



SMRA
SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

On the Wing

Spring 2025

Vol. 71 No. 3 | Issue No. 385



*House Wren in May
at Prugn Sanctuary.
Photo: Mitchell Goldfarb*

Spring Highlights See more events on Page 3



In January, New York State Young Birders Club visited Croton Point Park, led by field trip leaders from Saw Mill River Audubon, and then held their 2025 Kickoff Meeting at Teatown, hosted by SMRA.



Birding Rockefeller State Park Preserve during single digit temps on December 23. Here is our eBird list: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S206300106>



Exploring the rainforest of Panama in November. Come to our Thursday, March 27 program at the Chappaqua Library to find out what we saw. Three photos above: Anne Swaim

We are highlighting several events below. See page 3 for field trips and more.

For the latest info and registration visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs and www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips.

You may also register for any of our programs or field trips by calling our office at 914-666-6503 or emailing us at office@sawmillriveraudubon.org

Thursday, February 27, 7:00 pm | Program: Living with Bears

Come to Croton Free Library to hear from Budd Veverka about regional black bear populations and how to peacefully co-exist with these large mammals.

Thursday, March 27, 7:00 pm | Program: Exploring Panama Birding

Come to Chappaqua Library for this special program. Participants on our November 2024 birding trip to Panama will share images and stories about our stays at Canopy Tower and Canopy Lodge as well as our field trips to surrounding birding hotspots and our visit to the Panama Canal.

Sunday, April 6, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm | 2025 Annual Dinner & Program

Gather at Travelers Rest in Millwood with our friendly community of Audubon members and friends to celebrate our past year of connecting people with nature. **See article on page 5** and www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner.

Our keynote speaker will be Tina Morris, author of *Return to the Sky:*

The Surprising Story of How One Woman and Seven Eaglets Helped Restore the Bald Eagle, her story about monitoring the restoration of Bald Eagles in New York.

Thursday, May 8, 7:00 pm | Program: Birds and Invasive Plant Species

We are still planning this Zoom program about the impact of invasive plant species on birds as well as the potential impact of invasive species removal on bird habitats. To be followed by an afternoon field trip on Saturday, May 10, to local habitats impacted by invasive plant species and invasive plant removals.

Saturday, May 31, 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm | Special Event: Birding Tea

All are invited to tea with lovely homemade goodies 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 914-271-4138 or email_oomis@aol.com.

The Tea benefits Saw Mill River Audubon with a suggested donation of \$20/person. Birdy-themed clothing and bling encouraged!

Do you prefer a paper newsletter? If you have a current membership, request a newsletter via US Mail here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/paper OR call/email us at 914-666-6503 or at office@sawmillriveraudubon.org

President's Message

An erstwhile professional trader, I spend an unusual amount of time thinking about how to calculate the likelihood of any problem's outcomes, whether a leaking pipe or an options exercise. During the pandemic, I was an erstwhile health care administrator struggling with the unknowns (the rapidly evolving science of Covid-19 and the public health care response) and the knowns (the alternate universe redefining the NYS Department of Health through the Governor's Executive Office), so I learned and repeatedly relearned the value of having as much information as possible at hand in all emergent times. This personal background also prompted this president's message. I have been thinking how little I actually knew about the current state of avian influenza. Quickly, here's what I learned so far:



Erik Andersen, SMRA

Avian influenza is caused by Influenza Type A, with two proteins on the shell of the virus: any one of 16 "H" proteins, and any one of 9 "N" proteins. They combine to become either HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) or LPAI (Low Pathogenic AI). H5N1 is currently prevalent and is HPAI, but newly discovered H5N9, which is also HPAI, has just been found in ducks in California.

H5N1 was first confirmed in the US three years ago; 145 million chickens have been killed/died since 2022. The US commercial fowl population comprises 380 million laying chickens and (in 2023) an additional 9.4 billion broiler chickens and 218 million turkeys processed. No wonder egg prices will continue to rise.

Avian flu has also been found in domestic cats, feral cats, large cat species, bear, raccoon, mice, skunks, dolphins, seals, opossum, dairy cattle and humans. Five strains of avian flu virus have crossed to humans: H5, H6, H7, H9, H10. As of the end of January, there have been 67 human positives and one death since February 2022. Of most importance, to date, there has been no documented human-to-human transmission.

Widespread? In the first thirty days of January, USDA reported 70 commercial flocks and 43 backyard flocks lost 19.55 million birds, often with results such as a Putnam County flock reporting 96% mortality. Underreported? Absolutely. With wild populations, evidence is incomplete and impacts harder to track. The USDA's Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) observes that waterfowl, in particular, can carry HPAI and show no signs of illness, and the disease spreads quickly and widely, especially during migration, of course. Once they are infected, birds can die in a few days.

Safety first! Store purchased eggs at 40 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent bacteria growth; cooking eggs and poultry to 165 degrees kills bacteria and viruses. Skip over-easy and soft-boiled eggs for now.

Most importantly find trusted sources of information and keep current. We all have pandemic burnout, but this is a hard-charging virus and only needs to cross the human-to-human barrier to become disastrous. My real disturbance occurred when I clicked through and read: "CDC's website is being modified to comply with President Trump's Executive Orders"...Mr. Trump who, once upon a time, suggested injecting bleach might help fight Covid-19.

Yours for the birds, *Erik Andersen, SMRA President*

Saw Mill River Audubon

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Visit us online: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

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If you are reading this on paper, you can view our full-color digital version with clickable links by visiting <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news>

Where to Track Avian Flu

Cornell Wildlife Health Lab is tracking wildlife avian flu. As of 2/6/25, they say: "Passerines do not seem susceptible to HPAI and are not thought to play a significant role in spreading this virus. We are not recommending removal of bird feeders at this point." Visit <https://cwhl.vet.cornell.edu/article/highly-pathogenic-avian-influenza>. The NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets is tracking domestic fowl impacts at this web site: <https://agriculture.ny.gov/animals/poultry>

Spring Schedule

Bird Walks & Field Trips

Local walks 8:00 am through Apr, 7:00 am May–Sep*

* except for any special field trips noted below in boldface

Details and register: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

No registration for Dawn Walks / See website for details

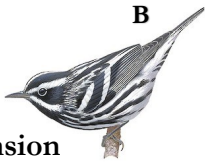
MARCH

- Mon, Mar 3, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
- Sat, Mar 8, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Mon, Mar 10, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary
- * **Sat Mar 15, 7:00 am, Long Island Birding**
- Mon, Mar 17, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Sat, Mar 22, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- Mon, Mar 24, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- Sat, Mar 29, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park



APRIL

- Sat, Apr 5, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Mon, Apr 7, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
- * **Sun, Apr 13, 7:00 am, Lyndhurst Mansion**
- Mon, Apr 14, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Fri, Apr 18, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy
- * **Thu, Apr 24, 6:00 am, Dawn Walk: Rockefeller SPP**
- Sat, Apr 26, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- Mon, Apr 28, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve



MAY

- Mon, May 5, 7:00 am, Muscoot Farm
- * **Thu, May 8, 5:00 am, Dawn Walk: Rockefeller SPP**
Above walk is meeting at Old Sleepy Hollow Road trail entrance
- Sat, May 10, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Sun, May 11, 7:00 am, Lyndhurst Mansion
- Mon, May 19, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- * **Wed, May 21, 5:00 am, Dawn Walk: Teatown Lake**
- Sat, May 24, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- * **Sun, May 25, 5:00 am, Dawn Walk: Anglefly**
- Mon, May 26, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- Fri, May 30, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy



JUNE

- Sun, Jun 1, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Mon, Jun 2, 7:00 am, Muscoot Farm
- * **Tue, Jun 3 to Sat Jun 7: Coastal Birding Trip**
- Mon, Jun 9, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- * **Thu, Jun 12, 5:00 am, Dawn Walk: Rockefeller SPP**
- Mon, Jun 16, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy
- Sat, Jun 21, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- * **Sun, Jun 22, 6:00 am, Sterling Forest Birding**
- Mon, Jun 23, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- * **Sat, Jun 28, 6:00 am, Nickerson Beach Nesters**



Highlighted Spring Programs

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

Featured Keynote Speaker will be Tina Morris, author of a new book about New York Bald Eagles, published October 2024. Book sales and signing will be available at the 5:00 pm reception.



**Saw Mill River Audubon's
2025 Annual Dinner
Sunday, April 6, 5:00 pm**

Travelers Rest, Millwood, New York
Join with our friendly community of Audubon members and friends to celebrate the past year of connecting people with nature.

Reservations online
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

Birding Tea!

Saturday, May 31, 2025

3:00 to 5:30 pm

Hosted by Cary Andrews
Croton-on-Hudson
RSVP & Space limited

Benefits Saw Mill River Audubon | \$20 person donation



Even More Spring Events

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary
3/8, 4/12, 5/10, 6/14. 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.

2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7:00 pm, Zoom Bird Chat
Tue, Mar 11 & 25, Apr 8 & 22,
May 6 (note 1st Tue) & 27, Jun 10 & 24
See upcoming topics/speakers & register for Zoom link:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat



Project FeederWatch at Croton Point

Gather with us inside the Croton Point Nature Center to count the birds visiting the feeder. No registration needed.

Continues through Sunday, April 20
10:00 am to 12 noon each Sunday

For background, visit www.feederwatch.org

For questions about Croton Point Nature Center FeederWatch, contact office@sawmillriveraudubon.org or call 914-666-6503

New York Legislative Update

Saw Mill River Audubon has been monitoring the status of several important environmental bills over the last and current New York State Legislature sessions. Here is an update.

Horseshoe Crab Harvesting Ban

The biggest blow to environmentalists' legislation hopes was Governor Kathy Hochul's last-minute veto of the Horseshoe Crab Protection Act, which had been passed in both the State Senate and the Assembly. The bill would have banned the harvesting of horseshoe crabs for bait or biomedical use.

Populations of horseshoe crabs have plunged along most of the East Coast, leading the Center for Biological Diversity and 22 other environmental organizations to petition the federal government to list it as an endangered species (<https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/endangered-species-act-protections-sought-for-american-horseshoe-crabs-2024-02-12/>).

As important as it is to preserve the species itself, its continued presence is especially important for shorebirds. Horseshoe crabs spawn on East Coast beaches primarily during May and June. Their millions of eggs provide copious nutrition to shorebirds stopping over during their migrations north.

New York State has issued licenses to use horseshoe crabs for bait, mainly for conch and eel fisheries and limits the annual take to 150,000 (https://dec.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2024-12/horseshoecrab_quotaplan.pdf), although some activists allege illegal harvesting occurs. It also closes the fisheries for two full-moon periods each year (May 10–14 and June 23–27 in 2025) and has closed the Fire Island National Seashore and three other areas to hand-harvesting of the crabs (<https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/saltwater-fishing/commercial/closed-horseshoe-crab-areas-map>).

The state currently issues no licenses for biomedical harvesting, done elsewhere to provide quantities of the crabs' toxin-sensitive blue blood, which is used in a product to test for sterility of medical devices. Horseshoe crabs are routinely harvested, bled in labs and released back to their environment, with an unknown mortality rate post bleeding. A synthetic alternative to this testing regime means that harvesting for this purpose can begin to be reduced in the future.

Governor Hochul maintained in her veto message "DEC has significant rules and regulations regarding commercial and recreational fishing in the state and adheres to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission management plans to ensure healthy coastal fishery resources.... While this bill is well-intentioned, the management of marine species is better left to the experts at DEC."

Says Audubon New York's policy director Erin McGrath, "The Governor included legislation in her [recently released]

budget that would extend the DEC's authority to manage horseshoe crabs. Unfortunately, this language did not include any additional protections for horseshoe crabs, which Audubon advocated for in the prior legislative session."

Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act

A new push has begun for the state to pass legislation that puts the responsibility for reducing and recycling waste from packaging onto producers instead of municipalities. Last year the bill, sponsored by Westchester State Senator Pete Harckham, passed in the State Senate but failed to come to a vote in the Assembly. A new version of the bill (S01464/A01749) has been reintroduced in the current session.

According to advocates, the bill would:

- save taxpayers and municipalities money
- force polluting companies to pay to deal with their packaging waste
- get 14 of the most toxic chemicals and substances out of packaging (including lead, PFAS, formaldehyde, phthalates, bisphenols, vinyl chloride, cadmium, mercury, benzene, halogenated flame retardants, perchlorate, toluene, and more) and
- require companies to reduce their packaging by 30% over 12 years.

The push for the legislation is being led by Beyond Plastics, which has steps for those who want to support it here: <https://www.beyondplastics.org/nys-packaging-reduction>

Wildlife Crossings Study

The Governor also vetoed a bill that would have directed the state Department of Transportation and Thruway Authority to "identify sites along all highways, thruways and parkways in the state where wildlife crossings are most needed to increase public safety and improve habitat connectivity." The study would be used to pursue federal grants for implementing bridges, tunnels, culverts, and fencing to prevent some of the thousands of vehicle-wildlife collisions—65,000 reported annually with deer alone in the state—and to reduce the habitat fragmentation that roads impose.

The bill passed with strong majorities in both houses in May. Hochul vetoed it in December, along with 28 other bills that would have created various task forces and commissions that she said would have imposed unbudgeted costs on the state. "I share a strong desire in addressing the problems and issues identified in this legislation," she said of the bills. "However, enactment of this package of legislation would collectively cost the state approximately \$24 million."

Jenni Stern, SMRA Board Member & Editor

Sunday April 6, 2025: SMRA Annual Dinner & Program

Reserve your space today for our 2025 Annual Dinner, this year at the newly renovated Travelers Rest, 25 Route 100 in Millwood. View the new look of Travelers Rest here: <https://www.travelersrestrestaurant.com>

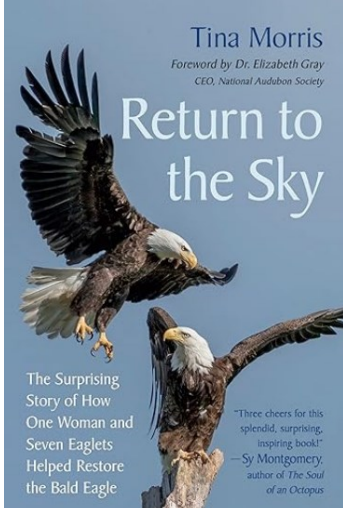
Feel comfortable to come alone or with family and friends with our open seating and welcoming tables of eight. The price per person is \$150, which includes an open bar and your choice at the table of plated entrées, including vegetarian and gluten-free options, plus reception appetizers and choice of desserts.

At 5:00 pm, while enjoying our opening reception and open bar, visit with our speaker for book purchases and signing (see details to right) and enjoy a display of local bird photography by our members and friends with an option to purchase photos. Get a close-up look at the beautiful birding quilt we are raffling. (See page 6.)

Dinner seating is at 6:00 pm, and the dinner program will begin at 6:30 pm with greetings and brief remarks from our board president and treasurer. We will also present an Audubon award to a very special guest.

Before our keynote speaker, our dinner program will also include a short presentation from our 2024 Larry Light Youth Scholarship recipients, as well as acknowledgment of any special guests. We will conclude with our usual "Faces and Places" image show from our past year of connecting people with nature. Perhaps you will be in our 2024 pictures!

All details and online reservations for our 2025 dinner are at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner, or you may call our office at 914-666-6503 to reserve.



Tina Morris
Foreword by Dr. Elizabeth Gray
CEO, National Audubon Society

Return to the Sky

The Surprising Story of How One Woman and Seven Eagles Helped Restore the Bald Eagle

“Three cheers for this splendid, surprising, inspiring book!”
—Sy Montgomery, author of *The Soul of an Octopus*

Our 2025 keynote dinner speaker is Tina Morris, who will discuss her new book, *Return to the Sky: The Surprising Story of How One Woman and Seven Eagles Helped Restore the Bald Eagle*.

This book details Tina’s two-year experience as a young ornithology student in upstate New York when she fostered eaglets that began the re-population of Bald Eagles in New York. Before this, in 1976, there was only one eagle nest left in New York State. DDT weakened eggshells, and eggs were crushed under the mother eagles’ weight during incubation. The results of New York’s successful Bald Eagle reintroduction project is all around us today with Bald Eagles regularly seen year-round in our area and more than a dozen healthy Bald Eagle nests in the Lower Hudson region.

2025 Youth Environmental Scholarships

Saw Mill River Audubon offers scholarships to youth age 13 to 17 to help underwrite the costs for an environmental camp, workshop, or class. Over the past 65 years, we have assisted more than 160 youth and adults with scholarships.

Our scholarship awards are not based on financial need but rather on the level of environmental interest shown by the applicant through coursework and/or extracurricular or volunteer activities. We especially focus on applicants who will apply their experience in ongoing environmental education and outreach in their circles of influence, whether in local communities, school, or work. We prefer applicants from the Lower Hudson region.

The Larry Light Memorial Scholarship Fund for Youth was established by the Light family and friends in 1981 and has been strengthened over the years with additional gifts.

Programs funded in the past have included National Audubon camps (<https://www.audubon.org/audubon-camps>), American Birding Association youth birding camps (<https://www.aba.org/camps>), New York Department of Environmental Conservation wildlife camps (<https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/summer-camps>), and Westchester County ecology day camps (<https://parks.westchestergov.com/children-camps/nature-camps>).

The maximum amount of our youth scholarship award varies based on funds available but has typically covered all or most program costs. Applicants select their program themselves and then apply for a SMRA scholarship.

We now have a rolling deadline for applications. As soon as you know the event you want to attend, use our online application to apply: <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/scholarship-app>.



Our First Day Walk at Rockwood Hall State Park led by Larry Trachtenberg drew a big crowd on January 1, 2025. Photo: Cary Andrews



Winter birding at Muscoot Farm. Photo: Anne Swaim



Birders at the compilation dinner for the 2024 Peekskill Christmas Bird Count in December at Teatown Lake Reservation. Photo: Charlie Roberto



Our display area at the 2025 Teatown EagleFest. Thanks to over 20 SMRA volunteers who greeted EagleFest visitors here and at eagle viewing locations and also helped lead (very large) bird walks. Photo: Anne Swaim

Two Ways to Support What We Do!

Our **bird seed sale** continues through the spring!
View prices and pick-up options and order online:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed

Our annual bird seed sale proceeds benefit our local education and conservation work.

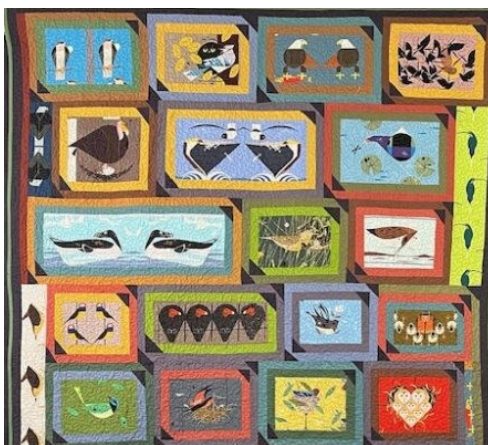
Buy Bird Seed from Audubon!

And support our local conservation & education work

Come on 3rd Sundays Oct-Mar
when volunteers will load your car
Or come any M/W/F 10am to 3pm
and do self-service pickup

Order & pay online or order & pay cash/check/Zelle

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed



Our **2025 Birding Quilt** features beautiful panels of Charley Harper's classic bird art and was created by SMRA board member Jean Sparacin. Drawing will be at our April 6 annual dinner.

View quilt details and purchase raffle tickets online here:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt

Save the Dates! 2025 New York State Birders Conference



The 78th annual conference for the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA, www.nybirds.org) will be held in Ithaca NY, hosted by the Cayuga Bird Club, a NYSOA member club (as is Saw Mill River Audubon.) The conference brings together birders from across the state and beyond who come to develop new birding friendships, renew old ones, hear excellent speakers, and enjoy well-guided birding field trips to new habitats.

The weekend offers attendees a variety of other social, educational, and birding activities, including a paper session, the NYS Young Birders Club ID Challenge, vendors, silent auction, banquet dinner, and more. Friday's welcome reception will be followed by a special presentation by Adriaan Dokter from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Center for Avian Population Studies about "*BirdCast—A Large-scale Perspective on Bird Migration.*"

On Saturday, Peter Kaestner will give the keynote address, "*In Search of the Orange-tufted Spiderhunter,*" about his quest to find 10,000 different bird species, the first person to reach this milestone. Peter traveled all over the world during his career as a diplomat, birding everywhere he went. A highlight of his birding journey was his discovery of a new species of antpitta in Colombia, subsequently named after him, the Cundinamarca Antpitta (*Grallaria kaestneri*). Peter has also been an active bird conservationist and was recently awarded the American Birding Association's Roger Tory Peterson Lifetime Achievement Award.

For more details visit <https://www.nysoa2025.org>. Registration opens April 1, 2025.

	<p>Send Trail Walker report by scanning QR code to left</p>	<p>Pruyn Sanctuary 275 Millwood Road Chapinville, New York N 41 11 41.18295 W 073 46 51.18063</p> <p>SMRA SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON</p> <p>Pruyn Sanctuary is open sunrise to sunset. Dogs are welcome only if leashed & with owner. Help protect Pruyn Sanctuary by donating to Saw Mill River Audubon and/or by sending a Trail Walker report on our website. To help maintain the trails and habitats of this sanctuary, please contact the SMRA office.</p> <p>0 300 1000 ft</p> <p>Saw Mill River Audubon www.sawmillriveraudubon.org 914-696-6503 office@sawmillriveraudubon.org</p>	<p>Download our Sanctuary Maps!</p> <p>Visit Saw Mill River Audubon's Avenza map store for free map downloads to use with the Avenza mapping app, or download individual georeferenced PDFs of trail maps from our website here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/maps</p>
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Or use this web link:
sawmillriveraudubon.org/walker



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at White Plains, NY
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Peregrine Falcon perched up during one of our recent bird walks.
Photo: Troy Gorodess

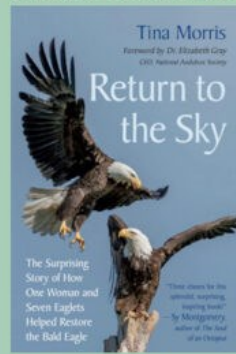
Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Spring!

We have more than 50 events scheduled between March 1 and May 31 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!

Featured Keynote Speaker will be Tina Morris, author of a new book about New York Bald Eagles, published October 2024. Book sales and signing will be available at the 5:00 pm reception.



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Join with our friendly community of Audubon members and friends to celebrate the past year of connecting people with nature.

Reservations online
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

Connecting with Nature: Your gift helps us connect people and nature. Zelle us: smrapay@gmail.com

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

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Email Address _____

Please make check payable to Saw Mill River Audubon and mail or deliver to our office address listed above

OR join/renew/donate online
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