



SMRA

SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON

Summer 2019



Osprey in Flight. The Osprey pair has returned to its nest atop the cell tower inside the Croton-Harmon railroad station. Photo: Steve Rappaport

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.

Recurring Events

Every Monday Bird Walks, 7:30 am. Beginners welcome and encouraged. **1st Mon:** Muscoot Farm. **2nd Mon:** Rockefeller State Park Preserve, main parking lot. **3rd Mon:** Rockefeller SPP, Sleepy Hollow Road entrance (see web site for directions.) **4th Mon:** Croton Point Park, main parking lot.

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

Highlighted Summer Events

See our **Google calendar** at our website for more summer events.

Saturday, June 1, 6:00 am to 3:00 pm, with lunch stop

Birding Dutchess County with John Askildsen

We'll carpool and caravan—with a limited number of cars and birders—to explore the rich habitats and breeding birds of Dutchess County led by John Askildsen. Registration required with \$10/person cost to cover donation from SMRA to Waterman Bird Club. Space limited. Register by calling or emailing our office.

Friday, July 26, 7:00 to 8:30 pm at the Croton Point Nature Center

Birders U: Shorebird ID Review with Anne Swaim

Join us for this refresher/intro multimedia workshop on identifying shorebirds. Cost is \$15/person for members of any Audubon group or any youth age 10–18 and includes a Stokes Shorebird ID book and workshop handouts; \$30/nonmember adult which includes above plus new membership in Saw Mill River Audubon. Payable at the door. Space limited. For adults, and youth age 10 and up. To register, email or call our office. **Check our website for shorebird field trips on Sat, July 27 to coastal NY and Sat, Aug 10 to coastal NJ.**

Sunday, August 4, 1:00 to 3:00 pm

Pruyn Sanctuary Gardens Open House with Donna Lassiter

Come visit our Butterfly-Hummingbird Garden and the Burke Plants for Birds Meadow Demonstration Garden at Pruynt Sanctuary. Enjoy seeing more than 100 species of native plants for pollinators and birds. Plant lists and growing information will be available. Find out about native plants that you can add to your property and visit with SMRA members and friends. No registration needed.



*Monday Birders at Muscoot in May
Photo: William Kellner*



*2018 Larry Light Youth Scholarship recipient
Aidan Perkins at our April 2019 Dinner
Photo: William Kellner*



*Our April Dinner drew a capacity crowd to celebrate
our past year of connecting people with nature.
Photo: Ken Novenstern*

President's Message

A recent United Nations report on the earth's ecosystems paints a frightening picture of habitat, flora, and fauna loss due to human activity. In commenting on this report, *The New York Times* said: "Almost everywhere you look, nature is vanishing before our eyes."

So what can we as individuals do? SMRA supports several local efforts. We plant native trees in our sanctuaries, and have regular work days where volunteers cut vines and remove other invasive plants. The trees we plant improve the sanctuary habitat while also protecting the Hudson River watershed from the effects of soil erosion.

The native plants we add to Brinton Brook Sanctuary meadow and our two gardens at Pruyn Sanctuary provide pollinator host plants as well as food for birds; these interactions then help spread the native plant species to neighboring areas. We have joined the newly established

New Castle Pollinator Pathways Coalition, which will work with public and private landowners to establish pesticide-free corridors, providing even more native plant habitat and nutrition for pollinators. (Learn more at pollinatorpathway.com.)

For many years, we have been working with Westchester County Parks to protect and improve wildlife habitat in county parks. Our work with the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership helps private landowners address land and watershed stewardship.

This summer, as you enjoy our gardens and sanctuaries, consider joining the community of volunteers who help maintain them, or serving on a SMRA committee to promote healthy ecosystems in our area. Together, we can support healthy habitats in our area and beyond.

Valerie Lyle



Purple Martins have returned for the third spring to the nesting structure at Croton Point Park that SMRA established with the funding assistance of Feed the Birds store in Croton and the Westchester Parks Foundation, with valued ongoing maintenance by Croton Point Naturalist John Phillips. Look for the Martins next to the entrance booth. Photo: Steve Kowalczyk

New York Audubon Chapters Gather Together for State Council Meeting

The Audubon Council of New York State spring meeting, March 22-24, provided a forum for updates on National Audubon's Climate Policy Strategy and opportunities for community science, among other topics.

Saw Mill River Audubon Board Members Tom Ruth and Cary Andrews represented SMRA at this twice-yearly gathering of all Audubon chapters in New York.

Top policy priorities included defending the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; sea birds forage fish protection by strengthening fisheries legislation; and climate change solutions.

Opportunities for community science, beyond

casual eBird reporting, include contributing to the updated *Breeding Bird Atlas*, a 5-year project starting next year, and the Assessing Vegetation for Impacts from Deer (AVID) program. (Seventy-five percent of foresters say forest regeneration is a complete failure or marginally successful today in NYS.)

We also reviewed Council work on some of Audubon New York's Policy Resolutions, including the Bird Safe Buildings Working Group, the Long Island Sound Resolution, and the Climate Change Resolution, the last led by SMRA's Richard Saravay. These will provide substance and guidance for Audubon New York's work with the state government. *Tom Ruth*

Saw Mill River Audubon

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To the Black Cow Coffee House for their coffee donation!

And to the Foley Group in Yorktown and to SBS Printing and Shipping in Briarcliff Manor for their support with our printing.



*Pileated Woodpecker
at Choate Sanctuary.
See article to right.
Photo:
Phil Heidelberg*

You Can Help with Climate Change

Climate change presents such an alarming crisis that people may have trouble thinking of ways they can make a difference. Here are some ideas to consider for meaningful personal action.

Reduce Carbon-Related Travel. If driving is the only reasonable way to get to your destination, consider carpooling.

- Drive at the speed limit.
- Limit unnecessary car use by aggregating trips to stores, doctors, etc.
- Choose public transit and your feet whenever feasible.
- Consider the most favorable MPG when selecting a car, preferably electric.

Get a Home Energy Audit & Reduce Usage. Energy companies conduct audits to flag areas in your home where heat loss or gain can be improved and recommend changes. Lifestyle changes can include: reducing clothes- and dish-washing and

drying, reducing hot water usage for bathing, and converting light bulbs to LED. All these choices will also save you money.

Join a Community Solar Project. If your home is unsuitable for solar power, investigate opportunities with your local town government, which may include planning for a community solar initiative. These plans open the door to anyone who pays an electric bill to join a community solar project and realize a reduction of a set percentage off your electric bills.

Help reduce carbon emissions and be part of New York's goal to have 50% of all power from sustainable sources by 2030.

Richard Saravay

Home Energy Audit
stars.nyserdagreenny.org

Lower Hudson Climate Change Effects
planning.westchestergov.com/
/soil-water-conservation

Rediscovering SMRA Sanctuaries

I highly recommend *Walkable Westchester* by Jane and Walt Daniels, published by the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. It describes more than 180 parks in Westchester County, complete with maps, where one can enjoy anything from a leisurely stroll to a strenuous hike; most of SMRA's sanctuaries are included.

A third edition is now in the works. Jane and Walt have recruited a small army of volunteers, including me, to visit the parks and identify any updates. I volunteered to survey SMRA's Brinton Brook, Choate, Graff, Haas and Pinecliff Sanctuaries. A different project, installing and monitoring a motion-activated camera for a bear population study, brought me back to Pruyn as well. (No visiting bears were detected on the previous survey two years ago).

What a treat it was to explore our sanctuaries again. I visited Brinton Brook on a clear winter morning, where I enjoyed great views of the mountains beyond the Hudson River through the bare trees from the high up Coyote and Hemlock Spring trails. I also got to say hello to the kids at The Rewilding School (www.rewildingschool.org), a nature-oriented preschool based at Brinton Brook in partnership with SMRA.

On another cold winter morning Graff provided me with beautiful views of an icy Hudson River beyond the snow-covered woods (alas, no eagles on the ice floes).

At Choate, a gorgeous Pileated Woodpecker posed for me on a tree full of large woodpecker holes. I admired the striking rock outcroppings along the steep slopes of Haas.

On an early spring visit to Pruyn, I was treated to views of the lovely purple and green shoots of skunk cabbage that were just beginning to pop up in the wetlands. Two weeks later the cabbage's broad green leaves had fully unfolded, fiddleheads were abundant, and I spotted a not-yet-blooming lady slipper with delicately striped leaves.

Finally, on Pinecliff's beautiful wheelchair-accessible boardwalk—which I helped to build back in 1995!—I was treated to the spectacular scene of Mallards and bright green duckweed floating on the pond, surrounded by reflections of the trees and the brilliant blue sky.

Our sanctuaries are real treasures and I encourage you to get out and enjoy them. If you develop a passion for one of them, you can become a volunteer Trail Walker to help monitor and care for that sanctuary. More information about Trail Walkers and SMRA sanctuaries is on our website. *Phil Heidelberg*



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Eastern Towhee at Rockefeller State Park Preserve
Photo: Mark Hester

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Summer!

Our weekly Monday bird walks, second Saturday Brinton Brook walks and other field trips continue all summer! Plus we offer you additional weekend field trips to explore habitats in the Hudson Valley and beyond.

We connect people with nature!



Check out one of our Mr. Lunetta Explorer Bags from local libraries for summer nature adventures for both children and adults! More information online at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/explorer

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

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