Virtual programs for fall

Window collisions, feather parasites and chipmunks

SAAS's monthly fall programs will be held virtually for everyone's safety and comfort. Details and links will be posted on the SAAS website and Facebook.

On Wednesday, September 30, at 7:00 p.m., SAAS president John Loz will present “Bird-Window Collisions and Bird-safe Solutions.”

This virtual presentation is co-hosted by Crandall Public Library of Glens Falls.

Birds don’t see glass. When windows mirror the sky and trees, birds perceive windows as passageways to fly through, or as habitat to fly into. Birds often die after colliding with windows. Collisions are a major cause of avian mortality worldwide.

In the United States, window collisions are the third greatest cause of death for birds, after habitat loss and predation by outdoor cats. Peer-reviewed conservative research estimates that about one million birds collide with windows every day; the annual estimate is 365 to 988 million.

Loz is Chair of the Audubon New York Council of Chapters, and 4½ years as continuing President of Southern Adirondack Audubon Society. Loz is Project Presenter for the Pennsylvania-based Bird-Window Collision Working Group that includes the Acopian Center at Muhlenberg College and Audubon Pennsylvania.

He earned a B.S. in Biology from Siena College, specializing in Environmental Science. John was a National Park Service volunteer at the Saratoga National Historical Park in Stillwater, censusing amphibians for many years. He is presently a Trail Naturalist with the Albany Pine Bush.

This shows the imprint left when a bird struck a home's window. Photo courtesy of Peter Sanger.

President’s Message

Looking ahead

By John Loz

Fall migration is upon us, and if there is no other season to see change, it is this season here in the Northeast. We will be seeing the beautiful vibrant colors of autumn leaves changing to various shades of yellow, red, brown, even a little purple, and all those in between. The birds themselves, reflecting many of those same autumn hues, will be seen passing through our region, brilliant colors to wonder at and appreciate.

It’s hard not to recognize all the other events we have been experiencing in this year of 2020, beyond worrying about climate change. Lives have changed from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as economic and social unrest and upheaval.

We have seen this year that the birding world is not immune to any of these events, with the widely publicized confrontation between a white woman and a black male birder in Central Park this past Memorial Day, coinciding with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. Long respected environmental organizations, such as the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society, are reassessing the personal views of their noted icons.

Nothing can be taken away from John James Audubon’s deep appreciation and detailed observations of birds, and mammals. His painstakingly created paintings captured the beauty and importance of these animals. His incredibly detailed and beautiful renderings of birds have inspired many to take action to protect birds and their habitats. I feel the personal views and history of John James Audubon should not be ignored considering recent events. The National Audubon Society is now looking deeply into the relationship between his views of nature and people of color and how his legacy with the
organization will be viewed moving forward. While the national organization examines Audubon’s legacy, our local Southern Adirondack Audubon Society chapter will continue to welcome all individuals regardless of color, gender orientation, or physical disability. We are looking forward to supporting #blackbirdersweek and #blackhikersweek next year, as well as supporting the LGBTQ community with the Let’s Go Birding Together! initiative when we start hosting in-person bird walks again.

The chapter is in the midst of a project to create an accessible bird blind, where everyone of all physical abilities can enjoy being outdoors and experience the joy of birding. I do wonder though if there is more we can do. How can we all create a more colorful mosaic of birders and nature lovers in our community?

I think back to the beginning of this message: just as we celebrate the multitude of colorful leaves during this autumn season, we need to celebrate the diverse colors of people year round. We all are, each in our own way, something incredible to wonder at and appreciate.

Meet our volunteers

Barbara Putnam

Retired educator Barbara Putnam of Queensbury has served as birding mentor to many SAAS members, including this newsletter’s editor. We’re featuring her bird photos from this season’s N.Y.S. Breeding Bird Atlas project in this newsletter on pages 6 and 7.

Putnam joined SAAS when it first started in 1983. Over the years, she held many roles, including board member, field trip leader and the group’s first website manager. She’s also served on the board of the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club in the Capital District.

During camping trips in the 1970s in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, she was intrigued after seeing many bird species. While in Myrtle Beach, she bought the classic Golden Field Guide book *Birds of North America*, and went though it page by page. She also made the effort to learn bird songs, which helped her immensely. At one point, she could identify about 200 bird species by vocalization alone.

So far, Putnam has birded in every state except Hawaii, traveling with Virginia Vogel and other SAAS friends. After retiring, she traveled farther afield. She went to Alaska several times, venturing to some very remote spots. In 2006, she started traveling to Central and South America including Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Panama, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Colombia. She is now actively learning Spanish.

She has participated in all three of New York State’s Breeding Bird Atlases, in the 1980’s, 2000’s and now 2020’s. The atlases are a five-year project held every 20 years to record bird species breeding the state. She reports “I am enjoying them just as much or maybe more than before!” She’s seen 94 species so far in her Hudson Falls atlas block, with breeding behavior confirmed for almost half of the species.

Her other interests include photography and American Sign Language.
Loz is an aspiring Adirondack 46er with 16 peaks under his belt. He has co-captained a runner’s aid station for the Lake Placid Ironman for 12 years.

This bird window strike topic is near and dear to him. Loz remembers as a child hearing the loud “thump” of a bird hitting the large living room window of his childhood home and finding birds every year dazed and injured in his yard.

On **Wednesday, Oct. 28** at 7:00 p.m., Dr. Christopher Harbison will present “A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Bird-parasite Coevolution.” His talk is co-hosted by the Saratoga Springs Public Library.

He will talk about host-parasite coevolution, focusing on birds’ adaptations for combating parasites, reciprocal adaptations of parasites for evading host defenses, and how this antagonistic dynamic plays out over long periods of time.

Harbison is Department Chair and Associate Professor of Biology at Siena College in Loudonville. His research interests are centered in the fields of ecology and evolution. He has focused his research on studying the coevolution of birds and their parasite communities.

He earned his Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Utah and a B.A. in Biology from Carleton College in Minnesota. His work has led him to Nevada, Utah, Maine as well as Yellowstone National Park.

Naturalist educator Charlotte Demers will present “Chipmunks: Timber Tigers of the Adirondacks” as a virtual talk on **Wednesday, November 18** at 7 p.m. through Crandall Library of Glens Falls.

The Eastern Chipmunk, although a common resident of the Adirondacks, has an uncommon natural history. Some of their remarkable adaptations include a large vocal repertoire, a penchant for stealing from the neighbors, vigorously defending territories, and taking long naps in winter.

This presentation will discuss the adaptations of this charming Adirondack rodent as well as explain why Alvin and the Chipmunks aren’t really chipmunks.

Demers has worked as a biologist at the Newcomb Campus of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) for more than 30 years. Her primary research interest revolves around small mammals and their importance in forested ecosystems.

She manages the Adirondack Interpretive Center, the outreach facility of ESF’s Newcomb Campus ([https://www.esf.edu/newcomb/](https://www.esf.edu/newcomb/)) and on Facebook ([https://www.facebook.com/ESFNewcombCampus/](https://www.facebook.com/ESFNewcombCampus/)).

Demers has presented popular SAAS programs in the past, including “Know Your Snow” and a talk on flying squirrels.
**About Wildflowers**

**Joe-Pye Weed and Boneset**

*By Diane Collins*

Long before foreign settlers arrived in North America, these two tall sturdy plants were providing medicinal remedies to Native Americans. They are also used for herbal treatments today.

These plants flower in the late summer and fall, branching off at the top of the stem. They reach heights of four to six feet. They like moist soil and can be found growing near each other close to Halfway Brook in Cole’s Woods, Queensbury.

Joe-Pye Weed and Boneset are closely related botanically. They were originally listed in the same genus, Eupatorium, until very recently. Eupatorium is the scientific name for the Native American word used for this plant.

The name change to Eutrochium for the Joe-Pye Weed genus is related to the whorled leaf arrangement on the plant’s stem: “troche” means wheel-like. The clasping paired leaves of Boneset are unique in that they appear to be pierced by the stem.

Both of these plant sisters are in the Composite, or Daisy, family. The composites appear as single flower heads but are made up of clusters of many small flowers growing together, each producing their own seeds. The flowers are sweet-smelling and, as they mature, have soft hairs covered with pollen which brushes off onto pollinating insects as they visit.

Boneset is often used by modern herbalists for reducing fever and pain. Lise Fuller, our local noted herbalist, in her recent book *Get Well, Be Well, Stay Well with Herbal Plants*, includes Boneset infusions. Early herb doctors used it to treat Break Bone Fever, or dengue. They also used Boneset leaves to set bones by wrapping them around splints with bandages. Another interesting theory as to the common name is that it came from the *Doctrine of Signatures*, the belief that God gave plants outward signs as to what they were good for medicinally. Because the boneset leaves were joined at the stem, folks thought a poultice would help broken bones to knit. Research shows a long list of ailments that might be helped by Boneset.

Joe-Pye Weed was most likely named for the Native American medicine man who lived and traveled in colonial New England, offering curative plant treatments. He earned his fame by helping to cure typhoid fever. Another connection to the plant’s common name was the Native American word used for typhus: *jopi*.

Joe-Pye Weed, also called Gravel Root, was historically used as an herbal remedy for rheumatism, gallstones (gravel) and edema. Root brews are used by herbalists today to relieve kidney and urinary problems. Flowers can be used to make teas. It is an amazing plant, not only curative, but hardy, able to survive harsh winters, complimentary with other perennials in a home garden, and attractive to butterflies. New England inns are known to display bouquets of the beautiful rose-pink varieties in late August or early September. I have no Joe-Pye Weed in my own garden (yet) but after re-searching and writing this article, I plan to collect some seeds by placing a mature seed head in a paper bag, shaking loose the seeds, keeping them cool and planting them next spring.

Wildflower photographer Diane Collins is the author of *Trailside Wildflowers in Cole’s Woods*, available through [http://www.wildflowersinyourownbackyard.com](http://www.wildflowersinyourownbackyard.com), *Cole’s Woods is located in both the City of Glens Falls and the Town of Queensbury, next to Crandall Park*. Diane sells her booklet for $10: proceeds go to The Friends of Cole’s Woods and our Audubon chapter.

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**Local birding spots**

Looking for some bird-rich places to visit that aren’t far away? See the SAAS website: [http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/birding/birding.html](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/birding/birding.html). These local birding spots include a detailed description, directions and photos.
Species Spotlight

Northern Flicker

By Joyce Miller, SAAS Newsletter Editor

A good look at a Northern Flicker (Colaptes auratus) often elicits a gasp: these birds have a thrilling combination of bright colors and patterns. The honey-colored breast has black polka-dots; the head is grayish, black and red. When it zooms away with its bounding flight, it displays surprising bright yellow flashes and a white rump spot that looks like a bouncing ping-pong ball.

It’s still a relatively common bird to see in the Southern Adirondack region. However, the North American Breeding Bird Survey discovered that their numbers have dropped by 49% between 1966 and 2012. It is considered a Common Bird in Steep Decline.

Here’s a link to sightings in Saratoga County that were reported on the online checklist eBird: https://ebird.org/species/norfli/US-NY-091. You’ll note on the Weekly Bar Chart that they’ve been sighted each month of the year in our area. In the winter, flickers who live in the north will often migrate farther south.

Like other woodpeckers, they prefer to nest in tree cavities. They can live up to nine years. Unlike other woodpecker family members, Northern Flickers are usually seen on the ground, hunting for ants, beetles and other insects, with their exceptionally long, sticky tongue.

Flickers have learned to rub their feathers with ants, in a habit called anting, appropriately. It’s believed that the formic acid exuded by an upset ant will help reduce a bird’s feather parasites.

For many years, Northern Flickers were known as two separate species, Yellow-shafted and Red-shafted Flickers. However, research indicates that they are the same species, Northern Flicker. The Yellow-shafted form lives in eastern and central North America. The Red-shafted is the common flicker subspecies in the west. In the center of the continent, the subspecies hybridize and can have the color traits of both subspecies.

Their loud call, “Clear!” is heard commonly in our area, as is their even wuk-wuk-wuk vocalization. For more photos, life history and sound clips, see this All About Birds site: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Flicker/overview.

Dr. Gordon Ellmers’ photos show the handsome patterns and colors of the Northern Flicker.

The photo above explains why eastern Northern Flickers were formerly called Yellow-shafted Flicker.

These photos depict male birds. The female Northern Flicker does not have a moustache.
Long-time SAAS member Barbara Putnam has participated in each of the New York State Breeding Bird Atlases since 1980. The project, held every 20 years for five years, seeks to record the bird species breeding in the state. Birders concentrate on certain priority blocks, and contribute their sightings through Cornell’s eBird portal.

Here are some photos from her atlas block in the Hudson Falls area, taken this spring and summer.

Left: This juvenile Belted Kingfisher sports a rusty chest band. If it’s a male, it will develop a blue-gray belt as it matures. If a female, it will have both a rusty and blue-gray belt. This is one of the few bird species where the adult female is more colorful than the adult male.

Left bottom: A juvenile Great Blue Heron still shows the duller, wispy feathers from its younger days.

Below: A wary Willow Flycatcher eyes the photographer. After much observation on both sides, the flycatcher caught and delivered an insect to a hidden nest—proof of breeding activity, finally!

Bottom: A Northern Mockingbird surveys its territory. Its song mimics many other species. Singing is evidence of probable breeding behavior.
More Breeding Bird Atlas photos

Here are more of Barbara Putnam’s photos this year from her Breeding Bird Atlas block in Hudson Falls.

Right: a svelte Cedar Waxing shows its breathtaking colors. It is one of the season’s latest breeders, waiting until July and August in our area.

Below, right: Barbara Putnam reported that this young Eastern Kingbird wrestled with this large dragonfly quite a bit before finally maneuvering it into its gullet.

Below, an adult American Robin holds a fresh earthworm. Carrying food is considered a sign of breeding activity, because an adult bird is bringing it to chicks in a nest instead of eating the food itself.

Participating in the N.Y.S. Breeding Bird Atlas is a great way to learn about birds and their behaviors. Read about the N.Y.S. Breeding Bird Atlas at https://ebird.org/atlasny/about and https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7312.html.

In the last N.Y.S. Breeding Bird Atlas from 2000-2004, 251 bird species were discovered breeding in the state.

Check the Breeding Calendar to see when to expect activity: https://ebird.org/atlasny/about/breeding-calendar.
Crown Point bird banding report

The Crown Point Banding Station continued for its 45th year at the Crown Point State Historic Site on Lake Champlain, in Essex County, New York. Established in 1976 by J.M.C. “Mike” Peterson, it is one of the longest-running banding stations in the eastern United States.

The volunteers banded migrating birds from May 8 to 23. COVID-19 restrictions closed the banding stations to the public, but the limited staff conducted its full banding season. Some notes from the 2020 report:

- As usual, Yellow-rumped Warblers were the most numerous species: 189 (in 2019: 229).
- Only 17 Blue Jays were banded this year, including one banded last year. A record 313 Blue Jays were banded in 2019.
- Fifteen warbler species were banded this year, down from 19 last year.
- A total of 61 bird species were banded (in 2019: 70), for a total of 641 individual birds (in 2019: 1095).
- Of those, 26 birds were re-captured from previous years (in 2019: 31).
- In all, 116 species were seen or heard (in 2019: 127).

Since the station started in 1976, 106 bird species have been banded. Master bander Ted Hicks will be the new Coordinator of the Station next year, taking over from Gordon Howard, coordinator since 2010. Adirondack Explorer magazine created this short video showing the Crown Point banding station in action: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZzTAhFFHDI.

Raptor Fest goes virtual

The 10th Annual Winter Raptor Fest will be offered virtually this year by the Grassland Bird Trust (GBT), based in Fort Edward. Streaming videos will be available starting on October 18. GBT plans to offer a virtual walk through the woods and a tour of a grasslands habitat to meet and learn about grassland raptors, through a professionally designed and directed virtual event produced with Look Media and Junda Video Enterprises. The Winter Raptor Fest supports GBT’s work to conserve critical habitat for the grassland birds. For details, see: https://winterraptorfest.com/.

Upcoming SAAS events

Check the SAAS website and Facebook page for details on these virtual online events.

- **Wednesday, September 30, 7:00 p.m.**
  “Bird-Window Collisions and Bird-safe Solutions” by SAAS president John Loz

- **Wednesday, October 28, 7:00 p.m.**
  "A Hitchhiker’s Guide to Bird-parasite Coevolution" by Dr. Chris Harbison

- **Wednesday, November 18 at 7:00 p.m.**
  “Chipmunks: Timber Tigers of the Adirondacks” by naturalist educator Charlotte Demers

SAAS has tentatively moved its nine-day trip to Ecuador’s Chocó-Andes Region to Oct. 20-29, 2021.

Thanks to our supporters!

Thanks to these renewed Chapter Supporters:

Alan Koechlein  
Debra Ferguson

Welcome to these new Chapter Supporters:

Catherine Knapp  
Daniel Casserly  
Brendan Hathaway  
Heidi Steves  
Rachel Baker  
Emily Mott  
Tammy Moffett  
David Covey  
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