



Common Tern seen on August SMRA field trip to Jones Beach State Park. Photo: Judy Lipton

Fall 2021

Upcoming Events



Our small group pop-up field trip to Jones Beach State Park early morning in August offered views of shorebirds and more. Photo: Debbie van Zyl



Members of the Yorktown Garden Club had a tour of our Burke Plants for Birds meadow demonstration garden at Prunyn led by Garden Coordinator Donna Lassiter. Photo: SMRA



Charlie Roberto surveys invasive species atop the Croton Point Park grassland in August. See more on page 5. Photo: Anne Swaim

This fall our schedule is a hybrid with online activities continuing—our twice-monthly Bird Chat and our monthly public programs—and some in-person events—our small group field trips and our annual dinner on Sunday, September 26. Please note that all of our in-person events require completed COVID vaccinations. **Be sure to subscribe to our email list for updates on fall events: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list**

Bird Chat—Most 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7:00 pm, via Zoom

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

Field Trips—Once a week birding, 8:00 am, days & locations vary.

Register for bird walks: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips
Every Second Saturday, 9:00 am, Brinton Brook Sanctuary Guided Hike
No registration needed. Rain, snow, or shine. Adults and ages 8 and up.

Birdathon—October 8-10. See page 4 for details.

Fall Public Programs—Monthly via Zoom.

Register for link: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Thursday, September 23, 7:00 pm, via Zoom

Bird Migration on Long Island: Shai Mitra

Shai Mitra will survey Long Island hotspots where migrating birds can be seen, with special attention devoted to visible fall migration and the relationship between migration and vagrancy.

Tuesday, October 12, 7:00 pm, via Zoom

Special Program with David Sibley, “What It’s Like to be a Bird”

See more details on page 4 about this special event co-sponsored by twelve Westchester County libraries and four local Audubon chapters including Saw Mill River Audubon. Zoom seats limited. Register today to reserve your spot.

Thursday, November 11, 7:00 pm, via Zoom

Wildlife Photography with Peter Post

Peter Post will show a selection of his images of birds, bugs and other creatures and talk about his photographic techniques. His published photographs have been in *Audubon* and *Natural History* and in books such as *Handbook of the Birds of the World* and *Peterson Field Guide to Moths*.

Thursday, December 16, 7:00 pm, maybe via Zoom or maybe in person! ***Members’ Best Photography (and maybe Holiday Desserts)***

We’ve reserved the Croton Free Library but plans are still very uncertain. Be sure to subscribe to our events email list—see above— for updates.

President's Message

While weeding in the (partial) shade of the tall grasses and perennials at Saw Mill's Prun Sanctuary meadow garden on a hot July day, I couldn't help but think forward to what this garden and the butterfly and hummingbird garden will look like in the fall. In July, the grasses and many perennials are about as tall as I am, and nearly everything is flowering and constantly covered with fast-moving pollinators. By September, the grasses will be even taller, arching over the paths with seedheads waving in the breeze. The pollinators will be slowing down, but goldfinches and other birds will be feasting on the perennial seedheads. You can see this on a visit to Prun. See pictures and learn about our garden plants and the birds and insects they support on our website: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/gardens.



Valerie Lyle, SMRA President

We have a busy schedule for the fall, with many local field trips on both weekdays and weekends (pre-registration with group size is increased to 20 participants.) We are also looking forward to our third annual Birdathon (Oct. 8–10.) Learn more and register your team at: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/birdathon. We are also planning a trip to Montezuma NWR (Sep. 17–19), and a day trip to the Fire Island Hawk Watch (Oct. 16.) Our long-postponed Annual Dinner at Crabtree Kettle House is now planned for Sunday, Sep. 26. Look for more details on all these events elsewhere in this newsletter and on our website.

(Note that participants of all in-person events must be fully vaccinated.)

In addition to the in-person events, **we will continue our online offerings** with twice-monthly Bird Chats, a Nature Book Club session on Sep. 21 where we will discuss Helen Macdonald's book *Vesper Flights*, and several interesting public programs, including **an Oct. 12 program that you won't want to miss: David Sibley talking about his latest book, *What It's Like to Be a Bird***, presented in collaboration with 12 local libraries and three other Westchester Audubon chapters.

Finally, as many of our members are aware, **this summer has been a time of more unusual bird sightings**, something we've been seeing since the beginning of the pandemic as the number of active birders in our area has seemingly exploded. As a testament to the success of the Croton Point Park grassland restoration project now in its third year, grassland birds such as Grasshopper Sparrows and

Bobolinks returned to nest there, along with a new species for this area and a species that is fairly rare on the East Coast: the Dickcissel. And we did not have just one Dickcissel. First there were three males in full breeding plumage singing their hearts out for weeks, and then two females showed up, mated with two of the males, built nests, and, hopefully, hatched young. All of this was documented by a number of our dedicated photographers. The grassland, by the way, looks beautiful, and—like the Prun meadow garden—should continue to provide much visual interest for people as well as sustenance for birds and other wildlife throughout the year.

I'm looking forward to more exciting birding and bird sightings at Croton Point and other hotspots in our area as we move through the fall and into the winter.

You are invited to join our fellowship of birders and nature-lovers on some of our field trips, if you are able, or on a Bird Chat or other online program.

Valerie Lyle

Saw Mill River Audubon

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Kaye Anderson Lending Library

Did you know that the SMRA office has a library of over 1,100 books about birds, other wildlife and plants including field guides from around the world? Our library is named in honor of our first naturalist: Kaye Anderson. Are you planning—or just dreaming!—about a birding trip? We may have a field guide for you to borrow. Office hours are now Mon/Wed/Fri, 11:00 am to 4:00 pm but we recommend calling first (914-666-6503) for an appointment.

Joy of Birds Photography Exhibit
 February 1-28, 2022
 Hendrick Hudson
 Free Library
 Deadline to submit photographs
 for review is November 15, 2021
 Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/photos-exhibit to learn more



Common Redpoll on a Red Pole

SMRA is sponsoring a gallery exhibit of bird photography by SMRA members and friends at the Hendrick Hudson Free Library, February 1–28, 2022. We are looking for a variety of bird photography and welcome submissions of local birds as well as those from farther afield. Multiple submissions are encouraged. Electronic submissions are due by November 15, 2021. We will notify participants whether their pieces are selected for the exhibit by December 1, 2021. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/photos-exhibit

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 offered through a raffle with all proceeds supporting Saw Mill River Audubon’s conservation and education work.

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

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

First-Ever Birding Tea a Success!

On June 19 Cary Andrews hosted our first-ever Birding Tea in her Croton-on-Hudson home. The 40+ attendees included SMRA board members, new members, the wider Croton community, and other friends. Homemade goodies included penguin mini cupcakes, bird-shaped rice krispie treats, and many other desserts. Cary, wearing her bird hat, spoke with her guests about bird-friendly habitats and the work of Audubon. We hope to make this an annual event!



Birding Tea photos from Debbie van Zyl: (L.) Host Cary Andrews and SMRA President Val Lyle and (R) tea guests listening to Cary speak.

**Join Us for Our Annual Dinner
 Sunday, September 26**

You are invited to join us for our 2021 Annual Dinner on Sunday, September 26 at Crabtree’s Kittle House in Chappaqua. Our annual gathering was postponed three times by the pandemic, and we are excited to gather together at last. Feel comfortable to come alone or with family and friends with our open seating at tables of eight.

*** Please note that proof of COVID vaccination is required to attend this event. Please send or bring an image of your COVID NYS passport or your vaccination record. You will also be able to upload an image with our online reservations.

For more details and to make reservations online, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner. If you prefer, you may also call or email us to request reservations over the phone: 914-666-6503 or office@sawmillriveraudubon.org.

2021–2022 Bird Seed Sale — Order Flyer enclosed in this newsletter!

Saw Mill River Audubon’s annual bird seed sale supports our local conservation and education work. Once a year in the early fall, we order bulk quantities of high-quality bird seed for sale to the members and friends of Saw Mill River Audubon.

At our sale kick-off day, Saturday, September 25, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, at Pruyn Sanctuary, we offer no-contact pickup of pre-orders, and we will load your car. Using our online seed sale form, you can also request no-contact pickup after September 25 at Pruyn Sanctuary on another, later day of your choice, with self-loading.

We also offer seed pickup through the winter into spring on 3rd Saturday mornings at Pruyn Sanctuary from October to April, and our volunteers will also load your car on those 3rd Saturdays.

Online ordering is now available at our website:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed

Deadline to order is September 15 for the September 25 first pickup.

Want to help at our sale kick-off day or at our 3rd Saturday sale days?

Contact our office at 914-666-6503 or by email to office@sawmillriveraudubon.org to join up with our friendly crew of people working together to support Saw Mill River Audubon.

Fall Events

September Events

Sep. Bird Walks, 8:00 am
Register online. Limited to 20 people with vaccinations required. If sold out, join wait list since new spaces open weekly. www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Mon, 9/6, Muscoot Farm
Sat, 9/11, Rockefeller SPP
Mon, 9/13, Croton Pt Park
Fri, 9/17, Rockefeller SPP
Wed, 9/22, Marshlands
Sun, 9/26, Croton Pt Park

Saturday, Sep. 11, 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk
Brinton Brook

No registration needed. Rain or shine. Meet in main parking area. Good for adults and young people age 8 and up. This month's walk is part of the Hudson Valley Ramble.



Buff-breasted Sandpiper

Sunday, Sep. 12, 6:00 am
Birding the Black Dirt

We will visit Orange County's famed Black Dirt region in search of fall migrants including grasspipers like the Buff-breasted Sandpiper. For more information and to register for this trip, call or email us.

Tuesday, Sep. 14, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat via Zoom

All details, Zoom link, upcoming guests and reminders: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Tuesday, Sep. 21, 7:00 pm
SMRA Nature Book Club via Zoom

Come to listen and/or be part of the discussion about Helen Macdonald's *Vesper Flights*. www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club

Wednesday, Sep. 22, 7:00 pm
Public Zoom: Raptors for Rookies—Learn Hawk ID
Central Westchester Audubon joint program. Email for link: info@cwasyociety.org

Thursday, Sep. 23, 7:00 pm
Public Program: Shai Mitra, Long Island Bird Migration
Details and Zoom link: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Saturday, Sep. 25, 8:00 am–4:00 pm
Seed Sale Kickoff Day
See details on enclosed flyer.



Sunday, Sep. 26, 5:00–8:00 pm
Annual Dinner
Crabtree's Kittle House
See page 3. Reservations: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner or call 914-666-6503

Tuesday, Sep. 28, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat via Zoom
Details, Zoom link and reminders here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat



In June, SMRA hosted a field trip for the New York State Young Birders Club at Croton Point Park along with a picnic and a book swap at the Nature Center. SMRA Board Member Steve Rappaport and Executive Director Anne Swaim birded with the students. Learn more about the NYS Young Birders Club: www.nysyoungbirders.org

Special September Event



2021 Annual Dinner
Sunday, September 26

Crabtree's Kittle House, Chappaqua

Enjoy good food and company and interesting short programs. Reserve your seat(s) today. Space limited. Past dinners have sold out!

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner

Special October Events

What It's Like to Be a Bird
with David Allen Sibley
Tuesday, October 12th (via Zoom)
7:00pm - 8:15pm

Register: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/sibley

JOIN THE BIRDATHON! Friday, October 8 to Sunday, October 10

Bird in your own backyard,
or bird at your favorite hotspot,
or bird across six counties of New York!
Gather 1–10 other birders to form a team
and enter our Fall 2021 Birdathon
to compete with other birders, win prizes,
~ **AND** ~

Support the local work of Saw Mill River Audubon AND another group, if you wish.

Categories for all levels of birders!

ALL DETAILS & REGISTRATION
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/birdathon

Fall Events

October Events

Oct. Bird Walks, 8:00 am
Register online. Limited to 20 people with vaccinations required. If sold out, join wait list since new spaces open weekly. www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Mon, 10/4, Muscoot Farm
Mon, 10/11, Rockefeller SPP
Wed, 10/13, Croton Pt Park
Sun, 10/17, Croton Pt Park
Mon, 10/18, Marshlands
Wed, 10/27, Croton Pt Park

Friday, Oct. 1, 7:00 pm
NYS Ornithological Association Zoom Program
www.nybirds.org/annual2021

Friday, October 8 to
Sunday, October 10
SMRA Fall Birdathon
See box on page 4 and visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/birdathon

Saturday, Oct. 9, 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk
Brinton Brook
See description for 9/11.

**** SPECIAL EVENT ****
Tuesday, Oct. 12, 7:00 pm
David Sibley Live Zoom
See box on page 4 and visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/sibley

Update: Croton Point Grassland Restoration

Regional birders were delighted by the arrival of three male Dickcissels to the Croton Point grassland in early June. After these birds sang for a month, a female was seen nest building and a second female was seen as well. By late July, nesting was confirmed with one of the females carrying food to a nest. This is the first known Dickcissel nest in Westchester in 100+ years.

Now in its third year, the grassland restoration on the capped landfill has resulted in a much richer habitat of native grasses and perennials. SMRA has concerns about future mowing and invasive plant management. We will continue to monitor and advocate for this valuable grassland habitat. *Anne Swaim*



Saturday, Oct. 16,
9:30 am–12:30 pm
Third Sat Bird Seed Sale

Meet our volunteers at the seed shed at Prun Sanctuary to pick up your seed. See enclosed flyer for more details.

Saturday, Oct. 16, 7:00 am
Fire Island Hawk Watch

Meet us at the lighthouse hawk watching platform by Field 5 of Robert Moses SP for a morning of hawk watching and other shoreline birding. Email/call us to register and for details.

Tuesday, Oct. 26, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat

All details, Zoom link, upcoming guests and reminders: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Friday, October 29
to Sunday, October 31
Audubon Council of
New York State Meeting
Gathering of Audubon chapter leaders across New York. Email us for more info.



Male Dickcissel perched at the Croton Point grassland.
Photo: Lou Ann O'Hara

November Events

Nov. Bird Walks, 8:00 am
Register online. Limited to 20 people with vaccinations required. If sold out, join wait list since new spaces open weekly. www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Mon, 11/1, Muscoot Farm
Mon, 11/8, Rockefeller SPP
Wed, 11/17, Croton Pt Park
Sat, 11/20, Rockefeller SPP
Sun, 11/21, Croton Pt Park

Tuesday, Nov. 9, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat

All details, Zoom link, upcoming guests and reminders: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Thursday, Nov. 11, 7:00 pm
Public Program via Zoom
Wildlife Photography
with Peter Post
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

December Events

Dec. Bird Walks, 8:00 am
By registration only. See Nov.

Sat, 12/4, Rockefeller SPP
Mon, 12/6, Muscoot Farm
Sun, 12/12, Croton Pt Park
Mon, 12/13, Edith Read Sanctuary, Rye

Saturday, Dec. 11,
9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk
Brinton Brook
See description for 9/11.

Tuesday, Dec. 14, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat
See description for 10/26.
Note: no Bird Chat on 12/28.

Thursday, Dec. 16, 7:00 pm
Members' Best Program
May be in person or by Zoom. SMRA members and friends show their pictures. More here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/members-best

Saturday, Nov. 13, 9:00 am
Second Saturday Walk
Brinton Brook
See description for 9/11.

Tuesday, Nov. 16, 7:00 pm
Nature Book Club
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club

Saturday, Nov. 20,
9:30 am–12:30 pm
Third Sat Bird Seed Sale
See description for 10/16.

Tuesday, Nov. 23, 7:00 pm
Bird Chat
See description for 11/9.

Friday, Nov. 26, 9:00 am
Turkey Mountain Hike
No registration needed. See website for details.

Saturday, Nov. 27, 7:00 am
Leader's Choice Trip
See website for details.

Saturday, Dec. 18,
9:30 am–12:30 pm
Third Sat Bird Seed Sale
See description for 10/16.

Christmas Bird Counts
Now in its 122nd year! Birders count all birds in 15-mile diameter count circles with hundreds of count circles across the Americas.
See local CBC dates below and email or call the SMRA office for count organizer contacts if you want to help with a count.

Saturday, December 18
Peekskill Area CBC
Sunday, December 19
Greenwich-Stamford CBC
Sunday, December 26
Bronx-Westchester CBC
Sunday, January 2
Putnam CBC
Learn more
www.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count





The Purple Martin colony at Croton Point Park did well again this fourth year, completely filling the nesting structure that was coordinated by SMRA and funded by the Feed the Birds store in Croton, SMRA, and the Westchester Parks Foundation. Thanks to CPP Naturalist John Phillips for its care. Photo: LouAnn O'Hora

Connecting People and Nature since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Fall

We have more than 50 events scheduled between September and December to connect you with local habitats, birds and other wildlife.

Our small group bird walks visit local birding hotspots weekly. Tip: register for a walk that interests you even if that walk shows as sold out because new spaces open weekly. New birders always welcomed. We have binoculars to loan on all trips.

Our popular Bird Chat, via Zoom, continues to gather an average of 80 Lower Hudson birders twice monthly, with online conversation about bird sightings and birding hotspots. All are welcome.

**** Our Annual Dinner will be Sunday, September 26 at Kittle House! Details within. RSVP today! ****

Register for bird walks

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Register for Zoom programs

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs



Two more Mr. Lunetta's Explorer Bags were released into the wild this summer with Hudson River Audubon sponsoring two new bags for the Tuckaboe Public Library. Each bag contains two pairs of binoculars, bird and tree ID cards, and more nature-exploring tools. Our ongoing thanks to LL Bean for backpack donations. Eleven different Westchester County libraries now have Explorer Bags in circulation so that you can check out an adventure. Find out more—including more about Mr. Lunetta —by visiting www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/explore

**Bird Seed Sale Flyer
enclosed in this newsletter!**

Our annual bird seed sale offers you high-quality seed at good prices and supports our local conservation and education work.