

The Rivertown Naturalist

NEWSLETTER OF THE HUDSON RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY



Sep / Oct 2016, Vol. 44, No. 1

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.

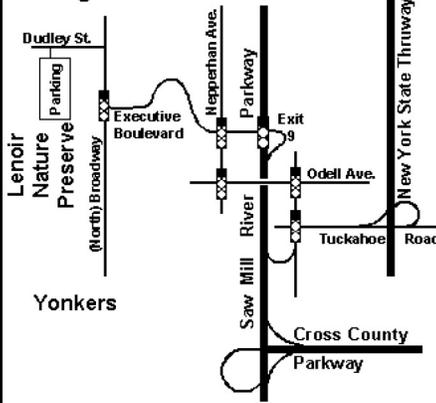
www.hras.org

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



AMAZING! UNEXPECTED! INCREDIBLE!



HANK WEBER

Former Owner of the Wild Bird Center
“Answers to Common Questions About Birds”

Wednesday, September 28th
Refreshments at 7:00 pm, Program at 7:30 pm
Lenoir Nature Preserve

Hank Weber, former owner of the Wild Bird Center, presents an entertaining and informative program, answering the wackiest questions he received on birds over seventeen years of business, plus little known facts and bird trivia. Everything you always wanted to know.

INFORMATIVE! ENTERTAINING! SURPRISING!

Inside

Science Watch
p.2

Upcoming Trips
p.3-4

FeederWatch
p.5

ScienceWatch: Man's Best Friend is a Bird



The greater honeyguide (*Indicator indicator*) is a woodpecker-like bird found in Africa that has an unusual relationship with humans. In 1588, a Portuguese missionary in present-day Mozambique described a bird he observed eating the wax from candles in his

church. He also noted that the bird had another unusual habit of leading native people to beehives and eating the beeswax after the humans smoked out the bees and raided the nest.

This interaction is a very rare example of *mutualism* — a relationship between two species that benefits both — between humans and free-living wild animals. Now a report in the July 22, 2016 issue of *Science* shows that it is also an extraordinary example of reciprocal communication between humans and wild birds.

The research team headed by Claire N. Spottiswoode, a behavioral ecologist at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, found that humans and honeyguides can communicate with each other by a specific exchange of sounds to form a cooperative partnership, one that probably predates our love affair with dogs by hundreds of thousands of years.

“Honeyguides provide the information and get the wax, humans provide the skills and get the honey.” - C. Spottiswoode

When a honey hunter from the Yao people of northern Mozambique wants to recruit a honeyguide in the forest he will issue a specific call, a trill-grunt, which sounds like “brr-hmm.” This is often followed by a honeyguide flying up close and chattering loudly to indicate its readiness to be a guide. Upon locating a hive, often in a towering tree, the bird flies from tree to tree in the direction of the hive, loudly chattering and flicking its tail to show the hunter where it is. After collecting the honey for himself the hunter then lays out the wax combs to reward the bird. “It’s decidedly odd to eat wax, but if you’ve got the metabolism to break it down, it’s a good source of calories,” said Dr. Spottiswoode.

Spottiswoode and her colleagues wanted to distinguish if the human-bird collaboration was wholly spontaneous or a specific response to the calls made by the honey hunter. She walked through the forest, playing the “brr-hmm” call, or a control human sound or another control animal sound. If a honeyguide showed up she followed it, while continuing to produce the appropriate sound. The “brr-hmm” call was more than twice as effective in attracting a honeyguide as either of the controls. In addition, honeyguides attracted by the “brr-hmm” call were more than three times as likely to find a bee hive as those attracted by control calls. “Our experiments showed that it really works. Giving the [honey-hunter] sound doubled the chances of being guided by a honeyguide, and tripled the overall chances of actually finding a bee’s nest. Honeyguides really are paying attention to signals that humans communicate back at them,” said Spottiswoode.

Even when a honeyguide was recruited by either of the control sounds, it tended to cease guiding behavior before finding any bees more often than when it was attracted by the honey-hunting sound. The success rates were 81.3%, 66.7% and 50% for the honey-hunting call, the human control sound and the animal control sound, respectively.

How the partnership began remains a mystery, but some researchers believe it is quite ancient. “It appears to depend on humans using fire and hand-axes,” said Richard Wrangham, a biological anthropologist at Harvard University. Those talents date back to the lower Paleolithic, “so the relationship could be more than a million years old.”



According to Dr. Wrangham, the honeyguide may have even played a role in making us into modern large-brained humans by supplying us with enough calories in the form of honey to feed our energetically-demanding brains.

Move over, Fido!

—SAUL SCHEINBACH

On the Wing: Upcoming Field Trips, Sep-Oct 2016

Outdoor activities such as birding and hiking with a group are a wonderful way to share your interests with like-minded people 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; a few will be available for loan. Dress appropriately for the weather. For more details and information, please call Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331 or e-mail at Bochnikm@cs.com.

Sunday, September 18, 2016

Lenoir Nature Preserve

Walter Chadwick Memorial Walk

Meet at the Nature Center at 8 am. We will look for birds, butterflies, dragonflies, and nature, and share memories of Walter. We will end up at the front of the mansion at 10 am for the **Hawk Watch**, to see the Broad-wing Hawks on their 4,300-mile migration to South America.

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

Saturday, September 24, 2016

Hawk Watch – Lenoir Nature Preserve

Meet at the Nature Center at 10 am. Hawk Watch will take place in front of the mansion.

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

Sunday, September 25, 2016

Larchmont Reservoir

A joint field trip with the Bronx River / Sound Shore (BRSS) Audubon. Meet at the Upper Reservoir in Larchmont. We will be looking for fall migrants.

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

Saturday, Oct 1, 2016

Hawk Day at Lenoir Nature Preserve

10 am–12:30 pm will have a Hawk Watch in front of the mansion.

1:00 pm: **Live Hawks!** Jim Eyring from Pace University will return with live raptors. A family-friendly event.

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

Sunday, Oct 2, 2016

Fire Island Hawk Watch

Another joint trip with the Bronx River / Sound Shore Audubon. Meet at 7:00 am at the Scarsdale Village Hall to meet for the drive to Fire Island. We will be looking for hawks, raptors and other fall migrants.

Saturday, Oct 8, 2016

The BIG SIT at Lenoir Nature Preserve

Meet behind the Lenoir Mansion anytime between 8AM and 3PM.

A great way to enjoy birds without an effort! The object of the "BIG SIT" is to tally as many bird species as we can in a day from a single position. We'll be out on the Lenoir lawn (at our hawk watch sight) overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades. Bring a chair, drink and snacks and join us anytime on that day and help us find the birds!

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



Scan this QR code
into your smartphone
for updates!

Continued on next page

Upcoming Field Trips, Sep-Oct 2016 (cont'd)

Saturday, October 15, 2016

Hawk Watch – Lenoir Nature Preserve

Meet at the Nature Center at 10 am. Hawk Watch will take place in front of the mansion.

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

Sunday, October 16, 2016

Edith Reade Sanctuary and Marshlands Conservancy

A joint trip with Bronx River / Sound Shore Audubon. Meet at 8:00 am at the Reade Sanctuary. We will be looking for fall migrants.

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

Saturday, November 5, 2016

Jones Beach – Late Fall Migrants

Meet at the Coast Guard Station parking lot at West End 2.

This is a good time for a rarity or a western stray to

show up. A variety of birds should be seen from ducks, raptors, seabirds, shorebirds and late land migrants.

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

Saturday, December 3, 2016

Croton Point Park

Meet at 8:00 am in the large parking lot. We will search the meadow for the American Pipit and other grassland birds.

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

Monday, December 26, 2016

Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count

This is the 90th year of this annual bird census. Groups of volunteers start at various locations throughout southern Westchester and the Bronx and canvas their area for birds. For more information, please contact the Count Compiler, Michael Bochnik, at 914-237-9331.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

Historic Notes: The History of the Glen Island Casino

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

Lenoir Nature Preserve

Presented by **Virginia Carnes**, Curator and Developmental Historian, Westchester County Parks Dept.

Refreshments at 7:00 pm • Program at 7:30 pm

So many people have memories of visiting the Glen Island Casino. Come and learn about its history and significance. You will be surprised to hear what went on there before it became a county park. It is a fascinating story.

Mark your calendars for future programs on Nov. 30 and Dec. 21st.

Project FeederWatch, 2016-2017

Project FeederWatch: Hosts and Volunteers Needed!

Once again, the Hudson River Audubon Society will be participating in Project FeederWatch at the Lenoir Nature Center. FeederWatch is a citizen science program, sponsored by the Cornell University Ornithology Lab. We help track the bird population by counting the birds at our feeders behind the nature center. We sit inside, usually with binoculars, and look out through two large windows.



A host for each session tallies the numbers of each species, and the information is passed on to Cornell Labs by Carol Lange at the end of the season. Our first session will be Saturday, November 19, 2016 and we will finish in April. We count for two hours for two days on weekends, approximately every two weeks.

We are looking for volunteers to host one or more two-hour sessions, and we are looking for lots of interested people to help the hosts count the birds. The host, who chooses the time of day for the count, usually brings some refreshments, such as bagels and cream cheese, or crackers and cheese, etc. For those who are new to birds and birding, it's a wonderful way to learn or sharpen your skills in bird identification.

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

FeederWatch Scheduled Times

<u>NOVEMBER</u>	Sat/Sun, Nov 19 / 20	
<u>DECEMBER</u>	Sat/Sun, Dec 03 / 04	Sat/Sun, Dec 17 / 18
	Thu/Fri, Dec 29 / 30	
<u>JANUARY</u>	Sat/Sun, Jan 14 / 15	Sat/Sun, Jan 28 / 29
<u>FEBRUARY</u>	Sat/Sun, Feb 11 / 12	Fri / Sat, Feb 24 / 25
<u>MARCH</u>	Sat/Sun, Mar 11 / 12	Sat/Sun, Mar 25 / 26
<u>APRIL</u>	Fri / Sat, Apr 7 / 8	

President	914-237-9331
Michael Bochnik	BochnikM@cs.com
Vice-President	
Saul Scheinbach	judisaul@aol.com
Treasurer	
Frances Greenberg	greenberg.fran@gmail.com
Secretary	
Jackie Bruskin	jrbruskin@optimum.net
Education	
Sandra Wright	tralac@yahoo.com
Programs	718-549-2380
Lynn Shaw	Lynnshaw@gmail.com
Butterfly Garden	914-589-3293
Mary T. Harrington	TCTallon@aol.com
Hospitality/Carpool	914-478-3695
Ruth DeFord Kotecha	rdeford@post.harvard.edu
Newsletter Editor	
Stan Cho	sscperigrine@gmail.com
Lenoir Liaison	914-968-5851
Melissa Sullivan	mqs8@westchestergov.com
Feeder Watch	914-668-5101
Carol Lange	carollange@aol.com
Circulation	
William Van Wart	914-376-2401
Publicity	
Jeanette Johnson	jntt3456@verizon.net
Fundraising	
(vacant)	
Board Members	
Judi Veder	Dana Fazzino
Jane Metzger	Mark Testa
Cathy Mazella	Kelli Bochnik

www.hras.org

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 _____

City _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

CHAPTER # C9ZR200Z

Send check and this application to:

National Audubon Society

P.O. Box 422250

Palm Coast, FL 32142-2250

Please make check payable to National Audubon Society

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
WHITE PLAINS, NY
Permit 7312

DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE EXPEDITE

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