



SMRA

SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

Summer 2022



SMRA volunteers installing new puncheon walkways at Brinton Brook Sanctuary in early May. See story on page 7. Photo: Terry McGarty



We enjoyed exploring Rockefeller State Park Preserve this spring with more than 600 students from four schools. These field trips were funded by New York State Connect Kids to Parks grants. Photo: Anne Swaim



Our schedule of public birding walks continued all spring with 30 walks between March and June. Come birding this summer! Photo: Anne Swaim



*Magnolia Warbler
Photo: Mitchell Goldfarb*

Summer Events

This summer, we have an in-person program and two special Zoom programs. See www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Bird walks continue June through August and are listed on page 3.

Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Live Raptor Program!


Saturday, June 4, 2:00 pm
Croton Point Park Cabins
(Teller's Pt, past RV campground)

Details and RSVP www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/raptor-program



Saturday, June 4, 2:00 pm
Live Raptor Program with James Eyring
Croton Point Park, Teller's Point Lawn

Falconer James Eyring always presents lively and engaging programs when he visits with his birds of prey. Don't miss this free and in-person program sponsored by Saw Mill River Audubon. RSVP helpful at following link with more details: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/raptor-program.



JUNE 22 @ 7PM

FREE LIVE WEBINAR

COEXIST WITH COYOTES

HOSTED BY SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON WITH THE WOLF CONSERVATION CENTER



Wednesday, June 22
7:00 pm via Zoom
Coexist with Coyotes
Wolf Conservation Center

Dana Goin, Wildlife Outreach Specialist at the Wolf Conservation Center, will present this Zoom program about eastern coyotes, their history and ecology, and what we can do to coexist with them. Zoom link and reminders: www.eventbrite.com/e/277663477937. Get a better understanding of the behavior and benefits of the eastern coyote and how to empower our community with the tools, information and resources we require to peacefully coexist with this misunderstood predator.

See more summer events on page 3 and at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

To view this newsletter as a PDF in color and with clickable links, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news

President's Message—Is It Worth It?

By the time you see this newsletter, we will have kicked off our 2022 Annual Fund Drive. Our members' generous donations have enabled us to do so much to connect people and nature, providing over half of our operating cost. **Here is what your 2021 donations made possible.**

Habitat—We maintain nine miles of hiking trails and protect more than 300 acres of wildlife habitat in our eight sanctuaries. (See page 7 for a recent volunteer effort.) In 2021, we enhanced our sanctuaries by planting 90 native trees and shrubs and many wildflowers with the help of Boy Scouts, preschool parents, and other volunteers.

The two native plant gardens at our Pruyn sanctuary are maintained by volunteers. They have become destinations for people from Westchester and New York City to discover how native plantings attract and support both pollinators and birds.



SMRA sanctuary volunteers. Story on page 7.

Photo: Phil Heidelberger



SMRA birding trip. Photo: Anne Swaim

Education and Connecting

People to Nature—The addition of virtual programs has enabled us to reach hundreds more people every month. Our twice-monthly Bird Chats, hosted on Zoom and coordinated by Executive Director Anne Swaim, provide a forum for birders across the region to connect regularly and share experiences and knowledge. We average over 70 people most sessions. Brand new birders are welcome too. Our monthly Zoom public programs featured expert presentations on topics including penguins from around the world, the challenges birds face and how our yards can help, migration from a bird's eye view, wildlife and bird photography, a virtual tour of California birding hot spots, climate change impacts on the Adirondacks, learning bird song, and growing a meadow garden. Presenting on Zoom enables us to bring in presenters and attendees without geographic limitations. In 2022, we also hope to hold some in-person programs in local libraries.

Article continues on page 4

Saw Mill River Audubon

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Visit us online: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

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ON THE WING, Saw Mill River Audubon's newsletter, is published four (4) times a year (Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer) for \$7.50 a year by Saw Mill River Audubon, 275 Millwood Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514. Periodical Postage #013281 at Chappaqua, NY 10514. ISSN: 1545-5254 at Chappaqua, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Address changes sent to Saw Mill River Audubon, 275 Millwood Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514

2022 Birding Quilt Raffle!



This quilt will be raffled off in support of the local conservation work of Saw Mill River Audubon. The winner will be announced at our 2022 Annual Dinner to be held at Crabtree's Kittle House, Chappaqua, on Friday, September 9, 2022.

To see close-up color views of the quilt and to purchase raffle tickets, visit:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt

Summer 2022 Schedule

Special Summer Events

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary
6/11, 7/9, 8/13. Meet at 9:00 am in the main lot. Walk typically lasts two hours. Rain does not cancel but, if extreme weather forecasted, always check our website calendar before traveling. For adults, and youth 8 and up. No registration required.

Zoom Public Programs

Get more details and register for Zoom links and reminders at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Saturday, June 4, 2:00 pm, Croton Point Park
Live raptor program with James Eyring!
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/raptor-program

Wednesday, June 22, 7:00 pm via Zoom
Learn about coyotes with Wolf Conservation Center.

Thursday, July 28 7:00 pm via Zoom
Introduction & review of shorebird identification.



Bird Chat, 2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7:00 pm. A Zoom gathering of regional birders. Beginners welcome! Past Bird Chat videos are on our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/sawmillriveraudubon.

Register for Zoom link and email reminders:

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

- Note that June Bird Chats will be on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays: June 7 and 21.



Save the Date!
Friday, September 9,
6:00 pm

After four postponements, we are very glad to plan for our next annual dinner!

We will gather once again at Crabtree's Kittle House for a delicious meal and an engaging evening program. Stay tuned for early registration and more details! Be sure you are subscribed to our private events email list: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list

Birding Field Trips

Details & registration online at:

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Trips marked OPEN do not require registration

JUNE — WALKS START 7:00 am

Saturday, June 4, Croton Point Park
Sunday, June 5, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Monday, June 6, Muscoot Farm (OPEN)
Wednesday, June 22, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Monday, June 27, Croton Point Park (OPEN)
Wednesday, June 29, Marshlands Conservancy



JULY — WALKS START 7:00 am

Sunday, July 3, Croton Point
Monday, July 4, Muscoot Farm
Monday, July 18, Rockefeller State Park Preserve
Saturday, July 30 Marshlands Conservancy

AUGUST — WALKS START 7:00 am

Monday, August 1, Muscoot Farm (OPEN)
Saturday, August 6, Croton Point Park
Sunday, August 14, Rockefeller State Park Preserve
Wednesday, August 31, Marshlands Conservancy

DAWN CHORUS WALKS — START 6:00 am

Earlier walks to catch the spring dawn chorus. No registration is required. Details: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Friday, June 24, Pruyn Sanctuary (OPEN)
Thursday, June 30, Brinton Brook (OPEN)



By the time this newsletter is mailed out, these young Red-tailed Hawks in a nest at Croton Point Park may be branching, leaving the nest to perch nearby as the parents still feed them. Sometimes they end up on the ground. They don't need rescue; they just need to be a safe distance from people and pets. For the sake of good bird habitat year round, please keep your dogs leashed at all times at Croton Point. Photo: Steve Kowalczyk

President's Message—Is It Worth It? *continued from page 2*

Anne Swaim also presented 18 virtual Birding and Raptor 101 programs in conjunction with 10 local libraries, reaching over 500 people. Small-group bird walks led by Anne in Westchester parks keep us all in touch with nature throughout the year. Some lucky members also joined some of our longer field trips this past year: to Cape May in November, Yellowstone in May, and the Fire Island Hawk Watch in October. We will continue offering weekend and longer field trips going forward. Sign up for our big trip email list to get early notice at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list.

Engaging Youth With Nature—Cultivating an appreciation for nature in our younger citizens is a special priority for SMRA. Eight educator-led Young Birder and Nature Explorer Walks last year brought children and their parents into local parks. Our work with the NY State Connect Kids to Parks program brought over 600 students from five schools in Westchester and NYC to field trips at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. These were a first introduction to birding and hands-on nature for many. Our Larry Light Scholarship sent an area high school student to the National Audubon birding camp at Hog Island, Maine, last year, and we sponsored a local teen who installed screech owl nest boxes in several of our sanctuaries as his Eagle Scout project. We continue to provide support and mentoring to the New York State Young Birders Club. Our new Pruyn Sanctuary feedercam is being watched by local classrooms. And two local organizations, The Rewilding School and Chappaqua Friends Nursery, run preschool programs in two of our sanctuaries, bringing nature skills and knowledge to children 3 to 5 years old.



SMRA school trip. Photo: Anne Swaim

Advocacy—Digging into public policy and other issues affecting our environment, birds and other wildlife is another high priority. We are continually monitoring issues related to Westchester County parks and especially the health of the Croton Point grasslands. We also engage on local environmental issues such as siting of new solar infrastructure and other projects. In 2021, our advocacy committee presented two well-attended and informative webinars on the environmental impact of food choices and recently presented another one on questions about plastics recycling (see page 5). Our advocacy committee is currently delving into the question of native habitats at solar sites as well as beginning a bird-safe building project to engage office building owners and managers to offer assistance to avoid bird collisions. Visit www.youtube.com/sawmillriveraudubon for program recordings.

I hope you agree that this is important work worth your support!

We know this may be a difficult time for many with all the uncertainty in the world right now, but your support this year is critical to the work we do, right here.

And, we are asking for more than your financial support. Volunteers are what we are about. We need garden volunteers, sanctuary volunteers, creative people to help us plan programs and field trips, and energetic people to work with our advocacy committee. Contact the office by email or phone to find out more about volunteer opportunities.

Or visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/volunteer and, if you are able, also visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate

Valerie Lyle, President, Saw Mill River Audubon



Pruyn Sanctuary Plants for Birds demonstration meadow garden plots, maintained by volunteers. Come garden with us! Photo: Anne Swaim



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

News Flash: Recycling Works!

At least in Westchester County. That was one among the encouraging messages about waste learned by the people who attended SMRA's webinar on recycling on April 28.

Deputy Commissioner Louis Vetrone and Assistant Commissioner Melissa-Jean Rotini from Westchester County's Department of Environmental Facilities, presented an informative slide show about the increasingly sophisticated county recycling and waste disposal programs. Also presenting were a trio of Peters. State Senator Pete Harckham and former Chappaqua resident Peter Spendelow, now a natural resource specialist at the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, spoke about Extended Producer Responsibility laws. Peter McCartt, County Director of Energy Conservation and Sustainability, endorsed the environmental initiatives in the county and state and introduced Vetrone and Rotini. The county officials sought to dispel three myths about recycling:



Myth 1: Products collected at the curb are not recycled. In Westchester, this is not true. For the 90 percent of the county's population whose recyclables are managed by the county, more than 90 percent of the items collected at the curb are recycled: turned from waste into usable products. They attributed the county's high success rate to the county's having a population well educated in recycling protocols; the maintenance of dual-stream recycling (paper and commingled plastic/glass kept separate), which greatly reduces contamination of paper recyclables; and the county's continual upgrading of its Yonkers-based Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) with sorters that help produce very clean materials to sell to companies that use recycled products.



Myth 2: Recycling is not worth it. Recycling is economically beneficial to the county and last year brought in \$2 million in profit (while other years it breaks even). And every ton of waste that is recycled saves \$105 that would otherwise be paid by the county to dispose of it.

Myth 3: When in doubt, recycle it. *Au contraire, when in doubt, throw it out.*

Signs at Material Recovery Facility

Non-recyclables in the blue bin are among the biggest challenges faced by the county. The county does not recycle plastic bags, and they should not be in the bin nor used to hold recyclables at the curb. They cause problems including fires at the MRF. If a container is not cleanable, it should be thrown out. Thermal cash receipts are not recyclable. Wet paper is a huge problem. However, the county does recycle and manage to find markets for plastics numbered 1–7, so all these should be put in the bin. Caps should either be left on or thrown away. Milk and other cartons should be included with commingled. More information can be found here: tinyurl.com/2p96dukD. Many other products, such as e-waste and household chemicals, can be brought to the Household MRF in Valhalla.

State Senator Harckham discussed the need for an Extended Producer Responsibility law in New York State to minimize waste at the front end. Bills are currently in committee in both state legislative bodies. Such a bill would require the state to work with industry to make producers responsible for ensuring their products and packaging are made with the environment in mind: using recycled materials as much as possible and leaving a minimal amount of unrecyclable waste when discarded.

Oregon is one of two states in the U.S. to have an Extended Producer Responsibility law, along with Maine, although many European countries and Canadian provinces do. Peter Spendelow (see story on page 6) described how Oregon has shifted its focus from recycling per se to an overall materials management focus, in part to reduce the environmental damage from creating products from virgin materials. Its 2021 Recycling Modernization Act commits the state in the next five years to bringing producers together as part of a state Producer Responsibility Organization whose many charges include ensuring that products have responsible end markets available at the end of their life cycles.

The full program is on SMRA's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/sawmillriveraudubon.

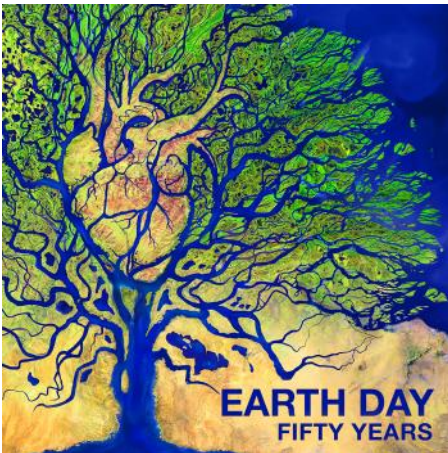
Jennifer Stern

50 Years After Earth Day

A 1970 Horace Greeley High School graduate who grew up near SMRA's Gedney Brook Sanctuary (now Pruyn Sanctuary), Peter Spendelow attended the first Earth Day at Greeley High in Chappaqua in April 1970 as well as the larger Earth Fair that October which was organized by SMRA. An active and still-current member of SMRA and an enthusiastic birder since his teens, he worked on the trails in the Gedney Sanctuary and was sponsored by the chapter to attend the National Audubon camp in Maine. He earned his undergraduate degree at Yale and a Ph.D. at the University of Washington and became involved in recycling issues, which led to his current position at the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. After 50 years in the environmental movement, he has a few thoughts on the environment then and now.



We've learned so much more since 1970, and priorities have shifted. Our national clean air and clean water programs have done an amazing job of cleaning up much of the pollution that plagued our country in 1970. The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act and the Superfund Program have greatly reduced our exposure to toxic waste. We no longer have major unlined landfills or open burning dumps. Our landfills have liners and leachate collection systems, greatly reducing the contamination of groundwater and releases of gases such as methane, compared to the situation in 1970 (although landfills are still a major source of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas).



But we still consume too much material. It is the production of materials—the cutting down of trees to make paper, the pumping of oil and gases out of the ground to produce fuel and plastic, and the digging up of ore and processing it to make metal—which is a much bigger threat to our environment compared to the relatively small environmental damage directly caused by landfills.

What I've learned is that recycling is important, but not sufficient. We cannot recycle our way out of our environmental problems. On the list of important things for protecting the environment, recycling is on the list, but fairly far down. Other things, such as the way we grow and consume our food, and importantly, the types of food we choose to grow, can be much more impactful on our environment.

The production of food has huge environmental impacts, including being one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas (particularly from animal agriculture); destroying native grasslands, shrubs, and forests; polluting our waters and our air; causing the production and spreading millions of tons of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers; and promoting the killing and displacement of our native predators, such as wolves and coyotes, and of the animals that compete with our livestock, such as prairie dogs.

So I think it is important to use the knowledge we've gained over the past 50 years to really work on effective steps to reduce our impact on the natural world.



What About that Bird Fluttering at Your Window?

Interactions between birds and windows happens during the breeding season when birds see their reflection in your window. Birds may think that their reflection is a different bird of their species trespassing on their territory, a rival to chase away. What to do? Massachusetts Audubon has several good tips on this issue and other bird–window issues here: www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/birds/birds-attacking-windows

The Puncheons Are In

One of the predicted effects of climate change in the northeastern United States is an increase in precipitation. Indeed, as you have probably informally observed, this is already happening. Historical data for New York City's (Central Park) annual rainfall available at www.ncdc.noaa.gov/cag/city/time-series shows that the five-year average rainfall was never above 48 inches per year between 1900 and 1965. There was a sharp rise beginning in 1966 with most years now well above 48 inches per year and some as high as 58 inches per year. The most recent five-year average was 53 inches per year.

This increased rainfall has had a visible impact on SMRA's sanctuaries. Some trails with marginal drainage that were once only occasionally muddy are now perpetually muddy and often have several inches of standing water on them. This causes the trail to become ever wider as people attempt to avoid the mud by walking around the edges. One such trail is the

southeastern section of the Pond Loop Trail in Brinton Brook Sanctuary. To address this particular problem, SMRA obtained a \$1,000 grant (which covered about half the cost of the project) from National Audubon to install two wooden puncheon boardwalks along this trail; one is 150 feet long, the other is 50 feet. This involved a considerable amount of work since there was a large amount of heavy lumber (82 pieces in all!) to haul from the parking lot where the lumber was delivered to the



work site about half a mile away. The work was accomplished over two days in late April to early May. On the first day, nine volunteers hauled all the "sleepers" (the



pieces that rest on the ground) to the work site and all the long planks that are nailed onto the sleepers half way to the site. On the second day, 16 volunteers hauled the remaining lumber to the site and built the puncheons. During construction, the hard part is getting the sleepers level because of all the roots

and rocks on the trail. In all, 20 different volunteers contributed a total of about 114 volunteer hours to complete this project! Everyone involved found the project both rewarding and fun. Our sincere thanks to all of them. We invite you to visit Brinton to see the fruits of this labor and to please consider volunteering for future work projects.

Phil Heidelberg

Saw Mill River Audubon thanks Phil Heidelberg for planning and overseeing the above project in Brinton Brook Sanctuary which was supported by a collaborative grant from National Audubon via Audubon New York. **We are grateful to the volunteer team that made this project possible:** Erik Andersen, Mary Ayers, Erik Brodsky, Luci Brodsky, Rudy Fasciani, Ellis Gitlin, Patrick Harty, Phil Heidelberg, Jody Hughes, Michael Madias, Jr., Greg Madias, Dave Margulis, Terry McGarty, Jim Meigs, Ayumi Noda, Michael Pashley, Steve Rappaport, Jenni Stern, Fred Stern, and David Watson. Thanks also to Saw Mill River Audubon sanctuary workers Danny & Eric Ferguson. Thank you all for making a difference.



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*Yellow-throated Warbler at Ooscavania Island.
Photo: Steve Rappaport*

PERIODICAL POSTAGE

PAID

at Chappaqua, NY
and additional offices

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Summer!

We have more than two dozen events scheduled between June and August to connect you with local habitats, birds and other wildlife.

Small-group bird walks. Online programs. Sanctuary walks. **We connect people with nature!**



**This summer,
don't be a birdnapper!**

This bird is a fledgling American Robin. It does not need to be rescued even though it cannot fly yet. Put it in bushes. Keep cats and dogs away. Let it stay wild. Learn more here: sawmillriveraudubon.org/baby-birds

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

☐ \$1000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250

☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$35 ☐ \$_____

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Basic Chapter Membership:

☐ Enclosed is \$35

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