



# The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society  
[www.audubon.noncommercial.org](http://www.audubon.noncommercial.org)

Vol. 21 No. 2      Dec 2003 - Feb 2004

## From your President:

As autumn's colorful bounty of leaves fell, I began my ritual of raking, shredding, and stockpiling them for use in next year's gardens. It became a race against time, as the sun shone on work days and rain fell on my days off. Bit by bit I gathered and processed my leaves and my neighbor's also. I am almost finished. If the weather will cooperate just a bit longer I might complete this project.

Spending so much time outside gave me a perfect opportunity to find woolly bear caterpillars in several places. Last year the *Times Union* sponsored an Upstate New York woolly bear watch, and is doing so again this year. I collected nineteen caterpillars and recorded the colors of each of their thirteen bands, then released them. Each band correlates to one of the thirteen weeks of winter. Black represents harsh weather; brown is mild weather. Starting at the head, I tallied all the bands. My woolly bears forecast harsh weather for the first four weeks of winter. Band 5 was in local dispute, with 9 black, 5 brown, and 5 half and half colors. Perhaps it means a transition week. Bands 6 through 9 were brown. Band 10 may be another transition week, with 11 brown, 4 black, and 4 half and half bands. Finally, bands 11 through 13 were black. Maybe that's the spell during which we say winter doesn't want to give up. It will be interesting to see if these caterpillars are good weather forecasters. I sent my results to the *Times Union* and await their weekly predictions.

Last winter I seemed to be feeding as many deer as birds. This year I have already tried verbally shooing two away with poor results, and decided to experiment. Now there is a fence around the feeding area, leaving a good amount of space and cover inside for the birds. Along the fence top I tied brush in upright position. It looks workable now, without snow, and in all but one instance seems to have no ill effect on the birds.

The next morning Mr. Mallard led his loudly protesting mate straight into my neighbor's yard. I imagined she knew it was the wrong yard, but he wouldn't listen, so she finally made an about face and headed directly for my

-Con't. next col.

## SAAS Calendar

Monthly chapter meetings are held at the Crandall Library, on the fourth Wednesday of the month, except as may be noted below. For changes and updates, please check this column in each issue. Mark your calendar and join us for the presentations by guest speakers featured below. The meetings start promptly at 7pm. Guests are welcome so please bring your friends with you!

**Dec - no meeting - "Happy Holidays"**

**Jan 28 - Pat Bailey - Pember Museum**

Ms. Bailey will introduce us to the Pember Museum of Natural History in Granville and its Nature Preserve. Many in the area are unaware of this extensive local resource and collection of natural history specimens.

**Feb 25 - Mike Prescott - Adirondack Cooperative Loon Project**

Mr Prescott will present a slide presentation that will educate us on the natural history of loons, factors affecting their population and the ongoing work of the ACLP.

yard. The male followed her along the invisible path the mallards always use.

I expect she'd been to my feeders before. Imagine her abrupt stop at the fence, with the male mallard all but knocking her over from behind. She led him to the right, stopping where the fence met the lilacs. They would not waddle through the lilacs. Back they went, pausing at the normal entry point, then following the fence to the thick bush where there is a duck sized opening at the end of the fence. Would they enter? No. Back they went, the female still in the lead, for another perimeter check, before flying back to the creek. None of the other birds seem to notice the fence.

I wish you happy bird watching. Look for irruptive species this winter.

Your President,  
Linda Hoyt

## From the Membership Chair

-Claire Hunter

A Happy Holiday report from membership for this issue.



### WELCOME TO SEVEN NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS:

Joining since the last issue of the *Fledgling*: Archie and Jean Messenger from Kattskill Bay; Beverly Relyea from Wilton; Barbara Sutherland from Saratoga Springs; Howard Ritchie and Joanne Armstrong from Queensbury; Greg and Gladys Furness from Mineville; Mary Lou MacVean from Fonda.

WELCOME BACK to Joanne Armstrong who has returned to our area from Colorado. Joanne was an active member in the formative years of SAAS. She designed the chapter logo which appears on each chapter publication. Joanne recently presented the chapter with a laser-cut wooden replica of the logo - thank you, Joanne!

National Membership report: Four new members were assigned to our chapter from National since the last newsletter. There were also 11 National renewals.

CHOICE - For Renewals: You may decide to renew as a local member for \$10.00 yearly dues. You will receive all local benefits but will not receive the *Audubon* quarterly magazine. ALL OF THE LOCAL DUES REMAINS WITH OUR CHAPTER. This is especially important as National's support to chapters has been drastically cut.

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HOLIDAY GIFT MEMBERSHIP - \$10 for SAAS Chapter Membership. To bring the pleasure of *Audubon* membership to a favorite person, simply send a \$10 check made out to SAAS to me at the address shown on the back page of this newsletter and include the name of the recipient. Your friend will receive a card announcing the gift. This is a quality gift requiring no choice of size, color or taste in music! It is a gift to our chapter's financial stability as well. And we'll do the mailing for you!



*The Fledgling* is printed on acid free paper containing 30% post-consumer fiber as defined by the EPA

## THE BOOK NOOK

Reviews of books on Natural History Subjects



*Sibley's Birding Basics* by David Allen Sibley  
Published by Alfred A. Knopf, ISBN 0375709665  
Paperback, 168 pp. \$15.95  
Crandall Library 598 Sib

*"I wrote and illustrated this book to help every inquisitive birder, from novice to expert. Whether you can identify six birds or six hundred, you'll be a better birder if you have a grounding in the real nuts and bolts of what birds look like, and your skills will be even sharper if you know exactly what to look for and how to record what you see." —David Allen Sibley*

Perfect for the beginner but also a treasure for the veteran birder, I would have titled this volume "Birding Basics and Beyond." This slim book is itself a whole course in birding and is a treat to read. Sibley's art does its job well - in addition to its beauty and technical excellence, each picture illustrates exactly the point the author is making in the accompanying text. Its small format makes it easy to carry around in a pocket or purse for a few minutes study while waiting for an appointment or while lunching alone.

The author covers the essentials of equipment, field marks, calls, etc. in a clear and concise manner making this a true entry level birding book. However, Sibley really shines with the handling of topics such as wing structure, feather wear and molting and these subjects take this volume far beyond basic. Both the text and the illustrations show what an incredible gift for observation this man possesses. These subjects are dealt with in a way that allowed me to understand some things that I thought were beyond my comprehension. I believe this volume has helped my powers of observation more than any other that I have read. With each reading I add to my birding skills and I will return to this book again and again.

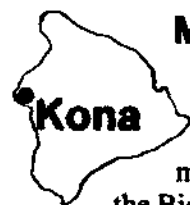
*Reviewed by Mona Bearor*

## Birdscouts of the North by Liza Porter



There are two hawthorn trees flanking the front door at work. They bloom lovely white blooms in spring and leaf out with deep green glossy leaves all summer. In the fall thousands of red fruits become visible and continue to ripen and shrivel through the winter, sometimes covered with little caps of snow, sometimes dripping with ice, ripening patiently in the cold air. In February they begin to have visits from cedar waxwings, who are not often seen hereabouts. The bird scouts come by ones and twos in early February. One can hear their shrill sibilant calls as they appear to taste the ripeness of the berries. One can almost see them wrinkle up their conical beaks, their delicate crests droop and flare, their elegant smooth feathers give forth shivers. "Not ripe yet," they report to Central. Then later in the month when the sun rises a little later, suddenly one day a congenial mob of 300, 400, 500 (yes, I did count and estimate) cedar waxwings settle from nowhere in a cloud on the trees and in a day the fruit is gone. Only thousands of empty fruit-stems bristling on the branches and profuse droppings on the ground give evidence of the feast. We probably won't see any cedar waxwings for another year, but they must be out there, the flock rollicking from feast-tree to feast-tree through the seasons. "Ripe yet?" Central asks, and "Not ripe yet," comes back the scouts' answer.

© 2002, Liza Porter, from "Essays for Our Time"



### My 50th State - Bird Watching

by Joan Robertson

Early in September we embarked on a trip to Hawaii - our 50th State in search of birds, and other interesting things. The flowering trees and plants are incredibly beautiful with bright yellow, red, orange and many shades of green. The Black sand, Yellow sand, Red sand beaches are exotic. We stayed at Kona on Hawaii, the Big Island and explored many types of habitat. One side of the island is a brown, dry desert. The miles of black lava fields were austere and impressive. The other side of the island is a green rain forest with the two volcanoes, Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, down the center. Here we saw craters and cinder cones. With our son as driver and tour guide, all we had to do was express an occasional choice and sit in the back seat enjoying the view.

Our hotel room was on the 4th floor, canopy level and good birding, with a balcony overlooking the ocean. As we ate breakfast each day we watched the Spinner Dolphins cavorting through the waves below. I also saw many Ruddy Turnstones on the rocks and 1 Wandering Tattler, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper. Other common birds right near the hotel were introduced species: Zebra Dove, Saffron Finch, Japanese White-eye -a very pretty bird, Common Mynah, Java Sparrow, Yellow-billed Cardinal, Spotted Dove. Some of our familiar birds were there also: Cardinal, House Finch, Rock Dove and Ubiquitous aka English Sparrow. So there I had 14 with out even getting in the car.

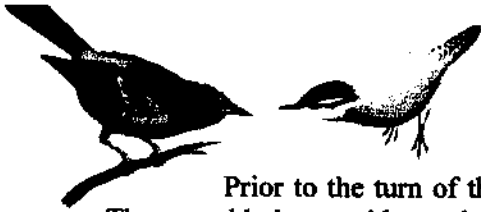
For the more exotic ones we traveled the highways and byways all over the Island! In the fields and hedgerows up above 4000 feet we found Francolins - Black, Gray, Erkels. Our son, Skip, is a sharp-eyed birder so it was great to have more sets of eyes for accurate identification. When we were at 9000 feet I saw three unmistakable geese forms flying overhead - since there is only one species, it had to be Nenes. I was glad to see them but not content with the distant ID aspect. Fortunately when we were going out to climb the volcano we found a pair wandering alongside of the road. They are as pretty as their pictures and not the least bit shy. The road signs are for Goose Crossing (not Moose)!

Climbing on the volcano was exhausting in the humid heat, but exciting. We saw a new lava flow start as we were watching an adjacent slowed down cooling area. The new one was fiery hot and flowing fast enough that we had to keep moving back. There were no birds here, but on the top of Kilauea White-tailed Tropic Birds can be seen soaring over the crater.

One day was spent sea-kayaking to frolic with the Dolphins. Dozens of White-tailed Tropic Birds were nesting on the sea cliffs. The snorkeling was interesting but I am not a strong swimmer so I became tired after a short time of watching little yellow fish and interesting coral. I was going to take my "purple noodle" with me but everyone talked me out of it, telling me the salt water would float me along with no problems. Just relax!! That is fine except when one is terrified of sinking beneath the briny sea. I returned to shore and happily watched the giant sea turtles swimming in the surf.

Among the other birds on my trip list, the Hawaiian species were harder to find and involved some climbing and lots of patience. Some of them we were able to observe as we were driving slowly on the back roads. The Hawaiian Hawk ('Io) was viewed as it flew back and forth by the window of our lunch stop. When there is only one resident hawk it is an easy call! We also saw the Hawaiian Short-eared Owl (Pueo) hunting in a field in mid-afternoon. The Akepa (bright orange) and two

con't. - see Hawaii, page 5



## Boreal Birds are Focus of 104<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count

Prior to the turn of the century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt": They would choose sides and go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won. Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition—a "Christmas Bird Census"—that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them. So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Frank M. Chapman and the enthusiasm of twenty-seven dedicated birders, twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied a total of 90 species on all the counts combined.

This year, nearly 2,000 individual counts are scheduled to take place throughout the Americas from December 14, 2003 to January 5, 2004 with over 55,000 observers participating. Each count group completes a census of the birds found during one 24-hour period between December 14 and January 5 in a designated circle 15 miles in diameter—about 177 square miles. The results of those counts will be compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, representing over a century of unbroken data on trends of early-winter bird populations across the Americas. During this year's count, Audubon scientists are highlighting the fact that many of the birds to be counted are produced in the great North American boreal forest, extending from Alaska to Eastern Canada. At the close of the count, Audubon will analyze the population status and trends of the birds of the boreal forests to see how these species are faring. Boreal species that appear to be declining that have been commonly seen on CBCs include Northern Flicker, White-throated Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and especially Rusty Blackbird.

Quoted recently, Geoff LeBaron, Director of Christmas Bird Count said, "The CBC has evolved into a powerful and important tool, one probably inconceivable to any of the 27 participants on the first Christmas Bird Count. With continually growing environmental pressures, it seems likely that today's participants cannot possibly fathom the value of their efforts now and in the next century."

### IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS IMPORTANT CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT...

The Hudson Falls count will be held this year on Saturday, December 20. This count includes South Glens Falls, Hudson Falls, Fort Edward, Glens Falls, and parts of Kingsbury and Queensbury.

If you would like to participate please contact Linda White at 792-4446.

The Saratoga CBC will take place on Sunday, December 14. This count includes Wilton Wildlife Preserve, Saratoga Battlefield and Saratoga State Park. If you wish to participate in the Saratoga count please contact Jane Graves. Email is preferred [jgraves@skidmore.edu](mailto:jgraves@skidmore.edu) or 518-587-8992 (H); 518-580-5512 (W)



### Winter Birding - Tips to help keep you comfortable

1. Dress in layers, however don't put them all on till you reach your destination. If you get overheated while traveling you can get chilled later.
2. Too many clothes are better than too few - you can always remove some and stow them in a backpack.
3. The wind chill factor can make your day miserable if you don't have a windproof layer on the outside. Protect skin with a sun/wind block cream or lotion.
4. Areas near the water always feel colder than inland - plan for it.
5. Expect it to be colder than called for in the forecast.
6. Don't forget food and water. Your body needs fuel to produce heat!

## Editor's Ramblings



I begin this issue by extending a long overdue thank you to Barb Putnam. Barb works tirelessly maintaining the SAAS website and the ever-changing membership mailing list. Barb writes for the newsletter, prepares the mailing labels and helps assemble the final product for the mail. I speak for the entire Board when I express my thanks for her many years of service to the chapter.

I was fortunate to spend a week with fellow SAAS Board members Linda Hoyt and Ginny Vogel on Sanibel Island, Florida this fall. The weather was a treat - warm temperatures accompanied by blue skies; daily threats of rain rarely materialized and the sunsets were postcard perfect. We discovered the joy of shelling and each returned home with the start of a new collection. The birding was superb. My first life bird of the trip was added while driving from the airport to Sanibel as I spotted a Wood Stork on the roadside. That initial excitement never waned the entire trip. We visited Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge to view dozens of herons and egrets, spoonbills, storks, ibises - and alligators! Nearby Babcock Webb WMA added the Brown-headed Nuthatch to all our life lists and this area also gave us our first look at a Loggerhead Shrike. Magnificent Frigatebirds soared over our condo complex one morning as we walked to the beach and the lagoon over which we passed on the way gave daily close views of herons, egrets, and anhingas. Local beaches offered us all we could handle in the way of shorebird lessons as plovers, sandpipers, gulls and terns roamed the water's edge. We were rewarded for our patience with spectacular looks at Black Skimmers, Marbled Godwit, Whimbrel and Snowy Plover as well. Osprey, Brown Pelicans and Red-shouldered Hawks are common and it was a pleasure to be able to study these birds at close range. Dusk one day was spent visiting Cape Coral to locate Burrowing Owls; directions were kindly supplied by a Ft. Myers resident through email. A trip to Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp afforded us a chance to study warblers, gnatcatchers, woodpeckers and flycatchers while we walked the boardwalk through an incredible variety of habitats - pine flatwood, wet prairie, pond cypress, marsh, lettuce lakes, and bald cypress forest. Swamp lilies bloomed and Limpkins called, however they never revealed themselves to us so we were provided a reason to return.

I will always cherish good memories of this first trip for the sole purpose of birding. However, one sad memory will remain with me as well. I recall the enormity of development in both the area we visited and the eastern part of this country as we flew over it. As I traveled by plane for hours over city after city, suburb after suburb, my thoughts turned to the future of our country and the world. I was torn

between the sheer joy of the trip and thoughts of the recent years of development in our local communities and what the consequences will be for future generations.

I urge each of you to make your wishes known to those managing local environments so that we may save some of what we love for those that will follow us. If natural places are important in your life, please speak up, write a letter, or pull the voting lever that will make your wishes known.

-Mona Bearor

*"To waste, to destroy, our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified. . ."*

- Theodore Roosevelt



### **Hawaii - con't. from page 3**

Honeycreepers: Apapane and Eliaipio were especially exciting finds. More of the introduced species running wild were: Peacock, Kalij Pheasant, Jungle Fowl (like a big rooster), and a Pacific Golden Plover hanging around a golf course. We also saw Wild Turkeys, Mallards and some weird-colored duck cross breeds. The trip list was about 30. That was a surprise since I had heard how difficult it is to find the birds. There are not great quantities except at feeders and the large flocks of Mynahs. My "target bird" for the trip was the I'iwi. I did see a red bird with a yellow eye, but since the curved bill was not visible I don't want to list it. Doesn't that sound like a good reason to go back?!! It is a trip that I would recommend highly.



### **Traveler's Tip!**

The gardening tote - a woven nylon bag measuring about 12x10" with many outside pockets for carrying tools, etc. - makes a great birding bag for the car. The outside pockets are handy for pens, sunscreen, insect repellent, etc. and the main section can be packed with field guides, maps, extra binoculars, small writing pads, gloves and hat. This makes it easy to carry everything to the car in one easy trip and to find what you need when you need it!

## SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK AUDUBON SOCIETY

President	Linda Hoyt	494-2380
Vice-President	open	
Secretary	Joan Robertson	656-9223
Treasurer	Ginny Vogel	584-3938
Newsletter Editor	Mona Bearor	745-8637
		ramonabearor@adelphia.net
Circulation	Barb Putnam	792-7542
Audubon Adventures	Linda White	blwhite@juno.com
Conservation	open	
Membership	Claire Hunter	793-9088
Publicity	Mona Bearor	745-8637
Legislative Interaction	open	
Webmaster	Barb Putnam	barbolink1@earthlink.net
SAAS Website:	<a href="http://www.audubon.noncommercial.org">http://www.audubon.noncommercial.org</a>	
SAAS Email:	SAdrAudubon@netheaven.com	

## DIRECTORS

### 2001-2004

Mona Bearor	745-8637
Joan Dobert	793-1660
Ginny Vogel	584-3936

### 2002-2005

Claire Hunter	793-9088
Linda White	792-4446

### 2003-2006

Bob Kirker	587-1460
Joan Robertson	656-9223
Linda Theis	793-4557

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

National Membership in the Audubon Society includes the quarterly magazine, *Audubon*, and the SAAS newsletter, *The Fledgling*. The cost is \$20 for regular memberships and \$15 for seniors or students. Make check payable to "National Audubon Society" and send with name, address and phone number to address below. Chapter Membership is \$10 annually and includes a subscription to *The Fledgling*. Make check payable to Southern Adirondack Audubon Society and send with Name, Address, and Phone number to: Claire Hunter, 3 Edgewood Dr., South Glens Falls, NY 12803

### **Newsletter Submission Policy**

*We welcome submissions to The Fledgling. Please email your articles to the editor if possible and include your name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit as necessary. If you cannot e-mail, please submit to Barb Putnam at 190 Palmer Ridge Rd., Gansevoort, NY 12831. Please be sure to include your phone number and call her at 518-792-7542 before sending material.*

# The Fledgling



4 Windy Lane  
South Glens Falls, NY 12803

Editor: Mona Bearor  
ramonabearor@adelphia.net  
518-745-8637

Contributing Writers:  
Liza Porter  
Joan Robertson

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