



Summer 2024



*Willet in June
Marshlands Conservancy
Photo: Tom Warren*



Birders on our free birding walks this spring saw and heard a wide variety of bird species. Here is our eBird list from the May 13 walk at Rockefeller State Park Preserve: www.ebird.org/checklist/S174232212



Fourth graders from Harlem's P.S. 125 Ralph Bunche School visited Rockefeller State Park Preserve in May with Saw Mill River Audubon under New York's Connect Kids to Parks program. We are now booking new school field trips for Fall 2024!



Happy SMRA group at the Rio Grande River in March, led by Tiffany Kersten from Nature Ninja Birding, after seeing a rare Bare-throated Tiger-Heron.

Summer Highlights *See more events on Page 3*

We are highlighting our Birding Tea, two Zoom workshops, and an overnight birding trip. For more details and to register for our events, visit our web site: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs or call our office at 914-666-6503. Our field trips continue all summer and are listed on page 3. Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Birding Tea!
Saturday, June 15
 3:00 to 5:30 pm
 Hosted by Cary Andrews
 Croton-on-Hudson
 RSVP & Space limited
 Benefits Saw Mill River Audubon | \$20 person donation

Saturday, June 15, 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm — Our Birding Tea Returns!

All are invited to a proper high tea with lovely homemade goodies and tea at Cary Andrews' house in Croton-on-Hudson. This is an informal gathering to meet other Audubon friends and to talk about creating backyard habitat and bird-friendly gardens, as well as other ways we can help our fine-feathered friends. RSVP is required, and space will be limited. To RSVP, call Cary at 914-271-4138 or email her at oomis@aol.com. The Birding Tea is a benefit for Saw Mill River Audubon with a suggested donation of \$20/person.

For Zoom registrations: sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs

Thursday, July 18, 7:00 pm—Zoom: Diversity of Westchester Birds

A multimedia introduction to the many types of birds found in Westchester and well-known birding hotspots. Organized by Pound Ridge Library. Co-sponsored by Greenburgh, Mount Kisco, Mount Pleasant, New Rochelle, and Yonkers Public Libraries.

Thursday, August 8, 7:30 pm—Zoom: Intro and Review of Shorebird ID

Learn/review the basics of identifying shorebirds found in our area through videos, audio, still photos, handouts and more.

Friday, August 9 to Saturday, August 10—Trip to Forsythe NWR

Join us on a field trip to see shorebirds and more at this famous National Wildlife Refuge in South Jersey just three hours from Millwood. Come just for Saturday or bird both days. Register: sawmillriveraudubon.org/forsythe

President's Message

One of my favorite morning rambles follows Crugers Station Road to Cortlandt Street, through the old McAndrews Estate to the very beginning of Furnace Dock Road, at the site of the old McAndrews rail siding in Crugers.

Along the way you will surely have heard and/or seen Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, the Great Blue Heron residing in the koi pond, and too many songbirds to list. Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks have been a constant presence the past several years, and in the winter we've seen as many as eight Bald Eagles on the south tip of Oscawana Island Nature Preserve, viewed as you amble toward Furnace Dock Road.

From there, up the hill to the trail entrance to SMRA's Graff Sanctuary, taking the trail that brings one out to Briggs Lane, and then about a mile to the trailhead of our Brinton Brook Sanctuary. You have to walk the loop at Brinton to get to the power lines and the likelihood of seeing Black and Turkey Vultures—I'm told the possibility of an Osprey—but in the meantime you've heard the Pileated Woodpecker calls echoing around the valley.

It is mind boggling to me this is all available an hour north of the "The City," and I often don't run into anyone—although it's better than even odds Stu Landesberg will be coming or going from some wonderful photo opportunities in the same general vicinity.

As I noted in my annual fund drive personal notes to Audubon members, please take advantage of our sanctuaries and programming. They are generally free, the sanctuaries are well maintained—and finally drying out from the very wet spring—and the programs are informative and collegial and often will take you to locales you'd otherwise not think to visit.

For the birds, *Erik Andersen, President, Saw Mill River Audubon*



Erik Andersen, SMRA President

Saw Mill River Audubon

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If you are reading this on paper, you can view a full-colored version with clickable links online at <https://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/news>

Looking Ahead to September

Audubon Nature Book Club
Tuesday, Sep 17
7:00 pm

Register for Zoom link & reminders at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org

Buy Bird Seed from Audubon!

And support our local conservation & education work

First Saturday Seed Sale: Saturday September 21
Order by Wednesday September 18
New Seed Available Wednesday, September 4
For self-loading M/W/F 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

new seed orders accepted after 8/1

www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/seed



These three shorebirds are seen in Westchester during late summer migration. Know them? Answers on side of page 7.

Summer 2024 Schedule

Birding Field Trips

7:00 am start for June through August walks and 8:00 am start for September walks*

* except for any special bird trips noted below in boldface

Register at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-trips

Birding Zoom Workshops

Register at www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/register-programs



JUNE (Second Half)

- Sun, June 16, 7:00 am, Lyndhurst
- Sat, June 22, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Sun, June 23, **5:00 am**, Nickerson Beach
- Wed, June 26, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy
- Sat, June 29, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

JULY

- Mon, July 1, 7:00 am, Muscote Farm
- Mon, July 8, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Sat, July 20, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Sun, July 21, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy
- Mon, July 22, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- Sat, July 27, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

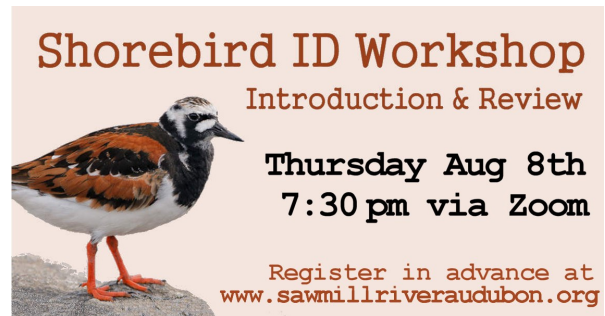
AUGUST

- Mon, Aug 5, 7:00 am, Muscote Farm
- Fri, Aug 9, **12:00 pm**, to Sat, Aug 10, **12:00 pm**
Overnight/Day Trip to Forsythe Nat'l Wildlife Refuge
- Mon, Aug 12, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Sat, Aug 17, 7:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Mon, Aug 19, 7:00 am, Marshlands Conservancy
- Mon, Aug 26, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- Sat, Aug 31, 7:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

SEPTEMBER (note 8:00 am starts)

- Mon, Sep 2, 8:00 am, Muscote Farm
- Sat, Sep 7, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Mon, Sep 9, 8:00 am, Croton Point Park
- Fri, Sep 20, 8:00 am Marshlands Conservancy
- Mon, Sep 23, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve
- Sat, Sep 28, 8:00 am, Rockefeller SP Preserve

If you visit our sanctuaries this summer, we invite you to send us **Trail Walker reports**.



Still More Summer Events

Garden Volunteer Days at Pruyn Sanctuary


Be sure to RSVP to Garden Coordinator Mark Magel (markmagel@aol.com) to get reminders and, especially, to get any rain date changes.

Wednesdays, 9:00 am start
6/19, 7/3, 7/17, 7/31, 8/14, 8/28, 9/11

Second Saturday Walks, Brinton Brook Sanctuary

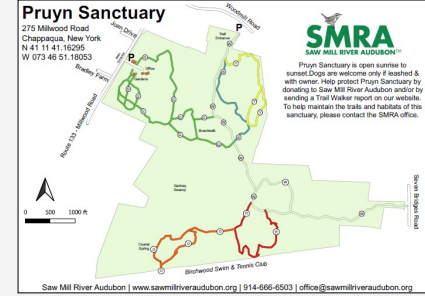
6/8, 7/13, 8/10, 9/14. Meet at 9:00 am in the main lot. Walk typically lasts two hours. Rain or shine but always check our website calendar before traveling. For adults and youth 8 and up. No registration required.

2nd and 4th Tuesdays, Bird Chat on Zoom
Tue, 6/11&25, 7/9&23, 8/13&27, 9/10&24, 7:00 pm
Zoom link & details: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/chat



Send Trail Walker report by scanning QR code to left

Or use this web link:
sawmillriveraudubon.org/walker



Pruyn Sanctuary
275 Millwood Road
Chappaqua, New York
NY 10517-1102
W 073.46.51.18053

SMRA
SAW MILL RIVER AUDUBON

Pruyn Sanctuary is open sunrise to sunset. Dogs are welcome only if leashed & with owner. Help protect Pruyn Sanctuary by donating to Saw Mill River Audubon and/or by sending a Trail Walker report on our website. To help maintain the trails and habitats of this sanctuary, please contact the SMRA office.

Download our Sanctuary Maps!

Visit Saw Mill River Audubon's [Avenza map store](http://www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/maps) for free map downloads to use with the Avenza mapping app, or download individual georeferenced PDFs of trail maps from our website here:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/maps

Curb Plastics Pollution

Responsibility for reducing and recycling waste from packaging would fall to producers instead of municipalities under a bill introduced in both houses of the New York legislature this session.

Known as the “Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act” and sponsored by Westchester-based State Senator Pete Harckham (S4246A) and Manhattan Assemblywoman Deborah Glick (A5322A), the bill is an “extended producer responsibility” policy of the type passed by Maine, Oregon, California, and Colorado over the past three years and operative in countries around the world. SMRA has signed on as one of more than 200 organizations statewide supporting the measure.

According to advocates, the bill would

- Reduce plastic packaging by 50% gradually over the next 12 years
- Reduce pollution in communities where packaging is produced, landfilled, and incinerated
- Make packaging safer by prohibiting certain toxic chemicals in packaging
- Save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars
- Reinvigorate the state’s recycling system
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Not allow “chemical recycling” to count as recycling

That last bullet point is a major point of contention about the bill and has induced the chemical industry

to spend hundreds of thousands in lobbying fees to kill it. Labeled “advanced recycling” by that industry, it involves breaking down plastic with intense heat and solvents purportedly to produce fuel or materials for making new plastics. Manufacturers are touting it as a way to deal with **the 95% of plastic used in the U.S. that cannot be recycled.**

Anti-plastic groups such as Beyond Plastics contend the process **is energy intensive and produces toxic wastes** and see the industry’s promotion of it as a way to avoid reducing plastic use. There is little evidence that these processes work as promised and can extract from plastics dangerous toxic waste materials that can pollute air and water. Readers can find detailed discussion of chemical recycling’s dangers in this article from *The Intercept*: theintercept.com/2023/09/28/braven-plastic-recycling-toxic-waste/

This legislation was introduced in previous legislative sessions and failed to pass despite support from the governor. This year’s session ended just as this newsletter is being prepared. While the bill passed the Senate, no Assembly vote was held. However, as we learned last December with the passage of the neonics bill, gaining support for such bills can be a multi-year process of building coalitions and support. Add your support to curb plastics: www.beyondplastics.org

Jennifer Stern, Board Member & Newsletter Editor



How Plastics Cause Peril to Wildlife

In 2018, SMRA, in partnership with Films on Purpose, brought the documentary *Albatross* to a sold-out audience at the Jacob Burns Film Center. I have been haunted by the film ever since. Director Chris Jordan directs his lens at the beauty and majesty of the Laysan Albatross through their courtship, nesting, and rearing of chicks. And then, with an unblinking eye, keeps his lens focused on the death and devastation caused by single-use plastics upon this population, even though they are far from any human habitation. I encourage you to watch the film (or just the three-minute trailer) here: www.albatrossthefilm.com. My hope is that you will support the pending Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act. See link at end of the article above. Another way is to encourage local organizations to sign this petition of support: bit.ly/prriamemo2024 *Kathleen Williamson, SMRA Board Member*

The Tramps at Pruyn Sanctuary



Westchester Trail Tramps at Pruyn. Photo: Phil Heidelberg



Side-hilling at Pruyn. Photo: Phil Heidelberg

Besides being on the SMRA Board, I'm a member of the Westchester Trail Tramps, a group of New York–New Jersey Trail Conference volunteers that go out every Wednesday to maintain hiking trails in several northern Westchester parks, including George's Island, Hudson Highlands Gateway Park, the Briarcliff–Peekskill Trail and the Teatown–Kitchawan Trail. The Tramps also do special projects on request in other parks. At SMRA's request, a group of ten Tramps worked in Pruyn Sanctuary on May 22. A 100-yard sec-

tion of the Deer Loop trail was at the bottom of a small valley and thus was frequently very wet and muddy. The solution was to move the trail up onto a side of the valley. But, doing so would make it difficult to walk on the trail since it is on a severe angle as it crossed the valley. Armed with pick-axes, shovels, and loppers, the Tramps did "side-hilling," which involves digging into the hill and making the trail flat for walking on. This was a great example of two local nature organizations working together to make access to a sanctuary easier for the public. As SMRA has eight sanctuaries with over 300 acres, we anticipate future collaborations with the Tramps.

Phil Heidelberg, SMRA Board Member

Help Us Connect People with Nature

In May, Saw Mill River Audubon launched our 2024 annual fund drive, and the story in this year's fundraising letter is about Keith Lea.

Known as the "Bird Guy" to his computer programming co-workers, Croton resident Keith Lea is only a recent enthusiast in the world of birding. He credits Saw Mill River Audubon and its executive director, Anne Swaim, with opening his eyes to the wonders that are the birds around us.

Keith's story provides the structure to our yearly fundraising letter, whose appeal was mailed to members in May. He tells of the first time Anne called his attention to the rare sight of an American Golden-Plover at Croton Point one September day, explaining that it was on a stopover in its annual round trip of up to 20,000 miles between the Arctic and South America.

He explains how he has, like so many, found a community in Saw Mill River Audubon. "Birding can be seen as a solitary experience, yet there is a camaraderie that you also experience. Like when you see something wondrous

or unusual or outright outrageous—like the mating dance of the American Woodcock at sunset."

Keith says that SMRA walks and other trips have "made my birding journey so incredible. This is why Saw Mill River Audubon is so effective in protecting the spaces we enjoy—and the spaces that allow our birds to thrive."

Anne Swaim adds "Our work to connect people with birds, other wildlife, and their habitats only happens because of the support of our members and friends. Please support us this year with your gift. Thank you to those who have already supported us in 2024!"

Donate through Zelle at smrapay@gmail.com or online here: www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate



*American Golden-Plover,
Croton Point Park,
September 2023. Photo: Keith Lea*

The Power of White Oaks

Caterpillars are one the most efficient means of transferring plant nutrients to birds. Ninety-six percent of North American terrestrial birds eat them and feed them to their young. No other plant can host as many caterpillar species as white oak trees, which can support nearly 900. Maples, a distant second, host fewer than half that.

Through acorns, white oaks also provide nutrition to many mammals as well as Blue Jays, Wild Turkeys, and other birds. In the process of “storing” them, Blue Jays inadvertently plant acorns that grow into more oaks.

The benefits of white oaks are myriad. Beyond nutrient value, mature oaks provide habitat, both in their above-ground structure and among the half a million leaves each drops annually. These high-tannin leaves decompose slowly and provide over-wintering habitat for soil-enriching organisms and Lepidoptera (moth and butterfly) chrysalises.

Water and air quality also benefit. The oaks’ extensive deep roots and large canopies help minimize erosion from rain. Oaks absorb pesticides, fertilizers, and other contaminants to reduce water pollution. Oaks draw water from deep underground, making soil hospitable for other plants. And they provide cooling shade, which conserves soil moisture and provides summer refuge.

Similarly, the leaves absorb and sequester CO² in their roots. Each tree can extract up to 10 pounds of pollutants out of the air while providing 100,000 liters of oxygen annually.



Oak wood for lumber, furniture, and fuel has been part of human civilization for millennia. Oak trees are often used as significant long-lived memorial plantings and historical sites. A white oak tree can live as long as 400 years, with approximately one-third of their life in growth, one-third in mature health and one-third in decline, when branches and decaying cavities provide habitat.

This summer at the Pruyin Sanctuary, we will be planting two white oak trees adjacent to the meadow. In 15 years, they will start producing acorns.

An old proverb advises, “The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the second-best time is today.” And arguably the best tree to plant, and one of the most beautiful, is a stately white oak.

Mark Magel, SMRA Garden Coordinator



Excerpted note from one of our 2024 donors

Thank you for sharing in-depth knowledge about birds, their sounds, their habits, and their unique characteristics. For me, it's not just about birds; it's also about being outside in nature with others who seem to share the same desire to look, observe, and listen to all that surrounds us on these walks. I've learned to become more intuitive to look up, around, and listen. I've also gotten more committed to avoiding pesticides in my garden and providing a variety of food, bathing spots, drinking spots, and six birdhouses on our property. Ann B.

Visit www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/donate

Note from our Larry Light Youth Scholarship recipient

Thank you for your support all these years and for the magnificent opportunity to attend the Penikese Island camp.

I am so thankful for the scholarship. Without it, I would not have been able to pursue this opportunity this summer.

Your continued support and mentorship mean a great deal to me. I hope to bird again with you all soon. Arabella P.

Learn more about our youth scholarships here:
www.sawmillriveraudubon.org/scholarships

SMRA Eats, Drinks and Celebrates

The 2024 Saw Mill River Audubon dinner—this year a potluck at the Mariandale Retreat Center in Ossining—drew a record number of 99 SMRA members and friends on a March Sunday night to socialize, share food and drink, elect officers and board members, and hear from our 2023 Larry Light Scholarship winner Nina Vigil and from Heather Wolf, author of the new book *Find More Birds: 111 Surprising Ways to Spot Birds Wherever You Are*.



Board President Erik Andersen and Board Member Mark Magel presented Executive Director Anne Swaim with a framed Audubon print of her favorite bird, the American Kestrel.



SMRA Larry Light Scholarship winner Nina Vigil entertained the crowd with stories from her trip to the Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine, where she had many wonderful birding experiences but also a chance to eat Atlantic Puffin pastries.



And we saved some trees and avoided plastics! Board Member Michael Madias, Jr., shows the bins for composting, reusing, and recycling, masterminded by Board Member Kathleen Williamson.



The scene at dinner with good food and good conversation enjoyed by all.



The buffet! MJ Picciano helps uncover some of the delicious foods offered in our extensive potluck buffet.



SMRA President Erik Andersen convenes the annual meeting portion of the dinner, welcoming our record-setting number of dinner guests.

Photos above from Bill Kellner, Charlie Roberto, Mitch Goldfarb and Anne Swaim

Shorebird Answers from page 2
A: Semipalmated Plover B: Solitary Sandpiper C: Ruddy Turnstone



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Turkey Vulture basking at Croton Point Park
Photo: Lou Ann O'Hora

Connecting People and Nature Since 1953

Explore Nature with Saw Mill River Audubon this Summer!

We have more than 40 events scheduled between June and September 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!



Purple Martin tenants arrived in late May for the first time to the new martin nesting houses at Croton Landing! Our thanks to SMRA Board Member Cary Andrews, also the Croton Village Bird Commissioner, who coordinated volunteers to play dawn songs many days to attract these birds to the location. Thanks to Croton Rotary for funding support. This is the third martin colony on Westchester's Hudson shore-line after Croton Point and Rockwood Hall. Photo: Lynn Salmon

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
 Please list my gift anonymously

Name(s)

Address

City / State / Zip

Email Address

Please make checks payable to: **OR** join/renew/donate online
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