

**IN MEMORIAM:
SHERRI LEIGH SMITH**

March 29, 1949 – September 13, 2022

Sherri Leigh Smith, known by many New York birders as Gerry Smith, passed away on 13 September. Sherri was a lifelong birder, raptor enthusiast, conservationist, and also a former Region 6 editor for *The Kingbird*. Not only was she active in a wide variety of conservation efforts involving the avifauna of northern and central New York, but was also a mentor and advisor to many in the regional birding and conservation communities. Sherri was also a great source of information on the history of birds and birders in this Region, who I frequently consulted with for historical context when writing my Regional reports. Sherri will be greatly missed by many.

Jeff Bolsinger, Region 6 Editor



This past year marked the passing of Derby Hill Bird Observatory’s first full-time and longest-serving hawk counter (1979-1993), our friend and mentor Sherri Smith.

There was no one more skilled at predicting favorable flights at Derby Hill. In her final season, with a new official hawk counter, Sherri willingly accepted the task of posting daily predictions. Her enjoyment and humor often were expressed in these, and her forecasts were spot on.

Sherri served as Onondaga Audubon's president twice and became the organization's institutional knowledge keeper. She was local media's go-to person on all things avian. During her terms of service, she brought speakers such as Pete Dunne and Laurie Goodrich to Syracuse for program meetings.

Sherri earned a degree in biology from SUNY Oswego and worked for a time at the college's Rice Creek Field Station. She also served as a Nature Conservancy land steward in the eastern Lake Ontario region and was a vocal conservation activist and defender of natural habitats. Never timid about expressing her opinions in writing or in person, Sherri was well known to local and state regulatory agencies as an advocate for environmental protection.

To those of us who came to know her, Sherri was a valued friend whose absence at Derby Hill will create a noticeable void as the 2023 season begins. In recent years, Sherri would end her communications with the phrase "Birds rise above it all." We wish the same for her.

Written by Alison Kocek, with input from Dave Fitch and Sandy Bonanno, for the the Onondaga Audubon Society newsletter and website; shared with permission.