



On the Wing

Winter 2025–2026

Vol. 72 No. 2 | Issue #388



Bald Eagle in January, Steamboat Riverfront Park, Verplanck. Photo: Mitch Goldfarb



Our September bird walk at Marshlands Conservancy enjoyed a diversity of bird sightings. See our eBird list here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S274891690>
Photo: Anne Swaim



Volunteers added native plants to the grassland at Croton Point Park in November. Do you want to help on future work days? Call or email our office.
Photo: Joe Wallace



Fifth graders from Roosevelt School in Ossining visited Rockefeller State Park Preserve in October, guided by Saw Mill River Audubon, and funded by a NYS Connect Kids to Parks transportation grant.
Photo: Anne Swaim

Winter Highlights *See more events on Page 3*

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.

Wednesday, December 10, 7:00 pm | Best Photos & Holiday Desserts

Join us at the Chappaqua Library as friends of Saw Mill River Audubon share their favorite photos of birds, other wildlife and habitats and we enjoy a holiday dessert buffet. All are welcome to attend, and you don't need to bring desserts or submit photos to be part of this fun and casual evening. Come enjoy images and desserts. Free and open to the public.

Want to be part of our Best Photos program? Entries will close Friday, December 5. For details and to enter your photos, visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/best-photos-2025

Tuesday, January 6, 6:00 pm | Birds in Winter | Greenburgh Library

Learn/review the birds found here in the winter with this multimedia program presented by SMRA Executive Director Anne Swaim. No registration needed. What winter birds can we expect in our area?

Saturday, January 10, 9:00 am | Eagle Walk with Charlie Roberto

Join Charlie Roberto at the Echo Croton River boat ramp at the south end of the Croton Train Station at 9:00 am. No registration needed. We will drive into Croton Point for more birding. See below for soup gathering afterwards!

Saturday, January 10, 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm | 11th Annual Soup Gathering

All are welcome to join us at this free and fun community gathering at the Croton Point Nature Center. Bring something to add to our potluck. RSVP and details: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/soup

Saturday, February 7, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm | Teatown's EagleFest

Day-long celebration of the return of the Bald Eagle to the Lower Hudson River coordinated by Teatown Lake Reservation. Supported by Saw Mill River Audubon. Details will be here: www.teatown.org/events/eaglefest/

Wednesday, February 18, 7:00 pm | Zoom: Are Invasive Plants Really

Bad for Birds? Dr. Chad Seewagen will discuss some of his research on the relationship between invasive plants and birds, and whether invasive plant removal is always worth the effort and side-effects.

Do you prefer a paper newsletter? If you have a current SMRA 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

As one of Saw Mill River Audubon's least accomplished birders, I am easily impressed. I'll be the last, not the first, to identify a unique species or separate one warbler from another...but I do search and I do retain as much as this aging, over-full brain can find room for. So take a short trip with my wife Eva and me....

Participation in SMRA activities and Eva's passion for astronomy have changed my lifelong "Point A to Point B and don't tarry" mindset. I drive, she plans and navigates, and that is how, on our way from a Chicago-land wedding to a southwest Iowa board meeting, we discovered the remarkable natural phenomenon Maquoketa Caves State Park north of Davenport, IA. It is a 13-cave hibernaculum for nine species of overwintering bats, many of which have been decimated by White Nose Syndrome (WNS). However, while putting on my boots, I realized there was a lot going on in the parking lot. Red-headed Woodpeckers were working the lot, taking humans' leavings up into the surrounding oaks. Out came the bins and a most satisfying half-hour before trails took us to caves large and small and across a prairie and numerous steep trails to more cave entrances. The caves are closed mid-November to April 1st to protect the bats.

From Maquoketa we wended our way to Madison County (yes, the "Bridges of" one, but since I've not read the book nor watched the movie, meh) and found the inspiring Madison County Conservation Center, a newly opened, beautifully designed public-private partnership near Winterset, IA. Naturalists and conservationists Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Jay N. "Ding" Darling, George Washington Carver, all with Iowa roots, are featured in this modern open space. Its website, www.madisoncountyparks.org/madison-county-conservation-center/case-for-support, makes a cogent, compelling argument for resource development to spark and hold the public's interest in conservation and nature. And on entering and exiting, we were distracted by dozens of Red-headed Woodpeckers! More than I have seen or will see again in this lifetime. All by itself, worth most of the 3,000 miles.

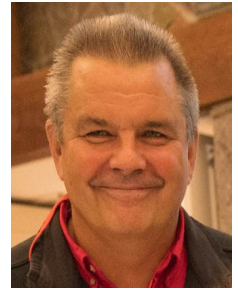
On arrival in Elk Horn, IA, for the aforementioned board meeting, the first thing to flush out of the Jens Jensen

Prairie Landscape Park was a brace of Ring-necked Pheasants, hard for any birder to misidentify and a nice reminder I'd left my bins in the car. With that I return you to local birding.

Laura Lennihan's excellent article in the Fall newsletter, "Protecting Raptors from Rat Poison," renewed my awareness of the ubiquity of bait boxes. It is worth repeating: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/rats has information you can share to save raptors from unintentional poisoning and death.

Don't forget to buy your bird seed (hopefully from SMRA.) It is a helpful contribution to defray our operation costs and will prepare you for the wonder of winter feeder birding. Our two-year-old granddaughter skirts welcoming arms to launch onto the couch and identify and count the birds, imitating bird sounds she has learned during many contented afternoons with her grandparents. My personal favorite is the Downy Woodpecker. Morning birds give "Tiny Chef" and "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" a run for their money.

Yours for the birds,
Erik Andersen, President,
Saw Mill River Audubon



Erik Andersen, SMRA

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

Winter 2025–2026 Schedule

Bird Walks & Field Trips

8:00 am start for most winter walks*

* except for any special field trips noted below in boldface
 Details and register: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

DECEMBER

Plus Christmas Bird Counts listed on our online calendar

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 SP Preserve

Mon, Dec 15, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

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

JANUARY

*** Thu, Jan 1, 9:00 am, First Day Hike**
 Rockwood Hall State Park

Fri, Jan 2, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

Mon, Jan 5, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

*** Sat, Jan 10, 9:00 am, Croton Point Eagle Walk**

Mon, Jan 12, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

*** Fri, Jan 16 to Mon, Jan 19, NYS Waterfowl Count**

Mon, Jan 19, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

*** Thu, Jan 22, 3:30 pm, Shawangunk Grasslands**

Sat, Jan 24, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park



A

FEBRUARY

Mon, Feb 2, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Mon, Feb 9, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

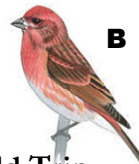
*** Thu, Feb 12, 9:00 am, Golden Eagle Field Trip**
 in Dutchess County, Dover Plains

Sat, Feb 14, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Mon, Feb 16, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Sat, Feb 21, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Fri, Feb 27, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary



B

MARCH

Mon, Mar 2, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Sat, Mar 7, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

Mon, Mar 9, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

*** Sat Mar 14, 7:00 am, Long Island Birding**

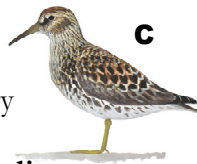
*** Sun, Mar 15, 6:30 pm, Woodcock Walk**
 Croton Point Park

Mon, Mar 16, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Sat, Mar 21, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Sat, Mar 28, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Tue, Mar 31, 8:00 am, Cranberry Lake Preserve



C

A=Barred Owl, B=Purple Finch, C=Purple Sandpiper

Highlighted Winter Programs

More at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

A Saw Mill River Audubon Presentation | www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

Our Best Photos 2025

Members & Friends
 Best Photos & Desserts!

Wednesday, December 10, 7:00 pm

Co-sponsored by the Chappaqua Public Library

Audubon Soup Potluck Gathering
 Saturday, January 10, 2026 | 12noon to 2pm
 Croton Point Nature Center

RSVP Needed for Soup Gathering: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/soup or 914-666-6503
 Eagle Walk 9:00 am to 11:30 am starts at Croton boat ramp with no RSVP needed for walk

Even More Winter Events

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary
 12/13, 1/10, 2/14, 3/14. 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.
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/brinton

2nd and 4th Tuesdays, 7:00 pm, Bird Chat on Zoom
 Note: one Bird Chat in January
Tue, Dec 9 & 23, Jan 13, Feb 10 & 24, Mar 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.

Sunday, November 2 through Sunday, April 26
 9:30 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

Advocacy Update

The SMRA Advocacy Committee has been following efforts on many fronts to pass New York State legislation to protect the environment. Here are brief updates on several issues we think are important.

Reducing Plastics

In the 2025 legislative session, the Senate passed the Packaging Reduction & Recycling Infrastructure Act sponsored by Westchester’s Pete Harckham, but the bill was not brought up for a vote in the Assembly. “Despite overwhelming bipartisan public support for the bill and endorsements from local governments, faith leaders, and 313 organizations and businesses, corporate opposition has stalled progress in the Assembly for two years in a row,” says the organization Beyond Plastics, which is spearheading an effort to get it passed in 2026. Visit their website for more about the bill (www.beyondplastics.org) and how to help, including attending a People Over Plastic Rally & Advocacy Day in Albany on January 13.

Helping Horseshoe Crabs

Horseshoe crabs—and the tasty egg meals they provide for migrating birds—are an important part of the ecosystems along New York’s saltwater shores. The population’s depletion for bait and biomedical purposes has endangered the Red Knot and other shorebirds. Both New York houses again passed a ban on their harvest this year, after Governor Kathy Hochul vetoed last year’s effort in December 2024.

Citizens have an opportunity to put pressure on the governor to sign the bill this year. Email or call her at www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form or (518) 474-8390 and ask her to sign S4289/A4997 to preserve the horseshoe crab and the food sources it provides for birds. Friends of the Bay also has a sample letter to the governor here: www.friendsofthebay.org/horseshoe-crab-protection-act-letter-of-support.html

Restricting Raptor-Killing Rodenticides

Those black boxes ubiquitous in our environment are meant to kill rodents, but the Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs) they contain also kill the raptors and other wild predators that feed on them. U.S. EPA has banned over-the-counter sales to consumers, but they are still easily purchased on the Internet. This past year, the New York State Senate passed a bill (S7532), also sponsored by Senator Harckham, restricting their sale to licensed commercial pesticide technicians and outlawing their use within 500 feet of a wildlife habitat area. (The bill’s clever acronym title is Restriction of Anticoagulant Pesticide Transactions for Online and Retail Stores, i.e. RAPTORS.) However, its sister Assembly bill failed to make it out of committee.

The SMRA Advocacy Committee will continue to monitor important environmental legislation and alert those concerned about the need for action. Subscribe for email updates: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/list

Jenni Stern, SMRA Newsletter Editor

Why Plastics Matter



A new book from Beyond Plastics (which is leading the fight to reduce packaging in New York State) explores the threat these ubiquitous materials pose for our Earth and the health of its inhabitants. *The Problem with Plastic: How We Can Save Ourselves and Our Planet Before It's Too Late*, written by the organization’s founder Judith Enck and climate reporter Adam Mahoney, examines how what began as a marvel of modern science has become one of the planet’s greatest threats.

The authors trace plastics’ full life cycle — from extraction to disposal — and provide readers with a path forward. Dismantling false solutions like plastic recycling and “compostable plastic,” they explore the human-health impacts of plastic exposure and highlight proven policy solutions. They also advise readers how to reduce the amount of plastic in their own lives, beginning with a household plastics audit, and offer 10 easy ways to get started, from reusable water bottles, shopping bags, cutlery, and takeout containers to buying in bulk and saying no to plastic straws. *The Problem with Plastic* will be published in December. Pre-orders are available at www.beyondplastics.org/problem-with-plastic-book.

Invasive Plants: Not So Bad for Birds?

Those of us who observe many fall warblers feasting on Japanese angelica berries sometimes dare to question the received wisdom among environmentalists that invasive plants lack value for birds and other wildlife.

One who has questioned this wisdom and has the research to back it up will be our speaker at an online program on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, beginning at 7:00 pm.

Chad Seewagen, Ph.D. is executive director of Great Hollow Nature Preserve & Ecological Center in New Fairfield, CT. Seewagen says, “Vast amounts of conservation resources are annually allocated to invasive plant removal, with the goal of improving habitat quality for wildlife. However, the ecological impacts of these plants and the benefits to wildlife from their removal have been surprisingly understudied. I will discuss some of my research on the relationship between invasive plants and birds, and whether invasive plant removal is always worth the effort and side-effects.”

To sign up for this program and receive the Zoom link, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs



Cape May Warbler on Japanese angelica, September 2025, Rockefeller State Park Preserve. Photo: Ruogu Li

Our Latest Bird Quilt Raffle!

Our latest raffle quilt is already assembled and waiting to be taken home by this year’s winner. Tickets and details are here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt

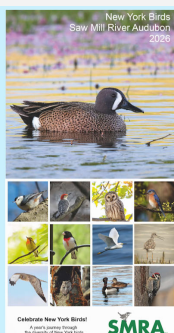
Created by Patricia Loquet and assembled with the help of Debra Oaks of Winterberry Quilts, our 2026 quilt features a pattern of traditional “Log Cabin” blocks arranged in what quilters call the “furrows” setting. In the middle of each block is a tiny and colorful bird.

This large quilt (58 by 73 in.) will be awarded in a drawing at our 2026 potluck dinner on Sunday, April 26, 2026, at Mariandale Center, Ossining. Raffle tickets are \$10 each or three for \$25. All proceeds benefit Saw Mill River Audubon.



See full design at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/quilt

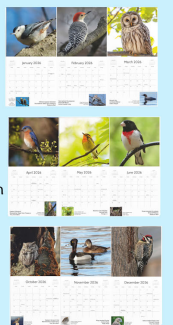
Save the Date! 2026 Audubon Community Potluck
Sunday, April 26, 2026 | Mariandale Center, Ossining
 Details and RSVP: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner
 Special Program | Good Company & Food | Silent Auction



2026
New York Birds
Calendar

Local Photographers & Birds
 Seasonal & Sky Events
 Benefits Saw Mill River Audubon

Order online at
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org
 or call 914-666-6503



Available this year at the Feed the Birds store in Croton-on-Hudson!

Here’s a Great Gift Idea!

With the generous support of local bird photographers, we have produced another *New York Birds* calendar for your 2026 viewing pleasure with birds shown on the months they are likely to be seen. Also includes seasonal nature notes and solar/lunar/star events. Order online for mailing, buy your copy at one of our upcoming programs and field trips, or pick up at our office at Pruyt Sanctuary.
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar



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*Hermit Thrush wintering at Croton Point Park.
 Photo: Barbara Strobino*

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Winter!

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



Redpolls are small northern finches that only come south to our region in winter during “irruption” years. This winter is forecasted to be an irruption year for northern finches with Red-breasted Nuthatches and Purple Finches already reported in good numbers in the Lower Hudson. Keep an eye on area feeders and birding hotspots for the above birds plus Redpolls, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks.

Left: Redpoll at Croton Point Park, February 2021. Photo by Karalyn Lamb. More info here: www.finchnetwork.org

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