

IN MEMORIAM: VALERIE M. FREER

Valerie M. Freer of Ellenville passed away on September 10, 2020. Valerie had a long career in education that began at Ellenville Central School where she taught 2nd and 7th grades and Biology. She went on to earn a PhD from Harpur College of Binghamton University and was a Professor of Biology at Sullivan County Community College (SCCC). She was awarded the State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, and completed her career at SCCC as Chair of the Division of Science and Mathematics. Valerie was an active member of Ellenville Reformed Church.

A superb birder, Valerie was extremely active and influential in New York State ornithology. As a licensed bird bander with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for over 50 years and member of the Eastern Bird Banding Association, Valerie banded over 14,000 birds including over 850 Saw-whet Owls on her property. A member of Sullivan County Audubon Society, she served as president, newsletter editor, and field trip leader for decades. She established the database of county bird records and co-authored "Birds of Sullivan County, NY, A Checklist and Summary of Records" with Phyllis Jones, and later with John Haas. On the state level, Valerie wrote seven species accounts for *Bull's Birds of New York State* (1998, edited by Emanuel Levine): Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, and Gray Catbird. She was a major figure in the Second Atlas of Breeding Birds of New York State, conducted from 2000-2005, serving as Chair of the statewide Steering Committee, as co-Coordinator for Region 9 (Hudson-Delaware Region), and authoring the account for Bank Swallow. Valerie was a pillar of our organization, the New York State Ornithological Association, serving as President from 1997-1999 and being honored twice with the Gordon M. Meade Award, the highest recognition of service to NYSOA, in 2002 and 2008. She was also a strong supporter of the New York State Young Birders Club.

We at NYSOA extend our deepest sympathies to Valerie's family, friends, and the innumerable students and birders whose lives she touched and enriched. We have lost a towering figure in our lives.

Memorial contributions may be made to:

Ellenville Reformed Church, 188 Canal St., Ellenville, NY 12428.

Or give to the church online at:

givebutter.com/GBRuH7https://givebutter.com/GBRuH7

Or give to the Sullivan County Audubon Society c/o Charles Hyden, Treasurer, 187 DeBruce Road, Livingston Manor, NY 12758.

Editor's Note: Parts of this memoriam were adapted from an obituary written by Mary Collier, published in the Sullivan County Audubon Society's newsletter *Warblings*. A collection of moving tributes to Valerie appears in the Winter 2020 issue of *Warblings*, with excerpts reproduced in the January 2021 issue of *New York Birders*.