



Winter 2018-19



Bald Eagles on the Hudson. Come to Teatown's 2019 Eagle Fest! See details on page 3. Photo: Bonnie Coe



Birding at the Greenwich Audubon Center during the eBird conservation workshop led by SMRA for the H2H Regional Conservation Partnership. Read more on page 5. Photo: Hallie Schwab



Saw Mill River Audubon joined with Audubon chapters from across New York in the Adirondacks in September. Read more about the work of Audubon NY on pages 2 & 5. Photo: David Gordon



Saw Mill River Audubon led field trips this fall at Rockefeller State Park Preserve for all 18 fifth grade classes at Ossining's Roosevelt School. We are now planning to visit the students in their classrooms this winter!. Read more on page 4. Photo: Anne Swaim

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.

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, Pruyin Bird Seed Sale High quality bird seed for pick up at Pruyin Sanctuary office/garden entrance. Also available M/W/F 10:30 am–3:30 pm at our office in Pruyin Sanctuary. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed for selection and pricing.

Every Third Sunday, 3:30 pm, Pruyin Sanctuary Guided Hike

Winter Public Programs — See Page 3 for Field Trips

Thursday, December 13, 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 10. Bring holiday cookies and other treats to share and exchange. (Okay to come without!)

Thursday, January 10, 7:00 pm at the Millwood Fire Station #1
Saw-whet Owls in Your Backyard

Come hear Trudy Battaly and Drew Panko discuss 15 years of banding Saw-whet owls in Westchester County. Find out what they've learned about this robin-sized nocturnal raptor with an unusual name. Info on venue at web site.

Thursday, February 7, 7:00 pm at the Mount Pleasant Library
The Great Backyard Bird Count and Backyard Birding

Ted Gilman, Audubon Greenwich Senior Naturalist, will present this engaging program about backyard birding, bird feeders and more. Held at the main branch of Mount Pleasant Library, 350 Bedford Road, Pleasantville.

To enjoy this newsletter in color, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news

President's Message: Birds Need Healthy Forests

Audubon NY's Fall Council meeting this September introduced attendees to Audubon's Healthy Forests Initiative, which focuses on protecting forests from fragmentation while promoting management that improves habitat for priority birds and creates healthier, more diverse, and more resilient forests.

Since 1900 changes such as the abandonment of agriculture and suppression of fire have created abundant forest cover in New York. Most of these forests are mature, with only a small amount of younger forests. Forest habitat quality has also been compromised by fragmentation, deer browsing of saplings, and invasive vegetation.

Birds and wildlife need unfragmented forests of diverse ages, varied plant and tree species, and varied structure.

Good forest management practices can mimic natural disturbances and restore a more diverse range of age classes, creating desirable habitat.

The Healthy Forests Initiative connects with foresters as well as public and private landowners to educate them about bird-friendly habitats and provide technical assistance and wildlife habitat enhancement recommendations.

Audubon New York is collaborating with NYS DEC and the private Lyme Adirondack Forest Company on the Kunjamuk Young Forest demonstration project in the Adirondacks, a project begun in 2015 to show how sustainable forest management practices can create healthy habitat. Data from breeding bird surveys already indicate phenomenal success; the forest management resulted in good quality young forest alongside mature forest habitat.

Closer to home for SMRA is Rheinstrom Hill Forest Demonstration Project in Columbia County. This project serves as a hands-on teaching and training tool for community members, private forest landowners, public forest managers, and consulting foresters.

Valerie Lyle, SMRA President

Youth Scholarships Available!

Saw Mill River Audubon's Larry Light Youth Scholarships fund summer environmental camps, workshops and classes for students age 11 to 17. Past recipients have attended NYS DEC conservation camps, Audubon and American Birding Association youth birding camps. Apply online: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/scholarship

Saw Mill River Audubon

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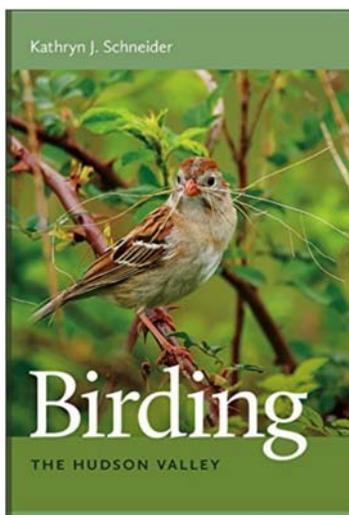
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Celebrating *Birding the Hudson Valley*

On October 21 the Bedford, Bronx River-Sound Shore, Central Westchester, Hudson River, and Saw Mill River Audubon chapters hosted the launch of Kathryn J. Schneider's *Birding the Hudson Valley*. The event at the Chappaqua Performing Arts Center was well attended and at least 60 books were sold.

More than just a list of birding hot spots, the book explores Hudson Valley history, ecology, and bird biology, and also covers techniques and skill-building activities. The bulk of the book, though (complete with great maps), is devoted to a selection of birding sites within the Hudson Valley's 10 counties, plus a few nearby that are too great to be missed: a range of destinations that cover the many different birds that each county has to offer.

I think Schneider has successfully delivered a great guide. It provides helpful tips for beginners, and experienced birders will likely discover new places to explore within reasonable driving distances. *Lynn Salmon, SMRA Board Member*

Saw Mill River Audubon thanks the Village Bookstore in Pleasantville for being our local bookseller at the *Birding the Hudson Valley* event.

December Events

Saturdays & Sundays, 9:00–11:00 am
Project FeederWatch
 Continues to April 7, 2019. 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 1, 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.

Saturday, December 8, 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook
 No registration needed. Rain or shine. Meet in main parking area. For adults and young people age 8 and up.

Thursday, December 13, 7:00 pm
Members' Best Photos & Holiday Gathering
Croton Free Library
 See more on page 1.

Sunday, December 16, 3:30 pm
Third Sunday Walk at Pruyn Sanctuary
 No registration needed. Rain or shine. Meet at Woodmill Road trail entrance. Family friendly, for adults and young people age 5 and up.

Christmas Bird Counts
 During Christmas Bird Counts, birders census birds in 15-mile diameter circles. See count dates to the right. Contact SMRA to connect.

January Events

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



Thursday, January 10 7:00 pm
Public Program: Saw-whet Owls in Your Backyard
 See more on page 1.

Saturday, January 12 9:00 am
Eagles & More Walk
 Now an annual tradition! Come birding with Charlie Roberto, starting at Croton's Echo Boat Ramp and then driving into Croton Point Park for more birding. Eagles are expected!

Saturday, January 12 11:30 am
6th 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 12 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook
 See entry for Sat Dec 8.

Sunday, January 20, 3:30 pm
Third Sunday Walk at Pruyn Sanctuary
 See entry for Sun Dec 16.

Sat 12/15 Peekskill Area
Sun 12/16 Greenwich/Stamford Area
Sat 12/22 Bronx-Westchester
Sat 12/29 Putnam
See article on page 5 to learn more about CBCs.

Tuesday, January 15 7:00 pm
Nature Book Club
Mount Pleasant Library
 We'll be discussing the Pulitzer Prize winning *The Sixth Extinction* by Elizabeth Kolbert. Come join in or just to listen. No registration needed.

Saturday January 26, 3:00 pm
Field Trip: Shawangunk Grasslands NWR
 Joint trip with Putnam Highlands Audubon. See details on web site.

February Events

Thursday, February 7 7:00 pm
Program: Backyard Birding
Mount Pleasant Library, Pleasantville
 See more on page 1.

Saturday, February 9 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook
 See entry for Sat Dec 8.

Saturday, February 9 9:00 am–4:00 pm
Teatown's EagleFest!
 See article to right for details.

Fri, Feb 15–Mon, Feb 18
Great Backyard Bird Count
 Visit gbbc.birdcount.org

Sunday, February 17 3:30 pm
Third Sunday Walk at Pruyn Sanctuary
 See entry for Sun Dec 16.

Sunday, February 17 3:00 pm
Afternoon Croton Point Birding Walk
 See details on web site.

Saturday, February 23 8:00 am
Leader's Choice Field Trip
 See details on web site.



Saturday, February 9 9:00 am to 4:00pm
 Snow date: Sun Feb 10
Don't miss this day-long celebration of Bald Eagles on the Hudson!
All details & tickets at www.teatown.org

Teatown's EagleFest headquarters will, once again, be in Croton Point Park with heated tents featuring a day-long schedule of live raptor programs, children's activities and other special events including free bird walks led by SMRA.

Volunteers with spotting scopes will be at the Croton Boat Ramp, George's Island, the Croton Dam, and the Peekskill waterfront. Watch Teatown's web site for a bus tour option to visit all sites!

Saw Mill River Audubon is once again sponsoring the warming tents at the Croton Boat Ramp and George's Island, with SMRA volunteers at both locations and also leading some of the free bird walks offered hourly in Croton Point Park.

Come visit us at our display table or catch our "Raptors for Rookies" ID program, both inside the big heated tents at Croton Point.

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

Education



Nature Book Club Titles

Eye of the Albatross

Carl Safina

The Genius of Birds

Jennifer Ackerman

The Invention of Nature:

Alexander Humboldt's New World

Andrea Wulf

Evolution of Beauty

Richard O. Prum

Birding Without Borders

Noah Strycker

What the Robin Knows

Jon Young

Genius of Place: The Life of

Frederick Law Olmsted

Justin Martin

Con Ed Grant for Audubon Education

Saw Mill River Audubon has received a grant from Con Edison to extend our Connect Kids to Parks visits into the classroom!

Audubon Educator Pete Salmansohn will visit all eighteen 5th grade classes at Roosevelt School in Ossining who visited Rockefeller State Park Preserve this fall on Audubon field trips under the New York State Parks Connect Kids to Parks (CKTP) grant program.

Find out more about CKTP free field trips at our web site under the Education link.

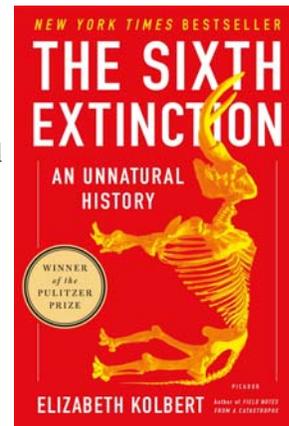
SMRA Gets Bookish

The inaugural year of our Nature Book Club has been filled with great reading and discussion on science, history, adventure and birds. We've traveled from the coral sands and sunny glare of a South Pacific atoll with Laysan Albatross to a mossy Andean cloud forest with Club-winged Manakins. We've followed Humboldt across South America and looked over Olmsted's shoulder as he designed our own Central Park. There wasn't much of the world we missed on one very big year with Noah Strycker, and we learned how to bird better in our own backyard with Jon Young.

On Tuesday, January 15th we will take on Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert as she examines the last half-billion years and the history of extinction on earth. Her lively prose invites us to join her around the world as she covers a somber subject in a way that never leaves you feeling overwhelmed or depressed. On March 5th, we will discuss selected essays by perhaps the greatest nature writer of all time, John Muir.

See left for a complete listing of the books we've read. And join us on a Tuesday evening at Mount Pleasant Public Library at 7:00 pm. Check our website for meeting dates. No reservation is necessary.

Kathleen Williamson, SMRA Board Member



More About Christmas Bird Counts

If you check any bird club's program this time of the year, you will see references to Christmas Bird Counts. Some of you might already know and

participate in this annual activity but here is some more info and how to get involved.

In 1900, an officer of the Audubon Society suggested counting birds around Christmas time instead of shooting them. In the 1800s, the tradition of a Christmas "side hunt" resulted in the shooting of thousands of birds with the winner being the hunter who shot the most birds. Clearly this outcome wasn't positive for birds, and the proposed bird count created an alternative for conservation-minded individuals. If you'd like more detail, there is some great history online about the count and how the data are used today: www.audubon.org/conservation/history-christmas-bird-count.

How do the counts work?

Christmas Bird Counts are done within 15 mile-wide circles during a 24-hour period. All birds seen and heard are counted within that circle. Last year in New York, there were 69 Christmas Bird Counts. The counts each have a leader (also known as a compiler) who is responsible for splitting up their circle into smaller areas, allocating groups of birders to those areas, and then collating all the count information before sending it in to Audubon.

These counts in our area can be challenging due to inclement weather but this doesn't take away from the enjoyment of the day. Going out to count birds in a defined area with a group of like-minded birders is wonderful, especially since most of the counts finish the day with a potluck dinner where the counts are tallied.

If you are interested in joining up with one of the local counts, see the dates on page 3 and email our office for compiler contacts. *Debbie van Zyl, SMRA Board Member*

Advocacy



Audubon’s Impact Around the State and Nation

Saving the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The New York Attorney General, along with those of seven other states, is suing the federal government to protect key portions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The government may try to exclude collateral kills related to industrial operations, such as fossil fuel extraction. Birds looking for food and rest mistake toxic fracking holding ponds for likely feeding opportunities and are poisoned, and the fouling of water and beaches, as occurred during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, leads to large-scale bird deaths. Audubon supports this suit to stop the threatened evisceration of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Protecting Plum Island

Plum Island lies in Gardiner’s Bay off Orient Point, Long Island. It has long been the site of biological research on farm animal pathogens and, based on limited human use, has served as a unique sanctuary for sea and shore birds, many of which are vulnerable species. The government plans to relocate this facility and may sell the island (or parts of it) to developers, including those who plan to build golf courses and related waterfront residences. Audubon is tracking this and will fight to preserve the island as a valued habitat for terns, and shorebirds including Piping Plovers.

Protecting Habitat for Grassland Birds

Short-eared Owls are a vulnerable species in New York requiring large, open grasslands such as those at the Fort Edwards Grasslands above Saratoga Springs. Farms and residential development are also in this grasslands region with an intense pressure for more large-scale development. Audubon successfully lobbied to pass a resolution for New York State to pay local taxes on privately-owned grasslands to support preservation of this valuable habitat.

Richard Saravay, SMRA Board Chair



Trying out eBird in the field. See story to right. Photo: Hallie Schwab



eBirding for Conservation

Saw Mill River Audubon is a partner organization in the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership which advances the pace and practice of regional land protection and stewardship from the Hudson to the Housatonic by collaborating across boundaries to enhance the connection between people and nature. Learn more at www.h2hrcp.org

On October 24, SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim led the H2H-sponsored workshop on “Using eBird to Monitor, Inform, and Engage,” at Audubon Greenwich. The participants learned how eBird works and how eBird data have been used for conservation outreach efforts. Then we actually used the eBird app as we birded on the grounds of the Audubon Greenwich Center and its hawk watch station.

This workshop was made possible by a grant from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Land Trust Bird Conservation Small Grant Program. This grant will support a series of Partner Development trainings related to habitat management and engagement around birds, including additional eBird workshops for landowners and community members within the H2H focus areas.

The next H2H partner development workshop is “Grants 101,” to be held November 28 at North Salem Open Land Foundation. These programs are open to H2H partners’ staff, board members and volunteers. If you would like to attend, email Tom Ruth at ruthtome2@yahoo.com.

Tom Ruth, SMRA Vice President



Northern Harriers are among the many birds that rely upon the Croton Point Park landfill grasslands as a migration stopover. SMRA is closely monitoring plans to improve the grasslands habitat. Photo: Jeff Seneca



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Saw-whet Owl. Croton-on-Hudson,
11/15/18. Photo: John Phillips

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. Nature Book Club. 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 Parks field trip this fall. CKTP trips are fully funded by a NYS grant program! Find out more by downloading our CKTP flyer: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/CKTP Photo: Anne Swaim

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

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Basic Chapter Membership:

Enclosed is \$35

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