



The Rivertown Naturalist

NEWSLETTER OF THE HUDSON RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY OF WESTCHESTER

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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.

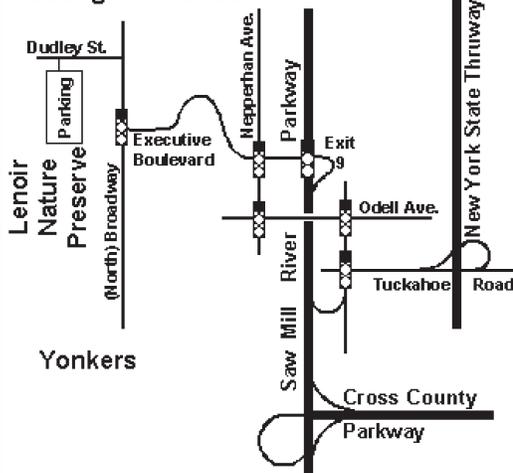
Our mission is to foster protection and appreciation of birds, other wildlife and habitats, and to be an advocate for a cleaner, healthier environment.

DIRECTIONS TO LENOIR

Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester, Inc. holds its meetings at Lenoir, a Westchester County Nature Preserve, on Dudley Street in Yonkers, New York (914) 968-5851.

By car: 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.

Hastings-on-Hudson



Members' Night

Wednesday, June 25, Lenoir Nature Center

6:00 PM : Michael Bochnik will lead a leisurely walk around Lenoir Preserve. Meet behind the Nature Center.

7:00 PM : Refreshments in the Nature Center

7:30 PM : Final Program of the Season

Selected volunteers will be recognized for their special contributions to HRAS during the past year. It is because of our volunteers that our chapter remains strong, vital, and active.

Officers of HRAS will be elected.

HRAS members are encouraged to share favorite nature slides and digital photos, taken during the past year, with us. Please bring no more than 10 to 20 images, and prepare a five to ten minute presentation. For digital images, pictures must be on a CD, USB drive or memory card; contact Michael Bochnik for information about format. You may expect to see photos from HRAS field trips, as well as members' nature and birding trips.

Have a great summer!
See you all in September!

The tentative date for the first program is September 24.

MONTEZUMA MUCKRACE 12 SEPTEMBER 12–13, 2008

Audubon New York and Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex announce the twelfth annual Montezuma Muckrace, to be held on September 12 and 13, 2008. This 24-hour birding competition raises funds to support conservation projects within the Montezuma Wetlands Complex.

This year our goal is to raise \$11,000 to fund a shorebird habitat restoration project in the North Montezuma area. Money is raised through sponsorships, registration fees and pledges sought by participants. Prizes are awarded to the team that raises the most money and to those teams that record the highest number of species. The 2007 competition raised over \$10,000, which is funding an eBird Trail Tracker for the Montezuma Audubon Center. In 2007, major contributors included Terry Precision Cycling, Wild Birds Unlimited, the New York State Ornithological Association, Nucor Steel, Nikon, Bass Pro, Eagle Optics, the Cayuga Lake Creamery, WomanMade Products, and the t-shirt designer Sue Adair.

The Muckrace starts at 8:00 PM on September 12 and ends 24 hours later with a closing ceremony (complete with plenty of pizza) at the Montezuma Audubon Center. Birds are counted within the boundaries of the Complex for any or all of the 24-hour period. There are several levels of participation: Competitive (3 or more individuals who must count together) and Youth, Recreational, or Low-Carbon (any number of individuals). In 2007, 72 birders in 19 teams from throughout New York and neighboring states tallied 170 species, with the winning fund-raising team, the Plucky Mucksters, coming up with \$1,302.00, and the winning listers, Wings over Ithaca, tallying 140 species.

Mid-September is a great time to be birding at the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, one of New York's most exciting birding destinations. Please consider either participating with your own team or pledging support to your local team!

To receive updates and information on the Muckrace, including the newsletter, "Muckrace Musings," visit: http://ny.audubon.org/GetInvolved_MontezumaMuckrace.html

For more information about participating, becoming a team sponsor, or to be added to the mailing list, contact Jane Graves at jgraves@skidmore.edu. The registration deadline is August 25.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY — HUDSON RIVER AUDUBON

The position of **Chairperson, Programs Committee** is open for next season. If you enjoy interacting with our speakers and presenters, this may be the opportunity for you. The duties entail contacting speakers and setting up monthly programs for next season, September 2008 through June 2009.

If you have an interest in this position, speak to Lynn Shaw, our current Programs Chair or Yvonne Lynn, Hudson River Audubon President.

Also, if you are interested in finances or would like the challenge, speak to Michael Bochnik about the position of **Treasurer**.

Volunteering is very rewarding, and your Hudson River Audubon Chapter needs your energies and abilities to keep us a vital, active chapter.



JILLIAN LINER

SCIENCE WATCH: The Clothes Make the Man

“Our research shows that it really pays to keep up appearances.”

SAUL SCHEINBACH

It has long been thought that many bird species form monogamous, even life-long pairs. However, evidence is accumulating that seemingly loyal couples do lots of cheating.

The throat and breast feathers of male barn swallows (*Hirundo rustica erythrogaster*) vary from orange, found in subordinate males, to the reddish-brown sported by dapper, dominant males. The females, it seems, just can't resist a well-dressed male. Writing in the September 30, 2005 issue of *Science* Rebecca Safran at Princeton University, Princeton, NJ and her colleagues demonstrate that even after they have paired off and mated, female barn swallows are still looking for sexual liaisons with males that have intensely colored feathers.

As is true for other songbirds, male barn swallows often end up caring for at least one chick that was sired by another male. “They form monogamous pairs, but both males and females are willing to stray from their partners,” says Safran, who studies swallow ecology and evolutionary biology. The researchers used this cheating phenomenon to determine how male coloration affects female choice (it is, of course, the female who does the choosing).



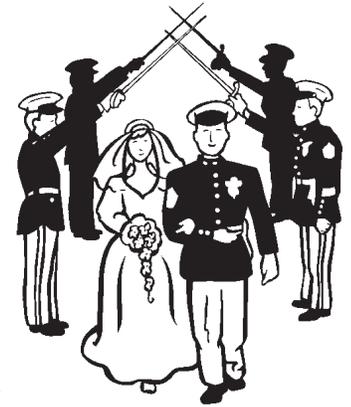
The team followed the breeding of 30 pairs in Tompkins County, NY. They allowed the females to mate and lay a complete clutch of eggs. They then removed all the eggs to induce the females to lay a second clutch. But before the females had a chance to mate again, the scientists captured all the males and randomly assigned them to three groups: 1) “enhanced” – throat and breast feathers were painted with a colored marker (light walnut) to match the dark color of dominant males, 2) “sham” – throat and breast feathers were smeared with a clear marker, 3) “control” – no manipulation.

During the second round of breeding each female remained with her original partner, but many also cheated with other males. The team knew this because they analyzed the DNA of all the embryos in the first brood, all the nestlings in the second brood and all the males to determine paternity. DNA analysis of the clutches laid before plumage enhancement showed there were no differences in paternity among the three groups of males. On average they sired about 70% of the eggs in their own nest. However, analysis of paternity in the replacement clutch showed that the “made over” males fathered a greater percentage (95%) of the chicks in their second nest than they had in the first one. Males in the two control groups were cuckolded just as often or even more than before.

Apparently, females strayed less the second time around when the plumage of their partner was enhanced and these males were sought out for illicit matings by females who had paired with duller males. According to Safran, “The study shows that the females are paying close attention to these signals and that they respond quickly to changes in their mate’s appearance”.

In a follow up study, just published in the June 6, 2008 issue of *Current Biology*, Safran demonstrates that testosterone levels rise significantly in males once their plumage color is enhanced. Normally, rising sex hormones cause changes in appearance and behavior. This unexpected finding shows that the reverse can also occur.

For barn swallows it seems that the clothes really do make the man.



COLOR BY NUMBERS Toucan



blue = 1

yellow = 2

black = 3

brown = 4

pink = 5

orange = 6

red = 7

light green = 8

dark green = 9

light blue = 10

A toucan's bill is a bit more show than substance. It is a honeycomb of bone that actually contains a lot of air. While its size may deter predators, it is of little use in combating them.

Hudson River Audubon Upcoming Field Trips

BLUE MOUNTAIN RESERVATION Saturday, June 7, 2008

MEET AT MOUNTAIN RESERVATION AT 8 AM

We'll look for breeding birds and late migrants. This park's biodiversity ensures up a good selection of breeding birds such as Louisiana Waterthrush, Eastern Wood-Pewee and others.

Directions: Route 9 North or South to the Peekskill, Welcher Avenue Exit. Follow signs East to Park entrance. Meet in the back, upper parking lot.

ADIRONDACK WEEKEND Friday–Sunday, June 20–22, 2008

Join us on a three day field trip to the southern Adirondacks. We will spend two nights in the town of Inlet, NY, about 20 miles east of Old Forge. We will visit the famous Ferd's Bog, Moss Lake, and Moose River Recreational Area. The bog can host Three-toed Woodpecker and Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Lincoln's Sparrow. Moose River Plains can also have Gray Jays, woodpeckers as well as Boreal Chickadee, warblers and more.

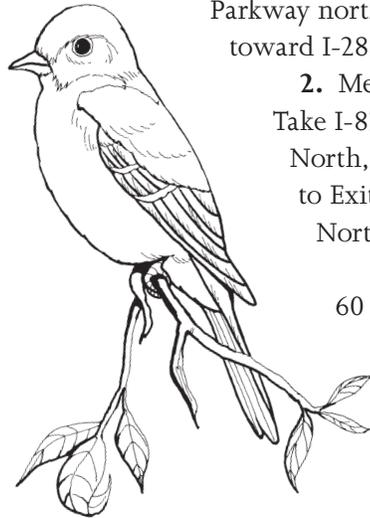
Friday will be a travel day, (travel on your own) with an evening on Ferd's Bog, have an early dinner on your own and meet at motel, ready to leave, at 6:00 PM. This can be a tranquil visit with some special sightings. Saturday morning we bird the motel property, then an 8AM breakfast at the Ole Barn then off to the Moose River Recreational Area by car.

Sunday we will go back to Ferd's Bog, then head home.

We will stay at the Deer Meadows Motel. Call: 315-357-3274 for rates and availability. Rooms are limited and vary, see below, two night stay minimum.

YOU MUST MAKE YOUR OWN RESERVATION. They will require a check for a nights stay to confirm the reservation so call early.

Once your reservations are made, let the trip leader, Michael Bochnik, know you are on the trip at 914-237-9331.



Eastern Wood Pewee

Directions to Deer Meadows Motel:

1. From Yonkers, NY take Saw Mill River Parkway north 7-8 miles to Exit 20, (I-87 North toward I-287/TAPPAN ZEE BR).
2. Merge onto I-87 North (Portions toll). Take I-87 over TappanZee. Follow I-87 North, New York State Thruway 135 miles to Exit 24. Exit at Exit 24 to stay on I-87 North which becomes the Northway.
3. Take I-87 North, The Northway 60 miles to Exit 23.
4. Take EXIT 23 toward WARRENSBURG/DIAMOND POINT.
5. At end of exit ramp turn Left to get to Route 9, in a short distance turn Slight Right onto US-9 North.
6. Take Route 9 North 4.1 miles and turn Left onto NY-28.
7. Take NY 28, 44.6 miles to the town of Blue Mt Lake and turn left to stay on NY-28.
8. Take NY 28 another ~20–23 miles to motel.

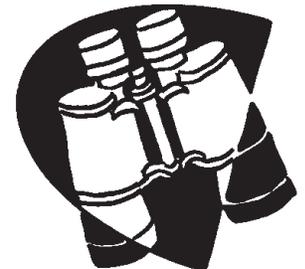
Please go to <http://hras.org/trips/adk2008.html> to download a route map for this trip.

MUSCOOT FARM Saturday, June 28, 2008

MEET AT THE FARM AT 9 AM

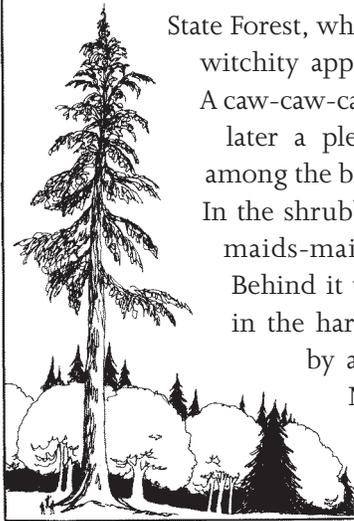
We'll look for both birds and butterflies at this northern Westchester County Park and Farm.

Directions: Take Interstate 684 to exit 6 (Katonah/Cross River), or the Saw Mill Parkway North until it ends at I-684. Go West on Route 35 to Route 100. Turn left onto Route 100. Proceed 1 mile to Farm entrance on the right.



Sounding Out Bird Nomenclature

Whereas ornithologists may squabble over nomenclature, field birders often just refer to birds by the sounds they utter. Here is an exaggerated example of how a real field trip might be described.



So there we were, speeching at the Long Pond State Forest, when suddenly an irate witchity-witchity appeared in a honeysuckle bush. A caw-caw-caw flew overhead. A little while later a pleased-to-meetcha was flitting among the branches of a tree near the road. In the shrubbery near an open field was a maids-maids-come-and-get-cher-milk. Behind it was a meow. An e-oh-lay was in the hardwoods nearby, accompanied by an insistent teach-teach-teach. More speeching brought in some de-dee-dees. Then a pee-a-wee appeared. Atop one sprawled-out bush

was a male I'm-so-sweet proclaiming his territory. A bright yellow bee-buzz-buzzzz caught our attention.

As the trail curved deeper into the woods, we picked up a zee-zee-zeet. We passed one-look-at-me-up-a-tree after another. In a swampy clearing we caught sight of a fee-be-oh snatching insects. As we moved out to the forest an ole-sam-peabody-poebody-peabody flew past. Some cheer-ups bobbed across the trail. From a scruffy patch of overgrown pasture a phew hid in the leaves. Just then a squadron of click-click-clicks few rapidly over in tight formation.

As we crossed a babbling brook, we paused to admire the cinnamon tail of a wheep. Up ahead was a large spruce where I had a hic-three-beers last September. Appropriately enough a drink-your-tea came out of the brush to gawk at us. Then a peter-peter-peter broke the silence. By the car some cheap-cheap-cheaps were picking bugs off the radiator.

—Donald A. Windsor, excerpted from *The Goldfinch*
(newsletter of the Chenango Bird Club)

Dragon Hunting

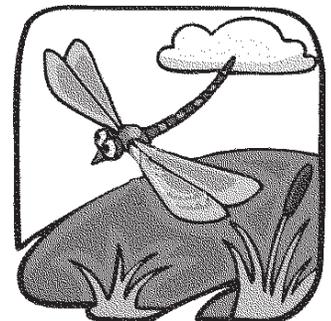
With the warmer weather it is time to start hunting dragons, dragonflies that is. Dragonflies and damselflies belong to the order Odonata (toothy ones). Dragonflies have been around for three hundred million years, even before the dinosaurs. Aerial acrobats, winged wonders are just a few ways to describe these amazing insects.

Dragonflies are fierce predators that eat a variety of insects from aerial plankton to dragonflies themselves. Odonates come in a variety of colors from subdued earth tones to brilliant reds, yellows and greens. Their flight has been studied by the United States military and NASA. Their two large compound eyes give them excellent vision.

At Lenoir Nature Preserve there are a variety of dragonflies from delicate damselflies to large darners flying over pond and meadows. Dragonflies in our area are active mainly from May through October. Species vary throughout the flight season.

Come to Lenoir Nature Preserve on June 14, 2008 at 10:00 am to learn about these flying jewels. We will learn about their unique life cycle, how to identify them and then we will observe them in the wild.

**For information contact
Walter Chadwick at
914-237-5791.**



BIRDS SEEN AT THE BIRD-A-THON 2008

What we didn't see in quantify of species was made up in quality of species. Highlights included a Bald Eagle's nest with two large soon-to-fledge young and an adult perched nearby and a point blank look at a Virginia Rail. Here are the results:

Bashakill:

1. Acadian Flycatcher
2. American Bittern
3. American Crow
4. American Woodcock
5. Black-crowned Night-Heron
6. Bald Eagle
7. Bank Swallow
8. Belted Kingfisher
9. Black-billed Cuckoo
10. Black-capped Chickadee
11. Blackpoll Warbler
12. Black-throated Blue Warbler
13. Black-throated Green Warbler
14. Chestnut-sided Warbler
15. Common Grackle
16. Common Moorhen
17. Common Nighthawk
18. Eastern Bluebird
19. Eastern Kingbird
20. Eastern Wood Pewee
21. European Starling
22. Field Sparrow
23. Great Blue Heron
24. House Finch
25. House Wren
26. Least Flycatcher
27. Mourning Dove
28. Northern Harrier
29. Northern Waterthrush
30. Osprey
31. Ovenbird
32. Rock Dove
33. Prairie Warbler
34. Pied-billed Grebe
35. Rose-breasted Grosbeak
36. Song Sparrow
37. Spotted Sandpiper
38. Swainson's Thrush

39. Swamp Sparrow
40. Veery
41. Virginia Rail
42. White-throated Sparrow
43. Wood Duck
44. Yellow-rumped Warbler

Doodle:

45. Black Vulture
46. Blue-winged Warbler
47. Chimney Swift
48. Hooded Warbler
49. Olive-sided Flycatcher
50. Northern Mockingbird
51. White-breasted Nuthatch
52. Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Bashakill & Doodle:

53. American Goldfinch
54. American Redstart
55. American Robin
56. Baltimore Oriole
57. Barn Swallow
58. Black-and-white Warbler
59. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
60. Blue Jay
61. Brown-headed Cowbird
62. Canada Goose
63. Canada Warbler
64. Cerulean Warbler
65. Chipping Sparrow
66. Common Yellowthroat
67. Eastern Phoebe
68. Eastern Towhee
69. Fish Crow
70. Gray Catbird
71. Great Crested Flycatcher
72. House Sparrow
73. Indigo Bunting

74. Magnolia Warbler
75. Mallard
76. Mute Swan
77. Northern Cardinal
78. Northern Parula
79. Red-bellied Woodpecker
80. Red-eyed Vireo
81. Red-tailed Hawk
82. Red-winged Blackbird
83. Ruby-throated Hummingbird
84. Scarlet Tanager
85. Solitary Sandpiper
86. Tree Swallow
87. Tufted Titmouse
88. Turkey Vulture
89. Warbling Vireo
90. Wood Thrush
91. Yellow-throated Vireo
92. Yellow Warbler

Home Feeder:

93. Downy Woodpecker



Downy Woodpecker

HRAS BOARD MEMBERS & VOLUNTEERS**President**

Yvonne Lynn 914-776-5046

Vice-President/Field Trips BochnikM@cs.com
Michael Bochnik 914-237-9331**Conservation**

Paul Steineck barbpaul@optonline.net

SecretaryJudi Veder judisaul@aol.com
718-884-4740**Education**Beverly Smith Bev186@aol.com
914-965-5553Walter Chadwick mrcnaturally@optonline.net
914-237-5791**Publicity**Jeanette Johnson JNTT3456@aol.com
914-965-7541**Membership**May Guglielmo maygug@optonline.net
914-969-0340**Programs/Season's**Lynn Shaw Lynnbshaw@msn.com
718-549-2380**Butterfly Garden**Mary Harrington TCTallon@aol.com
914-589-3293**Science**Saul Scheinbach judisaul@aol.com
718-884-4740**Circulation**

William Van Wart 914-376-2401

Hospitality

Kelli Bochnik 914-237-9331

EducatorWalter Chadwick mrcnaturally@optonline.net
914-237-5791**Feeder Watch**Carol Lange Carollange@aol.com
914-668-5101**Development/Bluebird Trail**Pamela Sullivan pamalama@earthlink.net
914-591-7399**Lenoir Liaison**Danniela Ciatto dac4@westchestergov.com
914-968-5851**Rivertown Naturalist Editor**Sandra Wright tralac@verizon.net
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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 National Audubon. As a member, you will also receive our chapter newsletter, Rivertown Naturalist, and an open invitation to all our guest lectures, field trips and events.

Sign me up as a New Member for 1 Year for \$20!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

CHAPTER NO R20**7XCH**

Send check and this application to: National Audubon Society
Membership Data Center
P.O. BOX 52529
Boulder, CO 80322

Please make check payable to: National Audubon Society



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OF WESTCHESTER, INC
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