



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## COMING ACTIVITIES

### JUNE

*Note: The 6/18 program advertised in the May 2010 issue has been cancelled. The only DOAS program occurring in June is "Birds of Prey" on June 19.*

6/19: **Program:**  
Birds of Prey, Live with Jeff O'Handley, 10:30am, DOAS Sanctuary, Franklin Mountain (see below right).

### AUGUST

8/17: **Board Meeting**, 7pm, home of Tom Salo.

### SEPTEMBER

9/17: **Program:** Sandy Bright to present her 2 years of study of our local Oneonta Merlins.

9/21: **Board Meeting**, 7pm, home of Stephen Rice.

**COME AND JOIN US!**

## Brown Spotted Birds

By Joe Richardson

What's special about those brown spotted birds that serenade us from the woods at this time of year? Peter Fauth's fine DOAS presentation in March has primed me to think about thrushes, and who can think about thrushes without thinking about their songs? Why are they so well-endowed

*(Continued on Page 6)*



*Louisiana Waterthrush,  
by Dave Kiehm*

### FAMILY OUTREACH PROGRAM: NO CHILD LEFT INSIDE Saturday, June 19, 10:30am-12 Noon

Gather up your kids and come out to our Sanctuary to experience the excitement of this live program featuring Birds of Prey, presented by Jeff O'Handley.

Jeff is President and co-founder of the Wildlife Learning Company, and a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. He is the primary caretaker of the live animal teaching collection (though he and his wife Susan prefer to call them their "animal staff").

Jeff shares, with regard to his philosophy on Environmental Education: "I believe it's important for everyone - not just kids - to have an understanding of and appreciation for the beauty and wonder

found right outside your door. We need to dispel the notion that the commonplace animals, plants and habitats are somehow less important than pandas, coral reefs and tropical rain forests - it's all important." Jeff is an excellent educator and is able to relay information to audiences of all ages in a fun and meaningful way.

Jeff will present a great program as part of the DOAS Family Outreach Project. Programs like these, that reach and teach the younger generation about the outdoors around them, are an investment in our future and that of the planet.

Come and join us at this Father's Day weekend event!

**All DOAS Programs are free and open to the public.**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**THE DOAS BOARD***Tom Salo*

This month I want to point out some of the important work done by our Directors and Officers, along with our webmaster and our two most recent newsletter editors. This active and dedicated group is responsible for our success. While I can't possibly describe everything they do in this limited space, I've tried to give a brief account of how each person benefits the organization.

Nancy Cannon is a long-time Director and a skilled birder. She takes a special interest in land use issues, especially in her home county of Delaware. She is actively involved in efforts to reduce wind power and gas drilling impacts.

Gerianne Carillo is a former Director and current Newsletter Editor. She is a passionate birder and environmentalist. Her commitment to excellence is evident in everything she does, including the newsletter.

Former President John Davis is our current Secretary and publicity person. John is a friendly, welcoming presence at every DOAS function. He is among our best ambassadors, reaching out to groups and individuals. He regularly teaches about birds and leads the annual Otsego Lake waterfowl trip.

Our Treasurer, Bob Donnelly is also the Field Trip Committee Chair. Bob regularly leads field trips for owls and other hard to find species. You can all have complete confidence that our finances are in good hands.

Lisa Gorn is a former Director and our current webmaster. Our excellent, up-to-date website is a testament to her attention to detail. Lisa works to involve more people in our volunteer activities.

Julia Gregory is a politically active Director from Unadilla. She often staffs public events and does an excellent job of organizing our annual Charter Dinner. Julia makes a significant contribution to board meeting discussions and decisions.

Dave Kiehm is a Vice President and a professional artist. Dave is a regular contributor to our publications. He leads field trips and bird walks. His artwork and artist's sensibility enhance our public image in many ways.

Barbara Marsala is a former President and current Director. She is the Education Committee Chair. Her special interest in education and great organizational skills benefit us in everything she does for DOAS.

Andy Mason is a former President and current Vice President. Andy has been involved in almost every DOAS activity at some level. His contributions, if listed, would require a whole column. I credit him with building the foundation for what DOAS is today.

Bob Miller currently organizes our bird counts. His dedicated and able service as Newsletter Editor for 30 years is something for which we are very grateful. He was among the first people I know to use a computer for this type of publishing.

Jean Miller is a former President and current Vice President. Jean is passionate about protecting the environment. She is currently acting as our representative on a coalition seeking greater protection from gas drilling

**THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO  
AUDUBON SOCIETY  
FOUNDED 1968**

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:**

GERIANNE CARILLO

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TO CONTRIBUTE NOTES OR ARTICLES FOR  
THE BELTED KINGFISHER PLEASE SEND TO  
"KINGFISHER EDITOR" AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS,  
OR EMAIL [EDITOR@DOAS.US](mailto:EDITOR@DOAS.US)

COVER ARTWORK BY DAVE KIEHM

*Continued on Page 3*

**CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION**

BY ANDY MASON

**OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING - RECIPE FOR DISASTER COME TRUE**

The ongoing horror of millions of gallons of crude oil pouring from an undersea well into the Gulf of Mexico has drawn the nation's attention. That it should take a debacle such as this to get regulators and politicians to understand the dangers of this activity is a sad commentary on our society and government.

At the end of March, the Obama administration made a splash of its plans to open vast expanses of water along the Atlantic coastline, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and the coast of Alaska to oil and natural gas drilling, much of it for the first time. Conservationists had kept expanded offshore drilling at bay through the anti-environment administrations of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, but was let down by a president who campaigned on reducing America's

addiction to fossil fuels.

Since the Gulf oil spill, there has been some withdrawal by the supporters of increased drilling — what else could they do, facing a spill that may yet earn the dubious title of the worst ever? However, the recently introduced American Power Act still encourages offshore drilling by promising revenues to states that allow it. President Obama praised this bill nine days after he toured the Louisiana coastal area affected by the oil spill!

The President has made a political calculation that Americans will support expanded drilling, despite the disaster in the Gulf. This is a cynical approach that says business as usual will continue, even as the failed well continues to pump heavy crude into our coastal waters. A truly courageous leader would just

say no to offshore drilling, and strongly move the nation towards efficiency and renewable energy.

**What you can do:** Contact President Obama and let him know that he is minimizing the lessons of the Gulf oil spill by continuing to push for expanded offshore drilling. This blind rush to open up the Atlantic and Alaska for more drilling belies his supposed support for renewable energy.

Also, let our US Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Charles Schumer know that the American Power Act is unacceptable without a ban on offshore drilling. If politicians cannot now recognize the dangers and devastation this energy source brings, they are intentionally looking away, and avoiding responsibility to the environmental and public health.

***The DOAS Board, continued from Page 2***

impacts. She is the Hospitality Committee Chair and leads wildflower walks. Jean was a key part of DOAS from the very beginning.

Eleanor Moriarty is a Director and our very energetic Program Committee Chair. Eleanor seeks out all those excellent speakers that present at our monthly programs. She is an ardent, and politically active proponent of more protection for the natural world. She too leads field trips.

Stephen Rice is a Director and our Sales Committee Chairperson. Stephen is an exceptionally caring and compassionate person who brings balance to the board that tends to be objective and scientific. His interests help to keep the board's focus on what is important.

Joe Richardson is a Director and retired Ecology Professor. Joe is very thoughtful. Board discussions frequently benefit from his contributions. Joe is working on issues surrounding the impacts of natural gas. He recently surveyed the plants in our Burlington wetland.

Thanks to all of you for everything you do.

Tom Salo  
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## DOAS-DELHI ANNUAL MAY BIG DAY COUNT

May 22nd was a beautiful day and we were treated to some very nice birds. The total species count was 126. In 42 years (1969-2010) we have totaled in the 130s 7 times, in a 125-129 slot 11 times and in the 120-129s 19 times.

Some species recorded which are not usually seen on this count were pied-billed grebe, green heron, mute swan, merlin, least sandpiper, worm-eating warbler, rusty blackbird and pine siskin. Each of these was seen once. Notable species that have expanded northward into this region only in recent years are N. Mockingbird (zero in last 2 or so years, and zero this year), Red-bellied Woodpecker (one only) and Carolina Wren (one only). Jeffrey Murray, a DOAS member but not on the DOAS count, reported to Osbirds that he saw a Brewster's Warbler and a Hooded Warbler. And there was a report of a White-eyed Vireo to the Delhi group but no verification for it. No location was noted for any of these 3 birds.



*Worm-eating Warbler, Dave Kiehm*

species, the Boises 94, Andy Mason 89, the Millers 82, the Salos 80, Scheims 79, Moriarty group 71, Betty New group 70, Julia Gregory group 66, Carter Cooperstown group 61, and Downie group, with a very small area, had 23.

The Delhi Bird Club had 11 people in small groups in the field: Cynthia Waterman, Kathy Mario, Betty MacGibbon, Lucille Courtney, Cindy Cobbe, Ray Sprague, Doris Carman, Pam Peters, Terry Gemmel, Harry Barnes and Nancy Cannon.

DOAS people were 25 in 10 groups: Cheryl and Joanne Boise, Rod Carter, Marion Karl, Eric Knight, Carol Beechy, Andy Mason, Peter Stephan, Bob and Jean Miller, Betty New, Frances Darrah, Leslie Preston, Julie Smith, Tom and JoAnn Salo, Julia Gregory, Sarah Tims, Janice Downie, Larry Duckwall, Eleanor Moriarty, Randy and Carol Lynch and Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright.

Bob Miller

The warblers we missed were Golden-winged, Tennessee, N. Parula, Cape May, Bay-breasted, Cerulean and Wilson's. The complete species list is on page 5.

Team results: entire Delhi group: 94

### DOCUMENTARY FILM "GASLANDS"

This special film is to be shown, with a live appearance by Sundance Festival Winning Director Josh Fox, Wednesday June 16 at 7:00 pm in the Cooperstown Central High School Auditorium on Linden Avenue. Open to the public, free of charge, donations accepted.

Gaslands tells the story of the effects of the largest domestic natural gas drilling boom in history that has swept across the United States and is poised to enter upstate New York. The recent gulf spill reminds us that this kind of technology - now proposed for our area - can be catastrophic.

It raises awareness about the negative impact of natural gas drilling on public health and the environment. This is one of the most effective and expressive environmental films of recent years.

"Gaslands" may become to the dangers of natural gas drilling what "Silent Spring" was to DDT.

Cooperstown is one of 20 communities in PA and NY chosen to host an evening of awareness and action against unsafe gas drilling. Gaslands is winner of this year's Sundance Special Jury Prize.

Jean Miller  
432-5767

### MAY ELECTION RESULTS

The annual election of Directors was held on May 21 prior to the May program. The slate of candidates submitted by the Nominating Committee were all elected unanimously. No nominations were submitted from the floor. The following will serve as Directors until May 2012: Nancy Cannon, Julia Gregory, Barbara Marsala, Andy Mason, Jean Miller and Tom Salo.

Tom Salo

## 2010 BIG DAY BIRD COUNT RESULTS

### Compiled by Bob Miller

List of Species Seen		
Common Loon	Pileated Woodpecker	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Alder Flycatcher	Black-throated Green Warbler
Green Heron	Willow Flycatcher	Blackburnian Warbler
Turkey Vulture	Least Flycatcher	Pine Warbler
Mute Swan	Eastern Phoebe	Prairie Warbler
Canada Goose	Great Crested Flycatcher	Blackpoll Warbler
Wood Duck	Eastern Kingbird	Black-and-white Warbler
Mallard	Blue-headed Vireo	American Redstart
American Black Duck	Warbling Vireo	Worm-eating Warbler
Hooded Merganser	Red-eyed Vireo	Ovenbird
Common Merganser	Blue Jay	Northern Waterthrush
Northern Harrier	American Crow	Louisiana Waterthrush
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Common Raven	Mourning Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Tree Swallow	Common Yellowthroat
Bald Eagle	N. Rough-winged Swallow	Canada Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Cliff Swallow	Scarlet Tanager
Broad-winged Hawk	Barn Swallow	Eastern Towhee
Red-tailed Hawk	Black-capped Chickadee	American Tree Sparrow
American Kestrel	Tufted Titmouse	Chipping Sparrow
Merlin	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Field Sparrow
Ruffed Grouse	White-breasted Nuthatch	Savannah Sparrow
Wild Turkey	Brown Creeper	Fox Sparrow
Killdeer	Carolina Wren	Song Sparrow
American Woodcock	Winter Wren	Swamp Sparrow
Common Snipe	House Wren	White-crowned Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper	Marsh Wren	White-throated Sparrow
Least Sandpiper	Golden-crowned Kinglet	Dark-eyed Junco
Ring-billed Gull	Eastern Bluebird	Northern Cardinal
Rock Pigeon	Veery	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Mourning Dove	Hermit Thrush	Bobolink
Black-billed Cuckoo	Wood Thrush	Red-winged Blackbird
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	American Robin	Eastern Meadowlark
Barred Owl	Gray Catbird	Rusty Blackbird
Chimney Swift	Brown Thrasher	Common Grackle
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	European Starling	Brown-headed Cowbird
Belted Kingfisher	Cedar Waxwing	Baltimore Oriole
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Blue-winged Warbler	Purple Finch
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Nashville Warbler	House Finch
Downy Woodpecker	Yellow Warbler	Pine Siskin
Hairy Woodpecker	Chestnut-sided Warbler	American Goldfinch
Northern Flicker	Magnolia Warbler	House Sparrow

**Total Species Seen: 126**

## MATCHING FUNDS STILL NEEDED FOR PROJECTOR

As reported in last month's *Kingfisher*, DOAS has been approved for a matching grant from the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation to purchase a computer projector, screen and related equipment for use at our monthly programs and other presentations. We have needed this updated equipment for some time, and this is an excellent opportunity to get it.

In order to meet the match required under the grant, we need to raise \$520 as DOAS' share. We have made progress halfway toward this goal, but still need donations to make this a success. We are appealing to our members for assistance! Please forward contributions to DOAS, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820, and note "projector donation" on your check.

Andy Mason

## *Brown Spotted Birds, continued from Page 1*

vocally? Come to think about it, why are other brown spotted birds also such lusty songsters - ovenbirds, for example, and their close cousins Louisiana waterthrushes (both warblers despite their names), not to mention song sparrows and brown thrashers? Are the genes for plumage color and vocal prowess possibly linked? Not very likely, and difficult to investigate! Are there clues, instead, in the ecology of these birds?

Immediately we strike pay dirt - sort of. The three brown-spotted thrushes of our local woodlands - wood thrush, hermit thrush and veery - share this habitat with ovenbirds and waterthrushes; also, all these species nest on or very close to the ground. Song sparrows and brown thrashers also nest close to the ground, but in more open, brushy habitats. Perhaps, then, we should leave them out of the story at first.



*Hermit Thrush, by Dave Kiehm*

So what is it about brown spotted coloration and lusty singing that especially benefits forest thrushes and forest ground warblers? These two groups are not closely related taxonomically, but seem to have converged as they evolved into successful forest dwellers. If we think camouflage for the color and communication for the song, we may be getting close to an answer. Brown-with-spots is good camouflage on the forest floor, and camouflage for a ground nester may be especially important. Yes, the bubble-gum pink legs of a Louisiana waterthrush are

pretty conspicuous, but not when the bird is sitting on its nest! And males announcing territorial rights and attracting mates near the forest floor may do better with vocal communication in this shady habitat than with the bright coloration of, say, an open country cardinal - or even a treetop tanager. Moreover, if you've ever tried to fix the exact location of an ovenbird or wood thrush by its song, you will know how difficult this is; they are master ventriloquists! Their motto seems to be: if it's best to communicate by sound, at least throw your voice (and confuse the hungry predator)!

Turning to our last pair of brown spotted birds - song sparrows and brown thrashers - we need not abandon the camouflage argument. True, they are birds not of closed forests but of open, shrubby habitats and stream edges, but camouflage must still be very useful, for these birds also are near-ground nesters. And lacking bright coloration, we would expect male thrashers and song sparrows to be strident songsters. Indeed, unlike the forest birds, they shun concealment when they sing their exuberant melodies. Their songs may have more than a little aggression in them, but to us, watching them pour their hearts out from the tip of a branch, they seem to be singing for pure pleasure!

Finally, we should at least take note of two thrush species common to our area that are not primarily birds of the forest - robins and bluebirds. Living in more open habitats but nesting above ground in places less vulnerable to ground predators, these thrushes are not brown and spotted, and they communicate as much with their bright colors as with their voices. Bluebirds, especially, are very modest songsters. Open-country thrushes obviously have a different suite of adaptations than their forest relatives. Yes, you say, but aren't young robins brown and spotted? Well, OK! I must grant you that!

Joe Richardson

**FAVORITE PLACES SERIES:  
MARTIN BROOK PARK,  
UNADILLA**

This little park is a gem located just outside the village of Unadilla. Originally built as the village water supply, it is a series of waterfalls and pools used to settle out the soil and clarify the water before piping it into the village. Now the park hosts a small pavilion and picnic tables. In the pavilion there is a map of the walking trails through the forested 14-acre hillside.

Martin Brook Park is one of my favorite places for a bit of relaxing birding, and a good place to find warblers in the spring. I stopped one evening after a hectic day and was treated to a choir of Hermit Thrushes, Wood Thrushes and Veeries. I've seen Pileated Woodpeckers, Ruffed Grouse, Scarlet Tanagers and several kinds of vireos there. If you climb to the upper boundary there are fields with Bobolinks as well.

Most of our spring woodland wildflowers can be found there: trillium, jack-in-the-pulpit, violets, hepaticas, etc. But the premier attraction are the pink ladyslippers in June. They're harder to find now than a few years ago but are worth the hunt.

All you have to do is follow the signs from Main St., Unadilla to the park.

Julia Gregory

**EXPERTISE IN MAPPING NEEDED**

We are excited to have received much positive feedback for our "Favorite Places" series, and we plan to continue it into the future.

We would like to offer a map of each targeted location, and are looking for someone to assist us to that end. If anyone has mapping expertise and can help, please email me at [editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@doas.us).

Also, if you have a favorite place to bird or just be in nature, and you would like to submit an article for consideration in our series, send it to the email above (or mail to the address on page 2).

Thank you to our active membership for all you do!

Gerianne Carillo, Editor

**CONSERVE WATER FOR GARDENING**

A simple rain barrel under a gutter's downspout can do wonders in conserving water and preventing polluted storm water runoff from entering sewers. The rain barrel, with a hole in the top to collect the rainwater, and a spout at the bottom to release water for lawns and gardens, is the most basic system for conservation. A fine screen over the top hole will prevent mosquitos from entering and breeding in the water.

Jean T. Miller

**MEMBERSHIP REMINDER**

Please check your address on this newsletter for your membership expiration date.

This date is shown by four numbers—the first two digits indicate the year and the second two digits indicate the month, i.e., '1006' is June, 2010.

Renewal information is below — please renew and continue your support of DOAS and our programs.

**DOAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, The Belted Kingfisher. Cost is \$15 annually or \$25 for two years. Please make your check payable to "DOAS" and mail payment with this form to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

**Note: Please mail National Audubon *renewals* to address on renewal notice.**

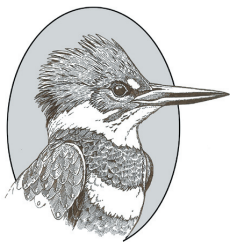
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*Cape May Warbler,*  
*by Dave Kiehm*

## APRIL-MAY BIRD SIGHTINGS

As I was peering out my kitchen window my eyes focused on a very industrious Song Sparrow as it meticulously plucked out the delicate hairlike bristles from a gone to seed dandelion. One by one it pulled out each hairy thread and gobbled up the seed at its tip. This all took place one foot away from my birdfeeder where I had recently scattered seed. To each his own, I guess.

On 4/16 Andy Mason saw a Blue-headed Vireo and heard a singing Hermit Thrush behind his house in Jefferson. Singing White-throated Sparrows appeared near Dorian Huneke's feeders in Treadwell the next day. Sandy Bright reported a Brown Creeper nesting in Wilber Park on 4/19. Dorothy Scott Fletcher spotted a Double-crested Cormorant perched on a snag in a large pond in Oneonta on 4/22. On 4/24 Andy Mason saw Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers and a Winter Wren, and heard a persistently singing Brown Thrasher at the DOAS Sanctuary. He also had his first of the season (FOS) Black-throated Green Warbler in Jefferson on 4/30.

May 1 was a birding day extraordinaire. Ed McGittigan saw 3 Wood Ducks and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Downsville. A Yellow Warbler was seen by Sandy Bright in W. Oneonta. In Jefferson Randy Lynch reported a Warbling Vireo, a Common Yellowthroat, a Least Flycatcher and a Baltimore Oriole. John Birkett saw 5 Bobolinks, the FOS for him, Lesser Yellowlegs and a Solitary Sandpiper in Bainbridge. Also 3 Chimney Swifts

flew over Sandy Bright's deck in Oneonta. The next day John Davis saw a Gray Catbird in Cooperstown, Sandy Bright saw a Blackburnian Warbler in Wilber Park, Gerianne Carillo spied a Baltimore Oriole singing happily on a crabapple tree branch in Milford enjoying the blossoms and Gregory Capobianco saw an Ovenbird and Canada, Prairie, and Blue-winged Warblers in Cobleskill. On 5/5 John Davis had his FOS Eastern Kingbird in Bainbridge, Charlie Scheim saw several Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway, Gerianne Carillo saw her FOS Ruby-throated Hummingbird consuming junk food in Milford and Tom Salo reported a Mourning Warbler in W. Burlington. Marge Mathis saw her FOS Rose-breasted Grosbeak eating sunflower seeds on her deck in Morris on 5/9. Warren Ryther saw 2 Northern Mockingbirds in New Lisbon on 5/11. Merwin and Sally Howard saw an Indigo Bunting at their feeder in Sidney and Becky Gretton saw Palm and Cerulean Warblers at Glimmerglass Park on 5/13. On 5/15 Sandy Bright and Charlie Scheim heard a Black-billed Cuckoo calling near Woodhaven Golf Course and also saw Barn Swallows and a Great-crested Flycatcher in Oneonta.

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 August 15, 2010 for the next issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*.

~ Dianne Benko