



# Spring 2023



*Red-shouldered Hawk.  
North County Trailway,  
Briarcliff Manor.  
Photo: Mitchell Goldfarb*



*SMRA volunteers at the SMRA table in the big tent at EagleFest showing off our raptor faces: Kara Mason, Kathleen Williamson and Melina Cronin. More about that big eagle quilt on page 8.*



*SMRA and Teatown volunteers at the George's Island warming tent during the 2023 EagleFest with (center) Park staff Stonie Oates; volunteers (from L) Ponie Sheehan, Pam Zicca and (from R) Steve Rappaport and Larry Trachtenberg. Photo: Rik Kaufman.*



*Saw Mill River Audubon birding walk at Muscote Farm in early December. Come birding with us this spring! All are welcome including first-time birders, and we loan binoculars on all walks. Visit our website for upcoming dates and for free registration.*

## Spring Highlights *See more events on Page 3*

We highlight three special spring programs below that are in-person events. We are also offering a couple of Zoom programs. For more details and to register for all programs, visit: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs). Our birding field trips continue April through June and are listed on page 3. Visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips)

### **Sunday, April 2, 2023, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm — Our Annual Dinner!**

Our annual dinner, this year a potluck, will be held along the Hudson River in Ossining at The Center at Mariandale, on Sunday, April 2, starting with a casual reception at 5:00 pm. All are invited! Feel comfortable to come alone or with family and friends with our open seating and welcoming group tables. Our program will feature images and stories from our 2022 South Africa trip followed by the raffle drawing for our 2023 Bird Quilt. Our usual quick finale will feature images from SMRA projects and activities. Will you be in our pictures? Space limited. RSVP [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner)

### **Sunday, April 23, 3:00 pm — Feather & Bone Poetry and Bird Images**

In honor of poetry month and in celebration of the release of SMRA Board Member Kathleen Williamson's poetry book, *Feather & Bone*, join us at the Chappaqua Library as Kathleen reads selections from her work, accompanied by images and bird notes from SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim.

### **Saturday, June 17, 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm — Our Birding Tea Returns!**

All are invited to a proper high tea with lovely homemade goodies and tea at Cary Andrews' house in Croton-on-Hudson. This is an informal gathering to meet other Audubon friends and to talk about creating backyard habitat and bird-friendly gardens, as well as other ways we can help our fine-feathered friends. RSVP is required and space will be limited. To RSVP, call Cary at 914-271-4138 or email her at [oomis@aol.com](mailto:oomis@aol.com). The Birding Tea is a benefit for Saw Mill River Audubon with a suggested donation of \$20/person.

### **Two Zoom Webinars — Details at [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org)**

#### **Thursday, March 9, 7:30 pm — Tune Your Ears & Eyes for Spring Birds**

SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim will lead this one-hour Zoom review of spring bird sounds and sights.

#### **Wednesday, May 10, 7:00 pm—Impact of Artificial Light at Night**

Larry Faltz, M.D., a leader in the local amateur astronomy communities, will illustrate and discuss the impact of nighttime artificial lighting on both human and wildlife health.

## President's Message—Stepping Down



*Outgoing SMRA President  
Valerie Lyle*

This is my last President's Message. It's with mixed feelings that I've decided to step down as Saw Mill River Audubon President. I've had many wonderful experiences over the past seven years and have enjoyed working with our talented board members and meeting and getting to know many of our chapter members. Vice President Tom Ruth and Treasurer Tom McEnerney are also stepping down from their roles. I want to thank them both for their dedicated service as officers, and I can assure you that they will continue to be valued board members and leaders of SMRA. Tom Ruth will also continue to lead our Advocacy Committee.

I'm enthusiastic about the new leadership team that was elected at the March 6 board meeting: Erik Andersen, President; Suzanne Kavic, Vice President; and Lynn Salmon, Treasurer. All three bring skills from other organizations, and they have been very active in a variety of roles during their service on Saw Mill River Audubon's board. I know that they will also bring fresh ideas to our leadership team.

I would also like to thank Bill Kellner for his service as Secretary, long-time board member, and active member of our Advocacy Committee. He has agreed to serve another one-year term as Secretary.

When I became President in 2016, Saw Mill River Audubon's energetic and talented board members and volunteers were already engaged in a wide variety of activities, including bird walks and field trips, sanctuary work days, and the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden at Pruyn Sanctuary.

Since then, work in our sanctuaries has continued and expanded. Many native plants have been added to the Brinton Brook Sanctuary meadow, bringing an abundance of butterflies, dragonflies, and other insects in late summer and fall. Pruyn Sanctuary now has a second native-plant garden; both Pruyn gardens attract a huge array of pollinators as well as human visitors. Volunteers plant native trees and shrubs at Brinton and other sanctuaries each year, and we have recently begun an effort to improve trails that have already been degraded by heavy use and extreme weather events.

Our engagement with the county Parks Department, led by Anne Swaim, monitored the successful restoration of the Croton Point grassland. Many grassland birds now rely on this habitat for nesting, wintering, or stopovers.

Our Advocacy Committee is now a large and enthusiastic group that puts together several webinars each year to educate our members and the public about what we as individuals can do to protect birds, wildlife, and habitat and to mitigate climate change. They also monitor local and regional environmental issues, preparing and guiding SMRA's involvement and responses to these issues.

Our youth education work has expanded to include new programs that get entire classrooms out for field trips at Rockefeller State Park, as well as programs and walks geared to families. We provide support and mentoring for the New York State Young Birders Club, and two local organizations run forest preschools at Pruyn and Brinton Brook sanctuaries.

During the pandemic, Anne Swaim found new opportunities to expand our outreach, meeting people's increased need for connection with nature. The Zoom Bird Chats introduced then are now a permanent part of our offerings, attracting 70+ people from our local area and beyond every other week.

*Continued on Page 4*

### Saw Mill River Audubon

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Visit us online: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org)

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Treasurer: Lynn Salmon Secretary: William Kellner

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**For a full-color view of this newsletter with clickable links:  
visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news)**



## Spring 2023 Schedule

### Birding Field Trips

**8:00 am\*** start for March & April birding.  
**7:00 am\*** start for May through September.

\* except special bird trips noted below in boldface

Register: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips)  
 including March birding field trips listed in previous newsletter.

### APRIL

Monday, April 3, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Friday, April 7, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Monday, April 10, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Saturday, April 15, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Thursday, April 20, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

**Special Birding Trips — note start times**

Sat, April 1, **4:00 pm**, Afternoon Walk: Croton Pt. Park

Sat, April 22, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Anglefly Preserve

Wed, April 26, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Pruyn Sanctuary

Sun, April 30, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Rockefeller SPP

**MAY — note change to 7:00 am May through Sep**

Monday, May 1, 7:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Thursday, May 4, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Saturday, May 13, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Thursday, May 18, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Friday, May 19, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Wednesday, May 31, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

**Special Birding Trips — note start times**

Sat, May 6, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Brinton Brook

Sun, May 7, **4:00 pm**, Afternoon Walk: Croton Pt. Park

Thu, May 11, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Pruyn Sanctuary

Mon, May 15, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Rockefeller SPP

Sat, May 20, **5:30 am**, Field Trip, Doodletown IBA

Mon, May 29, **6:00am**, Dawn Birding, Croton Pt. Park

### JUNE

Saturday, June 3, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Monday, June 5, 7:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Monday, June 19, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Thursday, June 22, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Monday, June 26, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

**Special Birding Trips — note start times**

Thu, June 1, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Croton Pt. Park

Sun, June 4, **4:00 pm**, Afternoon Walk: Croton Pt. Park

Sat, June 17, **6:00 am**, Dawn Birding, Rockefeller SPP

Sun, June 18, **6:30am**, Field Trip, Sterling Forest SP

Visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips)  
 for details and registration for our birding walks  
 and extended field trips.

### Saw Mill River Audubon Potluck Dinner

**Sunday, April 2, 5:00 pm**

The Center at Mariandale, Ossining

Come celebrate spring with Audubon!

RSVP [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner)



*Feather  
& Bone*  
poems by  
KATHLEEN  
WILLIAMSON

Sunday April 23  
3:00 pm  
Chappaqua  
Library  
Poetry Reading  
with images of birds from  
Saw Mill River Audubon

**Birding Tea!**  
**Saturday, June 17**  
**3:00 to 5:30 pm**  
 Hosted by Cary Andrews  
 Croton-on-Hudson  
 RSVP & Space limited  
 Benefits Saw Mill River Audubon | \$20 person donation

For above events, see page 1 for details.

### Still More Spring Events

**Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary**  
**3/11, 4/8, 5/13, 6/10.** Meet at 9:00 am in the main lot.  
 Walk typically lasts two hours. Rain or shine but always  
 check our website calendar before traveling. For adults  
 and youth 8 and up. No registration required.

**Nature Book Club, Tuesday, April 18, 7:00 pm**  
 Visit: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club)

### Zoom Public Programs

[www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs)

**Thu, March 9, 7:30 pm**

Tune Your Ears & Eyes for Spring Birds: Anne Swaim

**Tue, 3/14&28, 4/11&25, 5/9&30, 6/6&20, 7:00 pm**

Bird Chats, [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat)

**Wed, May 10, 7:00 pm**

Impact of Artificial Light at Night: Larry Faltz, M.D.

## President's Message—Stepping Down *Continues from Page 2*

We also began offering more frequent bird walks during the pandemic, and these have remained popular.

Coming up in September is the 2023 **New York State Ornithological Society annual conference**, also known as the New York Birders Conference, which we will be hosting right here in Westchester. This exciting event will offer a full weekend of speakers, field trips, workshops, and other activities, and opportunities to meet birders, including youth birders, from all over the state. See the article below for more information and, if you are interested, be sure to register starting April 1. We also need volunteers to help with planning ahead of time, to handle logistics leading up to the conference, and to staff the event. Contact our office to join in with our friendly team who will be producing this event.

This is not a true farewell from me since I will remain on the board with somewhat reduced responsibilities as Board Chair. I also plan to get more involved in committee work and actual hands-on volunteer work for Saw Mill River Audubon.

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to be part of the leadership team of such a vibrant organization, and I want to emphasize that the work we do is a joint effort by our dedicated board members, chapter members and staff, led by Anne Swaim, our Executive Director.

**Thank you, everyone, for your support. You make Saw Mill River Audubon's work possible.**

*Valerie Lyle, Outgoing President, Saw Mill River Audubon*



**David Allen Sibley** is coming to Tarrytown for the **New York State Birders Conference**, hosted by Saw Mill River Audubon in September! This event is also the 2023 meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association which connects the birds and birders of the Empire State through over 40 Audubon chapters and bird clubs. David Allen Sibley will be our keynote speaker on Saturday night at the **Sleepy Hollow Hotel and Conference Center** in Tarrytown next to the Cuomo/Tappan Zee Bridge. We have reserved a block of hotel rooms at a discounted conference rate. (Hotel reservations not available until April 1st.) Some Friday night activities will also be held at Croton Point Park, where we have reserved all the cabins on Teller's Point. We are offering these cabins first to members of the New York State Young Birders Club and their parents. Visit [www.nysyoungbirders.org](http://www.nysyoungbirders.org) to learn about this club. Remaining cabins will be offered to other conference participants. RV and tent reservations available now.

**Registration opens April 1st**, and we do expect a crowd, especially with David Allen Sibley as our keynote and Tom Stephenson as workshop speaker.

**For the latest info, visit [www.nybirders.org](http://www.nybirders.org).**

### Event highlights include:

- Excellent morning field trips on Saturday and Sunday to key birding hotspots will be led by several SMRA leaders and Bird Chat participants.
- Saturday afternoon workshops on birding and photography skills, advocacy and arts followed by the NYSOA annual delegates meeting.
- Birding quiz for all ages led by the NYS Young Birders Club Friday night at Croton Point Park with a birding-themed campfire and owl prowl.
- Vendor area for bird and nature gifts and more. Visit [www.nybirders.org](http://www.nybirders.org) to be a vendor!
- Saturday night banquet with delicious food, good company and our very special keynote speaker.



## New Board Leadership and New Board Members

### Incoming Board President Erik Andersen

A midwesterner by birth, I grew up in suburban Washington, DC, did my undergraduate studies in Bloomington, IN, and graduate work at NYU's GBA, now known as Stern.

In my professional life, I was a financial trader for 24 years.

After retiring in 2004, I became Executive Director of the Danish Home for the Aged in Croton-on-Hudson. I lived in Evansville, IN, St. Louis, MO, Chicago and Gilman, IL, followed by Croton-on-Hudson where I have lived for the past 35 years. My wife, Eva, a nurse-practitioner, and I have two adult children, Bjorn and Liv. In addition to SMRA, I have served on the boards of the Museum of Danish America, Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson, the Danish Home, and the Danish American Society. Eva and I are avid outdoors people, active birders, amateur astronomers, paddlers, skiers and hikers.



### Incoming Treasurer Lynn Salmon

What do a Polish salt mine, the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Buddhist cave temples on the Silk Road, the Grand Canyon, and the Byzantine churches of Cyprus have in common? They were my research sites when, as a senior scientist at Caltech, I specialized in the study of effects of atmospheric pollution on cultural properties. Where might you find me now that I've retired? I might be travelling. I might be geocaching. I might be birding. And in winter I definitely will be curling. Geocaching, hiking, and birding have taken me to every park and preserve in Westchester County. Through my outdoor activities I've come to appreciate the importance of natural habitats and the work of Saw Mill River Audubon.



### Incoming Vice President

#### Suzanne Kavic



I was fortunate to grow up on a Pennsylvania farm surrounded by mountains and large expanses of wilderness. I spent the majority of my free time outside, on our farm or sailing on Lake Erie. Although my family didn't farm for a living, all our neighbors did, so an awareness of the seasons and respect for

nature was part of our daily life. My husband and I have lived in Westchester County since 2001, but it wasn't until I retired in 2016 that I found the time to learn more about birds and birding. Thankfully, neighbors pointed me in the direction of SMRA's weekly bird walks, and a new obsession was born. As a physician, I have served on multiple professional boards, including medical societies at the county, state and national level with the AMA. I currently serve as 1st Vice President of the Westchester County League of Women Voters.

### New Board Members



**Mark Magel** lives in Croton-on-Hudson adjacent to the Graff Sanctuary with his wife, Nina Romanoff. Both are former board members of SMRA. Mark is a New York State Master Gardener with a deer management specialty. In his work as a professional horticulturalist, Mark was responsible for the design and installation of the

bird and butterfly garden for the Bedford Audubon Society, the Rockefeller University butterfly garden, and estate landscapes throughout the lower Hudson Valley. As president of Manhattan Garden Arts, Mark designed grounds for over 150 major cultural institutions, universities, landmark office and residential buildings in NYC including his alma mater, Columbia University.

*Continued on Page 6*

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

## New Board Members *Continues from Page 5*



### Kara Mason

Pleasantville, my home for the past 22 years, is where I raised my two wonderful daughters. As the owner of a dental practice in NYC, I had a flexible schedule that afforded our family generous time to travel. Tanzania, Galapagos, and the Amazon are among our adventures. In each oasis, local naturalists passionately introduced us to their flora and fauna but also impressed upon us the increasing human threat to those fragile ecosystems. From these eye-opening trips my passions for conservation, photography and birding took flight! With the alarming loss of biodiversity and its impact on birds, SMRA's local role becomes ever more impactful. As a member of the board and of the Advocacy Committee, my aspiration is to promote education, action, and optimism for environmental conservation. [During her travels, Kara Mason is also an accomplished bird photographer and presented a program, "Three Great Birding Spots," for our June 7, 2022 Bird Chat. See it here: [https://youtu.be/iqRMr\\_sBSxw](https://youtu.be/iqRMr_sBSxw) ]



*Participants on 2023 First Day Walk led by SMRA Board Member Larry Trachtenberg at Rockwood Hall State Park. This photo & right: Lynn Salmon*

### First Day Hike: 2023

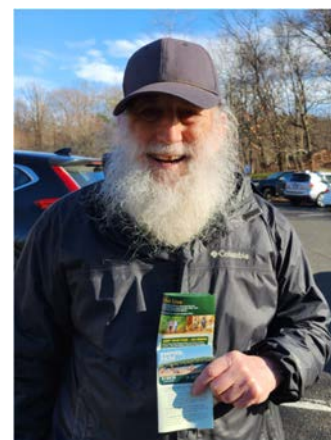
January First: Let's take a hike. The NYS Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation sponsors hikes annually on New Year's Day in parks throughout the state. The hikes tend to be well attended, weather permitting, and for this year's walk in Westchester County, it was very permitting. It was a balmy 43° at the start of the 9:00 am walk, a walk I have led for the past several years.

The Westchester walk is always at Rockwood Hall State Park, an 88-acre section of the larger Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Participants are treated to dramatic views of the Hudson River on a property loaded with specimen trees. It was once the 204-room Gilded Age home (since torn down) of

William Rockefeller, Jr., younger brother of John D. Many of the folks on this hike return from year-to-year, not for my knowledge (or lack thereof) or even my brilliant repartee, but most likely to enjoy the outdoors on the first day of a new year and to grab some swag generously provided by the State.

This year's First Day Hike swag was a pair of forest green gloves perhaps to clash with last year's lime green bandana. One lucky participant won free entry to all New York State Parks for a year.

Many of the more than 40 folks who attended this year were also there for the birds. Consistently warmer weather than usual had left all inland water unfrozen, so there was limited waterfowl on the Hudson. However, we were treated to some beautiful views of Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, a nice comparison view of Black and Turkey Vultures, and Eastern Bluebirds, who lit up in the morning sun. (As some of you may know there are no actual blue feathers in nature, not on any of the bluebirds or the Blue Jays we see locally. It's an illusion, as this article from *Smithsonian Magazine* explains <https://www.si.edu/stories/when-blue-bird-not-blue>.) Here is our eBird list from the 2023 First Day walk: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S125076964>. See you all on January 1, 2024!



*Joseph Shandling of Spring Valley was the lucky winner of a free NYS annual parks pass at the walk.*

*Larry Trachtenberg*



## Help Ban Toxic Neonics!

Bees are dying in record numbers around the globe, and other pollinators and birds are not far behind. Scientists increasingly identify the widespread use of toxic neonicotinoid insecticides as a leading culprit. Our state could pass the first agricultural ban on these chemicals, and you can help.

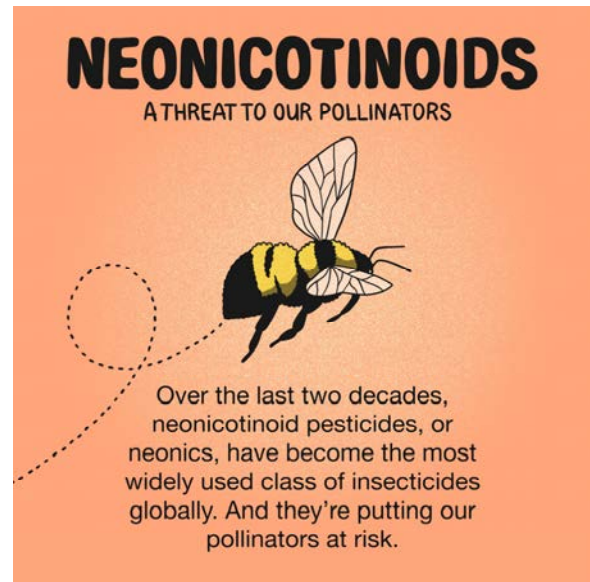
These “neonics” are the U.S.’s most widely used class of insecticides and occur in seed coatings in corn, soybean, and other crops. They work by permanently binding to an insect’s cellular receptors, causing overstimulation and eventually paralysis and death. One neonic-coated corn seed can contain enough active ingredient to kill a quarter-million bees! A New York State survey shows some 40 to 60 percent of the state’s native pollinators at risk of local extinction. These losses threaten the state’s ecosystems and \$400 million worth of pollination services to top state crops.

**Research links neonics to large declines in U.S. bird populations.** Eating just one neonic-treated seed can kill some songbirds, and neonics can harm birds even at low doses. They can cause rapid weight loss, reducing birds’ chances of surviving migration. And, as neonics kill insects, birds also starve, including those insect-eating warblers we all adore!

Emerging research now links exposure to neonics to an elevated risk of developmental and neurological damage in humans, with links also to autoimmune diseases and cancer. Fruits, vegetables, and processed foods frequently contain neonics, and washing does not remove them. The CDC estimates that half the U.S population has neonics in their bodies—with the highest levels found in children.

Proposed but not passed in 2021 and 2022, the New York Birds and Bees Protection Act would prohibit neonic-treated corn, soybean, and wheat seeds and end most uses on lawns and gardens. This would eliminate most of these pesticides from entering the state’s environment, without preventing other agricultural uses or treatment for invasive species.

Lena Faustel, a Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) organizer, states, “There’s a pretty decent chance of the neonics ban passing in NYS this year. Our coalition of support is bigger and better than ever!”



### Ways You Can Help

- 1. NRDC is sponsoring a Coalition Letter** that has been signed by SMRA as well as many groups, businesses, garden clubs and farms across New York. If you know of any other groups that may want to join the Coalition, please connect them with the sign-on letter here: <https://bit.ly/nrdc-neonics-signon>
- 2. Learn more by watching NRDC's presentation called "Neonics, The Toxic Truth"** on YouTube. Link here: [https://youtu.be/\\_Oy1zuGtymU](https://youtu.be/_Oy1zuGtymU)
- 3. Take action by contacting your representatives in the NYS legislature:** <https://action.nrdc.org/letter/1448-af-ny-bbpa-coalition-020623>

*Kara Mason*



For a full-color view of this newsletter with clickable links: visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news)



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Eastern Bluebird pair, February 14, 2023.  
Rockefeller State Park Preserve.  
Photo: Kara Mason

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

## Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Spring!

We have more than 40  
events scheduled between

**April and June**

to connect you with local  
habitats, birds and other  
wildlife. Small-group bird  
walks. Online and in-person  
programs. Sanctuary walks.

**We connect people  
with nature!**



### 2023 Quilt: Eagle Sighting

Our stunning 2023 Bird Quilt is entitled "Eagle Sighting." This 50-inch by 65-inch quilt was created by Board Member Jean Sparacin. See color images of the beautiful fabric choices and stitching at [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt) where you can also purchase raffle tickets for this beautiful quilt and help support our local conservation work. **The Quilt Raffle Drawing will be held at our Spring Community Potluck Dinner on Sunday, April 2, 2023.** (See dinner details on page 1.)

**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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I'd like to join Saw Mill River Audubon

Basic Chapter Membership:

☐ Enclosed is \$35

☐ Please list my gift anonymously

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