

Hollywood Comes To Constitution Marsh

By Pete Salmansohn

THERE ARE SOME NEW television stars in Cold Spring this winter. But you probably haven't seen them on Entertainment Tonight or in the pages of Gentleman's Quarterly. These stars have feathers! And they are appearing on Audubon TV, a closed circuit system set up at the Constitution Marsh Audubon Center.

The action takes place at a busy bird feeder, hidden from public view behind the main building, and is captured by a video camera cannily placed under a nearby tool shed. Viewers in the nature center, just 50 feet away, are then treated to real-time live TV. Last week, among other sights, they saw an energetic Caro-

lina Wren kicking and scratching amongst the seeds in search of exactly the right one. Downy and Red-bellied woodpeckers are also showing up, as are juncos, fox and tree sparrows, and the occasional handsome Blue Jay.

"The birds are magnified at least 5 times their normal size, so their features really stand out," says center director Eric Lind. "This exhibit allows you to see things you would otherwise never be able to observe."

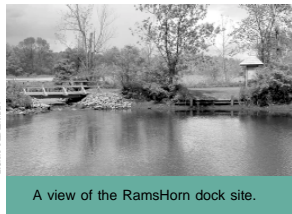
The entire system is just an ordinary CCTV camera with a long cable attached to it that feeds into a large television. The results, however, are far from ordinary, as visitors to the nature center are quickly drawn into the comings and goings of these wonderful winter birds. Having this set-up gives people a warm environment in which to observe bird behavior, and it helps build a stronger connection to our local wildlife.

RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary Update!

By Larry Federman

THE 440-ACRE RAMSHORN-LIVINGSTON Sanctuary is located on the western shore of the Hudson River in the Village and Town of Catskill. It includes the largest tidal swamp in the upper Hudson River Estuary System and is a Hudson River Greenway Hiking and Water Trail destination. Other habitats include upland forest, stands of evergreens, and old orchards. Currently, a three-mile trail network exists providing visitors with various habitat and wildlife viewing opportunities. A 25-foot high viewing tower offers elevated views of the marsh and a ground level observation platform affords visitors a lower perspective. Additional viewing opportunities are being explored.

The Sanctuary is of critical importance to the Hudson River's plant, fish, mollusk and crustacean life and is an important feeding ground for heron,



A view of the RamsHorn dock site.

waterfowl, and migratory songbirds. Wood ducks, black ducks, and mallards nest here along with other waterbirds (Pied-billed Grebe, Least Bittern), native raptors, and many songbirds. It is also an important stopover for seasonal flights of waterfowl and shorebirds. Bald Eagles and Peregrine Falcons are uncommon but seen regularly. Mammals seen include beavers, muskrats, and recently, river otters. White-tailed

deer are common sanctuary residents and signs of coyotes are abundant. Snapping turtles are regularly observed; some have shells as large as manhole covers!

One could call this sanctuary a meeting place. It is a site where diverse habitats come together — the Hudson River meets the RamsHorn Creek and the creek meets the forest via the swamp and marsh. It is a spot where hundreds of species of plants and animals interact. A swamp is a wetland where plants such as trees and shrubs replace the grasses that typically inhabit marshes. Food chains begin in the swamp. Algae, specifically diatoms, which clings to rocks are eaten by snails which in turn are eaten by fish. Starting another food chain, food particles made up of decomposed pieces of leaves provide nutrients for underwater insects. And, it is where people have an opportunity to immerse themselves in nature.

Local community involvement includes participation in the Catskill Middle School program, "Greater Sense of Place" which includes canoe trips and birding experiences, visitation by biology classes from Columbia-Greene Community College, opportunities for scouts to earn merit badges, as well as recreational usage by the public. Citizen science activities such as bird banding and breeding censuses take place and guided bird walks are offered. A site-specific education program targeting elementary students will be piloted at RamsHorn this spring.

Henry H. Livingston donated the initial 160 acres to the National Audubon Society in December 1973, to be left "forever wild" with all plants and animals protected by federal and state law. During the 1990s, additional acreage was purchased and added to the sanctuary. The sanctuary is co-owned and managed by Scenic Hudson and Audubon.

Future enhancements to the sanctuary include installation of a canoe/kayak dock and new kiosk information panels. Guided canoe trips will then be offered. A site management plan is being developed utilizing the expertise of scientists from the research organization, Hudsonia. The plan will balance protection of critical habitat with future recreational uses. At a recent ceremony, the trails of the sanctuary were designated part of the Hudson River Greenway Trail System. Designation will mean additional funding opportunities and the opportunity to utilize Greenway's expertise and experience.

RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary is a magical place, a protected home to an amazing diversity of creatures and plants. It is an ever-changing environment. Each time you come back, you will see something new, different and inspiring among the soothing sights, sounds and smells.

The sanctuary is accessed from the Village of Catskill. Head east off Route 9W onto Grandview Avenue. Proceed around the traffic circle, down the hill to the parking lot. For more information, call Assistant Warden/Educator Larry Federman at 518-678-3248, or visit the Audubon New York website, www.ny.audubon.org.

State Parks and Constitution Marsh Share in New Grant

CONSTITUTION MARSH RECEIVED an early Christmas present in mid-December when their frequent partner in educational programming, the Taconic Outdoor Education Center learned that a grant proposal they'd submitted has been approved. The Hudson River Improvement Fund has awarded \$8,000 for the purpose of teaching visiting New York City school children about Hudson River ecology. Educators from the Marsh will present 40 programs about the natural side of the Hudson at TOEC, a New York State Parks facility, in the upcoming winter months.

RAMSHORN- LIVINGSTON SANCTUARY



Aerial photo of the RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary, Catskill, NY, featuring the RamsHorn Creek.

The 440 acre sanctuary is a Hudson River Greenway Water Trail destination. It is also part of the Greenway Hiking Trail System and includes 3 miles of hiking trails through varied habitats. The sanctuary is home to the largest tidal swamp in the upper Hudson River estuary. Other habitats include tidal marsh, upland forest, and old orchards.

RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary is jointly owned and managed by Scenic Hudson Land Trust and Audubon New York.

For more information, visit <http://ny.audubon.org> or www.scenichudson.org.

Welcome Aimee Tweedie

By Staff Report

AUDUBON NEW YORK has a new voice on the phone and new face at the reception desk — Aimee Tweedie, who was hired as Audubon New York's new Administrative Assistant.

Aimee has worked for many years at Capital District not-for-profits and companies. Her most recent environmental experience was at Citizens' Environmental Coalition in Albany, NY, where she worked as the Office Manager.



KIMBERLY L. RYAN