



SMRA
SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON

Summer 2018



Dunlin at Croton Point Park ballfield wetland. Photo: Jim Bourdon. We are encouraging Westchester County Parks to manage this wetland for shorebirds.



Adding native plants to our Plants for Birds garden at Pruyn. See story on page 4. Photo: Anne Swaim



2017 Larry Light Youth Scholarship recipient Hannah Mirando at our April 2018 Dinner. See more photos on page 3. Photo: William Kellner



Exploring Muscoot Farm for spring birds on our 1st Monday bird walk in May. Photo: William Kellner

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
Every Third Sunday, 3:30 pm, Pruyn Sanctuary Guided Hike.

Highlighted Summer Events

See our Google calendar at our web site for more summer events.

Tuesday, June 19, 7:00 pm
Saw Mill River Audubon Nature Book Club
Mount Pleasant Library, Pleasantville

Come enjoy a discussion of *Birding Without Borders* by Noah Strycker, the account of his quest to see more species in a single year than any other birder. No registration.

Third Sundays, July–September, 1:00 to 3:00pm
July 15, August 19, September 16
Pruyn Sanctuary Gardens Open House

Come drop by Pruyn Sanctuary to look over our new Plants for Birds garden plot, our Butterfly & Hummingbird Garden and the adjacent Pruyn Arboretum. Find out about native plants that you can add to your property and visit with SMRA members & friends. Come any time between 1:00 and 3:00 pm. Light refreshments. Stay longer, if you wish, for the 3:30 pm Third Sunday Guided Walk through Pruyn Sanctuary.

Friday, July 27, 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 youth age 10–18 and includes an ID book and 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 office@sawmillriveraudubon.org or call 914-666-6503. **Check our web site for shorebird day trip on Sat Aug 11.**



As this newsletter goes to print in mid-May, we are delighted to report that Purple Martins have, once again, returned to the nesting tower that SMRA initiated at Croton Point Park. Photo: Karalyn Lamb

In Memoriam: Robert McCrillis

Saw Mill River Audubon lost a valued friend and leader on March 1, 2018 with the passing of Robert McCrillis, SMRA Board Chair and our longest-serving President. Robert's many contributions to our conservation and education work will be a lasting legacy.

Our heartfelt condolences to his wife Caroline and to all his friends and extended family. May the memory of his life well lived be a comfort in this loss.



Robert's friends and colleagues have chosen to honor his memory with contributions to Saw Mill River Audubon. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/memorial

Saw Mill River Audubon

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SMRA Outreach: Movie and Books

Saw Mill River Audubon and Films on Purpose hosted a very special presentation of the documentary *Albatross* at the Jacob Burns Film Center on Wednesday, April 18th.

Nearly all 250 seats were filled as the audience watched the powerful and searing images of Laysan Albatross at Midway Island. Although the island is thousands of miles from civilization, these magnificent birds are ingesting the plastic floating in the ocean and feeding it to their chicks. *Albatross* celebrates the beauty of the birds, but does not let us look away from their untimely deaths by plastic.

Filmmaker Chris Jordan introduced *Albatross* and then took the stage afterward to talk about the making of the film and answer audience questions. Learn about the film and how to schedule a community screening here: albatrossthefilm.com.

Films on Purpose is a grassroots organization showing documentary films about social justice and the environment in order to start conversation and implement change, www.filmsonpurpose.org. The Jacob Burns Film Center is a not-for-profit, five-screen movie theater in Pleasantville, www.burnsfilmcenter.org, which generously screened the film free of charge.

Saw Mill River Audubon Nature Book Club had its inaugural meeting last October with an enthusiastic discussion of *The Eye of the Albatross* by Carl Safina. Word got out quickly and we have had about fifteen participants at each of the following discussions: *The Genius of Birds* by Jennifer Ackerman; *The Invention of Nature: Alexander Humboldt's New World* by Andrea Wulf; and *The Evolution of Beauty* by Richard Prum.

Please join us for our next meeting on June 19th to discuss the fun and lively *Birding Without Borders* by Noah Strycker, centered on his quest to see more species in a single year than any other birder.

And then on September 25th, as a perfect counterbalance to *Birding Without Borders*, we will discuss *What the Robin Knows*. Instead of tearing around the world seeing as many species as possible (which does seem like an amazing adventure) Jon Young teaches us how to closely observe the birds in our own backyard (and enhance our birding skills.)

The Nature Book Club meets bi-monthly Tuesdays at 7:00 pm at the Mount Pleasant Public Library in Pleasantville.

Kathleen Williamson

End-of-Season Bird Seed Sale!

We are clearing out our final quantities of bird seed and suet and offering a 25% discount while supplies last. Call our office, 914-666-6503, to see what is available.

Seed pickup during our regular office hours of Mon/Wed/Fri 10:30 am to 3:30 pm.

2018 Welcome to Spring Dinner Celebrating Our Past Year of Connecting People with Nature



Clockwise from upper left: 2017 Larry Light Youth Scholarship students Hannah Mirando and Max Kogut; SMRA President Valerie Lyle; 2018 Birding Quilt creator Patricia Loquet; Paul MacGregor, John and Mary Cavallero, Gillian Corfield and Ruth Moy; Rockefeller State Park Preserve Manager Susan Antenen and Sam Kornhauser; a view of our sold-out crowd at Crabtree's Kittle House listening to Max Kogut speak; Kyle Bardwell and Larry Trachtenberg; Leslie Hughes, Donna Lassiter and Nina Romanoff. Photo credits: Anne Swaim (crowd view) and William Kellner (all others.)



Burke Plants for Birds Garden Installation

In May, Saw Mill River Audubon installed a demonstration garden for native grasses and perennials at Pruyv Sanctuary, converting an area of existing lawn. This project was supported by a grant from National Audubon’s Burke Plants for Birds program generously supported by the Coleman and Susan Burke Center for Native Plants.

Our new garden was designed by SMRA Board Member Donna Lassiter; 17 volunteers worked over three days— at times in pouring rain!—to turn Donna’s vision into a reality.

We look forward to seeing this garden flourish over the coming summer and fall. It will not only provide food for birds, butterflies and pollinators but also offer sanctuary visitors the opportunity to view and identify native grasses and perennials they may wish to plant as well. Our Plants for Birds plant list is online here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/plants.

We invite you to come visit our new Plants for Birds garden and the adjacent Pruyv Hummingbird and Butterfly Garden. See our garden visit dates on page 1. We will feature our Plants for Birds garden at one of our free, public evening programs this fall.

Photo credits (right & below): Anne Swaim



Over 400 plants were individually labeled & planted.



We began with an area of suburban lawn.



We removed the sod, rototilled and then added compost.



Raking smooth the new beds.



Planting the plants!



The garden beds are filling in! Adding some deer spray. Just in case.



Using vermiculite to outline planting areas.



Preparing plant labels & studying the garden plan.



Planting flags with number of plants.



Double-checking the location of planting flags with the garden plan.

Environment 101: What You Can Do

Environmental threats from human activity are increasing across the planet daily. We all cause the problem. Each of us needs to work together to fix it.

Prior to the current administration in Washington, we were able to rely on our government to develop and implement regulations and strategies that would reverse the declines we see, and which Audubon and others have documented. Now more than ever it is important to be responsible stewards and take meaningful steps of our own. Here are several areas in which we all can make a difference:

Awareness and Political Action

Educate yourself about threats and solutions. Check out National Audubon's web site; sign up for alerts and information on threats and how to take action. Using Audubon's web site provides easy one-step action.

For issues close to home, write or call legislators on local, state and federal levels by using their web sites and local offices for easy contact.

Lawns and Gardens

Lawns are an unnatural landscape with little value for birds and other wildlife. Pesticides (often combined in seed mixtures) kill "weeds" and insects (which birds need) and pollute soil and water; mowing and leaf blowing with gas-powered machines emit more carbon into the atmosphere than driving a modern car.

Consider converting some lawn areas into native meadows, using native grasses to reduce need for watering and pest control. (Visit National Audubon's native plant web site listed below.) For lawns you retain, consider mulching leaves into lawns in the fall to restore soil nutrients naturally. Consider using electric-powered tools.

Diet

Forests are an important carbon sink for climate stability. Meat herds occupy tremendous amounts of land which often requires removal of native forest lands; herds emit methane—a more potent heat trapping gas than carbon dioxide. Consider reducing meat consumption to once per week to reduce heat-trapping gases which cause global warming.

Richard Saravay

Links for more information and to take action

- **National Audubon Action Alerts**
<https://www.audubon.org/takeaction>
- **National Audubon Native Plants Information**
<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>



Group picture from Spring 2018 SMRA Arizona birding trip. Our extended trips include a donation to support our local conservation and education work.

Arizona Highs: Birding the Desert and Beyond

Twelve rather enthusiastic birders—some brand new to birding—piled into two vans in Tucson under the leadership of SMRA's Anne Swaim and Naturalist Journeys' Pat Lueders. Birding in the Arizona heat is thirsty work, so our first stop was at a wine shop for supplies. Those who stayed at the vans were rewarded with our first special sighting, a male Verdin. From there we traveled to Saguaro National Park for our first expedition, which proved highly successful and the list "ticking" really got underway with new birds.

The abundant color and avian variety in the dry habitats was extraordinary. One thinks desert with a few birds here and there, but the vegetation and terrain varies so much that habitats are numerous. The streams in the canyons with their tall Sycamore trees attract the delightful warblers, while the hardest of birds spread out across the more arid areas.

The cute Gambel's Quail seemed to be everywhere and thrilled us with views almost every day, along with the scuttling of Cactus and Bewick's Wrens. Swainson's Hawks perched on poles and Zone-tailed Hawks hiding among soaring Turkey Vultures reminded us to keep our eyes on the skies. Wilson's and Townsend's Warblers thrilled us daily with their bright yellow plumage and dark markings.



I can't forget the tiny desert owls: views of Burrowing Owl, Elf Owl, Whiskered Screech-Owl and Northern Pygmy-Owl enchanted everyone, while the calls of the Great Horned Owl and Western Screech-Owl kept some of our group up at night. *Debbie van Zyl*



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*Pileated Woodpecker at Pruyn Sanctuary
Photo: Rion*

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 third Sunday Pruyn walks 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!



*A bird watching a birder,
White-eyed Vireo
Photo: Charlie Roberto*

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

\$500 \$250 \$100

\$50 \$35 \$_____

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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