

SMRA
SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™
On the Wing
Fall 2026

Vol. 73 No. 1 | Issue #391



*Birders on our July 11th walk at Croton Point Park stopped for a photo atop the grassland hill where we watched Bobolinks and more. Our eBird list with bird images: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S370651170>
Photo: Anne Swaim*



*Summer students from Carrie E. Tompkins Elementary in Croton-on-Hudson went birding with Saw Mill River Audubon in July.
Photo: Anne Swaim*



*Our spring trip was to Magee Marsh and other nearby birding hotspots along Lake Erie in Ohio. Our trip list: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/524576>
Photo: Charlie Roberto*



A first-year Red-tailed Hawk shown "kiting," holding its position in the sky by facing the wind and slightly adjusting its feathers. Photo by Avril Armstrong at Hook Mountain Hawk Watch just north of Nyack. Hook Mountain offers close, eye-level or lower views of hawks migrating south down the Hudson. See our guided field trip there on Thursday, September 17!

Fall 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.

Thursday, September 17, 7:00 pm | White-tailed Deer Update

Our kickoff program this fall will be at the Croton Free Library and focus on white-tailed deer. Ernest (EJ) Borchert is the Deer and Land Management Biologist for Region 3, our region, for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. EJ will update us about the status of white-tailed deer management in our region and other deer issues.

Thursday, October 15, 7:00 pm | Zoom Workshop: Fall Migration

What do we expect, and what have we seen in this year's fall bird migration? What birds have left, and which ones are yet to arrive or pass overhead heading south? How can we help migrating birds? Register for Zoom link and reminders here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/migration

Coordinated by Pound Ridge Public Library and co-sponsored by Greenburgh Public Library, Mount Kisco Public Library, Mount Pleasant Public Library, New Rochelle Public Library, and Yonkers Public Library.

Wednesday, November 4, 7:00 pm | Authors Program: *The Hudson River Schools of Art and Their Ice Age Origins*

Published in March 2024 by Purple Mountain Press, *The Hudson River Schools of Art and Their Ice Age Origins* by Hudson Valley geologists Robert and Johanna Titus links 19th-century Hudson Valley culture to prehistoric glacial activity, showing how ice-sculpted terrain inspired America's first major art movement, landscape architecture, and literature. Co-sponsored by and held at the Chappaqua Public Library.

Save the Dates! Details coming soon on our website for these events:
Thu 12/17/26 Best Photos Program | Sun 4/4/27 Annual Dinner

Fall Bird Walks by Location

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

Rockefeller State Park Preserve

Sat 9/19, Mon 9/21, Sat 10/17,
Mon 10/19, Mon 11/23, Sat 11/28

Croton Point Park

Sat 9/5, Mon 9/14, Sat 10/3,
Mon 10/26, Sat 11/7, Mon 11/9

Muscoot Farm

First Mondays
9/7, 10/5, 11/2, 12/7

Lyndhurst Mansion

Sun 9/13, Sun 12/13

Marshlands/Edith Read

Mon 9/28, Wed 10/28, Mon 11/30

Cranberry Lake Preserve

Thu 10/15

Pelham Bay

Sun 9/20

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

Twelve important environmental bills have passed both New York State legislative houses and await Governor Kathy Hochul's signature. Russ Comeau, board member of New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) and South Shore Audubon Society President, has produced a focused and very helpful guide for environmental advocates to champion these bills. Until Hochul signs them, these important bills and Hochul herself are subject to the influence of opposing lobbyists and lethargy.



Erik Andersen

Russ' guide is simple to follow and complete, and you (hopefully) will feel good after you've called. Your call is important because her staff tracks every phone call. Use this phone script to make your voice heard.

Step 1: Call the Governor's office at 518-474-8390 and introduce yourself:

"Hello, my name is [Your Name]. I am a constituent in [City/Town/Zip], and I am a member of Saw Mill River Audubon. I am calling to urge Governor Hochul to sign critical environmental legislation into law before year-end."

Step 2: Give your priority bill number(s): Review and consider supporting the full list below or pick the individual bills you care about most. To save time and for clarity, you only need to read the Senate (S) number to the staffer.

"Specifically, I ask the Governor to support [quantity] bills as follows and I will read just the Senate 'S' numbers to make it easier for your log."

Step 3: Make a closing remark:

"These bills should become state laws because they offer good solutions for public health, for our environment, and for conservation of birds and the habitats they require. Please ask the Governor to sign them into law before the end of the year. Thank you for taking my call and logging my support."

1. **S9479/A10936:** Clarifies tidal wetland definitions to protect vulnerable coastal zones;
2. **S8512/A9111:** SUNNY Act—use of small plug-in solar devices in residential and commercial buildings;
3. **S3207/A8634:** Keeps toxic PFAS "forever chemicals" out of our drinking water;
4. **S4574/A5832:** For industries to disclose toxic PFAS discharges into state waters;
5. **S9133/A10102:** Overrides HOA bans and protects native plant gardening and home landscaping;
6. **S2292/A8515:** Whale Awareness Act – Reduces fatal boat strikes on whales through boater education;
7. **S9452/A10344:** Directs excess supermarket food to local food banks instead of landfills;
8. **S7618/A7291:** Standardizes "Best By" and "Use By" food labels to prevent unnecessary waste;
9. **S9462/A10633:** Manages upstate deer density to reduce tickborne disease, native plant loss;
10. **S1335/A5404:** Helps commercial property owners fund clean energy and resiliency upgrades;
11. **S8938/A9411:** Adds Sullivan County to Hudson Valley community land preservation program;
12. **S9463/A10692:** For DEC to manage unregulated Atlantic Bonito and False Albacore stocks.

Saw Mill River Audubon

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Together we can make a difference, and the louder our collective voice, the stronger impression we leave.

Yours for the birds,

*Erik Andersen, President,
Saw Mill River Audubon*

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 2026 Schedule

Bird Walks & Field Trips

8:00 am start for Sep–Dec walks

* except for any special field trips noted below in boldface

For trip details and to register visit

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

SPECIAL DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME NOTE

If DST is made permanent this fall, then we may adjust the start times on our November and December bird walks.

SEPTEMBER

Sat, September 5, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
 Mon, September 7, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
 Sun, September 13, **7:00 am**, Lyndhurst Mansion
 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
 Sun, September 20, 8:00 am, Pelham Bay Park
 Mon, September 21, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
 Mon, September 28, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy



OCTOBER

Sat, October 3, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
 Mon, October 5, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
 Fri, Oct 9 to Tue, Oct 13, Coastal Birding Trip
 Thu, Oct 15, 8:00 am, Cranberry Lake Preserve
 Fri, Oct 16, 8:00 am, Stateline Lookout Hawk Watch
 Sat, October 17, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
 Mon, October 19, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
 Mon, October 26, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
 Wed, October 28, 8:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy



NOVEMBER

Mon, November 2, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
 Sat, November 7, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
 Mon, November 9, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
 Mon, November 23, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
 Sat, November 28, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
 Mon, November 30, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary



DECEMBER (Christmas Bird Counts during the 2nd half Dec)

Sat, December 5, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
 Mon, December 7, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
 Sat, December 12, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
 Sun, December 13, 8:00 am, Lyndhurst Mansion
 Mon, December 14, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
 Mon, December 21, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
 Wed, December 30, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

A=Broad-winged Hawk, B=Blue-headed Vireo, C=Long-tailed Duck

Highlighted Fall Programs

More at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs



Hudson River Schools of Art and Their Ice Age Origins

Wednesday, November 4, 7:00 pm



Presented by
 Robert and Johanna Titus

Co-sponsored by Chappaqua Public Library

Even More Fall Events

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary
9/12, 10/10, 11/14, 12/12 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, Sep 8 & 22, Oct 13 & 27, Nov 3(1st Tue) & 24

See upcoming topics/speakers & register for Zoom:

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat



Tuesday, Oct 6, 7:00 pm, Next Nature Book Club
 on Zoom. www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club

See article on page 5.

Can a Plan to Reflect Sunlight onto Earth's Dark Places Be Stopped?

A US company has received FCC permission to light up the night by unfolding a mirror in space. And there seems to be no will to regulate the effects of the company's planned deployment of thousands of such mirrors on nature, including bird migration, and human health, not to mention navigation and astronomy.

California-based Reflect Orbital received permission in July to launch a test satellite with a 60-foot-diameter mirror that will unfold and reflect sunlight onto a 10-square-mile area to the brightness of a full moon for five minutes. If the test, scheduled for sometime this year, is successful, the company hopes to launch a network of 1,000 larger mirrors by the end of 2028 (and up to 50,000 after that) and plans to sell reflected sunlight for \$5000 an hour.

Why might our light-polluted Earth need even more light? The company lists solar farms, rescue operations, and city streets as potential users.

Unfortunately, satellites, though they affect the entire planet, are regulated only by the country where they are launched. In the US, the FCC has declared satellite-launch approval exempt from environmental review due to the supposedly "extraterritorial" nature of its effects. And even though the agency is required to consider "public interest, convenience, and necessity" in its deliberations, it has confined itself to considering only radio-frequency interference and orbital debris when approving launches.

Dozens of scientific organizations have called on the FCC to change its criteria for approval and to acknowledge that the reflection of sunlight from space from mirrored and even non-mirrored satellites does



Chaco Canyon, Milky Way. Akkabbani | Shutterstock.com

very much affect environmental conditions on Earth. So far their petitions have been unanswered.

Learn more about this issue at the links below (and, if you are reading this on paper, visit our website at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news for our downloadable newsletter with clickable links.)

How Sunlight Demand Could Erase Darkness

<https://environmentamerica.org/center/articles/how-sunlight-on-demand-could-erase-darkness/>

Who Owns the Night Sky?

<https://journals.law.umn.edu/mjlst/2026/04/21/who-owns-the-night-sky-reflect-orbital-wants-to-sell-sunlight-from-space>

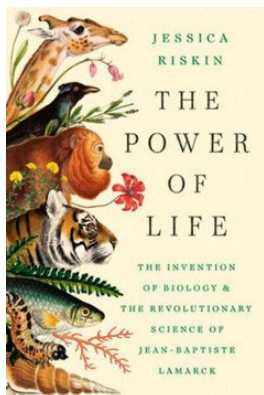
Reflect Orbital readies for first on-orbit demo of shining sunlight at night

<https://aerospaceamerica.aiaa.org/reflect-orbital-approaches-first-on-orbit-demo-of-shining-sunlight-at-night/>

DarkSky and allies ask the FCC to reverse its approval of the Reflect Orbital "space mirror"

<https://darksky.org/news/darksky-and-allies-ask-the-fcc-to-reverse-its-approval-of-the-reflect-orbital-space-mirror/>

Jenni Stern, Newsletter Editor



Our Next Book Club Selection

Nine years ago, I found myself totally immersed in Carl Safina's brilliant book, *Eye of the Albatross*. Whenever I love a book so completely, I want others to join me in the experience, so I asked Anne Swaim, SMRA's Executive Director, to read it and discuss it with me. She suggested I start a Nature Book Club, and it has been my absolute pleasure to be leading the book club ever since.

This October 6th, we will be reading and discussing our 38th book together: *The Power of Life, The Invention of Biology and the Revolutionary Science of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck* by Jessica Riskin.

Like many of the best books we've read, it is a blend of history and science, beautifully written and researched. It's reminiscent of the *Invention of Nature: Alexander Von Humboldt's New World* by Andrea Wulf, which is, to date, the favorite of our choices.

Our book club typically meets on Zoom. Some come regularly and some less often. All are welcome. Visit the SMRA website to register and see a list of past selections.

Kathleen Williamson, SMRA Board Member

Connecting People with Nature this Summer



Girl Scouts from Croton went birding with Saw Mill River Audubon this summer at Croton Point Park.



Birding at Croton Point Park on the "low road" in spring. Our eBird list is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S339972398>



Author Jim Wright was our June public program at the Chappaqua Library speaking about Peregrine Falcons, the focus of his new book. Encore presentation via Zoom on our Tuesday, August 25 Bird Chat.



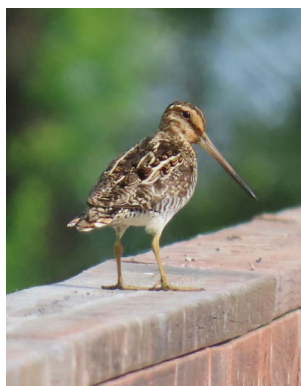
*(L)
Prun Garden Coordinator Mark Magel coordinated garden work sessions through the summer.*



*(R)
Prun Garden Volunteer Nancy doing some unexpected pruning of Garden Volunteer Marty*



Darryl Austin with a new nuthatch friend during our Quebec birding trip in June. Photo: Charlie Roberto



*Wilson's Snipe (of "snipe hunt" fame) being very easy to find and photograph on our Quebec birding trip.
Photo: Ginger Bernardin*



One of many spectacular vista at Gaspésie National Park in Quebec on our June Quebec birding trip. Our trip list is here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/533633> showing all the birds we recorded, the places we went birding, and many photos taken by trip participants. (See page 6 for our next big trip.) Photo: Kathleen Williamson

All other photos above by Anne Swaim

New Bird Seed Sale Begins

Our 2026–2027 Bird Seed kickoff is Saturday, September 26, 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 23, for the above pickup date to have your seed ready to load.

- See the enclosed seed sale flyer or download at link below.
 - Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed to see our seed types and prices and order online. You may pay at our online seed sale order form via PayPal using MasterCard, Visa, Amex, Discover, or your PayPal account, or you may pay us via Zelle. You may also pay by cash or check when you pick up your seed.
 - Our 2026–2027 seed inventory will be at Pruyn starting Monday, September 14, 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 18, November 15, December 20, January 17, February & March 21, April 18.



Can you name these three bird species? Answers below.

Birds at feeder above clockwise from top left: American Goldfinch (male), Black-capped Chickadee, Northern Cardinal (male and female), and two female American Goldfinches.



2027 New York Birds Calendars

We received more than 90 photos of New York birds from local photographers, and it was hard to choose! The result is another beautiful “New York Birds” calendar featuring local birds by local photographers.

We thank all our photographers for supporting this project with their entry fees and their beautiful images. As always, sales of this calendar benefit the conservation and education work of Saw Mill River Audubon.

Featuring local birds displayed on the months they are usually seen in our area plus notes on moon phases and nature notes for each season, this calendar makes a beautiful and unique holiday gift for the nature lovers in your life.

Preview and order at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar

Travel with us to Panama

As this newsletter goes to print, there are three spaces open on our Panama Birding Trip November 10 to 21, 2026

- ◆ 3 nights at Canopy Camp including a trek to seek the Harpy Eagle!
- ◆ 4 nights at Canopy Tower
- ◆ 3 nights at Canopy Lodge

Experience Panama's abundant birds, diverse wildlife, and beautiful habitats. We will enjoy professional guiding and spectacular lodging from the Canopy Family at all three of their venues.

For details and pricing, visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/panama for our trip flyer

Be Part of FeederWatch Starting November 1st!

Come watch winter birds with us from the comfort of the cozy Croton Point Nature Center on Sundays, November 1 to April 25, from 9:30 am to 12 noon. Drop in for all or part of our counting time. Free and no registration needed.

Once again, SMRA is sponsoring the Project Feeder Watch at Croton Point Park. Whether you are just starting to watch birds or are an seasoned birder, all levels of experience are welcome to help count the feeder birds. Enjoy observing winter birds with the added bonus of friendly company, coffee, tea, and snacks. We have loaner binoculars or bring your own.

There is no need to join Project FeederWatch yourself or to register with us in advance, but if you want to receive email reminders or information about what we see during the season or get a personal alert if our watching schedule changes, email our office at office@sawmillriveraudubon.org or call us at 914-666-6503 to get on our Project FeederWatch notice list.

As with all our events, always check the front page calendar on our website if there is any uncertainty about weather affecting one of our events.

If you would like to report observations at your own feeders to the FeederWatch project, sign up for an account at www.feederwatch.org. Cornell Lab of Ornithology will send instructions and a project kit.



Project FeederWatch, a community science 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 FeederWatch history and how the data is used by scientists, visit www.feederwatch.org.

Valerie Lyle, SMRA Board Member

Youth Scholarships Available



Do you know a budding teenage scientist? 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 local students 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 has been strengthened over the years with additional gifts. 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. Example programs funded in the past include

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>.

We have a rolling deadline for applications. As soon as you know the event you want to attend, use our online application to apply: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/scholarships.



275 Millwood Road

Chappaqua, New York 10514

Return Service Requested



In September, White-throated Sparrows return to Westchester parks and neighborhoods from their northern nesting grounds to spend the winter with us. Photo: Melina Cronin. Learn more: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/White-throated_Sparrow

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953



Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Fall!

We have more than 40
events scheduled between

Sep 1 and Nov 30

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!**



The smallest of our diving ducks, the black-and-white Bufflehead arrives in our area in mid-October from their northern nesting grounds. They spend the winter on the Sound, the Hudson and larger reservoirs and lakes. Photo by Chris Kennelly. More info here: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Bufflehead

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

Use QR code for PayPal



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www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate