

THE BELTED KINGFISHER



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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

Volume 38, Number 3, March 2006

Editor — Bob Miller

COMING ACTIVITIES

<u>Mar 17</u>	General Meeting. Nigel Mann , Professor of Ornithology at SUCO, presents <i>Bird Song from here to the Tropics</i> . See below.
Mar 21	Board Meeting. Tom Salo' s home.
<u>Apr 15</u>	Waterfowl Trip with John Davis. See page 3.
<u>Apr 18</u>	Board Meeting. Home of Andy Mason.
<u>Apr 21</u>	General Meeting. . Scott Crocol speaks on Raptors.
<u>May 6</u>	Bird Walk in the Milford area with Andy Mason. Page 3.
<u>May 7</u>	Bird Walk at Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway with Andy Mason. Page 3.
<u>May 16</u>	Board Meeting. Bob Donnelly' s home.
<u>May 19</u>	General Meeting and Potluck Supper.
<u>May 20</u>	Annual May Big Day Count
<u>May 27</u>	Weaver Lake Trip with Bob Donnelly

DOAS field trips are open to the public. Participants should meet at the stated time and location—please be prompt. We encourage carpooling- - please help with expenses if you are sharing a 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.

March Program: "*Birdsong: From Here to the Tropics*"

Our March program, "Birdsong: From Here to the Tropics", will focus on how song behavior in the tropics differs from that in northern latitudes. Songs of various species will be played to show just how amazing and diverse the vocalisations of this group can be, with a special emphasis on their duets. Tropical wrens, a focus group for Nigel, will be featured.

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

NY State Ornithological Assoc. Annual Meeting in Oneonta

Remember to mark your calendars for this fall's Annual Meeting of the NY State Ornithological Assoc. , Sept. 29 & 30 and Oct. 1 at the State University at Oneonta.

Events will include field trips, workshops, research presentations, and a banquet with speaker. More details will be available soon.

Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

Bush budget would sell off public lands—

President Bush's proposed 2007 budget would put as much as 800,000 acres of publicly owned lands into private hands to raise \$1 billion for the US Treasury.

In addition to major cuts in already underfunded public lands programs, the Bush administration now wants to begin selling of these lands themselves.

Although details are not yet firm, over 300,000 acres of National Forests in 32 states could be put on the auction block. These lands have already been identified, and the administration has given the Bureau of Land Management a sales quota that may require the agency to sell as many as a half million additional acres.

These public areas are a birthright to Americans—special places that provide wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities, water protection, and other environmental benefits. They should not be sold off to developers, ranchers, and logging and mining interests to please the conservative right wing.

The Bush plan comes just a few months after bipartisan opposition in Congress derailed a similar scheme. California Congressman Richard Pombo—well-known for his efforts to gut the Endangered Species Act—pushed a plan to sell millions of acres of public lands through the House of Representatives in a budget bill. Pombo's legislation even included units of the National Park system to go on the auction block. Fortunately, opposition from conservationists, and even hunters, anglers and western governors stopped the measure in the Senate.

Now the President has taken up the charge. He and Congress need to hear that these lands belong to the American people and are a public treasure, not a commodity to raise money for the government to squander.

What you can do—contact the President, your Congressional Representative, and US Senators Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer to express your sentiments over this budget plan.

Comments needed to improve cleanup standards—NY State has issued proposed regulations for cleaning up contaminated sites in the state. The goal is to restore the thousands of "brownfields"—former industrial areas with residual chemicals—to the point where they can again be used. However, the levels of contamination that would be allowed to remain on the sites falls short of protecting public health, as well as air, ground and surface waters, and fish and wildlife.

The NY State Department of Environmental Conservation has put forth regulations for public comment, over a year behind schedule, and has provided a 120 day public comment period. Environmental and

community groups have asked for more time to review and express their concerns over the cleanup standards.

According to those concerned with the regulations, they do not meet either the letter nor the spirit of the state Superfund law that require cleanups. For example, DEC would allow extremely high levels of lead to remain in soil at "cleaned" sites, from 400 parts per million (ppm) for most unrestricted cleanups to up to 3900 parts per million for industrial cleanups. These amounts dramatically exceeds rural background levels of lead, which are between 4 and 63 ppm, and are far higher than any New England state's industrial cleanup level.

The regulations would also allow such band-aid solutions as paving over contaminated soil, and limiting use of contaminated groundwater.

DEC's plan would not apply the stringent soil cleanup standards designed to protect ecological resources, even if the site is right next to a river or stream. Thus, many "cleaned up" sites could have residual contamination that can pollute groundwater and harm fish and wildlife—in violation of the state Superfund law.

In addition, the proposal limits meaningful public participation in cleanup decisions. The new regulations also allow land use to be considered when selecting cleanup remedies for Superfund sites, in violation of the Superfund law, which says the goal is to restore sites "to pre-disposal conditions" whenever possible.

What you can do—Public comment will be accepted by DEC until March 27, although hopefully this will be extended. Let the state know that cleanup of brownfields should not be short-circuited by lower standards, and that public and environmental health should be their top priority—not getting these sites redeveloped.

Comments may be sent to: Robert W. Schick, P. E., NYSDEC, Division of Environmental Remediation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-7014. Email written comments to: derweb@gw.dec.state.ny.us.

Addresses

U.S. Sens. Charles Schumer/ Hillary Clinton Sweeney/US Senate Washington, DC 20510 Schumer-(202) 224-6542 senator@schumer.senate.gov Clinton-(202) 224-4451 senator@clinton.senate.gov	Rep. Sherwood Boehlert/ Maurice Hinchey/John Michael McNulty US House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 Boehlert: (202) 225-3665 rep.boehlert@mail.house.gov Hinchey: (202) 225-6335 hinchey@hr.house.gov Sweeney: (202) 225-5614 http://www.house.gov/sweeney/ McNulty: (202)225-5076 mike.mculty@mail.house.gov
President George W. Bush The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. Washington, DC 20500 (202) 456-1111 President@whitehouse.gov	

February Bird Sightings

A hint of spring is in the air. Some birders have already seen harbingers of the new season. On 1/17 Tom Salo reported about 35 wild turkeys in Edmeston. On 1/20 6 pine siskins were seen by Andy Mason in Jefferson. On 1/21 a common raven and a pileated woodpecker were spotted by Tom Salo in W. Burlington. Dorian Huneke watched as a sharp-shinned hawk surprised her singing Carolia wrens in Treadwell on 1/22.

2/7 was a big birding day for Tom Salo. 300 snow geese flew overhead and 50 common redpolls and a pileated woodpecker were seen by him in W. Burlington. Andy Mason spotted a Northern shrike in W. Delhi on 2/10. Tom Salo sighted a rough-legged hawk in Pittsfield on 2/11 and on that same day Gerry Cahill saw two pileated woodpeckers flying overhead in Treadwell. Spring snuck in a little preview on 2/12. Andy Mason saw a lone male red-winged blackbird and several brown-headed cowbirds in Jefferson. On that same day Bob Donnelly spotted a Northern shrike in Coopers-town. On 2/15 Tom Salo reported 5 common red-polls in W. Burlington and Lisa Gorn saw 32 cedar waxwings in Morris.

If you have bird sightings please reach me, Diane Benko at (607) 829-5218, at 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753 or at caged@wpc.com by 3/19/06 for the April Belted Kingfisher.

Annual Lake Otsego Waterfowl Trip

On Saturday April 15 the annual spring waterfowl trip around Lake Otsego and environs will leave from Cooperstown's Lake Front Docks at 8 AM sharp.

Sponsored by the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society for several years, the trip has always attracted many area birders. All are welcome, and participants will leave in pooled cars; there will be some easy walking, depending on site and weather conditions. The trip will last until around noon and will take place unless it is pouring rain; it will not be rescheduled.

Co-leaders will be Matt Albright, Bob Donnelly and John Davis. Please sign up in advance: davi7js4@direcway.com or 607-547-9688.

Spring Bird Walks

Walks to view returning spring migrants have been scheduled for the first weekend in May. On Sat., May 6, a beginner's bird walk will be held in Milford State Forest in conjunction with the Earth Festival sched-

uled that day. Participants should meet at 8 a. m. at the Milford Central School. On Sun., May 7, a walk will be held at the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway, also starting at 8 a. m. Meet at the OSG parking lot on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta's West End.

These easy walks will each last approximately two hours. For more information, contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

Birds in Forested Landscapes: Citizen Science in the Catskill Mountains

A new volunteer project sponsored by *The Nature Conservancy, The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology*: Birds in Forested Landscapes will study population trends and reproductive success of selected forest songbirds in the Catskills. The project will also study the impact on these birds from threats including acid rain, mercury, and deer browse. Data gathered will also be used to measure the health of forest ecosystems in the Catskills.

Volunteers will be provided the tools and techniques for gathering information on the selected bird species and their insect prey items in designated sites throughout the Catskill Mountains. Volunteers for this project must be willing to commit a minimum of four days between the middle of May and the end of June to conduct fieldwork and report results.

The training will be held at the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development on Route 28 in Arkville, next to the fire hall.

If you are interested in joining this project please RSVP to Alan White by phone at 845-586-1002 or by email at awhite@tnc.org. Part of the training will be conducted in the field so please dress appropriately. Lunch will be provided.

Successful Eagle Trip

The numbers were impressive for this year's eagle field trip, on January 28. Forty-five participants saw 17 Bald Eagles on the tour of Cannonsville and Pepacton Reservoirs, and the E. and W. Branches of the Delaware.

Highlights included eagles at two nest sites, and a view of 7 eagles circling together—viewed for over 20 minutes. The weather was picture-perfect for the outing, and most of the group enjoyed lunch and eagle talk in Downsville after the last stop.

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Meet the Board: Julia Gregory



I am a life long resident of the Unadilla area where I returned after college. An interest in protecting our environment has always been a part of my life. I joined National Audubon in the mid-eighties and became active in DOAS shortly afterward. I joined the board of directors around 1992. Running the Charter Dinner is my main job but I help where I can.

Board of Directors

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 Treasurer - Bob Donnelly Secretary - Tom Salo

Directors

Gerianne Carillo	Nancy Cannon	John Davis
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Hawkwatch*	Andrew Mason, Tom Salo
Charter Dinner	Julia Gregory
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Sales	Stephen Rice

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, Conser- address and phone.

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

 NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

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