



The Fledgling

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

Vol. 24 No. 4

June – Aug 2007

President's Message

Spring seems to have exploded, the birds are returning, and the SAAS Executive Board has been very active.

Five members attended Audubon New York's Spring Council in Saratoga Springs in March. Friday evening's meeting opened with a farewell reception for David Miller, who has resigned as Audubon New York's president. David has taken a position with the New York State Department of Education. We will miss his leadership and we wish him well. I enjoyed the "Advocacy 101 Workshop" and the Chapter Round Table reports, as well as networking with Audubon members from other chapters. 'Hot issues' for Audubon are Global Warming, Public Land Oil & Gas, Farm Bill, 2008 Appropriations, Offshore Drilling, Endangered Species, Arctic Refuge Wilderness Bill and Great Lakes Restoration.

On the local level, the SAAS Board has focused its energy on the Ft. Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area. Our chapter applied for and received Collaborative Project Funding from Audubon New York. Money was used for training sessions, a GPS unit, and mileage reimbursement for surveys of the grassland birds. Board members have been actively involved in the Killian Farms subdivision proposal. We have distributed flyers door-to-door. We have attended the town board and planning board meetings in Ft. Edward and have given public comment on behalf of the endangered and threatened species. We will continue to attend and express our concerns. Please read the update in this newsletter and refer to our website for more information on this issue.

The closing of Crandall Library for renovations forced us to find a new location for our monthly programs. The Moreau Community Center in South Glens Falls has proven to be a great new meeting place. Attendance, however, has been down at the last two programs. Please join us for one of our excellent and informative programs.

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SAAS Calendar

We have arranged for use of the Moreau Community Center for our public meetings during the months of Crandall Library's reconstruction. Until further notice we will meet at the Moreau Community Center located at 144 Main St. in South Glens Falls. A short business meeting will be held at 7pm, followed by the public program. Please join us and bring a friend!

Programs at the Moreau Community Center:

June 27 "Waterfowl" with Clyde Robinson
No Meetings in July or August

We are hoping to have a seed sale this fall. More information will be forthcoming in the fall newsletter.

Less than two years ago, I answered an appeal from SAAS for help so the chapter would continue to exist. The hard work of a few individuals had kept the chapter of over 300 members afloat for several years. I felt that SAAS was a worthy cause, so I volunteered to become president. A few new people have come on board since then and we've made some progress; however, I now see the past repeating itself during my tenure. The same few Executive Board members are carrying this organization. No one else is volunteering to help make SAAS a successful chapter.

I am appealing to you to get involved. I am afraid SAAS will not survive without increased participation from our membership. Please help us save the habitat of the endangered short-eared owls! Please help us continue to offer educational and entertaining programs and field trips! We need your help with our activities. We had to cancel a fund-raising activity at Wal-Mart because we couldn't find four volunteers to help out on a recent Saturday. We need members who are willing to actively participate, even for a few hours a month.

Please contact me via e-mail at nanandon@adelphia.net or by phone at (518) 793-1531.

Your President,
Don Polunci

From the Membership Chair Claire Hunter

The male goldfinch and the forsythia in bloom make for May Fledgling notes to be happy tones! The opportunity to list new members is in tune with the joy of the spring season.



WELCOME! – New Chapter Supporters:
From Fort Edward:
Robert and Linda Bergman
Stephen Davis
Virginia Tillotson

From Gansevoort:
Jack Cochran
Marie Pepper
Barry Targan

Also, from South Glens Falls a new National Audubon member – Carol Moyer

This is also a time to express appreciation for our renewing members - Some are renewing for the 20th year! Also, special thanks go to those who give donations above the cost of their memberships. We can always put those funds to use in the local community.

The \$10 Chapter Supporter dues is all applied to local services, including public programs, the newsletter, and the new Junior Birder Program. The first year of National dues goes to the chapter; dues are sent with our chapter code. If you plan to join National, please route the check to me and I'll add the needed reference.

With the many spring and summer seasons come many reasons to send SAAS gift memberships – graduations, anniversaries, birthdays, prizes for good year-end report cards. Please consider giving a dear one a gift membership in SAAS. I'll be happy to send an appropriate card on request.

This summer marks the 23rd anniversary of SAAS charter by National Audubon. For us, 1984 was a very good year! I wish you a FUN SUMMER with happy hours of birding and wildflower walks.

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**"THANK GOD MEN CANNOT FLY, AND LAY WASTE
THE SKY AS WELL AS THE EARTH."**

-Henry David Thoreau

Editor's Ramblings

Summer is just around the corner once again. As I was enjoying conversation with a friend on my deck a few minutes ago, we heard the twice-repeated calls of the Brown Thrasher and found the bird perched above my small garden pool. It was a new "yard bird" for me – my 77th species. I also added Black-throated Green Warbler, Magnolia Warbler and Northern Waterthrush to my yard list this spring. I often wonder if I should spend more time birding at home...



This issue has two essays just for enjoyment – "Orioles" by Liza Porter paints a lovely picture of spring and "Birds of the Florida Keys" by Rosemary Pusateri is a birding diary with food for thought. Jason Goldsmith is an avid reader of natural history books and has reviewed a Peterson Guide for us – see page seven. All three are SAAS members and we appreciate their submissions. We are always happy to receive essays, fiction, book reviews, or poetry from our members; please send them to the editor at the address on the last page of this newsletter.

In this issue of *The Fledgling*, we are offering members the chance to participate in several other ways. One of our goals in SAAS is to involve our members to the benefit of the entire organization. I hope you'll be able to join a field trip, support our fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA or volunteer a few hours of your time for the chapter. We need the support of our members if we are to thrive.

-Mona Bearor

OOPS!

After receiving requests from interested members, we listed several places to purchase native plants in the March issue of the *Fledgling*. It was quickly brought to my attention that we failed to mention **Northland Gardens**, Tracy Tabor's extensive retail nursery on West Mountain Road in Queensbury. Tracy carries many species of natives for your garden and can offer advice on appropriate plants for your special needs. Tracy is a long-time member of Audubon, so we are doubly apologetic. A special thanks to those who made me aware of this error. -The Editor

Northland Gardens
423 West Mountain Rd.
Queensbury,
NY 12804
518-798-4277

www.northlandgardens.com

**WHIPPOORWILL
SIGHTINGS
SOUGHT
by
NYSOA**

As part of a regional effort throughout the Northeast, the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) is co-ordinating a Whippoorwill monitoring project in portions of New York this year, especially in areas around the Adirondacks and in the Hudson Valley. This project aims to determine state and regional population trends for Whippoorwill, which appears to be declining throughout much of the Northeast.

Additionally, any visual observations, or the discovery of Whippoorwills by ear, will add valuable data to the project. Please send all information on any Whippoorwills you may encounter to Matt Medler at mdm2@cornell.edu

**Short-eared Owl
Pellet Dissection**



Photo by Gordie Ellmers

Thanks to the interest and generosity of the Kurt Hammond family, SAAS was able to collect pellets from the owls that wintered on Blackhouse Rd. in the Fort Edward IBA. At an as-yet undetermined date, we will dissect the pellets to discover what the owls were eating all winter. If you are interested in joining us for this workshop, please contact Mona Bearor at 518-745-8637 or ramonabearor@adelphia.net



Photo by Gordie Ellmers

"Orioles"
by Liza Porter

The joys of spring include two of our favorite yearly events that coincide to make the first or second week of May truly memorable. The first is the blooming of the wild plums up the road. This is a long-awaited event that flashes by in a matter of hours or days, depending on the weather. Some years, when warmth in late April accelerates the pace, the plum comes on, blooms, and falls overnight. Often it rains, and no plums at all are conceived on the black thorny branches. Maybe once in ten years, like this one, there is early warmth and then it gets quite cool again. The buds form and wait and wait and wait, and then the bloom sweeps in and lasts four, five, six days before it falls in a gentle shower of petals. Bees are busy in the branches and many plums will hang to feed deer in autumn. The plum blossom's fragrance is unlike other fruit trees, however delicious they may be. The plum has a fruity, plummy fragrance all its own, and the habit of wild plum trees to mass in thickets concentrates a heady perfume to drift down the road on still evenings, intoxicating and demanding attention. We conduct drive-by sniffings and walk the dogs up there in the dusk to celebrate the marvel. Within a day or two of this wondrous event, we hear the loud whistle of the oriole. "Sweet...pretty bird" is my interpretation of one of his songs. My husband, ever the romantic, has a more earthy interpretation, "Tweet... dirty turd."

The loud musical songs of the oriole are attended by the sight of the glorious bird himself, high in the tops of the trees. We have a crossroads up the road a short distance, where there are always four orioles, one in each quadrant, singing their defense of their territories. Eventually they settle in and stop singing, but for several weeks we enjoy them on bright days. Orioles hereabouts will for me always be Baltimore orioles, no matter what the field guide says about Northern orioles. They were Baltimore orioles when I was young and going to Audubon meetings at Bedford Road Elementary School, and that is what they always will be. "Baltimore" orioles better describes their livery. I feel vindicated that recent genetic research has shown that in fact Baltimore orioles and Bullock's orioles aren't merging as a species. The orioles knew it all along. We are just catching on.

© 2006, Liza Porter, from "Essays for Our Time"

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Birds of the Florida Keys

- Rosemary Pusateri

While putting together bird lists recently, I discovered something amazing. One day in the Everglades, with a guide, we saw 21 species. During four weeks living on Plantation Key and touring elsewhere in the Florida Keys, our total count was 26. That's all.

My question to those of you who are experienced birders is this: When you travel, do you find it worthwhile to have a guide take you bird watching? Was it only because we are novice birders, with enthusiasm far surpassing any expertise, that on our own we had a 28-day bird count barely more than a single day count with guides? I'd appreciate your advice.

That said, we saw many hundreds, if not thousands, of birds in the Keys last year. The majority were Brown Pelicans, Double Crested Cormorants, and white wading birds, such as egrets, herons and ibises.

Armed with a laminated "Local Birds of the Florida Keys" in addition to my pocket Peterson's Eastern Birds, I counted 26 species in 28 days.

My first sighting, the afternoon we arrived, was a Great Egret with a problem. The bird landed in our swimming pool enclosure, just as I went for my first swim. The egret had a big flounder-like fish in its bill, big enough to block the bird's vision, and way too big to swallow. The big bird kept prancing around in a tight circle, while I wondered if the bird planned to drop its fish in the swimming pool for another try. It finally flew a short distance out of my sight, not letting go of dinner.

Minutes later, I was startled to see a peacock strutting on our beach, long tail feathers trailing behind. Peacocks soon became less of an oddity to us. The birds were introduced on Plantation Key about half a century ago. On several occasions, we observed a flock of nine, all less colorful and without the long tail plumage of the adult males, just ambling around the gardens and grass. Beautiful to observe, Peacocks and Peahens, make a sound between a meowing cat and a crying baby. It is a very loud sound, so luckily, they are quiet after sundown - except when there is a full moon to confuse them, and they start yowling only about an hour before sunrise.

The Blue Jays, Mourning Doves and Northern Mockingbirds were quiet compared with the peacocks!

On a sunset eco-cruise on an electric boat, we saw dozens of big white birds and Double Crested Cormorants all perched on a U-shaped mangrove island rookery in Florida Bay. The driver said some of the black birds were Anhingas, but I couldn't tell in the gloaming.

We saw other black birds, too—Fish Crows and Boat-tailed Grackles. Oops, only the male grackle is black. I saw a Magnificent Frigatebird or two, and that's mostly black.

The Brown Pelicans and Double Crested Cormorants literally line the "Bridges to Nowhere" of old U.S. 1. That's the remains of the original highway, close to the modern Keys Highway in most places. The pelicans also rest at shorelines and hover around fishing boats; Plantation Key is part of Islamorada, which calls itself fishing capital of the country. There often were cormorants and pelicans on the posts of our own dock on the ocean, mostly just waiting to swoop down for a chance at a fish.

Brown Pelicans came in great numbers for the afternoon feeding at the Wild Bird Center in Tavernier Key. At the little beach on Florida Bay, I had the experience of tossing fish from a bucket to the impatiently waiting pelicans - from rubber gloved hands to beaks, nobody dropped a fish! Snowy Egrets and White Ibises, perched in trees, also caught fish thrown by Wild Bird Center volunteers.

Every time we had a picnic at the beach at Bahia Honda State Park, we had company: Red-winged Blackbirds and Pigeons. We watched Least Sandpipers and Sanderlings playing chicken with the waves on that beautiful sandy beach. I saw an apparently injured Mottled Florida Duck, a big gray duck, near the south end of the same beach.

On a boat ride at John Pennekamp State Park, we saw a pair of Ospreys on the nest and hunting. A ranger at Pennekamp showed us Ring-billed Gulls and Laughing Gulls. There were many Ospreys and gulls elsewhere, often seen along the Keys Highway.

We saw Great Blue Herons in the air, and one wading Little Blue Heron.

Ending with the reds, there were American Robins and Northern Cardinals. I think I saw a Summer Tanager on mangroves on our rental property, because its head seemed more rounded than a cardinal's.

That Summer Tanager is among our five possible sightings, along with Palm Warbler, Dunlin, Brown Thrasher, and Whimbrel. That is not counting the unidentifiable hawks, perched in trees or soaring, that we saw while kayaking. There was no one to tell us for sure!



**UPDATE on the Fort Edward
Grasslands IBA
re: proposed Killian
Subdivision
and Planned Unit
Development (PUD) Law**

At the fourth public hearing, on May 14, 2007, the Fort Edward Town Board voted to send the proposed PUD law back to the Planning Board for further consideration and possible revision. This decision was recommended in a statement made by Town Supervisor Marilyn Pulver at the meeting's outset, prior to any public comment that night.

Supervisor Pulver stated, in part, *"Also, we ask the Town Planning Board to please give consideration to possible amendments to our Town Subdivision regulations including more flexibility in clustering and or conservation subdivisions for the purpose of encouraging and or allowing for the possibility of more intensive and affordable residential development in appropriate circumstances when accompanied by preservation of open space and protection of environmental habitats."*

A letter was recently received by Supervisor Pulver from Ken Kogut, Wildlife Manager for DEC Region 5. This letter detailed the possible results of habitat destruction caused by the proposed Killian's View subdivision and the impact it would have on populations of endangered Short-eared Owls and other threatened species which depend on this land for survival. Although the Town Board maintains that the proposed PUD law is not directly related to the proposed Killian's View subdivision, the law, if passed, would allow this development – and any other future developments – to proceed with no limits on habitat destruction regardless of current zoning.

Several members of Southern Adirondack Audubon have attended all meetings and given public comment. We were pleased at this latest development and hope that the Planning Board gives serious consideration to the value of the grassland habitat in any future revisions. We will be present at future Fort Edward Planning Board meetings to observe and participate in the future process involving this proposed law and any other regulatory changes that may affect the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA

-Mona Bearor

Additional information on this issue may be found at <http://www.audubon.noncommercial.org/FtEdMonitoring.html>

Hello Friends!

**Please Join Us for a Steak Roast Fundraiser
Sunday August 5th at 2pm**

This fundraiser will benefit
Southern Adirondack Audubon and the
"Do It Right" Group
Advocates for the preservation and protection of
the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA



DONATIONS AT THE DOOR

**Steak Roast will be held at the Boire's residence
270 County Route 42, Fort Edward**

Please bring a dish to share - family favorites welcome!

Gift baskets and a 50/50 raffle will be available

Please mark your calendars to RSVP by Monday July 30th
A head count is needed for an accurate Steak order

RSVP to Pat and Tammy Boire 747-0307
email tboire@hvwisp.net

Steak Roast Rain date - Sunday Aug 12th

Peterson Field Guides

Eastern Forests:

A field guide to birds, mammals, trees, flowers, and more

by John Kricher & Gordon Morrison

Reviewed by Jason Goldsmith



This book opens with an overview of ecological succession - field growth into an eventual forest; then summarizes the various forest communities located in the East. Key characteristics are described to help you identify forest types - such as northern pine-oak forest or Texas savanna. With sections on species adaptation and patterns throughout the seasons, this book covers many topics of interest to the naturalist. Filled with interesting facts and occasional technical terms, Eastern Forests gives great insight into the relationships of many plants and animals.

Although this book is a great introduction to ecology, it may lack in field usage. Pictures of only the most common species are shown; these are divided into multiple groupings and are accompanied by the text, making it cumbersome to identify a subject. The author's attempt to introduce all aspects of the woods: trees, shrubs, ferns, mammals, reptiles, birds, fungi, insects, etc., their interactions; and adaptations though the year, was perhaps too large a goal for one volume.

This book provides a great overview of forest ecosystems and is likely to expand the reader's awareness and appreciation of the interconnectedness of all species, and it confirms the importance of biodiversity; however, a more comprehensive guide might be more advantageous for field use.

ISBN: 0395928958

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company

Format: Paperback, 506 pages



Wandering the Web

It's been a while since we've offered our readers suggestions for birding websites. This issue we decided to simply list some websites that we hope you will find of interest. It can be fun to explore online and we hope these webpages will provide you with entertainment and opportunities for learning!

Nancy Castillo's Blog – Nancy, of Wild Birds Unlimited in Saratoga, has links to other birding sites as well as her informative and entertaining entries of her own "birding life." http://wildbirdsunlimited.typepad.com/the_zen_birdfeeder/

Rich Guthrie's Blog – Rich is a well-known local birder who has recently returned from a trip to Arkansas with the Cornell Ivory-billed Woodpecker search team. You can read all about his sighting – yes, I said sighting, on his blog at: <http://blogs.timesunion.com/birding/>

A site I "stumbled" across recently is "Birding in the Adirondacks" at www.adkbirds.com This site has an interactive map with links to 84 birding sites in northern NY.

Bird Watcher's Digest has an informative page on gardening for the birds at: http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/backyard_birds/gardening/garden_index.aspx

If you've ever wondered how bird migration is "tracked", visit Clemson University's Radar Ornithology Lab at <http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/birdrad/>

We hope you'll enjoy the summer "wandering the web" and finding your own online favorites.

SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK AUDUBON SOCIETY

President	Don Polunci	nanandon@adelphia.net
Vice-President	open	
Secretary	Rosemary Pusateri	518-656-9054
Treasurer	Virginia Vogel	518-584-3936
Newsletter Editor	Mona Bearor	ramonabearor@adelphia.net
Education	Linda White	518-792-4446
Circulation & Webmaster	Barb Putnam	518-792-7542
Publicity	Jason Goldsmith	barbolink1@earthlink.net
Conservation	open	518-642-9983
Membership	Claire Hunter	518-793-9088
Web address	www.audubon.noncommercial.org	
email SAAS at:	SAdrAudubon@netheaven.com	

DIRECTORS

2004-2007

Joan Dobert	793-1660
Drew Monthie	792-9557
Ginny Vogel	584-3936

2005-2008

Linda Hoyt	494-2380
Claire Hunter	793-9088
Linda White	792-4446

2006-2009

Mona Bearor	745-8637
Pat Fitzgerald	792-6846
Jason Goldsmith	642-9983

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. 4- Summer 2007

Editor: Mona Bearor
ramonabearor@adelphia.net
518-745-8637

Contributing Writers:

Jason Goldsmith
Liza Porter
Rosemary Pusateri

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