

The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.
www.southernadirondackaudubon.org

Vol. 30 No. 1 September 2012 – November 2012

President's Message

Summer is such a busy birding season with field trips, nest box monitoring, and watching nestlings grow into fledglings! I was lucky enough to have a very busy hummingbird summer. At



Photo by Don Polunci

first, I had one or two birds buzzing at my feeders, and then there were three, four, or five. I put up additional feeders. More hummers came. I had as many as eight, but they were so quick, darting from feeder to feeder, chasing and attacking each other that it was hard to count them all.

Our project of making and installing monofilament fishing line receptacles has been very successful. Thanks to the hard work of Nan and Don Polunci, Jim Ries, Linda Hoyt, and Sue Pierce, they are now installed at Moreau Lake State Park, Gurney Lane, Glen Lake, Hovey Pond, Hudson River Park, Crandall Park, East Field, and Brant Lake. Keeping fishing line away from the shorelines of these areas reduces the likelihood of waterfowl becoming entangled in it. If you visit these places regularly and would be willing to adopt a container, please let any board member know. Tools and instruction for emptying the containers will be provided. Monitoring should be done on a weekly basis.

We will be having our annual elections for the board of directors at our October meeting. It is imperative that we get more people on our board. The job is not difficult. One meeting a month from September to June, helping us make decisions about projects, assisting in raising money and spending money, and a desire to become involved in the conservation issues in our area is all it takes. You don't have to be an expert birder, just someone who is concerned about the habitat that we all share with our feathered friends. If you are interested, or know someone who might be interested in being on our board, please call one of the current members of the board (contact numbers are on the last page of this newsletter), or attend our monthly meeting and speak to one of us. We would be happy to discuss this further with you.

Once again, this year we will be participating at the Moreau Lake State Park *Naturefest* on Saturday, September 15 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. There will be many activities for children. If you could spare an hour to help us make bird feeders, hand out information, or just talk to people about our organization, we'd be happy to have you.

Pat Fitzgerald

Please join us for the following

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Our public programs are held at the Crandall Library in Glens Falls. Enter at the Glen St. entrance, and take the elevator to the lower level; the media room is on the left. In case of inclement weather, please call the Crandall Library at 792-6508.

Wednesday, September 26 - 7 p.m.

**Beekeeper Rick Green presents
"Beekeeping Through The Seasons"**

Wednesday, October 24 - 7 p.m.

**"California Here I Come"
with
Gerry Lemmo**

Wednesday, November 28 - 7 p.m.

**"Global Warming"
with Jason Breschko**

Got Questions? Our own Joyce Miller has Answers!

Long-time SAAS member Joyce Miller has created a web page called "Birds of New York State" on the SUNY Adirondack Library web page. She developed the page as a way to collect the best web sites about birds for this area, as well as to find quick answers to birding questions. The URL is <http://libguides.sunyacc.edu/birds>.

Joyce is a Professor of Library Science, the reference and instruction librarian at SUNY Adirondack, and the college's science librarian. She manages the library's web page (<http://libguides.sunyacc.edu/>), and wrote and organized much of the information that appears there. She is also the business and travel librarian, buying the library's books in those subject areas, and teaching the classes covering those topics, as well as writing the related research guides on the library's web page.

"SUNY Adirondack students, faculty and staff, as well as non-birding friends, know that I'm an avid birder," said Joyce. "So, I usually get several questions a day about birds. Talking about birds is just fun, of course, and I love to answer questions because I always learn more in the process." The number of "hits" to the page were few during its first year in 2009, but as word spread about the resource, the number grew steadily – 1,375 hits for 2012 as of mid-July!

Tabs highlight different categories of information, such as Birding Web Sites, Bird Songs, Birding Groups, Birding Books, etc., and each tabbed page is further organized into categories. As an example, the Birding Web Sites tab contains links to information on general birding, birding locally, migration, nestcams, how to choose binoculars, what to do about an injured bird, and more. The other tabbed categories are also packed with information helpful to both beginning birders and those whose expertise leads them to more obscure questions.

The Birding Books tab lists books available at the SUNY Adirondack Library. Local residents may borrow the library's books by obtaining a community borrower card. To register for a card, area residents may go to the library's circulation desk and present a photo ID. The library has a nice selection of birding field guides and well-known books about birds.

Whether you have a single question about birds or are looking for in-depth information about birds and birding in New York State, this web site should be your "go to" spot to find the answers. Joyce is continually updating and adding to the page, so visit often and you'll be amazed at what you learn!

-Mona Bearor



Joyce Miller birding in Madagascar in August 2010

Fall Events/Trips

Friday, September 7 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Birding Walk at the Betar Byway

Birding walks, led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, are held on the first Friday of every month, weather permitting. Each walk will last about one and a half hours. We will meet at 9 a.m. at the gazebo near the parking lot at the end of First Street in South Glens Falls. This is a leisurely, easy walk. Call Pat at 792-6846 for more information. No registration is required.

Saturday September 8 10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Raptor Awareness Day 2012

Presented by the Friends of the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA

Glens Falls City Park

Program Highlights: Owls, hawks, and falcons native to the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area and surrounding region star in presentations by educators from North Country Wild Care, Friends of the IBA and the Adirondack Wildlife Refuge & Rehab Center. ***Visitors will have the opportunity to see the raptors up close and take photos at informational tables during the event.*** Exhibitors, food vendors, kids activities, more!

Raptor Awareness Day 2012 – Juried Art Show

Art Show Open during regular City Hall hours through month of September;

Artists Reception September 20, 5-8 p.m. during Third Thursday Art Walk

Raptor Awareness day also highlights the 2nd annual **Friends of the IBA Juried Art Show. Artists from across the region and working in a variety of 2D and 3D mediums showcase “Life in the Washington County Grasslands.”** North Country Arts Center is hosting the Art Show this year in their second floor gallery in Glens Falls City Hall, *42 Ridge Street, Glens Falls*. Art is available for purchase as indicated. A portion of sales benefits Friends of the IBA efforts to protect state endangered Short-eared Owls and other At Risk birds of the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area, or IBA, while benefiting local communities.

Saturday September 15 10 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Moreau Lake State Park NatureFest

Nature activities for children. Attendees will be able to make a rope, build a birdhouse or a make a bird feeder, and paint a pumpkin.

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society

Fall elections will be held

October 24, 2012 at 7 p.m.

at the Crandall Library in City Park, Glens Falls, prior to the monthly program. There are several Board of Director positions open. Please call any board member or officer to place a name on the ballot for one of these positions.

Peregrine Update!

You may remember that as the spring issue of *The Fledgling* went to press, I was trying to determine whether our resident female - whose mate had a fatal accident last summer - had found a new mate and was nesting. Female peregrines display site fidelity; they will reuse a nest site year after year, or alternate between closely spaced sites. When they lose a mate, rather than follow a new male to different territory, they will bring their new mate to their preferred site - as proved to be the case this year.

After several field visits, I was excited to observe a new falcon in the area and determined that it was a male. A couple more visits and I was fortunate to observe the adult falcons together and locate a nest at a site that had fledged two young in 2010. Instead of the eggs I hoped to find, there were already two nestlings that appeared to be only a day or two old!

Emerging from the eggs as tiny balls of white fluff with huge feet, they are fed and guarded by the female for the first week or so, while the male does the hunting. In subsequent weeks, the chicks will be left alone for increasingly longer periods of time allowing both the male and the female to hunt for prey, supplying the growing chicks' need for larger meals. By the third week the chicks begin to grow flight feathers, week four finds them almost as large as the parents, and by week five they will spend a lot of time walking around the nest site flapping and exercising, their wings. At this stage, the adults will drop food off at the nest site and the chicks will feed themselves. Week six will find them grooming continually to rid themselves of the remaining down and they will be extremely active, actually running at times and wing-flapping, or even looking over the edge of the nest until they have the courage to leave. To encourage them to fly, the parents may fly by the nest with food, or withhold food from the nest and leave it at a nearby cache site. Since there was a difference in the size of the fledglings, I believe we had one male and one female. Watching the nestlings grow, and observing the adults provide for their needs was fascinating, and I visited often, tallying over 30 hours at the site. Knowing our two fluff balls are out there somewhere is wonderful!

This was my sixth year monitoring falcons for DEC, and I am as enthusiastic as I was when I began. I hope to continue to monitor these remarkable birds for years to come.

-Mona Bearor



Glens Falls Peregrine Falcon fledgling
Photo taken through telescope July 2, 2012

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Friday, September 21 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
at Crandall Library

Friday, October 19 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
at Moreau Lake State Park Warming Hut

Friday, November 16 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
at Crandall Library

Meetings are open to the public.
Interested members are welcome and encouraged to
attend.

Bluebird Nest Box Adventures

Joyce Miller

Two prolific pairs of bluebirds produced 14 chicks this summer on the SUNY Adirondack campus in Queensbury. It was a thrilling, hot and occasionally gory drama to monitor the bluebird boxes. I had no idea how much I was going to learn when we hatched this idea last year.

SAAS donated the six bluebird boxes, which were built by a woodworking class in Bolton. In October of 2011, SAAS board member Linda White, English professor Neal Herr and I erected the boxes around campus. Each Friday afternoon, from mid-March to late July, I checked the boxes around campus. I carried a digital camera, a small hand mirror, disposable gloves and binoculars. To check the boxes, I pulled open the front door and peeked in to see if there was a nest, eggs or chicks, using the mirror or camera for a better view. Here are my observations:

- Bluebirds nested successfully in two of the six boxes. One pair had two broods: five chicks in May to early June, and four more from mid-June to late July. Another bluebird pair produced one brood of five chicks, in mid-June to late July. From what I've read, chick mortality can be as high as 50 to 80%, but all fledged.

- Bluebirds grow incredibly fast. In two weeks, they grew from hatchlings about the size of a dime into almost-fledglings, the size of a small red potato. They fledge at 15-18 days. The rate of growth is mind-boggling. Credit goes to the parents and their ceaseless energy to find food.

- Tree Swallows occupied one box, and fledged five chicks in one brood. I was happy to have so many more insect-eating birds on campus this summer, especially near the college's new organic orchard and gardens.

- Birds live the lives of gladiators. One box at the south end of campus was the scene of many battles. I saw bluebirds on the box in early spring, but the next day found a male bluebird dead nearby. His tail feathers were plucked out and his eyes were missing. (That's apparently a House Sparrow technique, to kill occupants of a desirable nest box.) House Sparrows took over the box, so I removed the nest. Then, native Tree Swallows started a nest. But when I peered into the box the next week, I discovered a headless Tree Swallow

splayed out in the nest. Both were the victims of House Sparrow attacks, leading to another thing I learned:

- House Sparrows are very aggressive invasive species that will readily kill Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows and take over their nest boxes. I had no idea how aggressive they are until I saw the results of their attacks.

- Bluebirds can fight back. When I checked that disputed box the next week, I was shocked to see a female bluebird blast out of the box. When I looked inside, I saw a fully-built bluebird nest and an egg. That bluebird pair produced four chicks. The House Sparrow pair was still nearby, and I saw the bluebird pair frequently flutter-fight with them.

- House Wrens can be aggressive toward other birds nesting nearby, and will pierce the eggs of nearby birds. The male wren makes many twig nests. The female chooses one to finish with a grass cup for the eggs. They are native migratory songbirds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, so only their unused "dummy nests" can be removed. Because they like to nest in boxes near shrubs, it's good to place boxes away from shrubs and trees.

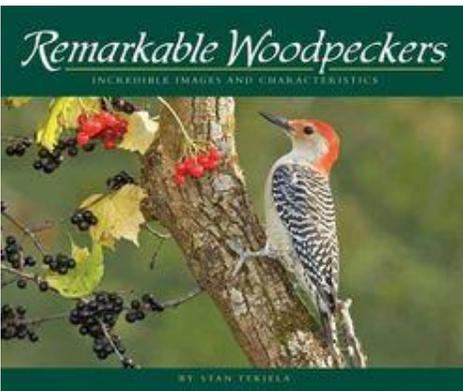
- House Wrens and spiders have a symbiotic relationship. Wren nests can get infested with up to 50,000 mites. Male House Wrens have learned to place spider egg sacs among the twigs of its nest. The spiderlings feed on the mites when they hatch.

- Bluebird personalities differ. One bluebird pair at the north end of campus had encountered little competition for its nest box. When I checked their box, the pair cautiously peered down at me from a light pole about 30 feet away. When I checked the box of the feisty pair that fought hard for that box at the south end of campus, the male screeched and swooped at my head as I quickly checked the box.

We'll see what new adventures next year brings!

Book Review: Remarkable Woodpeckers

Nancy Castillo
Wild Birds Unlimited



First, think about all the really cool things you might already know about woodpeckers. You know they make holes in trees to nest in and

that they prop themselves upright on tree trunks. They sometimes drum on metal objects and will come to a bird feeder.

Now, wouldn't it be nice to have a book that explains how and/or why woodpeckers do all that? One that explains it in a way that regular people like you and I can really understand? And has some great photographs to illustrate the point, as well? Stan Tekiela does all this in his book *Remarkable Woodpeckers*. It is a small, soft-covered, coffee-table book, the sixth in his series that combines stunning photographic images with interesting information. It was preceded by books on loons, eagles, bluebirds, owls, and hummingbirds.

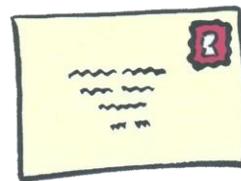
It was a joy to read through this book. Tekiela boils so much information down to a paragraph or two, making this an easy read of even science-type facts. It covers the gamut from woodpeckers' life span, flight, breeding, foraging techniques...all the things that make a woodpecker, well, a woodpecker!

The book doesn't try to do too much, though. It provides basic, yet adult explanations, in enough detail to satisfy your curiosity. You'll find yourself saying, "well that makes sense" when you read about how these unique birds do what they do. If it raises additional questions, you'll have to go elsewhere to delve deeper. Tekiela keeps it informative, but brief and concise.

I did find it a little bit of a challenge going back and trying to find one section about the Red-bellied Woodpecker that I wanted to share with friends. There is no index and the Table of Contents is a bit

cryptic, so I found myself leafing through the entire book to find the passage I sought. I think Stan Tekiela has established a nice balance with this book: beautiful and informative, yet very accessible to all readers, even those with just a passing interest in birds. It would be a great addition to your home library, but don't put it away on a bookshelf! Leave it face up on your side table to pick up and enjoy time and again.

* * * * *



Welcome to new chapter supporters!

We now have 95 chapter supporters.

Our most recent new chapter supporters are:

Melissa Maslanka – Lake Luzerne
Patricia Stephens – Corinth
Mary Lou Munger – Fort Edward
Daniel Barber – Lake George
Carol Blackwell – Rensselaer

Membership runs from January through December.
Annual dues of \$10.00 may be sent to:

Majken Sellar
9 Allen Rd. Ext.
Argyle, NY 12809

New chapter supporters who attend a public program, or go on a chapter-sponsored field trip can take advantage of a special offer of one-year membership for \$5.00. Checks or money orders should be made out to SAAS.

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Southern Adirondack Audubon Sponsors Camper at DEC Camp



From left to right, Tyler, Cameron, Dean

Going to camp Colby was a lot of fun and taught me many things. I learned how to work well with others and be responsible for myself. I had a lot of fun with new friends spending all day learning about the environment, playing games, and exercising. Camp Colby was a great experience for both fun and learning.

Camp Colby had lots of activities like "6 resources" which is basically capture the flag with 12 flags. I also participated in the Hunter Education Program. I shot five rounds of a .22 caliber rifle for the first time. Another activity I enjoyed was archery. There were lots of games that had to do with the environment and things that would limit an animal's lifetime. Those were some fun activities that made my time at camp Colby memorable.

The time that I liked the best was the night when we camped out. It was a lot of fun just camping out with a couple of friends in a tent. We ate a dinner cooked in tinfoil. That was the best meal! We also had to make up a skit for the final camp fire. We had some difficulty since we couldn't concentrate, but we eventually came up with an idea. We were going to have an argument over what to do for the skit, which ended in a light saber battle between a friend and me. That was why I liked the night we camped out a lot.

Thank you for this opportunity to go to Camp Colby. It was an experience I'll always remember!

Cameron Munsey of Ballston Spa

Volunteers Needed

If you are interested in volunteering with SAAS, you could help by

- Joining us at the Moreau Lake State Park *Naturefest* on September 15
- Making a basket for our monthly raffle
- Adopting a fishing line receptacle at any of the areas mentioned on page 1.

For more information about any of these volunteer activities, call Pat Fitzgerald at 792-6846.

The Fledgling

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Queensbury, NY 12804



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2010-2013

Pat Fitzgerald	792-6846
Ginny Vogel	584-3936
Jim Ries	792-4477

2011-2014

Linda Hoyt	494-2380
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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the National 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:
Majken Sellar, 9 Allen Rd Ext., Argyle, NY 12809

Newsletter Submission Policy: We welcome submissions to *The Fledgling*. Please email your articles to Audubon@netheaven.com, and include your name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit as necessary.