



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

June

June 11 — Bicknell's Thrush Field Trip

June 12 — Beginner's Bird Walk at DOAS Sanctuary

June 21 — DOAS Board Meeting

July

July 16 — Hike up Vroman's Nose, Schoharie County

August

August 16 — DOAS Board Meeting

September

September 16 — DOAS Program

September 20 — DOAS Board Meeting

More information on page 7

All DOAS programs are free and open to the public

Annual May Big Day Bird Count

This is a joint count of Delhi Bird Club and DOAS. Delhi fielded 15 observers in northern Delaware County and DOAS had 11 teams of 20 people covering the Oneonta area and north to route 20. Our species total was 139, the highest we have ever had in the 41 previous years. And in only 7 of those years were we in the 130s with 135 and 136 being the highest of those 7 years. The timing on the warblers was good, the weather was good, and Bob Donnelly and Eric Wright were out long before dawn searching out owls and then covered the area from Cooperstown north to Route 20 to include a number of water birds we seldom see. Bob and Eric had the very high record of 115 species in the 24 hours.

Two birds new to our count were Hooded Warbler and Common Moorhen, seen by Bob and Eric. Especially nice were the 6 Purple Martins reported by Delhi. There have been none we were aware of in our area for several years now. It was also nice to see reports of one or a few of Northern Mockingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Marsh Wren. It was no surprise to see no Golden-winged Warblers but unusual to not see Northern Parula and Cape May Warblers.

All in all it was a great day.

— Bob Miller



Hooded Warbler, by Dave Kiehm

See 2011 Big Day Bird Count Results on page 5.



Dave and Maggie

President's Message
A Day at Crown Point

A bare, rocky point jutting into Lake Champlain's western shore has long been one of the most popular birding spots in this bird rich valley. Crown Point's Revolutionary War era forts make a great backdrop for another attraction for birders, the Crown Point Bird banding Station. Gary Lee and Gordon Howard have run the station since the mid-1970's. The "station" consists of a half dozen lines of mist nest that go from the ground to about 6 feet high. Paths are cut in the dense underbrush and these nests are placed in the openings. All the birds flying low

through the cover hit the soft net and get tangled in the mesh.

We arrived at the Crown Point around 9 AM and found Gary measuring the wing of a male goldfinch recently caught. He noted all the details in a log that covered over 30 years of data. He then deftly placed a tiny band on one leg and opened his hand to let the bird free. The brilliant yellow bird gave us all a hard stare and flew away.

The station is run for the first couple of weeks of May (sometimes a few days longer) each year. If you are along Lake Champlain's western shore in the spring, make some time to visit the station. The historic forts are interesting in themselves but Gary's endless stories and Gordon's southern charm are worth the visit (and don't forget the birds!).

Dave & Maggie
 607 286 9222
 kieh@ocblue.com



Gary Lee removing a chickadee from a mist net, by Dave Kiehm



A recently banded White-crown sparrow ready to fly free, by Dave Kiehm

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

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 Helen McLean

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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

Conservation and Legislation

Water withdrawals for hydrofracking—right in our own backyard—Until now, the threat of hydrofracking for natural gas in our region has seemed just that—a threat. But now it is real: XTO Energy, a subsidiary of Exxon Mobil, has submitted an application to the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) for withdrawal of 250,000 gallons of water a day from the Oquaga Creek, a tributary of the West Branch of the Delaware River in Broome and Delaware Counties. The purpose of the withdrawals is to provide water for anticipated hydrofracking activities by the company. The DRBC regulates ground and surface water withdrawals in the Delaware River basin.

There was a brief window of opportunity to comment on this request. The DRBC gave the public just 10 working days notice of the scheduled vote on the withdrawals. A public hearing was scheduled in Trenton, NJ, over 4 hours from the site that would be affected. A quick response by those concerned about drilling and water withdrawals did result in nearly 8000 comments, mostly opposed to the withdrawals, and asking for a longer comment period. To their credit, the DRBC has extended the comment period until a public hearing is held in the vicinity of the withdrawal site, to be scheduled before June 11.

This is just the first of what can be expected to be a flood of water withdrawal attempts within the Delaware and Susquehanna River basins if and when state and federal regulators approve hydrofracking. The DRBC estimates between 15,000 and 18,000 wells to be drilled in the Delaware Basin, and each well uses up

to 6 million gallons of water. Not only is this immense quantity of fresh water taken from rivers and aquifers, but it also becomes tainted with fracking fluids and materials from the wells, and is transformed into a dangerous waste material.

It is very important that regulators hear a strong outcry from the public over this inappropriate and threatening use of our clean water—particularly in this case which will set a precedent for how such requests are handled in the future. This withdrawal is physically close to us, and will affect the Delaware River, one of our most important natural resources.

What you can do—Let the DRBC know your opinion on the Oquaga Creek water withdrawal proposal. Written comments may be submitted by e-mail to Paula.Schmitt@drbc.state.nj.us or by mail to Commission Secretary, DRBC, P.O. Box 7360, 25 State Police Drive, West Trenton, NJ 08628-0360. E-mails should include “XTO Energy” in the subject line and include the name, address, and affiliation (if any) of the commenter. The draft XTO Energy water withdrawal proposal (termed a ‘docket’ by DRBC) can be viewed on the Commission’s web site at www.drbc.net.

Also, keep an eye out for announcement of the public hearing, likely to be held in Broome County. If you would like to receive notification of this information, sign up for the DOASnews listserve at www.groups.yahoo.com/group/DOASnews. Another good source for information on hydrofracking is the Catskill Mountainkeeper web site, www.catskillmountainkeeper.org.

Andy Mason

Update on the DOAS Kestrel Project

This year, we decided to participate in the New York State Audubon Kestrel Project.

Six Kestrel boxes were placed in various locations in Delaware and Otsego County. Schools and individual citizens are engaged in this important project whose goal is to provide nesting habitat for the declining Kestrel population.



Gail and Nelson DuBois are the first to report a possible success. On May 2nd, Gail was able to take a picture of a female Kestrel sitting in the box. More recently, when the Kestrels were away from the box, Gail looked inside, took a great shot of the five beautiful eggs sitting on the wood chips.

We look forward to a series of great photos and hope this pair of Kestrels will be successful.

Photos by Gail DuBois



Earth Day Festivals 2011

DOAS was kept busy this April participating in numerous Earth Day Festival Events. On April 9th, the annual OCCA (Otsego County Conservation Association) Earth Festival was held at Milford Central School. The focus was the three R's of waste management: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. The DOAS display focused on the environmental issues and projects our organization engages in. Tom Salo had put together a slide show of the best pictures from our Winter Eagle Project over the past two years.

It drew a great deal of attention and interest from the younger generation curious about how to become involved. Andy Mason, our conservation chair, had crafted a letter for a number of our elected officials, bringing attention to the dangers of hydrofracking, citing the well documented indictment in the New York Times series of articles in 2011. Once again we were able to obtain a number of signatures and continue with our education of the public on the potential environmental assault from hydrofracking. Before the opening of the Earth Festival, Dave Kiehm organized a birding walk at Robert V. Riddell State Park. For those attending this walk – I did – a wonderful view of a Northern Shrike was the prize.

On April 27th, DOAS joined in with other local groups and college clubs to participate on the SUCO campus for the Earth Day Event. This was our first year attending. Our focus for this event was on a devastating situation in a wetland on the college campus. Through an anonymous letter sent to our board, a concerned citizen had stated that a wetland had been used over a period of time as a dumping ground for leftover cement, and other types of building waste. We went to view the damage and it was indeed horrifying. We took pictures, presented the information and were able, through targeting this situation publicly, to gain the attention and concern from the college vice president, who in turn contacted Andy Mason. The results were swift: the administration stated the dumping would be stopped, action would be taken to remove the debris and cement, and that restoration would take place. The students belonging to the environmental groups were grateful for the information about this wetland assault being brought to their attention. Through discussion of our common goals we gained a recognition of how each of our groups could benefit from working together. We plan

to meet in the Fall with the college environment clubs. DOAS used this opportunity to educate and activate the students about the hydrofracking issues. A number of letters discussing the dangers of hydrofracking were signed and sent to the appropriate elected officials. It was worth the time and effort to participate in the SUCO Earth Day.



Drowning in Plastic Bags
Earth Day participant exhibits the horror of plastic shopping bags used annually

On May 2, 2011, DOAS was represented in Albany for Earth Day Lobby Day sponsored by a number of environmental groups, such as New York State Audubon, Atlantic Chapter Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, etc., to focus on the five super bills coming up before the legislators. The bills address various issues from expanding solar energy, curbing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting watersheds from hydrofracking and making communities more pedestrian friendly. One hydrofracking bill by Assemblyman Sweeney and Senator Avella, considered by a number of active organizations to be in need of immediate attention, seeks to close the hazardous waste loophole. At present, any hydrofracking fluids or drill bit

waste (being accepted into landfills in Western New York) is considered industrial waste and therefore is not subject to strict regulations as to transport, treatment, storage and disposal. Scientific studies have proven that the common frack fluid ingredients (containing carcinogenic benzene) and the returning flowback water bringing up naturally occurring salts, heavy metals and radioactive particles meet the definition of hazardous waste.



Joe Richardson at the DOAS table on Earth Day in Milford NY
Computer is exhibiting Winter Golden Eagle Project

This year our participation at the Earth Day events provided a wider audience with whom to engage with at a state and local level, and continued our outreach efforts to the younger generation.

Eleanor Moriarty

2011 Big Day Bird Count Results

Compiled by Bob Miller

Common Loon (3)	Rock Pigeon	Barn Swallow	Blackpoll Warbler (3)
Pied-billed Grebe (2)	Mourning Dove	Black-capped Chickadee	Cerulean Warbler (1)
Double-crested Cormorant (≥1)	Black-billed Cuckoo (2)	Tufted Titmouse	Black-and-white Warbler
American Bittern (≥1)	Eastern Screech-Owl (≥1)	Red-breasted Nuthatch	American Redstart
Great Blue Heron	Great Horned Owl (≥1)	White-breasted Nuthatch	Ovenbird
Green Heron (2)	Barred Owl (4)	Brown Creeper	Northern Waterthrush
Turkey Vulture	Chimney Swift	Carolina Wren (2)	Louisiana Waterthrush
Mute Swan (≥1)	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Winter Wren	Mourning Warbler
Canada Goose	Belted Kingfisher	House Wren	Common Yellowthroat
Wood Duck	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Marsh Wren (2)	Canada Warbler
Mallard	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Golden-crowned Kinglet (2)	Scarlet Tanager
American Black Duck	Downy Woodpecker	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (≥1)	Eastern Towhee
Blue-winged Teal (≥1)	Hairy Woodpecker	Eastern Bluebird	Chipping Sparrow
Lesser Scaup (≥1)	Northern Flicker	Veery	Field Sparrow
Hooded Merganser (2)	Pileated Woodpecker	Hermit Thrush	Savannah Sparrow
Common Merganser	Eastern Wood-Pewee	Wood Thrush	Fox Sparrow (2)
Osprey (≥1)	Alder Flycatcher	American Robin	Song Sparrow
Northern Harrier (≥1)	Willow Flycatcher	Gray Catbird	Swamp Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk (1)	Least Flycatcher	Northern Mockingbird (2)	White-crowned Sparrow
Cooper's Hawk (2)	Eastern Phoebe	Brown Thrasher	White-throated Sparrow
Bald Eagle (7)	Great Crested Flycatcher	European Starling	Dark-eyed Junco
Broad-winged Hawk	Eastern Kingbird	Cedar Waxwing (8)	Hooded Warbler (1)
Red-tailed Hawk	Blue-headed Vireo	Blue-winged Warbler	Northern Cardinal
American Kestrel	Yellow-throated Vireo	Tennessee Warbler	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Ruffed Grouse	Warbling Vireo	Nashville Warbler	Indigo Bunting
Wild Turkey	Red-eyed Vireo	Yellow Warbler	Bobolink
Virginia Rail (2)	Blue Jay	Chestnut-sided Warbler	Red-winged Blackbird
Killdeer	American Crow	Magnolia Warbler	Eastern Meadowlark
American Woodcock (3)	Common Raven	Black-throated Blue Warbler	Common Grackle
Common Snipe (≥1)	Purple Martin (6)	Yellow-rumped Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
Solitary Sandpiper (2)	Tree Swallow	Black-throated Green Warbler	Baltimore Oriole
Spotted Sandpiper	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Blackburnian Warbler	Purple Finch
Least Sandpiper (≥1)	Swallow	Pine Warbler (4)	House Finch
Ring-billed Gull (4)	Bank Swallow	Prairie Warbler	American Goldfinch
Common Moorhen (≥1)	Cliff Swallow	Bay-breasted Warbler (1)	House Sparrow

NB: ≥ 1 indicates species seen at least once, possibly more; birds with no mark indicate commonly seen species

The Peacock

An unusually loud, raucous call emanating from the woods behind the house early one spring morning piqued my interest: A crow? Long-eared owl? Raven? Unable to pursue the matter further, I left for work. Several days later my neighbor reported



a peacock in his backyard. A peacock? In the wilds of upstate New York? Soon I had a male peacock in full regalia at my feeder. Anxious to return him to his home, I queried all the neighbors (and anyone else I met). No one was missing (or wanted) a peacock. And so it went as spring turned to summer. The homeless peacock began to follow me around the yard, perhaps hoping that someday I would introduce him to a personable peahen. Despite P's best efforts at strutting, vocalizing, and preening, no peahen ever appeared. Roosting in a tall locust near the house, he stood guard over the backyard, assuring

no intrusions by fowl or beast. Other than his somewhat loud call (no worse than a pack of coyotes), eating begonia flowers constituted his only bad habit. As summer changed to fall, P, now silent, began to shed his magnificent tail feathers and the question of what to do with P became more pressing. Someone assured me that, with food and cover, he could survive an upstate New York winter. I doubted this. October turned to November and the first snow came. Purely by chance, I met someone who would take P if I could catch him. Although ideas on how to capture the 8' long (with tail) peacock of summer eluded me, trapping the tailless peacock seemed more manageable. So I borrowed a dog cage, lured P into it with cracked corn, and threw a blanket over the cage. The soft, timid whimper emanating from P's cage as he was carried off to live in a warm barn with 11 other peafowl bore no resemblance to his boisterous call in spring. Winter came.



Nancy Cannon

NYS Audubon Director of Conservation and Science: DOAS Annual Charter Dinner Speaker

All that water and no place to land:

Stopover ecology of migrant land birds near the Great Lakes

At the annual DOAS Charter Dinner in October, Mike Burger, Director of Conservation and Science, NY State Audubon, will discuss the ecology of land birds migrating through the Great Lakes Basin and why habitat patches near the lakes are important and can be such great places for birding.

Mike Burger has been with Audubon New York since 1999 and now serves as their Director of Conservation and Science. Based at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, Mike functions as Audubon New York's chief scientist, with a responsibility of providing a science-based foundation for all of the organization's programs. Additionally, he oversees research projects, including a study of migrant bird use of stopover sites near Lake Ontario and several of Audubon New York's conservation programs, including the Important Bird Areas, grassland bird conservation, and forest stewardship programs. In 2008, Mike was elected to the first class of Conservation Leadership Fellows through Audubon's Together Green program. Using the resources that came with the fellowship, he began to coordinate an effort to increase collaboration across the Audubon network in the east, which is now known at the Atlantic Flyway Initiative and is providing an organizing framework for Audubon from Maine to Florida and

into Central and South America. Prior to coming to Audubon, Mike earned his Bachelor's degree at Wittenberg University in Springfield OH. He earned his M.S. and Ph.D degrees at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where he studied climatic and physiological determinants of bird ranges and was supported by a Department of Energy Global Change Fellowship.

Bears and Birdfeeders

A new DEC regulation on bears that could affect our feeding of birds was reported in the Times Herald-Record on January 25, 2011, so I went to the DEC website to read the rule for myself.

Here is the exact wording. Read carefully!

187.1 Black bear feeding

The deliberate, intentional feeding of black bears is prohibited. The incidental, indirect feeding of black bears becomes unlawful once a written warning has been issued by the department...

"Incidental or indirect feeding" means using, placing, giving, exposing, depositing, distributing or scattering any material for a different purpose but which attracts one or more black bears. This includes storage of garbage or refuse and use and storage of birdseed in a manner that is accessible to black bears. (the underlining is mine)

Valerie Freer

(reprinted from *Warblings*, bulletin of the Sullivan County Audubon Society)

Coming Activities

June

June 11 — Bicknell's Thrush Field Trip: led by Craig Nunn. This will be a Saturday evening hike up Hunter Mountain in Greene County for Bicknell's Thrush and other high elevation Catskill species. This quite strenuous but only moderately difficult hike up the jeep road to the summit of the mountain should produce singing Bicknell's Thrushes at dusk. This declining species is found in New York only on the higher peaks of the Catskills and Adirondacks. Other species possible include Swainson's Thrush, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Blackpoll Warbler and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. The walk down will be in the dark, so participants should bring flashlights, plus snacks, water, and something to eat for dinner on the mountain. Meet at 3 PM at the Spruceton Trail DEC parking area near the end of Spruceton Road, 6.7 miles east of the junction of Spruceton Road and Route 42. The parking area is on the left as you travel east on Spruceton Road (if you reach the parking area on the right at the end of Spruceton Road, you have gone a bit too far). Contact Craig Nunn at (551) 206-6823 for further information. In the case of awful or dangerous weather the trip will be cancelled.

June 12 — Beginner's Bird Walk at DOAS Sanctuary: led by Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162. A Sunday walk for novice birders will be held at the DOAS Sanctuary. This will be an easy walk around the varied habitats found on the property, focused on common birds and bird songs. Participants should bring binoculars and field guides if they have them; a limited supply will be available for loan. The walk will begin at 8 AM and last approximately two hours. To reach the Sanctuary, follow the signs from the intersection of Southside Drive and Swart Hollow Road in Oneonta.

June 21 — DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162.

For details, see the Events page of our website – <http://www.doas.us/page0002.html>

July

July 16 — Hike up Vroman's Nose, Schoharie County: led by Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162. Join us for a hike up Vroman's Nose, a significant geologic feature along the Schoharie Creek Valley. This promontory provides spectacular views of the valley and surrounding area from the flat-topped and glacial-striated summit. The climb is moderate, approximately 1.5 miles round trip, on a maintained trail. Participants should meet at the I-88 Exit 22 park and ride lot, east of Cobleskill, at 9 AM.

August

August 16 — DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Dave Kiehm, (607) 286-9222.

September

September 16 — DOAS Program: The program will begin at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For more information contact Program Chairman Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054 or (607) 278-4083.

September 20 — DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Stephen Rice.



Peregrine Falcon, by Dave Kiehm

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.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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Bobolink, by Dave Kiehm

April-May Bird Sightings

Spring is exploding with color. Gardens and plantings galore are proudly displaying their array of rainbow hues. The birding world isn't any different. Bursts of color can be seen flitting from tree to tree and blossom to blossom. Diane & Bruce Aaronson were astonished to see a dozen Baltimore Orioles and several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds busily visiting their cherry tree blanketed in bloom in Oneonta on 5/5.

Two Chipping Sparrows greeted Dorian Huneke in Treadwell on 4/16. The next day a White-throated Sparrow feasted on castoff seeds under Sandy Bright's feeder in Oneonta. Tom Salo had the pleasure of seeing a Baltimore Oriole in W. Burlington on 4/19. Andy Mason saw a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Jefferson and Sandy Bright heard a Yellow-rumped Warbler singing in the woods in Oneonta the next day. On 4/21 Scott Fielder saw 2 Double-crested Cormorants in Oneonta. A Rufous-sided Towhee was singing in Tom Salo's yard in W. Burlington and Marge Mathis saw a Brown Thrasher in Morris on 4/25. 4/26

was bursting with bird activity. Andy Mason reported a Black-and-White Warbler and a Least Flycatcher in Jefferson, Dave Kiehm saw both a Black-throated Blue and a Black-throated Green Warbler and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Milford and Tom Salo saw 3 Eastern Kingbirds in W. Burlington. The next day Andy Mason saw a Gray Catbird and an Ovenbird in Jefferson and heard a singing Yellow Warbler at the Greenway Trail, Bob Donnelly reported Yellow-throat Warblers, a Blue-headed Vireo and Wood Thrushes in Cooperstown, Charlie Scheim saw for the first time in Oneonta a Common Tern and Tom Salo had a Palm Warbler in W. Burlington. On 4/29 a Scarlet Tanager visited Tom Salo in W. Burlington and Dorian Huneke saw Carolina Wrens in Treadwell. Charlie Scheim spotted a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Oneonta and John Davis watched a couple of exuberant Winter Wrens and a Great-crested Flycatcher in Cooperstown the next day.

May had many new birding arrivals. Chimney Swifts were seen by Charlie Scheim in Oneonta (5/1). On May 3rd, 2 male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were eating sunflower seeds on opposite ends of Marilyn Bailey's feeder in Oneonta and

Tom Salo listened to 8 noisy male Bobolinks in W. Burlington. While on the Greenway Trail Sandy Bright and Charlie Scheim saw Spotted Sandpipers, Rough-winged Swallows and Warbling Vireos on 5/5. On 5/7 Dorian Huneke saw Barn Swallows in Treadwell, Tom Salo had a Mourning and a Chestnut-sided Warbler in W. Burlington, Andy Mason saw an American Redstart in Roxbury and Gerianne Carillo observed an Upland Sandpiper in Richfield Springs. The next day Martha Frey saw a Scarlet Tanager perched in a tree looking for wildflower blossoms in Springfield. On 5/14 Bob Donnelly played a Hooded Warbler recording in his yard in Cooperstown and 3-4 minutes later a Hooded Warbler popped out dancing just about 25 feet away from him, his first really good look at this bird. The next day Gerianne Carillo had her FOS Indigo Bunting at her feeder in Milford and the newest member to DOAS, Julie Barton, was thrilled to hear a Chestnut-sided Warbler in Schenevus.

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607-829-5218 for the fall issue of
The Belted Kingfisher. *Dianne Benko*