



February / March 2009
Issue 312

On the Wing

News from Saw Mill River Audubon

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Support Audubon



SPECIAL PULLOUT INSERT!
FOR MEMBERS ONLY
2009 EagleFest Map
of Hudson River eagle viewing spots

Winter Seed Sales

Every Third Saturday

9:30 am–12:30 pm

Sat. Feb 21 Sat. Mar 21

At Pruyn Sanctuary

Weekday sales are available
Mon/Wed/Fri 10:30 am–3:30 pm
Call 914.666.6503 for more info.

SMRA ANNUAL REPORT ONLINE

Thanks to all who supported us in 2008!
To conserve paper and save printing costs,
our 2008 Annual Report
will be available online February 1 at:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news/2008

SPECIAL EVENT: 2009 EagleFest

Saturday, February 7, 9:00 am–4:00 pm

Here's a wonderful opportunity to view and celebrate the majestic bald eagles that overwinter along the Hudson River. Guides with spotting scopes will be located at Charles Point Park in Peekskill, Georges Island County Park in Montrose and the Croton River boat ramp (just beyond the Croton train station). Visit Croton Point Park during the day for more events and exhibits inside large tents set up for this event.

EagleFest is organized by Teatown Lake Reservation. The Croton River boat ramp warming tent is being sponsored by Saw Mill River Audubon. SMRA volunteers will be staffing a display table at the main event area inside Croton Point Park and assisting at eagle viewing locations. **Additional SMRA volunteers are needed at all locations during this event. Contact our office if you are interested in being part of this day as an Audubon volunteer. Call 914.666.6503 or email office@sawmillriveraudubon.org.**

Free Field Trip: Winter Owl Prowl

Saturday, February 21, 9:00 am

Come with us to look for some of our most fascinating birds: the owls. Join us as we try to find these elusive creatures. Location will depend on recent sightings. Contact our office by email for details and to register or call 914.666.6503.

Family Programs: Bluebirds in New York

Saturday, February 28 Ossining Public Library

12:30 pm Box Building Workshop & 2:30 pm Public Program

Find out how to make a difference for New York's state bird, the Eastern bluebird. Saw Mill River Audubon and the Ossining Library are co-sponsoring an afternoon of activities about this special bird. Our presenter for both events is John Rogers, a well-known expert on the Eastern bluebird and its status in New York State.

12:30 pm: Bluebird Box Building Workshop

Free for those 18 and under. Pre-register by calling Ossining Library at (914) 941-2416. Space is limited. Those age 6 to 8 are asked to bring along an adult to the workshop and children 8 to 12 should have an adult present in the library if not at the workshop. **Adults without children may also attend at a cost of \$8 for each box constructed payable by check to Saw Mill River Audubon.**

2:30 pm: Free Public Program on Bluebirds

This program will be held in the Library auditorium on the lower level. Pre-registration is not necessary. Suitable for all ages.

Free Field Trip: Pinecliff Peeper Prowl

Sunday, March 29, 7:00 pm

Our annual outing to celebrate the singing of spring peepers. We will walk at dusk around the wheelchair-accessible boardwalk at Pinecliff with flashlights and may even see a spring peeper or two. Open to all ages. **Please pre-register by calling our office at 914.666.6503 or emailing our office. Space limited.**

Members of Saw Mill River Audubon are urged to return the proxy ballot enclosed in this newsletter.

Sanctuary Volunteers Needed

Join with us to help maintain and protect wildlife habitat. We will have a series of sanctuary work days this winter and early spring with tasks for all energy levels.

To attend any work day, just send an email to office@sawmillriveraudubon.org with your name, weekend phone contact and date of interest so we know to expect you and can alert you to any schedule changes. Come make a difference for the habitats we protect for birds, other wildlife and people. Children and youth welcome (note age limits) if they bring their own adult.

Saturday, January 31, 9:00 am - Noon **Cameron Murtfeldt Boundary Survey**

We'll explore the boundaries of this small sanctuary in the Town of New Castle checking and re-posting boundary signs. Wear warm, waterproof shoes. Ages 12 and up.

Sunday, February 8, 9:00 am - Noon **Vine Cutting at Brinton Brook Sanctuary**

Join us for a winter hike and vine cutting session at Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Bring loppers or pruning shears and wear suitable gloves and footwear for the work and weather. Ages 8 and up.

Saturday, February 14, 9:00 am - Noon **Chernick Boundary Walk**

Start your Valentine's Day by helping to protect the habitat at this little known property in the Town of Mount Pleasant. We'll check the boundary conditions and restore boundary signs. Ages 12 and up. Wear warm, waterproof shoes.

Sunday, February 22, 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm **Bluebird Boxes at Haas Sanctuary**

Join us as we walk the new trails at Haas Sanctuary and install bluebird boxes for the coming season. Ages 8 and up. Dress for the weather.

Sunday, March 1, 9:00 am - Noon **Vine Cutting at Graff Sanctuary**

Join us for a winter hike, vine cutting and trail survey at Graff Sanctuary in Croton. Bring loppers or pruning shears and wear suitable gloves and dress for weather. Ages 8 and up.



Saw Mill River Audubon Educator Pat Mutolo teaching students at Pinecliff Sanctuary.

Free and Open to All **SMRA ANNUAL DINNER** **Sunday, April 5, 2009, 6:00 pm**

New Castle Community Center
10 Senter Street, Chappaqua

Community Pot Luck

Pre-registration required by calling
Cori Cumming at (914) 739-0994
with number attending
and your choice of food donation.

Welcome Members

Briarcliff Manor E.W. Friedman, M. Moller, Alex and Robin Quinn, Jim Relyea, Erwin Rosenfeld **Chappaqua** George Beitzel, Eileen S. Bronstein, Richard and Jessica Lippin, Lawrence Nagel III, Justin Nobel, Lisa Shalett, Melanie M. Smith **Cortlandt Manor** The Aleshin Family, Lisa Bernardin, Rochelle Hauser, Charles W. King, Carol Shapiro **Croton-on-Hudson** Cary Andrews, Diane Barkoe, Grace Bender, Mary Delaney, Kerry Donnelly, Joseph Gallo, Gail H. Goodman, Wilma Messenger, Judith Wesley **Hawthorne** Laura Jean Thalman **Mohegan Lake** Al Dinsmore, Charles A. Sourby **New York** Ann Diamond **Ossining** Judith Boehr, Alice Bruno, Matthew Lagle, Paul Rose **Peeckskill** Kay Barthelmes, Robert Ebenstein, Mr. and Mrs. John Leslie, Kathryn Lounsbury, Angelene Matero, Dr. Jean Matheus, Paul Mayen, Carol A. Pauline **Pleasantville** Jill Clateman, Lou Csigay, Francine R. Jacobs, Leigh O'Shea **Scarborough** Mimi Boe, Maureen Debiccari, Geraldine Mahoney **Sleepy Hollow** Dr. Adila S. Goldman **Tarrytown** Dana Bennis, Thomas Dickason, Evan Edelbaum, Gaylord Holmes, Alice M. Nelson, Henry Walter **Thornwood** Hedy C. Frisbie, Irene Harris **Valhalla** Dr. Doris J. Escher, Christine Fisher, Mr. and Mrs. Manfred Janowski, Max McComb, Teresa Mull **Verplanck** Mary Vargo **Yorktown Heights** Barbara Capalbo

The Christmas Bird Count in Northern Westchester

Every year, Saw Mill River Audubon members participate in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). This annual event is held each year on a single designated day between mid-December and early January. Volunteers tally the number of species and individual birds seen between sunrise and sunset in a particular "count circle." Some truly brave souls are even out before dawn to listen for and count owls.

The main focus of activity for SMRA members is the Peekskill CBC, the count circle that lies within SMRA's territory. According to compiler John Askildsen, the 2008 Peekskill count recorded 91 species including rarities such as snow goose, 19 bald eagles, northern goshawk, rough-legged hawk, peregrine falcon, and three white-winged crossbills. SMRA members also birded in count circles in Putnam County, southern Westchester, and the Bedford/Greenwich area.

The CBC is perhaps the oldest and most well known of what we now refer to as "citizen science" projects. The 2008 count is the 109th year of Christmas Bird Counts. This annual counting of birds in more than 2,000 count circles across the U.S., Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean reveals important trends about which species are doing well and which are declining. For example, black vultures, which were rarely seen in our area just a decade ago are now seen frequently. Evening grosbeaks, counted in the hundreds just a few decades ago, have not been seen in the Peekskill CBC for a number of years. Although never common, ground-dwelling birds such as ruffed grouse and ring-necked pheasant have not been seen in recent years in the Peekskill count circle.

The CBC is not exact science. It may be affected by the weather, the number of volunteers within any count circle and other factors. Nevertheless, the work done by CBC volunteers provides valuable information about bird populations that could not be otherwise obtained. The population trends tracked over the years have led to the development of a watch list of threatened or endangered birds.

We encourage additional SMRA members and others to join in the CBC for a few hours, a half day or all day. At the end of the count day, participants in the Peekskill CBC always gather at a special supper at the Teatown Lake Reservation where the day's sightings are tallied for local record keeping and submission to the National Audubon Society. We'd also like to extend special thanks to Charlie Roberto who organizes the Teatown supper and who also leads several birding walks every year for SMRA.

Visit www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc/ for more information. Check SMRA's web site in the fall of 2009 for information about next winter's counts. --Larry Trachtenberg and Rik Kaufman



Photo: Anne Swaim

Charlie Roberto, Rik Kaufman, and Ralph Odell
birding at Croton Point Park.

Audubon's Great Backyard Bird Count

If reading about Audubon's 109th annual Christmas Bird Count has whet your appetite to participate in a citizen science project that can truly make a difference, you don't have to wait long. This February, join thousands of people throughout the U.S. and Canada in the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). You can count the birds you see in your backyard, off your balcony, at your local park, or from your window—anywhere you can spot birds!

People of all ages and all levels of bird-watching experience are invited to take part. It's a great way to learn more about the birds in your neighborhood. It's also a fun activity for kids and a great way to connect with nature. The GBBC is an ideal way for more accomplished birders to introduce their friends and family members to the wonderful world of birds.

In 2009 the GBBC will take place over the Presidents' Day weekend, February 13-16. Visit www.birdcount.org for easy to follow instructions. Participants are invited to submit digital images of birds or GBBC participants to the web site.

Saw Mill River Audubon

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www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

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MAKE A CONNECTION

"I go to nature to be soothed and healed and to have my senses put in order." *John Burroughs*

Our sanctuaries provide nearby places where you can connect with nature. Your gift to Saw Mill River Audubon helps us to encourage people to celebrate and protect natural places! You may also join, give a membership gift, create a special tribute gift or a memorial donation online at our web site.



Find the beautiful Trout Lily at Pruyn and Brinton.

I WISH TO DONATE

Enclosed is:

\$500 \$250 \$100

\$50 \$25 \$_____

My employer will match my gift.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone/Email _____

I WANT TO JOIN Saw Mill River Audubon!

Basic Chapter Membership:

Enclosed is \$25

Please send me information about planned giving opportunities

You can also join or donate at our web site.

Please make checks payable to
Saw Mill River Audubon
275 Millwood Road
Chappaqua, NY 10514

Deadline for Next Newsletter: March 1

SAVE THE DATE!
Saw Mill River Audubon's Annual Dinner
Sunday, April 5. Details on page 2.

PERIODICAL POSTAGE
PAID
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and additional offices

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