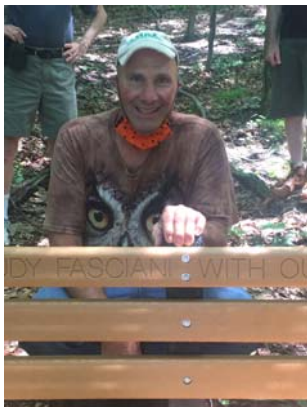




Caspian Tern at Croton River. Photo: Steve Rappaport



Birders kept birding this spring and summer—with masks and physical distancing. Photo: Anne Swaim



As a tribute to Rudy Fasciani's SMRA volunteer work, a new bench was added at Brinton Brook Sanctuary. See page 5. Photo: Phil Heidelberger



Bird Chat Monday, July 21
Tonight's Conversation Guest
Elijah Goodwin, Ph.D.
@whimbrel_nature

Our weekly Bird Chats, begun in April during the New York State Pause, continued through August with a variety of regional birding guests. This fall, Bird Chat will continue on 2nd Tuesdays. See page 5.

Upcoming Events

COVID-19 ACCOMMODATION: Until January 2021, we will be offering our public programs online via Zoom and limiting our guided bird walks to small groups of 10 people maximum, masked and socially distanced, and by registration only. Note: even though we shall follow all NYS-recommended precautions, small-group birders agree to attend at their own risk.

For Zoom registration for any of the public programs below, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/programs

Fall Public Programs—See Page 3 for Bird Walks

Thursday, September 17, 7:00 pm via Zoom

Exploring Geocaching: Lynn & John Salmon

Join SMRA Board Member Lynn Salmon for this online exploration of geocaching, a high-tech, worldwide treasure hunt that will introduce you to new parks, sanctuaries and public open spaces as you seek hidden containers using GPS. Lynn and her husband John are renowned as “Team Mumu” in the geocaching world, having found 7,000 geocaches and hidden 58 caches, many in northern Westchester and some in Saw Mill River Audubon sanctuaries!

Sunday, October 18, 5:00 pm via Zoom

Saw Mill River Audubon Community Gathering

All are invited! Join us online for our 2020 Community Gathering to celebrate all our connections for people, birds and nature in the past year, including images from our past events—will you be in the pictures?—and short presentations from our Larry Light Youth Scholarship students. We are especially pleased to feature a brief keynote presentation from David Ringer, National Audubon's Chief Network Officer which is certain to be engaging and inspiring with a focus on current environmental issues and what we can do. We'll also be including some fun and interactive segments to hear from our members and friends online—if you wish—as well as some video messages from our volunteers. Come be encouraged!

Thursday, November 12, 7:00 pm via Zoom

Walkable Westchester, Third Edition with Jane and Walt Daniels

Get a heads up on what is in the third edition of *Walkable Westchester* to be released later this fall. This on-of-a-kind book details parks and trails for all abilities in Westchester County. So no matter how you enjoy the outdoors, you can find a place to hike, walk, jog, or bird. There are 18 new places to explore, color photos and maps, and a table of where you can bike, take your dog, or find an accessible trail. Jane and Walt will share some behind the scenes stories and amazing photos, many of which are not in the book due to space considerations. If the book is ready, we will alert you to purchase options through local booksellers.

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

President's Message

Thanks to all of you who have contributed to our 2020 Annual Fund Drive. Your donations have made it possible for us to continue to pay our employees, maintain our properties and trails, provide virtual alternatives to our popular in-person activities, and continue our work advocating for habitat protection and the environment.

During the past few months, our staff and volunteers have been hard at work improving trails in our sanctuaries, working in our two native plant gardens, monitoring local habitat issues, updating and adding geo-referencing to our sanctuary trail maps (now available on the Avenza map platform as well as on our website), and doing field surveys for the *NYS Breeding Bird Atlas*.

We've continued the very popular weekly online Bird Chat, providing a platform for learning and conversation among members of the regional birding community who might not otherwise—even in normal times—have an opportunity to gather and interact. We have also had two successful Nature Book Club meetings on Zoom, as well as two bird ID webinars taught by SMRA's own Anne Swaim. In June, we introduced small-group, physically distanced bird walks, which have proved very popular.

Our fall schedule is packed with interesting programs, both online and in the field, including an online Community Gathering that will substitute for the Annual Dinner this year, more small-group walks, a Birdathon, the first of a series of 3 webinars on food choices, and our next Nature Book Club discussion. See pages 1 and 3 for more information.

We are eager to reconnect in person with all of our members when it's safe to do so, but even then we will also likely continue to have some online activities, now that we have seen how they can foster a larger and more diverse conversation and sense of community.



Valerie Lyle, SMRA President

Don't forget to take time to walk outside and reconnect with nature—a documented way to improve your health in body, mind and emotions, and steady your spirit regardless of the uncertainty we all face this fall.

As we go to press, we have received some good news for birds. Ana Paula Tavares, Executive Director of Audubon NY & CT, reports: "In 2018, New York State filed suit on behalf of eight states and joined with the National Audubon Society to challenge the Trump Administration's move to eliminate longstanding protections for waterfowl, raptors, songbirds, and more under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)....Nearly two and a half years of defending the MBTA on every front have paid off. United States District Court Judge Valerie Caproni has ruled in favor of birds and the MBTA's power to protect them, stating 'It is not only a sin to kill a mockingbird, it is also a crime.'"

Let us hope that 2021 brings us more good news about our national and state health and politics, and please do what you can, working together with others, to make this so.

Valerie Lyle

Please help make sure Saw Mill River Audubon is here for future generations by remembering us in your will

Saw Mill River Audubon

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The 2020 Audubon Quilt!

Last Call for Raffle Tickets!

Patricia Loquet has created another beautiful quilt for Saw Mill River Audubon! This one-of-a-kind handmade lap quilt is entitled "Humdinger," with hummingbird and flower images. The winning raffle ticket will be drawn at our October 18 virtual gathering.

To see the quilt in color and purchase tickets online, visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt

Fall 2020 Events

COVID Precautions

We will be offering our public programs online this fall. Register at: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/programs

Small-Group Birding is by advance registration only. Our small-group bird walks will have a max of 10 participants, masked and physically distanced, with an option of using one of our provided audio headsets to hear the walk leader and maintain distance. Sorry, no walk-ins.

All small-group birding walks require registration. Visit sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/walks

If you don't have internet access, call our office to register at 914-666-6503.

Please only register for a maximum of one bird walk per month to save space for other participants.

Seed Sale Pickup Dates

Sat 9/12 & Sun 9/13

We will be offering no-contact pickup of your bird seed order at Prunyn Sanctuary this fall.

See flyer insert for details!

Second Saturday Walks

We will again offer Second Saturday walks at Brinton Brook, starting 9:00 am and limited to the first ten people. Bring masks and physically distance. Meet in main lot. If walk is full, be prepared to walk on your own apart from the group. Walks typically last two hours. Rain or shine. Adults and youth ages 8 and up.

SEPTEMBER Public Programs

**Fri 9/11, 10:00 am
Birding 101 via Zoom**

Anne Swaim will present the basics of finding and identifying local birds, where to go birding locally and how to grow your birding skills. Presented with the Greenburgh Public Library. To register and receive Zoom info, visit www.greenburghlibrary.org

**Thu 9/17, 7:00 pm
Explore Geocaching**
Online workshop via Zoom. See more on page 1. Register in advance at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/programs

**Wed 9/23, 7:00 pm
A Bird's Eye View of Food: Food Production**
See page 4 for details.

**Tue 9/29, 7:00 pm
Nature Book Club via Zoom**
Come join the discussion or just to listen. Via Zoom online, we will be discussing *Lazy Point: A Natural Year in an Unnatural World*, by Carl Safina. If you would like to receive the Zoom connection info, please contact office@sawmillriveraudubon.org

SEPTEMBER Small-Group Birding

Meeting places shared with registered participants

**Sun 9/6, 7:00 am
Croton Point Park**

**Mon 9/14, 7:00 am
Rockefeller State Park Preserve**

**Sat 9/19, 7:00 am
Marshlands Conservancy**

September dates continue above.

SEPTEMBER Small-Group Birding

*(continued)
Meeting places shared with registered participants*

**Tue 9/22, 7:00 am
Croton Point Park**

**Sun 9/27, 7:00 am
Rockefeller State Park Preserve**

OCTOBER Public Programs

**Tue 10/6, 7:00 pm
Audubon Mural Tour**
A virtual guided tour of 40 different Audubon bird murals in NYC! Co-sponsored by all five Westchester Audubon chapters to provide this event at no charge and for all. For Zoom link: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/murals

**Sun 10/18, 5:00 pm
Saw Mill River Audubon Community Gathering**
Join us online via Zoom as we celebrate the past year of connecting people, birds and nature with a special short keynote from National Audubon's David Ringer. Register at: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/programs

**2020 Birdathon!
October 9-11
See page 5**

OCTOBER Small-Group Birding

Meeting places shared with registered participants

**Sun 10/4, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park**

**Mon 10/12, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State Park Preserve**

**Sat 10/17, 8:00 am
Marshlands Conservancy.**

October dates continue above.

OCTOBER Small-Group Birding

*(continued)
Meeting places shared with registered participants*

**Thu 10/22, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park**

**Sun 10/25, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State Park Preserve**

NOVEMBER Public Program

**Thu 11/12, 7:00 pm
Walkable Westchester**
Authors Jane and Walt Daniels will give us a first look at the 3rd edition of *Walkable Westchester* due out this fall. See more on page 1.

Public Hike

**Fri 11/27, 9:00 am
Turkey Mountain Hike**
Our annual tradition continues with a walk up Turkey Mountain in Yorktown the day after Thanksgiving. Bring mask & use safe distancing. No registration needed. Open to all.

NOVEMBER

Small-Group Birding

Meeting places shared with registered participants

**Sun 11/1, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park**

**Mon 11/9, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State Park Preserve**

**Sat 11/21, 8:00 am
Marshlands Conservancy**

**Tue 11/24, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park**

**Sun 11/29, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State Park Preserve**

**SAVE THE DATE!
Thursday, December 3
2020 Members' Best
Details to follow**



How do our food choices affect birds, other wildlife and their habitats? How will healthier food choices for people also result in healthier habitats for birds? Come along with us on a three-part journey to explore these questions this fall! The first webinar on September 23 will feature speakers from Stone Barns and Hemlock Hill Farm. For more details & registration, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/food

Better Food Choices for Birds

In tough times it's sometimes hard to find productive actions that can make a difference.

Fighting back on the threats from climate change can help you, your community and the earth, providing a sense of making a difference to mitigate severe outcomes.

Here are some suggestions:

Food *How we get it*

- ◆ Grow it on your property or a community garden.
- ◆ Buy directly from local growers. Meat, dairy and vegetables are all produced on local farms.
- ◆ Use markets which offer goods from local producers.

What we eat and how much we consume

- ◆ Vegetables, berries, nuts: use organic when possible.
- ◆ Fish: Check sources and lists to avoid threatened species like tuna and swordfish.
- ◆ Meat: Eat less and choose local organic providers who produce grass-fed beef and lamb locally.
- ◆ Reduce waste: Buy only what you need and use it.
- ◆ Compost waste or use town compost services.

Gardens and Gardeners

- ◆ Use electric power instead of gas for mowing, blowing and trimming tools.
- ◆ Consider eliminating leaf blowers to protect air quality and overwintering pollinators.
- ◆ The food web is complex and easily damaged. It starts at the microscopic level in soil and plants which provide food for insects, which provide food for birds, and eventually reaches the food we eat. **So...**
- ◆ Avoid pesticides and "weed" killing herbicides since many are long-lasting, and poison more than "weeds." Some are mixed with commercial fertilizers. Read labels carefully, research online.
- ◆ Let garden and lawn care workers know your preferences.

Richard Saraway

The Many Ways of Birding

Several weeks ago I joined a small group of volunteer birders from Saw Mill River Audubon assigned to canvas Teatown Lake Reservation for any and all signs of bird breeding behavior. There are many types of such behavior, ranging from a single bird singing, to a pair in suitable habitat, to an adult carrying nesting material. These behaviors are designated as either "possible" or "probable" signs of breeding, but to achieve the gold standard of "confirmed" breeding, one has to observe a bird carrying food, or see a fledgling or occupied nest.

I haven't been birding long. A generous count would be three years, and I'd never been on a breeding bird survey before (designated by the redoubtable name: "atlasing," which refers to the multi-year effort to update the *New York State Breeding Bird Atlas*). But what a wonderful and meaningful complement to what I had been doing.

By the end of the 3 hours, I had my total nests found and shared: zero. This wasn't going to be easy. Undeterred, I told myself I would find nests next time out. I didn't. In fact for several weeks I remained, you could say, nestless. Nestless, that is, until today.

While at Croton Point Park, I sat on a picnic table, following up on what sounded like a singing warbler. I lingered for 10 minutes, and heard no more song. This deliberate, slow and methodical way of moving agrees with a deeper part of me, the meditative part. As I was thinking whether 10 minutes was enough time to spend waiting, a sud-

den burst of high-pitched cheeps and squeaks came tumbling out of ... where??... young trees, not far from where I sat. "Occupied nest?" I waited again, and I heard the burst of excited cacophony twice more, while also ID-ing an adult House Wren. "How cool is this!" I smiled to myself, approaching stealthily, keeping a safe distance. All quiet. I waited. I had wholly unobstructed views, and yet I saw no nest. I was not going anywhere until I heard that outburst again. And eventually I did.

An agitated adult was the first to move near. Doubtless I was the source of consternation. I remained still and silent. And eager. The parent went up the tree and proceeded to go... *into* the tree trunk. There was a tiny hole in the tree itself!

Cheeps poured from the little cave, bathing the entire area in a waterfall of gushing squeaks. I counted three little mouths: occupied nest. Confirmed. I stayed for two more sorties, one in which a butterfly nearly the size of the adult bird got stuffed down the gullet of one of the youngsters.

I stayed long enough to get a recording of the entire exchange that will be included in the third *New York State Breeding Bird Atlas*. These data contribute to our knowledge of local breeding bird populations. *Yahvey Hoffman*

For more information about the *Breeding Bird Atlas*, visit www.ebird.org/atlasny/about. To read the unabridged version of Yahvey's writing, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/yahvey

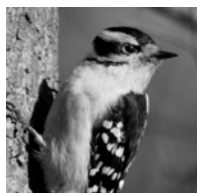
Bird Chat to Continue this Fall



Begun the first week in April, SMRA offered a weekly online Bird Chat through August to connect the area's birding community and feature some of the our region's leading birders. Pictured above is our Bird Chat guest for June 22: Julie Hart, who updated us about how New York birders are doing during this first year of the five-year *NYS Breeding Bird Atlas*. More than 175 people have connected with Bird Chat this spring and summer with an average of 55 people online with us weekly.

We will switch to a monthly Bird Chat this fall. Join us on Second Tuesdays at 7:00 pm, starting September 8.

To register and receive the fall Zoom link, visit, www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/chat. To see our schedule of past and upcoming Bird Chat conversation guests, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat.



Other SMRA Sanctuary News

Despite the New York Pause this spring and summer, SMRA sanctuary volunteers have been busy. Trail walkers have continued to monitor our sanctuaries and this was especially important after the extensive damage from Tropical Storm Isaias in early August. We welcome your trail reports at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/walker

- ◆ The Split Rock Spring at Brinton Brook, originally built by Willard Brinton, was refurbished this spring, restoring the stone catch basin and walkway crossing.
- ◆ This spring, SMRA participated in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's "Buffer in a Bag" program for Brinton, Choate and Graff Sanctuaries, with 25 new native trees and shrubs added to these properties.
- ◆ Download all updated SMRA trail maps, including Avenza maps, at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/maps

Go Birding for a Good Cause!



Fall Birdathon

A Birding Competition
across Six NY Counties!

Fri Oct 9 to Sun Oct 11

Prize Categories for All Levels

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/birdathon

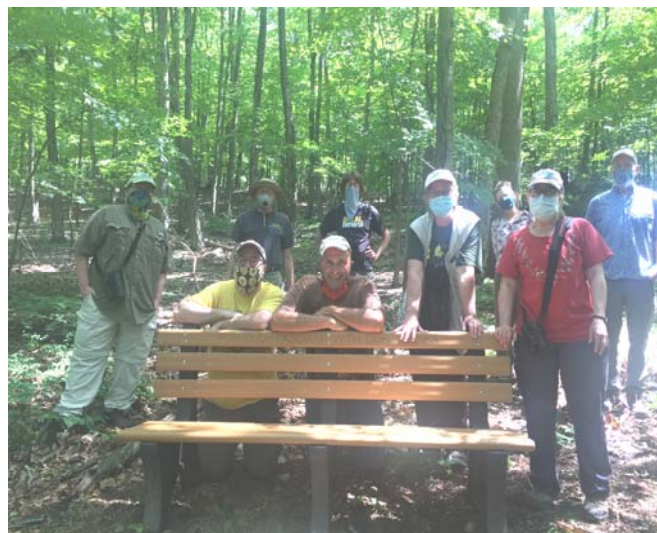
Bird in your own backyard,
or bird at your favorite hotspot,
or bird across six counties!

Categories for all levels of birders!

Gather 1–9 other birders to form a team
and enter our Fall 2020 Birdathon
to compete with other birders, win prizes,
~ AND ~
Support the local work
of Saw Mill River Audubon!

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/birdathon

Recognizing Rudy



A small group of SMRA leaders and friends gathered on July 12 to honor Rudy Fasciani for his many hours of volunteer service at Brinton Brook Sanctuary, unveiling a new bench inscribed with thanks to Rudy and donated by a SMRA friend. Rudy's bench is located in a special corner of the sanctuary near glacial erratic boulders and overlooking the Brinton Brook valley. We are grateful to the Hudson National Golf Club for their help transporting the bench materials from the top of Arrowcrest Road into Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Photo: Phil Heidelberg



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Broad-winged Hawk. Photo: Charlie Roberto

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Fall!

We have more than 20 events scheduled between September and November to connect you with local habitats, birds and other wildlife. Small group bird walks. Online public programs. Walks in our sanctuaries.

We connect people with nature!

Special Insert
in this issue
**2020–2021
Bird Seed
Sale Flyer**

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

- \$1000 \$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
 Please list my gift anonymously

Name(s)

Address

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