



SMRA

SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

Summer 2023



*Green Heron.
North County Trailway,
Yorktown Heights.
Photo: Steve Rappaport*



Our inaugural public bird walk at Lyndhurst in April was a great success with a sold-out audience and an American Kestrel perched up as a treat.



Thanks to Erik Andersen and Phil Heidelberger for new directional signs for Priyn and Brinton Brook. Look for these new signs at intersections and entrances.



A beautiful Blue-winged Warbler in song captured the attention of participants on our May 4 walk at Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Did you know we do an eBird list for all of our bird walks listing all birds seen/heard by the group? See our May 4 list: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S136027449>

Summer Highlights See more events on Page 3

We highlight special summer events below that are in-person. Also see our summer projects on pages 6 and 7. We are offering several Zoom programs. For more details and to register/RSVP for all events, visit our web site: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs or call us. Our birding field trips will continue June through August and are listed on page 3. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips



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. The Birding Tea is a benefit for Saw Mill River Audubon with a suggested donation of \$20/person.

For Zoom Webinars below: sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Thursday, July 20, 7:00 pm—Library Zoom: Raptors for Rookies

Learn/review the basics of identifying hawks, eagles and falcons found in our area with videos, audio, still photos, handouts and more. Led by Anne Swaim.

Wednesday, August 2, 7:30 pm—Birders U: Shorebird ID

Learn/review the basics of identifying shorebirds found in our area through videos, audio, still photos, handouts and more. Led by Anne Swaim.

Friday, August 4 to Saturday, August 5—Trip to Forsythe NWR

Join us on a field trip to see shorebirds and more at this famous National Wildlife Refuge only three hours from Millwood. Come just for Saturday or bird with us on both days. For details visit sawmillriveraudubon.org/forsythe.

More events page 3

President's Message

Many years ago, an earnest colleague perched on my trading floor desk and said, "I don't understand a thing you say, but I thoroughly enjoy it!"

Not a proud moment for an erstwhile English lit (and economics) major, but I got the point, which was something like, "Recognize your audience and address them, not yourself." I have not introduced myself to a large new audience in many years, but in my new role as board president of SMRA, I look forward to engaging with many of you on the trail, in the garden, or at the table advocating for and appreciating the environment and natural habitat... a language we all understand.

Board work at SMRA is a little like putting on a well-worn pair of comfortable gloves. Fellow board members and Executive Director Anne Swaim have their passions and share knowledge freely, a common trait among outdoorspeople. Then you find the morning, afternoon, evening, or weekend is gone before you know it.

I could lead, fill and finish this note encouraging readers to join us for the many bird walks and field trips hosted by SMRA and still not do justice to the myriad of activities hosted by this chapter. The breadth of mostly free educational and recreational engagement throughout our footprint is remarkable. Checking our regular emails (join our emailing lists at <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list>) always encourages me to tie up my boots and get a move on. We have free binocular loans, and beginners are welcome. If you explore Brinton Brook or Graff sanctuaries we are likely to pass each other on the path; submit a Trail Walker report at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/walker and let us know what needs work.

Our sanctuaries are well-maintained with the help of volunteers and donors. We have sanctuary workdays, as described on page 6. We'd love to meet you on the crew! Board member and professional gardener Mark Magel is now our garden coordinator. Join his volunteer team at Pruyn, to learn about native plants at the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden. See Mark's article on page 7 to learn about the scheduled garden work sessions.

Our Advocacy Committee continues exploring the effects of light pollution. Val Lyle's President's Message exploring ALAN (Artificial Light at Night) a year ago was followed by a May 10 SMRA Zoom presentation by Dr. Larry Faltz on "Artificial Light: Impacts on Humans and Birds," which can be viewed here: www.youtube.com/sawmillriveraudubon.

Finally, I encourage you to join the fight to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats in a way that is meaningful and sustainable...for you. We'd love to have you join us. Each SMRA volunteer brings their skill set to bear in manageable proportion, and we hope to make incremental change permanent and meaningful. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/volunteer.

Yours for the birds,

Erik Andersen, SMRA President



Erik Andersen, SMRA President

Saw Mill River Audubon

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Visit us online: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

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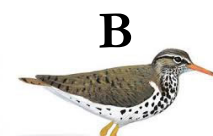
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For a full-color view of this newsletter with clickable links:
visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news



All three shorebirds above nest in Westchester. Know them?

Answers are at the bottom of page 5.

Summer 2023 Schedule

(Also see volunteer projects on pages 6 & 7!)

Birding Field Trips

7:00 am* start for June through September.

* except special bird trips noted below in boldface

Register: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

JUNE

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

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

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

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

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

Special June Birding Trips — note start times

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

Note new start time for below walk

Sun, June 4, **6:00 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

JULY

Sat, July 1, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Sun, July 2, **6:00 pm**, Afternoon Walk: Croton Pt. Park

Mon, July 3, 7:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Sun, July 16, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Mon, July 17, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Mon, July 24, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

AUGUST

Fri, Aug 4 to Sat, August 5, Overnight/Day Trip to Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge

Sun, Aug 6, **6:00 pm**, Afternoon Walk: Croton Pt. Park

Mon, Aug 7, 7:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Sat, Aug 12, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Mon, Aug 14, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Mon, Aug 21, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Sat, Aug 26, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Mon, Aug 28, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

If you visit our sanctuaries, we invite you to send us Trail Walker reports.



Send Trail Walker report by scanning QR code to left

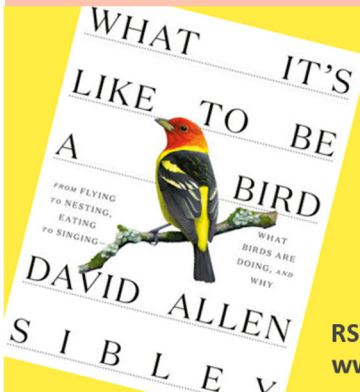
Or use this web link:

sawmillriveraudubon.org/walker

You can learn more about our sanctuaries and download trail maps at our website.



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



Audubon Nature Book Club
back in person!
Tuesday, June 13
7:00 pm
 RSVP
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

Field Trip: Sterling Forest Spring Birding Sunday, June 18

Target species are Golden-winged Warblers and other nesting species in this New York State Important Bird Area



Still More Summer Events

Audubon Nature Book Club, Tue, June 13, 7:00 pm

RSVP and details at sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary

6/10, 7/8, 8/12, 9/9. 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.

Zoom Public Programs

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Thu, July 20, 7:00 pm

Raptors for Rookies (local library Zoom): Anne Swaim

Wed, August 2, 7:30 pm

Learn/review shorebird ID: Anne Swaim

Tue, 6/6&20, 7/11&25, 8/8&22, 9/12&26, 7:00 pm

Bird Chats, www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Help Us Connect People With Nature



In May, Saw Mill River Audubon launched its annual fund drive, and the stars of our fundraising letter this year could not be happier to lend their faces and story to our cause.

Laura Rice and Richard Leonard, who became a couple and took up birding later in life, are often seen on SMRA bird walks and other events. Richard's photos are

seen on our Bird Chats, our bimonthly Zoom meetup of birders from the Hudson Valley and beyond, and on our photo calendar. (Check out his photo of a Northern Harrier in flight on the September 2023 SMRA calendar page.)

Both appreciate how their time attending SMRA programs has helped sharpen their birding skills. "Our activities with Saw Mill River Audubon have been the most inspiring and educational experience," says Laura. "Whenever we go on a trip, we are amazed how the guides study the birds, their patterns, their habits. We learn so much!"

They also appreciate how our advocacy and other programs

reach beyond bird identification to the thornier issue of how to make our environment safer for birds and other living creatures. "Saw Mill River Audubon is really on the cutting edge," says Richard.

"They not only offer amazing experiences, but we learn the science. By observing patterns in nature, you understand what is happening on our planet and can work in small ways to make a difference.

The lessons taught are local and beautiful—and they show how we can have a significant impact together."

These experiences are made possible by the generous donations of our members. Please check your mailboxes and email inboxes for our appeal and support these efforts. Or use QR code above. Thank you!



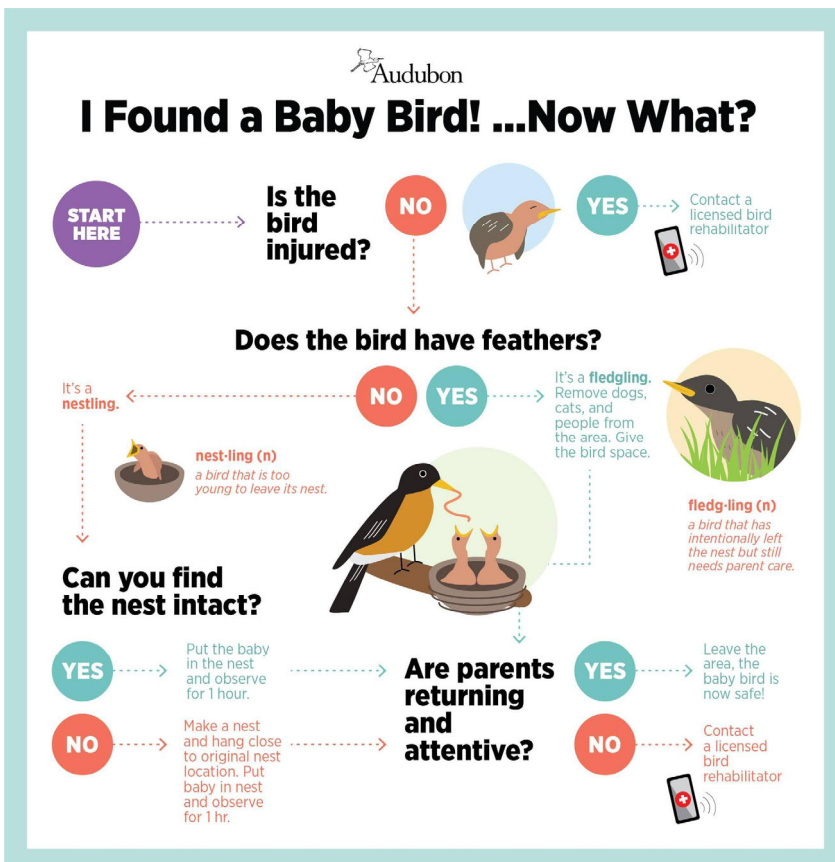
Northern Harrier. Photo: Richard Leonard



Donate today
by scanning
QR code
to left



Or use this web link:
sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate



Review the chart to the left to consider whether or not to rescue a young bird.

When in doubt, leave it alone.

See this chart online and learn more:
<https://www.audubon.org/news/when-you-should-and-should-not-rescue-baby-birds>

To find a local wildlife rehabilitator, download the **AnimalHelpNow** app

OR visit the NY Department of Environmental Conservation online to find a nearby wildlife rehabilitator who may be able to help:
www.dec.ny.gov/animals/83977.html



In September 2019, SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim and I attended the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) Annual Conference in Kingston and by the end of the conference had volunteered ourselves and SMRA to host the 2021 meeting! We started planning, had meetings, scoped out venues and then ... COVID put a hold on everything. Turn the clock forward a few years, and we are proudly hosting the 2023 NYSOA/New York Birders Conference in September this year.

The conference will be held at the Sleepy Hollow Conference Center in Tarrytown from Friday, September 22, to Sunday, September 24. Comfortable hotel accommodations include in-room refrigerator and Keurig machine, so if you rely on coffee to keep you going, it is at your fingertips! The hotel is easily accessible from both the Saw Mill River and Sprain Brook Parkways or a short taxi ride from the Tarrytown train station if you come on Metro-North's Hudson line.

We have put together a wonderful 2.5 days filled with the best of Westchester birding locations, excellent leaders, wonderful speakers (including our keynote speaker, David Allen Sibley), informative workshops, good food, a relaxed venue and great

company. All it needs is YOU. To make this a success, we need as many of our members there as possible, so please consider registering for the conference. And if you are willing to assist too, please sign up as a volunteer as we need many hands to make this a success.

We are also seeking vendors to exhibit in the hotel. Attendees will be available to visit your table on Friday from 4:00 to 8:00 pm during registration and our evening reception and Saturday from 11:00 am to 6:00 pm during lunch, workshops, and an evening reception. We are seeking craft vendors with bird- and nature-themed artwork; conservation organizations; and stores and businesses that are promoting birding, conservation and outdoor activities. If you are interested or have suggestions for vendors, please contact Cary Andrews at 914-473-0373 or oomis@aol.com.

Make your way to <https://www.nybirders.org/> to find out more info and sign up to volunteer and to attend the conference. Look forward to seeing you there!

Debbie van Zyl, Conference Coordinator



Did you know we are now seeing sharp declines in insects of all kinds?

No bugs = No birds and unhealthy habitats for all wildlife AND for people.

Please do not spray for mosquitoes or ticks. "Organic" sprays can still harm wildlife and habitats, will kill more than the target species, and are unhealthy for pets and children.

Learn about safer alternatives at www.healthyyards.org

Answers to Shorebird Quiz on page 2. A=Killdeer B=Spotted Sandpiper C=American Oystercatcher
Come to our Zoom shorebird ID workshop on Wednesday, August 21

Sanctuary Trail Improvement Projects



Sanctuary trail volunteers with completed water bar at Pruyn Sanctuary in May (L to R): Erik Andersen, Rob Newborn, Bruce Fleischer, Phil Heidelberg, Michael Madias Jr., and (photographer) David Watson.

Come work with us to improve our sanctuary trails. SMRA received a grant from National Audubon to help make our trails more resilient for the new “normal” of more intense, short-duration rainfalls as the climate changes. We have already completed two workdays in

May at Pruyn and Brinton and have two more scheduled in June, with the possibility of additional workdays depending on progress. The next workdays will be

Tuesday, June 13, 9:00 am, Graff Sanctuary:

We will be re-routing a portion of the Jack-in-the-Pulpit (red) Trail to avoid a steep section.

Sunday, June 25, 9:00 am, Graff/Brinton Brook:

If the Graff re-route is not completed, we will finish that project. Otherwise we will be installing water bars to channel water off sloped trails at Brinton Brook Sanctuary.

Each outing is expected to last four to six hours. For additional details and to register for the work days, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon/projects.

This grant is not enough to cover the costs of installing a long wooden puncheon in Brinton on a section of trail that was recently discovered to be extremely wet after several very intense rainfalls. The materials cost for that much needed project is expected to be about \$650.

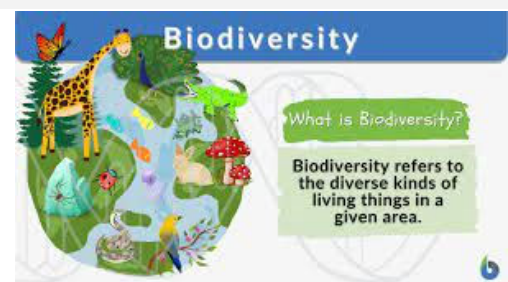
Please consider making a donation to help cover those costs: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate.

Please specify “Brinton Project” in the comments section of that form. *Phil Heidelberg, SMRA Board Member*

Biodiversity Is for the Birds!

How fortunate we are to have so many types of birds! The vast spectrum of avian species live in a multitude of habitats. Each habitat is comprised of millions of types of organisms ranging from microscopic bacteria, fungi and protozoa found in our soil and water, to all insects, fish, plants, and fauna found on Earth. It is this biodiversity of species that provide the building blocks which birds rely on to survive.

Loss of biodiversity is among the most critical environmental challenges that birds as well as humans face today. Our awareness and emphasis on climate change often eclipses loss of biodiversity as the main threat to birds, but the issues are cumulative and include rapid habitat loss, invasive species, agricultural runoff of fertilizers and pesticides, and an ever-increasing footprint from our human population. These factors all work together to create the perfect storm! Extinction is occurring at a breakneck speed. Scientists predict that over a million species will disappear in the next decade.



The first ever UN Biodiversity Conference took place in Montreal in December 2022. One hundred and ninety nations agreed on a historic package of 23 measures deemed critical to addressing our planet's dangerous loss of biodiversity. Known as 30x30, the goal is to preserve 30 percent of land and sea by 2030. Unfortunately, the U.S. was one of only two countries that did not sign the accord. Our divisive political atmosphere played a big role in this travesty. President Biden did however issue an executive order for a similar 30-percent U.S. preservation goal.

continued on next page

A Garden, a Diner, or Both?

The Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden and the nearby Meadow Garden may look lovely and ornamental to the many visitors who walk past the gardens at the Pruyn Sanctuary, but to those who crawl in or fly to the garden, it is a 24-hour diner offering nutrition and overwintering habitat for both insects and birds.

Containing a mix of over 150 perennials, annuals, vines and shrubs, the gardens attract pollinators and provide a broad menu of nectar plants for hummingbirds and butterflies and food for plant-eating insects.

Many of the well-fed larvae go on to become delightful butterflies, but many more end up as nutritious organic meals for the birds and their fledglings, roughly 80 percent of whom are insectivores.

The warm winter has allowed volunteers to get in early this year and start spring tasks of cleaning, weeding and planting.

The work sessions combine informative discussion of the garden's role in the ecosystem as well as "pruners-and-trowel" gardening.



SMRA Garden Coordinator Mark Magel meeting with garden volunteers at Pruyn Sanctuary in April. Photo: Anne Swaim

Upcoming gardening dates will be Wednesdays, June 7 and 21, July 5 and 19, and August 9, all weather dependent and all beginning at 10:30 am at the Pruyn Sanctuary office/garden entrance, 275 Millwood Road, Chappaqua.

If you enjoy gardening, learning about plants and techniques, and helping to feed and protect our environment, visit sawmillriveraudubon.org/gardening to RSVP or contact me at markmagel@aol.com

Or if you just want to visit the beauty, the gardens at the Pruyn Sanctuary in Chappaqua are open dawn until dusk every day. More information is online at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/pruyn

Mark Magel, SMRA Garden Coordinator

Biodiversity *continued from page 6*

Stroll across the Croton Point landfill grassland to witness how habitat restoration can dramatically improve biodiversity. Removal of invasive species and re-wilding with a diverse meadow is allowing more insects and small animals to thrive. This diversity has attracted birds such as American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, Eastern Meadowlarks, Grasshopper Sparrows, and even a Short-eared Owl on a rare occasion. Every habitat—whether ocean, forest, lake, or our own backyard—has a diversity backstory and plays a role in species survival.

How can you help foster biodiversity? Create and preserve varied habitat on your property. Whenever possible, don't cut down trees, even the dead ones. Reduce sterile grass lawns by planting native shrubs and gardens that benefit insects, pollinators and birds. Leave the fall leaves to provide habitat and food for many species. Let our politicians know that they need support legislation that supports biodiversity!

Kara Mason, SMRA Board Member

Come Be a Trailside Greeter!

Look for our trailside greeting banners from time to time along our sanctuary trails. Want to come sit with us? We'll do some birding, have some conversation and greet any passing visitors to find out what they think about our sanctuaries, how they discovered them and if they have questions or suggestions.

To help: sawmillriveraudubon.org/greeters

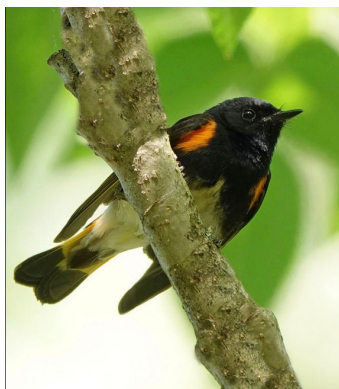


SMRA trailside greeting banner



275 Millwood Road
Chappaqua, New York 10514
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PERIODICAL POSTAGE
PAID
at Chappaqua, NY
and additional offices



American Redstart. May 2023,
Rockefeller State Park Preserve.
Photo: Troy Gorodess

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Summer!

We have more than 30
events scheduled between

June and September
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!

Three Ways to Make a Difference

This summer we invite you to join with us on
special sanctuary projects working alongside
our friendly community.

- Join us in the Pruyn native plant gardens
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/gardening
- Join us on sanctuary trail projects
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/projects
- Join us on trailside greeting stations
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/greeters



Banner for trailside greeting stations

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

I wish to donate. Enclosed is:

☐ \$1000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250

☐ \$100 ☐ \$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

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