

The Fledgling

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

Vol. 28 No. 3

March 2011 – May 2011

President's Message

Birds falling from the skies in Arkansas, Louisiana, Kentucky, and even Sweden, hundreds of crows gathering near City Park, migration patterns off by miles and weeks earlier than normal – I ask myself, “What’s happening?” I’m not sure anyone knows for sure. There are many theories, one of them being climate change. What I do know is that now, more than ever, citizen science is an all-important part of trying to understand the changes taking place in the natural world. If you are not familiar with it, citizen science is a term used for projects or ongoing programs of scientific work in which individual volunteers or networks of volunteers perform research-related tasks, such as observation and data collection. The use of citizen-science volunteers often allows scientists to accomplish more research objectives with less funding than would otherwise be possible. There are many ways you can participate in citizen science if you are not already doing so. Project FeederWatch is a winter-long survey in which people observe bird activity at their backyard feeders and at nature centers, community areas, and other locales in North America. Feeder watchers periodically count the birds they see at their feeders from November through early April, and send their counts to Project FeederWatch. FeederWatch data help scientists track movements of winter bird populations and long-term trends in bird distribution. It’s a wonderful activity for those cold, wintery days when it might be difficult to get out. Every year there are also local bird counts, such as the Christmas bird count and the Great Backyard bird count. If you missed them this year, be sure to sign up for one or more of them next year. NestWatch is another citizen-science project in which you could participate. NestWatch is a nest-monitoring project developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. People of all ages, who are interested in the natural world, can help monitor the success of nesting birds and better understand the threats they face. This spring we will be in need of volunteers to monitor the many bluebird boxes that are being donated to Southern Adirondack Audubon. Monitors will check the boxes weekly, record what’s happening, and submit their observations to Cornell Lab or Ornithology.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

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. In case of inclement weather, please call the Crandall library at 792-6508

Wednesday, Mar 23 7PM

**“A Walk in a Nearby Woods”
with Jackie Donnelly and Sue Pierce**

Wednesday, Apr 20 7PM

**“Easter Island to Cape Horn”
with Barb and John Youker**

Wednesday, May 25 7PM

“Patagonia”

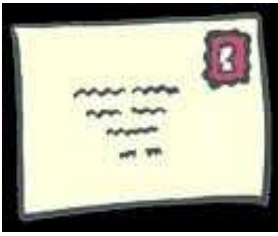
with Jerry Lemmo

Please visit our website for further information

www.southernadirondackaudubon.org

This year we will be celebrating Earth Day on April 23 by cleaning up the Betar Byway. The Betar Byway is a paved path that follows the shoreline of the Hudson River in the Village of South Glens Falls for approximately 0.6 mile. The SGF Beach Bikeway extension is a 1.3 mile gravel road on a wooded bluff overlooking the river. Together they offer a pleasant half-day of birding through several types of habitat. Birding the entire trail system will take you through mixed woods, riverfront, a small wetland area and the beach itself. It is a path we use often for field trips. We hope that, by getting volunteers together to pick up trash, we can make it a more enjoyable walk and a healthier habitat for the birds. See page 3 for more details. Please join us.

Pat Fitzgerald, President



Membership Corner

By Pat Fitzgerald

Welcome to new chapter supporters!

As of March 1, we have 92 chapter supporters. Our most recent new chapter supporters are:

<i>Mike George</i>	<i>Glens Falls</i>
<i>Nancy Hill</i>	<i>South Glens Falls</i>
<i>Lori McCarron</i>	<i>Saratoga Springs</i>
<i>Michele Mincher</i>	<i>Saratoga Springs</i>
<i>Ginny Vogel</i>	<i>Saratoga Springs</i>

Membership runs from January through December. A renewal notice was sent out in early January. A special thanks to all of you who have renewed your memberships. It's not too late to renew for 2011.

We would also like to thank those who sent additional funds to support the local chapter when renewing their memberships.

<i>Robert & Linda Bergman</i>	<i>Kathleen Bond</i>
<i>Rosamund Butler</i>	<i>Nancy Eustance</i>
<i>Bruce Goodale</i>	<i>Barbara Hennig</i>
<i>Edward & Margaret Hyde</i>	<i>Elaine Kee</i>
<i>Ruth & Sandy Lamb</i>	<i>Licia & Steve Mackey</i>
<i>Joyce Miller</i>	<i>Phyllis Miyauchi</i>
<i>Carol Moyer</i>	<i>Don & Nan Polunci</i>
<i>Barb Putnam</i>	<i>Leeanne & Gary Raga</i>
<i>Judy & Per Staubo</i>	<i>Weston Sweet</i>

If you haven't yet sent in your dues, you can do so at any time. Annual dues of \$10 may be sent to Pat Fitzgerald, 79 Laurel Lane, Queensbury, NY 12804. New chapter supporters who attend a public program, or go on a chapter-sponsored field trip can take advantage of a special offer of 1 year for \$5. Checks or money orders should be made out to SAAS.

Recent Bird Sightings

Since the last *Fledgling*, there have been quite a few interesting sightings in our chapter area. In September, a Laughing Gull sighted in Shepherd's Park, Lake George, brought birder's from the Capital region with hopes of adding this species to their home state lists, as did a Swainson's Hawk in Saratoga in October. Also in October, a Rufous Hummingbird spent several days at a feeder in Ballston Spa. November brought a Northern Goshawk to Saratoga Spa State Park, and a White-winged Crossbill to a member's home in Ganseboth Saratoga Lake and Loughberry Lake played host to many duck species this past fall. White-winged and Black Scoters, Long-tailed Duck, Ruddy Duck, and both Scaup species were found prior to freeze-up in December. Northern Shrikes were observed in both Gansevoort and Fort Edward. New Year's Day birders found Merlin in Saratoga and Barrow's Goldeneye on Degroot Road in Fort Edward. A Snowy Owl was seen in the Town of Providence on January 4, and an Eastern Phoebe in Northumberland on January 14. Only a smattering of Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Short-eared Owls has been recorded in the Fort Edward Grasslands so far this winter. Again this January, an Eastern Meadowlark has been found wintering in Fort Edward; a Hermit Thrush has been sighted in that town as well. Lapland Longspurs were seen among flocks of Horned Larks in Northumberland, and there have been intermittent reports of both Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls in several areas this winter.

It seems that each year brings an increase in the number of Carolina Wrens reported at home feeders – and this year is no exception. Is this species going to be as prevalent as the Northern Cardinal in years to come? If you are hosting a Carolina Wren at your feeder, or see one while birding in the field, please send your sighting to us at audubon@netheaven.com.

We have recorded 272 species in our chapter area. Please email us at audubon@netheaven.com to receive a copy of the species list.

Good Birding!
Mona Bearor

Baby Birds - What to Do And What NOT to Do



The season of nestlings and fledglings is just around the corner. Young birds are often taken in by well-meaning individuals who may not realize that the parent is still keeping an eye on its offspring. Since specialized care is required for young birds, the mortality rate is very high in these cases. Be very sure that the bird you find is abandoned or injured before you remove it from its natural environment.

Baby birds are NOT rejected by their parents if a person handles them. In fact, most birds have a very poor sense

of smell. It is an "old wives'" tale that the parents will reject a nestling after it has been handled by a human. If a nestling is found on the ground and it is not fully feathered, it is best to put it back into the nest. Some young birds require food every 20 minutes and the parents are much better equipped to take care of them than we humans are.

If you find nestlings, and the nest has become dislodged from where it was originally built, you can try to nail it or wire it back to the old location. If you find nestlings but cannot locate the nest, you can use a substitute, such as a shallow weatherproof container of appropriate size. Line it with dry grass or other materials, punch holes in the bottom for drainage, and attach the new nest to the tree securely. Put the nestlings back in and leave it alone so the parents can reclaim their offspring. Watch from a safe distance – preferably from indoors - to make sure the parents return.

Keep the telephone number of your local wildlife rehabber handy in case it is needed. Contact information for a rehabber near you can be found on this webpage: www.nyswrc.org/counties.htm



join us for the first annual
Riverside Green-up
April 23, 2011

What: Earth Day Clean-up of the
Betar Byway

When: April 23, 2011 - 10 a.m.

Where: Meet at the Gazebo near the
parking lot at the end of First
Street in South Glens Falls

What to bring: Work gloves, grabber,
water, snack, insect
repellent, sun screen,
family, friends, and if
you must, binoculars,
just in case, you
never know!

Photo courtesy of Sue Pierce.

For directions or more information call Sue Pierce (798-2051) or Pat Fitzgerald (792-6846).

Spring Field Trip Schedule

Sunday, March 20 – Call for start time Washington County Waterfowl

Join us as we search the Hudson River for migrant waterfowl such as Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Ducks and Mergansers in the Fort Miller area. We will meet at the Schuylerville Central School on Route 29. Expect to carpool. We will be traveling in a caravan and need to keep the number of cars to a minimum. Dress warmly, and bring a beverage, snack, binoculars, and scope, if you have one. Trip is limited to the first 12 people who register: call Mona (745-8637) or e-mail Joyce (justlookitup@yahoo.com) by March 19 to register and for details. Bad weather will cancel trip. Joint trip with Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club.

Friday, April 1 – 9 a.m. Monthly Coffee Walks at the Betar Byway

Birding walks led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon will be held the first Friday of every month. Each will last about one and a half hours. We will meet at 9 a.m. at the gazebo near the parking lot at the end of First Street in South Glens Falls.

After the walk we will meet for coffee at the Peppermill Restaurant to talk about the birds we see. In case of inclement weather, please call 793-1960.

Saturday, April 16 – 8 a.m. Bog Meadow Trail, Saratoga Springs

Join Rich Speidel in search of spring birds on the Bog Meadow trail, which includes an extensive boardwalk system through wetland communities: open marsh, wet meadow and forested wetland. Group size is limited, so call Rich to register: 623-2587.

Saturday, April 23 – 10 a.m. Earth Day Clean up of the Betar Byway

Meet at the gazebo, grab a garbage bag and do your part to help make the earth a little more pleasant. No need to sign up, just show up. See announcement on page 3.

Friday, May 6 – 9 a.m. Monthly Coffee Walks at the Betar Byway

Birding walks led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon will be held the first Friday of every month. at 9 a.m. at the gazebo near the parking lot at the end of First Street in South Glens Falls. In case of inclement weather, please call 793-1960.

Saturday, May 14 – 9 a.m. Nature walk at Skidmore Woods

Led by naturalist Jackie Donnelly, stroll in a regional treasure of flora and fauna, an interesting complex of ecosystems, and learn of the wildflowers along the way. Contact Jackie at 584-6346 for directions or more information.

Saturday, May 14 – 10 a.m. Saratoga Battlefield National Park

Enjoy a nature walk led by National Park Ranger Linda White. Meet at the National Park Visitor's center. No reservations required.

Saturday, May 28 – 10 a.m. Saratoga Battlefield National Park

Once again, join National Park Ranger Linda White as she leads her second nature walk at the park. Meet at the National Park Visitor's center. No reservations required.

Friday, June 3 – 9 a.m. Monthly Coffee Walks at the Betar Byway

Birding walks led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon will be held the first Friday of every month. Each will last about one and a half hours. We will meet at 9 a.m. at the gazebo near the parking lot at the end of First Street in South Glens Falls.

After the walk we will meet for coffee at the Peppermill Restaurant to talk about the birds we see. In case of inclement weather, please call 793-1960.

Saturday, June 4 – 8 a.m. Gull Bay Preserve

Don Polunci will lead a trip to the rookery to see the many nesting herons. Bring water, a snack, insect repellent, sun screen, and binoculars. This trip is limited to 12 people, so call Don at 793-1531, or e-mail him at nanandonp@gmail.com.

Blue Jays and Acorns

By Lindsey Duval

As a fledgling forager (and avid birder) I'm well aware of the inedibility of certain types of raw acorns due to their bitter tannins. Boiling is usually required to leach tannins before people can find acorns a desirable treat. So during this past autumn, as I watched several blue jays caching acorns for the cold winter months, I began to wonder – could they really survive on a nut chock-full of such an unpalatable substance? Blue jays have a varied diet but often find themselves forced to subsist mostly on acorns during a harsh winter.

It is important to first understand that acorns are a high energy food, high in fats, especially acorns of the red oak and pin oak varieties, so blue jays find them desirable. However, they are also high in tannins, bitter organic compounds that bind with proteins and digestive enzymes, causing them to inhibit digestion and lead to weight loss. Acorns are low in protein so they do not make up for the loss of protein caused by their own tannins. One would then think, since jays have not adapted to be able to handle these negative effects, that they would simply avoid acorns. But research on whether blue jays behaviorally avoid acorns with higher tannin levels show surprising results – the choice of acorn type by jays is based entirely on weight of the acorns, not on their ability to detect and tolerate tannin levels. Jays instead choose acorns that have low seed mass (weight) and those they have an easier time opening. This is because they cannot open acorns with thick shells, such as those of red oaks (which squirrels love), which are quite large and have hard, thick shells. This means they are also apt to avoid shagbark hickory nuts and black walnuts. They will instead cache acorns of willow oak, black oak, pin oak, chinkapin, and white oak, and also beech nuts – these acorns/nuts are of small or medium size with softer shells (think of how easily they break underfoot during a nice fall hike).

After finding this out, I still had questions – we still have jays eating high tannin acorns that cause protein deficiency. Are low tannin acorns better? Do tannins decline in storage? What if jays can't find an alternate source of protein? Researchers have tested all of these questions. One paper cited that jays lose 15% of their weight three days into an all-acorn diet. Even with acorns that only contain a small amount of tannin, this large weight loss still occurs because of the binding to protein and digestive enzymes. Also, tannin levels do not decline in overwinter storage, so our hungry jays in March can really suffer if we get a late winter storm.

So it's obviously important that jays find protein sources in winter and spring. For birders, this is great justification for buying lots of peanuts and nut-infused suet and putting it out on cold winter days. Maybe even a treat of mealworms would be enjoyed by our common jay. In the wild, jays may be finding this protein inside some of those acorns – weevils are notorious for damaging oaks, and their high protein larvae can be found in acorns. Even so, the next time a birder is asked why they have a yard crammed full of feeders, he or she can now excitedly talk about the winter hardships of the acorn-caching jays and maybe encourage more people to feed and enjoy our lovely feathered friends.



Photo courtesy of Gordie Ellmers

Domestic Duck Dilemma

Last December, before the pond in Crandall Park froze, a group of people (concerned citizens, The Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, and the Glens Falls Recreation Department) were notified that three domestic ducks had been placed in the pond earlier in the year. Apparently, the ducks had been Easter gifts and after the cute little fuzzy ducks grew, the recipients decided they couldn't keep them, so they "released" them into the pond.

Domestic ducks cannot fly sufficiently to migrate or avoid predators. Once the pond froze, the ducks would have nowhere to go. The natural environment for them is a farm. The first duck was caught easily with a large fish net. After that, the others became suspicious, and retreated to the open water whenever anyone approached them. It took several more attempts to finally capture the other ducks, and they are now being cared for at a farm.

We have also witnessed people feeding the ducks at Crandall Park and the Pineview Cemetery ponds. Respecting and protecting wildlife means NOT feeding them. Feeding them leads to overcrowding, which in turn leads to unsanitary conditions, water pollution from excess feces, and the spread of disease in the bird population. Bread has no nutritional value for waterfowl. It fills their stomach so that they do not eat the food needed to remain healthy. Birds without proper nutrition will quickly succumb to disease and death.

Nan Polunci



Photo courtesy of Al Greco.

2010 Christmas Bird Count

On December 18, 2010, Dick Bartlett, Beth, Brad, and Nathan Bidwell, Mona Bearor, Pat Fitzgerald, Jason Goldsmith, Russ Hilliard, Heather Mackey, Joyce Miller, Joan Robertson, Jacquie Tinker, Pat Walters, and Linda White participated in Audubon's 111th Christmas Bird Count. Together they put in 96 hours and traveled 321 miles. The weather cooperated for a great day of birding.

The following is a list of species seen, including numbers of individual birds that totaled 7,294. Canada Goose: 501, American Black Duck: 19, Mallard: 339, Red Head: 1, Common Goldeneye: 138, Hooded Merganser: 6, Common Merganser: 19, Ring-Necked Pheasant: 1, Ruffed Grouse: 1, Wild Turkey: 117, Red-necked Grebe: 1 (first time for our count – seen by the Bidwells), Northern Harrier: 1, Sharp-shinned Hawk: 1, Cooper's Hawk: 3, Red-tailed Hawk: 30, Rough-legged Hawk: 1, Merlin: 1 seen during count week, Peregrine Falcon: a pair seen during count week, Rock Pigeon: 734, Mourning Dove: 279 Red-bellied Woodpecker: 10, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1, Downy Woodpecker: 19, Hairy Woodpecker: 4, Northern Flicker: 4, Pileated Woodpecker: 5, Blue Jay: 195, American Crow: 1991, Common Raven: 1, Horned Lark: 35, Black-capped Chickadee: 261, Tufted Titmouse: 68, Red-breasted Nuthatch: 6, White-breasted Nuthatch: 36, Brown Creeper: 1, Carolina Wren: 6, Golden-crowned Kinglet: 6, Eastern Bluebird: 21, American Robin: 175, Northern Mockingbird: 6, European Starling: 1242, Cedar Waxwing: 125, American Tree Sparrow: 222, Chipping Sparrow: 5, Song Sparrow: 1, White-throated Sparrow: 8, Dark-eyed Junco: 253, Snow Bunting: 160, Northern Cardinal: 88, Common Grackle: 1, Purple Finch: 2, Common Redpoll: 10, Pine Siskin: 1, American Goldfinch: 96.

More information, including all other counts and historical records, can be located on Audubon's website under Christmas Bird Count. Our count name is Hudson Falls.

Linda White



PLEASE SUPPORT BIRDATHON 2011

*Thursday, May 19, through Sunday, May 22,
has been designated Birdathon 2011*

Birdathon is one of the more important, and most interesting, activities of Southern Adirondack Audubon. During this spring period we try to cover the entire chapter territory to seek out birds that are either nesting, or passing through on their way to breeding areas. It is an annual attempt to learn how each species is faring; which are commonly found, and which are declining.

Pick the day and times that are most convenient for you, and enjoy some time in the field in search of birds. The event is open to all, no matter what level of birding you do. So pack a lunch, grab your binoculars, partner with a birding buddy, if you like, and help us with this annual attempt to gauge the variety of our bird population.

We ask that you stay within the chapter boundaries - Warren, Washington, and Northern Saratoga counties. You may bird on one of the days, or use all four to compile your list. This is not a "contest;" rather, it is a way to compile a snapshot of the birds using our chapter area. It would be helpful to the tabulator to know the locations you covered. Please compile a list of all species seen, and remember, in this survey we are counting species, not numbers of individual birds, as in the Christmas bird count. Send your results to Linda White as soon as possible, so we can publish the results on our website in a timely manner.

If you want to use Birdathon as a fund raiser for the chapter, ask friends and neighbors to pledge a set amount for each species you identify. Care to sponsor a birder? Contact Linda White who will take your pledge and select a birder for you. At the end of Birdathon that participant will contact you with his or her species list and thank you for supporting the chapter. Your compiled lists and pledge money should be sent to Linda White, 29 Peggy Ann Rd., Queensbury, NY 12804. She can be reached by phone at 518-792-4446, or by email at lindaandblake@roadrunner.com.

Eagle Watch Update

Many sightings of Bald eagles in the area have been reported in the past weeks. Although the Moreau Lake State Park's section of the Hudson River is home to wintering Bald eagles, naturalists at the park have not reported seeing them on their weekly monitoring outings. Instead, reports have been coming in from other



local areas. In mid-January Sue Pierce saw one at the Betar Byway. An eagle was also spotted in the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA around the same time. On February 4th Steve Powers wrote, "Yesterday my son (Timothy) and I saw two mature adult Bald Eagles soaring around my house between Knight St. and Havilland Ave, about a quarter mile from feeder dam. They

were majestic, beautiful white tail and head feathers with black feathers on the body. They were quite low so we got a good look at them. The wing span had to be 5 to 6 feet". And on February 25, Pat Fitzgerald caught sight of an eagle near the river at Hudson Pointe Nature Preserve. Eagles forage over open water, so if you are near the river, keep your eye out and your binoculars ready. If you'd like to join the Moreau Lake State Park naturalist on an eagle walk, call the Park Office at 518-793-0511 for the spring schedule.

SAAS Board of Directors Meeting Schedule

Friday, March 18 – 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

(This meeting will be held at LARAC.)

Friday, April 15 – 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Friday, May 20 – 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meetings are held at Crandall Library and are open to the public.

Interested members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

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79 Laurel Lane
Queensbury, NY 12804



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IBON SOCIETY

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DIRECTORS

2008-2011

Linda Hoyt	494-2380
Linda White	792-4446
Pat Walters	793-1960

2009-2012

Carol Moyer	793-1960
Jason Goldsmith	480-4243

2010-2013

Pat Fitzgerald	792-6846
Ginny Vogel	584-3936

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 Audubon@netheaven.com, and include your name and contact information. We reserve the right to edit as necessary.