



# SMRA

SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON

## Winter 2017-18



Bald Eagles on Hudson. Come to Teatown's 2018 Eagle Fest! See details on page 3. Photo: Bonnie Coe



Ossining's Roosevelt School 5th graders explored Rockefeller State Park Preserve with Saw Mill River Audubon in October and November.



Some Seed Sale volunteers: Eli Trautwein, Tom McEnerney, Henry Blenwitt, Ellis Gitlin, Bob Burke.



Big thanks to Westchester Tree Life for rescuing a trapped Red-shouldered Hawk in Mount Kisco! (Hawk shown here safely wrapped for a trip to Veterinary Center for Birds and Exotics in Bedford Hills.) Thanks especially to neighbor Rob Hebner who alerted Saw Mill River Audubon.

### Upcoming Events

Visit our Google calendar at [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar) for more events, event details, and any schedule changes. Be sure to subscribe to our free, private email list to get additional details, and early notice of new trips and events, including "pop-up" trips that we may add a few days before the trip. Visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list) to subscribe.

**Monthly, Young Birder Walks.** See event listing on page 3.

**Every Monday, 8:30 am, Free Bird Walks** Check web site for dates for these locations: Muscoot Farm, Rockefeller State Park Preserve, Croton Point.

**Every Saturday & Sunday, 9:00–11:00 am, Project FeederWatch** SMRA volunteers at Croton Point Nature Center. All are welcome!

**Every Second Saturday, 9:00 am, Brinton Brook Sanctuary Guided Hike.**

**Every Third Saturday, 9:30 am–12:30 pm Pruyne Bird Seed Sale** High quality bird seed for pick up at Pruyne Sanctuary office/garden entrance.

**NEW!! Every Third Sunday, 3:00 pm, Pruyne Sanctuary Guided Hike.** Starts Sunday, December 17.

### Winter Public Programs — See Page 3 for Field Trips

**Thursday, December 21, 7:00 pm at the Croton Free Library**  
*Members' Best Photos and Holiday Gathering*

Join us for this fun and informal event where members and friends of Saw Mill River Audubon share photographic highlights of the past year of birding and natural exploration, and enjoy holiday desserts. If you would like to share 3-5 of your best photographs, email our office by December 13. Bring holiday cookies and other treats to share and exchange. (Okay to come without!)

**Thursday, January 25, 7:00 pm at the Chappaqua Library**  
*A Naturalist Explores Belize and Costa Rica*

Costa Rica and Belize are naturalist delights. As a small escape from winter, come explore these renowned neotropical ecotourism destinations through the beautiful photography and engaging commentary of Fran Greenberg.

**Thursday, February 22, 7:00 pm at the Croton Free Library**  
*What's New at Rockefeller State Park Preserve?*

Susan Antenen, Rockefeller State Park Preserve's Park Manager, will describe upcoming changes in the Preserve, trail improvement projects, and new land stewardship practices. You are invited to bring your questions about the Preserve's ecology, management, history, and more.

To enjoy this newsletter in color, visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news)

## President's Message and Fall Audubon Council of New York

SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim, board member Sarah Hansen and I attended the semi-annual meeting of the Audubon Council of New York in October. The Council brings together the 27 Audubon chapters in New York. The weekend's focus was partnerships, and Anne shared SMRA's successful partnership with Rockefeller State Park Preserve through the Connect Kids to Parks program.

We heard from several groups involved in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex: more than 50,000 acres of protected wetlands in northern Cayuga County, and home to Audubon New York's Montezuma Center, as well as 30,000 acres

owned by other conservation organizations and private landowners interested in wildlife conservation. (See Sarah's article below about the great birding there.) Chapters involved with Audubon's Great Lakes program reported on shoreline restoration projects with public, private, corporate, and citizen partnerships.

Audubon NY's initiatives for 2018 include supporting legislation to study lead ammunition impacts on wildlife and humans, pollinator and bird-friendly standards for ground-mounted solar sites, site standards for offshore wind development, and opposition to thermal solar development.

*Valerie Lyle, SMRA President*

## Autumn on the Hudson

On the first Sunday of Autumn, with its record-breaking warm temperatures, sixteen of us enjoyed the river breezes on our Constitution Marsh paddle.

Our guide Sarah helped us in and out of the canoes, making even the most inexperienced paddlers comfortable. The calm water gave us plenty of time to bird, and we enjoyed the chatter and the dart of a Belted Kingfisher and quick looks at a Marsh Wren. We saw Great Blue Herons, a pair of Snowy Egrets and a single Double-crested Cormorant. A juvenile Bald Eagle put on a show for us, soaring just overhead.

We saw a kettle of gulls, and a particularly persistent Ring-billed Gull we kept confusing with an errant Osprey. Sarah shared her extensive knowledge of the flora of the tidal marsh.

We hope to have another trip on the Marsh, a New York Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA), this spring. Check our calendar for updates.

*Kathleen Williamson*

## Montezuma NWR At Dawn

On daybreak of the last morning of the New York Audubon Council meeting, SMRA President Valerie Lyle, Executive Director Anne Swaim and I went birding along Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Wildlife Drive. Pre-dawn light barely touched the gravel road. Our slow-moving car spooked American Robins, Song Sparrows, and Swamp Sparrows foraging for grit ahead of us. Countless Red-winged Blackbirds sang and called far within the wetland.

With the sun about to rise, the eastern sky glowed with color. Thousands of blackbirds, flock after flock, began streaming low over the reeds. A Peregrine Falcon rocketed towards them. We expected the blackbirds to mob the predator away, but we didn't see it again and presumed it stayed low to feast on a successful catch.

A long row of reeds bordering the road blocked our view of the expansive open pool. When we finally reached a viewable spot, hundreds of waterfowl dotted the water: swimming, bathing, feeding, fighting, and sleeping. Merely ten feet from the road, lap-dog-sized Pied-billed Grebes speedily dove, American Coots paddling just behind them. The more cautious ducks – warmed in the now golden sunlight – layered farther back, requiring binoculars and scopes. Gadwalls, American Wigeons, Ring-necks, Ruddy Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Northern Shovelers, Northern Pintails, a lone Bufflehead drake. Anne estimated that there were 400 wigeons, theirs an incessant chorus of squeaky toy calls.

An adult Bald Eagle flew overhead just in front of us. Another raptor in pursuit of breakfast? Scores of ducks – the ones farthest away from the protective reed cover – took off. Canada Geese honked loudly in protest. The eagle passed through the flocks with majestic ease, then sharply pivoted. Testing our “ducks in flight” observation abilities, the waterfowl circled around to land while the eagle continued its flight, disappearing over the horizon.

*Sarah Hansen*

### Saw Mill River Audubon

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Visit us online: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org)

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## December Events

**Saturdays & Sundays,  
9:00–11:00 am**

### Project FeederWatch

Continues to April 8, 2018. SMRA volunteers are at the Croton Point Nature Center every weekend morning in winter, counting and photographing birds visiting the feeders. All are welcome!

**Saturday, December 2,  
7:00 am–12 noon**

### Ducking in Westchester

Join us for a morning of waterfowl watching at various sites in Westchester County. Call or email us to register, for possible carpooling info, and for first stop location.

**Tuesday, December 5  
7:00 pm**

### Nature Book Club

**Mount Pleasant Library**  
Come join in the Saw Mill River Audubon Nature Book Club. We will be discussing *The Genius of Birds* by award-winning science writer Jennifer Ackerman. No registration necessary

**Saturday, December 9,  
9:00 am**

### Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook

No registration needed. Rain or shine. Meet in main parking area. Good for adults and young people age 8 and older.

**Sunday, December 10,  
8:00 am**

### Young Birders Walk Edith Read Sanctuary

Our Young Birders Walks are for young people age 8 to 16 with accompanying adult. Meet in parking lot beside Playland Lake. No registration needed. Binocular loans available. Watch calendar for additional dates!

## NEW WALK SERIES!

**Sunday, December 17,  
3:00 pm**

### Third Sunday Walk at Pruyn Sanctuary

No registration needed. Rain or shine. Meet at Woodmill Road trails entrance. Family friendly, for adults and young people age 5 and older.

**Thursday,  
December 21, 7:00 pm**

### Members' Best Photos & Holiday Gathering

### Croton Free Library

See details on page 1.

### Christmas Bird Counts

During Christmas Bird Counts, birders census birds in 15-mile diameter circles. See local count dates listed below. If you want to help, contact our office to get connected with count organizers.

**Sat 12/16:** Peekskill Area

**Sun 12/17:** Greenwich/Stamford

**Sat 12/23:** Bronx-Westchester

**Sat 12/30:** Putnam

**Learn more at:**

[www.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count)

## January Events

**Monday, January 1  
7:00 am**

### Westchester Birding Day!

Kick off your 2018 bird list with a day of county birding. Meet up with us at one or all of the locations below

**7:00 am Mariandale**

Hudson sunrise with ducks!

**8:30 am Muscoot Farm**

(1st Monday walk)

**11:00 am Deans Bridge**

**12:30 pm Pound Ridge**

**3:00 pm Read Sanctuary**

Email us for leader cell phone to keep in touch with our timing and check SMRA Google calendar event entry for updates before traveling.

**Monday, January 1**

**9:00 am**

### New Year's Day Walk Rockwood Hall

See details on web site.

**Saturday, January 6**

**9:00 am**

### Eagles & More Walk

Now an annual tradition! Come birding with Charlie Roberto, starting 9:00 am at Croton's Echo Boat Ramp and then driving into Croton Point Park for more birding. Eagles expected!

**Saturday, January 6**

**11:30 am**

### 5th Annual Soup Social!

Join us at the Croton Point Nature Center for our soup social. Email us if you want to bring soup, bread or a dessert. Okay to come without!

**Saturday, January 13**

**9:00 am**

### Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook

See entry for Sat Dec 9.

**Sunday, January 21,**

**3:00 pm**

### Third Sunday Walk at Pruyn Sanctuary

See entry for Sun Dec 17.

**Thursday, January 25**

**7:00 pm**

### Program: A Naturalist Explores Belize & Costa Rica

**Chappaqua Library**

See details on page 1.

**Saturday January 27,**

**4:30 pm**

### Field Trip: Shawangunk Grasslands NWR

See details on web site.

## February Events

**Saturday, February 10**

**9:00 am**

### Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook

See entry for Sat Dec 9.



**Saturday, February 10  
9:00 am–4:00 pm**

### Teatown's EagleFest!

Don't miss this day-long celebration of Bald Eagles on the Hudson River. All details: [www.teatown.org/events/eaglefest/](http://www.teatown.org/events/eaglefest/) SMRA will be leading bird walks and helping people see eagles along the Hudson, in partnership with Teatown! Snow date: Feb 11.

**Tuesday, February 6,  
7:00 pm**

### Nature Book Club

### Mount Pleasant Library

See details on web site.

**Friday, February 16 to**

**Monday, February 19**

### Adirondack Winter

### Birding Weekend

Top ADK birding guide Joan Collins will lead our group. Email our office ASAP.

**Sunday, February 18**

**3:00 pm**

### Third Sunday Walk at

### Pruyn Sanctuary

See entry for Sun Dec 17.

**Thursday, February 22**

**7:00 pm**

### Program: What's New at

### Rockefeller State Park

### Preserve?

### Croton Free Library

See details on page 1.

**More winter events and more details at our Google calendar online**

**Special Thanks to Pizza Station in Chappaqua for feeding our seed sale volunteers in October!**



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Red-bellied Woodpecker storing an acorn.  
Photo: Steven Lester

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

## Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Winter!

We have more than 40 events scheduled between December and February to connect you with local habitats, birds and other wildlife. Monday bird walks. Monthly public programs. Young birder walks. Walks in our sanctuaries. Weekend field trips to explore habitats in the Hudson Valley and beyond.

**We connect people with nature!**



Ossining 5th graders exploring the birds at Rockefeller State Park Preserve during a Connect Kids to Park field trip this fall. CKTP trips are fully funded by a NYS grant program! Find out more by downloading this flyer at our website: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/) CKTP

**Connecting with Nature:** Your gift helps us connect people and nature.

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