

The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 31 No. 3, June 2014 - August 2014

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

This newsletter is in color online!

Success: DEC finalizes acquisition in Grasslands IBA

By Jason Goldsmith,
Conservation Chair

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced that it has finalized its purchase of property along Blackhouse Road and Fitzpatrick Drive in the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area.

The acquisition brings the total land protected by the DEC to 288 acres. The DEC made the announcement in an April 23 meeting with Audubon New York, Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) and Audubon Society of the Capital Region.

This newly owned property will be called the Washington County Grasslands State Forest. It will be designated multiple use and managed for grassland birds, including many that are threatened or endangered in New York State.

The DEC, with Audubon New York and SAAS, will write a unit management plan

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Hay mowing affects nesting birds

By Jason Goldsmith,
Conservation Chair

Grassland birds are among the most critically threatened populations in North America, in large part due to lack of suitable habitat.

In the Northeast, hayfields provide some of the most commonly used grassland bird breeding habitat. If not managed with breeding birds in mind, hayfields may become unsuitable traps that draw in birds but don't allow them to reproduce successfully.

Advancements in agronomy have allowed us to squeeze more feed from less cropland. Hayfields are now cut more frequently to produce as much as possible from dwindling farmland acres. However, the benefit is not without costs, and in this case grassland birds are picking up the tab. Today, hay fields are often mowed two or three times during the nesting period, not allowing birds to complete the process.

For the habitat potential of New York's hayfields to be realized, mowing must be adjusted to the timing of the bird breeding season.

Several timing options can be employed to immediately benefit grassland bird reproduction in working hayfields. If forage quality is not the priority, avoid mowing at all before August 20th. Nearly all nesting will be completed by this

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Dr. Gordon Ellmers photographed this Eastern Meadowlark last July on Cary Road in the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area.

SAAS celebrates 30 years! Page 3

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**Southern Adirondack Audubon Society
Board and Committees**

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Carol Moyer

2013-2015 Jim Campinell
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Board meetings are held monthly. Members are invited to attend. Contact Pat Fitzgerald for details.

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Publicity: Carol Moyer (518-793-1960)

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Membership: Barbara Beatty (518-793-1454)

DEC – Continued from page 1

to promote optimal grassland habitat for birds whose numbers have rapidly declined in recent decades.

Since 2006, SAAS has worked with the DEC and Audubon New York to protect this area which is critical for grassland birds.

With the DEC's purchase and management plan there will be many opportunities for involvement from our members. From habitat restoration to monitoring, education to outreach, we call on all our members to get involved to help protect this unique area.

For more information on how you can help, contact Jason Goldsmith at adk_wild_jay@yahoo.com.

Young birders invited to join club

The **New York State Young Birders Club** (NYSYBC) was started six years ago to develop a new generation of birders and committed conservationists. Young people aged 10 to 19 are invited to join NYSYBC to develop their birding skills, meet other young birders and participate in field trips around the state.

The Young Birder's Club was started by the N.Y.S. Ornithological Association (NYSOA). NYSYBC has grown from eight members in 2008 to 40 today. For more, see <http://www.nysyoungbirders.org/>.

The annual fundraising drive is now underway to replenish the scholarship fund.

With the help of adult birders, NYSYBC has awarded more than \$11,000 in scholarships to young birders to help them participate in youth-oriented birding and conservation programs. Most recently, the NYSYBC's Razorbills team competed in the World Series of Birding in New Jersey on May 10.

- To donate online: go to the NYSYBC donation page: <https://nybirds.org/membership/NYSYBC/donation.html>.
- To donate with a check, please make it out to NYSOA and send it to the NYSYBC Adult Chair and NYSOA vice-president, Carena Pooth, 22 Brothers Rd., Poughquag, NY 12570.

NYSOA is New York State's ornithological society. The objectives of NYSOA are to document the ornithology of New York State, to foster interest in and appreciation of birds and to protect birds and their habitats.

NYSOA has two types of members: Member Clubs/Organizations and Individual Members. SAAS is a member club. For more about NYSOA, see <http://www.nysoa.org>.

Hay Mowing - Continued from page 1

date. If forage quality is a high priority, mow once prior to Memorial Day, followed by a 65-day period without any mowing. This waiting period will be long enough to allow some species like Bobolinks to complete the nesting process and fledge a brood during most years. The earlier cutting helps boost the nutritional value of the late cutting.

For more information, go to: <http://ny.audubon.org/grasslands-and-shrublands>.

President's Message: **Happy 30th, SAAS!**

By Pat Fitzgerald, President

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society has had a busy spring. We have been listening for the return of the migrant birds and participating in many activities throughout the area.

For Earth Day, we joined the Feeder Canal Alliance in their **Canal Clean Sweep**, helping to rake and pick up trash along the canal in Hudson Falls.

Later in April, we met with staff of the DEC in the **Washington County Grasslands IBA** to clean up the newly acquired DEC property and install Eastern Bluebird boxes. Members of the Glens Falls-Saratoga chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) and the Friends of the IBA also helped.

Most recently, we were at **Moreau Lake State Park** helping to build a bird blind at Mud Pond. This latest activity was made possible by a grant through Audubon New York and funds from the Friends of Moreau Lake State Park.

The next few months will also be filled with activities and I hope you will join us. We will be at **Wilton Wildlife Preserve** for their nature festival on **June 1**. Volunteers are needed to staff our table, help children paint decorative bird boxes, sell raffle tickets and promote our organization by signing up new



members. We will also have a table at local **Farmers' Markets** to give out information and introduce people to Southern Adirondack Audubon.

Lastly, Southern Adirondack Audubon is celebrating its **30th year anniversary**. Please join us at our **June 25 monthly program** as we recognize the founding members, past presidents, officers and board members. Refreshments will be served. See page 5 for details.

Above: Happy but tired volunteers pose with the results of their cleanup efforts at the Washington County Grasslands IBA. Below: Volunteers built a bird blind at Mud Pond in Moreau Lake State Park. More small viewing slots will be added so visitors can watch wildlife in the pond below. (Photo above by Laura McCarthy; photos below by Sue Pierce.)



Birding by the Month

Bird activity picks up

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

June

- Baltimore Orioles are nest building and feeding young; you can easily find them on the Towpath Road in Hudson Falls and on the Betar Trail in South Glens Falls.
- Bobolinks are singing and displaying in the agricultural grasslands. It is a real treat to listen to them and watch their courtship behavior.
- Now is the time to try to find the eight species of sparrows that reside in our area in the summer months. Look and listen for Chipping, Field, Vesper, Savannah, Grasshopper, Henslow's, Song and Swamp Sparrows.

July

- Shorebirds are on their way south already. Keep an eye on short grassy fields or any bare or plowed ground after a rain.
- Swallows form large flocks in preparation for migration. Look for them on utility wires in open agricultural areas.
- Get out and bird the Towpath Road in Hudson Falls. Even on these hot mid-summer days there is a lot of action!

August

- Great Egrets visit the area. They are known for post-breeding wandering, and are seen annually along the Hudson River from West River Road.
- Common Nighthawks begin migrating at mid-month; look for them along river valleys at dusk as they fly silently overhead.
- Raptors begin to migrate south. Watch for them locally or visit the Franklin Mountain hawk watch in Oneonta.

Dr. Gordon Ellmers noticed this Gray Catbird with a billfull of insects in Fort Edward in July, 2013. This bird did not eat the food immediately, so could be carrying food back to its chicks.

Species Spotlight

Gray Catbird is a mimic

The Gray Catbird is a slim, nine-inch bird with a long tail, slate gray body, dark cap and rust-colored rump patch.

Catbirds winter along the Atlantic and Gulf coast, arriving in the Southern Adirondacks by late April and early May. Gray Catbirds breed in eastern and central U.S., as well as southern Canada.

The Gray Catbird's nasal meow call is familiar to most people. Like its relatives, mockingbirds and thrashers, a Gray Catbird imitates other birds' calls. Its long and complex song is composed of rapid, squeaky, sputtering notes, whistles and chatters. It will also imitate non-bird sounds such as frogs. The female sings quietly in response to the male's song.

Gray Catbirds eat insects such as grasshoppers, caterpillars and ants. They also consume fruit and berries, including poison ivy, grapes, cherries, strawberries and blackberries.

A nesting pair will defend a territory of about two acres. They place their nests at an average height of four feet, in low, thick shrubby areas. The deep, cup-shaped nest is made of twigs and lined with rootlets and grape bark. The female lays from one to six blue eggs.

Sources:

- Stokes, D. (1979). Gray Catbird. *Stokes Nature Guides: A Guide to Bird Behavior* vol. 1. Boston: Little Brown.
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology. (2014). Gray Catbird. *AllAbout Birds*. Retrieved from http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/gray_catbird/



Monthly Program

"All About Bluebirds - and More" with 30th celebration

June 25, 2014

- 6 p.m.: 30th Anniversary Celebration
- 7 p.m.: Monthly Program

The June monthly program at Crandall Library will feature the club's 30th anniversary celebration with refreshments at 6 p.m., to mark the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society's incorporation in 1984.

It will be followed at 7 p.m. by the monthly program by John Rogers. He will share his passion for the Eastern Bluebird, New York State's official state bird.



Rogers' multimedia presentation will include the life history of the Eastern Bluebird, nest box management and more. Although the focus is definitely on bluebirds, Rogers

also shares his fascination with the natural world. With beautiful photographs, sounds, and a sincere, enthusiastic presentation style, this program will interest anyone who appreciates nature.

Rogers was a co-founder of the New York State Bluebird Society in 1982 and is a lifetime volunteer director. He has received numerous awards for his bluebird conservation work, including the John and Norah Lane Bluebird Conservation Award from the North American Bluebird Society. By maintaining a trail of bluebird nest boxes in central New York, Rogers has personally fledged over 13,000 bluebirds.

Please avoid wearing fragranced products to the program as a courtesy to others. No public monthly programs are offered in July and August. The next monthly program will be held in September.

SAAS monthly programs are held in the Christine McDonald Auditorium, on the lower level of Crandall Library in downtown Glens Falls. Contact Crandall at 792-6508 if extreme weather may close the library.

Does this baby bird need help?

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

As we enter the season when fledglings are leaving the nest, we commonly receive calls about a young bird on the ground that "needs help."

Although there are times when this is true, often the



This fledgling American Robin's parents were likely nearby, watching and feeding it. Though vulnerable, it does not need human intervention. (Photo: American Robin, "Chick," Wikipedia Commons)

bird has recently left the nest and is being cared for by an adult bird that may be out of sight to the observer.

After making sure that there are no cats, dogs or other predators that could harm the bird, you may want to Google Cornell's "**Orphaned**" Baby Birds webpage. This will help you determine if the bird does need assistance and, if so, what the best course of action would be. The webpage offers simple instructions to see if a bird is a fledgling or a nestling, to help you decide what you should do, if anything.

If a rehabber is needed, our local North Country Wild Care may be reached at (518) 964-6740. Their volunteers are specially trained to care for these young birds and would have the best chance of success in raising them to adulthood.

Publicity volunteer needed

Our chapter is in need of a volunteer to handle the publicity for the monthly public programs.

This would involve preparing a press release or simple short description of the program and submitting it electronically to the area newspapers. All contact information will be provided and samples of previous months' submissions will be supplied. Contact with all presenters to obtain the necessary information can all be done by email, allowing this work to be completed at any time of day - no work schedule!

If you would like to help, please contact us at publicity@southernadironackaudubon.org and we will help you prepare for the fall season's programs.

Spring field trips: June to August, 2014

See the SAAS website for updates: <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

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

Birding walks, led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, are scheduled on the first Friday of every month, weather permitting. Each will last about one and a half hours. Meet at 8 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. Contact Pat Fitzgerald (792-6846; fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com) for more information. No registration required.

Saturday, June 7 – 1 p.m. – Coles Woods' Wildflowers

Enjoy a leisurely nature walk led by wildflower expert and author Diane Collins. This trip will focus on how to identify wildflowers using the book *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*. Meet in the Glens Falls YMCA back parking lot in Queensbury.

Friday, July 4 – No Monthly Betar Byway Walk. The walk will not be held this month because of the holiday.

Wednesday, July 16 – 9 a.m. – Warren County Bike Path Bike-and-Bird

Leisurely ride along the Warren County Bike Path, stopping along the way to watch and listen for birds. Contact Pat Fitzgerald (792-6846; fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com) for information and to register. Group size is limited.

Friday, August 1 – 9 a.m. – Monthly Birding Walk at the Betar Byway

Birding walks, led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, are scheduled on the first Friday of every month, weather permitting. Each will last about one and a half hours. Meet at 8 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. Contact Pat Fitzgerald (792-6846; fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com) for more information. No registration required.

Wednesday, August 13 – 9 a.m. – Fort Edward Bike-and-Bird

Leisurely ride along the Bike Path in Fort Edward, stopping along the way to watch and listen for birds. Contact Pat Fitzgerald (792-6846; fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com) or information and to register. Group size is limited.

Field trip report: Fort Miller, Washington County

A dozen birders from the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club and SAAS joined together on Sunday, March 16 for a field trip from Schuylerville in Saratoga County to Fort Miller in Washington County. The day was very cold and windy. Snow covered the ground in many places. Many usual wetland and river stops were frozen over.

The group spotted five Bald Eagles (two immatures and three adults), Canvasback, Redheads and many Common Goldeneyes. The Canvasback and Redheads were life species for some birders in the group.

Jacquie Tinker contributed this trip photo. It shows four birds representing three species in the *Aythya* duck genus: a Redhead and a Canvasback in the foreground and male and female Greater Scaup in the background.

The group also enjoyed close views of a Pileated Woodpecker on a sumac tree and saw Red-bellied Woodpeckers but surprisingly, no Downies or Hairies. This trip, offered for many years, averages about 42 species. It was a nice surprise to get at least 39 species, despite the chilly winter conditions.





SAAS Education Chair Mona Bearor photographed this male Northern Flicker (left) feeding its chick last summer in her South Glens Falls yard.

Send us backyard bird photos!

In the Spring issue of *The Fledgling*, we announced a new webpage which will highlight photos of backyard birds. As birds begin nesting and migrants return, photo opportunities will increase, so we hope to have some interesting photos to display. Please send your photos to photos@southernadironackaudubon.org, then visit the SAAS website to see your photos online!

Membership update

As of May 1, we have 113 Chapter Supporters. Our newest members are:

Linda Maxwell	Hudson Falls
Steven Scalia	Queensbury
Kenneth Beckley	Greenfield
Susan Nichols	Lake George
Dennis Jones	Schuylerville
Tom Mowatt	Clemons
Barbara Cloran	Indian Lake
Sandra Stoffolano	Queensbury
Sharon Meyer	Burnt Hills

The \$10 Gift Card membership incentive from the Wild Birds Unlimited Store in Saratoga Springs yielded 17 new chapter supporters. We thank the owners of the store for their generous support of our chapter.

- By Pat Fitzgerald, President

"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.

Best birding apps reviewed

A plethora of birding apps are now available for iPhone, iPad, Android and other devices.

Ones that are often mentioned are:

- *Merlin Bird ID* (from Cornell)
- *iBird Pro*
- *BirdsEye*
- *Audubon Field Guide to North American Birds*
- *Peterson Birds of North America*
- *Sibley eGuide to the Birds of North America*
- *National Geographic*
- *BirdLog*
- *Bird Codes*

For details, see these websites:

- **All About Birds:** <http://blog.allaboutbirds.org/2013/12/05/our-review-best-iphone-apps-for-learning-bird-songs/>

- **The Nature Conservancy:** <http://blog.nature.org/science/2013/05/27/boucher-bird-blog-apps-smart-birder/>

- **BirdWatching-Bliss Blog:** <http://www.birdwatching-bliss.com/birding-apps-for-iphone.html>

CCD research continues

Colony Collapse Disorder is a syndrome in which adult honeybees disappear from their hives in massive numbers. CCD was first noticed about 10 years ago by beekeepers.

Scientists are researching several possible culprits. Current research is looking into a combination of stressors. Pesticides may leave honeybees more susceptible to certain parasitic mites. Particular bacteria and viruses may also play roles.

Wildlife enthusiasts may want to reconsider the use of pesticides on their lawns and gardens.

One of the most heavily used insecticides in the world, imidacloprid, is a neonicotinoid, which may contribute to CCD. For ways to reduce use of pesticides in your yards and gardens, see: <http://athome.audubon.org/eliminate-or-reduce-pesticide-use>.

For more information about CCD, see "Honey Bees and Colony Collapse Disorder" by the U.S. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.ars.usda.gov/News/docs.htm?docid=15572>.

A third of American crops rely on pollination by the honeybee, according to a 2013 *Scientific American* article, "Return of the Natives."

The Western Honeybee, *Apis Mellifera*, was brought to North America in the 1600s. It is native to Europe, western Asia and Africa.



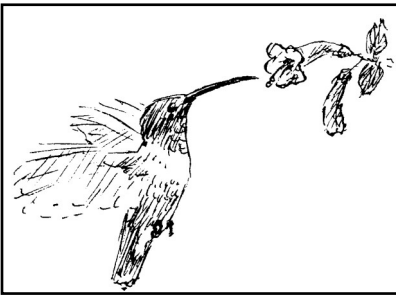
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"Hummingbirds at Home" is Audubon's Newest Citizen Science Program

Hummingbirds must sync their migration and nesting times with the flowering of nectar-bearing plants. Scientific research is essential to understand how climate change may affect hummingbirds.

"Hummingbirds at Home," National Audubon's newest citizen science program, asks participants to document the flowering plants the hummingbirds are feeding on in their backyards as well as whether hummingbird feeders are supplied and used.



The program gathers data on changing flowering patterns, timing of hummingbird migration and breeding success, and the impact of feeders and non-native nectar sources in gardens. For the past year, more than 9,200 volunteers

have shared observations of feeding hummingbirds.

Audubon plans to develop a series of region-specific recommendations to help birders make their gardens better stocked with nutrient-rich nectar sources, especially during the critical post-migration and breeding seasons. Go to <http://www.hummingbirdsathome.org> to learn more. This Audubon website includes tutorial videos and information about hummingbirds.

In New York State, Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the most common hummingbird species. For a migration map and more about the 17 species of hummingbirds that breed in North America, see: <http://www.hummingbirds.net/>.

Watch nest-cams on the web

See nesting birds' activities live at these websites:

- **All About Birds:** <http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/> (Owls, Red-tailed Hawks, Herons, Albatross, more);
- **National Audubon:** <http://projectpuffin.audubon.org/audubon-live-cams> (Atlantic Puffins, Osprey, Terns).