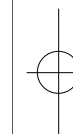
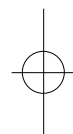
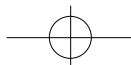


PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASED TO MEET'CHA

A generated@wavehill Project
by Nina Katchadourian

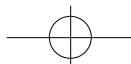


WAVE HILL
West 249th Street and
Independence Avenue
Bronx, NY 10471
718-549-3200
www.wavehill.org



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PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASED TO MEET'CHA



Nina Katchadourian

A generated@wavehill project

June 11–October 31, 2006

PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASED TO MEET'CHA

Nina Katchadourian

Birdsong must be among the most captivating and complex sounds a human ear encounters. It is also among the most elusive to describe. Trying to do so stretches both our linguistic and visual descriptive systems, and poses a very unique translation problem.

Among the many interpretive systems devised by ornithologists and bird watchers, these four are particularly fascinating:

- *Mnemonic*, where the sound of the bird is linked to a phrase that makes it easier to remember (“Please, Please, Pleased to Meet’cha,” for example, is one of many mnemonics for the Chestnut-sided Warbler).
- *Phonetic*, where the sound of the bird is “spelled out” (“Wit wit wit wit ta weecha” for the Chestnut-sided Warbler).
- The idiosyncratic *diagrams* of Aretas Saunders, an ornithologist whose 1935 book *A Guide to Bird Song* contains visual renderings of bird sounds.
- The highly expressive and opinionated *written descriptions* by F. Schuyler Mathews, author of *Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music* (1904).

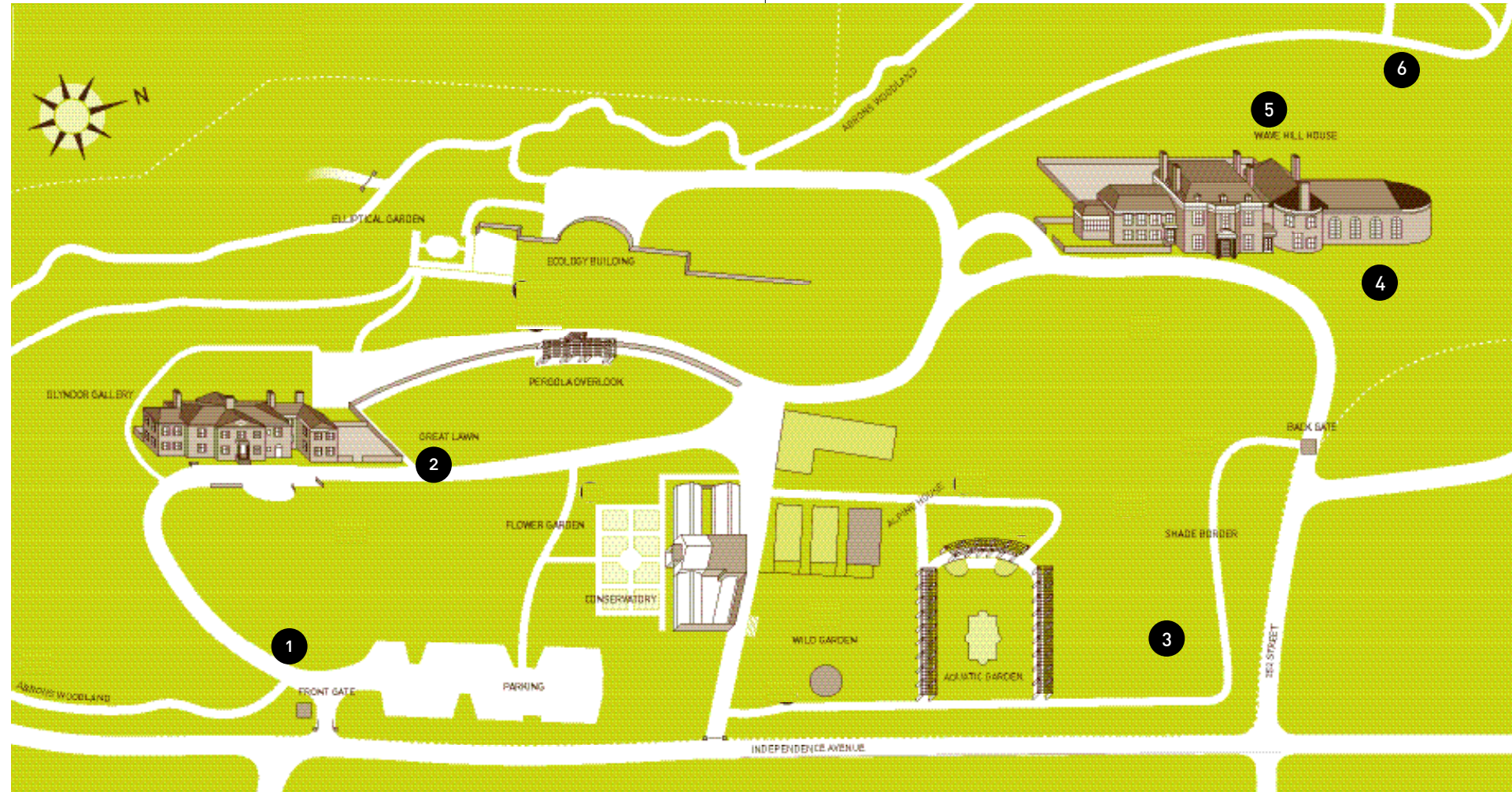
Please, Please, Pleased to Meet’cha consists of sound systems, installed into six trees on the Wave Hill grounds, where you can hear human voices vocalizing birdsong using the methods above. Although more objective descriptive systems exist (such as sonograms or transcriptions

into musical notation), I chose to work with these four because of their subjectivity and their personal, interpretive character, which can paradoxically convey the overall impression of the birdsong quite accurately. It is a very memorable and expressive sense of birdsong that emerges, one that also expresses a very human sense of listening.

In choosing the human voices, two things became important. I wanted to work with people who knew nothing about birds. I also wanted them to have a deep engagement with translation, so I put out a “Call for Participants” to the translators and interpreters at the United Nations. For many, the UN embodies a kind of utopian faith in the possibility of communication across national boundaries. In the context of this project, perhaps these voices will seem infused with well-intentioned but clumsy good will toward the birds, or even prompt fantasies of communication across the species divide.

None of the “voices” I worked with had previously heard the particular birds they were vocalizing. Their performances were interpretive, generative acts—spot translations that were performed without previous familiarity with the materials. All the raw materials I provided them are reproduced in this guide. Each tree features one native bird, and when you listen to the sounds you will be able to compare the various human interpretations.

From these recording sessions I created the soundtracks that are installed in six trees on the Wave Hill grounds. The map in this guide will show you where to find the trees. You may also hear the sounds of the real birds by visiting the listening station at Wave Hill House.

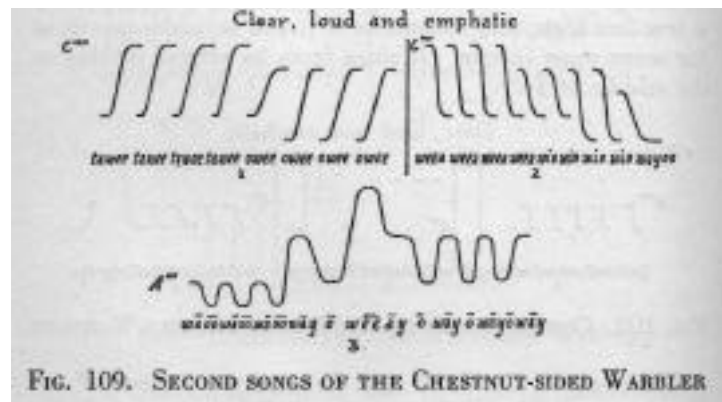
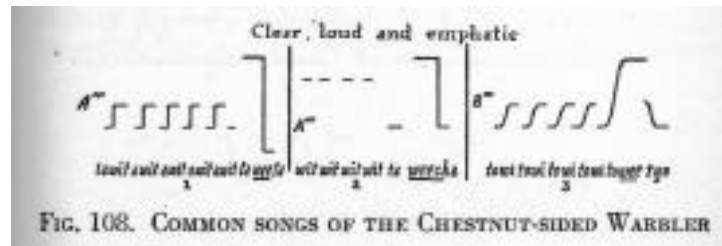


1. **CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** (*Dendroica pensylvanica*)
Lily tree (*Magnolia denudata*)
2. **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)
Large-leaved linden (*Tilia platyphyllos*)
3. **GRAY CATBIRD** (*Dumetella carolinensis*)
Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)

4. **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)
Little-leaved linden (*Tilia cordata*)
5. **BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Parus atricapillus*)
Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*)
6. **COMMON GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus quiscula*)
Kentucky coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*)



1. CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Dendroica pensylvanica*)



THE SONG OF THIS BIRD is, I believe, the loudest of the *Dendroica* warblers. The quality is clear and musical...

The second form of the song consists mainly, if not entirely, of slurred notes: sometimes repeated downward slurs, with the upper note of each slur strongly accented; at other times a series of alternated notes on high and

low pitches, all connected by slurring both up and down. The pitch varies, either beginning high and gradually lowering toward the end of the song, or else being highest on two or three notes in the middle of the song.

(Diagrams and text, ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *A Guide to Bird Songs*)

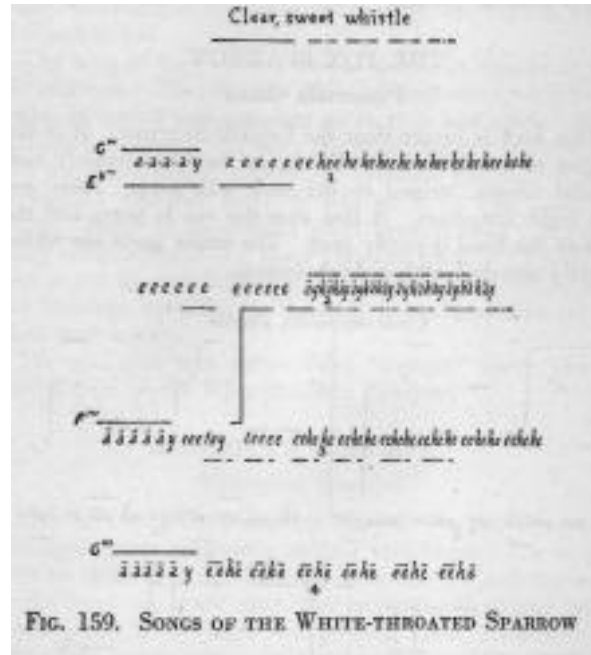
...see see see see Miss Beech'er or please please pleased to meet'cha, penultimate note accented, last note dropping." (*Peterson Guide*)

Rich and musical with an emphatic ending, sometimes interpreted as "Very very pleased to MEET-CHA!" (*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds*)

I wish, I wish, I wish, to see Miss Beecher
Tsee, tsee, tsee, Happy to meet you!
The voice of the Chestnut-sided Warbler is only moderately clear...
(SCHUYLER F. MATHEWS, *Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music*)



2. WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)



THE SONG, due to its long, sweet, clear introductory whistles and peculiar rhythmic ending, is one of the most noticeable of all bird songs... The groups of notes at the end are sometimes run together in little wavery sounds.

The pitch is normally very perfect, being exactly major or minor thirds or fourths. In fall singing, however, the pitch of final notes often falls a quarter-tone at a time, as if the bird lacked energy to maintain the pitch.

(Diagrams and text, ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *A Guide to Bird Songs*)

Song, several clear pensive whistles. (*Peterson Guide*)

Song is 2 long whistled notes followed by 3-4 higher, quavering notes, like phrase "Sweet sweet Canada Canada Canada."
(*Stokes Field Guide*)

Song: a clear, whistled "Poor Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody," or "Sweet Sweet Canada, Canada, Canada."

The latter rendition is perhaps more appropriate, since most of these birds breed in Canada. (*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds*)

The song of [this bird] is remarkable for its rhythm, and its pure, clear-whistled notes.

"Old Sam Pea-body, Pea-body, Pea-body."

"Sow wheat Pe-ver-ly, Pe-ver-ly, Pea-ver-ly."

"All day whit-tl-in', whit-tl-in', whit-tl-in'"

"Oh hear me Ther-esa, Ther-esa, Ther-esa"

"All day long fid-dle-in', fid-dle-in', fid-dle-in'"

Occasionally [the bird] attempts a high pitch which he is unable to sustain, and then we hear him drop down the scale by easy steps like a musical sigh:

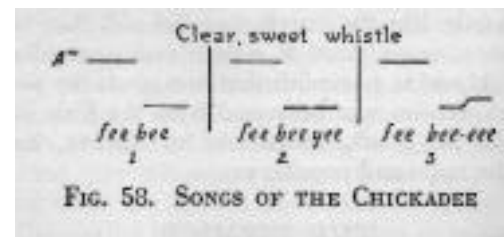
"All day whit-tl-in', whit-tl-in', whit-tl-in'"

The tones of voice here express as much discouragement as the words which accompany them imply. There is a sort of "Heigh-ho, fiddle-de-de!" character to the music which makes one think the little bird looks upon life and its cares as a tough problem!

(SCHUYLER F. MATHEWS, *Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music*)



5. **BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Parus atricapillus*)



WHAT IS GENERALLY CONSIDERED the song of this bird is a call of two sweet, clear, whistled notes, the second about a tone lower in pitch than the first. The second note is frequently slightly broken in the middle by a slight lowering in intensity, as though the bird sang "feebeeyee."

(Diagrams and text, ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *A Guide to Bird Songs*)

Song, a clear whistle, fee-bee-ee or fee-bee, first note higher.
(*Peterson Guide*)

Cheeseburger
(*Bird Song Ear Training Guide CD*)

The Chickadee is an all-the-year-around bird, attractive in appearance, lively in movement, and more than pleasing in the simplicity of his song.

The song of the bird... is often mistakenly attributed to the Phoebe; but poor tuneless Phoebe is intellectually incapable of such a perfectly musical bit as this.

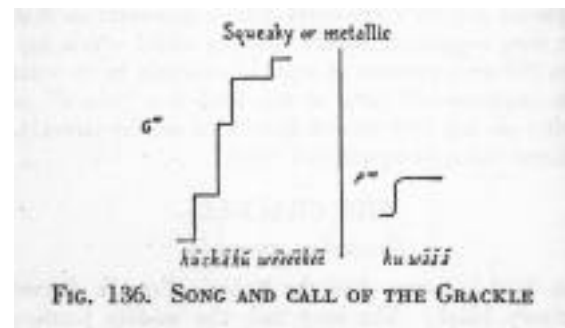
Indeed, few small birds whistle their songs as clearly, and separate the notes by such lucid intervals.

I may be overestimating the value of a melody so meager as that of the Chickadee, but if so it becomes difficult to account for the charm that underlies the music of all great composers, for constructively considered their melodies are mere elaborations of absolutely simple themes.

(SCHUYLER F. MATHEWS, *Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music*)



6. COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*)



IF A BIRD SONG is always something beautiful and musical, the Grackle is no singer. But if, on the other hand, it is a definite sound produced by the male in the breeding season, the Grackle has a song. It consists of one or two short notes followed by a more prolonged squawk. The quality is harsh and squawky or squeaky, with a peculiar metallic sound difficult to describe, but easily distinguished by one once one has heard it. It suggests a rusty hinge or machinery badly in need of oiling.

(Diagrams and text, ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *A Guide to Bird Songs*)

"Song," a split rasping note. (*Peterson Guide*)

High-pitched, rising screech like a rusty hinge.
(*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds*)

Song, an unmusical harsh kh-sheee or shr-reezzh.
(*Sibley Field Guide*)

The Purple Grackle is a songless bird... but he gives us a good octave and sometimes a 6th, in a resonant metallic whistle, though most of his notes sound like the twanging of piano wires, and his harsh cr-r-r-rrr like the click of a watchman's rattle...

The Bronzed Grackle's [Purple Grackle] note strongly resembles the noise of a squeaky hinge on an iron gate! The bird has no song, and there is no music in his harsh conversational chatterings... The other queer noises sound like rattling shutters, watchmen's rattles, ungreased cart wheels, vibrating wire springs, broken piano wires, the squeak of a chair moved across a hard wooden floor, the chink of broken glass, the scrape of a bow on a fiddle string, and the rest of those discords which play havoc with ones nerves! Evidently when nature's orchestra was tuning up for the Spring Symphony, the Grackle failed to screw up his vocal chords to the proper pitch.
(SCHUYLER F. MATHEWS, *Field Book of Wild Birds and Their Music*)

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Nina Katchadourian is a Brooklyn-based artist whose work spans a wide variety of disciplines, including sculpture, photography, video and sound. Katchadourian's work has often oriented itself around "nature" as a concept, construct and site. Past projects, including the *Mended Spiderwebs* series (1999), *Animal Crossdressing* (2003), and *Natural Car Alarms* (2002) explore the ways in which we place ourselves in relation to the natural world, and the simultaneous and often contradictory desire to find both similarity and difference there. Translation has also played a central role in past works such as *Talking Popcorn* (2001) and *Accent Elimination* (2006). Her most recent solo show was in January 2006 at the Turku Art Museum, Finland. In June 2006 the Tang Museum in Saratoga Springs, NY will open a survey show of her work from the past 15 years. She is currently developing a piece for the Public Art Fund for fall 2006. Katchadourian is represented by Sara Meltzer Gallery in New York and Catharine Clark Gallery in San Francisco.

ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am particularly grateful to all those who came to my studio to be my birds:

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Nicolas Diaz
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Teresa Marin
Marcos Oro-Caldero
Juan Pedreyra
Edita Zulic

Thanks also to Valeria Mogilevich, Susana Ferradas and Adolfo Mogilevich for encouraging so much participation at the UN.

Thank you to Jennifer McGregor and Erica Strongin at Wave Hill for their support and collaborative spirit throughout the project. I am grateful to Zach Poff, who masterminded the technical details that made the project possible and, as a fellow artist, provided excellent commentary. Thanks to the staff at New York City Audubon, particularly director E.J. McAdams, for allowing me to do research in their library and tap into various other resources. Peter Mott offered valuable input on birds native to Wave Hill, and I was lucky to bend the ear of Don Kroodsma who generously responded to thoughts and questions from my undisguisably lay point of view. I am grateful to both Clare Ellis and Sina Najafi, who provided particularly generous feedback from start to finish.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Nina Katchadourian's *Please, Please, Pleased to Meet' ch* has sharpened our sense of hearing and shifted our focus to the ever-present resident and migrating birds. The project suggests a new way to experience Wave Hill gardens by leading visitors to trees in locations they might not ordinarily visit. Stand under each tree, listen to the voices interpreting the bird song, and hear the interplay between the human voices and the surrounding songs and the real birds. This *generated@wavehill* project goes to the core of Wave Hill's mission to connect people with the natural world; in this case through the way that people interpret and communicate the illusive, engaging songs of birds. Use this booklet to study these methods of interpretation, and stop by Wave Hill House reception area to hear recordings of the actual birds.

The birdsongs that you encounter today can all be heard in the vicinity of Wave Hill at different times of the year. The Black-capped Chickadee and the Common Grackle are found here year-round. The Gray Catbird and the Red-winged Blackbird are present from spring to fall. The Chestnut-sided Warbler and White-throated Sparrow are here from fall to spring.

We have all enjoyed working with Nina over the past year as she fine-tuned her project—researching birds, familiarizing herself with the grounds, and figuring out the best way to “collect” the voices. She consulted with Wave Hill staff to locate the listening stations, and to ensure that the stations would be sensitive to the trees and compatible with the activities that take place here. Thank you to Scott Canning, Director of Horticulture, and Rick Penna, Facilities

Manager, for their helpful guidance on the design and installation of the stations. A stellar crew of gallery attendants and interns maintains the project.

It has been our pleasure to collaborate with New York City Audubon on a series of public programs from May through October. We are grateful for the support and advice that they have given the artist as she developed this project.

—JENNIFER MCGREGOR, Visual Arts Curator

ABOUT WAVE HILL

Wave Hill is a 28-acre public garden and cultural center dedicated to fostering connections between people and nature, through programs in horticulture, environmental education, woodland management, and the arts. The Visual Arts Program presents artworks in the galleries and on the grounds that engage the public in dialogue with nature, culture and site. Since 1999 generated@wavehill has featured temporal projects by Laura Anderson Barbata, Sylvia Benitez, Willie Cole, J. Morgan Puett, Anissa Mack, and Bob Braine and Leslie Reed. Exhibitions devoted to a range of subjects are organized in Glyndor Gallery. This summer *Garden Improvement* features new works by thirteen artists that offer an alternate view of the relationship between people and nature by looking at how a garden is made more inhabitable, personal, and domesticated. The exhibition includes idiosyncratic, humble, do-it-yourself ideas born from the artists' spirit of invention. For an exhibition archive, visit www.wavehill.org.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

July 16, 1pm, Birds, Habitats & Songs

A panel discussion with Lang Elliot, a naturalist and author of *Music of the Birds A Celebration of Bird Song*, E. J. McAdams, Executive Director of New York City Audubon, David Rothenberg, musician and author of *Why Birds Sing*, and Nina Katchadourian. Free with admission, to register call 718.549.3200 x305.

September 9, 10, 1–4pm, Family Art Project

Be inspired by the sights and sounds of birds—late summer migrants, year-round residents and human imitators—then make collage print mobile with guest artist Moses Ros. Free with admission.

October 15, 2pm, David Rothenberg in Concert

Musician, composer, author and philosopher-naturalist David Rothenberg plays clarinet with a band of birds and crickets blending the indigenous energy of the world's primal music with the exploratory spirit of improvisation. For ticket information contact 718.549.3200 x213

October 21, 22, 1 & 2:30pm, Family Art Project

Sing and dance along to bird-inspired music of Jody Kruskal, followed by a hands-on art project. Free with admission.

October 22, 9am, Plants and Bird Migration Walk, with naturalist

Gabriel Willow and Interpretive Gardener Charles Day. To register call 718.549.3200 x305



Please, Please, Pleased to Meet'cha is presented in collaboration with New York City Audubon



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The Arts at Wave Hill are sponsored by



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Assistant Curator: Erica Strongin
Cultural Programs Manager: Melissa Calder n
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and Ashley Thorfinnson

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