



Winter 2015

# WINGBEATS

## A Message From The President

John Loz, ASCR president



### Happy New Year Everyone!

At the end of every year, I find myself remembering what people have done for me and appreciating the big, and little things that have helped me or made me smile throughout the year. Starting around Thanksgiving and on through the New Year I find my hand automatically reaching out to everyone I know saying, "Thank You." I can't help myself. Even if it's for something really very small; some little thing that a person may deem as completely insignificant that helped me or our Audubon chapter in some little way, but it was *something* that helped us greatly. I say to that person - Thank You. This year volunteering on our Audubon board has been a busy, but one of the more rewarding things I've experienced. Probably because our board and new volunteers worked very hard this year to initiate some challenging new initiatives, many of those things starting from scratch! It inspired me. Thank You my fellow Board Members and Volunteers for creating, for running around, for tackling challenges and supporting this *great* Capital Region environmental organization in Audubon.

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### And Thank You, to our New Chapter Supporters!

With the introduction of our first Chapter Supporter Membership Drive starting at our OktoBIRDFest in late September, we have received over 50 new Inaugural Supporter membership forms in our ASCR mailbox! We'd also like to thank our additional donors as well - Please see page 8 for those that have generously contributed. Here are some of the highlights of things your donations have supported!

Among many other volunteer events, we installed Bird-friendly Gardens at the 8th Street Community Gardens (now Capital Roots) in Troy, NY this summer. Our educator led presentations and instruction at the Fonda-Fultonville Environmental Education days to over 90 students back in May and conducted beginning ornithology classes for the Cornell Coop Ext. as well as the Helderberg Workshop in July & August. We conducted Short-eared owl & songbird surveys in Coxsackie and at the GE Research Center in Niskayuna. Among our monthly free public programs bringing in guest speakers & live birds, we ran our 3rd Annual Raptor Rapture event at the NYS Museum in November. We started our 'tangle-tainer' initiative (see end of story starting pg. 3), where we've donated to the Woodlawn Preserve in Schenectady and fishing areas within the Town of Niskayuna. Over the year, our prolific nesting box builder has built over 30 nesting boxes for fundraising and donating. One Wood Duck box was donated to the Maybee Farm in Rotterdam Jct. There are too many more things to include here, but ASCR looks forward to another year of impactful Conservation work - and Birding!

## Winter Programs

### **"SAVING EAGLE MITCH"**

#### **A JOURNEY FROM AFGHANISTAN TO GRAFTON, NY...IN 137 DAYS**

When a Navy SEAL and a former Army Ranger rescue a wounded Steppe Eagle in war-torn Afghanistan, a writer learns what it can take to do one good deed in a seemingly wicked world.

The documentary short "All For The Birds" highlighting the Berkshire Bird Paradise Sanctuary where Mitch now lives will also be shown during the presentation.

**Date/Time: Monday January 12th, 7pm**

**Location:** Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library  
475 Moe Road Clifton Park, NY 12065

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#### **Grafton Lakes State Park Winter Fest!**

**Saturday January 24th 10am to 4pm**

Visit ASCR board members at our Audubon table to help Celebrate 30 years of Winter Fest at this designated Bird Conservation Area!

We'll be sharing our upcoming 2015 research projects, upcoming public programs and Volunteer Opportunities as well as having an activity for the kids!

#### **Huyck Preserve Winter Festival**

**Saturday January 31st - Noon to 4pm**  
**5052 Delaware Trpk, Rensselaerville, NY**

If you missed the early January Huyck Preserve Christmas Bird Count in all it's beautiful winter glory, then you have another chance to experience winter fun at this nearby Preserve & Fest! Ice fishing demonstrations, winter hikes, snowshoeing, a sled run, and LIVE animal demonstrations. See You there!

### **ASCR Annual Meeting and Public Open House!**

**Sunday, February 22nd - 1:30pm - 4:30 pm**

**East Greenbush Community Library**  
**10 Community Way, East Greenbush, NY**

Starting at 1:30pm, participate in a family art activity with Armando Soto where he will assist parents working together with their children in creating owls, hawks and songbirds using basic shapes that he has made.

At 2:30pm, there will be a short presentation of our Audubon Chapter Elections, introductions of our new Board Members, & a review of accomplishments from the past year.

At 3:00 pm, see a live birds of prey program from the **Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York** and hear about their habits & the challenges these raptors face.

### **"Preparing for Climate Change"**

**Monday March 2, 2014 - 7pm**  
**William K. Sanford (Colonie) Library**

If you read the most recent sobering **National Audubon Climate Change Report** this past September, one can see what this change is having on bird populations.

**Mark Lowery, a climate policy analyst in the Office of Climate Change for the State Department of Environmental Conservation, will present an overview of climate science and an examination of observed and expected effects of climate change, with a focus on New York's natural resources. He will then describe several New York State climate-change programs, especially Climate Smart Communities, the state's energy and climate outreach and technical support program for local governments.**

**Co-Presented w/ Hudson Mohawk Bird Club**



## ~ Swinger ~

### An Amazing Rescue

by Linda Brown

[www.NorthCountryWildCare.org](http://www.NorthCountryWildCare.org)

For a wildlife rehabilitator my day started off like any other. As I was driving to work, I received a phone call requesting help for a fawn that had wandered into someone's barn. The finder stated that he just wandered into the barn and laid down in one of the stalls and that he appeared to have a leg injury. The finder was not far from my work place, so I headed there first. Upon arrival the young, but large fawn had a severe compound fracture to one of its legs. From the look of the injury I knew that best course of action for this fawn was to be euthanized. Not a great way to start my day! Knowing that I would need help lifting and moving this fawn, I called a fellow rehabber, Wes Laraway, for assistance. Wes responded that he was in a meeting and once out of it, he had to go look for a raptor caught in a tree at one of the local boat launches.

Knowing that the fawn was resting comfortably, I offered to find the raptor and report back to Wes the location and what would be needed for the rescue. There are only two boat launches in Middleburgh and I checked them both to no avail. There were no raptors to be found, caught in a tree or otherwise. I reported back to Wes that I was having no luck finding the ensnared raptor. Wes called the finder back and he found out the bird was actually located at a boat launch one town over. (Lesson learned – don't



*Photo credit: Linda Brown*

assume) Wes was out of his meeting, so we both headed out to locate the unlucky bird.

We arrived at the Sloansville Boat Launch and it was quite evident that there was a young juvenile owl, swinging in the breeze, ensnared, in the tree, by fishing line. From the onset we knew that this would be a difficult to impossible rescue. It looked like my day was going from bad to worse. The tree hung out over the rapidly moving Cripplebush Creek by at least 20 feet, and that's where the poor owl was snared. The tree was not easily climbed by the likes of myself or Wes. The tree was quite deep in a wooded area, so calling in a truck with a bucket would not be the answer either.

As we were contemplating how we were going to attempt this rescue, I wandered over to a group of men who were installing some kind of scientific equipment. As I explained the situation to this group, they instantly became interested in the situation and they offered to give us a hand. It turns out this group was from Clarkson University (Pat O'Brien, Research Engineer, Peter Kirkley, Research Technician, Josh Miller, Assistant Research Technician, and Aaron Newcombe, Assistant Research Technician). They were there installing a hydrological monitoring system on the Schoharie Creek. Clarkson University has deployed and maintains 40 such stations as part of the River & Estuary Observation Network. It is a real-time system that allows them to monitor environmental conditions. They were fully equipped with machetes, scuba gear, and other tools of the trade, which might come in handy for this rescue. It was another miracle that they were there when we needed them.



*Photo credit: Linda Brown*

# RALPH, THE RUFFED GROUSE

**G. E. MALONE**

EAST GREENBUSH, NY

Occasional strange events occur in normal daily activities that can bring special meaning to our lives. To us, it is especially true of an unusual human and bird interaction.

This unique incident happened on a sunny spring day in 2010. I was mowing with a 40 year old green Lawn Boy mower. As I was trimming, I spotted what appeared to be a small brown animal moving toward me through taller, uncut grass. Coming from a forested area, it would run about 10 yards and stop and stare in my direction. I was surprised as the brown animal turned out to be a curious Ruffed Grouse. He seemed very interested in the old mower, perhaps attracted by the two cycle motor “putting” sound. Suddenly, with wings flapping, he attacked one wheel. I quickly shut the motor down. He stopped and stared at the mower and then cocked his head and peered up at me, perhaps, thinking that he had been successful and had killed the mower.



Male Grouse are known for a distinct mating call, a percussive, beating of wings against their body in a drum-like, thumping sound. I spoke to him, “Sorry! No competitor bird, pal, it is a mower!” I left the mower turned off and eventually, the grouse flew back into the woods.

A few days later, my wife and I had two shrubs to plant. It was a chilly, windy day and I was using a pickaxe on the hard ground to create large holes for plantings when suddenly the grouse reappeared on the wing. Evidently, he was curious about the steady thumping of my pickaxe. He walked about the freshly dug hole and to our surprise, jumped into the hole and examined the area. Then, seemingly satisfied, he jumped back out. Interestingly, he stayed near to my wife and me as we continued our planting and watering.

The planting was hard work and when I took a 15 minute break, I sat on a patio wall with a bottle of water. To our amazement, the grouse reappeared with flapping wings and then, sat by my side, shielded from the wind. I spoke with him and he seemed to enjoy the visit. When I returned to my task, he returned to the forest. We saw him several times during the summer as we were involved in yard work or relaxing on our patio.

Fall arrived and my wife, a violinist with a music studio in the lower level of our home, was visited by the grouse, now named, “Ralphie.” Her young violin students were quite awed by this charming visitor and became accustomed to his appearance, always an enjoyable event.

Winter was a surprise with some early snow. On Christmas Day, he visited our patio again as if to wish us a Happy Christmas. Some curious family members gathered on the patio and Ralphie stood still for a formal close-up photograph.

In early January, snow came down hard. Then a slight thaw occurred, but we were saddened to find Ralphie had come to the end of his life. An older bird, Ralphie had come to our home one last time. He had huddled next to the patio wall and familiar surroundings. Perhaps, having experienced some comfort in previous visits with his “non-bird” friends, Ralphie simply wanted us to know of his presence when he passed away.



## **The Hog Island Experience - by Angelika Beckmann, ASCR Recording Secretary**

While I sit here on a cold, late December night writing this article, I can't help but think of the sweet summer song of the waves crashing on the rocky shores of Hog Island, Maine. This past July, ASCR Vice President, Diana Hoffman, and I had the wonderful opportunity to represent the Audubon Society of the Capital Region (ASCR) at the weeklong Chapter Leadership program at Hog Island Audubon Camp located in Bremen, Maine. For those of you who have watched the Hog Island Osprey Cam online, you have also experienced a part of this lovely place.



*Photo by: Di Hoffman*

The Chapter Leadership program was a 6-day camp geared towards local Audubon chapter leaders throughout the Atlantic flyway (or those states located on the eastern portion of the country) however we were lucky enough to have a participant from Ohio also in attendance. Chapters from Florida, Virginia, Washington D.C., New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Connecticut, Maryland and New York were all represented. With such a vast overall area of land and a variety of land types represented, it was an absolutely fabulous way to get leaders with different perspectives together and swapping ideas. Chapters with a hundred members to chapters with a couple thousand members were represented from dense metropolises to rural, rolling farmland as far as the eye can see.

Our days consisted of numerous discussions and break out groups regarding the trials and tribulations each chapter faces or has faced, ideas that have been successful in the past and brainstorming of ways to further increase each and every of our local Audubon chapters' community presence. With such a melting pot of not only Audubon chapters but (human) communities, habitats and ecosystems

represented, our discussions really encompassed a sense of common ground between every single chapter, no matter how geographically spread out we were. The distance between chapters was swallowed up by the drive, want and love to protect the resources, which we all share. One of the greatest things I noticed during the Chapter Leadership program was a lack of the stereotypical 'generational gap'. We had a retiree and a teenage working together to seine (or net) the tidal zone during one of our field trips. That moment of the two of them, despite their 45 year age gap, walking together as if they were partners in a three-legged race, wading hip high in the cool ocean water of the incoming tide, cast a huge smile on my soul and will be forever embedded in my mind.

As an alumni of Hog Island, I highly suggest the Hog Island experience to any and everyone. Numerous camps are offered throughout the summer, not just the Chapter Leadership camp. For those who really just want to get see and hear about birds (and not the sentimental 'stuff' I included in my above paragraphs), I was standing about 10 feet from the banding of the famous 'Osprey Cam' osprey chicks, saw first hand the fledging of three merlin chicks (which nested about 50 feet from the cabin I stayed in), had a razorbill fly in during a bird watch and saw about 30ish puffins during our puffin watch boat cruise. I sincerely thank you ASCR for providing me this great opportunity. I cannot wait to give back to the community what I learned that week!



*Photo by: Angelika Beckmann*

*(Angelika will be taking over as ASCR Vice-President this February & is presently on our Conservation Committee as project leader for our chapter's first year participation in the Appalachian Eagle Project, researching over-wintering NYS Golden Eagles.)*

## **Announcement!**

**We're trying something new for the office of ASCR President for 2015-2016!**

**Our President, John Loz, will be stepping down at the end of his term to take a break from high office duties to focus on developing something he loves - ASCR Volunteer Committees. Want in?**

**The myriad duties of the 2015-2016 ASCR President will be conducted and ruled by Presidential Committee for this year, where upon we will Welcome a new President in 2016! Will it be you?**

## **OFFICERS**

President: John Loz  
Vice- President: Di Hoffman  
Correspondence Secretary: Fred Bockis  
Treasurer: René Facchetti  
Recording Secretary: Angelika Beckmann

## **DIRECTORS**

Eric Latini  
Craig Thompson  
Mike Devoe

## **COMMITTEES**

Conservation: Chair: Eric Latini  
Conservation Volunteers: Angelika Beckmann & Patrick Jones  
Education Coordinator: Open Position!  
Education Volunteer: Craig Thompson  
Programs Coordinator: Open Position!  
Programs Volunteer: John Loz  
Hospitality Committee Volunteers: Open Positions!  
Field Trips: John Loz  
Field Trip Volunteers: Craig Thompson  
Eric Latini  
Fundraising Chair: John Loz  
Membership Chair: Fred Bockis  
Publicity: Fred Bockis  
Editor of Wingbeats Newsletter: John Loz  
Webmaster: René Facchetti  
ASCR Board Member Emeritus: Jerry Brown

**Audubon Society  
of the Capital Region  
P.O. Box 14135  
Albany, NY 12212-4135  
www.capitalregionaudubon.org**

The following people (our Annual Meeting Election Slate) have volunteered their time and energy to fulfill the mission and goals as Officers and Directors of ASCR for 2015 - 2016.

## **Vice-President**

**Angelika Beckmann** is an environmental scientist at C.T. Male Associates. She has previously been a docent at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (2008-2011) and has been lucky enough to spend a week in Costa Rica birding. She has been Recording Secretary for the past year & is project leader for overwintering Golden Eagles in NYS with the Appalachian Eagle Project.

## **Correspondence Secretary**

**Fred Bockis** is currently employed by the NYS Dept. of Labor. He is a former Naval Reserve Officer and a former board member of the Kidney Foundation of NENY. He has been handling many of ASCR's information gathering and information dissemination tasks. Fred has served as ASCR Corresponding, Recording, and Financial Secretary since February 2012 as well as Publicist and is the ASCR Membership Chair.

## **Treasurer**

**René-Yves Facchetti** is a graduate of Siena College with a Bachelor of Science in Finance. He is the owner and CEO of the region's oldest IT company, Platinum ITS, Inc., now in business for over twenty years. In addition to managing his own company's budget and finances, he manages the IT budgets of many companies around the area. He has served Capital Region Audubon since 1987 in many ways: as Newsletter Editor, Website Designer, & since 2012 Treasurer.

## **Recording Secretary - Open Position!**

## **2015-2016 Directors**

**Eric Latini** performs with the Albany and Berkshire Symphony Orchestras, teaches trumpet at Skidmore College and the College of St. Rose, & maintains a busy schedule as a recitalist & chamber musician. Eric has been interested in birds for many years & has taken part in NYSDEC bird counts.

**Mike Devoe** works at GE Healthcare in the mammography sector as a physical vapor deposition technician. He served 4 years active duty in the Marine Corps and has always been interested in conservation & geology.

**Craig D. Thompson** is a life-long member of the National Audubon Society. He has served as an environmental educator at the Jamestown (NY) Audubon Society (1977-78) and with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (1979-2013), retiring in 2013 after 18 years as Director of the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center. He has served as President of ASCR (2004 - 11) & as Vice Chair of the Audubon Council of New York State (2009-2012).

**John Loz** is an Information and Insight Operations Manager at *IHS Engineering 360* located in East Greenbush, NY for over 13 years. He graduated with a B.S in Biology/Environmental Science in 2003. He joined ASCR in March of 2011 and has served as President since February 2013.

**Diana Hoffman** transferred to New York in 2012 for USDA Plant Protection & Quarantine as the State Plant Health Director. She has worked since 1990 in Federal & State agriculture regulatory programs for invasive species detection, quarantine & eradication. She is a Master Gardener intern, volunteers in the community, cycles each year to benefit research for Multiple Sclerosis. She has participated in Audubon club activities while living in Southern California, Long Island, Seattle & Yakima Washington, & now here in Albany, NY!



A plan was quickly in motion. They were going to send up one of the younger men to attempt climbing the tree to try and free the bird. Pat O'Brien had the scuba gear and had been in the creek, so he was aware of the depth and current. The young man climbed the tree and attempted to get to the branch where the bird was



located. Unable to reach the branch, it was decided that he would try to lasso the bird or branch and bring it closer to the tree. If the bird was to fall into the creek, Pat waited below in the water to catch the bird before it could be swept away. They only item that was available in trying to bring the bird closer was a tie down strap. After many (lots) of missed attempts, the branch was lassoed with the packing strap and the attempt was made to bring the branch and bird closer to the tree. The branch started to only bend, but eventually broke. The bird fell into the waiting arms of Pat, chest deep, in the below in the creek. I can only say that we were all jubilant! What looked like an impossible rescue turned into the miracle rescue of the year! I will forever be grateful for the help from the crew from Clarkson. I am not sure this would have been a successful rescue without them!

After a quick exam, it was decided that we had rescued a juvenile, Great Horned Owl. She was fully feathered but still had down on the top of her head. We also decided that she was a female due to her impressive size. As far as we could tell there were no obvious fractures but we always leave that to the experts. Off to Dr. Anderson at Ballston Spa Veterinary Clinic she went for x-rays and a thorough checkup. There were no fractures. Now dubbed 'Swinger', she would need to be observed for any tendon damage that may inhibit her flight.

I posted pictures and a small blurb regarding this rescue on the North Country Wild Care Facebook page, which was seen by John Loz, President, Audubon Society of the Capital Region (ASCR). John contacted me that his group had just initiated a project involving the building and installation of microfilament fishing line disposal containers around the Capital Region to prevent birds from getting their beaks, legs and wings entangled in improperly disposed of fishing line. These containers are being installed at local land trust trout streams, public boat launches, and other fishing areas to help fishermen dispose of their left over and tangled fishing line, properly. In addition, ASCR subsequently entered into a collaborative agreement with the NYSDEC Fisheries Unit to install these "tangle-tainers" at DEC Angler Areas on the Mohawk, Schoharie, and other tributaries over the next 5 years. DEC was very enthusiastic to work with ASCR on this project and is purchasing all the necessary equipment (iron posts, bolts and PVC tubing, info stickers) to build the containers. ASCR is now continuing to build and install them using DEC's gracious donations. Initially, the DEC installations would focus primarily on the Mohawk River, but John offered to come out and place their very first DEC Angler Area container at the Sloansville Boat Launch where Swinger was rescued.



Photo credit: Linda Brown

What a great collaboration, from rescue, treatment, rehabilitation, to preventing these kind of entanglements from happening in the future! At each step this rescue could not have happened with all of these helping hands! What started out as a bad day turned out to one of my best days of my life. I did manage to get to work that day and I was only 5 hours late.

**If you would like to know more about the work North Country Wild Care does, 'Like' them on Facebook! Also, if you come across an animal that is in trouble, please call the North Country Wild Care Hotline at: 518-964-6740. [www.NorthCountryWildCare.org](http://www.NorthCountryWildCare.org)**

Please join us in Thanking ALL of our newest Inaugural Chapter Supporters!

Annette Argyros  
Marjorie Karowe  
Anne Schwaller  
Ronald Boutin  
Mary Comley  
Carol A. Rasmussen  
Karen L. Tarvin  
Michael & Carol Gerrish  
Frank Barrie  
Jeff Schoonmaker  
Paul & Diana Praus  
Nancy and Roy Thornton  
Sharon Wiles  
Ralph & Mary Jean Cook  
Jenny Murtaugh  
Naomi Lloyd  
Elizabeth Bergan  
Noel Payton and David Payton  
Mrs. H. Seiger  
Lonnie & Suzanne Clar  
Barry & Brenda Lorch  
Martin Hotvet  
Pat Fitzgerald  
Mona Bearor  
Albert Caccese

### PROXY FORM

I, the undersigned, a member of ASCR in good standing, hereby appoint Eric Latini and Craig Thompson as my agents to vote as my proxy at the 2014 Annual Meeting and at any adjourned meeting thereof as follows (Check below):

☐ Cast my vote for all nominees as listed.

☐ Cast my vote for all nominees except:

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sign Here: \_\_\_\_\_

And if you haven't already....

**PLEASE** provide us with your email address if you would like to receive your *Wingbeats* Newsletter by email. You'll be helping our Audubon chapter save money on publishing and mailing.

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

*Another Big Thank You goes out to our Additional Donors:*

**C.T. Male Associates**

**John Gajewski**

**Michael J. Thompson**

### ASCR Annual Meeting & Open House!

**Sunday, February 22nd, 2015, 1:30 to 4:30pm**

**Location:** East Greenbush Community Library  
10 Community Way, East Greenbush, NY 12061

The Open House will feature a LIVE birds of prey program by the **Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York** and a family art activity by **Armando Soto** starting at 1:30pm.

The brief Annual Meeting will allow members to consider & vote for the ASCR Officers and Directors who will serve for the 2014 – 2015 fiscal year. All Officers and Directors are elected for a period of one year, with the exception of the President, who serves a two-year term. Members in good standing as of January 1, 2014, are eligible to vote either in person at the meeting, or by proxy. To submit your proxy vote electronically, email: [president@capitalregionaudubon.org](mailto:president@capitalregionaudubon.org).

To give your proxy by regular mail, fill out the Proxy Form in this newsletter and mail it to the chapter address seen at the bottom of Page 6 of this newsletter. Proxy responses must be received by the close of the business day, Friday, February 20, 2015.

**We appreciate your participation in this very important process. Thank you! Hope to see you on Sunday, February 22nd!**



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