Associated Press reports evidence that the interest in birding has also spiked. Downloads of National Audubon Society’s bird ID app doubled during March and April compare to the same period last year and unique visits to its website are up by half-a-million visits.

At Cornell Lab of Ornithology downloads of its Merlin bird ID app are up 102% over last year. Visits to their live bird cams have doubled and uploads of bird photos to e-Bird have increased 45%.

It seems that when people are forced to slow down, they rediscover the joys of nature and bird watching. And experience how relaxing and stress relieving birds can be.

What to do at home

If you are spending more time isolated at home, take some time check out National Audubon's action site www.audubon.org/takeaction. This site will keep you informed on the many initiatives Audubon is pursuing to protect the environment.

If occasionally you find yourself wondering what to do with your time, sit down, join in, and write a letter to your legislators.

Help protect the environment for further damage

Join in Member's Night - Wednesday, June 24th

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