



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Inc.
Founded 1968 P.O. Box 544, Oneonta, N.Y. 13820

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Editor — Bob Miller

COMING ACTIVITIES

- Mar. 16 General Meeting. "*Bluebirds*" by John Rogers. See below.
 - Mar. 20 Board Meeting. Home of Cheryl Boise
 - Mar. 24 Montezuma Bird Trip with Tom Salo. Page 4.
 - Apr. 1 Waterfowl Trip to Cooperstown Area with John Davis. Page 5.
 - Apr. 20 General Meeting.
 - Apr. 22 Sanctuary Work Day
 - Apr. 28 Milford State Forest Cleanup
 - May 5 Earth Day Festival at Milford
 - May 18 General Meeting.
 - May 19 Big Day Bird Count
 - May 27 Weaver Lake Trip with Bob Donnelly
 - Oct. 16 Fall Sanctuary Open House
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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.

All About Bluebirds - and More March Program for the DOAS

On March 16th the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is pleased to host return presenter John Rogers as he shares his ever-increasing knowledge of bluebirds with us. John is a recognized authority on bluebird conservation, and a much sought-after speaker. His quality PowerPoint presentation, "All About Bluebirds - and More", encompasses the life history and ecology of the Eastern Bluebird, nest box management, and other birds that nest in bluebird boxes. The focus definitely is on bluebirds, but John also shares his passion for the natural world in hopes the audience will absorb some broader and deeper messages. With visually beautiful photographs, bird song audios, and a sincere, enthusiastic presentation style, this program is of interest to anyone who appreciates nature.

In addition to the program, there will be bluebird boxes and kits for sale, and DOAS will offer a Peterson-style bluebird box as a door prize. Join us and learn how you can best support and enjoy New York's state bird!

This program will begin at 7:30PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. It is free and open to the public, and refreshments will be served. For more information contact Gerianne Carillo, 286-3855, e-mail gerianne@earthlink.net.

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Golden Eagles and Wind Power

If people associate us with Golden Eagles, the credit really goes to the counters who spend so much time at the hawk watch. Because of their efforts, Franklin Mountain has become "the" place to see goldens in New York. As we approach 10,000 hours of counting at the sanctuary, the Board of Directors has taken a big step to help protect these birds.

If you've visited the watch on a good day, you've seen goldens flying 200 feet off the ground, using the updraft from the ridge to glide its length. This migratory behavior, where birds concentrate along ridges, is "stereotypical" of Golden Eagles. Unfortunately, it puts the birds in the very same space that developers target for siting their wind power projects.

The DOAS Board understands the threats posed by the burning of fossil fuels. We support properly sited wind projects. However, we are growing concerned about impacts to birds and bats. As many as 60,000 wind turbines will be required to reach national energy goals. Many will be built along the ridges of New York and Pennsylvania. Some of those ridges will attract raptors like Franklin Mountain.

As a species, Golden Eagle is especially vulnerable to wind turbines. It has been called the species which "appears to be at the highest risk." Knowing that more eastern goldens pass our site than anywhere else this far north, we feel a special responsibility to protect "our" birds. This isn't easy since away from our site almost nothing is known about how they migrate through New York. To learn more about this NYS Endangered Species so they can be protected, we have joined with scientists studying Golden Eagles in Pennsylvania. We intend to expand their ongoing study of migration routes into New York.

The project involves trapping eagles and fitting them with transmitters that provide a wealth of data on their locations and movements. The Global Positioning System (GPS) telemetry devices can last 2 years or more. They provide 5 to 10 precise locations each day - including elevation. This will tell us where they roost, nest and forage. It also provides the exact the information scientists need to develop migration models to help guide the safe siting of wind projects. Solar powered GPS telemetry units are expensive but also ideally suited to our needs. We are pursuing grants to help fund the tracking of "our" eagles. We will also be asking supporters to help fund this important work. If we can raise enough money, we plan to initiate a full fledged program near the hawkwatch next fall.

Our collaborators at the National Aviary and Carnegie Museum of Natural History have already fitted 2 eagles with telemetry units in Pennsylvania. We look forward to following those birds as they move into New York this spring. You can follow their travels by visiting <http://www.aviary.org/csr/v/goldenEagles.php>.

... Tom Salo, President

"Walter Allen has captured a fine golden eagle measuring eight feet from tip to tip. The bird is for sale and parties wishing to purchase may learn particulars by inquiring of Mr. Allen or Jasper Ellis."

-- November 20, 1891 Classified Ad from -- On the St. Lawrence Clayton NY.

An Extraordinary Experience by Douglas Reeser, Andes, New York

Preparations for dinner begin as my wife, Brenda, and I look at the glorious sunset over the Pepacton Reservoir. On this particular evening we watch as eagles land in a tree that rests on the hillside. They sit in branches that are conveniently spread apart as their fat bodies silhouette against the sky. Holding binoculars, I count seven of them.

I am reminded of an extraordinary experience I had a few years ago. While driving on Route 30 traveling towards Margaretville, I noticed motion coming towards my car from the woods between the reservoir and Route 30. I turned to see a bald eagle suddenly turn in the direction of my travel to avoid colliding into my car. He continued to fly alongside the car at my speed inches from my passenger door window!

After what seemed like 10 seconds he positioned his head toward me and seemed to look right through me before he lifted his right wing and disappeared over the roof of the car. If I had a passenger with me he could have reached out and touched this magnificent bird.

To this day I continue to ask myself if I truly had this experience. I will never forget seeing that incredible eagle's head turn toward me as if to let me know he was completely in control.

Poet Stanley Kunitz writes, "The universe is a continuous web. Touch it at any point and the whole web quivers."

Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

Florida--can it be saved?--I'm writing this from warm, sunny Florida--a wonderful place for a winter vacation. The lush, tropical foliage, the exotic birds, the white beaches and blue water all make this state a paradise, especially for us northerners.

Florida is also a land of sprawling housing developments, malls, roads, and industrial agriculture. It's hard not to think how much more of a paradise it must have been only 100 years ago.

There may be a more human-altered large ecosystem than Florida, but I've never encountered one. The Everglades alone represents major degradation of a vital wild area. Originally covering the lower third of the Florida peninsula, the Everglades was a broad wetland of slow moving shallow water that provided habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals, including huge population of birds. Through the 20th century, this ecosystem suffered drainage projects, filling, clearing and construction that fundamentally changed its delicate hydrologic balance. Excess nutrients entered the Everglades from intensive agriculture and development around its edges. Droughts led to damaging fires, and invasive species pushed out natives.

At its low point, populations of Everglades wading birds dropped to 10% of their original levels. Lake Okeechobee, at the head of the system, was a weed-choked basin of eutrophication. Mangroves at the tip of the Everglades were dying from changes in salinity and pollution of the brackish water.

Finally, the damage and threats to the Everglades were recognized by all parties in Florida, and a large restoration effort is underway. The goals include returning water flows to their historic levels and timing through Lake Okeechobee and into the "river of grass" as the Everglades is known. Also, nutrient levels will be controlled, waterways de-channelized, and existing undeveloped lands protected.

This is a daunting effort though, involving local, state and federal agencies, development and agricultural interests, as well as environmental organizations such as Audubon. The support of Congress and the administration is critical, as much of the restoration funding will come from Washington.

The Everglades will never be what it was a century ago, but there is cautious optimism that its decline can be halted and perhaps reversed.

The Everglades are not the only exploited area of Florida by any means. As with most coastal areas, beachfront and barrier island development pressure is intense, and even the threats and realities of tropical storms do not seem to hold it back. Further inland, large areas of palmetto/pine scrublands have been bulldozed for agriculture, endangering such species as the Florida Scrub Jay and Gopher Tortoise. Fire suppression has altered the remaining shrublands and prairies, reducing their value for native wildlife. Now residential development is moving away from the coasts as Florida's population influx continues.

There are bright spots however. Formerly endangered species such as Bald Eagle, Osprey, Brown Pelican and American Alligator appear to be prospering. Wood Storks, though still endangered, are more numerous and widespread, and egrets and herons are common and have adapted even to developed areas. A project to establish a migratory flock of Whooping Cranes has made it possible to spot these spectacular birds on occasion.

There seems to be a recognition of the need to save what is left of Florida's wildness, if not for its own value, to preserve diminishing water supplies and the quality of life residents enjoy. The state is on the cusp--there are still fortunes to be made in development, and only public pressure and political will can resist these forces.

What you can do--Urge your federal representatives to support funding for Everglades restoration in the US Army Corps of Engineers budget. Remind them that Everglades restoration projects are already behind schedule and that costs increase each year of delay.

Contact Florida Governor Charlie Crist and ask him to push the 50:50 state/federal partnership to implement the \$8 billion Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. If you visit Florida, tell him that his state's natural values are important to you, and that statewide environmental restoration efforts are needed.

Addresses are on the next page..

Addresses

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Clinton: (202) 224-4451, fax: (202) 228-0282
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20th Congressional District (Otsego Co. towns of Cherry Valley, Roseboom, Decatur, Worcester, Maryland, Westford, Milford, and Middlefield. Delaware Co., except towns of Deposit, Hancock and Tompkins.)

Rep. Kirsten Gillibrand
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-5614
www.gillibrand.house.gov

21st Congressional District (All of Schoharie Co.)

Rep. Michael McNulty
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Washington, DC 20515
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22nd Congressional District (Delaware Co. Towns of Deposit, Hancock and Tompkins)

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24th Congressional District (Otsego Co. towns of Springfield, Otsego, Hartwick, Laurens, Oneonta (including City of Oneonta) and west. All of Chenango Co.)

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MONTEZUMA NWR FIELD TRIP

On Saturday, March 24th, the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will travel to the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge at the north end of Cayuga Lake. The refuge is a major stopover for migrating waterfowl. It is also the home to nesting Bald Eagles, and Sandhill Cranes.

Montezuma contains more than 7000 acres of widely diversified habitat in Seneca and Wayne Counties. It was established in 1938 to provide nesting, resting and feeding areas for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Habitat ranges from extensive marshes to upland hardwoods.

The group can meet participants along the route. Expect to leave Otsego County around 8 AM and return by evening. Bring lunch, 2 way radios if available, optics and appropriate clothing. Rare birds reported near Montezuma or along the route may be investigated. Contact leader Tom Salo for meeting place and time 607-965-8232 or tomsalo@localnet.com.

GENERAL MEETINGS: PLEASE NOTE!

We apologize for the last minute cancelation of the February 16th general meeting, due to weather conditions. For the future, if you have any doubt about whether a scheduled meeting or other DOAS event is going to happen, please do a last-minute check by at least one of the following methods until you have a definite answer: 1) Contact the person who is sponsor of the meeting, as published in the Kingfisher, the newspaper, or in an e-mail announcement. 2) Check the DOAS website at www.doas.us. 3) Call any DOAS Board member.
John Davis, Publicity Chair

During the 20th Century increased food production supported an unprecedented growth in world population, and now in the 21st century we are seeing the consequences of expansion of human needs and activities. Land, water and biological resources are being depleted, more than 3 billion people are malnourished, and there is a steady decline in cereal grain production worldwide.

... Jean T. Miller

ANNUAL LAKE OTSEGO WATERFOWL TRIP

On Sunday April 1 the annual spring waterfowl trip around Lake Otsego and environs will leave from Cooperstown's Lake Front Docks at the foot of Fair Street at 8 AM sharp. Co leaders will be Matt Albright, Bob Donnelly and John Davis. Sponsored by DOAS for several years, the trip has always attracted many area birders. Cars will be pooled, and the trip will last until around noon. Please sign up for the trip in advance by contacting John Davis at davi7js4@hughes.net or 607-547-9688.

February Bird Sightings

As I'm writing this, snow is drifting and floating outside my livingroom window and I'm reminded that this time last year I was in South Beach Miami. The wintery scene, although it doesn't hold a candle to the warmth and sun of Florida, does make it a delight to watch winter birds flit to and from my birdfeeders.

On 1/10 John Davis reported an immature Cooper's hawk in Cooperstown. Trina Bassoff saw a great blue heron in Blenheim on 1/18. On 1/10 John Davis sighted a white-crowned sparrow in Cooperstown, Marge Mathis reported a fox sparrow in Morris and Andy Mason saw an immature Cooper's hawk in Jefferson. Andy also reported 2 rough-legged hawks in Jefferson on 1/21. 1/23 was a big birding day. Trina Bassoff saw a song sparrow in Blenheim, Andy Mason reported a red-winged blackbird and a small flock of brown-headed cowbirds in Jefferson and Tom Salo saw a rough-legged hawk in W. Burlington and an American kestrel in Edmeston. Dorian Huneke heard 2 great horned owls in Treadwell and Tom and Sue Whitney reported a pied-billed grebe in Delhi on 1/27. On 1/28 Dorian & Eric Huneke saw 4-5 golden eagles at the Cannonsville Reservoir, while Jennifer & Eric Carr sighted 2 bald eagles in Middlefield. Tom Salo has been seeing a fox sparrow in W. Burlington since 1/30. A Northern shrike was pursuing a small flock of chickadees in Andes as reported by Jack McShane.

February brought a few birding treasures. Tom Salo saw a red-bellied woodpecker in W. Burlington on 2/1. Trina Bassoff had a wintering over song sparrow in Blenheim on 2/4. On 2/14 Gerry Cahill saw a pair of hairy woodpeckers at his suet feeder in Treadwell. On 2/19 Tom Salo reported the sighting of a Cooper's hawk snatching up a mourning dove in W. Burlington. John Davis heard 2 barred owls calling back and forth in Cooperstown on 2/21. On 2/22 Tom Salo had a singing purple finch in W. Burlington and Charlie Dahan saw a hermit thrush in Otego.

Please send sightings to Dianne Benko at (607) 829-5218, at 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753, or at caged@wpc.com by 3/18/07 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher.

WE MUST PREVENT A CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

A few decades ago people were afraid that an all-out nuclear war between superpowers would trigger a climate catastrophe. Today it looks like the two original nuclear superpowers would simply end up as helpless bystanders as at least 13 smaller nations now have nuclear capabilities, and could cause a nuclear environmental catastrophe if they should decide to use such weapons against a neighbor. And many more nations have the raw materials for constructing nuclear devices.

Increasingly more people are living in large cities, which make tempting targets, and today with political instability we see the greatest danger to the stability of human society since the dawn of man.

Urban areas with more than 10 million residents often have a densely populated urban core full of flammable materials, and a nuclear explosion immediately ignites any combustible material nearby. Shopping malls, houses, offices, vehicles, gas stations, and even asphalt paving would be in flames instantly. This in turn would produce millions of tons of soot and smoke. Rain would not cleanse the air efficiently as water vapor in the air would not condense on the 60% of the particles coming from burned petroleum products. The soot would remain aloft longer than soot from a natural fire.

Scientists know from studies made following huge fires and volcanic eruptions that plumes from major blazes can reach the stratosphere. And smoke particles in the stratosphere can spread over much of the northern or southern hemisphere. These miniscule bits of ash and droplets of water and sulfuric acid can cool Earth's climate significantly for months or even a year or two. At times they would not allow more than about 1% of the sun's light to reach Earth's surface.

Computer models simulating the effects of a war between India and Pakistan show that this war would release more than 5 million tons of smoke and soot into the sky, and it would stay aloft more than 6 years. The average temperature of the Earth would drop around 1.25 * C. for up to 3 years, and would still be 0.5* below normal 10 years later. During the century long 'Little Ice Age' which ended in the mid-1800s the average earth temperature was about 0.6* and 0.7* below what it is today, and glaciers advanced in mountainous regions worldwide.

Also - nuclear explosions could cause nitrogen in the air to burn, and this would destroy high-altitude ozone at rates much higher than normal. A 100-bomb nuclear exchange would create a GLOBAL ozone hole which would prove catastrophic as animals and plants are adapted to ozone protection for their own latitudes. It would be a true nuclear winter.

We are at a perilous crossroads, and must do all we can to prevent nuclear confrontations of any size at any place in the world. The results would be too horrific.

...Jean T. Miller from *Science News*, Feb. 3, 07

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Membership Application

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Soc. includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*. Cost is \$12 annually or \$20 for 2 years. Please make check payable to DOAS and mail to DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544, with name, address and phone.

(NOTE: Please mail National Audubon renewals to address on renewal notice.)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____

E-MAIL _____

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

All meetings are free and open to the public.