



Winter 2014

# WINGBEATS

## A Message From The President



by John Loz, ASCR president

*Thank You!*

### Happy New Year Everyone!

After all the holiday rush, I find myself in a bit of a vacuum from it all. After thinking about what to get people for the holidays and trying to remember everything one has to do to get here and there, my message is this to you: Take just a short break for yourself and reflect on the good things you accomplished and gave to this past year - things that gave you that warm fuzzy right there in your heart and made you smile. So that's what I'm doing here - reflecting on a couple projects I was able to participate in; two of *many* impactful things our chapter & new volunteers have accomplished this past year. Two things that made *me* smile.

On April 20th, 2013, over Earth Day Weekend, board members and volunteers of ASCR joined with students from the **Service Fraternity at SUNY Albany** and volunteers from **Capital District Volunteers** and **Capital District HikingMates**, to help clear the upper portion of the Indian Ladder Trail at Thacher State Park of an invasive species plant. A TogetherGreen grant (a partnership between National Audubon and Toyota) was awarded to

ASCR to tackle this 'growing' problem as European buckthorn was overtaking critical migrating and forest dwelling raptor habitat as well as marring the beautiful public viewscape of the Helderberg Escarpment. A total of 60 volunteers worked at different points during the day to clear *four* dump truck loads of chipped buckthorn on a cloudy day that had stiff, cool breezes at times, which made sawing buckthorn branches & digging up buckthorn root bulbs the best thing to do to keep warm! The thing I remember the most is that we all had *a lot* of fun that day. A day that still makes me smile. **Thank You Everyone** for making Thacher a successful effort, which we'll continue in 2014.

The second thing that makes me smile was helping a team to build Bird-friendly Gardens at an inner-city elementary school back in May. As part of Audubon New York's *For The Birds!* Pilot program, I worked along side ASCR volunteers and employees of the Corporate Sustainability Team from IHS-GlobalSpec out of East Greenbush, NY who kindly donated their time to help build these gardens. It was a warm and humid day back on May 22nd, 2013, but that didn't matter. It was such a fun and rewarding day to be digging in the dirt and putting up bird houses to do something special for the kids and teachers at a school that has faced many difficult challenges in the last few years. Seeing the faces of excited 4th graders in pictures from the student planting day, really hit home with me—and yes continues to make me smile. There are more details about this project on page 7 of this newsletter and pictures on our Facebook page dated May 22nd and May 24th and December 20th, 2013.

So, enjoy your reflections on 2013 that make you smile & here's to seeing lots of birds in 2014!

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## Winter Programs

Documentary Premiere on the  
**“Berkshire Bird Paradise Sanctuary”**  
Tuesday, January 21st, 2014 @ 6:00 p.m.

Reception starting at 6:00pm - Film at 7:00pm  
 Panel Discussion following the documentary.

Location: The Linda  
 WAMC's Performing Arts Studio  
 339 Central Ave., Albany, NY  
**FREE and Open to the Public!**

Event co-sponsored w/ Upstate Independents

### **Snowbirds! - Family Event!**

Saturday, January 25th, 2014 11:00a.m to 2pm

Location: Albany Heritage Area Visitor Center  
 25 Quackenbush Square, Albany, NY

Celebrating Birds of New York State!  
 Activities include: LIVE Birds of Prey presentations by The Wildlife Institute of Eastern NY, featuring owls at 11:30, 12:15, & 1pm. ASCR will share information on birding, binocular basics, Great Backyard Bird Count practice session; Albany Pine Bush will have an interactive table on birdwatching; Eco-Kids of TOAST will have seed packaging activity for gardening with birds; Five Rivers will have an Owls in Jeopardy game; and *Naturelogues* award-winning photography. **FREE and FUN!**

### **Annual Meeting and Open House**

Saturday, February 1st, 2013, 11am -3 p.m.

Location: Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center

Join us for a morning snowshoe walk to find breeding Barred Owls before coming inside to warm up with hot beverages and enjoy our feature presentation ***The History of Falconry-Past and Present*** Beth Bidwell from Wild Things Environmental Education will highlight our incredible 4,000 year relationship with birds of prey. Her engaging presentation also includes a sampling of falconry equipment and LIVE birds. Stick around after the presentation for a meet and greet with Beth and her fabulous raptors - a great time for pictures and shared stories. **FREE and Open to the Public!**

### **“Kestrels!”**

Thursday, March 20th, 2014

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

**FREE Program!**

**6:00pm - LIVE Male and Female Kestrels!**  
**7:00pm - Kestrel Presentation**

Mike Burger, Director of Conservation and Science for Audubon New York at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will talk about NY's smallest falcon, the American Kestrel. He will cover its biology, population status, and threats, as well as what Audubon and others are doing to conserve it across NY. Sprinkled throughout will be anecdotes from Mike's Master's thesis research on wintering kestrels

### **Capital District FlowerGarden Show**

Friday, March 21st thru Sunday March 23rd

Location: Hudson Valley Community College

Join Audubon Society of the Capital Region at this premiere annual Home Gardening Show! At our booth we'll be educating you on what plants are best to provide good nesting and feeding habitat to attract the birds you love and want to protect. Everything from shrubs, flowers and trees to what kind of bird feeders are best to place in you yard. See you there! (Admission charged)

### **NYS Golden Eagle Telemetry Tracking & Eagle Feeder Program**

Thursday, April 17th, 2014 7:00 pm

Location: William K. Sanford Library  
 629 Albany Shaker Rd, Loudonville, NY

Tom Salo, the NYS Coordinator for the Appalachian Eagle Project, will present a program on how our neighboring chapter, the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is capturing and outfitting migrating Golden Eagles with telemetry devices to track this NYS Endangered Species. He'll also show some of the best local photographs from the Golden Eagle Feeder traps from the past 4 seasons. Of fourteen sites that have operated in New York, nine are in our neighboring Chenango, Delaware and Otsego counties. **Free and Open to the Public!**

## Snowy Owls and Ice Cream at the Airport

by John Loz

I could have been six or eight or even 12 years old, but I remember heading out to the Dairy Queen on a summers late afternoon or evening with my Dad and picking up a couple ice cream cones to bring with us to a spot near the airport where we could watch planes land and take off. The spot was a dirt pull-off on a road that overlooked both of the runways, so we wouldn't miss any planes that appeared on either one. And, it was close enough to the DQ so the ice cream wouldn't melt all over our hands before we got there.

I remember the orange setting sun and the warm breezes that would blow lightly across my face as I tried to keep the cold drips of cream from running down between my fingers holding the cone. My younger brother was there, too doing the same thing, but he wasn't ever as successful as I was - he always needed many more napkins. My Mom would sometimes come along, but I think she left us 'boys' to go out and spend time with each other watching the planes and dreaming about flying and looking down upon the world as birds do everyday.

Flash forward 30 years...I woke up early (yes, early) on New Year's Day, now 2014, not hung over or over tired from staying up too late, and surprisingly, feeling quite refreshed. I gave up watching 'the ball drop' at midnight a few years ago and this morning was a morning I didn't want to waste, especially since it was mostly sunny and I'd have the roads and 'the spot' mostly to myself...and maybe, *just maybe* a Snowy Owl. I decided to head to where the old dirt pull-off used to be after grabbing a coffee to go and to where there were reports of Snowy Owls seen along the same stretch of road I had eaten ice cream with my Dad those many years ago. Maybe I'd get to watch some other things (other than planes) land and take off, this time with something *hot* in my hands, while *cold* breezes blew against my face.

As I turned onto the stretch of road running alongside one of the runways - I could already see it from a distance - a small white figure that looked like a chunk of snow sitting on the edge of the tarmac. I just slowly shook my head and smiled as I approached a couple cars of other observers who also got up early to see if they could take in the rare sight of one of the Arctic's high flyers. One that made a flight of survival to our site of leisurely departure and arrival.



Photo credit: Cornel Lab of O. and Michaela Sagatova

Selfishly, I wanted just a few silent moments just to myself with this raptor of the Far North, so I parked a bit beyond the other cars. I stepped out onto the cold squeaking snow under foot with my cup-o-joe in one hand and my 10 x 42's in another to take in the sight in my own quiet solitude. I spied through my binoculars to see this almost totally white Snowy Owl swiveling it's head, almost mechanically, to look at me, then out at the quiet open airfield, then back at me for awhile then back off into the distance. What a beautiful sight, and a handsome figure at that! Peering through the steam from my coffee and vapor of my breath, I quietly enjoyed the connection I felt I had with our regal-looking visitor and relished the view of the morning sun lighting up the snow and warmly lighting up the owl's white feathers. I don't really know how long I was watching (I really had no interest in keeping time that day), but it was long enough to make me pull the zipper on my coat further up over my mouth and nose to know - it was cold out there!

Satisfied with my one-on-one time with what was probably a young and hungry owl waiting for a chance at capturing a field mouse, and clearly not amazed with *my* presence, I approached the other curious onlookers I had passed earlier and we started talking about our observations of the morning. A night nurse on her way home from her shift was taking pictures of the three owls that were there that day with a large zoom-lens camera. She told me seeing these owls, and in general - birding in the morning after her shift was a great way to relax after a stressful night in the emergency room.

As more people started arriving and departing the scene, I met people who were just casual bird lovers, and talked with pros who were reporting other arctic birds arriving at the airport. I watched their excitement and amazement and listened to... (continued on page 6)

**Next issue of Wingbeats:  
We will be acknowledging our generous donors who have given kindly over the last year. You all are a HUGE help in continuing our Education & Conservation Programs!**

## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President: John Loz  
 Vice: Open Position!  
 President:  
 Correspondence Secretary: Fred Bockis  
 Treasurer: René Facchetti  
 Recording Secretary: Open Position!

## DIRECTORS

Eric Latini  
 Craig Thompson  
 Mike Devoe

## COMMITTEES

Conservation: Coordinator: Eric Latini  
 Conservation Volunteers: Heather Labore  
 Angelika Beckmann  
 Education Coordinator: Open Position!  
 Education Volunteers: Heather Labore  
 Lois Gundrum  
 Larry Deyss  
 Programs Coordinator: Open Position!  
 Programs Volunteer: John Loz  
 Hospitality Committee Volunteers: Open Positions!  
 Field Trips: Open Position!  
 Field Trip Volunteers: Craig Thompson  
 Heather Labore  
 Publicity: Fred Bockis  
 Editor of Wingbeats / Webmaster: René Facchetti  
 Wingbeats Newsletter Contributors/Editors: Craig Thompson  
 Diana Hoffman  
 John Loz  
 Volunteer Coordinator: Open Position!  
 GIS Specialist Volunteer: Robyn Keefe  
 ASCR Board Member Emeritus: Jerry Brown

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 2014 - 2015.

### President

**John Loz** is an Information and Insight Operations Manager at IHS-GlobalSpec, Inc. located in East Greenbush, NY. He has been with the company for over 12 years. As a life-long resident of the Capital Region, he graduated with a B.S in Biology with a concentration in Environmental Science in 2003. He joined the Audubon Society of the Capital Region in March of 2011. Since February 2013 he has served as President.

### Vice-President

**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 and State agriculture regulatory programs for invasive species detection, quarantine and eradication. She is a Master Gardener intern, volunteers in the community, and cycles each year to benefit research for Multiple Sclerosis and Diabetes. She has participated in Audubon club activities while living in Southern California, Long Island, Seattle and Yakima Washington, and birding in the Albany & the Upstate NY area.

### 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, as well as being a Federal retiree. He is a true organizer and 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. He has also worked on publicity 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, Board Member and since 2012 as Treasurer.

### Recording Secretary

**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 an active volunteer with ASCR for the past year.

### 2014-2015 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.

**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 the Audubon Society of the Capital Region (2004 -11) and as Vice Chair of the Audubon Council of New York State (2009 - 2012).

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

## Remember the old days when we used make our own suet cakes? Well here's how!

by Susan Nantista

Growing up in Albany, New York, I always thought I lived "in the city". A short walk to the bus took my friends and me downtown to the shopping district and anywhere else we wanted to go. But now looking back at it, I really lived in the outskirts of the city, just bordering fields and farmlands. In a family of eight children, I am still astounded that my parents had time to teach us so much about nature. My mother was a bird watcher and we always had a bird feeder in yard. I was convinced that my father's goal in life was to find a "squirrel-proof" bird feeder.

One of the things I remember well was feeding the birds. At Christmastime, we strung yards and yards of popcorn to decorate the yew and arborvitae trees with popcorn garlands. Just make enough popcorn as the children will certainly "eat one, then string one"!



We also made suet cakes to hang in all the trees. We used animal fat from the grocery store with peanut butter, raisins and sunflower seeds. You, too, can make suet cakes for the winter birds. All you need is the following:

- 1 cup suet (can be animal fat or shortening)
- 1 cup crunchy peanut butter
- ½ cup quick oats
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup sunflower seeds
- ½ cup chopped nut meats of any kind

Melt the suet or shortening over low heat. When fully melted, add peanut butter and mix. Then add all other ingredients. Pour the mixture into individual containers (any kind will do). Make sure the mixture is about 1 to 1-1/2" inches deep. You can also put it in a flat baking dish and then cut it into squares when it is hard. Put the containers in the refrigerator to harden or put them in your garage if the weather is cold. When the cakes are hard, just put one in a vegetable bag, the mesh kind that onions come in, tie up with string and hang in your trees.

~ Then sit back, make yourself a big cup of hot chocolate, and see who arrives! ~

### Annual Meeting & Open House

**Saturday, February 1st, 2014, from 11 am to 3pm,**  
at the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center located at  
195 New Karner Road, Albany, NY 12205

In addition to a lecture on the **History of Falconry** and LIVE birds of prey, members will 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, 2013, 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 on this newsletter. Proxy responses must be received by the close of the business day, Friday, January 31, 2014.

**We appreciate your participation in this very important process. Thank you! Hope to see you on Saturday, February 1st!**

### **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: \_\_\_\_\_

***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 costs - and it's in color!***

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

(continued from page 3)

...their stories and felt that hours were starting to pass me by. I *intended* on staying a half hour and then heading off to do a few errands. I didn't know exactly what it was, but I just couldn't tear myself away from that stretch of road.

I went to watch an owl and ended up watching people. A young father and daughter in a caravan, out-of-towners passing through Albany, new empty nesters with the last of their three kids off to college. It was like a pilgrimage - coming from all over to see these sentinels of the tundra. Columbia County to the south, Lake George to the North, three women travelling back from Vermont and one continuing through back home to Syracuse - to congregate *at the airport*. I watched people 'hop' out of their cars and heard cheers of joy from those who had never seen one. I saw a woman skipping towards an industrial building, where the owl had flown to, to gleefully enjoy this rare moment. Seeing adults 'skip' is probably one of the most sweetest things to see in the world, I gotta say. Even an Albany County Sheriff on patrol around the airport greeted us with a smile and was very supportive of our watch...as long as we weren't climbing the fences. We even encouraged him to step out of his vehicle for a close-up look through a scope, which he obliged and clearly enjoyed the view.



It finally occurred to me, after I started to feel hungry and stopped feeling my toes, to look at my watch. *Four and half hours* of watching, listening & talking to people. In this chill? Crazy. But I got sucked into the excitement of being around others calling out the field marks of a Northern Harrier, a Red-tailed Hawk, and a flock of Snow Buntings flying around the airfield. When it came right down to it, I truly enjoyed the camaraderie of this avian-human spectacle.

Reality started setting in and I figure I take a break from this unique happening to get lunch and warm up. Through the large glass windows of a coffee shop, I looked out the window at The Northway from where I was eating and considered continuing on my original journey for the day to Saratoga Springs. I mean, heavy snow was coming - for the next two days at that. I'd be snowed in for awhile. I looked at my watch, saw it was already 2pm, looked back out the window, shrugged my shoulders and headed back to the airport. My 'patrol' wasn't done yet.

I drove to other parts of Albany International to find more Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs, which are both songbirds of the Arctic tundra, and a few Horned Larks that others had reported during my morning watch. After driving to other vantage points around the terminals for about an hour, I found right myself back at the same place where I ate ice cream those decades ago with my Dad.

The sun was setting and I found myself among friends from the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club, waiting for short-eared owls to take flight just as they had been seen doing the late afternoon before. While scanning the dusky landscape for signs of flight, I told Tom about how I spent the *entire day* there talking with people, and tracking and admiring the whitest of the three snowy owls. I'm not sure if he thought I was crazy or not, but as the red, yellow and blue tarmac lights started coming on, I thought back on how much FUN I had during that day! Just standing in the cold around an airport runway with a bunch of other people doing the same thing! Like I said - I just couldn't pull myself away. I felt I just had to be there, toes freezing, standing watch like our owls seem to have been doing over our man-made tundra.

Casual bird lovers and professors of ornithology. Air traffic controllers on a quick lunch and a police officer stopping by to peer through a scope. Parents with their kids and grandparents taking pictures against the airport fence with a tiny white figure in the background. For some of these people it was just science. Others, a curiosity. For many, it was... 'historic.' Historic to those who may never see a snowy owl in the wild ever again. Historic where kids, and adults, can proudly say, 'I was there...' when the Snowy Owl Iruption of 2013-2104 was the biggest one in years.



Mothers and Daughters. Fathers and Sons. They can talk about that...over ice cream...in the summer... when they're watching the planes land and take-off...at the airport.

"Hey Dad, remember that day when we saw..."

## **Troy School 2 Bird-friendly Gardens project receives Corporate Sustainability Award!**

On December 19, 2013, the Troy School 2 Bird-Friendly Gardens project was named by IHS Inc. (NYSE: IHS) for a 2013 Sustainability Award! The Audubon Society of the Capital Region approached the Corporate Sustainability Team of IHS GlobalSpec, based in East Greenbush, NY, to help us build the gardens as part of the Capital Region - Audubon NY *For The Birds!* program in Troy, NY. ASCR board members and volunteers worked side-by-side with IHS employees to put up bird houses, remove invasive knotweed, and construct new garden beds around the school grounds for the children and surrounding community to steward. Many thanks



go to ASCR volunteer Heather Labore for pulling the many different pieces of this project together to make this effort a success! ASCR would also like to thank Home Depot and Hewitt's Garden Center for donating plants and planters. A very big, BIG Thank You goes out to J Dunn Group Site Development and Excavating for donating their equipment and time digging out the garden beds for prepping!

Funds for this project came from member's generous donations, a Collaborative Grant from Audubon NY as well as remaining funds from a TogetherGreen grant ASCR received for two other Capital Region projects. TogetherGreen is a partnership between National Audubon and Toyota, funding projects that bring people together to accomplish sustainable projects in their communities. Finally, we could not have done this without Lois Gundrum. For without her

spear-heading and Piloting the Audubon NY *For The Birds!* program in Troy, NY putting the Capital Region and ASCR on the map, we wouldn't have had this opportunity for our chapter. See our May 22nd & 24th Facebook postings for more pics and we look forward to fostering more Capital Region projects with you in 2014!

## **EIGHT CLUES TO THE BIRD OF THE MONTH!**

by Craig Thompson

- Certainly everyone east of the Rockies is familiar with me, one of the top 10 most recognized birds in the US!
- After all, I am the official state bird of 7 states, the most of any bird!
- Really though, I am of little socio-economic importance, nor can I be hunted, caged or farmed.
- During the last 70 years, I firmly established myself as a resident species in upstate NY, due to the reversion of farmland, increased popularity of bird feeding and climate change. Before then, I was known only as a straggler here.
- I was such an unusual upstate visitor, that in the 1920's, a young Roger Tory Peterson pedaled his 1-speed bike from Jamestown, NY to Gowanda, NY (35 miles one way) to verify a report!
- Nothing makes a more striking a winter counterpoint against a snowy background!
- A sucker for sunflower seeds, I can nonetheless be difficult to attract to your feeder without proper presentation: the safety of a shrubby border and seeds presented on an elevated tray.
- Late in January on sunny days, I can sometimes be heard boldly calling from the very top of an evergreen "What cheer! What cheer!", giving you to foolishly think that winter's back is broken.

\*\*\*Do you know who I am yet? If not, then read the first letter in each paragraph to spell it out.



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**Free and Open to the Public!**

Panel Discussion following the film

Reception starting at 6pm ~ Film at 7pm

at The Linda  
WAMC's Performing Arts Studio  
339 Central Ave., Albany, NY

**on the Berkshire Bird Paradise Sanctuary!**

**Documentary Movie Premiere!**

**SAVE THE DATE! - TUESDAY JANUARY 21ST!**