



# The Fledgling

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

Vol. 37 No. 4, June - August 2020

Website: <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SouthernAdirondackAudubonSociety/>



*A migrating Cape May Warbler posed for Don Polunci in Queensbury in May. The species is seen in migration in our area.*

## Breeding Bird Atlas underway

The third New York State Breeding Bird Atlas (NYSBBIII) project is underway. Thousands of birders around the state are recording bird breeding behaviors for the next five years.



The previous atlas projects started in 1980 and 2000. The current project will document birding changes over the last 20 years in New York State. The atlas project will take place from 2020 through 2024.

Birders of all experience levels are welcomed. People who participate quickly become better birders through careful attention to birds' behaviors.

Basic equipment would be a good field guide or app like Merlin, binoculars, patience and access to a computer with a web connection. Sightings are submitted to the state's atlas portal of the eBird checklist database.

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## President's Message

### What a year...

*By John Loz, SAAS President*

Well, 2020 has turned out to be a historic year, eh?



We are continuing to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day this year, and on July 1, we will be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)!

The NYSDEC has been instrumental in protecting our wildlife and their habitats in our state, especially our bird habitats. They led the charge in bringing back the Bald Eagle in New York State. Locally, they have been a driving force managing the grassland bird habitats in Washington County, within the 13,000 acre Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area.

This year has also, of course, been historic in regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been a struggle for all of us, but if anything positive can come out of this, it seems the hobby of birding has been getting quite a boost from nearly all of the national media outlets this spring.

More people have been exploring birding as a new pursuit. Families have been spending more time outdoors together learning about the birds they see. You might even have become a better birder this year by having more time to go on walks around your neighborhood, watching your bird feeder from your home's windows, and taking advantage of the many online educational bird webinars from

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## Southern Adirondack Audubon Society

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### Board and Committees

#### Officers:

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Secretary: Margie Amodeo

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2018-2020	Kim Atkins Peyton Atkins
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Board meetings are held monthly except July, August and December. Members are invited to attend. Contact John Loz for details.

#### Committees:

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Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS), a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society, has more than 580 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 — continued from page 1

around the country. Being in nature, watching for birds and other wildlife, can help center us and maintain a positive outlook as we make our way safely through this pandemic.

I look forward to (cross your fingers) safely starting up our in person monthly public programs and bird walks again in the fall. In the meantime, enjoy getting outdoors, but please keep a mask with you at all times to wear near other people, wash your hands frequently, keep hand sanitizer on hand, and be like a grassland summer bird – establish your territory – by keeping *your* territory at least six feet wide!

And as we say here at Southern Adirondack Audubon – Keep. Looking. Up. We will get through this.

### Meet our volunteers

## Ray Perry

Ray Perry became interested in birds more than 35 years ago, after seeing brilliant-blue Indigo Buntings while hiking the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine.

Working at Keewaydin Environmental Education Center in Vermont, he learned that birds can be identified just by their songs. He took a course on Adirondack birds at Camp Sagamore at Raquette Lake to cement his knowledge, and started his career as an environmental educator, nurturing others' interests in birds.

His professional career included work with the N.Y.S. Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and the New York State Department of Environmental Education (NYSDEC). He retired in 2018 as director of the DEC's Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar.

Ray has been involved with many bird research projects, including helping to establish the Christmas Bird Count at Saratoga Spa State Park (where he has conducted a portion of the count with the same team for 35 years), serving on the Important Birds Areas of New York Technical Committee, working as a Director of the OPRHP Bird Conservation Area Program, and maintaining a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) banding station at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center. He has personally observed 220 bird species in Schenectady County.

He has been married to Lylse for 35 years and has two grown children. He lives in Saratoga Springs, not far from the Spring Run Trail, where he has led SAAS monthly bird walks. He also enjoys geocaching, kayaking, biking and running.



Ray's wife Lylse took this photo before they went kayaking on the west branch of the Sacandaga River.



## Breeding Bird Atlas

*continued from page 1*

The entire state is divided into 5,712 blocks that are roughly nine 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.

Participants will note the strongest breeding evidence observed, from singing to carrying food back to a nest. The N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation lists breeding codes on its website: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7308.html>

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 NYBBIII page: <https://ebird.org/atlasny/about>.

For a good introduction to the atlas project, you can view a webinar by Julie Hart, the Project Coordinator of the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III. It’s posted on the website of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society: <https://doas.us/the-joys-of-atlating-with-julie-hart-march-20-2020-webinar/>. It was originally presented on March 20.



*Julie Hart is the Project Coordinator of the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III (Courtesy image).*

## In June: Virtual program on window collisions

SAAS President John Loz will present “Bird Window Collisions and What Can Be Done to Reduce Them?” as an online webinar.

Please check our SAAS website, Facebook and Instagram pages for date and time of the program, as well as information to access the webinar.

## Take a virtual field trip!

Here are some fun ways to enjoy birding and the outdoors when you’re indoors:

- SAAS offered its monthly program by Zoom on May 6, featuring Michael Glennon on Birds and Bogs: Climate Change and Life at the Edge of the Boreal . It was co-hosted by the Saratoga Springs Public Library, with 50 attendees from as far as New Jersey and the Berkshires. A recording is posted on the “Hanging@Home with SSPL” Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/80295625946/videos/674454169766714/>.
- The Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park offers Virtual Field Trips. Follow them on Facebook or Instagram [#wiltonwildlifepreserve](https://www.instagram.com/wiltonwildlifepreserve) .
- Biologists at the Vermont Center for Ecostudies in Norwich, Vermont offer videos on spring bird migration, vernal pools, bee conservation and more: <https://val.vtcostudies.org/events/recorded-events/>.
- The Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s All About Birds site offers several nest cams: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/> to see owls, hawks, and albatross.
- Audubon’s NestCams (<https://www.audubon.org/birdcams>) offer sneak peeks of nesting Atlantic Puffins, Sandhill Cranes and more.
- Download Cornell’s Merlin app for help in identifying birds on your neighborhood walks.
- Cornell’s Bird Academy Play Lab, to explore flight, song, dance, feathers, and more: <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/learning-games/>
- If you’re brave enough to test your birding knowledge, try eBird’s bird quiz: <https://ebird.org/quiz/> .
- American Birding Association (<http://www.aba.org>). The ABA’s Media link leads to videos such as “Nests and Eggs 101” and podcasts, where ABA staff and friends talk about birds, birding, travel and conservation.

Check the websites and social media of your favorite outdoor organizations!

**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.



Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*). Rondeau Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dendroica-fusca-001.jpg>. Courtesy of Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

## **Species Spotlight**

### **Blackburnian Warbler**

By Joyce Miller, SAAS Newsletter Editor

The male Blackburnian Warbler (*Setophaga fusca*) is one of the most breathtaking wood warbler species, with a flame-colored head and brilliant orange face and throat, accented by black markings. The drabber female is yellowish with two white wing bars.

These warblers spend the winter in Central and northern South America. They start appearing in our area in late April, and can remain in our region into early October. They breed in the forests of the northeastern United States. Here's the [eBird online checklist map](#); zoom in to see individual sightings and limit it to particular months.

Wood warblers typically hunt for insects at the tops of trees, as birders with "warbler neck" can attest. These warblers nibble up caterpillars (including the damaging spruce budworm), as well as other insects and spiders. A pair will raise one brood per season, with three to five eggs laid in a cup nest, usually in an evergreen tree branch. Their song is a very high, thin series of notes, sometimes so high it's hard to hear. For more about these stunning birds, see Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *All About Birds*: [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Blackburnian Warbler/id](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Blackburnian_Warbler/id).

## **About Wildflowers**

### **Sunflowers**

By Diane Collins

As I write this article, the finches, nuthatches, chickadees, titmice, and other birds are eating black-oil sunflower seeds at my birdfeeder. There are so many uses and joys this late summer wildflower provides.

Big and bold, the sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) is included in the huge Composite family. It is native to western North America. Its relatives include asters, daisies, dandelions, arnicas, and coriopses.

What seems to be a large single flower is actually a composite of hundreds of smaller flowers. Its large and showy head is made up of ray flowers surrounding a central cluster of hundreds of small disc flowers.

The ray flowers are sterile and act as landing pads for pollinating insects. The disc flowers are fertile; each one produces a seed.

The artistic pattern of the disc flowers is an example of Fibonacci sequencing. The Fibonacci sequence is found in nature and is one of the most famous formulas in mathematics. Each number in the sequence is the sum of the two numbers that precede it.

For a treat this summer, you might enjoy watching birds as they peck away on a large sunflower head with mature seeds. The seed head can be suspended from trees



or a corner of a house using fishing line, to keep the squirrels at bay.

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



## Where to bird locally

Many of us have more free time than we planned this year. What better way to spend it than birding? The SAAS website lists several birding hotspot locations to explore this summer in our area.

**- Betar Byway and the South Glens Falls Beach Bikeway Extension** - This area includes a 1.9 mile (one-way) trail in South Glens Falls along the Hudson River including mixed woods, riverfront, wetland, and beach. SAAS Education Chair Mona Bearor reports that 146 species have been recorded on the river trail; 155 including those seen on the woods section.

**- Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail** - This two-mile trail follows an abandoned railway through open marsh, wet meadow and forested wetland habitats in the Town of Saratoga.

**- Carter's Pond Bird Conservation Area** - This complex includes a one-mile nature trail, a pond open to motorless boats, and a marsh overlook structure in the Town of Greenwich, Washington County. It offers open water, emergent marsh,



wooded swamp, shrub wetlands, forests, old fields, grasslands, and shrubland.

**- Denton Wildlife Sanctuary** - Hudson River frontage and a network of land trails in varied habitats will assure a variety of species in most every season.

**- The Grasslands of Washington County** - This vast open grassland and agricultural complex is comprised of both private land and almost 500 acres purchased and protected by New York State as the Washington County Grasslands Wildlife Management area. Birders visit in winter for raptors and in summer for grassland breeding

birds.

**- Hudson Crossing Park** - This park located in Schuylerville offers a system of trails, a picnic area, and access to both the Champlain Canal and the Hudson River. Diverse habitats of riverfront, open fields, and wooded trails support a wide array of bird species.

**- Spring Run Trail** - This paved level trail in the City of Saratoga Springs has diverse habitat and supports a wide variety of bird species.

**- Towpath Road in the Town of Kingsbury** - This road has four miles of varied habitat that offers great birding in any season.

For descriptions, directions and photos of each of these sites, see <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/birding/birding.html>. That page also lists information on Important Bird Areas, the Capital District Bird Finding Calendar, and Audubon's free birding app, to help you identify birds in the field.

Of course, please make sure to practice appropriate tick caution and social distancing guidelines.

## Practicing ethical birding

SAAS strongly encourages our members to adhere to the American Birding Association Code of Birding Ethics (<https://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/>). It is reproduced with permission below.

### 1. Respect and promote birds and their environment.

(a) Support the conservation of birds and their habitats. Engage in and promote bird-friendly practices whenever possible, such as keeping cats and other domestic animals indoors or controlled, acting to prevent window strikes, maintaining safe feeding stations, landscaping with native plants, drinking shade-grown coffee, and advocating for conservation policies. Be mindful of any negative environmental impacts of your activities, including contributing to climate change. Reduce or offset such impacts as much as you are able.

(b) Avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger. Be particularly cautious around active nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display sites, and feeding sites. Limit the use of recordings and other audio methods

of attracting birds, particularly in heavily birded areas, for species that are rare in the area, and for species that are threatened or endangered. Always exercise caution and restraint when photographing, recording, or otherwise approaching birds.

(c) Always minimize habitat disturbance. Consider the benefits of staying on trails, preserving snags, and similar practices.

### 2. Respect and promote the birding community and its individual members.

(a) Be an exemplary ethical role model by following this Code and leading by example. Always bird and report with honesty and integrity.

(b) Respect the interests, rights, and skill levels of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience and be especially helpful to beginning birders. (c) Share bird observations freely, provided such reporting would not violate other sections of this Code, as birders, ornithologists, and conservationists derive considerable benefit from publicly available bird sightings. (d) Approach instances of perceived unethical birding behavior with sensitivity and respect; try to resolve the matter in a positive manner, keeping in mind that perspectives vary. Use the situation as an opportunity to teach by

example and to introduce more people to this Code.

(e) In group birding situations, promote knowledge by everyone in the group of the practices in this Code and ensure that the group does not unduly interfere with others using the same area.

### 3. Respect and promote the law and the rights of others.

(a) Never enter private property without the landowner's permission. Respect the interests of and interact positively with people living in the area where you are birding.

(b) Familiarize yourself with and follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing activities at your birding location. In particular, be aware of regulations related to birds, such as disturbance of protected nesting areas or sensitive habitats, and the use of audio or food lures.

- Birding should be fun and help build a better future for birds, for birders, and for all people.

- Birds and birding opportunities are shared resources that should be open and accessible to all.

- Birders should always give back more than they take.





## Photos by Don Polunci

Don Polunci of Queensbury is a retired photography teacher and a past president of SAAS. His photos this spring show the diversity and beauty of our local wildlife.

He uses a Canon 7d Mark II camera with a 500mm lens.

The Bald Eagles pictured on this page are year-round residents along the Hudson River. They have been a mated pair for about four years.

The male is smaller than the female, as is typical with many raptors. He has been doing most of the nest building, Don noted.

*From top:*

*- The male and female observe their territory.*

*- The female fights off an intruding Osprey.*

*- The male Bald Eagle flies from the nest.*

Don's photos continue on the next page.







Don Polunci took these photos in our region this spring.  
From top:

- *A Baltimore Oriole perches in a tree.*
- *A Black-crowned Night Heron yawns in Fort Edward.*
- *A male and female Killdeer tend to their four chicks.*
- *Four fox kits peek from their den.*
- *A male Indigo Bunting looks for food on a Queensbury lawn.*
- *An adult Great Horned Owl adult sits with its owlet.*





## Upcoming SAAS events

- SAAS is not hosting in-person programs or events due to COVID-19 limitations.
- See page 3 for information about a virtual program in June on bird window collisions by John Loz.
- Check the [SAAS website](#) and [Facebook](#) page for details on this and other virtual online events.
- Climate Watch, set for May 15 to June 15, is canceled for this spring.
- SAAS has tentatively moved its nine-day trip to Ecuador's Chocó-Andes Region to Oct. 20-29, 2021.

## Raptor Fest, Oct. 2-3

The 10th Annual Winter Raptor Fest is currently scheduled to return to the Washington County Fairgrounds in Greenwich on October 3 and 4 to celebrate the return of our wintering raptors. For details about the festival and the latest schedule, see: <https://winterraptorfest.com/>.

*Here's a side by side comparison of a Barred Owl and owllet (top) and a Great Horned Owl and owllet (bottom), seen in mid-May by Don Polunci in Queensbury. Follow SAAS's Facebook page to see photos like these regularly.*



## Rise in birding interest

Watching birds in your backyard and neighborhood certainly makes this time much more fun! National news has reported on the rise of interest in birding as people stay home:

- *Bird-watching soars amid COVID-19 as Americans head outdoors*, from Associated Press: <https://wildlife.org/this-pandemic-is-for-the-birds/>

- *You have no choice but to become a backyard birder*, from Slate online magazine: <https://slate.com/technology/2020/03/how-to-bird-during-pandemic.html>

- *Birding ideas for a pandemic*, from Outdoor News <https://www.outdoornews.com/2020/03/17/birding-ideas-for-a-pandemic/>

- *'Bird therapy' takes off as millions of birders see out coronavirus pan-*

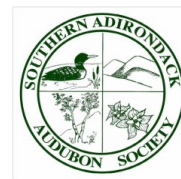
*demic from home*, from The Hill online news: <https://thehill.com/changing-america/opinion/496024-bird-therapy-takes-off-as-millions-of-birders-see-out-coronavirus>

## Thanks to our supporters!

Currently, SAAS has 167 Chapter Supporters, and 593 National Audubon and Chapter Supporters in our chapter area.

Welcome to these renewed Chapter Supporters:

Rob Snell  
Mallory Zakeosian  
Beth Saundry  
Paul Farhart  
Marion Shorey  
Bill Schwarz  
Patricia Brennan  
Marjorie Rosen  
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Lauren Cohen



Thanks also to these members and several anonymous donors, who included additional donations for our chapter operating expenses:

Beth Saundry  
Paul Farhart  
Marion Shorey  
Bill Schwarz

SAAS local chapter memberships start with the calendar year and expire at the end of the year. To send in your Chapter Supporter renewal, visit the SAAS website and renew online. Chapter memberships are \$15. Funds are used for local programming and educational activities.

## Identify nests with NestWatch site

Find a nest? Identify its residents with Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Nestwatch (<https://nestwatch.org/>). The site offers photos, tips and descriptions of the nests of breeding birds in our area.