



Summer 2015



Osprey on the wing. Photo: Jeff Seneca



*School children exploring Pinecliff Sanctuary.
Photo: SMRA*

Upcoming Events

Visit our Google calendar at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar for event details or call our office at (914) 666-6503 or email us at office@sawmillriveraudubon.org. Be sure to subscribe to our free, private email list to get additional details and early notice of new trips and events. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list to subscribe.

Every Monday, 7:30 am

Guided Birdwalks at Area Hotspots

1st Mon: Muscoot Farm,

2nd Mon: Rockefeller State Park Preserve,

3rd Mon: Tarrytown Lakes,

4th Mon: Croton Point County Park,

5th Mon: Location varies, see Google calendar.

Every Second Saturday, 9:00 am

Guided Hike at Brinton Brook Sanctuary

Rain or shine. No registration needed. Good for ages 8 and up.

Friday, July 24, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Birders U Workshop: Shorebirds

Croton Point Nature Center.

Workshop to tune up ID skills for the fall shorebird migration already underway at this point! Includes guided field trip (see below) and shorebird fold-out guide. \$20/member of any Audubon. \$30/nonmember price also includes new Saw Mill River Audubon membership! Register by phone/email at 914-666-6503 or office@sawmillriveraudubon.org. Payment at workshop.

Saturday, July 25

Birders U: Shorebirds Field Trip

Special small group guided field trip for participants in Birders U Shorebird Workshop the evening before. Location to be decided.

Saturday, August 15, 10:00 am

Pruyn Hummingbird & Butterfly Garden Tour

Come explore the native plant garden and nearby meadow and arboretum at Pruyn Sanctuary and join us in spotting the butterflies, dragonflies and hummingbirds found here. No pre-registration needed. Parking extremely limited; carpooling suggested. Best for adults and students 10 and older.



*Monday morning birders in pursuit.
Photo: SMRA*



*Planting native trees and shrubs in deer enclosure
at Pruyn Sanctuary. Photo: SMRA*

Check our Google calendar for additional summer field trips

Birding Notes

This past Memorial Day weekend marked the third year that I traveled to northern Vermont for some “Northern Kingdom” birding with Kyle Bardwell (former SMRA scholarship recipient), Mike Curtis, and my grandson Max Kogut.

Friday began near Hartford where certain warblers such as Hooded and Cerulean, which don’t venture much further north, were added to our list and ended in Chester, Vermont atop Okemo

Mountain, hoping, in vain, for a Bicknell’s Thrush. Early Saturday we were back atop Okemo, now freshly dusted in snow. Again no luck on the Bicknell's, but we were treated to several high-elevation breeders including Magnolia, Yellow-Rumped, Black-throated Green, and Blackpoll Warblers, as well as Juncos, Purple Finches and Swainson’s Thrushes. After beautiful views of a soaring Broadwing Hawk, it was off to West Rutland Marsh, where we enjoyed singing Marsh Wrens and both Willow and Alder

Flycatchers. In Brandon, we got Chestnut-sided, Blue-winged and Yellow Warblers but unfortunately no Golden-wings. Undaunted, we pushed on to the three most northeastern Vermont counties, the “Northeast Kingdom.” Our last stop was Victory Bog where a (partial) boardwalk saved us from getting too muddy. We added Canada Warbler, American Bittern, and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers to our growing list. Saint Johnsbury provided a needed shower and dinner at a cool, small spot named Kingdom Taproom.

Sunday morning we hit Moose Bog with wonderful views of a Grey Jay family, sounds of Lincoln's Sparrows and Rusty Blackbirds, and a fantastic look at a Spruce Grouse that flushed and perched right above us. Then came a near-collision on Burke Mountain with two long (skate) boarders; fortunately, all emerged unscathed.

In total 119 species were seen or heard, including 24 warblers. Visit the Kingdom, you won't be disappointed!

Larry Trachtenberg

Cuba Birding!

A mere 90 miles from the Florida Keys, Cuba is *terra incognita* to most Americans. As relations between our nations begin to thaw, it will become more known that this island, the largest in the Caribbean, is a natural marvel with incredible biodiversity. A strong conservation ethic, and the highest percentage of land set aside as nature reserves of any Latin American country, are factors in more than 300 reported species of birds, 21 endemic, i.e., found only here.

These and other facts were part of a fascinating “Cuba Birding” program at the Chappaqua Library on May 20, hosted by SMRA and the four other Westchester Audubon chapters. The speaker was Arturo Kirkconnell, curator of birds at Havana’s National Museum of Natural History, and the program featured his photography of Cuba’s diverse bird life. My favorites included two endemics, the Bee Hummingbird, the world's smallest bird, and the national bird, the beautiful Cuban Trogon. Arturo ended his presentation by urging the audience to get to know Cuba’s people, culture and wildlife. *William Kellner*

Saw Mill River Audubon

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Education

SMRA Educator Patricia Mutolo Retires

After ten years of service as environmental educator with Saw Mill River Audubon, Patricia Mutolo will be retiring this summer to spend more time with her family.

Pat has consistently received the highest of eval-

uations for her Audubon classroom and field trip programs. Her service with SMRA followed an exemplary classroom teaching career ending with retirement from Westorcharde School in the Chappaqua Central School District.

Because of Pat's work, Saw Mill River Audubon's education outreach has added new schools with

new lesson plans and field trip activities tailored to teacher suggestions.

Pat is now assisting us in our search for a new educator and has graciously offered to help with training and transition.

Thank you, Pat, for all you have contributed to Saw Mill River Audubon's school outreach!



Advocacy

Audubon New York (ANY) is an active force for state and regional legislation focusing on healthy habitats for birds, other wildlife and people. Recent legislative efforts include:

Action on feral cat colonies—Cats kill millions of birds nationally and are a special threat to ground nesting and ground foraging birds like the Wood Thrush and Ovenbird. Audubon is fighting to

prevent the passage of a trapping, neutering and release program (TNR). TNR efforts have been shown to actually increase the number of cats, thus increasing the threat to birds.

Microbeads in the environment—ANY is tracking legislation that would prohibit the sale of personal care products with microbeads. These small plastic particles are added as an abrasive to face scrubs, toothpaste and other products, and are finding their way into wa-

ter bodies, where they are ingested by birds and other wildlife, posing a growing threat to multiple species.

State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)—The SWAP is a 10-year action plan to preserve New York's wildlife species in greatest conservation need. ANY is working to align the SWAP with Audubon's conservation including climate change concerns. More info at: www.dec.ny.gov/press/102036.html.

Richard Saraway



Sanctuaries

Work continues in our sanctuaries to remove invasive species and replant with native trees, shrubs and wildflowers.

New native trees and shrubs were added to Choate Sanctuary this spring as part of New

York's "Trees for Tribs" program which provides new plants for tributaries of the Hudson River.

New native wildflowers have been added to the meadow at Brinton Brook Sanctuary and both this meadow and portions of the meadow at Prun Sanctuary were

mowed early this spring to maintain these habitats as meadows.

The project to control Hardy Kiwi vine at Brinton Brook Sanctuary began in June.

As always, we welcome your ideas, comments, and observations about our eight sanctuaries.



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at Chappaqua, NY
and additional offices**



Christine McCluskey captured this amazing image of a fledgling Great Horned Owl climbing a tree at Croton Point Park on April 28, 2015.



Connecting People and Nature since 1953

SMRA Welcomes New Board Members



John Phillips grew up in the Boston area, and as a young boy felt deprived that none of the local professional sports teams—the Red Sox, Patriots, Bruins or Celtics—had a bird as their team mascot (as opposed to the Baltimore Orioles, Toronto Blue Jays, Seattle Seahawks, St. Louis Cardinals, Philadelphia Eagles, New Orleans Pelicans, etc). In response he decided to take up bird watching, which captured his young heart and soul so completely that he never looked back. John is a thirty-year veteran of the music industry and has lived to tell the tale. He brings a passion for our area's natural history, especially concerning the mighty Hudson River, to Saw Mill River Audubon and hopes that he can be of service to this respected, long-standing champion for our birds and their environment.



Valerie Heemstra has been a lifelong birder. “I admired their ability to fly, their beautiful colors, and their songs,” she said. She studied natural history at the University of Illinois, then taught middle-and-high-school science and worked as a biochemical researcher before raising her family in Australia and South Africa. She began studying medicine in her fifties and continues to practice medicine part-time at the ARC of Rockland (acute care of developmentally disabled adults) and at Innovative Health Systems (patients recovering from opiate dependency). She moved to Pleasantville in 2014, and said she “feels blessed to be in this location, six minutes from Rockefeller State Park, where I hike and bird as often as I can.”