



April / May 2007
Issue 303

On the Wing

News from Saw Mill River Audubon

INSIDE:

EARTH DAY IS APRIL 22

In this issue, we offer you some ideas about how you can make a difference for the earth.

For more ideas at home, also visit www.audubonathome.org

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Get into Birding!

Check out our spring walks on page 3

Become an Audubon Trailwalker this spring!
Send trail reports online:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org



Get Outside With Geocaching!

Friday, May 18 ♦ 7:30 pm
Chappaqua Library

Geocaching is a new outdoor activity that only began in 2000 but it already has a huge following worldwide with people of all ages who enjoy the outdoors. Participants use handheld GPS (global positioning system) receivers to track down "caches," hidden containers placed on publicly accessible properties. Geocaches are hidden by volunteers who follow environmentally sensitive guidelines.

Geocaching combines technology and nature to encourage people to explore natural spaces nearby and wherever they travel. There are over 300 caches in Westchester County and five geocaches in the sanctuaries of Saw Mill River Audubon.

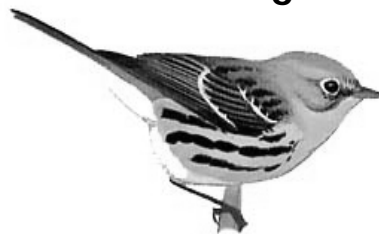
Our program will include a lively video segment introducing geocaching and a discussion with some of the geocaching leaders in our area. We'll follow up the Friday night program with an outside introduction to geocaching Saturday morning (see below). The evening program is targeted for adults but children age 10 years and older are very welcome.

Geocaching at Pruyn Sanctuary

Saturday, May 19, 10:00 am

Learn more about geocaching by finding a cache at Pruyn Sanctuary. Space limited. Free registration required by calling or email our office. A handheld GPS receiver is needed to participate. A limited number may be available for shared use during the workshop on a first-come, first-served basis. Meet at the Woodmill Road entrance of Pruyn Sanctuary. For this outdoors event, children ages 4 and up and accompanied by adults are very welcome. Space limited.

Come Along with Us for Spring Birding!



Check out our listing of free public bird walks on page 3 inside.

May is the height of the migration and we offer you the opportunity to explore local habitats with experienced birders. Beginners are always welcome!

Eagles pictures
by John Arcate
at Kendall
will go here
with captions
referencing his photos
and the EagleFest in Feb

Remembering Mickey Spano

Saw Mill River Audubon was saddened to hear of the passing of Mickey Spano on January 12, 2007. Along with that sadness also came many recollections of her long history with Saw Mill River Audubon.

We especially remembered how she continued the leadership and coordination of the Monday Walkers group following after the good work of Ginny Weinland. (The Monday Walkers group began in 1968. It was first led by Kaye Anderson, SMRA's first naturalist, and is still going strong today under the coordination of Joan Coffey. See our field trips listings on page 2.)

Sophie Keyes offered these remembrances:

"Mickey shared her expertise to people who walked with her in the field. There was very little that escaped her curiosity - flowers, trees, grasses, nuts, mushrooms and particularly seeds. Observation was key with her. All this came together throughout the year. Winter did not deter her. Summer was full of additional surprises in her walks."

Mickey shared her delight in nature with others and engaged them in observing and enjoying the natural world as well. Over the years, Mickey supported Saw Mill River Audubon in many events, field trips and programs. She was always warm and welcoming. Saw Mill River Audubon has lost a good friend.

Have you subscribed to our free, private email notice list? Subscribers to this email list receive advance notice about our events! Visit sawmillriveraudubon.org/list

Thank You for Your Support

Keep an eye on your mail for our 2007 Annual Fund mailing! We send these out every spring to ask you to support our efforts to protect the environment. We are deeply grateful to our many members and friends who responded to our 2006 appeal. Each gift is appreciated - and each makes a difference right here in Westchester County.

We strive to limit our requests for donations to once a year. If you would like to support our work beyond our modest annual membership fee, you now have the convenient option to donate online through our secure credit card service at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/Donate.

Or you may fill out the form on the back of this newsletter and send it to our office with your donation. Both options save SMRA the expense of mailing out an appeal letter, save you from sorting through another piece of mail, and reduce our use of paper.

Look for Rue Anemone
in our sanctuaries
before the forest canopy
leaves grow big enough
to shade the forest floor



Welcome Members!

We look forward to seeing you at our field trips & other events!

Briarcliff Manor Robert Owen **Chappaqua** Lisa Adler, James and Debra Treyz **Croton-on-Hudson** Amy Ferrara, Neil K. Hamill, Mac Ratliff **Mohegan Lake** Liz Sirico **Mount Kisco** Hank Lubin **Ossining** Linda Lowell, Ann Marie Smith, Fred Swartz, George and Susan West **Peekskill** Theresa McGinnis **Pleasantville** Katie Hoyt, Helen Kelly **Sleepy Hollow** L. Hutchinson, Harold March **Tarrytown** Elizabeth Cathcart, Jennifer Moran **Thornwood** Rose Colavito **Yorktown Heights** Babette Ballinger

U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

For more details: 914.666.6503 or www.sawmillriveraudubon.org.

A P R I L

Saturday, April 14 ♦ 9:00 am

Brinton Brook

Through the Seasons

Join us for our continuing series of second Saturday walks! Held rain or shine. Meet at main parking lot.

Saturday, April 21

♦ 9:00-11:30 am

Seed Sale Third Saturday

Come to Pruyn Sanctuary to stock up on high quality bird seed! All sales benefit Saw Mill River Audubon.

Saturday, April 28 ♦ 8:00 am

Beyond the Farm at Muscoot

Explore the trails behind Muscoot Farm on Route 100. Co-sponsored by Westchester Parks. Refreshments served following the walk.

M A Y

Wednesday, May 2 ♦ 7:00 am

Bird Walk: Pruyn Sanctuary

Meet at the office/garden entrance at 275 Millwood Road. Bring binoculars. Leader: Anne Swaim



Saturday, May 5

♦ 7:30 am

Bird Walk:

Central Park, NYC

Meet 6:00 am for carpooling at the Millwood A&P. Or meet 7:30 am at 72nd St & Central Park West at NE corner. Walk

ends 11:00am with brief coffee break half-way through. Cost: \$6/person cash to leader Jack Kelly at start of the walk.

Wednesday, May 9 ♦ 7:00 am

Bird Walk: Brinton Brook

Meet at the main entrance parking area. Leader: Larry Trachtenberg.

M A Y

Wednesday, May 16 ♦ 7:30 am

Bird Walk: Central Park, NYC

Co-sponsored with Teatown. Meet at Teatown at 6:30 am for carpooling or 7:30 am at NW corner 77th St across from Museum of Natural History. Walk will last until 10:30 am. Leader: Charlie Roberto.

Friday, May 18 ♦ 7:30 pm

Free Public Program:

Get Outdoors with Geocaching
Chappaqua Library. See page 1.

Saturday, May 19 ♦ 10:00 am

Free Outdoors Workshop:

Get Outdoors with Geocaching
At Pruyn Sanctuary. See page 1.

Wednesday, May 23 ♦ 7:00 am

Bird Walk: Rockefeller State Park

Meet at the main entrance parking area. Leader: Richard Nelson

TAKE A WALK ON MONDAYS!

Explore a local nature site each Monday morning (weather permitting). Call Joan Coffey: 914.747.4763

Take a Walk in a New Place



Photo: Joyce Remkus

Northern Westchester is blessed with many parks and preserves where one can experience the beauty and variety of our hills, woodlands and shorelines. Many of us are familiar with the larger and more popular destinations such as the Rockefeller State Park Preserve in the Town of Mount Pleasant. There are also some hidden gems that, while they may be smaller, are definitely worth exploring. In this article we'll introduce two new parks that have been opened to the public in recent years.

The first is the 50-acre Montrose Point State Forest located on the Hudson River in Montrose in the Town of Cortlandt. A network of trails allows the hiker to thoroughly explore this rugged parcel. There are great views of the river and one can walk down to the shoreline, which is covered with discarded bricks, remnants of the days when the property was a brickyard. In fact, the interesting topography of the forest is a result of the mining of clay that was used in the manufacture of bricks. Montrose Point's lush vegetation makes it hard to believe this was once an industrial site. The entrance to Montrose Point State Forest is located on Kings Ferry Road. The forest is accessible by public transportation via the number 14 Westchester Beeline bus.

Next on the list of hidden-away places to explore is the Hunter Brook Linear Park in the Town of Yorktown. The park preserves 60 acres of woodlands and flood plain along the Hunter Brook close to the border with the Town of Cortlandt. Ownership of the land is divided between the Town of Yorktown and the Westchester Land Trust. A series of trails and a bridge over the brook allow for extensive walking. There are great wildlife viewing opportunities in this secluded place. Otter, mink and muskrat have been reported on this stretch of the Hunter Brook. Access points to the Hunter Brook Linear Park can be found on Beekman Court and Fox Tail Lane. Both of these are dead-end streets on the west side of Hunter Brook Road north of Baptist Church Road and south of White Hill Road in Yorktown. -- William Kellner

Dear Bird Folks, I Have Questions about Bird Songs

We came across this humorous article on the Internet and immediately wrote to the author for permission to reprint it here for your reading pleasure. It's from the Bird Watchers General Store in the Cape Cod area. I know that I particularly enjoyed the last paragraph's suggestion on how to identify bird songs. We do have people call our office with entertaining bird call imitations -- just more one of the many unusual benefits of working for Audubon! And as we prepare this newsletter in mid March, a significant snow storm is underway but it won't be long now until the dawn bird chorus is heard again. -- Anne Swaim



Dear Bird Folks:

I have two questions. I woke up at 4:30 the other morning to a wall of bird songs. Birds were singing everywhere. I looked out the window but didn't see a single bird. A few hours later, at a more normal time of 7:00 AM, there were almost no birds singing. Why were the birds singing so early and why couldn't I see them? Also, what is the best way to learn bird calls? -Phyllis, Falmouth

Dear Phyl,

With no offense to the Falmouth school system, I might suggest that you take a quick refresher course in mathematics. Right off the top you said you had "two questions", when you have clearly asked three. Go a head, take a quick count. There are three questions aren't there? Are you a bit tired? What happened, did you get up too early this morning, say around 4:30? Don't worry, I can probably answer all three questions at no extra charge, just don't tell the union.

As most people all ready know, even the ones in Falmouth, birds don't sing for fun or entertainment, they sing to communicate. What you may not know is that, with few exceptions, it is the males that are doing all the singing. They sing to attract a mate and to announce their territory. Each day, as soon as possible, the males want to make sure that everyone knows that they are alive and well and ready to defend their territory. What is interesting, although it may all sound the same to us, is that there is some evidence suggesting that each bird has its own unique song and other birds know it. We hear the lovely call of a robin, while other robins hear "This is Vinny, stay away and nobody gets hurt".

Another reason why birds sing at the crack of dawn is that the pre-dawn hours are usually the quietest part of the day. The sun hasn't had a chance to stir up the air. The birds' voices are a lot clearer without having to compete with the sound of the wind blowing through trees or without having to be heard above those annoying backup beeps on dump trucks.

The reason why you can't see the birds, Phyl, is because they have just gotten up and most of them are probably still singing in the shower. Also, early morning light is poor and summer foliage is thick. Even brightly colored birds like cardinals can be tough to find if they don't want to be seen.

An exception: Carolina wrens sing year-round and both male and female Carolina wrens appear to sing territorial songs. Their numbers in our area will increase during mild winter s. Sometimes they visit bird feeders.

Which brings us to the last in your string of questions. What is the best way to learn birds' calls? Well, the first thing you don't want to do is to start at 4:30 AM. Like we said, the light is bad, plus there are way too many birds singing at once. You'll be overwhelmed. In addition, who needs the hassle of explaining to the cops why you are walking through your neighborhood with binoculars at 4:30 in the morning. As you've noticed, there are fewer birds singing at 7:00 AM. I would go out at that time when there are fewer choices, the light is better and the neighbors are less paranoid.

For me, the absolute best way to learn a bird call is to choose a call that you don't know and track the bird down and don't give up until you find it. The harder the bird is to find the more likely you are to remember its song. Once you find the bird, listen carefully to its song and try to come up with your own catch phrase or rhyme to help you remember. There are tapes and CDs that are helpful too, but nothing is better or more rewarding than finding the bird and seeing it while it sings. The last way to identify a bird call is to come here and sing the bird's song to us. This might not be the best way, but it is by far the most embarrassing for you and very entertaining to us.

*Reprinted with permission from
<http://www.birdwatchersgeneralstore.com>*

WHO'S SINGING NOW?

Even by mid-February, our year-round bird residents are responding to increasing day-length and begin singing their territorial songs. Woodpeckers also begin their territorial "drumming" in early to mid February. Sorting out the earlier songs makes it easier to learn new birds in May when our spring migrants return.

Here are six bird songs to learn in April before we are inundated with songs on early May mornings!

Northern Cardinal	House Finch
Tufted Titmouse	Eastern Phoebe
Black-capped Chickadee	Carolina Wren*

* see note at top of page

Want to listen to these songs online?
Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/songs

Come along on one of our early morning bird walks in May and we'll offer a free sample of the spring bird chorus in our area!

Support the Bigger Better Bottle Bill

New York State's updated Bottle Bill would expand coverage of the 5 cent deposit and return program to include water, juice and other noncarbonated beverage containers, ultimately

- saving tax-payer's dollars;
- conserving natural resources and space in landfills;
- helping to keep our communities clean and ensuring that more than 2 billion additional cans and bottles will get recycled each year;
- helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We need your help to pass the Bigger Better Bottle Bill. Act now and urge your representatives to support the Bigger Better Bottle Bill. Visit the Wildlife Conservation Society at <http://capwiz.com/wcs> to learn more and to take online action about this and other issues that affect birds and wildlife.

Birds and Wildlife Need You!

At two different Audubon web sites, you can also read about current issues and then easily and quickly write to your elected representatives via the Internet.

Visit this web site for current national issues: <http://audubonaction.org/audubon/>

And to track state-level issues, visit: <http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/stateissues.asp>

Make a Difference at Home



April 22, 2007



Ideas from Overseas

Although great strides have been made in recycling in the US in recent years, there is much more we could be doing to reduce the amount of solid waste that we produce. **Let's take a look at some interesting ideas from around the world on how to lower the amount of garbage that ends up in landfills or incinerators.**

Our first stop is Ireland where an innovative law has reduced the number of plastic shopping bags distributed by around 90%. As Ireland's Department of the Environment and Local Government explained in its notice announcing the Plastic Bag Environmental Levy, "It is estimated that some 1.2 billion plastic shopping bags are provided free of charge to customers in retail outlets [in Ireland] annually. This is excessive and largely unnecessary. Plastic bags are a very visible component of litter in Ireland throughout our towns, coastlines and in the countryside. They have a negative impact on our environment and on our wildlife and their habitats." The levy is a charge of about \$.19 per bag that the consumer pays at check-out.

Next we travel to Japan where a law mandating the recycling of personal computers took effect in 2003. Computer equipment contains a number of hazardous substances including heavy metals like lead. Improper disposal of old computers can lead to serious environmental contamination. The law in Japan requires consumers to pay for recycling when they purchase new equipment. The recycling cost (typically around \$30 per computer) must appear as a separate line item on the invoice. When the consumer is ready to get rid of the computer it is dropped-off at any post office for return to the manufacturer.

Perhaps it's time to consider these creative solutions that have been adopted in other countries. Remember, by reducing solid waste we are working to keep our drinking water and the air we breathe cleaner. This benefits all of us - people and wildlife. But even if we do not enact laws like those described here, we can take steps to minimize the amount of trash that we generate. -- William Kellner



Tips for Earth Care

We will feature simple tips that YOU recommend protect the earth. Feel free to submit your tips to office@sawmillriveraudubon.org.

This month's tips come from William Kellner.

Tip #1:

Take a reusable canvas bag to the supermarket for your purchases.

Tip #2:

If you are planning to throw out an old computer, visit www.computertakeback.com. This web site will help you find an environmentally friendly way to say goodbye to your equipment.

Saw Mill River Audubon

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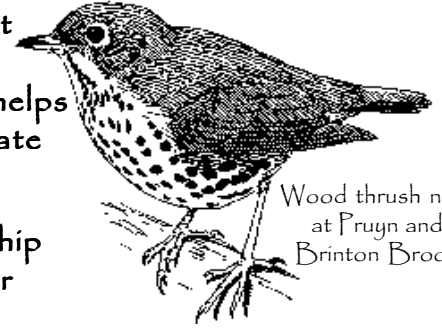
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CELEBRATE NATURE!

Our sanctuaries provide important habitat for migrating birds. Your gift to Saw Mill River Audubon helps us to encourage people to celebrate and protect natural places!

You may also join, give a membership gift, create a special tribute gift or a memorial donation online!



Wood thrush nest at Prugn and Brinton Brook

I WISH TO DONATE

Enclosed is:

- \$500 \$250 \$100
 \$50 \$25 \$____
 My employer will match my gift.

I'D LIKE TO JOIN Saw Mill River Audubon!

Basic Chapter Membership:

- Enclosed is \$20
 Please send me information about planned giving opportunities

Name(s)

Address

City/State/Zip

Phone/Email

You can also join or donate at our web site!

Please make checks payable to
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