



The Fledgling

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

Vol. 22 No. 3 Mar 2005 – May 2005

From your President

Bird watching is always a pleasure and sometimes a frustration. Twice I drove to Fort Edward with hopes of seeing a Short-eared Owl to add to my life list. While I watched and waited for the owl, I was entertained by three Northern Harriers, two adult and one first year juvenile, hunting over the fields. With a wing adjustment one's legs would drop down, feet forward, talons spread wide, and the harrier would drop out of sight in the tall, dry grasses. If the harrier rose up right away, empty-clawed, it resumed its low passes over the field. When one stayed out of sight in the grass for a while, I imagined it had caught a rodent and was dining. Observing their behavior increased my knowledge and appreciation of a bird I have seen before. Perhaps I'll be lucky and see the owl next winter.

I began to wonder if these fields will be there for the birds next winter and in winters to come, for I noted undeveloped land for sale and new houses. Human impacts on birds and other wildlife are constantly increasing. If we hope to see birds in the future, we need to take action now to ensure that there will be space and safe habitats that birds need for survival.

Some actions may be small in scale, such as in your own yard, where you can eliminate pesticides and herbicides from your lawn - protecting your family at the same time - and plant native, non-invasive plant species. Many of you may have read or heard about the Red-tailed Hawks, Pale Male and Lola, in Central Park. When their nest was torn down, people rallied physically and verbally in their defense. In a February e-mail update from E. J. McAdams, Executive Director of NYC Audubon, we learned that the new nest can now be seen with the naked eye and everything looks good for another successful nesting season.

There are issues supported by New York Audubon that might be of interest to you. These include setting rules for bird-friendly communications towers, and smart growth planning for building development which preserves habitat

-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!

March 23 – “A North Country Pond – Top to Bottom” Gerry Lemmo will guide us as we discover the many varied life forms that co-exist above and below the tranquil surface of an Adirondack pond.

April 27 – “Avian Magic – Photographing Birds” Using a breathtaking digital slide show with music, nature and bird photographer **Jeff Nadler** will share his techniques for creating pleasing compositions.

May 25 – “The Whooping Cranes of Aransas NWR” Don Polunci will share photos and stories of his recent travels to Texas to see these amazing birds.

-con't. from col. 1

for plants and animals, and flood protection. You can support Audubon New York's goal of prohibiting the use of ATV's in forest preserves and on beaches. Support the Clean Air Act in its full strength. It helps protect us as well as the environment. Protest the proposed drilling for oil in the Arctic Preserve. How? Letters are a good start, especially if we all write them. Attend meetings on the issues that interest you, and speak up. Becoming personally involved and active is even better. Volunteer. This is our world and we need to work to protect it.

From your president,
Linda Hoyt

From the Membership Chair

-Claire Hunter



HAPPY BIRTHDAY time: 21 for SAAS and 100 for National Audubon. The spring *Fledgling* celebrates the 21st anniversary of our "fledgling" chapter; at the same time, National Audubon marks its 100th.

On January 5, 1905, National Audubon's incorporation papers were signed and its office established in New York City, which at the time was a center of the trade in feathers and millinery. State Chapters established earlier included Massachusetts inaugurated by a Boston lady who had her friends to tea and to discuss the destruction of birds involved in the current feathered hat fashions.

As one of the 30 current New York chapters, SAAS is continuing the Audubon goals of conservation and bird science. The latter is marked by annual Christmas Bird Counts and spring species counts. These provide interesting local and vital national information as the figures are shared at Cornell.

Over the years, our members have contributed to the identification of Important Bird Areas in our region and to bird census counts. SAAS has survived and proven a source of fellowship and knowledge through the years. We are happy now to offer local membership as a Chapter Sponsor at \$10 annually as well as the traditional national membership. All the Chapter Sponsor dues benefit local projects and include the *Fledgling* and all local activities. National Audubon has withdrawn the dues share previously provided to chapters. SAAS is hoping to increase its number of local Chapter Sponsors to offset this reduction in funding.

REJOICING IN RENEWALS: Ten local renewals have gladdened the membership chair's winter. Thank you to these loyal friends and to those who have added donations.

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS are available and the chapter will send the appropriate card on request.

HAPPY NOTES: LOCAL - A call from a bird feeding friend in the Malta area in January reported very large flocks of robins feeding in the yard, which has an abundance of cedar trees. He remarked on how fat the birds were and that about 40 were seen daily.

NATIONAL - Pale Male Wins! The Red-tailed Hawk, who for years has nested on the balcony of an exclusive co-op adjacent to Central Park, made national news when his 20 year old nest was removed on orders from building's cop-op
-con't. next col.

Editor's Ramblings

-Mona Bearor



March can be a difficult month here in the north country. Lingered snow with cold, gray, overcast days, winds that force birds and animals to find cover. I'm thankful that even as Mother Nature made this a time of trial she also gave us hope. As I prepare this newsletter for the printer, the snow is piling up in my yard; however, I know that tomorrow morning I will hear the spring sounds of the chickadees, cardinals and titmice - and hearing those songs I will know that once again, spring is not far off.

We had a great turnout of interested new birders for our January public program - Birding 101. It was a pleasure to see new faces excited with the prospect of learning all about birding. At that program we also introduced our new handout on choosing birding binoculars. If you were unable to attend but would like a copy, please contact any board member. We hope that those who attended will continue to join us each month and grow in their newfound pleasure of watching birds.

I think it is super that the tourist bureaus in neighboring counties have recognized the importance of birding in eco-tourism. Please read the article on page 5 about the two new festivals coming to our area in spring 2005. Support these local efforts!

My thanks to Joan Robertson for her memorial to Bob Kirker. Although I did not know Bob as well as many of those in SAAS, he was a special friend to me. I remember a couple years ago I was talking to Bob about an upcoming trip I was planning to the Canadian Maritimes. Bob offered me some books he had on the area. When he delivered them to me he made it plain that he was giving them to me - not loaning them as I had thought. His only request was that I in turn loan or give them to someone else who might make use of them when I didn't have need of them any longer. That was Bob - just wanting to help anyone to whom he could lend a hand. I enjoyed talking owls with Bob and listening to his many stories. I did not attend Bob's services - I was chasing Great Grey Owls in Montreal and Snowy Owls in Portland, Maine. I know Bob was watching and approved.

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board. With assistance from New York Audubon and Mary Tyler Moore, a resident of the building, Pale Male's home is restored.



IN MEMORIAM

Robert D. Kirker
1935 – 2005



Bob Kirker was not only a Charter Member of SAAS, he was the power source that helped a small gathering of birdwatchers evolve into a vibrant group of Auduboners. Bob knew “everybody” and he was our inspiration to strive for higher goals. Within a year we were a recognized Chapter of National Audubon and soon moved into programs involving public informational meetings at Crandall Library, into work as conservation watchdogs in the local towns, into educational programs for children. Bob loved people and he loved sharing, whether it was his vast store of knowledge, or his even more voluminous collection of stories about where he had been and what he had seen. Two tales in particular were on different sides of the continent: one when he was chasing shorebirds on the West Coast and lost his shoes in a mudflat. No problem - just go to the local chain store and buy some more. Another was an invitation to drive to Cape Cod, rent a plane and go chasing a Yellow-nosed Albatross. He was an incredible storyteller and had us all enthralled, a bit envious. Bob was generous with his knowledge, lending his books, volunteering his time, introducing us to his “birder” friends. We will miss you, Bob, for your good humor, for your endless adventures that inspired us all, and for your great wisdom in planning our mission as conservation watchdogs. You were a good man; we loved you; rest in peace with a pair of binoculars close at hand.

A Dignified Bird by Liza Porter



Chickadees are here all year around but they are especially welcome in the winter, all turned out in their neat gray and black and white outfits. We can see them more closely when the leaves are off the trees, as we snowshoe by. We remark on their durability: here we are staying warm in our layers of wool and down and heavy boots, and there is that little bit of feathers and flesh, flying and hopping about staying much warmer than we are. And he is going to have to sleep outside, while we curl up under still more down and wool with the furnace cranking along in the basement. Remarkable. Perfectly adapted to his niche. What a tiny bite of fluff is a chickadee -- bold, cheerful little bird. Why would a hawk or owl waste its time on someone so tiny and unassuming? Of course I know that predators prey upon the small and defenseless, but it is hard to think of chickadees as the rodents of the bird world, feeding the hawks and owls and bobcats. It must be hard for such a formally-dressed bird to hide, so their main defense must be their birth rate. In February, the sun rises high and bright enough to set off their tiny bird-brain, inciting whistling competitions in the flock that has wintered together so companionably. But then, recent DNA research on chickadee nests has shown that females get around rather more than their mates might wish, and that dominance doesn't have that much to do with who fathers the chicks. Young chickadees are still the offspring of the whole flock in a way... We have four birdhouses in the meadow, one with bluebirds, one with tree swallows, one housing a wren's nest if not always the actual wrens. The fourth is an old, falling apart one with a hole in one side -- most years it remains empty. One summer as I was checking to see which family had which box, I moved up slowly and unthreateningly on all four, lifting the lids and peering inside. As I peeked inside the fourth, I received a surprise. There, wings spread out over the nest, was a chickadee. She looked up haughtily at me, with no apparent fear, and said in a very dignified voice, as clear as day, "Could you please close the door? Can't you see I'm brooding?" What could I do? I was offending this dignified creature, such a large dignity for such a tiny bird. I closed the door smiling.

© 2005 Liza Porter, from "Essays for Our Time".

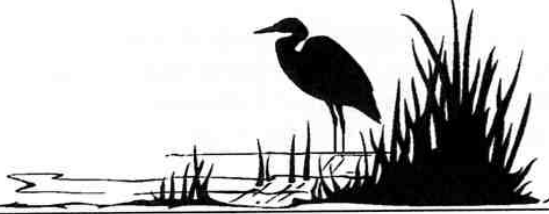


CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2004

SAAS thanks compiler, Linda White and participants Beth & Brad Bidwell, Joan Robertson, Barbara Putnam, Virginia Vogel, Nancy Eustance, Earla and Don Woodworth, Linda White, Joyce Miller, Stewart Brown, Russ Hilliard, Elaine Winslow, Linda Hoyt and Mona Bearor for their assistance on this important yearly census.

Great Blue Heron	1	Wild Turkey	52	Northern Mockingbird	2	Common Raven	4
Canada Goose	872	Herring Gull	208	Eastern Bluebird	13	European Starling	781
Mallard	371	Ring-billed Gull	85	American Robin	27	American Tree Sparrow	148
American Black Duck	21	Rock Dove	1235	Black-capped Chickadee	213	Song Sparrow	1
Common Goldeneye	88	Mourning Dove	377	Tufted Titmouse	101	Dark-eyed Junco	56
Hooded Merganser	28	Barred Owl	1	Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	Northern Cardinal	25
Common Merganser	18	Red-bellied Woodpecker	5	White-breasted Nuthatch	48	Red-winged Blackbird	1
Northern Harrier	3	Downy Woodpecker	42	Brown Creeper	4	House Finch	134
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2	Hairy Woodpecker	13	Carolina Wren	2	Pine Siskin	3
Cooper's Hawk	3	Northern Flicker	2	Blue-headed Vireo	1	American Goldfinch	101
Red-tailed Hawk	51	Pileated Woodpecker	2	Northern Shrike	1	House Sparrow	225
Rough-legged Hawk	9	Horned Lark	100	Blue Jay	79		
Merlin	1	Cedar Waxwing	25	American Crow	482		

Spring Birding Festivals



Adirondack Birding Celebration Saranac Lake - June 2-5

The first Adirondack Birding Celebration will be held in and around Saranac Lake from June 2-5, 2005. Hosted by the Saranac Lake Area Chamber of Commerce and the Adirondack Park Agency Visitor Interpretive Center at Paul Smiths, and co-hosted by High Peaks Audubon and Audubon New York, the celebration will feature adventurous field trips with expert guides, informative workshops, stimulating lectures, fun-filled social gatherings, a bird-related art show, and a festive banquet on Saturday night. Field trips to old-growth forests, boreal bogs, and boreal mountainsides are planned. The registration fee of \$50 covers most events, including the banquet. For an application form and other information, contact the Saranac Lake Area Chamber of Commerce at (800) 347-1992 or (518) 891-1990, or visit online at www.saranaclake.com/abc.shtml.

Hamilton County Birding Festival June 17-19

Hamilton County, the third largest and least populated county in New York State, is home to a million acres of forest, 1,500 miles of rivers and streams and over 56,000 acres of lakes and ponds. The county is entirely within the Adirondack State Park and over 60% of the land area is either Wilderness or Wild Forest. There is not a single traffic light in the entire county. These facts make Hamilton County well qualified to host a spring birding festival.

From early morning hikes into Ferd's Bog to canoe tours on Moss Lake for loon watching to evening nature walks this festival is sure to have something scheduled that will please any birder or outdoor enthusiast. The events are scheduled at widely dispersed locations throughout Hamilton county and you must pre-register to assure a spot. See www.hamiltoncounty.com and click on the Birding Festival link or contact info@hamiltoncounty.com or 800-648-5239 for more information.

Audubon in Action!

Recent Changes to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

In early December 2004, Congress passed the "Migratory Bird Treaty Reform Act of 2004", which restores Migratory Bird Treaty Act protection to the law's intended beneficiaries, America's native migratory birds. This reform of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act was designed to strengthen the existing law by ensuring that invasive species causing harm to native migratory birds could not be extended legal protection under the Act.

Next to habitat loss and alteration, introduced non-native species have been identified as one of the greatest threats to birds in the U.S. Up to 46% of the plants and animals federally listed as endangered species have been negatively impacted by invasive species. Control of some of these invasive species is biologically warranted for the protection of both environmental and public health and for the conservation of America's natural heritage

What made this reform necessary was a recent court decision, *Hill v. Norton*, which the court ruled that the introduced non-native Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) was afforded the protection of the MBTA. Prior to the *Hill* case, introduced exotic species, such as the Mute Swan, were not afforded federal MBTA protection and management was left to the states and to federal agencies

The reforms passed this winter restored the Migratory Bird Treaty Act so that it applies only to native birds, providing state fish and wildlife agencies with the management flexibility they need to control nonnative, human-introduced birds that are causing serious ecological damage as well as causing serious harm to native birds.

To learn more, please visit: www.Audubon.org

-Sean Mahar

Did you know...

that people once believed low flying V's of geese meant rainy weather would come soon? Actually this is based on fact since low clouds will cause many birds to fly at a lower altitude. These same clouds can bring rain!

Wandering the Web

by Mona Bearor



Master Guide to the Warblers of Canada

<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/warblers/index.htm>

Why the warblers of Canada? Because the warblers of Canada are also the warblers of New York! Either breeding here or commonly seen in migration are the 34 species highlighted on this website.

The home page is a short introduction to what the website is about and serves as a jumping off spot for the other pages. I like the "no nonsense" approach – simple facts, cleanly stated.

The weighty part of this site, as could be expected, is the "Identification" page. Here you will find links to individual pages for 34 warbler species. The page for each species has the identification features one would expect to find in a field guide, ie: size, weight, description, habitat, song and a map of distribution. There are also pictures – most are photos, however you may find an occasional drawing where needed for a special plumage. Every species page has a picture of the underside of the tail – a valuable tool, since that is the most commonly seen view for many of us!

A special feature of this website is the link available for every species to the study skins; a link is placed on each species page and on the homepage is a special link to a page where you can compare any two species – a valuable tool unavailable elsewhere to my knowledge.

The quiz feature is a boon to anyone serious about learning to identify warblers. There are three quizzes available – arranged in order of difficulty. Each is accessed only after the previous one has been successfully completed.

Spend some time studying the birds on this website and practice till you can complete all 3 quizzes you'll be ready for the upcoming warbler migration season in upstate New York!



SAAS Supporter Gerry Lemmo
would like to announce his new website!

www.gerrylemmo.com

Visit Gerry in cyberspace!

Nuthatch

by Janet Contois of Brant Lake

Cute little Nuthatch, upside down,
Going up the tree and round and round.
Searching for the food you seek,
With your long pointed beak.

You're quick as a flicker, busy as a bee,
With your little black cap like a Chickadee.
Flying to my feeder, landing on the ground,
Going up the tree and round and round.

You come for the food that I provide,
When I try to peek, you're sure to hide.
Lifting up my spirits with your cheerful song,
And stay around all winter long.

Cute little Nuthatch, upside down,
Going up the tree and round and round,
Searching for the food you seek,
With your long pointed beak.



EDITOR -con't. from page 2

I am pleased that once again this issue we have an essay by Liza Porter. This generous SAAS member has offered her nature essays for our members pleasure and we thank her for her kindness. We also have a poem by member Janet Contois of Brant Lake. Members stepping forward to offer newsletter submissions make this publication more diverse and therefore, more interesting for our membership.

We have three exceptional local photographers lined up for the March, April and May public programs. I hope you will make an effort to attend and show your support for their efforts on behalf of our chapter. I promise you won't be disappointed!

Please take time to read Sean Mahar's informative and thought provoking article on development in the local area. This is an issue that affects all of us and only through our involvement will important habitat be saved. In our "Audubon in Action" column Sean explains recent changes in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Rounded out with columns by the President and Membership Chair, the Christmas Bird Count results and Wandering the Web with warblers, and I hope there is something in this issue of interest for every member.

For Sale!

by Sean Mahar



As more and more communities throughout the capital region are experiencing unprecedented growth rates, and each week we hear about proposals for new developments, the need for planning has never been greater. Numerous portions of the Fort Edward Grassland in Washington County, an Audubon Important Bird Area, are now for sale, and many other Important Bird Areas and other habitats are increasingly being threatened by development. This is just the beginning of what is to come for this region. As new proposals for large scale industrial development, like the chip fabrication plants in Malta, come about, they are sure to have an impact on our region, in the form of more properties that were once open space now being sold for development.

While not all developments are bad, if they are not planned for appropriately, with foresight and community support, they can have long term dire consequences on the health and well being of a community. Local governments need time to properly plan for development, so as to balance the need for development with the need to preserve the local character of a community, protect the open spaces and farmland, and channel growth where it is most suitable. Strong civic participation is essential for the community to balance these needs, and create a plan for the future that allows a municipality to grow economically, while preserving the community character that has attracted so many residents to the region. Attending local planning and zoning board meetings, becoming active with your local open space planning committee, working with your local governments and local environmental groups, like the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, to protect important open spaces and farmland, are just a few ways to get involved with shaping the future of your community.

Another way to get involved is to be an effective advocate for state legislation that will help communities plan for development. Currently, the legislative session in Albany is just getting underway, and already there are a number of proposals to help communities plan for development and protect open space. One of Audubon New York's top legislative priorities for Smart Growth is passage of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Modeled after successful initiatives already adopted by the 5 eastern towns on Long Island, this legislation sponsored by Assemblyman Thomas DiNapoli and Senator Carl

Marcellino, would give Towns in New York the ability, if they so choose, to adopt a transfer tax on certain real property transactions of up to 2% for the purpose of establishing a community preservation fund to use for land conservation and acquisition, parkland improvements, safe guard drinking water, protect farmland, habitat and scenic views and other conservation activities. A referendum would be required for a town to participate in such a program. This is another useful tool for cash strapped towns to generate much-needed funds for land conservation and preservation activities. You can help advance this measure by writing to your state Assembly member and Senator today, and ask that they support this important measure.

Governor Pataki is also giving more support to communities to plan for and manage growth. As part of his Budget proposal, the governor has proposed a new \$5 million Quality Communities Grants program to be funded from the State's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). Specifically, this new matching grants program provides for an 80% state /20% local share, to communities for land use planning and other community enhancement projects. This further enhances a local municipalities ability to plan for the future and set open space priorities. Also with his budget proposal, the Governor also announced that he would be introducing his own version of the CPA this year.

You can stay informed of these initiatives and others by visiting ny.audubon.org, and joining Audubon's Action Network.



"The first robin, the first bluebird, the first song sparrow, the first phoebe, the first swallow, is an event which we mention to our neighbor, or write in our letters to our friends. It is an old story with a new interest. The birds have lived, and we have lived to meet again the old scenes.

They bring us once more the assurance of the unfailing return of spring, and the never-ending joy and fecundity of life."

-John Burroughs, *The Familiar Birds*

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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., 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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Vol. 22 No. 3 – Spring 2005

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Glens Falls, NY
Permit No.81