

Summer 2013

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Photo: W. Kellner

Falconer James Eyring shows off Elvis, a hybrid gryfalcon, at SMRA's 60th Anniversary benefit, Raptors Uncorked. More on p. 2

60th Anniversary Cruise

SMRA's 60th Anniversary events will continue with a special Hudson River Cruise on October 14. Details on page 2.

Big Savings on Quality Bird Seed

All varieties now 25% off
Stock up and save!

Sale hours:
Mon/Wed/Fri
10:30 am–3:30 pm
at Pruyin Sanctuary
Call 914.666.6503 for details

All sales benefit
Saw Mill River Audubon

SUMMER FIELDTRIPS & PROGRAMS

Join us! For more information call 914.666.6503 or visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

Public Program: Introduction to Geocaching, Ossining

Thursday, June 13 ♦ 7:00–9:00 pm

Join us at the Ossining Community Center, 95 Broadway, for an interactive program about the sport of geocaching which combines technology and nature for a world-wide treasure hunt that appeals to all ages from seniors to young children. We'll see a video introduction and hear from experienced geocachers in our area and learn about nearby geocaches to find. Suitable for adults and children age 8 and up.



Geocaching Day at SMRA's Sanctuaries

Saturday, June 15 ♦ 9:00 am–3:00 pm

Come geocaching with us as we visit six of Saw Mill River Audubon's eight sanctuaries in one day, collecting geocaches along the way! We will start at Brinton Brook in Croton, then go to nearby Graff Sanctuary. Next we'll travel south to Pruyin Sanctuary near Millwood. Bring a picnic lunch to enjoy at Pruyin (beverages provided). Then we'll continue on, after lunch, to Choate Sanctuary near Mount Kisco and Haas Sanctuary east of Mount Kisco, finishing up at Pinecliff Sanctuary in Chappaqua.

Bird Walk: Marshlands Conservancy, Rye

Monday, June 17 ♦ 7:00–9:00 am

This is one of our weekly birding walks at local birding hotspots. Beginners encouraged. Call or email us for directions and if you want to borrow a pair of binoculars for the walk; otherwise no RSVP needed. Directions and map at: marshlandsconservancy.com/directions.html

Birding Overnight: Basha Kill Wildlife Mgmt. Area

Friday, June 21–Saturday, June 22

The Basha Kill, in Sullivan County, is the largest freshwater wetland in southern New York, featuring over 2,000 acres of prime birding habitat. We'll stay in motel rooms at the Greenskill YMCA on Friday night and then rise before dawn to start birding on Saturday morning. Expect to be amazed by the variety of sights and sounds of nesting birds in Basha Kill as we try for a birding "big day." Call or email for info & registration.

Bird Walk: Croton Point County Park

Monday, June 24 ♦ 7:30–9:30 am

Our weekly birding walks at local birding hotspots continue with a visit to Croton Point. Beginners encouraged—join us as we celebrate our 60th anniversary. Call or email for directions and if you want to borrow a pair of binoculars for the walk; otherwise no RSVP needed.

SEE PAGE 3 FOR MORE AUDUBON FIELDTRIPS & PROGRAMS

Call for Volunteers

The Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden at Pruyn Sanctuary will be full of flowers, butterflies and birds this summer for you to visit and enjoy. Our group of dedicated volunteers works at the garden on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30. If you would like to become a part of the garden team, we would welcome your help. Let us know by calling the office at: 914.666.6503 or emailing us at office@sawmillriveraudubon.org

60th Anniversary Events

SMRA's 60th anniversary celebrations continued on June 1, when over 70 members and friends joined us for Raptors Uncorked, a special benefit evening at Croton Point Park. After sampling fine wines supplied by Deprez Wines & Spirits of Croton-on-Hudson, guests were treated to an entertaining and informative talk and demonstration by master falconer James Eyring, who brought his entourage of owls, hawks and falcons. Everyone was impressed by the power and beauty of these incredible birds of prey. We'd like to thank all those who participated in this fun event, which helped support SMRA's work of habitat preservation and education. (Our thanks also to Blossom Nurseries of Yorktown for their donation of table flowers.)



Photo: C. McCluskey

Want to join in on the fun and celebrate SMRA's 60th Anniversary? **Sign up now for our special 3-hour Columbus Day Hudson River Cruise on Monday, October 14.** After boarding the paddleboat River Rose in Cold Spring we'll view the Hudson Valley's glorious fall foliage while we sample a selection of beverages and hors d'oeuvres. The cruise will include fascinating dialogue about the river's natural and human history by naturalist Tom Lake of the Hudson River Estuary Program. Reserve now at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/Cruise

Summer Reading: *Nature Wars*

We often take calls in the SMRA office from people who seem startled, scared, annoyed or—sometimes—thrilled at the presence of wildlife in their northern Westchester backyards. "Wild turkeys just walked through our yard!" "Is it possible that a bear just took apart my bird feeder?" Wildlife have been adapting to our mixed suburban/rural habitats for several decades. Conflicts with people are the inevitable result.

Jim Sterba's book, *Nature Wars: The Incredible Story of How Wildlife Comebacks Turned Backyards into Battlegrounds*, is a well-researched, very readable and timely book about the wildlife issues many eastern suburban residents are facing. Sterba offers little-known background and a balanced perspective about suburban wildlife management issues.

The book's provocative thesis is that "more people live in closer proximity to [wildlife]...in the eastern United States today than anywhere on the planet at any time in history." Sterba offers separate chapters about beavers, white-tailed deer, Canada geese, wild turkeys and black bears, with additional discussions about coyotes, suburban sprawl, roadkill and our country's increasing level of nature illiteracy.

Find out more about the fascinating wildlife stories unfolding in the suburbs—spend some time this summer with *Nature Wars*.

--Reviewed by Anne Swaim

New Board Member

Joan Wyly moved from Brooklyn to Sleepy Hollow 5 years ago. She and her husband David enjoy hiking in the surrounding parks and became intrigued by the many songbirds they would hear during the spring migration. Deciding that Audubon would be her avenue to knowledge, she joined and became an active participant in many of SMRA's walks and trips. Joan is interested in applying her skills honed as Head of Operations for a New York City social media agency to further SMRA's mission of connecting people to nature in non-traditional, engaging ways.



SMRA Yellowstone Trip



2013 SMRA Yellowstone Trip - 2nd week group

Twenty-four people traveled with Saw Mill River Audubon to Yellowstone National Park in May during two 1-week trips we offered to observe wolves and more in the world's first national park. In addition to wolves, our groups observed 20 species of mammals, including grizzly and black bears, river otters, bison, elk, pronghorn, mountain goats, and big horn sheep. Of course we were birding too! Our combined trip bird list of 123 species was a pleasure considering that spring migration is later in the mountains. Some bird highlights were: trumpeter swan, golden eagle, harlequin ducks (on breeding territory), and Wilson's phalarope, cinnamon teal, and eared grebes, all in breeding plumage.

We supported Sacajawea Audubon in Bozeman, Montana, and the Yellowstone Association with donations in exchange for their guiding services. We stayed in a lodge built with local timber owned by a local family; we hired a local caterer for some of our evening meals, and we bought our groceries locally. As with all our trips, we wanted to send the positive message that "Birds Mean Business" for the local economy.

Keep an eye out for our 2014 trip plans. We'd love to have you travel with us whether on our annual big trip, like this one to Yellowstone, on any of our regional overnight trips, or on our many day field trips closer to home.

Mowing at Croton Pt.

Saw Mill River Audubon has been communicating with representatives from the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation (Parks) and the county Department of Environmental Facilities (DEF) since December to improve habitat management of the capped landfill meadow at Croton Point County Park. Joining us in this effort are Bedford Audubon and Hudson River Audubon of Westchester, Teatown Lake Reservation, and other area birders and conservationists.



A view of Croton Point landfill in bloom. theharborandthehudson.wordpress.com

When the Croton Point landfill was capped in the mid-1990s, it was intended to be managed as native meadow habitat. The DEF has maintenance oversight of the landfill. In the 2012 growing season, DEF repeatedly mowed the cap for a one-time monitoring and maintenance project, unnecessarily damaging grassland habitat vital for birds like bobolink, eastern meadowlark and grasshopper sparrows.

Our coalition worked with Parks and DEF on a no-mowing agreement for this year, but, some unnecessary mowing was attempted by DEF on May 7 because of miscommunication between county staff. We were able to request a stop to that mowing just after it started. We continue to monitor the small amount of necessary mowing around the methane monitoring wells this summer. We are also tracking county plans to dig up portions of the main landfill this fall and of the smaller landfill by the model airplane field this summer to repair the methane collection systems. We recognize that landfill safety issues require this work but we are also advocating for habitat protection during the work and habitat mitigation after this project.

Grasshopper sparrows, listed as an endangered species in Westchester County, were singing on the main landfill beginning in late May and bobolink, a threatened species, were observed in early June. We appreciate having new lines of communication with the Parks Conservation Division and DEF and we continue to monitor.

J U L Y

Monday, July 1 ♦ 7:30–9:30 am

Bird Walk: Muscoot Farm

Our Monday walks at local birding hotspots continue at Muscoot Farm County Park on Rt. 100 in Somers. Beginners encouraged! Call or email for directions and if you want to borrow a pair of binoculars.

Saturday, July 6 ♦ 10:00–11:00 am

Butterflies at Pruyn

Come meet the butterflies (and dragonflies) that visit SMRA's Pruyn Sanctuary on Rt. 133 near Millwood. We'll also keep an eye out for hummingbirds and other birds that visit the garden and nearby habitats.

Monday, July 8 ♦ 7:30–9:30 am

Bird Walk: Rockefeller Park

For this week's Monday morning birding walk we'll visit Rockefeller State Park and Preserve. Meet in the main parking area off Rt. 117. Call or email if you want directions or to borrow a pair of binoculars.

Saturday, July 13 ♦ 9:00–11:00 am

Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary

Our monthly walks will continue year-round on second Saturdays at our largest sanctuary: Brinton Brook in Croton-on-Hudson. Good for ages 6 and up. No pre-registration necessary. Held regardless of weather except in cases of severe weather or road closures. Meet at main parking area off Rt. 9A.

Sunday, July 21 ♦ 9:00–11:00 am

Tree Walk at Rockwood Hall

Join arborist John Grant on a summer walk to explore native trees. Learn about the value of native trees and tips on identification. Meet in parking area for Rockwood Hall State Park just north of Phelps Hospital parking garage off Rt. 9A in Sleepy Hollow. Walk intended for adults and children 10 and up interested in trees. No pre-registration necessary.

J U L Y (cont.)

Monday, July 22 ♦ 7:30–9:30 am

Bird Walk: Croton Point Park

Our weekly birding walks at local birding hotspots continue with a visit to Croton Point County Park. Beginners encouraged—join us as we celebrate our 60th anniversary. Call or email for directions and if you want to borrow a pair of binoculars for the walk; otherwise no RSVP needed.

A U G U S T

Monday, Aug. 5 ♦ 7:30–9:30 am

Bird Walk: Muscoot Farm

For details see July 1st entry at left.

Saturday, Aug. 10 ♦ 9:00–11:00 am

Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary

For details see July 13th entry at left.

Monday, Aug. 12 ♦ 7:30–9:30 am

Bird Walk: Rockefeller Park

For details see July 8th entry at left.

Saturday, Aug. 17 ♦ 10:00 am–Noon

Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden Tour at Pruyn

Come for a walk through the garden at Pruyn Sanctuary and learn how to attract butterflies and hummingbirds to your yard. There will be over 80 species of flowers and shrubs to enjoy and a handout listing the best nectar and host plants. Led by SMRA garden coordinator and Master Gardener Donna Lassiter.



Great Spangled Fritillary butterflies visit the Pruyn Garden

Monday, Aug. 26 ♦ 7:30–9:30 am

Bird Walk: Croton Point Park

For details see July 22nd entry above.

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275 Millwood Road
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60th Anniversary Hudson River Cruise
Monday, October 14: Sign up now!
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/Cruise

Deadline for next newsletter: **Aug. 1**

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A PLACE FOR THE BIRDS

“Birds are fiercely alive, simultaneously vulnerable and resilient. Study them to quiet your mind.” *John Muir Laws*

Our sanctuaries provide critical habitat for birds and other wildlife. Your gift to Saw Mill River Audubon helps us to encourage people to celebrate and protect these natural places!



Song sparrow

Thank you!

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