



The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society
www.audubon.noncommercial.org

Vol. 22 No. 1 Sept - Nov 2004

A Message from your President:

How do you mark the passing of summer? That was my thought as I began to write on an August day that feels like September. Spring birding gave way to garden planting. June brought wild strawberries, followed in July by wild blueberries, then raspberries. Mid-August is blackberry time. My berry picking hours were enhanced by bird watching, butterflies, and wild flowers. The changing blooms coloring my flower beds mark the seasonal passage.

In the vegetable garden young seedlings succumbed to torrential rains and I reseeded. While paper roll tubes saved the tomatoes and peppers from the cutworms, they would not work for tiny plants. When the second sowing produced little plants I surrounded them with toothpicks. Though very tedious to apply, it worked. Hopefully I will have enough vegetables to last until next summer.

Finding half a blue egg shell at the bottom of our sidewalk led to the discovery of the robin nest on a spruce branch above the walk. It was used for two broods. A feisty male hummingbird often charged the nest, challenging the parent robins because they were so close to 'his' nectar feeder. In early August the adult and young robins made early morning forays into the chokecherry trees, devouring berries, and, hopefully, some of the tent caterpillars out of reach to us on one high branch. Trying to identify the large piece of blue-green egg shell with dark spots and squiggles which my grandsons found was more difficult. Written descriptions are not as good as photographs, though we did narrow it down to four probables, based on egg color and the fact that all four had brought young to the feeders.

The bold catbird often comes very close to scold or beg when I uncover my own blueberry bushes. The light and water permeable cover is a bed canopy meant to be hung from a ceiling hook, and was a yard sale bargain. It is held up by stakes topped with used tennis balls and pegged to the ground with earth staples, which can be made from wire coat hangers. So far it has frustrated the catbird, chipmunks, and squirrels.

In July a school of bullheads was a great find for my grandsons.

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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, on the SAAS website and on the Post Star online Events Calendar. 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!

Sept 22 - The Stoners "Exploring the Everglades"

This slide and music program will lead us through the various habitats of the park and we will learn about the wildlife that calls the park home.

Oct 27 - Seth Katner "Ordinary Wolves"

The author will show slides and read selections from his work which is a commentary on the clash of cultures in present-day Alaska.

Nov 17 - Gerry Lemmo "Birds of the Adirondacks"

This well-known local photographer will present his newest program highlighting the birds native to our own Adirondack region.

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They also saw the large father bullhead, which cares for the young. A female mallard brought seven juveniles to the beach. We could see that there were three distinct sizes and stages of feather development among the juveniles, which created an interesting discussion. A curious single loon used diving to approach more and more closely until the mallards swam away. I marvel at how many birds five and seven-year olds can identify.

I hope you have all have good summer memories. It is important to help protect the natural resources that make our activities and memories possible, starting with our own yards. From a letter to a town or state official to active involvement in the care of our environment, your input is needed to help preserve open spaces and forests, air quality, endangered areas, and wildlife.

Your President,
Linda Hoyt

From the Membership Chair

-Claire Hunter

As SAAS and "The Fledgling" mark the 20th anniversary of its charter, our fledgling chapter is becoming more reliant on local efforts for support. An important aspect of this is our offer of Chapter Only membership, with dues of \$10 annually. All of the local dues stays with our chapter to help us "fly" as we have for the past 20 years. Chapter dues include chapter activities and "The Fledgling" newsletter.



We are happy to report and welcome as NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS: Per and Judy Staubo from Saratoga Springs.

Chapter membership gifts have proved a popular remembrance; a gift card will be sent on request. Just send the information about the recipient and your check to me. You will be happy to have a meaningful gift, so will the recipient, and I will be delighted to welcome another SAAS member.

Also available is National membership, which includes the *Audubon* magazine as well as chapter activities. We are currently waiting arrival of the Annual National Report. Year ended June 30. Let's make it our goal this year to "Recruit a Friend to Join SAAS." With our 30-plus zip code area we have a fascinating variety of members whose experiences enrich us all.

Our birdfeeder has been bright with goldfinches this summer, especially our favorite, dubbed "Gorgeous George" who has brought us joy as he enjoys our niger seed. A bewildered Mourning Dove perched atop the rounded shepherd's crook of the feeder pole one day, turning east, then west, very carefully, before he remembered that he was a ground feeder! What a better return for expense do we receive than for the price of our bird seed?

Enjoy the birds and the blaze of fall colors in our beautiful region. Calls are always welcome, as well as notes.



Did you know.....?

that National Audubon has withdrawn the majority of its funding from the chapters? SAAS is hoping to increase its local membership to offset this reduction in funding. Please consider joining locally to support our chapter's efforts in conservation education - See page 4 for a local membership form.

SAAS Fall Elections

The annual elections will be held at the October 27, 2004 meeting of SAAS, at 7pm in the Crandall Library auditorium. Three positions on the Board of Directors expire this year; those are currently filled by Ramona Bearor, Joan Dobert and Virginia Vogel. There is one unfilled board position expiring in fall of 2005 open as well. All three expiring members are willing to serve another term; however, new faces with new ideas would be most welcome. The elections shall be by a plurality vote of members as stated in the bylaws. Serving the chapter in a local capacity does not require a lot of time - just a willingness to further the work of the chapter and its goals of public education. If you wish to volunteer for any position or offer someone's name as a candidate, please contact any board member as listed on the last page of this newsletter.



NCWC EMERGENCY HOTLINE

518-964-6740

for Injured and Orphaned Wildlife

North Country Wild Care, a non-profit organization for wildlife rehabilitators provides a wildlife emergency hotline. The number is staffed seven days a week from 8am to 10pm. NCWC is also seeking volunteers to help staff this hotline. The volunteers will receive training and a written protocol for dispatching phone calls from the public regarding injured and orphaned wildlife.

For more information please call Trish Marli
at 518-644-2146.

For more information about NCWC, visit the website,
www.northcountrywildcare.org

Wetlands Protection Legislation in New York

By Sean Mahar



The New York State Legislature ended its 2004 session on August 12 without taking action on many Audubon supported initiatives. The most important measure not addressed this session is the Clean Water Protection/Flood Prevention Act (A.7905-a/S.4480-a), which decreases the size threshold for DEC regulation of freshwater wetlands to 1 acre or larger, thus increasing the states ability to protect these ecosystems. Since this was not passed, New York remains the only state in the northeast to impose a size limitation on wetlands regulation.

Regardless of size, freshwater wetlands are an integral part in the functioning of ecosystems throughout New York State. Each individual wetland community is highly intricate, with most containing a diverse range of plant and animal species, including some species that are exceptionally rare. They provide essential habitats for many species of migratory waterfowl, for numerous threatened, endangered, or species of special concern, such as the bald eagle and osprey, and for countless other amphibian, avian, fish, and wildlife species to nest, breed, and feed. The loss of these vital habitats has been linked to population declines in many amphibian species.

Numerous freshwater wetlands can be found on Audubon Important Bird Areas (IBAs) throughout the state. Some of these IBAs, like Vischer Ferry Nature a Historic Preserve located in Saratoga County (<http://ny.audubon.org/iba/vischer.html>), are host to very unique wetland habitats.

These wetlands not only provide critical habitats for many plant and animal species, but provide countless other environmental benefits from flood protection and storm water runoff control, to filtering pollutants, pesticides and sediments from the water. These countless benefits clearly illustrate the need for the state to protect these freshwater wetlands to the greatest extent possible.

Currently, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has the authority to regulate wetlands 12.4 acres or greater that are mapped, while the federal government (EPA and Army Corp.) has authority over the rest. However, a 2001 Supreme Court ruling in Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. United States Army Corps of Engineers held that the federal government did not have the authority to regulate "isolated, non-navigable" wetlands under the Clean Water Act. "Isolated wetlands" are wetlands that are not connected by navigable surface water to waters of the U.S. Since that time, the federal government has backed away from protecting these extremely important areas. As a result, 20% of New York's freshwater wetlands have been left unprotected according to the DEC. New York State needs to step in and ensure these vitally important areas are protected.

In decreasing the wetland size threshold, the Clean Water Protection/Flooding Prevention Act sponsored by Assemblyman Thomas DiNapoli and Senator Carl Marcellino thus increases the states ability to protect these ecosystems. This legislation also greatly increases the state's ability to properly manage these habitats for the benefit of all New York's citizens, birds, and wildlife by removing the requirement of wetlands to be mapped for regulation. Without this increased level of protection, the health of all New York's water bodies is put at risk.

Even though this legislation was not passed this year, we are still pushing hard to have it addressed next session. You can stay informed on this issue and other Audubon legislative priorities by visiting our website ny.audubon.org; or by sending your name, address and email address to nyaction@audubon.org to be put on our activist newsletter list.



There is hope if people will begin to awaken that spiritual part of themselves,
that heartfelt knowledge that we are caretakers of this planet.

~Brooke Medicine Eagle

Birding Cape Cod



On a rainy weekend towards the end of May, four SAAS board members – Linda Hoyt, Mona Bearor, Virginia Vogel and Linda Theis – decided to take a spring trip to Cape Cod. Two of the members had never been there. I thought, gotta go, gotta go!! I couldn't imagine anyone not visiting Cape Cod living so close! After it finally stopped raining on our way out there, we had some very fruitful outings.

We made sure we visited Monomoy Island which had nesting gulls and terns. I was very glad to see one of my favorites, the oystercatcher, feeding on the mud flats at low tide. We also had the opportunity to witness horseshoe crabs mating on the shore – the male latches onto the female's back and remains there for as long as a month. The female burrows into the wet sand and lays an egg cluster that could number up to 1,000 eggs. She will lay eggs in three to ten nests over a period of one month. Mr. Horseshoe stays with her the entire time and hitches a ride back to the sea when she is finished laying her eggs. This lends a whole new meaning to hitchhiking!

We took a vote and decided that our trip to the Marconi site for our dinner *al fresco* was the best evening of the trip. We had heard that the whip-poor-wills and the chuck-will's-widow were nesting there, and if we were lucky we might see them. This would be a real coup for us, since many avid birders for years never get this opportunity. We did get this tip from a very reliable source, Bob Prescott, Director of Mass. Audubon. We were quite excited about this. So we made a quick stop at the local lobster take out place and ordered our crab and lobster dinners and off we went around dusk. If you go to the Cape make sure you visit this site – it really is worth it. No guarantees you will see or hear chuck-will's-widow, of course, but the site has a most beautiful 360' view on top of a hill allowing views of the oak/pine woods and the ocean from a walled concrete patio, which, of course, is great for a scope or a digital video camera – not to mention a gorgeous view of the sunset. After we headed down by the gazebo, where we were watching shorebirds, we began to hear whip-poor-wills calling – or what we thought were whip-poor-wills. This turned out to be one of the best cases of mimicry we had heard – 2 mockingbirds with quite a repertoire. As we were watching and listening to the mockingbirds, we moved

back to the top of the hill and another group arrived – obviously birders armed with a tape recorder, binos and scopes. They informed us of the whip-poor-will and the chuck-will's-widow and asked if we would like to join them. We decided to decline their offer thinking they might drive the birds out to us with all the calling from their tape player. We kind of thought it was a form of harassment also. Well, about 15 minutes to a half hour went by while we were standing in the parking lot. Next thing we knew we heard what we thought was the chuck-will's-widow calling. According to the Peterson field guide, the chuck-will's-widow sounds very similar to the whip-poor-will and also calls its name with the chuck part barely audible; they also sing less vigorously than the whip-poor-will. Sure enough, that is what we heard. Unfortunately, between the mockingbird, whip-poor-will, chuck-will's-widow and the tape, it was quite a circus. It was fortunate that there were 4 of us, because we had four sets of ears and witnesses. The chuck-will's-widow was unbelievably close, as we could hear it quite loudly. Next thing, out it swooped from the brush behind us and darn near took off our heads, swooped around in a large circle grabbing insects on the wing. Boy, were we excited! We had all we could do to contain ourselves as we did not want to scare it off. After about another half hour, when the moon was full, we decided to leave. By the way, a full moon is a good time to see and hear the birds also. On the drive out all we could hear everywhere was the call of the whip-poor-will or the chuck-will's-widow. This would be sealed indelibly in our memories.

Oh, I almost forgot... the Cape has one of the biggest and best birdwatcher's stores I have ever seen. Be sure to stop at the Birdwatcher's General Store in Orleans if you happen to visit the Cape.

Happy Birding,
Linda Theis



Make a Difference – Join Locally!
SAAS Local Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Send with \$10 annual dues payment to:

Claire Hunter

3 Edgewood Dr.

South Glens Falls, NY 12803



As I write this column cool air with the scent of fall is wafting through my window. I can hardly believe fall is around the corner. It was a hectic spring and summer at times. Birding trips to Cape May and Cape Cod, weekends at the Montezuma NWR, the Great Adirondack Birding Festival, a trip to visit the puffins on Machias Seal Island all kept me packing and unpacking, coming and going. However, nowhere did I find anything to rival participation in Atlas 2000. I spent many late night hours listening for owls, peaceful hours in the early morning walking woodlands and, yes, lots of time swatting mosquitos! – but the experience and knowledge gained was invaluable. I hope I am around to do it again in 20 years.

When you received your *Fledgling* you may have noticed our “new look” – plain white paper; copied rather than printed. When our friends at Pinetree Press in South Glens Falls decided to pursue other interests we were forced to find a new printer for the newsletter. What we discovered is that we can't get the printing quality we would like for the price we have been paying. In order to keep costs to a minimum we decided to have the newsletter copied rather than printed and on plain white paper rather than on a colored stock. We hope the members appreciate our attempt to keep costs down so valuable funds can be spent on conservation education within the chapter area.

I'm sure I speak for the Board and officers of SAAS as I extend a welcome to Sean Mahar who has joined us as Conservation Chair. Sean is the Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator for Audubon New York. If you have concerns about local issues please contact Sean. Be sure to read his article about wetland legislation on page 3.

I felt very privileged to spend a week on Sanibel Island in Florida last November. It was an area of incredible beauty as well as an important habitat for many nesting and wintering species of birds and animals. I had hopes of visiting again someday; however, now I know that I will never again see that lush landscape as I remember it. Hurricane Charlie battered the entire island and left a trail of devastation that will take years to erase. Ding Darling NWR suffered a loss of vegetation estimated at 70%; the canopy was entirely removed in some areas. The encouraging news is that the natural succession of plants will heal this land; root systems left intact will sprout new growth, seedlings will receive more sunlight to grow strong.

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BIRDATHON 2004

Thirteen teams and individuals submitted data for Birdathon 2004. The greater number of participants allowed more territory to be covered – several SAAS members were counting species in their yards, some members used their Breeding Bird Atlas blocks as a starting point. Others simply went where their interest took them and we had coverage in Queensbury, Hebron, Brant Lake and Chestertown, Hudson Falls, Fort Miller, South Glens Falls, and Wilton. Some interesting facts:

Total Species counted – 133; up from 87 in 2003!

New species added this year:

Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's hawk, Greater Scaup, Canada Warbler, Fox Sparrow

Only species reported on every list: American Robin

Most species reported by one individual/team:

110 – submitted by Barb Putnam

Total number of warbler species: 22

Only owl species reported: Barred Owl

Paul Saffold was the only observer to see the “6-pack” of woodpeckers – Pileated, Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied, Northern Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

Participants: Joan Robertson, Joan Dobert, Dot & Phil Bentley, Joyce Miller, Nancy Curtis, Russ Hilliard, Barb Putnam, Marjory Moeller, Linda Hoyt, Claire Hunter, Mona Bearor, Margaret & Alan Koechlein, Paul Saffold

The chapter thanks all who took time to participate in this important spring count and our birding hats are off to Joan Robertson for compiling and totaling the lists. Let's all try to top these results next year for Birdathon 2005!



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Nature will take care of its own and Sanibel will again be home to thousands of birds and animals. I only wish the same could be said of the habitat destruction caused by man.

SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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	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

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