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.
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

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 Pruyn 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/PruynVid
**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.

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### DECEMBER

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<td>Tue 2/9 &amp; 23, 7:00 pm</td>
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<td>Best nature photography from members and friends. Deadline 11/30 to submit entries. Come enjoy the show! Note date change from 12/3.</td>
<td>Learn/review waterfowl identification tips in this online workshop. See website for details.</td>
<td>Thu 2/18, 7:00 pm</td>
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<td>Tue 12/8 &amp; 22, 7:00 pm</td>
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**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

**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

| Sat 1/4, 8:00 am | Mon 1/4, 8:00 am |
| Croton Point Park | Croton Point Park |
| Tue 1/12, 8:00 am | Tue 1/12, 8:00 am |
| Rockefeller State Park Preserve | Rockefeller State Park Preserve |
| Sat 1/16, 8:00 am | Sat 1/16, 8:00 am |
| Croton Point Park | Croton Point Park |
| Wed 1/20, 8:00 am | Wed 1/20, 8:00 am |
| Edith Read Sanctuary | Edith Read Sanctuary |
| Sun 1/31, 8:00 am | Sun 1/31, 8:00 am |
| Rockefeller State Park Preserve | Rockefeller State Park Preserve |

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**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.

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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 underwater. 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!

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.
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!

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

ty $1000 ty $500 ty $250

$t100 $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 __________________________

City / State / Zip _____________________

Email Address _______________________

Please make checks payable to: Saw Mill River Audubon and mail to our office address listed inside this newsletter.

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