Winter 2017-18

Upcoming Events

Visit our Google calendar at 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 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 Pruyn Bird Seed Sale High quality bird seed for pick up at Pruyn Sanctuary office/garden entrance. NEW!! Every Third Sunday, 3:00 pm, Pruyn 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
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

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.

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.

Kathleen Williamson

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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

Monday, January 1 9:00 am
New Year’s Day Walk
Rockwood Hall
See details on web site.

Thursday, 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.

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.

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.

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!
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!

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Winter!

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

☐ $500  ☐ $250  ☐ $100
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☐ My employer will match my gift.

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Basic Chapter Membership:

☐ Enclosed is $35
☐ Please list my gift anonymously

Name(s)

Address

City / State / Zip

Email Address

Please make checks payable to: Saw Mill River Audubon

OR join/renew/donate online

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/join
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/renew
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate

Ossining 5th graders exploring the birds at Rockefeller State Park Preserve during a Connec 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/CKTP

Red-bellied Woodpecker storing an acorn.

Photo: Steven Lester

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