



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Inc.
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Editor — Bob Miller

COMING ACTIVITIES

- Nov. 21 DOAS General Meeting. *Global Warming: Science and Solutions*. Pam Musk of New York State Audubon will present the major areas of concern and current solutions in N.Y.
- Dec. 9 Board Meeting. Eleanor's home.
- Dec. 20 Annual Christmas Bird Count. Plan ahead. Everyone welcome. Details page 5.
- Jan. 16 DOAS General Meeting. *Nature Photography*. Gail and Nelson DuBois, local wildlife photographers, will present recent photographic journeys: *The Panda Bears of China and the Snow Monkeys of Japan*.
- Jan. 17 Eagle Field Trip. Andy Mason leader. Details page 4.
- 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.
- 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 the bat colonies.
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GLOBAL WARMING: SCIENCE and SOLUTIONS

Audubon to Present Program on: *Global Warming: Science and Solutions* at our general meeting on Friday 21,2008 at 7:30PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street in Oneonta. The presenter will be Pam Musk Director for Centers and Education of Audubon New York. Pam has extensive experience as an educator and teacher. She holds two Master Degrees, one in Education from the University of Connecticut and the other in Environmental Studies from Antioch New England graduate school. Her presentation will present a unique view of our current evolving crisis of global warming facing our planet and New York State.

The meeting is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. For further information, please contact; Eleanor Moriarty,

Program Director at: 607-278-5896 or e-mail: eleanor@dmcom.net

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Great-blue Herons whose nest trees were cut down chose to nest in trees along the edge of the beaver pond instead of on the platforms we constructed. The board discussed moving 2 of the platforms to locations where herons no longer nest. A decision was made to leave the heron platforms in place for another nesting season. If they don't use them next spring, we will move some around the following winter.

As I mentioned in last month's column, we understand but regret the resignation of Cheryl Boise from the board. She has been a great asset over the years. Our by-laws allow the board to fill a vacant position between elections. At the October board meeting, the board unanimously appointed Dave Kiehm as a Director. Dave is a local wildlife artist. He and his wife Ann recently built a house in Milford. You have probably seen him at meetings and on field trips. He is willing to pitch in whenever necessary. He helped me construct the parts of the heron platforms last winter. On the ice last winter he lead the nest platform installation effort. He and Ann recently helped Andy clear branches from the edges of the fields at the sanctuary in preparation for mowing.

Dave is a skilled naturalist who participates in a broad range of outdoor activities. His presence further diversifies our energetic and hard working board. His outstanding art reflects years of study of wildlife and nature. You've seen some of it on the pages of this newsletter. The Upper Catskill Community Council on the Arts will be hosting a show of Dave's paintings from April 24-June 6, 2009. We will provide more information on the show as the time draws near.

Andy Mason is replacing Cheryl as Vice President. Gray Mason will chair the Financial Committee.

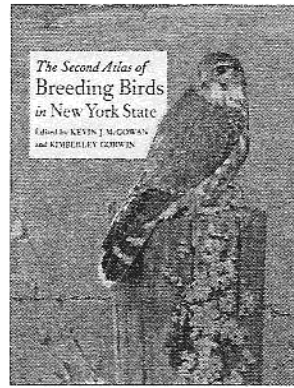
...Tom Salo

Red-tailed Hawk by Dave Kiehm



FORT PLAIN CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count will be on Friday, January 2. Everyone is welcome to participate. Please save the date. For more information contact Tom Salo - 607-965-8232, tomsalo@localnet.com or Bob Donnelly - 607-264-8156, rsdonn@yahoo.com.



THE SECOND ATLAS OF BREEDING BIRDS IN NEW YORK STATE NOW AVAILABLE AT DISCOUNT

Edited by KEVIN J. MCGOWAN and KIMBERLEY CORWIN

The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State documents and illustrates the current distribution of breeding birds within the state and the significant change in bird distribution that has occurred since the publication of *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State*, edited by Robert F. Andrie and Janet R. Carroll, in 1988. Each species account features a black-and-white illustration of the bird, color maps of the current (2000-2005) breeding distribution and of the twenty-year change in distribution, and an overview of the species' breeding range, habitat preferences, history in the state, trends in distribution, and conservation implications. The book not only chronicles shifts in bird distribution but also celebrates the 244 species that breed within the state's borders by showcasing majestic landscape paintings of family groups and original artwork of each species.

Based on comprehensive, statewide research efforts conducted from 2000 to 2005, this landmark volume shows the surprising amount of change in the distribution of breeding birds in New York that has taken place in the last twenty years. Over half of the species changed their distribution in the state, some dramatically. The consistency of survey methods in the two atlas efforts, including census of the same 5,333 survey blocks, allows for statistically significant comparisons.

In all, 1,187 volunteers spent 140,000 hours in the field, making this a substantive work of citizen science with broad applications for bird research and environmental management. In addition to the species accounts, there are chapters on methodology, results, habitats, land use, history of New York birding and ornithology, conservation, and appendixes of rare breeders as well as an updated table of the seasonal timing of breeding.

For a limited time, DOAS is offering this monumental work at a substantial discount over the \$59.95 book store price. We have ordered copies to sell at the November 21 program at Elm Park Church. The cost will be \$45. Members can also order copies shipped directly to their home for an additional \$5. To order a copy, send a \$50 check to DOAS - BBA, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820. We need your check by December 12 to assure delivery in time for Christmas. Be sure to include your correct shipping address.

Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

Public review of gas drilling underway--The NY State Dep't. of Environmental Conservation has begun the State Environmental Quality Review process for updating its Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for natural gas exploration and production in the state. The update is necessary to consider the potential impacts of horizontal drilling and high-volume hydraulic fracturing to develop gas from the Marcellus shale formations underlying much of central NY State.

The "hydro-fracking" well production technique requires large quantities of water with chemical additives to be forced underground with high pressure to fracture the shale and release trapped gas.

Presently DEC has a draft scoping document out for review by the public. This outlines the issues and concerns to be covered in the update. It is important to ensure that all possible threats to the environment are included in the scope. Among the known dangers are contamination of groundwater by hydro-fracking water, storage of returned water and additional contaminants from the wells, withdrawal of water from aquifers and surface water bodies, and fragmentation of habitat for drilling operations and transmission pipelines.

The scoping document does not specifically address dangers to wildlife, except threatened and endangered species. However, if drilling wastes are stored in open pits, as is currently allowed for natural gas exploration in the state, the mix of heavy metals, oils, surfactants and other substances certainly poses a threat to waterfowl, shorebirds and other wildlife. Ideally these liquids would be stored in closed tanks, but there is no guarantee this will be required.

What you can do--The draft scoping document is available at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/47554.html>. A public hearing on the scope will be held Dec. 2 in SUCO's Hunt Union Ballroom, starting at 5:15 p.m., with public comments at 6 p.m. In addition, comments can be submitted by mail to: Bureau of Oil & Gas Regulation, NYSDEC Division of Mineral Resources, 625 Broadway - Third Floor, Albany, NY 12233-6500, Attn: Scope Comments; or by email to dmnog@gw.dec.state.ny.us with "Scope Comments" as the subject.

Following finalization of the scope, a draft supplemental GEIS will be prepared, and put out for public comment before a final document is completed. DEC anticipates the process to be finished by Spring, 2009, and regulations for the hydro-frack horizontal drilling to be promulgated shortly after that.

BIRD POPULATIONS IN CRISIS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Bird Life International reports catastrophic fall in bird numbers, and reveals bird populations are in crisis throughout the world.

Michael McCarthy says that a new comprehensive review suggest that birds of the world are in serious trouble and common species are now in decline all over the globe. Turtle doves of Europe, vultures of India, Bobwhite quails of US, yellow cardinals of Argentina and many more are falling in number.

Their falling populations are compelling evidence of a rapid deterioration in the global environment that is affecting all life on earth, including human life, Birdlife says in its report, *State of the World's Birds*. Threats include the intensification of industrial-scale agriculture and fishing, the spread of invasive species, logging, and the replacement of natural forest with monocultural plantations. It goes on to say that the long term, human-induced climate change may be the most serious stress. The regional pictures of bird declines combine to present a startling picture of a whole class of living things on a steep downward slope.

Twenty common North American birds have more than halved in number in the last four decades, while in Asia, the millions of white-rumped vultures which once filled the skies have crashed by 99.9 percent, and the species is now critically endangered.

"Many of these birds have been a familiar part of our everyday lives, and people who would not necessarily have noticed other environmental indicators have seen their numbers slipping away, and are wondering why," says Dr. Mike Rands, BirdLife's Chief executive.

All the world's governments have committed themselves to slowing or halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010, but reluctance to commit what are often trivial sums in terms of national budgets means that this target is almost certain to be missed, according to the report.

"Birds provide an accurate and easy-to-read environmental barometer, allowing us to see clearly the pressures our current way of life are putting on the world's biodiversity", Dr. Rands said. "Effective biodiversity conservation is easily affordable, requiring relatively trivial sums at the scale of the global economy. The world is failing in its 2010 pledge.

continued on Page 5

Hawkwatch News

The Golden Eagles season has begun at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary. The first golden of the year came by on Oct. 5, and two adults and two immatures passed by on the 15th. Movements of Golden Eagles will increase through October into November with double-digit counts expected on days with good north and northwest winds.

On Oct. 17, counter Fred Fries had a noteworthy day when 13 of the regularly occurring 15 species made an appearance at the lookout. Only early season Broad-winged Hawk and late season Rough-legged Hawk were missing. Fred counted 181 raptors that day.

Red-tailed Hawks, generally the most numerous species at Franklin Mt., will also be on the increase in October and November. Good red-tail conditions are the same as those that bring Golden Eagles--passage of a cold front followed by dropping temperatures and northerly winds.

Visitors, spotters and counters are always welcome at the hawkwatch. For more information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, tomsalo@localnet.com. Be sure to dress warmly conditions are often considerably colder on the mountain.

Forecast of anticipated good flights at the hawkwatch are sent out by email a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit www.pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/hawkcast/ to sign up. Daily tallies from Franklin Mt. are also available by email contact Andy Mason as above. More information and directions to the hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at www.doas.us/franklinmt.htm.

Eagle Trip Scheduled for Jan. 17, 2009

Sat., Jan. 17, 2009 is the date for the annual DOAS field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles. The trip visits rivers and reservoirs in Delaware County where the birds concentrate to feed. Recent trips have turned up 20+ eagles.

Other raptors and waterfowl are usually sighted on this trip. We also will stop at a local restaurant for lunch for interested participants.

The trip will leave the Dietz St. parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 8 a.m. Carpooling is strongly encouraged and participants can be picked up en route in Delhi and Walton. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon.

For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

September-October Bird Sightings

Birdwatching in the fall always results in seeing a mixture of last minute stubborn migrators and of diehard winter residents who remain with us. The following bird sightings bear this out.

On 9/17 Tom Salo reported 7 Eastern meadowlarks in W. Burlington. On 9/2 he also saw 9 Eastern bluebirds there. On that same day Eleanor Moriarity saw 30 cedar waxwings. John Davis heard duetting barred owls in Cooperstown on 9/28. Andy Mason heard a wood thrush clucking in Jefferson on 9/29.

A red-bellied woodpecker was seen by Sue Whitney in Delhi on 10/2. John Davis heard a great horned owl in Cooperstown on 10/5. An Eastern towhee was at Tom Salo's feeder in W. Burlington on 10/12. On 12/17, 2 common ravens were spotted by Germaine Connolly in Springfield Center.

Please send sightings to Dianne Benko; 607 829-5218; 6815 Co. Hwy 16, Delhi, NY 13753; dbenko@frontiernet.net by 11/28/08 for the December issue of The Belted Kingfisher.

Macaw Rescued at Hawkwatch

A new species made an appearance at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch on Sept. 24, when a macaw flew in and perched in a tree near the lookout. Richard Hendrick, one of the counters that day, happened to have in his lunch a banana which he took out and held up. The bird promptly flew down and landed on his shoulder where it devoured the fruit and remained the rest of the day.

An interesting enough experience, but the rest of the story is even better. At the end of the count, Richard and Steve Hall contacted the Community Veterinary Center in Oneonta who sent someone up to get the bird. They checked it over (it was IDed as a Severe Macaw), found it healthy, and over the next few days tried to locate the owner via ads, radio announcements and phone calls--with no success.

After a more days, the bird began talking. It repeated the same names over and over. Soon vet Trevor Ostrander recognized the names as those of his landlord's family! He checked, and sure enough, it was their pet. He had no idea they owned a macaw.

It turned out the bird had gone out in their yard with the landlord's wife, which it often did. But the husband came out to do some work and started a chain saw, startling it off into the woods. It was on the lam for 3 days before it appeared at the hawkwatch a mile or so away.

A very lucky bird--to have avoided the regular Cooper's Hawks tallied at the hawkwatch, to have found a sympathetic shoulder to land on, and to have talked its way back home!

A picture is available at <http://members.localnet.com/~amazon1/Severe%20Macaw%20at%20FMHW.jpg>.

... Andy Mason

Birds and Cats

There has been an ongoing feud in this country between cat lovers and bird lovers. Of course there are those who love felines as well as egg-laying, feathered vertebrates with wings. But unfortunately, having wings does not necessarily mean that birds escape the claws of the cat. It is estimated that outdoor cats (owned, stray, and feral) kill millions of birds each year, not to overlook the billion or so small mammals such as rabbits, squirrels, and chipmunks. Ron, a California wildlife biologist, has documented the total destruction of colonies of terns: "If a cat finds the colony, it can destroy the colony in a few days, if not overnight." In fact, documented evidence from all parts of the world testifies to the inordinate decimation of birds by free roaming cats. It is true that the decline in bird populations is caused by many factors such as pesticides, habitat loss, pollution, and window strikes; but the free-roaming cat populations in many parts of the U.S.A. are out of control and thought to be a major factor in the decimation of millions of songbirds. It's a fact that a pair of breeding cats can have at least two litters per year, thus exponentially producing 420,000 offspring over a seven-year period.

What can be done? Many veterinarians support the Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program which traps, vaccinates, neuters, and then releases feral cats. However, the TNR method is neither quick nor simple. Feral cat colonies, even if every cat is neutered, remain killers. Even domesticated cats that are well fed retain their motivation to hunt, and if allowed to roam free, will prey on the same birds and animals that feral cats eat, birds constituting approximately 20%-30% of the prey of feral and free-ranging domestic cats. Julie Levy, a veterinarian at the U. of Florida College of Veterinarian Medicine, says that what is needed is an efficient way to neuter entire cat colonies; and so, true to her word, Dr. Levy is working with a wildlife research group to develop a sterilization vaccine for female and male cats.

Meanwhile, cat owners need to rethink their philosophy of cat care: cats that are allowed to roam freely are not "happier" than cats kept indoors. In fact, indoor cats have longer and healthier lives. It goes without saying that all domestic female cats should be spayed, and all male cats neutered. Beyond keeping our own cats indoors, we must work locally to safeguard habitats from development and pollution; and we can work with Audubon and other organizations to shape national policies and protect migratory bird habitats across the hemisphere.

by *Stephen Rice*

Birds in Crisis — continued from page 3

Birds in Peril in North America:

Twenty common species have suffered population declines of over 50 percent in the last 40 years, and Northern Bobwhite population suffered reductions of 83 percent. Other species suffering include the Evening Grosbeak (78 %), Northern Pintail (77%), and Boreal Chickadee (73%)

North American to Latin American migrants:

"57% of neotropical (Central and South American) migrants monitored at their breeding ground in the US have suffered declines over the last four decades. Migratory species such as the Wilson's Phalarope and Semipalmated Sandpiper are disappearing."

National Audubon Society is a partner with Bird Life International, and has also issued reports of this bird population crisis worldwide. NAS is urging chapters to emphasize our Important Bird Areas, our local threats to habitat loss and our Hawk Watches.

Audubon's report can be found on the NAS website.

The State of the World Birds report can be found at <http://www.birdlife.org/sowb>

Christmas Bird Count

The DOAS annual Christmas Bird Count is Saturday, December 20. This is our 40th year of participating in this national count. Everyone, novice or experienced, is welcome to join us on that fun day. Small groups in one or two cars count all the birds they see in their assigned area for whatever hours they choose. Each group has a leader who will have received appropriate materials beforehand. Alternatively, instead of joining a group you can count birds at your own feeder off and on throughout the day. If you are a new counter for either the group counts or the feeder counts please phone Bob Miller at 607-432-5767. People who have participated before will be contacted.

Union of Concerned Scientists Acts

UCS presented legislators with a letter signed by more than 1700 prominent scientists and economists, and brought 15 of these signers to meet with more than 50 members of Congress to drive home the message that swift and deep cuts in global warming pollution are urgently needed.

... *Bob Miller*

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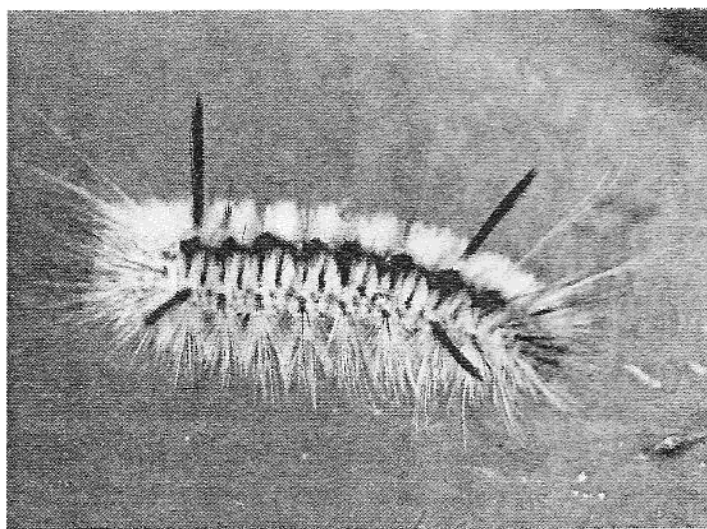


Photo — JRM

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Bird Counts	Bob Miller
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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.
 Do you know a good location for a field trip ?

All meetings are free and open to the public