

# The Fledgling

Vol. 19, No. 3 March - May 2002

## From your New President:

My presidency is the indirect result of having a Lewis' woodpecker in my yard for thirteen days in November 1997. After meeting SAAS members and other birders who came to see 'my' woodpecker, I graduated from being a lone birder to attending SAAS public meetings. How nice it was to join others discussing birds and environmental issues I care about. I became a SAAS member. In October 1998 I took the secretarial position for the SAAS board and began to learn more about our chapter.

During these years I have gotten to know some of my fellow SAAS members. At public meetings I recognize familiar faces, though I do not know everyone's name. I hope to meet and talk with more of you. In the meantime, I would like to share a recent event with you.

In December and January a deer was often a greedy guest at my spool feeder. The only solution was to get up before the mourning doves and fill that feeder. When I stepped off the porch on the morning of January 11th, I froze in my tracks. On the near end of a maple branch extending toward the feeders was a large, bulky bird silhouetted against the still gray sky. Nice round head, no discernable neck, rather short rounded tail...OWL! All I could see was black, so which owl? Of course, it wouldn't speak to me. My guess is a barred owl, for I saw no tufts on its head, and barred owls have been vocalizing around here this winter. (Seed snitching rodents beware! This owl has your number...) Too soon the owl slipped from the branch and with soundless grace winged its way across the creek into the woods. From now on I must look before I step out the door. (can't next column)

## 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. Meetings are also published in the Post Star and Chronicle, on the SAAS website and on the Post Star online Events Calendar. Mark your calendar and join us for some exciting presentations by guest speakers featured below. The meetings start promptly at 7pm. Please be on time. Guests are welcomed - please bring one with you!

March 27	Don Polunci	"Puffins"
April 24	The Koechleins	"Trinidad & Tobago"
May 22	Gerry Lemmo	"From Mice to Moose"

Local photography instructor, Don Polunci, will present a slide program on the fascinating and always popular Puffin.

The Koechlein's will take us all along on their vacation as they present a slide show highlighting the birds, butterflies and flowers of this tropical paradise.

Gerry Lemmo will awe us once again with his fabulous photos of both common and rare species of Adirondack mammals.

Hope to see you there and bring a friend!

(can't)

I would like to hear your stories and also about your interests and concerns. Is SAAS meeting your expectations? Please tell us how we are doing.

Until next time, your President,  
Linda Hoyt

## Editor's Corner

Ewa Hammer

Before going away for the winter last year, I was fortunate to have Mona come aboard as assistant editor for *The Fledgling*. I knew I would need her help in getting out the winter and spring issues, while I was away for five months. Little did I know that life had other plans for me and *The Fledgling*.

Upon our arrival in Florida, we discovered that the small school in which my husband and I had become financially and otherwise involved was going downhill fast due to extremely poor administration. There seemed no solution but for me to take over, so here I am out of retirement and with a very full time job. My grandchildren, with whom I had planned to spend this time, are very disappointed, as is my husband who had never intended to be away from home this long. As the saying goes: "Man proposes and God disposes." While certainly unplanned, I must admit I am enjoying the challenges of my new career.

The fact that I have such a capable and willing successor on which to pass the responsibilities of *The Fledgling* makes it so much easier for me. It has been a pleasure and privilege to serve as your Editor. It is time to let others take over. Best of luck to Mona and the team, good birding and see you all when I finally get back North.



### From the Membership Chair Claire Hunter

Our Spring *Fledgling* is an opportunity for birthday greetings to SAAS, which celebrates its 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary in March. In 1983, organization began at a meeting with a representative of National Audubon. To qualify as a chapter, we had to enroll 80 new members - we could not count those who were already in National Audubon. By 1984, we were certified and had begun to meet the other requirements of a chapter, including the publishing of a newsletter. So this month, *The Fledgling* also celebrates its anniversary.

Welcome Members: Two new members have been added to SAAS since the last newsletter: Stanley Hunt of Glens Falls and Carol Fischer of Queensbury. We welcome their support. National Audubon has obtained 18 new members that have been assigned to our chapter. We hope to welcome you all in person at a future meeting.

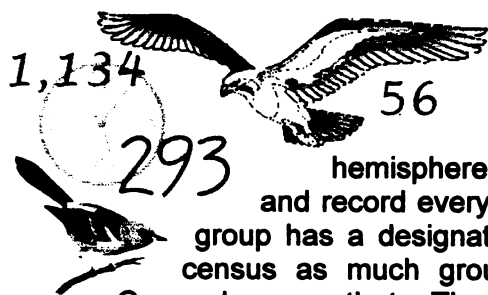
National Audubon has new dues sharing plan that puts much greater financial responsibility on chapters. Emphasis is on our chapter to locally recruit members. Invite a friend to a meeting or two; perhaps they might join us. Gift memberships are also available. For any new member, we have a supply of suncatchers (birds) and some ceramic cardinals; they are a token of our appreciation for those wanting one.

Renewals are flying in with 75 since the last newsletter. Please call or phone if there is any question about your renewal. National Audubon's billing program has several reminders so another notice after you have sent your check should not cause you concern.

Bluebirds have been in the news lately! From the January 31 issue of *The Post Star*: "Warren County Conservation District Selling Houses for Bluebirds". The article notes that there are three types of bluebird nesting boxes offered, ranging in price from \$6 to \$15. The "deluxe" is the Peterson design, which is the most effective at hatching bluebird chicks. Contact the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation office at 518-623-3119 or email: john12@nycap.rr.com

The Jan 2002 Audubon magazine "Earthalmanac" column also features some information on our New York State bird. The article states that over the last 24 years, an effort by the North American Bluebird society to popularize artificial nest boxes has produced spectacular results. "As bluebirds surge back, more and more of them are wintering in the north where they sustain themselves on fruit. During cold snaps, the birds will roost in the boxes." The SAAS Christmas Bird count has listed bluebirds for the last several years. The article also suggests feeding mealworms, which can be ordered from a vendor aptly named Grubco. Contact them at 1-800-222-3563. Since starlings and robins also will gorge on the mealworms, detailed directions are given for creating a "selective" feeder for the bluebirds. "Bon appetit, Bluebirds!"

January *Audubon* features a special section "Turning to Nature in a Time of Crisis", with articles and photos reflecting the experiences of many nature lovers after the devastation of September 11. Barbara Kingsolver, one of my favorite authors, has a very personal article titled "Saving Grace", about her family's trip at Thanksgiving. She writes, "I wish our national anthem were not the one about bombs bursting in air but the one about purple mountain majesties and amber waves of grain." I believe Barbara speaks for all of us.



## The 2001 Christmas Bird Count

On December 29, 22 local volunteers joined with birders across the western hemisphere to participate in the 102<sup>nd</sup> Christmas Bird Count. Over 50,000 volunteers count and record every individual bird and bird species seen during one 24 hour calendar day. Each group has a designated circle 15 miles in diameter - about 177 square miles - where they try to census as much ground as possible. Our local circle extends from the Harrisena Church in Queensbury south to Thompson's Island in the Hudson River, west to West Mountain, and east to Adamsville. In order to cover such a large territory we divide the circle into quarters and a group will cover each section. This year we had enough volunteers to have a fifth group cover the center of the circle, which included the city streets of Glens Falls and South Glens Falls.

The birders count from sunup to sunrise, unless you are Bob Kirker, who does the owling and you're out from 12 to 4 in the morning. Each group tries to outdo the others with the best count (number of species). A dinner is enjoyed and a counting party afterward determines the results. This year we had a great count with cold but nice weather. Many thanks to our volunteers who contribute to monitoring the status of early winter bird populations as well as the overall health of the environment. The database from these counts is one of the most significant citizen conservation efforts, which has lasted for over a century!

After 40 party hours and 436 party miles the bird tally was 54 species and 8780 individuals. We can continue to look for other species during the count week, which we did and that brought the total to 57 species. These last three were quite impressive, as they were a Peregrine Falcon, Cooper's Hawk, and a Snowy Owl. Seeing a mature Bald Eagle on the Hudson River bank off Big Bay Road was so exciting.

Our birders for this year were: Mona Bearor, Beth and Brad Bidwell, Melissa Brewer, Joan Dobert, John and Nancy Eustance, Pat Hickey, Bob Kirker, Tracy LaFreniere, Joyce Miller, Barbara Osterhout, Barbara Putnam, Joan Robertson, Paul Saffold, Scott Stansfield, Ginny Vogel, Mike Windsor, Elaine Winslow, and Don and Earla Woodworth.

### Count Totals by Species

Turkey Vulture	2	Ring-billed Gull	27	Tufted Titmouse	68
Canada Goose	1,912	Herring Gull	14	Red-breasted Nuthatch	2
Wood Duck	1	Rock Dove	1,074	White-breasted Nuthatch	43
American Black Duck	64	Mourning Dove	381	Brown Creeper	1
Mallard	484	Great Horned Owl	1	Eastern Bluebird	38
Canvasback	1	Barred Owl	2	American Robin	1
Bufflehead	5	Short-eared Owl	1	Northern Mockingbird	4
Common Goldeneye	73	Belted Kingfisher	2	European Starling	1,656
Hooded Merganser	54	Red-bellied Woodpecker	8	Cedar Waxwing	53
Common Merganser	82	Downy Woodpecker	27	American Tree Sparrow	139
Bald Eagle	2	Hairy Woodpecker	6	Dark-eyed Junco	74
Northern Harrier	24	Northern Flicker	2	Northern Cardinal	62
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Pileated Woodpecker	5	Brown-headed Cowbird	101
Red-tailed Hawk	50	Blue Jay	192	Purple Finch	12
Rough-legged Hawk	9	American Crow	675	House Finch	62
American Kestrel	2	Common Raven	4	Common Redpoll	468
Wild Turkey	65	Horned Lark	126	American Goldfinch	77
American Coot	3	Black-capped Chickadee	281	House Sparrow	256

Submitted by Linda White  
Christmas Bird Count Compiler

## Window on Wilton

Janet McAvoy



To all lovers of that species of wildlife known as "Birds", I hope you enjoy my humble article.

This past spring while looking out my window that faces the woodlands, I noticed an Eastern Phoebe. When the darting continued for a couple of days, I investigated. Low and behold, on top of a tree trunk standing upright in the corner between the house and chimney there was a sight to behold! A nest only a master builder could have fashioned. I kept track of the progress and several eggs (3-4) were seen. She successfully raised 3 young and one day they had "flown the nest", never to be seen again. The empty nest was knocked down (perhaps Jays) and I tried to replace it, but only "she" could have made it stay. By the way, the tree trunk was quite green and had been used to carry a 1956 Cadillac engine at one point! I hope she returns.

Another experience this summer was the visit by a hawk that entered the front room through two panes of thick glass. The bird lived and my son threw my bathrobe over it and set it free heading due north. This was a big bird, I have some feathers, not sure of the species, but much glass!

I came to this house as a bride in August 1978 at which time I saw the Indigo Bunting. I would not see this bird again until the year 1998 at the thistle feeder during June just prior to my husband's death.

Over the years I have noted unusual sightings. There has been a return of the red Finches over the past three years. I do not see Yellow Grosbeaks anymore and they used to come in droves. There have been two pair of Rose Breasted Grosbeaks the past two years. Male and female take turns feeding black oil sunflower - probably have young.

Since living here we have had raccoons, grey fox, as many as 30 wild Turkeys at one time; White-tailed Deer eat corn in winter and rabbits have made a comeback.

This winter there are several pair of Cardinals - against the snow spectacular! Now, the most recent sighting to share was a few days ago seeing a Red-Bellied Woodpecker. Wow, what a bird! I first saw him on a well-pecked white pine tree trunk, where I do believe it probably lives. There is quite a variety of woodpeckers here, including the Pileated and Yellow Shafted Flicker (sighted 12noon, 5/13/01)

Howard and I were - and I still am - adamant regarding no mosquito spraying, etc. My heart goes out to wildlife; they are slowly being pushed out.

See ya!

[Janet requested we print her address - PO Box 2161, Wilton, NY 12831 and her tel. no. 518-584-5747. Feel free to contact her]

## Red-winged Blackbird

Barb Putnam

If you are considering a harbinger of spring, you would do well to look for Red-winged Blackbirds in our area. Although a few remain in our area throughout the winter, the majority of them will be returning to the North Country very soon. First to arrive are the raucous males sporting epaulets that are red with a yellow edge. They arrive ahead of the females and attempt to set up the best territory to attract a mate.

Many beginning birders mistake the females for large sparrows. Although the bill is a dead giveaway, the streaked body and yellowish face/throat confuses the uninitiated birder. Young males look similar to the females with a hint of red on the shoulders.

During their northward migration, they may appear at feeders in large groups. After breeding has begun, they will stay closer to their nesting habitat: marshy areas and fields with good cover. Red-wings are quite aggressive during the nesting season. They will attack humans as well as animals that approach their territory. They'll scream and dive at the intruder relentlessly until either bird or beast moves away.

The Red-winged Blackbird is very common and will join in large winter flocks with grackles, starlings, and cowbirds. They are definitely in the running for the acclaim of "North America's most numerous land bird".



## Hats Off to the Whites!

The SAAS Chapter and all CBC birders would like to express sincere thanks to Linda and Blake White for graciously hosting a dinner for all participants of the Christmas Bird Count. Thoughts of that dinner to come at the end of the day was at times the only thing to keep tired counting crews hard at work!

Our gratitude also to you for the many hours you spend compiling the data, keeping the CBC records for our area and submitting it for this very important yearly project. This is a huge undertaking that would not be possible without the dedication of volunteers such as yourself - and we salute you!



## From our Mailbox...

Joan Robertson

Pat Santora, longtime Southern Adirondack Audubon member, writes from Florida in response to an article in *The Fledgling*, Vol. 19, No. 2, "Missing Birds From My Backyard" submitted by Joan Robertson.

She starts her letter "Hope you remember me!" Of course we do, Pat, since you have passed on a treasure trove of information about so many natural history subjects in the many programs you presented at our meetings. Thanks for your response, Pat. Many of us are puzzled and dismayed at the changes in our resident and migratory bird population. Here are some excerpts from your comments to be shared with our readers. Stay well and keep in touch!

"I am still a *Fledgling* subscriber, though I have not been able in recent years to get to a meeting. We're in the north country from late May to mid-September. We have noticed a yearly decline in birds - both number and species. I haven't seen any of the Orioles in two years. We used to have Scarlet Tanagers but none in our area for many years. In 2001 we had the usual number of Kingbirds and Flycatchers, but where we used to see and hear warblers, such as the Blackburnian, (there's a sight!), we now have only Yellows and Yellow-throats nesting on our beach. The pair of Kingfishers are perhaps my favorite of all the regulars. "Stilts", our Great Blue Heron, is always visible. Several varieties of woodpeckers are present, but the great Pileated hasn't roared through the pines as in other summers. Plenty of sapsuckers.

BUT, in 2001 we had a feeder visitor for the first time in thirty-odd years: a Rose-breasted Grosbeak! Evening Grosbeaks usually drop in at the beginning, then vanish, but this cousin of theirs was a loner- hard to believe; easy to watch. We did have one Brown Creeper, usually there are more; no Black and White Warbler; Juncos at odd times, scrounge underneath, nothing dependable but not unusual.

In spite of the seemingly replete list, there has certainly been more of a loss in the past year than in previous years, notably warblers. The water birds seem to be holding their own; we even saw a Great Egret over in Hudson Falls. Which brings me to Florida.

Whatever losses the North Country may be suffering, they are sad but minor compared with Florida, which is rapidly being paved over. Two days ago, despite the protest of the entire environmental community, the Red-cockaded Woodpecker was officially downgraded to the least protection: "Species of Special Concern". His extremely limited habitat is

wanted for development and Fish & Wildlife is not immune to dollars."

We appreciate your commentary, Pat and hope to see you in June.

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*"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."*

Aldo Leopold (1887-1948)

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## The 700 Road

Bob Kirker

Amelia Earhart, where are you?

It was October 1997 and Bill Gorman and I were on Monterey Bay, California. The weather was absolutely gorgeous, calm. The water looked like an ice rink you could skate on. As I recall I got two new species and enjoyed the good company of Bill and made some new friends on the boat.

There were several bird watching boats and each would communicate with each other if a good species was spotted. I remember several times the boat abruptly turning around based on a marine radio alert. Also on at least two occasions 3 to 4 boats would circle together to see an exciting species. Many birders saw life birds on this trip.

However the incident which made the trip unique occurred at the end, as we were approaching the dock. I was gazing forward watching the scenic shoreline. Suddenly I heard an airplane which sounded very close. I looked up and saw a mini-airplane approaching the starboard (south) side of the boat. I called Bill and pointed upward. I can't recall the color-maybe yellow-but the design seemed somewhat unique as most of these planes are. We must have watched the aircraft for about a minute as it finally disappeared beyond the northern horizon. I recall saying to Bill something to the effect of how carefree and lighthearted it must be to fly one of these airplanes. Only minutes later John Denver's plane crashed into Monterey Bay.

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## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the National Audubon Society and Southern Adirondack Audubon includes the bimonthly magazine *Audubon* and SAAS newsletter, *The Fledgling*. The cost is \$20 for regular memberships and \$15 for seniors. Make check payable to "National Audubon Society" and send with Name, Address, and Phone number to:

Claire Hunter, 3 Edgewood Dr., PO Box 1382, South Glens Falls, NY 12803-1382

### Newsletter Submission Policy

We welcome all submissions to *The Fledgling* and will utilize them as space permits. Please include your name and contact number, e-mail preferred. All submissions must be e-mailed to the editor no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding publication and will be edited as needed. If you cannot e-mail, please submit to Barb Putnam at 190 Palmer Ridge Rd., Gansevoort, NY 12831, at least a week before deadline. Please be sure to include your phone number and call her at 518-792-7542 before sending material.

# The Fledgling



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