



# The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 33 No. 2, December 2015 - February 2016

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

This newsletter is in color online!

## Bird Counts set for Dec. 19, 20

Area birders and nature enthusiasts are invited to join other SAAS members in the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on Saturday, December 19. The Lake George Land Conservancy's CBC in Bolton is also on Dec. 19. The Saratoga CBC is on Dec. 20.

Tens of thousands of volunteers will participate in more than 2,000 individual counts throughout the Americas from mid-December to early January. The information 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 Glens Falls, South Glens Falls, Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, and much of Queensbury and Moreau.

Birders of all skill levels are needed. Non-birders are welcomed to help spot birds or keep team records. Most of the birding is done from a car. Some teams may walk along trails or in area parks. It's a fun way to get to know area birders and increase your skills. To join a count team for a whole or partial day, contact Linda White at 518-222-5675 or email [lindamezzadonna@gmail.com](mailto:lindamezzadonna@gmail.com). See page 7 for details.

The Christmas Bird Census started in 1900 as an alternative to Christmas "side hunts," competitions to see which teams could shoot the most birds and other animals.



*This scene from the making of The Lost Bird Project features a Giant Auk bronze sculpture. It is installed on Fogo Island, Newfoundland, Canada. (Photo courtesy of Lost Bird Project, <http://www.lostbirdfilm.org/press>.)*

## Programs to alternate between Glens Falls, Saratoga

Starting in 2016, SAAS monthly programs will alternate between Crandall Library in Glens Falls and the Saratoga Springs Public Library.

Many SAAS members live in the Saratoga Springs area. The SAAS board hopes this encourages those members to attend programs.

SAAS does not hold a monthly program meeting in December, and

instead will host the Christmas Bird Count on Dec. 19.

The film *The Lost Bird Project* will be shown on Wednesday, **January 27** at the **Saratoga Springs Public Library**.

The Labrador Duck, Great Auk, Heath Hen, Carolina Parakeet and Passenger Pigeon are five North American bird species that are now extinct. Moved by their stories, filmmaker and sculptor Todd McGrain set out to create memorials to the lost birds — to bring their vanished forms back into the world. The film follows the journey of McGrain and his brother-in-law, Andy Stern, as they search for locations where the birds were last seen in

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## Southern Adirondack Audubon Society Board and Committees

<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

### Email:

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

2012-2015	Jason Goldsmith Joyce Miller Carol Moyer
2013-2016	Jim Campinell Jim Reis OPEN
2014-2017	Barbara Beatty Lori Barber OPEN

Board meetings are held monthly except July, August and December. Members are invited to attend. Contact Pat Fitzgerald for details.

### Committees:

**Newsletter:** Joyce Miller  
([editor@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:editor@southernadirondackaudubon.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)

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. The group has more than 500 members in Warren, Washington, and northern Saratoga counties in New York State.



Jackie Donnelly inspects a bladderwort flower on an Adirondack pond. Her photos will be featured on Feb. 17 at Crandall Library in Glens Falls.

## 2016 monthly programs planned

*Continued from page 1*

the wild and negotiate for permission to install McGrain's large bronze sculptures there.

Traveling from the tropical swamps of Florida to Martha's Vineyard to the rocky coasts of Newfoundland over a period of two years, McGrain and Stern scout locations, talk to park rangers, speak at town meetings and battle bureaucracy in their effort to gather support for the project.

McGrain's aim in placing the sculptures is to give presence to the birds where they are now absent. "These birds are not commonly known," he says, "and they ought to be, because forgetting is another kind of extinction. It's such a thorough erasing."

The film is directed by Deborah Dickson, whose previous films have been nominated three times for Oscars, and is produced by Muffie Meyer, whose previous directing credits include several Emmy award-winning documentaries. The score, composed by Grammy-winner Christopher Tin, is a stirring tone-poem for chamber orchestra.

The Wednesday, **February 17** program will return to **Crandall Public Library** in Glens Falls. Naturalist **Jackie Donnelly** will present

"Mother Nature's Riverside Garden: Wildflowers of the Upper Hudson River" at 7 p.m.

The program will be held in the Christine L. McDonald Community Room on the lower level of Crandall Library in downtown Glens Falls.

Jackie Donnelly is a nature writer and photographer who has spent nearly 25 years exploring the upper Hudson River in her small lightweight canoe. A longtime resident of Saratoga Springs, she writes about her adventures on the Hudson and elsewhere throughout the North Country in her blog "Saratoga Woods and Waterways."

Jackie Donnelly will explore four distinct areas of this magnificent river, stretching from the Ice Meadows north of Warrensburg downstream to the quiet backwaters above the dam at Glens Falls. Through numerous photographs and informed commentary she will reveal the amazing abundance and diversity of beautiful plants that thrive in this riverbank habitat.

Visit the SAAS website, <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>, for more information.

Please avoid wearing fragranced products to the program. Fragranced products trigger allergies, asthma and migraines in others attending the event.

## **President's Message**

### **Board farewells and welcomes**

*By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS President*

Five years ago, I volunteered to take the office of President for Southern Adirondack Audubon. In that time I have learned a lot about the National Audubon Society, our local chapter, and the workings of a grassroots organization that has endured for more than 30 years.

I would not have been able to lead this organization without the dedicated support of our board members, committee chairs, field trip leaders and other volunteers who give of their time to keep Southern Adirondack Audubon an active chapter. I am pleased that new people are stepping forward to continue the work of our mission of protecting our environment through the preservation of natural habitats and the advancement of environmental education.

At our last board meeting we voted in a new president, John Loz. John has been president of the Audubon Society of the Capital Region for the past three years. He worked tirelessly to build a strong board, and was able to develop that chapter in ways that have not been done for several years. He leaves it a growing and healthy organization and is now ready to help do the same for Southern Adirondack Audubon. I am confident he will bring new energy and life to our chapter, and will help it to become stronger and enduring.

We are also happy to add new members to our board of directors and welcome new committee members.

Rob Snell will take one position on the board and also join the fund-raising committee. Jody Schleicher will take another board position and will be using her experience with

New Jersey Audubon to help out with our programs. Pat Demko will take another position on the board and join the field trip committee. In addition, Laurel Male has volunteered to help with publicity and Debbie Peck is willing to use her environmental education background to join the education committee.

On a personal note, when I moved here from Texas 10 years ago, I didn't know anyone. I joined Southern Adirondack Audubon hoping to find out where the good birding spots are. Little did I know that I would meet so many new friends. It has been an honor and a privilege to be a part of Southern Adirondack Audubon.

### **Membership News**

### **Welcome, new members!**

Thank you to our newest chapter supporters:

*Rich Kline, Athol  
Barbara Lindenmuth, Binghamton  
Libby Haus, Binghamton  
Patrick Collier, Fort Edward  
Teresa Delauri, Glens Falls  
Walt Adams, Lake George  
Paul Silk, Lake George  
George Schuster, Lake George  
Sharon Charbonneau, Queensbury  
Jeff & Candi Kilburn, Queensbury  
Jody Schleicher, Saratoga Springs  
Nancy Martinez, Saratoga Springs  
John & Barbara Youker, South Glens Falls  
Helen & Bill Crawshaw, Stillwater*

We currently have 464 members of National Audubon and local Chapter Supporters. Many of our 138 chapter supporters belong to both the National Audubon Society and also financially support our local efforts of conservation and education.

You can become a "Chapter Supporter" for 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.

All of our staff are volunteers and all of our regular programs and field trips are free and open to the public.

Make your check payable to "Southern Adirondack Audubon Society" and send with name, address, and phone number to: Barbara Beatty, 6 Meldon Circle, Queensbury, N.Y., 12804.

### **Birding by the Month**

### **Winter species are arriving**

*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!





*The female Pileated Woodpecker, left, lacks the red moustache and red forehead of the male. Dr. Gordon Ellmers spotted this female eating staghorn sumac berries on the Towpath Road in Fort Edward in November.*

*Don Polunci's photo of a male Pileated Woodpecker, below, shows the male's red moustache and red crest feathers extending down the bill.*

## **Species Spotlight**

# **Pileated Woodpeckers are striking birds**

*By Joyce Miller  
Newsletter Editor*

Few local birds are more breathtaking than the Pileated Woodpecker, whether it's zooming by overhead with deep, white-flashing wingbeats or hitching itself up a tree trunk in search of insects. One birding friend described a Pileated like watching "flying origami."

Pileateds are quite noticeable, with their loud *wuck-wuck-wuck* call, bounding flight and hefty size. Pileateds are about the size of an American Crow.

It's easy to tell the difference between male and female Pileateds. The male has a red "mustache" stripe and a bright red crest; the red feathers continue down its forehead to the top of the bill. The female has a dark gray mustache and forehead. Her red crest covers the top of her head and does not extend down her forehead.

Most of us have seen the large rectangular holes that their hatchet-like bills have carved into trees as they search for their favorite food, carpenter ants.

They also devour insect larvae and some fruit and nuts, and will take advantage of a backyard suet feeder. Dead trees offer food sources as well as nesting cavities.

This woodpecker is a permanent resident in our area. It does not migrate. Its range extends from eastern United States, across southern Canada and down into northwestern United States.

Pileateds were rare in the early 1900s, due to habitat destruction and hunting. With the increase in mature forests and protection, their population is now estimated to be 1.9 million, according to Partners in Flight. N.Y.S. Breeding Bird Atlas records show that their numbers have slightly increased in the 20 years between 2000-2005 and the 1980-1985 census.

These woodpeckers may live more than 13 years in the wild. They can become the prey of Cooper's Hawks, Barred and Great Horned Owls.

For more, see this All About Birds page : [http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/pileated\\_woodpecker/](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/pileated_woodpecker/) That site also links to current sightings on the online checklist site *eBird* at <http://ebird.org>.



## **Sponsor a N.Y. Loon**

The Biodiversity Research Institute's Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation in Ray Brook, N.Y., offers a unique holiday gift idea: sponsor an Adirondack study loon. Sponsors will receive a history of that loon, a certificate, photo and more. Visit <http://www.briloon.org/support-our-work/adopt-a-loon> for more.

# Visit Fort Edward Grassland for great winter birding

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

On a cold winter's day, birding the Fort Edward Grasslands can be a refreshing treat. You may see winter specialties: Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, perhaps Short-eared and Snowy Owls. As of mid-2015, 177 species have been seen throughout the year there.

*Here are excerpts from SAAS's Fort Edward Grasslands webpage:*

The Fort Edward Grasslands are comprised of the 13,000 acre Fort Edward Grasslands IBA (Important Bird Area), located east and south of the Villages of Hudson Falls and Fort Edward, and the agricultural areas in the towns of Argyle and Kingsbury contiguous to the IBA.

Containing many working farms and grassland areas interspersed with cultivated fields, small woodlots, and wetlands, this is an important breeding ground for grassland species, and is also a wintering area for large numbers of raptors.

The N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has proposed to protect a large portion of the area through outright purchases of land and the purchase of conservation easements from private landowners.

In 2014, the DEC finalized its purchase of 286 acres of the Washington County Grasslands IBA. The lands were designated State Forest and hunting is allowed in season. That same year, a half-mile long trail was developed and a kiosk built at the trailhead on Blackhouse Rd. Details can be found on the DEC website.

This area is best known for its wintering population of raptors, when the lack of food forces them from their sub-arctic breeding grounds in Canada. Rough-legged Hawks join the Red-tailed Hawks which are year-round residents. Short-eared Owls - a New York Endangered Species - and Northern Harriers - listed as Threatened in New York - are the stars of the show over the snow-covered land-



*Snowy scenes like this can be bird-rich in the Washington County Important Bird Area. (Photo courtesy of Mona Bearor.)*

scape. Harriers will be seen hunting low over the fields until late afternoon, when the Short-eared Owls will leave their daytime perches to forage over the grasslands. Blackhouse, Fitzpatrick, Plum, and Swamp Roads are some of the areas these species frequent.

Species also using the grassland habitat in winter are Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, and Northern Shrike. Somewhat surprisingly, Eastern Bluebirds and Carolina Wren can be found in "edge" habitat. Additional uncommon species that have been recorded in the IBA during the winter months are Barred Owl, Merlin, and Golden Eagle.

In spring, the grasslands host many Killdeer - their calls can be heard in every field, as can the bubbly, gurgling song of the Bobolink, recently arrived after a migration of over 5,000 miles. Another long-distance migrant, the Upland Sandpiper, flies over 7,000 miles to return to our area each spring. Also listed as "Threatened" in New York state, loss of grassland habitat is a major reason for the decline of this species.

Other important summer breeding species found in the grasslands complex are American Kestrel,

Grasshopper, Savannah and Vesper Sparrows. American Woodcock, Eastern Bluebird, Baltimore Oriole, and Orchard Oriole have also been recorded.

Spring and fall are also the times to seek out the few wetlands in the IBA. Although there is little public access to Dead Creek, which intersects the IBA in a north-south direction, areas where this creek crosses the roads can be very productive. During "spring melt," a small, marshy area on Town Line Road will hold large numbers of waterfowl, including Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal and Wood Duck.

As development encroaches on this agricultural area, traffic is increasing, making "roadside" birding hazardous in some areas at certain times of day. State routes 196, 197 and 4 are busy roads with high-speed traffic; use caution when birding these roads. The same is true for Washington county routes 46 and 42.

This IBA has long been an important summer breeding area and winter home for bird species that are rapidly declining in the eastern part of this country. For more information, see: <http://southernadirondack.audubon.org/> and click **Birding**.



## NYS Species Checklist grows

New York State's official checklist currently stands at 485 bird species, according to the N.Y.S. Ornithological Association (NYSOA).

The list continually undergoes updates and changes. Species are added to the state list when approved by NYSOA's New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC), which reviews well-documented sightings.

On a national level, the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) publishes checklist revisions in response to new genetic evidence and changes to taxonomy and species names. For more, see <http://www.nybirds.org/NYSARC/NYSARCArticles/chklist-changes2015.html>.

## Discourage balloon launches

Some groups still offer balloon launches as part of events. In a balloon launch, many plastic helium-filled balloons are let loose into the sky. While it may temporarily look colorful, the result is not as pretty. Burst or deflated balloons not only add litter to the landscape but can also prove deadly to birds and other wildlife that ingest them, thinking they are food.

Less environmentally damaging but festive options are mentioned on the Balloons Blow website (<http://balloonsblow.org/>). Instead, groups can blow bubbles or create giant bubbles, use drums, or celebrate with reusable tissue paper pompoms, pin-wheels, streamers, bunting or banners.

If you know of a group planning a balloon launch, please ask them to reconsider these alternatives.

## Tracking visitors

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's website **BirdCast** <http://birdcast.info/> shows current bird migration forecasts. BirdCast helps to predict if

## Ready or Not: How Animals Prepare for Winter

By Peter Olesheski, Senior Naturalist, Up Yonda Farm Environmental Educational Center

As winter approaches in the northeast, the days shorten and become colder signaling to local wildlife that it is time to act. Although some were born with the ability to adapt to their seasonally changing climate allowing them to stay active, other animals will need to migrate to warmer locales or go dormant.

Estivation is sometimes seen in insects and reptiles, where an animal responds to increasingly hot and dry conditions by decreasing physical activity.

Brumation in reptiles, diapause in insects and hibernation in mammals are all responses to increasingly cold temperatures and a potential lack of food or other necessary resources.

Of these three dormant conditions, true hibernation is the most intense, causing more than simply long periods of inactivity or a pause in growth or sexual reproduction. True hibernation causes major metabolic changes that will allow the hibernating animal to survive for nearly six months on nothing more than its stores of body fat.

Truth be told, only a few Adirondack mammals including the chipmunk and woodchuck can endure the extreme biological changes associated with "true" hibernation. Others, including the black bear, raccoon and skunk, spend the winter in a languid state and are commonly referred to as "false" hibernators.

*Peter Olesheski presented a talk on hibernation at the October monthly SAAS program. The Fledgling asked him to summarize these timely facts for this newsletter.*



*Eastern Chipmunk (Photo courtesy of Gordon Ellmers.)*

this area will see high numbers of winter species such as Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks.

It may be a good year to see Snowy Owls and redpolls. Several Snowy Owls arrived by late October in Wisconsin.

On Oct. 26, Ron Pittaway of Toronto reported on an Ontario, Canada birding listserv that birder "Pascal Cote reported 15,790 redpolls passing the Tadoussac Bird Observatory, 212 km northeast of Quebec City. This is the largest movement of redpolls ever recorded at the observatory."

## Use eBird at home and away

If you are visiting friends and relatives for the holidays and want to know what birds are being seen in that area, visit eBird. This online checklist, created by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, can be searched by species or by location. Visit eBird at <http://ebird.org/> and click **Explore Data**.

When at home, consider adding your sightings to eBird so others can benefit from your observations. Cornell has used this information from citizen scientists for many projects, including migration research.

## Field Trips and Events

For details, see <http://southernadirondackaudubon.org/fieldtrips/fieldtrips.html>

### Saturday, Dec. 19

**SAAS's Glens Falls Area CBC** - To join a count team for a whole or partial day, contact Linda White at 518-222-5675 or email [lindamezzadonna@gmail.com](mailto:lindamezzadonna@gmail.com).

**Lake George Land Conservancy CBC, Bolton**—Visit <http://www.lglc.org> for more information. Call 518-644-9673 or email [events@lglc.org](mailto:events@lglc.org) to register.

### Sunday, Dec. 20

**Saratoga Christmas Bird Count** - Contact Jean Holcomb: 518-935-3353 or [jholcomb5@nycap.rr.com](mailto:jholcomb5@nycap.rr.com). The county circle is centered near the north end of Saratoga Lake and includes part of Saratoga Spa State Park and Hudson Crossing Park. New participants are welcomed.

### Saturday, Jan 23, 2016

**Hudson Crossing / Happy New Year Outing** (Hike/ Snowshoe), 9:00 a.m.  
Leader: Rich Crammond, 584-2380. Joint field trip with Glens Falls-Saratoga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club. This trip is around two miles up and back down the west shore of the Hudson River, Lock 5 Schuylerville area. We'll look for eagles along the way. Bring your binoculars and dress warmly. Meeting place: Hudson Crossing parking lot/Lock 5 Schuylerville area. Visit <http://www.adk-gfs.org/> for more.

### December 5: Gull Bay Preserve, Putnam

### January 2: Last Great Shoreline, Putnam

### February 6: Gull Bay Preserve, Putnam

Joint field trips with Lake George Land Conservancy on the first Saturday of each month at 8 a.m. Hikes led by experienced birders; people of all levels of birding ability are welcome. Findings will be added to eBird.org, an online global checklist used to track observations. No RSVP required; hikes will take place rain or shine. Visit <http://www.lglc.org/> for more.

For more programs and outings, visit the websites of these clubs:

- Hudson Mohawk Bird Club: <https://hmbc.net/>
- Audubon Society of the Capital Region: <http://www.capitalregionaudubon.org/>



## Send in your renewal today!

The Fledgling newsletter will be emailed to you quarterly in color.  
Your support of local chapter efforts is tremendously appreciated!

Please print clearly below or attach a mailing label:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities.

☐ I would prefer to get the newsletter in paper format and am including an additional donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to help cover postage and printing. (Suggested donation: \$5.)

I've enclosed a check made out to **Southern Adirondack Audubon Society** 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, 6 Meldon Circle, Queensbury, N.Y., 12804**.



## **The Fledgling**

**79 Laurel Lane**

**Queensbury, NY 12804**

**Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
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Glens Falls, NY  
Permit No. 81**

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### **It's renewal time!**

**Renew your membership now! Local memberships end with the calendar year.** If your mailing label shows **2015**, it's time to renew your Southern Adirondack Audubon membership.

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.

Chapter Supporter memberships are a perfect holiday gift for nature enthusiasts!

Make your check payable to "Southern Adirondack Audubon Society" and send with name, address, and phone number to: Barbara Beatty, 6 Meldon Circle, Queensbury, N.Y., 12804. You can use the form on page 7 of this newsletter.

To save paper, time and postage, starting with our March 2016 issue, **we will no longer be sending paper copies of our newsletter to anyone who is not**

**a chapter supporter.** If you want to receive a paper copy of *The Fledgling*, indicate this on the membership form. To receive *The Fledgling* electronically to your e-mail account, be sure to give us your e-mail address. You can also read *The Fledgling* on our website at anytime.

You can find the Chapter Supporter membership form on the SAAS web page: <http://southernadirondackaudubon.org/membership/membership.html> 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 an electronic copy of 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!**