



The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 31 No. 1, September - November, 2013

Visit SAAS at: <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

Calendar of Events

Sat., Sept. 14:

Nature Fest,
Moreau Lake
State Park,
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
(See page 4)

Wed., Sept. 25:

Monthly program:
Trinidad & Tobago,
7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 4:

Betar Byway Walk,
9 a.m.
(See page 3)

Wed., Oct. 30:

Monthly Program:
Kenya & Tanzania,
7 p.m.

Wed., Nov. 20:

Monthly Program:
Hudson Valley Bald
Eagles, 7 p.m.

Monthly Programs are held
at 7 p.m. in Crandall
Library's Christine McDonald
Auditorium. See page 1 and
2 for talk descriptions.
Contact Crandall at
792-6508 if extreme
weather may close library.

Fall Programs Travel the World

Hummingbirds, Secretary Birds and Bald Eagles are among the wildlife featured in the fall monthly program series. The chapter's public monthly programs are held at Crandall Library in Glens Falls.

Joyce Miller, professor of library science at SUNY Adirondack, will present a photographic slide show, **"Trinidad and Tobago: South America Meets the Caribbean"** on Wednesday, **Sept. 25** at 7 p.m. She visited the islands this past winter. Trinidad and Tobago is a mountainous island country located off the north-east coast of Venezuela. It offers both Caribbean and South American bird species, including many species of hummingbirds.

Miller has traveled to 25 countries on



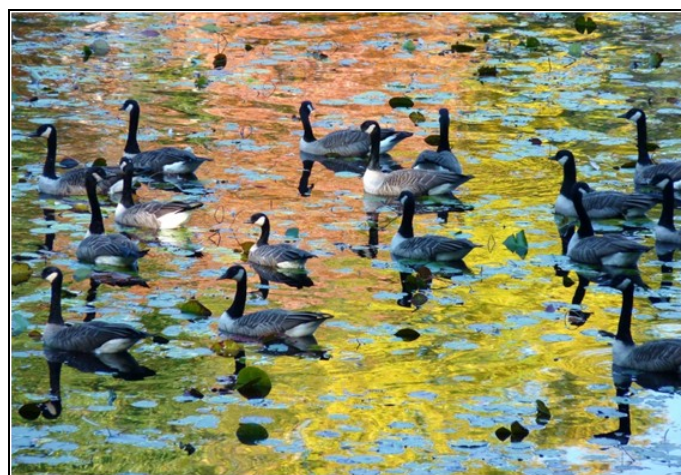
Left: Bananaquits on a fruit feeder in Trinidad; photo by Barbara Putnam. **Right:** Phil Whitney's photo of a Secretary Bird in Africa.



six continents, primarily in search of birds and other wildlife. An avid birder for about 30 years, she is a member of the SAAS board. She is also a member of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, N.Y.S. Ornithological Association and American Birding Association.

On Wednesday, **October 30**, Phil Whitney will present a slide show highlighting the east African regions of **Kenya and Tanzania**.

Nearly 1,400 species of birds have
(continued on page 2)



Geese gathering - Board member Sue Pierce captured this scene at Mud Pond in Moreau Lake State Park in October, 2011.

As they fly in, she said, "they twist and turn to spill the air from their wings, which slows them down, before they plash down in the shallow waters of the pond, and gabble and gossip." Well described!

Fall Programs Travel the World *(from page 1)*



Gordon Ellmers captured this photo of a Bald Eagle feeding its eaglet. Tom Lake will discuss Bald Eagles on Nov. 20.

been recorded in East Africa, including both resident species and palearctic and intra-African migrants, making it a prime destination for birders.

The Whitneys made three trips to the region in 1999, 2006 and 2012 to visit their son and daughter-in-law who are missionaries to the Kuria people of southwest Kenya and northwest Tanzania. This was an opportunity to observe and enjoy some of the avian abundance.

Guided by their son, who is also a birder, and by local experts, they birded a variety of habitats including savanna, thorn bush, rainforest, Rift Valley lakes, coastal forest, tidal estuary and urban parklands.

The talk will focus on the birds, ranging from bizarre to beautiful and from enormous to diminutive. They will also discuss experiences with some of the large mammals and the local people.

Whitney is a retired geologist who worked at the New York State Museum, specializing in

geochemistry and Adirondack geology.

Prior to that he taught geology at Alfred University, Union College and RPI. He and his wife Marjorie have been birding for

about 25 years.

Tom Lake, Hudson River Estuary Program Naturalist for the N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation, will be the guest speaker for a program on **Hudson Valley Bald Eagles** on **Nov. 20** at 7 p.m.

Since 1782, the Bald Eagle has been our national bird. However, the last 230 years have been difficult for them. The talk will travel across those centuries to see how the Bald Eagle evolved from an honored symbol to a target for human ignorance and neglect.

This downward spiral culminated in the mid-20th century with their extirpation from New York State from the effects of DDT. They were subsequently placed on the Federal Endangered Species List.

The final chapter in this story finds the Bald Eagle rising from near ruin to their present day abundance, and a recovery so complete that you may see an eagle any day of the year, any-

Birding By the Month

*By Mona Bearor,
Education Chair*

Watch for these bird activities in upcoming months:

September

- Blackbirds, cowbirds, and starlings form huge flocks and perform aerial ballets.
- Look for nighthawks at dusk as they forage for insects on the wing.
- Flooded or plowed fields can reveal migrating shorebirds that have stopped to rest and refuel.

October

- Thrushes and sparrows move through the area on their way south to wintering grounds.
- Check large bodies of water for migrating ducks, loons, grebes, and geese.
- Check shrubby areas near water for lingering warblers.

November

- Keep your eyes on the skies for kettles of raptors and vultures on the move!
- It's not too early for the return of wintering owls and raptors to the grasslands.
- American Tree Sparrow, Northern Shrike, and Dark-eyed Junco return from their breeding grounds.

where in the Hudson Valley.

In addition to his ongoing work with eagles, Lake has compiled and edited the *Hudson River Almanac*, a weekly natural history journal, for 20 years. He teaches Anthropology and Archaeology at SUNY Dutchess Community College.

Species Spotlight: American Goldfinch

By Lindsey Duval, SAAS Member

The **American Goldfinch** male is a small bright yellow songbird with a bright orange bill, black cap and black and white wings. Female and winter birds are duller in color, but still recognizable as goldfinches. The song is a bright, cheery, warbling melody and their flight call sounds like "potato-chip," which they repeat with an undulating flight. They frequent backyard thistle feeders year-round.

Goldfinches were not always common in New York because this species is not found in deep forests. Goldfinches became common in the mid-1800s with the clearing of forests for farming.

Goldfinches are the latest breeding songbird in New York because they rely on thistle plants. Goldfinches use thistle-down to line their nests. They convert thistle seed into a milky pulp to feed nestlings.

Goldfinches almost exclusively



Don Polunci's photo shows an American Goldfinch male in breeding plumage.

species that will not join other songbirds in this mobbing behavior.

The Brown-headed Cowbird is a common bird in New York that lays eggs in other species' nests and relies on the adults of other species to raise their young, sometimes to the detriment of the parasitized species. Cowbird nestlings, who eat insects, cannot survive in a gold-

finch nest due to the goldfinch's reliance on a seed diet. eat seeds rather than insects. Their diet includes carotenoid pigments which causes their bright orange bills and bright yellow feathers.

The flight call of the male and female in a pair are nearly identical.

Other backyard birds, such as the Black-capped Chickadee, will mob predators. The goldfinch is one

finch nest due to the goldfinch's reliance on a seed diet.

Sources:

McGowan, K.J. & Corwin, K. (2008). *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*

Ehrlich, P., Dobkin, D.S., & Wheye, D. (1988.) *The Birder's Handbook*

All About Birds: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/american_goldfinch/id

Enjoy the Betar Byway on Oct. 4

A birding walk will be led on **Friday, October 4** by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, weather permitting.

Meet at 9 a.m. at the gazebo near the parking lot at the end of First Street in South Glens Falls. The walk will last about 1 1/2 hours.

This is a leisurely, easy walk on a wide paved path. For details, call Pat at 792-6846. No advanced registration required.

The scenic Betar Byway is pictured to the right. It meanders along the Hudson River in South Glens Falls. Photo: Sue Pierce.



President's Message: Join us at the Nature Fest

By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS President

Southern Adirondack Audubon will again participate in Moreau Lake State Park's **Nature Fest** on **Saturday, September 14**, from 10 a.m. - 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.

With this issue of *The Fledgling*, I am happy to introduce our **newsletter editor**, Joyce Miller. Joyce has brought new form and life to the newsletter. I hope you enjoy not only the content, but also the design. Many thanks for all her hard work.

After another successful summer of field trips and monitoring Eastern

Bluebird and American Kestrel nest boxes, September brings the beginning of the cooler weather, shorter days, and the migration of the birds back to their wintering areas.

You can watch **hawk migration** in several areas. One is Franklin Mountain, outside of Oneonta, N.Y. Last year, volunteers began counting raptors on August 22 and continued for 3½ months. The total number of raptors counted in that time was 5,039. If you want to see raptors in migration, it's a wonderful place to go.

Find more information about Franklin Mountain at <http://hawkcount.org/siteinfo.php?rsite=361>.

Several websites post the migration progress of different species. One of my favorites is <http://www.learner.org/jnorth/maps/galleries/2013/fall.html>. On this site, not only can you watch as the birds begin to fly south, but you can also participate by posting your sightings.

Finally, consider "liking" us on **Facebook** to stay updated on programs, field trips and other news. Just search for *Southern Adirondack Audubon Society*.



Update: Support is Building for New Wildlife Stamp

By Jason Goldsmith, SAAS Conservation Chair

This report updates the status of the wildlife stamp. Jason first wrote about this in the Winter 2012 issue.

Conservation groups across the country are starting to organize in support of a Federal Wildlife Conservation Stamp to help raise much needed funds for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

This stamp is similar to the Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (also known as the Federal Duck Stamp) which is currently required to hunt migratory waterfowl. The newly proposed stamp would be an additional funding mechanism aimed toward birders,



wildlife watchers, and photographers. According to a 2011 survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, that includes more than 71.1 million people.

The funds raised would go toward habitat acquisition for birds and wildlife species, construction of

interpretive trails and viewing platforms, and education about the importance of wildlife and National Wildlife Refuges.

SAAS has joined the growing list of organizations supporting this effort. Recently, this coalition drafted a letter to Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell encouraging her to support this proposal. Plans are being made to solicit members of Congress to sponsor legislation creating this stamp.

For more information and the latest updates, visit <http://www.wildlifeconservationstamp.org>.

Field Trip Reports

Five Combines and Feeder Canal Park Nets 34 Species

By Jim Ries, Trip Leader

Eleven summertime birders enjoyed a stroll along the Warren County Bike Path in the Five Combines Park in Hudson Falls on Saturday, June 29, 2013.

The Five Combines are a series of locks with a lift of 55 feet. The existing locks were constructed in 1845, replacing the original locks which were built with timbers in 1822. They are part of the seven mile long feeder canal which was constructed to supply water and boat access to the Champlain Canal from the Hudson River above Glens Falls.

Birding was challenging due to the heavy cover. The actual number of birds was thought to be down from previous years. We did manage to see or hear 34 species, listed below.

Highlights included the Combine Locks, a pair of Eastern Kingbirds feeding their young and a Great Crested Flycatcher at its nest hole in the same area with the kingbirds. All attempts to actually see Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos failed! Thanks to all the participants for an enjoyable morning.

Five Combines Trip Species List:

*Mallard
Turkey Vulture
Red-tailed Hawk
Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Eastern Phoebe
Great-Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird*

*Warbling Vireo
Red-Eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Northern Rough-Winged Swallow
Tree Swallow
Black-Capped Chickadee
White-Breasted Nuthatch
American Robin
Gray Catbird
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Common Yellowthroat
American Redstart
Yellow Warbler
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Rose-Breasted Grosbeak
Red-Winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Baltimore Oriole
American Goldfinch*

Birders Explore Towpath Road in Hudson Falls

By Mona Bearor, Trip Leader

Five enthusiastic SAAS birders spent three and one-half hours on the Towpath Road in Hudson Falls. The Towpath Road is lo-

cated between Route 196 and 149 near Hudson Falls in Washington County.

Following an old canal along its four-mile length, the Towpath presents birders with several different habitats.

Although a few regulars, such as Tufted Titmouse, Wood Duck, Mallard and Eastern Bluebird, were not seen, the group still found an amazing total of 48 species.

Highlights were 5 American Kestrels, watching a Willow Flycatcher sing (a life bird for one birder), and great views of Yellowthroated Vireo, Marsh Wren and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

While the bird itself eluded the group, an Orchard Oriole nest was found, lending credence to the belief that this species is now nesting here.

A Black-and-white Warbler was the 120th species recorded for this location.

Below, the group watches a pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks along the Towpath Road on July 13. (Photo: Mona Bearor)



Ospreys Fledge in Fort Edward

Dr. Gordon Ellmers captured these active scenes of an Osprey family on their nest this summer. Their large stick nest is located at the top of a pole along Route 4 near Fort Miller in Washington County.

Top photo: A parent arrives with a large fish for the chicks.

Bottom photo: The osprey chicks exercise their wings. They successfully fledged later in July.



Volunteer Your Skills to Help SAAS

Join our enthusiastic and concerned group of Audubon volunteers!

Here's who we need:

- **Friendly folks:** Help out at our table in Moreau Lake State Park's Nature Fest on Saturday, September 14. See the President's Message on page 4 for more.

- **Organized people:** Help with membership duties by maintaining files and sending out renewal notices.

- **Writers:** Assist in grant-writing to raise monies for various conservation and educational projects.

- **Creative thinkers:** Collect items — donated or other-

wise — to make a fun basket for our monthly raffle.

- **People who love the outdoors:** Join the trail steward program at Moreau Lake State Park with SAAS volunteers to walk a trail, pick up trash, and report trail conditions.

- If you can think of other ways your skills can help SAAS, let us know!

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

Below: SAAS volunteers help at the Feeder Canal Cleanup near the Five Corners, April, 2012. (Photo: Sue Pierce)



Welcome, New Members!

Of our 518 total members, 100 are Chapter Supporters. That is our most valuable category of membership, because the entire \$10 annual dues remains within the chapter area.

We are pleased to welcome six new Chapter Supporters since the last newsletter:

Veronica Fuller – Glens Falls

Linda Carr – Lake George

Margery Morris – Lake George

Carol White – Hudson Falls

Julie Hotaling – Gansevoort

Diane Piccirillo – Gansevoort



Memberships are up for renewal at the end of each calendar year. We'll include a membership renewal form in the December newsletter. Annual dues are only \$10.00 and may be sent to Pat Fitzgerald, 79 Laurel Lane, Queensbury 12804.

Consider giving a gift membership to SAAS for holidays or birthdays. Gift memberships are available for family and friends who would enjoy our newsletter or appreciate having a schedule of monthly programs and field trips. We will send an appropriate card to announce your gift. Call Pat Fitzgerald at 792-6846 for more information or to order a gift membership.

Visit the SAAS web site for details about membership: <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>.



The Fledgling
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Web site: <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

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Like us on Facebook: *Southern Adirondack Audubon Society*

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Vice-President: OPEN

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Treasurer: Mona Bearor (518-745-8637)

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Board of Directors:

2010-2013 Jim Campinell

Pat Fitzgerald

Jim Ries

2011-2014 Barbara Beatty

Linda Hoyt

Sue Pierce

2012-2014 Jason Goldsmith

Joyce Miller

Carol Moyer

Board meetings are held monthly.
Members are welcomed to attend.
Contact Pat Fitzgerald for details.