

# THE BELTED KINGFISHER



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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

Volume 41, Number 6

June 2009

Guest Editor:  
Gerianne Carillo

## COMING ACTIVITIES

\*Note: As this is the last edition of *The Belted Kingfisher* until September, we have chosen to include scheduled activities well into the future, for your interest and information. Please check the September 2009 issue for more specifics on the later items below.

- June 7            Spring Bird Walk, 8:00 AM Sunday at the Schoharie Land Trust's Paulson Preserve in Jefferson. The walk will explore the preserve's mix of hardwood and conifer forests, open space, and wet lands. To reach the Paulson Preserve, take State Rte. 10 onto Peraglie Rd., 4.5 miles south of Summit and 4 miles north of Jefferson. Turn left on Rum Hill Rd. -- Parking is about one mile at the end of the road. Leader, Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).
- July 12            Nature walk at the Milford State Forest, 9AM; trip sponsored by the Otsego County Conservation Association (OCCA). Trip leader: John Davis, (607) 547-9688, [davi7js4@hughes.net](mailto:davi7js4@hughes.net).
- Aug. 10-13:      DOAS Summer Day Camp (see below).
- Aug. 18            Board Meeting, 7PM, at the home of Tom Salo.
- Sept. 15            Board Meeting, 7PM, at the home of Stephen Rice.
- Sept. 18            General Meeting: Todd Katzner to present his research on Asian Vultures.
- Oct. 3              Open House at the DOAS Sanctuary.
- Oct. 16             Charter Dinner, with presentation on the Golden Eagle by Tricia Miller.

### THE JOHN G. NEW AUDUBON DAY CAMP - AN ADVENTURE IN NATURE AUGUST 10 - 13, 2009

Each summer, the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society offers a one-week summer day camp to children who will be entering grades 3-6 in the fall. The camp, located at the DOAS Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain, will run from August 10-13, 2009.

DOAS camp provides hands-on field experiences in natural science and environmental education. Through field investigation, crafts and games, the campers explore a variety of habitats and learn about the creatures that live there.

Registration forms and payment must be received by July 20, 2009. Due to limited space availability, registrations will be accepted on a first come, first serve basis. DOAS Camp brochure and registration information are posted on the DOAS web site at [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us). Or you may call 607-988-7805 for more information.

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### Bad News and Good News

Things are not going well here on earth. It should have come as no surprise that our recent program on White Nose Syndrome drew about a third of the attendance of the previous month's program featuring beautiful bird photographs. Who wants to hear more bad news? Does this lack of attendance mean we should avoid addressing unpleasant problems? I don't think so. It is necessary to confront these unpleasant realities, to acknowledge threats if there is any hope of making things better. As an organization that advocates for nature and wildlife, we need to make an effort to educate our members and the public about various threats. We also need to show them the beauty that is worth saving. I think we find a good balance.

Fortunately, all the news is not bad. There has been a sea change in Washington. For the first time in many years we have a President who cares about the environment. He is seriously addressing the threat of climate change. For too long, the executive branch pretended the problem did not exist so they could continue to serve industries that exacerbate the problem. Just before writing this column, I heard on NPR that new car fuel efficiency standards will be implemented earlier than planned. Hopefully, many more actions like this will follow.

Locally, there are small positive signs. The Merlins are nesting again in Oneonta. We also learned that the blood test of the one that was trapped last year showed very low mercury levels.

At the DOAS property in Burlington, beavers greatly expanded their impoundment this year. The quality of wetland habitat is much improved. Ducks and geese are nesting around the now flooded old stream bed. Turtles are sunning themselves on logs. Tadpoles are swimming around. It has been fascinating to watch these changes take place in such a short time. Over the next year or two, the hemlocks the beavers girdled will be dying and allowing light on the forest floor.

The beavers have not done any more damage to the rare black maples since we surrounded the best trees with wire. Our efforts to vegetatively propagate those trees failed last year. However, they have now set seed for the first time since they were discovered. This is very good news. We intend to collect this seed and start growing replacement trees next year. This species is very closely related to sugar maple but has a more southern range. In a warming world, the genes from these trees may prove valuable for keeping maples in our region.



We all need to keep hope alive while fighting things that threaten what we love. Keep fighting. Write your elected officials. Donate money to good causes. Get out and enjoy nature. Watch birds. Paddle on a local river some early morning. Take a walk. Take a child with you. DOAS will try to balance the good and bad. Try to do the same in your own life.

~ Tom Salo



*Shown are seeds on one of the Black Maple trees on the DOAS Burlington property.*

### Addresses

**President Barack Obama**  
**The White House**  
**Washington, DC 20500**  
[www.whitehouse.gov/contact](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact)  
**(202) 456-1111**

US House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515  
 (202) 225-5076  
 fax: (202) 225-5077  
[www.tonko.house.gov](http://www.tonko.house.gov)

Secretary Ken Salazar  
 Dept. of the Interior  
 1849 C Street, N. W.  
 Washington DC 20240

*22nd Congressional District*  
*(Delaware Co. Towns of*  
*Deposit, Hancock and*  
*Tompkins)*  
 Rep. Maurice Hinchey  
 US House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515  
 (202) 225-6335  
 fax: (202) 226-0774  
[www.house.gov/hinchey](http://www.house.gov/hinchey)

**US Congress**  
*20th Congressional District*  
*(Otsego Co. towns of Cherry*  
*Valley, Roseboom, Decatur,*  
*Worcester, Maryland, Westford,*  
*Millford, and Middlefield*  
*Delaware Co., except towns of*  
*Deposit, Hancock and*  
*Tompkins)*  
 Rep. Scott Murphy  
 US House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515  
 (202) 225-5614  
[www.scottmurphy.house.gov](http://www.scottmurphy.house.gov)

*24th Congressional District*  
*(Otsego Co. towns of*  
*Springfield and*  
*Hartwick, Laurens, Oneonta*  
*(including City of Oneonta)*  
*and west. All of Chenango*  
*Co.)*  
 Rep. Michael Arcuri  
 US House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515  
 (202) 225-3665  
 fax: (202) 225-1891  
[www.arcuri.house](http://www.arcuri.house)

*21st Congressional District (All*  
*of Schoharie Co.)*  
 Rep. Paul Tonko

## CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

**A second strike for Obama on endangered wildlife** -- The still young Obama administration in Washington has made another decision disregarding serious threats to an endangered species.

In early May, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar in effect endorsed the Bush administration's policy of excluding the harmful effects of global warming on polar bears from consideration under the Endangered Species Act, claiming that a law protecting endangered species shouldn't be used to take on the issue of climate change.

Earlier this year, Sec. Salazar had also gone along with Bush policy in delisting wolves in the northern Rockies from the Endangered Species Act (see the April edition of *The Belted Kingfisher*).

In the latest action, the Interior Department refused to rescind a rule that says actions that threaten the polar bear's survival cannot be considered when safeguarding this iconic mammal, if they occur outside the bear's Arctic home.

The Endangered Species Act requires that a threatened or endangered species must have its habitat protected. Environmentalists say that in the case of polar bears, the biggest threat comes from pollution--mainly carbon dioxide from faraway power plants, factories and cars--that is warming the Earth and melting Arctic sea ice.

Salazar's predecessor in the Bush administration, Dirk Kempthorne, had issued a "special rule" that limited the scope of the bear's protection to actions within its Arctic home. Obama's Interior Dept. head has now agreed, stating, "The Endangered Species Act is not the appropriate tool for us to deal with what is a global issue, and that is the issue of global warming."

This decision leaves polar bears at risk to melting and breakup of the sea ice they depend upon to travel and feed. Scientists say as many as 15,000 could be lost in the coming decades because of the loss of Arctic sea ice, a key element of its habitat.

Salazar's decision was praised by Republicans, including Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, who hailed the decision as a "clear victory for Alaska" because it should help North Slope oil and gas development.

Environmentalists, who had hoped for a significant change in approach to endangered wildlife from the Obama administration, see it differently. "For Salazar to adopt Bush's polar bear extinction plan is confirming the worst fears of his tenure as Secretary of Interior," said Noah Greenwald, of the Center for Biological Diversity which, along with the Natural Resources Defense Council and Greenpeace, has a

lawsuit challenging the bear rule.

On the wolf front, Idaho and Montana are moving ahead with plans to kill all but 300 – of an estimated total of 1,343 – of the wolves in those states, now that federal protection has been removed.

In Alaska, Gov. Palin's aerial assault continues, with at least 84 wolves killed during a five day stretch in March, using helicopters, spotter planes and high-powered guns. So far, over 1,000 wolves have been chased down and shot by gunmen in low-flying aircraft in this scientifically unsound effort to increase game.

In Arizona, the population of the southwestern wolf, or "lobo", is down to only 52 individuals in the wild—and only two breeding pairs. A female lobo was recently shot by a poacher and left along a roadside. Illegal shooting is the leading cause of documented loss of lobos.

**What you can do:** Clearly wolves are still at risk, despite limited recovery in some areas. Inadequate governmental protection, legal and illegal hunting, and persecution by farmers and ranchers are all serious threats.

Polar bears face dramatic and unsurvivable alteration of their world from climate change.

Contact President Obama and Interior Secretary Salazar and urge them to reinstate protections for these animals. Tell them that our nation has a legal and moral responsibility to protect endangered species.

Ask your congressional representative to cosponsor the Protect America's Wildlife Act, federal legislation to end the practice of using aircraft and gunmen to chase and kill wolves in Alaska. The state has abused its ability to manage wolf populations in engaging in wholesale aerial killing and must be reined in. (*Editor's note: see left for your representative's contact information.*)

~ Andy Mason

## **SPRING MIGRATION COUNT**

Ten parties went afield on May 16 for the 2009 DOAS Spring Migration count. Various areas in Delaware, Otsego and Schoharie Counties were covered to find the greatest variety of birds at the height of spring migration. A cumulative total of 123 species were recorded. No one reached the century mark this year. Andy Mason had 96 species, 94 of which were in the

(Continued on page 4)

**SPRING EAGLE COUNT REPORT AVAILABLE**

A report on the eagle counts conducted south of the Cannonsville Reservoir in early March is now available on the DOAS web site – [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us). Volunteer counters from Franklin Mountain working at a 3 site transect recorded all raptors moving through the area during the period from March 5-14. Adjusted totals for the transect (eagles seen from more than one site were only counted once) found 31 Golden Eagles and 66 Bald Eagles migrated through the transect. The number of both species is high when compared to other sites in the northeast. It appears this is a significant corridor for eagles moving north in the spring.

~ Tom Salo

**OTSEGO COUNTY BIRDING SPOTS**

Around Otsego County, there are some places I recommend to go if one has either a lot or a little time to spend birding. One of my favorite spots includes the paths around Moe Pond near Cooperstown. The paths are marked, and start at a small parking lot at the upper end of Main Street. The habitats include open ponds, wetlands, conifers, hardwoods and brush. Even though Moe Pond itself has few birds using it, the nearby ponds are full of wildlife. Olive-sided flycatchers are frequent visitors during migration. The different trails are all easy to walk.

If there are two or more people, and you have a few hours, a trip down the Susquehanna River from Milford to Portlandville is well worth the time. You can leave one car at the put-in at Portlandville, and then put a canoe in the river near Milford. It is an easy float down the river. Great Horned Owls, Northern Waterthrushes, and Gnatcatchers, along with many more common birds, are frequently found along the way. Pack your sunscreen, a snack, and enjoy a lazy morning.

~ Bob Donnelly

**SUCCESS STORY -- ISLAND RESTORATION**

Santa Cruz Island is again seeing the Bald Eagles and the little Santa Cruz Island Fox around the island. This little island, one of the Channel Islands off the coast of California, faced a severe setback when ocean dumping of DDT upset the ecology there. It affected the fish-eating Bald Eagles, killing and poisoning them. This caused the land-hunting Golden Eagles to move in from the mainland, lured by the year-round supply of feral pigs. The little foxes made an easy

(Continued on page 6)

**(Spring Migration Count, continued from page 3)**

town of Jefferson, Schoharie County. Next were Cheryl & Joanne Boise with 92. Several parties were in the mid-80s, including the Delhi Bird Club with 86 species; Sandy Bright, Laurel Elder, Charlie Scheim, Mike Ulrichs, and Susan Young with 85; and Dave Kiehm, and Joanne & Tom Salo with 84.

Highlights included three Merlins, one found by the Boise sisters in Cooperstown in the neighborhood where one was observed last year; and a nesting pair in Oneonta's Wilber Park, presumably the same pair that successfully nested there last year. This expanding and increasingly urban species seems to like our area.

Other good birds included a Bufflehead found by the Boises, who also located Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at a nest on Otsego Lake. Julia Gregory had the only Sharp-shinned Hawk and Swainson's Thrush on the count. Julia also spotted two Bald Eagles to go along with the five found by the Delhi Bird Club. The DBC also had the only Solitary Sandpiper and Black-billed Cuckoo. Cuckoos were in short supply this year--only one Yellow-billed was found--by Dave Kiehm and the Salos.

The party of Rod Carter, John Davis, Dick DeRosa, and Marion Karl turned up a single Red-bellied Woodpecker; Randy Lynch and Eleanor Moriarty had a Philadelphia Vireo; and the Delhi Bird Club had a Pine Grosbeak.

Lingering Pine Siskins were counted by five parties, but through migrant warblers were scarce with only a few Tennessee, Blackpoll and Bay-breasted reported. Surprisingly, Cedar Waxwings showed up from only one group. Swallows were also low, with rough-winged and bank each seen by one group, and Cliff Swallow by two.

On the bright side, meadowlarks were reported by five parties, Wood Thrush by nine, and bluebirds by eight.

Totals for all species can be found on the DOAS web site, [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us).

Participants other than those already mentioned include: Fran Darrah, Bruce & Janice Downie, Larry Duckwall, and Betty New. Delhi Bird Club participants include: Lauren Beck, Nancy Cannon, Cynthia Cobbe, Lucille Courtney, Georgina & Larry Dake, Margo Graham, Heidi Hartman, Betty MacGibbon, Katherine Mario, Ray Sprague, and Cynthia & Frank Waterman. (Editor's note: see opposite page for a complete list of totals.)

~ Andy Mason

**SPRING MIGRATION COUNT TOTALS  
MAY 16, 2009**

Species	Total	Species	Total	Species	Total
Great Blue Heron	8	Eastern Phoebe	31	Black-throated Blue Warbler	12
Green Heron	1	Great Crested Flycatcher	7	Yellow-rumped Warbler	19
Turkey Vulture	51	Eastern Kingbird	23	Black-throated Green Warbler	23
Canada Goose	196	Blue-headed Vireo	9	Blackburnian Warbler	16
Wood Duck	12	Yellow-throated Vireo	2	Pine Warbler	1
Mallard	31	Warbling Vireo	14	Prairie Warbler	11
Bufflehead	1	Philadelphia Vireo	1	Bay-breasted Warbler	1
Hooded Merganser	2	Red-eyed Vireo	60	Blackpoll Warbler	3
Common Merganser	18	Blue Jay	114	Black-and-white Warbler	8
Northern Harrier	3	American Crow	137	American Redstart	22
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	Common Raven	7	Ovenbird	90
Bald Eagle	7	Tree Swallow	204	Northern Waterthrush	3
Broad-winged Hawk	3	N. Rough-winged Swallow	1	Louisiana Waterthrush	6
Red-tailed Hawk	13	Bank Swallow	20	Mourning Warbler	4
American Kestrel	10	Cliff Swallow	16	Common Yellowthroat	115
Merlin	2	Barn Swallow	88	Canada Warbler	7
Ruffed Grouse	13	Black-capped Chickadee	112	Scarlet Tanager	15
Wild Turkey	41	Tufted Titmouse	17	Eastern Towhee	18
Killdeer	12	Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	Chipping Sparrow	34
Solitary Sandpiper	1	White-breasted Nuthatch	16	Field Sparrow	16
Spotted Sandpiper	4	Brown Creeper	5	Savannah Sparrow	8
American Woodcock	8	Carolina Wren	1	Song Sparrow	91
Ring-billed Gull	1	House Wren	42	Swamp Sparrow	17
Rock Pigeon	63	Winter Wren	17	White-throated Sparrow	30
Mourning Dove	101	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	White-crowned Sparrow	7
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	Eastern Bluebird	24	Dark-eyed Junco	50
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	1	Veery	11	Northern Cardinal	49
Great Horned Owl	2	Swainson's Thrush	1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	60
Barred Owl	7	Hermit Thrush	9	Indigo Bunting	26
Chimney Swift	22	Wood Thrush	37	Bobolink	90
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	33	American Robin	225	Red-winged Blackbird	297
Belted Kingfisher	12	Gray Catbird	75	Eastern Meadowlark	9
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	Brown Thrasher	12	Common Grackle	73
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	24	European Starling	96	Brown-headed Cowbird	121
Downy Woodpecker	24	Cedar Waxwing	3	Baltimore Oriole	90
Hairy Woodpecker	9	Blue-winged Warbler	7	Pine Grosbeak	1
Northern Flicker	14	Tennessee Warbler	2	Purple Finch	35
Pileated Woodpecker	5	Nashville Warbler	9	House Finch	16
Eastern Wood-Pewee	7	Yellow Warbler	82	Pine Siskin	29
Alder Flycatcher	4	Chestnut-sided Warbler	65	American Goldfinch	141
Least Flycatcher	30	Magnolia Warbler	5	House Sparrow	37

Total Birds observed: 4116

Total Species: 123

Note: Total counts for each species were not reported by all parties. If a species was reported as sighted only, one individual was included in totals.

## NEW BIRDING AIDS

For those who may not be aware, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology has done a far-reaching makeover of its website "All About Birds" (<http://www.birds.cornell.edu>). This is a truly remarkable source of information about the avian world, sort of an ultimate field guide and birding encyclopedia in one, with information on 585 species of birds of North America, quick access to the famed MacCaulay Library of animal (including bird) songs, ways to enhance your birding skills and much, much more. It's all free and an easy first stop on the web before going to the (paid subscription required) Birds of North America on Line (<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna>) or other scholarly birding resources. If you haven't done so, check it out! And, in addition, for those of you inclined to use an iPod (especially the new iPod Touch) or an iPhone, there are now at least two great birding downloads: BirdJam with the bird songs adapted from the outstanding Stokes CDs ([www.birdjam.com](http://www.birdjam.com)) and iBird, an extensive "Field Guide" with bird songs, range maps and other useful species information for essentially all North American birds (<http://www.ibirdexplorer.com>). The field of useful, quickly retrievable information on our avifauna is racing ahead!

~ John Davis

### **(Success Story, continued from page 4)**

target for the eagles, which hunted them nearly to extinction. The fox was historically the top predator on the island.

When the Nature Conservancy and National Park Service stepped in five years ago to help restore the island's ecological balance they first eradicated the feral pigs and sheep. Golden Eagles were captured and relocated, and Bald Eagles were set free on the island. The remaining 10 pairs of foxes were captured, bred in captivity, and eventually released on the island. Today there are seven pairs of Bald Eagles nesting on the island, other nesting birds have returned, and foxes have rebounded to more than 700. New shoots of native plants are again seen, and little oak seedlings are springing up now that the acorn-eating pigs are gone. These islands support 65 plant species found nowhere else, and the efforts to restore native animals has helped native plants to again thrive.

This is a true success story, and a new model for endangered species recovery.

~ Jean T. Miller, from  
*Nature Conservancy, Summer 2009*

## "A (TOO) CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH A CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER"

In my never-ending search for quality reference material for my art, I have been looking for likely subjects in most of the parks, lakes and woodlands in our area. On a recent trip to the Arnold Lake State Forest in Milford, my goal was to find and photograph Chestnut-sided, Common Yellowthroat, Magnolia and maybe Blackburnian Warblers. A towhee and any flycatcher would be a bonus. I was not 50 yards down the trail when a Chestnut-sided began to sing not far away. I decided to try to see if he would come closer for a good look and maybe a couple of photos. To get some birds closer, I will often play a tape with the target bird's song. Many birds will come closer to look to see who the new guy on the block is or who would dare to enter their territory. I sat with my back to a small bush and pointed my camera out in front of me where I hoped the bird would come out and land. I pressed the iPod to play and waited to see if the warbler was curious enough to investigate. I did not have to wait more than 10 seconds before a brightly colored "bullet" shot out from the bush in front of me and made directly for my face. I had the camera in front of my face so I held tight to see what would happen next. Before I knew what was happening, the warbler landed on my head and proceeded to sing its heart out. I could not figure out how to photograph this bizarre scenario so I sat still as the little bird marched about on my head and belted out note after note. After what seemed like 5 minutes (probably 45 seconds), the warbler flew to the bush in front of me and stared back with a menacing glare. I was able to get some photos but as soon as he left the bush, I packed up and headed down the trail. I thought it best to leave this little tough guy alone. I was very thankful it was not a hawk or an owl. My head would have suffered a much different fate.

~ Dave Kiehm



Here's a photo of the "offending bird", a Chestnut-sided Warbler, taken by Dave Kiehm.

## APRIL-MAY BIRD SIGHTINGS

Spring is doing its thing. Returning bird migrants are making their way back to our area on a daily basis adding bursts of color to the landscape. It's exciting!

On 4/8 Dorian Huneke saw a Northern Flicker in Treadwell. Tom Salo reported an Eastern Towhee in W. Burlington on 4/15. He also saw a Field Sparrow there the next day. On 4/18 Andy Mason saw Rough-winged Swallows in Cobleskill. Tom Salo reported a Palm Warbler in W. Burlington on 4/19.

At the DOAS Sanctuary Andy Mason saw a Blue-headed Vireo and Yellow-rumped Warblers on 4/21. Marge Mathis reported a singing White-throated Sparrow in Morris on 4/22. On 4/24 Becky Gretton saw an Osprey in Warren and Gerianne Carillo saw Tree Swallows in Milford. Andy Mason heard several singing Yellow Warblers in Stamford on 4/25. 4/26 brought a plethora of bird sightings. Andy Mason reported a Warbling Vireo and a House Wren in Jefferson; he also saw Black and white and Black-throated Green Warblers in Oneonta; Gerianne Carillo saw a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Milford; a Louisiana Waterthrush was reported by John Davis in Cooperstown; Tom Salo saw a Brown Thrasher in W. Burlington; Dorian Huneke saw an Eastern Wood-Pewee in Treadwell.

On 4/27 Andy Mason reported Broad-winged Hawks in Jefferson, John Davis saw a Chestnut-sided Warbler in Cooperstown, Eleanor Moriarity saw a Great Crested Flycatcher and a Gray Catbird in Davenport and Gerianne Carillo saw a Barn Swallow in Milford. 4/28 ushered in a variety of bird species. Andy Mason saw an Ovenbird in Jefferson, Eleanor Moriarity reported a Wood Thrush, a Baltimore Oriole, and a Spotted Sandpiper in Davenport and Gerianne Carillo reported a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Milford. On 4/29 Tom Salo saw a Hermit Thrush and an Eastern Kingbird in W. Burlington. The next day Mourning Warblers were seen by Bob Donnelly in Cooperstown.

On 5/2 Tom Salo reported 2 Magnolia Warblers in W. Burlington. Dorian Huneke saw an Indigo Bunting in Treadwell on 5/4. Sandra Bright saw 3 Chimney Swifts in Oneonta on 5/5. On 5/7 Andy Mason reported a Least Flycatcher in Jefferson. John Davis saw a Black-billed Cuckoo in Cooperstown on 5/11. Dorian Huneke reported Bobolinks in Treadwell on 5/12.

If you have bird sightings to report, please contact me [dbenko@frontiernet.net](mailto:dbenko@frontiernet.net), 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753, 607 829-5218 by May 17, 2009 for the September issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*.

~ Dianne Benko

## UNPLUGGED WHIZ KIDS

In Eastern Pennsylvania a group of 10- to 16-year olds are collecting bug data for the first time since 1900. This group of kids is known as the Naturalist's Club. The common bond between them is the love of nature and of being outdoors.

Here is a clear example that kids can become unplugged and learn to contribute to science. The Naturalist's Club has projects ranging from going on Hawk watches to leading nature walks at the Lehigh Gap Nature Center. Currently, they are helping to re-vegetate a large Superfund site. The Bee project is hands-on research under the mentoring of a retired USDA honeybee researcher and, by the end of summer, this group of whiz kids will be sending their bee data on to the USDA to be recorded.

A recent report found that, between the ages of 8 to 18, a period of 45 hours a week is spent before electronic devices. Once again in reading about this heart-lifting group of kids, the mention of the need for our connect to nature to bring about a healthy emotional, physical and spiritual growth is targeted.

In a previous article, I had written about Richard Louv, author of "The Last Child Left in the Woods," and his bringing attention to the significance of our children lacking a nature connection. His phrase, "nature-deficit disorder", has brought attention to the benefits of bringing children to nature.

Summer is about four weeks away, but the kids are already signed up for all the structured activities for the summer months: soccer camp, computer camp, baseball camp, etc. If we just attempt to plan for 6.5 hours over a week's time to do one nature-connected activity with our own, a relative's, or friend's children – exploring the woods, walking a beach or lake, just looking, hearing, and seeing – perhaps we can build a generation of whiz kids. Maybe, just maybe, a future scientist might emerge.

~ Eleanor Moriarty

Look to our September issue for details of our fall activities and upcoming programs.  
Have a wonderful summer!

*The DOAS Board of Directors*

