



The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc.

Vol. 32 No. 4, June - August 2015

Visit SAAS at: <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

This newsletter is in color online!

Mow hay later for nesting birds

Grassland birds are among the most critically threatened populations in North America, in large part due to lack of suitable habitat. In the Northeast, hayfields are important grassland breeding bird habitat.

However, hayfields are often mowed two or three times during grassland birds' nesting period, not allowing birds to complete the process.

Mowings can be adjusted to the timing of the breeding season. If forage quality is not the priority, avoid mowing at all before August 20th. Most nesting will be completed by then.

If forage quality is a high priority, mow once prior to Memorial Day, followed by a 65-day period without any mowing. This waiting period will be long enough to allow species like Bobolinks to fledge a brood during most years. The earlier cutting helps to boost the nutritional value of the late cutting.

For more information, go to <http://ny.audubon.org/grasslands-and-shrublands>.

A longer version of this article, by conservation chair Jason Goldsmith, appeared in the June 2014 issue of *The Fledgling*.

Africa talk set for June

Three Southern Adirondack Audubon Society members will present "Destination: Africa!" on Wednesday, June 24, as part of the chapter's continuing monthly program series. The slide show and talk will be held in the Christine L. McDonald Community Room on the lower level of Crandall Library in downtown Glens Falls. It will begin at 7 p.m. It is free to the public. Dessert and beverages will be offered at 6:45 p.m. in honor of the group's 31st anniversary.

Mona Bearor will join Don and Nan Polunci to talk about the wildlife and experiences on their October 2014 trip to Kenya and Tanzania on an 15-day



safari adventure. Bearor said that visiting Africa and seeing the "big five" species — lions, leopards, African elephants, Cape buffaloes and rhinoceros — was a long-time dream. "From the first magical sighting of an elephant family to a baboon in the safari vehicle, the trip was packed with experiences that we will remember for a lifetime," she added.



Bearor, a South Glens Falls native, has been an avid birder for about 15 years.

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Above, a leopard stares into the camera.

Left, a safari vehicle travels along a dusty road.

Photos by Don Polunci.

**June Program
Pages 1 & 5**

**Spring Field Trips
Page 7**

**This newsletter is printed on
recycled paper.**

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society Board and Committees

<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org>

Email: info@southernadirondackaudubon.org

Officers:

President: Pat Fitzgerald (518-792-6846; fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com)
Vice-President: OPEN
Secretary: Linda Hoyt (518-494-2380)
Treasurer: Mona Bearor (518-745-8637)

Board of Directors:

2012-2015	Jason Goldsmith Joyce Miller Carol Moyer
2013-2016	Jim Campinell Jim Reis OPEN
2014-2017	Barbara Beatty OPEN OPEN

Board meetings are held monthly except July and August. Members are invited to attend. Contact Pat Fitzgerald for details.

Committees:

Newsletter: Joyce Miller (editor@southernadirondackaudubon.org)
Education: Mona Bearor (518-745-8637)
Publicity: Carol Moyer (518-793-1960)
Conservation: Jason Goldsmith (518-480-4243)
Membership: Barbara Beatty (518-793-1454)

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) is a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society. The organization's primary goal is to protect the environment by preserving natural habitats and promoting environmental education. The group has more than 450 members in Warren, Washington, and northern Saratoga counties in New York State.

President's Message:

SAAS offers several summer activities

By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS President

Spring always provides many activities for outdoor enthusiasts. Southern Adirondack Audubon will lead several field trips in the area, including our monthly Betar Byway walks.

In addition, Wilton Wildlife Preserve will hold their 5th annual spring festival on May 31 from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. Those who attend the festival can visit the SAAS table, participate in fun activities for children, and see live birds on display. Wilton staff members will lead hikes to see the beauty of the wild blue lupine in bloom, and perhaps catch a glimpse of the first brood of the recently-hatched Karner Blue butterflies.

SAAS will also have a table at the Saratoga Farmers' Market on June 20 from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Volunteers are needed to staff our tables at both Wilton and Saratoga to sell raffle tickets, and promote our organization by enrolling new members. Call 792-6846 if you are able to give an hour or two to either or both events.

Recently, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) announced that 750 acres of the former Mount McGregor State Correctional Facility property in Saratoga County will be transferred to Moreau Lake State Park. Southern Adirondack Audubon worked with Saratoga PLAN (Preserving Land and Nature) and Audubon New York in advocating this transfer. Thanks to all who signed the petition to transfer the lands that was presented to the Office of the Governor in January.

In July, I will be attending the National Audubon Convention in Leesburg, Virginia. This will be an opportunity to connect with Audubon representatives from across the country, and with National Audubon staff. I am looking forward to attending leadership training conferences, field trips, and other workshops. It will be a privilege to represent Southern Adirondack Audubon at this event.

SAAS board positions open

Several positions are open on the Board of Directors of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society. The terms of the President, Treasurer and Program Committee chair are expiring. The board will also need a Vice-president. Please join us and help your chapter thrive! Contact SAAS Board President Pat Fitzgerald for more information.

Monthly board meetings are held at Crandall Library in downtown Glens Falls on Sundays afternoons. The board does not meet over the summer.

The next board meeting is on **Sunday, June 21** from 3-5 p.m. at the VFW Hall, 30 Cooper Street, Glens Falls. Meetings resume in the fall. The fall meeting dates are September 20, October 25 and November 15, at Crandall Library in Glens Falls. Interested members are welcomed to attend.

Drone operator harasses Bald Eagles

By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS President

On an early Sunday morning in March, several photographers were in their vehicles near the Great Sacandaga Lake in Saratoga County, waiting for nearby eagles to feed on deer carcasses.

A service truck from a company in Saratoga drove up and parked in front of the vehicles already stopped along the side of the road. The driver promptly got out of his truck and activated a drone. He flew it over the top of the photographer's cars, out onto the ice-covered pond, and directly at the adult and two juvenile eagles perched in nearby trees, scaring them away.

Three of the photographers confronted the man, who seemed unconcerned about the consequences of his actions. Photographs were taken of his truck, license plate number, and the drone flying near the eagles. The next day,

This white drone was flown close to this Bald Eagle near Sacandaga Lake in early March. The drone operator was reported to the DEC.



the man was reported to the N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation, and the agent immediately went to the man's place of business. Had the man flown his drone at nesting eagles, the agent said they could file charges against him and fine him. Because the eagles were only feeding, the man was given a stern warning.

The DEC encourages anyone who witnesses the harassment of birds to report it immediately. Call the Raybrook Dispatch at 518-897-1300 to file a complaint.

What to do if you find a baby bird

With area birds actively nesting, many of us may notice chicks on the ground. Should you "help" it?

Unless it is injured, it is most likely a fledgling, a chick that has successfully flown out of the nest as it develops its ability to fly. Its parents will continue to find and feed it for the next few days. This is a normal, though vulnerable, stage of its development.

For more information, see Cornell Lab of Ornithology's page on "Orphaned" Baby Birds: http://www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/faq/master_folder/attracting/challenges/orphaned.

Wild Center opens new elevated trail

The Wild Center in Tupper Lake opened on May 1 for the summer. New this year is Wild Walk, the only elevated trail across the treetops in New York.

The center features exhibit halls, activities and live animals including lake fish, porcupines and four otters. Visitors can walk on woodland trails to the Raquette River and watch films, including The Wild Center's movie, *A Matter of Degrees*, narrated by Sigourney Weaver.

The Wild Center, which opened in 2006, is located about two hours northwest of Glens Falls. Details: <http://www.wildcenter.org/> or call (518) 359-7800.

Welcome, new members!

Currently, 501 members of National Audubon live in our chapter area. Many of our 114 chapter supporters belong to the National Audubon Society and also financially support our local efforts of conservation and education. Chapter supporter dues are the main support for our chapter activities. All of our staff are volunteers and all of our regular programs and field trips are free and open to the public.

Our newest chapter supporters are:

*Lori and Daniel Barber, Lake George
Roma Bedell, Chestertown
Gerald Carruthers, Queensbury
Irene Fischer, Glens Falls
Dennis Jones, Schuylerville
Laurel Male, Queensbury
Susan Nichols, Lake George
Joan Rech, Queensbury
Nancy Reynolds, Queensbury*

Renewal notices were sent out in January. We are grateful for all who renewed their chapter supporter membership, and to the following members who included an additional donation for our chapter operating expenses.

*Diane Collins
Anthony and Mary La Creta
Kathleen Royka
Donald Sevits
Holly Vegas*

Anyone can become a Southern Adirondack Audubon Chapter Supporter by paying annual dues of only \$10 per household. All members will receive Southern Adirondack Audubon's quarterly newsletter, *The Fledgling*. Annual dues stay in this area and help support the monthly public programs, this newsletter, and other educational programs.

Gift memberships are available, and will be announced with an appropriate card at your request. Print out the SAAS Chapter Supporter form on the SAAS Membership page (<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/membership/membership.html>). Mail it with payment to Barbara Beatty, 12 Heinrich St., Queensbury, N.Y. 12804.

For details, contact Barbara Beatty by phone at 518-793-1454, or by email at membership@southernadirondackaudubon.org.

Species Spotlight

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds

By Joyce Miller, Newsletter Editor

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) appear in this area by early May. Most travel non-stop across the Gulf of Mexico from Central America in one long migratory trip. Their progress can be followed at <http://www.hummingbirds.net/map.html>, as well as eBird (<http://ebird.org>).

Of the 17 hummingbird species breeding in the United States, the Ruby-throat is the only one that commonly breeds in the eastern United States. About 330 hummingbird species exist. They are found only in North and South America.

Many of us may have experienced the males' aerial courtship dances in our backyards. If a female flies by, the male will start a swinging, U-shaped dance. If she is interested and lands, he changes to a fast back-and-forth pattern, according to Cornell's All About Birds site.

Hummingbirds can see color as well as ultraviolet light. They prefer red or orange tube-shaped flowers. Their long tongues have a tip like a brush, allowing them to lap nectar at about 13 licks a second. They remember the flowers they have visited, and return to them. Their wings can flap at least 53 times a second.

Attract hummingbirds to your yard by putting up a hummingbird feeder. Fill it with a solution made of one part table sugar to four parts water. Do not add red dye. Put the feeder in a spot cats cannot reach. (For details, visit Cornell's *Feeding Hummingbirds* page, <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1181>.) Change the water often, especially in hot weather.

The Ruby-throat male's throat looks dark until sunlight turns it to iridescent red. Females and juvenile birds have buffy-colored throats.



This male Ruby-throated Hummingbird was photographed by Don Polunci in North River in northern Warren County.

Hummingbirds have tiny legs and toes. They can only take small steps when perched. Banded Ruby-throats have been recaptured that were nine years old.

For more information: http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Ruby-throated_Hummingbird/id.

Loon Survey set for July 19

Since 2001, the Wildlife Conservation Society of Saranac Lake holds its Adirondack Loon Census on the third Saturday of July each year.

The survey covers about 200 lakes and involves more than 500 volunteers. Census results indicate a relatively stable population of approximately 2,000 loons in the Adirondacks, the WCS website says. For more information, see <http://programs.wcs.org/northamerica/WildPlaces/Adirondacks/LoonConservation/LoonCensus.aspx> or call (518) 891-8872.

Birding by the Month

Peak birding time is here!

By Mona Bearor, Education Chair

June

- Baltimore Orioles are nest building and feeding young; you can easily find them on the Towpath Road in Hudson Falls and on the Betar Trail in South Glens Falls.
- Bobolinks are singing and displaying in the agricultural grasslands. It is a real treat to listen to them and watch their courtship behavior.
- Now is the time to try to find the eight species of sparrows that reside in our area in the summer months. Look and listen for Chipping, Field, Vesper, Savannah, Grasshopper, Henslow's, Song and Swamp Sparrows.

July

- Shorebirds are on their way south already. Keep an eye on short grassy fields or any bare or plowed ground after a rain.
- Swallows form large flocks in preparation for migration. Look for them on utility wires in open agricultural areas.
- Get out and bird the Towpath Road in Hudson Falls. Even on these hot mid-summer days there is a lot of action!

August

- Great Egrets visit the area. They are known for post-breeding wandering, and are seen annually along the Hudson River from West River Road.
- Common Nighthawks begin migrating at mid-month. Look for them along river valleys at dusk as they fly silently overhead.
- Raptors begin to migrate south. Watch for them locally or visit the Franklin Mountain hawk watch in Oneonta.

Africa talk

Continued from page 1

She has served in a number of roles on the board of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, and currently serves as the website coordinator, education chair and Treasurer. Bearor writes the "Birding by the Month" column for *The Fledgling*, the chapter's newsletter. She also developed and maintains the checklist of bird species used by the chapter and for the Betar Byway in South Glens Falls. She is a member of the Town of Moreau Conservation Committee.

Nan Polunci has been involved with Southern Adirondack Audubon for several years. She has served on the board of directors and is currently the program and fundraising chair. She enjoys hiking, biking, photography and traveling.



Don Polunci retired from Glens Falls High School after teaching art and photography for 32 years. Don served as vice president of the Adirondack Camera Club and was president of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society. He is a published photographer and was a finalist in an Adirondack Life magazine photo contest in 2010 and 2012. His work has been published in several magazines and

These images were taken by Don Polunci on the October 2014 photographic safari to Kenya and Tanzania.



newspapers, including *Adirondack Life* and *National Wildlife* magazines. He has participated in a number of juried art shows and is active in the local arts community. He has traveled extensively to photograph nature.

Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) is a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society. The Southern Adirondack Audubon Society was incorporated in 1984. See <http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org> for more information.

Please avoid wearing fragranced products to the program, to avoid triggering allergies, asthma and migraines in others attending the event.

Mount McGregor lands will be added to Moreau Lake State Park

On May 5, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation announced that 750 acres of the former Mount McGregor State Correctional Facility property will be transferred to Moreau Lake State Park, according to a press release from that office. The property is located in the towns of Corinth, Wilton and Moreau in Saratoga County.

The land includes forests, wetlands and the shores of undeveloped Lake Bonita, according to the press release. The property includes a segment of the planned long-distance Palmertown Ridge Trail that eventually will connect Saratoga Springs to Moreau Lake. Hiking trails and access to Lake Bonita are planned.

The State Parks office will undertake a public planning effort in the coming months to give the public an opportunity to comment on how best to provide recreational access to the new parkland.

The lands transferred to State Parks also include Grant Cottage State Historic Site, where President Ulysses S. Grant died in July 1885. The site opened for the season Memorial Day weekend.

The reuse of the full 1,025-acre former Mount McGregor Correctional Facility property is being coordinated by Empire State Development and the Office of General Services.

For more, see <http://nysparks.com/newsroom/press-releases/release.aspx?r=1202>.



Dr. Gordon Ellmers photographed this American Robin feasting on sumac berries near Towpath Road & McIntyre Street, Fort Edward, in March.

Book Review

What the Robin Knows

By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS President

I have spent a lot of time trying to learn bird calls and songs, and have become familiar with some of the most common ones. But when I read Jon Young's book, *What the Robin Knows*, I came to understand that there is much more about bird calls and songs than identification. This book actually forced me to look at the birdlife around me in an entirely different way.

What the author, a lifelong birder, tracker, and naturalist explains in his most interesting book is his understanding of "deep bird language": what birds communicate to one another. He advocates staying quietly in the same spot for a specific amount of time to observe and listen to the sounds of the habitat around us. The birds know everything important about their surroundings, and by listening to them we can learn

from them. This is a guide to paying more attention to the outdoors, even if it is just in our backyard. It is full of tips on how to interpret what we see and hear.

In addition to explanations of the movements of birds when predators are lurking near-by, there is a complete audio of field recordings of many common birds in a variety of situations, along with sounds of non-avian species (squirrels, chipmunks) and mimics that can confuse even the best.

The audio collection can be found online at <http://www.hmhbooks.com/whatherobinknows> and includes many of the baseline voices of backyard birds, such as cardinal songs and chickadee calls, and life-or-death recordings of birds in the presence of imminent danger. These calls are referenced throughout the book, making it a fascinating print/audio experience.

Field Trips: June to August

- Cut and save this page! -

For details and updates, visit the SAAS page:

<http://southernadirondackaudubon.org/fieldtrips/fieldtrips.html>

Sunday, May 31 – Deadline for **Washington County Grasslands** trip on June 14.

Friday, June 5 at 9 a.m. – **Monthly Walk at the Betar Byway, South Glens Falls.** Birding walk led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, weather permitting. This walk 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. This is a leisurely, easy walk. Call Pat at 792-6846 for details. No registration required.

Saturday, June 27 at 9 a.m. – **Wildflower Walk.** Enjoy a leisurely nature walk led by wildflower expert Jackie Donnelly and naturalist Sue Pierce. Explore the powerline easements and walk around Mud Pond near Spier Falls Road. This trip will focus on identifying wildflowers such as wood lilies and other mid-summer flowers. Parking is limited along Spier Falls Road; car-pooling is recommended. Contact Sue (smpierce33@gmail.com) or Jackie (jackie0542@gmail.com) to register.

Sunday, June 14, in the morning – **Washington County Grasslands.** Coordinators: Tom Williams 857-2176 trudsd@yahoo.com Pat Fitzgerald 792-6846 fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com. Joint trip with Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED BY MAY 31.** Washington County Grasslands State Forest Area encompasses nearly 300 acres of prime grassland habitat. The area supports almost a dozen threatened and rapidly declining grassland bird species, including Northern Harrier, Upland Sandpiper, Horned Lark, American Kestrel, Eastern Meadowlark, Sedge Wren, Grasshopper and Savannah Sparrows. A half mile trail starting just past the kiosk follows a wooded hedgerow before emerging into the open and cresting a grassy knoll. The trail end offers views of the surrounding fields, and is a great spot to watch and listen to songbirds in spring and summer. We will also visit a nearby private property that is part of the Washington County Watchable Wildlife project. Limit: 16 participants (including the coordinators) for this trip. Contact one of the coordinators for reservations.

Friday, July 3 at 9 a.m. – **Monthly Birding Walk at the Betar Byway, South Glens Falls.** Birding walk led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, weather permitting. This walk will last about one and a half hours. Meet at 9 a.m. at the gazebo near the parking lot at the end of First Street in South Glens Falls. This is a leisurely, easy walk. Call Pat at 792-6846 for more information. No registration required.

Saturday, July 25 at 8 a.m. (tentative) – **Bird Walk.** Joint trip with SAAS and Audubon Society of the Capital Region. Date, time and place to be announced; check SAAS website.

Friday, August 7 at 9 a.m. – **Monthly Birding Walk at the Betar Byway, South Glens Falls.** Birding walk led by members of Southern Adirondack Audubon, weather permitting. This walk will last about one and a half hours. Meet at 9 a.m. at the gazebo near the parking lot at the end of First Street in South Glens Falls. This is a leisurely, easy walk. Call Pat at 792-6846 for more information. No registration required.

More local SAAS events:

Sunday, May 31 from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. – **5th annual Spring Festival at the Wilton Wildlife Preserve.** The event is free and open to the public; visit the SAAS table, participate in fun activities for children and see live birds on display. Wilton staff will lead hikes to see the beauty of the wild blue lupine in bloom, and perhaps catch a glimpse of the first brood of the recently-hatched Karner Blue butterflies.

Saturday, June 20 from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. – **Saratoga Farmers' Market.** Volunteers are needed to staff SAAS tables at both Wilton and Saratoga to sell raffle tickets and promote our organization by enrolling new members. Please call 792-6846 if you are able to give an hour or two to either or both events.



The Fledgling

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Queensbury, NY 12804

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Newsletter: online-only in 2016

The print version of the Fledgling will end with the December 2015 issue. To save hundreds of dollars each year in printing and postage costs and to conserve paper, the SAAS Board of Directors has decided that starting in 2016, the newsletter will be published on the website only. An email will be sent to members when each new issue is available online.

Many local members have switched to e-delivery in recent years. To switch to online-only delivery now, please contact SAAS President Pat Fitzgerald at fitzgeraldsaas@yahoo.com.

Feral cat program debated

The New York State Assembly is contemplating Assembly Bill 2778, which legalizes the release of feral cats as part of the Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) program.

The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) announced that it opposes this legislation because the TNR program does not effectively reduce feral cat populations and uses public money. According to a 2013 study from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, approximately 2.4 billion birds and 12.3 billion mammals are killed in the United States by outdoor cats every year. To learn about ABC's Cats Indoors! Program, see <http://www.abcbirds.org/cats/>.

NYSOA meeting in Albany in Oct.

The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club is planning the **2015 NYS Birders Conference** and NYSOA Annual Meeting in Albany, New York, October 2-4, 2015. The weekend includes a keynote address by Jon Dunn, noted birding tour leader and author, behind the scenes tours of the ornithology collection at the NYS Museum, book signings, field trips, workshops, papers, and more. Details will be posted on <http://www.nybirds.org> and in the July issue of *NY Birders*.

Cornell site teaches bird biology

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website is treasure-trove of accurate information about birds, their behaviors, songs and more. For interactive videos, slide shows, articles and more, visit <http://biology.allaboutbirds.org/>.

Where are local hotspots?

On our website! Six area hotspots are highlighted on SAAS's Birding page (<http://southernadironackaudubon.org/birding/birding.html>). The links offer photos, bird species lists, and detailed descriptions for the sites. The pages are maintained by the SAAS web manager, Mona Bearor.