



Short-eared Owl in flight. Come along on our field trip on February 2! Photo: Bill Golden

Winter 2019–2020



In October, our Climate Change Boot Camp, co-sponsored with 11 other area organizations, offered a focused look at climate change responses from local, county and state government, and surveyed participants for their responses to climate change and their plans to make a difference.



Participants on our fall Coastal Birding Trip explored coastal habitats in Delaware, Virginia, and New Jersey.



Lower Hudson birders gathered in early November at a workshop co-sponsored by SMRA and Putnam Highlands Audubon to prepare for the Third NYS Breeding Bird Atlas which begins January 2020. See article on page 4.

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

See page 4 for weekly locations or check our website.

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

Winter Public Programs — See Page 3 for field trips

Thursday, December 19, 7:00 pm, Croton Free Library

Members' Best Photos and Holiday Desserts

Join us for this fun and informal event where members and friends of Saw Mill River Audubon share photographic highlights of their past year of birding and nature exploration, along with sharing holiday desserts. Free and open to all whether or not you contribute photos and/or desserts! Contact SMRA office by December 16 if you want to submit 3–5 photos for review.

Thursday, January 9, 7:00 pm, Mount Pleasant Library, Pleasantville

Exploring Bluebirds with Sandy Morrissey

Licensed bird bander Sandy Morrissey will share what she has learned about Eastern Bluebirds during the 9 years she's collected banding data. Sandy has been maintaining bluebird nesting boxes all across Westchester County for more than 20 years. Come learn about establishing and maintaining your own nesting boxes for bluebirds and other backyard birds. Sandy will also explore questions about how long bluebirds live, whether adults return to the same next box, if fledglings return to the same area as their parents, and whether bluebirds nesting on golf courses have the same nesting success as those nesting elsewhere.

Thursday, February 13, 7:00 pm, Croton Free Library

South Africa Birding with Debbie van Zyl

Take a trip to the southern hemisphere with SMRA Board Member and South Africa native Debbie van Zyl and discover the feathered delights of South Africa. Learn about the Kruger National Park, famous for its raptors, and the majestic Cape where mountains and seas collide to create a picture-perfect backdrop for one of the world's six floral kingdoms. This diverse habitat and concentration of birds at the end of their migratory path creates unique birding opportunities.

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

President’s Message

SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim and I attended the fall meeting of the Audubon Council of New York in November. This semi-annual meeting of local Audubon chapters provides opportunities for chapter representatives to network and share information with each other and with staff and officials from National Audubon (NAS) and Audubon New York (ANY); to hear about the strategic plans, priorities, and initiatives of NAS and ANY; to communicate our concerns and priorities to NAS and ANY; and to find out how



Valerie Lyle, SMRA President

our chapters can benefit from and get involved in the work of NAS and ANY.

The focus of this Council meeting was watershed protection, with a special focus on efforts to protect and restore the watersheds of the Delaware, Susquehanna and Hudson Rivers. Audubon PA’s

Delaware River Watershed Program Director and Sullivan County Audubon’s Co-president told us about the varying needs of the urban, suburban, and rural portions of the watershed, and Audubon’s work to engage the public and secure funding for restoration and protection efforts.

Other themed activities were a beer and spirits tasting from two breweries and a distillery in the watershed, as well as a visit to the nearby Catskill Fly Fishing Museum and Center and a presentation by the Center’s director.

We also heard from other groups working on water issues in our region: New York DEC’s Hudson River Estuary Program, the Watershed Agricultural Council’s Forestry Program and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, a network of 21 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in NY and PA focused on water quality in the upper Susquehanna basin.

The **Chapter Roundtable** provided an opportunity for chapters to share with each other successes, challenges, and local initiatives and concerns. We heard from other chapters who are working on bird-friendly siting of local renewable power projects; lake

and coastal shoreline restoration and protection; local legislation on bird-friendly buildings; pollinator and native plant gardens; and many other habitat projects.

National Audubon’s Network Action Manager, Gregorinah Hartman, gave a presentation on NAS’s network tools for chapter boards, NAS’s newly released report, *Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink* (www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees), and NAS’s climate change online resources for taking action (www.audubon.org/climate-action-guide).

The Council’s 2020 Conservation Policy Resolutions were discussed and approved. These resolutions guide chapters and ANY staff as they engage with elected officials on legislation and funding. You can see the 2019 Policy Agenda and the Resolutions (more detailed than the Agenda) at ny.audubon.org/conservation/2019-policy-positions. The updated 2020 documents will be posted in the next month or so.

Audubon NY Executive Director Ana Paula Tavares and staff closed the meeting with information on Audubon New York’s work on climate change, working lands, coastal protection, and water quality.

Valerie Lyle

Saw Mill River Audubon

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December Events

Also see Christmas Bird Counts listed on page 4

All Saturdays & Sundays, 9:00–11:00 am
Project FeederWatch
Croton Point Nature Center
 All welcome. Staffed by SMRA volunteers.

NEW DATE
Saturday, December 7, 7:00 am–11:00 am
Ducking in Westchester
 Join us for a morning of waterfowl watching at various sites in Westchester County. Call or email us to register.

Saturday, December 14, 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook
 No registration needed. Meet in main parking area.

Thursday, December 19, 7:00 pm
Members' Best Photos & Holiday Gathering
Croton Free Library
 See details on page 1.



Bufflehead. US Fish & Wildlife Service

Saturday, December 21, 9:30 am–12:30 pm
Third Saturday Bird Seed Sale at Pruyn Sanctuary
 Support our local work by buying quality bird seed! Pickup also available M/W/F 10:30 am to 3:30 pm during SMRA office hours. Details on our website.

January Events

Wednesday, January 1, 9:00 am
First Day Walk at Rockwood Hall State Park
 Now an annual Saw Mill River Audubon tradition! Start off the year with an invigorating walk along the Hudson at Rockwood Hall State Park. No registration necessary.

Tuesday, January 7, 7:00 pm
Nature Book Club
 See details on website. All are welcome!

Thursday, January 9, 7:00 pm
Public Program: Exploring Bluebirds with Sandy Morrissey
 See details on page 1.

Saturday, January 11, 8:30 am Croton Eagle Walk
11:30 am Soup Gathering
 Starts at Croton Boat Ramp. See website for more info.

Saturday, January 11, 9:00 am
2nd Sat Walk at Brinton Brook. See details 12/14.

Sunday, January 12, 3:00 pm
Pruyn Walk
 See details on website

Saturday, January 18
Sunday, January 19
NYS Waterfowl Count
 See details on page 4.

Saturday, January 18, 9:30 am–12:30 pm
Third Sat Bird Seed Sale
 See website for details.

February Events

Sunday, February 2, 3:30 pm
Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge
 Meet us at the refuge to look for wintering grassland birds and stay for dusk flight of Short-eared Owls. Call or email to register.

Saturday, February 8, 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook
 See listing for 12/14

Saturday, February 15, 9:30 am–12:30 pm
Third Sat Bird Seed Sale
 See website for details.

Sat, Feb 15–Mon, Feb 17
Cape Ann Winter Birding
 Plans underway. Contact us.

Thursday, February 13, 7:00 pm
Public Program: South Africa Birding
 Croton Free Library
 See details page 1.



Saturday, February 8, 9:00 am–4:00 pm
Teatown's EagleFest!
 Don't miss this day-long celebration of Bald Eagles on the Hudson River. Visit: www.teatown.org/events/eaglefest. SMRA will be leading bird walks and helping people see eagles along the Hudson, in partnership with Teatown!

March Events

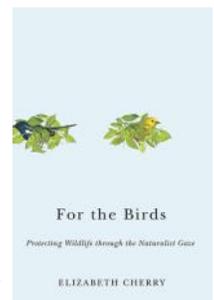
All Saturdays & Sundays, 9:00–11:00 am
Project FeederWatch
Croton Point Nature Center
 All are welcome. Staffed by SMRA volunteers and continues until end of March.

Sunday, March 8
Leaders' Choice Field Trip
 See website for details. Location and timing to be decided based on bird reports.

Saturday, March 14, 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook
 See listing for 12/14

Saturday, March 14, 6:45 pm
Woodcock Walk
Croton Point Park
 We'll listen and look for the spring courtship flight of American Woodcocks. See website for more details

Thursday, March 19, 7:00 pm
Public Program: For the Birds, Liz Cherry.
 See website for details



Saturday, March 21, 9:30 am–12:30 pm
Third Sat Bird Seed Sale
 See website for details.

Save the Date! Our Annual Welcome to Spring Dinner will be held Sunday, April 5, 2020 at Crabtree's Kittle House

Our featured dinner presentation will be *Unbroken Wings: The Story of Birds and the People Who Save Them* by Scott and Denise Stoner of Naturelogues. Silent Auction. 2020 Quilt Raffle. And More!

Saw Mill River Audubon's 2019 Birdathon Results

The weekend of October 4–6, 2019 was beautiful and unforgettable for 27 people. Seven teams competed across four different categories and birded the lower Hudson Valley for 24 hours straight.

Three teams competed for the overall highest bird count. These teams were allowed to bird across six counties. Quick 3 Beers was first with 102 species, Pish Perfect in second with 73, and Dutchess Dames in third with 71.

Two teams competed in the highest bird count for one county. The Westchester county race was very close with Hudson Hummers in first with 69 species, and



Birdathon compilation gathering. Photo: Matthew Orletti

Hawkward Conversations in second with 67.

One team participated in the hotspot category and another team participated in the big sit category; both took place at Croton Point Park.

Crotonics recorded 54 species throughout the park, while Croton Point Nature Center Sitters recorded 18 species seen and heard from behind at the Nature Center.

Between all seven teams 133 different species were seen, and a total of about 7,658 birds were counted.

SMRA was able to successfully fundraise about \$1,000 from this event.

Birdathon participants had a great time and we are looking forward to many more years of friendly competition!

Thank you again to all the participants and donors—your time is greatly appreciated!

Louisa Gagliardi
SMRA Birdathon Coordinator



New York's 3rd Breeding Bird Atlas

Starting January 1, 2020, birders across New York State will begin counting breeding birds for five years for the state's Third Breeding Bird Atlas. The previous two atlases began in 1990 and 2000.

The Atlas will be using eBird for data entry, so area birders are urged to start getting comfortable with eBird now. Check out the free, online "eBird Essentials" course offered by Cornell Lab of Ornithology or ask a fellow birder to show you how to get started.

We need your help with the Atlas! If you are want to help, contact the SMRA office. To learn more about the Atlas, visit the Atlas portal: www.ebird.org/atlasny

Do the Birding that Helps the Birds!

Join with us to assist with bird population counts. Three opportunities below and also see the Christmas Bird Count info to the right. Contact our office if you want to help.

Thursdays, Eagle Roost Monitoring in Verplanck

See our website for details. Starts 1.5 hours before dusk on each Thursday in January and February.

Saturday, January 18 and Sunday, January 19

NYS Waterfowl Count. SMRA birders will be counting waterfowl along the Hudson shoreline north of the TZB. More about count: <https://nybirds.org/ProjWaterfowl.htm>

January 2020 through December 2024!

NYS Third Breeding Bird Atlas. Birders across New York will be counting breeding birds over the next five years! Find out more at ebird.org/atlasny and see article to right.

Free Monday Morning Bird Walks

8:30 am start time. Come earlier to park and meet up with us. Held regardless of weather but check our website if uncertain. New to birding walks or wonder what SMRA field trips are like? Visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/trip-tips

1st Monday: Muscoot Farm

Meet in main parking lot

2nd Monday: Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Meet in main parking lot

3rd Monday: NEW LOCATION: Croton Gorge Park

Meet in main parking lot. New location starts in December.

4th Monday: Croton Point Park

Meet in ballfield parking on the left as you enter the park

5th Monday: Location varies, check our website

Christmas Bird Counts

Now in its 120th year! Birders count all possible birds in 15-mile diameter count circles. There are hundreds of count circles across the Americas.

See local CBC dates

below and email or call the SMRA office for count organizer contacts. Help us count birds and gather data that tracks bird populations, climate change, and habitats.

Saturday, December 14

Peekskill Area CBC

Sunday, December 15

Greenwich-Stamford CBC

Sunday, December 22

Bronx-Westchester CBC

Saturday, January 4

Putnam CBC

Learn more about the Christmas Bird Count:
www.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count

Advocacy



Short News Items from Our Three Focus Areas

Recognition for Richard Saravay

The Audubon Council of New York State recently presented Richard Saravay, SMRA Board Member and Past President, with the Norman I. Stotz Award in recognition of his many years of leadership, including service as President of the Audubon Council of New York State. The Stotz award recognizes Audubon members in New York who best demonstrate extraordinary leadership. Richard has represented SMRA at the Audubon Council of New York since 2002 and served as SMRA Board President from 2001 to 2004.

Education



Kaye Anderson Lending Library

Did you know that the SMRA office has a library of more than 1,100 books on a wide range of nature-related subjects, including plants, insects, birds, and environmental education? Our library is named in honor of our first naturalist: Kaye Anderson.

Are you trying to identify a wildflower or butterfly? Planning a birding trip and want to browse a field guide from another country? Looking for ideas for children's environmental activities? Wanting to do some deeper reading about wild places in the US and around the world?

We may have just the books to loan you. Our office is open Mon/Wed/Fri 10:30 am to 3:30 pm but we recommend calling first (914-666-6503) to let us know you are coming.

SMRA Blog Writer Joe Wallace

Have you visited Saw Mill River Audubon's blog: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/blog/? We are now fortunate to feature the writing of SMRA member Joe Wallace. Do visit and enjoy Joe's observations of birds, other wildlife and their habitats. Thanks, Joe!

Sanctuaries



Woodworker(s) needed!

Do you have the tools and expertise to make carved wooden trail signs like the one pictured here?

We need some small replacement signs for a few of our sanctuaries with trails. Can you help? We could provide the wood, if needed, as well as what the sign needs to say! We can do the painting part too or leave that to your expertise. Call or email our office if you can help us.



Sanctuary exit sign. Photo: David Watson

Please leash dogs...no, really...please leash dogs & remind others

Did you know that unleashed dogs in a wildlife habitat reduce habitat quality? Birds and other wildlife see unleashed dogs as predators. If unleashed dogs frequent a habitat, birds and other wildlife will change their behavior, reducing feeding time, sometimes abandoning nests and young, sometimes even leaving that habitat altogether. Please don't let unleashed dogs reduce the wildlife habitat quality of Saw Mill River Audubon sanctuaries. Please leash your dog and remind others to do the same. Please also note that commercial dog walkers are not allowed in our sanctuaries. We do welcome responsible dog owners walking their own dogs, on leash.



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*Perched Red-tailed Hawk at Croton Point
seen on our recurring 4th Monday bird walk
there in September. Photo: Steve Kowalczyk.*

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Winter!

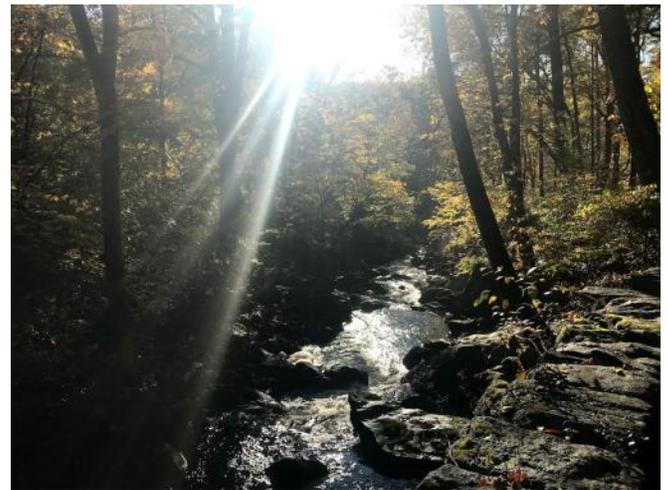
We have more than 50 events scheduled between December and March to connect you with local habitats, birds and other wildlife!

Our Monday morning bird walks happen every week, now average 20 people, and are always a friendly and welcoming gathering, especially for beginning birders. (And we always have binoculars to loan for all our field trips.)

Our weekend day trips near and far offer you opportunities to discover some of the best wild places in our region.

Our free monthly evening programs feature regional environmental experts to connect you with ongoing issues and expand your natural horizons.

Visit the **Google calendar** at our website for event listings: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org



Come explore the beauty of the Hudson Valley with us! We enjoyed this morning view of the Pocantico River in Rockefeller State Park Preserve on one of our recent Monday morning bird walks. Photo: Anne Swaim

**Saw Mill River Audubon thanks
Pizza Station in Chappaqua
for supporting our October seed sale
with delicious donated pizzas!**