



The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 31 No. 2, December 2013—February 2014

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

This newsletter is in color online!

Calendar of Events

Sat., Dec. 14: **Christmas Bird Count**

(See page 3)

No monthly program

Wed., Jan. 22: **Monthly program:**

"Countries of the Red Sea" with Barbara & John Youker, 7 p.m.

Wed., Feb. 26: **Monthly Program:** "White Birch: What You Don't Know May Help You" with Tom Mowatt, 7 p.m.

(Joint program with Glens Falls-Saratoga Chapter of Adirondack Mountain Club)

Monthly Programs are held at 7 p.m. in Crandall Library's Christine McDonald Auditorium. Contact Crandall at 792-6508 if extreme weather may close the library.



No additional SAAS birding walks are planned this winter other than the Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 14. Check the SAAS webpage for updates, and see the "Birding News" feature on page 2 for other area bird club trips.

Red Sea, White Birch on Tap for Winter

Barbara and John Youker will present "Countries of the Red Sea" at Crandall Library on Wednesday, **January 22** at 7:00 p.m.

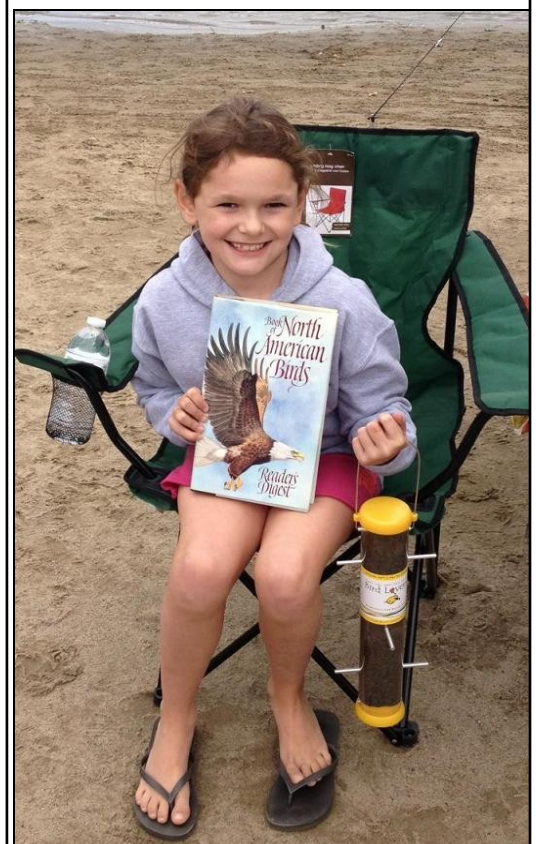
They traveled to Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, Jordan and Israel in November, 2009. Their multi-media presentation will offer their personal insights into the history, culture and geography of that region.

On Wednesday, **February 26**, Thomas Mowatt will present "**White Birch: What You Don't Know May Help You.**" It is a joint program with the Glens Falls - Saratoga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club.

He will discuss the active biochemical compounds identified in the White or Paper Birch tree. He will also talk about uses of this tree's bark by woodland Native American cultures.

Mowatt is an assistant professor of biology at SUNY Adirondack. He is an environmental educator, Adirondack hiking and camping guide, naturalist-artist

and traditional craftsman. He was adopted into the Great Lakes Ojibwa tribe and is respected



Happy Raffle Winner

Ten-year-old Lilly Weeks won the raffle at Moreau Lake State Park Nature Fest on Saturday, September 14. She's holding her prizes, a book about North American birds and a seed feeder.

Photo: Sharon Finch



One of many uses of White Birch bark is pictured to the right. This container was crafted by Tom Mowatt. Photo: Joyce Miller.

in the First Nations culture as a traditional craftsman and researcher of medicinal ethno-botany. Mowatt has also worked as a forest firefighter and arson investigator.



New: Towpath Road Hotspots Featured on SAAS Webpage

SAAS Board member Mona Bearor added a page about Towpath Road in the Town of Kingsbury to the SAAS Birding page (<http://www.southernadironackaudubon.org/birding/birding.html>). Here's an excerpt:

The Towpath Road is located along the old Champlain Canal in the town of Kingsbury. The road is four miles long. With a variety of habitats, it can fill an entire morning with interesting birding in any season. The Towpath may be the best four-mile stretch of road birding in our chapter area.

With the exception of early morning commuters taking short-cuts, this unpaved road is usually quite devoid of traffic, and is far enough from town so it is also quiet enough to easily hear birds. An abundance of native vegetation, such as viburnum, wild grape, dogwood, and sumac make this place a haven for both resident species and migrants.

Warblers, woodpeckers, sparrows, cuckoos, herons, ducks ...120 species in all so far, and this is simply a dirt road in Washington County. It's only five minutes from the traffic circle in Hudson Falls. However, once you bird this amazing road, we think you'll agree that it is four miles of birding bliss.

Birding News Noted Briefly

- For more **birding field trips** this winter, check the web sites of these regional birding groups: Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club (<http://hmbc.net>), Audubon Society of the Capital District (<http://www.capitalregionaudubon.org/>), and Rutland County Audubon Society (<http://rutlandcountyaudubon.org/>) in Vermont.
- The **HMBirds discussion group** on Yahoo Groups (<http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/hmbirds/info>) is a great way to stay in touch with Capital District bird sightings.
- Wash your **bird feeders** every two weeks with hot, soapy water to prevent transmission of diseases, especially in wet weather and times of heavy use. Clean up and discard old seed and hulls. For more: http://web4.audubon.org/bird/at_home/bird_feeding/.
- For a fun winter project, sign up with **Project FeederWatch** (<http://feederwatch.org>), run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants periodically count the birds visiting their feeders from November through early April. The information helps scientists track winter bird populations. All skills levels are welcomed.

Birding By the Month

By Mona Bearor,
Education Chair

Watch for these bird activities in upcoming months:

December

Owls begin pairing up for the nesting season; listen for them calling at dusk.

Look for signs of irruptive species, such as redpolls, siskins and grosbeaks.

Check all flocks of Snow Buntings and Horned Larks in agricultural areas for a Lapland Longspur.

January

Carefully check locations where gulls concentrate for that rarity!

Large bodies of open water may host uncommon species such as scoters and grebes.

The raptor show is on in the grasslands! Look for hawks and harriers during the day, owls at dusk.

February

Bald Eagles may be found near any areas of open water.

Waterfowl numbers are on the rise; keep an eye on the Hudson River from Fort Miller to Stillwater.

Red-winged Blackbirds return to herald the start of Spring!

Christmas Bird Count set for Sat., Dec. 14

Area birders and nature enthusiasts are invited to join other SAAS members in the annual Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 14.

Tens of thousands of volunteers will participate in over 2,000 individual counts scheduled to take place throughout the Americas from mid-December to early January. The collected data becomes a valuable addition to the U.S. government's natural history monitoring database.

In the SAAS area, birds are

counted within a 15-mile diameter circle centered in Hudson Falls. The circle includes the city of Glens Falls, the villages of South Glens Falls, Fort Edward, and Hudson Falls, as well as much of the towns of Queensbury, Fort Edward, and Moreau.

You do not need to be a bird identification expert to participate. Birders of all skill levels are needed. Non-birders are welcome to help spot birds or keep team records. Most of the birding is done from a car, but some teams may walk

along trails or in area parks. The many diverse

habitats within the SAAS count circle make for interesting observations. It's also a fun way to get to know area birders and increase your skills.

The Christmas Bird Census started in 1900 as an alternative event to the over-hunting of birds for feathers for the millinery trade.

To join a count team for a whole or partial day, contact Linda White at 518-792-4446 or 518-222-5675.

For details, see the SAAS website.

Species Spotlight: Black-capped Chickadee

By Lindsey Duval, SAAS Member

The Black-capped Chickadee is a small buffy and white songbird with a black throat, black cap, and gray wings with white edges. Female chickadees appear similar to the males and sexes are quite difficult to tell apart. The song is a long, whistled "fee-beee" and their call is the familiar "chick-a-dee-dee". Black-capped Chickadees will visit feeders containing sunflower seeds or suet.

The Black-capped Chickadee was once considered rare in southern NY. However, the species was found in all New York counties by the 20th century due to strong population increases.

The 2002 West Nile Virus outbreak caused a large decrease in Black-capped Chickadee populations, but they rebounded to normal numbers the very next year.

Though chickadees may easily be found foraging or roosting in the winter in coniferous trees, they tend to favor deciduous trees for nesting sites, often choosing birch or alder trees.



During cold winter nights, chickadees save energy by entering a state of hypothermia, in which they decrease their metabolism and body temperature.

In the winter, chickadees join flocks of up to 12 individuals. In the interactions in this flock, the oldest birds are dominant, high-ranking birds, while the youngest are low-ranking birds who may switch between flocks. Chickadees may also join

mixed flocks for foraging, with species such as nuthatches, woodpeckers, and Tufted Titmice.

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; http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/black-capped_chickadee/id

Photo credit: Don Polunci

President's Message: Enjoy These Winter Activities

By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS President

Last month I attended the **Audubon New York Fall Council**, held in Woodcliff Lake, NJ. This was a joint meeting with representatives from state and local chapters of both New York and New Jersey. Speakers, field trips, and networking with other chapter leaders always inspires me to keep working for the mission of our local Audubon chapter.

Recently our chapter has become a partner with **Birds and Beans®**, a coffee certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center as bird-friendly. You can find more about the Birds and Beans® coffee at <http://www.birdsandbeans.com>.

Over the winter there are still ways to enjoy the birds that remain in our

area. One way is to sign up for **Project Feederwatch**. This is a winter-long survey of birds that visit feeders in backyards in North America and Canada. Watch the birds, record what you see, and send your findings to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. To find out more about Project FeederWatch, or to sign up to participate, go to <http://www.projectfeederwatch.org>.

Another way is to participate in the **Christmas Bird Count**. More information about event this is found on page three.

The **Great Backyard Birdcount** will be held February 14 – 17. This annual four-day event engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds, and helps determine

where the birds are located each February. Information about this event can be found at <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html>.

I hope you have a happy and safe holiday season. Keep your feeders filled for our wintering populations of birds.



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



Gordon Ellmers snapped this photo of a male Eastern Bluebird at Hudson River Park. The park is located at the end of on Big Boom Road in Queensbury.

Sixty-six Fledglings Raised in SAAS Bluebird Boxes in 2013

For several years, Southern Adirondack Audubon has provided bluebird boxes for certain natural areas. The boxes are monitored by chapter members, who check the breeding success of Eastern Bluebirds who find and nest in the boxes.

This spring and summer, our local bluebird trail monitors reported 66 fledglings:

- 20 young from five broods in three boxes at SUNY Adirondack in Queensbury,
- 33 in the the Hudson Falls cemetery,
- nine at Hudson Pointe in Queensbury,
- four in the Hudson River Park in Queensbury.

SAAS offers its sincere thanks to bluebird monitors Barbara Beatty, Pat Fitzgerald, Chris Germain, Joyce Miller, and Mary Lou Munger for their time and dedication.

To learn more about being a bluebird monitor, send an email to info@southernadirondackaudubon.org.

Field Trip Report: Betar Byway Nets 33 Species

By Lindsey Duval, SAAS Member

Eight watchful birders, including a visitor from Oregon and a couple from Florida, enjoyed the monthly SAAS bird walk at Betar Byway on September 6th. With the overnight low of 34 degrees Fahrenheit, it was a bit chilly at the starting line, but the bright sun and bird song warmed everybody up halfway through.

Betar Byway can often be a great spot to see fall warblers. Despite our lack of typical fall storms, we caught sight of the first Betar Byway record of a Northern Parula! Also briefly visible was a Yellow Warbler, a brightly colored species common and in large numbers during the spring and summer along the Byway.

The most abundant species of the day was Warbling Vireo. While this is another species that is consistent along the trail during the breeding season, our Florida couple was on the lookout for them, as it would be a life list species. While Warbling Vireos seem to enjoy singing from high up in the trees, making them difficult to find, one bird cooperated for great views and much celebration occurred!

Birding was overall rather quiet for a typical fall day at Betar Byway, but the group still enjoyed 33 species. Highlights included a curious Ruby-throated Hummingbird; the resident Sharp-shinned Hawk making an overhead pass; an Osprey flying west, its destination unknown; a Snow Goose enjoying the river with some Canada geese; and scope views of two adult male Wood Ducks, making it possible to see their fire-red eyes.

Tracking Luke the Leucistic Squirrel

By Sue Pierce, SAAS Board Member

Walk often enough on the Betar Byway in South Glens Falls, and you will hear tell of The White Squirrel. Since seeing one along this short but sweet riverside trail for the first time five years ago, and a few times since then, I've gotten in the habit of using this as an occasional greeting to other walkers on this trail: "Have you seen the White Squirrel lately?"

These are not true "albino" squirrels. They have dark brown eyes. My birding friend Lindsey tells me they are more properly termed "leucistic." We promptly began referring to this mystery squirrel as "Luke."

The last time either of us had seen Luke was back in November, 2012. He was easy to see against the dull brown background of the woods. I figured that after the snows came, it would be almost impossible to spot him.

Then in February, there he was again! His thick coat was pure white, and his eyes dark brown.

Several towns have entire colonies (more than 20 individuals) of these color variants: some albino, most leucistic. A town near Toronto calls them The White



Wonders. The town seal of Olney, Ill., features one.

The legends surrounding the origins of these colonies are pretty amusing - "escapes from a circus" etc. Most likely, it's just a genetic variation, like black squirrels, that pops up here and there. They are all Eastern Grey Squirrels, underneath it all.

For more: <http://whitesquirrels.com/about-white-squirrels/>.

Audubon Adventures Goes to Ireland

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

Our chapter supplies the Audubon Adventures environmental education program to home-schooling families in the area.

This year, one of our families took



the materials to Dublin, Ireland.

Mom and teacher Susie Heneghan of Kingsbury said "The Audubon adventures curriculum has always given me such inspiration to teach! The curriculum is filled with such fun projects and I love being able to get my kids outside applying learning and hands on!"

She used the "Flow of Life" segment to teach her students about the ecosystem of the Liffey River in Celbridge, Ireland.

If you know of any home-schoolers who would like

Left: Students creating posters on "The Flow of Life"

Right: Students taking notes on the ecosystem at the banks of the Liffey River.

to receive the Audubon Adventures materials, please contact Mona Bearor at 518-745-8637.

Read more about the program at <http://education.audubon.org/audubon-adventures>.



Making Ethical Birding Choices

Whether it's Short-eared Owls or a common bird, please keep ethical birding practices in mind.

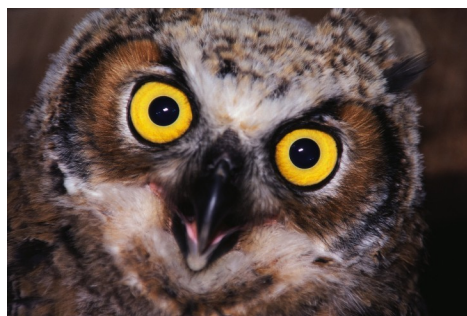
SAAS strongly encourages our members to adhere to the **American Birding Association Code of Birding Ethics** (<http://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html>).

It states: "Everyone who enjoys birds and birding must always respect wildlife, its environment, and the rights of others. In any conflict of interest between birds and birders, the welfare of the birds and their environment comes first."

Some highlights from the ABA Code of Ethics:

- *To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.*

- *Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area.*
- *Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites.*
- *Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the*



area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private land-owners.

- *Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.*
- *If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation, and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action, and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.*

For instance, consider contacting the DEC if people are birding on the DEC posted lands in the Fort Edward Important Birding Area.

Do what you can to encourage these ethical birding practices.

Renew Your Membership in December!

If your mailing label shows 2013, it's time to renew your Southern Adirondack Audubon membership!

Local memberships end with the calendar year.

Membership as a "Chapter Supporter" is only \$10 annually. All dues are used locally to support chapter activities, local conservation issues, monthly programs, and field trips. You will also receive four issues of *The Fledgling* newsletter. Make your check payable to "Southern Adirondack Audubon Society" and send with name, address, and phone number to: **Barbara Beatty, 12 Heinrich St., Queensbury, N.Y., 12804.**

To save paper, time and postage, opt to receive *The Fledgling* in electronic format. Just indicate this on the membership form. You may also fill out

the form on the SAAS web page: <http://southernadirondackaudubon.org/membership/> or sign up at one of our monthly programs.

You may also want to renew your membership in the National Audubon Society. National membership in the Audubon Society includes the magazine, *Audubon*, and the SAAS newsletter, *The Fledgling*. Dues for the National Audubon Society go to support national issues. The cost is \$20 annually for regular membership and \$15 for seniors and students. Make checks payable to "National Audubon Society," and send with a name, address, phone number, and e-mail (optional) to Membership Chair Barbara Beatty.

Thanks for renewing now!



Send in your renewal today!

Consider saving resources by receiving *The Fledgling* newsletter in electronic form only. The electronic version is in color and arrives faster.

- ☐ **Yes, electronic only. Thanks!**
- ☐ **No — paper newsletter, please.**

Please print clearly below or attach a mailing label:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Phone: (____) _____

I've enclosed a check for either a chapter supporter or national membership:

- ☐ a check made out to "Southern Adirondack Audubon Society" (chapter supporter: \$10)
- ☐ a check made out to "National Audubon Society" (national: \$20; \$15 seniors/students)

I am also including a gift of \$_____ for chapter use.

Please mail the form and your check to **Barbara Beatty, 12 Heinrich St., Queensbury, N.Y., 12804.**

Thank you for your membership!



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If your mailing label says 2013, you're due to renew! See page 7.

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society Board & Committees

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E-mail: info@southernadirondackaudubon.org

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Vice-President: OPEN

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2011-2014 Barbara Beatty

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Sue Pierce

2012-2014 Jason Goldsmith

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Carol Moyer

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