



The Fledgling

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

Vol. 37 No.2, December 2019 — February 2020

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



Tim Watson holds a radio-collared marten as part of the NYSDEC's marten research in the Adirondacks.

Winter programs: Martens and Arctic birds

SAAS's next monthly program will be held on **Wednesday, Jan. 22**, at 7:00 p.m. at the **Saratoga Springs Public Library**. Biologist Timothy Watson will present "**Fisher and Marten in New York State – The Lesser Known of our Weasels.**"

Fisher and American (pine) marten are two of the most fascinating and least known mammals in New York State. One is well known for its ability to take down the prickly porcupine, while the other forages in the tiniest of spaces deep under the snow. These members of the weasel family have undergone major range expansions in most of their respective parts of the state in recent decades.

Biologists with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have conducted research on these unique mammals over the past 15+ years to help answer fundamental questions about them. DEC biologist Tim Watson will discuss the research, biology and ecology for fisher and marten in New York State.

Watson is a furbearer biologist with the DEC, based at the Region 5 Warrensburg office. He is a 2010 graduate from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry with a bachelor's degree in wildlife science. Since graduation, Tim has worked in locations all over the country with a variety of wildlife species, including marten, fisher, bobcats, island foxes, wolves, as well as other mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds.

On **Wednesday, Feb. 26**, John Schneider will present "**The High Arctic: Birds, Polar Bears and More!**" at **Crandall Library** in Glens Falls at 7:00 p.m. In the summer of 2018, Schneider and his wife spent two weeks on a 150-passenger ship cruising from Svalbard, Norway to Greenland and Iceland. They then spent 10 days touring southern Iceland on their own.

They saw thousands of sea birds. The ship's bridge reported spotting 60 bird species. They cruised past well-known bird-roosting cliffs in the middle of the night. It was so far north it was still light at midnight. They saw more than 20 Polar Bears and the ship's bridge spotted a total of 33 bears.

One of Schneider's favorite birds is the Arctic Tern (pictured below), which migrates from its northern Arctic breeding grounds to the Antarctic coast. It has the longest migration in the animal kingdom, with an average round-trip migration as much as 44,000 miles.

The talk will include photos of many sea birds, Icelandic land birds, Polar Bears, sea mammals and more. Schneider has identified all but one small dark Icelandic bird, and welcomes input on what it might be.

SAAS does not hold a December program.

Arctic Tern, by John Schneider.



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Southern Adirondack Audubon Society

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Peyton Atkins

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

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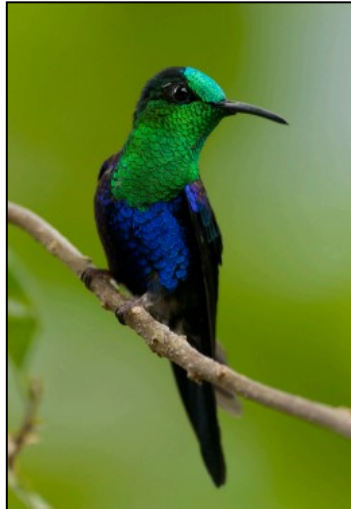
Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS), a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society, has more than 530 members in Warren, Washington, northern Saratoga and southern Hamilton counties in New York State. SAAS's primary goal is to protect the environment by preserving natural habitats and promoting environmental education. Contact a board member to learn about SAAS volunteer opportunities.

President's Message

Visit Ecuador with SAAS in April!



President John Loz was on a preview trip to Ecuador when this newsletter was in production. Instead of a President's Message, we offer this information about SAAS's upcoming Ecuador trip!



SAAS is offering a birding trip to Ecuador from April 17 to 26, 2020. Sign up for Holbrook Travel's "Birding at the Chocó-Andes Region" soon! The cost is \$2,750. The final non-refundable payment is due by Jan. 13.

Visit the trip [website](#) and our [customized trip brochure](#) for details. In recent years, SAAS has offered trips to Belize, Costa Rica and Arizona.

This Violet-bellied Hummingbird is one of the many breathtaking, colorful birds in Ecuador. Photo courtesy of Reinier Munguia.

Meet our board members

Peyton Atkins

Peyton Atkins joined the SAAS board this past year. He lives in Greenwich in Washington County with his wife Kim Atkins (also a SAAS board member) and newborn son Chase (perhaps a future board member), pictured below. He and Kim traveled with SAAS on trips to Belize and Costa Rica. He enjoyed taking photos of the tropical birds and lush scenery.

Peyton joined SAAS about a year ago. "I really appreciate the conservation aspect, and actually joined for that reason," Peyton said. "I've always been drawn to conserving wetlands and streams since living in California, and seeing how precious a resource clean water is."

"I hope to support the board moving forward, both with my time, and with the knowledge I have of computers, online software, and my knowledge of photography and videography," Peyton said. He's already helped the chapter purchase a new laptop and software.



Christmas Bird Count set for Saturday, Dec. 14

SAAS's annual Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, Dec. 14.

Area birders will follow specific routes in an established 15-mile-wide diameter circle in the Glens Falls region. Every single bird that is seen is counted, as well as every species. SAAS has held a count every year since 1983.

Most of the birding is done from a car, but some teams may walk along trails or in area parks. The many diverse habitats within the SAAS count circle make for interesting observations. It's also a fun way to meet area birders and increase birding skills.

Beginning birders can join a group that includes at least one experienced birder. New birders do not need to be bird identification experts to participate, and can help spot birds or keep team records.

To join a count team for a whole or partial day, contact SAAS count compiler Linda White at 518-222-5675, preferably a week before the count.

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 and January 5.

The Christmas Bird Census started in 1900 when ornithologist Frank Chapman suggested it as an alternative to Christmas "side hunts," competitions to see which



Tufted Titmice are among the species often seen on the SAAS Christmas Bird Count. In 2018, almost 11,000 individual birds from 54 species were spotted by the seven teams. Photo: Dr. Gordon Ellmers.

teams could shoot the most birds and other animals. Instead, birders count every bird they see in the designated count areas. It is now considered the world's longest running citizen science project.

For a map of area count circles and more information about the CBC, see: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>. For details on the Dec. 14 count, see the SAAS website.

SAAS Monthly Programs from January to June, 2020

To help you plan the first half of the new year, here are SAAS's upcoming monthly programs. Please make sure to confirm the details on the SAAS website and Facebook page closer to the program dates.

- ♦ **January 22** – "Fishers & Martens" of the Adirondacks – Tim Watson - Saratoga Springs Public Library
- ♦ **February 26** – "High Arctic: Birds, Polar Bears and More!" – John Schneider - Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls
- ♦ **March 25** – NYS 3rd Breeding Bird Atlas – Julie Hart – NYS Coordinator of the NYSBBA, Saratoga Springs Public Library
- ♦ **April 22** (Earth Day) – "A Slow Loss of ADK Icons" – Climate Change and Birds – Michael Glennon – Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls
- ♦ **May 27** – "Timberdoodles! – American Woodcock" – Dr. Roger Masse, SUNY Cobleskill, Saratoga Springs Public Library
- ♦ **June** (date TBA) – "Ospreys: The Revival of a Global Raptor", program and book signing – Dr. Alan Poole, retired editor of Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Bird Guide for North American Birds, Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls.

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

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



New pollinator garden planted in Greenfield Center

SAAS partnered with the Town of Greenfield Lions Club and local native perennial landscaping company Jessecology to create a pollinator-friendly perennial garden in Greenfield Center Park in Saratoga County in June. Above, Jessecology owner Jesse Elwert Peters (left, in brown top), works with Rob Snell (on right), and other volunteers to plant the perennials. Snell is a member of both the Town of Greenfield Lions Club and a SAAS board member. Photos are courtesy of Courtney Plummer and Rob Snell.

The *Saratoga Business Journal* wrote an article about the project: [A Bird-Friendly, Perennial Garden Created In Greenfield Center Park By Jessecology](#). When the garden is in full bloom, it will provide food for not only native birds, but also a variety of other pollinators such as bees and wasps.

About Wildflowers

Pollinator meadows

By Diane Collins

A recent program by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (<https://xerces.org>) discussed the swift and dramatic decline in insect populations due to climate change, pesticide exposure, and habitat degradation. It stirred my interest in planting an urban “meadow” to attract bees and other pollinators.

In early spring, consider using a large portion of a sunny front lawn to establish a successive blooming habitat. Keeping a tidy lawn border tells your neighbors that your meadow garden is intentional and not just wild takeover.

Wildflower seed mixes are just what’s ordered to start your project. Some ideas:

- Johnny’s Selected Seeds offers “Bee Feed Flower



Mix,” providing bee forage with low-maintenance perennials and re-seeding annual wildflowers.

- Prairie Moon Nursery sells an inviting “Pollinator-Palooza Seed Mix” of non-GMO untreated seeds that bloom successively through spring & summer.
- Other gardening options to attract bees and insects are found in the helpful Massachusetts Audubon link <https://www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/help-pollinators-thrive>.

An urban meadow or other gardening project can be very valuable in growing wildflowers that attract and nourish our keystone pollinator partners that make the world work.

Wildflower photographer Diane Collins is the author of Trailside Wildflowers in Cole’s Woods, available through <http://www.wildflowersinyourownbackyard.com>. Diane sells her booklet at SAAS monthly meetings for \$10; proceeds go to The Friends of Cole’s Woods and our Audubon chapter. Cole’s Woods is located in both the City of Glens Falls and the Town of Queensbury, next to Crandall Park.

Species Spotlight

Rough-legged Hawks

By Joyce Miller,
Newsletter Editor

Each winter, local birders look forward to good sightings of handsome Rough-legged Hawks.

These raptors breed in the Arctic and spend the winter in the relative warmth of the Southern Adirondacks. In the winter, these hawks are commonly found in open areas such as the Washington County Grasslands of Fort Edward.

According to eBird online checklist, they are reported in our area by early November. They stay the winter and return north to the Arctic in April.

These hawks are about the same size as our common



Don Polunci of Queensbury captured this dramatic scene of a Snowy Owl chasing a Rough-legged Hawk in February 2018 in the Fort Edward Grasslands. The hawk was harassing the owl, which had been perched on a pole. Both are winter visitors to our region.

Red-tailed Hawks, but have more dramatic mottled dark and light contrasting feathers and dark wrist patches. Their heads are often comparatively light-colored. The long tails have a light base and dark edge.

They're called "Rough-legged" Hawks because feathers cover their legs, making their legs look rough instead of smooth. The feathers keep their legs warm in the chilly Arctic.

Rough-legs often hunt for small rodents by hovering over fields looking for prey, or perching on smaller branches of trees.

They are found in Europe as well as North America, according to eBird's maps (<https://ebird.org/species/rolhaw>).

This Cornell Lab of Ornithology site offers more about these winter visitors: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Rough-legged_Hawk/id.

Climate Watch project continues in January

Join our bird survey this winter! SAAS will again participate in the National Audubon Society's citizen-science pilot project, Audubon Climate Watch, from Jan. 15 to Feb. 15. The project strives to learn how specific bird species are affected by climate change.

SAAS is seeking 20 volunteers to collect data about birds in our area. The SAAS survey focuses on two species: Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches. SAAS joined the program in June, 2017.

Volunteers use a specific protocol established by National Audubon: 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).

The Climate Watch project was developed after National Audubon issued a report in 2014, *Birds and Climate Change*, on risks faced by North American bird species from climate change. Audubon members asked how they could help. The Audubon Climate Watch program started in 2016. Details about the national program are available at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watchprogram>.

Contact SAAS board member Rob Snell for more information: bird-brane1@gmail.com. The survey is conducted twice a year: in June and mid-winter.

Tower lights updated

The American Bird Conservancy reports that during the past two years, thousands of communications tower operators have updated their lighting systems by turning off steady-

burning lights. These lights attracted birds, causing millions to die from collisions each year. Since 2016, more than 2,700 of about 13,900 tall towers have made this change, saving hundreds of thousands of birds each year. Flashing lights remain at the tops of these towers, ensuring aviation safety.

For more information about this issue, see <https://abcbirds.org/birds-communication-towers>.

Merlin Bird ID links

Cornell Lab of Ornithology's popular [All About Birds](#) bird identification site now has direct links to the Merlin Bird ID tool. To identify an unknown bird species, just click the ID button in the top right of any [All About Birds](#) page and answer five short questions. Merlin will list the most likely North American species.

Register for Breeding Bird Atlas for 2020

Local birders are invited to sign up now for the New York Breeding Bird Atlas III. NYSBBAIII is a 5-year community science project to document where and when birds are breeding in New York State.

The atlas will document bird breeding changes over the last 20 years in New York State. The previous atlas projects started in 1980 and 2000.

On March 25, Julie Hart, the NYS Coordinator of the NYSBBA, will speak about the atlas project at the SAAS monthly program at the Saratoga Springs Public Library.

From 2020 to 2024, NYBBAIII will provide information on how New York's birds are faring, informing management decisions and conservation efforts. Birders of all levels are welcomed to participate.

Atlasing is really just observing bird behavior. Simple behaviors like singing and nest building have a lot of meaning. Participants will note the strongest breeding evidence observed, from singing to carrying food back to a nest.

The entire state is divided into 5,712 blocks that are roughly 9 square miles. Approximately a third of these blocks will be designated "priority" blocks, which represent the coverage needed to understand where birds are breeding across all habitats and regions of New York. Sightings from anywhere in the state (any block) count towards the atlas project, but the atlas isn't finished until all priority blocks are completed.

For more about this project, see:

- New York State Breeding Bird Atlas: <https://nybirds.org/ProjAtlas.htm>
- New York Breeding Bird Atlas III Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/nybba3/>
- eBirds NYBBAIII page: <https://ebird.org/atlasny/about>.
- eBird flyer: <https://ebird.org/content/atlasny/wp-content/uploads/sites/79/2019/07/>



Snowy Owl stayed in Malta for the summer

Lisa Nichols of Corinth took these photos of a Snowy Owl that was seen in Malta from early June 2018 until early March 2019. It was seen in the fields just west of Northway Exit 12 in Saratoga County. Nichols is the Membership Engagement Supervisor at the Malta YMCA. She has been the Community Scientist for SAAS for the last year, monitoring the Malta Snowy Owl.

Usually, Snowy Owls are seen in our area only in the winter, when the birds come south from their Arctic breeding grounds. For an eBird map showing recent and current sightings of Snowy Owls, see: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snowy_Owl/maps-sightings.





Female and male Golden-winged Warblers. Photos by Ruth Bennett and Jack Hruska.

Study Finds Gender Bias in Bird Conservation Plans

From Cornell Lab of Ornithology

After pairing up and raising chicks, males and females of some bird species spend their winter break apart. At the end of their journey to Central or South America, you might find mostly males in one habitat, and females in another. Yet conservation strategies have typically overlooked the habitats needed by females, putting already-declining species in even more peril, according to a new study in the journal *Biological Conservation*.

"Among the small songbird species that have been studied, the general rule seems to be that females occupy lower elevation, shrubbier, drier sites," says lead author Ruth Bennett. "Mid-elevation and high-elevation sites that are more humid and have better quality forest are occupied by males." Bennett conducted the research while at Cornell University and is now a postdoctoral researcher at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center.

This male-female split is pretty common, Bennett says, but the study found that in conservation plans for 66 declining migratory species, only 3 made any mention of his-and-her-habitats—those being plans for Golden-winged Warbler, Bicknell's Thrush, and Back-capped Vireo. Bennett concludes that female birds are definitely being overlooked.

"When conservation plans don't explicitly address the habitat requirements of both sexes, there's no guarantee both sexes will be protected. Overlooking habitats females use can lead to unforeseen population loss, which is especially critical for species of conservation concern," says Bennett. "Our research is an important reminder that 'one size fits all' conservation does not accommodate the needs of both male and

female birds any more than a one-size-fits-all approach would work in meeting the needs of all genders at work and at home," adds co-author Amanda Rodewald, senior director of Conservation Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Using declining Golden-winged Warblers as their case study, the researchers also found that the habitats where female birds spend the winter are being lost more

rapidly than those inhabited by males. Field crews surveyed more than 1,100 locations for the warblers during three wintering seasons in Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

Researchers then used Global Forest Watch data to see what percentage of areas with the most birds had been deforested between 2000 and 2016. Male Golden-wings lost 4% of their habitat during that time span. Females lost twice as much, at 8%. Despite the higher threat faced by females, the study found that habitats for the males got all the conservation attention. "To counteract the bias in favor of male birds, researchers and conservation planners need to identify and report the sex of birds, model female distributions, and include female habitats in conservation plans," says Bennett.

Female birds are often harder to find with their muted colors, and both sexes are quieter while in their wintering locations. But making the effort to consider the needs of female birds could pay off in the long run.

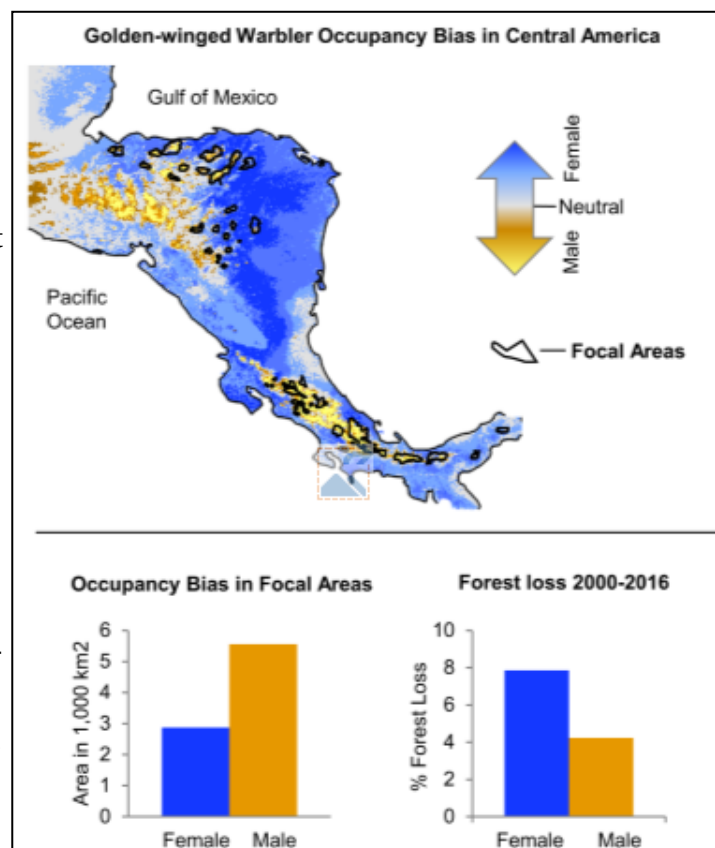
"Yes, it requires more investment and care on the survey portion of any conservation effort when you're trying to

acquire information to guide action," Rodewald says. "But that could actually allow us to be much more strategic and save money on the back end. Conservation plans are stronger—and more likely to be effective—when they explicitly consider the needs of females."

Reference:

Ruth Bennett, Ken Rosenberg, Amanda Rodewald. (2019) Overlooked sexual segregation of habitats exposes female migratory landbirds to threats. *Biological Conservation*.

This graphic highlights the different locations in Central America where study surveys found male and female Golden-winged Warblers spent the winter months. There is bias toward male habitats within conservation focal areas but higher rates of deforestation in the core of the female range. Figure by Ruth Bennett.

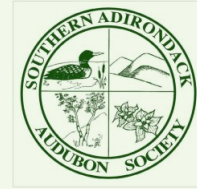


Send in your 2020 renewal now!

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 mail this form with a check to:

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society—Membership
P.O. Box 4076 Queensbury, NY 12804



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Please indicate your choices:

- ☐ I've enclosed a **\$15** 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 a donation of \$_____ to help cover postage and printing. (**Suggested donation: \$5.**)
- ☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities.

It's renewal time!

Renew now for 2020! SAAS local chapter memberships start with the calendar year and expire at the end of the year. Renew online with Paypal, or send a check using the form above or on the SAAS website (<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/membership/membership.html>).

Currently, 557 members of National Audubon live in our chapter area. Many of our 143 chapter supporters belong to National Audubon Society and also financially support our local efforts of conservation and education.

Our newest chapter supporters are:

Gisele Martineau, Queensbury
Jeff Gardiner, Galway
Laura Fisk, Ballston Spa
Stephen Farr, Ballston Lake
Mark Quackenbush, Hudson Falls

Special thanks to Carol Runge who supported SAAS with a donation to our recent letter of appeal.

Chapter memberships are \$15. A SAAS chapter membership makes an ideal holiday gift! Funds are used for local programming and educational activities.

First Saturday Bird Walks

SAAS continues the First Saturday monthly bird walks along the Spring Run Trail in Saratoga Springs, on **Jan. 4, Feb. 1** and **March 7**, led by Ray Perry, past Director of Five Rivers Environmental Education Center.

The Spring Run Trail offers a variety of habitats. The path is paved or on a boardwalk. All skill levels are welcome. So far, 117 species have been recorded on [eBird](#) for the Spring Run Trail, including Red-bellied Woodpecker (pictured here, courtesy of Dr. Gordon Ellmers).

The bird walks start at 8:00 a.m. sharp at the Spring Run Trail parking area, located on East Ave. near the corner of Excelsior Avenue. If the lot is full, park just slightly down the road on Excelsior Ave. in the EBI Beverage Center parking lot, adjacent to the Spring Run Trail. For updates, check SAAS's Facebook page and website.

