

The Rivertown Naturalist



March 2017 Vol. 45, No. 4

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.

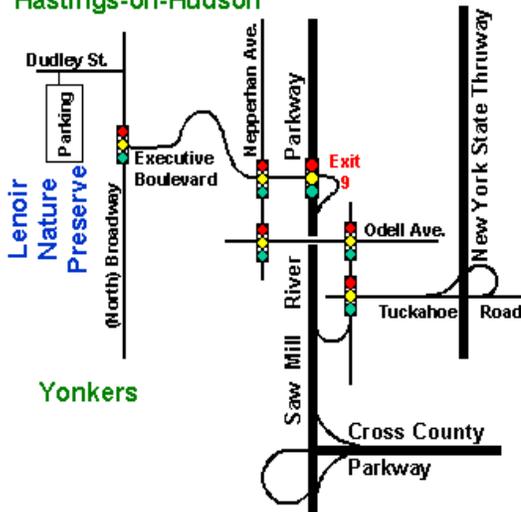
www.hras.org

DIRECTIONS TO LENOIR PRESERVE

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



Program: Butterflies in My Backyard

Wednesday, March 22nd

Refreshments: 7:00pm, Program 7:30pm



You don't want to miss this program featuring Victor DeMasi, a recognized butterfly expert. Victor is responsible for mounting and preserving butterflies for Yale's Peabody Museum of Natural History in New Haven, CT and will bring spectacular displays of specimens from the museum's collection.

It may be cool outside but this program will have you yearning for hot summer days.

Annual Spring Luncheon

Saturday, April 22nd

The Riverview, 1 Warburton Ave, Hastings-on-Hudson

Noon until 4:00pm

Join us for a wonderful Luncheon to celebrate the return of spring.

- * Delicious buffet
- * Amazing views
- * Door prizes
- * Good company

Plus an excellent program "*Hummingbirds from the Veranda, Leatherback Turtles on the Beach*" by Fran Greenburg. In addition to the

history of Trinidad, she will offer highlights of HRAS's recent trip to Trinidad – "we saw over 10 species of hummingbirds just from the veranda of Asa Wright Nature Center while having rum punch. We witnessed huge leatherback turtles emerge from the sea to lay their eggs. The sight of thousands of scarlet ibis flying to their night roosts, their brilliant color intensified by the setting sun, was breathtaking." The program will feature exceptional photography by Fran and other HRAS members.

The Luncheon will take place at The Riverview, in Hastings, known for its excellent food and spectacular views. Cost is \$35.00 per person. Cash bar. Guest are welcome. Bring your friends. Reservations are required.

Complete the Reservation Form on Page 5 today and mail with your check by April 10th.



ScienceWatch – Hawai‘i: Invasive Species Heaven



“With dozens of species on the [endangered species] list, Hawaii leads all regions in the U.S. in terms of threats, yet received less than 5% of the recovery funds from the federal government’s endangered species program. Presumably this is because more charismatic species receive a disproportionate share.” – J. Fitzpatrick, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, NYT, 8/31/14

Thoughts of Hawai‘i usually conjure up a tropical paradise richly endowed with striking flora and fauna. While that was true before humans arrived, today’s Hawaiian Islands have more invasive species than any other state. At least 34,000 species are non-native including 3,400 insects, spiders or mites, over 10,000 flowering plants, 19 mammals, 55 birds, 24 reptiles and six species of amphibians. Even the state tree (Kukui) is not a native, but was brought to the islands from Asia. Invasive species began arriving some 1,500 years ago with the first Polynesians who brought their chickens, pigs, goats, dogs ... and rats, and they continue arriving even today.

The latest threat, described by journalist Inga Vesper in the October 21, 2016 issue of *Science*, is a fungus (*Ceratocystis fimbriata*) that is killing ‘ōhi‘a trees (*Metrosideros polymorpha*) on Hawai‘i island. The disease causes rapid ‘ōhi‘a death (ROD). ROD was first discovered in 2010, but most likely began 10 years earlier when the fungus was carried to Hawai‘i island, probably on imported plants. In 2014 the outbreak exploded, destroying an estimated 6,000 acres. By 2016 it had devastated over 50,000 acres of native forest.

The ‘ōhi‘a, endemic to the islands, is a keystone species, a pioneer that can colonize bare lava and hold water, preventing runoff. Mature trees create forest habitat for endemic passerines like nectar-feeding honeycreepers. At least 55 honeycreeper species existed before humans arrived but only 17 survive today. Sadly, Hawai‘i was once home to over 107 endemic bird species but only about 50 survive. In fact, with only 0.2% of U.S. land mass, Hawai‘i accounts for 84% (21 of 25) of recent U.S. bird extinctions and 74% (14 of 19) of our critically endangered birds.

Many honeycreepers co-evolved with endemic lobelias. Those plants developed flowers with curved, tubular corollas and the birds evolved correspondingly sickle-shaped beaks to harvest the nectar at the bottom. But as lobelias were driven to near extinction by introduced livestock, some honeycreepers began feeding on ‘ōhi‘a flowers instead. The ‘i‘iwi (*Drepanis coccinea*), last of the sickle-beaked honeycreepers, is now a major ‘ōhi‘a pollinator (see Fig. 1&2).

So far ROD is limited to Hawai‘i island, and the Department of Agriculture has placed a permanent prohibition on moving ‘ōhi‘a wood, flowers and soil anywhere else, even to other parts of the island. Currently there is no “silver bullet” to eradicate the fungus. Today the strategy is to contain it while scientists try to figure out how it spreads (certain wood-boring beetles are suspected), and hopefully eradicate it.

A lot is at stake!



Figure 1. 'i'iwi on lobelia



Figure 2. 'i'iwi on 'ohi'a

To highlight some better news about Hawai‘i here is a follow-up to my last *ScienceWatch* about tool-using crows (<http://hras.org/sw/swjanfeb2017.htm>).

‘Alalā released into the wild

Five young ‘Alalā—critically endangered Hawaiian crows—were released into a reserve on Hawai‘i island on December 14, 2016. The male birds slowly emerged from the aviary where they were temporarily housed, and appeared to show a natural curiosity for their surroundings.

“After being released, the ‘Alalā quickly adjusted to their new home, and began to search for and find food items in the forest,” said Bryce Masuda, conservation program manager of the Hawaii Endangered Bird Conservation Program. “Although the birds have now been released, we will continue to monitor them and provide appropriate supplemental food, to ensure they are supported as they encounter challenges.” Masuda plans to release 12 crows per year for the next five years.

A release in the 1990’s failed due to disease and predation, but let’s be hopeful. A lot is at stake!

- *Saul Scheinbach*

Ramblings

- Congratulations to Cathy and Larry Mazzella who recently became certified as Master Naturalists as part of a Cornell University’s program. It is not easy certification – 122 hours of training coupled with 172 hours of volunteer service and they both have demanding full time jobs. Fortunately for us much of their volunteer efforts benefited our chapter – bluebird houses, removal of invasives, revitalized rain garden and more. Anyone interested in Cornell’s Master Naturalist Program should talk to them or visit <https://blogs.cornell.edu/cecp/master-naturalist-program/>
 - Last December 118 people participated in the annual Christmas Bird Count. Two new species were spotted for the first time ever in the 94-year history of the count – a Pink-footed Goose and a Cackling Goose. Complete detailed results of this year’s count as well as previous year’s can be found on our web site. It is interesting to note that this year more robins were seen than chickadees. Global warming?
 - The coming of spring is a good time our well-regarded Butterfly Garden can use more volunteers. It is a great way to enjoy the warming weather, learn about plants and help the community. Call or email Mary Harrington for details (914) 589-3293 TCTallon@gmail.com
 - Take 5 minutes to email your county legislator stressing the value and importance of Lenoir Nature Center and how it adds to the community and the education of children. The county is always on the brink of closing the center. They have already eliminated the full-time naturalist. So it is critical that we continuously remind them that voters care and are watching their actions. Politicians do keep track and respond to the desires of their voters.
 - Spring begins Monday, March 20, 2017 Daylight Saving Time Begins: March 12, 2017
 - Congratulations to Stan Cho, former NewsLetter editor, and his wife on the birth of their son.
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Upcoming Field Trips



Birding and hiking with a group is a wonderful way to share your interests with like-minded people, to learn more about nature, and to discover many new preserves and natural areas.

Our field trips are free and open to all. Non-members/beginners are welcomed.

Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. Some are available for loan for those who need them. Dress for the weather. For more information call Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331, or cell 914-953-7409

Saturday, March 25, 2017

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

Meet at the Refuge at 8 AM

Late wintering ducks and possible Barn Owl

<http://hras.org/wtobird/jamaicabaywildliferefuge.htm>

Friday to Monday, April 28 – May 1, 2017

Weekend Trip to The Delmarva Peninsula

– DELaware, MARyland and Virginia

Thursday- Drive to Cambridge, MD

Friday – **Blackwater NWR, MD**

Saturday – **Chincoteague NWR, VA**

Sunday – **Milburn Landing SP, MD**

Monday – **Bombay Hook NWR, DE**

Searching for American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Prothonotary and Yellow-throated Warblers.

Friday May 5, 2017

Evening at Tibbets Brook Park

Meet at the flag pole in front of main building at 6 PM

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

Saturday May 6, 2017

Cranberry Lake

Meet 8 AM at the nature center.

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

Saturday, May 13, 2017

Annual Birdathon

Bird like crazy in Westchester County to raise money for our chapter. Details to follow.

Sunday May 14, 2017

25th Annual Mother's Day Warbler Walk

Lenoir Nature Preserve 8 AM

19 Dudley St. Yonkers

Meet us for our 25th year of this Audubon tradition.

Spring migrants will be searched for; followed by refreshments at the nature center.

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

Saturday- Sunday May 20 & 21 2017

Bashakill Marsh

Drive up Saturday afternoon and stay overnight for Whip-poor-wills, American Bittern, Virginia Rail, and Alder Flycatchers.

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

FeederWatch Continues. Everyone Welcome

Sat, Mar 11 10-Noon Judi & Saul
 Sun Mar 12 10-Noon Cathy & Larry
 Sat. Mar 25 2-4:00 Jackie
 Sun Mar 26 10-Noon Ruth



Thur, Apr 06 10-Noon Bill Van Wart
 Fri., Apr 07 10-Noon Bill Van Wart

Hudson River Audubon Spring Luncheon

Saturday, April 22nd, The Riverview – Hastings Noon 'til 4:00pm



Yes, We plan to attend

Your Name _____
Phone (Home/Cell) _____
E-mail Address _____

Amount Enclosed: ___ x \$35 /Person Total Amount: _____

Please mail this form together with your check to:
Hudson River Audubon Society P.O.Box 616 Yonkers, NY 10703

Deadline: April 10

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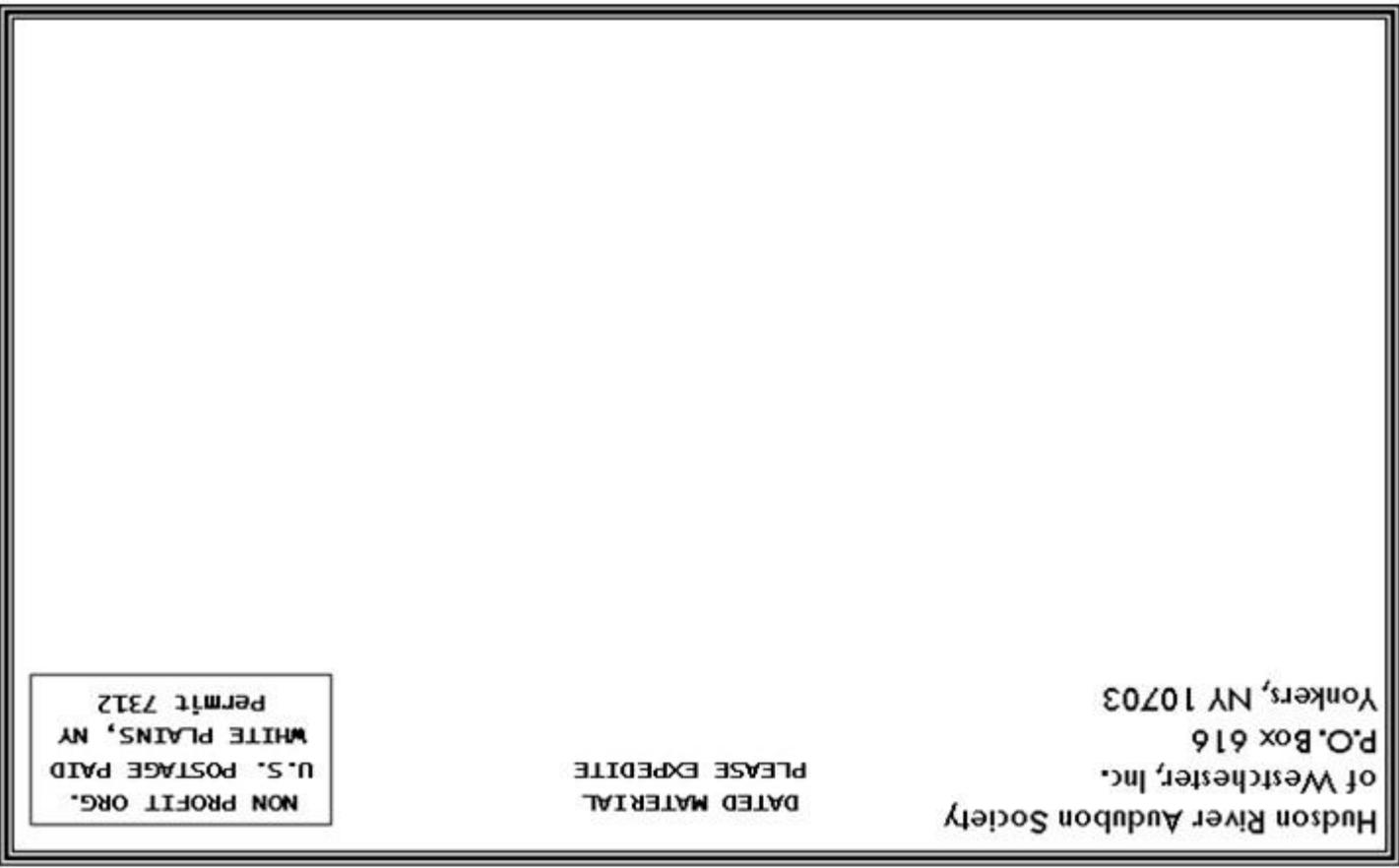
Join National Audubon Society. Become a Member Today

For only \$20 you can become a member of the National Audubon Society and of our local chapter. Your small contribution supports nature and environmental causes and rewards you with a subscription to the award-winning *Audubon* magazine as well as our chapter newsletters filled with information on local activities, lectures, programs and field trips.

Becoming a member is easy.

Go to our website: www.hras.org Click on the **Membership** link in the upper right corner and follow the instructions. That's it. Or you also join by mailing a check made out to Hudson River Audubon Society to HRAS, P.O. Box 616, Yonkers NY 10703

Join today!



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