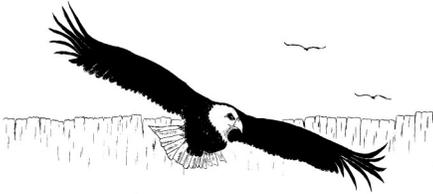


The Rivertown Naturalist

NEWSLETTER OF THE HUDSON RIVER AUDUBON SOCIETY OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY



November/December 2014, Vol. 42, No. 2

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.

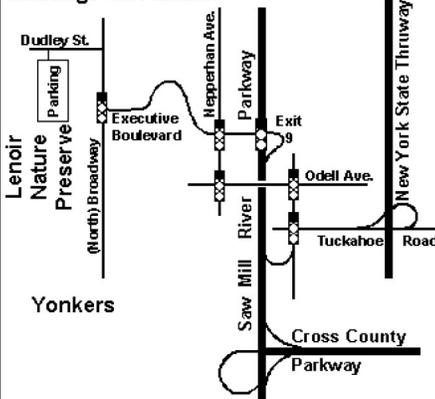
www.hras.org

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



The Galápagos: The Enchanted Islands

Date: November 19, 2014

7:00 pm Refreshments, 7:30 program

Speaker: Fran Greenberg, HRAS Treasurer

Location: Lenoir Nature Preserve

Las Islas Incantadas – the Enchanted Islands – was the name given to this mysterious archipelago by 17th century Spanish sailors. Home to dozens of wildlife species found nowhere else on earth, these islands are a UNESCO World Heritage site, a mecca for international tourism, the crucible of Darwin's theory of evolution, and a battleground between environmental protectors and industrial exploitation.

Fran Greenberg will show photographs from her 2013 voyage to the Enchanted Islands.

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Project FeederWatch

The Project FeederWatch season will soon be upon us once again. Hudson River Audubon Society members will be counting feeder birds from the observation room at the Lenoir Nature Center from November through March. This Citizen Science Project is in conjunction with the Cornell University Ornithology Lab and helps track bird population throughout the country.

We still need a few leaders to be in charge of a FeederWatch day and mark the tally sheet. The day leaders frequently bring some refreshments, such as bagels, donuts, etc.

We count the birds every two weeks for two hours, two days in a row. Many HRAS members, as well as non-members, show up to help with the count and socialize.

FeederWatch times are chosen by the day's leaders and will be announced by e-mail approximately a week ahead of time. To be placed on the email announcements of times, please send your email and contact information to CarolLange@aol.com. If you have already received these announcements last year, you're already on the list and do not have to re-register.

If you are interested in being a leader for a day, or if you have any questions, please contact Carol Lange at (914) 668-5101, or email CarolLange@aol.com.

Project FeederWatch Schedule

Sat. Nov. 8: Kelli & Michael Bochnik	Sat. Dec. 20: OPEN	Sat. Jan. 31: OPEN
Sun. Nov. 9: Jackie Bruskin	Sun. Dec. 21: Jackie Bruskin	Sun. Feb. 1: OPEN
Sat. Nov. 22: Maggie & Walter Chadwick	Sat. Jan. 3: Fran Greenberg	Sat. Feb. 14: Kelli & Michael Bochnik
Sun. Nov. 23: Mary Harrington	Sun. Jan. 4: Ruth DeFord	Sun. Feb. 15: Cathy & Larry Mazzella
Thu. Dec. 4:- Yvonne Lynn	Sat. Jan. 17: Judi Veder & Saul Scheinbach	Sat. Feb. 28: OPEN
Fri. Dec. 5: Hilary & Alan Soiefer	Sun. Jan. 18: Fran Greenberg	Sun. Mar. 1: Mary Harrington

Christmas Bird Count



If you're looking for a local birding activity that's not only fun and exciting, but helps with valuable winter bird population data, come on out and help on a Christmas Bird Count. They are censuses, near Christmas, of the number of each species of bird seen in a 24-hour period in a particular area or count circle.

Bird counts will be conducted from December 14 to January 5. Our local one, the Bronx-Westchester CBC will be held Sunday December 28, 2014. The Peekskill CBC and the Greenwich CBC will be held a week earlier on the 20th and 21st.

There is no particular meeting place for these events. Different groups of volunteers start at various locations throughout southern Westchester and the Bronx and canvas their area for birds. You can also participate by identifying and counting the birds at your feeder on the count day and phoning in the results. We will set up a group to count in Tibbetts Brook Park. Call for time and meeting place. We will tally the results from all the groups at the compilation dinner (\$12) at the Lenoir Nature Preserve in north Yonkers.

For more information, see the count's web site at <http://www.hras.org/bwcbc.html> or call the Bronx-Westchester Count Compiler, Michael Bochnik at 914-237-9331 or at bochnikm@cs.com.

ScienceWatch: Living on the Edge

The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is among the most successful wild bird invasive species. Originally from Europe and Asia, its range has expanded across every continent except Antarctica. Many introductions have been deliberate. For example, in the 1850's house sparrows were released in Central Park, supposedly to bring birds mentioned by Shakespeare to the New World. While other released birds like Java Sparrows (*Padda oryzivora*) and Chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*) failed to take hold, House Sparrows quickly spread across North America. So what makes them so successful?

Lynn B. Martin, an ecological physiologist at the University of South Florida, Tampa, has pursued this question for over ten years. We may easily expect a successful invasive species to be a generalist in diet and something of an "adventurist" behaviorally. But Martin and his colleagues have gone a step further. They look at the individuals on the front line of the invasion, asking if these "edge" birds have any special attributes. They find that edge birds are indeed different behaviorally and physiologically from already established birds.



Worldwide distribution of House Sparrows, 2013

For example, in a 2005 study Martin compared the behavior of two house sparrow populations: a 150-year-old already established one in New Jersey, and a 28-year-old actively invading one in Panama. The Panamanian active invaders approached and ate novel foods such as peanut butter and dog food much faster than the established New Jersey birds. Clearly active invaders were behaving more adventurously than established birds.

In the 1950's house sparrows began arriving in Mombasa on the east coast of Kenya as stowaways aboard freight ships. Spreading westward, within 60 years they made it to the Ugandan border, a distance of 850 km (450 mi). Martin realized the Kenyan birds would be a good model system for comparing frontline invaders with established birds by using distance from Mombasa as a measure of range expansion.

“Over the short span of 60 years, house sparrows have spread across Kenya, changing dramatically as they’ve moved into new areas.” - L.B. Martin

In 2012, Martin and his graduate student Andrea Liebl studied the behavior of the Kenyan sparrows. Birds captured at Mombasa and seven other locations across Kenya were tested for their exploratory behavior by placing them in a small tent with novel items and measuring the area explored in five minutes. Exploration increased with increasing distance from Mombasa. Mombasa birds were the least exploratory, edge birds the most.

Martin and Liebl showed that edge birds also differ physiologically; they release more cortisol when stressed and their brains have more cortisol receptors. Cortisol, the “stress” hormone, revs up the body to deal with threats and enhances memory—responses to be expected from birds on the edge—and more receptors allow for a more rapid response to challenges they encounter.

In a more recent study of Kenyan birds published in the January 2013 issue of *Proceedings of the Royal Society, Biological Sciences*, Liebl and Martin along with Courtney Coon and Aaron Schrey found that active invaders have a more alert immune system. Certain molecules of the immune system, Toll-like receptors (TLR), perform immune surveillance. They detect bacteria or parasites invading the host and trigger an inflammatory response to kill the pathogens.

First Martin *et al.* measured TLR baseline levels in the blood of captured birds. After injecting a bacterial antigen, they checked to see if the levels increased. They hypothesized that edge birds would produce a greater response to the antigen. Instead they found that edge birds maintained greater baseline levels than established birds. Although maintaining a high baseline level is energetically costly, a sharper immune system may be worthwhile for birds encountering new pathogens. “Perhaps their immune systems are more attuned to finding particularly harmful parasites in new regions where parasites are more likely novel,” said Martin.

Currently Martin and his team are looking at how edge birds differ genetically. They find that while invading birds have less genetic diversity, they exhibit greater genetic plasticity, yet another adaptation that makes them the most cosmopolitan bird on the planet.

—SAUL SCHEINBACH

On the Wing: Upcoming Field Trips, Nov 2014–Jan 2015

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. Some are available for loan for those who need them. Dress appropriately for the weather. Car pooling 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, November 22, 2014

Tibbetts Brook Park, Yonkers

Meet at 8 AM at the flagpole of the main building.

Late fall migrants and waterfowl.

We will walk the paved path around both lakes looking for waterfowl such as Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler and Hooded Mergansers. Late migrants such as Belted Kingfisher, kinglets and Pied-billed Grebe may also be seen. Trip over by 10:30 AM

Saturday, December 13, 2014

Massapequa Preserve

Meet at 8 AM, Lake Shore Drive & Clark Street. Park along Lake Shore Drive off Clark Street in Massapequa Long Island.

Waterfowl and early winter birds.

We will visit Massapequa and Tackapasha Preserves. Massapequa Preserve is a wooded area with a stream that leads to a series of ponds. Waterfowl such as Northern Pintail, Redhead, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Green-Winged Teal, and Northern Shoveler may be found. The pond may contain Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, Greater Yellowlegs and Killdeer. Other birds should include Black-crowned Night-Heron, Pied-billed Grebe and Swamp Sparrow. We will stop for lunch and continue on to Tackapasha Preserve and other areas. We will return mid-afternoon.

Saturday, January 31, 2015

Jones Beach

Meet at 8 AM Coast Guard Station lot in West End

We will check the bay and ocean for loons, grebes, sea ducks, gannets and other seabirds. We will then search the dunes and grassy median for winter birds such as Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, overwintering sparrows, Red-breasted Nuthatches, hawks and owls.

Birding Basics at Lenoir Nature Preserve

Introduction to Birds Saturday, November 15, 2014, 11:00 am

Learn to identify our resident and visiting winter birds. A visual presentation followed by our observation of birds at the feeders.

Surviving the Winter Saturday, January 10, 2015, 11:00 am

How do our local fauna survive the winter? Snow and ice cover the ground, the temperatures are below freezing making it difficult for animals to survive. Learn how animals have adapted to survive Westchester's winter.

Any questions, please contact Walter Chadwick, [914-237-5791](tel:914-237-5791).



*Hudson River Audubon Society's
Holiday Luncheon
The River View*

*One Warburton Avenue, Hastings-on-Hudson
Handicap access may be limited (Stairs)*

Buffet

Saturday, December 6, 2014— 12 noon – 4:00 PM

Special Guest Speaker

Bernie Wides

Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs

Not birds! Not even dinosaurs! Pterosaurs were flying reptiles, and the first to fly under their own power.

\$35.00 per person

Seating arrangement is on a first come basis

Checks for reservations must be received by Nov 26 to:
Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester

Holiday Reservation

PO BOX 616

Yonkers, NY 10703

If you have questions, please call Michael Bochnik at (914) 237-9331

Yes, We would like to attend.

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____ for _____ reservations.

Directions, tickets, and confirmation will be sent on receipt of payment.

Sorry, we cannot attend but enclosed is a donation of \$ _____

to further Hudson River Audubon Society of Westchester's efforts to educate children about our natural world.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Tel. _____

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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 _____

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

www.hras.org

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