

The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society
www.audubon.noncommercial.org

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From your President:

As I write this message summer is still with us, but the last few nights were a definite change. The birds are giving notice of changes to come. I see a variety of fledglings coming to the feeders on their own now. Two chickadees, neither of which used my nestboxes this year, are coming to eat after a long absence. I missed their activities of past years, especially the "line up" teetering on my clothesline on their first excursions from the nest box. *Birdscope* reported that Project FeederWatch numbers showed a decline in black-capped chickadees in the Northeast last winter, and my daily records concurred.

My organic vegetable garden is thriving and keeping me busy harvesting and processing food when I am not at work. The goldfinches love to harvest the volunteer sunflowers that I allow to grow. This year I actually planted a sunflower corner which did well until the deer ate them. I let some mullein grow around the yard edges for I had read that birds eat their seeds, and was rewarded by a downy woodpecker circling one tall spike from bottom to top, busily probing. Actually, I couldn't see whether it ate seeds or insects, but it was enjoyable to watch the downy's methodical progress up the spike. Hummingbirds flit through the flower gardens, sampling bee balm and other flowers. Their favorite now is the wild spotted touch-me-not when they are not fighting over the feeders. Though monarch butterflies are absent here, there are white admirals and viceroys about. Earlier in the summer the tiger swallowtails were plentiful, and showed a marked preference for the chives I allowed to go to blossom.

All too soon it will be fall, and I'm never ready to
con't - see next column

SAAS Calendar

Monthly chapter meetings are held at the Crandall Library, on the fourth Wednesday of the month, except as may be noted below. For changes and updates, please check this column in each issue. Meetings are also published in the Post Star, on the SAAS website and on the Post Star online Events Calendar. Mark your calendar and join us for the presentations by guest speakers featured below. The meetings start promptly at 7pm. Guests are welcome so please bring your friends with you!

Sept 24 - Bill Gorman Hummingbirds

If you attended Bill's "Eastern Owls" last season you are familiar with what an entertaining program he presents. If you haven't been fortunate enough to see one of Bill's shows then don't miss this opportunity. Bill will have pictures of all 16 species of Hummingbirds that are found in the United States accompanied by lots of interesting information.

October 22 - To Be Announced

November 19 - To Be Announced

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give up summer. October will bring election of officers and board members for SAAS. No individual may hold the same office for more than two consecutive terms. A term of office is two years. A board of Directors term is three years. If you are interested in helping to keep SAAS functioning, perhaps you might consider filling one of our vacancies, such as vice-president, program chair, or conservation chair.

Or you might be interested in serving a term on the board of directors. We could certainly use your help and input, and we would enjoy getting to know you. Please help us out. Thank you.

Your President, Linda Hoyt

From the Membership Chair

-Claire Hunter



Twenty years ago SAAS was a very young fledgling chapter working for permanent charter in National Audubon. The membership year runs from July 1 to June 30; this is the time when we usually assess membership results for our chapter.

GROWING WELL: Our new offering of local membership in SAAS has tripled since last summer. This represents important support for chapter activities. As we deal with greatly reduced income from National, these local funds are even more needed.

WELCOME: From **Brant Lake**, three new local members - Janet Contois, Mary and David King, and Patricia Greenwald; also Betty Burgess from **Corinth**; Rosemary Pusateri from **Saratoga Springs** and Drew Monthie from **Queensbury**.

The Annual National report showed about the same number as last year. I've reviewed the 26 pages of printout and Barb Putnam will update computer lists in preparation for the newsletter mailing. From National, word of 14 renewals; also 31 new members assigned to SAAS since the last Fledgling was mailed. At the September meeting, we hope to extend a personal welcome.

John J. Audubon



BROWSING: SAAS "album" has so many reminders of activities that were part of our early years. A clip from the January 1985 *Post Star* has an 8x11 photo of our members titled "Birdwatching - on Lookout". The article states "Barb Putnam, Joan Robertson and Alan Koechlein scope the skies for unusual birds near the Harrisena Church in Queensbury." Barb, Joan and Alan are still very active SAAS members.

Another highlight of 1985 was observance of the 200th birthday of John James Audubon. A 22 cent US postage stamp was issued on April 23rd to commemorate the birth of this naturalist whose name remains synonymous with birds and bird conservation. I've kept a few!

Member's notes and phone calls are the best part of my job. Do let me know if there is any question about your membership.



Citizen Science Corner



CORNELL LAB of
ORNITHOLOGY



Audubon

eBird!

Once again the partnership of Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society has produced a revolutionary tool for birders. *eBird* is available at no cost to anyone with online computer access at www.ebird.org. This online database is an easy way to record the birds you see at any North American location. You may then access both your personal data and the information input by other birders for any use you wish.

A single bird sighting carries value of its own, however, thousands of sightings compiled into a single database become exponentially valuable. You may track species by time period, by location or you may create lists of species, both from your own sightings and from those contributed by others. The possibilities are endless for the study of seasonal migration and species distribution with this simple manner of recording data from the entire continent. The sighting records will be beneficial for use in pinpointing Important Bird Areas. Going on a trip? Just ask for a species list for that area and you'll have an idea of what you may find when you arrive at your destination! Want to know when your Red-winged Blackbirds arrived last spring? *eBird* can do it! There is an impressive amount of data already - for example, the month of May 2003, *eBird* compiled 596 checklists for New York state totaling 225 species and 38,792 individuals - and the number of birders who submit their sightings will grow as we spread the word about this important research tool.

Many birders would like to convert their paper records to computer data but hesitate to purchase an expensive software program for the purpose. *eBird* is the answer and will at the same time make the data available to all other birders, scientists, and conservationists. With your help, *eBird* will become the avian database of the future. So don't just bird - *eBird*!

-Mona Bearor

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Because They Care

-Mona Bearor

All too often when a young bird - or any bird, for that matter - meets a neighborhood cat, the cat is declared the victor. Not so in this story that will have you cheering for the birds, expressing thanks to a helpful neighbor, and finding a whole new respect for the wildlife rehabbers of our area.

The call came on June 19th from Sharon Jensen of South Glens Falls. It was relayed to me from our membership chairperson, Claire Hunter - thank goodness everyone knows Claire! Sharon had heard a commotion earlier that afternoon, looked across the road and saw a young bird on the ground being harassed by a cat. The cat appeared to be planning its next meal. The frantic parents of the fledgling were dive-bombing the cat and being very vocal in their attempts to chase it from their baby. Other species of birds were also in the fight, lending their cousins a hand in trying to scare off the bully. Sharon ran across the road and chased the cat away, the cat owners retrieved their animal, secured it inside and then brought a box and placed the young bird inside. They placed it on the top of a ladder in hopes that the parents would be successful at leading their youngster to a safer area.

At this point Sharon was calling to find out what the best course of action was. As anyone would be, she was worried that the bird was still vulnerable and possibly injured. After cautioning her that it is usually best to let the parents take over the care of a young bird once it is removed from harms way, I did what I do best - I referred the problem to someone else! We are extremely fortunate in this area to have available the excellent services of North Country Wild Care, a non-profit, fully licensed network of home-based wildlife rehabilitators. I gave Sharon contact information for several rehabbers and suggested that she call one of them for further instruction.

As evening approached and knowing the parents had not yet been successful at moving the young one from the box, Sharon became concerned for its safety. Not knowing the extent of any possible injuries and with thunderstorms imminent, she called NCWC rehabber, Hope Brynes in Hudson Falls. It was decided that the bird should be brought in for care. Coincidentally, another young bird of the same species - Baltimore Oriole - had been brought to Hope two days previously and after assessing the condition of the bird and detecting no serious injuries, she put them in the same cage and hung the cage in a maple tree in her yard. The birds required feeding every 30-40 minutes during the day - the job of a rehabber is no small commitment! Interestingly, the caged young birds attracted the notice of a pair of resident Baltimore Orioles. Hope found that the adults were giving chase when the cage was approached and they soon began feeding the young birds through the sides of the cage! This behavior continued even when the young were moved to the aviary - a larger enclosure where they birds can fly and gain strength and stamina before they are released back into the wild. On returning to the aviary Hope would often find cocoons, wings and bits of other foods, indicating that the parents were still on duty feeding their adopted young. On July 10th, after making sure the adoptive mother was present, Hope released the bird back to the wild. She watched with feelings of accomplishment and joy as it immediately joined its recently acquired family and flew away on healthy and strong wings.

I'm thankful that good neighbors like Sharon are watchful and willing to give a helping hand to wildlife in jeopardy. I'm equally thankful to, if not in awe of, those like Hope Brynes who give a huge portion of their time and lives to care for nature's creatures. Because they care a life was saved and another brilliantly colored Baltimore Oriole will grace our skies.

To learn more about North Country Wild Care, visit their website at
www.northcountrywildcare.org



HMANA-con't from page 5

The "Reference" area of this website is worth its weight in gold. In addition to a page listing a wealth of books on the subject, there is a table listing all the migrating raptors, each one a link to a separate page with a photo, probable sighting locations and dates for that species. In my opinion, the most valuable part of this website is the "Eastern Raptor Migrant Guide", also found in the Reference section. This

table presents everything to look for when hawk watching - not only physical appearance but also flight patterns and behavioral characteristics that will clinch an identification. If you plan on joining a hawk watch this autumn - or if you are simply interested in learning more about raptor migration - visit this site for a wealth of information and I'm sure you'll agree it was time well spent.

Editor's Ramblings

-Mona Bearor



As this issue goes to press, I am anxiously awaiting the arrival of autumn. This summer's intense heat and extended periods of rain made for difficult gardening and some very uncomfortable birding. I relish the beautiful fall colors and the cooler days and crisp nights of September in the northeast.

Regardless of the weather, my summer was packed with fun days. I also accomplished a few long overdue gardening tasks. I replaced several shrub roses with plants native to the northeast and I hope these will pay dividends in increased species of birds in my yard. With Drew Monthie's help, I chose two *Viburnum* species; *dentatum* or Arrowwood *Viburnum*, and *cassinoides*, also known as Witherod *Viburnum*. The berries will provide food for the phoebe, mockingbird, robin, brown thrasher, northern flicker, cardinal, cedar waxwing, vireo, bluebird, and grosbeak. I also planted Summersweet, or *Clethra alnifolia*, and less than a week after planting they were visited by hummingbirds and butterflies.

One of the most enjoyable days of my summer was spent with my nephew, Joshua Lewis from Hudson Falls. I had agreed to help him meet the requirements for his Cub Scout Naturalist badge so one day in July we headed to the Carter Pond Wildlife Management Area; this is also a designated Bird Conservation Area. We walked the trails and both learned many things as we searched field guides to identify wildflowers, insects, birds and trees. We studied a lesson on the Eastern Flyway while we enjoyed lunch and later hiked to a falls on the Battenkill. Helping to satisfy a child's hunger for the natural world is a rewarding way to spend the day.

In this issue we are again fortunate to have an essay by Liza Porter. I hope you enjoy "A Handmade Specialty" on this page. Liza truly has a talent for nature writing and I am pleased to offer her work for you to enjoy. Please take time to read "Because They Care" on page 3. It is a story that I hope will warm your heart and make you smile. The Koechlein's second story of their Arizona Elderhostel trip may cause you to listen to birdsong in a new way. If you are searching for a way to keep track of your bird sightings and would like to offer your data for the benefit of other birders and scientists, see the article on *eBird* on page 2.

I welcome each of you to a new year with Southern Adirondack Audubon and hope that this issue of *The Fledgling* brings something of interest for every member.



A Handmade Specialty

by Liza Porter

We have an old screen house at the back of our property. We eat there every night in the spring and summer, and on into the fall with a small fire in the fireplace. It is our little retreat from the cares of the world. For just a few steps of a walk out of the house and down a little slope, barely any distance at all, we might as well be deep in the Adirondacks. We watch the phoebes flit and bob their tails as they chase the plentiful insect life in our backyard. They build their nests in the eaves and the male wheezes his name incessantly in May.

One cool summer evening, shortly before the solstice, when we started a small fire in the fireplace, we realized that the smoke had flushed out a female phoebe from the eaves, and we wondered if there were young ones in the nest. There was no sound of peeping. When we climbed up and looked, the nest held five perfect, translucent little eggs. A week or so later, I climbed up again and found five scrawny, downy little brand-new hatchlings silently racked out in the nest. They filled it pretty well. Once we realized how good the eaves were for nests, we looked and found two more, probably from previous years. How beautiful they are, perfectly round constructions of fine twigs lined with grass and tail hair from our neighbors' horses, and all camouflaged -- or could one say decorated? -- with green bits of moss. The moss of the old nests was still green, years after construction.

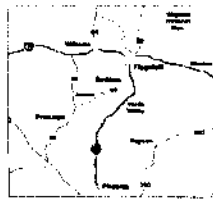


What works of art. What a miracle nests are. If you really look closely at one, you see how ancient it is, made of bits of this and that that were part of the first day of creation. Nests are hand-made items, settled completely into the space they occupy, unlike the manufactured items bought by humans. Hand-made items, with which we lived most of the millennia of our genetic inheritance, can be made according to an infinite variety of tastes and at all levels of skill. With hand manufacture (a word, which, of course, means "made by hand",) taste can be indulged in a way with which we have fallen out of touch. But despite changes in our human way of being, the phoebes still make a new nest every year, each beautifully crafted and perfectly suited to its place.

© 2002, Liza Porter, from "Essays for Our Time"



Sedona Elderhostel by Alan Koechlein



If you recall, in the last issue of the Fledgling, I spoke of the Elderhostel Margaret and I attended in Sedona, Arizona, from September 28 to October 5, 2001. One of the evening programs was especially fascinating and I'd like to share with you from what I can remember.

Mr. Doug Von Gausig spoke to the group regarding the recording of Bird Songs and other environmental sounds utilizing a spectral dish with microphone and recording equipment. With the human ear we can readily recognize the difference between the song of a chickadee and that of a cardinal. Maybe distinguishing between some of the grackles, for example, is more difficult for some of us while identifying each species can be readily accomplished with sonograms. A spectral display of the song is shown for many species in several of the common field guides to North American birds.

Mr. Gausig has collected many bird songs and makes their songs available through his web site www.naturesongs.com. One of the topics he spoke of which I found particularly interesting and relevant is on the subject of noise pollution. During his many outings to record different species of birds Mr. Gausig began to notice that some species were missing from the community where there is suitable habitat. The observation started him wondering about the cause.

When recording bird sounds, it is almost impossible to eliminate all background noises that are the result of other wildlife species or those caused by man. He began to see a pattern while comparing the sonograms of bird species with the "environmental" noise. One of the several reasons birds sing in the spring is to attract a mate. The sonogram produced by singing males typically includes many components of sound that make up the song. A sonogram shows more detail of a bird's song than can be detected by the human ear. The female has to hear the sequence of notes at the precise frequency that make up the male's song. When the "environmental" noise includes a portion of the same frequencies as comprises the male's vocalization, the female may not be able to hear it when "masked" or covered by the environmental noise. Hence, a male may be singing its heart out but cannot be heard by the female, which results in the failure to mate, and therefore the species is lost from the community. A male that cannot attract a mate will either perish or move to another location in competition with other males of its own species. Mr. Gausig was still exploring how much of the song has to be masked by noise causing unsuccessful mating. He is also testing his theory in other locations and habitats.

We have become accustomed to sounds in our every day life, whether from traffic, from a city, or near a factory. The

sounds may be reducing the success of some species to interact; mate, nest, or successfully rear young where suitable habitat exists. As a student of Ornithology, I found his presentation very fascinating and troubling for our winged friends.



Wandering the Web -Mona Bearor

With the approach of fall many birder's eyes are turned skyward to view the spectacle of the autumn hawk migration. While doing some online research for my own interest in the seasonal movement of raptors, I happened across the website of the Hawk Migration Association of North America at www.hmana.org.

The HMANA is a not-for-profit organization founded, as their mission statement says, "To conserve raptor populations through the scientific study, enjoyment and appreciation of raptor migration." If you are fascinated by raptors and their recurrent journeys through our area, this website is for you.

Several pages of this site are reserved for member specific information; however, there is plenty here for the casual visitor with an interest in migrating raptors. From the navigation bar on the homepage, you may bypass the member area and go to the link for hawkcount.org. This area provides your choice of either monthly or daily data from many hawk count areas across the continent. By studying the species counted in various months, you'll learn about the timeline for migration and you'll be impressed by the sheer numbers observed at some locations around the country. There is also a link to the BIRDHAWK listserv - a mailing list for those wishing to correspond by email with others having an interest in the subject.

The "Regions" section of the site provides concise and clear explanations of the major raptor flyways in North America. I found this area to be informative and interesting. "Watch Sites" will lead you to lists of hawk watch sites across North America - there are 40 in New York alone! Unfortunately, many have incomplete contact information so you may have to dig a little to reach someone with information if you are joining a particular hawk watch in your area. The "Data" link provides a contact if you wish to request use of HMANA collected data. "Forms" leads you to downloadable forms for use on a count site. "Weather" supplies links to all the weather data you could possibly want including precipitation forecasts, wind maps and county specific forecasts for the entire country.

con't- see HMANA on page 3

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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

National Membership in the Audubon Society includes the quarterly magazine, *Audubon*, and the SAAS newsletter, *The Fledgling*. The cost is \$20 for regular memberships and \$15 for seniors or students. Make check payable to "National Audubon Society" and send with name, address and phone number to address below. Chapter Membership is \$10 annually and includes a subscription to *The Fledgling*. Make check payable to Southern Adirondack Audubon Society and send with Name, Address, and Phone number to:

Claire Hunter, 3 Edgewood Dr., PO Box 1382, South Glens Falls, NY 12803-1382

Newsletter Submission Policy

We welcome submissions to The Fledgling and will utilize them as space permits. 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 e-mail, please submit to Barb Putnam at 190 Palmer Ridge Rd., Gansevoort, NY 12831. Please be sure to include your phone number and call her at 518-792-7542 before sending material.

The Fledgling



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