

Birding in Hudson Crossing Park, Schuylerville

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

Editor's note: This is an excerpt of Mona's new article on our website describing local birding hotspots. For the full article and a helpful bird list for this park, see the Birding links on SAAS's website.

Hudson Crossing Park (HCP) is operated by a nonprofit organization of the same name, although the land itself is owned by several entities including the NYS Canal Corporation, the Towns of Northumberland and Saratoga, the Village of Schuylerville, and the New York State Museum. Close cooperation and in-kind support from those organizations have made this park a reality. The Dix Bridge over the Hudson, closed to vehicles for many years, saw many partners help raise the funds to rehabilitate it as a walking and biking bridge. In addition to the property owners, many other groups help with maintenance and programming in the park; some of those are Saratoga National Historical park, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the Schuylerville Public Library, and the Schuylerville School District.

The park currently consists of about 50 acres, with most of the land lying between the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal leading to Lock C-5. The nonprofit HCP was formed in 2005, although the work of creating



This wrought-iron gate greets visitors to the park. Photo: Mona Bearor.

the park from neglected land was begun in the late 1990s. The park lands consist of riverfront, open fields, a wooded ridge between the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal, and brushy areas along the canal - all habitats that will support a great mix of avian species. There are a pollinator garden, a play area, and a canoe launch as well.

The name of the park comes from the fact that this location has long been a place for crossing the river because it is quite narrow there. Perhaps the most famous crossing to take place was the Bridge of Boats, by means of which the British Army crossed near today's Dix Bridge on its way to the Battles of Saratoga. But Native Americans crossed here before that, and remnants of trolley and railroad bridges still exist in the park.

Fall is a great time to visit the park. Southbound migration is underway and many species not seen at other times can be found then. Warblers missed in the spring may very well be seen in fall; kinglets move through as well. Sparrows always seem to be

more numerous in fall -



The walking bridge (inset) over the Hudson River provides a place to view migrating waterfowl. Photos: Mona Bearor.

perhaps it is the addition of this year's juveniles heading south for the first time. Blackbirds and Canada Geese will begin to flock up in readiness for moving out to a warmer climate.

Winter hosts many resident favorites such as Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Cardinal and noisy Blue Jays. Dark-eyed Junco will have returned from summer breeding grounds. Because the water most often does not freeze below the dam, this is a great area for waterfowl to congregate. The bridge offers a good spot to set up a scope to study ducks and geese as they feed. Where there is open water there may be Bald Eagles. They have been sighted here, so check all the trees along the riverbank carefully! We know this location hosts many species not yet observed. If you have any additions to the species list, please send the species name, your name, and the date the bird was observed to saasmona@gmail.com.

Directions:

From the north, head south on Route 4 from the Village of Fort Edward. Continue across the steel deck bridge, then turn left to continue on Route 4 towards the village of Schuylerville. Turn left onto County Route 42 where you see signs for Canal Lock 5. Continue on this road past the lock until you see the wrought iron gates. The parking area is on your right.

From the south, go north on Rt.4 from the Village of Schuylerville. Turn right on County Route 42 where you see signs for Canal Lock 5. Continue on this road past the lock until you see the wrought iron Hudson Crossing gates. The parking area is on your right.