



The Fledgling

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

Vol. 22 No. 2 Dec 2004 – Feb 2005

Editor's Note: The Board and members of SAAS extend our deepest condolences to our President, Linda Hoyt, on the recent death of her husband. We look forward to next issue when Linda will return with her regular quarterly column. This essay is one Linda gave me some time ago for use "as needed" in the *Fledgling*; I believe it recounts an experience with which all birders can relate.

Identity Crisis

By Linda Hoyt

I am awestruck by the raw beauty of a hawk pinning its prey to the ice-crusting snow beneath them, wings shrouding its catch, its head turned and its eye on me as I stand on the porch watching. It issues a string of kek calls with a slight rising inflection at the end of each kek, like an exclamation point. I am sure I am being called an intruder.

Beneath the hawk the dark lump might be the lone starling that has been coming for suet. Light appears to radiate through the hawk's wings from below, so that the spread feathers appear creamy with dark mottling, and the tail tip blends into the ice-covered snow. This is an immature hawk, either Cooper's or Sharp-shinned. I am sure.

Constantly keking, the hawk flaps and laboriously raises itself and its prey into the air for a short ground-skimming flight to the end of the yard where it lights and appears to be trying for a better grip on its prey. Or maybe it is just trying to stand on the ice. Keks flow from it as it flaps toward the road edge where I can no longer see it. Silence. I had started to turn when the hawk reappeared, without prey, and flew, several feet above the ground, back through the yard

Con'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, 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!

December – No Meeting – "Happy Holidays"

Jan 26 – SAAS presents "Birding 101"

SAAS Board members Joan Robertson and Mona Bearor will cover identification tips, field guides, places to bird, optics and more. There should be something for everyone whether you are a brand new birder or an experienced one so come to learn or come to share your birding expertise with us!

Feb 23 – Drew Monthie "Gardens and Birds"

Local garden designer and native plant historian, Drew Monthie will explain the unique relationship between birds and plants and will tell us how to design a garden that will provide for all the needs of our backyard bird friends.

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and onward towards the woods.

With no binoculars in hand and seeing the hawk from oblique views only I tried to reconstruct the field marks. The size indicated Cooper's, but the spread tail in flight had definite corner edges and the bars looked rather straight across. I think the eye was forward of center on the head. Flight angles precluded seeing the head in relation to the leading wing edges. Did I actually hear kek, or did I hear kik? Unfortunately, this is one of those times when I have to say, "I saw a hawk, but I don't know which hawk."

From the Membership Chair

-Claire Hunter



HOLIDAY GIFT TIME:

Avoid the "Holly Daze" at the mall. Audubon membership in SAAS is a great gift choice. Chapter Sponsorship at \$10 annually includes the *Fledgling* with local information and meeting notices. This is a gift that keeps on giving throughout the year and brings fellowship and a stimulating interest. If you so choose, the chapter will send a card to your gift recipient.

WELCOME BELLS RING FOR NEW CHAPTER SPONSORS:

Nancy Curtis, Chestertown; Carol Kaufman, North River; Ruth and George Lamb, Bolton Landing; Jean and Bob Stevens, Gansevoort.

Some of these friends have joined SAAS as Chapter Sponsors in addition to keeping National Audubon membership; some have switched their membership to Chapter Sponsor only instead of renewing with National.

National Audubon is withdrawing the majority of its funding from chapters. SAAS is hoping to increase its local Chapter Sponsors to offset this reduction in funding.

HAPPY MEMORIES AS 2004 HEADS INTO THE HOLIDAYS:

A call on Saturday evening, a beautiful summer night, about 9pm. The caller had phoned me at the suggestion of his mother who had our newsletter. The young man had returned home to find the sad remnants of a robin's nest that he had been watching over each day. One survivor, a feathered chick not yet able to fly, was on the ground.

Thankfully I had the name of the nearest avian wildlife rehabilitator. He called her, took the rescued baby down to join several others that she was feeding, and the story ended happily. I had been interested to hear the conclusion so I called on Sunday and was rewarded with good news.

The most unusual bird story that I remember this year was the Cooper's Hawk taking a bath in the pool cover of a Moreau home this fall. Wild as a hawk???

HAPPY HOLIDAYS, GOOD HEALTH AND GOOD BIRDING!



North Country Wild Care Emergency Hotline
for Injured and Orphaned Wildlife

518-964-6740

Editor's Ramblings

Mona Bearor



As I write this I am enjoying sunny skies and afternoon temperatures in the 60's. No, I am not at home; I'm visiting family in North Carolina. It is a treat to escape for a few days but I question whether I could live happily without snowshoeing on a crisp winter day and the sight of a chickadee on a snow covered evergreen bough.

In this issue I'm pleased to include the first article by our new Conservation Chair, Sean Mahar. The proposed cell tower on Pilot Knob is an important local issue so please take the time to read his essay and give it some serious thought.

You may notice that this issue of the *Fledgling* is somewhat abbreviated. I hope some members will step forward and submit material for the next issue so we can return to a six page edition with a variety of articles and subjects. This is the 20th year of SAAS as a certified chapter of National Audubon and many of the board members and officers have been active for all those 20 years. We would welcome some new active members and their ideas for how to make our chapter stronger and more effective in the area of conservation education.

If early reports are any indication, we may be fortunate to see some irruptive species this winter - watch for crossbills, pine siskins, evening and pine grosbeaks and snowy owls. Extremely high numbers of Hawk, Great Grey and Boreal Owls have been reported from northern Minnesota and this often foretells of an irruptive year; unfortunately it may also be an indication that food sources are scarce in their normal range forcing the birds into the northern part of the US. So it is with some sadness that we welcome these travelers to our area and hope that our prey populations can sustain them through the winter.

I know I speak for the entire SAAS board when I wish our members a happy, safe and healthy holiday season.

"Nothing living should ever be treated with contempt. Whatever it is that lives, a man, a tree, or a bird, should be touched gently, because the time is short. Civilization is another word for respect for life." -- Elizabeth Goudge



Metal Trees

-Sean Mahar – Conservation Chair

Lake George is one of the most widely known and heavily used lakes in the Adirondacks. From boating to bird watching, the views around the lake have captivated thousands of visitors, enticing many to return year after year to bask in its beauty. However, the traditional views that have drawn so many to the area, and inspired many others to capture these views on canvas and film, is threatened to be scarred by a new tree species. At issue is NEXTEL Partners Inc. proposal to place a communication tower, shaped as a fake pine tree (or “Frankenpine” as dubbed by the Adirondack Council), on the eastern shore of Lake George.

The proposed site, Pilot Knob, is a pristine historic area, renowned throughout generations for its scenic views. Many of our chapter members and area residents use this area's hiking trails for bird walks along the lake, while hundreds of Artists, including many of the Hudson River School of Landscape Painters, have admired this area's beauty for centuries. Undoubtedly any tower, regardless of what it may look like, that juts above the tree line will negatively change this famous landscape, and does not belong along the eastern shore of Lake George.

It has been estimated that 4-50 million birds die annually from collisions with communication towers throughout the United States. In adverse weather conditions birds become increasingly susceptible to collisions with large towers, as they have a more difficult time of seeing the structures before they collide. As the proposed communication tower will protrude above the tree line, and with thousands of birds migrating through the Adirondack Park each spring and fall, this tower has the potential to impact these migrating species.

The Adirondack Park is known for its breathtaking views, scenic vistas, birds and other wildlife. The precedent in the Park should be for new communication towers to be placed on existing structures or sited in locations that do not alter the scenic landscapes, which would minimize the negative impacts of cellular communication on the Park. A huge tower, shaped as a fake pine tree or not, does not meet any of these requirements. It would be an eyesore on this beautiful lakeshore, which has been photographed, painted, and admired by hundreds of artists. Our chapter feels that the Park Agency should adhere to this precedent and reject this plan.

For more information visit the Adirondack Council's website: <http://adirondackcouncil.org/>

2004 Christmas Bird Counts

SAAS will sponsor the Hudson Falls CBC to be held Sunday, December 19th.
Please contact Linda White at 792-4446 if you would like to participate.

Capital Region Audubon will sponsor the Saratoga CBC on Saturday, Dec 18th.
Anyone willing to join in this count please contact Jane Graves at jgraves@skidmore.edu

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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 Sponsorship 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.

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