

The Rivertown Naturalist

NEWSLETTER OF THE HUDSON RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY



January / February 2015, Vol. 43, No. 3

The Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester, Inc., is a non-profit chapter of the National Audubon Society serving the communities of Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington and Yonkers.

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

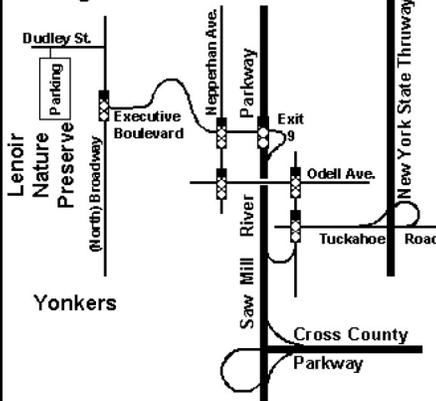
www.hras.org

Directions to Lenoir Preserve

The Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester meets at Lenoir Nature Preserve on Dudley Street in Yonkers, NY, (914) 968-5851.

By car: Take Saw Mill River Parkway to Exit 9, Executive Blvd. Cross over Nepperhan Ave and continue to follow Executive Blvd to its end at North Broadway and turn right. Dudley Street is the first left. Entrance and parking lot are on the left.

Hastings-on-Hudson



In Memoriam

Walter Chadwick

Hudson River Audubon Society Educator
and Photographer

The Hudson River Audubon Society suffered a great loss in November.

Longtime chapter member, board member and education chair, Walter Chadwick, passed away.

He was an avid photographer, birder and dragonfly expert. He loved teaching children as well as adults about our natural world. He will be remembered by many of the lives he enriched.

Our condolences to his family.

Walter Chadwick's family has requested donations to the Friends of Westchester County Parks to plant a Memorial Tree. The Memorial Tree includes a bronze plaque, installation, and care in perpetuity.

Donations can be made online at:

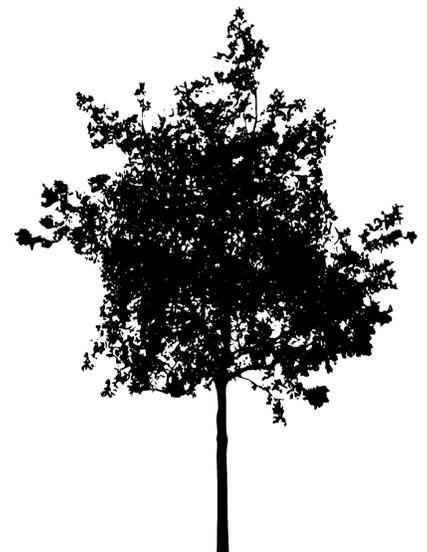
<http://www.youcaring.com/WaltersTree>

or by check, made out to:

Caitlin Chadwick
(put "Walter's Tree" in the notes)

and sent to the following address:

Walter's Tree Fund
c/o Caitlin Chadwick
14 Highview Drive
Scarsdale, NY 10583



Upcoming Field Trips, Jan 2015 – Mar 2016

Outdoor activities such as birding and hiking with a group are a wonderful way to learn more about nature, and to enjoy many preserves and natural areas.

All Hudson River Audubon Society field trips are free. Non-members and newcomers are welcomed.

Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Some are available for loan. Dress appropriately for the weather. Carpooling for field trips may be arranged in advance by calling Ruth DeFord Kotecha at 914-478-3695, or by email at rdeford@hunter.cuny.edu.

For more information call Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331.

Saturday, January 9, 2016

Short-Eared Owls at the Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge

Meet at Lenoir 2:30 PM for carpooling and directions, or meet at the refuge at 4:00 PM. Up to a dozen Short-eared Owls winter at this former airport site. As dusk settles on the refuge, the owls come out at start to roam the refuge for prey. Sunset is at 4:30 PM. Before dusk, we will look for other wintering birds such as Northern Harrier (Marsh Hawk) and maybe even a Rough-legged Hawk. Dress warm. We will be returning after dark.

<http://www.hras.org/wtobird/shawangunk.html>

Saturday, January 30, 2016

Owl Prowl at Pelham Bay Park

Meet at Pelham Bay Park at 8 AM; far left corner of the Orchard Beach parking lot.

Pelham Bay Park is known for its wintering owls. Northern Saw-whet, Great Horned, Long-eared and maybe a Barn or Barred owl might be found on this trip. We will also search the woods and waters for other winter birds. American Wigeon, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser should be in the bays.

<http://www.hras.org/wtobird/pelhambay.html>

Saturday, February 13, 2016

Eagle Viewing on the Hudson

Meet at Georges Island Park 7 AM. We will search the shores and iceflows of the Hudson for wintering Bald Eagles. Other birds expected are Great Cormorant, and ducks such as Lesser Scaup, Canvasback and Common Merganser.

<http://hras.org/wtobird/george.html>

Saturday, March 12, 2016

Evening Timberdoodle Walk

6 PM Croton Point Park Ball Field. Look for displaying American Woodcocks. As night begins to fall American Woodcocks come out of the woods to open fields where males conduct their amazing flight display courtship. Bring a flashlight to help find your way back after dark. Conditions can be wet and/or icy.

<http://hras.org/wtobird/croton.html>



This is a QR Code

You can now access the website of the Hudson River Audubon Society directly through your smartphone. Download a QR code reading app and scan this box through your camera.

Memories of Walter

Below are memories from former and present staff of Lenoir Nature Preserve about Walter.

He enjoyed chatting with the staff in the quiet calm of the bird observation room. Walter would always bring his tea and sandwich to eat. He was so enthusiastic about his upcoming nature programs, as he was the Hudson River Audubon Society's Educator and Naturalist. The children he would teach lovingly called him "Mr. C". Teaching brought Walter so much joy as it gave him a chance to share his love of the natural world with others.

He would tell us stories of the latest in the world outside of Lenoir, the world of his family that he loved so dearly: how Maggie was at the salon so he came for a hike so she could have her "girl time". Then he would talk about the campout sleepovers he had with the "prettiest little girl in the world", his granddaughter, Wyatt Rose. He spoke about wanting to take her camping for real this summer. He would talk about his sons and his daughter-in-laws. The staff at Lenoir knows so much about Walter's family from his fond stories. He would stop himself frequently as to "let us get back to work".

Then he was off on his outdoor adventure. He was always all layered up in seasonally appropriate attire, wielding his binoculars and always his camera. Walter couldn't take more than a few steps without spotting some tiny wonder and snapping a photograph. He loved his dragonflies. Very few people can identify them to species as well as he could. He would wander the grounds of Lenoir with such joy, frequently talking to other park patrons to point out any wildlife – insects, mammals, or birds – through his binoculars. Walter would usually end his hikes by stopping back in to update us on what he saw out in the field, always a treat, and always delivered with a big smile on his face.



Photo by Caitlin Fuster Chadwick

ScienceWatch: A Destructive Mimicking Mite



Social insects recognize one another by “body odor,” a mixture of the hydrocarbon chemicals they produce, which allows them to distinguish nest mates from intruders and even recognize the various insect castes in the colony. Different ant

castes can also make characteristic sounds to identify each other, and some parasites have broken these highly sophisticated communication codes to achieve unfettered nest access, as seen in the last two issues of ScienceWatch: <http://hras.org/sw/swseptoct2015.htm> and <http://hras.org/sw/swnovdec2015.htm>.

Bees have their parasites too. The mite *Varroa jacobensii* has evolved as an ectoparasite on Asian honeybees (*Apis cerana*). A female mite lays several eggs on a bee larva. The developing mites not only feed on larva, but also on pupae and adults, by sucking their blood (hemolymph). About 70 years ago, the species of mite jumped hosts to the European honeybee (*Apis mellifera*), and in 1987 it was discovered in *A. mellifera* living here. Recently it has become clear that *V. jacobensii* had evolved into a new mite species, aptly named *Varroa destructor*.

Asian honeybees survive infestations because they have evolved defenses against mites. For example, mites can only reproduce on drone larvae. Asian bees comb mites from adult bees and remove infested larvae or pupae from the nest (grooming and cleaning behaviors). The European honeybee, however, shows very weak grooming and cleaning behaviors against the newer *V. destructor* threat and female mites infest both drone and worker larvae. Beekeepers are trying to develop “mite resistant” European bees with enhanced grooming and cleaning behaviors because uncontrolled infestations destroy hives in 2 to 3 years. Even worse, Varroa mites, along with neonicotinoid pesticides, are implicated in a devastating phenomenon called colony collapse disorder (CCD), whereby workers flee the hive and disappear, abandoning queen and brood. CCD annually destroys 40% of bee colonies in the US.

Now a study in the June 2015 issue of *Biology Letters* shows that the successful spread of *V. destructor* stems from its ability to quickly decipher and mimic the chemical codes of a new host. The research team, headed by Dr. Zachary Huang, an entomologist at Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI, already knew the mite was a master of

chemical mimicry. Bees change their chemical profile as they develop from larvae to pupae to adults, and the mite adapts its chemical profile accordingly.

In the new study the team challenged the mite’s ability to change its profile to match that of a different host by transferring mites between the two bee species. They took mites grown on either European or Asian bees and transferred them to larvae of both bee species. After eight days of development they collected each bee pupa with its associated mite(s). Mites and bees were then separated, yielding four groups of mites depending on the initial and present hosts, and four groups of bees depending on their species and where their mites originated.

“They are essentially getting through the door and reaching the inner sanctum by using the bees’ own complex communication codes against them.” – Z. Huang

They next determined the chemical profile for each bee group and each mite group by gas chromatography and statistically analyzed the profiles for similarities between mites and bees. As expected, they found that mites grown on the same bee species they came from had chemical profiles closely resembling that host. However, the profiles of the switched mites were much closer to the new bee species than the one they originated from. In just a few days the mites had switched their chemical profiles.

“This remarkable adaptability may explain their relatively recent host shift from Asian to European honeybees,” said Huang. He also noted that since the original Asian bee host had developed a strategy to detect and remove the parasite, the newer European bee host might also acquire it over time. “...bees are adapting to detect these invaders. Our results give a clear illustration of an arms race between the parasites and the host bees based on chemical mimicry and its detection,” Huang said.



Honeybees are extremely important because they pollinate about 100 food crops. Right now the mites are winning. Let’s hope the bees gain the advantage.

—SAUL SCHEINBACH

Hudson River Audubon Programs, Jan - Mar 2015

All Wednesday lectures begin with refreshments at 7:00 pm and program at 7:30

The Winter Solstice

Wednesday, January 27, 2016

Presented by Mary Harrington, Master Gardener, HRAS Board Member

The Winter Solstice has long been regarded as a special day throughout history and in many cultures. Come and celebrate the return of light! Learn about the plants that were sacred to this time. Local plants will be discussed that follow in this tradition.

Plant It and They Will Come: the Bird-Friendly Landscape

Wednesday, March 23, 2016

Presented by Kim Eierman, Master Horticulturist and Master Gardener, New York Botanical Garden

The National Audubon Society reports that our 20 most common Bird species have declined by an average of 68% since 1967. You can do a lot in your own landscape to help our many declining species. Kim Eierman explains how we can attract and support our native birds and neo-tropical migrants with ecological design and proper native plant selection.

16th Annual "Seasons at Lenoir" Art and Photography Exhibit

Beginning Saturday, March 5th

Works that depict or be inspired by facets of the Lenoir Nature Preserve: wildlife, trees, flowers, landscape, the Butterfly Garden, structures, activities, etc.

If you wish to exhibit:

- By the week of February 22nd, please contact Lynn Shaw at Lynnshaw@gmail.com (put "Seasons" as subject) or call 718-549-2380. Include your name, title of work(s), media, and price (if any).
- Saturday, February 27th — Bring work to the nature center between 9:30 and 12 noon.
- **Saturday, March 5th: Opening reception**, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
- Gallery will be open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 AM to 3 PM until Saturday, April 2nd. Closed March 25th-27th for Easter.
- Please pick up your work on Saturday, April 2nd.

Project FeederWatch: Call for Leaders and Volunteers!

FeederWatch continues! If you are interested in being a host, or if you want to be added to the email list to receive the times of each count a few days before, please contact **Carol Lange** at (914) 668-5101 or email CarolLange@aol.com.

Schedule for January to March 2016:

Sat. January 9 / Sun. January 10

Fri. January 22 / Sat. January 23

Sat. February 6 / Sun. February 7

Fri. February 19 / Sat. February 20

Sat. March 5 / Sun. March 6

Sat. March 19 / Sun. March 20

Sat. April 2 / Sun. April 3

Hudson River Audubon Spring Luncheon

Saturday, April 16, 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Location: Pas-Tina's, 155 South Central Avenue, Hartsdale

Program: Through the Eyes of an Ecotourist: Costa Rica and Belize

Presenter: Fran Greenberg; HRAS Board Member, Nature Enthusiast, Photographer

Additional information on program, sign-up forms and cost information for the luncheon will appear in the next newsletter and on the website.

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Join the Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester!

Every membership supports Audubon's vital efforts to protect birds, other wildlife and natural habitats. Membership includes a subscription to Audubon magazine and affiliation with the National Audubon Society. As a member, you will also receive our chapter newsletter, *The Rivertown Naturalist*, and an open invitation to all our guest lectures, field trips and events.

**SIGN ME UP AS A NEW MEMBER
ONE YEAR FOR \$20**

Name _____

Address _____

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State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

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