



The Fledgling

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

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Dec 2007 – Feb 2008

President's Message

Happy Holidays! One of nature's gifts to us is the return of the Short-Eared Owls to Fort Edward. Life is good!

Next year, 2008, Southern Adirondack Audubon Society will celebrate its 25th Anniversary! Two of the founding members still serve on the Board of Directors and deserve recognition; they are Claire Hunter and Linda White. Thank you both for your time and dedication. We would be remiss if we did not mention Barb Putnam. Although never a board member, she has maintained the membership roster and website since the chapter's inception. We are discussing how to celebrate this milestone next year, and hope to host a special event, complete with cake and candles.

Fall Council was held at the new Montezuma Audubon Center in Savannah, NY in late October. Mona Bearor, Jason Goldsmith, my wife Nan and I attended, and enjoyed field trips to Montezuma NWR and Savannah Dhu, a 4500-acre Evergreen Preserve in the NW corner of the complex. We also visited the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, where we spent time in the sound studio. Software allows you to play and compare the sounds of birds and mammals—or record your own voice!—then speed it up, or slow it down for study. It was fun and interesting. Mike Allen from NYS DEC spoke about "Bringing Back Bald Eagles" on Friday night. On Saturday we participated in workshops on how to promote awareness and action on Global Warming, and how to publicize and communicate chapter programs. Prior to leaving on Sunday, we attended the Chapter Roundtable meeting, still my favorite part of a Council weekend. It is a great opportunity to share information and ideas, and to learn what other chapters are doing. Spring Council will be held in Saratoga March 28-30, 2008.

We continue to monitor developments in the Fort Edward IBA/Grasslands. Several members of SAAS attended an "informational Town Board" meeting on

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SAAS Calendar

We have arranged for use of the Moreau Community Center for our public meetings during the months of Crandall Library's reconstruction. Until further notice we will meet at the Moreau Community Center located at 144 Main St. in South Glens Falls. A short business meeting will be held at 7pm, followed by the public program. Please join us and bring a friend!

There is no meeting in December

"Happy Holidays from SAAS"

Jan 23

"Our National Parks"
 Scott & Denise Stoner

Feb 27

"Winter Animal Tracking"
 Vince Walsh

October 11th. This meeting was called by the Supervisor of the Town of Fort Edward for the purpose of having DEC representatives explain their proposed plan for protecting portions of the Fort Edward Grasslands IBA. Ken Kogut, Wildlife Manager for DEC Region Five, was the main speaker with assistance from Wildlife Biologist, Tim Post and Casey Holzworth of the Warrensburg office. Dr. Graham Cox of Audubon New York was present to explain the IBA status. A PowerPoint program began with explanations of why protection is needed, followed by a proposed plan for the long-term development of a "Washington County Wildlife Management Area" or "Washington County Unique Area." Under the DEC plan this would protect - through a combination of outright purchase from willing sellers and conservation easement - core areas within the IBA. Areas considered the most critical for the endangered Short-eared Owl would be protected first, followed by other important areas. Kogut stressed repeatedly that the "boundaries" shown on the map were simply a starting point and many changes would be forthcoming as the plan develops. He also stated that none of this would be possible without resolutions being passed by all the towns involved. We will keep you informed as this plan evolves. *-see President on page 4*

From the Membership Chair -Claire Hunter

WELCOME BELLS RING for new Chapter Supporters!



These memberships represent several towns in our chapter area, as well as one gift membership to Pennsylvania. The asterisk denotes a gift membership.

ARGYLE	Albert Fromberger of North Ridge Guest House
HADLEY	George and Janie Schoenbaum
HUDSON FALLS	Roberta Clute *
QUEENSBURY	Nancy Reynolds Elizabeth Schukis Roland Akins **
SARATOGA	Barbara Henning Bruce Goodale
PENNSYLVANIA	Patricia Walters *

** Mr. Akins sent a memorial gift honoring his wife, Emily, a long-time member of SAAS.

HOLIDAY GIFT TIME: Avoid the “Holly Daze” at the mall. Audubon membership as a supporter of our chapter is a great gift choice. The \$10 annual cost includes the *Fledgling*, our newsletter, which contains information and notices on local meetings and field trips. This is a gift that keeps on giving all year and brings fellowship with others who share a common interest. If you choose, the chapter will send a gift card to your recipient.

All of the income received from chapter supporting memberships stays with our chapter for use on local educational and environmental projects; this is vitally important as we receive reduced support from National Audubon.

HAPPY MEMORIES as 2007 heads into the holidays! This was the year of the Short-eared Owl. I have a clip of his portrait from the *Post Star*. Many members and visitors to the area enjoyed visiting the owl roosting areas in the Fort Edward Grasslands Important Bird Area. Let us hope we can welcome the owls again in 2008.

I always enjoy calls and correspondence from members! **HAPPY HOLIDAYS, GOOD HEALTH, and GOOD BIRDING!**

Clip & Save!

Winter Field Trip Schedule

Enjoy the Winter and meet other birders!

Saturday, January 26 – 8:30 AM

Wintering Birds of the IBA with Jason Goldsmith

Join us as we bird through the grasslands of Ft. Edward and Argyle, searching for wintering raptors such as Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, and Short-eared Owl; other species may include Horned Lark, Northern Shrike, and Snow Bunting. The number of participants is limited. Call Jason at (518) 480-4243 to register.

Saturday, February 23 – 9:00 AM

Snowshoe Walk at the Denton Preserve with Don and Nancy Polunci

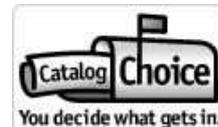
We will meet at the trailhead on Rt.4, south of Fort Miller. A couple pairs of snowshoes are available if you have none of your own. Dress in layers, bring water or a thermos with a hot beverage.

You need to register for this trip so you can be contacted in case of cancellation due to stormy or icy conditions. Please call Nan or Don at 793-1531 or email nanandon@adelphia.net for more information and to register.

Sunday, March 23 – 8:00 AM

Washington county waterfowl with Joyce Miller and Mona Bearor

Join us as we search the Hudson for migrant waterfowl such as Goldeneye, Bufflehead, and Mergansers; last year 13 species of waterfowl were tallied on this trip! Time permitting, we may visit the Fort Edward Grasslands for late winter specialties such as Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier, and Snow Bunting. We will meet at the Schuylerville Central School on Rt. 29 to form a carpool. Dress warmly and bring a beverage or snack. Please contact either Joyce, justlookitup@yahoo.com, or Mona, kinglet@roadrunner.com 745-8637 to register.



FACT: Eight million tons of trees are consumed each year in the production of paper catalogs.

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Searching for the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker

by SAAS member Pat Fitzgerald

In February 2004, a kayaker in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas reported a sighting of what he believed was an ivory-billed woodpecker (IBWO), a bird thought for many years to be extinct. After several trips to the same area, other experienced birders also heard calls and reported sightings. Finally in April, a four-second video showing a large woodpecker with extensive white on its trailing wing feathers was obtained, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology announced to the world that the IBWO lived. It wasn't long after the announcement that other birding experts examined the film and raised questions about the bird seen in it. This has resulted in a disagreement among ornithologists as to whether or not an IBWO has been sighted.



After the 2004 announcement of the Arkansas sighting, the historic range of the IBWO was reassessed. In the past, the range of the IBWO extended to the bottomland forests of the southeastern United States, including parts of Louisiana, Florida, Texas, and South Carolina. Consequently, searches have been extended to include these areas. One of the search sites is in Congaree National Park (formerly Congaree National Swamp). The park, east of Columbia, South Carolina, is considered to be one of the largest remnants of old-growth floodplain forests remaining on the continent. Most of its 22,200 acres are occupied by wetlands and seasonally inundated bottomland hardwood and swamp forests, prime IBWO habitat.

The South Carolina search is a joint partnership of several state and federal agencies including the National Park Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In 2006, about one-third of the park was surveyed. Although no definite evidence was found, some of the data gathered suggested that further searches should be conducted. The 2007 search began in January and continued through the end of April. I participated in the last two weeks of the South Carolina search.

On the first day I attended a training session that included a general orientation to the park, information about the foraging, feeding, and nesting habits of the IBWO, and the differences between the IBWO and the pileated woodpeckers, which are abundant in the park. I learned the calls of the birds, listening to them repeatedly until I was certain I could identify them. There was also training on how to use GPS receivers, two-way radios, digital video cameras, and recorders.

Volunteers and researchers from the previous months had noted areas of interest where the possibility of hearing or spotting an IBWO was greatest. Each morning, an hour before sunrise, dressed in camouflage, we set out to a predetermined area. The morning chorus of the birds was exhilarating. Usually we followed well marked trails, but sometimes it was necessary to travel by kayak or canoe. We wore waders and hip boots in the swampy areas. In addition to listening for the double knocks and "kent" calls of the IBWO, we searched for scaling of the bark high up in the trees where they look for beetles to feed their young. We also looked for large cavities they use for nesting. All interesting sights and sounds were photographed and/or recorded. At the end of the day, we returned to the National Park Education Center and entered our data into databases on the computers in the research lab. We shared pictures and recordings with the leaders and other volunteer searchers who would decide if our findings needed further exploration. If so, we would return to the same site the next day and place a camera or recorder on a tree to continuously record activity in that particular area. Later in the week, the devices would be removed and the tapes analyzed.

Even though no positive sighting was documented, the search has been extended in to 2008. I will be going back to Congaree National Park for two weeks in March. Maybe this will be the year we have definitive evidence of the IBWO's existence so that we can begin to implement a recovery plan for this magnificent bird.

Christmas Bird Count 2008

SAAS members will participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 16.

Last year 48 species were tallied by volunteer counters; join us to try and exceed that number this year! Data derived from these annual counts help scientists to learn more about the winter presence of various species, and their movement as they adjust to the climate changes affecting all life on earth. You do not need to be a bird identification expert to participate; extra pairs of eyes and hands are always needed to spot birds and keep records. If you'd like to assist with this important project – and have lots of fun, too! – please call Linda White at 792-4446

Bog, Swamp, or Marsh?

- Jason Goldsmith

The proper naming of small bodies of water has perplexed many of us; we've all at times wondered what to call these standing pools that are so full of wildlife activity. Although scientists have detailed classification schemes to label specific types of wetlands, amateur naturalists can often distinguish among three basic wetland habitats by observation alone.

Bogs are standing pools that get almost all of their water from rain and snow. Since rainfall has fewer nutrients than groundwater, the environment becomes very acidic. This limits the variety of plants the land can support and slows the rate of decomposition. Sphagnum moss dominates most bogs, and insectivorous plants, such as pitcher plants and sundews, are often found in this type of wetland.

Swamps generally get their water from slow-moving streams or rivers. Added nutrients supplied by the running water support the growth of various trees such as red maple and ash. Shrubs are also commonly found, such as dogwood and buttonbush. Swamps can be further divided by whether trees dominate (forested swamp) or shrubs dominate (shrub swamp), but these distinctions often overlap.

Marshes also get their water from moving surface water; however, they are dominated by grasses, sedges, and cattails. The root systems of these plants are often very dense and help capture nutrients. Often bordering rivers or lakes, marshes provide a natural filtration system and protect the larger bodies of water from polluted run-off.

So, the next time you are birding near a standing body of water, think:

“Lots of moss or insectivorous plants...bog!”

“Trees or shrubs... swamp!”

“High grasses, sedges, or cattails... marsh!”

Step Right Up! Officers' Positions Open!

SAAS annual elections were held at the October General meeting. Elected to serve three-year terms on the SAAS Board of Directors were Laurie LaFond, local writer and photographer; Nancy Polunci, our fund-raising committee chair; and Virginia Vogel, our Treasurer.

Don Polunci will continue as President for another term and Ginny as Treasurer; however, Rosemary Pusateri stepped down as Secretary and that position remains open, as does the Vice-President's chair.

We need your help to fill these positions! Please consider serving on our board as we celebrate our 25th year.

The vice-president assists the President and presides over meetings in his absence. The secretary takes minutes at board meetings and distributes them, via email, to the Executive Board members. If you feel the time is right for you to volunteer for SAAS, please contact any board member on the mailing page of this newsletter.

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President - con't. from page 1

At our last board meeting, we discussed chapter goals for 2008. One important objective is to increase community awareness about SAAS. We'd like to boost attendance at our programs and field trips, get more people involved in our chapter, partner with other groups, and promote environmental education at public events. You can help! Please support our programs and field trips by attending them (or leading one), or perhaps by suggesting a topic of interest or a speaker for a public program. Please alert us to events where we can set up an informational table.

Finally, in the true spirit of the holiday season, we would like to ask for the gift of office space. All of our “stuff” is accumulating at our board members' houses! SAAS would love to have a home for storage and board meetings. If you can help, please contact me.
-Don Polunci, President

Contact: Pat Leonard
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
(607) 254-2137
pel27@cornell.edu



Contact: Delta Willis
Audubon
(212) 979-3197
dwillis@audubon.org



GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT IS GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH NATURE

In February, volunteers throughout the U.S. and Canada are invited to
“Count for Fun, Count for the Future!”

New York, NY, & Ithaca, NY, —Millions of novice and accomplished bird watchers can make their fascination with nature add up for science and for the future during the 11th annual Great Backyard Bird Count, led by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. During “Presidents’ Day” weekend, February 15–18, 2008, anyone can count birds from wherever they are and enter their tallies online at www.birdcount.org. These reports create an exciting real-time picture of where the birds are across the continent and contribute valuable information for science and conservation.

“These volunteers are counting not only for fun but for the future,” said Tom Bancroft, Chief Science Officer for Audubon. “It’s fun to see how many different kinds of birds can be seen and counted right in your backyard or neighborhood park. Each tally helps us learn more about how our North American birds are doing, and what that says about the health and the future of our environment.”

“The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family, and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds, and mystery,” said Janis Dickinson, Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are—at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges, even counting birds on a balcony. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count web site www.birdcount.org.

The web site provides helpful hints for identifying birds. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

For more information on how to participate, including identification tips, photos, bird sounds, maps, and information on over 500 bird species, visit www.birdcount.org.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership institution interpreting and conserving the earth’s biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.

www.birds.cornell.edu

Audubon is dedicated to protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in conservation.

www.audubon.org

SOUTHERN ADIRONDACK AUDUBON SOCIETY

President	Don Polunci	nanandon@adelphia.net
Vice-President		
Secretary		
Treasurer	Virginia Vogel	518-584-3936
Newsletter Editor	Mona Bearor	ramonabearor@roadrunner.com
Education	Linda White	518-792-4446
Circulation & Webmaster	Barb Putnam	518-792-7542
Publicity	Jason Goldsmith	518-480-4243
Conservation	open	
Membership	Claire Hunter	518-793-9088
Web address	www.audubon.noncommercial.org	
email SAAS at:	SAdrAudubon@netheaven.com	

DIRECTORS

2005-2008

Linda Hoyt	494-2380
Claire Hunter	793-9088
Linda White	792-4446

2006-2009

Mona Bearor	745-8637
Pat Fitzgerald	792-6846
Jason Goldsmith	480-4243

2007-2010

Laurie LaFond	955-8301
Nancy Polunci	793-1531
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:
Claire Hunter, 3 Edgewood Dr., South Glens Falls, New York 12803.

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 Barb or Mona at the numbers listed above.

The Fledgling



4 Windy Lane
South Glens Falls, NY 12803

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Editor: Mona Bearor
ramonabearor@roadrunner.com
518-745-8637

Contributing Writers:
Pat Fitzgerald
Jason Goldsmith

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