



The Fledgling

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

Vol. 24 No. 1

Sept - Nov 2006

President's Message

Summer is such an exciting time for birding!

Many of us made Sunday visits to the peregrine falcon nest in Glens Falls. Four eggs were laid, but only one hatched; however, the chick did well and fledged on July 30. It has been seen recently hunting from high places in the area.

My wife and I discovered five great horned owlets at the Saratoga National Historical Park while bicycling there in June. I returned ten times in eight days, happy to photograph them and share our find with others.

A spring trip to Rochester allowed a visit to the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. The new Audubon Center is slated to open there this fall. We were able to see the eagle's nest, which we were told, holds three adult eagles! We also visited the new Wild Center in Tupper Lake. It is not quite finished, but it is worth the trip. The live exhibits and short films are educational, and the program, lecture and concert schedule is impressive. Three trails lead to Blue Pond and Oxbow Marsh behind the museum.

Our three spring field trips were successful. Drew Monthie led us on a Plant Discovery Walk at Cole's Woods in Glens Falls, and Andrea Bello guided us around Carter Pond in Argyle and The Betar Byway in South Glens Falls. (Thanks to you both!) We have some fall birding trips scheduled and hope to offer even more in months to come; we can always use volunteers to help with them so please contact us if you'd like to lend a hand in this way.

Our Crandall Library programs continue to attract many people and are always excellent. They are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except in July, August, and December. Upcoming programs are listed in this newsletter. Mark your calendars!

Although we have no public programs in the summer months, our members are still active in conservation efforts. The monitoring of the Fort Edward IBA continued through July as members recorded sightings and behaviors of breeding grassland species.

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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 listed below. The programs start promptly at 7pm. Members are encouraged to bring a guest!

Sept 27 - "Hudson River Valley Otter Stewardship Program" with Jane Murawski

Oct 25 - "The Amazing Meadow" with Gerry Lemmo

Nov 15 - "Light Pollution" with Steve Davis

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Other members have volunteered to participate in breeding surveys at the Saratoga National Historical Park. They are both considered long-term monitoring projects. Our members have also been involved with fact-finding in the French Mountain access road issue – our concern is for the wildlife. The chapter also contributed birding information for signage and developed a birding checklist for the Betar Byway in South Glens Falls and it is now available at the trailhead.

We are now members of Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council (LARAC) and we will be holding our board meetings at 7 Lapham Place in Glens Falls beginning this fall.

Elections for SAAS Board of Directors will be held this October. We are always seeking members to become involved. Please contact me if you are interested.

I am looking forward to Fall Council, an association of the 30 Audubon chapters in NYS. Conservation and educational policies are determined at these meetings, and it is a great opportunity for networking and information sharing. The meeting will be held at The Hotel Saranac October 27-29.

Don Polunci, President

From the Membership Chair

Claire Hunter

WELCOME to New
Chapter Supporters!



| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Gail Epstein | Poughkeepsie* |
| Pat Fitzgerald | Queensbury |
| Harmony Wildflower Farm | Comstock |
| Sharon Jensen | South Glens Falls |
| Mary and David King | Brant Lake |

*Denotes Gift Membership

In this issue, SAAS and The Fledgling celebrate 22 years since the chapter charter. As our chapter is becoming more reliant on local efforts for support, we are happy to note the growth in Chapter Supporter memberships. All of the annual dues stays with our chapter to help us "fly" as we have for these many years. The \$10 includes chapter activities and the quarterly newsletter.

Also available is National membership, which includes the award-winning *Audubon* magazine and chapter activities. Unfortunately, renewals in National membership no longer benefit the local chapter financially. We are currently awaiting the arrival of the Annual National Report for the year ending June 30.

THANK YOU: To Barbara Putnam, for her work throughout the 22 years in doing the computer records for our membership, including all those monthly changes and mailing labels!

Let's make it our goal this year to "Recruit a Friend for SAAS." With our 30 plus zip code areas we have a fascinating variety of members whose experiences enrich us all.

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS: We still offer gift memberships, with a card if requested. A gift may be made to any location; it need not be for someone in the chapter area.

I'm always happy to receive calls from our far-flung membership. Happy Birding! Enjoy Fall!



**"TO CHERISH WHAT REMAINS OF THE EARTH
AND TO FOSTER ITS RENEWAL IS OUR ONLY
LEGITIMATE HOPE OF SURVIVAL."**

-Wendell Barry

Editor's Ramblings



Fall is quickly approaching. Hawks soar gracefully in the skies, my gardens show more seedheads than flowers, and the Virginia Creeper is showing tinges of scarlet. As I write on this cool morning I hear the calls of immature crows. Yesterday a Carolina Wren passed through my yard on its way to a wintering destination unknown to me. I lament the passing of another summer, so full of birdsong and sightings; however, I am reminded once again of the fullness of each season. Regardless of how much or how little we humans view of nature's creatures, they are always at work, traveling to new places, preparing homes to raise their young and gathering food for long winters.

This first issue for the new SAAS year has a variety of articles - hopefully something for everyone! In addition to the "regulars" - President Polunci's report on page 1 and Claire Hunter's Membership notes on page 2 - new member Jason Goldsmith has written a review of Miyoko Chu's "Songbird Journeys"- see page 4; Ticonderoga graduate, Linnaea Chapman, funded in part by SAAS, spent time with the Leatherback Turtles this spring and reports to us on page 3; and on page 5 you'll find the first of a series of articles spotlighting invasive species.

Please see *Editor- page 7*.



Important Bird Areas in New York State, 2nd Ed.

is available from Audubon New York.

The cost is \$19.99 (including tax, shipping and handling).

Please print and fill out this form and send it with your check (payable to Audubon New York) to:

Audubon New York
200 Trillium Lane
Albany, NY 12203

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Spring with the Sea Turtles!

-Linnaea Chapman

This spring, as part of my High School Senior Project, I volunteered for an Earthwatch Expedition called Saving the Leatherback Turtle in St. Croix, USVI from May 10 - 20. Leatherback turtles are the largest turtle in the world and have 7 longitudinal ridges that go down their back. Their shell is rubbery and dark black with a few pink speckles. On average, they are 6ft long and weigh over 1,00lbs. They live out in the open ocean and eat mainly jellyfish. They are considered critically endangered which is why volunteers are needed to patrol nesting beaches and relocate nests that would normally be lost to erosion.

I was able to get permission to leave school for the 11 days in order to have such an amazing experience. I flew down by myself and met the 6 other volunteers as well as the researchers there. All the volunteers stayed in adjoining cottages so we got to know each other quite well. We were all different ages and came from around the world, but we were able to come together as a group and really cooperate.

At 8:00 PM we would climb in the back of a truck and go out to Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge, which is where the leatherbacks like to nest. We patrolled the beach in groups every hour in order to record all the turtles that came up to lay that night. When we came across a turtle, we would start a data sheet on her and get an identification number from the tag. When the turtle started to lay, she would go into a trance and we were able to take measurements, record any scars or wounds, let the researchers take a blood sample, and if the nest needed to be relocated, someone would catch the eggs.

While I was there, I got to watch the researchers put a satellite transmitter on a turtle, which involved putting a backpack-like contraption on the turtle because the ridges on its back make it so you can't glue it on. They also put a device called a time/depth recorder on some of the turtles to see how deep they dive.

We normally left the beach at 3 or 4 in the morning so it was hard to stay awake when we were sitting on the beach waiting for the next patrol. It took a little while to get used to this new sleep pattern, but by the time I had to go home, I still wanted to stay up really late.

I was intrigued by how such a large turtle could carefully dig a nest cavity without even looking. I was very excited when I got to hold a baby turtle in my hand that had recently hatched. It was only the size of my palm! It is amazing how much they have to grow to become an adult and only by eating jellyfish.

I would like to thank Southern Adirondack Audubon Society for donating money to make it possible for me to have an unforgettable adventure such as this. If you have any questions, you can send an email to lchapman@hamilton.edu and I will do my best to provide answers.

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

SAAS is now a member of LARAC, and we will have our board meetings at the LARAC offices on Lapham Place in Glens Falls until further notice. The dates reserved for this fall are:

Sept. 24 2-4pm
Oct. 22 2-4pm
Nov. 12 2-4pm

Members of SAAS are encouraged to attend, interact with the board and officers and offer ideas and suggestions for our growing chapter.

Annual Election of Directors

The Southern Adirondack Audubon annual elections will be held at the October 22, 2006 meeting, at 7pm in the Crandall Library auditorium. Three positions on the Board of Directors expire this year. Election shall be by a vote of members present at this meeting as stated in the SAAS bylaws. Serving as a Director does not require a lot of time; it does require a willingness to help further the work of the chapter and its goals of public education and conservation. If you would like to offer your own name, or someone else's, as a candidate for a Director position, please contact any board member or officer listed on the last page of this newsletter.



Songbird Journeys: Four Seasons in the Lives of Migratory Birds by Miyoko Chu

Mixing recent scientific research with tips on how to experience the migratory spectacular, *Songbird Journeys* brings the reader up to date on our knowledge, and lack of knowledge, of the extremely risky venture our beloved songsters undertake to reach their breeding grounds. Anyone who has ever watched a perched bird singing his melodic song will gain even more appreciation by the knowledge of obstacles which must be overcome to arrive at the selected location. Scientists are using many tools to study bird migration, from looking at birds' silhouettes against the moon with a telescope, to using weather radar to detect bird movements, to flying beside them in an airplane, and they are revealing amazing findings.

Chu explains these observations and other research, indicating how birds time their journey, navigate to optimal breeding grounds, and survive the harsh challenges they encounter. She reports on the threatening impact people have made on the environment, which has greatly reduced the number of birds reaching their summer homes and describes the actions necessary to reverse this. She also includes chapters on prime locations to view migration and citizen science projects anyone can take part in to improve the understanding of songbirds. Appealing to birders, scientists, and environmentalists, this book gives incredible insight into the lives of our wonderful songbirds. The book is available locally from Wild Birds Unlimited in Saratoga Springs and online from Amazon.com.

ISBN: 0802714684

Publisher: Walker and Company, March 2006

Format: Hardcover, 224 pages

Reviewed by SAAS member Jason Goldsmith

WANTED!!

The Fledgling editor is looking for someone with desktop publishing experience willing to help make our newsletter more visually appealing. Instruction is needed in MS Word and MS Publisher. If you'd like to offer your expertise in this way, please contact Mona Bearor:

518-745-8637 or ramonabearor@adelphia.net

A Special Thanks to Paul Saffold

Southern Adirondack Audubon owes a special thanks to member Paul Saffold for his diligent monitoring of the Peregrine Falcon nest located in the Jointa Lime Quarry in Glens Falls. Paul spent many hours over several months recording the activities of the mated pair. His conversations with the owners made it possible for us to visit the site on Sundays and learn about this fascinating species. We all celebrated with him as the single chick fledged on July 30. THANK YOU, Paul, for your efforts on behalf of Glens Falls' Peregrines.



Nature Center Opens in Comstock, NY

The Harmony Wildflower Farm and Nature Center opened recently on Rt. 22 in Comstock. Harmony was established as a haven for native plants and all wildlife dependent on them; the hope is that, in turn, each visitor may connect spiritually with the earth and its creatures.

The 10 acre haven of diverse habitats, including meadow, marsh, woodland and wetland, has paths and benches throughout, creating a pleasant birding atmosphere for those looking for a quiet, peaceful natural area. The welcome center offers a variety of nature-inspired gifts, a bookshop with titles on nature, the environment, metaphysics, and field guides, and seating with a seven foot observation window.

Thirty-four species of wildflowers grow on the property; some, such as Cup Plant and Ox-eye Sunflower were planted especially for the bird life. To date, 62 species of birds have been recorded on the property, including Indigo Bunting, American Redstart, Scarlet Tanager and Cedar Waxwing.

Owners Bonnie Sanders and Robin John will welcome you daily, except Thursday, from 10am to 4:30pm during the months of May through October. Special requests for admission at other times may be made by calling 518-642-2122 or 518-642-9544. Every effort will be made to accommodate birders.

The Visitor Center is open without charge; a small admission fee is required to walk the grounds.

**Editor's Note: I was fortunate to attend an open house at Harmony on August 20. Although the nesting season is almost over, many species of birds were in evidence and, with its many different habitats, this property shows great potential as a birding location. We'll be scheduling a spring field trip to Harmony – watch for listings in the March newsletter!*

Directions: From Fort Ann head north on Rt. 4, proceed 3 miles to traffic light and turn right (east) onto Rt. 22. Continue 2.8 miles to Harmony on the left.



Spotlight on **INVASIVE SPECIES!**

Scientific Name: *Euonymus alatus*

Common Names: **Burning Bush**

Fire Bush

Winged Euonymus

Introduced into the United States from Asia in the 1860's and widely utilized in landscaping for its brilliant fall foliage, this plant is a huge threat to native habitats. Birds feed on the berries produced by this plant and the seeds remain viable as they pass through the bird's digestive tract. They are then deposited at other sites – often carried back to nest and roosting sites in habitats far different from the suburban backyard or commercial establishment where the parent plant is located. In those areas the seedlings would be controlled by frequent mowing; however, in the wild, with nothing to keep them in check, colonies will establish which can shade or choke out the native vegetation.

Parent plants will produce thousands of seeds each year and the plant will thrive in many types of soil and in a wide range of pH. This plant is also extremely shade tolerant and is unpalatable to native wildlife. These properties combine to produce an invasive species which has been found in almost all habitat types from New England to Northern Florida and is now considered a noxious weed.

Unfortunately, local nurseries promote this plant for retail sale and landscaping companies continue to use it extensively for fall color. The good news is that seedlings up to 2 feet tall can be hand pulled so diligent watching in natural areas will help keep this invasive at bay. Larger shrubs can be cut and the stumps ground or dug out.

If you have this plant on your property, please give serious consideration to removing it. Even though you don't see any seedlings on your land, remember that your plant may be infesting a nearby natural area and reducing the natural diversity which is so necessary to sustain populations of native wildlife.

by Mona Bearor

Native Substitutes for Burning Bush

by Drew Monthie

Most nurseries are unaware that *Euonymus alatus*, the Eurasian burning bush, is invasive and continue to sell it as a shrub for fall color. In addition to letting your local nurseries know that burning bush is invasive, you can replace your burning bush with several natives which offer great fall color and don't contribute to the environmental degradation caused by invasive species.

Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) is a native shrub with glossy dark green leaves during the growing season. It has attractive white spring flowers, followed by bitter, black berries in late summer that are used by birds as a winter food. Chokeberry has spectacular fall color in shades of orange, red and purple. Black Chokeberry is very drought tolerant once established. When asking for Chokeberry make sure to have the botanical name with you so that you don't end up with Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) another native, but much larger plant.

We don't often think of Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) for fall color. Blueberries have incredible fall color in shades of red and purple. It also has the advantage of providing you (or the birds) with tasty fruit. For smaller or shaded areas consider Lowbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). This more drought tolerant relative of the highbush grows only 12"-18" tall and has the same type of fall color.

Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*) doesn't have showy fall color in its leaves, but in its brilliant red fruit that ripens in fall and persists throughout early winter. Winterberry provides food for over wintering species such as Robins and Bluebirds. Make sure you plant male and female hollies for fruit set.

There are Native burning bushes that are perfectly hardy for our climate:

(*Euonymus americanus*) called the Strawberry bush has reddish pink fruit in the fall, while its close cousin the Wahoo (*Euonymus purpureus*) is very similar in fall color to the Eurasian burning bush. Finally the Running Burning Bush (*Euonymus obovatus*) is a ground cover member of the family with fall color and attractive fruit. This species grows only 12"-16" tall and is very easy to grow. Native burning bushes are grown by specialty nurseries and usually obtained by mail order. Forest Farm (www.forestfarm.com) carries all 3 species.

Silence!

by Liza Porter

It is a Sunday dawn soon after the vernal equinox. I am out already, walking along my favorite road. The silence is a gentle blanket. I can hear small chirpings and motions in the dry leaves. A nuthatch is absorbed in examining the bark of a pine tree, running down the bark beeping to himself peacefully, like a tiny truck backing up. A few crows pester an owl a hundred feet away. A chickadee communicates with his kind, and with me. How lovely to be out. A louder and louder hum, an unpleasant buzz, an ear-shattering zzzaaaa as an SUV approaches, passes and goes off into the distance. How long was that, when I could not even hear the crows cawing nearby? I timed it to be at least 45 seconds. How long was it, while I could not hear the inoffensive beeping of the nuthatch? It was at least a minute. How long was it that the birds could not hear each other? Why do people think they need to drive such big, heavy cars? Don't they have confidence in their own ability to drive? If you look at the ridiculous, disgusting ads for SUVs, you would think that people who drive them all want to drive over and destroy everyone else on the road. I hope that isn't true. I read a few months ago that if birds can't hear each other often enough, they can't meet up to mate, and the population goes down. Highways are bad enough, but how about my little road, where I have walked daily for more than fifteen years. Why should I have to give up the things that make my life worth living, so someone can drive a car that hums, buzzes, and goes zzzaaaa? This cannot be right.

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

SAAS Christmas Bird Count to be held on December 17, 2006

Add your name to the list of over 50,000 observers who participate across the globe each year in this all-day census of early-winter bird populations. Show your love of birds and enjoy a day of friendship as you help add to the longest running database in ornithology. Your efforts will make a difference!

SAAS compiles data for the Hudson Falls count circle - 15 miles in diameter from a central point in Hudson Falls. We are splitting the circle into smaller segments this year in hopes of more thorough coverage; additional pairs of eyes to identify birds and extra hands for recordkeeping are needed.

If you would like to be a part of this historic annual gathering of data, please contact Linda White at 518-792-4446.

Update on the Fort Edward IBA

During the summer months, members of Southern Adirondack Audubon attended Fort Edward Town Planning Board meetings and wrote letters asking for protection of this important grassland area. The current Killian Farms proposal for development of over 200 acres is just one of many threats on the horizon.

In addition, SAAS members and birders from outside the chapter gathered data for a grassland bird monitoring project. Breeding bird species were surveyed throughout the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA and surrounding areas. Leadership was supplied by Audubon New York's bird conservation department. The new data will support advocacy for increased protection with the town, or through a local Land Trust or other land conservation/farmland preservation organization.

Monitoring will continue in the winter months and again next spring breeding season. We need volunteers to monitor birds, assistants to record data and people to write advocacy letters. If you are interested in helping with this important project, please contact any Director or Officer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

Buy a NYS Habitat and Access Stamp

Legislation signed by Governor Pataki in 2002 created a Habitat/Access Stamp that is the perfect way for birders, hikers or photographers to help conserve New York's wildlife heritage. All monies raised through purchases of the Habitat/Access Stamp will be deposited in the State's Conservation Fund in the Habitat Account. The stamp may be purchased for a \$5.00 donation at license issuing outlets or online at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/license/habstamp.html>. A complimentary lapel pin is included for each \$5 donation and will be mailed directly to the purchaser.



Habitat is the key to wildlife abundance, and the Habitat Stamp will provide funds to help improve and conserve wildlife habitat.



SAAS Fall Field Trip Schedule

Saturday, September 9th

Birding Walk at Bog Meadow Trail
with Jason Goldsmith

Meet at 7AM at trail off Meadowbrook Rd. in
Saratoga.

Directions: Take Exit 14 of I-87 and head east on
Rt9P (Union Ave.). Turn Left on Meadowbrook Rd.
(CR 65) and continue to Bog Meadow entrance
which is a short distance before reaching Stafford's
Bridge Rd (CR 67).

Saturday, October 7th

Birding Walk at Adirondack Community College
Fitness Trail with Jason Goldsmith

Meet at 7:30AM at ACC Queensbury campus south
parking lot by trail entrance.

Sunday, November 5th

Beginner's Bird Walk at Betar Byway
with Jason Goldsmith

Meet at 7:00AM at Parking Lot at end of First
Street in South Glens Falls; just south of the bridge
over the Hudson River.

For more info on any of these trips or to sign up,
please call: 518-642-9983 or email:
adk_wild_jay@yahoo.com

Editor – *con't from page 2.*

Alien invasives are one of the most serious threats to our local environment - please take time to learn about them. Also read about a new nature center called Harmony in Comstock, learn about chapter activities in the Fort Edward IBA and sign up for a field trip – see schedule on page 7. And don't miss Liza Porter's plea for *Silence!* on page 6.

I'm searching for a volunteer to proofread the newsletter before printing. This would involve no more than an hour or so every 3 months. If you'd like to try your hand at it, please contact me at ramonabearor@adelphia.net. I hope this issue offers each of you some enjoyable reading.

-Mona Bearor

Spring Field Trip Reports

Plant Walk with Drew Monthie

An afternoon walk with Drew Monthie brought 21 participants to Cole's Wood's on June 18. The high temperatures that Father's Day were not quite as stifling on the partially shaded woodland trails. We learned about the benefit of native plants and why planting species introduced from other countries is not beneficial to our ecosystems. Look for the article on page 5 to learn about one of the most widely planted invasives in this area – the "Burning Bush." Drew found this plant was establishing small colonies in several areas of Cole's Woods- seedlings most likely escaped from nearby landscape plantings through the actions of birds.



Drew educates field trip participants in plant ecology

Discovery Hike at Carter Pond with Andrea Bello

On June 24, thirteen nature enthusiasts enjoyed our first outing with Andrea Bello. On this 2 hour walk we studied trees, wildflowers, fungi and birds; each participant shared his knowledge with the group which made for a fun and informative morning. Carter Pond is a 400 acre New York State Bird Conservation Area and with its nature trail and waterways is a great resource for learning about the natural world. We hope to base more learning adventures here in the future.

Betar Byway Walk with Andrea Bello

A cloudy morning on July 22 couldn't dampen the spirits of ten birders who joined Andrea for a walk on the Betar Byway along the Hudson River in South Glens Falls. Indigo Bunting, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, Eastern Bluebirds were a few of the many species seen and heard. Jewelweed, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, and many ferns were studied as well. Although the trip was washed out by rain, everyone agreed it was an enjoyable and educational trip.

SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK AUDUBON SOCIETY

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
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| Linda White | 792-4446 |

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

National membership in the Audubon Society includes the magazine, *Audubon*, and the SAAS newsletter, *The Fledgling*. The cost is \$20 annually for regular membership and \$15 for seniors and students. Make checks payable to "National Audubon Society" and send with name, address and phone number to the address listed below. Membership as a "Chapter Supporter" is \$10 annually and includes *The Fledgling* and all chapter activities. 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, New York 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 email, please contact Barb or Mona at the numbers listed above.

The Fledgling



4 Windy Lane
South Glens Falls, NY 12803

Vol. 24 No. 1 – Fall 2006

Editor: Mona Bearor
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