

# The Fledgling

Vol. 20, No. 1 Sept 2002- Nov 2002

## Message from your President:

For several years I pondered the idea of adding a birdbath to my feeder yard. I would recall the Yellow-rumped Warbler I came upon splattering water in a puddle and the male Scarlet Tanager bathing in a pool created in a log road rut. Then I would think of the numerous birds that I have watched drinking and bathing at the creek edge right across the road. Why would they want a birdbath?

My friends showed me their various birdbaths and urged me to give it a try. In July I purchased a large, inexpensive saucer meant to go under an outdoor plant um. Then came the problem of placement, for the lawn is not level. I chose a spot near cover that was relatively flat. Now, how would I get the sound of running water?

Having no available tree limb, I set a post, filled a gallon jug with water, hung it, stuck it with a pin, and let go. Oops! The water was too heavy for the pole. The tiny arc of water missed the saucer as the pole keeled with the weight. I slid the saucer under the water and left it. When I returned with stones to place in the saucer, the water was dripping nicely on the lawn. I readjusted the saucer and retreated to the house to watch. No birds approached the bath.

The next morning, before I could refill the jug, the entertainment began. A robin took a prolonged bath. A grackle, then a cowbird drank, followed by a Blue Jay and a Red-winged Blackbird. Gripping the rim with its front feet a thirsty chipmunk took its turn. I removed the water jug, which left me free to experiment. The slope of the lawn provides both shallow and deep water levels in the saucer. After several days I moved the bath across the yard to a spot by the lilacs, which are closer to the window. Then a goldfinch, a chickadee, and a junco drank. The Mourning Doves only approach, eye the bath, and leave it alone. Now I wait for my next visitor while I consider adding a second bath.

Without my involvement in SAAS, through which I found friends, shared knowledge, pleasure, life birds, and advice on birdbaths, among other things, I most likely would have no bird bath. Now I invite you to share the same with those of us who are trying to make SAAS a pleasure for you. If you could spare a few hours once in a while, or monthly, or share a special skill, please give one of us a call. We are listed on the last page of the Fledgling. Thank you.

Your president,  
Linda Hoyt

## SAAS Calendar

The fall programs listed below will be held at the Crandall Library Auditorium and will start promptly at 7pm. Guests are welcomed so please bring your friends with you!

September 25 "Galapagos" Rosemary Pusateri

October 23 "Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons"  
Don Polunci

November 20 "The Great Alaskan Odyssey"  
Gerry Lemmo

SAAS member Rosemary Pusateri will share her video and photos of a January 2002 Lindblad Expedition. This will be a treat - don't miss it!

Everyone enjoyed Don Polunci's Puffin program in March, so make sure you attend this super Yellowstone presentation by a favorite local photographer!

We are excited to have Gerry Lemmo return in November to present his Alaska program. Gerry is always entertaining and his photos are spectacular!

Please plan on joining us for these special programs.



**From the Membership  
Chair**  
Claire Hunter

#### DUES NEWS:

As SAAS nears its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Spring 2003, we are able to offer two ways to join Audubon.

Audubon Membership now consists of two categories: National Members and Chapter Members. National Members will receive 4 issues of *Audubon* magazine, *The Fledgling* newsletter from SAAS, and the membership card, which provides some discounts to Audubon sites. Dues are \$20 to join, \$15 for Seniors or Students. Chapter Members will receive the SAAS newsletter and recognition as a supporter of Audubon aims. Chapter dues are \$10 annually for all members. Several years ago Chapter membership similar to this was available and we are happy to be able to provide this choice once again.

#### EXTENSION OF NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP FOR CURRENT MEMBERS:

An extension is being made because of the change in *Audubon* magazine publication. Beginning with the next issue in September, the magazine will be published quarterly instead of bimonthly. A postcard regarding this change was sent to all members in June. Until this notification, members joined Audubon expecting to receive six issues of the magazine yearly. To honor this expectation, National is extending the membership of every current member who has at least one issue of the magazine yet to be received. Members will notice their new extended membership expiration date printed on the label of their December magazine. Length of extension depends on the number of issues still to be delivered to the individual. Those members whose membership expired with the May/June issue did not receive an extension due to their having received all six issues prior to the policy change.

I hope you had a super summer of birding! Please call or write if I can be of assistance with any membership questions



### Mark Your Calendars for Fall Field Trips!

SAAS is pleased that we can offer the following field trips for fall birding:

#### September 29 - Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve

There is always something of interest at this freshwater wetland and we'll spend a half-day exploring the marshes and ponds. We encourage beginning birders to join us for skill building. Meet at the I-87 Exit 14 parking lot near Yaddo at 8:30am to form a carpool. Bring binoculars, field guides, scopes and your own snacks and drink. For questions, call Ginny 584-3936 or Mona 745-8637

#### November 16 - Fort Edward Raptors with Joyce Miller

This auto-based trip will introduce you to the importance of the Fort Edward Grasslands - a designated Important Bird Area. We hope to locate several species of hawks and perhaps an owl or two! We'll meet at 3pm at the Ft. Edward Agway parking lot and form carpools for this approx. 3 hr. trip. Please bring binoculars & field guides. For questions please call Mona 745-8637

Please plan on taking advantage of these trips. If well attended we plan on scheduling more for the winter and spring seasons. Make this an educational experience for your children - bring them along to learn the value of the natural world and why we need to work to save it for generations to come.

#### Coming in the December *Fledgling*...

##### "The Grapes of High Island" by Bob Kirker

A super tale of Bob's Birding adventures in this Texas birder's mecca. Don't miss this one!

##### "The Importance of Roost Boxes"

Why this often forgotten shelter shouldn't be overlooked...

##### "Thrushes Still Sing" by Liza Porter

After you read "A Study in Persistence" on page 4 of this issue, you will rush to read the second essay by our newest contributor!

....and lots more!

## Editor's Ramblings...



Another summer season is well on it's way to being no more than a memory. This issue I thought I'd share with you some of the summer memories and lessons I'll take with me into the fall.

If you recall, in the June issue I mentioned trying to learn those confusing warbler songs? Well, I've learned this summer that the birds do not practice till they sound like my birdsong CD! In three months I've managed to learn only a half dozen or so - I'll have plenty to learn this winter!

I've also learned that Grackles have a higher IQ than I do... one daily visitor to my backyard was using his beak as a tool to shovel seed from a feeder onto the ground for his buddies - It took him one day to learn that. We finally learned to get feeders that were too small for him to perch on - It took us all summer to learn that!

Although I only started "life listing" in January of this year, I have found something else that brings me as much enjoyment - yard listing! The joy of seeing a new species is equaled and sometimes surpassed by having a new bird visit my yard. To have them stop by - and sometimes feel comfortable enough to stay and nest - means that all my natural landscaping efforts are paying off and that makes it all worthwhile.

I learned the joy of watching a child discover the thrill of nature when Joan Robertson's granddaughter, Alexandra, spotted and pointed out to the adults the mother Hermit Thrush feeding her baby at the VIC in Paul Smith's.

It has been a busy summer full of experiences that I won't soon forget and I look forward to many more in the autumn months to come.

And in Chapter News...

While you were enjoying your summer, your chapter officers and Board members were hard at work. It was learned early in July that the Village of South Glens Falls was planning to clear all trees and brush on the west side of the path at the Betar Byway to provide a better view of the river for walkers. Since this area is an important breeding area for migrating warblers as well as year-round resident bird species, the Board and some interested SAAS members attended a Village Board meeting and presented information that ultimately resulted in a compromise - clearing was done but on a more limited scale than originally planned. Dead trees with nest cavities were left in place and some areas were left intact as nest sites. We hope to have a continuing relationship with

SGF on this issue and appreciate their efforts to help save the nesting migrating warblers.

I was so pleased when I received an email from member Liza Porter in June with two lovely essays attached. Although she is an extremely busy working mom, she wanted to help out and graciously offered several of her nature writings for publication in *The Fledgling*. She said she "just wanted to say thanks" to those who keep this chapter going. The first of Liza's essays, "A Study in Persistence" is presented in this issue and I'm sure you'll be as pleased as I was to share her views on the Pileated Woodpecker. A special "Thank You" goes out to Liza for stepping forward to help the chapter!

I'll close now and wish you all a cool, pleasant autumn...hope to see you all at the monthly program meetings.

-Mona Bearor

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## \*\*NEWS BULLETIN\*\*

On September 14 in Saratoga Springs, NY Tim Leach, Nature Photographer, Adventurer, and Arctic Advocate will begin his 1600 mile bicycle trek of the Northeast as part of a Nationwide "Walk to Washington, D.C. - for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge" Tim will present over 45 lecture and slide programs during his journey to educate and inform audiences about the issues and concerns surrounding oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

This program is designed to promote Conservation and Civic Environmentalism. A member of the Gwich'in people will be traveling along to offer a cultural viewpoint for the protection of the Arctic Refuge's coastal plain.

Events for the Trek Kickoff will begin on Sept. 13 at 8 pm with a benefit concert at Cafe Lena, Saratoga Springs to publicize and provide funding for the expedition. On Sept. 14 and 15, lectures, slide presentations and music will be given in Saratoga Springs and Glens Falls. Watch the newspaper for time and place. The route followed will take Tim and his group North through the Adirondacks and then on toward the west. All are welcome and encouraged to ride for a few hours or a few days.

More information is available on the internet at [www.cariboucommons.com](http://www.cariboucommons.com). Just Click on "Walk to Washington" or Call Pam at 692-9232.

## "A Study In Persistence"

by Liza Porter



Pileated woodpeckers are a study in persistence. When I was young, they were a threatened species, going downhill. They were a deep woodland species, and as deep woodland vanished, they retreated further and further. But now, triumphant, they soar through every second-growth woodland. We have many in our woods. It is easy to see how Woody Woodpecker got his slightly wacky personality and crazy call. I believe he was not actually modeled on the

pileated but rather on the red-cockaded woodpecker, but our local pileateds certainly have his abandon. The flight pattern alone—strong but irregular wing-beats and erratic but swift progress toward the eventual goal—speak to how carefully Walt Disney and his animators studied their animal characters. Today I saw one of our local pileateds sitting on a branch, pecking and listening for insect footsteps, pecking and listening intently, head cocked. Later I heard him drumming on a series of different branches. I could hear his brain turning them about and considering them judiciously. Nope, this one is too high, that one is too rattly, the one over there is too muffled. Eventually he found just the right one and deep, resonant drumming rolled out over the quiet woods. I saw him later with another woodpecker. I'm not sure of the field marks, but I bet she was a cute little female responding to his masculine drumroll. Their brains have to be hardily made and padded to tolerate the constant impact of drilling dinner out of solid wood year after year. Perhaps the engineers who study how to make us safe in cars should find out how the brain of a woodpecker is protected from the constant bashing. Their leaveings are everywhere, as they gradually consume dead trees, holes appearing, enlarging, and eventually becoming larger than the remaining wood. Piles of sawdust appear below the holes and grow as the wood shrinks. The termites and molds love the woodpeckers for making great piles of easily digested soft sawdust. I wonder who took over this job during the decades when pileateds were debating whether to stay here or go extinct. I'm glad they decided evolutionarily to remain with us. The winter woods would be dull without their crazy cry and weird, abandoned flight pattern, and in spring I would miss their wild drum-rolls.

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

## Conservation Short Takes

Great news! On July 25, EPA stopped use of the bird-killing pesticide, Granular carbofuran, on the rice fields of Louisiana. Farmers had requested authorization to apply more than two tons of this bird-killing pesticide to 10,000 acres of rice fields. The EPA initially intended to grant an "emergency use" application of the pesticide, but was forced by Audubon and our partners in conservation to open a public comment period that resulted in a turn-around of their original position. Had this pesticide been used, hundreds of bird species, including neotropical migrants would have been threatened. Your local Audubon chapter was active in protesting the use of this pesticide.

The Asian Longhorn Beetle is a real threat to our area. The US Forest Service has listed our Adirondacks and the Green Mtns. of VT as potentially at risk due to the species makeup of our forested areas. Please see the notice on pg. 5 and report immediately if you see this pest or damage that may have been caused by its presence.

For those who have birded this area for many years, it is not a surprise to hear that the Wood Thrush is declining. It may come as a surprise to hear that a study recently released by Cornell shows a link between acid rain, the resulting calcium depletion and the decline of this species. Areas high in acid rain have shown a 5% drop yearly in the Wood Thrush population. Previous studies have shown that calcium depletion can affect breeding birds in a number of ways. A critical component of their analysis was data gathered by the volunteers participating in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's ongoing Birds in Forested Landscapes project. Please make an effort to volunteer for these important citizen-science studies.

-Mona Bearor

## "IF" for BIRDWATCHERS

-contributed by Barbara Youker

*If you can keep your mouth shut  
While all about you are listening carefully,  
If you can tread lightly while ears are cupped  
And hands are pointing frantically,  
If you can point your glasses and focus immediately,  
If you can identify markings and winter plumage readily,  
If you can balance book and scope to see the wing-tip clearly,  
See black-capped, hooded, red-bellied, long-billed,  
yellow-legged, white-throated, checkered or spotted,  
thousands of species,  
You can be called "a birder," my dear.*



I am constantly amazed at the number of wildlife viewing areas within a short drive of our SAAS home turf. I recently discovered the Lake Champlain Birding Trail, which is a joint venture by various Vermont and New York state agencies and local conservation organizations in both states.

The LCBT is a highway-based trail of approximately 300 miles, which connects 87 birding areas in and around the Lake Champlain basin. The goal in creating the trail was to increase nature tourism traffic in these areas and thus increase the flow of revenue into these towns. For those of us who live so close to the target area it means we have a concise map and guide to many wildlife areas of which we may not have been previously aware. Although other states have successfully launched birding trails, this is the first venture of its kind involving neighboring states.

The numerous birding sites on the trail include shorelines, woodlands, open water, cliffs and bluffs, fields and grasslands, and wetlands. Because of this diverse collection of habitats the potential exists for hundreds of bird species in this relatively compact area. In addition to the resident species, a vast number of migrating species move through this unique geographic corridor between the Adirondacks of New York and the Green Mountains of Vermont. I have made several birding trips to the Champlain Valley in the past and expect to make many more now that I have a concise guide to the hotspots for birding.

Pick up your copy of the Lake Champlain Birding Trail pamphlet at the program meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup> and schedule a trip on the birding trail soon!

-Mona Beaser

note: LCBT logo used by permission of Mary Jeanne Packer, Ghostwriters Communications, Poultney, VT

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## **☛ If You See This Beetle Call: 800-554-4501 ☛**



**THE ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE is a serious threat to trees in New England. It is easy to recognize. It is large (3/4 to 1 1/2 in. long), shiny black beetle with white spots and long black and white banded antennae. We must limit its spread.**

The Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) is an exotic insect pest that threatens the health of hardwood forests in the United States. The beetle was accidentally introduced into New York City and Chicago in the late nineties, where it has destroyed almost 7,000 trees.

ALB feeds on a number different tree species, favoring maple but also attacks horsechestnut, willow, birch, poplar and many more. This broad host range, makes the pest particularly dangerous to the forests of New York. It is a large beetle with distinctive markings that leaves characteristic signs, which people can readily see and identify. The public, not pest specialists, found most of the initial ALB infestations. It is impossible for official inspectors to check every tree. For this reason, enlisting assistance from the public is essential to detecting infestations early. We would like to employ your help in preventing the Asian Longhorned Beetle from becoming established in New England.

For more information please link to the Asian longhorned beetle web site at: [www.uvm.edu/alb](http://www.uvm.edu/alb)

\*This notice printed on request of:

Jane Stewart, Research Technician, University of Vermont  
Entomology Research Laboratory, 661 Spear Street, Burlington, Vermont 05405-0105  
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## **My Watching Window**

Joan Robertson

This column by member Linda Theis was such an interesting column in the last *Fledgling*, that I'd like to tell you about my own "window watching" and a recent local excursion.

Since I am on the shores of Lake George I see many water birds, including pairs of Common Mergansers, Hooded Mergansers, Black and Mallard Ducks, an occasional bunch of Goldeneyes and Buffleheads, and Loons. These are regular species in winter until the lake freezes. As spring approaches I continue enjoying winter finches, woodpeckers, Cardinals and the twittering Chickadees, Titmice and winter sparrows. Nothing out of the ordinary very often - just regular old friends who come to help pass the stormy days until the sun is warmer.

Migration is a whole other ball game and anything can pop by, including a Red-headed Woodpecker, a Black-billed Cuckoo, Bald Eagles and assorted raptors. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned are fun to watch. They sure do clear out all visitors from the bird feeders, but hey, they have to eat too!!! When the White-crowned Sparrow stops off for a few weeks or so I start planning what to grow in my vegetable garden.

The warblers are my favorites and can cause me to lose all track of time if a "wave" is coming through the neighborhood. One year I had a whole tree full of Cape Mays; another year Bay-Breasted, Golden-wings and other unusual ones. Sadly I must report that this is a thing of the past. I do not often see more than 12 or 15 warbler species in a season now. I was surprised by a Wilson's this year, but saw no Black-throated Blues.

I am busy with the Breeding Bird Atlas now, as are several of you. I am going farther afield in my blocks, not finding too many new species and missing some that were regular breeders. I am not quite sure what is the reason except for more houses, more roads, more people and more cats. One part of my sector is a Nature Conservancy tract that is close enough that I can climb up the mountainside and be at a lookout in less than an hour for a lovely breakfast interlude, with coffee, field glasses and a notepad.

An interesting event occurred while I was canoeing in the Warner Bay wetlands near my home in early August. We were way back in the far reaches of the swamp when we heard a terrific thrashing, splashing sound. I couldn't imagine what, but hoped it was a bunch of beavers playing. Not so! As we paddled closer through the tangle of cattails and water lilies we flushed a young Mallard keeping watch and then saw another Mallard wildly beating his wings in a

futile attempt to fly. I thought it might be a monofilament fishline problem and was wondering how I was going to untangle an unhappy waterfowl while managing a tippy canoe. I put the blade of the paddle under the bird, who had quieted down, lifted it up for a look and was astounded. The duck's foot was in the mouth of a huge snapping turtle. As I raised the paddle higher the turtle had to let go and the hapless duck, now much happier, flew off into the weeds. Now that is an adventure to add a little spice to the staid old hobby of Birding.

What do you see from your window?

## **Notice To Members**

### **Annual Chapter Elections to be held at October Meeting**

The annual chapter elections will be held prior to the program presentation at the October 23, 2002 meeting. There are several Board of Directors positions open. Nominations may be made by contacting any Board member prior to the meeting or may be presented from the floor prior to voting.

There will also be a vote on proposed bylaws changes. National Audubon Society adopted a new Chapter Policy in 2001 which necessitated the rewording some sections of the SAAS bylaws. Additional changes are proposed to update the language, which has not been modified since 1985. Anyone wishing to view the original or proposed bylaws or the 2001 National Audubon Chapter Policy prior to the October meeting may contact any Board member. A list of the proposed changes as well as the original and proposed bylaws will be available for members to examine before the meeting.

## Landscaping for the Birds -

### Learn To Be Lazy!

Mona Bearor

Spring and summer are the busy times in my garden. Planting, weeding and maintaining the garden pools for both beauty and the well being of my bird residents is a tiring and time-consuming job. Fall is my time to slow down, relax more and be that lazy person that lurks inside of me the rest of the year.

There are several chores you can ignore that will be a help to the birds and other wildlife that choose to spend the fall and winter months in your yard.

#### 1. Don't cut back!

Unless you have a problem with disease, leave the foliage of flowers and grasses which provides a home for insects that attract birds. At the end of the season a perennial garden that's not cut to the ground is inviting to birds because they will feel protected among the plants. The birds will also find seeds along with insects, insect eggs, and larvae that are overwintering on the dried foliage.

#### 2. Don't deadhead!

As fall approaches, allow the seeds to mature on the flowers that you have carefully deadheaded all season. This will provide a much needed natural food for birds that remain in the area and may attract migrants as well. Goldfinches love the seeds of coneflowers and the deep red heads of sedum attract grosbeaks, siskins and sparrows.

#### 3. Don't eliminate dead wood!

Most home owners run for the saw as soon as they spot a dead branch or tree on their property. Unless it is a hazard to residents or guests, don't be too quick to remove dead trees and limbs. These make homes for the birds that prefer natural hollows for nesting. The insect population on a dead tree as it decays will attract birds and woodpeckers will use the tree for drumming during mating season. Leave some dead branches to serve as natural perches - many birds like a spot where they can easily see approaching predators or danger. The decaying tree may also serve as a host for fungi or lichens, which provide food and nesting materials.

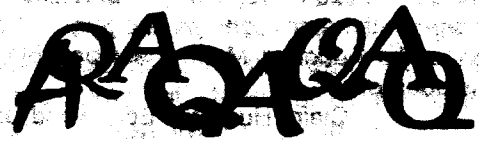
#### 4. Don't clean up the leaves!

Mulch some of your yard leaves with the mower and leave piles - they attract insects and therefore birds. You will be amazed at how quickly you have birds scratching around in a newly found pile of leaf litter. You may have the added bonus of a colony of ladybugs taking winter refuge on your property and when spring arrives they will be ready to clear your garden of aphids.

#### 5. Don't trim your shrubs!

Many homeowners do all their shrub trimming and shaping in the fall thinking that they will be all set for the spring season when it comes. Spring flowering and most berry producing shrubs are properly trimmed right after flowering. If you need to trim or shape, research and know the proper time for each plant. Be careful not to do this chore when you are eliminating the berries and fruit that can be a much needed food source for birds.

Meticulous fall cleanup of garden debris only lessens the attractiveness of your property to the wildlife you are trying to lure. If you just can't leave it all till spring, then compromise and clean some areas and leave others. The birds and other wildlife will appreciate your efforts and you will enjoy learning to be lazy!



## Ask Barbolink!

**Q.** Do the Mockingbirds and Catbirds tend to mimic birds that reside in their vicinity or is there no connection? Seems that way to me, but...?

**A.** Mockingbirds do have their own song but will often sing the songs of other birds. Their Latin name *Mimus polyglottos* literally means "many tongued mimic". One mocker was recorded singing the songs of 51 species of birds. Often they will also mimic other environmental sounds such as dogs, sirens, squeaky hinges, notes from a piano, crickets, chickens, frogs, and drills. A study found that females are attracted to males with the most varied repertoire!

They often sing from high exposed perches such as television antennas, utility poles, chimneys, and trees. They sing for the same reason other birds do: to attract a mate, to claim their territory, and to discourage interlopers. Another interesting mocker behavior is that they will sing at night. I have read that it is the unmated males that do this.

If you have a question for our expert, "Barbolink" Putnam, just give it to any Board member and watch for the answer here!



## SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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## 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., 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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