

THE BELTED KINGFISHER



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

FOUNDED 1968 ● P.O. BOX 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820

Volume 38, Number 4, April 2006

Editor: Gerianne Carillo

COMING ACTIVITIES

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| April 15: | Waterfowl Trip with John Davis |
| April 18: | Board Meeting, 7PM at the home of Andy Mason |
| April 21: | General Meeting with Program - see below |
| April 22: | Earth Day Cleanup at Milford State Forest, 9AM-Noon (see page 5) |
| May 6: | Bird walk, Milford area, with Andy Mason - see "Spring Bird Walks", page 3 |
| May 7: | Bird walk, Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway, with Andy Mason - page 3 |
| May 16: | Board Meeting, 7PM at the home of Bob Donnelly |
| May 19: | Potluck Supper (6:30PM) and General Meeting with Program (7:30 PM) - see below |
| May 20: | Annual May Big Day Count: For info or to sign up, call Bob Miller at 432-5767 |
| May 27: | Weaver Lake Trip with Bob Donnelly |

DOAS field trips are open to the public. Participants should meet at the stated time and location--please be prompt. We encourage carpooling--please help with expenses if you are in someone else's vehicle. Most trips include a moderate amount of easy walking; leaders will note any strenuous hiking. Please expect to provide your own food and drink unless a food stop is indicated. In case of bad weather, check with the leader about cancellation.

April Program: "The Biology of Raptors in New York"

This program will be presented by Scott Crocoll, DEC biologist in the division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, with background in Raptor Ecology. Scott will give an overview of the raptors in our area and their general biology and migration habits; he will also discuss what it's like for a researcher to study raptors.

The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For further information contact Gerianne Carillo at 607-286-3855, email gerianne@earthlink.net.

May Program: "Damsels and Dragons - an Introduction to Odonates and the NYS Odonate Survey"

Join us for a potluck supper and, after, Larry Federman will introduce you to odonates - the variety of species, life cycle, activities he has been involved with, and the protocol of the current NYS Odonate Survey.

Larry is the assistant Warden/Educator for Audubon New York, and president of the Northern Catskills Audubon Society. Potluck supper will be at 6:30PM and the program will begin at 7:30PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church in Oneonta. For further information contact Gerianne Carillo (information above).

Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

Republicans attack Endangered Species Act—yet again—Once more the Bush administration and Republicans in Congress have declared war on one of the most successful and well-supported environmental laws: the Endangered Species Act.

For over thirty years, the ESA has provided a safety net for wildlife, fish and plants at the brink of extinction. It has prevented the disappearance of the Bald Eagle, the Gray Wolf, the Pacific Salmon, among many other species.

However, US Senator Michael Crapo of Idaho has introduced legislation that would dramatically weaken the ESA. If this bill becomes law, it would eliminate habitat protection, abandon recovery of species near extinction, repeal protections against hazardous pesticides, and politicize the scientific decision-making process. In addition, it would set up an unprecedented entitlement program requiring the federal government to use taxpayer dollars to pay developers for complying with the law!

Similar legislation passed the House of Representatives last year, so this must be stopped in the Senate.

What you can do: Urge our US Senators, Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton to stand up against this irresponsible and unnecessary attempt to eviscerate this important law. Let them know the ESA is seen as a model conservation statute well beyond our borders and that our commitment to protecting at risk species encourages similar efforts overseas.

Good news in the State Assembly— On March 20 the NY State Assembly overwhelmingly passed the Community Preservation Act by a vote of 106 to 30. This will give cities and towns the ability to raise funds for protection of natural areas, historic preservation and working farms by allowing them to establish a small fee on large real estate transfers for these purposes.

The law is voluntary for each municipality, but has been popular in the Long Island towns where it is already allowed. Large areas of open space and farmland have been preserved on Long Island where development pressures are very high.

The Community Preservation Act is supported by a broad coalition of organizations and individuals—groups that rarely come together on issues. It is also has bipartisan support in the legislature, as the Assembly vote shows. However, it has been kept from a vote in the State Senate by pressure on the leadership

from wealthy developers and real estate interests. If it can reach the floor, it almost certainly will pass and be signed by Gov. Pataki.

What you can do: Local State Senator James Seward is part of the Senate Republican leadership and can help bring a vote on this bill. Contact Sen. Seward and tell him that you want to see the Senate take a stance on the Community Preservation Act. More delay is unfair and undemocratic. Sen. John Bonacic is also influential with the Republican leaders and should be urged to work for a vote.

Addresses

U.S. Sens. Charles Schumer/ Hillary Clinton US Senate Washington, DC 20510	State Sens. James Seward/ John Bonacic NY State Senate Albany, NY 12248
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Schumer-(202) 224-6542 senator@schumer.senate.gov	Seward—(518) 455-3131 seward@senate.state.ny.us
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Clinton-(202) 224-4451 senator@clinton.senate.gov	Bonacic—(518) 455-3181 bonacic@senate.state.ny.us
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Help Wanted for NY State Ornithological Assoc. Annual Meeting

DOAS is hosting a major statewide event this fall—the 59th Annual Meeting of the NY State Ornithological Assoc., Sept. 29 & 30 and Oct. 1 at the State University at Oneonta. Birders and bird club representatives from across the state will be joining us for field trips, workshops, research presentations, and banquet.

To put on this gathering, we will need volunteers to help at the meeting and with preparations. Jobs include staffing the registration table, helping prepare registration packets, leading field trips, guiding visitors, etc.

If you would like to help with the meeting, contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net. For field trips, contact Bob Donnelly, (607) 547-8654, rsdonn@yahoo.com, or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, tomsalo@localnet.com.



**Together
Everyone
Achieves
More!!!**

Meet the DOAS Board:



Nancy Cannon

Raised on a dairy farm in southeastern Wisconsin, I became aware of the natural world at an early age. I well remember the birds of my childhood: Western meadowlarks, red-headed woodpeckers, horned larks, vesper sparrows, bobwhites. One summer my brothers asked me to take a tractor and mower and cut the hay. I cut the hay, but avoided all the meadowlark and skunkbird (bobolink) nests. There was quite a patchwork when I got done (oddly enough, no one said anything, but that was one chore I was never asked to do again). In college, I majored in Biology, taking all the field biology classes I could. Always (too) curious about everything, I later got an M.L.S. and became a Reference Librarian. I was Program Chair for the DOAS for several years and currently serve on the Board of Directors.

March Bird Sightings

They're back!!! Birders throughout our area have spotted many first of the year species and Spring migrants. Spring's arrival seems to have happened even earlier this year.

On 2/19 Cindy Bauer saw a pair of hooded mergansers in Cooperstown, Bob Donnelly reported 10 Eastern bluebirds in Springfield and Andy Mason spotted a Northern harrier in Jefferson. The next day Andy also saw an American robin in Jefferson and Bob reported 8 robins in Cooperstown. Jeff and Sue O'Handley saw 3 turkey vultures in Laurens on 2/25. On 2/26 Bob Donnelly reported 4 short-eared owls in Cooperstown.

On 3/1 Cynthia Lockrow saw a Cooper's hawk in Oneonta. Eleanor Moriarity reported 2 red-winged

blackbirds in Davenport on 3/5 and on 3/7 she saw a belted kingfisher there also.

3/10 was a big birding day. Bruce & Janice Downie saw 5 American robins and 11 red-winged blackbirds in Oneonta; Jessie Ravage reported a killdeer and turkey vultures in Fly Creek; 2 red-winged blackbirds were seen by Gerianne Carillo in Milford; In Treadwell Gerry Cahill and I saw an American robin, a Northern harrier, and 6 common grackles. The next day 3/11, also brought in many reports. Cindy Campbell heard an American woodcock in Cherry Valley; Trina Bassoff heard the drumming of a ruffed grouse in Blenheim; In W. Burlington Tom Salo reported an Eastern bluebird while in Oneonta Bruce & Janice Downie saw a pair of them; In Gilbertsville Fred Johnson reported a red-bellied woodpecker and a great horned owl; I saw a brown creeper in Treadwell.

On 3/12 Sandy Perry & Charlie Scheim saw 4 wood ducks in Oneonta, Fred Johnson reported 50 red-winged blackbirds in Copes Corners and Gerry Cahill saw his FOY song sparrow. On 3/13 three fox sparrows were spotted by Trina Bassoff in Blenheim and in Treadwell Dorian Huneke reported a belted kingfisher and 3 common mergansers. On 3/14 Andy Mason saw 60 cedar waxwings in Jefferson and Kay Crane reported 3 song and a fox sparrow in Walton. On the next day Tom Salo observed the antics of 34 common ravens. Kay Crane also was delighted to see 4 Eastern meadowlarks in Walton. On 3/17 Dorian Huneke saw her FOY Eastern bluebird and song sparrow in Treadwell. 2 pied-billed grebes were spotted by Bob Donnelly on Otsego Lake.

If you have bird sightings please reach me, Dianne Benko at (607) 829-5218, at 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753 or at caged@wpe.com by 4/16/06 for the May *Belted Kingfisher*.

Spring Bird Walks

Walks to view returning spring migrants have been scheduled for the first weekend in May. On Saturday, May 6, a beginner's bird walk will be held in Milford State Forest in conjunction with the Earth Festival scheduled that day. Participants should meet at 8 a.m. at the Milford Central School.

On Sunday, May 7, a walk will be held at the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway, also starting at 8 a.m. Meet at the OSG parking lot on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta's West End.

Both walks will last approximately two hours and will not be strenuous. For further information, contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.



Tree Swallow Ladder

~ John Rogers

For any nest box made with relatively smooth lumber, it is very important to have a "ladder" beneath the entrance hole to enable tree swallows to exit. Significant numbers of swallows die in bluebird and other bird boxes each spring because they're not able to exit. Horizontal grooves can be sawed, or a small strip of plastic gutter guard can be stapled. I have used gutter guard for years, and it works great.



I will gladly mail a few pieces free of charge if a SASE is sent to: John Rogers, 9641 Bauer Rd., Brewerton, NY 13029. (*John Rogers is the co-founder of the NYS Bluebird Society.*)

Avian Agents to Again Head South

The Avian Agents, with DOAS team members Sue Gaynor and Andy Mason, will again be scouring the wilds of NJ on May 13, in search of the highest number of bird species, as competitors in the World Series of Birding.

Sponsored by the NJ Audubon Soc., the event draws birding teams from as far as Europe for 24 hours of intense looking and listening from the forests of northwestern NJ to the tip of Cape May. The team with the highest total receives fine optics as a reward, but the true purpose of the WSOB is a fund-raiser for NJ Audubon and other groups, such as DOAS, to assist in their efforts to protect birds.

You are invited to pledge an amount per species for the Avian Agents encouragement, or a fixed amount. Last year the team tallied 126 species—a few below our average. With good weather and a timely migration, the Agents look to increase their numbers this spring. To help the effort, return the form below by May 10.

I SUPPORT THE "AVIAN AGENTS"!

Name _____

Address _____

Pledge: ____ per species; or ____ fixed amount.

Return to: DOAS, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820
by May 10.

Remembering Two Long Time Members

We recently lost two members of DOAS who have supported our chapter for years.

Jacky Hoopes, age 89, died last month at the home of her daughter in Rochester. She was very active in DOAS for years, hosting board meetings at her house, and helping out in many other ways with programs, field trips, refreshments, etc. She was a language professor at Hartwick College, where her husband Dr. Alban Hoopes was professor of history. We miss her ever sunny personality and willingness to help wherever needed.

Elizabeth (Betty) Wright, age 85, died in Cooperstown last month. She was one of our three LIFE Members of National Audubon. She was active in our chapter many years ago. Her husband Dr. Ernest Wright taught at first Rochester and then Gainesville Medical Schools. They retired to Cooperstown, and both participated in the DOAS Christmas Bird Count for years.

~ Jean Miller

Local Wind Power Development

On March 21, 2006 the Board of Directors of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society approved a statement addressing the increasing amount of wind power development in our region. Of greatest concern to DOAS is potential impacts to birds and bats from wind turbine blades and towers. Earlier wind farms, especially one located in a major hawk and eagle winter foraging area, caused significant mortality. More modern turbine designs have reduced dangers to birds, and little mortality has been found at other sites. Even so, few projects have been built in areas where raptors and other species are known to concentrate during migration.

Hundreds of eagles and thousands hawks migrate through our area each year. The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch has recorded more Golden Eagles in a day, and in a season, than any other site in the east. Golden Eagles – a New York State endangered species – have been described by a researcher as being the raptor species at "the highest risk" for impacts from wind projects. Since a significant portion of the eastern population migrates through Delaware and Otsego Counties we expect the developers of these projects to conduct migration surveys of their sites before construction begins. We are also asking officials to require post-construction mortality surveys to determine if birds are killed.

To read the full statement, visit the DOAS website at <http://www.doas.us/>. ~ Andy Mason

February and March Field Trips

Bob Donnelly's February 25 trip to the Mohawk Valley in search of owls became a victim of the weather. The forecast was for lake effect snow in Fairfield but good conditions in Cooperstown encouraged an attempt. Unfortunately, by the time we approached the Mohawk Valley high winds and snow made both driving and birding difficult. The 2 wheel drive car in our group couldn't get out of Little Falls on the greasy roads (every road goes up). We crammed into the one 4 wheel drive vehicle and searched for Snowy Owls to no avail. Our attempt to get to the Starkville area to find Short-eared Owls also failed. Again, the 2WD vehicle couldn't get up the hills. We gave up. While the rest of the group headed south, Bob and I had to detour 15 miles east along the river before we found a way to get out of the valley.

The March 11 trip to the Utica Marsh and Mohawk Valley had better results. The weather was beautiful. A Horned Lark was found singing in Bridgewater. A number of Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures and American Kestrels were seen. At the park in Frankfort an adult Bald Eagle spent about 10 minutes soaring nearby, giving people good looks. Heading north along the West Canada Creek, both Hooded and Common Mergansers were found. At Fairfield, Steve Hall located a adult Snowy Owl. Fairfield also had both dark and light Rough-legged Hawks, multiple Northern Harriers and a Northern Shrike.

Late in the day near Salt Springville a Short-eared Owl emerged early and sat for an extended time on a power pole. Just after it started flying, it was joined by at least 5 more. There could have been as many as 7 or 8 but it was impossible to count as they came in and out of view. Before leaving that area, we found 2 Screech Owls and a displaying American Woodcock.

~ Tom Salo



Watching a Snowy Owl on the March 11 field trip: Left to right - Doug Jamieson, Charlie Dahan, Pat Jamieson (hidden), Jean Dorman.

Earth Day Cleanup Project Seeks Volunteers

Do something for the environment on Earth Day by picking up trash in Milford State Forest. Participants are also invited to bring an Earth Day-related quote to share. Meet at the DEC warehouse on Kelly Corners Road (the section between State Land Road and Burners Road). For more information, call Lisa Gorn at 607-263-5703.

Bluebirds!



A reminder that bluebird house plans and ready-built bluebird houses are available from DOAS. Plans are free and houses are \$11.00 each. Plans and houses can be obtained at DOAS functions or by mail. Contact Andy Mason, 1039 Peck St., Jefferson, NY 12093, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net

Conservation Tips

21% of all U.S. energy consumption takes place at home. Turn your hot water heater to 130° if you have a dishwasher, and lower if you do not. This is the single largest electricity user in your house. One third of your energy is lost in windows and doors. Check also your window joints, doorframes, recessed lights, fireplaces, glass doors, attics and floorboards. Caulk and insulate. Buy energy efficient appliances.

~ Jean Miller

One Final Thought:

California's efficiency programs regulating utilities will provide a net gain of \$3 Billion by reducing utility bills, and will avoid the need to build 3 large power plants. The state is concentrating on wasting less energy. They work for efficiency first and renewable energy sources second. Other states are starting to copy their successes.

~ Jean Miller

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
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www.doas.us

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Membership Application

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*. Cost is \$12 for a one year membership and \$20 for two years. Please make check payable to DOAS.

All meetings are free and open to the public. Mail checks to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544, with name, address and phone.

(Note: Please mail National Audubon renewals to address indicated on renewal notice.)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

To contribute notes or articles for *The Belted Kingfisher*, please send to: *Kingfisher* Editor, DOAS, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.