



Winter 2020–2021



Red-tailed Hawk at Croton Point. Photo: Mitchell Goldfarb



Small-group guided bird walk at Croton Point Park in October. Photo: Barbara Schultz



We published our first calendar this fall featuring the work of local photographers and celebrating New York State birds. A great holiday gift idea! Preview the calendar and order online, including shipping with a gift message, here:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/bird-calendar



Birding-while-masked at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Photo: Anne Swaim

Upcoming Events

COVID-19 SAFETY: Through this winter, 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, by registration only. We may cancel walks, if pandemic conditions change. Our COVID field trip guidelines are available at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/walks

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

Winter Public Programs—See Page 3 for Bird Walks.

Thursday, December 10, 7:00 pm via Zoom

Best Nature Photography by Members and Friends

We are holding our annual Members' Best program online this year. (We'll miss our usual sharing of holiday desserts and, especially, seeing everyone in person!) For this program, we invite members and friends of Saw Mill River Audubon to submit 3-6 photos—taken in the past year—of birds, other wildlife or habitats to share with the SMRA community during this program. Visit registration webpage above for more details and how to submit photographs. Deadline for photographs is November 30.

Thursday, January 21, 7:00 pm via Zoom

Book Program: Susan Fox Rogers, When Birds Are Near: Dispatches from Contemporary Writers

Susan Fox Rogers has edited a “dazzling literary collection.” In this book, “writers explore and celebrate their lives with and love for birds—detailing experiences from Alaska to Bermuda, South Dakota to Panama.” Come hear the overview of this fascinating new book.

Wednesday, January 27, 7:00 pm via Zoom

A Bird's Eye View of Food: Part 2 — Consumer Choices

This combination short film and panel discussion will explore how food choices impact our health as well as the health of birds, other wildlife, and the planet. And we'll explore healthier alternatives.

Thursday, February 18, 7:00 pm via Zoom

Adirondack Birding — #BirdsTellUs

Renowned Adirondack Bird Guide Joan Collins will delight us with images and video clips of boreal birds found as far south as the Adirondack Mountains and also share her observations of distribution and population changes over recent decades.

Thursday, February 25, 7:00 pm via Zoom

Growing the Pruyn Meadow Garden

Discover what we've learned over three years at the Meadow Demonstration Garden at Pruyn Sanctuary from Garden Coordinator Donna Lassiter. Donna will showcase the native meadow grasses and perennials in the garden and discuss how to grow them with success.

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

President's Message

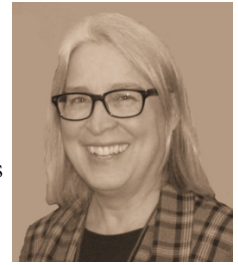
As the days get shorter and we head into winter at the end of an extraordinarily distressing year, I'm finding my usual winter malaise to be even more difficult to combat. With so much uncertainty—about the pandemic, about the divisions in our society, about the future of our world in the face of global warming—where do we turn for hope?

Hope came for me recently from the Audubon Chapters of NY/CT Fall Council meeting, which like the Spring Council meeting, was a virtual event this year.

The meeting kicked off with a public webinar featuring Dr. Chandu Visweswariah of Croton, whose presentation, "An Inside Look: Radical Climate Action," covered climate science and the dangers of allowing warming to exceed 1.5°C, achievable pathways for bird and nature lovers to limit global warming, and ways that individuals and communities can address the climate crisis.

Dr. Visweswariah introduced a new organization, CURE100, a consortium of communities seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2040, along with a new tool called the Carbon Tracker that's available free to nonprofits and can help individuals and communities assess their carbon footprints, create plans to reduce their footprints, and track carbon reduction. Three Audubon chapters, including SMRA, are considering licensing this tool so they can participate in a pilot program. You can view a recording of the presentation at <https://www.facebook.com/AudubonNewYork/videos/718597959034029>

During a chapter roundtable the following day, we heard reports from a number of Audubon NY/CT chapters on the work they are doing and their challenges and successes this year. Many have been able to use National Audubon's Plants for Birds grants to create native gardens in their communities.



Valerie Lyle, SMRA President

A Connecticut chapter took a different tack, collaborating with community organizations to create a native plant nursery in a low-income area of New Haven, engaging youth in a project that resulted in 250 native plants being sold in a community that had never seen this kind of activity before.

While I missed the more casual interactions and connections that come from gathering with (and birding with) people from around the state for several days, these Zoom-based gatherings still provided a sense of what a community of like-minded people can do together in our quest for a better future.

If you would like to join in any of SMRA's work or share ideas with us, please reach out by calling our office or emailing us. And, look at our upcoming events to find online programs and small-group walks that may help combat those winter blues.

Valerie Lyle



Saw Mill River Audubon

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

Can You See the Fox?



This is a still image from Prugn Sanctuary captured on a wildlife cam donated, set up, and monitored by SMRA Board Member Steve Rappaport. (Thanks, Steve!) Steve is also uploading color video highlights from the wildlife cam here: <https://bit.ly/PrugnVid>

Winter 2020-2021 Events

COVID Precautions

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

Small-Group Birding is by advance registration only: sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/walks

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.

If your preferred walk is full, be sure to register for the wait list since we have new openings each week.

Our COVID safety guidelines for field trips are linked at the above walk registration page and here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/docs/SMRA-COVID-19-Trip-Guidelines.pdf

We may reduce walk size OR cancel walks depending on NYS COVID guidelines.

Second Saturday Walks Sat, 12/12, 1/9, 2/13

We are still offering Second Saturday walks at Brinton Brook, starting 9:00 am and limited to the first 9 people. Wear masks and physically distance. Meet in main lot. If walk is full, enjoy a hike on your own. Walks typically last two hours. Rain or shine. Adults and youth ages 8 and up.

DECEMBER Public Programs

Thu 12/10, 7:00 pm
Program: Members' Best
Best nature photography from members and friends. Deadline 11/30 to submit entries. Come enjoy the show!
Note date change from 12/3.

Tue 12/8 & 22, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat. See page 5.

Christmas Bird Counts
SMRA birders participate in the below CBCs, a 121-year-old tradition of winter bird counts in 14-mile diameter circles. Contact SMRA to reach count coordinators. NOTE: CBCs may be modified or even cancelled this year pending pandemic status

Sat 12/19
Peekskill Area
Christmas Bird Count

Sun 12/20
Greenwich-Stamford
Christmas Bird Count

Sun 12/27
Bronx-Westchester
Christmas Bird Count

Sat 1/2
Putnam
Christmas Bird Count

DECEMBER Small-Group Birding *Meeting places shared with registered participants*

Tue 12/1, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park

Sat 12/5, 8:00 am
Edith Read Sanctuary

Wed 12/9, 8:00 am
Muscoot Farm

Mon 12/14, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State
Park Preserve

Sun 12/20, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park

JANUARY Public Programs

Wed 1/6, 7:00 pm
Workshop: Waterfowl ID
Learn/review waterfowl identification tips in this online workshop. See website for details.

Tue 1/12 & 26, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat. See page 5.

Tue 1/19, 7:00 pm
Nature Book Club
We will be discussing Michael McCarthy's *The Moth Snowstorm: Nature and Joy*. See website for details.

Thu 1/21, 7:00 pm
Program: When Birds Are Near, Susan Fox Rogers.
See page 1.

Wed 1/27, 7:00 pm
Program: Bird's Eye View of Food Part 2, Consumer Choices. See page 1.

SPECIAL EVENT First Day Hike Fri 1/1, 9:00 am

Registration required this year and will be limited for this special event. Contact SMRA office for NYS Parks EventBrite link

JANUARY Small-Group Birding *Meeting places shared with registered participants*

Mon 1/4, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park

Tue 1/12, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State
Park Preserve

Sat 1/16, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park

Wed 1/20, 8:00 am
Edith Read Sanctuary

Sun 1/31, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State
Park Preserve

FEBRUARY Public Programs

Tue 2/9 & 23, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat. See page 5.

Thu 2/18, 7:00 pm
Program: Adirondack Birds, Joan Collins
See more on page 1.

Thu 2/25, 7:00 pm
Program: Growing a Meadow Garden with Donna Lassiter.
See more on page 1.

FEBRUARY Small-Group Birding *Meeting places shared with registered participants*

Sun 2/7, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park

Fri 2/12, 8:00 am
Rockefeller State
Park Preserve

Mon 2/22, 8:00 am
Edith Read Sanctuary

Sat 2/27, 8:00 am
Croton Point Park

Two Ways to Enjoy Birds This Winter and Support Saw Mill River Audubon:

1. Invite Bird Guests with our Bird Seed. We offer contact-free pickup with online ordering to choose your pickup date. More here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed

****PLUS** 3rd Saturday Bird Seed Sales** with volunteers to help load your car on these dates: **Sat: 12/19, 1/16, 2/20, 9:30 am–12:30 pm**

2. Enjoy New York birds all year with our 2021 calendar of local birds! A great holiday gift. We'll mail and can include a gift message OR do contact-free pickup at Pruyn Sanctuary www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/bird-calendar

I'm Helping Birds!

- ☐ Make Windows Safe
- ☐ Keep Cats Indoors
- ☐ Less Lawn, Plant Natives
- ☐ Avoid Pesticides
- ☐ Drink Bird-Friendly Coffee
- ☐ Use Less Plastic
- ☐ Watch Birds, Share What You See

Find out more: bit.ly/7-simple-actions

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

7 SIMPLE ACTIONS TO HELP BIRDS

Wood Thrush by John Petruzzelli/Macaulay Library 56732651. Graphic by Sarah Seroush.

Cats

Of all the animals we may love as pets, cats are at the top of the list for many people.

Unfortunately, domestic cats evolved as highly adept hunters and, once back in nature, they seek prey. People who love cats may also see feral cats as in need of food and feed them on a regular basis. Well-fed cats are simply better predators.

Audubon has estimated that cat predation from both house pets and feral cats results in about *one billion* bird deaths per year in the U.S. This is a tipping point threat for bird species with already-compromised habitats and/or with population numbers at the endangered level, such as the Piping Plover.

Cats—Actions

Pet cats should be kept indoors. There is no more effective way to prevent them from contributing to the decimation of bird populations. Feral cats should not be fed. Audubon has noted that Trap, Neuter and Release (TNR) programs do not reduce feral cat populations.

Glass Windows and Doors

Bird glass collisions are estimated to cause 300 million–1 billion bird deaths per year in the U.S. Birds see the sky and surrounding landscape reflected in glass and attempt to fly through, with disastrous results.

Windows—Actions

Make windows look like a barrier to birds. For glass areas larger than 24 × 24 inches consider decals, non-reflective coatings or screens. Certain glass manufacturers have developed bird-safe glass and are improving it steadily. Audubon and local seed shops also offer simple collision-reducing items such as decals, ribbons or items which can be hung. Remember to close shades, blinds or curtains at night.

Pesticides & Other Toxins

Using pesticides and herbicides to eliminate unwanted insects or the plants that many of us call “weeds,” also kills beneficial insects and insects birds rely upon for food, and/or may poison other bird food sources, like seeds and fruit. Insect and weed toxins are also sometimes mixed with lawn fertilizer. Read the label or ask your lawn care workers to show you the labels. Even worse, widely used herbicides such as Roundup have been linked to human and dog cancers.

Toxics—Actions

Visit www.healthyyards.org for alternatives to chemical use and other healthy yard practices.

Richard Saravay

Go deeper here:
bit.ly/7-simple-actions

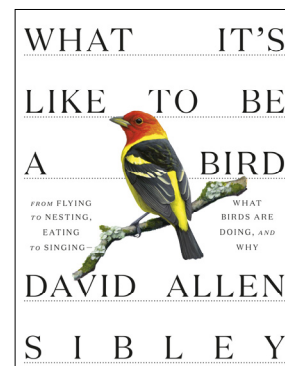
Book Review—*What It's Like to Be a Bird: From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing* by David Allen Sibley

With apologies to the Coen brothers, David Sibley is a serious man. Many birders are familiar with *The Sibley Guide to Birds* and the derivative *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds*, which covers eastern and western North America in separate editions. These books have earned a well-deserved reputation as representing the gold standard of field guides.

Sibley's writing is marked by precision and fidelity to the most up-to-date science. This, combined with his beautiful and accurate paintings of birds, makes the Sibley guides stand out in a crowded field.

Surprisingly, *What It's Like to Be a Bird* represents a different side of David Sibley. Rather than being a comprehensive compilation of bird behavior, anatomy and physiology, the book is more of a loosely organized appreciation of just how remarkable birds are and how evolution has led to some incredible adaptations that have allowed birdlife to thrive.

The main section of *What It's Like to Be a Bird* is entitled Portfolio of Birds. On each left-facing page is a large painting of a bird or group of related birds. The birds in these illustrations are, for the most part, life-sized. The following right-facing page has additional, smaller illustrations of the same group of species and descriptions of various aspects of behavior and anatomy. The species list is not



comprehensive, but rather is chosen to provide examples of the diversity of birdlife.

What It's Like to Be a Bird is not designed to be read straight through. If you open to page 26, for example, you'll see a stunning painting of the head and neck, with a bit of the inner wing, of a Double-crested Cormorant. Page 27 has additional illustrations, including a detail of a cormorant feather and a schematic representation of a cormorant's eye with a contrasting illustration of the eye of a species that does not need to see under water. The text describes the special adaptation that gives these birds clear vision after diving below the surface. Reading about this and other adaptations leaves the reader with an understanding of why cormorants are so good at catching fish.

What It's Like to Be a Bird shares with Sibley's other books a deep love and appreciation of birds. His mission is to inform and entertain. The hope is that the more we know about the beauty and nature of birds, the more we will work to preserve and protect them.

Reviewed by William Kellner

Join Us on Bird Chat 2nd & 4th Tuesdays

Beginning the first week in April 2020 with the pandemic shutdown, SMRA offered a weekly online Bird Chat through August to connect the area's birding community and to feature some of the our region's leading birders. This community gathering has continued to be a fun way to share sightings and bird photos and exchange ideas about where, when and how to go birding in our region in these pandemic days. We typically have around 60 people join us online for our Bird Chats. You should do this too! Come to listen, and watch and, only if you wish, join in (and be seen.)

We are now switching to twice monthly Bird Chats for November through February. Join us on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 7:00 pm. Register today to receive a Zoom link that will work for all Bird Chats through February plus receive reminder emails the day of each Bird Chat. Go to: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/chat.

The Great Fall Birdathon 2020

October 9–11 was a beautiful weekend filled with wonderful weather, great friends, amazing competition, and fantastic bird watching. Seven teams competed in three different categories, and covered four counties in the lower Hudson Valley. There were a total of 133 species seen, which is the exact same amount as in 2019. Throughout the weekend just over 6,500 individual birds were seen, which was slightly down from 7,600 in 2019.

There was some competition this year in the “Big Sit” category with two teams participating. However the Pleasantville Cardinal-watchers pulled through for the category win with a total of 31 species over the Stool Pigeons who saw 28 different species.

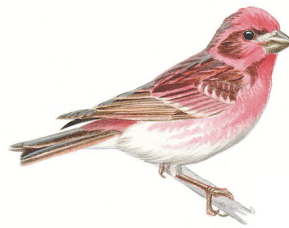
The “County” category held most of the competition with four teams participating. Three of the teams birded in Westchester county, while one birded in Dutchess county. The Left Wingers came out on top with a total of 88 species. Hawkward Conversations was right on their tails with 86 species. The Dutchess Dames placed third with 82 species, and the Westchester Watchers were fourth with 68 species.

One team competed in the “Overall” category. The Quick 3 Beers had a magnificent day seeing 103 species throughout three different counties.

I want to thank everyone who came out to participate and donated to this fundraising program. Any time spent birding is a great time and this event was no exception!

Louisa Gagliardi, SMRA Birdathon Coordinator

Watch For Northern Finches This Winter!



*Compare the differences of shape and patterns: Purple Finch (L) and House Finch (R)
Learn more: www.audubon.org/news/-pine-siskin-finch-irruption-fall-2020*



Pine Siskin



Common Redpoll

You may see some new visitors this winter at area bird feeders. This is an irruptive year for northern finches. An irruption happens when birds leave northern forests because conifer cones are in short supply. Thousands of Pine Siskins, Purple Finches and other northern seed eaters have been recorded moving south from Canada and are already arriving at local bird feeders. Even the quite rare Evening Grosbeak has been spotted with our resident House Finches and American Goldfinches at bird feeders. Common Redpolls may be next. Watch for your own northern guests!

Learn more: www.audubon.org/news/-pine-siskin-finch-irruption-fall-2020

Bird Feeder Project for Students

Work with your family or on your own to create a one-of-a-kind bird feeder that will be displayed at the Hendrick Hudson Public Library in Montrose. First discover the birds most likely to visit area bird feeders with a video from Saw Mill River Audubon. Then learn about the eBird App and discover a new lifetime interest in science & conservation. Project information provided with registration. Register by calling the Hendrick Hudson Library at 914-739-5654 or emailing: monref@wlsmail.org.



*A collaborative project between
Hendrick Hudson Public Library
and Saw Mill River Audubon
generously supported by a grant
from ConEdison.*





275 Millwood Road

Chappaqua, New York 10514

Return Service Requested



Evening Grosbeak being banded. Watch for these large northern finches visiting feeders this winter!

Photo: Charlie Roberto

PERIODICAL POSTAGE

PAID

at Chappaqua, NY
and additional offices

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Winter!

We have more than 20 events scheduled between December and February 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!

Our thanks to
Pizza 238 in Millwood
for feeding our seed
sale volunteers
with a delicious
donation of pizzas.
Molte grazie!

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) _____

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