

The Fledgling

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

Vol. 36 No. 1, September - November 2018
Visit SAAS at: http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org

Fall programs feature Panama, live raptors, Migratory Bird Act

The fall monthly programs will travel the world, from Panama to our own region, on Sept. 26, Oct. 24 and Nov. 28 at 7 p.m.

John Hershey will present "Birding Central Panama" on Wednesday, Sept. 26 at Crandall Library in downtown Glens Falls at 7 p.m. The talk will describe his spring birding trip to two popular ecolodges in central Panama: Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton and Canopy Tower in the lowland rainforest of Soberania National Park. Many colorful, iconic tropical birds will be illustrated with photos including toucans, parrots, trogons, motmots, antbirds, oropendolas, hummingbirds, warblers, and tanagers. Other subjects will include tropical butterflies, reptiles, monkeys, and the quirky, painted "red devil" buses.



Hershey, a resident of Clifton Park, is a former board member and secretary of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club (HMBC) and a former board member of the Audubon Society of the Capital Region. He regularly leads HMBC field trips to Vischer Ferry Preserve, as well as Cohoes Flats and Peebles Island and Fox Hill Road.



John Hershey photographed the Broad-billed Motmot (above) and the Emerald Toucanet (left) during a trip to Panama.

He is officially "semi-retired" and works part-time in private practice in psychology.

Wildlife educator Trish Marki will present "Happy Owl-o-ween! - Live Birds of Prey" at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, October 24 in the Dutcher Community Room of the Saratoga Springs Public Library in downtown Saratoga Springs. Marki is Executive Director of the Saratoga Springs based Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York, an IRS 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

The program's goal is to increase environmental awareness by introducing people to some of the most exotic species of animals indigenous to their very own ecosystem: raptors, also known as birds of prey. Raptors include owls, hawks, eagles, and falcons. All birds of prey have remarkable adaptations and skills for survival in the wild. Marki will bring live birds of prey for people to see up close. She will also discuss the adaptations and behaviors of these birds, conservation issues that impact them, and wildlife rehabilitation. She'll talk about what people should do if they find injured or orphaned wildlife.

Continued on page 3

Fall Programs	Cardinal Flowers	Turkey Vultures
Page 1, 3	Page 4	Page 5

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society

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Board and Committees

Officers:

President: John Loz (president@southern adirondackaudubon.org)

Vice-President: OPEN

Treasurer: Sharon Charbonneau Secretary: Margie Amodeo

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Rob Snell

2018-2020 Kim Arnold

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@southern
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Membership: Lori Barber (membership@southern adirondackaudubon.org)

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Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) is a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society, which has almost 500 members in Warren, Washington, northern Saratoga and southern Hamilton counties in New York State. SAAS's primary goal is to protect the environment by preserving natural habitats and promoting environmental education. Contact a board member to learn about SAAS volunteer opportunities.

President's Message

SAAS advocacy efforts continue

By John Loz, SAAS President

This past summer has been a busy one for me and our board members on the advocacy front.



On August 17, Gov. Cuomo signed a bill that has been more than two years in the making. The Policy Manager at Audubon New York has worked with two of our local state representatives in the N.Y.S. Legislature to write a bill - S.1672 (Little)/A.6759 (Woerner) that would make state-owned lands in the towns of Argyle, Fort Edward, and Kingsbury in Washington County subject to taxation for all purposes. This bill — now law — will assist the N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation in pursuing additional land acquisitions that support open space conservation goals in the 13,000 acre Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA). Our chapter, and our partners from the Friends of the IBA, have led many grassroots efforts, urging Gov. Cuomo to sign the bill. With your grassroots support, especially in signing the petition to the governor, this hard-fought piece of legislation will now make it much easier to preserve our local grasslands for years to come. (See related story on p. 6.)

In other advocacy news, I spoke to U.S. Congressman John Faso regarding amendments in the Farm Bill he put forth, which narrowly passed in the House. Our local Congresswoman Elise Stefanik added an amendment to the Farm Bill to combat invasive species. I talked with Rep. Faso specifically about the threat of a tiny invasive insect called the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, which has spread into his district. The insect could inflict severe damage upon our upstate and Adirondack forests and rural economies.

Lastly, SAAS board members and I made calls to Rep. Stefanik's office about removing an irrelevant rider that was in the now-passed Defense Authorization Bill. It included the delisting of two threatened western grassland birds, the Greater Sage Grouse and Lesser Prairie Chicken, from the protections of the Endangered Species Act for 10 years. Rep. Stefanik is on a subcommittee on the House Armed Services Committee that worked on this bill. I added my voice to remove the rider by calling and writing Rep. Stefanik's legislative assistant that handles defense matters. In the end, the rider was removed from the final Defense Authorization Bill. With the protections of birds here in our chapter and across the nation under threat, the fight to protect goes on. Happy Birding!



Joyce Miller birded in Borneo this summer. She was thrilled to visit 13,435-foot Mount Kinabalu.

Meet our board members Joyce Miller

Joyce Miller has been a SAAS board member and the newsletter editor since 2013, and a SAAS member since the chapter's start in 1984. She is also a member of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, N.Y.S. Ornithological Association and American Birding Association. She has traveled to 31 countries on six continents, primarily in search of birds and other wildlife. After a trip to the island of Borneo in southeast Asia this summer, her life list — the list of all birds she's seen so far — is 2,820, about 26% of the 10,700+ bird species.

She is the Reference and Instruction Librarian and a Distinguished Professor of Library Science at SUNY Adirondack in Queensbury.

Fall programs

Cont'd from page 1

Marki's birds were either born in captivity or were injured, rescued and rehabilitated, but unable to return to the wild. She uses them for educational programs in many settings such as schools, senior centers, libraries and church groups.



On **Wednesday**, **Nov. 28**, Capital Region-based nature photographers Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner of Naturelogues will present a program on "**The International Migratory Bird Treaty Act**" at **Crandall Library** in Glens Falls at 7 p.m.



Above, Trish Marki talks about Barn Owls. She'll bring other raptors, such as the rufous-morph Eastern Screech Owl, left. Below: Scott Stoner took this photo of a Roseate Spoonbill at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Flori-

Commemorating the centennial of the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act, conservation organizations have designated 2018 as the Year of the Bird, a celebration of birds and the ways this act has helped their conservation, and a recognition of new threats to bird populations in modern times. Naturelogues prepared this special program to celebrate the Year of the Bird with a personal look at birds both across the nation and across time. While show-



casing avian beauty, behavior, and diversity, they weave in successes, failures, and changes over the past hundred years. From plume hunters and pesticides to the recovery of the Bald Eagle, they look at species and habitats lost and protected, birds whose range has changed in our lifetimes, and special conservation issues countered in their extensive travels across the United States.

Their photography features birds, flowers, insects, mammals and landscapes. Naturelogues' award-winning photography has been exhibited across New York's Capital Region. They have been published in *National Wildlife* and *New York State Conservationist* magazines. Their work has been featured on several covers of *The Kingbird*, the journal of the New York State Ornithological Association. Their photos have illustrated the books *In Praise of Poison Ivy* by Anita Sanchez, *New York Wildlife Viewing Guide* (Watchable Wildlife Series), and *Birding the Hudson Valley* by Kathryn J. Schneider.

Stoner and Hackert-Stoner present slide programs about the beauty and breadth of the natural history they have experienced while birding and photographing both in the Capital Region and across North America. More work is displayed on their website http://www.facebook/naturelogues.

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

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Page 3 - The Fledgling, September - November 2018

Watch for fall migrants

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

Birding is a year-round activity. Look 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 northern breeding grounds.

Adirondack Loon Celebration, Oct. 7

The Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation will host its annual Adirondack Loon Celebration on Sunday, Oct. 7, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Paul Smith's College Visitor Interpretive Center in Franklin County. The day will be filled with activities for the whole family to learn about loons. See https://www.adkloon.org/events/ for details.

The mission of the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation is to promote the conservation of Common Loons (*Gavia immer*) in and beyond New York's Adirondack Park. It is based in Saranac Lake.

<u>About Wildflowers</u> Cardinal Flower

By Diane Collins

The Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) is a striking plant of stream banks, and blooms in late summer and early fall. As the loop trail in the Hudson Point Nature Preserve crosses a small Hudson River tributary, this brilliant red treasure awaits the walkers.

The blossom is complicated. The tiny white part seen on the lower left petal in the photo is part of the "beard." It is this beard that brushes pollen onto the heads of hummingbirds, the flower's chief pollinators. The range of the ruby-throated hummingbird and the cardinal flower is almost identical.

As you might guess, the species name "cardinalis" is named after the red robes worn by Roman Catholic cardinals.

Naturalist John Burroughs wrote:
"When vivid color is wanted, what can surpass or equal our cardinal flower?"

Wildflower photographer Diane Collins is the author of "Trailside Wildflowers in Cole's Woods," available through http://www. <u>wildflowersin</u> <u>vourownback-</u> yard.com. Diane sells her booklet at SAAS monthly meetings for \$10: \$5 goes to The Friends of Cole's Woods, and \$5 is donated to our Audubon chapter.



SUNY Adirondack environmental films

The SUNY Adirondack Library and the college's Sustainability Committee will sponsor an Environmental Sustainability film series this fall. These films will be shown in Miller Auditorium in Dearlove Hall on the Bay Road campus in Queensbury.

(Summary: Al Gore's mission is to change the hearts and minds of world leaders regarding climate change.)

- Oct. 16: Racing Extinction (Summary: Human life has completely transformed our planet, with dire consequences for the species we share it with.)
- Nov. 13: The Future of Energy (Summary: When legislators fail to act, communities band together to revitalize our planet.)

Showings will be held at 4:30 and 7:00 p.m. The public is invited. For more information, see the library's web page http://library.sunyacc.edu/environmentalfilms.



Species Spotlight

Turkey Vultures

By Joyce Miller, Newsletter Editor

What Turkey Vultures (*Cathartes aura*) lack in beauty, they make up in practicality: they perform an essential service by eating dead things. Carrion-eaters are an important part of our ecosystem, devouring carcasses that could spread disease.

These scavengers fly low over the land, using sharp eyesight and relatively large olfactory bulbs to detect decomposing animals. Their heads lack feathers, helping them stay clean when feeding on carcasses. Their strong digestive acids allow them to eat bacteria-laden meat without ill effects.

Circling groups, or "kettles," of Turkey Vultures are a common sight. They're often seen kettling over the Northway near the Hudson River.

It's relatively easy to identify a soaring Turkey Vulture: its very long wings are held in a shallow V, and the bird often tilts from side to side. In the right light, one can usually see the silvery trailing edge of the wings. If one is low enough, you can see its red head.

Turkey Vultures are found throughout North, Central and South America. They retreat south for the winter, but some will reappear in our New York region even in late January, according to records in eBird, Cornell's online checklist.

Another New World vulture has been spreading north into our region: the Black Vulture. Just a few years ago they were rare locally, but now are fairly common in our region. In flight, a Black Vulture has a small black head, short tail and bright white wing tips. Their wings seem

to have a slight forward slant, unlike the Turkey Vulture's long straight wings. It's been reported that Black Vultures have attacked live animals. Turkey Vultures are not known to do that.

Turkey Vultures lay eggs on rocky ledges, hollow logs and even in deserted buildings such as barns. They have one brood a year, laying from one to three eggs. They may use the same nesting site for years.

To learn more about Turkey Vultures, see Cornell's All About Birds: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Turkey Vulture/.



Don Polunci took the photo of the Turkey Vulture pictured above left. Above, this Wikimedia image compares a Turkey and Black Vulture in flight.

(Wikimedia image by Jim Conrad [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:America_Black_ Vulture-Turkey_Vulture-silhouettes.jpg)

Local birding hotspots

Wondering where to see great birds in the Southern Adirondack area? See the SAAS website's <u>Birding page</u>. The page offers details about local birding hotspots: the Betar Byway in South Glens Falls, the Fort Edward Grasslands, Bog Meadow Trail in Wilton, the Towpath Road in Kingsbury and other areas.

Moreau Nature Fest, Sept. 15

Moreau Lake State Park's annual Nature Fest takes place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the park near Northway Exit 17. on Saturday, Sept. 15. The event features nature-oriented family activities, children's crafts, food, music, and more. The event is free; donations go to the Friends of Moreau Lake State Park. For details, call (518) 793-0511 or visit MLSP's website at https://parks.ny.gov/parks/150/details.aspx.

DEC adds 180 acres to Washington County Grasslands WMA

[Editor's note: This edited article is excerpted from a July 30, 2018 press release from the NYSDEC.]

New York State has purchased 180 acres of land to add to the Washington County Grasslands Wildlife Management Area (WMA) New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos an-

nounced. The \$326,000 land acquisition, located along Plum Road and County Route 46 in the town of Fort Edward, will increase the amount of important grassland habitat protected by the WMA to 466 acres.

"This acquisition allows the Department of Environmental Conservation to protect and maintain grassland habitat and provide breeding and foraging grounds for grassland birds, many of which are experiencing steep population declines," said DEC Commissioner Seggos. "These lands will also provide additional wildlife viewing, hunting, and other outdoor recreational opportunities."

The WMA is home to more than 100 bird and animal species, including wintering Snowy Owls and state endangered Short-eared Owls. The area also provides critical habitat to 10 of the 11 grassland bird "species of greatest conservation need," including Northern Harriers, Upland Sandpipers, Eastern Meadowlarks, Horned Larks, and American Kestrels.

The WMA is part of the 13,000-acre Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA) in the towns of Fort Edward, Argyle, and Kinsgbury, in central western Washington County. The IBA contains large open areas which grassland birds require for nesting, roosting,



Mona Bearor snapped this scenic view of the Fort Edward Grasslands in Washington County. For more information about the grasslands, see SAAS's Birding page at http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/birding/Birding%20Locations/WashCounty/.

foraging and protection from predators.

The Pulver Family is selling the lands to New York State in memory of the late David Pulver. "My children and I want to see the land preserved on behalf of my deceased husband, David, as part of our family's legacy to the town and future generations," said Merrilyn Pulver. "This transaction couldn't have happened without the support of Friends of the IBA. They are as committed to helping people and local communities as they are to the birds, and we are fortunate to have them here."

Friends of the IBA (FIBA) is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit land trust dedicated to conserving critical habitat across New York State for endangered and threatened grassland birds. The organization provided vital assistance on this project and facilitated communications between DEC, the Pulvers, and the Town of Fort Edward.

"We applaud DEC's commitment to preserving New York's biodiversity," said FIBA founder and Executive Director Laurie LaFond. "We need to conserve critical grassland habitat (so that) imperiled birds like Shorteared Owls and Snowy Owls will still be around for our children and grandchildren to enjoy." Grassland birds benefit humans in a variety of ways. They control insects and rodents that damage crops and carry disease such as Lyme. Grasslands are also an important habitat for bees and butterflies that pollinate fruits, vegetables, hay, and other crops.

DEC plans to construct two parking areas and a half-mile trail, and install directional and educational signage on the Pulver property. In addition, an ADA-accessible viewing blind will be constructed on another part of the WMA. Hunting will be allowed on the newly acquired lands during open hunting seasons. Deer, turkeys, and rabbits inhabit the lands. DEC is evaluating stocking pheasants at this location in addition to other locations in the WMA.

DEC is partnering with FIBA to construct a regional Birding Center in the Washington County Grasslands. The center will provide environmental education to local school children and adults, and serve as a destination for bird watching tourism to the region. It will also host research facilities for DEC and FIBA biologists and wildlife managers.

More information, including a map, on the <u>Washington County Grasslands WMA</u> can be found on DEC's website.

New Birdcast maps forecast migration using radar

From Cornell Lab of Ornithology

For the first time, new maps are using radar to forecast night-time clouds of migratory birds, as well as track migration flights in near real-

Scientists with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the University of Oxford made the breakthrough, processing weather radar data to produce maps that visualize migration on the Cornell Lab's BirdCast website (birdcast.info).

One map shows an animated visualization that tracks migration in near real-time. Cornell Lab postdoctoral associate Adriaan Dokter designed an algorithm to rapidly estimate the intensity and flight directions of migrating birds detected by the weather radar network. The system processes incoming radar data continuously, and updates the animated map every 10 minutes.

"We're able to isolate bird data from atmospheric information because of the way weather radar works—a process called dual-polarization," Dokter since we first began using radar to explains. "This means the radar stations transmit and receive radio waves in both vertical and horizontal directions. It provides a much clearer picture of the size, shape, and direction of the targets it picks up. And with the power of cloud computing, we can analyze all radar data incredibly fast."

Another map forecasts migration three days ahead. The color-coded displays combine projected weather conditions and bird movements to show where and when the most intense migrations are expected.

Most songbirds migrate in darkness, usually when weather conditions are favorable. Tailwinds can produce massive migratory movements. Rain can shut down flights entirely.

"Knowing when and where a large pulse of migrants will pass through is useful for conservation purposes, says Benjamin Van Doren, a former Cornell undergraduate and now Ph.D. candidate at the University of Oxford. "Our forecasts could prompt temporary shutdowns of wind turbines or large sources of light pollution along the migration route. Both actions could significantly reduce bird mortality.'

"This is the most significant update

study bird movements," notes Cornell Lab postdoctoral associate Kyle Horton. "From the bird watcher's perspective, if you know where and when migrants will be flying at night, you stand a better chance of seeing them, especially if the birds make a stopover in your area."

Van Doren and Horton designed the system that generates the migration forecast maps. They used machine learning models based on 23 years of radar and weather data to predict suitable conditions for migration occurring three hours after local sunset.

"We hope these maps will provide perspective to the expert and novice alike on the amazing spectacle—and the sheer magnitude—of migration, " Cornell Lab migration researcher Andrew Farnsworth said. "Beyond that, we believe these maps will become powerful tools for conservation action to help reduce the impacts of human-made hazards birds face during their incredible journeys."

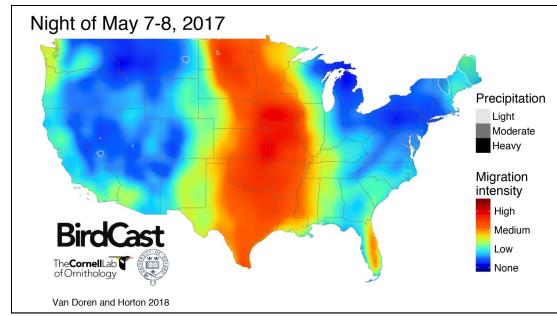
This research was supported by funding from the National Science Foundation, Leon Levy Foundation, and NASA. Additional funding was provided by the Edward W. Rose Postdoctoral Fellowship at the

> Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission in the United Kingdom, and Amazon Web Services Cloud Credits for Research.

The BirdCast project is a collaboration among the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Oregon State University, and was funded by grants from the National Science Foundation and Leon Levy Foundation.

To see the latest migration maps for the fall, visit BirdCast: Bird Migration Forecasts in Real-Time: http://birdcast.info/

This migration forecast map for the night of May 7, 2017, predicted high intensity migration over much of the central United States. The "hot" colors in the center of the map indicate more intense migration. Courtesy Van Doren and Horton 2018.



SAAS "Birds and You" educational program is available to groups

The SAAS Education Committee has recently developed a program for area children highlighting how birds and people are alike and how people can help birds thrive.

The program consists of a 45-minute slide presentation with questions and answers. It is presented by education committee members Mona Bearor and Laurel Male. Participants are given a take-home bag consisting of an eight-page booklet stressing the points of the program plus a small birdbath that children can set up at home.

A group of attentive campers at Gavin Park in Wilton enjoyed the presentation on August 2.

For more information about offering this program to a group, email education@southernadirondack audubon.org.

N.Y.S. Birders Conference, Oct. 5-7

The 71st annual meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) will be held from October 5 to 7 in Rochester. The meeting is hosted by the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club and the Rochester Birding Association.

The conference will offer birding and educational activities. The banquet speaker will be Greg Miller of *The Big Year* book and movie fame. This is the 20th anniversary of Greg's Big Year. For more information, see hosting bird club's website: https://rochesterbirding.com/event/new-york-state-ornithological-association-71st-annual-meeting-2018/.

Field trips

No field trips are planned right now, but check the SAAS website (http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/fieldtrips/fieldtrips.html) for updates about field trips and events. Visit the SAAS Facebook page and click "Follow" to get notices of upcoming events.



SAAS sponsored a nature walk led by environmental educator George Steele at the Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park's annual wildlife festival on June 3. Adults and children learned about plants, animals, birds, insects and reptiles as they walked along the forested trail. SAAS's primary goal is to protect the environment by preserving natural habitats and promoting environmental education. SAAS plans to take part in the festival again in June, 2019.

Welcome, new members!

By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS Membership Committee

Currently, 513 members of National Audubon live in our chapter area. Many of our 136 chapter supporters belong to National Audubon Society and also financially support our local efforts of conservation and education. Chapter supporter dues are the main support for our chapter activities. Gift memberships are available, and will be announced with an appropriate card at your request.

Our newest chapter supporters are:

Bruce Clements, Saratoga Springs Bruce Lawson, South Glens Falls Bernadette Hoffman, Salem Nancy Ellett-Crosby, Greenwich Margaret Amodeo, Niskayuna Deborah Ferguson, Athens Linda Hathway, Glens Falls Susan Hathway, Corinth Kathleen Roberts, Chestertown Sandra Allen, Queensbury James & Christine Brown, Glens Falls Brett Varney, Hudson Falls

Renewals

Renewal notices were sent out in December for 2018. We were

amazed at the return rate of renewals this year and are grateful to all who renewed their chapter supporter membership.



If you have not yet sent in your renewal, it is never too late. We are always ready to accept your membership dues at only \$10 per year. Visit the SAAS website: http://www.southernadirondack audubon.org/membership/