



The Fledgling

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

Vol. 25 No. 1

Sept - Dec 2007

President's Message

The Black Swift requires the unique combination of darkness, high cliffs, and a waterfall to nest successfully. These rare birds fly from Central and South America to Box Canyon Park in Ouray, Colorado, to raise their young in the summer months. I had the opportunity to see these birds nesting on a trip to Colorado this summer. While I was observing them on their nest, I couldn't help thinking about the Short-eared Owls at the Important Bird Area in Fort Edward. What a special treat to be able to observe these winter visitors. What a tragedy it would be to lose this unique area to urban sprawl. SAAS has been working tirelessly with a group of concerned residents of Ft. Edward called "Do It Right." We have been attending Planning and Town Board meetings in order to monitor the discussions and proposed laws that will affect the IBA. Several fund raisers and appeals have garnered some of the money needed to pay for the legal fees necessary to fight this urban sprawl. To those who have worked long and hard on this project or have made financial donations, I thank you.



Black Swift

Photo by Don Polunci

The Pileated Woodpecker is also an extraordinary bird. Its call is eerie as it echoes through the woods. I have heard this call in my neighborhood off and on for the past 20 years. This year I spotted a female at my suet cage, which is attached to my backyard birdfeeder. She then visited several evenings in a row. One night she came to the suet cage, and another flew to a tree nearby, followed by a third, to the same tree!

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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:

Sept 26	"Birding Adventures in China" with Joyce Miller
Oct 24	"Jungle Journey" with Gerry Lemmo
Nov 28	"A Journey Through the Adirondacks" with Paul Gibaldi

They were all females. I suspect they were recent fledglings and followed their mother to the feeder. What a pleasure to have these incredible birds visit our home!

One of Southern Adirondack Audubon Society's goals is to inspire people to become more environmentally aware and responsible through education. Elections to fill three Board of Director positions will be held at the general meeting on October 24, 7pm at the Moreau Community Center, Main St., South Glens Falls. The board positions are for three years. I would encourage any SAAS member in good standing to get involved. Nominations can be sent to me at 55 Lambert Dr., Queensbury, NY 12804 or e-mail to nanandon@adelphia.net. You may also contact any board member or officer to submit nominations. Please consider serving on the SAAS board - our chapter is only as effective as the people who participate. You may also volunteer to lead a field trip, give a workshop, or present a program. Several committees would benefit from more members. I believe you'll find involvement in Audubon a rewarding and worthwhile experience.

- Don Polunci

From the Membership Chair -Claire Hunter

Welcome to new Chapter Supporters!

We are pleased to have the following new supporting memberships from our 30-plus zip code chapter area:



Bolton Landing - Louise Shoemaker

Fort Ann - Sheila Tuttle

Fort Edward
Jim and Melinda Durrler*
The Kurt Hammond Family*
Mr. and Mrs. George Telesha*

Hudson Falls - Miriam Hayes

Queensbury - Chris Germain*

South Glens Falls - Laurie LaFond

* denotes gift membership

Chapter Supporting gift memberships are \$10 per year and will be announced to your recipient with a card. A gift may be made to any location; it need not be for someone in the chapter area – perhaps you have a relative or friend who has moved from this area but would enjoy reading our newsletter to keep up with what is happening with the chapter “back home.”

Summer mail brought membership renewals and gifts of financial support. As the chapter is becoming more reliant on local fundraising efforts for support, we are happy to note this increase. All of the Chapter Supporter funds stay with the local chapter to help us “fly” as we have for over 20 years.

I always enjoy correspondence and calls from members. Please contact me with any questions you may have about your membership.

Enjoy the birds and blaze of fall colors in our beautiful region.

NOTICE OF CHANGE **Chapter Supporting Memberships**

Beginning in January of 2008, all Southern Adirondack Audubon Chapter Supporting memberships will be based on a January to December year.

The Board of Directors has wrestled with this issue for several months and made this change to simplify maintaining membership and mailing lists.

Editor's Notes

As this issue goes to press, summer is nearly over and fall migration has begun. Shorebirds move through the area and can be found on exposed mudflats, sod farms, and rocky outcrops in the Hudson River. Nighthawks have begun their long journey to South America and can be seen overhead on late afternoons and early evenings.

SAAS is ready for the fall season as well. The calendar on page one lists our upcoming public programs – we hope you'll plan to join us and bring a friend. Also in this issue are a field trip schedule and information on an open house at the Hudson Crossing Festival; both of these are great opportunities to meet other members and learn more about the chapter.

Invasive plant species are a huge threat to our area; we continue our series of educational articles on page four. Jason Goldsmith has been following the Energy Bill as it moves through both houses of Congress and has provided an update for us. Please read this important information and contact your representatives in Washington when the opportunity arises. Jack Reber's article on an Elderhostel kayaking trip in South Carolina will make you want to reserve a spot for next season. Although Liza Porter's “The Swallows are back!” may cause you to yearn for the spring just past, I hope her comments on learning to fly come to mind as you see the young swallows passing through our area on their first migratory journey.

Chapter members were busy in the Fort Edward IBA this summer also and you'll find a report on page five. A new coordinator is needed for these bird surveys to continue. I hope one of our readers will volunteer to help with this important chapter work. Another conservation effort is highlighted on page six – the Delaware-Otsego Audubon chapter's involvement in the Golden Eagle migration monitoring. This work is invaluable as wind energy becomes more prevalent in the northeast.

I hope this issue offers something of interest for each reader and that you'll enjoy fall as it bursts into color in the northeast.

-Mona Bearor

ELECTION NOTICE

SAAS fall elections will be held October 24, 2007, at 7pm at the Moreau Community Center on Main St. in South Glens Falls. There are three Board of Director positions open. Please email or call any board member or officer to place a name on the ballot for one of these positions.



Birding and Kayaking in South Carolina

by Jack Reber

Last May, my wife Lenore and I enjoyed a birding Elderhostel program in the Low Country of South Carolina, near the Georgia border. We knew it was going to be a great trip when we arrived at the Palm Key Institute office and saw a male Painted Bunting on the bird feeder. Before we left five days later, we saw 90 bird species, including 11 life-list birds. The staff provided us with a busy week of birding, kayaking, evening programs, comfortable lodging, and delicious food.

The first day, we began with a 45-minute bird walk. We added a Mississippi Kite to our life list before a breakfast of ham, eggs, oatmeal, grits, and the best biscuits we ever ate. Then we prepared our own bagged lunches and rode in a van to a wildlife refuge, where we saw a Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Orchard Oriole, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and other species. After lunch, we kayaked through a Cypress swamp with dappled sunlight, and Prothonotary Warblers flitting around us all afternoon. We discovered a rookery and watched Great and Cattle Egrets, and Little Blue Herons. We continued to an alligator-filled pond and observed several Black-crowned Night Herons. After dinner we compared lists and discovered that we'd seen 43 bird species that day. We painted ceramic mugs that evening. On the way back to our room we heard a Chuck-will's-widow.

The next day, I added Clapper Rail, Wood Stork, and Fish Crow to my life list before breakfast. We took the kayaks to the appropriately named Broad River and spent a leisurely morning paddling through a salt marsh. Sandpipers, Marsh Wrens, and egrets attracted our attention. While taking out the kayaks, we saw two Bald Eagles perching on an old railroad bridge. After dinner, we enjoyed an interactive program about Carolina geology.

We took a road trip to Hilton Head Island the next day and hiked around a wildlife sanctuary. Common Moorhens, alligators and nesting Anhingas were the highlights of that walk. After lunch we went to the beach and swam in the ocean. We watched Black Skimmers and Laughing Gulls while drying off. The evening entertainment was a storyteller who portrayed a Low Country girl recalling her Civil War childhood.

On our last day we toured other wildlife sanctuaries in the area. We saw hundreds of birds, including Wood Storks, a Black-bellied Whistling Duck, both species of Ibis and Yellowlegs, Mottled Ducks, Black-necked Stilts, gulls, terns, plovers, sandpipers, and more Black Skimmers. A thunderstorm canceled our evening kayak trip, so we reviewed pictures and had a sing along.

The friendly and knowledgeable staff at Palm Key Institute worked hard to make this an outstanding five-night experience. All of the 13 participants had a great time. One woman had two life birds in her binoculars at the same time - Clapper Rail and Tri-colored Heron.

If you are interested in this "Birding by Kayaking" trip, contact www.elderhostel.org or www.palmkeyinstitute.com for more information.

Please Join Us for a Fall Field Trip

Saturday, September 22

Birding at Bog Meadow Trail, North End

Meet at 7:30 AM at the north trailhead on Rt. 29 in Saratoga Springs, .5 miles east of Weibel Ave.

Saturday, October 13

Nature Walk at Denton Nature Sanctuary

Meet at 9:00 AM at the trailhead on Rt. 4, south of Fort Miller.

Please call Jason at 518-480-4243 for more information or to register for these trips

A Word of Thanks...

SAAS would like to extend a "THANK YOU" to the Glens Falls Farmers' Market for allowing us table space on Saturday, June 30. The table, manned by Nan and Don Polunci, and Jason Goldsmith provided a new venue for selling our seed and suet and distributing information.

Please consider shopping at the farmers' market, where you will be getting fresh, great tasting food products while supporting local agriculture and open space that farming offers to the greater community.

Spotlight on Invasive Species: Japanese Spirea



Japanese Spirea (*Spiraea japonica*) is a member of the rose family native to Japan, China, and Korea, and was introduced into the United States as an ornamental in the 1870's. This deciduous shrub grows up to six feet tall, has one to three inch toothed oval leaves, and produces showy flowers in varying shades of pink in spring. It is almost indestructible and is very showy when flowering, making it one of the most popular plants in both commercial and residential landscapes.

Cultivars commonly seen in local nurseries include 'Goldflame', 'Little Princess', 'Golden Princess', 'Shirobana', 'Lemon Princess', 'Alpina', 'Limemound', 'Magic Carpet', and 'Crispa'.

The properties that make Japanese spirea a commonly used backyard plant – its tolerance of a wide range of light conditions and soil types – are the same characteristics that make this plant a threat to native habitats; spirea will grow in a wide variety of natural habitats including fields, riverbanks and forests and will rapidly spread in disturbed areas such as transmission line rights-of-way. Spirea will form dense stands that will displace native vegetation. This plant flowers profusely, producing huge numbers of seeds that remain viable for many years. This complicates the problem of eradication and inhibits reintroduction of native species if this plant populates an area.

If you have this plant on your property, please consider removing it. The plant will resprout after cutting, so multiple cuttings may be required to eradicate it. It will be worth the effort to protect our natural environment.

Native substitutes for Japanese Spiraea

By Drew Monthie

Japanese spiraea (*Spiraea japonica* and the related *Spiraea X bumalda* hybrids) were introduced to North America right after the American Civil War. Since the introduction of Japanese spiraea many varieties have been made for colored foliage or showier flowers. The most popular of these are the ones with brightly colored yellow, orange or red foliage such as 'Goldmound' and 'Goldflame'. Japanese spiraea has become a staple in the nursery industry and a problem in ecosystems.

Although my passion is native plants, I grew cultivars of Japanese spiraea in my own garden until about three years ago when it began to appear regularly on lists of invasive species. After that the spiraea came out promptly.

There are several native species of spiraea largely ignored by the nursery trade because of the widespread (read inexpensive) availability of the Japanese species. Natives don't cost any more but are generally less commonly available. *Spiraea alba* (western form) and *Spiraea latifolia* (eastern form) are natives commonly called meadowsweet. Both have white flower panicles in summer. The Steeplebush (*Spiraea tomentosa*) also blooms in summer with pink spires of flowers. Meadowsweet and Steeplebush are tolerant of both wet and dry conditions and at about the same height (2'-3') as the Japanese species, they make great substitutes.

Douglas Spiraea (*Spiraea douglassi*), a western species, is very similar in appearance to steeplebush. Its spires of pink flowers are more vivid in color, and the plant is about twice the height (3'-7') of steeplebush. Think steeplebush on steroids.

Other natives that also work well as substitutes for Japanese spiraea are New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus americanus*) a low growing (2'-3') shrub with white flowers in July that lure butterflies, and dark green attractive foliage. It often grows along roadsides, a good indicator of its salt and drought tolerance.

Another native that has been available in the nursery trade for some time but is just starting to get some recognition by gardeners is Diervilla (*Diervilla lonicera* and *sessilifolia*) sometimes called bush honeysuckle (not to be confused with invasive Asiatic honeysuckles). Diervilla is a low growing shrub (2'-4') that blooms most of the summer with small yellow flowers that attract pollinators. New growth and fall color are both intense red. Cultivars include 'Copper' and 'Butterfly.' Diervilla is easy to transplant and drought tolerant, and makes an excellent stabilizer for steep banks and other areas prone to erosion. Diervilla will grow in full sun or part shade.

All of the natives mentioned in this article benefit from a hard pruning (basically cutting the plants to the ground) every two or three years in late winter or early spring when the plants are dormant.'

Report of the Summer Bird Surveys in the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA

-Mona Bearor

Surveys to record the activities of breeding bird species were conducted between June 20 and July 1. There were two routes, each having 16 or more stops, and each route was surveyed twice in the early morning and once in late afternoon/early evening. Higher numbers of birds were recorded at stops in the northern route; however, species diversity proved to be fairly balanced when the routes were compared. The northern route has more acreage still used for agricultural purposes than the more highly subdivided southern portion of the IBA.

Bobolinks were actively displaying and protecting territories at all but seven stops. Savannah Sparrows were recorded at approximately 75% of locations surveyed; Grasshopper Sparrow at only 8 of the 34 total stops on the two routes. Approximately 30% of stops had an Eastern Meadowlark in residence; American Kestrel was recorded just twice. Killdeer were found at only ten locations, leading me to wonder if the Easter

snowstorm may have taken a toll on this species. Vesper Sparrow, Northern Harrier and Brown Thrasher were each recorded once.

Numbers of birds were higher on the first surveys for each route; however, wide-spread and repeated mowing of fields greatly reduced the numbers of birds on subsequent surveys.

Although not recorded on the official survey, Upland Sandpipers were found by Jason Goldsmith at two locations within the IBA. On June 16, Jason saw four Upland Sandpipers in field on CR42, approximately 40 yards from its junction with Rte. 197. The same morning he observed one additional "Uppie" perched on a fence north of Rte.197 at the Plum Road intersection. A subsequent visit on June 23 yielded a maximum number of five Upland Sandpipers at the CR42 location. I received no other reports of Upland Sandpipers.

I'd like to thank Jason for his assistance with the surveys and for his diligent searching for Upland Sandpipers.

NOTICE: COORDINATOR NEEDED for BIRD SURVEYS for the FORT EDWARD IBA

Because of increasing health problems and family responsibilities, I will no longer be able to act as coordinator for the bird surveys in the Fort Edward IBA. If you are interested in volunteering for this position please contact Mona Bearor at 518-745-8637 or ramonabearor@adelphia.net

It's Time for Fall Migration! Did You Know...?

- The ruby-throated hummingbird weighs only 4.8 grams and can use stored fat to fuel a non-stop, 24-hour flight across a 600-mile stretch of open water from the U.S. Gulf coast to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico!
- Traveling to South America in the fall, Blackpoll Warblers depart from New England on a non-stop flight that takes a minimum of 72 hours. That's 2,000 miles in three days, or an average of 660 miles per day. This degree of exertion is equivalent to a human being running four-minute miles (15 mi/hr) for 80 consecutive hours.
- The Arctic Tern may hold the record for longest migration distance - it flies about 18,600 miles each year traveling between its Arctic breeding ground and non-breeding area in the Antarctic. One Arctic Tern, banded as a chick on the Farne Islands off the British east coast, reached Melbourne, Australia, in just three months from fledging, a sea journey of over 14,000 miles.
- Most songbirds migrate at altitudes of between 500 and 3,000 feet, with 75% traveling at less than 2,000 feet. Bar-headed geese have been recorded as high as 29,000 feet when they migrate over the Himalayas. A Mallard has also been recorded above 20,000 feet!
- Ninety percent of migrating birds fly at speeds between 15 and 45 mph. When birds are flying into the wind (headwind), they fly low; however, when flying with the wind (tailwind), they will fly higher where the wind is the faster. Larger birds fly faster than smaller species. Some typical flight speeds are: Songbirds - 10-30mph; Shorebirds - 20-40mph; Waterfowl - 30-50mph; and Raptors - 20-45mph.

Franklin Mountain, Golden Eagles and Wind Power

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch in the northern Catskill Mountains is among the best places in the east to see Golden Eagles. Its reputation results from a team of dedicated volunteer hawk counters, and cooperative eagles. We are actively working to maintain good levels of both counters and eagles.

Regularly, over 200 magnificent goldens pass the site during their migration south. If you've visited the hawkwatch on a good day, you've seen them flying 200 feet off the ground, using the updraft from the ridge to glide its length. This migratory behavior, where birds concentrate along ridges, is typical of Golden Eagles. Unfortunately, it puts the birds in the very same space that some developers have targeted for siting wind power projects.

At Franklin Mountain, we understand the threats posed by the burning of fossil fuels. We support properly sited wind projects. However, we are also concerned about impacts to birds and bats. As a species, Golden Eagle seems especially vulnerable to wind turbines. Some consider it "at the highest risk" for collisions. Avian Impact Assessments for proposed wind projects in the Golden Eagle migration corridor generally are inadequate.

A many as 60,000 wind turbines will be required to reach national energy goals. Many will be built along the ridges of New York and Pennsylvania. Some of those ridges -- such as Franklin Mountain -- will attract raptors.

Knowing that more eastern goldens pass our site than anywhere else this far north, we feel a special responsibility to protect "our" birds. This isn't easy since away from our site and a few others, almost nothing is known about how they migrate through New York. To learn more about this NYS Endangered Species so they can be protected, we have joined with several organizations studying Golden Eagles in Pennsylvania. We are working to expand their ongoing study of migration routes into New York.

The project involves trapping eagles and fitting them with transmitters that provide a wealth of data on the birds' locations and movements. The Global Positioning System (GPS) telemetry devices last 2 years or more. They provide 10 to 15 precise locations each day - including elevation. This will tell us where they roost, nest and forage. It also provides the kind of precise information needed to develop migration models to help guide the safe siting of wind projects.

Part of the migration modeling involves recording data on each individual golden that passes the site. We are hoping to recruit some extra help to record this data during the peak golden migration.

The technology is expensive but ideally suited to this research. We urge anyone concerned about impacts to Golden Eagles to help support this important work. Please consider spending some time at Franklin Mountain--skilled hawk counters are always needed. For those who are not ready to count, we also need help spotting birds and collecting data. Please also consider a tax deductible donation to DOAS Golden Eagle Research, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820. For more information visit www.doas.us.

Our collaborators at the National Aviary and Carnegie Museum of Natural History are already tracking 3 eagles. We followed those birds north in the spring and hope to spot them if they pass Franklin Mountain this fall.

Tom Salo, Co-chair
Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch
tomsalo@localnet.com
607-965-8232

House Passes Energy Bill: Includes Renewable Energy Standard - Jason Goldsmith

In early August, the House of Representatives passed an energy bill that included a renewable energy amendment; this amendment would be the first step to significantly reduce global warming. Called the Udall-Platts Renewable Energy Standard (RES), it would require 15 % of the electricity in the U.S. to come from renewable sources such as sun, wind, and biomass. By making this a national standard, it is estimated that it would reduce global warming pollution by an amount equal to taking 18 million cars off the road.

Although this is an enormous victory for environmental advocates, the House energy bill did not include provisions to increase the fuel economy of cars and light trucks. The corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) amendment would raise the average fuel economy of new vehicles to 35 miles per gallon.

The Senate, in an earlier session, passed its version of the energy bill that included CAFE but not the renewable energy amendment. This means that the House and Senate will meet and discuss a final energy bill in September and hopefully include both provisions.

Since both amendments address critically important ways to reduce global warming, it is imperative that they be included in the final energy bill. You can help! There's never been a better time to register for Audubon Advisory email alerts; simply go to <http://audubonaction.org/audubon/join.html> and fill out the online form. When you get the alert early this fall, email your delegates and tell them the importance of including both the renewable energy provision and the CAFE standard. This easy and quick method sends your comments immediately and your voice will be heard on this vital issue. You can also call your representative and leave a message with his office staff.

Take action!

Let's get involved in reducing global warming!



The Swallows are back!

-Liza Porter

Chitter, chitter, twitter, twitter, wings a-glitter, the swallows are flashing through the air and

flashing even as they sit still on the wire. They are back. It must be April.

We have swallows in our boxes every year. The first year we were in this house, we were worried that the swallows, which seem more aggressive, would run the bluebird out of his box before he could have his family. But as the years have passed, it appears that what we thought was the swallows dive-bombing and strafing the bluebird aggressively, is actually more of a teasing or even an exuberant greeting. The bluebird sits hunched on the top of his chosen box, not moving or even taking note of the swallows swooping and rising, doing spectacular loop-the-loops, twittering and chittering in a very communicative way. Like puppies racing in circles to show enthusiasm for the assembly of

a group they like, the swallows go round and round, greeting the reserved bluebird.

The first summer we were here, we observed a fascinating behavior on the part of the fledged swallow young. As they started to fly, they would take a feather from the home nest and one would fly above the others and drop the feather. One of the lower birds would snatch the feather out of the air and fly up over the others, and drop the feather again. Playing? Is this using a tool? Our little dinosaurs, using tools? Hey, I thought only human beings used tools. I thought only mammals played.

Learning to fly must be quite an exciting process. They look as if they are having fun, even though I'm sure anyone who really studied them would tell me they are just learning to catch flies. Well, maybe. That's part of it. But just think of the glory of learning to fly. Even learning to walk is all-absorbing for some human infants. They will walk and fall, walk and fall, they aren't interested in eating or sleeping, they want to stay up and walk all night. Just imagine the liberation of learning to fly!

© 2007, Liza Porter, from "Essays for Our Time".

Visit the SAAS Table at the Hudson Crossing Festival!

Saturday, September 15, 2007

10AM - 2PM

Our chapter has been invited to participate in the Hudson Crossing Park Project's annual festival and fundraiser at the Lock 5 Island in Schuylerville. The HCPP is currently developing recreational sites on the island, with plans for an educational center to highlight the "history of the American Revolution, unique geologic elements, ecology and economic and cultural significance of the Hudson River and Champlain Canal."

Profits from sales at our booth will benefit Southern Adirondack Audubon Society's efforts to preserve the Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area and other conservation and education projects. New this year, we will be selling our very own specially designed greeting cards (from photos by local photographers) featuring grassland birds of the Fort Edward IBA and surrounding area. Birdseed, suet & suet cages, and raffle tickets for a gift basket of nature items will also be available.

There will be many other booths with a focus on ecology, the environment, and our local history, as well as living history exhibits, boat rides, and tours of the Lois McClure Schooner, food booths, horse-drawn carriage rides, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Hudson Crossing Play Garden, live music, and more. So come out and join us, stroll the existing nature trail, and be sure to keep an eye out for the Bald Eagles that are often spotted there!

Directions: The festival location is at Lock 5 in Schuylerville, just off Route 4, from the North about 1.3mi. south of the intersection of Routes 4 & 32, and from the South about .5mi. north of the intersection of Routes 4 & 29.

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 Drive, 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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4 Windy Lane
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Vol. 25 No. 1- Fall 2007

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Permit No.81