

The Rivertown Naturalist

Nov 2018 Vol. 48, No. 2



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, healthier environment.

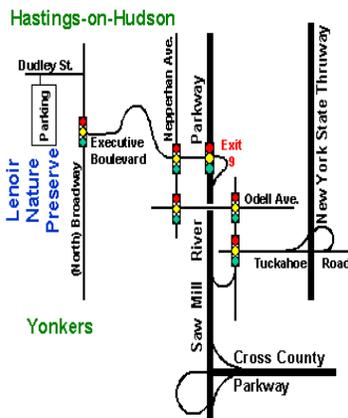
www.hras.org

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.



Owls of NYC Area



Wednesday, Dec. 5th

Refreshments 7:00pm; Program 7:30pm

Joe Giunta, well-known Audubon guide, will present an informative program about the owls of our area. Joe knows our region. He regularly leads bird walks for New York City Audubon, Brooklyn Bird Club, the Nature Conservancy and the South Fork Natural History Society, and others. He knows his topic and is an entertaining presenter. To learn more about him, visit his website www.happywarblers.com

Don't miss this timely topic. Then join our Saturday Dec. 8th. Field Trip to Pelham Bay Park, one of the best local areas for finding overwintering owls.



Birds Survival in Winter

How you can help

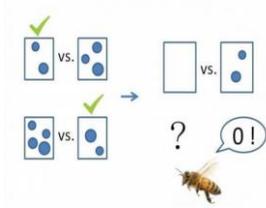
Wednesday, Jan. 23rd

Refreshments 7:00pm; Program 7:30pm

Gabriel Willow, a NYC Audubon guide, is knowledgeable about birds and the environmental issues that they face. In 2004 he developed a program for Bryant Park blending social and natural history with wildlife viewing. He is an active bird trip leader for New York City Audubon including river birding cruises, walks in local parks such as Wave Hill as well as overnight trips.

ScienceWatch –

The Insect That Knows Nothing



“Zero is a difficult concept to understand and a mathematical skill that doesn’t come easily—it takes children a few years to learn.” – A. Dyer

The concept of zero is relatively new to human understanding. Its usage first appeared in 5th century C.E. India. Children don’t grasp the concept until the age of four or five, and for a long time humans thought they were in an exclusive club. But within the past decade researchers have found that some monkeys and a famous African grey parrot, named Alex, can comprehend “nothing” on a numerical continuum. Now a report in the June 8, 2018 issue of *Science* demonstrates that the tiny honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) can do it too.

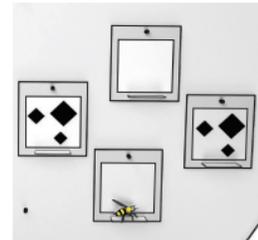
Honey bees are smart. They have good short-term memories, understand sameness and difference and can learn from other bees. They also can count and discriminate up to four objects. So a team led by Scarlett Howard and Adrian Dyer, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, decided to find out if bees trained to count could also understand zero.

They trained bees to comprehend the concepts of “greater than” and “less than” using what they called “appetitive-aversive differential conditioning.” Bees were shown two pairs of white panels with different numbers of elements (black squares, or circles) and were rewarded with sugar water when they landed on the correct panel or punished with bitter-tasting quinine water when they landed on the wrong panel. The shapes were of different sizes and the panels were randomly rotated to prevent the bees from gaining any spatial clues. Alcohol washes between each test also removed any possible olfactory cues.

Trained bees quickly learned to make the right choice over 80% of the time. They learned either “less than” or “more than” and could rank panels containing up to four objects. For example, bees that learned “less than” mostly landed on the panels displaying fewer objects.

Next the trained bees were challenged to compare an empty white panel with one containing unfamiliar shapes

(diamonds) and patterns. Bees trained to “less than” chose the empty panels most of the time, while bees trained to “more than” chose panels containing shapes. The bees found it harder to judge—they took longer to decide and were wrong more often— when the empty set was compared to panels with one or two objects as compared to five or six. This finding, which is seen when children are similarly tested, strongly suggests that the bees were looking at the numerical distance between panels when making their choice; *i.e.*, bees and humans conceive zero in analogous ways.



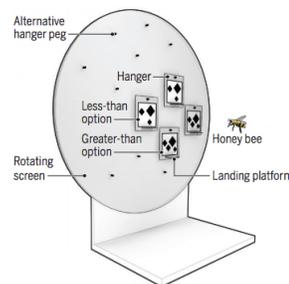
Bees and humans are separated by hundreds of millions of years of evolution. Furthermore, a bee brain is the size of a sesame seed and contains only about 800,000 neurons compared to a human brain with over 80 billion so it’s hard to know how a bee brain represents zero.

“The discovery that such elaborated of numbers was given their tiny brains are thus not play with numbers. therefore probably animals,” said member Dr. Aurore Avarguès-Weber



bees can show understanding really surprising brain size. Large necessary to This capacity is shared by many research team

Dr. Dyer believes a better understanding of the neural processes that allow a bee brain to comprehend zero would help in developing artificial intelligence. If bees can perceive zero with a brain of less than a million neurons, it



suggests there are simple ways to teach artificial intelligence new tricks, he said.

These experiments suggest that bee’s comprehension of zero is similar to that of some humans and primates, said Dr. Howard. “We still have some things to figure out about why they can do this,” she said.

– ***Saul Scheinbach***

Help! Annual Appeal

Many non-profit organizations are having difficulty raising funds today. We are no exception. Although we are proud to be part of the National Audubon Society, we do not receive any funds from the dues you pay to the National Organization to support our local nature and environment activities. That means, in order to continue our children's programs, educational activities, local conservation advocacy and other efforts we must raise funds from our local area.

You can help.

Please consider making a generous donation to our local chapter. Make your check payable to Hudson River Audubon Society (or HRAS) and mail it in the enclosed envelope.

Please give what you can. Everything counts. Small gifts add up. Thank you for your support.

Audubon Board Members

President	Michael Bochnik	BochnikM@cs.com	914-237-9331
Vice President	Saul Scheinbach	judisaul@aol.com	718-884-4740
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Publicity	Jeanette Johnson	Jntt3456@verizon.net	

At Large Judi Veder, Mark Testa, Jane Metzger, Cathy Mazella, Kelli Bochnik, Lynn Shaw, Sandra Wright,

Upcoming Events

All events are free and open to the public. You can find more details on events at www.hras.org

Saturday, Nov. 10

Sunday, Nov. 11

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us as we sit INSIDE the Nature Center looking out two large picture windows at overflowing bird feeders identifying and counting birds. Good for beginners. Good company, good snacks

Saturday, Nov. 24

Sunday, Nov. 25

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Help us count the birds using the many bird feeders outside the nature center. Good for beginners. Good company. Good snacks

December Activities

Wednesday, Dec 5,

PROGRAM:

Local Owls

Lenoir Nature Preserve
19 Dudley Street, Yonkers
7:00 pm Refreshments,
7:30 pm Program
Then join our Saturday Field Trip

Saturday, Dec 8

FIELD TRIP:

Pelham Bay Park

8:00 am

Top local area for wintering owls. Meet in far-left corner of main parking lot.

Saturday, Dec. 8

Sunday, Dec. 9

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us as we sit INSIDE the Nature Center looking out two

large picture windows at overflowing bird feeders identifying and counting birds. Good for beginners. Good company, good snacks

Saturday, Dec. 22

Sunday, Dec. 23

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us as we sit INSIDE the Nature Center looking out two large picture windows at overflowing bird feeders identifying and counting birds. Good for beginners. Good company, good snacks

Saturday, Dec 15

Peekskill XMAS COUNT

9:00 am

Michael Bochnik needs volunteers to help cover the landfill at Croton Point Park

Sunday, Dec 23

90th Annual Bronx-

Westchester Xmas Bird Count

10:00 am Tibbetts Brook Park

For info, call Michael Bochnik at 914-237-9331

January 2019 Activities

Saturday, Jan. 5

Sunday, Jan 6

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us as we sit INSIDE the Nature Center looking out two large picture windows at overflowing bird feeders identifying and counting birds. Good for beginners. Good company, good snacks

Friday, Jan. 18

Saturday, Jan 19

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us as we sit INSIDE the Nature Center looking at overflowing bird feeders identifying and counting birds.

Wednesday, Jan. 23, 2019

PROGRAM:

Winter Survival for Birds

7:30 pm

Lenoir Nature Preserve

Saturday, January 26, 2019

FIELD TRIP:

Jamaica Bay NWR

9:00 am

Bird the 1.7 mile loop around the newly repaired West Pond. Followed by a stop at New Park Pizza in Howard Beach

February 2019 Activities

Saturday, Feb. 2

Sunday, Feb. 3

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Help us count the birds using the many bird feeders outside the nature center. Good for beginners. Good company. Good snacks

Friday, Feb. 15

Saturday, Feb. 16

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us as we sit INSIDE the Nature Center looking out two large picture windows at overflowing bird feeders identifying and counting birds. Good for beginners. Good company, good snacks

Saturday, Feb 23,

FIELD TRIP: (Long Island)

Morton NWR & Shinnecock Inlet

Good winter birding, Plus opportunity to hand feed birds



March 2019 Activities

Saturday, March 2

Sunday, March 3

10:00 am – Noon

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

It's FeederWatch Time Again

Once again we are participating in Project FeederWatch – a fun citizen science project sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The name explains the project. We sit snugly inside the nature center watching and identifying the birds that visit our bird feeders just outside the large picture windows. We count the quantity of birds of each species we see during a two-hour period. Then we send our data to Cornell where it is combined with similar data from thousands of other FeederWatches around the country. Tens of thousands everyday citizen-scientists gather massive amounts of data on bird population and trends for the professional scientists and ornithologists to use.

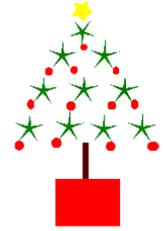
Everyone can join and help. You don't have to be an expert birder. In fact, this is a great way for beginners and novices to hone their skills and learn about our local birds. And it is flexible. Help us for a few minutes or stay for the complete two-hour watch period.



The atmosphere is friendly and welcoming. Some believe that the social aspects and the delicious food treats (for humans) may attract more volunteers than the birds do. It can be addictive on cold winter days.

For more information, or to volunteer as a "host" for one watch day, contact Carol Lange at (914) 668-5101 or at CarolLange@aol.com

90th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



If you're looking for a local birding activity during the holiday season that's not only fun and exciting, but also helps provide valuable data on the population of winter birds, come on out and help on a Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

For the Christmas Count small groups scour a particular area (called the count circle) and tally all the birds they find during one day. At the end of that day all the groups gather at Lenoir Preserve for a final compilation dinner (\$10) where all the numbers are combined into a single report for our area.

This year our local **Bronx-Westchester Christmas Count** will take place on **Sunday, Dec. 23rd**. Join us and help count. On this day for our 90th consecutive year we will add more data on bird populations. Join us and help count. You can participate for the full day, half a day, or one hour or so. Or you can simple count the birds at your backyard birdfeeders.

Our chapter will also be helping with the Christmas Count for the **Peekskill** area. That will be on **Saturday, Dec 15th** when we will count birds at the landfill in Croton Point Park. If you would like to help, call Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331



Hudson River Audubon Society
of Westchester, Inc.
P.O. Box 616
Yonkers, NY 10703

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