



WINGBEATS

First, we'd like to extend our heartfelt thanks to those of you who have responded to our Annual Appeal. Your generous support will enable ASCR to expand "For the Birds!" to a second school, fund new conservation projects, and bring additional opportunities to learn about birds to people of the Capital Region. If you have not yet contributed and would like to, you can send a check to ASCR, PO Box 14135, Albany, NY, 12212-4135.

We would also like to thank the 24 volunteers who participated in our first TogetherGreen Volunteer Day event at Schodack Island in September. Siena College students and members of the Capital District Volunteer Meetup Group formed the majority of our volunteer force. According to Dr. George Robinson who helped to organize our efforts that day, we cut at least 3,000 climbing oriental bittersweet vines, helping about 500 canopy trees to recover or approximately 5 to 10 acres of habitat improvement. One of our target species for this project was the Bald Eagle, featured as this newsletter's Bird of the Month.



Another TogetherGreen Volunteer Day event will be held on Saturday, April 20, 2013, from 9 am to 4 pm at Thacher Park. We will be cutting buckthorn along a 2 mile stretch of the Helderberg Escarpment to improve the habitat of migrating and forest raptors, and to improve viewing conditions for the hawk migration monitoring program. Please think about joining us that day! We'll provide lunch and equipment. All you need to bring is a pair of gloves if you have them (we'll have extras of those, too!).

November's Raptor Rapture, which we co-sponsored with the Friends of the IBA and the NYS Museum was a huge success and attracted 3500 people! Everyone enjoyed the talks, live birds of prey, children's activities and exhibits.

We also owe a huge thanks to the 21 participants of the 26th Annual Christmas Bird Count, held on December 16th. Overall, the total for individual birds sighted was down 27% from last year. Poor crops of berries and seeds might be to blame, according to Alan Mapes, organizer of this event.

On a more personal note, after serving as president of ASCR for two years, it is time for me to move on. Audubon is an organization of many knowledgeable, well-intentioned people who work diligently to make a difference in our world. It has been an honor to meet and work alongside them. ASCR is a vibrant chapter, but we need more people to keep things going. The best contribution you can make to this chapter is to contact someone on the Board and ask what you can do to become an active member. You do not need to commit major time or be a bird expert! Please consider this!

Sandhill Cranes - Rare Bird Alert! by Heather Labore

Birders of the Capital Region are being treated to a rare sight. Since January 8th, a pair of Sandhill Cranes have been visiting the town of Halfmoon NY. The Sandhill Crane is a distinct bird, averaging 3 to 5 feet tall, grey feathers cover the majority of the body with a beautiful patch of red feathers on its head.

I was lucky enough to see them on the morning of January 9th as I crouched behind some trees, carefully trying my best to not disturb them. They were extremely graceful and vocal and I felt like I had been transported back in time and was witnessing some prehistoric bird. Only later, after some research, did I find out that the Sandhill Crane is one of the oldest documented birds alive today, with fossil evidence that dates back 2.5 million years.



How rare a sight is this in New York? Sandhill Cranes nest from Siberia to Alaska, across the Canadian Arctic as far east as Ontario. A frequent sight in the Mid-west, migrating in flocks numbering in the thousands, they winter in the southern United States, Mexico, and Cuba. That means this pair visiting Halfmoon were about 1200 miles away from where they should be!

So why are they here? According to Anne Lacey from International Crane Foundation (ICF), in the 1940's these birds were brought to the brink of extinction because of over hunting but in recent years they have made a dramatic comeback. In the past, Sandhill Cranes were plentiful all along the eastern migratory corridor. Recent studies have turned up several pairs nesting in VT, NH, MA and the Finger Lakes region of NY. Anne feels the pair visiting Halfmoon have most likely migrated from a colony nesting near Quebec. Anne goes on to say that their usual winter homes in FL, GA, and TN have become too crowded and the cranes are expanding their wintering territories along the eastern migratory corridor. Additionally, birds that migrate shorter distances during the winter do not have as far to travel back to the spring nesting sites, which mean less competition for prime real estate.

Though the birds may be a unique sighting in New York today, the cranes in Halfmoon have selected what seems to be a perfect location for their stay with plenty of open water and marshes. Soft downy coats and a specialized circulatory system in their long, elegant legs will keep them warm and active all through the season.

Since the population of Sandhill Cranes has stabilized, there is pressure in several states, including Wisconsin and Tennessee, to reinstate hunting on these birds. At present it remains illegal to hunt them and the ICF would like to see the ban continue.

When I hid behind those trees on that Thursday morning I had no idea how amazing these birds were or how incredible their story was. There may come a time when Sandhill Cranes are no longer such a rare sight in these parts. Until then, I'll keep peeking, and hoping. Thanks to Ken Harper for the beautiful photo. For continuing updates on the whereabouts of the cranes, check out the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club website <http://hmabc.net>.

A Case of Mistaken Identity by Lois Gundrum

On November 19th, 2012, Rebecca Singer was driving home on Rte. 9H toward Kinderhook and spotted a snowy owl near the airport ... or was it? A few days later she spotted the same bird near a red-tailed hawk. She concluded that they must be mates and she hadn't seen a snowy owl at all. Evidently, the Capital Region has a significant number of red-tailed hawks that have a condition known as leucism. Every one of the six field parties participating in the Albany County Christmas Bird Count a few years ago reported seeing one or more leucistic red-tailed hawks. According to Gordon Ellmers, a Ft. Edward Vet and wildlife photographer, leucism is a rare condition "caused by a genetic mutation that prevents pigment from being properly deposited on feathers. These birds can have all white feathers or partially white feathers. Their eyes, legs, feet and bills have normal color.

Albinism is a different type of genetic condition in which no melanin at all is produced." Photo is of a leucistic red-tail seen in New Hartford, CT, February 2012, by Alyce Walker.

Upcoming Events

February 23, 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm ASCR Annual Meeting and Open House at the East Greenbush Public Library. Join us for a fun afternoon. View live birds of prey and draw live owls guided by a professional artist. Free refreshments. Talk: Urban Birds of Prey by Wendy Hall and staff at 2:30 pm.

March 3, 2 pm - 4 pm Wetlands lecture and "Liquidity" documentary film at East Greenbush Public Library, co-sponsored with the Rensselaer Land Trust.

April 1, 7 pm Talk on "Woodpeckers and the Emerald Ash Borer" by Dr. Mark Whitmore of Cornell University. Is it possible to detect this alien pest by using woodpeckers as a guide? Colonie Public Library

April 20, 9 am - 4 pm TogetherGreen Volunteer Days Event at Thacher Park. Do some hands-on conservation work to protect our environment and enhance bird habitat! We will be at Thacher Park, working alongside State Park staff and Friends of Thacher Park to remove buckthorn that grows along the Helderberg Escarpment. It will be a worthwhile day! Lunch and snacks, as well as a special gift will be provided to all who participate. Funded by a grant from Toyota in partnership with National Audubon.

April 27, 10 am - 4 pm ASCR will be participating in the Bird Fest at the Huyck Preserve. Go to <http://www.huyckpreserve.org> for details.

May 11, 10 am - 4 pm International Migratory Bird Day Event at the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center. A day geared for the whole family! Come and celebration bird migration with the Audubon Society of the Capital Region and the Pine Bush Discovery Center. Details to follow.

Urban Birds of Prey!



Peregrine Falcon at Adirondack Habitat Awareness Day in Wilmington. Photo by Jesse Kenyon.

ASCR Annual Meeting and Open House 2013

JOIN US!!

A Fun-filled Family Day with ASCR

We have a great afternoon planned with a chance to see and hear about birds of prey that you might see around the Capital Region. Wendy Hall and her staff from the Adirondack Wildlife Refuge and Rehabilitation Center, Wilmington, NY, will be present with their educational birds to teach us about their habits and challenges.

This is the time of year to meet the board members of ASCR, as well as those who have joined Audubon and wish to be active members (although you don't need to be a member to attend - all are welcome!!). Our program, this year, consists of two parts. During the first half of the afternoon, you'll have a chance to go around the room and see the birds of prey up close, ask questions, and even draw a barred owl and a screech owl from life! That's right! Armando Soto, a professional artist, will be there to assist you in drawing these owls using basic shapes that he has made to help you on your way! This activity is designed for both children and adults. During the second part, Wendy Hall and her staff will give a more formal talk about the birds they've brought with them. We hope to see you there!

SCHEDULE

- 1:30 pm Program begins: Art and View Birds
- 2:30 pm Brief ASCR Meeting and Bird Talk
- 4:00 pm View displays
- 4:30 pm End of Program

LOCATION: EAST GREENBUSH COMMUNITY LIBRARY, 10 Community Way, East Greenbush, NY



In case of inclement weather, check website (<http://www.capitalregionaudubon.org>) or call 518.598.3025.

The following people have volunteered their time and energy to fulfill the mission and goals of ASCR for

2013 - 2014:

President

John Loz is an Information and Insight Operations Manager at HIS-GlobalSpec, Inc. located in East Greenbush, NY. He has been with the company for over 11 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 and did research on amphibians at the Saratoga National Battlefield for a few weeks each Spring between 2000 and 2008. He joined the Audubon Society of the Capital Region in March of 2011 taking on the role of Publicity and Recruitment. Since February 2012 he has served as ASCR Vice-President.

Vice President

Heather Labore Heather has been actively involved as an environmental volunteer for close to a decade in three different states. Starting out as a bird feeder monitor with the Beaver Brooke Association of Hollis NH, she developed a passion for birds and the environment. She carried her passion for volunteering to the Audubon Society of Rhode Island where she was awarded the Golden Plover Award. Now residing with her family in the Capitol Region, she is excited to be a part of the ASCR team. Outgoing, ener-

getic, and dedicated, Heather hopes to inspire people to be the change they wish to see in the world.

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, and Board Member. He has served as ASCR Treasurer since February 2012.

Corresponding 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. In addition, he is in charge of the chapter's kestrel project. A personal goal of his is to ID as many bird species as possible in the Northeast.

2012-2013 Directors

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. He has always been interested in conservation and geology.

Lois Gundrum has just served as president of ASCR for two years. She is a retired Earth Science Teacher and textbook editor. She has always loved nature and feels that Audubon has given her a chance to contribute. She started, and will be in charge of, 'For the Birds!' in the Capital Region.

Eric Latini

has been playing the trumpet professionally since the age of 15. He performs with the Albany and Berkshire Symphony Orchestras, teaches trumpet at Skidmore College and the College of St. Rose, and maintains a busy schedule as a recitalist and chamber musician. Eric has been interested in birds for many years and has taken part in NYS DEC bird counts and surveys.

Barb Samuels comes to Albany after many years in public health and pediatrics in Texas, Georgia, Washington State, Arizona, North Carolina, New York City, and Hawaii. She has been a member of the local Audubon society wherever she has lived and is an avid paddler.

Bird of the Month - The Bald Eagle by Fred Bockis & H. Labore



The Bald Eagle, the National bird of the United States, appears on the U.S. Seal, and is a symbol of the U.S. Post Office. It has a white head, neck, & tail, a brown body and wings, and yellow feet (talons) and bill. In zoology, 'bald' means having white feathers or markings on the head ... hence the name Bald Eagle. Juveniles, lacking the familiar white head, are predominantly dark brown with mottled white feathering. It can take 4 to 5 years for a juvenile to mature to adult plumage. As with most birds, the mature female eagle is larger than the male. The wingspan averages around 6.0 to 7.5 feet while the average weight is between 6 to 14 lbs.

Eagles are diurnal (daytime) opportunistic feeders, which means they are not overly picky about what they eat and will go after the easiest meal that presents itself, including the food captured by other animals. While the main part of their diet consists of fish, they also prey on birds, mammals, and scavenge carrion.

The nests, or aeries, of the Bald Eagle are extremely large because the nesting mates add to them each year. Average nests are 3 to 5 feet across, 3 to 6 feet deep and might weigh a metric ton (although one was documented to be 20 feet deep and 2 tons in weight!). The nest can usually be found in the tallest tree (usually a white pine) near rivers or coasts. Both the male and female take part in nest building. The breeding season of the Bald Eagle starts early in the year and they usually have laid their eggs by the end of February.

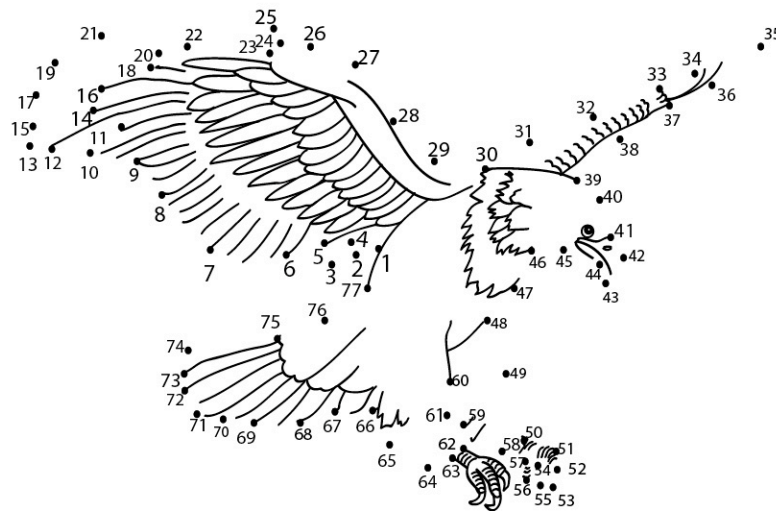
Peter Nye Talk by Lois Gundrum

On Tuesday, January 22, 2013, Peter Nye gave a wonderful talk about the comeback of bald eagles in New York State to a group of 88 people at the Colonie Public Library. He took us from the year 1976 when there was only one, unproductive, nesting pair of bald eagles near Rochester, NY, to today's approximately 200 nesting pairs!! The recovery program began by placing chicks in the nest of the unproductive Rochester mates. When they began successfully raising "foster" chicks, a hacking program was begun. The process of successfully raising bald eagles began very modestly, with only two chicks from Montana. As time went on, the program expanded. Peter said that he knew he was on the right track when, four or five years after the start of the hacking program, the first two chicks ever hacked were found nesting together. They had found each other after all of that time and were raising young!

Peter held everyone's attention for an hour and one half with interesting facts and stories. He concluded with two major points. The first is that people are the bald eagles' major threat. We destroy habitat, poison the environment, put out traps and litter that entangle birds, and sometimes disturb nearby birds on purpose. Of all of these, destruction of habitat is the most critical. By far, the greatest number of bald eagle mortalities in NYS has occurred along the Amtrak tracks that run along the Hudson, prime eagle habitat, from Rensselaer to NYC. The high speed trains kill deer, the eagles move in to eat the deer carcasses, and another train comes along and kills the eagle. Over 40 eagles have been killed this way. The second point is that there are signs that the capacity of NYS to support bald eagles is maxing out. Some pairs are nesting in less than ideal sites and there are more instances of aggression between single eagles looking for a mate and territory, and nesting birds.

Try these raptor activities

AERIE	RSHABITATUV
BALDEAGLE	WXNESTYZABJ
PLUMAGE	ICFGIWJHEDU
FEATHERS	NKMOQUFPNLV
JUVENILE	GSBALDEAGLE
WINGSPAN	SOAPXLANIVN
HABITAT	PHEEDOTTYGI
FISH	ABDFISHECAL
NEST	NGILQPEHKFE
	ORBWAERIEUM
	DISHOTSLCBJ
	TYPLUMAGENS



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Annual Meeting and Open House

You are cordially invited to attend the ASCR Annual Meeting and Open House being held on Saturday, February 23, 2013, from 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm, at the East Greenbush Public Library. In addition to fun, informative activities for both children and adults, members will consider and vote for the ASCR Officers and Directors who will serve for the 2013 – 2014 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, 2012, are eligible to vote either in person at the meeting, or by proxy. Voting by proxy can be done electronically or by regular mail. To give your proxy vote electronically, either email: president@capitalregionaudubon.org, making sure to include your name exactly as it appears on this newsletter, or go to the "Contact" page of the ASCR website and give your proxy that way. To give your proxy by regular mail, fill out the 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, February 22, 2013.

We appreciate your participation in this very important process. Thank you! Hope to see you on Saturday, February 23rd.

PROXY FORM

I, the undersigned, a member of ASCR in good standing, hereby appoint Eric Latini, Mike DeVoe, and Lois Gundrum as my agents to vote as my proxy at the 2013 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!!!

EMAIL: _____

Tell us why you joined Audubon and share any comments with us: _____

Audubon Society of the Capital Region

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