



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

March

March 12 & 13, 2011 — Winter Raptor Fest

March 15, 2011 — DOAS Board Meeting at 7 PM.

March 18, 2011 — DOAS Program: The Golden Eagle Winter Projects.

April

April 2, 2011 — Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip.

April 3, 2011 — Annual spring waterfowl trip.

April 9, 2011 — 6th Annual Earth Day Festival, Milford Central School.

April 15, 2011 — DOAS Program: Catskill Black Bears.

April 27, 2011 — Earth Day at SUCO campus.

May

May 20, 2011 — DOAS Program: Birds of Costa Rica by the Fielders.

More information on page 7

All DOAS programs are free and open to the public

DOAS Submits Gas Drilling Comments Public Participation Needed by March 18

Our Chapter has submitted formal comments to the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) on draft regulations for water use and disposal for hydrofracking gas wells. The DRBC is an interstate agency that oversees ground and surface waters in the Delaware River basin, which includes much of Delaware Co., NY.

The DOAS comments follow our position paper, which concludes that:

“Even with the most stringent controls and oversight, this activity is an unacceptable danger to our planet, with no environmental benefits. As such, we oppose hydrofracking gas exploration and production in our region and elsewhere.”

DOAS Director Eleanor Moriarty delivered the DOAS comments at a public hearing on Feb. 22. The DRBC is accepting public comments until March 16. Comments can be mailed to: Commission Secretary, DRBC, P.O. Box 7360, 25 State Police Drive, West Trenton, NJ 08628-0360; or submitted electronically at:

<http://www.parkplanning.nps.gov/commentForm.cfm?documentID=37829>

The draft regulations are available at:

http://www.state.nj.us/drbc/notice_naturalgas-draftregs.htm

The DOAS position on gas drilling, and our comments are available through the DOAS website, www.doas.us. The DOAS comments are on page 4.



Dave and Maggie

President's Message

Winter's Fleeting Highlights

This winter season has been as tough as any in recent memory. The snow depth has limited our daily walks to a ragged circle around the house and to the birdfeeders, but this is as far as we travel. I don't have snow shoes so when the snow piles to its current depths, I am trapped. It is a wonder I see any wildlife outside the army of feeder birds. When encounters do occur they seem like momentous occasions.

Looking back, most of late January and early February were just too bleak to see much outdoors. But lately,

it seems that a combination of good timing and animals on the move have made for some great winter highlights. First, Maggie and I were coming up the driveway when a crow streaked out of the spruces as if its tail was on fire. A Goshawk was a foot behind it matching it for every twist and turn. The crow screamed in protest or terror but could not shake the Goshawk. I don't know if it was the Goshawk's intent to attack and kill the crow but it seemed that once over the open yard, it could have easily over run the crow. From our vantage place, a spectacular show!

Our second great encounter was a visit from one of our resident Barred owls. We hear them often at night but rarely get more than a fleeting glimpse. Lately the owl has been out more in the day. At 12:30 one afternoon, I looked out my studio window and the owl was perched in the apple tree alongside the house. I grabbed my camera, snuck out the basement door and slowly approached the bird. Though it kept an eye on me, I got within 15 feet and it never flushed. I took some photos and went back to the house to review them. When I looked back out to see if the owl was still there, it swiveled its head and launched into a snow bank. I ran back outside and found the owl back in the tree, too late to see it eat its prize. A bloody beak was the only evidence of the meal.

Our third encounter was the biggest surprise. One day while driving around the state land behind our home, I noticed a large shape in the road. As I got closer, it stood and shook its stubby tail and jumped on the roadside snow bank and skidded down the backside. I moved ahead and stopped where it jumped off the road and peered over to see not one but two bobcats hunkered down and staring at me! We see tracks around our property but these are the first bobcats we have seen in our neighborhood.

For me winter is cold, dark and months too long. When I experience amazing encounters like these, I am reminded that there are special things around us all the time. One just needs to get out and keep your eyes open. You just don't know when a little bit of magic will take place.

Dave
607 286 9222
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Barred Owl, 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

Environmental Assault in Washington--The new Republican majority in the House of Representatives has begun its expected attack on environmental regulations under the guise of creating jobs and improving the economy.

Typical of the rhetoric was a quote from Representative Joe Barton of Texas that regulations to curb pollutants and limit greenhouse gases will “put the American economy in a straitjacket, costing us millions of jobs.” Another Republican leader, Darrell Issa, chair of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, actually solicited complaints from big business leaders to bolster the “Chicken Little” argument that basic protections such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts hurt the economy.

A particular focus of House Republicans is Environmental Protection Agency regulations, especially of greenhouse gases. EPA is currently moving forward with regulations for fossil fueled power plants and petroleum refineries. The GOP effort will include de-funding implementation of regulations, aggressive oversight hearings, and overturning rules through the Congressional Review Act.

Other anticipated targets in the House include the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Drinking Water Act, and fuel economy and emissions standards for motor vehicles.

The reality is that not only have environmental regulations brought about significant improvements and savings in public health, and cleaned up our waters and skies, but they have had a net beneficial impact on the economy. A recent University of Massachusetts study shows that construction and retrofitting investments in the eastern US under two new EPA air quality rules would produce nearly 1.5 million jobs over the next five years. The rules limit the emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury, lead, dioxin, arsenic, and other pollutants. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said the agency’s implementation of the Clean Air Act, even in the last year of a George W. Bush administration loath to admit to the dangers of global warming, “contributed to dynamic growth in the US environmental technologies industry and its workforce.”

None of this includes the obvious other positive impacts. “Air regulations will also provide substantial economic benefits from cleaner air, improved public health, and increased

competitiveness through innovative technologies,” the study said.

What you can do

Our area has two new Republican Representatives in Congress who will be deeply involved in the debate over the effort to weaken or kill environmental regulations. It is important for Richard Hanna and Chris Gibson to hear that they have constituents who do not support rolling back clean air and water protections, and who want endangered species and other wildlife protected. The beginning of their terms is an excellent time for them to get this message, while their priorities are still being formed.

Let your representative know that the Republican leadership’s efforts to improve the economy in this fashion are misguided, and that the jobs created by cleaning up the environment outnumber those that would keep it polluted—and at the same time protect human health and make America more competitive.

Addresses:

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. Chris Gibson

US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: (202) 225-5614

Fax: (202) 225-1168

www.gibson.house.gov

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

Rep. Richard Hanna

US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Phone: 202-225-3665

Fax: 202-225-1891

www.hanna.house.gov

Andy Mason

DOAS Submits Gas Drilling Comments, continued from page 1

Commission Secretary
Delaware River Basin Commission
P.O. Box 7360
25 State Police Drive
West Trenton, NJ 08628

February 22, 2011

The following are formal comments by our organization on the pending Draft Natural Gas Development Regulations.

The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Soc. is the Chapter of the National Audubon Soc. covering Delaware and Otsego and portions of Schoharie and Chenango Counties in New York. A large part of our Chapter area is within the Delaware River watershed, and the environmental quality of the river, its tributaries, and the lands making up the watershed are of great importance to our organization and members.

We have adopted a formal position statement detailing our position on gas drilling and hydrofracking wells (attached). Our first concern in that statement is “*potential ground and surface water contamination from the many toxic chemicals used in hydrofracking the shale*”.

We further state that “*The practice of injecting large quantities of toxic substances into the earth to physically fracture it and permanently leave behind damaged geology and foreign substances is an assault on the very resources that sustain life. This damage will remain for millennia, and will threaten unseen future generations, as well as present-day humans and wildlife. Even with the most stringent controls and oversight, this activity is an unacceptable danger to our planet, with no environmental benefits. As such, we oppose hydrofracturing gas exploration and production in our region and elsewhere.*”

The draft regulations put forth by the Commission attempt to put in place such stringent controls and oversight. However, it is clearly impossible for the Commission or any other agency to administratively control, regulate or otherwise assure the safety of an activity that largely takes place thousands of feet below the surface of the earth, and the ramifications of which may not be apparent or experienced for hundreds or thousands of years.

If this body is to responsibly “*...protect the water resources of the Delaware River Basin...*” and “*...avoid pollution of or injury to the water resources of the Basin*” as the draft regulations envision, it should deny any and all uses of Delaware River basin ground or surface waters, or disposal of any wastewaters, or importation of water for the purpose of hydrofracking gas wells or related activities.

We call on the Commission to withdraw the draft regulations and enact a permanent ban on use of basin waters for these purposes. Anything less would be an abrogation of your responsibilities to the waters and the residents of the Delaware watershed.

Sincerely,

Andrew Mason, Conservation Chair

Teaming with Wildlife A Natural Investment

Jillian Liner, New York State Audubon's Director of Bird Conservation, presented on Friday, February 18th the Kestrel Project defining the goals, data and the number of sites across the country involved in this wonderful project. DOAS is taking on a partnership role for the first time this year with three out of a possible seven sites being located in High Schools. This gives us a sense of pride as we have been committed to gearing our energies toward reaching out to families and young people. Our goal is to bring about environmental awareness with the younger generations as we attempt to hand off the stewardship that has been hard fought for and resulted in some major battles won against some impressive foes.

However, one does not rest because every week seems to bring about a new threat to our environment and attempting to develop a sense of what to prioritize could earn you a Ph.D. in stress management. The Kestrel Project came about due to the decline of the Kestrels in a number of areas. The data was based on annual bird counts and the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas. New York State Audubon in looking at this data, believed that one of the possible reasons for the Kestrel decline could be the loss of habitat, mainly grasslands. Jillian referred to the Kestrel as a type of "umbrella bird" meaning the loss of grassland habitat for the Kestrel would mean loss of habitat for grassland varieties such as Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, grasshopper Sparrow, and one of my personal favorites, the Northern Harrier.

Now the US House of Representatives will be voting on the FY11 spending plan, or Continuing Resolution. The CR would eliminate funding for the successful State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program. That Grant Program along with the North American Wetland Conservation Act were singled out to receive 100% cut in funding instead of a proportional reduction. We know that times are tough and we all need to do our part in reducing the deficit, but the State & Tribal Wildlife Grants Program is the nation's core program for preventing wildlife from becoming endangered.

Results from such drastic action would cut across every state and territorial fish & wildlife agency whose job it is to conserve at-risk fish and wildlife. Native habitat would be degraded. More species would become endangered. The results from the huge cuts to New York State DEC, particularly the wildlife biologist position, would lead one to believe that the easiest areas to cut as those most vulnerable, the ones with the smallest voices.

As Jillian Liner stated in her presentation, the goal of the Kestrel project is to educate and have an action plan. It appears that every potential decline and assault against our environment needs an education/action plan. Here is the action plan for this next attack on our environment: call your member of the US House of Representatives -ask them to oppose the continuing resolution. Go to www.house.gov for information on your contact. Let us hope the vote hasn't been taken yet.

Eleanor Moriarty



Kestrel, by Dave Kiehm

Hawkwatch News—correction

In last month's Kingfisher it was reported that Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch counter Steve Hall had tallied his 500th Golden Eagle this past season. In fact, Steve's total is nearly double that—970 in the twelve years he has been counting. Quite a feat—no doubt Steve will go over 1000 in 2011.

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: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

*Favorite Places Series***Weaver Lake**

One of the places that makes our part of New York so interesting for birding is Weaver Lake. It is a small, shallow lake surrounded by marshes and wet ground. It is located halfway between Richfield Springs and Springfield Center along side of US Route 20 on the north side of the road. This is an area best enjoyed with either canoe or kayak. My favorite time to visit is a May morning. There is an easy put-in, and almost immediately, Marsh Wrens can be heard singing. Almost anywhere around the lake, Virginia Rails, Moorhens, Grebes, American Bitterns and Willow Flycatchers can be found. Least Bittern are also there, but are harder to find. There is a wonderful stream which feeds the lake. It is hard to find (on the west side), but is a great place for Soras, Wood Ducks, and Blue-Winged Teal, which all nest there.

Bald Eagles, Ospreys, Cormorants and numerous other species, besides Mallards, Geese, etc. are often seen there. With luck, one can find beaver, mink, and otter also.

Leave a whole morning to really enjoy the lake.

Bob Donnelly



Green Heron from Weaver Lake, by Dave Kiehm

Winter Eagle Sites and Other Wildlife Visitors

The March monthly program will be held on Friday the 18th at 7:30pm in the Elm Park United Methodist Church, located at 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

Tom Salo, DOAS director and co-Chair of the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch, will present a program showing the best photographs from two seasons of research using baited wildlife cameras. Tom has been a leader in New York State for efforts to define Golden Eagle migration corridors and the northern limits of their winter range. Three sites were active in 2010. Five sites have been active this winter.

A fascinating benefit from this research is the ability to view the variety and numbers of other wildlife species which also visited the sites. Both species of eagles were photographed along with ravens, crows, hawks, coyotes and some unexpected surprises. Part of the presentation will be devoted to interactions between individuals at these sometimes crowded food sources.

The program is free and open to the public. Refreshments are served. For further information contact: Eleanor Moriarty: 607-435-2054 or 607-278-4083



A Golden Eagle feeds at one of our monitoring sites

2010 Christmas Bird Count

This year's CBC was quite unremarkable but we had a very pleasant, mostly sunny day for it. The total number of birds seen was rather low perhaps partially owing to the rather low numbers of birds coming to feeders because of the availability of "wild" sources. This year the 25 field observers in 9 parties and the 7 feeder watchers saw 4903 birds of 48 species whereas in 09 we had 49 species totalling 6517 birds and in 08 we recorded 7828 of 44 species. There were a few late lingerers — 1 Great Blue Heron, 2 Belted Kingfishers, 1 Flicker, 10 Cedar Waxwings, 1 Song Sparrow and 2 Brown-headed Cowbirds. And there were a few winterers from more northerly breeding areas — 2 Rough-legged Hawks, 52 Snow Buntings, 95 American Tree Sparrows, 1 Redpoll, 43 Pine Siskins and none of the sometimes wintering grosbeaks and crossbills. The detailed list of the birds seen is on the DOAS website www.doas.us.

Bob Miller

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip

On Saturday, April 2, 2011, there is a DOAS Spring field trip to Montezuma to view the incredible migration of numerous species of ducks, geese, and hawks at this wildlife refuge, located at the north end of Cayuga Lake in the heart of the Finger Lakes Region. The trip visits the areas located in the refuge, lakes and marshes and breaks for lunch at the green state of the art New York Center.

Recent trips have observed snow geese migration in the thousands. Raptors are often seen soaring over the waters. Located towards the northern part of the refuge, a pair of Sandhill Cranes have been breeding for two or more seasons successfully.

The trip will leave from the Dietz St. parking lot, across from the YMCA in Oneonta, at 7:30am. Carpooling is strongly encouraged, and participants can be picked up en route to Cooperstown. Return to Oneonta will be late afternoon. The trip takes a few hours each way, and participants need to pack a lunch.

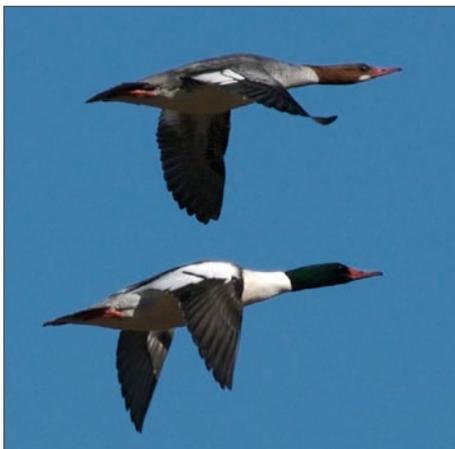
For further information please contact Eleanor Moriarty at eleanormr955@gmail.com or phone: 607-435-2054 or 607-278-4083



Snow Geese, by Dave Kiehm

Lake Otsego Waterfowl Trip

On Sunday April 3, 2011 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. Past trips have always interesting waterfowl and other species. Cars will be pooled, and the trip will last until around noon. For more information, contact John Davis at davi7js4@hughes.net or 607-547-9688



Common Merganser, by Dave Kiehm

Coming Activities

March

March 12 & 13, 2011 — Winter Raptor Fest at the Little Theater On the Farm, Forts Edward, NY. For details and directions, visit: www.winterraptorfest.com

March 15, 2011 — DOAS Board Meeting at 7 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. For more information contact Dave Kiehm at (607) 286-9222.

March 18, 2011 — DOAS Program: The Golden Eagle Winter Project by Tom Salo, DOAS Board Member. See details, *Winter Eagle Sites and Other Wildlife Visitors*, page 6.

April

April 2, 2011 — Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip. See details, *Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Field Trip*, this page. For more information please contact Eleanor Moriarty at 607-435-2054 or 607-278-4083.

April 3, 2011 — Annual spring waterfowl trip around Lake Otsego and environs. For more information, contact John Davis at davi7js4@hughes.net or 607-547-9688.

April 9, 2011 — 6th Annual Earth Day Festival at Milford Central School.

April 15, 2011 — DOAS Program: Catskill Black Bears by Larry Bifaro, Wildlife Biologist, DEC Region 4 (9 counties), co-leader of New York State's Black Bear Management Team.

April 27, 2011 — Earth Day at SUCO campus.

May

May 20, 2011 — DOAS Program: Birds of Costa Rica by the Fielders.

Earth Day Festivals

Saturday, April 9, 2011 -The 6th Annual Earth Day Festival at Milford Central School, Milford New York. The festival is sponsored by Otsego County Conservation Association. DOAS President Dave Kiehm will be leading a walk in the morning as part of Earth Day participation. DOAS will once again have a table filled with information about local, and State issues that directly affect our environment and quality of life.

Saturday April 27, 2011 - SUCO campus. DOAS will have an information table at this event. Details of place and time will be forthcoming in the April Kingfisher.



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January-February Bird Sightings

I often hear “Who cooks for you?” “Who cooks for you?” late at night from my bedroom window as a pair of barred owls call to one another. However I rarely see this bird. On our drive home from cross country skiing at Frost Valley in mid-January my husband and I saw a barred owl perched on a telephone wire facing the road just outside Delhi. It patiently waited there as we turned our car around to get a look at its silhouetted and sculptured face. In mid-February I saw another one again sitting on a telephone wire as I descended Franklin Mountain into Oneonta. These were two truly delightful sightings for me.

January was filled with some interesting bird reports. Marge Mathis saw a flock of 12 Common Redpolls in Morris on 1/1. While working in the woods Warren Ryther was surprised to see 3 Golden-crowned Kinglets in New Lisbon on 1/9. On 1/14 foraging near her feeders Jean

Dorman observed a White-throated Sparrow in Dunraven near Margaretville. The next day she saw a Northern Shrike on her snow covered yard apparently eating a mouse or a mole that it had captured. Becky Gretton spied 2 adult Golden Eagles from the parking lot of Glimmerglass Park as they soared over Wellington Mountain on 1/17. The next day Trina Bassoff was delighted to see a Red-bellied Woodpecker in Jefferson. On 1/22 Jessie Ravage spotted a light phase Rough-legged Hawk hovering over her house in Cooperstown as she shoveled snow from a roof valley and John Davis was pleased to see a flock of Snow Buntings also in Cooperstown as they veered left and then sharply turned right. Bill Butts pulled into his snow covered driveway in Franklin when he spotted a clump of what he thought was snow that had fallen from his car when he had left. Being a bit curious he explored further with a flashlight to be greeted by an Eastern Screech Owl. On 1/27 Dorian Huneke saw a Bald Eagle land in a big old white willow by Treadwell Creek.



White Throated Sparrow, by Dave Kiehm

There was just one sighting to report in February thus far. On 2/3 Peter and Vivienne Clark saw 3 Northern Cardinals, 1 male, 2 females. They questioned this sighting which seemed to go against the “cardinal” law of nature that these colorful birds travel in pairs.

Contact me dbenko@frontiernet.net, 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753, 607 829-5218 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher.

Dianne Benko