

The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society
www.southernadirondackaudubon.org

Vol. 27 No. 3

Mar 2010 – May 2010

President's Message

Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day. Plant a tree, erect a birdhouse, recycle, go birdwatching, take a hike, spend time with the natural world, get involved in your community. There are many Earth Day activities you can join. One right in our area.

The 20th annual Earth Day Lobby Day will be held in Albany on Tuesday, April 20th. Hundreds of citizens from every corner of New York State will meet with their state lawmakers and show their support for the environment.

The event is being sponsored by Audubon New York, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Environmental Advocates of New York, the New York Public Interest Research Group, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, and other organizations. The day will last from 9:30 - 4:00..

If you have any questions, please contact Bill Mahoney, at mahoney.w@gmail.com Legislative Operations and Research Coordinator
New York Public Interest Research Group
107 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12210 (p) 518 436-0876 x254
(m) 518 817-3738 (f) 518 432-6178

SAAS Board of Directors Spring Meeting Schedule set

Sun. April 18	1:00pm – 3:00pm
Fr. May 21	10:00am-12:00pm
Fri. June 18	10:00am-12:00pm

All meetings will be held at Crandall Library and interested members are encouraged to attend.

We welcome input and ideas from members.

SAAS Calendar

Our public programs are held at the Crandall Library in City Park, Glens Falls. Enter at the Glen St. entrance, and take the elevator to the lower level; the media room is on the left.

Public Programs

March 24th 7:00 PM "Peru - Gateway to Amazonia" with Howard Romack

Learn about Andean topography, tropical fauna and flora, and the work being carried on by biologists in the Madre de Dios region bordering Bolivia.

April 21st 7:00 PM "The National Parks of South Africa" With Barb & John Youkers

Thanks to a generous donation from Ray Supply in Queensbury, we will raffle a pair of Nikon Sportstar 10x25 binoculars at the April 21st program. The compact size binoculars retail for \$79.95.

May 26th 7:00 PM "Australia" with Gerry Lemmo

Birdathon: May 13-16

If you would like to participate in National Audubon's Birdathon, please contact Linda White at 792-4446. This is a count where citizens record numbers of species of birds during the peak migration period. The counts can take place within the chapter boundaries of Warren, Washington, and Northern Saratoga Counties.



Remembering Claire

By Linda White

Southern Adirondack Audubon has been honored to have had Claire Hunter as a member since its inception. Claire was instrumental in helping to establish this chapter in 1983 and served as Membership Chair until 2008. Claire passed away on November 11th 2009.

It was her love of birds and creating a culture of conservation in our community that was so inspiring. Claire spent a great deal of time each year keeping our membership lists up to date and countless hours on the phone with National Audubon. Getting credit for each member and having the dues match took some doing, particularly in those early years. It was always a delight attending board meetings hosted by Claire. Her husband Larry would disappear into another room as we made our way through the business portion of the meeting, and then the snack, socialize and laugh portion. Claire was ever present at the Audubon programs, always trying to attract new members and welcoming those that had signed on.

In the fall of 2008 the Audubon Board attended an open house at the Parks-Bentley House (one of Claire's other favorite organizations) where a flagpole was erected paying tribute to this special lady for all her years of service.

We would like to express our loving thoughts and gratitude as we remember Claire with her infectious laugh and contagious spirit. It has been said that a smile is the most beautiful attire a person can have and how fortunate for all who knew Claire that she gifted us as the best "attired" person out there. Here's to you Claire!



*The following is a March 10, 2010
Press Release from the DEC*

DEC REPORTS: RECORD-SETTING YEAR FOR PEREGRINE FALCONS

2009 proved to be a record-setting year for peregrine falcons in many productivity categories according to a new report released today by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). DEC surveys found that there were 73 territorial pairs of state endangered peregrine falcons present in the state in 2009, with 42 pairs recorded upstate. That's a slight increase from 2008, when 67 pairs were recorded statewide.

Also in 2009, 61 pairs bred and produced 132 young, also slightly up from 2008.

"The 2009 report shows that it was a successful year for New York State's efforts to restore our peregrine falcon population," DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis said. "The record breaking numbers are a positive sign not only for the environment but also for the work carried out by DEC's endangered species program."

New York State has the largest population of peregrines in the eastern United States.

Peregrines raise one to five young in nests located mainly on cliffs, bridges and buildings. They are known for their high speed - over 200 mph - dives on their bird prey.

These birds had disappeared as nesting birds from the eastern United States by the early 1960's due to pesticide (DDT) residues which caused eggshell thinning. Once DDT use was banned in the United

States, an experimental restoration program began involving widespread releases of captive raised birds from the Peregrine Fund, a global non-profit organization focused on conserving birds of prey. Through this program, 169 young peregrines were released in New York State, from the mid -1970's through the late 1980's.

In 1983, the first new pairs nested at two bridges in New York City, and in 1985 two pairs returned to nest on Adirondack cliffs. The population has grown steadily since then. There are now about 20 pairs in the metro New York area and 27 in the Adirondacks, a pair at every major bridge between New York City and Albany, and about 10 pairs scattered through the rest of the state.

At many of the urban nest locations, wooden nest trays have been placed to increase the falcons' productivity. Peregrine falcons do not build nests of sticks like most raptors, but instead lay their brownish eggs in whatever substrate is available. Protection and management is necessary to continue this species' success in New York, which means working with building and bridge authorities so that whenever possible their work is done in a way that does not negatively impact nesting peregrine falcons. DEC has had excellent cooperation from many agencies and volunteers in protecting, managing and monitoring this endangered species.

In the Capital Region, a pair of nesting birds can be seen at the Dunn Memorial Bridge during the spring and summer seasons. A webcam operates during the nesting season at this site and several others in New York State. For links to these sites and other information, including a link to view the new 2009 peregrine falcon report in full text, visit the DEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7059.html.





Southern Adirondack Audubon Participates with Audubon New York in American Kestrel Program

American Kestrel populations across North America have been slowly declining for many years. In the last decade, however, the rate of decline has increased markedly. During 2008, Audubon New York and the Audubon Council of New York began working on a state-wide plan to help restore Kestrel populations.

In 2009, funding for this project was received through a TogetherGreen grant, sponsored by Toyota. Southern Adirondack Audubon is working in with Audubon New York, 13 other New York Audubon Chapters, two Audubon Centers, and the New York Department of Transportation to help increase the kestrel population. Several Kestrel nesting boxes have been put up throughout Kestrel habitat in this area.

Volunteers will also be needed to monitor the boxes on a weekly basis. For more information about the program or to volunteer to help monitor the boxes, call or e-mail Pat Fitzgerald at 518-792-6846 (pfitz_007@yahoo.com).

What do Kestrels look like?

The American Kestrel, formerly called the Sparrow Hawk, is North America's smallest and most colorful falcon. Adult male kestrels average about 9 inches in length, about the size of a robin, with a wingspread of about 21 inches. They are easily distinguished by the lightly barred rufous back and blue-gray upperwing feathers (coverts). The breast color varies from whitish to deep rufous; the belly is white with distinct black

spots. The tail is rufous, unbarred, but with a thick black terminal band.

Females are slightly larger than males, averaging about 10 inches in length with a wingspread of about 22 inches. Adult females tend to be paler overall. The back and upperwing feathers (coverts) are reddish brown with dark brown barring. The belly is streaked rather than spotted and the tail is reddish brown with dark brown barring. Juveniles resemble the adults but the breast and belly are heavily streaked.

What do Kestrels eat?

The Kestrel diet varies considerably with habitat, season, and individual. Overall, approximately 70% of their diet consists of small invertebrates, 18% small mammals, 11% small birds, and 1% reptiles and amphibians.

Kestrels are typically "sit-and-wait" hunters, watching from a high perch, such as a utility wire, fence, or a tree branch. Prey is attacked on the ground. While perched, they characteristically "bob" the tail. In open fields, they will sometimes hover-hunt, that is, they will flap to maintain a stationary position high above a field while intently watching the ground for any signs of movement.

Once located, they will dive on prey from above. This characteristic hunting behavior often allows one to identify kestrels at very great distances. Kestrels tend to dive feet first at insects and head first at mammals.

How do Kestrels reproduce?

Although some American Kestrels may overwinter in the Northeast, most begin arriving on the breeding grounds in late March or early April. Males generally arrive first and establish small territories which they defend against intruding males. Territories may be up to about 250 acres and may be the same from year-to-year. Territories are defended throughout the summer and sometimes throughout the winter. Females typically arrive on the breeding grounds a few days after the males. After a bit of initial wandering, the females select a territory and pair bonding begins. Pair bonding takes various forms, including hunting together, vocalization, aerial displays, courtship-feeding of the female by the male, mutual perching, mutual preening, and nest site inspections. Aerial displays include the "dive display" where the male soars and at the peak, calls 3-5 sharp "killy" notes. He then rapidly descends 30-60 ft directly over the perched female. The Kestrel is a secondary cavity nester favoring woodpecker holes or natural cavities in trees. Little or no nesting material is used. Competition for nest sites can be limiting, but the kestrel generally dominates woodpeckers and most other similar sized birds and mammals, such as squirrels and chipmunks. They appear to be less successful evicting starlings.

Nesting densities vary considerably, ranging from about 1 to 25 pairs per square mile. Nesting kestrel pairs can be quite tolerant of one another, nesting as close as 40 feet apart. Nesting densities are dependent on food availability and quality of nest sites. In New York, migratory kestrels may start entering nest cavities in late March and early April. Resident birds, however, may be seen entering nest cavities as early as the first week of March. Clutch size is generally 4-5 eggs, but occasionally 3 or 6. The eggs are typically produced every other day. Eggs are oval in shape, about 35 mm long by 29 mm wide. The color varies from white through cream to reddish brown overlain with brownish mottling. A single brood is produced each year, but if a clutch is lost, the pair will produce a replacement in about 11-12 days. In New York, egg-laying has been recorded as early as April 5 and as late as July 25. Most of the incubation (about 85%) is done by the female. Males typically incubate twice per day, in the morning and late afternoon, for a total of about 4 hours. Hatching occurs over a 3-4 day period after an incubation period of about 30 days. In New York, nestlings are seen between May 7 and August 2.



The female broods them steadily for the first few days, by day 9 she broods them only at night. The male remains nearby hunting and bringing food back to the female and young. Once the female stops daytime brooding, she will share in the hunting. Fecal sacs are not carried from the nest, instead, young spray feces on the nest cavity walls where it quickly dries. Dermestid beetles consume the remains of uneaten prey items. As adults approach the nest with food, young will give a whiney call and flutter their wings; they may eventually meet the parents in flight. Fledging occurs about 30 days after hatching. In New York, fledglings have been noted from April 27 through September 21. Young begin leaving the nest over a several day period. During the day they remain near the nest, often in trees

and on ledges. During this period they are active and make short flights. At night, they generally return to the nest hole with the adult female. Fledglings will depend on the adults for food for a period of about two weeks.

What can I do to help?

Preserve Grasslands and improve habitat!

Keep fields open by mowing once a year. Fall is best, after birds are done breeding.

Leave standing dead trees and snags for nesting and perching.

Leave some large live trees and other perches close to open fields for perching and hunting.

Leave old barns standing unless they are a safety threat. Such structures can provide nesting habitat.

Preserving grasslands not only helps Kestrels, but also benefits a number of other species declining in New York, such as Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Meadowlark, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Bobolink.

Information for this article was provided by Alan W. Wells, Ph.D., Rockland Audubon Society, Inc. Photographs by Arthur Morris/VIREO and J. Oakley/VIREO.

Volunteer Corner

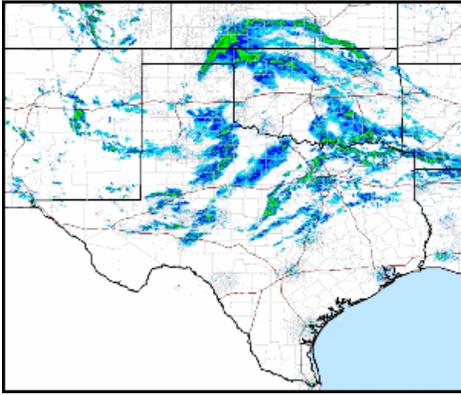
Assist publicity chair-

Design posters for monthly programs. Familiarity with Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, or similar program helpful but not necessary. Time commitment: a few hours a month.

SAAS has many opportunities for volunteers to share their expertise and knowledge, make new friends and perhaps learn new skills.

We have a small dedicated pool of volunteers whose time is limited by their current involvement and commitments to SAAS projects. We need your help and support to continue and expand our efforts.

For more information contact
Pat Walters at 793-1960.



Clemson University’s Radar Ornithology Lab has produced a very informative website explaining how to interpret NEXRAD as it applies to birds; this can be found at <http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/birdrad/index.htm> . However, without learning all the specifics, a little practice will allow you to determine whether you are seeing birds moving, or if those “colored blobs” you see are weather systems. The image below to the left shows weather patterns over Texas. Characterized by irregular shapes, and often showing lateral movement, they can easily be distinguished from the very circular patterns created by migrating birds as they move upward and into the radar’s beam as shown in the image on the right. Try watching about 45 minutes after sunset and turn on the display’s “looping” feature; this is the time when most birds lift off for their nightly flight—called “exodus”—and you may see the “bloom” created as hundreds, or thousands of birds take to the air.

Armchair Birding – Watching Spring Migration online using Nexrad

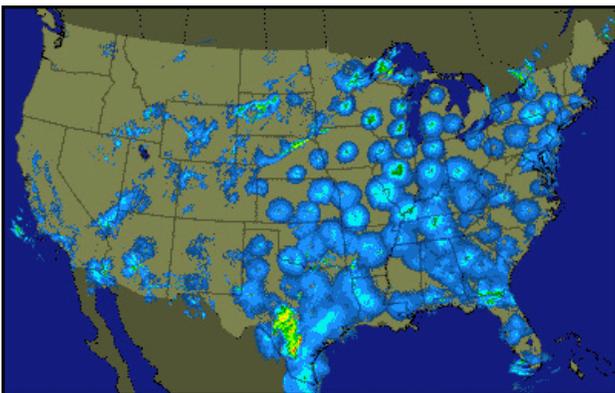
Did you know you can “watch” migrating birds on your computer as they move north? For several years I have enjoyed this spectacle as I wait for the birds to arrive from their wintering grounds. Although a poor substitute for seeing one’s first Blackburnian Warbler of the year, it is none-the-less an entertaining way of spending a few minutes on a cold and damp spring evening, and it can be a valuable tool for choosing days to get out in the field to see recently arrived migrants.

There are many places online where you can find NEXRAD—Next generation Radar—images, but my favorite is the National Weather Service Doppler Radar Images page at <http://radar.weather.gov/> . From here you can choose the weather radar located in Albany, if you want to check on activity locally, or any of ten larger sectors, such as the Northeast, where you can see whether birds are moving at Cape May, NJ, or the Lower Mississippi, which may show migrants crossing the Gulf of Mexico!



Return a Gift to Wildlife – Every Dollar Helps!

If you haven’t yet filed your New York State tax return, please consider adding a dollar amount for the “Return a Gift to Wildlife” (RAGTW) program. Since 1982, over 250 projects have been funded by RAGTW—including the recently completed “Second Atlas of Breeding Bird Atlas of New York State”. The current condition of New York State finances has caused the budgets for conservation programs to be decimated. This simple act can help insure that valuable projects benefitting wildlife and the environment can move forward.





Welcome to new chapter supporters!

Jane Arnold	Queensbury	Dick Bartlett	Glens Falls
Rosemary Silverman	Corinth	Roberta Clute	Hudson Falls
Irene Burns	Glens Falls	Alice Johnson-Zeiger	Gansevoort
Clifford Oliver Mealy	Greenwich	Bill Tompkins	Greenwich
Donald Butler	Schuylerville	John Dutcher	Queensbury
Bob Odess	Buskirk	Jim Bogue	Buskirk
Marilyn Baxan	Lake Luzerne	Nan Scinta	Queensbury
Barb McCarthy	Fort Ann	T. Per and Judy Staubo	Saratoga Springs

This January, renewal letters were sent to all chapter supporters whose membership expired on December 31, 2009.

If you have not already renewed, please send your 2010 membership renewal. Make check payable to "Southern Adirondack Audubon Society" and send with name, address, and phone number to:

Pat Fitzgerald, 79 Laurel Ln., Queensbury, NY 12804

We would also like to thank all of the following, who in addition to renewing their memberships, sent additional funds to support the local chapter:

Joanne Armstrong	Ryan Aleva	Susan Beaudoin	Robert & Linda Bergman
James N. & Rosamond Butler	Helen and Bill Crawshaw	Mrs. Nancy Eustance	
Dawn Faller	Alan & Elizabeth Gee	Harry & Ruth Goldman	Bruce Goodale
Ms. Charlene B. Harrington	Edward & Margaret Hyde	Beth LaPan	Rosemary Pusateri
Barbara J. Putnam	Leanne & Gary Raga	Lynn Sickles	

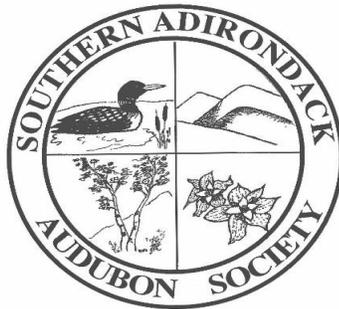


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Linda Hoyt	494-2380
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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

National membership in the Audubon Society includes the magazine, *Audubon*, and the SAAS newsletter, *The Fledgling*. The cost is \$20 annually for regular membership and \$15 for seniors and students. Make checks payable to "National Audubon Society," and send with name, address, and phone number to the address listed below. Membership as a "Chapter Supporter" is \$10 annually and includes *The Fledgling* and all chapter activities. Make check payable to "Southern Adirondack Audubon Society" and send with name, address, and phone number to:

Pat Fitzgerald, 79 Laurel Ln., Queensbury, NY 12804

Newsletter Submission Policy

We welcome submissions to *The Fledgling*. Please email your articles to the editor if possible, and include your name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit as necessary.

If you cannot email, please contact Pat Walters at 518-793-1960.