

The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc. (SAAS)

Vol. 35 No. 2, December 2017 - February 2018

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

SAAS Bird Count set for Dec. 16

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, Dec. 16.

Area birders will follow specific routes in an established 15-mile-wide diameter circle in the Glens Falls region. Every bird and species seen will be counted. Most birding is done from a car; some teams may walk along trails or in area parks. The diverse habitats within the SAAS count circle make for interesting observations.

Every group will include at least one experienced birder. Beginning birders are needed to help spot birds or keep team records. It's a fun way to get to meet area birders and increase birding skills.

To join a count team for a whole or partial day, please register at least a week before the count by contacting SAAS count compiler Linda White (email lindamezzadonna@gmail.com or call 518-222-5675). For details, see the SAAS website.

Tens of thousands of volunteers will participate in more than 2,000 individual counts across North America, with some in Central and South America. Counts are held between December 14 to January 5.

SAAS has participated in the count since 1983. The Christmas Bird Census started in 1900 when ornithologist Frank Chapman suggested it as an alternative to Christmas "side hunts," competitions to see which



Albany Pine Bush ecologist Amanda Dillon holds a male Connecticut Warbler during a fall morning of bird-banding. (Photo: Neil Gifford)

designations as both an Audubon Important Birding Area and a NYS-DEC Bird Conservation Area.

Dillon is the Field Ecologist and Entomologist at the APBP. She earned her Bachelor and Master of Science degrees at the SUNY College of Envi-

ronmental Science and Forestry. Dillon specializes in native solitary bees and wasps. Since she began working at the Albany Pine Bush in 2010, her interests have expanded to include birds. She now conducts bird point count surveys, assists in re-sighting color-banded birds and helps run the bird banding stations.

Continued on page 3

Below: This male Io moth was found at the Albany Pine Bush.

Winter programs: Albany Pine Bush, Coyotes

Ecologist and educator Amanda Dillon will present "Bird Research at the Albany Pine Bush" at the Saratoga Springs Public Library on **Wednesday, Jan. 24**, for the monthly program of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society. The free program starts at 7:00 p.m.

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve (APBP) protects an inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens ecosystem, home to 76 New York Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Of those, 43 are birds. Uncommon species, high-quality habitat and diverse breeding bird species have earned the preserve

teams could shoot the most birds and other animals. The Christmas Bird Count is considered the world's longest running citizen science project.



For a map of area count circles and more information about the count, see: <http://www.audubon.org/join-christmas-bird-count>.

SAAS trip to Costa Rica
Page 3

Monthly Programs
Page 1-3

Membership renewal time
Page 8

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society

P.O. Box 4076
Queensbury, NY 12804

<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

Email:
info@southernadirondackaudubon.org

Board and Committees

Officers:

President: John Loz
(president@southernadirondackaudubon.org)
Vice-President: Lori Barber
Secretary: OPEN
Treasurer: Sharon Charbonneau

Board of Directors:

2015-2017	Barbara Beatty Jody Schleicher Laurel Male
2016-2018	Joyce Miller Rob Snell Pat Demko

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

Committees:

Conservation: OPEN

Education: Mona Bearor
(education@southernadirondackaudubon.org)

Membership: Lori Barber
(membership@southernadirondackaudubon.org)

Newsletter: Joyce Miller
(editor@southernadirondackaudubon.org)

Programs: John Loz (Interim chair)
(programs@southernadirondackaudubon.org)

Publicity: Laurel Male
(publicity@southernadirondackaudubon.org)

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) is a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society. SAAS's primary goal is to protect the environment by preserving natural habitats and promoting environmental education. The group has about 400 members in Warren, Washington, northern Saratoga and southern Hamilton counties in New York State. Contact a board member to learn about SAAS volunteer opportunities.

President's Message

Fall Council thoughts

The winter is upon us and I am reflecting on the many trips I've taken this fall to gather information and ideas to bring back to our Southern Adirondack Audubon chapter area.

On one trip in late October, I made my way to the Audubon New York All-chapter Fall Council meeting to spend two days attending panel presentations and workshops with other Audubon chapter leaders.

The attendees had the opportunity to experience fall migration at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in Seneca Falls, N.Y. It really is an incredible place and I highly recommend you go there yourself. The diversity of waterfowl and the unique sounds they were all making together were just...other-worldly. There were peeps, squeaks, honks, chirps, squeals, croaks and sounds I can't describe. All together on a warm,

sunny afternoon, it was incredible to hear the different vocalizations and see the diversity of waterfowl all mingling with each other. It was kind of like our Audubon New York Council weekend meetings! I interacted with chapter leaders from Long Island with their distinguishing downstate accent and with western New Yorkers who vocalized their Coca-Cola as "pop." But we all were there with one thing in common – finding better ways to protect birds and their habitats. The council weekend was not all play I must say, but the panel presentations and chapter roundtable where each chapter shared their successes and challenges were engaging and fun.

I came back with some interesting ideas to collaborate with partners and advance our bird conservation efforts here in the Southern Adirondacks ... and, another way to say "soda."



Meet our committee chairs

Mona Bearor, Education Chair

Growing up before words like "internet" and "cell phone" were in use, Mona spent time roaming the woods for wildflowers in spring, mushrooms after a good rain and greens to make holiday decorations. There were always birds around, but she didn't have a chance to pursue this interest until she retired from a career in communications in 2001.

At her first SAAS public program shortly thereafter, she offered to help with the chapter newsletter and soon found herself filling a vacancy as editor of *The Fledgling*. She remained in the position for 12 years, learning from others on the board and developing a strong commitment to the chapter.

Mona has worn many hats in the last 16 years, serving as Program, Publicity, Field Trip, and Membership Chairs in addition to serving as Treasurer for seven years. She currently maintains the chapter website, helps with the Facebook account,

leads occasional field trips, and serves as Education Chair.

Mona is currently working on programs that partner with local groups to advance the chapter motto of "Conservation Through Education." Chapter sponsored events have included a live bird program at the Pember Museum in Granville and our "Join the Flock" photo op for kids at the Moreau Lake State Park NatureFest. (See photos on page 4.) She is working on ways to partner with libraries in outlying areas of the chapter to bring the joy of birding and the message of conservation to children.

Continued on p. 3





Don Polunci of Queensbury snapped this photo of a coyote on a sunny day in Yellowstone National Park. The Feb. 28 program focuses on coyotes.

Pine Bush and Coyotes

Continued from page 1

To learn more about APBP birds and bird communities, the Conservation Science Team conducts bird point count surveys at 57 points located around the preserve, works with citizen scientists to conduct singing ground surveys of American Woodcock and Eastern Whip-poor-will, and runs multiple bird banding stations. The banding data are used to study demography and migration of Prairie Warblers (a barrens specialist), fall migration patterns, and avian productivity and survivorship during the breeding season, according to information provided by the APBP. The information gathered from this work has helped guide restoration and management efforts within the preserve and continues to inform us about the efficacy of these techniques in preserving this globally rare ecosystem.

“Coyotes of Eastern New York” will be offered as SAAS’s monthly program on **Wednesday, February 28** at 7:00 p.m. at **Crandall Public Library** in **Glens Falls**.

Paul Jensen, N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation Wildlife Manager, will talk about these fascinating mammals and dispel myths about coyotes, drawing on his research and experience in the field. Jensen, based at the DEC Warrensburg office, oversees and is responsible for all wildlife-related work, staff, and issues that occur throughout the counties of Region Five. He represents the region on the DEC’s state-wide Bureau Management team and works closely with all of the region’s wildlife biologists, technicians, and foresters to make sure that the Bureau of Wildlife’s mission is carried out. He received his B.S. in Environmental and Forest Biology from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of New Hampshire, and a Ph.D. in Wildlife Biology from McGill University.

Coyotes have readily adapted to living close to people and are increasingly being seen in suburban and even urban environments. Although coyotes are able to exist within highly human-dominated landscapes, they would rather avoid frequent interactions and conflicts with people.

Several subspecies of coyotes live throughout North America, including Eastern Coyotes that live in New York State. According to a June, 2014 article by Dr. Dan Bogen in the *N.Y.S. Conservationist* magazine, “Using genetic analyses, researchers found that eastern coyotes are roughly 64% western coyote, 26% wolf ancestry and 10% domestic dog.” Coyotes expanded into the Northeastern U.S. starting in the 1930s. According to the DEC’s page on [Eastern Coyote](#), they

are opportunistic omnivores, eating whatever food is available. During the year, the food sources vary, and include deer (often scavenging road-killed deer), small mammals, birds, insects and even berries.

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

No monthly program is held in December.

Mona Bearor - *Continued from page 2*

A resident of South Glens Falls for 25 years, Mona has turned a barren yard into a bird sanctuary, installing garden pools, removing invasive species and planting native trees, berry-producing shrubs, and flowers that offer either seeds or nectar for the birds. At this location to date, she has compiled a list of 101 species of birds – and is always looking for number 102!

SAAS Costa Rica trip in March

SAAS is organizing a week-long birding trip to Costa Rica from March 11 to 17, 2018. The trip starts in Costa Rica’s capital, San José, and travels to the Suria Lodge in San Gerardo de Dota and the Selva Verde Reserve in Chilamate. It is organized by Holbrook Travel.

Ten area birders have registered. The limit is 12. The cost of the trip is \$1,650, excluding airfare. Deposits are refundable until December 6.

See Holbrook’s page for more information and to register: <http://www.holbrooktravel.com/where-we-travel/americas/costa-rica/costa-rica-introduction-neotropical-birding-saas>.

"I Joined the Flock"

Many future birders migrated to Southern Adirondack Audubon's table at Moreau Lake State Park's NatureFest on September 16.

This event debuted SAAS's five new bird masks, hand-made by "Seamingly Sarah," a business in Warrensburg. Children and adults delighted in having their pictures taken wearing the faces of a Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, Blue Jay, Pileated Woodpecker and Northern Cardinal. Crayons were also provided for young artists to color pictures of their favorite birds. SAAS's table was visited by many people, all enjoying the beautiful weather and fun activities provided for the whole family.

Young bird enthusiasts try on bird masks in front of SAAS's new "I Joined the Flock" stand-up banner. (SAAS courtesy photos)





About Wildflowers

Invasive Plants: Garlic Mustard

By Diane Collins

The proceeds of my booklet *Trailside Wildflowers in Cole's Woods* (funded by a Glens Falls Foundation grant) are being used toward the eradication of invasive plants.

One invasive, a pretty early spring wildflower found throughout the woods, is Garlic Mustard. The leaves are triangular to heart-shaped and give off an odor of garlic when crushed. The plant grows two to four feet tall and produces button-like clusters of small white flowers, each with four petals in the shape of a cross. It can out-compete native plants, such as Spring Beauty, Toothwort, hepatica and trilliums. Its seeds last for years. It was likely introduced by settlers for food and medicinal purposes. An effective method of control is to pull the plant out, roots and all, during its early May flowering period, before it goes to seed. But please contact Cornell Cooperative Extension at (518) 623-3291 for advice in "garlic pulling" before you go at it!

Wildflower photographer Diane Collins is the author of "Trailside Wildflowers in Cole's Woods," available for purchase on Diane's website, <http://www.wildflowersinyourownbackyard.com>. She has led many wildflowers walks for SAAS.

Local Climate Watch project continues

Join our bird survey this winter! SAAS will participate in National Audubon Society's new citizen-science pilot project, Audubon Climate Watch, from January 15 to February 15. The goal of the project is to learn how specific bird species are affected by climate change.

The SAAS survey will focus on both Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches. SAAS participated in a survey in June. This is the winter counterpart of the survey.

SAAS is seeking 20 volunteers to collect data about birds in our area. Volunteers would use a specific protocol established by National Audubon:



Red-breasted Nuthatch. Photo: Don Polunci.

Contact SAAS board member Rob Snell for more information: birdbrane1@gmail.com.

Details about the program are available at the program's website, <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch-program>.

According to that site, Audubon issued a report in 2014, *Birds and Climate Change*, on risks faced by North American bird species from climate change. Climate Watch was developed after Audubon members asked how they could help. The Audubon Climate Watch program started in 2016, focusing on blue-birds.

using grid maps of a specific area, birders will conduct 12 counts, observing for five minutes each. They would also record the numbers and species of other birds identified within 100 meters (328 feet).

Online bird skills course

Cornell Lab of Ornithology offers free and paid online courses this winter to increase your birding skills. Visit <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/>.

This Bald Eagle sculpture was recently installed near a viewing platform at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in central New York State between Syracuse and Rochester. It can be seen from the N.Y.S. Thruway between exits 40 and 41. (Photo: John Loz.)



Species Spotlight

Snow Buntings and Horned Larks

By Joyce Miller, Newsletter Editor

Many birders look forward to spotting flocks of Snow Buntings and Horned Larks swirling over the frozen grasslands in Washington and Saratoga Counties each winter. A popular place in our area to see this sight is the Bacon Hill area of northeastern Saratoga County, especially the farm stubble in the Wall Street and King Road area.

Snow Buntings flocks flash white, black and brown as they fly, often over freshly-manured fields. They eat seeds and insects. They spend the summer nesting on the tundra in northern Canada, Alaska, Iceland, Greenland, northern Europe and Scandinavia and some areas in Russia. They build nests on the ground between rocks, lining them with fur and feathers.

In North America, these stout songbirds spend the winter in the relative warmth of southern Canada and northern United States. For more information, see https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snow_Bunting/id.

Horned Larks trundle along roadsides and farm fields in small flocks, picking up seeds and grit. Their well-camouflaged bodies are squat and set close to the ground. Though they look drab at first, their yellow faces feature a dapper black moustache and short feather “horns.” Their song is a squeaky twitter.

Horned Larks build grass nests on the bare ground. They breed across Canada in the summer. For more information, see https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Horned_Lark/id.

Both birds are listed as a “Common Bird in Steep Decline” by the U.S. Committee of the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) coalition. Among the reasons for the declines may be loss of grasslands due to development and reforestation.



Top photo: Snow Bunting by Don Polunci
Lower photo: Horned Lark by Gordon Ellmers.



Crow winter roosting dramas

In the winter, it's awe-inspiring to see massive flocks of American Crows gathering at dusk to roost at night. Starting in mid-afternoon, streams of crows from miles around start flying in the same direction as they head to their communal evening resting spots. In recent years, one roosting spot along the Hudson River between Glens Falls and South Glens Falls has attracted hundreds of chatty crows. For an entertaining two-minute lesson about the winter roosting habits complete with a variety of crow calls, listen to this podcast from the radio show BirdNote: <https://www.birdnote.org/show/crows-night-roost>.

Production of this issue of *The Fledgling* newsletter is provided by
Edward Jones, 34 Congress Street, Suite 102, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

Conservation Committee Sign-ons

By Pat Fitzgerald, Conservation Committee

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society continues to sign on to action-alert letters relating to conservation. SAAS signed on to these issues over the past several months:

- The National Audubon Society requested local New York Audubon Chapters to thank Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Senator for New York, for introducing legislation to protect **Plum Island**, and encourage her to ensure this bill receives a vote in the U.S. Senate. The preservation of Plum Island's miles of pristine beaches, untouched natural shoreline, and critical bird habitat is a top priority for Audubon. It has become a unique and irreplaceable natural preserve for birds and other wildlife and needs our protection.
- South Shore Audubon Society of Long Island requested that local New York chapters sign on to the comments regarding significant changes proposed for **Hempstead Lake State Park**, which is arguably the best terrestrial bird watching site in their area. The Living with the Bay program, overseen by the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery, has been proposed to reduce flooding risks. A several-page description of the project has been written, but it has been difficult to obtain specific information about the proposal. South Shore Audubon is requesting a copy of the final plans so their comments will be more specific when they address critical areas of interest. They are urging that a full environmental impact statement be completed on the cumulative effect of the program. And finally, they are most strongly opposed to any alterations to the park that result in loss of habitat.
- The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) asked that we contact our U.S. representative, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, and request that she cosponsor the H.R.3040 **Saving America's Pollinators Act**. The ABC also asks that we contact our U.S. senators to help protect birds from harmful neonic pesticides and other threats. This bill requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to suspend the registration of members of the nitro group of **neonicotinoid insecticides** that are registered under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). These insecticides are used in seed treatment, soil application or foliar treatment on bee-attractive plants, trees, and cereals. This practice will continue until the EPA determines that the insecticides will not cause unreasonable adverse effects on pollinators.
- SAAS also signed on to letters to the administration of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and members of



(Photo courtesy of Cheryl Pierson.)

New Osprey platform erected at Moreau Lake State Park

The Friends of Moreau Lake State Park worked with park staff to install a new Osprey nest pole in late October. It is located in the cove across the lake from the nature center.

The Osprey platform was donated by SAAS. It was built by Mark Cronin and Don Polunci. Vincent Petteys of Petteys Sawmill in Gansevoort donated a 22-foot hemlock pole. See the Friends' Facebook page for more photos.

Most Ospreys in our area spend the winter along coastal areas in the eastern and southern United States. They return to breed in this area in late March and April.

Congress to fight for migratory birds and support a new rule that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to **prevent birds from being trapped in oil pits, or electrocuted by power lines**. Industrial interests are fighting these changes, determined to preserve the status quo—even if it means leaving protected migratory species at risk.

Please renew now for the new year!

All chapter memberships expire at the end of the year. Chapter supporter dues are only \$10. They are the main support for our chapter activities, including monthly programs and activities at area nature festivals.

Renewal notices will be sent out in December for 2018 memberships. If you renew early, it will save us the postage and paper for mailings. Renew using the form below, or on our website using Paypal. A renewal form is also on the SAAS website. Gift memberships are available, and will be announced with an appropriate card at your request. *Consider a SAAS chapter membership as a holiday gift!*

Currently, 406 members of National Audubon live in our chapter area. Many of our 146 chapter supporters belong to National Audubon Society and also financially support our local efforts of conservation and education.

Welcome to our newest chapter supporters:

Eric Potter, Queensbury
Peter Benoit, Queensbury
Jody Suprenant, Fort Edward
Gail Livingston, Gloversville
Suzanne Laplante, Gansevoort
Barbara Baker Saratoga Springs
Anne Best, Galway
Mark Silo, Loudonville
Lauren Cohen, Wilton
Eric Potter, Queensbury
Joyce Miller, Queensbury

Special thanks to Nancy Forgette, Bruce Goodale, Phyllis Miyauchi and John Reber who included additional gen-

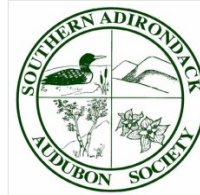
Field trips

Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017:
Christmas Bird Count - See the front page of the newsletter for details.

Jan. 15-Feb. 15, 2018:

Climate Watch - Volunteer for this Audubon citizen-science project to count nuthatches. See page 5 for details.

More field trips may be planned this winter. Check SAAS website's **Field Trips** page: <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/fieldtrips/fieldtrips.html>.



erous donations for our chapter's operating expenses and projects with their memberships.

Marking the passing of a SAAS president

SAAS past president Linda Theis of Moreau passed away on Oct. 21.

She is survived by her four sons and their families, including six grandsons. She is also survived by two brothers and two sisters, as well as several nieces, nephews and other family members.

Linda served as president of SAAS in the 1990s. The SAAS board remembers Linda's good humor and energy and expresses its condolences to her family.

Send in your 2018 renewal now!

Memberships are renewed at the start of each calendar year. Chapter supporters receive *The Fledgling* newsletter by email in March, June, September and December, and help support the educational efforts and programs of the chapter. **Renew online through PayPal or complete the form below.**

Please print clearly:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: () _____

Please indicate your choices:

- ☐ I've enclosed a **\$10** check made out to "Southern Adirondack Audubon Society" to be a local chapter supporter and member.
- ☐ I am also including a gift of \$_____ for chapter use.
- ☐ 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 am interested in volunteer opportunities.

Thank you for your membership! Mail this form and your check to:

Lori Barber, Membership Committee, Southern Adirondack Audubon Society
P.O. Box 4076 Queensbury, NY 12804