



Central Westchester Audubon Society *News*

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

Vol. XXXV, NO. 1

September - December 2011

Fall Programs - - Free and open to the public.

How Has That Been Used? Edible and Medicinal Plants



Speaker: **Mary Harrington**

Wednesday, October 19, 7:00 PM
Church Street School, Room 132
295 Church St., White Plains

*Co-sponsored with Bronx River - Sound Shore
Audubon*

Mary Harrington is a Master Gardener and has been an environmental volunteer in Westchester County for 24 years. She helped to author the Teatown Guide to the Wildflowers on Wildflower Island. She is the current caretaker of the Beverly E. Smith Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden sponsored by Hudson River Audubon at Lenoir Nature Preserve.

So much of the flora around us has historical uses as food and/or medicine. This program will introduce you to the history of some of the plants and weeds that are common in this area. How they are used will surprise and delight you!

Live Raptors with Master Falconer Jim Eyring

Thursday, November 17, 7:00 PM
Church Street School Gymnasium
295 Church St., White Plains

Jim Eyring, Assistant Director of the Pace University Environmental Center in Pleasantville and master falconer, returns to thrill us with his presentation of live owls, hawks and falcons in a free flying demonstration. Even if you have seen him before, you will find that each presentation is different. Jim's enthusiasm and story-telling skills will capture the attention of children and adults alike. So come along, bring the kids and enjoy!



CENTRAL WESTCHESTER AUDUBON SOCIETY

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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.

Field Trips

Doug Bloom, Field Trip Leader for BR/SS invites CWAS members to join these field trips
Please call Doug Bloom for Information on trips at (914) 834-5203. Meet at Village Hall, 1001 Post Rd in Scarsdale unless otherwise specified.

Sunday, September 18 - Meadowlands
Meet at Village Hall at 7:00 AM. Easy walking along trails around mudflats. Migrant shorebirds, herons, raptors and land birds.

Sunday, October 9 - Greenwich Audubon Center Hawk Watch
Meet at Greenwich at 8:30 AM. We will be looking for migrating hawks and eagles as well as migrating land birds. Co-sponsored with Saw Mill Audubon.



Sunday, October 30 - Great Swamp, New Jersey
Meet at village Hall at 7:30 AM. Easy walking along trails through forest and marsh. Migrating raptors, herons, shorebirds and small land birds. Co-sponsored with Saw Mill River Audubon.

Sunday, November 13 - Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge
Meet at 8:00 AM at Wild Bird Center or Jamaica Bay at 9:00 AM. We will be looking for early migrant waterfowl.

Sunday, December 11 - Read Sanctuary
Meet at Read at 8:00 AM. Looking for wintering waterfowl.

Annual Memorial Walk

The annual CWAS Audubon Memorial Walk was held on May 7, 2011 at Fairchild Garden, a property of the Greenwich Audubon Society. A half dozen CWAS members participated on this mostly sunny, mild day.

Our bird list included (in the order seen or heard): blue jay, robin, tufted titmouse, common yellowthroat, red-bellied woodpecker, catbird, wood thrush, redwing blackbird, white-breasted nuthatch, Northern (Baltimore) oriole, , song sparrow, flicker, tree swallow, yellow warbler, rose-breasted grosbeak, ruby-throated hummingbird, Eastern kingbird, Eastern bluebird, cardinal, turkey vulture, osprey, pheasant, mourning dove, red-tailed hawk, Canada goose; at the Greenwich Audubon Center: orchard oriole, common crow, tree swallow, barn swallow, robin, turkey vulture, grackle, and Eastern bluebird.

Fairchild Garden has an abundance of spring flowering plants that we were able to identify: false Solomon's seal, skunk cabbage, violets, invasive garlic mustard, black mustard, trout lilies, Christmas fern, sensitive fern, New York fern, bracken fern, kidney leaf buttercup, golden Alexander, common chickweed, mayapple, purple dead nettle, wood anemone, wild leek (ramp), false hellebore, rue anemone, and Canada mayflower.

The mayapple has some interesting wildlife, medicinal, and folklore connected with it. The plant is highly toxic, except for the single, yellow fruit, which hangs under a pair of umbrella-like leaves. The fruit is eaten by opossums, skunks, box turtles and raccoons, who disseminate the seeds in their droppings. Humans can use only the very ripe fruit (no other part) for jams and marmalades. Although the rest of the plant is so toxic, that Native Americans used it as a source of pesticide for crops and tipped their bear-hunting arrows with extract, The FDA approved the use of two different extracts for their cancer fighting properties, since they interfere with cell division in cancer cells. Sometimes called "witches umbrella" for the believed source of poison for witch brews, the mayapple is also called the American mandrake and is a relative of the English mandrake. The European version has a manlike root shape, supposedly screams when pulled from the ground and could make a person insane.

Along a wooded path, we paused to remember Audubon board members who had passed away, including: Nicole Kelisky (for whom this memorial walk originated), John Ferrone, Lois Stierhout, Robert Canfield, Norma Canfield, Anne O'Brien, Herb Ruskin and most recently, Peter daSilva. All of these people made significant contributions to the work of our chapter and to the preservation and protection of the Westchester environment. They are greatly missed.

Susan Fried

Thank you to all who contributed to the 2011 Birdathon Camp Scholarship Fund, sending twenty-three children to ecology camp this summer.



Northern Gannets on nesting rock, Cape St. Mary's, Newfoundland - Photo by Al Gassman

Quotations from some famous birders:

"I still learn new things every time I go birding, and I am certain that the opportunities for birding will never end." David Allen Sibley, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*

"Caution should be a keynote. A quick field observer who does not temper his snap judgment with a bit of caution is like a fast car without brakes." Roger Tory Peterson, *A Field Guide to the Birds*

"There is no such thing as unmistakable." Ludlow Griscom

"The ornithologist is almost always a good fellow; he can hardly be otherwise...the elusive grace and charm of the wild bird is not for the morose or mean person." Witmer Stone

More Developments on Hydrofracking from New York League of Conservation Voters Blog *eco politics daily*, by Jenny Keroack, August 18, 2011

Further ratcheting up the debate over hydrofracking, New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has issued subpoenas to three major gas companies due to concerns about investment disclosure.

The attorney general launched the investigation to discover whether the corporations accurately described the prospects for their natural gas wells to investors.

According to the **New York Times**, investigators are asking for documents pertaining to the assumptions the companies made about drilling costs in their estimates of a wells long-term profitability. The subpoenas are also requesting the formulas the companies use to predict how much gas a well is likely to produce in coming decades.

Schneiderman has taken an active role on the issue of gas drilling in New York and the possibility of allowing hydrofracking here.

Meanwhile, the department of environmental conservation is moving forward with its plan to allow hydrofracking for natural gas in some parts of the state, while banning it in the New York City and Syracuse watersheds.

Have You Joined the Audubon Action Network?

With a few clicks of the mouse, you can let your voice be heard on the important conservation issues of the day. Here's how:

- Log onto **Audubon.org**.
- On the Home Page, click **Issues and Action**.
- Click on **Take Action Now**.
- **Sign up**

From time to time you will receive emails outlining an issue on which Audubon want to take action. If you agree and want to participate, all you have to do is click as directed. Because you have given your address and zip code, the site will automatically send the letter to your members of congress. Your are given the option of editing the letter if you wish.

For **State and Local** issues, log onto **ny.audubon.org** and follow the prompts on **Issues and Actions**.

After you have joined the **Action Network**, please let us know by emailing us a cwas@centralwestchesteraudubon.org.



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More quotations from famous birders:

[When I go birding] "...I feel that I am not seeing nearly all there is to see, and if what I see is wonderful, what I *don't* see distracts me." Leonard Nathan, *Diary of a Left-handed Birdwatcher*

"Even the stocky little sparrow has twice as many vertebrae in its neck as the tallest giraffe: fourteen for the sparrow; seven for the giraffe." Paul Erikson, *et.al. Treasury of North American Birdlore*

"...a host of vultures walking windy tightropes in the sky." Pete Dunne, *The Wind Masters*

"I went out on the road, to chase my dream, at the age of nine." Kenn Kaufman, *Kingbird Highway*