

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy | Spring 2020

# Park Notes

More than Meets the Eye



The Science Behind the Beauty

*Cover photo by Jeffrey B. Evans*



## Chairperson's Letter

In early 2002 the Conservancy was finally able to seriously attempt taming the “wilds” of Carl Schurz Park. Our park, which had been left untended for decades, looked it. In fact, it would take us years of hard work to effect a change that the community could even recognize.

Early on, our mission was clear—clean, prune, weed and restore the greenery. Consolidate shrub borders to afford as much usable space as possible. Establish sight lines to enhance the views, and, perhaps hardest of all, create inviting lawns.

Through the years, the park has become safer, cleaner and greener. It is beautiful. However, we now realize that that is not enough. Our concept of responsible stewardship has changed measurably. The health of this planet, on which our survival depends, is inexorably linked to the health and well-being of all organisms. And more importantly, great change is possible by making small, incremental improvements.

Our efforts have turned to biodiversity which is imperative in our world today. Our plants not only need to be resilient, but must provide a source of food or habitat for native wildlife. Our trees must be cared for, and our canopy restored to provide as much carbon offset as possible. A thriving ecosystem is the only way to ensure our future viability.

With the assistance of highly regarded ornithologists, we have spent the past 2 years documenting our bird population. In the summer of 2019, our friendly native bee population was documented by entomologists from the *American Museum of Natural History*. The last year was also spent measuring our almost 700+ trees to calculate carbon storage and CO2 capture.

So yes, our park is lovely, but it is so much more than just a pretty space. We hope you enjoy reading further to see how important Carl Schurz Park is to the well-being of our community—simply put—the science behind the beauty.



Judy Howard  
Chair, Board of Directors



Executive Director of New Yorkers for Parks, Lynn Kelly (left) with CSPC Board Chair, Judy Howard.

## CSPC Receives Good Stewardship Award

In March of 2019, Carl Schurz Park Conservancy received the Good Stewardship Award from *Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts* at a ceremony held in the elegant surrounds of the Cosmopolitan Club. Founded in 1982, *Friends* is a highly regarded organization dedicated to preserving the architectural legacy, livability and sense of place of the Upper East Side.

The evening's program consisted of a moving video presentation lauding the Conservancy's many achievements and exceptional restoration of Carl Schurz Park, after which, the award was presented to Board Chair, Judy Howard by Executive Director of *New Yorkers for Parks*, Lynn Kelly. Board Vice-Chair, Pat Nadosy, Board Secretary, Clare Thomas, Conservancy Executive Director, Patrick McCluskey and Operations Associate, Jess Goetz were also on hand to receive congratulations.





## Latest Buzz about Park Bees

**Banford Weissmann**

Master Gardener

For some, alarm bells go off when they see a bee. To others, bees are all about the honey.

But to scientists, bees help make our planet habitable.

If it were not for bees, farmers could not grow alfalfa, almonds, apples, apricots and avocados - to name just a few crops that begin with "A." Bees are critical to flowering plants in our yards and parks.

Sadly, scientific studies show that our bee friends, particularly native bees, are struggling to survive. In response, the Conservancy has launched a project in collaboration with the *American Museum of Natural History* to study the bees of Carl Schurz Park and develop a bee conservation plan.

Because our goal is to support the healthiest, most



*Photos by: Jeffrey B. Evans*

**Above left: Bee in a balloon flower. Above: Bee collecting pollen from the flower of a St. John's Wort.**

sustainable green space possible, we need to make sure that our bees are protected. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, more than half of native bee species are in decline. A quarter of them are headed towards extinction. Causes include habitat destruction, pesti-

cides and disease.

In our study, we want to find out which species live in the park. Are we providing sufficient floral and nesting resources to sustain their populations? Could we increase the diversity? How can we adapt our landscape management practices

so that we can protect or improve their habitat?

Under the direction of Sarah Kornbluth, bee biologist and Field Associate at the Museum, we collected bee samples in the park throughout last summer and fall. Kornbluth

... continued on page 4

### What you can do to support native bees:

- Plant native plants
- Don't cut plants back for the winter
- If you see a small hole in the ground, leave it alone
- Refrain from using pesticides





**Bees**

... continued from page 3

then took our samples to her lab. She needed to examine their wing veins, claw structures, mandible formation, antennae, facial markings and many other traits under the microscope in order to determine the exact species. Eventually, our specimens will be included in the permanent archives of the Museum's bee collection, and the data will be available to other researchers.

While the final data on our bee study will not be available until this summer,

we have some positive news to share. In terms of variety and numbers, we currently seem to have a significant bee community. In NYC, more than 100 species have been recorded. Kornbluth's report will show us which of these can be found in the park, but we know already that different types of bumble bees, sweat bees, leaf-cutting bees, mason bees and carpenter bees have taken up residence.

In addition to the bee specimens we have collected, we have evidence that these groups exist through observations by our horticultural

staff and park volunteers. Leaf-cutting bees, for example, carve circular shapes out of the leaves of our redbud trees and button bush which they use to line their nests. We also find small holes in the dirt that belong to ground nesters like bumble bees and sweat bees. During her park visits, Kornbluth has seen brood-parasitic bees (or cuckoo bees) who lay their eggs in another bee's nests, effectively robbing provisions that the host bee has left for her own young. While that sounds terrible, it indicates that we have a healthy population of native

**Above: Sarah Kornbluth works in our park collecting bees.** *Photo by: Banford Weissmann*

**Below: An example of leaf cutting bees work.**

*Photo by: Banford Weissmann*





bees for them to rob from.

Our landscape management practices support bee habitat. We use predominately native plants in the gardens, which provide appropriate floral resources for the bees. They need access to the local plants that have co-evolved with them over time. Pesticides, the leading cause of bee decline, are not used in our park. Most of our native bees are solitary or semi-social. They don't live in large colonies, as do non-native honey bees, which have been imported from Europe. To accommodate plentiful nesting sites, we have changed the way we maintain the gardens. Over the winter, we leave spent stalks in the beds, in case our cavity nesting bees need them. We try to protect certain areas from foot traffic, so that ground-nesting bees can be safely undisturbed. We weave fences out of sticks so that our mason bees and carpenter bees have a place to make their nests.

When you visit the park

in the spring, summer and fall, it's perfectly fine to walk up and take a closer look at the bees. (Don't worry - they won't be interested in you because they are much too busy collecting pollen for their young). By watching them, you'll clearly understand where the expression "busy as a bee" originated. You'll see how they gather the pollen in baskets (scopa) on their legs or on the hairs on their bellies. Sometimes their furry little bodies get very messy – and from a flower's perspective, the messier, the better. Bees will hunt for pollen until their baskets are fully loaded before lugging their haul back to their nests to feed their young. Back and forth they go, over and over again, providing for the new generation.

We hope that the next time you see a bee, it will be in a whole new light. They are facing an uphill battle, but at Carl Schurz Park, be assured that we are with them every step of the way.



Amsonia provides nectar in Spring.

Photo by: Jeffrey B. Evans



Top: Our Horticulturist, Breeana George, learning new skills at the American Museum of Natural History.

Photo by: Banford Weissmann

Above: Our Master Gardener, Banford Weissmann sees bees in a new light!

Photo by: Breeana George



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is grateful to all those who made a contribution between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2019. Without your vital support, our efforts at improving the park and offering annual events would be greatly diminished.

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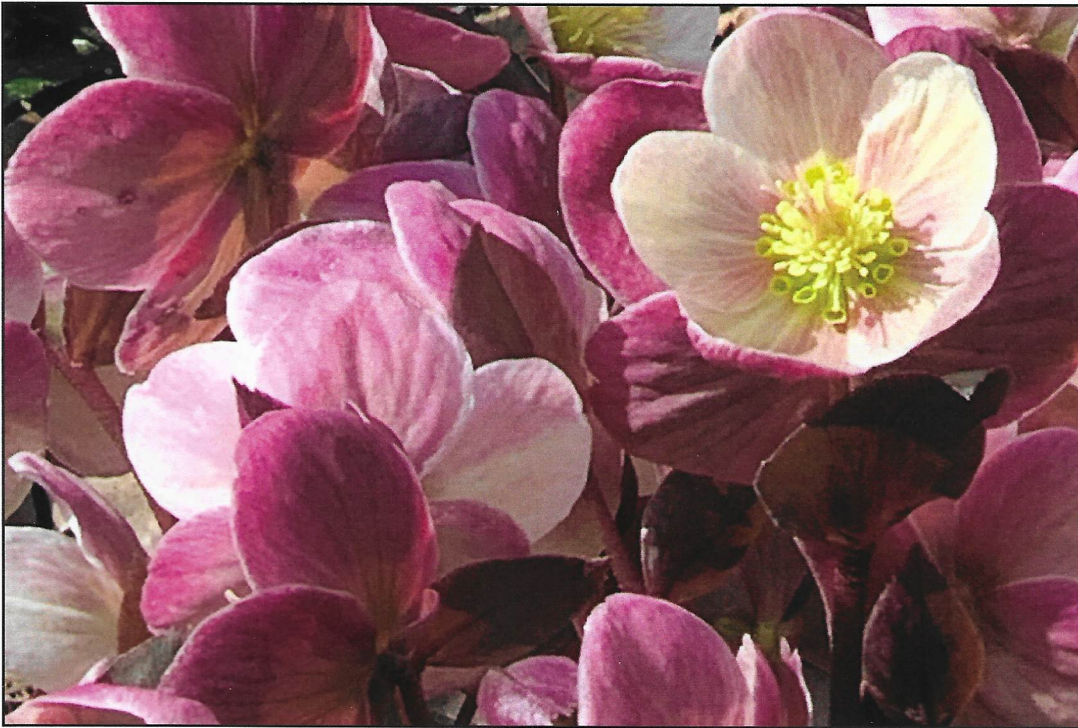
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*Photo by: Judy Howard*

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CARL SC

Promotes monarch butterfly migration through targeted plantings

Supports native bee habitats in partnership with the American Museum of Natural History

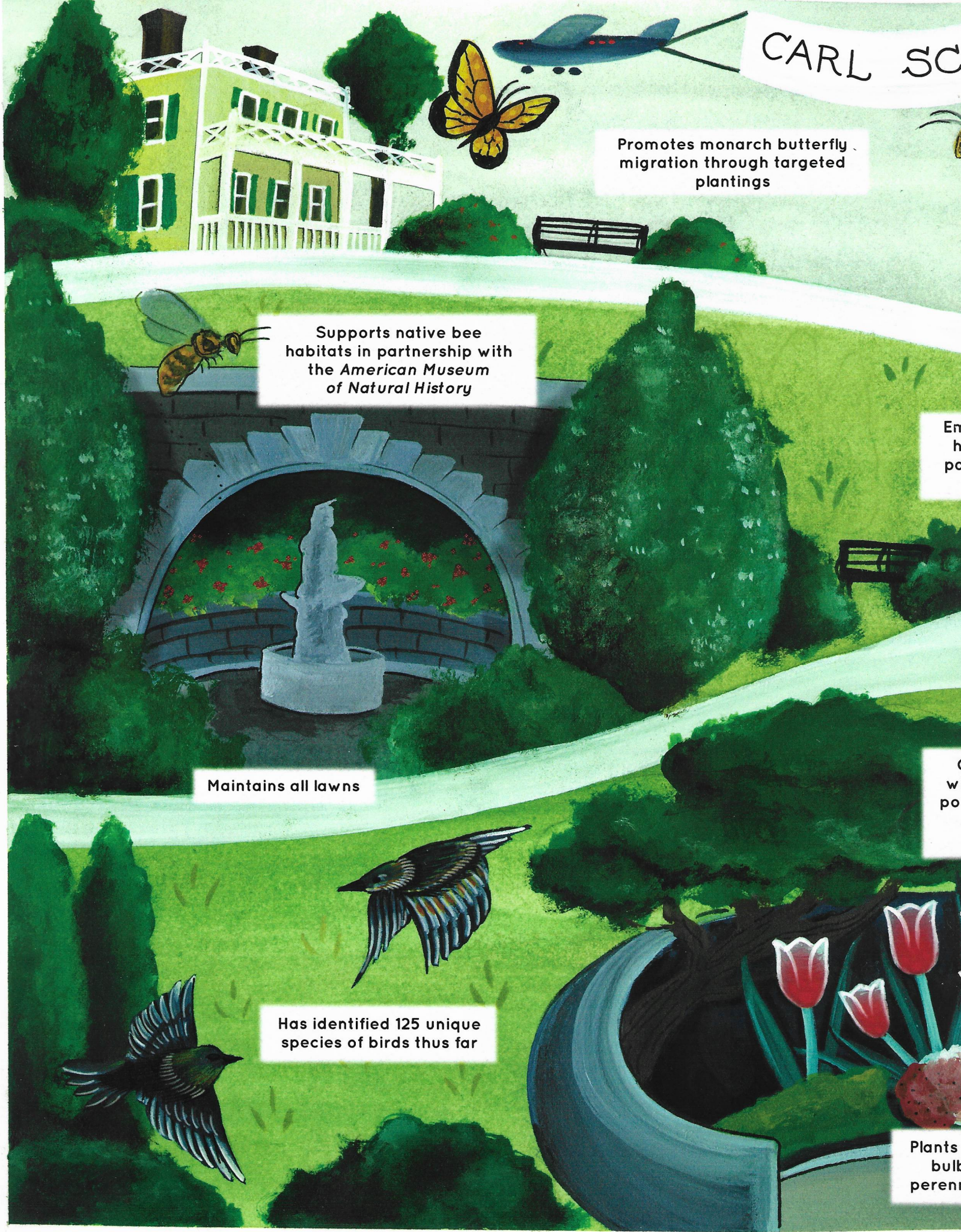
Maintains all lawns

Has identified 125 unique species of birds thus far

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Plants  
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# SCHURZ PARK CONSERVANCY

Presents year-round family events like the Summer Sounds concert series & the Holiday Tree Lighting

Employs a full-time horticulturist & a part-time seasonal gardener

Provides weekly sanitization of dog runs & all Mutt Mitts

Plants 700 trees which capture 30,000 pounds of CO2 annually & store 700,000 pounds of carbon

Has restored over 100 original benches to date

Has renovated all entry pillars, 5 stairways, & over 6 blocks of stonewall

Attracts thousands of butterflies & native plants annually

CARL SCHURZ PARK



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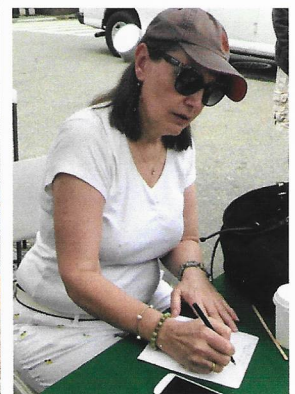
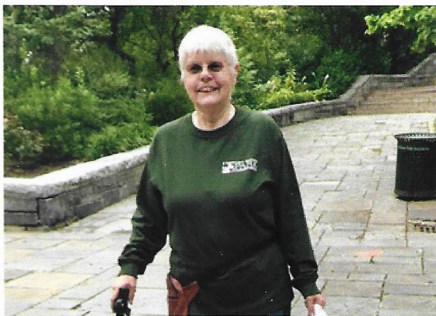
**Heartfelt Thanks to:**

**The Chapin School** for hosting our annual Party on the Park as well as our Volunteer Appreciation Day  
**Insomnia Cookies** for their donation of cookies to the Holiday Tree Lighting and Sunset Film Festival.  
**Yura** for their donation of breakfast for the Gracie Square Art Show artists.  
 And over 350 contributors whose donations of \$1 to \$249 totaled more than \$27,600.





*Our Volunteers  
Make it Happen!*





## Volunteer Highlight

*Since the beginning, our volunteers have been the backbone of the Conservancy. As Executive Director, I look forward to sitting down with some of our most dedicated friends to hear why they love our Park.*

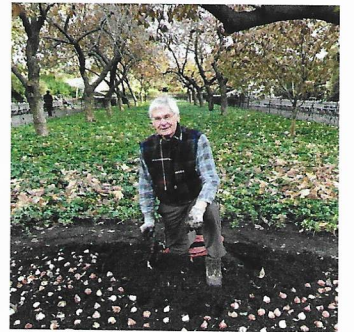
*Ellen Halsted and Bernhard Kessler have been volunteering as Zone Gardeners. Together they now co-chair the Plant 'Sale' held each year on Mother's Day weekend. This event raises money for park improvements and provides our Zone Gardeners with all the flowering annuals they need.*

PM: How did you first get to know Carl Schurz Park, and the Conservancy?

BK: I lived here about 45 years ago so I first knew of the park then. I used to walk a dog in the park. I remember the park back then was so different! Peter Pan had forsythia everywhere at the time. It has improved so much since then.

EH: I knew the park originally because, even though my family was from Connecticut, we had family friends who lived at One Gracie Square. The daughter and I became best friends, and we'd visit back and forth. We would always walk her dog in the park.

A while back, I used to walk through Carl Schurz Park to get to Randall's Island. One day I saw a sign about volunteering and decided to sign up. I always wanted to learn about gardening. The other volunteers gave me gloves etc. and told me to clean an area behind the benches. It was such a fun



Top: Ellen Halsted

Above: Bernhard Kessler

feeling to be able to do this kind of great work on public property. That was probably around 2005. Then I started helping with the Plant 'Sale' in 2011.

BK: I would come to help the Parks Department Gardener, John Tweddle, and then slowly I started coming on monthly volunteer days and became an official volunteer. One day, in 2011, I was given a zone garden near Peter Pan. Ellen and I looked it up and we think the first year we did the Plant 'Sale' together was 2013.

PM: You both have been involved for over a decade, so what keeps you coming back?

BK: Every time I walk in the park it's like entering a new world. You leave the noise behind, and the air is better. I



## One Good Deed Deserves Another

When long-time friend, supporter and Conservancy volunteer master carpenter, Kenny Creed, needed iron supports to build a bench with his students he knew where to turn. The Conservancy connected him with Joe Pouso from Prestige Pavers who has been doing all of the bench restoration in Carl Schurz Park. Sure enough, Joe had the supports, salvaged from another park in the city, and the rest is, as they say, history.

The following is a letter of thanks from Kenny, the Director of a remarkable school where students and seniors interact with astonishing results:

"We at Hudson Lab School want to thank you both for making our project dreams come true with the acquisition of the amazingly beautiful bench from Saul Weprin Park.

The students stripped the old black paint away and painted it moss green. They sanded and stained new boards and used the screw gun and drill to install the boards.

The bench was placed in the new Nature Nook in the Lobby of Andrus on Hudson, the residential senior home where our school is based. The "Grands" were so grateful for this new space the students conceived and assembled with the money they raised with a GoFundMe campaign. The bench is the centerpiece of the space. At the celebration and ribbon cutting, the children beamed with pride when everyone realized they had salvaged the bench and brought it back to life."



have always enjoyed gardening and I get the same feeling every time—like walking into a fairy tale, so quiet. I enjoy it very much, even though now I come less often. I still try to garden about once a week.

EH: The Conservancy is such a peaceful, integral and wonderful place. The people are so fabulous. I love the whole Conservancy; the whole idea of it and the way people do things. It is so impressive to be a part of it. Having worked in the airlines and dealt with different types of management, this is like a gift—I am proud to be part of it.

PM: Our neighbors and friends really are what make this Conservancy so special. Talk about the relationships you've built since you've been here.

BK: Yes, I feel that the Conservancy pulls in so many people, all these volunteers, and they become a small family of friends. People are happy to see you and sometimes we invite each other to events. It's like a big family. Everyone seems to get along and everyone is supportive.

EH: Everyone is so supportive, which makes us all kinder.

It's so neat. You get to do what you love doing and people thank you for it. And now I'm learning about the birds, trees, plants, lichen, bugs and everything on our park tours it is exciting to be a part of a group that gives so much rather than our having to look it up and chase it. CSPC is a

## Trees - Our Park's Largest Workforce

Trees, like all plants, need carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) to live. They use it for photosynthesis which provides them with the carbon sugars they need to grow. The carbon is stored as biomass.

The main human activities that cause emissions of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> are fossil fuel use, deforestation, and agriculture. Not surprisingly, the United States has the second highest level of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the world! We need trees in our arsenal to offset this harmful gas.

Our recent calculations show that the 700 trees in Carl Schurz Park store 350 tons (700,000 pounds) of carbon. Each year these trees absorb 30,000 pounds of carbon.

With the help of volunteers, young and old, our CSPC horti-

culturist measured the circumference of each trunk at breast height (4 feet 10 inches) and converted that into the standard measure of Diameter at Breast Height (DBH). We used calipers for the small trees and long tape measures (and two people) for the large trees; we also measured the height of each tree using a special laser. We collected these data for our 700 trees, then entered the age of each tree in our data base. From the Parks Department's 1937 planting records, we know that 200 trees planted that year are still with us. Since 2001, Carl Schurz Park Conservancy, along with the Parks Department, has planted 356 trees. Of that total, 66 trees were planted as part of the Million Trees program and 53 were planted recently after the sea wall repair. The planting years of the

remaining trees are shrouded in the mists of time!

In addition to acting as valuable carbon sinks, our trees absorb water during storms, thus intercepting rainfall that would otherwise clog storm sewers. This is vitally important in NYC where storm water run-off frequently overloads the system and causes thousands of gallons of raw sewage to spew into our surrounding water ways. The leaves of trees also absorb gases in the air and reduce the amount of air pollution each day.

Clearly, an easy way to make a difference is to plant trees or to take good care of those you may already have. After all, it may just be one of the most important legacies we leave behind.

Proverb: The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago; the next best time is now.



real gift for the neighborhood. PM: Have you learned from this experience and have you been able to teach others?

EH: We work with some great gardeners; they inspire us and we all learn quite a lot from each other. I learned everything I know about gardening from other gardeners. Pat Nadosy is great. She makes us use the Latin name for things which I try to remember by using mnemonic devices. Luckily, it

works!

BK: You get to know people who visit the park and sometimes they talk to you. They ask questions about plants and how we are doing, how many volunteers we have, etc. I explain that we need a lot of volunteers to get the work done. People come and ask and admire your work; it's a great experience.

PM: Anything else? Thoughts for the future of our Park and Conservancy?

EH: There is always something to do to improve the park; our work will never be done!

BK: I think that ten years from now that unless the volunteer group is rejuvenated, we'll all be in our 80s! We always are looking for new volunteers. We have a few younger people who do come and help, but we're still the same group that started 15-20 years ago—the old die-hards!



## We're not alone... Thriving Wildlife in Our Park

**Breeana George**  
Horticulturist

Many people visit Carl Schurz Park to walk their dogs, to play with their children, to eat lunch on the waterfront. It's easy to overlook the hundreds of creatures who depend on our park for survival. Carl Schurz Park is home to many species of birds, flying and crawling insects and mammals. Thousands more use it as a stop-over on their migratory journeys. All these living creatures have one thing in common; they depend on Carl Schurz Park to provide the resources they need to live.

A thriving wildlife population is vitally important. It maintains balance and order, with each group benefiting from the others. These checks and balances keep our



park running smoothly. Take the lowly earth worm. Did you know that they predate dinosaurs or that they have 5 hearts? Worms will emerge to grab a leaf snack and can travel as much as 3 inches down into the soil with it. This action naturally aerates and loosens soil, while their waste adds desired nutrients.

Predators like the red-tailed hawk call our park home. Interestingly, New York City's urban environment provides the ideal conditions for them to live and raise their young. Throughout the year, they easily stalk rats and pigeons from our tree canopy. I have personally been a few feet away from a hawk diving into an ivy patch for its meal.

Of course, grey squirrels are everywhere so it might surprise you to know that they were nearly wiped out in the early 1800's due to rapid deforestation and urbanization. The Central Park Menagerie, as the zoo



Above: A Red Tailed Hawk searching for its next meal.

was then called, reintroduced them to the Ramble in 1877. For generations, residents of New York City have made it a tradition to feed them.

Pigeons are social, friendly birds. A bit clumsy on the ground, they are one of the swiftest birds in steady, level flight. They were once the most common way of communication via messenger. Pigeons, which can live up to 20 years, are extremely smart, can recognize faces, and mate for life. Like the rest of us, they also love to sunbathe. If you see a pigeon lying on its side in the middle of walkway, don't worry. It's just catching some vitamin D.

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is dedicated to the establishment of a healthier ecosystem. We strive to be thoughtful in our plant choices and judicious in the maintenance of our gardens. We are "naturalizing" as many areas as possible and making sure to use native plants which provide the most benefit to our resident wildlife. We have many "plant material only" compost bins throughout the park. This allows our volunteer gardeners to recycle herbaceous material and turn it into nutrient rich compost. We are determined to make Carl Schurz Park a true shared space.

## Jillian Zrebiec joins CSPC Board

Jillian Zrebiec, a longtime supporter of our Park and Conservancy, has stepped up to join our Board of Directors. Jillian is a graduate of the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. She spent a decade at John Wiley & Sons, where she focused on higher education, primarily marketing college textbooks and coordinating large-scale events targeting professors and other educational professionals. She also worked on the team that pioneered the firm's initial investments in emerging technologies such as eTextbooks, which involved coordination with major electronic bookselling platforms like Amazon and Barnes & Noble. Jillian currently stays at home raising two children on the Upper East Side, where she enjoys being an active member of the Parent Association at both of their schools.





# Carl Schurz Park Conservancy Event Calendar 2020

## Volunteer Gardening Day

February 15  
March 7  
April 18  
May 16  
June 13  
September 19  
October 17  
November 14  
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
*East End Ave.  
at 86<sup>th</sup> Street*



## Easter Egg Scavenger Hunt

Sunday, April 5  
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
*Throughout the park*



## Annual Plant "Sale"

Saturday, May 9  
9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
(Rain date May 10)  
*East End Ave.  
at 86<sup>th</sup> Street*

## Make Music New York

Friday, June 19  
4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
City-wide concert series!  
Celebrate the first day of summer! In collaboration with Manhattan Borough President, Gale Brewer  
*John Finley Walk at the top of 86th St. staircase.*

## Summer Sounds Open-Air Concerts

Chuck Braman  
Trumpet Saxophone Quintet  
Wednesday, July 8  
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
*John Finley Walk at the top of 86th St. staircase.*



## Steve Shaiman and Swingtime Big Band!

Eleventh appearance!  
Wednesday, July 22  
7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.  
*John Finley Walk at the top of 86th St. staircase.*



## The 48th Annual Gracie Square Art Show

Saturday and Sunday, September 12 and 13  
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
*East End Avenue from 84<sup>th</sup> to 88<sup>th</sup> St.  
(Rain or shine)  
www.gsasnyc.org*

Harvest Festival  
Saturday, October 17  
12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.  
(Rain date October 24)  
*Playground at 84th St. and Peter Pan Walk*

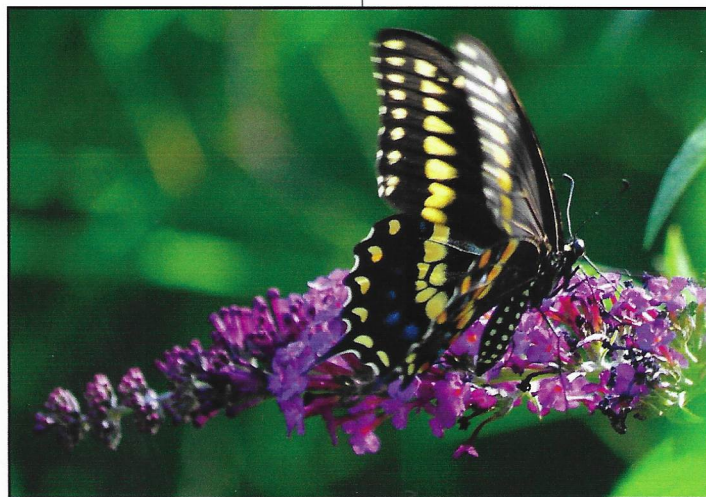


## Halloween Howl and Healthy Hound Fair

Sunday, October 18  
12 noon to 3:00 p.m.  
(Rain date October 25)  
*Basketball/Hockey Court at 84th St. and John Finley Walk*



Holiday Tree Lighting  
Sunday, December 6  
5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
(Rain, snow or shine)  
*East End Ave. at 86th St.*







*Photo by: Judy Howard*

## HOW TO DONATE

### Donate Online

For online donations, visit [www.carlschurzparknyc.org](http://www.carlschurzparknyc.org)

### Matching Gifts

If your employer matches gifts, please follow their matching gift protocol to initiate the match; we will complete the process to multiply your support.

### Planned Giving

Please consider including the Conservancy as a beneficiary of your estate. You may call our office to speak with us.

### Stock Gifts

For instructions on how to donate stock, please call or e-mail our office.

### Please mail your gift to:

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy  
1483 York Avenue, #20523, New York, NY 10075-1021  
212-459-4455

### Carl Schurz Park Conservancy Mission Statement

The mission of Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is to restore and beautify Carl Schurz Park, complementing the efforts of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Our goal is to enhance the public's enjoyment and involvement in the Park. The Conservancy organizes volunteers to execute its projects and sponsors community events that are open to all.

### Board of Directors

Judy Howard, Chair  
Larry McCaffrey, Vice-Chair  
Pat Nadosy, Vice-Chair  
Louise Radin, Treasurer  
Clare Thomas, Secretary

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Executive Director

Ann Meschery

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Susan Heide

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Claire Mann

Barbara O'Connor

Marvin Sandler

Diantha Schull

Roland Villacorta

Jillian Zrebiec

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