



# The Fledgling

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

Vol. 43 No. 3, **March—May 2026**

**Now in our 43rd year!**

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



Mountain Lion photo courtesy of Dylan Crawford, Unsplash.

## Spring programs: Fish and Mountain Lions

On **Wednesday, March 25**, Lisa Holst will offer “**Adirondack Fish & Piscivorous Birds**,” at the Saratoga Springs Public Library in Saratoga Springs at 7:00 p.m.

Holst’s talk will offer a brief history of the fish communities of the Adirondacks, including the history of degradation that shaped the Adirondack Park preserve. The program will briefly touch on effects of acid rain and invasive species affecting fish habitat, as well as profile some of the lesser known native Adirondack fish species. The program will wrap up by discussing the ongoing restoration of endangered Adirondack fish species, how the recovery of certain bird species is affecting fish and fisheries, and how piscivorous birds are affected by environmental contamination.

This program will be co-hosted by

the Clearwater Chapter of Trout Unlimited. The group will have an information table at the program.

This program will also be presented at The Glove Theater on Sunday March 22 at 2:00 p.m. A fly-tying demo will be offered in the Glove’s lobby between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. by [The Fly Shack](#), based in downtown Gloversville.

Lisa Holst is a biologist with the Rare Fish Unit at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). She has worked at NYSDEC for 33 years in various planning and restoration roles. She has been the Rare Fish Unit leader since 2008, responsible for assessment, management and restoration of imperiled species of freshwater fish statewide. She attributes her interest in fish to spending summers on (and in) the St. Lawrence River and watching too much of *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau* on TV as a child. She holds a B.S. in Marine Biology from Southampton College of Long Island University. She resides in Niskayuna.

On **Wednesday, April 15**, Renee Seacor will present “**Catamount Conversations: Reimagining a Wild Future for the Northeast**” at Crandall Library in downtown Glens Falls.

Catamounts – also known as cougars, pumas, or mountain lions – once played a vital role in shaping the forests of the Northeast. Their disappearance left an ecological void still felt today.

The talk will explore the past, present, and possible future of catamounts in our region. Seacor will use



Brook Trout. Photo: courtesy of Brian Yurasits, Unsplash.

case studies to trace their loss, the changing landscapes that could support their return, and stories of coexistence across the country. The talk concludes with a look ahead, what it would take to bring catamounts back to Vermont and New York, and invites an open conversation about the future of our shared landscapes.

Renee Seacor is Mighty Earth’s Rewilding Director, where she oversees the campaign to reintroduce catamounts to the forests of the Northeast United States. She previously served as the Carnivore Conservation Director for Project Coyote, overseeing campaigns aimed at promoting coexistence with North America’s wild carnivore species. She has built a career in environmental advocacy, using litigation and policymaking to champion a wide range of conservation issues that protect wildlife and wild nature.

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**Southern Adirondack Audubon Society**

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**Board and Committees**

**Officers**

President: Open  
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Vice-President: John Loz  
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**Board of Directors**

2024-2026

John Loz  
Paul Lundberg  
Joyce Miller

2025-2027

Elizabeth Roos  
Matthew Roos  
Rob Snell

2026-2028

Jason Krahnke  
Jen Selfridge

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

**Committees**

Field Trips: Tony Galligani  
Damon Russo  
Membership: Rob Snell  
([membership@southernadironackaudubon.org](mailto:membership@southernadironackaudubon.org))  
Newsletter: Joyce Miller  
([editor@southernadironackaudubon.org](mailto:editor@southernadironackaudubon.org))  
Programs: John Loz (Interim chair)  
([programs@southernadironackaudubon.org](mailto:programs@southernadironackaudubon.org))  
Publicity: OPEN

Chapter memberships are \$20. Renew at [southernadironackaudubon.org/membership/](http://southernadironackaudubon.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.

## Our thanks to retiring board members

We thank our board members and officers who, after several years of service, now pass the torch on to others.

Rob Snell joined the board in 2019 and has served as president since 2022. He will stay on the board for one more year to ease the transition. "I am very proud to have had the opportunity to lead such a motivated and enthusiastic board of directors," he said. "Their drive allowed SAAS to significantly broaden its range of impact. Without their hard work, we never could have accomplished as much as we did. Thank you."



Rob Snell



Mark Silo

Mark Silo, who joined the board in 2021, became vice president in 2022. He said: "Our SAAS Board is a very active, productive, and sociable group. I've enjoyed the annual board meetings/parties up at my cabin on the Schroon River and hope they continue. This group was especially appreciative when riding the pontoon boat up to the lake to see the active, successful man-made loon nesting platform. Also, I enjoyed teaming with John Loz to develop and deliver a 'Birding for Beginners' program, as well as collaborating on efforts to develop trails at Big Bend and plan the Motus stations."

Dusty Caldwell and Deb Ferguson are also retiring from the board. New board members are Jason Krahnke (see below) and Jen Selfridge, who will be featured in the June newsletter.

**Meet our new board members**

### Jason Krahnke

Jason Krahnke of Saratoga Springs joined the SAAS board this year.

He's a "Yooper," a native of Michigan's Eastern Upper Peninsula. Krahnke spent 20 years as a Navy submariner, stationed up and down the East Coast. Now settled in Saratoga Springs, he reports that his wife, Sara, tolerates the borderline excessive number of feeders and birdhouses in their little suburban backyard.

Krahnke has a son, Ben, 15, and daughter, Amy, 13. "Neither are birders – yet," he said. "If I'm in the outdoors without my binoculars, I'm either hiking, biking, gardening, or swimming. We grow vegetables and have several native plant beds. Last summer, my kids and I completed a quest to swim in 10 different lakes, a list that included Great Lakes, Finger Lakes, and a few local treasures."

Krahnke started identifying birds at his mother's backyard birdfeeders with a Reader's Digest *North American Wildlife* book, and, later a Peterson's guide, a gift from his aunt. "We would get the typical feeder birds, but Evening Grosbeaks were frequent visitors and stole the show. My family were also duck hunters. I spent many October days in a duck blind amazed at my dad's ability to identify ducks by the way they flew. Fortunately, I was a lousy shot, but I credit those days with teaching me the joys of being still in nature for hours on end, waiting to hear birds on the wing."

His "spark" bird was an Osprey. "When I was nine, I noticed an Osprey nest in a tree near our house, and we would check in on it frequently for years, thrilled every time we saw them in the nest tending to their young. Living on the Great Lakes, there was ample opportunity to watch Ospreys hunting, and I distinctly remember watching them soar and dive from the dock of my grandparents' resort on Lake Huron."

*Continued on next page*



New board member Jason Krahnke holds a newly-banded Blue Jay at the Crown Point banding station.

## Winter programs

*Continued from page 1*

Seacor holds a B.S. in Environmental Science from Rocky Mountain College in Montana. While in Montana, she contributed to several wildlife research studies in the Yellowstone River ecosystem, including Osprey and the extirpation of Gray Wolves.

She earned a J.D. with a concentration in environmental law from the University of Oregon School of Law. During law school, Seacor worked in various roles on environmental and wildlife issues—from litigating for endangered species protections for the Marbled Murrelet (an imperiled seabird), to campaigning for clean water legislation in New York, to conducting policy research on urban forest expansion for the U.S. House Committee on the Climate Crisis in Washington, D.C. For more information, see [BringCatamounts Home.org](http://BringCatamountsHome.org).

There will be no program in May.

## 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 at 8:00 a.m. on these Saturdays: **March 7, April 4 and May 2.**

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

### Bird Walk notes

- More bird walks may be scheduled. Check SAAS's website, Facebook and Instagram pages for updates on walks.
- Review SAAS **Field Trip Guidelines** ([southernadironackaudubon.org/field-trip-guidelines/](http://southernadironackaudubon.org/field-trip-guidelines/)).
- SAAS trips follow the American Birding Association's **Code of Birding Ethics** ([www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birdingethics/](http://www.aba.org/aba-code-of-birdingethics/)).



*To learn more about Great Horned Owls, see "Species Spotlight" on Page 7.*

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

## Great Adirondack Bird Celebration, May 29-31

SAAS will join Northern New York Audubon to co-host the Great Adirondack Bird Celebration (GABC) on May 29, 30 and 31 in the Paul Smith's area of northern New York.

A highlight is the chance to see Adirondack boreal bird species, such as Bicknell's Thrush, Boreal Chickadee, Canada Jay and Black-backed Woodpecker. The Adirondacks are the southern end of the the great northern boreal forest, and a critical

## Notes from the field

*Article and photo by Liz Roos, SAAS board member*

In late December, I was hiking just after dawn in the Veterans Memorial Park and Mooney Carrese Forest in Ballston Lake, when I heard Black-capped Chickadees and Blue Jays giving alarm calls from a large hardwood tree. As I made my way down the path, out flew a Great Horned Owl!

You can never truly be prepared for how silent they are in flight, and just how massive they look in person — they really are the tiger of the skies. The owl was gracious enough to perch just across the meadow, where it gave me the stink eye for a couple of minutes for disturbing its morning nap, then disappeared further into the woods.

breeding ground for those species. For more information, see [www.nnya.org/gabc](http://www.nnya.org/gabc).

## Jason Krahnke

*Continued from Page 2*

"When I retired from the Navy in 2018, I wanted to be more deliberate about seeking out birds, so I gifted myself my first set of birding binoculars and joined SAAS," Krahnke said. "My first outing was a SAAS First Saturday Bird Walk led by Ray Perry, which was a perfect start because of Ray's informative and entertaining leadership, and I'm proud to be a 'First Saturday Regular.'"

Visiting the bird banding at Crown Point Park last year and releasing two Blue Jays was a birding high point, as was exploring the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge on a trip led by Damon Russo. Krahnke saw 19 Ospreys and got several lifers.

"Being in nature in any capacity is great, but birds are a whimsical reflection of ourselves," he said. "They have unique personalities and appearances, but they're really just looking for a good meal and a mate."

**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.

## So what exactly is "MOTUS"?

By Mark Silo and John Loz  
SAAS Board members

"Motus" is the Latin word for motion.

It is also the name of a worldwide collaborative network that uses technology to track the motions of birds, bats, and certain large insects.

For a couple of years, the SAAS board has been involved in developing Motus receiving towers in our area. If all goes well, our initial Motus stations will come online at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs and in the Washington County Grasslands in 2026.

While our members may recall seeing references to Motus in the SAAS newsletter, we want to make sure that they have a good sense of what Motus is and why we are interested in participating. A brief summary follows. Anyone wanting further information is encouraged to visit the Motus website at [motus.org](http://motus.org), which



*Birds Canada graphic depicting a Motus tower and some of its signaling "customers."*

is the source of most of the information presented here.

By its own definition, "Motus is an international research community working together to study the movement and behaviour of birds, bats, and insects. These animals carry miniaturized tags that transmit information to stations placed across the landscape. This powerful conservation tool transforms how we understand and protect biodiversity."

Motus is managed internationally by Motus Central at "Birds Canada," a non-profit dedicated to the study and

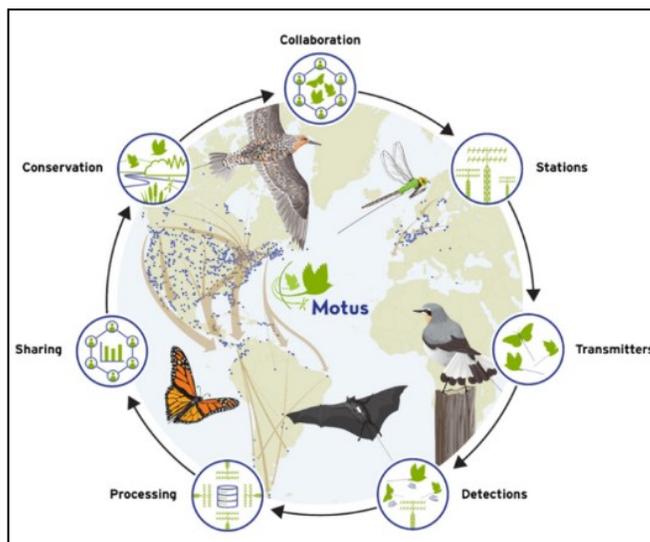
conservation of Canada's birds. Currently, the Motus network is active with 2,368 stations in 34 countries worldwide.

Many of us are familiar with bird banding or have even seen it under way at the banding station at Crown Point, New York. Similarly, researchers collaborating with Motus safely catch, tag, and release flying animals. While a banded bird must be recaptured to enable data on its location to be recorded, the Motus tags transmit a signal that contains data on the date and time and location of contact, and the animal's direction and speed. No recapture of the animal is required.

According to Motus, the tags "are among the smallest tracking devices available, enabling researchers to monitor a wide range of birds, bats, and large insects. Each tag emits a unique signal, allowing the simultaneous tracking of thousands of individuals." To date the system has tagged over 61,000 individual animals of nearly 500 different species.

As a tagged animal moves and migrates, data signals are received by Motus stations within range, which is typically 9 to 12 miles but varies with environmental factors. The stations employ fairly basic technology and are comprised of a radio tower and equipment for collecting the data and transmitting it to the network. They are simple structures which can be placed almost anywhere. The stations being developed by SAAS will be located on the Center for Integrated Sciences building at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs and on the Grassland Bird Trust's Alfred Z. Solomon Viewing Blind in the Washington County Grasslands.

The individual data can be collected manually at the stations or transmitted to the network via Wi-Fi. It is processed and stored in a permanent archive by Birds Canada, and is ac-



*This Motus website graphic summarizes the network. For details, see [motus.org](http://motus.org).*

cessible to all collaborators, researchers, and other interested parties at no cost. Over 1,000 ongoing research projects use Motus data.

The locations being developed by SAAS are strategically chosen to maximize line-of-sight distances from the stations, and optimize their locations within the existing Motus network.

Although these stations do require a notable initial investment, the ongoing maintenance will be quite minimal. We look forward to reporting on progress in the coming year.

### Renew or join online!

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

## Queensbury Senior Center meadow project underway

By Mary-Beth Wagner, Horticulturist

The Queensbury Town Board has approved a project to create a meadow at the Queensbury Town Hall property on Bay Road in Queensbury.

The goal is to replace a portion of the existing non-native, cool season turf grass with native plants that will provide cover and food for wildlife and seasonal beauty for humans. A site adjacent to the Senior Center building was selected because we hope patrons will have leisure time to enjoy the plants and anticipated wildlife. The relatively small plot is about 2,600 square feet.

Kathy Bozony and Lisa Adamson, members of the Queensbury Climate Smart Community, approached SAAS president Rob Snell in 2025 to ask for support for the project. SAAS offered to contribute up to \$400 towards the purchase of native live plants or seeds. As a retired horticulturist, I am able to provide technical advice and labor.

The method of preparation is experimental and was introduced to me by Larry Weaner and his daughter Sara Weaner Cooper of New Directions in the American Landscape. Sara presented a webinar to SAAS in April 2025 on this type of project. Instead



*Evan Cooper and Sara Weaner Cooper stand in their front yard meadow in year one of their experimental project to replace their yard's non-native grass. Photo courtesy of Sara Weaner Cooper.*

spending hours digging up the grass or wasting months solarizing the plot, we will seed directly into the turf.

Our goal is to give every advantage to the native seedlings and to disadvantage the non-native turf by the way we manage the site. The existing turf consists mainly of cool season species, which do the majority of growing, flowering and setting seed in cooler temperatures. The majority of species in our seed mix are warm season plants which need heat to germinate and grow. We have tested the soil and know that the pH is 6.74, that potassium and phosphorus levels are low, and magnesium and calcium levels are quite high. No fertilizers, lime nor sulfur will be added. Native plants appreciate good soil with reasonable moisture and nutrient levels, but so do weeds! We aren't worried about dry or nutrient poor soil because the native plants can tough it out better than the non-native turf grasses.

As soon as the soil is workable this spring, we will vigorously de-thatch the turf with a machine until we can see about 50% soil and 50% grass. Native perennial, biennial and grass seed will be mixed with a bulking agent (like cedar shavings) and broadcast into the shallow grooves cut by the de-thatcher. The meadow site will never be irrigated, so if it is a dry year sprouting may be delayed.

The existing turf will be mown weekly as short as possible into late May, limiting growth and preventing it from going to seed. Once the native seedlings are taller than the turf grass, we will stop mowing for the year, which will allow maximum growth in the warm season for our natives.

of All plant stems will be left in place through the winter of Year One and every year going forward to provide cover for insects (and food for in-



*Above: The red outline indicates the spring 2026 planting site at the Queensbury Senior Center. Photo courtesy of Mary-Beth Wagner.*

quisitive birds). In early spring of Year Two, we will cut down the previous year's growth (except for some woody stalks which will be cut off at 15" tall for summer nesting bees) and repeat the cool season mowing until the seedlings are taller than the grass.

By Year Three, we hope that little mowing will be needed because our native plants are crowding out the turf. Once established, the meadow will only need to be mown once a year, along with regular inspection for weeds and editing as species fade out or mature.

We want as much diversity as possible to attract as many species of insects and other wildlife as we can. Our seed mix will contain 23 species representing 10 plant families! The annual Shirley poppy was chosen to provide color in Year One. It is the only non-native seed in the mix but can be found throughout the U.S. and is considered "naturalized." The mix contains two grass species and the rest are biennial and perennial forbs. The meadow is a living entity and will change over time. Some species will thrive in Years 1-3, others 3-7, and then longer-lived perennials may crowd out those earlier species.

We will rely upon a small group of volunteers to install, mow and monitor the meadow. We have high hopes that this project will be a success, but we will learn no matter what! If you would like to participate in a Citizen Science project to observe and record insect and birds that visit our meadow, contact me at [marybethwagner@hotmail.com](mailto:marybethwagner@hotmail.com).



Above: SAAS board member Laurie Murphy photographed a CBC team at Big Bend Park in Moreau, Saratoga County.



Sue Pierce caught these images of a Blue Jay (above) and Eastern Bluebird (below) during the CBC on Dec. 20. Participants counted a total of 160 Blue Jays and 145 Eastern Bluebirds on their assigned CBC routes that day.

## 2025 Christmas Bird Count results

By Count Compiler Linda White

SAAS's annual Hudson Falls Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Saturday, Dec. 20.

Eight parties of observers and four groups of feeder watchers spent a cold day in pursuit of every possible bird in their assigned territory. More specifically, 19 observers spent 49 hours in the field, drove 372 combined miles, and walked 13 miles. The feeder watchers spent a total of 16 hours observing.

Their dedication and enthusiasm resulted in 51 recorded bird species. A Barred Owl was seen the day prior to count day and will get a count week (CW) designation. Count week includes observations three days prior and three days after count day.

The cold weather and the frozen water contributed to a lower-than-average count.

Since 1983, this count has contributed an amazing amount of data for National Audubon. The count history and count circle can be found on [Audubon's Christmas Bird Count](#) site. It's interesting to compare other local counts, like Saratoga, Lake George, and Salem. Compilers have until the end of February to complete the data. Then, it is verified, particularly for rare bird species, so 2025 data may not yet be available.

### These species, listed here in taxonomic order, were recorded in the 2025 count:

3 Snow Goose, 29 Canada Goose, 86 American Black Duck, 220 Mallard, 1 Mottled Duck, 85 Common Goldeneye, 34 Hooded Merganser, 110 Common Merganser, 78 Wild Turkey, 1 Great Blue Heron, 3 Black Vulture, 1 Northern Harrier, 3 Sharp-shinned Hawk, 4 Cooper's Hawk, 8 Bald Eagle, 50 Red-tailed Hawk, 1 Ring-billed Gull, 628 Rock Pigeon, 134 Mourning Dove, 5 Great Horned Owl, 1 Barred Owl (CW), 4 Belted Kingfisher, 33 Red-bellied Woodpecker, 60 Downy Woodpecker, 18 Hairy Woodpecker, 2 Northern Flicker, 13 Pileated Woodpecker, 2 American Kestrel, 160 Blue Jay, 1,037 American Crow, 11 Common Raven, 185 Black-capped Chickadee, 82 Tufted Titmouse, 9 Red-breasted Nuthatch, 76 White-breasted Nuthatch, 8 Brown Creeper, 12 Carolina Wren, 3 Golden-crowned Kinglet, 145 Eastern Bluebird, 103 American Robin, 10 Northern Mockingbird, 1,642 European Starling, 14 Cedar Waxwing, 11 Tree Sparrow, 1 Song Sparrow, 257 Dark-eyed Junco, 3 White-throated Sparrow, 1 Song Sparrow, 78 Northern Cardinal, 99 House Finch, 2 Pine Siskin, 97 American Goldfinch and 209 House Sparrow.

Sincere thanks and gratitude go out to all of the observers who made time during such a busy season to dedicate a day (or more in preparation) to participate in this count. They are: Pat Fitzgerald, Dave Stewart, Mike Rivette, Joanne Armstrong, Mary Lupo, Joyce Miller, Russell Hilliard, Stephen Farr, Sue Pierce, Collin Bolebruch, Rob Snell, Nick Logan, Laurie Murphy, Jen Selfridge, Vicki Bocketti, Helen Crawshaw, Ari Casella, and Beth, Brad and Nathan Bidwell.

*Editor's note: The Christmas Bird Census, now in its 126th year, 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.*



## Birding backpacks now at 25 area libraries

Do you want to share the fun of birding with others, but not sure how to start? Borrow a birding backpack! 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 explorers), a Birding Journal to record observations, and other items. They can be used by people of any age.

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

## About Wildflowers

### Linnaeus: "The Man Who Named the World"

By Diane Collins, Wildflower Columnist

For this issue, I am highlighting the man who, in the 18th century, gave the unique scientific name to most of the wildflowers I have described in my Audubon newsletter articles.

Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), a Swedish naturalist and physician, named over 12,000 plants and animals. In 1741, he became Professor of Botany at Uppsala University. He led his students on exhilarating countryside walks accompanied by singing, flutes, and tambourines. He was charismatic, inspiring several students to be like scientific missionaries, traveling across the globe collecting plants, often at personal risk. Peter Kalm (1716-1779), an "Apostle of Linnaeus," brought back many plants from North America.

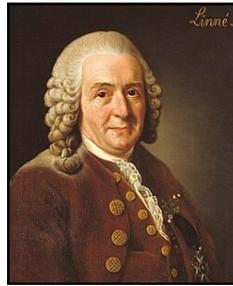
Linnaeus brought order to a chaotic system of local and folk plant names by creating the binomial nomenclature system, the idea that all organisms should be described by only two Latin words: one denoting its genus and another its species. His choice of

those names is fun to decode.

The genus name is capitalized and refers to a group of closely related species. It often uses earlier botanical, Greek, or Latin names.

The genus name can be based on distinguishing physical features. The genus *Salvia* includes many types of sage plants. *Linnaea borealis*, Linnaeus's favorite Twinflower, a delicate wildflower found in forests across the northern hemisphere, was the name given by Dutch botanist Jan Gron to honor him. (I guess Linnaeus did not name ALL the wildflowers...!)

The species name makes the plant a "one-and-only" botanical. It often refers to what the plant looks like (*alba*- white; *rotundifolia* - round leaves); where it was growing (*virginiana* - Virginia; *palustris* - in marshy land); the person who found it, or a friend (*banksii* - Banks, a naturalist and collector who voyaged with Captain Cook); or its use



Alexander Roslin's painting of Carolus Linnaeus. (Image: Wikimedia Commons.)

(*officinalis* - used medicinally). Example: *Salvia officinalis* - common sage, a medicinal plant.

Linnaeus is famous for inventing a controversial way of classifying plants according to their sexual floral organs. The system grouped plants together based on similarities between their stamens and pistils. This classification raised many eyebrows in the day.

His grand accomplishment is his famous *Systema Naturae* that evolved over decades. It grouped all species according to shared characteristics into kingdom, class, order, genus, and species. His work evolved with new discoveries.

His system endures. Binomial nomenclature is still the global standard for identifying species today. Linnaeus is considered both the father of modern botany and the father of modern taxonomy. His famous phrase "Deus creavit, Linnaeus disosuit" ("God created, Linnaeus organized") explains why.

Wildflower photographer Diane Collins is the author of several local wildflower booklets. Her spring wildflowers booklet is available at the St. Andrews Ace Hardware store in Queensbury.

## Species Spotlight

### Great Horned Owl

By Joyce Miller, SAAS Newsletter Editor

"Who's awake? Me toooo!" On a cold winter night, it's a treat to hear Great Horned Owls performing their evening courtship duet from nearby woods. The female pipes up with a higher-pitched series of hoots; the male replies in a deeper voice.

Great Horned Owls (*Bubo virginianus*) nest as early as late January in New York State. They often use abandoned nests made by hawks, crows, ravens, or squirrels. They incubate one to four eggs for more than a month. Owlets fledge in about 42 days.

They are a relatively common species in our region. These powerful raptors measure 18 to 25 inches long (from bill to tailtip), with a wingspan of 40 to 57 inches. Females can be up to one-third larger than males, as is



Gordon Ellmers photographed this adult Great Horned Owl with two owlets on a nest on the side of a silo.

common among many raptor species. As apex predators, these owls are at the top of the food chain. They consume many animals: frogs, rodents, rabbits, skunks, waterfowl, crows, other owls, and even Ospreys and Peregrine Falcons. Crows will often mob them to drive them away.

These owls are very effective hunters. They have excellent night vision, sharp hearing, and silent flight from

soft-edged feathers. Their talons quickly kill prey with a force of 300 pounds per square inch, similar to the bite of an American Bulldog. The owls' large yellow eyes do not move within their sockets, but the birds can rotate their heads up to 180 degrees.

Great Horned Owls have several vocalizations. They can bark, trill, squawk, hiss, pop, meow, and produce many other sounds, according to *BirdNote*.

Their range extends across most of North America and into parts of South America. They live in forests, but hunt in open fields and wetlands. They usually live 20 to 30 years in the wild. Their population has been stable over the last few decades.

To learn more about Great Horned Owls, visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *All About Birds* page: [www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great\\_Horned\\_Owl/overview](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Great_Horned_Owl/overview).

## **Hudson Crossing Park**

*By Wendy DeLaCruz  
Director of Education and External Relations*

Sitting on one of the benches at the end of Hudson Crossing Park's Meadow in the Sky, also referred to as "The Allée of Oaks," it's easy to get carried away watching birds flicker from branch to branch and butterflies drift effortlessly through the understory.

The Meadow in the Sky, a multi-year project begun in 2023, is an ambitious but rewarding undertaking. Comprised of nine pairs of seven different varieties of native oak trees as well as more than 80 native understory trees and shrubs line an even, easy-to-navigate stone dust trail which provides birders of all levels and abilities the chance to observe some of the many species which come to rest along the Meadow's edges.

Each plant was chosen with intention: to support the many pollinators and other wildlife that call Hudson Crossing Park, a part of the New York State Birding Trail, home.

Oaks are the ultimate "support system" tree, hosting an incredible web of life. Visitors can spot many of the park's 100+ recorded bird species moving through the oaks.

Tucked among leaves and bark are thousands of tiny insect larvae, often unnoticed by people, but absolutely essential to birds. In nesting season especially, those larvae become high-protein fuel for growing chicks and the adults feeding them.

Hudson Crossing Park, a nonprofit environmental education park centered around Champlain Canal Lock C5 Island, is located just north of Schuylerville on New York State's Historic Scenic Byway, Route 4.

The park, which is free and open to the public 365 days a year, also offers free and low-cost family friendly events and programs to the community. A location rich in recreational as well as educational opportunities,



*Above: Visitors stroll along the recently-established Meadow in the Sky, a bird-rich oak allée at Hudson Crossing Park in Schuylerville.*

*Left: The park celebrates its 20th year in 2026.*

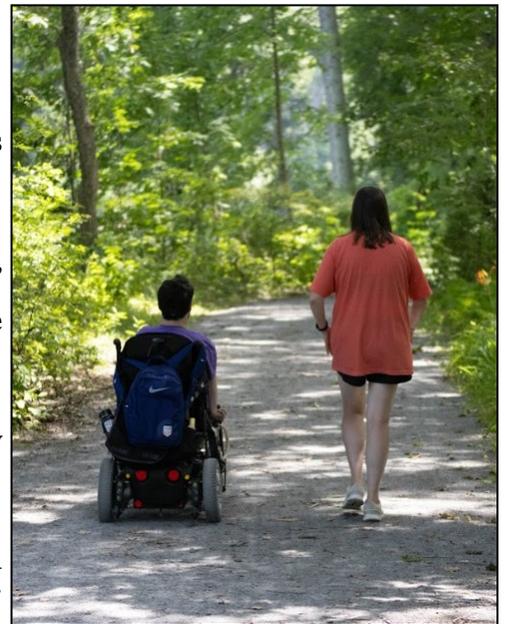
*Below: The park features more than two miles of accessible nature trails with views of the Hudson River and Champlain Canal.*

*Photos courtesy of Hudson Crossing Park.*

Hudson Crossing Park welcomes more than 30,000 people of all ages and abilities annually.

The Meadow in the Sky serves as an extension of Hudson Crossing Park's Sensory Trail along the Hudson River, offering a welcoming place where people of all ages and abilities can experience nature up close in a calm, restorative setting. Together, the Sensory Trail and the Meadow in the Sky bring Hudson Crossing Park's mission to life: tying environmental responsibility to economic revitalization, and engaging our community in making informed choices for a sustainable future.

For more information about Hudson Crossing Park, its programs, or facilities, please visit [hudsoncrossingpark.org](http://hudsoncrossingpark.org), email [info@hudsoncrossingpark.org](mailto:info@hudsoncrossingpark.org), or call 518-350-7275.



*This is part of a series highlighting the work of the Southern Adirondack region's nonprofit organizations that support wild birds.*