



# The Fledgling

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

Vol. 43 No. 2, **December 2025 — February 2026** *Now in our 43rd year!*

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SouthernAdirondackAudubonSociety/](http://www.facebook.com/SouthernAdirondackAudubonSociety/)

Website: [www.southernadirondackaudubon.org](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org)

## Winter programs: Bird migration, forest habitats, bird song

One Zoom and two in-person monthly programs are coming up this winter.

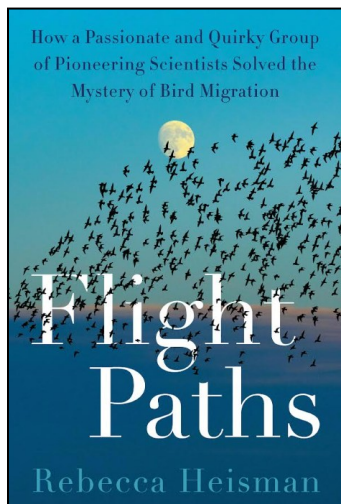
On **Wednesday, Feb. 11**, on Zoom only at 7:00 p.m., author Rebecca Heisman will talk about **“Wild Stories from the History of Bird Migration Research.”**

This online presentation is hosted by the Saratoga Springs Public Library. Register for the Zoom link here: <https://sspl.libcal.com/event/16004115>.

While working for the American Ornithological Society, Heisman became fascinated with the varied and creative techniques that scientists have used to study bird migration. This eventually became the basis for her first book, *Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solved the Mystery of Bird Migration*.

In her Zoom talk, she'll share stories from the history of bird migration research and discuss why understanding migration is crucial for bird conservation.

Heisman is an award-winning science writer who lives in Walla Walla, Washington, and has worked with organizations including the Audubon Society, the American Bird Conservancy, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the American Ornithological Society.



Above: Rebecca Heisman will offer a Zoom talk on Feb. 11.

Left: Cover of her 2023 book.

## Christmas Bird Count, Dec. 20

SAAS's annual Hudson Falls Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held on **Saturday, Dec. 20**. The snow/rain date is Sunday, Dec. 21.

Last year, 16 observers spotted 63 species and thousands of birds.

Most birding is done from a car. Some teams may walk along trails or in area parks, following prescribed routes in an established 15-mile-wide diameter circle in the Glens Falls region.

For more information and to join a count team for a whole or partial day, contact SAAS count compiler Linda White at least a week before the count, at (518) 222-5675.

The Christmas Bird Count is a fun way to increase birding skills. New birders do not need to be bird identification experts. They can help spot birds and keep team records. Thousands of volunteers participate in more than 2,000 counts across North America.

The event is now in its 126th year. The Christmas Bird Census started in 1900 when ornithologist Frank Chapman suggested it as an alternative to Christmas "side hunts," which were competitions to see which teams could shoot the most birds and other animals. Now, birders simply count every bird they see in the designated count areas. For details, see [www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count).

December's count results will be included in our March 2026 newsletter.

Additional local CBCs are held by groups in Bolton Landing, Saratoga Spa State Park, Salem, Johnstown-Gloversville, and the Capital District. To see other area CBCs, see the Audubon CBC page ([gis.audubon.org/christmasbirdcount/](http://gis.audubon.org/christmasbirdcount/)).



Observers spotted 118 Blue Jays on SAAS's 2024 CBC. Photo courtesy of Dr. Gordon Ellmers.

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**Southern Adirondack Audubon Society**

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Newsletter: Joyce Miller  
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Programs: John Loz (Interim chair)  
([programs@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:programs@southernadirondackaudubon.org))  
Publicity: OPEN

Chapter memberships are \$20. Renew at [southernadirondackaudubon.org/membership/](http://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 national or chapter 600 members in Warren, Washington, Fulton, 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**

**Oak trees**

*By Rob Snell, SAAS President*

Landscape designers are finally starting to incorporate native plants into their design work, resulting in beautiful and sustainable habitats for birds and other pollinators.

However, sustainable landscaping is a relatively new practice, and the majority of residential properties, although green, are ecological deserts, made up of ornamental non-native plantings. Converting these properties to a healthier natural state can be daunting. Fortunately, there is one tree that can convert these yards from deserts to oasis with a single planting.

Oak trees support a vast array of wildlife, providing food, shelter, and breeding grounds for hundreds of insect species, birds, and mammals.

Oaks are particularly valuable for fostering biodiversity. Oak trees host almost 900 caterpillar species, as well as other insects. In comparison, maple trees are home to only about 300 caterpillar species, according to the National Park Service ([www.nps.gov/articles/species-spotlight-oaks.htm](http://www.nps.gov/articles/species-spotlight-oaks.htm)). These insects form the base of many food chains. Baby birds eat hundreds of small insects a day, so adult birds frequently visit oak trees.

Additionally, oak trees are highly resilient and adaptable, thriving in various soil types and requiring minimal maintenance once established.

By incorporating oaks into landscaping plans, homeowners and communities can cultivate ecosystems that sustain both wildlife and environmental health for generations to come. If you are searching for a simple and effective way to start your yard's renovation, plant an oak tree.



*Oak tree sapling by Allison Farrand. Courtesy of Audubon DAM service ([audubon.netx.net/app/#asset/22488](http://audubon.netx.net/app/#asset/22488)).*



*SAAS President Rob Snell*

**Renew or join online now!**

Visit the SAAS Membership page ([www.forms.southernadirondackaudubon.org/join/](http://www.forms.southernadirondackaudubon.org/join/)) to join or renew at these membership levels:

- Black-capped Chickadee (\$20)
- Northern Cardinal (\$50)
- Eastern Bluebird (\$100)
- Great Blue Heron (\$250)

**Your membership and donations help to support these projects:** offering educational programs to the community, providing bird nesting boxes to local parks, installing two Motus towers to help track migrating birds in our region, supplying birding backpacks to local libraries, creating pollinator gardens in local public spaces, and distributing this quarterly newsletter.

If you're not sure when your membership lapses, email Membership Chair Rob Snell ([membership@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:membership@southernadirondackaudubon.org)). He'll check the membership database and let you know when your membership is due. Thanks!



## Winter programs

*Continued from page 1*

On **Wednesday, Jan. 28** at 7:00 p.m., Todd Waldron will talk about **“Flight Paths and Future Forests - How Active Stewardship is Supporting Bird Habitat in the Southern Adirondacks”** at the Saratoga Springs Public Library in Saratoga Springs.

He will discuss how active forest stewardship is revitalizing bird habitat across the Capital District and Southern Adirondacks.

Waldron is the Senior Program Director at Winnakee Land Trust in Rhinebeck. He formerly worked with the Ruffed Grouse & American Woodcock Society as the Northeast Forest Conservation Director.



*Todd Waldron*

Waldron will share stories and visuals from regional conservation projects that illustrate how thoughtful forest management benefits Ruffed Grouse, American Woodcock, Golden-winged Warbler, and a diversity of other forest birds, wildlife and pollinators. He'll show how local landowners, conservationists, and partners are shaping a more resilient forest future.

Waldron has been working with forest landowners, agencies, non-profits, businesses and strategic conservation partners to promote healthy forests and habitat diversity across New York and the Northeast U.S. for the past 30 years. He has a Masters in Natural Resources from Virginia Tech's Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability and a B.S. and A.A.S. from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.

On **Wednesday, Feb. 25**, take a journey into the hidden world of bird communication when Dr. Samantha Carouso Peck will present **“The Invisible World of Birdsong: Too Fast for Humans to See or Hear.”**

It will be held at Crandall Public Library in Glens Falls at 7:00 p.m.

Peck will discuss her Cornell University research on how and why birds sing, dance, and speak.

She will explore the ways in which birdsong resembles human song and speech, and how birds learn to sing by shaping up their tunes, using feedback from parents and peers that is imperceptible to the human eye. Peck will discuss the incredible vocal flexibility of songbirds, parrots, and other mimics that incorporate human sounds into their repertoires, and how birds pass down songs through the generations.

She will also take a “bird’s eye view” of how birds perceive time, sound, and motion differently from us, and how this affects their learning of song and dance, from acoustic acrobatics to backflips to tapdancing.

Peck is an expert in bird communication and cognition. She has lived on six continents in search of interesting birds. She has studied tool use in crows, speech in African Grey Parrots, and vocal learning and development in songbirds. Her doctoral dissertation at Cornell University focused on how young birds use feedback from their parents and peers, in forms invisible to the human eye, to guide their song learning. Her work has been published in *Current Biology*, *Philosophical Transactions*, *Animal Behaviour*, and *Scientific American*.

She is currently the Head Ornithologist and Educator of the Grassland Bird Trust, a non-profit conservation organization in Fort Edward.



*Dr. Samantha Carouso Peck, seen here holding a screech-owl, will talk about bird song at Crandall Library on Feb. 25.*

### Here's a summary of upcoming SAAS monthly programs.

All will be held on Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

**January 28:** “Flight Paths and Future Forests: How Active Stewardship is Supporting Bird Habitat in the Southern Adirondacks” at the Saratoga Springs Public Library

**February 11:** on Zoom “Wild Stories from the History of Bird Migration Research” by Rebecca Heisman. Register at [sspl.libcal.com/event/16004115](https://sspl.libcal.com/event/16004115)

**February 25:** “The Invisible World of Birdsong: Too Fast for Humans to See or Hear,” at Crandall Public Library in Glens Falls

**March 25:** “Adirondack Fish & Piscivorous Birds,” at the Saratoga Springs Public Library. Details on this program will be posted in the March 2026 issue.

## Winter birding routes

Cold weather is a great time to check out grasslands in Saratoga and Washington counties. Short-eared Owls, Horned Lark and Snow Buntings are among the birds that migrate to our area in the winter.

See the “Grasslands” page on SAAS website ([www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/grasslands/](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/grasslands/)) for general tips.

To learn what species have been reported by area birders, visit these eBird pages for area hotspots:

- Washington County, NY Hotspots: [ebird.org/region/US-NY-115/hotspots](https://ebird.org/region/US-NY-115/hotspots)
- Saratoga County NY Hotspots: [ebird.org/region/US-NY-091/hotspots](https://ebird.org/region/US-NY-091/hotspots).

**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.

## Winter Raptor Safari planned for Jan. 11

SAAS field trip coordinator John Loz will offer a Winter Raptor Safari on **Saturday, Jan. 11.**

The group will visit several spots within the Fort Edward Grasslands to look for Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harriers, Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, Short-eared Owls and perhaps Snowy Owls. Short-eared Owls emerge from their roosting areas in tall grass near sunset.

The group will meet in at the Washington County Grasslands WMA parking area on Blackhouse Road to carpool. Please be very prepared for standing out in cold, windy weather conditions and carpooling with others. Email John Loz to register at [programs@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:programs@southernadirondackaudubon.org).

Details will also be posted on SAAS's Facebook and web pages. The snow/rain date is **Monday, Jan. 12.**

## 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.

Ray Perry will lead walks on these Saturdays: **December 6, January 3 and February 7.** 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](http://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 Excel-



*A Red-tailed Hawk adult launches from a tree branch in this photo by Dr. Gordon Ellmers. Bare branches in the winter make it easier to spot raptors and other birds.*

sior Ave. in the EBI Beverage Center parking lot adjacent to the Spring Run Trail. For directions and details, see [www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/Spring-Run/](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/Spring-Run/).

## Birding backpacks now at 25 area libraries

Winter is a great time to go birding by borrowing a SAAS Birding Backpack from your local library.

While many bird species have migrated south, many others live here year-round. Some boreal species arrive from the north to spend the winter in our area.

Backpacks are available in 25 libraries around the SAAS membership area, in Warren, Washington, Saratoga, Hamilton and Fulton counties. 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 ex-

### Field trip guidelines

- Review our SAAS **Field Trip Guidelines** ([southernadirondackaudubon.org/field-trip-guidelines/](http://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/](http://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birding-ethics/)).
- Check the SAAS website, Instagram and Facebook pages for updates on trips.

plorers), a Birding Journal to record observations, and other items.

For more about the program, see [www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/education/](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/education/).

## Climate Watch starts on Jan. 15

National Audubon Society's citizen science project Climate Watch resumes on Jan. 15.

Volunteers look specifically for Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches, to observe how those species are affected by climate change. The survey is conducted twice a year, from Jan. 15 to Feb. 15 and May 15 to June 15.

Using grid 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. SAAS joined the program in 2017. Contact Rob Snell ([birdbrane1@gmail.com](mailto:birdbrane1@gmail.com)) for details and to participate.

## More pop-up events

More bird walks may be scheduled this fall. Check SAAS's website, Facebook and Instagram pages for more pop-up events:

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

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



## Do window decals work?

People often put bird silhouettes on windows in an attempt to decrease bird collisions. However, birds tend to avoid those random decals and still hit windows.

Researchers used a special flight tunnel to test which patterns of decals actually reduce deadly bird strikes. See the video here: *Testing Raptor Decals: Scientific Evidence on Bird-Window Collisions* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_QzFT0A1IA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_QzFT0A1IA)).

## NYS Breeding Bird Atlas initial findings

From 2020 to 2024, thousands of birders participated in the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III. This five-year project documents which bird species breed in the state. The survey is performed every 20 years.

At least 233 breeding bird species have been confirmed so far, as reported by 4,331 participants.

A book and website about the findings will be published in early 2028.

Atlas coordinator Julie Hart summarized some initial findings in the December 2024 issue of *The Kingbird*, a scholarly publication by the NYS Ornithological Association.

Among the findings so far:



*Sandhill Cranes are now among the 233 bird species that breed in New York State, according to the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas. They favor wetlands and grasslands. This photo above shows an immature bird (left) and two adults. Adults have a red crown and stand more than four feet tall. Sandhill Cranes breed in the northern half of North America and head to southern North America in the fall. Photo: Diane Taylor/Audubon Photography Awards.*

## Look for Lanternfly eggs

Late fall and winter are good times to look for the brown egg masses of Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*), an invasive species that is slowly spreading into upstate New York State. The gray-brown egg masses are about 1.5 inches long and contain up to 50 eggs.

The species has been reported in Albany County and is likely headed north.

They cause damage to grapes, maples and other important species.

Check for the egg masses on tree trunks and branches as well as fences, vehicles and any flat surfaces. For more information, see [www.nyimainvasives.org/slf](http://www.nyimainvasives.org/slf).

For photos of the insect and eggs and tips on destroying the egg masses, see the N.Y.S. Integrated Pest Management website from Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences page: "Spotted Lanternfly Management" ([cals.cornell.edu/integrated-pest-management/outreach-education/whats-bugging-you/spotted-lanternfly](https://cals.cornell.edu/integrated-pest-management/outreach-education/whats-bugging-you/spotted-lanternfly)).



*Above: Spotted Lanternfly egg masses can be found on outdoor machinery, pallets, and other surfaces besides trees. (Photo: Lance Cheung, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 20180828-APHIS-LSC-0910 (44430445002).jpg.)*

*Below: Adult Spotted Lanternfly (Photo: Lawrence Barringer, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.)*



- Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Wren are expanding northward, likely due to more feeders and warmer winters.
- Sandhill Crane: Range has expanded, with many breeding areas across the state, possibly due to wetland restoration efforts.
- Eastern Meadowlark: Declining breeding range, likely due to loss of grassland habitat, especially in Central NY.

## Hemlock Woolly Adelgid beetle battle

On October 29, Saratoga PLAN (PLAN) staff were joined by Cornell University's NYS Hemlock Initiative to release hundreds of *Laricobius* beetles into select hemlock trees on the Snake Hill Preserve in Stillwater. Snake Hill is a 30-acre forested dome on the eastern side of Saratoga Lake.

- Barn Swallow: Decline in numbers across the state, likely due to loss of insect prey.
- American Three-toed Woodpecker: Possibly extirpated from the state; no documentation despite targeted efforts.
- Mississippi Kite: A single breeding pair observed, marking a far northern record for the species.

This effort is part of an ongoing integrated pest management effort on the preserve. It aims specifically to protect the preserve's hemlock trees. These trees serve a critical ecological role not just on the preserve, but across the state.

The target of PLAN's integrated pest management is the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA). These tiny, aphid-like insects were introduced to the United States in the 1920s from Japan and have since spread across the country, becoming a destructive invasive pest. The HWA has recently spread to the northern reaches of New York State.



## SAAS sponsors Grasslands Bird Trust bench in Fort Edward

The Grassland Bird Trust has finished installing plaques on all of the trail benches along the Alfred Z. Solomon Grasslands Viewing Area on Route 42 in Fort Edward, Washington County.

The second bench on the trail, which has a scenic view, is sponsored by SAAS, using donated funds from a bequest from the estate of Helen Mohr.

The trail offers great birding year-round. According to the GBT website, “Short-eared Owls, Snowy Owls and Rough-legged Hawks are often seen wintering here, along with flocks of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings. Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers hunt the fields year round.”

The 2.6-mile birding trail starts at the Viewing Area on Route 42 and winds through the grasslands and along Dead Creek. The trail is open dawn to dusk. Seasonal closings are posted on the GBT website and on the trail.

Dogs are not allowed. According to the GBT website, “While we love dogs, they are not allowed as they disturb the grassland birds that roost, feed, and nest on the ground.”



*This bench along the Alfred Z. Solomon Grasslands Viewing Area trail now features a plaque honoring SAAS donor Helen Mohr. The 2.6 mile grassy trail is located on Route 42 in Fort Edward. The bird blind is seen at the top of the hill. Photo courtesy of GBT board member Terry Griffen.*

For more about the Alfred Z. Solomon Grasslands trail, see [www.grasslandbirdtrust.org/conservation/bird-watching-and-wildlife-viewing/](http://www.grasslandbirdtrust.org/conservation/bird-watching-and-wildlife-viewing/).

## SAAS community outreach events

SAAS volunteers set up information tables at several community events this fall:

- the Hawk Watch migration count at Thacher State Park in Albany County in September
- the North Creek Farmers Market in Warren County

in September

- the Second Sunday Markets in Congress Park, Saratoga Springs on July 13 and August 10
- the Albany Pine Bush Barrens Birding Blitz on Saturday, Sept. 20. SAAS was also one of the sponsors of the Birding Blitz.



*SAAS program chair John Loz set up the SAAS information booth on Monday, Sept. 15, during the two-week Helderberg Escarpment Hawk Watch migration count at The Overlook at Thacher State Park in Voorheesville, Albany County.*



*SAAS volunteers Tony Galligani and Emily Jipson set up and staffed a SAAS information table on Thursdays at the North Creek Farmers Market for three straight weeks in September.*



## About Wildflowers

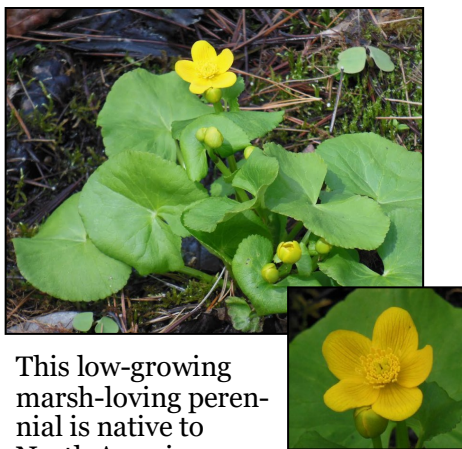
### Cowslip, or Yellow Marsh Marigold

By Diane Collins, Wildflower Columnist

Come mid-April, take a walk along the lower trail in Cole's Woods in Glens Falls by the boggy section. Or, take the Meadowbrook Preserve path that runs along the Halfway Brook stream in Queensbury. The bright yellow color of the Marsh Marigold wildflower will catch your eye.

It's a plant of wet places, growing up to 24 inches high. Called the "golden symbol of spring," it roots in streambeds and comes to full flower while the stream rushes around it. Glossy heart-shaped basal leaves add to its décor. It's in the Buttercup Family.

So many of our local wildflowers have inventive common names. Here are some for the Marigold: Cowslip (most common), Cowflock, Kingcup, Mary Gold, Water Bubbles, and Polly Blobs. (Don't ask me what "blobs" is all about!) A sensible possible theory for the origin of the common name Cowslip is that cows would slip on the wet ground where these flowers grew. The name Marigold refers to its use in medieval churches as a tribute to the Virgin Mary.



This low-growing marsh-loving perennial is native to North America as well as Eurasia. It is native on both continents because its ancestors spread naturally across the northern hemisphere during and after the last Ice Age before humans arrived. Plant species migrated and adapted across the connected northern continents. Their history gives us the insight and appreciation for "shared boreal flora."

The scientific name is *Caltha palustris*. *Caltha* is derived from the Greek word *calathus*, meaning cup or goblet, while *palustris* is Latin for "of the marsh." The plant has five to nine petal-like sepals. Plant stems are hollow. The showy yellow flowers occur in clusters, and each has over 50 to over 100 stamens. Cowslips are an important early source of nectar

and pollen for various insects, including bees, butterflies, and hoverflies, as well as a food source for insectivorous birds, especially during nesting and spring migration.

That bright yellow petal we see is seen by insects as two hues: yellow, and, along the upper petal area, the ultraviolet color "bee's purple." This contrasting design may entice the bee and surely makes us reflect on how other creatures see the world differently from us.

I'm ending this article with two challenges:

1. Will you see the Yellow Marsh Marigold in a new light?
2. Who gave the scientific name to this plant? (I will give the first person who gives the correct answer to your newsletter editor, Joyce Miller, a copy of my *Trailside Wildflowers in Cole's Woods*. Email [editor@southernadirondackaudubon.org](mailto:editor@southernadirondackaudubon.org).)

*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](http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/order-betar-booklet/). Visit [www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/order-betar-booklet/](http://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

### Evening Grosbeak

By Joyce Miller, SAAS Newsletter Editor

With its bold pattern of white, yellow and black feathers, it's hard to mistake an Evening Grosbeak for any other bird in our area. They are an infrequent winter visitor here.

This may be an especially good winter to see them, due to poor cone crops in their northern breeding range, according to the 2025-26 [Winter Finch Report](#). Other northern species may also migrate south to our area this winter in search of food: Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, Pine Grosbeaks, Redpolls, Red Crossbill, and White-winged Crossbill.

Evening Grosbeaks (*Hesperiphona vespertina*) are stocky, eight-inch birds that use their huge, pale bills to crush and eat seeds. Their bills are



*This Evening Grosbeak was photographed at the Sax-Zim Bog in Minnesota. Photo: Mark Hainen/Audubon Photography Awards.*

strong enough to crack cherry pits!

Large chattering flocks may swarm platform seed feeders. Smaller-billed birds like Redpolls and Pine Siskins may follow Evening Grosbeak flocks

to enjoy their leftovers.

Evening Grosbeaks breed in the coniferous forests of northern North America, eating seeds and berries as well as insects like spruce budworms, a destructive caterpillar.

Originally native to western North America, this species spread towards New England by the early 1900s. Their numbers are now plummeting, however, perhaps due to disease and habitat destruction. The North American Breeding Bird Survey estimates that their population declined by 84% between 1966 and 2023.

Check eBird ([ebird.org/species/evegro](http://ebird.org/species/evegro)) to see reported sightings; just narrow the search by location and date. For more about Evening Grosbeaks, see Cornell's All About Birds: [www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Evening\\_Grosbeak/overview](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Evening_Grosbeak/overview).



## **Kelly Adirondack Center of Union College**

*By Margie Amodeo,  
Coordinator, Kelly Adirondack Center,  
Union College, Niskayuna*

The Kelly Adirondack Center of Union College is an important third space for students, faculty, and the broader community.

Our mission is to engage the campus and the wider public in the conversations and interdisciplinary study of the Adirondacks and to discuss the relationships between nature and society.

The Kelly Adirondack Center is centered on the site of the Niskayuna home of Paul Schaefer.

While Schaefer's vocation was building homes, his avocation was protection of the woods and waters of the Adirondack Park. When he passed, the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks purchased the home and added space for their offices and the Adirondack Research Library. When the organization could no longer keep the facility in 2011, it was purchased by Union alum Dr. John Kelly III ('76) and donated to the college.

Our exhibitions highlight all the ways artists celebrate wilderness. Currently on exhibit is "Wool and Water," the work of Adirondack Watershed Institute Director of Research Michael Glennon and other fiber artists. The goal of the exhibit is to use knitting, crochet, weaving, and other arts to illustrate the commitment to protecting clean water in the Adirondacks and beyond.

Our program series brings environmentalists, authors, scientists, musicians, and others to the Center for free events that are open to the public.

Recordings of many programs are available on the Kelly Adirondack Center website under "Past Events" ([muse.union.edu/adirondack/category/events/past-events/](https://muse.union.edu/adirondack/category/events/past-events/)).

The "Upcoming Events" tab ([muse.union.edu/adirondack/category/events/upcoming-events/](https://muse.union.edu/adirondack/category/events/upcoming-events/))



*Above: Paul Schaefer's family home in Niskayuna*

*Right: Entrance to the Kelly Adirondack Center*



will take you to information on future programs.

Our Adirondack Research Library shares books, periodicals, and collections focused on the environmental movement and recreation in the Adirondacks. The library also features our "Big Year" wall that includes images of the birds we've seen at the Center as well as the dates they were first seen.

The Center also offers connections to other scholars, organizations, and projects in the Adirondacks.

For example, when students formed the first Ornithology Club at Union College, the Center connected them with Audubon members resulting in their current status as an Audubon Campus Chapter. Since then, we've partnered with them on lectures, bird walks, Great Backyard Bird Counts, and blanket birding sharing our love of birding with the Union community and the public.

The Kelly Adirondack Center is fortunate to abut the Henry G. Reist Wildlife Sanctuary, owned by the Hudson

-Mohawk Bird Club. On Union's John Calvin Toll Day of Service, student volunteers help HMBC members clear trails and build bridges in the Sanctuary.

It is a great responsibility to steward Paul Schaefer's honored legacy. Every day, Schaefer's story serves as a reminder to students, faculty, staff, and the community that while current environmental challenges may seem insurmountable, each one of us has a responsibility to play a role in defining the future through education, collaboration, and persistence.

We're happy to add you to the Kelly Adirondack Center events email list so you can keep up to date on our upcoming programs and exhibits. Just email us at [kellycenter@union.edu](mailto:kellycenter@union.edu).

*The Kelly Adirondack Center of Union College is located at 897 St. David's Lane, Niskayuna, NY. Phone: (518) 388-7000.*

*Please visit the Kelly Adirondack Center website for the schedule of hours: [muse.union.edu/adirondack/](https://muse.union.edu/adirondack/).*