



# Central Westchester Audubon Society *News*

Central Westchester Audubon Society, a Chapter of National Audubon Society serves  
Elmsford, Greenburgh, Harrison, Purchase, Rye, Rye Brook, Purchase and White Plains

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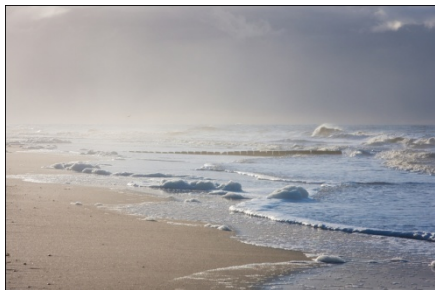
Vol. XXXIII, NO. 3

MARCH-APRIL 2010

## Spring Programs

**Our Beaches Are Moving - but Where and Why?**  
Speaker: Mickey Maxwell Cohen

*Spring Field Trip Schedule Inside  
Birdathon May 15*



**Thursday, March 18, 2009**

**7:00 PM**

**Room 20 at Church St. School**

**295 Church St., White Plains, NY**

Beach erosion, a twenty-first century reality, will continue to occur at an accelerated pace. Join this virtual (slide illustrated) trip to Long Island seashores to examine the causes and effects of this inexorable phenomenon. Our speaker is an award winning marine educator and a Senior Naturalist for the Northeast Chapter of the American Littoral Society. Program co-sponsored by Bronx River/Sound Shore Audubon.

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## Moss and Lichen Lab presented by Taro Ietaka

When the birds just can't be found, you can still enjoy your time outdoors by just changing your focus. Mosses and lichens, though small, are an important element in many ecosystems and are beautiful in their own right.

**Thursday, April 15, 2009, 7:00 PM**

**Cranberry Lake Nature Preserve**

**1609 Old Orchard St. (off Rte. 22)**

**North White Plains**

**914-428-1005**

In this slide show and lecture we'll learn about their evolution and biology; how birds and other wildlife use them; how they have adapted to very inhospitable conditions; and how to recognize the most common species in our area. The lecture will be followed by a hike on Saturday, April 17 at Cranberry Lake so that you can learn to recognize them in the field. Taro Ietaka, Curator of the Cranberry Lake Nature Preserve, studied mosses and lichens at the Humboldt Field Research Institute and has made many new moss and lichen additions to the Westchester County biodiversity database.

Directions to Cranberry Lake Nature Preserve: From 287 take exit 6 for North Broadway, Rte. 22 north. (Turn left from eastbound; left, then right from westbound.) Go straight to the 4th light and bear to your left onto Broadway. At the next light bear to your right onto 22 north. Go to 3rd light and make a right onto Old Orchard St. The preserve entrance is on the right.

**CENTRAL WESTCHESTER AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**P.O. BOX 359, WHITE PLAINS, NY 10602**

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Retired Board Members: Norma Canfield, Jack O'Brian, Libby Wagner

**Urgent Call for Kestrel Box Monitors**

In the January newsletter I wrote about our chapter's involvement in the Audubon Kestrel Project which was launched in response to the observed declining numbers of American Kestrels in New York and other states in the northeast. In November we engaged in the education aspect of the project by having Jim Eyring focus on his kestrel, "Adam," who flew around the gym to the wonder and enjoyment of the audience. At that program, Jim presented CWAS with a kestrel box which will be installed in the field at the Marshlands Conservancy by the end of February. The box should be monitored weekly for 15 to 30 minutes between mid-morning and late afternoon from early March and continued through June. Volunteers will be provided with a data sheet with detailed but simple instructions. You can volunteer for one day or more – we would appreciate any commitment of time you can give to this worthwhile project. If you are interested, please call or e-mail Jeanne Alpert at 914-946-1780 or [jsalpert@optonline.org](mailto:jsalpert@optonline.org).

ja

**Volunteers Needed for Courtyard Garden Enhancement**

We have big plans for enhancing the Courtyard Garden at the Church Street School. Funded by a mini grant from Audubon NY, we are going to add several species of native, flowering perennials attractive to birds, butterflies, and bees. In order to give these plants the best chance to thrive we must improve the texture of the soil by digging in peat moss, sweet peat, manure, etc. We need volunteers to pick up and deliver bags of soil enhancers (reimbursement provided); and we need adults to prepare the beds. The work will be done weekdays in the latter part of April. Once the soil has been improved, the students will do the planting. If you can help us with this project, please call or e-mail Jeanne Alpert at 914-946-1780 or [jsalpert@optonline.net](mailto:jsalpert@optonline.net).

ja

**Program Cancellations**

To find out if a program is cancelled because of inclement weather, please call 914-946-1780.

**Directions to Church Street School**

Take 1-287, Cross Westchester Expressway, to Exit 6, North Broadway, Going west-bound (toward Tarrytown) turn left at the end of the ramp, and turn left (south) on North Broadway. going east-bound (toward Rye) turn right (south) at top of ramp on North Broadway. Then take the first right, immediately after expressway ramp, onto Westview. Westview has a sharp left turn into Church street. The entrance to the school parking lot is on the right, 0.2 miles from Westview.

## Congratulations to Al Gassman!

CWAS Board member Al Gassman submitted his Easter Box Turtle nesting photo (see September CWAS Newsletter) in the Westchester Land Trust Photo Show and placed third among 140 photos.



## Wildlife Rehabilitators

### Seeking help for an injured bird or animal?

Following is the DEC web site address and a list of wild life rehabilitators in Westchester County:

**DEC Web Site:** [www.nyswrc.org/counties.htm](http://www.nyswrc.org/counties.htm)

#### **Bronxville:**

Lorraine J. Izzo  
914-629-8352

#### **Yonkers:**

Diana McKinnon  
914-963-7772  
[mckinnond@jgb.org](mailto:mckinnond@jgb.org)

#### **Ossining/Yorktown**

Erin Smithies  
Cell: 337-654-1610  
Work: 914-762-2912 ext. 114  
[esmithies@teatown.org](mailto:esmithies@teatown.org)

## Natural History Exhibit

### Trees: Heroes of Our Planet

This exhibit includes pictures, charts, hand-on displays and more, illustrating the anatomy of a tree, the role trees play in a healthy ecosystem, and the many threats that trees face from people. Geared for adults and children. Through October 3.

**Greenburgh Nature Center**  
**99 Dromore Road, off Central Ave.**  
**Scarsdale, NY 10583**  
**914-723-3470**  
[www.greenburghnaturecenter.org](http://www.greenburghnaturecenter.org)

## Field Trips

Bring binoculars, lunch, water and insect repellent.

**Sunday, March 14, Edith Read Sanctuary & Marshlands.** Lingering winter birds and early spring migrants. Meet at 8 AM at Read. Co-sponsored with Bronx River/Sound Shore Audubon. Leader; Doug Bloom.

**Sunday, April 25. Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.** Spring migrants. Meet 9 AM at refuge center. Co-sponsored with Bronx River/Sound Shore and Hudson River Audubon Chapters.

**Saturday, May 8. CWAS Annual Memorial Walk.** This will be a lovely spring walk in memory of our dedicated members Nicole Kelisky, John Ferone and Lois Stierhout. We will meet at 8:00 AM at Ed House for car pooling. Destination to be determined. For questions, please call Jeanne Alpert at 946-1780.

**Saturday, May 15 (Rain date Sunday, May 16) Annual Birdathon.** This is our major fund raising event of the year. See back page for pledge form. **Meet at 7 AM at Education House for carpooling.** Our first stop will be Forest Park in Queens, followed by a visit to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. We will search for spectacular warbler sightings and should tally several other migrants and residents.

**Sunday, May 23, Doodletown** (near Bear Mountain). Meet 8 AM at Doodletown Rd. Co-sponsored with Bronx River/Sound Shore Audubon. Leader; Doug Bloom.

### Directions to Education House

5 Homeside Lane is located off North St. in White Plains. Going south on Mamaroneck Ave. from downtown White Plains, make a left turn on Ridgeway. Continue on Ridgeway to the traffic light (firehouse on the left) and turn right on North St. Homeside Lane is the third right and Education House is the first building on the left.

## Notes from Abroad

*Former CWAS Board member Jean Coates recounts her birding experiences at her home in England.*

The winters in northern England are usually much less severe than those experienced in New York with daytime temperatures mainly about 40° - 45°F and night-time temperatures rarely falling below about 28°F. Any precipitation that falls is usually rain which tends to give a cold and damp atmosphere. Although some snow does fall occasionally it tends to melt quickly. This winter, however, has proved the exception to the rule. A covering of snow fell the week before Christmas and the temperature was low enough for this to remain until just before the New Year. After one day without snow more snow then fell. For most of the next two weeks the whole of Great Britain was been blanketed in snow and temperatures to dropped as low as 12 degrees F. There had not been as much snow or such low temperatures since the winter of 1981 - 82.

The bad weather means that there was a feeding frenzy whenever food was put out for the birds. It has also brought birds to the garden that are usually found a little further north. The birds that normally come to the garden to feed have been present in much larger numbers than usual. This year has seen the return of large numbers of chaffinches to the garden. These are ground feeding birds and tend to flock in the autumn and winter. With the ground being snow-covered the seeds put out can obviously form a major part of their diet. This year a nyger seed feeder has also been added to the other feeders and this has attracted goldfinches which were very rare visitors previously but at times flocks from ten to fifteen birds have been present. Other finches attracted by the food have been bullfinches, probably the most beautiful British finch, and greenfinches. There were green finches nesting in the garden during the summer but these disappeared after their nest was attacked by magpies. Some of the more common birds that visit the garden, such as blackbirds, wood pigeons and a variety of tit species, have come in larger numbers. Of the tits, the long-tailed tits have come in flocks of ten to twenty birds at a time and the less common willow tit has become a frequent visitor.

Of the more unusual birds to come to feed in the garden a brambling was often seen amongst the flocks of chaffinches. This bird is about the same size as a chaffinch and is also a member of the finch family. It is also only the second time this bird has ever ventured into the garden, the other time being in the winter of 1981 – 82. Two members of the thrush family that are usually seen only in colder weather have also been coming to feed. The more common of the two, the redwing, is about the same size as an English song thrush and distinguished from one by the distinctive red colour under its wings. The other, the fieldfare, is one of the largest of the thrushes being about the size of an American robin.



*Brambling - Photo by Jean Coates*

The cold weather has also brought large numbers of birds from further north to the coastal region. The most numerous of these has been the pink-footed goose. These have arrived in flocks of several thousand and could be seen feeding on pasture and arable land near the coast and in the early morning and late evening roosting on the coastal lakes. There were also a number of greylag geese among the flocks. Small flocks of brent geese (called brants in the US) have also been seen. Of the waders large numbers of curlews have been seen both on the beaches and on fields and ponds near to the coast. Another fairly unusual visitor has been the bar-tailed godwit which has been seen on the beach together with large numbers of oystercatchers which are more common in Britain than the American oystercatcher is in the US. Many other common waders and shore birds have also been present. Unlike the waders, shore birds tend to be more prevalent in winter than in summer.

Although the winter weather has not been particularly pleasant it has brought its compensations for birders and it is to be hoped that not too many of the small birds have perished in the unusual conditions.

## Courtyard Investigation Association (CIA)

*Some 5<sup>th</sup> grade students are participating in a courtyard garden club which they have named the Courtyard Investigation Association (CIA). Under the guidance of a volunteer from the Central Westchester Audubon Society, they will be observing and documenting the changes in the garden through the seasons, using a variety of academic skills. They will also participate in selecting and planting additional native plants, beneficial to birds, bees and butterflies. The funding for the plants and bird seed for the courtyard has been provided by the Central Westchester Audubon Society through a grant from Audubon New York. The group meets about twice a month during the lunch period.*

### The First Assignment

After a discussion on what makes a good habitat for birds, the value of native plants, and a walk through the Courtyard, the CIA students were asked to write a short narrative or haiku imagining that they were birds flying over the garden.

#### Norway Spruce

Big green majesty  
Reaching up to the blue sky  
Pinecones hang on you

Colin

#### Red Twig Dogwood

Mahogany red  
Yellow and Green Leaved Branches  
Flutter In The Breeze

Christopher

#### If I Was a Bird

I would notice I was the only bird. I would notice there were dead seeds. I would notice the bare shrubs. I would notice the berries on the summersweet shrub. I would notice the big berries on the deciduous holly female shrub. I would notice the empty bird baths. I would notice the empty bird feeders. I would notice the hard and spiky needles on the Norway spruce. I would notice the only two pumpkins in the pumpkin patch. I would notice the seeds in the orange flowers. I would notice the few flowers that look like butterflies.

Natalie

#### If I Was a Bird

If I was a bird and I flew over the courtyard I would land there and hide awhile just to make sure there is nothing dangerous around. I would eat some seeds and berries if I could find any. I would clean myself in a birdbath. In the springtime I might make a nest in the Norway spruce tree. When it rains I would hide under a plant or a window sill to keep dry. I might want to try an inkberry to eat. I then would fly around the courtyard and look at all the plants.

Nicole

#### If I Was a Bird

If I was a bird, I would hop along the grass and see many beautiful shrubs in the courtyard. I would fly above and see the top of a beautiful tree. I could fly along and see berries on the shrubs I saw and store them for winter. Then I'd go back for more and then I'd take one last look before...

Leah

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Box 359  
White Plains, NY 10602



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### Birdathon 2010

Saturday, May 15, 7 AM - Rain date, Sunday, May 16  
Meet at 7 AM at Education House for Carpooling

#### Central Westchester Audubon 2010 Birdathon Pledge Card

\_\_\_\_ I am happy to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per species in support of the Birdathon  
\_\_\_\_ My tax deductible gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed, payable to **Central Westchester Audubon**  
\_\_\_\_ My employer matches gifts - matching form enclosed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Area code) Telephone Email

Mail to Central Westchester Audubon, P.O. Box 359, White Plains, NY. 10602

Thank you for supporting our Birdathon. All contributions are tax deductible and will help support the CWAS scholarship fund and the education activities of our chapter.