

BELTED KINGFISHER
Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Inc.

Founded 1968 P.O. Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820

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Editor- Bob Miller

COMING ACTIVITIES

- Mar. 20 DOAS General Meeting. Lauren Hierl who is Alaska Policy Associate of the National Audubon Society, presents *Alaska Road Show*.
- Mar. 20 Board Meeting. 5PM. Elm Park Methodist Church
- Mar. 29 Montezuma NWR Field Trip — with Eleanor Moriarty.
- Apr. 5 Waterfowl Trip around Cooperstown. John Davis
- Apr..17 DOAS General Meeting. *Birds of New York State*. Warren Green's bird and nature photography will once again display his incredible photos of our birds. Elm Park Methodist Church. 7:30 PM
- Apr. 18 Milford State Forest Bird Walk. Bob Donnelly leader. Meet 8 am Milford School Parking lot.
- Apr. 29 Evening Search for Wetland Birds. Sharon Springs area. Bob Donnelly leader.
- May 15 DOAS General Meeting. *White Nose Syndrome: Bats: What it is and Why it is Important to You*. Presented by Emily Davis, an experienced team member of the DEC, studying and collecting data on the crisis in bat.

Of Books and Ideas by Jean Miller

E.O.Wilson - *Advice for the President* - Discover Magazine, Dec. 2008: Work to assure that U.S. will lead the world in Science and Technology. That is -in medicine, environment, alternative energy, basic science and education.

Jared Diamond and Nathan Wolfe - *The Perfect Plague* - Discover Magazine 2008: Globalization, changing climate, and the threat of drug resistance have set the stage for a "perfect microbial storm" where an emerging pathogen might burst on the scene and kill millions before we can respond. Infectious disease epidemiologists are hoping to stop every epidemic before it becomes a pandemic through disease forecasting, early detection, and a new initiative GVFI - Global Viral Forecasting Initiative.

E.O. Wilson - *Sustainability* - from a talk at Baldwin-Wallace College, Ohio. Science News, Dec.20, 2008: We must put more emphasis on protecting our living environment (habitat and biodiversity) and less on the physical environment (energy consumption and averting climate change). We must protect areas of the world with the most concentrated biodiversity, and address world poverty, to achieve a sustainable world.

Cradle to Cradle - Remaking the Way We Make Things - William McDonough: This forward-looking architect calls his design philosophy "a vision of a continuous cycle of use and reuse of materials without any waste". He advocates recycling seriously and using materials derived for reuse and recapture, such as recycled metal and sustainable forests, and using sustainable materials in items such as Nike sneakers. He believes that renewable energy is potentially the largest job-creation program in the history of the planet.

Where the Wild Things Were - William Stolzenburg Bloomsbury \$24.99: The disappearance of some of Earth's most common large carnivores has produced habitats in peril for lack of predators. e.g. Yellowstone aspen groves have been overgrazed by elk in the absence of wolves. And our Eastern Forests are becoming overgrazed by deer in the absence of large predators. Skeptics wonder if we can afford to welcome top predators back into the fold, but he asks "Can we afford NOT to welcome them back?"

Fruitless Fall - by Rowan Jacobsen Bloomsbury \$25.00: In 2007 some 30 Million bees vanished across United States, without a trace, while out foraging. This was one third of all the bees bred by US beekeepers. The author tells of the colony collapse and tracks down suspected causes without success. Are bees the "canary in the coal mine"? Other pollinators are also crashing. Does this predict ultimately the fate of other domesticated animals? and our food supplies? (for the need of pollinators)

WWF Living Planet Report - 2008 - see worldwildlife.org/lpr to read in full.: This report is issued biannually, and in the '08 report they have added Water Footprints to the other two measures: *Ecological Footprint (human demand on natural resources)* and *Living Planet Index (state of Nature)* to the report.

President's Message - Thoughts on Habitats and Wildlife

Habitat, and how humans affect habitat, always seems to be at the center of our activities. Around here, habitat is diverse. We have mixed forests, open areas and brush lots. Lakes, rivers and bogs are filled with plants, insects and fish. As a result, our area has among the highest number of breeding bird species in the state.

Before European settlement, open and brushy areas were small. Animals of the edge were present in small numbers. Grassland birds were rare, some may have been totally absent from New York. Species like the parasitic Brown-headed Cowbird, moved into the region as forests were felled. I watched a kinglet feed a fledgling cowbird 4 times its size. Maybe they should be considered invasive aliens.

Our grasslands and brushy areas are ephemeral habitats. Without regular maintenance, they will disappear. Modern farming is hard on open country birds. However, farming created this habitat, and now maintains it. Successful farms keep land open. Former farms become subdivisions, second homes and fragmented habitat. Wind turbines, like modern farming practices can also be hard on these species, but wind turbines can also help keep farms in business. It seems to me, the farm economy has a greater influence on regional habitat than the environmental community.

Should we worry about the loss of those habitats created by humans? Is diversity always good, even if it wasn't here before? Should we alter habitat to encourage game species? What about endangered songbirds? Send me your thoughts.

Kingfisher Delivery

The February issue of the Belted Kingfisher was mailed on February 3 in Oneonta. At this writing, 17 days later, half of the Board of Directors had not yet received their copy. Many members did not have theirs in time to learn details on the February program or that month's owl trip.

We have contacted the U.S. Postal Service and are waiting to hear why this happened. We apologize to our members who received their copy late.

I would hope that the challenges the USPS faces competing with electronic media would have them become better at what they do. Hopefully, they will improve service so our members can get information on our activities in a timely manner.

Tom Salo

CAFOs HIDDEN COSTS

Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) cost taxpayers billions every year, and generate staggering environmental, health, and societal costs. These confined feeding operations are for cattle, pigs and chickens, and are scattered across the country, creating havoc to the surrounding towns and counties.

The foul odors and contaminated water caused by CAFOs reduce property values in surrounding communities by an estimated \$26 billion nationally.

The overuse of antibiotics given to the animals held in the pens leads to drug-resistant illnesses in humans, and these illnesses are very difficult to treat. The public health impacts of this costs us an estimated \$1.5 million to \$3 billion a year.

Leakage of manure from the storage "lagoons" at CAFOs contaminates the soil and also the groundwater. Sometimes storms can cause the lagoons to overflow and spread the manure for miles downstream from the original site. Cleaning up the contaminated soil would cost an estimated \$4.1 billion.

Federal standards require that the manure be distributed on farmlands to reduce both air and water pollution.

CAFOs generate about 300 million tons of manure a year, and distributing it costs as much as \$1.6 billion a year.

From *Union of Concerned Scientists for Environmental Solutions* Spring 2009 ... Jean T. Miller

Earth Hour 2009 March 28

Worldwide voluntary power-down between 8:30 and 9:30 pm. Turn off your lights and join millions around the world. Drop the carbon consumption by 10 %.

... Jean Miller

Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

DEC finalizes windpower guidelines—The NY State Dep't. of Environmental Conservation has issued its final guidelines for conducting bird and bat studies at commercial wind energy projects. These guidelines are intended to provide windpower developers with DEC's recommendations for surveying for birds and bats at sites where these projects are planned.

Draft guidelines were put out over a year ago, and DOAS, along with other organizations and individuals, submitted feedback during the public comment period. We urged members to review the document and also comment.

It is important that DEC be involved with wind projects, since the legal responsibility for reviewing environmental impacts typically fall to local town and planning boards. These bodies lack the expertise and interest to properly assess threats to birds, and so tend to rely on information from the developers—hardly an unbiased source.

DEC's role is technically only advisory, unless threatened or endangered species are a significant concern. However, our involvement with existing projects indicates that both the developers and local governments give great weight to DEC's guidance in avian and bat studies.

As for the recommendations themselves, they can be viewed as adequate, but not burdensome. DEC lays out a two-step process for wind projects. The first is a standard study evaluating habitat, a compilation of existing knowledge of bird presence at the site, identification of nearby concentration areas for birds, and a minimum of one-year of on-site bird surveys including monitoring breeding and migrating songbirds, and migrating raptors.

If results from the initial standard study indicate a potential serious threat to birds or bats, additional years of study will be recommended.

If projects are proposed on or near landscape features and resources of potential concern such as ridgetops, near coastlines, or other areas that may concentrate birds, expanded pre-construction studies are recommended. These include use of radar to survey nocturnal migrating birds, daily monitoring of raptors through migration periods, more thorough breeding bird surveys, and wintering bird surveys.

The guidelines also spell out procedures for standard and expanded post-construction surveys. These are important to assess the accuracy of pre-construction predictions of avian and bat mortality, and to provide data that can be used in evaluating future wind projects.

Although these recommendations are a helpful guide for wind developers, municipalities and interested groups and citizens, it is important that the public be involved in the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process for wind projects. Without adequate scrutiny, wind projects can be located in places they should

not go, or be halted by misguided residents in areas where they can be properly sited.

The final guidelines can be found at www.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/windguidelines.pdf.

The year for the environment in NY?—With a new majority party and new leadership in the NY State Senate, this legislative session could be the best opportunity in decades to move forward environmental bills that have languished in Senate committees or been otherwise blocked by Republican opposition.

However, the first order of business for conservationists is to ensure the environment is not shortchanged in Albany's efforts to deal with its huge budgetary shortfall.

The legislature has already cut the Environmental Protection Fund—the source of monies for many land protection, recycling, clean water and other worthy projects—by \$50 million for this year. Now Gov. Paterson is proposing a hiring freeze at DEC, which will dramatically reduce the agency's ability to protect our environment and public health. With hundreds of staff retiring each year, it is anticipated 241 positions will be lost, lessening oversight of polluters, reducing wildlife programs, and in our area, possibly cutting inspection of anticipated gas drilling.

There are better ways to plug the budget gap and improve environmental protection at the same time. A number of these were outlined in the Dec. 2008 *Kingfisher* and can be found at www.eany.org/issues/reports/SavingGreen_FINAL_lowres.pdf

What you can do—Contact Gov. Paterson and your State Assemblymember and Senator and tell them NY's environmental agency is too important to be slashed in the budget. Make the point that collecting penalties on pollution and dirty fuels, along with halting unneeded projects, will save the state millions and help the environment.

Addresses

NY State

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DOAS Sponsors Young Birders Club

At its December meeting, the DOAS board of directors voted to become a partner organization of the NY Young Birders Club, a project of the NY State Ornithological Assoc.

In addition to financial support, the partnership will include DOAS organizing a field trip for the Young Birders Club? most likely to the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch in November.

The Young Birders Club is growing and improving its organization, according to a recent update. In January club members traveled to DEC's Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center in the Hudson Valley. Following a successful bird outing, they met to elect officers and work out future plans and trips. Hope Batcheller, who first proposed the club in NY, was elected president.

The NY Young Birders club is seeking members in all three of its categories: Youth (ages 12-19), Supporting Adult, and Partner Organization. Details and application forms are available online at www.nysyoungbirders.org/membership.html.

Membership News

A reminder that DOAS local membership dues have been increased to \$15 for one year and \$25 for two years, effective January 1, 2009. This is due to rising costs for printing and mailing, and other organizational expenses.

Your current expiration date is on the mailing label of the newsletter?the first two digits indicate the year and the second two digits indicate the month, i.e., ?0906? is June, 2009.

January-February Bird Sightings

We're thick in the throes of winter weather yet some of our spring bird friends have been making surprise early visits to our area. On 1/20 Tom Salo saw 8 Eastern bluebirds and 20 white-winged crossbills in Oneonta. Jeffrey Murray saw a common redpoll in Fly Creek on 1/21. Randy Lynch reported seeing a pair of rusty blackbirds in N. Harpersfield on 1/23. Jean Dorman had a common redpoll in Margaretville on 1/27. On 1/29 Warren Ryther saw a belted kingfisher on Butternut Creek. Jean Dorman saw 2 purple finches in Margaretville 1/31.

Gregory Capobianco saw 12 American robins in Cobleskill on the 1st of Feb. Two days later Eleanor

Moriarity saw 36 American robins in Davenport. On 2/5 2 bald eagles were reported by Lisa Gorn in Unadilla and John Davis saw 7 common ravens in Cooperstown. On 2/9 Dorian Huneke reported an Eastern screech owl in Treadwell. A pair of Eastern bluebirds and a tooting Northern saw-whet owl were reported by Becky Gretton in Springfield. Tom Salo had a female red-winged blackbird in W. Burlington on 2/12. On Valentine's Day Gerianne Carillo saw 3 Eastern bluebirds in Milford.

If you have bird sightings to report, please contact me dbenko@frontiernet.net, 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753, 607 829-5218 by 3/15/09 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher.

FOOD MILES

Many of us try to eat foods that are grown locally, as we worry about the number of miles our foods travel between farm and table, and the carbon footprint we are leaving. For many foods such as fresh produce in the summer and fruits in season grown nearby, this is a logical decision. Farmer's markets are a real boon, especially if you can buy organic foods.

According to two researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, the actual transportation of food turns out to account for only eleven percent of its greenhouse-gas emissions. The food production is a much greater factor - especially that of red meat - , because of the high energy and fertilizer use required. Production of the foods can produce CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide, and hydrofluorocarbons. Together, (sometimes up to 80% - 90%) these amount for most of the greenhouse gases emitted while getting our foods to our tables.

Switching from beef to veggies one day a week would reduce your carbon footprint more than if you bought ALL your food locally.

The real solution is to find producers close by who grow foods organically. We must be willing to pay the extra costs of their foods. If enough demand is made for local organic foods, the supply will increase, prices will gradually lower, and we will all benefit.

Sierra Jan/Feb 2009

... Jean T. Miller

Analysis of CBC Data of 1968-2008 shows bird moves from Global Warming

Analysis of the data from the past 40 years of Audubon's Christmas Bird counts show that 58% of the 305 widespread species that winter on the continent shifted significantly north since 1968, some by hundreds of miles. Movement was found among species of every sort, including more than 70 % of highly adaptable forest and feeder birds. Only 38% of grassland species followed that trend. Their habitat has been severely depleted in addition to the climate change. Shifts in individual species are common and occur from many causes but the significant trend in movement of 177 species correlating to long term winter temperature increases, clearly shows a link to climate change.

Birds are showing us that we are tipping the ecological balance, likely in ways we are not even aware of yet. Movements across all species, including those not reflecting the 40 year trend, averaged about 35 miles during the 40 years. Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and Boreal Chickadee retreated dramatically into the Boreal, ranges moving 313, 246 and 211 estimated miles in the 40 years. In time the boreal forest itself may seriously impacted. Red-Merganser, Ring-necked Duck and Am. Black Duck have moved northward with the warmer winter waters, north by estimated 244, 169 and 141 miles.

Only 10 of 26 grassland species moved north significantly and 9 species moved south. E. Meadowlark, Vesper Sparrow, and Burrowing Owl were probably unable to move because of lack of grassland habitat that has been used for crops, pastures and fields.

"We're witnessing an uncontrolled experiment on the birds and the world we share with them," says John flicker, Audubon President. Greg Butcher says that the long term picture is poor for many species, since eventually they can run out of suitable habitat despite their moves and even in the short term a single harsh winter could impact birds that had moved too far north.

Recent research from Audubon California reinforces the national findings and predicts about 80 of their state's bird species will have significant climate driven reduction in their ranges. Models indicate the magnitude of California losses depends largely on what steps are taken now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. California Gnatcatcher could lose up to 56 % of its range or as little as 7 %. Predicted range loss for the Bay area's Chestnut-backed chickadee are from 49% to 16%.

Scientists say bold action is needed to overcome threats from global warming. Audubon calls on Congress to adopt policies that will sharply reduce global warming, pollution, cut oil dependence in half, and invest in a clean energy future and the economic benefits it offers. Americans can sign a petition at <http://www.birdsandclimate.org> to demand aggressive federal action.

Audubon anticipates that this new avian evidence will help attract attention among the >40 million U. S. bird-watchers, including tens of thousands who contributed to the Christmas Bird Count data on which these studies are based. The 109 year old census provides the world's longest annual record of bird population trends.

from a National Audubon Report ... *Bob Miller*

COMBAT GLOBAL WARMING

AND ITS IMPACT ON BIRDS As individuals and engaged citizens we can all take steps to reduce our energy use and help mitigate the worst impacts of global warming. Help save our birds world wide.

Yes - we have seen most of these before, but post this where you can see it often and be encouraged to follow more and more of the steps.

Here are some ideas to follow:

1. Reduce Energy Consumption. Save money and energy by switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs. Maximize the use of natural sunlight for daytime lighting needs. Lower your thermostat during the winter and reduce the use of your air conditioner in summer. Use fans to pull in summer night-time cool air and lessen the need for an air conditioner. Weatherize your home. If buying a new appliance, look for an energy efficient "Energy Star" compliant appliance.

2. Shop Smarter. Manufacturing, packing, transporting and selling goods not only use huge amounts of energy, but also release excessive amounts of greenhouse gases. When shopping, always ask, "Do I really need this?" Does the Earth really need this? You will probably save money as well!

3. Plant More Trees and Buy Good Wood. An average tree absorbs ten pounds of pollutants from the air each year, including four pounds of ground level ozone and three pounds of particulates. So, plant leafy trees around your house to provide windbreaks and summer shade. When shopping for wood, ask about certified wood to support sustainably managed forests that are bird-friendly.

4. Save Gas and Money. Use public transportation, ride your bicycle, walk, and drive a more energy-efficient vehicle. Keep tires properly inflated to increase fuel-efficiency costs. SHARE RIDES.

5. Eat Locally Grown and Organic Produce. The fewer miles your products travel, the less energy is used for refrigeration and transport. And buy ORGANIC. This reduces the use of pesticides that kill the organisms which help keep carbon in the soil.

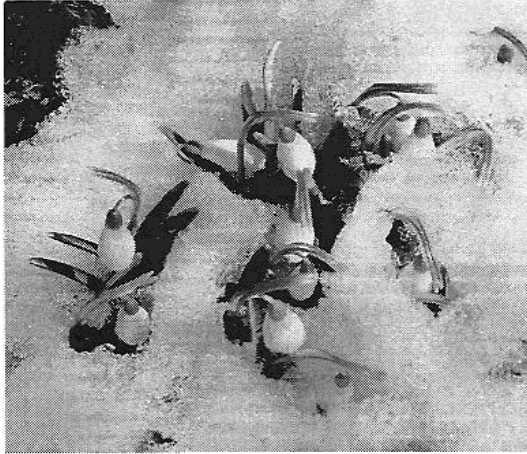
6. Determine Your Energy Profile and Carbon Footprint. An energy audit assesses how much energy you consume. A carbon footprint show how much greenhouse gas you emit into the atmosphere. These figures can help you determine steps you can take to make your home, school, or office more energy efficient. Many footprint calculators are available online.

From a National Audubon Society Report *Jean T. Miller*

Return Service
Requested

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PO Box 544 Oneonta, NY 13820-0544
www.doas.us

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Snowdrops by Jean Miller

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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 it to DOAS Membership Chair, P O Box 544, Oneonta, N. Y. 13820-0544, with your 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.