

The Fledgling

Newsletter of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society, Inc. (SAAS)

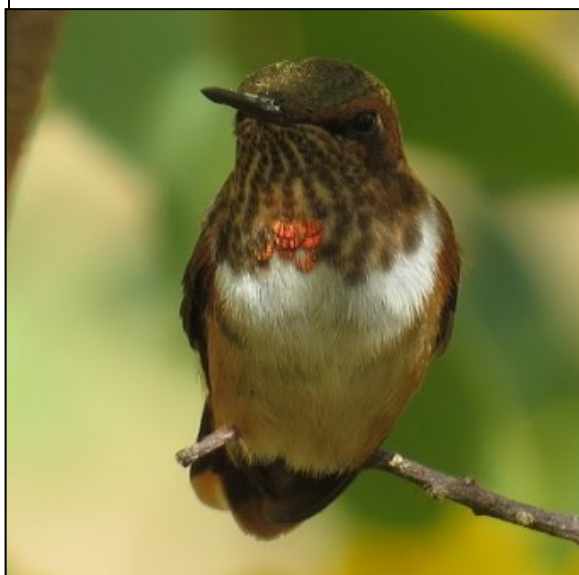
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Costa Rica is rich in birds

By Kim Arnold, SAAS Board Member

Going from the cold, dreary, hoping-for-spring days of upstate New York, to the sunny, hot, birdsong filled days of Costa Rica was a shock, but it made me realize why birds migrate. In mid-March, the rainy season was yet to begin and the coffee season had ended a month before. The lack of rain in some parts of the country were apparent, though the trees and flowers still bloomed. Palm trees, hibiscus, roses, morning glories, canna lilies, and



The SAAS group saw 25 species of hummingbirds in Costa Rica, including this dazzling Scintillant Hummingbird. It measures three inches from bill tip to tail. Photo: Debra Ferguson.

so many more were a welcome sight. We didn't go to Costa Rica for the plants and the weather - those were just bonuses. We went for the 910 species of birds.

Costa Rica is about the same size as West Virginia. What makes it so special for birds is the many types of micro-climates. The rainforest, cloud forest, dry Pacific forest, mangroves and páramo are all vastly different and are each home to different birds. While parts of the country might have been in the dry season, several parts get rain constantly.

Costa Rica has several mountain regions. Many of the mountains are shrouded in clouds, which can make spotting birds quite difficult. The highest point in the country is 12,533 feet, Mount Chirripó.

A biological corridor goes right through the country, allowing jaguars and other animals to cross the country safely. A large variety of animals prevents any type of mammal or bird to multiply past a small group. Consequently, no hunting is allowed.

When our group of ten arrived, we were asked to tell our guide which birds we really wanted to see. Hummingbirds, the Resplendent Quetzal and Toucans made the list. The Bananaquit was near to the top of my list, right next to the Scarlet Macaw and Ornate Hawk Eagle.

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Tom Lake will present a program in Lake Luzerne on June 20.

Special June program set for Lake Luzerne

Tom Lake will present "Changing Ecology of the Hudson River Flyway" on **Wednesday, June 20** at 7:00 p.m. It will be held in a special location, at the **Hadley-Luzerne Public Library**, located at 19 Main Street in Lake Luzerne.

"For at least the last 12,000 years, the Hudson River Flyway has been a critical north-south conduit for migratory birds. Users of the flyway, from butterflies to hummingbirds, waterfowl to water birds, and raptors have adapted to the changing environment. However, in historic times, there has been a slow deterioration of habitat and carrying capacity due to natural and unnatural events, from climate change, human ignorance and apathy, to invasive species," Lake stated.

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Southern Adirondack Audubon Society

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Board meetings are held monthly except July, August and December. Members are invited to attend. Contact John Loz for details.

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Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) is a certified local chapter of the National Audubon Society, which has almost 500 members in Warren, Washington, northern Saratoga and southern Hamilton counties in New York State. SAAS's primary goal is to protect the environment by preserving natural habitats and promoting environmental education. Contact a board member to learn about SAAS volunteer opportunities.

President's Message

By John Loz, SAAS President

Rainy weekend put no damper on Audubon N.Y. Council Meeting

Over a very rainy last weekend of April, 45 Audubon chapter leaders from around New York State, and a few from Pennsylvania and Vermont, rained down on the Queensbury Hotel in Glens Falls for the annual Audubon New York Spring Council meeting. Because of a problem with another hotel, I jumped on the opportunity to bring the annual meeting to the heart of our SAAS chapter area for the first time, and during the city's "Wing Fest" no less!



The three-day seminar and working group weekend focused on three themes: the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act, volunteer Audubon chapter activities across the hemisphere to protect bird habitats, and increasing diversity within our Audubon culture. All those that attended were not disappointed! They loved exploring new birding hot spots, the walkability of the city and the hotel itself.

The Queensbury Hotel really shined. The staff members were all very courteous, professional and extremely attentive in setting up our meeting spaces and banquet rooms. They really made our travelers from Long Island, New York City and Western New York all feel very welcome. Special thanks goes to our two SAAS board directors, Rob Snell and Joyce Miller, who led bird walks for our state-wide chapter leaders between the rain drops, to showcase how amazing our chapter area is for birding. I hope they all come back!

Meet our board members

Kim Arnold

Born and raised in Argyle, NY, she grew up on her parents organic vegetable farm with her older brother. She was homeschooled and then attended SUNY Adirondack for a few years, studying criminal justice and creative writing. For more than ten years, she was a part of Bat-tenkill Pony Club and owned horses.

She and her fiancé plan on taking over her parents successful operation. They plan on building a house and raising the next generation on the farm.

The passion for birding came at an early age as she watched birds at the feeders. Further birding was done on vacations to Hawaii, Alaska, all over the west coast, the southern states, as well as Belize and Costa Rica. Being outside on the farm gave her a love of nature and hard work, along with a desire to travel to more countries and to see the rest of the United States.



Costa Rica

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Though we didn't get to see the Hawk Eagle, we saw everything else on the group's list and so much more. Our final number was 240 species. Our days were a whirlwind of riding in our small bus trying to spot raptors, waiting in gardens to see the hummingbirds zip by, and tripping on rocks while hiking as we craned our necks to spot birds above us.

Hummingbirds were a highlight of the trip, from the smallest, the Scintillant, to the biggest, the Magnificent. Some we waited for and searched for and others perched in front of us, too close to focus on through our binoculars. The colors shimmered in the sunlight, the blues, reds, yellows and greens all on these tiny light birds that were out of sight in the blink of an eye.

The Resplendent Quetzal was another highlight, with its striking profile and gorgeous color. Our first sighting of the Quetzal was on the road to one of our lodges. We saw two males with their long tails and a female that the males were fighting over. They were "lifers" for many in the group. King Vulture, Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Great Green Macaw, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, White-throated Magpie-Jay, and Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl are a few of the honorable mentions.

Our guide, Erick, and driver, Orlando, were amazing and took very good care of us. Rice and beans were a staple at every meal, along with fruit and fresh squeezed juice. One of our three lodges had a trout farm nearby so grilled trout with garlic was on the menu for lunch and dinner. If you weren't careful, some birds would steal



Left: Guide Erick Guzman with Deb Ferguson, Joyce Miller, Mark Silo, Dusty Caldwell, Diane Lawrence, Kim Arnold, Mary Lou Munger, Peyton Atkins, John Loz and Frank Conte.

Participant Peyton Atkins took these three photos:

Below: The fierce-eyed Volcano Junco was a favorite of many in the group.

Below left: This male White-throated Mountain-gem is a hummingbird that is endemic to the high mountain ranges of Costa Rica.

Below right: Red Passion Flowers were among the abundant blooms in Costa Rica.

the fruit off your plate if you decided to sit outside! The trip was more than I could have hoped for. The weather was a welcome relief, but, alas, the trip had to end and we headed back to the cold.

Having been to Belize last year and now to Costa Rica, I am looking forward to the next adventure and to see more of the winged wonders that are much smarter in the winter than I am!



Production of this issue of *The Fledgling* newsletter is provided by Edward Jones, 34 Congress Street, Suite 102, Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING



From the left: Kate Morse, Co-Director of Hudson Crossing Park (HCP), Darryl Dumas, Superintendent of Grounds of HCP, Wally Elton, member of both HCP and SAAS, Lois Geshwilm of Wild Birds Unlimited (WBU) of Saratoga Springs, Nancy Castillo, also of WBU, and Tim McInerney of the NYS Canal Corporation. The house was later raised high on the pole.

Purple Martin house erected in Schuylerville park

SAAS partnered with Hudson Crossing Park in Schuylerville over the last few months to obtain and mount a Purple Martin house at the park. It was installed on April 12.

Last year, SAAS volunteers did weekly bird counts in Hudson Crossing Park, to develop a bird list. One observer saw a Purple Martin. The swallow species has been seen elsewhere in the general region, so a plan was developed to put up a Purple Martin nest house to attract them to the park.

The Purple Martin is an aerial insectivore, eating flying insects. It winters in the Amazon basin of South America. Their numbers have dropped dramatically in recent decades due to pesticide use, collision with man-made structures, habitat loss and other factors. Purple Martins nest in cavities in dead trees or

in human-made nesting boxes. However, aggressive, non-native invasive European Starlings and House Sparrows frequently take over available nesting cavities. Purple Martins now rely on human-made houses.

SAAS is indebted to Wild Birds Un-

June Program

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During the presentation, Lake will outline and explain some of the changes already affecting the quality of the flyway as well as those that are looming ahead.

Born in the Hudson Valley, Tom Lake has lived in this region all his life except for his two-year military service in Vietnam. As a Hudson Valley archaeologist, he understands the natural history of the valley through experience and education. He holds a BA from SUNY New Paltz and an MA from SUNY Albany, both in Anthropology.

Lake has been an estuary naturalist and educator for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for the past 24 years and continues his position as editor of the NYSDEC *Hudson River Almanac*, an online natural history journal, which has more than 18,000 readers.

limited of Saratoga for their generous donation of the house and pole system. Thanks also to the New York State Canal Corporation for allowing the house to be placed on their property and for providing the staff to construct the cement footings and help with the raising of the house.

In April, 45 Audubon chapter leaders from around New York State, and a few from Pennsylvania and Vermont, congregated at the Queensbury Hotel in Glens Falls for the annual Audubon NY Spring Council meeting. See John Loz's President's Message for details about this momentous event.



Species Spotlight

House Wrens

By Joyce Miller, Newsletter Editor

The bubbly, rapid and persistent call of House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*) are to many people a welcome sound in the summer. This tiny, perky native bird is common in backyards in our area. It often perches on fence posts, cocking its short tail and hopping around searching for insects.

Our local subspecies, the Northern House Wren, breeds across the northern two-thirds of the United States and parts of southern Canada. They spend the winter in the southern United States and Central America. Other subspecies are found year-round throughout Central and South America. House Wrens can live as long as nine years.

These cavity nesters often take over nest boxes with their twig nests. The male will make several twig “dummy nests.” The female chooses one, and adds a lining of grass, fur and feathers before laying up to 10 eggs. House Wrens can be very aggressive in claiming nesting spots, pecking holes in eggs, killing chicks and even adult birds such as Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows and Black-Capped Chickadees. For tips on discouraging House Wrens from nesting in bluebird boxes, see <http://www.sialis.org/wrens.htm>.

According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Nestwatch.org site, House



For more information about House Wrens, see https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/House_Wren/id.

Left: The pert tail is diagnostic of House Wrens. Photos: Don Polunci.

Right: House Wrens often occupy bluebird nest boxes that are placed within 100 feet of forested and shrubby areas.

About Wildflowers

Spotted Joe-Pye Weed

By Diane Collins

Spotted Joe-Pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*), seen growing in late July and August in Cole's Woods in Queensbury, is a very tall plant, up to six feet. It has dusty rose-colored, slightly fragrant disc flowers jammed together and is very enticing to butterflies. There are no typical ray flowers common to composites. A native species in the Aster (or Composite) family, this plant likes full sun and thrives in moist soil.

Folklore tells us that a Native American medicine man, Joe Pye, used this plant to cure fevers, and that the early American colonists used it to treat a typhus outbreak.

The botanical name *Eupatorium* (probably given by Linnaeus) refers to Mithridates Eupator, a Persian general who used this plant as magical medicine; *maculatum* refers to



the purple spots on the plant stem.

Wildflower photographer Diane Collins is the author of "Trailside Wildflowers in Cole's Woods," available through <http://www.wildflowersinyourownbackyard.com>. Diane will be selling her booklet at SAAS monthly meetings for \$10: \$5 will go to The Friends of Cole's Woods, and \$5 will be donated to our Audubon chapter.



Welcome to our new members!

By Pat Fitzgerald, SAAS Membership Committee

Currently, 495 members of National Audubon live in our chapter area. Many of our 123 chapter supporters belong to National Audubon Society and also financially support our local efforts of conservation and education. Chapter supporter dues are only \$10 per year and are the main support for our chapter activities. Gift memberships are available, and will be announced with an appropriate card at your request.

Our newest chapter supporters are:

Scott Pearson, Cambridge
Katherine & Christopher McCarthy, Delmar
Suzanne Nealon, Glens Falls
Jane Welsh, Queensbury
Eric Cristler, Hudson Falls
Tom Mowatt, Clemons

Eric Krantz

Long-time member Eric Krantz passed away at the end of March. He was a generous chapter supporter and regularly attended our monthly public programs. Eric was always interested in birds and kept our chapter informed about eagles nesting on Lake George, even leading a canoeing field trip to see the eagle nest one year. The SAAS board has sent a donation in his memory to The Raptor Trust, which supports a cause he cared about.

Adirondack Festivals

Three wildlife events are planned for the Adirondack region this summer:

- The 16th Annual **Great Adirondack Birding Celebration** (GABC) will be held at the **Paul Smith's** College Visitors Interpretive Center (VIC) from **June 1-3**. Friday includes options for day-long birding workshops across the Adirondacks. Saturday and Sunday mornings offer birding field trips. Saturday includes

a family-friendly bird festival at the VIC, with an artisan market including birds-carver Allen Aardsma from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Keynote presentation is \$10 admission. For details, visit <http://www.paulsmiths.edu/vic/gabc/>.

- **Adirondack Boreal Birding Festival, Hamilton County, June 8-10.** Hosted by Northern New York Audubon and Audubon New York, this festival offers field trips by birders Joan Collins, John and Patricia Thaxton and others in the hamlets of Long Lake, Indian Lake, Speculator, Raquette, Blue Mountain Lake, Piseco, Morehouse, Lake Pleasant, and Inlet. Chris Rimmer of the Center for Ecostudies in Vermont is a guest speaker. A dinner cruise is offered on Raquette Lake. For information, call 518-548-3076 or see http://www.adirondackexperience.com/pdfs/2018_Birding_Festival_Schedule_3_13.pdf.

- **“Flowerondacks” at the Adirondack**

Experience (ADKX), the Museum on Blue Mountain Lake, on **Wednesday, July 25, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** The ADKX gardens, displayed throughout the grounds of the 32-acre museum campus, were created by Mary Marquand Hochschild, wife of the founder Harold K. Hochschild. Those who attend this event will look at flower gardens in the Adirondacks. It starts with a lecture, including art and photography by Nan Wilson from Thistledown Studios. In the afternoon, ADKX's gardener Karin Cuniff will give a tour of the gardens, sharing tips on their upkeep. Naturalist Ed Kanze will point out examples of Adirondack flora and as he leads walks throughout the day. The National Audubon Society, Southern Adirondack Beekeepers Association, Hamilton County Soil & Water Conservation and others will offer information about gardening and pollinators. Participants can also make flower bombs, wildflower seed balls that can be used to change a vacant patch of yard into a wildflower garden that will add beauty and attract pollinators.

Audubon's Climate Watch continues

SAAS volunteers are participating in National Audubon Society's citizen-science pilot project, Audubon Climate Watch, from May 15 to June 15. The goal of the project is to learn how specific bird species are affected by climate change.

The SAAS survey focuses on both Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatches. This is the summer counterpart of the survey; members also participated in a winter survey from January 15 to February 15. Details about the program are on the program's website, <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/climate-watch-program>. Audubon issued a report in 2014, *Birds and Climate Change*, on risks faced by North American bird species from climate change. Audubon Climate Watch program started in 2016.

The ethereal trilling “ee-oh-lay” song of Wood Thrushes are always a treat during Adirondack summers. They breed in mature forests. Photo: Gordon Ellmers.



SAAS intern helped as grassland steward, much more

By Henry Hoffman, SAAS Intern

As the first intern for the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society (SAAS) this spring, I thoroughly enjoyed my experience. I participated in many projects, from acting as a grassland steward to taking meeting minutes.

Through the mentorship of SAAS president John Loz, I learned to identify many avian species in the protected Fort Edward grasslands and helped grassland visitors learn more about proper viewing practices and bird identification. I also developed a scientific method to research avian species at the Fort Edward Important Bird Area (IBA), using locations on Fitzpatrick Road and the DEC Wildlife Management Area trail along the grassland viewing area. Taking minutes at monthly board meetings helped me understand how a small non-profit operates and gave me the opportunity to work with engaging SAAS members who are dedicated to the protection of avian species.

One of the most memorable experiences during my time as a grasslands steward was to bring my family, who live in Washington, D.C., to three different locations in the Fort Edward IBA: the viewing area at the Little Theatre on the Farm, Fitzpatrick Road, and the Friends of the IBA Alfred Z. Solomon Grassland Bird Viewing Area. They were astonished by the vastness of the grasslands and were excited to use SAAS's binoculars and spotting scope to get close looks. At that moment, I had a revelation:



SAAS intern Henry Hoffman is pictured at the April Earth Day events in Glens Falls City Park. He graduated from Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs in May.

I realized that generating excitement that truly resonates within people, as evidenced by my parents and brother who never birdwatch, is one of the keys to bird advocacy. Moreover, amid the controversy about photographers disturbing Snowy Owls and other birds this past winter, I felt obligated to inform visitors of proper viewing ethics. I hope this will spread awareness in the long run.



Throughout my trips to the Fort Edward Grasslands, I had difficulty at times identifying different bird species. Males and females of the same species can look very different. For instance, the Northern Harrier is a common winter resident that breeds in almost all parts of New York State. Female and male harriers have very different coloring: females have golden-brown feathers while adult males have grayish-white feathers. After multiple trips to the grasslands, I was able to identify them more easily as I began to see the same species repeatedly. It was much easier than my experiences working on an avian research project in Panama, where I had to identify over 100 different species.

I also enjoyed participating in the April 22 Earth Day event in Glens Falls to promote the chapter and avian protection.

John Loz taught me a great deal about interacting with the public and understanding techniques for avian identification, and guided me throughout the internship process. John extended his support every step of the way and I have thoroughly enjoyed working for this Audubon chapter.



Don Polunci took these photos at the Fort Edward Grasslands. Above, a Snowy Owl takes flight. Left: A Snowy Owl yawns. Below: A Snowy Owl reacts to an attack by a Rough-legged Hawk.



How to attract hummingbirds to your garden

By Mona Bearor, Education Committee Chair

There is only one sight lovelier than a hummingbird sipping nectar from a feeder—the beauty of a hummingbird feeding from a natural bloom in your garden. Not all gardeners are bird watchers; however, when one of these tiny creatures visits the garden, it is hard to resist pausing from garden chores long enough to admire this summer guest as it moves from bloom to bloom, sampling flower nectar, or dining on miniscule insects.

Except for the occasional rarity, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only species found in the north-east. Weighing only 1/8th of an ounce and measuring about 3 1/2 inches, this bird is a triumph of flight engineering! With a heart rate of 1200 beats per minute, and wing beats averaging 50 per second when feeding, it is easy to see why these little creatures need to feed often. Lucky for us that they do – it is a pleasure to observe them as they make frequent trips to nectar sources, whether natural or artificial. Ruby-throats are very inquisitive, adapting quickly to human presence, so enticing them to visit your garden is not difficult.

Many plants will grow well in our area that are beneficial to hummingbirds. The following is a sampling of **native** perennials that will enhance your garden and attract hummingbirds:

- **Wild Bergamot or Bee Balm**, *Monarda fistulosa*, is a plant Ruby-throats love so much it is sometimes referred to as the “hummingbird flower”! This plant is native to New York and is a member of the mint family and will bring both butterflies and bees to your garden as well.
- **Eastern Red Columbine** is delicate looking, but very hardy. *Aquilegia canadensis* is a lovely red and yellow wildflower found in our rocky woods and along country roads. It is a reliable



A female Ruby-throated Hummingbird sips nectar from a jewelweed flower. Photo: Gordon Ellmers.

ble hummingbird magnet because it blooms during May, June and July when hummingbirds return to our area and are breeding and feeding young, and therefore most in need of a special diet. This plant will add interest to perennial beds and borders along water gardens. If there is enough ambient light, it can grow well in a shade garden.

- **Cardinal Flower**, *Lobelia cardinalis*, is a member of the Bellflower family that will provide nectar from late July to September when many others have finished their bloom cycle. The brilliant red 2-3' flower spikes are irresistible to hummingbirds. This plant will thrive in a moist soil and does not like hot afternoon sun.

- **Fringed Bleeding Heart**, *Dicentra eximia*, forms an attractive clump of gray-green foliage with rose-pink heart shaped flowers. This will be a valuable addition to your garden as well as

a target for hummingbirds since it has a long bloom time if spent flowers are removed promptly.

- **Canada Lily**, *Lilium canadense*, is a spectacular lily that thrives in slightly acid or neutral soil in wet meadows. It can easily adapt to your garden. Flowers are borne in mid-summer on stalks that reach four to six feet tall, and are usually yellow, but may be red or orange.

Many annuals will attract hummingbirds to your garden, including Salvia, Nasturtium, Impatiens, Snapdragon, Lantana, Phlox and Verbena. Potting a few and placing them on your deck or in window boxes will attract hummingbirds to your property and add enjoyment to your summer hours.

If you add a few of these plants to your property, you'll be rewarded with the jewel-like flash and the loud buzzing of the hummingbird's wings as you work in your garden this summer.

Summer field trips

No field trips are planned right now, but check the SAAS website (<http://www.southernadirondackaudubon.org/fieldtrips/fieldtrips.html>) for updates about field trips and events. Visit the SAAS Facebook page and click “Follow” to get notices of upcoming events.

