



Fall 2016



Northern Gannet in flight. Photo: Paul Lewis



Exploring Gaspé Peninsula. Photo: Paul Lewis



Exploring Prunyn Sanctuary. Photo: Rina Miele



Prunyn Garden Coordinator Donna Lassiter and SMRA President Val Lyle in Prunyn Garden. 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 with a few days notice. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list to subscribe.

Recurring Events

Every Monday, September walks start 7:30 am in main parking at each location. **Note fall time change:** for October through April, we start at 8:30 am **Free guided bird walks at area hotspots.**

1st Mon: Muscoot Farm

2nd Mon: Rockefeller State Park Preserve

3rd Mon: Teatown Lake Reservation

4th Mon: Croton Point County Park

5th Mon: Location varies, see Google calendar on SMRA web site.

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

September Events

Sat, September 3: Field Trip: Black Dirt Region Birding (Orange/Ulster)

Wed, September 7: Field Trip: Hook Mountain Hawk Watch

Fri–Sun, September 9–11: NY Birders Conference (see page 4)

Sat, September 10: Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary

For Sep 2nd Sat only: please RSVP since this walk is part of Hudson Valley Ramble.

Sun, September 18: Field Trip: Hook Mountain Hawk Watch

Sat, September 24: Hudson River Fish Seining at Croton Point

October Events

Sat, Oct 1: SMRA Bird Seed Sale Pickup (see flyer enclosed)

Sun, October 2: Field Trip: Bashakill Marsh

Wed, October 5: Field Trip: Sandy Hook, New Jersey

Sat, October 8: Second Saturday Walk at Brinton Brook Sanctuary

Wed, October 19: Field Trip: Marshlands Conservancy and Edith Read

Sat, October 22: SMRA Hudson River Cruise (see page 6)

Sun, October 23: Field Trip: Sandy Hook, New Jersey

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

President's Message

We have the following words on the front page of our web site:

We are a friendly community of people who enjoy exploring the outdoors. Our 1,100+ members are drawn from northwestern Westchester County, New York and beyond. All share a common desire to learn more about birds and other wildlife, and a common belief in the importance of preserving and protecting wildlife habitats.

It is community and relationships that make it possible for Saw Mill River Audubon to thrive, as we do, connecting people with nature, as we pursue our mission areas of education, advocacy, and sanctuary stewardship.

How are you connected with us? It may be that you simply subscribed to *Audubon* magazine and found yourself, unexpectedly, affiliated with us, the local chapter that serves

your zip code. Or perhaps you connected with us face-to-face on one of our Monday bird walks or on our Second Saturday Walks at Brinton Brook. Perhaps you bought bird seed from us or live near one of our eight local wildlife sanctuaries.

How would you like to be connected with us? In the coming weeks, the SMRA board and some of our key volunteers will be exploring new

ways to connect, whether it is at a sanctuary work day, a community event, or working together on a conservation project.

We are a friendly group of people and we welcome your ideas on how we can grow our Saw Mill River Audubon community. Got ideas? Feel free to email me directly at president@sawmillriveraudubon.org

Valerie Lyle

Saw Mill River Audubon

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New York State Young Birders Club

Saw Mill River Audubon will be sponsoring a field trip for the New York State Young Birders Club on Sunday, September 25 at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. NYS Young Birders Club is for youth age 10 to 19. To find out more about the NYSYBC and to register for the above walk, visit online: www.nysyoungbirders.org

SMRA Larry Light Youth Scholarships

Saw Mill River Audubon offers youth age 13-17 the opportunity to attend an environmental class, camp or study trip with funding support from our Larry Light Youth Scholarship Fund, established by family and friends of Chappaqua resident Larry Light. Award deadline can be adjusted to match event payment deadlines as needed. Visit: sawmillriveraudubon.org/scholarships

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

\$500 \$250 \$100

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My employer will match my gift.

I'd like to join Saw Mill River Audubon

Basic Chapter Membership:

Enclosed is \$35

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Sanctuaries



Thanking the Lunettas

For nearly 50 years, Don and Jo Lunetta watched over Pinecliff Sanctuary next door to their house at the end of Pinecliff Road in Chappaqua. Their children and grandchildren grew up exploring the sanctuary habitats and Don had an intimate knowledge of the sanctuary's wildlife and habitats.

On June 19, Lunetta family and friends gathered with Saw Mill River Audubon board members and staff to dedicate a boardwalk plaque to Don and Jo to recognize this special connection.



New Pinecliff Sanctuary boardwalk plaque. Photo: Anne Swaim

Saw Mill River Audubon was saddened to hear of Don's passing in late July. He will be remembered as a man who cared deeply about the natural world and took delight in connecting others with nature. The Lunetta family has requested memorial

donations to either the Chappaqua Library or to Pinecliff Sanctuary.

If you would like to make a memorial donation to Pinecliff Sanctuary, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/memorial

Advocacy



Audubon Taking Action on Climate Change

In 2015 the National Audubon Society (NAS) published a major study focused on the ongoing and potential effects of climate change on North American bird species. Bringing this science-derived, detailed study to public media generated immense interest from many quarters.

Recently the MacArthur Foundation provided a \$9,000,000 grant to NAS to build on this study in nine states, including New York. Organized around congressional districts, the intent of the grant is to use the findings in the NAS

climate initiative to engage communities, raise awareness of key environmental issues and strengthen local Audubon chapters.

This development underscores the strength of Audubon as a leader in addressing the most challenging issues we face. Using birds as key heralds, we hope to impact public policy to take meaningful action on the effects of climate change to protect birds and all plant and animal species, including ourselves. *Richard Saravay*

For more about Audubon's Birds and Climate Change Report, visit climate.audubon.org

Hudson River Threat

A new proposal would establish a large number of anchorage grounds for commercial vessels in the Hudson River—30 berths in 10 locations from Yonkers to Kingston, as requested by commercial marine interests. According to Riverkeeper.org, the US Coast Guard is soliciting comments from the public through September 7, 2016 to more fully inform its internal review and assess initial community response. Public hearings seem likely in the coming months. SMRA plans to comment and we urge you to track this issue at: www.riverkeeper.org



On June 27, our 4th Monday morning bird walk participants paused for this celebratory photo by the new interpretive sign on the Croton Point Park landfill grasslands. Our thanks to Audubon New York for a collaborative chapter grant and to Westchester County's Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation for in-kind support installing the sign. This is the second sign that SMRA has added to the grasslands landfill to illustrate the significance of this bird habitat and its location in the Atlantic Flyway. SMRA continues to advocate for the bird habitats at Croton Point. Our special thanks to State Senator Terrence Murphy and the Westchester County Soil & Water Conservation District for securing \$630,000 in funding this summer to enhance this grassland habitat. Saw Mill River Audubon also thanks John Baker of Westchester Parks for his ongoing work for this high-value habitat. Photo: Anne Swaim



New York State Birders Conference: September 9–11, 2016

Birders from across New York will gather Friday, September 9 to Sunday September 11, 2016 at the 2016 New York State Birders Conference and the 69th Annual Meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association in Elmira, N.Y.

Hosted by Chemung Valley Audubon Society, the conference will feature workshops and paper presentations on birding topics, ornithological research, and avian conservation, as well as guided field trips to area birding hotspots. The keynote speaker following Saturday evening's dinner will be ornithologist and author, Dr. Richard (Rob) Bierregaard presenting "Tracking Ospreys in the Age of Silicon: Migration, Ecology, and Conservation."

The conference is open to all with an interest in New York State birds, birding, and conservation. For more information, registration, and a complete conference schedule, visit www.nybirds.org. **A group from Saw Mill River Audubon is planning to attend this year.** If you are interested in traveling with us, send an email ASAP to office@sawmillriveraudubon.org

Birding Notes: June & July

Monday Walks

Our weekly Monday morning birds walks continued through the summer months. We averaged 18 participants each week and recorded more than 140 bird species together this year alone. Our Monday walks continue year-round and beginners are welcome and warmly encouraged.

Saturday, June 25 Dutchess Birding

John Askildsen guided SMRA participants in a car tour of Dutchess County birding hotspots. Highlights included great looks at Blackburnian Warblers in higher elevation evergreen woods and Bobolinks in open meadows. We plan to have another Dutchess County birding trip in mid-winter.

Saturday, July 30 Birders U: Shorebird Field Trip to S. Jersey

As part of our "Birders U: Shorebirds" workshop, we traveled to Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and viewed hundreds of sandpipers and wading birds. We also enjoyed great looks at Blue Grosbeaks, a life bird for some.

SMRA Takes the Gaspé, by Air, Land and Sea



SMRA Gaspé Travelers, June 30, 2016. Photo: Charlie Roberto

July in far-Northern Quebec seemed far from the New York heat.

Thirteen lucky birders met in Quebec City Airport (YQB), headed up the west side of the St. Lawrence River, then crossed by ferry from Baie-Comeau to Matane. Eventually our vans circled around to the town of Percé before heading back to YQB.

There were birds and lots of them: more than 20 species of wood warbler, in-

cluding stunning looks at Blackburnian, Bay Breasted, Cape May and Mourning Warbler, and other passerines, including Yellow-bellied Flycatcher. Here, many of our New York migrants were on breeding territory. Boreal sightings included Evening Grosbeak, Boreal Chickadee, and Pine Siskin.

We saw beluga, minke and several endangered fin whales, and one young moose who hung out with us for a while in Gaspésie

National Park. Some of us ate poutine—French fries and cheese curds topped with a light brown gravy—and we had wonderful meals everywhere in the Quebec countryside, washed down with a variety of Pit Caribou Brewery micro-beers. Particularly memorable was our last meal at Auberge du Mange Grenouille, Le Bic.

easily visible. Other birds in and around Bonaventure included thousands of Razorbills, Black Guillemots, Black-legged Kittiwakes and Common Murre, and even one Atlantic Puffin.

The Gaspé, far from the madding summer crowds, is worth a return trip.

Larry Trachtenberg

More About Gaspé Birding

Saw Mill River Audubon thanks **Charlie Roberto** for introducing us to the stunning beauty and high-quality birding found on the Gaspé Peninsula. Charlie will be presenting a program this winter, jointly sponsored by SMRA and Teatown, that overviews our trip and Charlie's many years of visiting this region.

Tentative plans are also underway for a second SMRA trip to the Gaspé in June–July 2017! We want to support ecotourism in this region, where so many boreal and coastal birds find nesting territory, even as we do with valued habitats in the neotropics. Interested to hear about plans for a second SMRA Gaspé trip? Email us at office@sawmillriver-audubon.org



Young moose. Photo: Larry Trachtenberg

Of course we encountered some dreaded black flies (barely visible specks of annoyance). This was balanced by navigating miles of pristine spruce forest buttressed up against the St. Lawrence, eventually arriving in Percé, on the Gulf, for three nights of breathtaking views. We boated to Bonaventure Island, spending significant time at the world's largest Northern Gannet colony, literally feet from 150,000 birds, with hatchlings and fuzzy chicks



A few of the 150,000+ birds seen in the Northern Gannet colony, Bonaventure Island, Québec. Photo: Christine McCluskey



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Great Egret fishing in Thornwood. Photo: Bonnie Talluto.

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Join us for a Hudson River Cruise! Saturday, October 22, 2016

On Saturday, October 22, come along with Saw Mill River Audubon on an afternoon fall cruise, 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm on the **Hudson River**, leaving and returning at Cold Spring Dock. We will enjoy fall colors and the magnificent Hudson Valley viewscape. We will look for birds on their journey south along the river, and have the special treat of commentary from **Chris Letts**.

Longtime educator for organizations such as the Hudson River Foundation and the Clearwater, Chris Letts has spent decades working on the Hudson as a commercial fisherman, researcher and teacher. Chris will share his extensive knowledge about the Hudson River.

We'll be cruising on the *River Rose*, based in Newburgh, an original stern-driven Mississippi River paddle wheeler. There will be a cash bar for all beverages and a potluck buffet of light fare provided by SMRA members and friends. (If you'd like to contribute to the potluck, do let us know with your cruise reservation!) Space will be limited so do reserve your spots today!



**Saturday, October 22, 2016
2:00–5:00 pm from/to Cold Spring Dock
(Boarding 1:30 pm)**

Cost \$75/person. Benefits SMRA.

Potluck buffet of light fare by SMRA members and friends. Cash bar for all beverages.

Hudson River commentary by Chris Letts.

Reservations: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/cruise