

# The Fledgling

Vol. 19, No. 4 June - August 2002

## Thoughts from your President

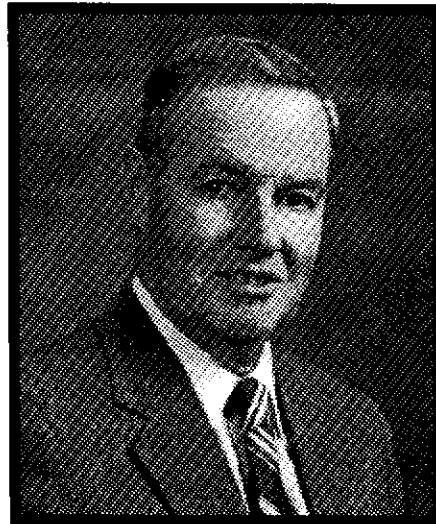
My thanks to all of you who have contacted me with questions and ideas. I hope I can continue to be of help when it is needed.

Some of our returning birds have had a rainy greeting. Accepting cool, wet days and nights for lessening of drought conditions is a reasonable trade. The birds don't seem to mind, and I don't have to water my gardens. Though bird songs fill the air, I have noted the absence of some species, particularly thrushes, an alarming trend.

There is some good news, however, such as the NY State legislation prohibiting the sale of most lead fishing sinkers. Small lead sinkers have been strongly implicated in the increasing deaths of common loons, which ingest them. I hope Governor Pataki shortens the two years effective implementation time of the measure. Moreau is offering BTi dunks, an effective, selective mosquito control, which should lessen the use of toxic chemicals. Some students in Wilton are helping to recreate Karner blue butterfly habitat and are learning about trees and the environment

## In Appreciation

John W. Eustance



1926 - 2002

"Example isn't another way to teach, it is the only way to teach."

- Albert Einstein

as they work.

Involving young people in environmental projects helps them to learn to love and care for (con't on pg. 3)

## 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 the June meeting before we break for the summer. The meetings start promptly at 7pm. Guests are welcomed so please bring your friends with you!

June 26	"Watching for Summer Birds" with Linda Theis
July & August No Meetings	

Our June meeting will be an informal program led by SAAS member Linda Theis that will highlight the spring and summer birds of our area. A video about spring and summer birds will be shown followed by discussion and a question period. Newer birders are encouraged to bring their questions and seasoned birders are welcome to share stories of their backyard sightings. Please join us for a fun evening!

## The Editor's Ramblings...



To paraphrase an old saying, "A year ago I didn't know what an editor was, now I am one!" As I sat down to write my first column I realized I didn't know the rules. What should I write about? What do the members want to hear? How long shall my column be? Am I supposed to entertain, educate or inform? I will have to answer these questions as I gain experience and hope that you, as the reader, will let me know what you like and don't like about my column and the entire publication. Although I am a little daunted at the responsibility, I am also pleased to have the opportunity to play a part in the publication of *The Fledgling* and I want to thank all those who have encouraged me. I truly hope the efforts of all of us on the staff will please the readers.

It was my pleasure to dedicate this issue to John Eustance, an SAAS Charter Member, Board Member and former Editor of *The Fledgling*. John worked tirelessly for our chapter and not only taught his values and love of nature to his children, but also to anyone who shared his life. He was a friend and colleague in our continued effort to further the love of natural things in this increasingly difficult world. We will all miss him.

I was encouraged when the U.S. Senate refused to support an amendment to its Energy Bill that would have opened up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling. We send our thanks to local advocate Tim Leach and to our NY Senators Clinton and Schumer for voting against the drilling. However, this issue is only temporarily arrested. If you are concerned with the protection of this important natural area, stay informed and get involved wherever you can. Letters and calls DO make a difference.

I have been pleased with the visits of several species of birds that I've not seen in my yard previously. A pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and a pair of Eastern Towhees come often to feed. White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins also visited me for the first time this spring. Perhaps all that "Landscaping for the Birds" has begun to pay off!

I participated in the Birdathon with Linda Theis and I quickly learned how much I have to learn! Linda has a great "ear" for birds and I had an enjoyable day with her. As always, I came away from that experience with the feeling that I had gained some knowledge but anxious to learn even more. Thanks again, Linda, for the lessons and the laughs...

The article below on this page was a personal email that I received. It seemed to exemplify the feelings that so many of us share that I received permission from the author to print it here for your enjoyment. Carol is one of our newer members and I hope you agree that her story relates the importance of nature in our lives as we go through difficult times.

I'll close for now and look forward to talking with you again in September. I hope you find something in this issue that brings you pleasure or makes you smile.

Mona Bearor

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## Hope IS the Thing With Feathers

Carol Fischer

I have a cute little hummingbird story. About 6 years ago when we were living in North Carolina, I had a female hummingbird regularly visiting my feeder. She was so aggressive that I named her Bertha. She wouldn't let anyone near her feeder and she was particularly vicious to the males. If I sat on my deck near the feeder she would continuously buzz right by my head and squeak at me.

In September, Hurricane Fran roared through the Raleigh area. The sounds of trees crashing down and howling winds were frightening all night long. When it was daylight I looked out and it looked like a war zone. It was shocking to see huge old trees lying across the road and leaning against houses, battered roofs, and trees and limbs scattered all over our yard. I was weary and felt crushed.



Then I saw Bertha! Her feathers were wet and frazzled but she came by and sat at her feeder that remarkably was still hanging.

It gave me such hope!

I felt renewed!

I'll never forget that moment...

## Thoughts from the President

(con't from pg.1)

the plants and creatures that inhabit the world we call ours, and hopefully this caring will grow with them into their adulthoods. Let's all try to find ways to pass on our love of nature to the young people in our lives by direct involvement. Try a stroll around the yard, organic gardening, a walk in the woods, or a bike ride. Just include them in your favorite environmental activities.

This is my story of how one experience can lead to interest and learning. At age three my grandson, who likes birds, was entranced by the Gray Treefrog that spent its days in the opening of my water barrel and answered the squeaking reel of my clothesline when I hung the wash. My grandson wanted its name, so we identified it. What does it eat? Why does it have "fat toes"? Soon he became fascinated by the frogs in the creek. This year he learned about tadpoles and the need for their watery environment, and wanted to show me tadpoles near his home, and to find a tree frog.

I hope you can share good times with a child this spring and summer.

Linda Hoyt

### Birdathon 2002

Over Mother's Day weekend 4 teams of birders participated in our Chapter's Birdathon for 2002. Each team covered a different area and tallied the different species that they saw or heard. The total for all teams was 91. Some of the more notable species were:

Blackpoll Warbler	Warbling Vireo
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Savannah Sparrow
American Redstart	Prairie Warbler
White-crowned Sparrow	Winter Wren
Black-throated Green Warbler	

One team recorded more raptors than usual and fewer species of warblers. 91 species is excellent for such an extremely windy day. Next year's goal - 100!

#### Things to Do This Summer...

- ✓ Learn those confusing warbler songs...
- ✓ Plant a native landscape plant on my property
- ✓ Involve a child in nature
- ✓ Educate myself on local environmental issues
- ✓ Start a nature-watching diary
- ✓ Learn those confusing warbler songs!

## Wandering The Web

Mona Bearor



This issue I have chosen to review the website [www.owlpages.com](http://www.owlpages.com) and, as its name suggests, the site presents a vast array of information about Owls. It is maintained by an Australian gentleman and is apparently a personal project. There are a number of moving and flashing ads that I find very annoying on the pages, but they can thankfully be quieted by using your browser's "Stop" button.

There is far too much for me to cover it all in this column but I will try to hit the high spots.

The first section to capture my attention was the "Physiology of Owls". This section is comprised of several pages such as Behavior, Food & Hunting, Hearing, Vision, Skeletal System, etc. Each of these is an in depth look at that particular area. Pictures and diagrams enhance these pages and clarify the facts presented.

For someone who finds an injured Owl or raptor the "Rehabilitation" section gives useful information and has links to wildlife rehab personnel worldwide.

The "Education and Fun" section presents many excellent books, videos and computer software. ~~There are even toys for the child in your life - or for the young at heart!~~

The "Reproduction" section describes the nesting habits and rearing of young. I found this to be very interesting as I have not had much experience observing Owls.

Probably one of the most useful sections is "Owls of the World". Subdivided by continents, each one has pictures of all the Owls resident in that area. Those pictures are links to a descriptive page for that species; most are very complete with specific hunting, breeding, and habitat information. These pages also contain additional photos and even the calls of the bird for you to listen to.

There is a "Nestbox" section that points you in the direction for either buying or building an Owl house. The "Owl Photo Gallery" and "Owl Artwork" present what their names imply.

I could rave for some time about this site, but I think you can see that this is a large and complete site just waiting for a visit from anyone with an interest in Owls. There are a few pages still being built, however, there is enough information already presented to keep even the most avid Owl fan content on a rainy summer afternoon. Enjoy your visit!

## My Watching Window by Linda Thais



About 10 years ago, I bought this wonderful book called "Through My Watching Window" by Jane Dillard Knight. It proved to be such an interesting and motivating book for me. This book is mostly about the flora and fauna surrounding Ms. Knight's home, which is in Georgia. The book is written in the form of a diary of the seasons - by month and day. Ms. Knight mentions approximately 70 species of birds - 16 warblers! - at her feeder. Ms. Knight is very lucky because she has a variety of habitats surrounding her home - i.e. old growth forest - loblolly pines; deciduous trees; berry bushes; a park; and a water source. This is "opportune" in that it will attract a large variety of birds.

From my watching window, I have observed approximately 60 different species over the past 15 years. I have old growth oak-pine woods.

Habitat is very important to birds. Cardinals prefer thick, brushy areas, Bluebirds like fields, and Orioles prefer tall, deciduous trees - particularly near a water source, especially around nesting time. Habitat needs are an important consideration when you are trying to attract certain birds to your feeders. That is why it is also important to have many different types of shrubs, flowers, and trees; and always, a water source - even if it is only a bird bath.

I use three different types of seeds to attract different birds. Also, I always hang seed both in my front yard and back yard. I use niger seed for finches - Goldfinches, Purple and House Finches, and Redpolls and Pine Siskins in winter. I use sunflower seeds for Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Nuthatches, Chickadees, and Titmice. Finally, I use a variety mix with cracked corn, sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, and millet for Juncos, Mourning doves, Sparrows, and, rarely, Turkeys.

Some of the interesting and colorful spring yard birds to look for are:

Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Baltimore Oriole

Pine Warbler

Northern Cardinal

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

White-throated Sparrow

White-crowned Sparrow

Eastern Phoebe

Hermit Thrush

Try to keep a diary of when the birds of migration arrive at your feeders. You might be

surprised that they arrive at or almost on the same day year after year.

Happy Birding!

## But Its Only One Tree...

by Mona Bearor

I watched with dismay as a local tree removal service stripped the boughs from the majestic White Pine in my neighbor's yard. Although it had previously avoided the lumberman's axe and the developer's bulldozer, it took only a few minutes to sever all the limbs and reduce that 60 foot towering tree to a naked trunk; nothing left but pockmarks where it had been reaching out only that morning. The strong straight trunk was then destroyed with a few more cuts and 10 foot sections thundered as they hit the ground. It was as if Nature itself was screaming in protest.

It is quiet now and the bite of the chain saw has silenced forever the whispering of those long limbs that swayed so gracefully in the west wind. That tree was watching over this area and sheltering birds and insects when I was a child. It has provided shade from the hot afternoon sun for the birds that raise their young in nestboxes on my property. The hawk that used its limbs as a perch will have to find a new place from which to hunt and I fear I shall never see him again. The tree had performed its duties well and caused no harm, but before the day that Nature would strike it down, it became a sacrifice to man's continuing attempt to improve on the landscape.

As I think of all the ways this single tree has touched my life and the lives of the creatures on my property, I am reminded of the devastation of forests worldwide and the immense effect on birds, animals, insects and man. The death of this one tree only makes me more determined in my resolve to help save the natural areas that have yet to succumb to man's endeavor to remake the face of the earth. My hope is that there are enough who will stand with me and that we are able to make a difference.

### Nature Lovers Tip:

To help thwart the efforts of those pesky mosquitoes and black flies on spring birding or hiking trips, try wearing wind pants. They add almost no weight, won't cause you to overheat and if secured around the ankles, will keep out most of those pests! When not needed they can be rolled up and take up little space in your pack.



## Home Landscaping for the Birds - Vines

Mona Bearor

Vines are often overlooked when choosing landscaping plants. Because vines cannot support themselves they must have an external support or they will ramble over the ground looking for something on which they can climb. A tree, fence or even a brush pile will support a vine. Due to their nature of being somewhat unmanageable, vines may best be grown in an area of your property where they can ramble and climb at will. However, many can be contained easily enough if you are willing to spend time pruning and trimming. Some vines will also cause the demise of their host plant so keep that in mind when choosing a site for your vines to roam. Planting a vine to wind up a dead tree trunk will not only make a woodpecker haven more attractive, it will provide added shelter, nest sites, and food for other species. The flowers and berries are a valuable source of food for birds and the dense foliage provided by vines gives exceptionally good cover for small birds. Some vines, such as the grape, are also valuable for their shredding bark, which many species of birds use in constructing or lining their nests. Many homeowners are reluctant to save that brush pile if it can be seen from the house or yard, but planting a perimeter of vines will make it more pleasing and also give further cover for small birds that might choose to nest or hide there.

Two bird-friendly vines for our area are: *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* - Virginia Creeper - also known as woodbine; and *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* - Boston Ivy.

Virginia Creeper is one of the most ornamental of vines. It will easily climb and cling to walls and other smooth surfaces as well as trees, fences, etc, with the help of stems that cement themselves to trees or structures. Note that if removed a residue is left behind. The leaves emerge in spring as bronze-red, changing to green, then to an eye-catching scarlet red in the fall. Virginia creeper will thrive in most soils, in sun or partial shade and is quite drought tolerant. Although it may get out of hand if not managed, I enjoy it on my property and find that a once-a-year hand pulling of stray growth is enough to contain it. The blue berries borne on bright red stalks are readily eaten by Tree Swallows, Flycatchers, Woodpeckers, Mimics, Thrushes, Chickadees, Finches, Vireos, Warblers, White-breasted Nuthatches and Scarlet Tanagers. Virginia Creeper has a looser, more open growth than its relative, the Boston Ivy.

Although the growing requirements are the same for both and their climbing habits are similar, the Boston Ivy produces a much denser growth of glossy green leaves. It is also more tolerant of adverse city conditions and for these reasons is often the preferred vine for adding interest to stone and brick homes. Once established this vine can grow at a rate of 3-10' per year and has no disease or pest problems. The small grape like fruits are hidden by the foliage but when they ripen in September and October are eaten by the same large variety of birds that enjoy the Virginia Creeper.

Add some of these vines to your property this season; I think you will learn to enjoy their advantages in your landscape. I know you will enjoy the added birds that they will attract!

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## From the Membership Chair

Claire Hunter

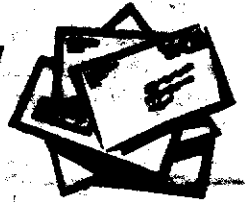
SAAS welcomes some new members to our flock. Since the last *Fledgling*, three newcomers have been added through the efforts of our local chapter. Philip

Bentley of Queensbury, John Karadenes of Greenfield Center, and Elaine Tear of Adirondack. John's membership is listed under "Feed the Birds" as he operates a business of that name from his home.

Welcome also to 32 members assigned to SAAS by National Audubon. Renewing members, numbering 65, are the strong base of our support. Thank you!

With one new membership, there came a note, which expresses the feeling I have about working for Audubon. "I am joining Audubon because the Society spoke out in New York City recently pointing out that lighted towers and buildings are killing our birds, especially during migration. Please continue a "hard line" to protect the environment. Toronto, Canada, has a large bird kill every day, I am told." The problem of light confusing migrants was pointed out last month when the Towers of Light were dedicated as a memorial to the World Trade Center. New York City Audubon contacted the memorial committee, which agreed to turn off the lights when the chapter notified them of migration activity. Working together, we can make a difference.

Please call or write if I can be of help with your membership.



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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 submissions to *The Fledgling* and will utilize them as space permits. 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



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