



The Fledgling

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

Vol. 26 No.1

Sept 2008 – Dec 2008

President's Message

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society celebrated its 25th Anniversary at our June program with a cake and reflections from Linda White, one of our founding members, who still serves on our Board. Claire Hunter, also a founding member still on our Board, has been Membership Chairperson for the entire 25 years. Unfortunately, Claire has had to resign from that position for health reasons. We will miss her comments at our monthly programs, her sense of humor, and her optimism. Claire will continue to serve on the SAAS Board of Directors. We appreciate her dedication to SAAS and wish her well. Thank you, Claire, for a job well done!

We have completed the summer breeding bird survey in the Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area and surrounding region. SAAS, Audubon New York staff, and the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club participated in the study. These surveys have proved to be an invaluable resource now that DEC has a plan for protecting the area.

The strange weather patterns this spring and summer have impacted bird movement. There were very few warblers this spring, except for those moving through the area along watercourses. Resident breeding bird populations have done well, especially Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals, and all species of woodpeckers. A pair of Ruby Throated Hummingbirds has entertained us at our feeders. This is the first year hummingbirds have remained in our backyard throughout the summer. We've had a pair of very loud House Wrens nesting in our bluebird boxes, and a pair of Great Crested Flycatchers visited in early June.

In May, participants on a SAAS field trip to Gull Bay were rewarded with a colony of 30 Great Blue Heron nests. Two weeks later, I ventured into the rookery with two SAAS Board members. We counted 39 active nests, with two, three, or four chicks occupying each nest. Last year I discovered 34. On the hike into the rookery, the other participants took the long route

SAAS Calendar

**All monthly public program meetings will be held at the Moreau Community Center
144 Main St., So. Glens Falls, NY**

**Sept 24
7pm "Exploring Pond Life"
Emily DeBolt**

Emily will give a PowerPoint presentation and talk about the diversity of life in a pond

**Oct 22
7pm "Search & Rescue with K9 teams"
Sarah Snowdon**

This will be an interesting program about the Lower Adirondack Search and Rescue (LASAR) and its work with air-scent dogs.

**Nov 19
7pm "Christmas in New York"
Gerry Lemmo**

This is a new program by one of the area's favorite nature photographers!

so that they could bird the trail. I opted for the shorter route. On the way in I thought I heard a Baltimore Oriole high in a treetop. I looked everywhere but could not spot the bird. As I turned to continue on the trail, I was greeted by a Barred Owl sitting on the branch of a tree six feet from me. I let out a startled cry. The owl flew to a tree twenty feet away where I photographed it for more than ten minutes.

We have interesting programs and field trips planned for this fall, and we will have another raffle basket filled with goodies. The drawing will be held at our November program. As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions. I hope to see you at one of our events.

Don Polunci, President

Membership News

It is with sadness that we announce the retirement of Claire Hunter as Membership Chair of SAAS. Claire has performed this valuable work for the chapter since its inception over 25 years ago. Whether you've met her or not, you would recognize her—she's the one with the ready smile, a twinkle in her eye, and a kind word for everyone. We thought an interview with Claire might be a fitting tribute to her, and that follows. If you'd like to send a card or note, she would love to hear from you; her address is:

3 Edgewood Dr., So. Glens Falls, NY 12803

An interview with Claire Hunter

Q: Twenty-five years is a long time to serve in one position; why do you think this was a good fit for you and the chapter?

A: Although the job itself did not change drastically over the years, many names and faces did. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many different people, each having a variety of interests, and open to new ideas. As for the chapter - it was long-suffering enough to put up with me and deserves a banner!

Q: As an educator, you have many talents that would enhance any group, so why Audubon, and why Membership?

A: My husband and I had an interest in birds; we were looking for a group that would offer fellowship with people of like mind. My skill at shorthand usually caused me to be recruited as a secretary when I joined any organization; I was thrilled to be considered for anything else for a change!

Q: Who was the most influential person in the early history of SAAS? What was their role?

A: Gary Stone, a Glens Falls teacher, and the first president of SAAS, led the chapter well in its early years. He had extensive knowledge of local birds and birding spots and was enthusiastic about growing the chapter. He had been contacted by National Audubon to try to form a local chapter, and led the first organizational meeting. Early Board meetings were held in his home. Nancy Curtis was very important in our work protecting Big Cedar Swamp.

Q: Do you think your work with Audubon added to your daily life?

A: Definitely... my new Audubon acquaintances have added so much to my life; so many new friends. Also, being "in the loop" of local bird sightings added memorable times... Snowy Owls, Peregrine Falcons, and other new and surprising things of nature.

Q: What do you feel are the most important accomplishments of the chapter?

A: Past and continuing work to save natural areas from development, such as Big Cedar Swamp and the Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area.

Q: Do you have any suggestions as to how we can get our membership more involved with our activities?

A: Since most people react well to a friendly approach, I would suggest more face-to-face communication and more field trips.

Q: Do you have any funny stories to relate?

A: In the early days of our public programs at Crandall Library, we served coffee from an old electric percolator. It had to be started early in the program to be ready to serve after the speaker was finished. It was so noisy heating the water, that at times it was hard to hear the speaker over the popping, crackling, exploding noises of the percolator! We soon switched to cold drinks! Another one... our chapter was once the host for a national meeting held at the Silver Bay Association on Lake George. Frozen drinks were included with lunches packed by the restaurant to insure cold refreshment at noon. Unfortunately, unexpected cold weather kept drinks from thawing and kept birds well hidden!



Before You Recycle - *Precycle!*

What is Precycling?

Precycling is the reduction of waste through thoughtful buying decisions. It may be accomplished by purchasing recycled items, buying items that were packaged in recycled or minimal packaging, or deciding to rent or borrow an item used infrequently, rather than buy.

As consumer waste reaches vast proportions, Precycling becomes increasingly important. Here are a few ways you can incorporate Precycling into your everyday life:

- Buy the largest size available or buy in bulk—this helps reduce packaging.
- Buy products with the least amount of packaging.
- Use shopping bags/containers brought from home or reuse the plastic shopping bags that you bought the items in last time. Better yet, purchase the new SAAS logo tote bag (available at public programs) to keep in your car for trips to the grocery store, farmers' market, or flea market.
- Try products packaged in boxes made of 100% recycled materials, or in containers that can be reused.
- Reuse all those plastic bags and containers after they've been cleaned or pass them along to someone who can.
- Avoid purchasing disposable products such as razors, diapers, plastic cutlery, and plates. Choose products designed for reuse such as cloth napkins or rechargeable batteries.

Remember: Unless plastic has the recycling "triangle" on it, it's not recyclable and ends up in the landfill. (Note: even if it has the triangle on it, it will end up in a landfill unless the consumer takes it to the proper recycling facility or utilizes their weekly recycling bin.)

Here is a list of questions to ask yourself as you consider making a purchase:

- Do I really need this product?
- Is the package reusable or recyclable?
- Is there a similar product available with less packaging?
- How long will this product last? Is there a longer-lasting alternative?
- Would it be better to rent or borrow this item?
- Do I need it new or can I buy it used?
- Is it made locally? Buying products produced locally drastically reduces packaging material needed for transportation and reduces thousands of pounds of CO2 emitted during transport.

Asking yourself these simple questions will help you change your buying habits and make a huge impact on the amount of trash sent to our landfills. Make it a challenge and try it for a month. Note the significant reduction in your volume of non-recyclable trash. Odds are, you'll be impressed and will adopt Precycling as part of your day-to-day routine.

Local recycling hints: Ink jet cartridges and cell phones can be recycled at the Moreau Community Center—it is a fund raiser for them. Cardboard, glass, tin cans, and plastic, newspapers, white paper, and magazines can all be recycled for no charge at the Town of Moreau recycling center on Butler Rd. Residency not a requirement. Please let us know of any other free recycling programs in the area.

Fall Field Trip Schedule



Saturday, October 4 – 8:00am till ? Birding at the Helen Buckner Nature Preserve

SAAS board member Laurie LaFond will lead you on a birding walk through The Nature Conservancy's largest and most ecologically diverse preserve in Vermont. The varied habitat should offer many views of migrating songbirds and waterfowl. Plan to bring a lunch and plenty to drink; this is a full-day trip.

Call Laurie at 955-8301 to register; meeting location and carpooling information will be given when you register.

Saturday, October 18 – 8:00am Birding at Bog Meadow Brook Trail

SAAS board member Jason Goldsmith will lead a birding walk on this level trail outside the city of Saratoga Springs. It is an easy walk through wetland habitat that attracts a wide variety of migrating songbirds. Registration is required; please call Jason at 480-4243.

This issue of *The Fledgling* is our first on 100% post-consumer recycled paper. This was one of the first issues brought to our board by Jason Goldsmith when he joined our ranks.



We have finally accomplished this ecologically sound move—thank you, Jason, for your persistence!

Summer 2008 Bird Sightings

Let's put the sad news behind us first.... the Peregrine Falcon pair in the Jointa-Galusha quarry in Glens Falls, failed to raise young this season. Eggs were seen earlier in the month; however, a visit on May 29 found the nest empty and there was no indication of renesting on subsequent visits.

But great news for the Peregrines on Sleeping Beauty... volunteer nest watchers, Nan and Don Polunci, reported 3 fledgling falcons at their site! Kudos to the Poluncis for trekking into that difficult site and spending hours in the mosquito-infested swampy area!



While visiting from Oregon, Susan and John Sullivan emailed our chapter with a report of a female Surf Scoter on Glen Lake. Familiarity with this bird's appearance from their home area, and the insight to know it would

be an unusual species for Glen Lake, led them to contact our chapter and send the confirming picture to the left. Apparently not only tourists find this area attractive in summer!

Reports of a Mute Swan in June, and a Wild Turkey in July, brought the species list for the Betar Byway in South Glens Falls to 110 species! Thanks to Don Wharton and Dave VanLew for these additions.

Did that SGF swan fly to Lake George? One was reported by Joan Robertson near the beach in June.

Upland Sandpipers were found again this year by Jason Goldsmith. The birds were located on CR42 in Fort Edward, near the site of the proposed Killian Farms housing development.

Hope Batchellor, participating in the breeding bird surveys in the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA, located Blue-winged Warbler on both CR46 and New Swamp Rd., and Dickcissel on Hinds Rd.

The Surf Scoter, Mute Swan, and Dickcissel were first records; the total now tallied for our chapter area exceeds 225 species. If you would like to receive a list of the bird species recorded so far, please contact Mona at ramonabearor@roadrunner.com

Fort Edward Grassland Breeding Bird Surveys Continue



“You hear that? Vesper Sparrow out about 175 meters!”

Sean Mahar and Rich Merritt of Audubon New York team up to identify grassland bird species in the Fort Edward area. Others participating in the surveys this summer included Jason Goldsmith, Laurie Lafond, Hope Batcheller, Laura McCarthy, Honey Hollen, and Susan Stewart. SAAS continues to be vigilant as developers attempt to carve the Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area into housing developments.

Please Don't Move Firewood!



A new regulation is now in effect that prohibits the import of firewood into New York unless it has been kiln-dried. The new regulation also limits the transportation of untreated firewood to less than 50 miles from its source.

Most people don't realize they move bugs along with their firewood. You could be spreading diseases from insect invaders that can quickly kill large numbers of trees. Our forests are at risk from firewood infested with tree killers. Help protect our campgrounds and STOP THE SPREAD of these pests.

Further information about firewood and insect pests can be found by following the “Emergency Firewood Regulations” link on the DEC’s homepage:
www.dec.ny.gov

ELECTION NOTICE

SAAS fall elections will be held

October 22, 2008 ~ 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.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL AUDUBON CHAPTER!



Our fundraising committee has assembled a basket of items to be raffled; proceeds will add to the chapter treasury. The basket will be displayed at the September, October, and November programs and at the Hudson Crossing Energy Festival.

Basket contents include a finch feeder with a bag of niger seed, a suet cage and suet, several books on nature themes, a bag of shade-grown coffee, organic chocolate, an SAAS reusable tote, and a \$25 gift certificate to George’s Restaurant, plus other interesting, useful, and fun items.

Hudson Crossing Energy Festival

**Saturday, September 13, 2008
11A.M. - 6P.M.**

SAAS has been invited to participate in the Hudson Crossing Park Project's annual Festival & Fundraiser, to be held at the Lock 5 Island in Schuylerville. We will have free informational handouts covering a wide range of topics, from bird-feeding basics to Audubon Adventures to 10 things *you* can do to reduce global warming! Birdseed, suet and suet cages, and raffle tickets for a gift basket of nature items will also be available.

This year's Energy Festival seeks to promote awareness of local and regional sources for renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable living, and environmental conservation by offering a day of music, events, and speakers, in addition to the exhibitors.

The 40-acre Hudson Crossing Park is being developed as an educational and recreational destination. The park is located on an island north of Schuylerville and encompasses land in both Saratoga and Washington counties. It comprises a "green" park, river and canal access, a network of trails and points of historical and ecological interest, and a proposed environmental education center. Partnerships include county and state authorities, as well as Skidmore College.

www.hudsoncrossingpark.org

Directions: Lock 5 in Schuylerville, just off Route 4. The turnoff is 1.3mi. south of the intersection of Routes 4 & 32 and about .5mi. north of the intersection of Routes 4 & 29.

Volunteer Opportunity! We need volunteers to help staff our booth!!! Basic knowledge of birds is a plus but not essential. We just need a few people to hand out information and chat with visitors. Even two hours of your time would help give our regular volunteers a break!

Please call Laurie at 955-8301 if you are interested in helping out.

Monitoring Golden Eagles in New York *You can help!*

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society (DOAS) is applying for a TogetherGreen grant to fund research to define and map Golden Eagle migratory concentration areas in New York. Together Green is an alliance between Toyota and National Audubon which was formed to promote conservation projects nationwide.



A significant portion of the eastern population of Golden Eagles migrates through New York. Intensive one week eagle counts are planned at four focus areas spread across the state during fall, and five areas in spring.

Each focus area will have two to four people spread about six miles apart on a transect. Their purpose is to count eagles, but all raptors will be recorded. One of the spring focus areas is near our chapter, roughly between Indian Lake and Lake George. During a second migration cycle, one surveyor would be stationed at the most promising site in each focus area.

The SAAS Board of Directors has agreed to partner with DOAS on this project. We have offered our chapter's help in scouting count sites and providing lodging for counters. Lodging will be required for three or four counters for one week each in mid-March.

As wind energy develops rapidly in New York state, surveys of migratory species will become increasingly important. Golden Eagles have been tracked through the Barton Mines area of the proposed Adirondack Wind Energy Park.

If you have the raptor identification skills required for this important project, or would like to offer assistance in lodging one of the counters, please contact Mona Bearor at 518-745-8637.

Field Trip Reports

Saturday, May 31 - Washington County Grasslands with Laurie LaFond and Jason Goldsmith

Jason and Laurie's birding field trip to the Washington County Grasslands was a winner! Sightings included favorites such as Bobolinks and Killdeer, as well as Savannah Sparrows, Swallows, Kingbirds, and a single Meadowlark. Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warblers and a very vocal Common Yellowthroat (another Warbler species) brightened our day.



Eastern Bluebird by Gordie Ellmers ©2008

A pair of Bluebirds—perhaps taking a break from nesting duties—preened together from their perch on a dead tree near the road. A little later, we watched with rapt attention as half a dozen Mockingbirds displayed their aerobatic skills, chasing each other across the fields and at times passing right over our heads. A red fox kit took advantage of the distraction they provided to sneak through the grass and cross the road in front of us! An Eastern Phoebe and a Great Crested Flycatcher flitted in and out of brush along the road in their hunt for flying insects.

At our last stop—a field where several threatened Upland Sandpipers had recently been spotted—a bird turned the tables on us. It seems quite humorous that while our group was intently searching the field with binoculars for even a glimpse of this rare bird, we eventually turned around to discover an Upland Sandpiper watching us from a lawn across the road! The bird was not skittish, and everyone got a good look at it through both their binoculars and our club spotting scope. This sighting provided a life bird for many, and we were all excited to see it! All participants agreed it was a great trip, and we look forward to the next one.

Saturday, August 16 – Invasive species on the Betar Byway with Drew Monthie

On Saturday, August 16, five enthusiastic “students” joined leader, Drew Monthie, for a walk along the Betar Byway in South Glens Falls. Sixteen species of invasive plants were identified as Drew led discussion about how invasive plant species threaten natural habitats. The group learned that the introduction and spread of invasives was largely caused by man's intervention in the environment; methods of control to counteract those errors were covered as well. As always, Drew made it an interesting and informative morning for those who attended.

Bigger Better Bottle Bill – S5850-A

This proposed legislation extends the five-cent deposit to non-carbonated beverages such as bottles of water, sports drinks, and teas not covered by the 1982 Bottle Bill. The recycle rate for beer and soda containers covered by the current law is 80%, but only 10% - 20% of non-carbonated beverage containers are recycled. The rest end up in the trash or littering our communities. Why trashing plastic is bottles a problem? Burning plastic releases Dioxins, some of the most toxic and carcinogenic chemicals known to man!

Recycling plastic bottles would also save roughly 18 million barrels of crude oil annually and prevent 800,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases.

The Bigger Better Bottle Bill now appears to have a better chance in the State Legislature following the recent change in legislative leadership. It has the support of Gov. David Paterson. Republican Dean Skelos, the new State Senate Majority Leader, voted for an earlier bottle bill when he was a rank-and-file legislator. Joseph Bruno, the former Senate Majority Leader, strongly opposed the bill. On June 11, the Assembly passed the Bigger Better Bottle Bill after a three-hour debate. Now it's up to the Senate to take action

Please contact your senator and urge him/her to support this common sense bill in the fall legislative session.

To **find your senator's contact information**, visit the following web site and enter your zip code in the box provided:

<http://www.senate.state.ny.us/senatehomepage.nsf/senators?OpenForm>

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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:
Pat Fitzgerald, 79 Laurel Ln., Queensbury, NY 12804

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 Putnam or Mona Bearor at the numbers listed above.

The Fledgling



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