

# Great Winter Walk Destinations: Rheinstrom Hill, Buttercup Farm, and RamsHorn-Livingston

By Larry Federman

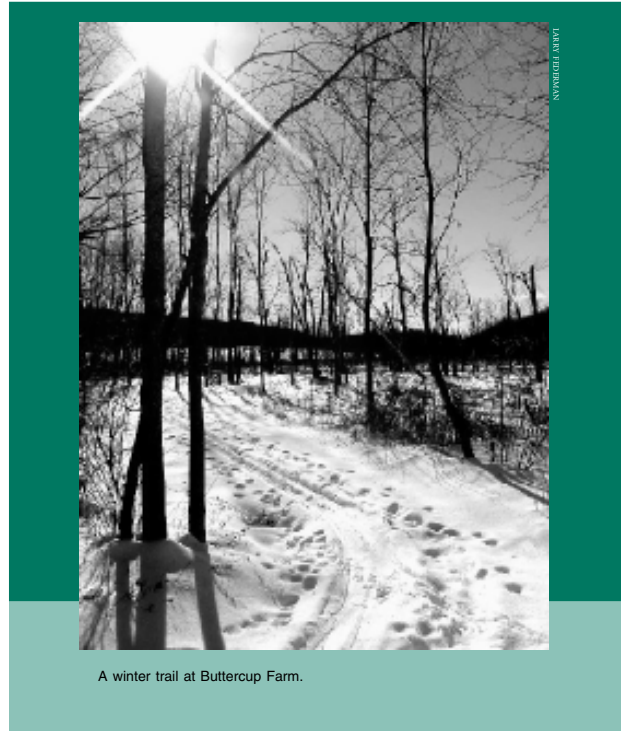
WHEN WINTER comes on, you don't need to stay hunkered down indoors. Our three Sanctuaries in the upper Hudson Valley are all great destinations for memorable winter day trips on foot, snowshoes or skis. The sheer beauty is reason enough to go, but the chance to see signs of wildlife not readily evident at other times of year is an added enticement. Tracks in fresh snow tell a multitude of stories, and you may find traces of animals as common as deer or as elusive as bobcats. Birds that visit us only in winter are another reason to venture outdoors. Winter finches, such as Pine Siskins, Pine Grosbeaks, and White-winged and Red Crossbills are very likely to be seen this year at all three sanctuaries, as the seed crop is very low up north.

At Buttercup Farm Sanctuary in Stanfordville, in northern Dutchess County, Rough-legged Hawks and Short-eared Owls are likely sights, as are Golden Eagles that winter at nearby Stissing Mountain. The trails on the western side of Buttercup are on an old railroad bed—flat and great for beginner cross-country skiers or snowshoers. The eastern side trails cover varied terrain through more hilly habitats—OK for snowshoe beginners, but recommended for experienced cross-country skiers.

Rheinstrom Hill Sanctuary in Craryville has been home to Crossbills and Ravens, and allows for explorations of a pristine forest. The trails run the gamut from easy to difficult, and some run out to very remote areas. For those looking for an easier route, the Community Wetlands trails off Route 23 are along an old railroad bed.

At RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary in Catskill, you have a good chance to see Bald Eagles, Iceland Gulls and Glaucous Gulls coming in from feeding along the Hudson River. The trail is flat for approximately ½ mile to the RamsHorn Creek, and then gets a bit hillier through the woods—a bit more challenging on skis.

For directions, details, and year-round opportunities to attend programs at all three sanctuaries, call 518-325-5203 or visit the Audubon New York website at <http://ny.audubon.org>. We hope to see you out at one of our Sanctuaries soon!



A winter trail at Buttercup Farm.

## Did You Know?

By Jane E. S. Sokolow

**THE SASSAFRAS TREE** has three different kinds of leaves: (1) plain oval; (2) mitten-shaped with one thumb; (3) mitten-shaped with two thumbs?

**BEECH TREES** are struck by lightning far less than any other species of tree?

The **SUGAR PINE** has the largest cones of all of the pine trees? The cones range from 11-24 inches long.

The **PAULONIA** or **EMPRESS TREE** is the fastest growing tree in America? It can grow as much as 20 feet a year.

The single, oldest tree on earth is the **BRISTLECONE PINE**—it is more than 4,760 years old and was growing when the Egyptians built the pyramids?

**GINKGO TREES** are the oldest living tree species? Geological records indicate that ginkgo trees provided food for dinosaurs.

One acre of trees produces enough oxygen for 18 people every day?

The New York State tree is the **SUGAR MAPLE**?

*Jane E. S. Sokolow, a member of Audubon's Stewardship Committee, is a science-writing consultant. She currently works with the New York City Parks and Recreation Department and has worked with the American Museum of Natural History, Audubon New York and the National Audubon Society.*

## Kaler's Pond Audubon Center

By Richard Haley

THE KALER'S POND Audubon Center in Center Moriches in eastern Long Island is now one of Audubon New York's centers. During the summer and fall of 2003 the legal agreements with the Moriches Bay Audubon Society and the Town of Brookhaven (owners of the property) were finalized and signed.

Kaler's Pond is a seasonal Center, open on weekends in the late spring and early fall, and Thursday through Sunday in the summer. The Center building is a small renovated barn. It is packed with artifacts and exhibits that showcase the natural history of Long Island. Most of the work that has gone into making the exhibits neat, accurate and interesting has been done by Annette Oliveira, who has served as the educator at the center for several years. Annette is a genius at creating attractive exhibits and activities with very few resources.

The Center has now been supplied with its first ever computer system so that many of the office and education tasks can be made easier. Volunteer Gene Arpino has directed the Center since its renovation in 1998. Gene, Annette and the members of the Moriches Bay Audubon Society have done a terrific job of building and sustaining the center.

We are now working to create an Advisory Board for the Center to help maintain and expand the programs started by the Moriches Bay Audubon Society. Gene Arpino is meeting with Centers and Education staff to plan expanded programs for the 2004 season, and to make necessary repairs and improvements to the exhibits and building. If you are traveling in eastern Long Island in the warm weather, be sure to drop by this fascinating site. For more information, contact Centers and Education Director Richard Haley at 518-869-9731 or at [rhaley@audubon.org](mailto:rhaley@audubon.org).