



SMRA
SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

On the Wing

Summer 2026

Vol. 72 No. 4 | Issue #390



Male Purple Martin photographed on the wing during a past June at Croton Point Park, where the nesting structure organized by SMRA continues to attract an active colony of these largest swallows in North America. Watch for them as you enter the park on the left by the entrance booth.

Photo: Dmitry Aronov



Our April 26 Annual Dinner was a community potluck this year at Mariandale and drew a capacity crowd. Photo: Anne Swaim. More pictures on page 5.



Our new walk series at Cranberry Lake Preserve continued with an April walk that featured many new arrivals. See our eBird list with pictures: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S328930086>



We are glad to continue our partnership with Lyndhurst to offer seasonal bird walks on its grounds. Here's our spring Lyndhurst eBird list: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S320578171>

Summer Highlights See more events on Page 3

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

Saturday, June 13, 3:00 to 5:30 pm | Birding Tea!

The annual Birding Tea, hosted by board member Cary Andrews, will take place at her Croton home on Saturday, June 13, from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m. Come enjoy high tea and birdie-themed treats, chat about ways to create bird-friendly habitat in one's backyard, and learn other ways to help our feathered friends. Birding bling is encouraged. RSVP to 914-271-4138 or oomis@aol.com. Space is limited with a suggested donation of \$20 to benefit SMRA.

Thursday, June 18, 7:00 pm | Zoom Workshop: Bird Architecture

Learn about the amazing variety of bird nests worldwide with this multimedia presentation from Saw Mill River Audubon. Also learn about nestcams that you can watch online and how to help nesting birds around your neighborhood. Register for Zoom link: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/nest
Coordinated by Pound Ridge Public Library and co-sponsored by Mount Kisco Public Library, Mount Pleasant Public Library, New Rochelle Public Library, and Yonkers Public Library.

Thursday, June 25, 7:00 pm | Zoom Presentation: Roads Run Through It: Impact of Roads on Wildlife and Opportunities for Improvements

Scott LaPoint will present his research efforts to better understand how landscape attributes, particularly Interstate 87, have affected local mammal species, including bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), and discuss both challenges and opportunities for mitigation. Register for Zoom: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/roads

Summer Bird Walks by Location

For details and registration visit: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Mon 6/15, Sat 6/20, Sat 7/25,
Mon 7/27, Sat 8/15, Mon 8/17

Croton Point Park

Mon 6/8, Sat 6/13, Sat 7/11,
Mon, 7/13, Sat 8/1, Mon 8/10

Muscot Farm

First Mondays
6/1, 7/6, 8/3

Lyndhurst Mansion

Sun 6/28, Sun 9/13

Marshlands Conservancy

Thu 6/18, Sun 7/26, Mon 8/24

Cranberry Lake Preserve

Sun 8/30

Do you prefer a paper newsletter? If you are a SMRA supporter, you can request a mailed newsletter here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/paper OR call/email us at 914-666-6503 or office@sawmillriveraudubon.org

President's Message

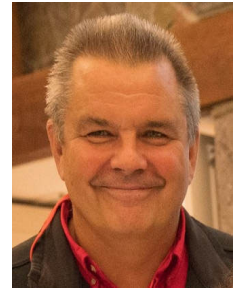
More relevant to our advocacy committee's mission than day-to-day birding, my ornithological introduction to Danish "recycle" artist Thomas Dambo is "The Nordic Swan," pictured left, a giant recycle sculpture made in Copenhagen for the Nordic Council of Ministers that now lives on the lawn of rural Iowa's Museum of Danish America. Made from more than 300 plastic buckets and scrap wood, this installation is a 2015 example of Dambo's goal of creating impactful, joyful art that leaves no negative trace on the planet. He sees trash as a valuable resource...and to that end has created a worldwide trail of "trash" trolls built of recycled and repurposed materials.



His initial foray into colorful, scrap-wood birdhouses evolved into trolls, the giant creatures of Norse mythology thought to live far from humans in caves or mountains...and apparently all over the United States now!

Curiosity about "Troll Hunters" (of which there are a couple hundred thousand) frequenting nearby Omaha's Lauritzen Gardens led me to call the Dambo Art business people in Denmark, which began a whirlwind introduction, negotiation and construction project, culminating in Fjord Færgemand, to the right, the latest resident of the museum's prairie.

She joins the Ring-necked Pheasants, Red-tailed Hawks, Red-winged Blackbirds, returning Purple Martins and The Nordic Swan already at home in the Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park in Elk Horn, Iowa. Just under three weeks of concerted construction led to a late April unveiling of Fjord, along with an enlightening, rap-oriented artist's conversation with 500 audience members, who were fully exposed to the artist's lifelong commitment to trash as a valuable commodity.



Erik Andersen, SMRA

Saw Mill River Audubon

275 Millwood Road Chappaqua, New York 10514
914.666.6503 | office@sawmillriveraudubon.org
Visit us online: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

President: Erik Andersen
Vice President: Suzanne Kavic
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Editor: Jennifer Stern
Executive Director: Anne Swaim
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ON THE WING (ISSN 1545-5254) (USPS 13281) Saw Mill River Audubon's newsletter, is published four (4) times a year (Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer) for \$7.50 a year by Saw Mill River Audubon, 275 Millwood Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514. Periodicals Postage Paid at White Plains, NY and at additional mailing offices.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Saw Mill River Audubon, 275 Millwood Road, Chappaqua, NY 10514.

If you are not familiar with this phenomenon, I encourage you to explore www.thomasdambo.com; for troll locations the associated Trollmap is helpful; and the independent Facebook group DamboTrollHunters are serious-minded but humorous foragers: it's like geocaching for monsters!

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



It's Calendar Time! Be Part of our 2027 NY Birds Calendar!
We are starting now to gather photos for our popular New York Birds calendar featuring local photographers and local birds.
Deadline is July 1! Details and photo submission:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar-pics

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

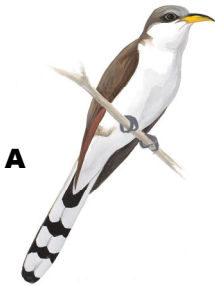
Summer 2026 Schedule

Bird Walks & Field Trips

7:00 am start for Jun/Jul/Aug | 8:00 am for Sep

*** except for any special field trips noted below in boldface**

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



JUNE

Mon, June 1, 7:00 am,
Muscoot Farm

Mon, June 8, 7:00 am,
Croton Point Park

Sat, June 13, 7:00 am,
Croton Point Park

Mon, June 15, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Thu, June 18, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Sat, June 20, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Sun, June 28, 7:00 am, Lyndhurst Estate

JULY

Mon, July 6, 7:00 am, Muscoot Farm

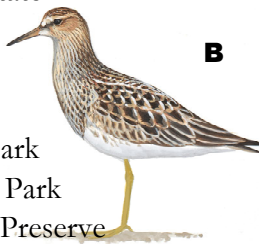
Sat, July 11, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Mon, July 13, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Sat, July 25, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Sun, July 26, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Mon, July 27, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve



AUGUST

Sat, August 1, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

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

Mon, August 10, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park

Sat, August 15, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Mon, August 17, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Mon, August 24, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Sun, August 30, 7:00 am, Cranberry Lake Preserve

SEPTEMBER

Sat, September 5, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Mon, September 7, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm

Mon, September 14, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

Thu, September 17, 8:00 am, Hook Mtn Field Trip

Sat, September 19, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Mon, September 21, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

Mon, September 28, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy

Sun, September 30, **7:00 am**, Lyndhurst Mansion

Highlighted Summer Programs

More at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Birding Tea!
Saturday, June 13
 3:00 to 5:30 pm
 Hosted by Cary Andrews
 Croton-on-Hudson
 RSVP & Space limited
 Benefits Saw Mill River Audubon | \$20 person donation

Bird Architecture: Nest Beauty and Diversity

Floating nests, hanging nests, cavity nests,
 nests that last for years,
 and birds with no nests at all!



Zoom Program: Thursday June 18, 2026, 7:00 pm

A Saw Mill River Audubon Program
Roads Run Through It:
 Quantifying Impacts of Roads
 on Mammal Behavior and
 Opportunities for Improvements
 Scott LaPoint, Ph.D.
 Director of Research
 Black Rock Forest
Thursday, June 25, 2026
 7:00 pm via Zoom
 Register for Zoom link & reminders
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/roads

Even More Summer Events

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary

6/13, 7/11, 8/8, 9/12 Meet 9:00 am in the main lot.

Walks typically lasts two hours. Rain or shine but always check our website calendar before traveling.

For adults and youth 8 and up. No registration.

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/brinton

Usually 2nd & 4th Tue, 7:00 pm, Zoom Bird Chat
Tue, Jun 16&30 (3rd/5th Tue), Jul 14&28, Aug 11&25

See upcoming topics/speakers & register for Zoom:

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Looking Ahead...

Tuesday, Oct 6, 7:00 pm, Next Nature Book Club

on Zoom. www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club

Faces and Places of the Past Year

As part of each annual dinner, we feature a slide show of images from the past year of Saw Mill River Audubon connecting people with nature. Here is a selection of images from Spring 2025 to Spring 2026.



Birding Rockefeller State Park Preserve in May 2025.



Newsletters volunteers in SMRA office helping with very large mailing after Central Westchester merger.



Milton Cobb, Circulation Director, at New Rochelle Public Library with new Lunetta Explorer Bags from SMRA, the 14th county library to offer these bags for check out. For details see www.sawmillriveraudubon/explorer



SMRA Yellowstone Trip in May 2025.

Board Member Ginger Bernardin & Board President Erik Andersen working in SMRA office, which was refurbished Summer 2025 with new paint & carpeting donated by generous supporters.



Ossining Fifth Graders on SMRA field trip at Rockefeller State Park Preserve.



Birding Marshlands Conservancy Summer 2025.



Mega-Birdwalk led by SMRA at Teatown's EagleFest.



Scouts building a new puncheon walkway at Prunyn Sanctuary, Summer 2025.



Peekskill Christmas Bird Count compilation in December 2025.



Visitors to our birding table at Girl Scout Day Rockefeller State Park Preserve, September 2025.

Scenes from a Spring Dinner

The Saw Mill River Audubon annual spring dinner was a potluck with 90 guests held April 26 at the Center at Mariandale in Ossining (photo 1). At this year's event, Larry Light Scholarship winner Vincent Cassetta (2) told the crowd about his sponsored trip to the Audubon youth camp in Maine; featured speaker Ryan Goldberg (3) spoke about birding in New York City, the topic of his new book *Bird City*; the annual raffle for a bird quilt was won by Ellen and Phil Heidelberger (4); we celebrated the merger of Central Westchester Audubon with SMRA (5); and SMRA Board Vice President Suzanne Kavic honored outgoing board members Jean Sparacin (6) and Bill Kellner (7). Much thanks to all our dinner guests for enjoying this evening with us and to our board members who helped host this evening with their food prep and organizing.



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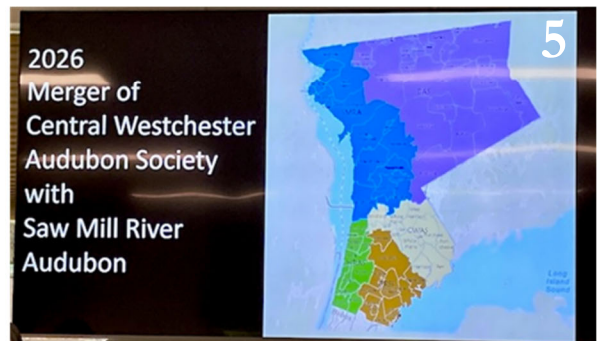
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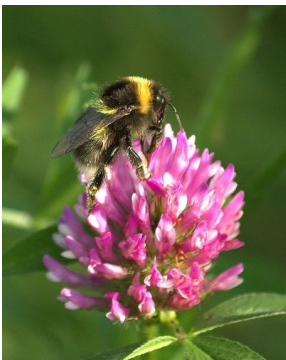
Blue area is SMRA and white area was merged from CWAS.

A Weed by Any Other Name Is Not a Weed

“Is this a weed?” is the first question asked each year as we begin gardening in the native gardens at the Pruyn Sanctuary and also one of the most difficult and evolving subjects. Increasingly, the answer is no. There is no botanical definition of “weed,” but the term carries an implied condemnation and a sentence to immediate extraction from our lawns and gardens.

Emerald turf grass lawns are environmental wastelands, and when a few highly nutritious and beneficial dandelions pop up, people rush to dig them up or worse: spray poison! **Dandelions**, the icon of “weed,” are one of the first nectar and pollen sources in spring feeding for more than 30 species of birds and small mammals.

Chickweed is a year-round highly nutritious source of vitamins A, B, and C and minerals as well as a nectar source and host plant.



Clover, offering many of the same benefits, also pulls nitrogen from the atmosphere and enriches the soil. Add wild plantain and sorrel to the beneficial list of “lawn weeds.” Often growing in disturbed or compacted soils, various weeds help to rehabilitate soil structure, prevent erosion, and provide durable ground cover.

In the meadow, **goldenrod** and **butterfly weed** are now understood to be essential in a native garden. We have purchased those as nursery plants for the gardens at Pruyn, but most beneficial weeds just appear thanks to wind and bird droppings. Until recently, we pulled **pokeweed** but now value it for its highly nutritious, beautiful deep-purple berries as a food source for both migrating and overwintering birds, a pollen source, and habitat.

Calling Garden Volunteers

The growing season is underway and we need your help! The Saw Mill River Audubon Bird & Butterfly Garden is seeking volunteer gardeners who would be willing to spend an hour twice a month planting, deadheading, weeding and mulching to create a beautiful and beneficial habitat for native flowers and grasses, chirping birds, and moths and butterflies as well as other beneficial insects. Join our wonderful group of volunteers, and discover a great way to spend an hour helping nature and meeting new gardening friends at our Pruyn Sanctuary in Chappaqua. To be part of this satisfying work with friendly people, contact our volunteer garden coordinator, Mark Magel, by visiting www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/gardening



Similarly, we’ve recently stopped pulling **jewelweed**, which offers habitat and seeds but also produces a high-sugar nectar for long-tongued insects and humming-

birds (as pictured here.) We plant many species to feed hummingbirds, but inevitably jewelweed is a magnet for them and often noticeably preferred over the “pedigree” salvias and zinnias.

Surrounding the Pruyn gardens we find **dead nettle**. An early food source popular with bees, it will also feed finches and sparrows and caterpillars (which become bird food).

Creeping Charlie is yet another weed offering early-season nectar and pollen as well as shelter and habitat – but its invasive nature and its low-quality of nutrition can make it a nuisance.

Not all plants have a wealth of hidden benefits.

Garlic mustard comes to mind. And an aggressive habit is a characteristic not wanted in a garden. Anything too close or crowding another “cultivated” plant, is a weed. But we want biodiversity, and weeds are a part of achieving that variety. As we work at the Pruyn gardens, what defines a weed is location. “A rose in a peach orchard is a weed.” Anything in a path is a weed for us. When you see benefits in wild plants, the “weeds” magically disappear.

*Mark Magel, SMRA Garden Coordinator
and SMRA Board Member*



*SMRA Pruyn Garden Volunteer
Erica Babad at work in May.*

Welcome New Board Members

Chris Kennelly

I grew up in Northwest Indiana and have lived in both New York and California. Five years ago, my partner Liz and I moved to Croton from NYC during the pandemic. We became familiar with SMRA after discovering Brinton Brook Sanctuary close to our home and being introduced to Anne's bird walks by John and Lynn Salmon.



Around the same time, I had bought myself a camera to kick off a new hobby, but I hadn't really figured out what to photograph yet. I took it on a walk to Croton Point, where I encountered a pair of courting Northern Flickers at Teller's Point. I didn't recognize them from the handful of birds I knew about at the time. The photography fed into birding and vice-versa ever since then, creating an appreciation for the outdoors and conservation. It's also redefined my idea of a vacation, too, as I've calmly explained to coworkers that crawling around in the muck on Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge's East Pond and photographing shorebirds is my idea of a good time.

For the past 15 years, I've worked as a software engineer.

Joe Wallace

Joe has been birding almost as long as he can remember, ever since his dad took him to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge while also showing him the birds that visited the family's tiny backyard in Midwood, Brooklyn. (His simultaneous "spark birds" were the Glossy Ibis and the White-throated Sparrow.) The passion for nature that grew from these early experiences led directly to his career as a writer, authoring books, magazine articles, and other publications on the world's wild places, the threats that face them, and (of course) their birds.



Joe has lived in Westchester for more than 30 years, most of it in Pleasantville, where he and his wife, Sharon AvRutick, raised their family. After moving to Croton in 2019, he became deeply involved in the struggle to preserve the imperiled grasslands and other environments in Croton Point Park, along with all the creatures that depend on them. (This also gives him a good excuse to spend a lot of time birding in the park!) He's thrilled to be part of SMRA, to add to its efforts to protect the forests, marshes, and other vital habitats that survive in our region.

Learn About Wildlife Crossings

The ability to move is fundamental to life. Understanding how wildlife navigate their fragmented landscapes is fundamental to effective conservation and harm-mitigation strategies. It is also challenging.

At our June 25 webinar, Dr. Scott LaPoint will present his research efforts to better understand how landscape attributes, particularly Interstate 87, have affected distribution of local mammal species as well as bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) behaviors, and how they present both challenges and opportunities for mitigation. Specifically he will discuss his bobcat movement ecology project, Black Rock Forest's long-term camera trapping work, some roadkill data, and some under-road culvert monitoring work.

Scott LaPoint, Ph.D., is the director of research at Black Rock Forest in Cornwall, NY, and an adjunct associate research scientist at Columbia University. He has a Bachelor of Science in natural resource policy and management from Paul Smith's College, a master's degree in conservation biology from SUNY ESF, and a doctorate in biology from the Universität Konstanz in Germany. His primary research interests include carnivore movement behavior, landscape ecology and connectivity, and wildlife distribution patterns.



Visit <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/roads> for a Zoom link to this program. Please join us!



275 Millwood Road
Chappaqua, New York 10514
Return Service Requested



Prairie Warblers sing alongside powerlines and field edges through midsummer. Photo: Steve Rappaport
Hear their song and learn more here:
www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Prairie_Warbler

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Summer!

We have 40 events scheduled between June 1 and August 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!



Left: Least Sandpiper may be seen in July and August at Marshlands Conservancy, Rye, and all along the Hudson as they move south from northern nesting grounds.
Photo by Leon Meintjes More info here:
www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Least_Sandpiper

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

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