



# The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 31 No. 3, March 2014 - May 2014

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

This newsletter is in color online!

## Monthly Programs

*Details: page 1*

**WED., MARCH 26:**

"The Night Sky"

by Bernie Forman, 7 p.m.

**WED., APRIL 23:**

"Birding While Sound Asleep"

by David Martin, 7 p.m.

**WED., MAY 28:**

"Flora and Fauna of the Adirondack Region" by Warren Greene, 7 p.m.

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



## Spring Field Trips

*Details: page 6*

**March 16** – Washington County Waterfowl

**April 4** – Betar Byway

**April 26** – Bog Meadow Trail, Saratoga Springs

**May 2** – Betar Byway

**May 18** – Gurney Lane Recreation Area

**May 24** – Five Combines Feeder Canal Park

**May 31** – Hudson Crossing Park, Schuylerville



*Photographer Warren Greene captured this striking photo of a Northern Flicker family.*

listening or by viewing sonograms. For several years, David Martin has been following the progress of fall migration by recording nocturnal flight calls at two locations in Albany County. He will show how to identify birds from flight calls and present some of his results on the migration of individual species.

Local photographer Warren Greene will show his exceptional photography on May 28. The slide show "Flora and Fauna of the Adirondack Region" will highlight the birds, landscapes, butterflies, moths and flowers of the Adirondacks.

All programs are free and open to the public. Please avoid wearing fragrances, which can trigger allergies, asthma and migraines in others attending the program.

## Spring 2014 programs previewed

Constellations, bird night calls and Adirondack wildlife will be the focus of upcoming SAAS programs.

The illustrated slide shows are held on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at Crandall Library in Glens Falls.

On March 26, Bernie Forman will discuss "The Night Sky: How It Works and How to Find Your Way." He will offer a tour of the constellations: how to find objects, how the sky changes during the night and during the year and what kinds of objects to observe in different seasons.

On April 23, David Martin will present "Birding While Sound Asleep." Many birds migrate at night, and they call as they fly. Some species can be identified from their calls either by

**Southern Adirondack Audubon Society  
Board and Committees**

**Website:** [http://](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org)

[www.southernadirondackaudubon.org](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org)

**Email:**

[info@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:info@southernadirondackaudubon.org)

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**Officers:**

President: Pat Fitzgerald (518-792-6846)

Vice-President: OPEN

Secretary: Linda Hoyt (518-494-2380)

Treasurer: Mona Bearor (518-745-8637)

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Linda Hoyt

Sue Pierce

**2012-2015** Jason Goldsmith

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**2013-2015** Jim Campinell

Pat Fitzgerald

Jim Ries

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

**Committees:**

**Newsletter Editor:** Joyce Miller

[nysbirdinglibrarian@gmail.com](mailto:nysbirdinglibrarian@gmail.com)

**Education:** Mona Bearor (518-745-8637)

**Publicity:** Carol Moyer (518-793-1960)

**Conservation:** Jason Goldsmith (518-480-4243)

**Membership:** Barbara Beatty (518-793-1454)



"Like" us on **Facebook**! Just search for *Southern Adirondack Audubon Society*. You'll stay updated on SAAS programs, field trips and other news and activities.

**Birding by the Month**

**It's spring!**

*By Mona Bearor, Education Chair*

**March**

- Waterfowl are on the move. Check open water for unusual species - including that elusive Cackling Goose.
- Red-winged Blackbirds are everywhere. Enjoy watching their behavior as the males fight for the best territory and show off for the females.
- Wintering birds will leave our area soon. Travel the Fort Edward IBA (Important Bird Area) for a last look at Rough-legged Hawks, Short-eared Owls, Snowy Owls and Northern Shrikes.

**April**

- Osprey return; keep an eye on the nest on Route 4 south of Fort Edward - but don't get too close!
- The well-camouflaged Wilson's Snipe can be found in wet areas of open fields. American Woodcock will be displaying at dusk.
- The first warbler species return: watch for Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Palm, Pine and Louisiana Waterthrush.

**May**

- The Spring chorus is at its peak. Take time to listen to the incredible variety of birdsong at dawn.
- Many species of flycatchers and vireos are heard in all types of habitat. Try to get a good view before the leaves obscure them. Learn their songs so you can identify them when they are hidden.
- May is warbler heaven. There have been 32 species recorded in our chapter area - can you find them all?

**Watch birds nesting**

- Cornell's Lab of Ornithology's nest cameras (<http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/>) offer live views of nesting Great Blue Herons and Red-tailed Hawks in Ithaca, N.Y. Late winter cameras were focused on Laysan Albatross in lush Hawaii.
- Cornell's site also features **FeederWatch** cameras in Ithaca and Ontario, Canada.
- Atlantic Puffins are the stars of Audubon's Live Cams at <http://projectpuffin.audubon.org/audubon-live-cams>.
- When you can't go birding, these nestcams may be the next best thing!



## **Species Spotlight**

# **Downy Woodpeckers**

The Downy Woodpecker is the smallest North American woodpecker.

The male is black and white with a broad, white, vertical back stripe, a red spot on the back of his head, and black-spotted white outer tail feathers. Female Downy Woodpeckers are similar but lack the red spot. The call is a flat, high “pik,” sometimes repeated.

The Hairy Woodpecker is very similar in appearance. To tell them apart, notice that the Downy’s bill’s width is half the head’s width. A Hairy’s bill is the same width as the head.

The Downy Woodpecker strongly prefers deciduous trees in which to excavate nest cavities. They are not found at high elevations. Downy Woodpeckers visit feeders containing suet, nuts and seeds.

Male and female Downy Woodpeckers forage on different parts of trees so that they don’t compete for food. Males search for food on smaller branches while females search on trunks and larger branches. Downy Woodpeckers also forage on weed stalks, *Phragmites*, and goldenrod galls for insects and larvae.

Downy Woodpeckers excavate a new hole each year, choosing deciduous trees infected with fungus that softens the wood. Holes are often camouflaged by fungus, lichen, or moss.

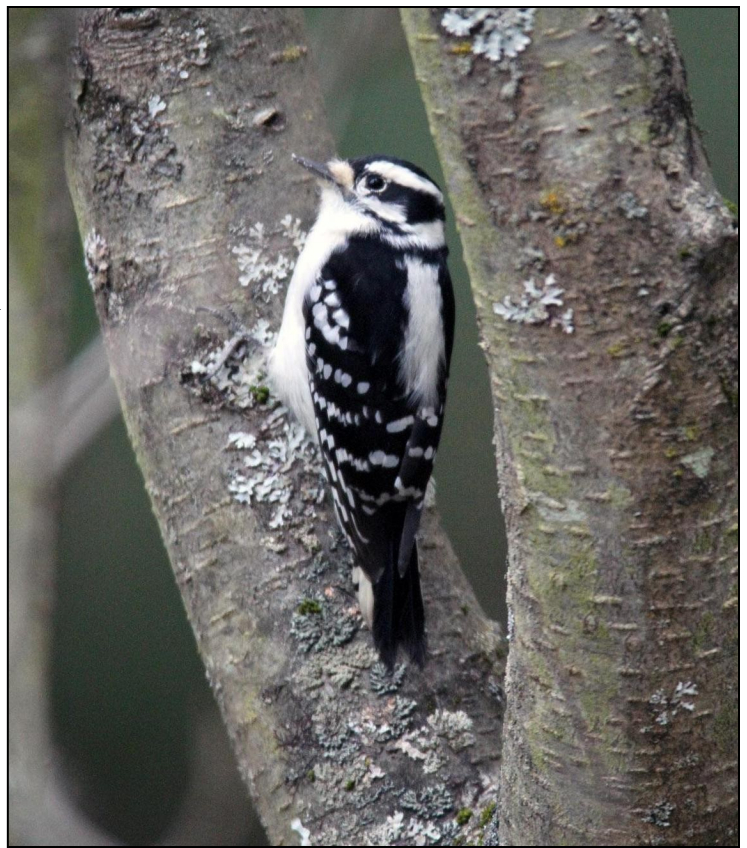
In the winter, Downy Woodpeckers may roost in bird boxes, but will not build nests in bird boxes in summer. They may also excavate roost holes in trees.

### **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: Downy Woodpecker. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/downy\\_woodpecker/id](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/downy_woodpecker/id)

## **Find area birding spots**

The SAAS website offers information on several area birding hotspots, at <http://southernadironackaudubon.org/birding/birding.html>. That page also lists the 278 species seen in our Audubon chapter area.



*Don Polunci took this portrait of a female Downy Woodpecker. The female lacks the male’s red spot on the back of the head.*

## **Containers save wildlife**

You may spot SAAS’s monofilament tubes at area fishing spots. Area anglers can use them to safely dispose of used fishing line. Birds and other wildlife can easily become tangled in discarded line left on the ground or water and die of starvation. SAAS Past President Don Polunci built



the tubes. They were funded through Toyota’s Together Green grant program. SAAS thanks the Betar Byway (pictured here) in South Glens Falls, the Glen Lake Boat Access Area in Queenbury and many other area partners for installing them.

Encourage fishing friends and family to use them!

## **President's Message:**

# **Bird activity continues all year**

*By Pat Fitzgerald,  
SAAS President*

As I write this, it is -10 degrees outside and we haven't had an above-freezing temperature in at least 10 days. Nevertheless, the bird activity continues despite these conditions.

If you've been to the Fort Edwards Grasslands IBA, you may have been lucky enough to see one of the several Snowy Owls wintering there. The Short-eared Owls are there also, but are much more elusive and harder to see.

Although the weather wasn't the greatest, our Christmas Bird Count tally was healthy.

The Great Backyard Bird Count, conducted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for the last 17 years during mid-February, was also an opportunity to help researchers get a look at where the birds are wintering.

Last year was the first year that the count included countries other than the US and Canada. The results, which can be seen on the GBBC website (<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/sciencestories/2013summary/>) are impressive.

In a few weeks, we will begin to see the migratory birds return to our area. Join us on a field trip or two and get a look at the diversity of bird life just outside your door.



*Dr. Gordon Ellmers photographed this Snowy Owl perched on a hay bale in Fort Edward in the winter of 2014.*

## **Watching Snowies**

*By Mona Bearor,  
Education Chair*

To birders, 2013 will be forever known as "The Year of the Snowy Owl."

These huge white owls migrated south in high numbers this fall, breaking records going back over a century.

At least three individuals spent the winter in the Fort Edward Important Bird Area. Keep an eye on power poles and fence posts along Plum, and Blackhouse Roads and County Route 46. (See the SAAS webpage > Birding > Grasslands of Washington County link for a map.)

It's not easy for them to survive the winter. **Please remain at roadside and do not cause the bird any distress.**

Getting too close violates the American Birding Association's Code of Birding Ethics about respect for wildlife and property (<https://www.aba.org/about/ethics.html>).

Scientists believe the influx is due to a higher than normal number of young birds and an inadequate food supply in their normal wintering grounds.

Many owls are not in prime condition as the young birds have not fully developed their hunting skills. Any disturbance may contribute to their failure to make it through the winter in good health.

*Visit the SAAS webpage for more information on topics mentioned in this newsletter:*

**<http://www.southernadironackaudubon.org/>**



# Christmas Bird Count celebrates its 30th year

By Linda White,  
CBC Coordinator

For over 113 years, Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count census has grown into the world's most intensive wildlife survey by local observers. Last year nationally, there were over 70,000 participants counting throughout the 2,369 dedicated count circles. Every bird is recorded with the goal of getting as many species and individual birds as possible.

Our **Hudson Falls** Count celebrated counting for 30 years on December 21. Many thanks go out to our participants, who birded from dawn to dusk on a cold wintry day: Beth, Brad and Nathan Bidwell, Joyce Miller, Russ Hillard, Pat Fitzgerald, Jacquie Tinker, Lindsey Duval, Steve Nichols and Barbara Trypaluk, as well as feeder watcher Mona Bearor. Joyce and Russ have been on most of these counts and the Bidwells have been on close to 20. It has been such a pleasure birding with them over my 30 years of counting and coordinating this important endeavor. We are grateful that Joan Robertson has been birding for 28 of the counts.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention and give thanks to the late Bob Kirker, and Garry Stone, a retired school superintendent currently living in Batavia. Both were founding

members of Southern Adirondack Audubon and were instrumental in setting up this count circle more than 30 years ago. Time has certainly flown by!

During count week we included Short-eared Owl, and, for the first time, Snowy Owl.

Here are the totals:

- 14 Canada Goose
- 1 Wood Duck
- 23 American Black Duck
- 214 Mallard
- 166 Common Goldeneye
- 10 Hooded Merganser
- 36 Common Merganser
- 15 Ring-necked Pheasant
- 12 Wild Turkey
- 4 Great Blue Heron
- 2 Bald Eagle
- 1 Northern Harrier
- 2 Sharp-shinned Hawk
- 3 Cooper's Hawk
- 26 Red-tailed Hawk
- 2 Rough-legged Hawk
- 3 American Kestrel
- 1 Peregrine Falcon
- 2 Herring Gull
- 465 Rock Pigeon
- 262 Mourning Dove
- 4 Belted Kingfisher
- 4 Red-bellied Woodpecker
- 3 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- 27 Downy Woodpecker
- 5 Hairy Woodpecker
- 6 Northern Flicker
- 6 Pileated Woodpecker
- 135 Blue Jay
- 1,272 American Crow
- 5 Common Raven
- 149 Horned Lark
- 199 Black-capped Chickadee
- 45 Tufted Titmouse
- 2 Red-breasted Nuthatch
- 23 White-breasted Nuthatch
- 9 Carolina Wren
- 4 Golden-crowned Kinglet
- 40 Eastern Bluebird
- 89 American Robin
- 16 Northern Mockingbird
- 780 European Starling
- 11 Cedar Waxwing
- 122 American Tree Sparrow
- 12 Song Sparrow
- 5 White-throated Sparrow
- 292 Dark-eyed Junco
- 77 Snow Bunting
- 82 Northern Cardinal
- 5 Red-winged Blackbird
- 5 Brown-headed Cowbird
- 123 House Finch
- 89 American Goldfinch
- 244 House Sparrow

For more about the CBC, see:  
<http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.



## New: Send us your backyard photos

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

We have many photographers among our members and online friends. Some of you use a simple point and shoot camera to record your backyard birds, while others pursue that "perfect shot" with professional equipment.

Whatever your level of expertise or interest, we invite you to submit photos of your backyard birds for consideration to be placed on our new webpage called, "Backyard Birding Behind the Lens."

Any photo taken on your own property, and within the SAAS chapter area of Warren, Washington, and northern Saratoga counties, will be considered.

We'd love to see some photos that show unusual bird behavior of commonly seen species. Technical excellence is not necessary; all we ask is that the photo be in focus and interesting!

We will choose some to be highlighted on our website, and will change the exhibit periodically.

The photo above shows a pair of Red-breasted Nuthatches sampling peanuts in my South Glens Falls backyard.

# Spring Field Trips: March to June, 2014

See the [SAAS website](#) for updates

## **Sunday, March 16 – Morning – Washington County Waterfowl**

Joint trip with Hudson Mohawk Bird Club

Coordinators: Joyce Miller ([nysbirdinglibrarian@gmail.com](mailto:nysbirdinglibrarian@gmail.com)) and Lindsey Duval ([eccentricvirgo@gmail.com](mailto:eccentricvirgo@gmail.com))

Join us as we search the Hudson River for migrant waterfowl such as Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Ducks and Mergansers. In recent years, Horned Grebe, Canvasbacks and Tundra Swans have been life birds for many. Meet at Schuylerville Central School on Route 29. This is primarily car birding. To keep cars to a minimum, we'll carpool; please avoid wearing fragrance. The trip is limited to the first 12 who register. Contact one of the leaders before 7 p.m. on March 16 to register and for meeting time. Dress warmly and bring a beverage/snack, your binoculars and a scope, if wanted. Trip will end late morning. You will be contacted if the trip is cancelled due to weather.

## **Friday, April 4 – 9 a.m. – Monthly Walk at the Betar Byway**

Birding walks led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon are held on the first Friday of every month starting in April, weather permitting. Each 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 required.

## **Saturday, April 26 – 8 a.m. – Bog Meadow Trail, Saratoga Springs**

Join Rich Speidel in search of spring birds and waterfowl on the Bog Meadow trail, which includes an extensive boardwalk system through wetland communities: open marsh, wet meadow and forested wetland. Group size is limited, so call Rich to register: 623-2587. Rain date is Sunday, April 27.

## **Friday, May 2 – 9 a.m. – Monthly Birding Walk at the Betar Byway**

Birding walk is led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, weather permitting. This 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 required.

## **Saturday, May 17 – 8 a.m. – Gurney Lane Recreation Area**

Birding walk led by Mona Bearor and Pat Fitzgerald on the trails of Gurney Lane in Queensbury. Easy trails along a small stream and forested woodlands. Meet at the back entrance in the parking area behind Westmount Health Facility. Call Pat at 792-6846 for more information. No registration required.

## **Saturday, May 24 – 9 a.m. – Five Combines Feeder Canal Park**

Led by Jim Ries, 792-4477 ([jimries@roadrunner.com](mailto:jimries@roadrunner.com))

We will walk the bike trail for about 2 miles along the Five Combines and Feeder Canal. The habitat ranges from field edges to wetland areas to stands of tall hardwood trees and should provide for some great birding. Meet at the Five Combines Feeder Canal parking lot off Burgoyne Avenue. Directions: From Northway Exit 17 turn north on Rt. 9, travel about one mile to Rt. 197 (Reynolds Rd.), turn right and travel five miles into Ft. Edward. Turn left onto Rt. 4, drive one-half mile, then take a right turn on Maple Avenue just past Ft. Edward Elementary School. Bear left onto Burgoyne Avenue and travel about one and one-half miles to the parking lot, just past Jones Avenue, on the right.

## **Saturday, May 31 – 9 a.m. – Hudson Crossing Park, Schuylerville**

Led by Jim Ries, 792-4477 ([jimries@roadrunner.com](mailto:jimries@roadrunner.com))

Located just north of Schuylerville on Route 4, Hudson River Crossing Park is part of the Champlain Canal, Lock 5 Island. We will walk through the wooded areas along the river on the paved trails. Meet at the Lock 5 parking lot.

## **Friday, June 6 – 9 a.m. – Monthly Birding Walk at the Betar Byway**

Birding walk is led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, weather permitting. This 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 required.

## **Membership Update**

# **Thanks to our generous supporters!**

As of February 1, we have 89 chapter supporters. Our newest chapter supporters are:

Betty Barth	Melbourne, FL
Ronald Briggs	Queensbury
Cliff Costa	Chestertown
Wally Elton	Saratoga Springs
Louis Ferrari	Schuylerville
Dan Furbish	Saratoga Springs
Mary Rose Holzhauer	Queensbury
Carol Kirk	Gig Harbor, WA
Barbara Kolapakka	Saratoga Springs
Richard Leibold	Glens Falls
John & Faith Parker	Saratoga Springs
Don Sevits	Saratoga Springs
Susan & Peter Shea	Amherst, MA
Frank Sollasy	Argyle
Al Thompson	Saratoga Springs

Renewal notices were sent out in January. We are grateful for all who renewed their chapter supporter membership, and to the following members who included an additional donation for our chapter operating expenses.

Barbara Beatty  
Carol Blackwell  
Ann Blanchard  
Rosamund Butler  
Maureen Coutant  
Helen & Bill Crawshaw  
Mark & Amy Cronin  
Charlotte Demers  
Gordon R. Ellmers  
Charles Farrar  
Nancy Forgette  
Daniel Furbish  
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Alan and Elizabeth Gee  
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Licia G. Mackey  
Lurana & Mich McCarron  
Bernice Mennis  
Phyllis Miyauchi  
Don & Nan Polunci  
Barbara J. Putnam  
Leeanne & Gary Raga  
John Reber  
Jim Ries  
Frank Sollosy  
Holly Vegas  
Other anonymous donors

During the months of January, February, and March we are having a Chapter Supporter membership campaign.

To help us boost our membership, the **Wild Birds Unlimited Store in Saratoga Springs** is offering a **\$10 Gift Card** to anyone who becomes a Southern Adirondack Audubon Society Chapter Supporter during this drive. Because our annual membership is only \$10, it will be like joining us for FREE! Many thanks to owners Nancy Castillo and Lois Geshiwlrm for this generous offer. The gift cards will be sent to you when you send us your annual dues. A membership form can be found on our website. These cards are valid at the Saratoga Springs store only and are good until Dec. 31, 2014.

Please make checks or money orders payable to SAAS and send your payment to: Barbara Beatty, 12 Heinrich St., Queensbury, NY 12804. Thank you!



## **Choose bird-friendly coffee**

*(continued from back page)*

a more environmentally friendly coffee, started putting a “shade-grown” label on their coffee. This could simply mean that a few trees are left standing, but in most cases the deep canopy of the traditional farms that supports the birds is gone.



Realizing that the migratory birds are in trouble, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center in Washington, D.C. has developed a strict certification program for coffee growers who continue to use the traditional practices of truly shade-grown coffee. This program combines organic farming and fair trade standards with environmentally friendly approaches that require a multi-layered canopy, and little or no use of pesticides or manufactured fertilizers.

This coffee, certified by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, is called “Bird-friendly” coffee. The farms certified as bird-friendly tend to have much more bird species diversity than the larger industrial farms.

You won’t find this bird-friendly coffee at your local supermarket, at Starbucks, or the nearby coffee shop.

Birds and Beans™ is a company that supplies Smithsonian certified bird-friendly coffee. It can be ordered online at <http://www.birdsandbeans.com> or purchased at the *Wild Birds Unlimited* store in Saratoga.

Drinking bird-friendly coffee is one way to help preserve wintering habitat for our migratory songbirds.



**The Fledgling**  
79 Laurel Lane  
Queensbury, NY 12804

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## Choose bird-friendly coffee

In a few weeks, we will be anticipating the return of the birds that winter in warmer climates.

Where do they go and how do they fare there? Some go only as far south as they need to in order to find sufficient food, but others go much farther south, making for some fantastic migration trips.

Over 40 species of songbirds that spend their summers in our area spend the winter months in coffee plantations as far as Central and South America.

But not any coffee plantation will do. The heavily-shaded coffee farms under the forest canopy provide the best habitat for the wintering migrants. Scarlet tanagers, several warbler species, hummingbirds, and orioles all find the habitat they need to sustain them in Central and South American coffee farms.

Unfortunately, this particular type of habitat is being cut



down and, of the species that winter there, 22 have significant declining populations.

Traditionally, coffee has been a forest floor crop grown under a dense overhead canopy. When the Dutch introduced the coffee crop to Central America in the 1700s, it was grown without artificial fertilizers or pesticides. The forest floor is fertilized naturally by decaying leaf litter and the birds eat the insects that could be detrimental to the coffee plants.

Recently, investors have seen the value of the coffee farms and have been buying up the smaller ones, converting them into sun-grown plantations for higher yields and bigger profits. The forest is cut down and burned. Because there is less leaf litter, chemical fertilizers and pesticides are now applied. Although this leads to more profits for the investors, it leads to less habitat for the birds.

But just because a coffee boasts of being shade-grown does not mean it is better for the birds. Many coffee growers, realizing that cutting down the forests might not appeal to conscientious coffee-buyers looking for

(continued on page 7)