



SMRA

SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

Summer 2021



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Rockefeller State Park Preserve this May.
Photo: www.tommarrenphoto.com



Our May small-group bird walk visited Marsblands Conservancy and tallied 61 species of birds!
View our list: ebird.org/checklist/S87241644



Scouts from Chappaqua Scout Troop #1 planted 100 trees in Pryn Sanctuary in early May within our deer enclosure areas. Thank you, Scouts!



Our Mr. Lunetta Explorer Bags are now available for circulation at ten county libraries. These three bags went to the Yonkers Public Library in April.
Learn more: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/explorer

Upcoming Events

We hope to be easing back to more normal scheduling of our events in the fall but, of course and like everyone else, we don't know for sure. Meanwhile, read below for our summer event offerings.

Be sure to subscribe to our email list for updates on summer events: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list

Bird Chat Continues

Bird Chat on 2nd & 4th Tuesdays through the summer, 7:00 pm
Gather online with the local birding community to hear about local sightings, see pictures, learn where to go birding and what birds to expect. Details and registration: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Bird's Eye View of Food, Part 3

Wednesday, June 23, 7:00 pm via Zoom. How we handle food waste affects climate change as well as healthy habitats. Join us to learn more.

Small-Group Birding Continues

We are offering more small-group birding opportunities in June, July and August for vaccinated participants only and limited to 16 people.
For dates and locations, and to reserve your spots, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register/walks after May 18.

Birding Tea on Saturday, June 19!

This special event will be hosted by Cary Andrews in Croton-on-Hudson, 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Enjoy a proper high tea with lovely homemade goodies and tea...and a time to talk about creating backyard habitat, bird-friendly gardens, and how to help our fine-feathered friends. \$20/person benefits SMRA. To RSVP, email oomis@aol.com.

SMRA Annual Dinner on September 26!

At long last, we may actually be able to gather together again, at least those of us who are vaccinated. We are delighted to have reserved space at Crabtree's Kittle House for this special event. Watch our email list, Facebook, and our website for more details soon. Save the date!

View newsletter in color: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news



SMRA Vice-President Tom Ruth and I attended Audubon NY and CT's Spring Council meeting last week, with representatives from over 20 chapters in New York and Connecticut gathered as "Hollywood Squares" on Zoom for two evenings of information sharing and networking, focusing on state-level legislative advocacy and youth engagement.

Audubon NY policy director Erin McGrath reported that the final 2021 budget for NY State was a true win for the environment, with no cut to funding for the state Environmental Protection Fund. The Restore Mother Nature Bond Act, which had been pulled from the 2020 budget, was put back into the enacted 2021 budget, and will be on the 2022 ballot. If approved by voters, it

would be the first environmental bond issued in NY since 1996. It is intended to provide long-term, dedicated funding to prepare for the worsening impacts of climate change and to invest in restoring wildlife habitat. The budget also included funding for a NY State birding trail.

Audubon NY is still pushing hard for passage of a number of other environmental bills in the current legislative session, which ends in early June. The highest priorities are a bill that would allow the DEC to regulate all wetlands in the state. Other legislation would: bring NY State into the 30X30 movement, conserving 30% of our land mass by 2030; ban the unnecessary use of neonicotinoid pesticides, particularly treated seeds, which harm birds that eat them; and the Extended Producer Responsibility Act, which would compel producers to pay for recycling of their products' packaging. Several new policy initiatives that Audubon NY-

President's Message

CT is developing for future advocacy efforts are dark skies/light pollution, bird-friendly buildings, and horseshoe crab protection.

The NYSDEC is also planning to overhaul the endangered and threatened species lists in the coming months, and, when the proposed changes are out, Audubon NY will review and comment on them with input from local chapters.

Mike Burger, Interim Executive Director of Audubon NY-CT, spoke about a **new youth leadership and development initiative** meant to create equitable opportunity and develop the next generation of conservation leaders. The idea is to create programming for young people from middle school through early college that gives them exposure to environmental issues and environmental work as they continue their education and career pathways.

There are already nine such programs in NY and CT, and Audubon wants to create more, emphasizing engagement of youth from under-resourced communities; accessibility and inclusion; paid internships; partnerships with community organizations; connecting youth with (or placing them in jobs or internships with) for-profit companies as well as nonprofit organizations and government agencies; and involving local Audubon chapters, including campus chapters. Endowed internships may also be pursued.

Twenty-one chapters shared highlights of their recent work as well as challenges during the chapter roundtable. Anne Swaim reported on Saw Mill's youth education initiatives: our new Young Birder walks for youth ages 8–17; the Nature Explorer Walks for younger children accompanied by a parent; and the expansion of our Lunetta Explorer Bags program at local libraries.

While not as much fun as the traditional pre-pandemic spring and fall weekend Council meetings—and lacking the opportunities to get to know or re-connect with Audubon people from around the state—these two Zoom meetings got the job done. We shared information, learned about the doings of our state executive team, and saw each other's faces. That said, we're cautiously optimistic that we may be able to meet in person again this fall.

Speaking of which, we at Saw Mill are also cautiously optimistic that we will also be able to hold our long-postponed Annual Dinner in person on September 26 at Crabtree's Kittle House.

Be sure you are subscribed to our email notice list for updates on this special event. Do that at: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list.

Also note that the group size for our small-group walks has been increased to 16 people this summer, which we hope will allow more people to participate.

We truly are excited and looking forward to seeing more of you in person in the coming months.

Valerie Lyle

Saw Mill River Audubon

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Welcome New Board Members!

Erik Andersen



We (Eva, and our children Bjorn and Liv) moved to Croton 34 years ago, a return to the greater New York area, for my work. Eva is a Nurse Practitioner at Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in Ossining for the past 24 years, and after 17 years as Administrator and board member of the 117-year old charity Danish Home for the Aged, Inc., I'm in the process of closing the Home and then selling the property. My first SMRA connection was probably buying seed for the house and the Home, then reinforced by SMRA programs presented at the Home. I had an

enjoyable day years ago, led by Nick Fischer, building a deer enclosure in Pruyn.

I am an avid outdoorsman, raised by two birdwatchers, and Eva is an avid amateur astronomer so we're often looking up.

I like the organized and low-key nature of the SMRA structure and for many years we walked our dog on leash at the Graff Sanctuary off Furnace Dock Road adjacent to the McAndrews Estate near Oscawana Island.

I spent my formative years, hiking the C&O Canal in hometown Washington, DC and hiking the ADKs—half the 46ers, none new since 1978—and canoeing—once from Old Forge to Montreal, Canada.

I'm a firm believer in paying forward and gender equality. Hopefully I have something to contribute to this board, although based on two board meetings you seem to have it pretty well covered! *Erik Andersen*

Jenni Stern



After growing up in Fairfield, Conn., where I spent many hours wandering the paths of the nearby Connecticut Audubon wildlife sanctuary, I have lived in Westchester for almost 30 years and greatly enjoyed hiking and biking throughout the Hudson Valley with my husband, Jim Meigs, and our three now-grown sons (including one who works as a bird bander and wildlife technician).

I first connected with SMRA through the weekly bird walks and through an intrepid hiking group that includes some SMRA board members.

Throughout COVID, I have enjoyed and been amazed by the opportunity to stay connected through programs including Bird Chat that have grown to embrace and edify bird lovers throughout the county and beyond.

I am impressed by the breadth of SMRA's activities, including managing eight(!) local sanctuaries. Its programs too have wide scope: walks for the least to the most skilled among us and presentations that range from bird identification to the importance of making our own yards more hospitable to wildlife (a Sisyphean task perpetually engaging me) to the implications of our food consumption on our feathered friends.

My professional experience includes working as a writer, newspaper editor, New York City math teacher and currently tutor. I am looking forward to becoming active in SMRA's missions of education and advocacy. *Jenni Stern*



Dunlins and Black-bellied Plover. Photo: USFWS

SMRA Photographers Wanted

SMRA is looking for photographs for our 2022 *New York Birds* calendar. Photos should be of New York birds from all seasons. Submissions will start June 1st and run through July 31st.

While reviewing your bird photos, be aware that SMRA will also be seeking submissions for a bird/nature photography exhibit at the Hendrick Hudson Library in February 2022. We will accept submissions until the end of 2021 for the library exhibit. **Check our website after June 1 for the link to submit your photos.** *Louisa Gagliardi*



Bird Chat
 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7:00 pm
 Join local birders and photographers on Zoom for an informal gathering to share sightings and pictures, and discuss local birds and birding places. Stop by to listen and watch or join in the discussion. All welcome!

Bird Chat continues through the summer! The same Zoom link will work for all Chats, no need to register for each. Visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

SMRA Advocacy Work — January–March, 2021

All of the advocacy programs described below were recorded and linked from our website or at: <https://bit.ly/SMRA-YouTube>

On January 27 SMRA presented the second part of our Bird’s Eye View of Food webinar series on food choices and their impacts on the environment. After a short film “Diet That Helps Fight Climate Change,” featuring Dr. Maya Almaraz of the University of California, Davis, Dr. Almaraz joined our Zoom program to discuss her research on climate friendly innovations that could be scaled up for widespread use in agriculture.

On January 14, over 140 people registered for a Zoom program on the environmental issues related to the siting of commercial solar farms in our area, hosted by SMRA and the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County. Our expert panel, Audrey Friedrichsen, land use and environmental advocacy attorney at Scenic Hudson, Mt.

Kisco mayor Gina Picinich and Leo Wiegman, former mayor of Croton-on-Hudson and currently executive vice president of the Croton Energy Group, discussed issues relating to the number of active proposals for large-scale solar development in the region.



On March 4, SMRA co-hosted a second webinar on siting of commercial solar projects in our area. Co-sponsors were the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, the Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance, Teatown, and Sustainable Westchester. The webinar featured Nina Orville of Sustainable Westchester, discussing issues relating to funding of Community Solar projects.

Coming Soon... New Owl Houses!

These nest boxes are designed for Eastern Screech-owls. This six-box installation is an Eagle Scout project by Jonathan Weidenheft.

The boxes are planned to be installed early this summer. Here’s hoping they will all have tenants by 2022.

Our thanks to those who each sponsored a box to cover the materials and other costs: Rivertowns Chiropractic and Stu & Elise Landesberg, The Danish Home, Phil and Ellen Heidelberg, Suzanne Kavic, Cary Andrews, and Anne Swaim.



Coming soon to three of our sanctuaries — Brinton Brook, Pruyn and Pinecliff Sanctuaries — are two large nest boxes on tall poles. Look for them this summer.

On March 24 SMRA hosted a Zoom gathering with author Carl Safina to discuss his book *Becoming Wild*, which was also the topic of our Nature Book Club selection earlier in March. Carl gave us a fascinating presentation about how culture is not just a human development but is found in a variety of animal species.

SMRA has become a sponsoring organization of the Cure100, a not-for-profit consortium of communities that seeks to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2040. They offer an online tool (CURE100 Carbon Tracker) for individuals to measure their household carbon footprint and assess effects of different improvements.

Our website has a direct link to the Carbon Tracker for you to use: sawmillriveraudubon.org/cure100

Tom Ruth



Year Two Underway: New York Breeding Bird Atlas

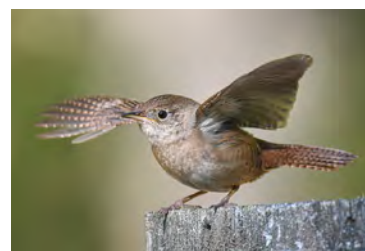
Year Two of the 5-year New York State Breeding Bird Atlas is well underway. The New York Breeding Bird Atlas III is a 5-year community science project to document where and when birds are breeding in New York State. From 2020–2024, NY BBA III will collect critical data on how New York’s birds are faring, informing management decisions and conservation efforts. Anyone from beginning to expert birders can participate. Atlasing is really just observing bird behavior, something you probably do already.

Learn more at: ebird.org/atlasny

Some Spring Bling



*Common Yellowthroat
Photo: Steve Rappaport*



House Wren. Photo: Mitchell Goldfarb



*Black-throated Green Warbler
Photo: Kara Mason*

2021 Birding Quilt Raffle!



Jean Sparacin has once again created an extraordinary work of quilt art for Saw Mill River Audubon.

Owl de Lune is our 2021 Birding Quilt to be raffled with all proceeds supporting our conservation and education work.

The winner will be drawn at our Annual Dinner on September 26.

To view the quilt in color, zoom in for a closer look, and purchase raffle tickets visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt



Our Pruyin Sanctuary gardening volunteers have been working hard this spring preparing our Plants for Birds demo meadow garden and our butterfly and hummingbird garden for the growing season. Thank you!

Want to help? Our volunteers are working Tuesdays and Thursdays this year. All volunteers are vaccinated. Contact our office to learn more about our garden team by calling 914-666-6503 or emailing office@sawmillriveraudubon.org

Learn more about our gardens and download plant lists at: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/gardens

New Youth Education Programs

Because of a generous gift from the estate of Edward Mertz, Saw Mill River Audubon has been able to initiate two new education programs: young birder walks and family-based nature explorer walks. We offered three of each April-June and plan to offer others in the fall. Learn more at: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/young-birders www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/family-nature

Young Birder Walks
 For students age 8 to 17
 1-2 students & 1 adult per family
 Register today to reserve spots
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org
 Free binocular loans available

Peregrine Photo: Jeffrey Seneca

Nature Explorer Walks
 Spring 2021 | Saw Mill River Audubon
 One parent/caregiver & two children per family
 Reserve: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/family-nature

Ongoing Zoom Education Outreach

We began offering Birding 101 Zoom workshops for local libraries during the pandemic and are also offering additional Zoom workshops about bird friendly backyards and identifying raptors. And the requests keep coming in! Let us know if you would like us to offer our Zoom workshops for your online community or organization. Visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/birding-101

Birding 101
 Learn or review the basics of identifying New York state birds and grow your birding skills
 Connect through one of the Zoom programs already scheduled OR consider hosting a new Zoom for your community
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/birding-101



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Least Sandpiper stopping over in Croton Point Park during its migration north up the Hudson River in May. Photo: Barbara Strobino

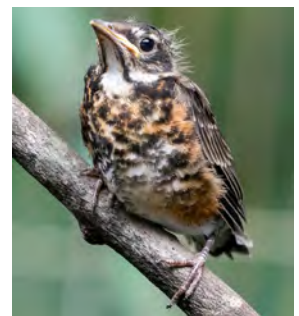
Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Summer!

Our twice monthly Bird Chat continues on Zoom and our small-group birding walks have expanded to 16 people. Our second Saturday walks continue at Brinton Brook Sanctuary. Be sure to subscribe to our private email list to get early notice about additional events:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list

When Baby Birds Really Do NOT Need Your Help...

Did you know that many birds leave the nest before they fly well OR before they know to hide from predators and humans? If you find a fledgling bird on the ground, just shoo it into shrubs (or move it with a towel.) Keep cats and dogs and kids away and then the parent birds will keep feeding the fledgling as it learns to hide and fly. Their best hope is to stay wild and outside.



Fledgling American Robin just out of the nest. Photo: US Fish & Wildlife Service

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