



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## COMING ACTIVITIES

### NOVEMBER

11/19: Program - Ants, Bushmasters, Chain Saws: Some ABCs of rain forests today - by Joe Richardson

### DECEMBER

12/7: Board Meeting 7 pm, home of Barbara Marsala  
12/18: Christmas Bird Count  
12/31 The Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count

### JANUARY

1/15 - Field trip to Delaware County reservoirs to view wintering Bald Eagles  
1/21 - Program - Miriam A Sharick, Instructor Delhi College, Superheroes of Biodiversity

MORE INFO ON  
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*All DOAS programs are free and open to the public.*

## It's Bird Feeding Time Again - *Should We?*

It's that time of year again, when so many of us begin the costly feeding of our feathered friends -along with those seed-munching squirrels and chipmunks.

Project Feederwatch is underway ([www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html)) And the Great Backyard Bird Count is February 18-21 ([www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/index.html)). The Black Bear problem will disappear by early December, and in the meantime if your feeders get taken out, at least it's exciting... .

But should we feed the birds at all? Before you start throwing expletives my way, I DO feed, but with some misgivings. To wit:

Do we know that those sunflower and thistle seeds are free of pesticides and possibly other toxins? Clearly the FDA doesn't play a role here.

Can suet be harmful if it gets soft in warm weather? We are warned that rancid fat around bird beaks can cause "disease", but I couldn't find evidence for this. On

the other hand the Cornell Lab web site on feeding birds ([www.alaboutbirds.org/Net-Community/Page.aspx?pid=1180](http://www.alaboutbirds.org/Net-Community/Page.aspx?pid=1180)) does state that "when suet gets soft, it can coat belly feathers, a dangerous situation especially in spring and summer when birds are incubating—tiny pores on the birds' eggs may get clogged, preventing the developing embryo from getting enough oxygen." Wow.

And do we facilitate evolutionary change in birds that may cause species harm in the long run? A study in the journal *Biology*, as reported in the BBC News 12/3/09, suggests, at least in "European



*continued on page four*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Dave and Maggie*

### **A TALE OF TWO HAWK WATCHES**

This summer I was invited to show some of my paintings at the Cape May Bird Observatory in Cape May New Jersey. When I found out it was going to be in late September, I jumped at the offer. I felt it an honor to be asked to show but late Sept. in Cape May means hawks!

After dropping off my paintings at the gallery, I headed to Cape May State Park where their hawk watch is located. Palatial is the first word I thought of when seeing the multi-level viewing platform that makes up the watch. This platform has more square footage than my house! I immediately thought of our

more modest hawk watch and it's bench, storage shed and kiosk. Definitely different set-ups but their common goal remains the same. **HAWKS!**

Though my timing in the season was right, I could not control the weather. It was 92 degrees on Friday and 89 degrees on Saturday. Both days accompanied by South winds, a bad combination for hawk movement. Even with the bad conditions, the first hour I watched there were ospreys, kestrels, merlins, a peregrine falcon and multiple sharp-shins. The hawk counter said it was a slow day but I loved it!

Beside for the structural differences between the Cape May and Franklin Mt. hawk watches, the next obvious difference is terrain. Cape May's watch sits just off the dunes at sea level with it's back to the Delaware Bay. The Franklin Mt. watch is perched high above the Susquehanna River valley on a ridge top. I noticed right off that birds fly different at each site. Most significantly is that the birds at Cape May flew early, often before sun up. They did not wait for the thermals to rise and help carry them aloft. The hawks that migrate locally are closely associated to the ridgeline and the warm updrafts of the thermals they produce. These thermals sometimes take into the morning before they rise and the birds take advantage.

The early flights in Cape May were very evident when on Sunday morning I was out on the State Park trails. A cold front was coming in and the wind shifted and was now out of the Northwest. The sun had not risen out of the sea before hawks of many species were silhouetted against the sky. A Cooper's hawk who glided by not 20 feet from me once startled me. Being just above the cattails, I could not see the hawk until it was right on top of me.

As it slowly brightened, harriers and sharp-shins were everywhere. I have never seen so many sharpies at one time! The falcons started up later in the morning and I was able to get great looks at kestrels and merlins hunting dragonflies. The highlight was when I spotted a peregrine gliding low over the water. I don't think it saw me until it was just a few yards away. A stunning bird at anytime but when it is in your "lap" like this one, a treasured sight to be remembered.

Though Cape May is a unique and important hawk watch, we are very fortunate to have a significant watch right in our back yard. We have already had record-breaking days for Broad-wing hawks and October brings the huge flights of Red-tailed hawks. This is also the time when the Golden eagles starts to show in numbers. As diverse as Cape May's menu is, they don't get the Golden eagle flight we get.

Please take advantage of one of our local treasures and visit the hawk watch at Franklin Mt. Check our website for forecasts to time your visit with the best weather and flights. I think you will be glad you went and it is sure beats the 6+ hour ride to south Jersey!

*Dave Kiehm*  
607 286 9222

*dkiehm@dmcom.net*

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GERIANNE CARILLO

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**THE BELTED KINGFISHER** PLEASE SEND  
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COVER ARTWORK BY DAVE KIEHM

## CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

By Andy Mason

Gas Drilling Update—The final Environmental Impact Statement that will guide New York State in its efforts to permit and regulate horizontal gas drilling is anticipated to be released at any time. The EIS follows a public participation process, and intense and ongoing public debate over the appropriateness and safety of drilling and related activities.

Environmentalists and many other New Yorkers were deeply disappointed in the draft version of the EIS put forth last year. An outpouring of support for strengthening the document, or starting over, was directed at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the agency preparing the impact statement. What DEC's response will be remains to be seen.

In other arenas, the US Environmental Protection Agency is conducting a study on the threats to drinking water from gas drilling. Public hearings last month drew large crowds to several locations, including Binghamton, and again the prevailing opinions were against drilling.

There has been a call for NY to

hold off on releasing its EIS until the EPA study is complete. Legislation placing a moratorium on drilling passed the NY State Senate, but has not been taken up by the Assembly.

Another concern is that DEC will not have sufficient resources and personnel to enforce whatever regulations it ultimately puts in place. Recent reports say that the agency's already shorthanded staff will be cut even further due to budget constraints.

What you can do—Our region is near the heart of the targeted gas drilling area. It's important that we as citizens and environmentalists be heard on this issue. Contact your state legislators and urge that drilling not be allowed until all the facts are in and adequate safeguards are in place. Tell that that state oversight is crucial to protecting our lands and waters and that DEC needs the capacity to do its job. Local town and county representatives should also hear that they need to speak out and take action to protect local residents and the environment.

Environmental Advocates—a group worth supporting—Perhaps the best of the statewide environmental

organization is Albany-based Environmental Advocates—a group that works to “monitor state government, evaluate proposed laws, and champion policies and practices that will ensure the responsible stewardship of our shared environment.”

Now in its 4th decade, EA's history somewhat parallels DOAS'. One of our early leaders, Dr. John New, was a founder of the then Environmental Planning Lobby, a coalition of groups that focused on state government to bring about environmental protections. EA has been involved in nearly every major state environmental issue, from the Bottle Bill to controlling acid rain, to the State Environmental Quality Review Act, to the Clean Indoor Air Act, and most recently natural gas drilling. They publish an annual Voter's Guide that provides the records of legislators and other public officials on environmental issues.

DOAS is a long-time member and supporter of Environmental Advocates, and the organization is an invaluable source of information on the conservation issues that are addressed in this column.

*Please consider joining and supporting Environmental Advocates. Their web site, [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org), provides information on how you can assist their campaigns.*

## **DOAS and the New York State Audubon American Kestrel Project**

**J**illian Limer, Audubon New York Director of Bird Conservation, is scheduled to present this important project that is partnered with the New York State Department of Transportation and other State Audubon chapters in early 2011 at our monthly general meetings. The aim of this project is to help boost levels of breeding Kestrels in New York State.

Hundreds of individuals across

the New York State are engaged in a coordinated effort to build, install, and monitor next boxes for American Kestrels. The mission is to teach people about the plight of the Kestrels and other grassland birds; and to spur action by this group of engaged citizens in support of habitat stewardship. We are seeking five to six individuals interested in becoming involved in this project. It is not time consuming and collecting the information -data is quite clear and simple. The location

and placement of the boxes will be a collective effort.

More detailed information will be provided within the next month. Please feel free to contact Eleanor Moriarty, program director at: 607-278-4083 or email: [eleanormrrt955@gmail.com](mailto:eleanormrrt955@gmail.com). For more information on this project and the Kestrels in general go the New York State Audubon website and click on bird conservation: [ny.audubon.org](http://ny.audubon.org)

*by Eleanor Moriarty*

# Migration to the Gulf

Loons, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, Terns, ducks and geese are among the millions of migratory bird species already heading south along the Mississippi Flyway to their wintering grounds in the Gulf of Mexico. They left in spring before the disastrous oil spill, but will return to marshes and open waters laden with 100 million gallons of oil.

Chemical dispersants - sprayed heavily over the water - have broken down much of the oil into small globules that microorganisms can ingest, and perhaps degrade, but this may result in immense toxic zones where life cannot survive. A storm tide could bring more oil to marshes and coastal wetlands, compromising ducks and shorebirds especially.

Conservationists and farmers are flooding 20,000 acres of rice fields in



southern LA and TX to provide alternate feeding grounds for ducks and marsh birds, and Ducks Unlimited will try to divert birds to these sources of good food. But loons and diving ducks need deeper water, and may die from ingesting oil in the tiny organisms they eat

Nationwide Christmas Bird Counts and other bird monitoring programs will help to assess the impact this spill has on migratory birds.

Jean T. Miller

*Audubon Magazine, Sept/Oct . 2010*

## HELP NEEDED WITH GOLDEN EAGLE RESEARCH

Again this winter we will set up baited wildlife cameras, to locate winter resident Golden Eagles. This was successful last season when we photographed at least 3 Golden Eagles in Delaware and Otsego Counties. A juvenile Bald Eagle and 2 adults spent time at one of the sites. Other scavengers include multiple Common Ravens, as many as 50 ravens at 1 site, multiple Red-tailed Hawks at every site, Rough-legged Hawks, American Crows, coyotes, a bobcat and a red fox.



We need a good used car battery to use to run one of the cameras. If you have a battery you could loan or donate, it would be appreciated.

We are now identifying sites to set up cameras for this coming winter. We need help maintaining a potential site on the ridge between Otego and Franklin. The responsibilities include restocking the bait by transporting road-killed deer carcasses to the site, changing memory cards and batteries in the camera, and downloading the photographs. These tasks could be shared by 2 people. If you would like to help, or for more information, contact Tom Salo at 607-965-8232 or tomsalo@localnet.com.

We will be presenting a program next March showing the best of our photographs from these camera traps. Sample photos can be seen on our website –

**www.doas.us.**

Tom Salo

## It's Bird Feeding Time Again - Should We?

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Blackcaps” (a warbler, not a chickadee - en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackcap), that over only about 50 years an “evolutionary split” has led to two different populations, those that hang around all winter because of feeders and those that migrate south as they have for eons. But whether this is “harmful” or “helpful” to the Black cap’s worldly future is subject to debate.

So, what’s the bottom line? I say, go ahead and feed the birds -for enjoyment, to learn, and to be a citizen scientist” in the Cornell Lab mode (www.birds.cornell.edu/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=708). Surely this “tinkering with nature” is pretty benign, compared to other things we humans do to the natural world.

John Davis

## DID YOU KNOW...

Migrating Bobolinks travel up to 6,800 miles - from Canada or U.S.A. to Brazil or Argentina

The Painted Buntings migrate from South and Southeast USA - traveling up to 3,000 miles to Panama and West Indies

Migrating Scarlet Tanagers travel up to 4,350 miles - from Canada or U.S.A. to South America

Traveling up to 4,500 miles, the Cerulean Warbler flies from Canada and U.S.A. to South America

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu>



FAVORITE PLACES SERIES:

**Butternut Wetland near Morris**

The Butternut Valley contains a number of enticing wetlands along the meandering course of Butternut Creek, but many of them are not easily accessible except by kayak or canoe in times of high water. However, the wetland just north of the Otsego County Fairgrounds in Morris is easy to get to – though no longer very easy to get through. If you enter Morris on State Route 23 from Oneonta, turn right onto Lake Street and follow it to



the fairgrounds. If arriving on State Route 51, turn onto Hargrave Street at the north end of Morris and proceed one block to the intersection with Lake Street, turning left here to get to the fairgrounds. Staying to the left as you enter the fairgrounds, proceed to the large gravel mound at the far north end and park. A path begins to the left (west) of the gravel mound and leads across a dip and up to an open knoll overlooking the creek. The overlook has been undercut by erosion, so do not get too close to the edge! Beyond the knoll the path continues north along a dike with wetland on either side. Unfortunately the dike each year becomes more and more overgrown; wear heavy jeans to minimize the pain of encounters with brambles! The wetland to the left of the dike is more open, with cattails, alders and a shallow pond; to the right the wetland extending to the creek is wooded. The whole walk is only about half a mile; retrace your steps along the dike back to the knoll when you tire of the brambles.

Most of my visits to this wetland have been in late spring or early summer, during the nesting season. (It is nesting season for snapping turtles too, so step cautiously as you move along the dike!) Among the birds, you may encounter any of several species of warbler, including northern and perhaps Louisiana waterthrush; black-billed cuckoo; cedar waxwing, phoebe and wood pewee; oriole, indigo bunting and tanager; green and great blue herons and possibly rails. Bank swallows and/or rough-winged swallows nest in the steepest of the eroding banks along the creek; and when you get back to your car, scan the grassy parking area of the fairgrounds for nesting killdeer.

*Joe Richardson*

**Hawkwatch News**

The Golden Eagles are coming! As the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch moves into the late season period, the species that gives the lookout its reputation will be arriving. Golden Eagle numbers typically peak during the first two weeks of November, with double-digit days possible on any day with northerly winds.

The Golden Eagles were already trickling in by mid-October. Five had been tallied through the 18th, accompanying the buildup of Red-tailed Hawks that comes in October into November.

In recent years, Franklin Mt. has averaged nearly 200 Golden Eagles a year, with last season’s 161 something of a drop-off. However, 46 of these passed on Nov. 7, an example of the big days that occasionally occur on the mountain. The high count was 252 in 2005—the top fall count in the eastern US that season.

Other late season specialties can also be anticipated through November, including Northern Goshawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, and possibly the first Rough-legged Hawks.

If you come up to the hawkwatch looking for eagles, be sure to dress warmly. Wind chill can be severe at times. Look for days with north or northwest winds for the best migration conditions. For more information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net), or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, [tomsalo@localnet.com](mailto:tomsalo@localnet.com)

Forecasts 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/](http://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 hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at [www.franklinmt.org](http://www.franklinmt.org).***

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.**

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## Tom Salo Honored at Charter Dinner



Photographs by John Davis

*David Kiehm and Tom Salo*

The DOAS board recognized long time director and officer Tom Salo at this year's Charter Dinner, Oct. 15. Tom was commended for his commitment to the environment, to birds, and to our organization, and presented with a certificate and a framed print of a Golden Eagle in flight. This marked only the fifth time in over four decades that DOAS has so honored one of its own.

Tom has served two terms as President, ending his second term this fall. He led DOAS with a steady, conscientious hand, managing the various directions and activities which occupy the group.

In addition to his leadership, he has been deeply involved in numerous conservation issues, including James Bay, state forest protection, lead ammunition, deer management, and many others. He has shown a special concern for Golden Eagles, deriving from the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, which he co-chairs. Tom has organized spring migration counts of eagles the past two years, as well as the ongoing project to photograph eagles and other wildlife at carrion sites. He has also lead DOAS' efforts to review wind project proposals and their potential impacts on raptors and other birds.

Beyond DOAS, Tom has been active with the state Audubon Council, and served as Regional Co-coordinator for the NY State Breeding Bird Atlas.

DOAS is most fortunate to have Tom Salo in its leadership, and the board is pleased to recognize and honor him for his great efforts for conservation.



## Tips for Families who want to go **BIRDING**

1. Pick early morning or late afternoon to look for birds. This will help increase your chances of seeing birds.
2. Start at a pond or wildlife refuge so children can easily see larger water birds.
3. Dress your children in comfortable clothes. Layers work the best to cover all types of weather.
4. Bring along a pair of binoculars and a field guide to help identify species.
5. Encourage your children to walk and speak quietly, so that the birds will not be scared away.
6. Help them to note information about the birds: color, size, is it swimming, perching, making a nest, singing?
7. When you return home extend the activity by having the children draw the birds they saw. They can use the field guide as a reference.
8. Most importantly, enjoy the day.



For more information visit:  
[http://education.audubon.org/  
birding-tips-families](http://education.audubon.org/birding-tips-families)

*Eileen Kline*

## Ants, Bushmasters, Chainsaws: ABC'S OF RAINFORESTS

On Friday, November 19th, 2010, Board Member and Biologist, Joe Richardson will present his experience with both temperate and tropical rainforests. For 33 years he taught a number of biology courses at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa. Joe's interest and love of rainforest stretches from Malaysia, The Philippines, and Australia to The La Selva Research Station in Costa Rica.

This exciting program will take place at 7:30PM, The Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY. Refreshments will be served. Presentation is free and open to the public. For further information, please contact: Eleanor Moriarty, Program Director at; 607-278-4083.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- **January 21, 2011:** Miriam A Sharick, Instructor Delhi College, Superheroes of Biodiversity
- **February 18, 2011,** Jillian Liner, NY State Audubon, Director of Bird Conservation and Science: The NY State Kestrel Project
- **March 18th, 2011,** Tom Salo, DOAS Board Member, Golden Eagle Winter Project
- **April 15th, 2011,** Larry Bifaro, Wildlife Biologist, DEC, Region 4(9 counties), co-leader of New York State's Black Bear Management Team, Catskill Black Bears
- **May 20, 2011,** The Fielder's Birds of Costa Rica...

## Eagle Trip Scheduled for January 15, 2011

Sat., Jan. 15, 2011 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.**



*Bald Eagle  
Photograph by David Kiehm*

## Waterfowl Count

The NY State Ornithological Association's annual statewide waterfowl count is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 16, 2011.

DOAS covers Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and Cannonsville Reservoir and the W. Branch of the Delaware River.

*Anyone interested in helping with this census, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.*



## Christmas Bird Count

The DOAS annual Christmas Bird Count is Saturday December 18. This is our 42nd year of participating in this national count. Everyone, novice or experienced, is welcome to join us on this 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.

*... Bob Miller*





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## September-October Bird Sightings

As a recent result of my retirement from teaching I've been able to go birding on a regular basis both getting good exercise and seeing some great birds. One morning I watched half a dozen Northern Flickers chase each other around throughout the brush, obviously communicating with one another to make plans for their eventual migration south. Meanwhile a Belted Kingfisher perched on a telephone wire overlooking a pond, kept one eye on the cavorting flickers and the other eye on the pond trying to secure its next meal. On my way back home I passed a family of Eastern Bluebirds. Retirement couldn't be better.

John Birk saw a Great Egret in Bainbridge on 9/14 and Charlie Scheim also reported one and an Osprey in W. Oneonta the next day. Rose Beers was still seeing Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in N. Franklin as of 9/15 and said they probably would have stayed around longer if she hadn't run out of sugar for her feeder. I saw a pair of American Kestrels hunting on a wire near my house in

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*"...a Belted Kingfisher...  
kept one eye on the cavort-  
ing flickers and the other  
eye on the pond trying to  
secure its next meal..."*

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Treadwell (9/16). On Ouleout Creek Dorian Huneke was delighted to see a Great Egret on 9/19. Apparently that species of bird was making its rounds in our area. Tom Salo still had Eastern Meadowlarks as late as 9/20 in W. Burlington. A Northern Harrier also cruised by his property. Becky Gretton watched as two immature Cooper's Hawks interacted with one another while some curious squirrels in a picnic area of Glimmerglass Park enjoyed the show (9/24). White-throated Sparrows made an appearance at Tom Salo's place in W. Burlington on 10/11.

*If you have bird sightings to report, please contact me [dbenko@frontiernet.net](mailto:dbenko@frontiernet.net), 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753, 607 829-5218 by October 17, 2010 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher.*