

THE BELTED KINGFISHER



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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

Volume 38, Number 2, February 2006

Editor — Gerianne Carillo

COMING ACTIVITIES

<u>February 17-20th</u>	The Great Backyard Bird Count! Join the Fun!
<u>Friday, February 17th</u>	General Meeting: "Owls - Our Nocturnal Neighbors" (see below)
<u>Tuesday, February 21st</u>	Board Meeting at the home of Barbara Marsala
<u>Saturday, February 25th</u>	Owling Trip with Bob Donnelly (see below)
<u>Saturday, March 11th</u>	Winter Bird Trip (Page 3)
<u>Friday, March 17th</u>	General Meeting: Scott Crocol on Raptors; See next issue for details
<u>Saturday, April 15th</u>	Waterfowl Trip with John Davis

NOTE: DOAS field trips are open to the public. Participants should meet promptly at the stated time and location. 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.

January Program: Owls - Our Nocturnal Neighbors **Presenters: Jeff and Susan O'Handley of the Wildlife Learning Company**

This program, featuring two of our region's more common owls, overviews the adaptations and natural history of these amazing nocturnal predators, and includes comparison with a diurnal counterpart. Live birds will be featured.

The Wildlife Learning Company, founded by Jeff and Susan O'Handley in 2003, is a full service environmental education company that strives to promote conservation of our natural environment through educational programs and products that foster an appreciation of the environment, impart an understanding of how natural systems function, and create a desire for people to explore the natural world further and take personal responsibility for its protection and care.

The program will begin at 7:30PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For more information call Gerianne Carillo at (607) 286-3855.

Owl Field Trip Planned

On Saturday, February 25th, DOAS will conduct an owl field trip around northern Otsego and southern Herkimer Counties. The trip will start around 4:00 PM to try and find some daytime owls. Please contact Bob Donnelly at 607-547-8654 for details on where to meet and with any questions.

Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

Success on Alaska! In the last issue we discussed the Bush administration's efforts to open up the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas drilling. Congress was engaged in intense political maneuvering to include an Alaska drilling provision in year end budget bills, and we urged you to contact NY's US Senators and Representatives to oppose these attempts.

The drilling provision moved quickly though, and the House of Representatives passed a defense appropriations bill that included a rider to open up the Refuge. That meant the last place to block it was the Senate, where a courageous handful of Senators filibustered the entire bill to force removal of the drilling rider. They did this against immense political pressure—opposing a defense bill is always a difficult action. They were supported by other Democrats in the Senate and even by a few Republicans. A key vote to break the filibuster failed on Dec. 21, ensuring protection of ANWR for the immediate future.

This victory came about as a result of intense last-minute contacts with senators from the environmental grassroots, including DOAS. This shows the impact we can have when we make the effort to stand united against attempts to exploit our natural resources.

What you can do: Write US Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Clinton and thank them for standing up against the Bush attempt to invade ANWR for oil and gas.

Environmental Agenda in Albany for 2006: The NY State Legislature will soon return to Albany to begin its 2006 session. All Senate and Assembly seats will be up for election this year, as well as Governor. This creates an opportunity to push for good environmental legislation, much of which is well-supported by the public, but has been stalled by special interest pressures.

Some of these bills came close to passing last year, and this could be the year they make it over the top. Among the priority legislation:

=The Community Preservation Act - This bill would give towns in NY the authority to create a community preservation fund by enacting a local real estate transfer fee of less than 2% on property transactions over a certain dollar amount. These dollars would be used to preserve open space, working farms and historic properties. This would provide much needed funds to help protect the character of communities, especially those facing heavy development pressures.

This bill has strong support in the Legislature but has been blocked by pressure on the leadership from wealthy developers.

=SEQRA Standing - The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), enacted in 1975, established an environmental review process for significant projects. It is one of the most important and effective laws we have to ensure that potential impacts to air and water quality, wildlife, public health, and other environmental considerations are taken into account before a project is approved. However, a 1991 court ruling significantly reduced the protections of SEQRA by requiring that individuals show direct injury from projects before they can have legal standing in SEQRA appeals. This decision was contrary to the legislative intent of the law when it was enacted. Legislation has been put forward to correct this and clarify who has standing under SEQRA.

=Bigger Better Bottle Bill - This sensible legislation has been on hold for several years due to opposition from the beverage industry. It would add non-carbonated drinks such as juice and bottled water to the list of beverages that have a deposit, as soda and beer currently do. These drinks now make up a large portion of beverage sales in the state, and a similar segment of the discarded trash on our roadsides. The bill would also direct the unclaimed deposits that are now kept by bottlers to environmental programs, including recycling.

=The Clean Water Protection & Flood Prevention Act - Another piece of legislation necessitated by a court decision, this bill would provide protection for small and intermittent wetlands in NY. Prior to 2001, these wetlands were regulated by the federal government under the Clean Water Act. However a US Supreme Court decision that year removed these long-standing protections, leaving small wetlands vulnerable to filling, draining and other development.

These areas are critical wildlife habitat and provide flood and drought protection by holding water during periods of extreme weather. This bill would lower the threshold for state wetland authority to 1 acre, improving the safeguards for these environmentally important parcels.

What you can do: Contact your state Senators and Assemblymembers (see page 3 for contact information) and ask for their public support for these bills. Let them know that you will be watching their actions this session and basing your vote in November on how well they perform. Stress that they need to stand up to the legislative leaders and get these measures to the floor for votes and approval.

Meet the DOAS Board



Bob Donnelly

Born and raised in Michigan, I grew up in Jackson County, an area with a large population of Sandhill Cranes. Seeing flights of these birds in the early morning mist hooked me on birds and nature. In college, I took as many field biology courses as I could. Since 1982, my wife and I have lived around Cooperstown. I have been the treasurer for DOAS the last five years, enjoying working with bright and energetic people. During the just-completed NYS Breeding Bird Atlas, I was co-coordinator with Tom Salo for Region 4. I also was able to do field work in numerous atlas blocks and came away impressed by the still wonderful habitats in our area. Leading field trips for birds is an activity I truly enjoy, and with the atlas field work done, I hope to do more. I especially love finding and showing birds to enthusiastic novices.

January Bird Sightings

I'm always amazed by those who believe global warming is having no or little effect on our environment. The month of January has been a conundrum. We've had very cold and blustery days and yet we've had our fair share of days in the 50's. This is quite an adjustment for humans, but I wonder what the long range effects are on birds who have a built-in migrational clock.

On 12/6 Cindy Bauer reported 4 fox sparrows in South Valley. On the next day 12/7 Tom Salo saw a Northern shrike in W. Burlington. On 12/8 in Davenport Center Eleanor Moriarity spotted a bald eagle. On 12/10 Trina Bassoff reported pine siskins in Blenheim and Tom Salo was lucky to see a Northern goshawk. In Treadwell on 12/12 Dorian Huneke was visited by a

Carolina wren. On 12/16 Eleanor Moriarity also saw a belted kingfisher in Stamford and Millard Hall saw a great-blue heron at the FMH. On 12/17 a pileated woodpecker was seen by Bruce & Janice Downie in Oneonta. The next day Tom Salo reported 2 common ravens. On 12/23 great-blue herons were seen by Tom Whitney in Delhi and Bob Howard in Walton. On Christmas Day Lisa Fields reported 2 common grackles in Worcester. A common redpoll was seen by Gerianne Carillo in Milford on 12/27. She also reported 40+ pine siskins on 12/31 and on that same day John Davis saw 4 common ravens.

January brought some interesting bird discoveries. On New Year's Day Bob Donnelly saw 10 common redpolls in Cooperstown. On 1/2 Eleanor Moriarity was delighted to see 2 Eastern bluebirds in Davenport Center. On 1/3 a red-bellied woodpecker was spotted by Fred Johnson in Gilbertsville. On 1/8 Lisa Fields reported 3 evening grosbeaks in Worcester. On 1/10 Tom Salo still had a lone song sparrow in West Burlington.

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 2/19/06.

Winter Bird Trip

Tom Salo will lead a birding trip on March 11 to an as yet unknown location. Reports on birding listserves and Rare Bird Alerts will help determine where to go. If Snowy Owls are around, we may go look for them. If some open water has a good assemblage of waterfowl, that may be the destination. If there are a lot of raptors someplace nearby, we may go look at hawks. Depending on what interesting birds are around, a decision will be made shortly before the trip. Anyone interested in participating should contact Tom Salo 607-965-8232 or tomsalo@localnet.com.

Addresses

U.S. Sens. Charles Schumer/Hillary Clinton
US Senate Washington, DC 20510

Schumer-(202) 224-6542 senator@schumer.senate.gov

Clinton-(202) 224-4451 senator@clinton.senate.gov

State Sens. James Seward/
John Bonacic

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Bonacic-(518) 455-3181

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Assemblymembers William Magee/
Clifford Crouch/Daniel Hooker

NY State Assembly

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Crouch-(518) 455-5741

crouhc@assembly.state.ny.us

Hooker-(518) 455-5363

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Hawkwatch Wrap-up

by Andy Mason

New Years Day, 2006 brought down the curtain on another outstanding season at The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, sponsored by DOAS and located on the DOAS Sanctuary outside Oneonta. New seasonal records were set for two species: Golden Eagle and Merlin, as well as for days of coverage at 129. Most species were above the 17-year average at FMHW. A dedicated team of counters put in 906 hours of coverage beginning August 20th.

Again, Golden Eagles were the highlight at Franklin Mountain. As noted last month, Steve Hall and Ron Milliken made history on November 11th when 71 Golden Eagles passed the lookout. This now stands as a record daily count for eastern North America for this species. This outstanding count in turn contributed to the season's total of 252 Golden Eagles, also a record for the eastern flyway. The mystery of why so many Golden Eagles pass Franklin Mountain remains unsolved, but we are very pleased to greet them!

Another highlight of the season was construction of a shelter by Kevin Magee of Otego for his Eagle Scout project. The shelter was much appreciated by the counters and visitors and provides needed storage at the hawkwatch.

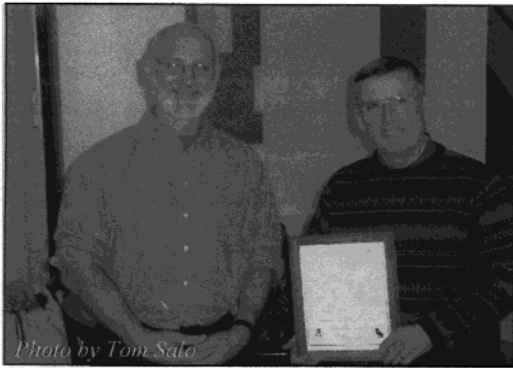


Photo by Tom Salo

Andy Mason and Larry Dake

Many thanks to this year's counters: Andy Cooper, Larry Dake, Peter Fauth, Fred Fries, Steve Hall, Art Levy, Andy Mason, Ron Milliken, Sandy Perry, Fred Reckner, Tom Salo and Charlie Scheim. Thanks also to those who spotted at the hawkwatch and otherwise provided support to the project.

The DOAS Board again showed its appreciation to the counters at a dinner for them on January 21.

Larry Dake of Walton, a long-time and committed Franklin Mountain regular, received a certificate of appreciation for his efforts at the hawkwatch.

All Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch daily counts are available online at www.hawkcount.org. Further information on the hawkwatch can be found at www.FranklinMt.org.

2006 Hawkwatch Season Totals

Turkey Vulture: 477	Broad-winged Hawk: 867
Osprey: 132	Red-tailed Hawk: 2205
Bald Eagle: 87	Rough-legged Hawk: 20
Northern Harrier: 51	Golden Eagle: 252
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 515	American Kestrel: 150
Cooper's Hawk: 113	Merlin: 36
Northern Goshawk: 25	Peregrine Falcon: 10
Red-shouldered Hawk: 52	Unidentified Raptor: 55

Total-5047

Successful Waterfowl Count

The DOAS section of the NYS Ornithological Assoc.'s annual waterfowl count turned up good numbers this year. Counting took place from Jan.14-16, and covered the East and West Branches of the Delaware River: Trout Creek; Cannonsville Reservoir; Pepacton Reservoir; Otsego Lake and tributaries; the Susquehanna River, Milford to Unadilla; Ouleout Creek including the East Sidney Lake; Buckhorn Lake; Canadarago Lake; and the Unadilla River and tributaries, Leonardsville to Sidney.

Still water was more open than usual due to a January thaw, but moving water was quite high for the same reason.

Waterfowl totals: Mute Swan-1; Canada Goose-514; Mallard-171; Am. Black Duck-118; Redhead-6; Hooded Merganser-41; Common Merganser-65; Am. Coot-28; Common Goldeneye-2; Total-944.

Other species of interest sighted included: Bald Eagle, Ring-billed Gull, Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel.

Thanks to participants Matt Albright, Cindi Cobbe, Kay Crane, Larry Dake, John Davis, Bob Donnelly, Lisa Gorn, Andy Mason, Ed McGittigan, Eleanor Moriarty, Katie Ray, Tom Salo.

- Andy Mason

DOAS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**- J. Robert Miller, 2005****Date:** 12-17-05 **Time:** 4AM-4PM **Weather:** Cloudy **Total Species:** 47 **Total Birds:** 5247

The annual count on December 17th found 19 people in 7 groups counting all the birds in their respective territories within our 15-mile diameter circle centered near Milford. Leaders were Charlie Scheim, Betty New, Bob Donnelly, Rod Carter, Elma Hollway, Andy Mason, and Gerianne Carillo. In addition, 11 people were feeder watchers, contributing all the birds they observed at their feeders.

Two species that moved north into our area in very recent years are of interest: 3 Red-bellied Woodpeckers and 1 Carolina Wren. Also, Ravens have moved in from the north in recent years; 3 of them were noted. The only winter finches seen were 1 Redpoll, 83 Pine Siskins and 17 Evening Grosbeaks. Lingers were 2 Flickers, 1 Song Sparrow, 2 White-throated Sparrows, 4 Cowbirds and 1 Wood Duck.

Seen at least 2 Yrs. 1969-04, ()=2 yrs. only, [] = 3 yrs.

(Common Loon)	3 (Red-bellied Woodpecker)	Pine Grosbeak
Great Blue Heron	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Purple Finch
10 Canada Goose	68 Downy Woodpecker	73 House Finch
9 American Black Duck	26 Hairy Woodpecker	Red Crossbill
72 Mallard	2 Northern Flicker	(White-winged Crossbill)
(Canvasback)	6 Pileated Woodpecker	1 Common Redpoll
(Bufflehead)	Horned Lark	83 Pine Siskin
10 Common Merganser	437 Blue Jay	194 American Goldfinch
(Hooded Merganser)	818 American Crow	17 Evening Grosbeak
(Osprey)	524 Black-capped Chickadee	108 House Sparrow
Northern Harrier	86 Tufted Titmouse	
[Golden Eagle]	9 Red-breasted Nuthatch	
(Bald Eagle)	87 White-breasted Nuthatch	
2 Sharp-shinned Hawk	3 Brown Creeper	
Cooper's Hawk	1 Carolina Wren	
1 Northern Goshawk	Golden-crowned Kinglet	
Red-shouldered Hawk	(Ruby-crowned Kinglet)	
17 Red-tailed Hawk	(Varied Thrush)	
1 Rough-legged Hawk	American Robin	
3 American Kestrel	Northern Mockingbird	
1 Ring-necked Pheasant	9 Cedar Waxwing	
Ruffed Grouse	3 Northern Shrike	
427 Wild Turkey	1156 European Starling	
(Northern Bobwhite)	45 Northern Cardinal	
(Killdeer)	[Eastern Towhee]	
10 Ring-billed Gull	100 American Tree Sparrow	
Herring Gull	1 Song Sparrow	
400 Rock Pigeon	2 White-throated Sparrow	
225 Mourning Dove	White-crowned Sparrow	
4 Eastern Screech Owl	181 Dark-eyed Junco	
3 Great Horned Owl	Snow Bunting	
1 Barred Owl	Red-winged Blackbird	
Belted Kingfisher	Common Grackle	
[Red-headed Woodpecker]	4 Brown-headed Cowbird	

Seen 1 Yr. Only 1969-04

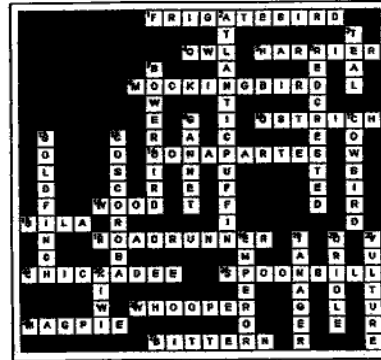
Tundra Swan
Green-winged Teal
Ring-necked Duck
Merlin
Common Barn-Owl
Northern Saw-whet Owl
3 Common Raven
Boreal Chickadee
Eastern Bluebird
Swainson's Thrush
Wood Thrush
Gray Catbird
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Fox Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Rusty Blackbird
Bullock's Oriole

Additional Species

1 Wood Duck

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
 PO Box 544
 Oneonta, NY 13820
www.doas.us

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Answers for "Crossword Challenge",
 January Newsletter

To read "The Belted Kingfisher" online, go to www.doas.us and click on the newsletter link.

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Membership Application

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Soc. 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.