The Fledgling

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

Vol. 42 No. 4, ***June 2025 — August 2025*** ***Now in our 42nd year!***

Facebook: *www.facebook.com/SouthernAdirondackAudubonSociety/*

Website: *www.southernadirondackaudubon.org*

Neil Gifford holds an Eastern Whip-poor-will at the Albany Pine Bush. Photo courtesy of Neil Gifford.

Summer events: Albany Pine Bush, Wild Turkeys

On **Thursday, June 26,** Neil A. Gifford will offer "**Avian Research in the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, an Important Bird Area and National Natural Landmark."** The presentation starts at 6:00 p.m. at the Bancroft Public Library in Salem, Washington County.

Gifford is the Conservation Director of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission in Albany.

Inland pine barrens are a rare yet important habitat for shrubland birds in the northeastern United States. However, many of these ecosystems are limited to fragmented remnants in heavily urbanized landscapes. The 3,407-acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve protects the remnants of an inland pine barrens following decades of loss, fragmentation, and degradation due to human development, species invasions, and fire suppression. To understand the effects of their protection efforts, researchers have been monitoring the response of bird populations at the Pine Bush, conducting point counts, capturing birds to band and release, and documenting the territory fidelity of two target shrubland birds: the Prairie Warbler and the Eastern Whip-poor-will. Gifford will provide a synopsis of the individual studies and conservation work being conducted there and share that their efforts have had a positive impact on the local shrubland bird community.

Gifford is a community representative on the North Atlantic Fire Science Exchange, with more than 28 years of fire ecology, prescribed fire and field ornithology experience. He earned an associate's from Paul Smith's College and bachelor's, and master's degrees in Ecology and Environmental Science from Plattsburgh State University. Gifford is also a certified wildland fire fighter, a USGS Master Bird Bander and the author of both popular and peer-reviewed scientific articles. He lives on a small farm in White Creek, Washington County, where he tends a flock of Jacob Sheep and many species of cavity-nesting birds.

On **Thursday, July 31**, Mike Muthersbaugh will talk about **Wild Turkeys** at the Bancroft Public Library in Salem at 6:00 p.m. He is the Upland Game Bird Biologist for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Check the SAAS website and social media for details.

Wild Turkeys, once extirpated in New York, started to naturally recolonize in the 1940s. Muthersbaugh will talk about factors that affect Wild Turkey populations in the state. See his article on page 4 about the N.Y.S. Wild Turkey Survey in August.

Andean Condors can be seen in Colombia. Photo courtesy of Holbrook Travel.

Visit Colombia with SAAS in Feb. 2026!

SAAS is again partnering with Holbrook Travel to offer a birding trip to Colombia next year. "Birding the Central Andes" will travel from February 11 to 19, 2026.

Colombia has more than 1,900 bird species, more than any other country. This nine-day program focuses on the highlights of the Central Andes region. The group will explore Andean cloud forest, farmland, and páramo habitats, including flycatchers, hummingbirds, tanagers, toucans, and more. For a full description, see *www.holbrooktravel.com/where-we-travel/central-and-south-america/colombia/birding-culture-central-andes-saas-26*.

A $350 deposit is due upon enrollment. The deadline to reach minimum group size is **October 14**. Final payment is due November 8. If the trip has 8 to 9 paying participants, the cost will be $3,750. The single supplement is $550.

SAAS has traveled with Holbrook to other birding hotspots such as Belize, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Cuba.

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Board meetings are held monthly except July, August and December. Members are invited to attend.

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Newsletter: Joyce Miller (*editor@southernadirondackaudubon.org)*
Programs: John Loz (Interim chair) (*programs@southernadirondackaudubon.org*)
Publicity: OPEN

Chapter memberships are $20. Renew at *southernadirondackaudubon.org/membership/*, or send a check using the form on the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) website. Contributions support SAAS's education and conservation activities in our region.

SAAS is a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society. SAAS has approximately 600 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

Seek some refuge

By Rob Snell, SAAS President

SAAS President Rob Snell installed a Wood Duck box in wetlands at Big Bend Preserve in Moreau this spring.

Recently, I visited J.N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge in Sanibel, Florida. It has been more than 50 years since my first visit, and the experience was still wonderful. We think of these places as refuge for wildlife, but in fact they are also refuge for humans. Whether watching a Reddish Egret "dancing" in shallow water as he chased his prey, or Ospreys feeding their young, the experience transports us away from daily stress. In the turbulent world we live in, visiting wild spaces can help us improve our mindfulness.

Studies have shown that spending time with nature has significant positive impacts on human mental health. One study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* (2019) found that spending just 20–30 minutes in nature significantly lowers stress hormone levels. Hence, wildlife refuges are not only vital for conservation and biodiversity, but also serve as essential spaces for human mental health and emotional well-being. Visiting and protecting these areas benefits both the planet and individuals, helping people thrive in a challenging and fast-paced world.

Meet our New Board Member

Matt Roos

Matt Roos holds a Red-winged Blackbird at the Five Rivers banding station in Delmar, Albany County.

Matt Roos joined the SAAS Board of Directors in 2025. Roos holds a master's degree in Wildlife Ecology and Management from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF), where he researched the use of spatial data to predict the occurrence of wildlife-vehicle collisions. He currently works as an Environmental Specialist for the N.Y.S. Department of Transportation, assisting in the environmental review of major transportation projects. He has previously worked as a wildlife technician for NYSDEC and as a seasonal conservation technician for the Albany Pine Bush.

Roos has been interested in biology and ecology since childhood. He began birding seriously after taking an ornithology course as an undergraduate at Binghamton University in 2020, and he has a particular interest in New World blackbirds.

His involvement in SAAS began when he was invited to attend a meeting by his sister and fellow board member Liz Roos as well as board member John Loz, who he had previously worked with at the Albany Pine Bush. He has since assisted with guided bird walks and has represented the chapter at a regional council meeting.

Roos' other interests include fishing, "herping" for reptiles and amphibians, and volunteering in conservation projects such as bird banding and prescribed fires.

First Saturday Bird Walks continue

Join SAAS members for morning bird walks along the beautiful **Spring Run Trail** in Saratoga Springs on the first Saturday of each month.

SAAS members will lead walks on these Saturdays: **June 7, July 5 and August 2.** Walks start at 8:00 a.m.

The one-mile trail is paved and flat. It is used for walking, running and biking, as well as birding. It offers a variety of habitats.

So far, 136 bird species have been reported along the Spring Run Trail. See the species checklist on eBird: *ebird.org/hotspot/L1548124/bird-list*. The "Bar Charts" link show species seen for each month.

Bring binoculars if you have them. All skill levels are welcome. Meet at 8:00 a.m. sharp at the Spring Run Trail parking area near the corner of East Ave. and Excelsior Ave. If the parking area 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 directions and details, see *www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/Spring-Run/*.

Field trip guidelines

- Review our SAAS **Field Trip Guidelines** (*southernadirondackaudubon.org/field-trip-guidelines/*).
- SAAS trips follow the American Birding Association's **Code of Birding Ethics** (*www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/*).
- Check the SAAS website, Instagram and Facebook pages for updates on trips.

Summer Bird Walks and Trips

Register for these walks with bird walk leader Damon Russo at *birdwalks@southernadirondackaudubon.org*.

More bird walks for July and August will be announced on the SAAS website, Facebook, Instagram and by Mailchimp email (register for email at *www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/subscribe/*).

Sunday, June 8:
Saratoga National Historical Park, Stillwater, Saratoga County.
Walk will include southern grasslands. See the eBird checklist: *ebird.org/hotspot/L246300/illustrated-checklist*.

Saturday and Sunday, June 21-22:
Montezuma NWR, Seneca Falls, Seneca County.
First walk starts at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 21. Expect to see a wide variety of bird species, habitats, other animals and plants. Registrants responsible for hotel accommodations, expenses and transportation. A detailed trip description will be posted on SAAS website, social media outlets, and Mailchimp. For trip guidelines, details and to register, contact Damon Russo at *birdwalks@southernadirondackaudubon.org*.

Sunday, July 6:
Vischer Ferry Preserve, Clifton Park, Saratoga County.
Walk in this popular and bird-rich preserve along the Mohawk River. See the eBird checklist: *ebird.org/hotspot/L208678/illustrated-checklist.*

April Bird Walk reports

SAAS board members Liz and Matt Roos led a walk on April 5 on the Betar Byway in South Glens Falls, with the New York City Bird Alliance. They found 34 species including Gadwall, Long-tailed Duck, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Fox Sparrow and a Red-tailed Hawk.

On Sunday, April 6 at Bog Meadow Preserve, the SAAS group saw 20 species including: Barred Owl, Northern Flicker, Rusty Blackbirds, and a Belted Kingfisher.

A Northern Flicker male flies from its nest. Photo: Audubon DAM, Zachary Vaughan, 2023 Audubon Photography Awards.

More pop-up events

Check SAAS's Facebook and Instagram pages for more pop-up events:

- **Email**: sign up for announcements and updates at *www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/subscribe/*.
- **Facebook**: Join the 2,300 people who follow SAAS at *www.facebook.com/SouthernAdirondackAudubonSociety/*.
- **Instagram:** Follow @adkbirds (*www.instagram.com/adkbirds/*).
- **Website**: Check *www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/* for updated and new event information.

Changes and details about scheduled events will be shared through these announcements.

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

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

Add your sightings to the Wild Turkey Survey in August

By Mike Muthersbaugh
Upland Game Bird Biologist, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

A Wild Turkey trots across a Washington County field in this photo by Dr. Gordon Ellmers.

Flocks of Wild Turkey can now be seen throughout New York State, but this was not always the case.

Wild Turkeys were once extirpated in New York, and only began to naturally recolonize in the 1940s. With the help of trap-and-transfer efforts through the second half of the 20th century, healthy turkey populations became well established across the state. However, after reaching peak abundance in the 2000s, the statewide turkey population contracted through the 2010s, and the cause for these declines largely remains a mystery. The good news is that turkey populations appear stable in more recent years and may even be growing in parts of the state, like the St. Lawrence River Valley and portions of the Adirondacks. Various factors can impact turkey populations, particularly nesting success and poult survival.

Since 1996, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has conducted the Summer Wild Turkey Sighting Survey every August, primarily to obtain an index of reproductive success each year.

The survey is now fully online and accepts agency and public submissions of turkey sightings from across New York. Throughout August, survey participants record the sex and age of all Wild Turkeys observed, when (what date), and where the observation(s) took place.

Data obtained through the survey is used to estimate the average number of poults (young of the year) per hen statewide and among major geographic regions of the State.

This metric allows DEC biologists to predict fall harvest potential, compare reproductive success between years, and compare turkey reproductive success in New York to other states and regions. As more, high-quality data is recorded through the August survey, DEC biologists will be better able to compare turkey productivity between areas within the state and identify factors affecting turkey populations each year.

Weather, predation, and habitat conditions during the breeding and brood-rearing seasons are among the many factors that impact nest success, hen survival, and poult survival. Young turkey poults are particularly susceptible to cold and wet conditions, so reproductive success can vary greatly from year to year.

Community science opportunities like the Summer Wild Turkey Sighting Survey cultivate a collaborative partnership between the public and the DEC while providing valuable data that can be used to help manage game species, like Wild Turkeys.

The *Summer Wild Turkey Sighting Survey* will available on the DEC website throughout the month of August. SAAS members are invited to report Wild Turkeys sightings in August.

Summer events: Collision prevention; live birds

Two programs have been added to the SAAS summer line-up.

SAAS Programs Chair John Loz will present **"Bird-Window Collisions and Safe Solutions"** on **Thursday, June 19** at 6:30 p.m. at the Bolton Free Library in Bolton Landing.

Birds can't perceive glass, and typically die after colliding with windows. Collisions with windows are the third greatest cause of death for birds in the United States, after habitat loss and predation by outdoor cats. About one million birds collide with windows every day, according to peer-reviewed research.

Loz is a Project Presenter for the Pennsylvania-based Bird-Window Collision Working Group that includes the Acopian Center at Muhlenberg College and Audubon Pennsylvania. To learn about this issue and how to help mitigate it at your home, see "Reducing collisions with glass" from National Audubon Society, *www.audubon.org/news/reducing-collisions-glass*.

Falcon Heart Rescue will present a **live birds of prey program** at The Arkell Museum in Canajoharie on **Saturday, August 16** at 2:00 p.m.

Check the SAAS website and social media for details and updates.

In March, SAAS program chair John Loz delivered a birding backpack to Easton Library's director, Jennifer DeCarlo.

Birding backpacks now at 21 libraries

Summer is a great time to borrow a SAAS Birding Backpack from your local library.

Each backpack contains two sets of Celestron binoculars, Birding Adventures for Kids book, Birds of NY Guide, Walking in Nature Bingo Game (great for younger nature explorers), Birding Journal to record observations, and other items.

SAAS program chair John Loz delivered the latest birding backpack to the Easton Library in March. SAAS also donated a children's book called *Bird Count* to the library's collection. SAAS will follow up this donation with two programs at the Easton library: a Beginner Birding workshop later this spring, and a program in September on the bird research at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve.

Birding Backpacks are in these 21 libraries around the SAAS membership area: Caldwell Public Library in Lake George, Saratoga Springs Public Library, Galway Public Library, Ballston Spa Public Library, The Richards Library in Warrensburg, Town of Chester Public Library in Chestertown, Lake Pleasant Public Library in Speculator, Bolton Free Library, Bancroft Public Library in Salem, Argyle Free Library, Hudson Falls Free Library, Greenwich Free Library, Town of Johnsburg Library in North Creek, Corinth Free Library, Ballston Community Public Library in Burnt Hills, Horicon Free Public Library in Brant Lake, Schuylerville Public Library, Waterford Public Library, Round Lake Library Malta Branch in Malta, Round Lake Library Clark House Branch and Easton Library.

For more about the program, *www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/education/*.

Annual loon census

The N.Y. Annual Loon Census will be held on Saturday, July 19, from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. During the census, volunteers from across the state observe loons on their assigned lake and report observations to the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, based in Saranac Lake. The survey started in 2002. It provides information about the breeding loon population in the state. To learn more, visit *www.adkloon.org/ny-loon-census*.

Invasive Species Awareness Week

New York's Invasive Species Awareness Week is June 9 to 15. For a list of invasive species in New York, see *nyis.info/species-information/*.

SAAS program report: Old growth forests, bluebirds

Two SAAS board members offer these accounts of recent monthly programs held at the Saratoga Springs Public Library.

From Mark Silo:
On February 26, Dr. Dan Bogan of Siena College treated 37 attendees to an interesting program on "First Growth and Old Growth Forests of The Catskills."

"First growth" designates forest tracts where the trees have not been disturbed by man or fire since the last glacial retreat 13,000 years ago, while "old growth" designates tracts that have not been disturbed for a couple of centuries.

Dr. Bogan and his colleagues and students have traversed the Catskill Park in search of such tracts and found surprisingly many, which they have inventoried and digitally mapped.

The talk contrasted patterns of growth with population growth and included some illuminating before and after images. A ton of our SAAS literature was swept up by the crowd, a dozen or so signed on to our contact and volunteer list and, as always, the Saratoga Springs Public Library was a great host.

From Judy Staubo:
Bluebird expert John Rogers gave the program **"Bluebirds and More"** on March 26.

Here are some of the bluebird facts he shared with the 75 attendees:

- Approximately 170,000 Eastern Bluebirds live in New York.
- Bluebird numbers are declining because of loss of habitat and competition from birds such as Starlings and House Sparrows.
- The Eastern Bluebird is the official bird of New York and Mississippi.
- The average lifespan of a Bluebird is 1.4 years. Fewer than 10% live more than 3 years.
- Bluebirds are one of 85 bird species that nest in cavities. Woodpeckers are primary "excavators" but only use their cavities for one season.
- The best habitat should have low vegetation with just a scattering of trees for perching. Large lawns away from woods, gravel pits, and cemeteries are good places for bluebird nests, as well as cemeteries with low vegetation and places for perching.
- A bluebird will defend 3 to 15 acres; this decreases as the season progresses. Males will protect against other males; females will attack other females.
- The first nesting is in April or May; occasionally now in March.
- The female will lay one egg a day. She will start to sit on the nest when all eggs have been laid. The eggs are normally blue but 3%-5% are white, which is a DNA feature.
- Do not put up a box if you do not intend to monitor it. When monitoring boxes, wait until the sun has risen and it is warm outside. After the first brood has hatched, clean out the box. Otherwise, the next nest is elevated and thus increases danger from predators.

This Fiery-billed Aaraçari was spotted at the Paraíso Birding Paradise during a SAAS trip to Panama. It is a member of the toucan family.

White-shouldered Tanager at Summit Ponds, Panama

SAAS Panama birding trip report

By Deb Ferguson
SAAS Board Secretary and Member

Holbrook Travel planned a birding trip for SAAS in Panama in February 2025. We spent a week searching out birds and getting to know the various areas visited. Our guide, Cristian Moreno and other local guides led us on this fast-paced but fruitful trip.

After arriving in Panama City, the Gamboa Rainforest Reserve, Colón, was our first stop. We spent a few nights there where it was possible to observe birds from your balcony or on the grounds, including Keel-billed Toucan and Whooping Motmot, the first of several motmots that were seen on this trip.

On our second day, we traveled to nearby Ammo Dump Ponds, the Panama Rainforest Discovery Center feeders and trails, Summit Ponds and Plantation Road. On day three, we birded the Parque Natural Metropolitano, Ciudad del Saber Parque and the Miraflores Locks where we also watched a documentary on the history of the Panama Canal.

We boarded a flight on day four to the northwest province of Chiriquí where we birded the Pipeline Trail. On day five we ventured to Sendero Los Quetzales and Volcán Barú Road.

On day six, we walked the extensive Paraíso Birding Paradise, our birdiest hot spot of the trip, led by notable local guide Mizael Rivera (Fork-tailed Flycatcher, a personal nemesis of mine, was observed.) We followed up that absolutely amazing habitat with a change of pace at the Humedal Lagunas de Volcán.

The next morning, we flew back to Panama City, where we were able to squeeze in a morning at Costa del Este, Mirador Paseo del Mar mudflats and a drive through the historic district of Panama City before regrouping for dinner later and various departing flights.

In addition to checking off a nemesis flycatcher, other highlights for me were the Three-wattled Bellbird, Spot-crowned Euphonia, Scarlet-rumped Tanager (photo on next page), Yellow-crowned Euphonia, Brown-hooded Parrot, Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Snowy-bellied Hummingbird, Scaly-breasted Hummingbird, White-crested Coquette, Fasciated Antshrike, Dot-winged Antwren, Northern Black-throated Trogon, Slaty-tailed Trogon, and Fiery-billed Aracari (photo on this page).

What a wonderful, albeit whirlwind, birding trip!

Ferguson photographed this Broad-billed Motmot at the Panama Rainforest Discovery. When alarmed, a motmot will twitch its long tail back and forth like a clock pendulum.

Photos on this and the next page were taken by Deb Ferguson

More Panama photos

Continued from previous page

Lesson's Motmot, photographed at the Paraíso Birding Paradise. As the bird matures, some of the feather barbs on the tail drop off to form these "paddles" on the tail tip.

A Scarlet-rumped Tanager enjoys a banana at the Paraíso Birding Paradise, Panama.

This Golden-hooded Tanager was spotted at the Paraíso Birding Paradise in Panama.

Resplendent Quetzal, photographed on the famously bird-rich Pipeline Road, has a magnificent sweeping tail that can measure up to three feet long.

Quetzals are the largest members of the trogon family. The body of the birds measure 14 to 16 inches.

The Rufous-collared Sparrow, photographed at the Sendero Los Quetzale, is the most common sparrow in Panama.

Climate Watch continues to June 15

National Audubon Society's citizen science project Climate Watch resumed on May 15. The survey is conducted twice a year: May 15 to June 15 and January 15 to February 15.

Volunteers look specifically for Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches to observe how those species are affected by climate change. Using maps of a specific area, birders conduct 12 counts, observing for five minutes each. They also record the numbers and species of other birds identified within 100 meters.

Climate Watch started after National Audubon issued a report in 2014, *Birds and Climate Change*, on risks faced by North American bird species from climate change. Contact SAAS president Rob Snell (*birdbrane1 @gmail.com*) for details.

NestCams

Each nesting season, Cornell Lab of Ornithology offers a peek into several active nests around the world, including California Condor, American Kestrels, Great Horned Owls and New Zealand's Northern Royal Albatross. See *www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/all-cams/.*

That link also offers views of feeders in Ontario, Panama, and Ithaca in New York state.

New York Birders connect on Discord

This article by Anne Swaim originally appeared in the Spring 2025 issue of NYSOA's New York Birders *magazine. Reprinted with permission from the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA).*

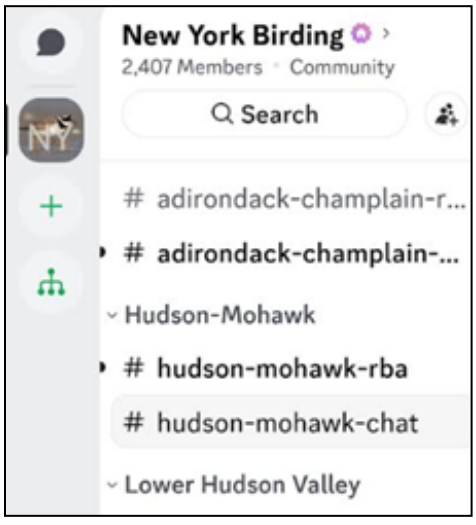
Birders have continually adapted technology to share sighting reports: from the basic telephone answering service with recorded rare bird alert messages through internet text message boards to all the more recent social media apps.

The oddly-named Discord app is yet another text/image social media app that gathers all messages sent for viewing online whether by desktop computer or mobile devices.

First adopted by computer gamers, Discord is now being used in many other communities as an efficient way to send, read, and archive messages, including birders in many U.S. states and other locations.

The "New York Birding" Discord community currently has almost 2,500 members.

There are sections for many counties and areas of the state, as well as topical sections. These include: Northern, Western NY/Finger Lakes, Central, Hudson-Mohawk, Lower Hudson Valley, and NYC/Long Island. Topic sections include nfc-birding (night flight calls), migration-and-weather, extralimital rarities, ebird-help, pelagic birding, and other-state -discords.



This Discord app screenshot shows several local New York state birding links.

To connect with the "New York Birding" Discord community visit *tinyurl.com/NYS-RBA-Discord*.

NYSOA Board Member Steve Rappaport presented a video tutorial about how to use the "New York Birding" Discord community on Zoom last year. View this tutorial on YouTube here: *bit.ly/discord-ny-birders*.

Loz wins statewide award

Pictured above are board member and newsletter editor Joyce Miller, Loz, board members Liz and Matt Roos and Laura McCarthy, the Senior Manager, Network Engagement, for Audubon's Connecticut and New York regional office. The award was commemorated by a framed American John James Audubon print of American Kestrels. Photo courtesy of Laura McCarthy.

SAAS program chair and past president John Loz (right, second from left) was presented with the Norman Stotz Award by the Audubon Council of New York at a conference in April at the Queensbury Hotel in Glens Falls.

The annual award recognizes the Audubon New York member who best demonstrates extraordinary leadership on behalf of the Audubon Society, in the spirit of Norman I. Stotz. Stotz was an environmental activist who helped to establish the Audubon Council of New York State, a consortium of the 27 National Audubon Society chapters in New York.

Loz is past president of two chapters: SAAS and Audubon Society of the Capital Region, as well as past Chair of the Audubon New York Council.

Win a binocular harness!

Renew or join as a chapter supporter by Monday, June 30 to receive chances to win a binocular harness. These devices make it more comfortable to wear binoculars by distributing the weight.

The drawing will take place in early July. Last quarter's winner was Lanie Angel of Bolton Landing.

Annual chapter memberships are only $20. They run for a year, renewable on the month one signs up. An additional ticket will be allotted for every $5 donated through the SAAS membership or donation page. Visit *www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/membership/*

Contributions support SAAS's local educational and conservation activities. Many National members also become chapter supporter members to financially support SAAS's local efforts.

About Wildflowers

Passionflower

By Diane Collins, Wildflower Columnist

Revel in the exquisite beauty of this common native wildflower found in the Amazon rainforest.

The scientific genus name *Passiflora* was given by Carl Linnaeus (no surprise here) in 1737. The name is derived from the Latin words "passio" (suffering or passion) and "flos" (flower). Christian missionaries interpreted the flower structure as representing Christ's crucifixion: the corona as the crown of thorns, the stamens as the five wounds, and the styles as the nails.

Passiflora includes over 500 species. They are mostly tendril-bearing "passion vines". The flower ripens into an indehiscent (not splitting open at maturity) fruit with numerous seeds. The edible parts of Passiflora include the fruit, the flowers, and the leaves.

Pollinators include bees, wasps, bats, and hummingbirds. A notable bird fact - an example of pollinator specificity: the Sword-billed Humming-

bird (*Ensifera ensifera*) with its immensely elongated bill is the sole pollinator of 37 species of high Andean Passiflora. If you need to check it off your bird list, there's where to go. But even if you miss this one, the Amazon has more than 1,300 different types of birds to see, and for wildflower enthusiasts like me, more than 40,000 different plant species.

The Amazon is the world's largest tropical rainforest covering an area over 4.2 million miles and occupying much of Brazil and Peru, and also parts of Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela. It plays a crucial role in regulating local and global weather patterns. It produces over 20% of the world's oxygen and stores an estimated 130 billion tons of carbon above and below ground. The Amazon is a critical carbon sink absorbing CO_2 from the atmosphere and mitigating climate change. The Amazon rainforest is called by some "the lungs of the earth."

So how did I come to have this photo from this fabulous place?? My son-in-law Greg teaches in Bogota, Colombia and took this photo on a field trip to the Amazon with his students. He sent the photo to me, and I just had to pass it on to you.

Wildflower photographer Diane Collins is the author of several local wildflower booklets, including the new Springtime Birds & Wildflowers along the Betar Byway, South Glens Falls. Visit www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/order-betar-booklet/ to order a booklet.

Diane Collins' spring wildflowers booklet is also available at the St. Andrews Ace Hardware store in Queensbury.

Species Spotlight

Song Sparrow

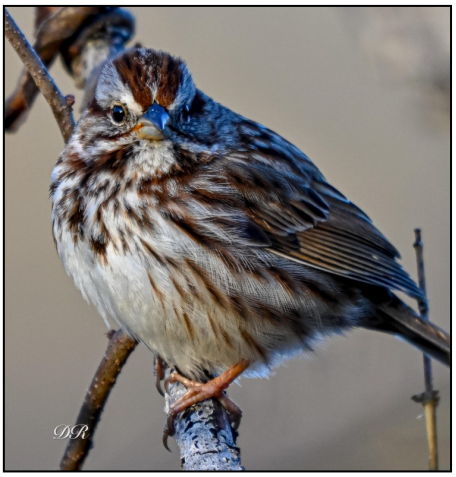
By Joyce Miller, SAAS Newsletter Editor

The cheerful song of the Song Sparrow is a familiar summer sound in our region. You probably hear it more often than you realize.

Listen for three loud introductory notes, followed by a tumble of enthusiastic notes. Then, look for a small, plump, striped brownish bird perched on top of a shrub, its head thrown back to project the song. The song's mnemonic is "Maid, maids, maids, put on your tea kettle-ettle" - admittedly, a bit of a stretch. Just remember that the song starts with three notes.

The bird uses its song to defend territory and attract a mate. They often nest in shrubs close to the ground, sometimes near houses.

If you get a close look, you'll notice



SAAS volunteer Damon Russo took this photo of a Song Sparrow at Vischer Ferry Preserve in Clifton Park. It shows the sparrow's characteristic striped feather patterns, including the dark dot on the breast.

the bird's characteristic dark brown "stickpin" dot in the center of its streaked breast. They also have a dark cap and a dark "moustache."

Song Sparrows are one of our area's most common birds, seen in yards, fields and parks. However, their numbers declined by about 27% between 1966 and 2019, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

These sparrows have variable appearances across North America: lighter in the desert and south, and darker along the north and on coasts. According to Cornell's All About Birds website, there are 24 subspecies of Song Sparrows.

Song Sparrows eat seeds and fruit throughout the year, and insects in warm weather. They will visit platform seed feeders.

The oldest known Song Sparrow was banded when it was 11 years and four months old.

To learn more about Song Sparrows and hear their familiar song, visit Cornell's All About Birds: *www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Song_Sparrow/*.

Avian Advocates

Wild for Life

This is the fifth in a series highlighting the work of the Southern Adirondack region's non-profit organizations that support wild birds.

By Alexis Broz
President and founder,
Wild For Life Inc.

Left: Alexis Broz, the founder and president of Wild For Life, has spent the last five years as a licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

Here, she's holding Bo, a beaver found as an orphaned newborn after a heavy rain storm. A virus caused the loss of Bo's eye, so she is now a permanent resident of Wild for Life and is its educational ambassador. Bo's story was featured on Good Morning America in April: www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/video/baby-beaver-rescued-1-day-bffs-woman-saved-120570972.

Wild for Life Inc. is a licensed 501(c)(3) non-profit rescue and rehabilitation organization based in the Schluyerville area.

Our mission is to protect, rehabilitate, and release native wildlife while fostering a deep connection between our community and the natural world.

While our primary focus and experience is with mammals, we have had some unique avian visitors to our rescue in recent years, possibly due to changes in weather patterns effecting migration.

Working with wildlife has allowed me to experience these extraordinary animals up close, some that I had never even heard of prior to caring for them. It has also given me an excuse to network with and learn from some of the leading experts in the country on avian wildlife health and care. I'm currently working as a licensee under another rehabber who has a federal migratory bird license, and am working on earning my own federal license.

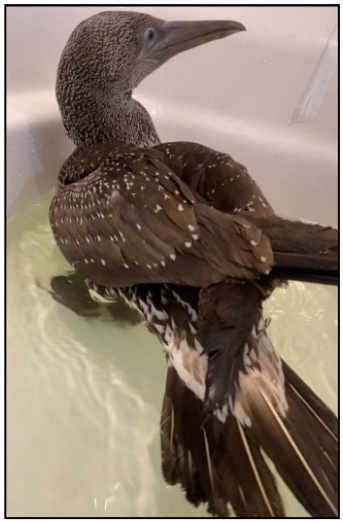
Every day doing this work I am more in awe, and fall more in love with the beauty of our natural world.

Who knows what tomorrow will bring? A Cormorant? (We've also had a few of those.) A swan? Or maybe something completely new!

Wild for Life is on Facebook and Instagram.

Photos and captions courtesy of Alexis Broz

Left: A consistent visitor to our rescue is the Green Heron. In recent years, we have raised several injured chicks when storms sweep through rookeries. Their innate instinct to fish and incredible skill at such a young age is a wonder to behold.



Left: In 2023, we assisted a juvenile Northern Gannet who had crash-landed and become stranded on a busy city street in Albany, New York.

Thankfully, this absolutely stunning creature sustained very minimal injury and was able to quickly be released to continue its migration. Only a handful of Northern Gannets have been seen in our area in the past hundred years, so meeting this one was truly delightful, especially since it was able to be released successfully.

Left: Another notable avian patient was this Wood Stork struggling in a pond in Schuylerville, New York.

A rare visitor and in delicate condition, this youngster was immediately transported for treatment to the Janet L. Swanson Wildlife Hospital, an annex of the Cornell University Hospital for Animals in Ithaca.

For details, visit www.wildforlifeinc.org/.

Left: A common emergency call on the North Country Wild Care Wildlife Hotline is for stranded loons and grebes, who often just need assistance finding open water after being cleared with a medical exam.

This Horned Grebe was found in Salem, Washington County, in a farmer's field. It most likely mistook the field for a pond. It was later released on an open section of the Hudson River in Fort Edward and continued its migration.