

# The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 32 No. 1, September - November 2014

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

This newsletter is in color online!



A Peregrine Falcon fledgling perches on a ledge in a Glens Falls quarry. Photo by Mona Bearor.

## Peregrine nesting is a success!

By Mona Bearor  
Education Chair

A Peregrine Falcon fledgling has taken to the skies above Glens Falls again this year. Our resident pair nests in a local quarry on private property. As a volunteer nest watcher for the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) I have the pleasure of watching the nesting progress each year.

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## Wildlife talks set for fall

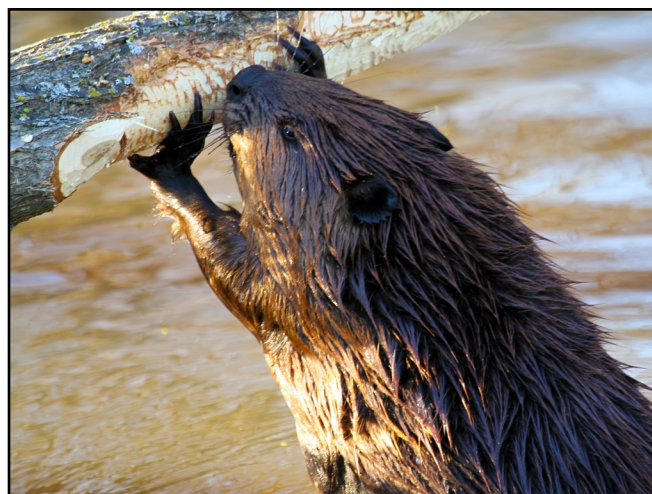
Adirondack beavers, timber rattlesnakes and the beauty of the region are featured in the monthly program series of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society. Programs are held the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Christine L. McDonald Community Room on the lower level of Crandall Library in downtown Glens Falls.

Naturalist and educator Tom Kalinowski will present "**Life of a Family of Adirondack Beavers**" on **Wednesday, Sept. 24**. Kalinowski is an avid outdoor enthusiast who taught field biology and ecology at Saranac Lake High School for 33 years. He has written many articles relating to the natural history of the Adirondacks for various publications, and currently writes nature articles for the *Adirondack Almanack*, an online journal.

The slide show and talk will focus on the natural history of the beaver in the Adirondacks, including their habits, young and winter survival techniques. Kalinowski will also offer a brief historical view of the beaver in the Adirondacks and the importance of this animal in promoting the exploration of North America centuries ago. The program is illustrated with photographs of a family of beavers that were studied over a span of several years. Few forms of wildlife have as noticeable an impact on the environment, Kalinowski says. This large rodent can transform a slow moving brook or woodland stream into a sizeable pond in a few short months, and can obliterate a stand of poplars and other trees near the shores.

Biologist and educator Dr. Bill Brown will present "**Timber Rattlesnake: What you Always Wanted to Know, but Were Afraid to Ask**" on **Wednesday, Oct. 22** at 7 p.m. Dr. Brown will review the basic biology of the Timber Rattlesnake and focus on research questions about its conservation

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A beaver gnaws on a tree in this photo by Don Polunci.

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**Win an original print!**  
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## Southern Adirondack Audubon Society Board and Committees

### Website:

<http://www.southernadironackaudubon.org>

Email: [info@southernadironackaudubon.org](mailto:info@southernadironackaudubon.org)

### Officers:

President: Pat Fitzgerald

(518-792-6846; [fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com](mailto:fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com))

Vice-President: OPEN

Secretary: Linda Hoyt (518-494-2380)

Treasurer: Mona Bearor (518-745-8637)

### Board of Directors:

**2011-2014** Barbara Beatty  
Linda Hoyt  
Sue Pierce

**2012-2015** Jason Goldsmith  
Joyce Miller  
Carol Moyer

**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

([editor@southernadironackaudubon.org](mailto:editor@southernadironackaudubon.org))

**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" on Facebook. You'll stay updated on SAAS programs, field trips and other news and activities. You may also get alerts about last-minute field trips!

## September board meeting

The September board meeting will be held at the Crandall Public Library on Sunday, September 14 from 3 – 5 p.m. All board meetings are open to the public.

## Send us your photos

The SAAS website features a new webpage highlighting photos of backyard birds. Please send your photos to [photos@southernadironackaudubon.org](mailto:photos@southernadironackaudubon.org), then visit the SAAS website to see your photos online!

## Peregrines *Continued from page 1*

A little history: in 2002, fledgling Peregrine Falcons were observed in the area by SAAS member Paul Saffold, an employee of Finch Pruyn. Paul had previously seen falcons occasionally, but after seeing the fledglings he put in many hours watching until he located a nest site in the spring of 2005. He was able to confirm two fledglings that year and the pair continued to successfully nest every year until 2011 when the male of the pair was fatally injured while hunting. The female found a new mate and returned the following year to raise two young, and has successfully nested each year since.

According to Barbara Loukes, the former Peregrine Falcon Program Coordinator, this was the only pair known to nest in an active quarry. The quarry workers were very interested in the birds and were proud to host them each year. The female has been observed on eggs with dynamite charges set not far from the nest. She would wait until the warning horn was sounded and immediately fly above the nest, hover until the blast went off, then return to the nest. What an amazing adaptation!

In the fall of 2010, mining operations ceased and the quarry immediately began to fill with water - it is currently over 50' deep. It is interesting to note that the birds are much more wary of my presence since the quarry ceased operations. For years, they accepted the presence of people and activity during mining operations. Now, they have become acclimated to the quiet. In the past, they only vocalized or acted aggressive towards me if I was on the quarry floor near the nest site. Now they often begin their "screaming" calls as soon as they detect my car arriving.

While I was vacationing this spring, SAAS Board member Barbara Beatty kept an eye on the birds for me. She observed the adults perched in the quarry area several times so we hoped for another successful nesting season.

On May 7th the female was observed on the nest and eggs were seen, and on June 3rd a hatchling was observed being fed by the female. Two nestlings were confirmed on June 12th and again on June 30th, however, on July 4th there was only one young bird at the nest site. It remains a mystery as to what the fate of the other nestling was. At times a smaller nestling will not get enough food; over two inches of rain on July 3rd may have contributed to sickness or death as well.

On July 6th, the fledgling Peregrine was observed perched on a tower away from the nest site and was seen shortly thereafter flying high above the quarry with strong wingbeats. So closes another successful year for our resident Peregrine Falcons. I'm hoping we see them soaring above our city for years to come.



# Wildlife talks

*Continued from page 1*

status. His talk is aimed toward outdoor enthusiasts and naturalists who may encounter a rattlesnake in the wild. He will share anecdotes of human-rattlesnake incidents that illustrate the "other side" of doing biological research on this animal.

In New York, Timber Rattlesnakes are distributed among scattered overwintering dens in more than 20 counties. Many populations were extirpated or depleted throughout the state over the past two centuries. The species was listed as "threatened" in 1983 and has been fully protected under New York State law for the past 30 years.

In the northeastern sector of the state, rattlesnake dens represent ancestral populations which have been in continuous existence for approximately 8,000 years following climatic warming and withdrawal of the most recent glacial ice sheet. Once colonized, each den enhances winter survival and maintains a stable population.

Timber Rattlesnakes hibernate for seven months, from October through April. After emerging, the active season lasts five months, from May through September. Each spring, the snakes migrate a distance from one to three miles between their winter dens and their summer foraging grounds. In its deciduous forest habitat, the Timber Rattlesnake is an important predator of small mammals and thus plays an important role in the natural food web.

Over the past three decades, the author's field study has revealed new information on the Timber Rattlesnake's life history. It is a long-lived species; recent recaptures of snakes initially marked as adults over 30 years ago show that the maximum confirmed lifespan exceeds 40 years.



*Adirondack photographer Carl Heilman captured this close-up of a Timber Rattlesnake.*

Females do not reproduce for the first time until an age of about nine to 10 years. Adult females have a low birthing frequency, reproducing only at three- and four-year intervals, on average. The estimated survival rate is low in the first year, while adults survive at a much higher rate.

In July and August, rattlesnakes move often and may come into contact with humans in homes and campsites. On a hiking trail on a warm summer day, encountering a rattlesnake is an uncommon but memorable outdoor experience.

The snake's behavior contributes to the low danger of rattlesnake bite. Shy and retiring, Timber Rattlesnakes normally are not aggressive and will attempt to escape. However, if provoked or disturbed, a Timber Rattlesnake may hold its ground, coiled and rattling, until the human intruder disappears. Common-sense precautions are simple: enjoy seeing a live rattlesnake, perhaps photograph it, and leave it alone. First-aid and medical approaches to venomous snakebite will be discussed.

Dr. Brown is a vertebrate zoologist

and herpetologist. He is an emeritus professor of biology at Skidmore College and Lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University at Albany. He is also a Visiting Research Scientist at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Darrin Freshwater Institute in Bolton Landing.

Dr. Brown's research on the life history and ecology of the Timber Rattlesnake is now in its 36th year. Brown's study involves capturing, marking, releasing, and recapturing rattlesnakes in the southeastern Adirondacks. His field research is the longest continuous capture-recapture study of any rattlesnake conducted in the wild. He actively publishes his research in periodicals and peer-reviewed scientific journals.

He has served as a consultant for New York State, conservation groups and landowners in evaluating development projects impacting reptiles and amphibians and other wildlife. He is an editor and author for a national group of research biologists producing a "Conservation Action Plan" for the Timber Rattlesnake.

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## **Birding by the Month**

# **Watch for fall migrants**

*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.

## **Birding Hotspots:**

Wondering where to see these great birds in the Southern Adirondack area? See the SAAS website's Birding page (<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/birding/birding.html>).

The page offers details on the Betar Byway, Carter's Pond, the Fort Edward Grasslands, Bog Meadow Trail, Denton Preserve and the Towpath Road in Kingsbury, among other areas.



*The black bridle patterns on Blue Jays may help them identify one another. Dr. Gordon Ellmers photographed this Blue Jay.*

## **Species Spotlight**

# **Blue Jays plan ahead for winter**

*By Joyce Miller, Newsletter Editor*

Blue Jays will be busy this fall caching acorns and other food for the winter. Here are some Blue Jay facts:

Blue Jays aren't blue. Their feathers are colored brown by melanin. The way light hits the feather structures causes them to appear blue.

Even though they are such a familiar bird, much is not known about them. For instance, it's known that some Blue Jays migrate - perhaps 20%. However, those same birds may not migrate in other years.

Blue Jays primarily eat acorns, seeds and insects. They can carry up to five acorns at a time: perhaps three in a throat pouch and two more in their bill and mouth. They don't always retrieve cached nuts, so Blue Jays are thought to be a reason for the spread of oak trees after the last ice age.

Though many people think Blue Jays often raid other birds' nests, only 1% of Blue Jays were actually found to have bird or eggs in their digestive tracts in one thorough study.

Blue Jays are corvids, related to personality-filled and intelligent birds such as crows, magpies and ravens. Various Jay species are found around the world: Gray Jay, Green Jay, Turquoise Jay, Brown Jay, Siberian Jay and China's Sichuan Jay, for instance.

A raised Blue Jay crest indicates a higher aggression level. Jays usually lower their crests when feeding quietly with family members.

Blue Jays have been seen eating paint chips, perhaps to increase their calcium levels from limestone in paint. They have a high need for calcium.

They will also mate for life, and stay with their mate all year long.

For more information about Blue Jays, see this page from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds site: [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/blue\\_jay/](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/blue_jay/).



# Wildlife talks

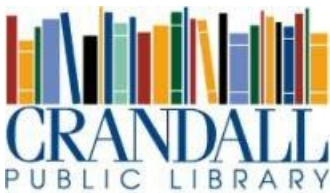
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Wildlife photographer Gerry Lemmo will present "Adirondack Timeless Treasures" on **Wednesday, Nov. 19** at 7 p.m.

The slide show features unspoiled wilderness scenes of the Adirondack Park, starting at Lake George and continuing through well-known sites and small communities, from Great Camp Sagamore to remote Copperas Pond.

His photography includes rugged mountains, inviting lakes and plentiful birds and animals.

Gerry Lemmo's photographs and articles have appeared in numerous magazines, including *Adirondack Life*, *National Geographic World*, *Audubon*, *Natural History*, *Ranger Rick*, *Defenders of Wildlife*, *The Nature Conservancy*, *WildBird* and *Birds & Blooms*.



He has hundreds of photo credits in books and calendars as well. His work has been published in over a dozen countries on four continents.

More information is available at

**Wilton Wildlife event:** SAAS volunteers again participated in the Wilton Wildlife Preserve's nature festival on June 1. The event offered guided nature walks, pond life exploration, live bird presentations and other hands-on crafts for children and adults to enjoy. Participants also planted Blue Lupines, the only food plant of the larvae of the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. To the right, children decorated bird houses at the SAAS nature craft table. This annual event is free and open to the public.



*This portrait of a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak will be one of the photos featured in November 19's program by Gerry Lemmo.*

<http://www.gerrylemmo.com/>.

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) is a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society. The organization's primary goal is to protect the environment by preserving natural habitats and promoting environmental education.

SAAS has more than 500 members in Warren, Washington and northern

Saratoga counties in New York State. Visit the SAAS website, <http://www.southernadironackaudubon.org>, for more information.

Please avoid wearing fragranced products to avoid triggering allergies, asthma, and migraines in others attending the programs.

The monthly programs are free and open to the public.



## Fall field trips: September to December, 2014

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

### Birding Walks along the Betar Byway, South Glens Falls Friday, September 5 and Friday, October 3

Birding walks will be led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, weather permitting. Walks will last about one and a half hours. 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 advance registration is required.

### President's Message

## Celebrating our 30th

*By Pat Fitzgerald, President*

In June, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society with a light dinner followed by a great program about Eastern Bluebirds by John Rogers.

Many founding members, past officers and board members came to celebrate with us. Audubon New York and National Audubon recognized our 30 years with a Certificate of Congratulations, presented by Laura McCarthy of Audubon New York. We extend a special thank you to Hannaford and Price Chopper grocery stores and several anonymous donors for their donations of food items for our anniversary dinner.

We are delighted that the number of chapter supporters has increased tremendously over the past six months. Our Membership Update is on the next page.

To ensure our success over the next 30 years, SAAS members need to become more involved in running the chapter. We are in need of volunteers to keep the chapter moving ahead. Specifically, we need people to fill these roles:

- someone able to maintain our e-mail files who can send out electronic notices about programs and field trips
- fund-raising committee members and
- a field trip chairperson.

We will be happy to work with volunteers who would like to be part of a team for any of these tasks.

If there is a job you would like to do, please contact me through our website, by phone (792-6846), or by e-mail ([fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com](mailto:fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com)). Thank you.

*Laura McCarthy, right, presents a certificate to SAAS President Pat Fitzgerald at the 30th anniversary dinner on June 25. Laura McCarthy is Manager of Conservation Engagement for Audubon New York. Southern Adirondack Audubon Society incorporated in 1984. This photo was taken by SAAS member John Loz.*





## You can win this print!

This limited edition print of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was donated to our chapter for fundraising purposes and will be offered as a special raffle item this fall.

Adirondack artist and author Lynn Ballou donated the print. Her sister, Carol Blackwell, donated the mat and frame. Southern Adirondack Audubon thanks them both for their thoughtfulness and generosity.

The artwork measures 8 by 10 inches. Matted and framed it measures 15 1/2" by 16 1/2".

The artwork will be on display and tickets will be sold at the three SAAS fall programs. The drawing will be held at the November program. Raffle tickets are \$1.00 each, or 6 for \$5.00.



## Nesting Bluebirds

This year our Eastern Bluebird monitors report 58 fledglings! We have had boxes around the chapter area for several years, and the bluebirds keep returning to raise their young.

Our sincere thanks go out to bluebird monitors Barbara Beatty, Pat Fitzgerald, Chris Germain, Joyce Miller, and Mary Lou Munger for their time and dedication.

If you would like to become a bluebird monitor, contact us at [info@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:info@southernadirondackaudubon.org).

## Membership update

Currently, 476 members of National Audubon live in our chapter area.

Many of our 129 chapter supporters belong to the National Audubon Society and also financially support our local efforts of conservation and education.

Our most recent new chapter supporters are:

Sally Quinn	Ballston Spa
Thomas Cummings	South Glens Falls
Roger and Libby Frohlich	Gansevoort
Rosemary Pusateri	Cleverdale
Sandra Jarrosiak	Queensbury
Elaine Angel	Bolton Landing
Kat Evans	Saratoga Springs
Pamela Hanke	Hadley
Tracey Clothier	Lake George
Donald Woodworth	South Glens Falls
Amy Godine	Saratoga Springs

## Interested in joining SAAS?

Become a Southern Adirondack Audubon Chapter Supporter for annual dues of only \$10 per household.

Members will receive Southern Adirondack Audubon's quarterly newsletter, *The Fledgling*, for one year and news about field trips and events.

All dues stay in this area and help support the monthly public programs, this newsletter, and other educational programs.

Gift memberships are available, and will be announced with an appropriate card at your request. It's a great holiday gift!

Print out the SAAS Chapter Supporter form on the SAAS Membership page (<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/> > Membership). Mail it with payment to Barbara Beatty, 12 Heinrick St., Queensbury, N.Y. 12804.

Any questions can be directed to Barbara Beatty by phone at 518-793-1454, or by email at: [membership@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:membership@southernadirondackaudubon.org).

## Bird Song Hero

Cornell Lab of Ornithology offers a fun new online way to learn bird songs: **Bird Song Hero** matching game, available free at <http://biology.allaboutbirds.org/bird-song-hero/>.

The game teaches you to recognize more than 50 bird songs, matching songs with its spectrogram visualization for species from around the world. Cornell's site says the game helps users "harnessing the power of the visual brain to help you identify the unique qualities of each song and commit sound patterns to memory."



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## **Bird blind ready to use at Moreau Lake State Park**

Our members helped to build a bird blind at Mud Pond at Moreau Lake State Park in early June. Park visitors can quietly view birds and other wildlife from the blind unobserved.

Here, SAAS board member Sue Pierce holds the sign "Wet Paint: Do Not Touch" as other volunteers put the final touches on the new blind. Sue was instrumental in coordinating this "Audubon in the Parks" project with the park's Friends group. Materials for the project were obtained with a grant from Audubon New York and funds from the Friends group. All work was completed by volunteers. This photo was taken by board member Jim Reis, who also helped paint.

The park is an important stopover site for migrating songbirds. It is also a significant wintering site for threatened species such as Bald Eagle, Pied-billed Grebe, and Northern Harrier. Google Moreau Lake State Park to reach their website, which has a downloadable map of the park's Bird Conservation Area.