



Winter 2007
Issue 306

On the Wing

News from Saw Mill River Audubon

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 **Sanctuaries Celebrated!**
New Signs for Three Sanctuaries
- 2 **Chapter News**
Give to Nature ♦ Welcome Members
- 3 **Upcoming Events**
Field Trips and Workshops
- 4 **Issues & Advocacy**
Forest and Trees
- 5 **Thinking & Acting Green**
Unusual Fall ♦ Greening the Holidays
- 6 **Contact Us!**
Support Audubon

Take a Walk on Mondays!

Explore a local nature site each Monday morning (weather permitting).
Call Joan Coffey: 914.747.4763



Winter Seed Sales

Every Third Saturday

9:30-11:00 am

Sat Dec 15 Sat Feb 16

Sat Jan 19 Sat Mar 15

At Pruyn Sanctuary

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

Sanctuary Improvements Celebrated



On October 21, the board and staff of Saw Mill River Audubon celebrated the installation of a new entrance sign and new trail signs at Pinecliff. Board President Robert McCrillis led a brief dedication ceremony and Executive Director Anne Swaim led a guided walk around the boardwalk.



The new entrance sign at Pinecliff, and two other new entrance signs at **Choate and Cameron-Murfeldt Sanctuaries** were all made possible with a New York State Legislative Grant. Saw Mill River Audubon received this grant with the support of New York State Assemblyman Adam Bradley and the assistance of Audubon New York.

The new trail signs at Pinecliff were made possible by a grant from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation.

This winter and spring, we will also be working on the following projects:

We are continuing our boundary surveys this winter at **Choate and Pinecliff Sanctuaries**.

We have received partial funding for a new entrance sign for **Graff Sanctuary** from Audubon New York.

Financial support from our members and friends has made possible a new entrance sign at **Haas Sanctuary** where we are currently researching the possibility of new trails and habitat improvements.

We welcome your comments and suggestions about our eight protected wildlife sanctuaries in Westchester.

Please help us protect Audubon sanctuary land

Come along on one of our monthly sanctuary walks to learn more. See page 3.
Become a volunteer Audubon Trailwalker. Visit our web site to find out more.

We currently need the services of a land surveyor to check boundary segments of some of our sanctuaries. Do you know a land surveyor who would offer us donated or reduced cost services? Please call our office, 914-666-6503.

Give a Gift to Nature

For nature, winter is a time of renewal and preparation for the new life that bursts forth in the spring. For SMRA, winter is also time to prepare for the coming year and to take stock of the work that needs to be done.

As you have seen from this newsletter, we accomplished a lot during 2007, and we are deeply grateful to the volunteers, members, and donors who supported this work. However, membership dues cover only 10% of the cost of our programs. If we are to continue to protect critical habitat, to offer free programs and field trips to the community, and to provide educational programs to our local schools, we need your support.

As the holidays approach, please consider adding Saw Mill River Audubon to your gift list. You may donate online through our secure credit card service at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/Donate. Or fill out the form on the back of this newsletter and send it to our office with your donation. Both options save SMRA the expense of mailing out an appeal letter, save you from sorting through another piece of mail during this busy season, and may even help save a tree.

Each gift is appreciated, and each makes a difference right here in Westchester County.

- ◆ A gift of \$500 provides a month of trail maintenance in one of our sanctuaries.
- ◆ A gift of \$250 underwrites a community education program, offered at no charge to the public.
- ◆ A gift of \$100 brings people to nature via a free community field trip.
- ◆ A gift of \$50 supports a classroom presentation on local wildlife.
- ◆ A gift of \$25 covers the cost of printing 50 detailed trail maps for sanctuary visitors.

With your support, we can connect more people with the natural world around us. Thank you and best wishes for a happy, healthy holiday season.

The Board and Staff of SMRA

Year-end Giving Opportunity

Unique provisions in the tax law provide a soon-to-expire opportunity! There is presently an incentive for older individuals to make gifts directly from their traditional IRAs to charitable organizations like Saw Mill River Audubon without paying tax on the distribution. This new law, part of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, allows those who are over age 70 and a half to give a gift up to \$100,000 to any charity directly from their IRA accounts. Individuals can fulfill their minimum distribution requirements without realizing taxable income and without paying taxes on those IRA distributions that are gifted to charity.

This special incentive is set to expire on December 31, 2007.

If you are over age 70 and a half, consider whether a gift to charity of your IRA assets makes sense for you. For questions or assistance with your gift, please contact SMRA at 914.666.6503.

Still Need Bird Seed?

Did you miss our October sale weekend? Need more seed?

**Our seed sale continues
Third Saturdays in the winter**

Sat Dec 15 Sat Feb 16

Sat Jan 19 Sat Mar 15

9:30 to 11:00 am

at our office at Prun Sanctuary.

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

Our annual seed sale weekend in
October was a great success.
Thanks to everyone who helped!

**Our special thanks to
Pizza Station and Starbucks
in Chappaqua
for their generous donations
of food and coffee
for our cold & hungry volunteers!**

Welcome Members

Briarcliff Manor Lois D. Alliessi, Peter Sonnenberg

Chappaqua Marc and Luanne Citrin,
Ronald Dionne, Katherine du Quesnay,
Harriette Kaledin, Mary Rohde,

Lee and Olga Seham, Arnold and Joyce Tovell

Cortlandt Manor Janet Englund, Carole Guffanti
Croton-on-Hudson Denise Diggin,
Samantha Enteles, Emily Grober,
Christina C. Moore

Ossining Amanda Curley, Justine Davenport,
Adele S. Dowell, Mary Noll, H. Richard R. Rice,
Adriane Russo

Peekskill Mary Hermanowski, Ronald Jones
Pleasantville Janet Kiel, Raymond G. Stephens
Sleepy Hollow Shelly L. Florence, Lillian Furlan,
Grace D. Imray, Nina Morison

Tarrytown Christopher Atwater, S. Lane Faison,
Robert and Margaret Kogan, Herbert P. Lefevre

Thornwood Diana DiCarlo

Valhalla Christine Word

White Plains Bice C. Wilson

Yonkers Lori Pastore

A U D U B O N A D V E N T U R E S

For more details: 914.666.6503 or www.sawmillriveraudubon.org.

DECEMBER

ALL DAY FIELD TRIP

Saturday, December 8 ♦ 7:00 am
Forsythe Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
Brigantine, New Jersey
 Join us for an all-day field trip to this spectacular refuge near Atlantic City. We'll be outside most of the day with frequent stops and shared spotting scopes. **Register for this trip by calling or emailing our office.**

Saturday, December 15 ♦ 9:00 am
Field Trip: Brinton Brook
Through the Seasons

Join us for sanctuary walks every **THIRD** Saturday, each month at a different sanctuary. Dress for the weather. Rain or shine. Suitable for ages 4 and up. Free and open to the general public. For Brinton Brook, meet at the main entrance off Route 9A.

Leader: Michael Madias, Jr.



Bufflehead

Weekends mid to late December
Area Christmas Bird Counts

Teams of experienced birders will be counting birds in 15-mile diameter "count circles" throughout the Americas during December and January.

Area Christmas Bird Counts:

Sat Dec 15: Peekskill CBC
Sun Dec 16: Greenwich-Stamford CBC
Sun Dec 16: Rockland CBC
Sun Dec 23: Bronx Westchester CBC
Sat Dec 29: Putnam CBC

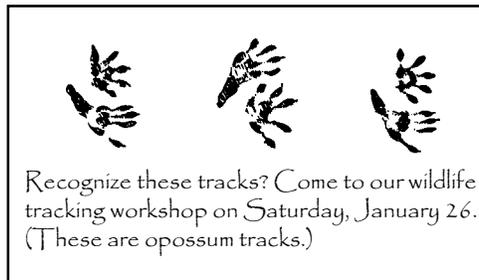
To get in touch with the various count compilers, contact our office.

JANUARY

Saturday, January 12 ♦ 9:00 am
Field Trip:
Croton Point in Winter

Our annual midwinter bird walk always provides good views of bald eagles and generally a surprise or two—such as short-eared owls or rough-legged hawks.

Leader: Charlie Roberto. Meet at 9:00 am at the extreme lower (south) end of the Croton-Harmon railroad station parking lot, at the boat ramp. Dress very warmly and bring binoculars. Spotting scopes will be available for sharing.



Saturday, January 19 ♦ 9:00 am
Field Trip:
Pinecliff Through the Seasons

Dress for the weather. Rain or shine. Suitable for ages 4 and up. Free and open to the general public. Meet **9:00 am** at the **sanctuary entrance**. Parking is very limited; carpool if possible being careful to park at the end of Pinecliff Road in Chappaqua, not blocking our neighbors' driveways or the sanctuary entrance.

Leader: Michael Madias, Jr.

SATURDAY WORKSHOP

Saturday, January 26 ♦ 10:00 am
Workshop: Wildlife Tracking

County Parks naturalist Scott Williamson will lead a workshop on wildlife tracking at Croton Point. We'll start inside at the Nature Center and then move outside to look for wildlife tracks and traces. Suitable for adults and children ages 6 and up. Dress for the weather. Space will be limited. Free but pre-registration is required by calling or emailing our office as soon as possible.

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 9 ♦ ALL DAY
Hudson River EagleFest

This annual festival coincides with the annual winter gathering of bald eagles along the Hudson River. Organized by Teatown Lake Reservation with funding support by Saw Mill River Audubon and other organizations. **For a schedule of events, visit www.teatown.org.**

SMRA will once again be sponsoring the warming tent at the viewing location at the Croton Point boat ramp.

Saturday, February 16 ♦ 9:00 am
Field Trip:

Graff Through the Seasons

Our February walk will be in Graff Sanctuary. Dress for the weather. Rain or shine. Suitable for ages 4 and up. Free and open to the general public.

Meet us 9:00 am at the Furnace Dock Road sanctuary entrance. Parking is very limited; carpool if possible to park on Furnace Dock Road by the sanctuary entrance. **Leader:** Michael Madias, Jr.

Looking ahead to
 M A R C H

Saturday, March 8 ♦ 9:00 am
Field Trip: Brinton Brook
Through the Seasons

See listing for December 15 above.

Friday, March 28 ♦ 7:00 pm
FREE Public Workshop:
Shorebird Identification
with Kevin Karlson

Space will be limited. Call or email for free registration. Held at Chappaqua Library. For more information visit Kevin's web site: www.kevinkarlsonphotography.com

Sunday, March 30 ♦ 6:00 pm
Field Trip: Spring Peepers
at Pinecliff Sanctuary

Annual walk that will hopefully coincide with the spring frog chorus at Pinecliff.

Seeing the Forest and the Trees

Wherever you walk in the woods in northern Westchester, you're likely to see stone walls. You may ask yourself, why would anyone have built these walls in the middle of the forest? The answer is, they didn't. The land was cleared when the walls were built. The walls served to edge fields and pastures long since abandoned and returned to trees.

The process of reforestation started at least one hundred and fifty years ago when farmers struggling to survive on the rocky soils of the lower Hudson Valley pulled up stakes and headed for the more fertile lands that were opening up in the Midwest. Farmland abandonment and resultant reforestation continued into the second half of the twentieth century. Shortly after World War II forests began to give way to housing developments.

In our part of the world, maintaining adequate forest cover is essential for a healthy environment. Forests cool the landscape, partly mitigating the effects of climate change. They help store rainwater, allowing it to slowly recharge our underground aquifers. This process helps purify the groundwater. Where land is cleared without adequate protection, rain and snowmelt may cause soil erosion; less and poor quality water reaches underground well aquifers and surface reservoirs that provide drinking water. Forests help remove pollutants from the air. Forests provide essential wildlife habitat, providing a home for a myriad of species, from microscopic organisms and insects to birds and mammals.

Our forests are threatened not only by development, they also face additional human-caused disturbances. These include the introduction of non-native species of plants and insects that negatively impact native species. An example of the latter is the hemlock wooly adelgid, an insect from Asia that is killing eastern hemlocks in our area. When forest cover changes, wildlife populations also change.

At first glance, many parts of northern Westchester may appear to have healthy forest cover. However, this cover is increasingly fragmented by development and divided by streets and utilities. Where the forest is broken into smaller fragments it is more likely to be invaded by non-native plants. Certain species of birds and mammals require large, undisturbed tracts of forest and may become locally extinct.

The threats to forest health in our region are parts of long-term trends that are likely to continue. There are however steps that are being taken to help protect forests and trees in our region. The high value of undeveloped property in our area can make forest protection a difficult proposition. In addition to outright purchase of open space by state, county or local governments and private organizations, significant acreage has been preserved in our area through the use of conservation easements by owners of large parcels. Conservation easements can shape the direction of future development and help avoid forest fragmentation. Easements can



Saw Mill River Audubon's Haas Sanctuary, Tripp Street,
Town of New Castle Photo: William Kellner

also provide for wildlife movement corridors in a neighborhood.

Creation of biological corridors is another tool to limit the negative effects of forest fragmentation by linking larger, preserved forest parcels. Studies have shown that corridors as narrow as 25 meters (82 feet) can help maintain a healthy diversity of native plant and animal species.

In an effort to preserve healthy woodlands, a number of towns and villages in Westchester County have passed tree preservation ordinances. An example is the Town of New Castle, which requires the landowner to secure a permit before clearing trees (defined as cutting more than 10 trees in a quarter acre area). New Castle's tree ordinance also regulates removal of trees from the town-mandated property landscape buffer and requires a permit for removing a specimen tree (any tree with a diameter greater than 24 inches). **According to the National Arbor Day Foundation, "Ordinances are the strongest means available to a community for protecting its trees."**

Thoreau wrote, "A town is saved, not more by the righteous men in it than by the woods and swamps that surround it." We need the woods and swamps that remain in our suburban landscapes for the scientific reasons outlined above. We also need them for the spiritual reasons Thoreau refers to. It is incumbent upon us all to work to preserve some of the remaining natural world in our midst. *-- William Kellner*

Action Steps to Consider

- Visit www.arborday.org to learn more
- Check whether your town or village has a tree ordinance.

Thinking and Acting Green

Autumn Then and Now

On September 28, 1946, a few friends and I celebrated my eighth birthday with a party in Chatham, New York. I was happy and the day was beautiful. As I played with my friends I thought to myself that I would always remember this day. The red maples were crimson and sugar maples were becoming mostly orange, with green leaves becoming the minority. I would expect Columbia County to look like this every September 28th. However, in recent years my birthday has often been much greener with fall colors coming later and less glorious. This year I've seen less color and fewer sugar maples blending their bright orange into the landscape. Green has lasted longer with patches of brown foliage common. The hues of the red maples also seem more subdued. Higher ambient temperatures, dry conditions and late frost resulted in late color changes and the leaves disappeared quickly as wind and short intense rainstorms followed. It appears that global warming is robbing us of some of the beauty of our fall foliage. The decline in autumn color is another warning of other unpleasant worldwide ecological changes that are upon us. A cooperative global effort to reduce the global warming gases is needed immediately or we will lose much more than the aesthetics of Hudson Valley leaves.

-- Ward B. Stone, NYS DEC Wildlife Pathologist

From *Hudson River Almanac*, November 13, 2007

Act Locally

Cool Cities is a national, grassroots effort formed under the auspices of the Sierra Club. Its goal is to reduce our collective carbon footprint and fight global warming through citizen involvement at the community level. Cool Cities seeks to have city mayors and town supervisors sign the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. A Cool Cities group has formed in Yorktown. For more information on how you can get involved in your community, visit Cool Cities on the Web at coolcities.us

Share a Ride

A great way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—and save money—is to carpool. **Metropool**, a cooperative effort of the New York State and Connecticut Departments of Transportation, helps facilitate carpooling for people traveling to destinations in Westchester and surrounding counties in the lower Hudson Valley as well as Fairfield County, Connecticut. To find out more, visit www.metropool.com

On the Wing (Al Vuelo)

is now available in Spanish
on our web site:

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/alvuelo

Greening Your Holidays

Live more simply. Resist a consumer culture.
Reduce your "footprint" on the earth. Green your holidays.



We've collected several web links
about how to green your holidays:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/GreenHolidays

Great Backyard Bird Count

Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

During "Presidents' Day" weekend, February 15–18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at www.birdcount.org. These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

In 2007, participants reported a record-breaking 11 million birds of 616 species. They submitted more than 80,000 checklists, an all-time record for the ten years of the count. **To find out more, visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc**

Pruyn Celebration Thanks

Over 125 friends and neighbors visited Pruy Sanctuary on September 23 for our guided trail walks and tours of the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden. Thanks are due to all the Saw Mill River Audubon board members, staff and volunteers who came together to enjoy this day. We offer our thanks to the New Castle Police Department for helping with traffic control and keeping everyone safe. The Westchester Flutes added to the event. We also appreciated great service provided by Chappaqua Transportation's two shuttle bus drivers.

It is only through the support of our many members and donors that we are able to preserve the wildlife habitat at Pruy Sanctuary and further our mission of connecting people with nature. Thank you!

Saw Mill River Audubon

275 Millwood Road
Chappaqua, New York 10514
914.666.6503
office@sawmillriveraudubon.org
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

OFFICERS

President, Robert McCrillis
Vice-President, George Shakespear
Chairman of the Board, Richard Saravay
Secretary, Trish Foy
Treasurer, Tom McEnerney
Bulletin Editor, William Kellner
Circulation Director, Sophie Keyes

STAFF

Executive Director, Anne Swaim
Office Assistant, Ellen Heidelberger
Marketing & Fundraising, Barbara Campbell
Educators, Patricia Mutolo, Mary Charbonneau
Sanctuary Maintenance, Dan Ferguson

ON THE WING is published five (5) times a year (Sept/Oct/Nov, Dec/Jan, Feb/Mar, Apr/May, and June/July/Aug) for \$7.50 a year by Saw Mill River Audubon, 275 Millwood Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514. **Periodical Postage #013281** at Chappaqua, NY 10514. **ISSN: 1545-5254** at Chappaqua, NY and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Address changes to: **Saw Mill River Audubon**, 275 Millwood Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514

CELEBRATE NATURE!

Our sanctuaries provide important habitat for migrating birds. 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!

I WISH TO DONATE

Enclosed is:

- \$500 \$250 \$100
 \$50 \$25 \$____
 My employer will match my gift.

I'D LIKE TO JOIN Saw Mill River Audubon!

Basic Chapter Membership:

- Enclosed is \$20
 Please send me information about planned giving opportunities



Hermit Thrushes are seen in winter at Pruyn Sanctuary.

Name(s)

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone/Email

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: January 1

SAVE THE DATE!
Saw Mill River Audubon's Annual Meeting & Dinner
Sunday, April 6 at Travelers Rest, Millwood

PERIODICAL POSTAGE
PAID
at Chappaqua, NY
and additional offices

Saw Mill River Audubon
275 Millwood Road
Chappaqua, New York 10514