



On the Wing

Fall 2025

Vol. 72 No. 1 | Issue #387



Peregrine Falcon (with Rock Pigeon)
Photo: Steve Sachs

Fall Highlights

See more events on Page 3



Birders at Muscoot Farm on our monthly bird walk there. Here's our August Muscoot eBird list: www.ebird.org/checklist/S264990474



Two more Lunetta Explorer Bags were released into the wild this summer: delivered to Larchmont Public Library through the efforts of Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon. See more about our Explorer Bags: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/explorer



Our 2026 Birding Quilt is already completed and ready for our next raffle! Quilt creator Patricia Loquet delivered her quilt to the SMRA office in July. You can see images online—and get in early on our raffle tickets!—at our Birding Quilt web page: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt

We are highlighting several events below. See page 3 for field trips and more. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs and www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips for the latest information.

Tuesday, September 9, 7:00 pm | Bird Chat on Hawk Migration

Hawk Watch Coordinator Trudy Battaly will be our guest on the September 9th Bird Chat. Trudy will discuss fall hawk migration and area hawkwatch locations, like Hook Mountain, where volunteers keep a count of southbound hawks each fall. For Zoom link and reminder, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Thursday, October 9, 7:00 pm | How to Help Local Birds of Prey

Come to the Chappaqua Library to learn about local birds of prey with a quick review of local species and then a special owl guest shown by Veterinarian Laura Jaworski, followed by a short talk about the problem rat poisons harming local hawks, eagles and owls in our region. Learn how you can help.

Tuesday, October 21, 7:00 pm | Fall Bird Migration in Westchester

Saw Mill River Audubon Executive Director Anne Swaim will present this multimedia program via Zoom to explore which fall migrating birds we can see and hear, when and where across Westchester. Co-sponsored by the public libraries of Greenburgh, Pound Ridge, Mount Kisco, Mount Pleasant, New Rochelle, and Yonkers. Zoom link: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/migration

Wednesday, November 12, 7:00 pm | Film: *Time and Tide*—Don Riepe

Join us on Wednesday, November 12, at 7:00 pm at the Chappaqua Library for a screening of *Tide and Time*, a short documentary (25 minutes) about one of New York City's most celebrated conservationists, Don Riepe. Stay afterwards for light refreshments and conversation with the filmmakers and Don.

Monday, November 17, 7:00 pm | Winter Birding in the Lower Hudson

Multimedia program presented by SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim at the Rye Free Reading Room. No registration needed. Find out which birds are here all winter, what bird sounds to hear, and how birds adapt to winter.

Thursday, December 19, 7:00 pm | Best Photos & Holiday Desserts

Come to Chappaqua Library for a presentation of best nature photos from our members and friends and holiday dessert potluck! See details and photo entries here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/best-photos-2025

Do you prefer receiving 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

First Some Good News: Welcome to our Friends from Central Westchester Audubon!

Our SMRA family has grown significantly! We warmly welcome members of Central Westchester Audubon Society (CWAS) into SMRA’s fold, as CWAS has elected to close after more than 50 years. (See more on page 5.) This merger brings advantages to all. Former CWAS members will be offered new programs and field trips from the SMRA calendar, and existing SMRA membership will enjoy field trips and programs in new venues to our south. I encourage everyone to find a new site or new topic to explore this fall!



Erik Andersen, SMRA

SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim is introducing new event venues this fall in the new portion of SMRA’s membership territory, which now stretches from the northernmost corner of Westchester County on the Hudson’s shore south to Rye on Long Island Sound. (See pages 1 and 3 for our fall events.) We will continue our cooperative and shared programming with Bronx River-Sound Shore, Hudson River and Bedford Audubon Societies in Westchester along with Putnam Highlands Audubon to our north.

And Some Bad News: Prun Sanctuary Encroachments Continue

We at SMRA are proud of our extensive sanctuary system and devote considerable time and other resources to their maintenance That is why it is so disheartening for us to have to spend money fighting neighbors who are encroaching on Prun Sanctuary, where our office is located.

Three years ago on Prun’s southern boundary, neighbors **Dr. Yossi Haroush and Rebecca Marshall**, residing at 7 Mayberry Close, Chappaqua, bulldozed dozens of live trees on their property, pushing many of these trees into Prun Sanctuary, damaging many Audubon trees. The debris extended as much as 30 feet into the sanctuary and was piled eight feet high. SMRA sued Haroush and Marshall for these actions plus trespass, and in December 2024, a default judgement on liability was issued against Haroush and Marshall. Their various appeals have failed, as did a prematurely terminated mediation attempt, and now we move towards an inquest to determine damages. Their attorney has made clear that despite the judgment against them, they admit no responsibility for the damage, in fact claiming SMRA pushed large boulders onto their property. If only the bulldozer blade scars were less obvious....

Haroush, a veterinarian with Animal Health Center in Briarcliff Manor, has also incurred legal penalties from the Town of Chappaqua for felling at least 102 trees on his own property. He was fined tens of thousands of dollars by the town and required to remediate damages, stemming from a stop work order issued back in May 2022. At this writing, Haroush has still not met the terms of his September 2024 settlement with the Town, their attorney claiming as late as June 2025 that he had not received a copy of the plea agreement...which makes one wonder who was doing the pleading.

We are now facing an encroachment on the other side of Prun. This summer, during a periodic boundary survey of our eight sanctuaries, we found the **Sultaniks** at 243 Millwood Road had attached high-intensity LED spotlights to sanctuary trees via buried electrical lines and directed them into the sanctuary forest, and, most recently, added mesh fencing between sanctuary trees more than 15 feet inside the sanctuary boundary. *continued on page 4*

Saw Mill River Audubon

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

Fall 2025 Schedule

Bird Walks & Field Trips

8:00 am start for most fall walks*

* except for any special field trips noted below in boldface

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

SEPTEMBER

Know the four birds below? Answers at bottom.

Mon, Sep 1, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

* Sun, Sep 7, 7:00 am, Saxon Woods Park

Mon, Sep 8, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Sat, Sep 13, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm Anniversary Walk

* Sun, Sep 14, 7:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

* Thu, Sep 18, 7:00 am, Field Trip: Hook Mountain

Mon, Sep 22, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Wed, Sep 24, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

* Sat, Sep 27, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Mon, Sep 29, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve



OCTOBER

* Sun, Oct 5, 7:00 am, Lyndhurst Mansion

Mon, Oct 6, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Tue, Oct 7, 8:00 am, Cranberry Lake Preserve

Fri, Oct 10, 8:00 am, Field Trip: Stateline Hawkwatch

Mon, Oct 13, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

* Wed, Oct 15, 10:00 am, Geocaching | Choate Sanctuary

Sat, Oct 18, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Mon, Oct 20, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Tue, Oct 21, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Sat, Oct 25, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park



NOVEMBER

* Sun, Nov 2, 7:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

Mon, Nov 3, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

* Sun, Nov 9, 7:00 am, Saxon Woods Park

Mon, Nov 10, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Mon, Nov 17, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Sat, Nov 22, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

* Fri, Nov 28, 9:00 am, Turkey Mountain Hike

Sat, Nov 29, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve



DECEMBER

Mon, Dec 1, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

* Sat, Dec 6, 7:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

Mon, Dec 8, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Sat, Dec 13, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

♦ Sun, Dec 14, Greenwich-Stamford Christmas Bird Count

Mon, Dec 15, 8:00 am, Rockefeller State Park Preserve

♦ Sat, Dec 20, Peekskill Christmas Bird Count

♦ Sun, Dec 21, Putnam Christmas Bird Count

Sat, Dec 27, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

♦ Sun, Dec 28, Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count



♦ **Christmas Bird Counts** happen over 24 hours, often including after-dark and pre-dawn owling. Some birders go birding for many hours and some for just a couple of hours as part of teams assigned to a specific area. Contact our office to connect with teams covering these Christmas Bird Counts. See more here: www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count

A: American Kestrel B: Dark-eyed Junco C: Barred Owl D: Bufflehead

Fall Birding Programs

More programs at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Fall Bird Migration Across Westchester County

Tuesday, October 21, 7:00 pm | via Zoom



A Presentation from Saw Mill River Audubon

Winter Birding
in the Lower Hudson
Monday, Nov 17
7:00 pm
Saw Mill River Audubon | Rye Reading Room

Even More Fall Events

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary
9/13, 10/11, 11/8, 12/13, 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. www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/brinton



2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7:00 pm, Zoom Bird Chat
Tue, Sep 9 & 30, Oct 14 & 28, Nov 18, Dec 9 & 23
See upcoming topics/speakers & register for Zoom link: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat



Sundays, 9:30 am to 12:00 pm
Project FeederWatch | Croton Point Nature Center
Come anytime and help count birds at the feeders, watching from inside the center. Good for beginners and also good for bird photography. All welcome.
Starting Sun 11/2. Ending Sun 4/26.
More about FeederWatch: www.feederwatch.org

Pruyn Encroachments *(continued from page 2)*

At this writing, despite clear communication from SMRA, the Sultaniks have neither removed the offending equipment nor acknowledged the recently renewed boundary survey markers placed by a surveyor we hired this summer.



Surveyor Paul Rowan staking the property line between Pruyun Sanctuary and the Sultanik property in June.

Note the electrical cables and the large spotlight attached to a tree owned by SMRA facing into the sanctuary forest.

Photo: SMRA

One might assume sanctuary protection from neighbors wouldn't need to be a high priority for a charitable, not-for-profit organization dedicated to protecting the environment. Neighbors benefit in numerous ways from our properties—quality of life, real-estate values, privacy and having well-meaning property owners who maintain our properties for the public good. It is particularly disappointing to spend Audubon resources protecting ourselves from those who benefit the most from our presence: our neighbors.

The board of directors of Saw Mill River Audubon is dedicated to protecting all of the sanctuaries entrusted to us, and we appreciate and need membership contributions of all kinds. If you are a walker or birder and utilize the sanctuaries, you are our eyes and ears on the ground. If you are a donor, please, carry on! Two-plus years of legal fees, judiciously spent, still add up, but the principle is critical: if not here, where does one draw the line?

Yours for SMRA,

Erik Andersen, SMRA President

How to support what we do



Donate at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate
Or www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/paypal
Or via **Zelle** to smrapay@gmail.com



Walk our sanctuary trails and send us a **Trail Walker Report** to help us know when trail work or habitat repair is needed.



Trees bulldozed from Haroush/Marshall property onto Pruyun Sanctuary. Looking uphill from Pruyun Sanctuary and note the orange flags clearly marking the Audubon border. Photo: Town of New Castle



Boulders, logs and dirt were bulldozed downhill into Pruyun Audubon Sanctuary from the Haroush /Marshall property. The boundary line is at the top of the hill where SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim is standing. Photo: SMRA

Central Westchester Audubon Merger with Saw Mill River Audubon

After more than five decades of dedicated environmental advocacy, bird conservation, and community education, Central Westchester Audubon Society (CWAS) has announced its plans to cease independent operations and merge with Saw Mill River Audubon. This merger aims to strengthen Audubon local efforts by uniting resources, expertise, and volunteer networks.

Saw Mill River Audubon's new local footprint will stretch from Cortlandt Manor in northwest Westchester to Rye in the southeast. See map below. The chapter will gain over 400 new members, totaling more than 1600.

The legal closure of Central Westchester Audubon Society, Inc., which is subject to the approval of the New York State Attorney General, is set to occur over the coming months. Central Westchester Audubon members may now participate in all SMRA activities.

Saw Mill River Audubon President Erik Andersen said, "We look forward to welcoming Central Westchester Audubon members to Saw Mill River Audubon. We are also planning new outreach efforts in the Central Westchester Audubon communities of Elmsford, Harrison, Port Chester, Purchase, Rye, West Harrison and White Plains."

"Our chapter was built on a simple but powerful idea: that a small group of dedicated individuals could make a real difference in protecting the natural world," said Lisa Curtis, president of CWAS. "It's bittersweet to close this chapter. However, we're excited for the expanded opportunities this merger will bring. As we look to the future, we do so with pride in what we've accomplished and confidence in what lies ahead."

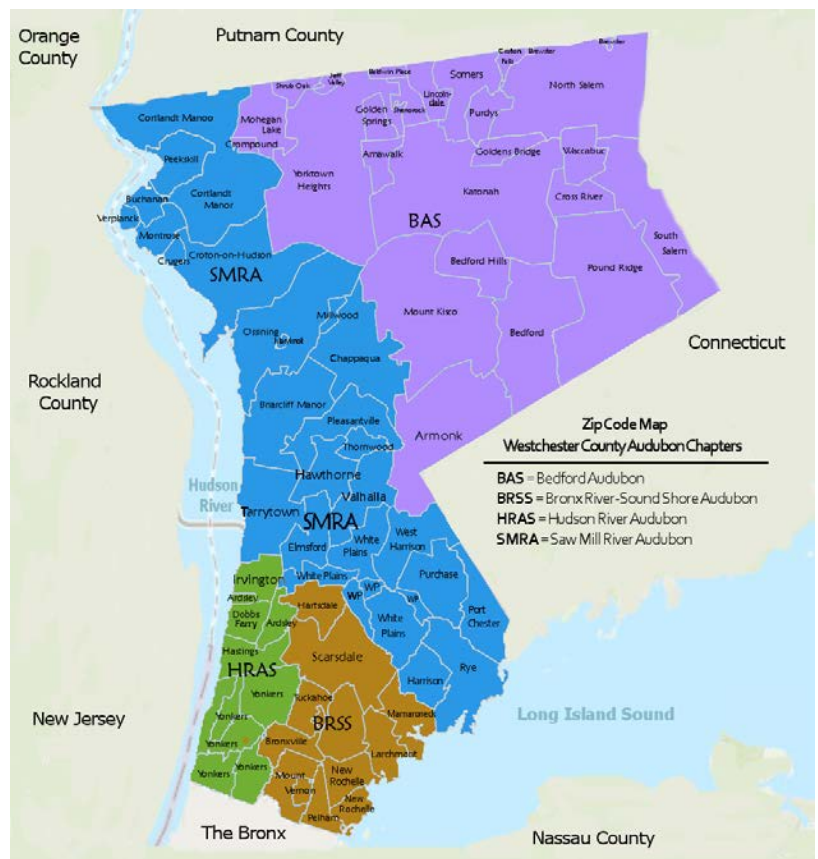
Founded in the early 1970s by a passionate group of local birders and nature enthusiasts, Central Westchester Audubon has been a vibrant advocate for environmental stewardship in the central Westchester area. From organizing seasonal bird counts and classroom projects to hosting educational workshops and guided bird walks, the chapter has played a vital role in fostering a love of nature among generations of central Westchester residents.

Saw Mill River Audubon, with its broader geographic reach and larger pool of volunteers and staff, will continue to expand programs and initiatives offered by Central Westchester Audubon, ensuring that its legacy lives on.

If you are a current member of Central Westchester Audubon Society, your National Audubon membership and/or chapter membership in CWAS will fully transfer to SMRA.

SMRA President Erik Andersen added, "We want to thank the focused and attentive attorneys on Cassandra Xia's team at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP, who took our engagement through Pro Bono Partnership, White Plains. We also recognize and appreciate the attention that CWAS President Lisa Curtis, Vice President Christopher Mignone, Secretary/Treasurer Fred Pfisterer, and their counsel at Dechert LLP have paid to the exacting nature of winding down a not-for-profit charity in New York State."

We invite you to contact us with your questions or suggestions about this merger.



Protecting Raptors from Rat Poison

Owls, hawks, and eagles are rodent predators. They are a natural balance for rat populations. But eating rats can kill these raptors if the rats have eaten second-generation rat poisons from bait boxes.

Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs) were banned from retail sale by the federal government in 2015 due to dangers posed to children, pets, and wildlife, but they remain legal—and widely used—by commercial pest control companies in Westchester County and elsewhere.

The rodenticides used by commercial pest-control companies work by causing internal bleeding in rodents. Raptors that eat these poisoned rodents can also experience internal bleeding and die as a result. A national study of 303 dead Bald Eagles found that 82% had been exposed to rodenticides. A study at a Massachusetts wildlife clinic found that 100% of Red-tailed Hawks tested there had SGARs in their bodies.

Second-Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides are placed in bait traps that are black plastic boxes about 10 x 8 x 4 inches with an opening large enough for a rat, mouse, chipmunk, or squirrel (see photograph).

Locally, in a survey of public spaces and exteriors of public buildings (library, high school, parking lots behind commercial buildings, recycling center) in Chappaqua, many of these bait traps were easily found: five at the high school, three at the library, seven in public parking lots.

Campaigns to raise public awareness of the hazards of SGARs and to convince towns and cities to stop using them have been successful in many places. We are working to organize Chappaqua residents to create a compelling message and to bring signed petitions and



Seen these boxes? Too often, they contain rat poison that travels through the food chain, killing owls, hawks and eagles in our area. Look below for how you can learn more about this and help stop it. Photo: Laura Lennihan

our presence to Town Board meetings to convince the Town Board to cease using SGARs. Next steps will be to educate other public institutions (library, houses of worship, schools), commercial enterprises, and homeowners to stop using SGARs. Of course, after all of that, there will be more to do, in other towns and even across New York State.

Please join us in this endeavor and help make a difference in your own community.

- **Come to our October 9th public program.** See page 1 for more details.
- **Visit our rats web page** with links for more info and a response form if you want to get involved: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/rats

*Laura Lennihan, Member
SMRA Advocacy Committee*



Celebrate the Guardian of Jamaica Bay!

Join us on Wednesday, November 12, at 7:00 pm at the Chappaqua Library for a screening of *Tide and Time*, a short documentary (25 minutes) about one of New York City’s most celebrated conservationists, Don Riepe.

Don has dedicated half his life to preserving the rich wildlife and salt marshes of Jamaica Bay. As he approaches his 85th birthday, the “Guardian of Jamaica Bay” reflects upon his achievements and attempts to inspire the next generation of caretakers. *Tide and Time* is the intimate portrait of a poet at the frontline of climate change whose love for nature has influenced countless New Yorkers.



Don Riepe and a Barn Owl friend.

After the screening, Don will join filmmakers Natalie Ruiz-Pérez and Naeem Amarsy for a panel discussion. Natalie and Naeem are Columbia Journalism School graduates who collaborated on this film as an outgrowth of their respective reporting on water-related topics.

After the discussion, stay for a light reception and a chance to speak with Don, Natalie and Naeem.

This event is brought to you by SMRA, FCWC, Films on Purpose, and the Chappaqua Public Library.

*Kathleen Williamson
SMRA Board Member & Films on Purpose Member*



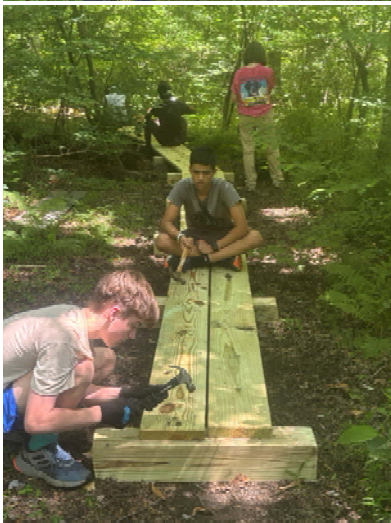
New Eagle Scout Work at Pruyn

My name is David Schifrin, and I am completing an Eagle Scout Project in the Pruyn Sanctuary.

I chose this location due to its proximity to my own house, and how much time I spent there throughout my early childhood. My Eagle Scout Project consists of building 180 feet of puncheon (wooden footbridge) through an eroding section of trail, and also building an informational kiosk and new entrance sign at the Seven Bridges entrance to the sanctuary.

I have completed the project by fundraising for and purchasing the materials and have built the puncheon through setting up work dates with other Boy Scouts within my troop to help me. I obtained most of the lumber from Lakeland Lumber, which kindly charged me for the materials at wholesale price.

Eagle Scout Candidate David Schifrin



Above project photos: SMRA. As this newsletter goes to print, David is finishing up work on the new kiosk and replacement sign at the Seven Bridges entrance for Pruyn Sanctuary.

We Are Losing Our Grassland Birds



Eastern Meadowlark.
Photo: Susan Logan Ward,
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

The Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*), a member of the blackbird family, is one of our most beautiful songbirds, with its brilliant yellow breast and black bib. In years gone by, meadowlarks were fairly common in our fields and pastures here in the Lower Hudson Valley. But so far this year, there have only been a handful of sightings of the Eastern Meadowlark reported on eBird in Westchester County.

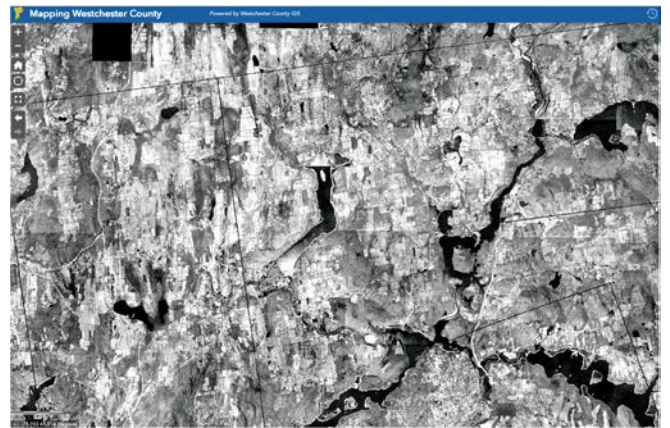
What's going on? The Eastern Meadowlark, like many ground-nesting birds that frequent grassland habitats, is undergoing a precipitous decline in the northeast and beyond. It is estimated that the Eastern Meadowlark population has suffered a cumulative decline of at least 75% in the past 60 years, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

Cornell's All About Birds website describes the Eastern Meadowlark as a "common bird in steep decline." Cornell also uses the "steep decline" descriptor for several other grassland bird species, including the Savannah Sparrow, Northern Bobwhite, and Grasshopper Sparrow. Another ground-nesting grassland bird in the blackbird family, the Bobolink, is faring somewhat better in the northeast but is also undergoing a population decline.

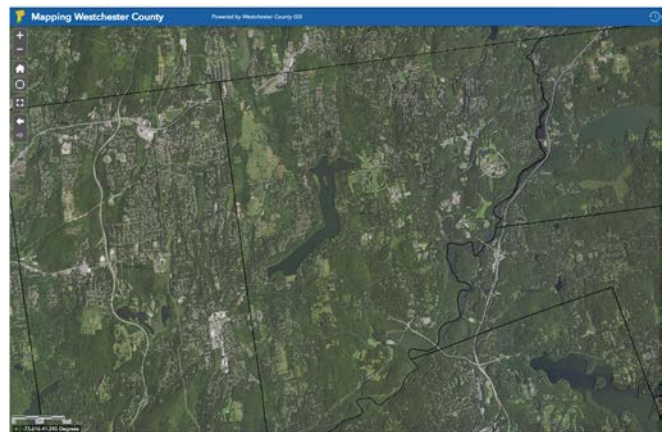
Why are grassland birds declining? Midwestern populations are vulnerable to changing agricultural practices and increased use of pesticides. Here in the northeast, grassland habitat is disappearing. Fields and pastures are undergoing both reforestation as farmland is abandoned and commercial and residential development gobbles up former agricultural land.

An illustration of habitat changes that are negatively affecting grassland birds can be seen in these two aerial photos from the Westchester County GIS.

The photo at the top of the next column shows the Town of Somers and parts of neighboring towns in 1947. Note the extensive area of farm fields and pastures. The same area in the 2019 image below shows much of the field and pasture having undergone reforestation or development.



Town of Somers and surroundings in 1947.
Photo: Westchester County GIS



Town of Somers and surroundings in 2019.
Photo: Westchester County GIS, USDA data

According to the Bobolink Project, "20 acres is typically recognized as the minimum acreage that can reliably support Bobolink populations. Fields that are over 50 acres will have higher Bobolink abundances, and fields over 75 acres in size may have Eastern Meadowlarks." See bobolinkproject.com. There is very little grassland habitat remaining that meets these criteria here in Westchester County.

A future article will cover how changing practices on our remaining farmland are harmful to our ground-nesting grassland birds, including earlier mowing of hayfields, which now takes place during nesting season, leading to reproductive failure. We'll describe efforts being made to work with farmers to achieve nesting success.

*William Kellner
SMRA Secretary and Board Member*

Bird Seed Sale Begins!

Our 2025–2026 Bird Seed kickoff is Saturday, September 27, at Pruyn Sanctuary, when our volunteers will be on hand to load your car from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Please order by Wednesday, September 24, for the above pickup date to have your seed ready to load.

- Click here to download our seed sale flyer.
- Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed to see our seed types and prices and order online. You may pay online at our seed sale webpage with MasterCard or Visa, or via PayPal which also accepts Amex, or pay us via Zelle. You may also pay by cash or check when you pick up your seed.
- Our 2025–2026 seed inventory will be at Pruyn starting Monday, September 15, and through the winter.
- Come pick up seed any office day, Monday, Wednesday, or Friday, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm—our regular office hours—at Pruyn Sanctuary. Call or email first. You will be self-loading your vehicle from our seed shed.
- We also offer staffed seed pickups on third Sundays from October through April, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Third Sundays are: October 19, November 16, December 21, January 18, February & March 15, April 19.

If you are new to bird feeding and/or if you want to learn about different types of bird feeders and bird food to offer, and what feeder birds to expect in our area, be sure to visit Cornell Lab of Ornithology's excellent website, www.feederwatch.org, or stop by the Croton Point Nature Center any Sunday, between 9:30 am and 12 noon to see the SMRA FeederWatch in action, starting November 2. See more below about Project FeederWatch.

Birds at feeder above clockwise from top left: American Goldfinch (male and female), and two female American Goldfinches.



Can you name these three bird species? Answers below.



Be Part of FeederWatch this Winter!

SMRA is sponsoring Project FeederWatch at the Croton Point Park Nature Center again this winter. Bird watchers at all levels of experience, including novices, are welcome to **join us each Sunday, November 2 through April 26, from 9:30 a.m. to noon** to help count birds visiting the feeders. Enjoy observing and learning to ID winter feeder birds from the comfort of the cozy Nature Center, with the added bonus of fellowship, coffee, tea and snacks. Bring binoculars if you have them. We have loaner binoculars too.

There is no need to join Project FeederWatch yourself or to register with Saw Mill River Audubon in advance, but if you want to receive email reminders or information about what we see during the season, contact our office by email or phone to sign up for the FeederWatch email list. If you would like to report observations at your own feeders to the FeederWatch project, sign up now for an individual account at www.feederwatch.org. Cornell will send instructions and a project kit.

Project FeederWatch, a research project of Cornell Lab of Ornithology, involves thousands of sites across North America where people count and record the birds they see at feeders in backyards, parks, and other areas. Data from Project FeederWatch is used to help track winter bird abundance and distribution. To learn more about the history of FeederWatch and how the collected data is used by scientists, visit www.feederwatch.org.

Valerie Lyle, SMRA Board Member

Youth Scholarships Available



Participants at the 2024 Penikese Island School Girls Science Camp included Arabella Pajooi (lower righthand corner) a Larry Light Youth Scholarship recipient. Photo: www.penikese.org/camp

Do you know a teenager crazy about nature? 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 68 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.

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

Programs funded in the past have included

- National Audubon camps www.audubon.org/audubon-camps,
- American Birding Association youth birding camps www.aba.org/camps,
- a girls science camp (see photo caption left),
- a high school science research trip,
- New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation wildlife camps dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/summer-camps, and
- Westchester County ecology day camps 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 the online application on our website here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/scholarship

To Paper or Not to Paper

For our new members from CWAS, this paper newsletter is part of our special welcome to you: a special edition for our entire membership list. Several months ago, we began distributing our newsletter only in digital (and color) form to save trees and printing and mailing costs. We now typically print only a small number of paper newsletters for promotional purposes but also for those current members who specifically request a paper newsletter.

For chapter members who want to receive a paper newsletter, call us at 914-666-6503 or visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/paper

SMRA Newsletter Archives



We now have 20+ years of newsletters in our online archives. Browse them here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news

Lunetta Explorer Bags Now in 14 County Libraries



Through the support of Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon, two more Mr. Lunetta Explorer Bags are available for circulation, beginning in mid-September,

at the Larchmont Public Library. Library staff and BRSS Audubon board members shown above received the bags on July 16 from Anne Swaim, SMRA Executive Director. This is the fourteenth Westchester County library to offer these bags to their patrons. The bags have two pairs of binoculars and other nature study tools and activity suggestions. They were developed in honor of Chappaqua resident Don Lunetta, a long-time neighbor of our Pinecliff Sanctuary. Learn more here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/explorer/

How We Connect People with Birds...and More

Since our beginning 72 years ago, Saw Mill River Audubon has offered education programming to connect people with birds, other wildlife and their habitats. Contact our office if you can help us connect nature with people in your town.

Public Programs & Field Trips

We offer a calendar of public programs — both in person and by Zoom — from September through June. These are free programs held at local libraries throughout our membership area. This fall we are offering a program in Rye Library, two in Chappaqua Library, and a Zoom program hosted by seven different Westchester County libraries. See page 1!



Birders at Croton Point Park on SMRA walk, July 2025. Photo: Anne Swaim

We also offer a seasonal calendar of free public field trips focused on birding. See page 3 in this newsletter! We usually limit bird walk sizes with registration. We also offer trips to regional birding hotspots, walks in our sanctuaries, and outings like our Wednesday, October 15, geocaching walk.



Download our community programs flyer to share in your community



Community Programs

Saw Mill River Audubon also presents multimedia in-person and Zoom programs about birds and birding to local community groups like garden clubs, libraries, and service clubs. Some of our popular topics are *Birding 101*, *Westchester Owls*, *Bird-Friendly Backyards*, *Westchester Bird Diversity*, and *Learning Bird Sounds*. Use the QR code above to download our community programs flyer for more info.



School group exploring Rockefeller State Park Preserve on a SMRA-guided field trip. Photo: Anne Swaim

School Programs and Field Trips

We offer guided field trips for school groups in our Pinecliff Sanctuary or Rockefeller State Park Preserve, the latter under the Connect Kids to Parks grant program, which covers busing costs. We are scheduling now for the 2025–2026 school year so contact our office as soon as possible if you are interested in booking a school field trip or a classroom program. We also partner with the Rewilding School, which offers a forest preschool program at our Brinton Brook Sanctuary: visit www.rewildingschool.org to learn more.



Our Sanctuaries

We own eight wildlife sanctuaries—protecting wildlife habitat and water quality and also raising nearby property values with preserved open space. Six of our sanctuaries also have marked walking trails with free admission for hiking, birding and nature exploring. Learn more about our sanctuaries and download trails maps here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/sanctuaries.



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*Cape May Warbler,
Rockefeller State Park Preserve.
Photo: Mitchell Goldfarb*

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Fall!

We have more than 50 events scheduled between September and December 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!



Pileated Woodpeckers are the size of crows and the largest woodpecker now in North America. They need older and bigger trees for their habitat. As our suburban forests are aging, people are seeing these large birds more often in their backyards and hearing their loud, ringing calls. Hear their sounds and see more images at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website:

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pileated_Woodpecker —>

Photo: Troy Gorodess



Pileated Woodpecker Info

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

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