SMRA
SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

On the Wing

Winter 2026–2027

Vol. 73 No. 2 | Issue #392



Bald Eagle, January 30. Steamboat Riverfront Park, Verplanck, New York. Photo: Mitchell Goldfarb



Our October popup walk in the Rockefeller fields along Route 448 met the sunrise and had a good bird list: ***https://ebird.org/checklist/S405010881***
Photo: Anne Swaim



We watched the fall hawk migration at the Fire Island Hawk Watch in late September. Our eBird list: ***https://ebird.org/checklist/S395336398***
Photo: Anne Swaim



Birding by the restrooms at Rockefeller State Park Preserve, a hotspot within a hotspot for those in the know! Our September bird walk there was good: ***https://ebird.org/checklist/S394237330***
Photo: Bob Yankou

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/programs*** and ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/trips*** for the latest information.

Thursday, December 17, 7:00 pm | Best Photos & Holiday Desserts
Join us at the Chappaqua Library as members and friends share their best photos of birds, other wildlife and habitats while we enjoy a holiday desserts. 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. For details: ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/best-photos***

Saturday, January 9, 9:00 am | Eagle Walk with Charlie Roberto
Join Charlie Roberto at the Croton River Echo Boat Launch at the south end of the Croton Train Station at 9:00 am. No registration needed. We will go into Croton Point for more birding. See soup gathering below.

Saturday, January 9, 12:00 to 2:00 pm | 12th Annual Soup Gathering
All are welcome to this free soup gathering at the Croton Point Nature Center. RSVP and details: ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/soup***

Wednesday, January 13, 7:00 pm | Black Bears in Lower Hudson
A Zoom program about New York state bear management and their population levels over the past 70 years with a special look into current estimates and management goals for the Lower Hudson Valley. Presented by John Milo, NYSDEC Regional Bear Biologist.

Saturday, February 6, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm | Teatown's EagleFest
Teatown's day-long celebration of Bald Eagles in the Lower Hudson. Details: ***www.teatown.org/events/eaglefest/***

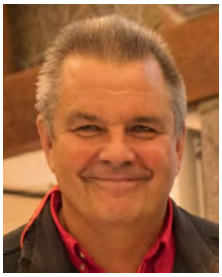
Winter Bird Walks by Location

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

Rockefeller State Park Preserve	Croton Point Park	Muscoot Farm
Sat 12/12, Mon 12/21, Sun 1/10, Mon 1/25, Sat 2/20, Mon 2/22, Mon 3/15, Sat Mar 20	Sat 12/5, Mon 12/14, Mon 1/11 Sat 1/30, Mon 2/8, Sun 2/14, Sat 3/6, Mon 3/8, Sun 3/14	First Mondays 12/7, 1/4, 2/1, 3/1

Lyndhurst	Edith Read Sanctuary
Sun 12/13, Sat 2/13	Wed 12/30, Sat 1/2, Sat 2/27, Sat 3/27

President's Message


Erik Andersen, SMRA

I have spent the last year in Elk Horn, Iowa, running the Museum of Danish America, so many of my "touches" with SMRA have been virtual or digital. At home in Croton-on-Hudson, we are in close proximity to the Graff and Brinton Brook sanctuaries and the beautiful Hudson River. (At the right angle with a squint I can just see the river out of an upstairs bathroom.) Here in Iowa, I look out on the 35-acre Jens Jensen Prairie Landscape Park, itself surrounded by tens of thousands of acres of corn and bean fields. I often reorient myself to home ground. One of my best uses of this time is to revisit the many wonderful things going on at SMRA through our website (***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org***) and social media (@SMRAudubon on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram). A not-insignificant dividend is enjoying the many wonderful photographs posted by members and staff.

Whether you are near or far, here are some terrific ways you can participate, too:

- **Join the Nature Book Club** led by SMRA Board Secretary Kathleen Williamson. We gather every other month by Zoom, occasionally with the author, to discuss a wide range of natural history and science books. Our next Book Club will be Tuesday, January 5, discussing *Eager: The Surprising and Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter* by Ben Goldfarb. All are welcome, even just to come and just listen: ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club***.
- **Bird Chat** is a twice-a-month Zoom gathering of regional birders and bird photographers captained by our Executive Director Anne Swaim. It's a wonderful chance to armchair-travel the world with knowledgeable guides, along with very current intelligence on bird sightings at local hot spots.
- **Project FeederWatch**, inside the Croton Point Nature Center every Sunday morning from 9:30 am to 12 noon, is led by Board Chair Val Lyle. This features hot beverages, treats and good conversation centered on casual birding at the feeders from inside during the cold weather.
- **Sanctuary work crews**, often led by Finance Committee Chair and Trail Maintainer Coordinator Phil Heidelberger and Sanctuaries Chair Michael Madias, Jr., keep our sanctuary trails safe and well-marked. Recently a ten-person crew repainted all the trail markers at Pruyn Sanctuary. (See pictures on page 5.)
- Come by Pruyn Sanctuary to restock your bird pantry at our **3rd Sunday Seed Sales**, organized by board Seed Sale chair Tom McEnerney. Great seed variety at fair prices support many of the free offerings of SMRA.
- Come to our **weekly bird walks and monthly public programs**. (Highlights on page 3.) Come to our Best Photos Holiday Gathering Thursday, Dec 17, at the Chappaqua Library offering a holiday dessert potluck with nature images and stories from local photographers, and good conversations before and after the program. Pick up your 2027 New York Birds calendar there too!
- Even more activities are behind-the-scenes. Led by chair Tom Ruth, our **Advocacy Committee** works together to track and plan outreach about key natural resource issues. (I have used some of their rodenticide research here at the museum.) Our **Finance Committee**, working with **Board Treasurer** Lynn Salmon, does the valued, detailed work of nurturing and growing our finances. Finally, we all thank **Newsletter Editor Jennifer Stern** for her fine work on each and every issue, while SMRA **Vice President Suzanne Kavic** and I calmly regard the torrent of activity that makes SMRA such a vibrant community for everyone to enjoy.



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

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If you are a SMRA supporter, you can request a paper newsletter be mailed to you by calling us or visiting ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/paper***
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 2026–2027 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/trips***

DECEMBER

See page 5 for information on Christmas Bird Counts

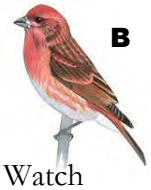
Sat, Dec 5, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
Mon, Dec 7, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
Sat, Dec 12, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Sun, Dec 13, 8:00 am, Lyndhurst Estate
Mon, Dec 14, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
Mon, Dec 21, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Wed, Dec 30, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

JANUARY


A

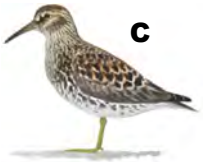
***Fri, Jan 1, 9:00 am,** First Day Hike
Rockwood Hall State Park
Sat, Jan 2, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary
Mon, Jan 4, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
***Sat, Jan 9, 9:00 am**, Croton Point Eagle Walk
Sun, Jan 10, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Mon, Jan 11, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
***Fri, Jan 15 to Mon, Jan 18,** NYS Waterfowl Count
Mon, Jan 25, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
***Thu, Jan 28, 3:30 pm,** Shawangunk Grasslands
Sat, Jan 30, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park

FEBRUARY


B

Mon, Feb 1, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
Mon, Feb 8, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
***Sat, Feb 13, 2:00–5:00 pm,** Eagle/Hudson Watch
at Lyndhurst Estate, Tarrytown
Sun, Feb 14, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
Sat, Feb 20, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Mon, Feb 22, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Sat, Feb 27, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

MARCH


C

Mon, Mar 1, 8:00 am, Muscoot Farm
Sat, Mar 6, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
Mon, Mar 8, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
***Fri, Mar 12, 9:00 am–4:00 pm**
LI Natural History Conference, Stony Brook
***Sat, Mar 13, 7:00 am,** Long Island Birding
***Sun, Mar 14, 6:45 pm,** Woodcocks,Croton Point Park
Mon, Mar 15, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Sat, Mar 20, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
Sat, Mar 27, 8:00 am, Edith Read Sanctuary

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

Highlighted Winter Programs

More at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/programs





Even More Winter Events

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary
12/12, 1/9, 2/13, 3/13. 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, Bird Chat on Zoom
Tue, Dec 8&22, Jan 12&26, Feb 9&23, Mar 9&23
See upcoming topics/speakers & register for Zoom link:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat

Tuesday, January 5, 7:00 pm
Nature Book Club on Zoom
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/book-club

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 1 through Sunday, April 25
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

Celebrate Spring at our 2027 Annual Dinner

Mark your calendars for April 4, when our 2027 Annual Dinner happens this year at Travelers Rest, 25 Route 100 in Ossining (***www.travelersrestrestaurant.com***.)

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

At 5:00 pm, while enjoying our opening reception, you can enjoy a curated display of local bird photography by our members and friends with an option to purchase matted photos. We expect to have special silent auction items too, purchasable by PayPal or Zelle.

Dinner seating is at 6:00 pm, and the dinner program will begin at 6:30 pm with greetings and brief remarks from our board president and our treasurer. We will end the evening with our usual "Faces and Places" images from our past year of connecting people with nature. Perhaps you will be in our 2026 pictures! Details and reservations are at ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/dinner***, or you may call our office at 914-666-6503.



Join the Audubon Action Network

From encouraging ranchers to restore native grasslands to protecting Alaska's Western Arctic from oil and gas development—for the sake of millions of migratory birds—many worthy environmental bills come before our nation's legislatures every year. You can weigh in for the birds by joining Audubon's Action Network here: ***https://act.audubon.org/a/action-network***.

You will receive emails about legislation at appropriate times for public comment and be directed to a page that makes it easy to communicate with your elected officials as well as key state and national leaders. Every voice counts, but more so if you join it with others!



Our guest speaker will be Joseph Squillante, an award-winning photographer who has dedicated the past 40 years to photographing the Hudson River and the life along its banks, from Lake Tear of the Clouds in the Adirondacks to New York Harbor.

Joseph and his wife, Carol Capobianco, have founded the Hudson River School of Photography (with a respectful nod to the similarly named school of painting) to promote appreciation for the Hudson through workshops, presentations, in-classroom talks, lessons, exhibitions, notecards and prints. Visit ***www.josephsquillante.com***.

Joe will tell us about his career and his observations on the Hudson while sharing beautiful images from his work.

Have Silent Auction Items?

Do you have birding-related equipment, pictures, books, or other materials suitable for our Annual Dinner Silent Auction? Or perhaps you can offer a special experience or a gift certificate for a special meal or offer a night or two away at a special place? Please consider making a donation of any of these to Saw Mill River Audubon for our 2027 Annual Dinner Silent Auction. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent of the fair-market value of the items. Contact our office with any questions or to arrange transfer: 914-666-6503 or ***office@sawmillriveraudubon.org***.



Great Gift Idea!

With the generous support of local bird photographers, we have produced another *New York Birds* calendar for your 2027 viewing pleasure.

Order online and see all page views: ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/calendar*** and request in-person pickup at the SMRA office or mailing.

OR purchase at one of our upcoming programs and field trips OR at these local stores: Feed the Birds in Croton-on-Hudson, Village Bookstore in Pleasantville, or Books for Humanity in Ossining.



Come Count Birds With Us!

Birders of all ages and experience are invited to take part in area Christmas Bird Counts in December and early January. This is birding that makes a difference for birds!

Over the past 126 years, Christmas Bird Counts have generated a priceless longitudinal data set—publicly accessible on the main CBC website. Visit it here: ***www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/cbc-data***. This data allows bird researchers to track population trends and assess the health and status of bird populations across North America.

Christmas Bird Counts are held between December 15 and January 5, and each count is done within a 15-mile-wide circle over a 24-hour period. All birds seen and heard are counted within that circle. Each circle has a compiler who ensures all areas in the circle are covered and compiles data from the area to send to Audubon. Find counts in specific areas using the Find a Count page: ***https://cbc.audubon.org/en/join***

This year in New York State, there will be 79 Christmas Bird Counts and four of these counts (boldfaced below) cover parts of Westchester. Counts in our region can be challenging due to inclement weather, but birders—being birders—always find them very enjoyable, especially since our local counts finish the day with a potluck dinner where species found in the areas within each circle are tallied out loud with much friendly competition and comparisons with past year counts.

If you are interested in helping with one of the local counts (dates below), call us at 914-666-6503 or email us at ***office@sawmillriveraudubon.org***, and we will put you in touch with the compiler for that area.

Regional Christmas Bird Counts

Sat, 12/19: Peekskill | Sun, 12/20: New Jersey–Lower Hudson
Sun, 12/20: Greenwich–Stamford | **Sun, 12/20: Rockland**
Sat, 12/27: Bronx–Westchester | Sun 1/3: Putnam
(Boldfaced counts cover portions of Westchester County)

Painting Pruyn Trails



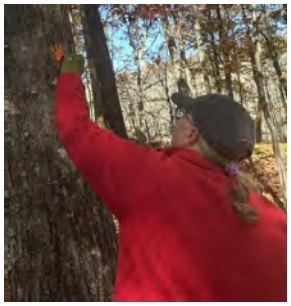
Phil Heidelberger gathering the team and reviewing best practices for trail markers. Photo: Anne Swaim



Chris Von Stein at work on the yellow trail. Photo: David Watson



Larry Trachtenberg blazing the red trail. Photo: Anne Swaim



Laurie Lechthaler painting the orange trail. Photo: Anne Swaim



Barbara Kingsborough marking the white trail. Photo: Michael Madias, Jr.



Phil Heidelberger adding green markers. Photo: Vicki Neilson

Attention Young Birders Age 10 to 19! The 2027 Kickoff Meeting for the New York State Young Birders will be held at Mariandale in Ossining on Sunday, January 31, hosted by Saw Mill River Audubon. This day-long, youth-led gathering is an annual highlight, and includes a birding trip to Croton Point. Visit: ***www.nysyoungbirders.org***

SMRA
SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON™

275 Millwood Road
Chappaqua, New York 10514

Return Service Requested



Long-tailed Ducks are elegant-looking winter visitors to Westchester already being seen by mid-November in the Long Island Sound. They are less commonly seen in the Hudson or inland reservoirs. Photo: Bob Yankou

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!**



Fox Sparrows, with their rich rusty coloring, are the largest sparrows we typically see in Westchester Country. They are winter visitors from the north and might be spotted under bird feeders or on the forest floor, doing a characteristic "double scratch," hopping forward and then back with both feet to uncover seeds and insects. Photo: Troy Gorodess.
More here: ***www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/foxspa***

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

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Basic Chapter Membership

☐Enclosed is $35

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