



# SMRA

SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON

## Spring 2019



*Hooded Merganser (male) seen during our 2nd Monday walk at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Photo: Steve Kowalczyk.*



*SMRA visited all eighteen 5th grade classes at Roosevelt School, Ossining, this winter, funded by a grant from Con Edison. SMRA Educator Pete Salmansohn brought nature inside for the students to explore up close. Photo: Anne Swaim*



*Monday morning bird walk at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Photo: LouAnn O'Hora*



*Twenty-four SMRA volunteers represented SMRA at Teatown's EagleFest in February including SMRA Board Members Tom Ruth, Bill Kellner and Richard Saraway shown here at our info table at Croton Point Park. Photo: Rose DePalma*

## 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.

**Every Monday, 8:30 am (March-April) 7:30 am (May-Oct), Free Bird Walks**  
Check website 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. Until April 7. All 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** until May. High quality bird seed for pick up at Pruyn Sanctuary office/garden entrance. Also available M/W/F 10:30 am–3:30 pm at our office in Pruyn Sanctuary. Visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed) for selection and pricing.

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

**Thursday, March 21, 7:00 pm at the Croton Free Library**

### *Exploring Antarctica: Ice and Millions of Penguins but no Bears*

In November 2018, Phil and Ellen Heidelberger traveled with National Geographic and Lindblad to explore the Falklands, South Georgia Island and the Antarctic Peninsula by ship, zodiac, kayak and snowshoes. Come see Phil's images of stunning landscapes of ice, eight species of penguins, elephant and leopard seals, whales and other wildlife and hear stories from their journey.

**Sunday, April 28, 6:00 pm at the New Castle Community Center**

### *Welcome to Spring Annual Dinner — Community Potluck*

Our favorite event of the year! Join us for a fun and friendly event with our community potluck and Welcome to Spring dinner. All details and online reservations are here: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner)

**Thursday, May 23, 7:00 pm at the Croton Free Library**

### *Restoring Croton Point Park Grassland*

Larry Weaner Landscape Associates is the designer of the restoration plan for the Croton Point Park landfill grassland: a plan designed to increase native plants and improve bird habitat on the landfill while reducing the number of invasive plant species. Come hear from Larry Weaner and Jenna Webster how the restoration plan was developed and the timeline for this exciting and innovative project. See article on page 2 for more details.

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

## President's Message: Spring Update

### Changes are coming to the Croton Point Grasslands.

Over the next few months, you will see the first stages of a 2-year project to remove invasive species and restore the habitat of this Important Bird Area. See Anne Swaim's article below for more details of the plan, including how SMRA has worked with county officials to ensure a successful outcome and to mitigate project impacts on the birds and other wildlife that depend on this area.

**Please do not overlook the proxy ballot enclosed in this newsletter.** We need your proxy vote to elect the new officer slate and members of the Board of Directors at our annual meeting on April 28.

This year there is an additional ballot item to vote on: a change to the incorporation of SMRA, reflecting changes that were made to New York State's nonprofit law after our original incorporation. Among other things, SMRA would change from a voting membership to a non-voting membership organization. With this change, SMRA members

will no longer vote on officers or appointments to the Board of Directors, as is common with many nonprofit organizations, including National Audubon. All other privileges of membership will remain in place. We are recommending this change because the annual proxy process is cumbersome, time-consuming, and costly to our organization. We urge you to vote yes on item 2 on the proxy to approve this change. The complete Restatement of the Certificate of Incorporation is available on our website at: [http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/docs/SMRA-Restated\\_Certificate\\_of\\_Incorporation.pdf](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/docs/SMRA-Restated_Certificate_of_Incorporation.pdf)

We will continue to report on our activities in our newsletters, on our web site and Facebook page, and at our annual dinners as we always have. Rest assured that we value the ongoing input of all our members. We encourage you to share ideas and concerns via email, phone, or in person at Saw Mill events, and to share your energy and talents as volunteers and participants in our programs.

*Valerie Lyle, SMRA President*

## Restoring Croton Point Grassland

Using state funding to its Soil and Water Conservation District, the County of Westchester is restoring valuable grassland atop the former landfill at Croton Point Park. Larry Weaner Landscape Associates designed the project, which is intended to curb less desirable, invasive plants in favor of more ecologically friendly native plants to improve wildlife habitat, especially for birds. Saw Mill River Audubon appreciates the opportunity we have had to review and comment on the plans as they developed with a focus on preserving existing areas of native grass that are important for nesting grasslands birds like Grasshopper Sparrow and Bobolink. During the project, much of the landfill hill will have a very different look as invasives are removed and before native species regrow. We encourage you to attend our Thursday, May 23rd program at the Croton Free Library to hear more about how the grassland restoration plan was developed and the project's timeline with an opportunity for you to ask any questions.

*Anne Swaim, SMRA Executive Director*

## Starting 2019 with a First Day Hike

On New Year's Day 2019 I was pleased to lead one of the First Day Hikes sponsored across the state by New York State Parks. SMRA was the leader of the one at Rockwood Hall, part of Rockefeller State Park Preserve on the Hudson near Phelps Hospital. The walk was tasked to me. I didn't mind rising early New Year's Day because, seriously, who really goes out on New Year's Eve (amateur night at the tavern, and staying in also gives one time to put the finishing touches on one's "dead pool lists" before the midnight submission deadline)?

For the 2018 First Day walk, it was nine degrees at the 9:00 a.m. start and the NYS Parks' swag was a sticker (seriously, a sticker). Nonetheless, 14 brave souls showed up and we had some pretty good birds. This year the temperature was a balmy 55 degrees—fifth warmest on record for New York. As a result, 45 people met me at Rockwood Hall. Try leading a walk with 45 folks; it's not so easy to get everyone on the birds (of which there were few — junco was a highlight)!

There had not been much cold weather up to then so the river was wide open and devoid of waterfowl. However, a few close encounters with Red-tailed Hawks and Bald Eagles enthralled the throng, and merely walking the loop at Rockwood Hall with the beautiful specimen trees is always a great morning out. As for the swag, NYS Parks stepped up its game and I was able to give all in attendance a green head band (shade: forest or hunter green; I checked a paint chart.) See you all January 1, 2020.

*Larry Trachtenberg, SMRA Board Member*

### Saw Mill River Audubon

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

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## March 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, March 2,  
9:00 am–1:00 pm**

### **Hudson River Eagles and Chili Potluck**

Join Charlie Roberto on a drive along the shoreline of the Hudson River starting 9:00 am at Croton's Echo Boat Launch. Then we'll return to the Croton Point Nature Center for a Chili Potluck. (Email us if you can bring chili, bread, beverages or dessert to share or join us for the post-trip potluck without bringing anything.)

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

### **Nature Book Club**

Essays by John Muir.  
See details on website.

**Saturday, March 9, 9:00 am  
Second Saturday Walk  
at Brinton Brook**

See details on website.  
Repeats 4/13 and 5/11.

**Sunday, March 10, 6:45pm**

### **Field Trip: Flight of the Woodcock, Croton Point**

See details on website.  
Weather may cancel.

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

### **Public Program: Exploring Antarctica**

See more on page 1.

**Sunday, March 31, 8:00 am  
Teatown Birding with  
Charlie Roberto**

See details on website.

## April Events

**Saturday, April 13, 8:00 am  
Long Island Birding**

Join us 8:00 am at the Coast Guard Station, west end of Jones Beach State Park. Plans may vary depending on sightings and weather. Register by email for trip updates.

**Saturday, April 13  
9:00 am**

### **Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook**

See entry for Sat Mar 9

**Friday, April 26, 7:15 am  
Central Park Birding**

Meet Charlie Roberto at Central Park West & W 77th Street. Extensive walking. Bring binoculars. Map: [bit.ly/CentralPark-Charlie](http://bit.ly/CentralPark-Charlie)

**Saturday, April 27, 7:00 am  
Marshlands Conservancy**

Meet us in the main parking lot of Marshlands Conservancy and join us for a two-hour exploration of this shoreline habitat as we search for early spring migrants. No RSVP needed.

**Sunday, April 28, 6:00 pm  
Welcome to Spring Dinner  
and Community Potluck**

A fun and relaxed evening!  
See details and RSVP online  
[www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner)

## May Events

**Wednesday, May 1, 6:00 am  
Early Morning Birding:  
Rockefeller SPP**

Early morning birding for spring migrants. Walk begins 6:00 am, main parking lot at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Leave early as desired. Note \$6 parking fee. Repeats 5/15, 5/29, 6/12.

**Saturday, May 4, All Day  
Global eBirding Big Day**

Fast-paced birding starting at dawn and through the day across Westchester. Email us to RSVP and for details.

**Tuesday, May 7, 7:00 pm  
Nature Book Club**

See details on website.

**Wednesday, May 8, 6:00 am  
Early Morning Birding:  
Croton Point Park**

Early morning birding during the spring migration! Walk begins 6:00 am in the ballfield parking. Repeats 5/22, 6/5.

**Saturday, May 11, 6:00 am  
Birding Rockefeller SPP**

Early morning birding for spring migrants. Same details as Wed May 1.

**Saturday, May 11, 9:00 am  
Second Saturday Walk  
at Brinton Brook**

See entry for Sat Mar 9.

**Saturday, May 11, 9:00 am  
Native Plant Center Walk  
at Pruyn Sanctuary**

Explore with NPC guides Missy Fabel and Dawn Orza. Discover native ephemerals, unfurling ferns, swamp azalea, and other plant species. Registration required by emailing: [MissyFabel@yahoo.com](mailto:MissyFabel@yahoo.com).

**Wednesday, May 15, 6:00 am  
Early Morning Birding:  
Rockefeller SPP**

See entry for Wed May 1.

**Friday, May 17, 7:15 am  
Central Park Birding**

See entry for Fri Apr 26.

**Saturday May 18, 5:30 am  
Birding Doodletown**

An annual favorite!  
See details on website.

**Sunday, May 19, 3:30 pm  
Spring Walk at  
Pruyn Sanctuary**

Good for all ages. Meet at the trails entrance at the end of Woodmill Road.

**Wednesday, May 22, 6:00 am  
Early Morning Birding:  
Croton Point Park**

See entry for Wed May 8.

**Thursday, May 23, 7:00 pm  
Program: Restoring Croton  
Point Grassland**

**Croton Free Library**

See more on pages 1 and 2.

**Wednesday, May 29  
6:00 am**

### **Early Morning Birding: Rockefeller SPP**

See entry for Wed May 1.  
Repeats Wed 6/12.

**Overnight Birding Trip:  
Saturday, May 25 through  
Monday, May 27**

### **Bashakill Birding**

Email our office for more details on this planned trip.

## *More about Field Trips*



Check our website for latest details and for more spring events OR if there is any question about weather.

Subscribe to our free email list to get early notice of trip changes or new trips:  
[www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list)

Some helpful tips: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/trip-tips.html](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/trip-tips.html)



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*A chance to win a Parliament of Owls: a beautiful raffle quilt custom-made for SMRA by Jean Sparacin! View in color with all details and purchase your raffle tickets at [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt) Photo: Peter Oden*

**Connecting People and Nature since 1953**

## *Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Spring!*

We have more than 40 events scheduled between March and May 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 in the Hudson Valley and beyond.

**We connect people with nature!**

## **SPECIAL INSERTS IN THIS ISSUE**

**All are invited to our Welcome to Spring dinner, a community potluck at the New Castle Community Center. See enclosed flyer!**

**All current members of Saw Mill River Audubon are urged to fill out the enclosed proxy ballot or vote your proxy online:  
[www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/proxy](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/proxy)**

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

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