

The

Fledgling

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

Vol. 24 No. 2

Dec 2006 - Feb 2007

President's Message

My first year as President has been action packed. I am thankful for the board members and other volunteers who have stepped forward to make this chapter vibrant again. Our goal for the future is to offer even more programs, field trips, citizen science projects, and community based educational sessions. We welcome your input, suggestions, and participation.

Fall Council, the association of the thirty Audubon chapters in NYS, was held in Saranac Lake from October 27-29. It was a great event with several interesting speakers. I was pleased that SAAS was represented by six delegates who paid their own registration, hotel and food expenses. Friday evening speakers included Nina Schoch, who reported on the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program; Glenn Johnson and Angelina Ross, who presented a program about the Spruce Grouse in the Adirondacks; and Julie Hart, who discussed the natural history and conservation of Bicknell's Thrush.

Saturday morning we awoke to wintry conditions, so many of us chose to stay inside rather than go on the field trip to the Bloomingdale Bog. Our group used this time to meet and discuss chapter issues, such as fund raising and bylaws revision. Afternoon speakers were Dave Franzi, who spoke about the geologic history of the Adirondacks; Jerry Jenkins, author of the Adirondack Atlas; and Graham Cox from Audubon NY, reporting on the biodiversity inventory in the Adirondacks. Our dinner speaker was Peter A. A. Berle, the former CEO of the National Audubon Society and publisher of the Audubon Magazine from 1985-1995. During his tenure as president, Peter led the fight to stop drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

My favorite part of the council is the Chapter Roundtable. Delegates from each chapter report on the activities and events, problems, and concerns in their chapter. We all took pages of notes! We are looking forward to Spring Council at the Gideon Putnam Hotel in Saratoga Springs next March.

In our chapter we are monitoring the controversial activities and reports of environmental degradation on French Mountain. We are concerned about the bird and

SAAS Calendar

Monthly chapter meetings are held at the Crandall Library, on the fourth Wednesday of the month, except as may be noted below. Mark your calendar and join us for the presentations by guest speakers listed. The programs start promptly at 7pm. Members are encouraged to bring a guest!

Dec - No meeting; "Happy Holidays"

Jan 24 - "Galapagos" with Emily Debolt

Feb 28 – "Spring Wildflowers and Avian Migrants" with Joan Robertson

wildlife habitat there. Several members are attending town board meetings, and we have written a letter detailing our concerns with copies to the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Adirondack Park Agency, the Lake George Waterkeeper, and Queensbury and Lake George Town Boards. In Fort Edward we are also concerned about the Killian's View development. This project proposes 327 housing units in the Fort Edward IBA. Our members have attended Fort Edward Town Board meetings and are involved in the surveys of spring and winter birds in the area. Coordinator Mona Bearor has conducted training sessions for the participants and has efficiently organized this winter's project, with the help of SAAS member Jason Goldsmith. We are pleased to have two GPS units, received from Audubon NY grant money, as valuable tools needed for this scientific project.

Thank you to those who have responded to our recent letter of appeal. Future fundraising projects that we are considering are seed and suct sales, bluebird house construction and sale, and educational workshops.

I am looking forward to another year of growth and renewal for Southern Adirondack Audubon and I am excited about our future.

I hope to see you at one of our events! Happy Holidays. Don Polunci

A Note of Sympathy

The Board of Directors and Audubon friends extend our heartfelt sympathies to Claire Hunter, our membership chairperson, in the recent loss of her husband, Ralph "Larry" Hunter. Larry was a charter member of Southern Adirondack Audubon and supported its many activities in the founding years of our chapter. Although health concerns kept him from attending public programs in recent years, Larry remained an avid backyard birdwatcher and supporter of SAAS.

Dogs, cats and wildlife

By Roger Fulton

One Northern New York resident openly admits that nesting killdeer don't have a chance of successfully nesting on his property. "The dog gets them every year," he told us. Killdeer tend to nest on open ground, in or near driveways and mowed areas. That's his house and lawn.

In Florida a licensed wildlife rehabilitator told us, that in many of the cases she receives, "There's a cat in the story somewhere." It's not malicious; it's just the nature of the cat.

Although we consider our beloved cats and dogs to be domesticated, they still have their base hunting instincts intact. Both of those species have their roots as predators. When left out on their own, these dogs and cats instinctively "hunt" rabbits, squirrels, chipmunks and songbirds. Don't blame them; it's their nature.

Don't be fooled into thinking that because you have never actually seen your cat with a dead bird, he is not out there doing his fair share of hunting. Domestic cats kill more than 7,000,000 song birds each year and that is only a conservative estimate, according to one source. Cats are touted as being great "mousers," but they also pursue other similar prey, including baby rabbits and squirrels, during their hunting expeditions.

Responsible pet owners can limit this wildlife carnage by simply keeping their pets indoors, or by exercising them on a leash under their direct supervision. One source suggests that if you must let your cat outdoors, put it out only after dark, and bring it in by early morning. That will minimize its kill of birds and squirrels. It's a start.

Join Us for the 2006 Christmas Bird Count!



The Southern Adirondack Audubon Society invites birders and nature enthusiasts to take part in the 107th annual Christmas Bird Count, to be held December 17th from dawn to dusk. Join birders across the western hemisphere and participate in Audubon's longest-running wintertime tradition. Counts are open to birders of all skill levels. Over 2,000 individual counts are scheduled to take place throughout the Americas from December 14, 2006, to January 5, 2007.

The Christmas Bird Count began over a century ago when 27 conservationists in 25 localities, led by scientist and writer Frank Chapman, changed the course of ornithological history. On Christmas Day in 1900, the small group posed an alternative to the "side hunt," a Christmas day activity in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds and small mammals. Instead, Chapman proposed to identify, count, and record all the birds they saw, founding what is now considered to be world's most significant citizen-based conservation effort - and a more than century-old institution.

Apart from its attraction as a social and competitive event, the count reveals valuable scientific data. The 107th CBC is larger than ever, expanding its geographical range and accumulating information about the winter distributions of various birds. The CBC is vital in monitoring the status of resident and migratory birds across the Western Hemisphere, and the data, 100% volunteer generated, have become a crucial part of the U.S. Government's natural history monitoring database.

Count results from 1900 to the present are available through Audubon's website, www.audubon.org/bird/cbc. Our local count is called the Hudson Falls count as our first chapter president Garry Stone, lived in Hudson Falls. The local count includes not only Hudson Falls but Queensbury, the city of Glens Falls, Fort Edward, the Village of South Glens Falls, and much of the Town of Moreau. If you are interested in joining us for either a whole or half-day, please call Linda White at 792-4446.

Galapagos!

by Emily DeBolt

If you have been considering a trip to the Galapagos, but weren't sure about it – go! It is definitely worth the trip! And if it isn't on your list of places to see, I would suggest adding it right at the top. The islands are just as amazing as everyone tells you, and then some. I had heard that the wildlife is tame and allows you to get close, but I had no idea I would be literally stepping over and around Sea Lions, Nazca Boobies, and Marine Iguanas on the trail. In June I spent eight days in the Galapagos traveling from island to island being amazed. The Galapagos are known for all sorts of wildlife, from Tortoises and Marine Iguanas to Sea Lions and Darwin's Finches. But it is really the seabirds that steal the show, if not for pure mass in numbers, then for their intriguing names and stunning colors.

We flew from Quito, the capital of Ecuador, to the Galapagos and landed on San Cristobal Island, which is on the eastern side of the archipelago. There are actually two different airports in the Galapagos that you can fly to. The other is on the smaller island of Baltra. The archipelago is composed of 13 major islands, 6 minor islands, and 40 smaller rock formations that cover over 17,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean. Our boat headed north, crossing the equator, to Genovesa Island, and here we found nesting colonies of Great Frigatebirds and Red-footed Boobies. The sky was black with Frigatebirds as we approached shore in our panga, or little dinghy that takes you to shore from your larger boat. The Frigatebirds were soaring overhead and resting on their nests, with many of the males displaying their red gular sacs that take around 30 minutes to fill. The Red-footed Boobies were perched on tree branches, often with their heads hidden in their wings. Others were nested in the red mangroves with an egg or even a young baby in the nest.

Besides the nesting seabirds, along the trail there were also Swallowtail Gulls with gorgeous red rings around their eyes and Nazca Boobies, which up until a few years ago were treated as a subspecies of the Masked Boobies. Now they have been distinguished as different from the Masked Booby found elsewhere. Small Yellow Warblers are common of many of the islands, on the beach or inland, as well as the Galapagos Dove, with red legs and a bright blue eyering. Close to our landing sight we spotted a pair of Sharp-beaked Ground Finches, which are also called Vampire Finches because they peck at the base of the feathers on the Nazca Booby to make it bleed and then feed on the blood. Genovesa Island is definitely a bird lover's paradise. My senses immediately went into overdrive the minute we arrived on shore, and this was only the morning of our first day!

The rest of the week passed by in a similar fashion, seeing the Galapagos Penguin, yes - that's right - there are penguins at the equator - along the coast of Isabela Island, as well as the Flightless Cormorant. The Red-

billed Tropicbirds soared along the coastal cliffs where it nests, with its delicate tail and vibrant beak, occasionally landing for a rest. On Fernandina and Espanola Islands we saw the Galapagos Hawk, and a variety of finches on many different islands. On Santa Cruz the Greater Flamingo fed in a saltwater lagoon close to the beach, while a lone Whimbrel, a pair of Black-necked Stilt, and a handful of Ruddy Turnstones fed along the edge of the shallows. The Flamingoes in the Galapagos are the pinkest Flamingoes found in the wild.



The population of the Galapagos Penguin fluctuates, with dramatic declines after El Nino years.

I can't possibly name all the birds I saw on the islands nor do them justice in such a short space, but there are two more that I wanted to mention that by now you might be asking yourself about: first, the Blue-footed Booby. The Blue-footed Boobies feed close to shore, unlike the Nazca and Red-footed Boobies, which feed farther out on the open ocean. So you have plenty of chances to watch them dive-bomb at amazing speeds straight down into the water to catch dinner. Unfortunately, I did not get to see the famous mating ritual. A few weeks before our arrival all of the Blue-footed Boobies abandoned their nests.

con't. - see Galapagos-page 4

Galapagos - Con't. from page 3

Our guides were not sure why, but conjectured that the supply of fish was not strong this year, so they abandoned breeding because they were short on food. We did see a few chicks that had been born early and were still around, and there were plenty of Blue-footed Boobies flying around and feeding, but they just didn't feel like dancing. Of course on the bright side, now I have a reason to have to go back!



The male Great Frigatebird inflates his gular sac and vibrates his outstretched wings when displaying to attract females.

The last bird I wanted to mention is the Waved Albatross. The only place they breed in the world is Espanola Island. With an eight foot wingspan, these birds are hard to miss. On Espanola you can watch them take flight like a parasailer, jumping off a cliff and catching a breeze. On the runway nearby they come in to land, spreading their feet and somehow gracefully landing on the roughest runway I have ever seen. Our visit to Espanola Island was our last day in the Galapagos, and what an amazing way it was to end such an incredible trip.

The islands are great for even the novice birder because most of the birds are so unique and distinct you can learn to identify them rather easily. And surprisingly we have some of the same birds in the States, including the Whimbrel, Black-necked Stilt, and Brown Pelican. So some things will look familiar! However, the finches on land and the storm petrels at sea provide a challenge for the more advanced birder. By the time I started to be able to tell the difference between a small and a medium finch, it was the end of the week and time to go home! Anytime is a great time to go to the Galapagos. Look up what time your favorite bird breeds and take a trip.

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.

~ALBERT EINSTEIN

Got Books?



Many SAAS members are avid book collectors and have excellent libraries on natural history subjects. If you would be willing to lend your books to SAAS members only, please contact Jason Goldsmith at adk_wild_jay@yahoo.com or 518-642-9983 for information on an exciting new program that will help share this wealth of information.

Field Trip Report

Bog Meadow Trail – September 9, 2006 by Jason Goldsmith

Once the morning fog lifted, we enjoyed early fall weather on our journey to a lovely bog. Along the way we saw White-breasted Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees, and Pileated Woodpeckers. We heard the aggressive meowing of Gray Catbirds and delighted in the handful of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds as numerous frogs hopped away from our approaching footsteps.

Highlights of our stroll included excellent views of Red-eyed Vireos in the understory, instead of their usual spot in the upper canopy of the trees. Equally exciting were the detailed looks provided by female and immature Scarlet Tanagers allowing us to compare their subtle differences.

When we arrived at the bog we were greeted by a Belted Kingfisher perched on his throne, a dead tree limb, ready to plunge into the water at the sight of a fish. Eastern Phoebes ate insects, bobbing their tails between flights. And a majestic Great Blue Heron flew by with its legs dangling behind. As midday drew closer we returned to our starting point, satisfied with our sightings on this sunny September morning.



Members of SAAS with leader. Jason Goldsmith, study Scarlet Tanagers at Bog Meadow in September.



SPOTLIGHT on INVASIVE SPECIES!

Japanese Barberry - Berberis thunbergii

Japanese Barberry is one of many Asian natives that have become a significant threat to the natural environment because of its popularity as a landscape shrub.

A dense, deciduous shrub that grows from 1-8 feet high, Japanese Barberry has branches that are deeply grooved and usually have simple spines. The narrow oval leaves, 1/2 to 1 1/2 inches long, have a color ranging from green to dark reddish purple. Abundant pale yellow flowers occur along the entire length of the stem from mid-April to May in the Northeast and the fruits, bright red berries 1/3 inch long, mature from late summer to fall and persist through the winter.

Seeds of this invasive exotic arrived at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston from Russia in 1875 and, because it has been widely promoted, many cultivars exist. Japanese barberry is currently listed as invasive in twenty states and the District of Columbia. Because of its ornamental interest, barberry is still widely propagated and sold by nurseries for landscaping purposes in many parts of the U.S., including our local area.

Barberry is shade tolerant, drought resistant, and adaptable to a variety of open and wooded habitats, wetlands and disturbed areas. It prefers to grow in full sun to partial shade, but will flower and fruit even in heavy shade. Extreme winters do not affect this species. Deer avoid barberry while often browsing surrounding vegetation, which may provide this exotic a competitive advantage over neighboring native species. Japanese Barberry is a very fast grower and can form dense stands in a short time, displacing a variety of native species and further reducing wildlife habitat and forage.

Birds and small mammals disperse its prolific seeds; this is a huge problem for a species that has a documented germination rate of 90%. Additionally, birds frequently drop seed while perched on powerlines or trees at forest edges, inadvertently "planting" this species in the sunny areas it prefers. Branches touching the ground can also root to form new plants, and root fragments remaining in disturbed soil can sprout to form new plants. Established colonies can alter pH, nitrogen levels, and biological activity in the soil.

The rapid destruction of wildlife habitat due to urban sprawl has a doubly drastic effect when homeowners and landscapers plant invasive exotics that escape into wild areas nearby.

by Mona Bearor

Native Substitutes for Japanese Barberry

by Drew Monthie

Berberis thunbergii or common barberry is among the most widely sold landscape shrubs. Many nurseries are aware of the problem barberry poses in the landscape, but continue to sell it for two reasons: it is extremely hardy and it sells well. Neither of these reasons is justification for intentionally introducing invasive species to the landscape.

The two reasons homeowners select barberry are either its red or yellow foliage or the red berries it produces. Many other plants have these same attributes:

The red forms of **Common Ninebark** (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) are very attractive in the summer landscape, holding an intense red color all during the growing season and taking on shades of orange in the fall. Some of the common redleaved cultivars are "Diablo," "Coppertina." and "Center Glow." If you want a substitute for golden barberry, try *Physocarpus* "Dart's Gold" or "Lutea," two golden-leaved forms of Ninebark.

If you're looking for red berries in the landscape, consider **Cranberry Viburnum** (Viburnum trilobum). This shrub has maple-like leaves that turn red in the fall and brilliant red berries that appear almost translucent in the winter sun. Birds utilize these berries in the late winter and early spring. Make sure you don't bring home the European Cranberry Viburnum (Viburnum opulus) which appears almost identical. This plant is under scrutiny because it crosses readily in the wild with the native form and may become a problem plant.

Mountain Holly (Nemopanthus micronutus) is a relative of Winterberry Holly but is monoecious (self-fertilizing). Intensely colored red berries cover the plant and are then eaten by birds. Mountain holly prefers moist soil, so if you plan to grow it in sand, add lots of compost when planting.

Virginia Rose (Rosa virginiana) is a small native rose sometimes called pasture rose. It has glossy, pest-free foliage all con't,—see Natives, page 6

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

SAAS President, Don Polunci, has confirmed dates for the SAAS Board of Directors meetings as follows:

Dec no meeting Jan 14 Feb11

All meetings are scheduled for 2-4pm and will be held in the LARAC offices on Lapham Place in Glens Falls City Park. Members of SAAS are encouraged to attend, interact with the board and offer ideas and suggestions for our growing chapter. We hope to see you there!

"Dear Santa"

More of your generous donations could be used for education and conservation efforts if Santa brought us a few presents this Christmas!



The chapter would be pleased to receive:

First class Postage stamps - for general mailing

Gift cards from Staples - to purchase office supplies

A laptop and digital projector – for use in giving public presentations; we are currently borrowing equipment

Office space – our homes are overflowing; SAAS needs a place to call its own!

A two-drawer filing cabinet – President Polunci's cardboard boxes are packed full!

<u>Used binoculars, scopes and tripods</u> – for use on field trips or donation to Birders' Exchange program - see page 7 for more information on this worthwhile program

Natives-con't. from page 5

during the growing season that turns yellow and red in fall. Flowers are single pink or white. Small bright red hips attract birds and other wildlife. Virginia rose is very drought resistant. The plants form colonies 2'-3' high and 3'-6' wide. If the colony gets too large, cut it to the ground in late winter, and the roots will send up new shoots.

2007 WINTER FIELD TRIPS



Sunday, January 14th

Nature Walk. 10:00 AM at Camp Saratoga parking lot on Scout Road in Wilton. A casual walk to observe signs of winter wildlife and other forms of nature. Call Jason at 518-642-9983 for more information.

Saturday, February 3rd

Inman Pond Investigation Hike. Shelving Rock Road, West Ft. Ann. Call for meeting place. Hike to Inman pond to discover its natural setting and place within its bioregion. 3-4 miles round trip, some off trail. May need snowshoes. Wear proper hiking footwear and dress for weather. Consider fitness level. Call Jason at 518-642-9983 for more information.

Saturday, February 17th

Scats & Tracks and Other Winter Time Wonders. Join Andrea Bello and Jason Goldsmith at Carter Pond for a look into the wonder of the natural world during winter. Included will be basic scat and track identification, and discussion of how various animals spend their time during the winter months. Meet at 10:00 AM at Carter Pond, Rt. 113 in Greenwich. Please call Jason at 518-642-9983 for more information.

Saturday, February 24th

Shelving Rock Mountain Hike. Shelving Rock Road, West Ft. Ann. Late afternoon, call for meeting place. Casual 3.5 mile hike with 650 ft. elevation gain. Will stop occasionally to observe nature. May need snowshoes. Wear proper hiking footwear and dress for weather. Consider fitness level. Call Jason at 518-642-9983 for more information.

NOTE: Because of the variability of our winter weather, we ask that you register for these trips; it may be necessary to cancel and the trip leader will require contact information. To register for any of these trips, please call Jason at 518-642-9983.

"Those who find beauty in all of nature will find themselves at one with the secrets of life itself."

- L.W. GILBERT

Southern Adirondack Audubon Receives Optics for Citizen Science Projects

Donors are Recipients of First "Friends of Southern Adirondack Audubon" Award!



Nancy Castillo hold "Friends of Southern Adirondack Audubon" award as Lois Geshiwlm presents Eagle Optics "Raven" birding scope to President Don Polunci

The first "Friends of SAAS" award was presented at the public meeting November 15, 2006. Recipients were Lois Geshiwlm and Nancy Castillo of Wild Birds Unlimited and Eagle Optics. The generous donation of an Eagle Optics "Raven" birding telescope and Radian Pro GT tripod will aid members of SAAS as they survey for raptors and owls in the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA this winter. These new optics will also be valuable tools for future citizen science projects and will be available for use by those who lead field trips. SAAS looks forward to partnering with Wild Birds Unlimited on future projects in local communities.

Birders' Exchange Program

"Sharing Tools, Saving Birds"
A Program Across the Americas

From the American Birding Association website:

"To successfully address Neotropical migratory bird issues, good science and public awareness are essential. However, in the Neotropics, many researchers, educators, and conservationists work without the most basic equipment. The ABA addresses this need for equipment and educational tools and contributes to bird conservation through its Birders' Exchange program."

Birders' Exchange takes new and used birding equipment and educational materials and matches it with local scientists, conservationists, and educators in Latin America and the Caribbean."

Used optics, digital cameras, GPS units, and educational materials such as field guides are collected, and delivery is arranged, by mail or through a courier, to scientists, conservationists, and educators in Latin America and the

Caribbean. Since its inception, the program has served over 500 groups in 30 countries.

Monetary donations may be made as well, and will be used to purchase specialized equipment or pay for shipping and printing costs.

SAAS would like to become involved in this program by collecting donations from the chapter area and arranging shipment to the program offices. If you have anything you would like to donate, please contact any board member or officer.

More information can be found online at: http://www.americanbirding.org/bex/

It Counts for the Birds!

10th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count Feb 16-19, 2007

It's Fun! It's Free!
See the website at http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc
for more information

SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK AUDUBON SOCIETY

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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.





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