



# SMRA

SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

## Fall 2023



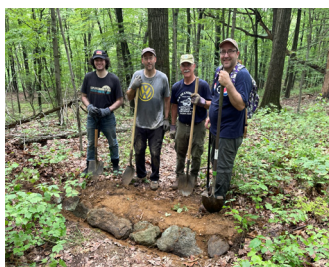
Peregrine falcon.  
Croton Point.  
September 2022.  
Jorge Montalvo



Saw Mill River Audubon's late spring big trip visited the famed spring migration hotspot of Magee Marsh on Ohio's Lake Erie shoreline. Our trip report is here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/133826>. Subscribe to our "Big Trip" email list for notice of other upcoming big trips: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list)



Our open garden day at Prayn Sanctuary in June attracted plenty of new visitors interested in native plants and resulted in new garden volunteers too. Our thanks to Garden Coordinator Mark Magel for his work all through the 2023 growing season. (See more on page 5.)



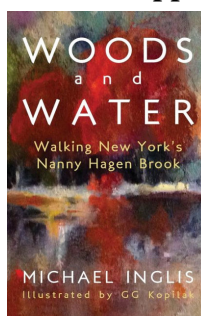
This summer, our sanctuary volunteers did much hard work installing water bars at Brinton, Graff and Prayn just before the heavy rainstorms arrived. (See more on page 5.)

## Fall Highlights

See more events on Page 3

Special fall events highlighted below that are in-person. Listed on page 3 are our free birding field trips continuing September through November along with even more fall events.

**Thursday, September 7, 7:00 pm—Local Author Talk: *Woods and Water*, at the Chappaqua Library with local author Michael Ingles**



Join us for this special, in-person program at the Chappaqua Library with local author Michael Ingles. His book, *Woods and Water*, explores the flora and fauna of Nanny Hagen Brook in Thornwood over the course of a year. The book includes charming illustrations by local artist GG Kopilak. This program is co-sponsored with Chappaqua Library and Federated Conservationists of Westchester County. No registration is needed. Open to the public.

**Friday, September 22 to Sunday, September 24—2023 New York State Birders Conference with the New York State Ornithological Association This year in Tarrytown!**

Saw Mill River Audubon is the hosting organization for this special event. All details and online reservations at [www.nybirders.org](http://www.nybirders.org). Online registration closes August 31. After August 31, email [info@nybirders.org](mailto:info@nybirders.org).



Gather with NYSOA • Sep 22-24, 2023  
**New York State Birders Conference**

♦ Keynote: David Allen Sibley ♦ Field Trips & Vendors  
♦ Workshop: Tom Stephenson ♦ [www.nybirders.org](http://www.nybirders.org)

**Wednesday, October 11, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm—Big Sit & Hawk Watch at Lyndhurst Mansion.** By special partnership with Lyndhurst, join us for a Big Sit & Hawk Watch at Lyndhurst. A Big Sit is observing as many bird species as possible from one location, and we'll combine that with a count of migrating hawks heading south. Come and leave anytime during listed hours. Details and registration online at: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips)

**Thursday, November 9, 7:00 pm—Zoom on *Neonics: The Toxic Truth*** Neonics are pesticides threatening bees, birds and our health. This webinar will explain the science behind the threats posed by neonicotinoid pesticides. Our presenter will be Dan Raichel, Acting Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Pollinator Initiative. See more details on page 4 with registration online at: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs).

## President's Message

Summer is usually time for some relaxation and days off, and we have enjoyed some of that at Saw Mill River Audubon as well. But we've also had an unusually busy summer with several different projects underway led by our volunteers and assisted by our staff.

- Our conference team has been working all summer on the 2023 New York Birders Conference coming up very soon on September 22 to 24 in Tarrytown. We are excited to have David Allen Sibley as our Saturday banquet keynote speaker and Tom Stephenson as our Saturday afternoon workshop keynote. We have exceptional raffle items including over \$5,000 in optics from Zeiss, our leading sponsor, and a high-end spotting scope and tripod from Vortex. We are also grateful for event support from PepsiCo.
- As this newsletter goes to print in mid-August, we have received a record number of registrations. Online conference registration ends August 31 but, if you miss that deadline, you may email us at [info@nybirders.org](mailto:info@nybirders.org) to see if space is still available.
- This summer, Mark Magel has been coordinating native plant garden workdays and inviting and encouraging several new garden volunteers. Come enjoy the late summer and early fall peak of our native meadow garden beds at Pruyn Sanctuary. See article on page 5.
- Phil Heidelberger and Michael Madias have been working to improve our sanctuary trails and habitats. Phil coordinated work days to install water bars at Brinton, Graff and Pruyn Sanctuaries just before this summer's heavy rainstorms, preventing trail erosion and damage. (More about this work on page 5.) And, Michael has been raising and planting native plants at Brinton Brook Sanctuary, as he has done for many years.
- This summer we were shocked and very disappointed to discover extensive damage to the Pruyn Sanctuary forest on the border with one of our neighbors. A neighbor on Mayberry Close is being charged by the Town of New Castle with the bulldozing of hundreds of trees, some of which were Audubon trees and many of



*Erik Andersen, SMRA President*

which were bulldozed right over our property line to be left in large piles of trunks and stumps on sanctuary land. We will report more about this situation as legal matters develop.

- This summer, we have also been preparing for our 2023–2024 Bird Seed season. Don't miss our seed sale flyer inside this newsletter. Our first pickup date is Saturday, October 7, 9:00 am to 12 noon at Pruyn Sanctuary, but we expect to receive our new seed supply by September 15 if you want to pick up your order earlier during office hours.
- Lastly, SMRA Board Member Louisa Gagliardi has created another New York Birds calendar this summer to highlight the work of local photographers. After September 15, our 2024 New York Birds calendar may be viewed and purchased at our web site and also at the 2023 New York State Birders Conference, in Tarrytown, September 22-24. Hope to see you there!

Yours for the birds,

*Erik Andersen, SMRA President*

### Saw Mill River Audubon

275 Millwood Road Chappaqua, New York 10514

914.666.6503 | [office@sawmillriveraudubon.org](mailto:office@sawmillriveraudubon.org)

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

#### OFFICE HOURS

Mon/Wed/Fri 11:00 am to 4:00 pm  
except major/school holidays.

President: Erik Andersen

Vice President: Suzanne Kavic

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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)*

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

## Fall 2023 Schedule

### Birding Field Trips

**8:00 am start | arrive earlier to park & meet**

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

### SEPTEMBER

Sat, Sep 2, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park  
 Mon, Sep 4, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm  
 Sat, Sep 9, 8:00 am Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Fri, Sep 15, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy  
 Mon, Sep 18, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Thu, Sep 28, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

### Special September Birding Trips

Over a dozen field trips are being offered Sat, Sep 23 and Sun, Sep 24 as part of the 2023 New York State Birders Conference with all details here: [www.nybirders.org](http://www.nybirders.org)

### OCTOBER

Mon, Oct 2, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm  
 Mon, Oct 9, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park  
 Wed, Oct 11, **9:00 am**, Big Sit, Lyndhurst Mansion  
 Mon, Oct 16, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy  
 Sat, Oct 21, 8:00 am Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Mon, Oct 23, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Sat, Oct 28, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

### NOVEMBER

Mon, Nov 6, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm  
 Mon, Nov 13, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park  
 Thu, Nov 16, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary  
 Sat, Nov 18, 8:00 am, Lyndhurst Mansion  
 Mon, Nov 20, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Sat, Nov 25, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Sun, Nov 26, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

### DECEMBER

Sat, Dec 2, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Mon, Dec 4, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm  
 Sat, Dec 9, 8:00 am, Lyndhurst Mansion  
 Wed, Dec 13, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park  
 Wed, Dec 20, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve  
 Wed, Dec 27, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

### Dec 15-Jan 5: Christmas Bird Counts

See story on page 4 for details

### Looking Ahead...

Monday, January 1, 9:00 am,  
 First Day Hike at Rockwood Hall



### Gather with NYSOA • Sep 22-24, 2023 New York State Birders Conference

- ♦ Keynote: David Allen Sibley ♦ Field Trips & Vendors
- ♦ Workshop: Tom Stephenson ♦ [www.nybirders.org](http://www.nybirders.org)

### NEONICS: THE TOXIC TRUTH

The pesticides threatening birds,  
 bees, & human health

Join NRDC's Dan Raichel

via zoom November 9 at 7 pm

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



Members  
 & Friends  
 Best Photos  
 & Desserts!

Thursday, December 21, 7:00 pm

Details and registration for above programs at  
[www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs)

### Still More Fall Events

#### Audubon Nature Book Club, Tue, Oct 17, 7:00 pm

Get details and reminder emails and link at:

[www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club)

See also the article on page 4.

#### Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary 9/9, 10/14, 11/11, 12/9. Meet at 9:00 am in the main lot.

Walk typically lasts two hours. Rain/snow or shine but  
 always check our website calendar before traveling.  
 For adults and youth 8 and up. No registration required.

#### Fall Bird Chats on Zoom

Tue, 9/12&26, 10/10&24, 11/14&28, 12/12, 7:00 pm

## Protecting Healthy Habitats

### NEONICS: THE TOXIC TRUTH

The pesticides threatening birds, bees, & human health

Join **NRDC's Dan Raichel**

via zoom November 9 at 7 pm

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



Great news! The New York State Birds and Bees Protection Act passed both the Assembly and Senate this spring! We are hoping that Governor Hochul signs the bill into action as soon as possible. This groundbreaking legislation will ban agricultural and residential uses of neonicotinoid pesticides. New York would be the first in the U.S. to ban neonics as seed coverings, thereby taking a lead role and setting a precedent for other states to follow.

SMRA is thrilled to have NRDC's Dan Raichel present a special webinar on Thursday, November 9, 7:00 pm via Zoom entitled "Neonics, the Toxic Truth: The Pesticides Threatening Birds, Bees and Human Health."

Dan is the Acting Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's Pollinator Initiative, which focuses on protecting our nation's bee populations from the ever-growing threats to their health and existence, in particular, the use of bee-toxic pesticides. He was formerly co-director of NRDC's Community Fracking Defense Project and has been an advocate for the cleanup of industrial pollution in the New York region.

This webinar will explain the science behind the threats posed by neonicotinoid pesticides, aka neonics, to pollinators, biodiversity and our own health, as well as neonics' surprising prevalence in our environment. This popular pesticide contaminates our soil, water and plant life on an unprecedented scale. The science is telling us that neonics have been driving mass losses of birds and bees, raising alarm bells for a whole host of wildlife, for clean water and for the health of all New Yorkers.

#### An action step you can take today!

Time is of the essence as Gov. Hochul will soon make her decision to sign the bill or not. You can email her at [correspondence.office@exec.ny.gov](mailto:correspondence.office@exec.ny.gov) or call her at (518) 474-8390 to voice your opinion.

*Kara Mason, SMRA Board Member*

## Birding that Makes a Difference

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is now in its 124th year with over 2,600 15-mile diameter count circles and, last year, tallying over 4 million birds. Five different CBC count circles touch on Westchester County. Each count circle has a compiler and is divided into areas. Each area captain recruits birders to cover key locations over a 24-hour period, counting every bird. Counting birds helps to assess the health of bird populations and their habitats.

Contact the SMRA office to connect with compilers for the following Christmas Bird Counts:

**Sat Dec 16:** Peekskill CBC

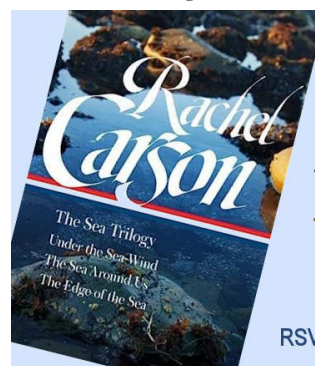
**Sun Dec 17:** Greenwich-Stamford CBC (E. Westchester)

**Sun Dec 17:** Rockland CBC (Tarrytown/Sleepy Hollow)

**Sat Dec 23:** Bronx-Westchester CBC

**Tue Jan 2:** Putnam CBC

See all Christmas Bird Count circles and learn more here: [www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count)



**Saw Mill River Audubon  
Nature Book Club**

**Tue Oct 17, 2023**

**7:00 pm | via Zoom**

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

**Our Nature Book Club will next meet by Zoom on Tuesday, October 17 at 7:00 pm** to discuss Rachel Carson's *The Sea Trilogy: Under the Sea-Wind/The Sea Around Us/The Edge of the Sea*. This will be our 31<sup>st</sup> book. In October, we will mark six years of meeting!

We moved to Zoom during Covid, and it now seems like the more popular way to meet. We've got readers attending from near and far, and we also hope to welcome author Sheila Myers, who is working on a book of historical fiction featuring Rachel Carson, to our October meeting. Future book selections will include *Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World*, by my friend Christian Cooper, and *When Birds Are Near: Dispatches from Contemporary Writers*, compiled by editor Susan Fox Rogers. Perhaps one or both of them will be able to join us!

For those who'd prefer to meet in person, never fear! We will have an occasional meeting at the Mount Pleasant Public Library in Pleasantville. To register for the link and reminders, visit [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club) and also see the titles of the books we've read and discussed in the past.

*Kathleen Williamson, SMRA Board Member*

## With Native Plants, Less is More

Native plants offer many benefits to wildlife, but they can also make a gardener's work easier. We've put those many benefits to the test this summer in the gardens at Pruyn Sanctuary, and the results have been spectacular.

Once established, native roots can grow deep. The taproots of Rattlesnake Master, Blue Star Amsonia, and Echinacea (Purple Coneflower) can reach deeper than four feet. Rudbeckia and Prairie Dropseed roots can be five to six feet deep, and Switchgrass roots can reach 11 feet underground. These deep roots are established by nature's own deep watering (witness this summer's periodic downpours), whereas a frequent artificial irrigation schedule encourages shallow root systems.

Native soils, especially clay particles, are great for holding moisture. Soil texture amendments and non-organic fertilizers can actually reduce a native plant's nutrient and water uptake. Unamended healthy native soil is best for native plants, which are also healthier, with fewer pests, without mulch. Healthy plants, with natural protection against most insect invaders, also reduce the need for pesticides.

Our goal is to allow insects to feed (which they do in balance without harming the plant) so that they can become butterflies or a plump snack for a bird. No pesticides are ever used at Pruyn.

So, with no supplemental watering needed, no soil amendments needed, no mulch, no pesticides, what is a gardener to do? Weeding was the main task at the Pruyn Gardens with a convivial group of volunteers this summer. But, as an added benefit of no supplemental watering, the vigor and tenacity of shallow-rooted weeds has been diminished and the work is easier. Sometimes there's little more to do than talk amongst ourselves about the lovely flowers, lovely birds, and lovely weather. That's how we like to garden, and we hope that you consider joining the crew next year!

*Mark Magel, SMRA Garden Coordinator*



*Here's Mark at Pruyn Sanctuary talking plants with Kara Mason, SMRA Board Member.*

## Protecting Sanctuary Trails



*Sanctuary volunteers (L to R): Erik Andersen, Robert Newborn, Bruce Fleischer, David Watson, Michael Madias, Jr.*

With the increased frequency of intense rainfalls, it's more important than ever to monitor the condition of the hiking trails in SMRA's sanctuaries and to take action to prevent erosion on the trails.

With the help of a grant from National Audubon Society, we surveyed all of SMRA's trails with an eye out for steep trails showing signs of erosion. Then, on four different workdays in May and June, we addressed the major problem areas. We installed water bars—small rock-lined ditches running diagonally on a trail to divert water off it—in Pruyn and Brinton Brook sanctuaries, and we re-routed a steep trail in Graff Sanctuary onto more level terrain. In all, we installed about 20 water bars.

After the very severe rainfall of July 9, several people reported that the new water bars in Brinton Brook were working well, although one needs lengthening to better drain the water farther off the trail.



**Send Trail Walker report** by scanning QR code to left

Or use this web link:  
[sawmillriveraudubon.org/walker](http://sawmillriveraudubon.org/walker)

**If you see a problem in a SMRA sanctuary such as a tree down or trail or boundary damage, please send us an online Trail Walker report.** (See the QR code and web address to the left.)

Let us know if you want to volunteer on future trail workdays, with our online form here: [www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/volunteer](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/volunteer)

*Phil Heidelberger, SMRA Board Member and Coordinator of Trail Work Days*



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Red-breasted Nuthatch. Chappaqua.  
September 2022. Mitchell Goldfarb

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

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

Inside are more than 50 events  
between September and December  
to connect you with birds, other  
wildlife, and local habitats.

Small-group bird walks. Online and  
in-person programs. Sanctuary walks.

**We connect people with nature.**

And we have been doing this  
since 1953, for 70 years!



**Special Insert!**  
**2023-2024 Bird**  
**Seed Flyer**  
Help support our  
conservation work  
and feed the birds!

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

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☐ \$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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