



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## COMING ACTIVITIES

### OCTOBER 2010

10/2: Open House at the DOAS Sanctuary, 10am- 2pm.

10/15: Charter Dinner and Program: The Ice Age History of Oneonta by Dr. Robert Titus.

10/19: Board Meeting 7 pm, home of Dave Kiehm

### 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

### JANUARY

Jan. 15, 2011--Field trip to Delaware County reservoirs to view wintering Bald Eagles; details next month

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

## Hawkwatch News

*For the second year in a row, the early season has been a record breaker at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch. Broad-winged Hawks again made an outstanding showing, with record-breaking daily and seasonal counts.*

Franklin Mt. has never matched up well with other eastern US hawk watching sites when it comes to Broad-wings. For most sites, this is the biggest species in terms of numbers, with thousands or even tens of thousands tallied each fall. Pennsylvania's renowned Hawk Mountain, for example, averages over 8,000 Broad-winged hawks annually. By contrast, Franklin Mt. has averaged about 1200 in nine years of full-time counting. 2009 was the biggest Broad-wing year ever at Franklin Mt., with 2097 counted. Now that record has already fallen in 2010, with 2242 counted through Sept. 19. Particularly notable was a large flight of 685 on Sept. 17 that was the highest single day count of Broad-wings ever at Franklin Mt. But that record only lasted 24 hours as Sept. 18 brought a flight of 900—a terrific day by any standard.

It's hard to say why the Broad-wings have found Franklin Mt. the past two years--it may be nothing more than the random nature of this species' movements. Migrating over a wide front, the birds tend to use columns of rising warm



air for lift, rather than updrafts off ridges that account for our lookout's success. We seem to have hit the jackpot this year and last, but there is no guarantee it will last.

Virtually all Broad-winged Hawks will have passed through by October, but this month will bring a good variety of accipiters and buteos past the watch, and the first significant flights of Golden Eagles.

As always, visitors, spotters and counters are always welcome at the hawkwatch. 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,  
or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232,  
tomsalo@localnet.com*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*Dave and Maggie*

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*"... Consider leading a bird or nature walk. Submit photographs to both the website or The Belted Kingfisher newsletter. Write an article about your favorite local birding spot..."*

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To keep DOAS as active as possible, I would like all the membership to keep in mind that this is your organization. The Board may handle day-to-day responsibilities but this is a volunteer organization. With that thought, I would like all to consider contributing to DOAS in any way they can. Consider leading a bird or nature walk. Submit photographs to the website or *The Belted Kingfisher* newsletter. Write an article about your favorite local birding spot. These are just some of the ways in which to make the organization strong and more enjoyable and above all, share your knowledge and passion for all things outdoors with a child. They are the future conservationists!

Though some things will be constantly changing, others will not. You can count on us to keep you informed about important issues like hydrofracking for gas. Watch our conservation and legislation page in *The Belted Kingfisher* to keep you informed about this and many other issues that have local and national implications. If you would like to contribute to either *The Belted Kingfisher* or our website, contact Germane Carillo and Lisa Gore respectively. For leading a hike and walks, contact Bob Donnelly. And of course, please contact me with any suggestions or questions.

*Dave Kiehm*  
607 286 9222  
[dkiehm@dmcom.net](mailto:dkiehm@dmcom.net)

## Change

Maggie, our Golden Retriever, and I sit on our porch and enjoy the early morning sights and sounds. Change is in the air. Nights have dipped into the 40s and summer gives way to autumn. The goldfinches have lost their brilliant yellow sheen and migrating warblers glean any remaining worms from the apple trees. The set wings of raptors can be seen along the ridges as many drift south to warmer climates.

DOAS also is changing. Tom Salo, Board President for the last four years, has stepped aside. Tom has worked hard over his term to promote and fight for wildlife in all its forms. He is leaving DOAS as strong as it ever has been. We have a committed board and healthy membership. With Tom's guidance, I am hoping to pick up where he left off and keep DOAS moving forward as an active and relevant organization.

### THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY FOUNDED 1968

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:**  
GERIANNE CARILLO

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TO CONTRIBUTE NOTES OR ARTICLES FOR  
THE BELTED KINGFISHER PLEASE SEND  
TO "KINGFISHER EDITOR" AT THE ABOVE  
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[editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@doas.us)

COVER ARTWORK BY DAVE KIEHM

## CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

By Andy Mason

### Elections 2010

New Yorkers will go to the polls November 2 to choose a new governor and attorney general, along with both US Senators and all members of the House of Representatives. All NY State Assembly and Senate seats are also on the ballot. As is too often the case, the environment is not in the forefront of issues, either among the candidates, nor the media covering them. This is particularly true in the present economic downturn.

However, informed voters should consider the candidates' records and statements on conservation issues. Here are a few items from candidates' websites for some of the races: based on candidates' actual records.

#### ***Governor***

Republican Carl Paladino ([www.paladinoforthepeople.com](http://www.paladinoforthepeople.com))—"Carl Paladino is in favor of drilling the Marcellus Shale deposit for its energy resources."

Democrat Andrew Cuomo ([www.andrewcuomo.com](http://www.andrewcuomo.com))--"Making sure health and environmental risks are comprehensively studied before natural gas exploration in New York's Marcellus Shale formation occurs"

#### ***Attorney General***

Democrat Eric Schneiderman ([www.ericshneiderman.com](http://www.ericshneiderman.com))--"He will litigate to block the use of unsafe and unproven technologies like hydrofracking to protect against dangerous drilling accidents."

Republican Dan Donovan ([www.dandonovan.org](http://www.dandonovan.org))—No environmental issues addressed on web site.

#### ***US Senate***

Republican Joe DiGuardi ([www.dioguardiforussenate.com](http://www.dioguardiforussenate.com))--"While development is important for economic growth, I believe it must be balanced with the preservation of the natural assets that surround us."

Democrat Kirsten Gillibrand ([www.kirstengillibrand.com](http://www.kirstengillibrand.com))--"Kirsten supports aggressive action aimed at reducing carbon emissions by 80 percent by the year 2050."

Democrat Charles Schumer ([www.chuckschumer.com](http://www.chuckschumer.com))--"His efforts to protect wildlife include successfully fighting back changes to weaken the Endangered Species Act, and increasing funding for wildlife refuges and international conservation programs."

Republican Jay Townsend ([www.townsendfornewyork.com](http://www.townsendfornewyork.com))--"We can and should increase domestic supplies of energy by making more federal land available for oil exploration."

#### ***US House of Representatives***

Republican Richard Hanna ([www.richardhannaforcongress.com](http://www.richardhannaforcongress.com))--No environmental issues addressed on web site.

Democrat Michael Arcuri ([www.arcuriforcongress.com](http://www.arcuriforcongress.com))--"... he stands adamantly against the natural gas drilling process known as hydrofracking until there is adequate proof that the process of drilling will not contaminate water sources and that removal of waste products can be done safely."

#### ***What you can do—***

Make an effort to learn the candidates' stances on local, state and national environmental issues. Their websites are not objective sources of information, so check the League of Conservation Voters ([www.lcv.org](http://www.lcv.org)) and the NY Environmental Planning Lobby voters guide ([www.eplvotersguide.org](http://www.eplvotersguide.org)) for rankings.

## PRECIOUS ORCHIDS AND BIODIVERSITY

Early settlers sometimes left unplowed swaths of land surrounding their cemeteries to provide flowers for the graves, and today some of these sites hold rare species of wildflowers. The beautiful little Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchis was discovered recently in the Mississippi River Valley area, and computer models of its location helped to find more nearby. In our area there are many similar old cemeteries and wild

sites that have never been plowed due to elevation or steep slope or difficulty in reaching, and these also may hold endangered species long thought extinct.

Be alert for such places to explore for lost delights. Some orchids are very small and easily overlooked, but are real beauties. Watch for Fringed Orchis and other orchis species, ladies tresses, rattlesnake orchids (plantains), twayblades, and coralroots, all among

the orchid family. We all are familiar with the four species of ladyslipper orchids.

Our rich biodiversity of life is so precious that we MUST work to preserve it. From forest to grasslands to oceans, and from ants to wood thrushes to polar bears, it is everything that makes up our wonderful and varied ecosystems around the world.

We cut forests, drain wetlands, plow

*continued on page four*

## DEC'S CITIZEN TASK FORCES ON DEER MANAGEMENT

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is responsible for managing the deer herd in New York. They do this in Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) with similar habitat, and deer numbers, across the whole area. Our membership area is split by two of these units. WMU 4F contains most of Otsego County and also a very small part of both Schoharie and Delaware. Unit 4O covers roughly the northern half of Delaware County.

Periodically, DEC carries out a public process to determine an acceptable deer population for each unit. A Citizen Task Force on Deer Management for each unit is created with representatives from a number of interest groups or "stakeholders". These representatives survey their particular interest group and then try to agree on whether the deer population should decrease, increase or remain the same. The actual number of deer in a unit is not known to DEC. The agency judges the change in population from

the number of adult male deer killed each fall. This is determined by hunter reports and by extrapolating from estimates of how many were not reported.

This past summer, DOAS President Tom Salo and Conservation Chair Andy Mason each served as a representative of the conservation stakeholder group for WMUs 4F and 4O respectively. Other stakeholder groups included agriculture, sportsmen, forestry, highway safety, local business and homeowners and gardeners. In these two WMUs, 20 years had passed since DEC conducted this public process. In that time, deer populations have fluctuated due to a number of factors including two severe winters early in the last decade. Other factors that can affect the buck harvest include a decrease in the number of hunters and an increase in the amount of posted land. Less access gives deer more places to hide. These differences in hunting can change the meaning of the buck harvest numbers. Over time, a smaller harvest might not



mean fewer deer, only fewer hunters, hunting on less land.

In 4F the members of the task force all agreed that deer densities across the unit varied widely from place to place. The sportsmen overall wanted an increase in deer numbers to improve hunting opportunities. The conservation group wanted a decrease to lower habitat impacts from browsing, which are severe in some areas. There was very little input from forestry. One DEC Forester felt numbers were too high. All the other groups were split as to whether num-

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## PRECIOUS ORCHIDS AND BIODIVERSITY

vast areas for agriculture, overfish the oceans, overpopulate the world, and in the process alter habitats forever. We introduce invasive species, drain our water tables, and as we burn fossil fuels we pollute the air, sea, and land. A "Red List", prepared by scientists at IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) in Switzerland, ranks the status of thousands of species and provides a snapshot of the current state of biodiversity. Twenty to thirty percent of native species are now considered at risk of extinction. One in 8 birds, 1 in 5 mammals, 1 in 4 corals, 1 in 3 amphibians face extinction risk. Of the total 44,838 species that IUCN had evaluated at the end

of 2009, 16,928 met the criteria for facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. Unless we do more to protect habitat, plant and animal diversity will continue to decline dramatically. We need to prioritize wild spaces, we need to declare protected zones across a range of terrestrial ecosystems, we must set sheltered zones to fill in the gaps on



land and sea. We need to set aside land which provides services to us (such as storing carbon and collecting water). When fiddling with something as complicated and not entirely understood as biodiversity, it is not smart to "throw away" parts such as clean water, wild fish, clean air, and pollinators for crops. They are all part of the ecosystems which keep all species alive.

E.O. Wilson speaks about "biophilia", - a deep urge in humankind which draws people to other living things. May we have the strength and wisdom to save all living things on the planet.

*Jean T. Miller*

**FAVORITE PLACES SERIES:  
THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER PARK TRAIL**

The best way to find a variety of wildlife is to find a variety of habitats. The Susquehanna River Park Trail offers that, with field, brush, river and trees. This two-mile loop has easy terrain, benches, picnic tables, and a pavilion.

This trail is better known as the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway (OSG) but is, in fact, only the first completed section of the OSG trail, which may

eventually extend as far as Cooperstown. To access the trail, take I-88 exit 13, head east on County Rd. 48A, then right onto Silas Lane. Park in the OSG parking lot.

Early May is an ideal time to visit the Greenway as migrants return to the area. The trees are not fully leafed out, making birds easier to observe. You'll find many species of songbirds including American Redstarts, Yellow Warblers, Baltimore Orioles, Warbling Vireos, and Catbirds. Listen and watch for the occasional Brown Thrasher or Yellow-throated Vireo.

Common on or near the river are Mallards, Common Mergansers, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Belted Kingfishers, and Spotted Sandpipers. Scan the skies for Bald Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks. Beaver and muskrat have been spotted swimming in the waters.

In winter, this is a nice trail for snowshoeing; in summer, the part

of the trail that follows the river can offer refreshing relief on a hot day. At all times of the year, please be aware of river erosion and poison ivy in some areas. Staying on the trail is safest for you and the environment.



Indigo Bunting

*Note: You can help make the extended Greenway Trail a reality by making a donation to OCCA (Otsego County Conservation Association). Note that the donation is for the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Trail and send to P.O. Box 931, Cooperstown, NY 13326.*

*Contributed by Sandy Bright*



Cardinal

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



Jillian Liner,  
Audubon  
New  
York  
Director  
of Bird  
Con-

servation, 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. The funding for this project was obtained through grants and we are very pleased to announce that DOAS has been written into this grant for the coming year. Hundreds of individuals across the New York State are engaged in a coordinated effort to build, install, and monitor nest 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: [eleanormrt955@gmail.com](mailto:eleanormrt955@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*

## DOAS HOSTS ITS 2010 CHARTER DINNER

The 42nd Annual Charter Dinner of the Delaware- Otsego Audubon Society will be held Friday, October 15, 2010 at the Foothills Performing Arts Center on Market St. in Oneonta. The evening will begin at 5:30pm with a social hour, including appetizers and a cash bar, followed by a 6:30 buffet dinner. The program, which is open to the public, will begin at 7:30pm.

This year we are proud to present Dr. Robert Titus, Professor of Geology at Hartwick College, as our featured speaker. Dr. Titus will present on the Ice Age History of Oneonta and the local Susquehanna Valley. Dr. Titus has authored numerous articles, essays and books that highlight his passion for Catskill geology. He has gained a reputation for his incredible ability to communicate the geological history of the Catskills to the general public. Trained as a paleontologist, he researched the fossil record of NY State, producing a great deal of professional data. Since 1991 he has been committed to writing the story of our region's geological history, acquiring a growing readership in his articles featured in "Kaatskill Life Magazine", "The Woodstock Times" and "The Columbia County Independent". He recently published his third book, "The Other Side of Time." This, as well as his other publications, are aimed at the general reader.

Dinner Menu Choices for the event are Herb Encrusted Pork Loin, Chicken Marsala, or Vegetable Lasagne, for a cost of \$30.00 per person. Reservations must be made no later than October 10, 2010 by calling 607-563- 2924, or returning the reservation form below to Julia Gregory, P.O. Box 641, Unadilla, NY 13849-0641. For further information, please contact Julia directly at the above number.

*Julia Gregory and Eleanor Moriarty*

## DEC'S CITIZEN TASK FORCES ON DEER MANAGEMENT

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bers should go up or down. In the end it was agreed to keep the numbers as they are. This doesn't please everyone since some areas in 4F are clearly overpopulated. There are other areas where hunters have trouble finding deer. DEC had been managing for a target of 3.4 bucks killed per square mile. This is much higher than last year's 2.7. Now the target will be based on this fall's harvest – very likely a lower number than the 3.4 goal of the past 2 decades. From our perspective this is positive since DEC will no longer be trying to increase the number of deer in 4F.

The situation in 4O was similar, with hunters seeking significant increases in deer numbers, and conservationists supporting lower or stable numbers. Forest landowners and farmers also sought fewer deer, while taxidermists, businesses, and property owners wanted an increased or stable population. Consensus was reached on a 10% increase over the present population, with a maximum harvest of 3 bucks per square mile. This represents a drop from the current target of 3.1 bucks.

These targets will likely be in place for the next decade or longer. The hope is that the deer herd can be managed to minimize overbrowsing and other habitat damage.

*Tom Salo and Andy Mason*

*“Consensus was reached on a 10% increase over the present population, with a maximum harvest of three bucks per square mile.”*

<b>2010 Charter Dinner Registration Form</b>				
<b>Please Complete identifying information below:</b>		<b>Menu Choice (Circle one next to each name)</b>		
Name:		Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Name:		Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Name:		Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Name:		Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Address:	Please remit \$30 per person			
Address:	<b>Total remitted:</b>			
Phone:	<b>Thank you!</b>			

## Gas Drilling Update

The fourth and last EPA hearing was held in Binghamton Sept. 13 and 15, with four sessions during which two minute statements were presented by hundreds of both pro and anti gas drilling proponents. The three other hearings had been held in TX, CO and PA. The EPA hearings were held to study the potential impact of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water, and now also may include a more comprehensive look.

Our own Sustainable Otsego moderator Adrian Kuzminski presented a strong statement to the EPA advocating prohibiting all unconventional gas production in the northeastern US, including NYS. He also presented the EPA with a 17 pound document, over 1000 pages, made up of 69 documents on all aspects of unconventional gas

production - an attempt at a cumulative survey of the literature. This was prepared by James Herman, John Kosmer, Ron Bishop and Adrian, and is the first attempt to bring together the many studies, reports, testimonies and other materials related to the pros and cons of fracking. Andy Mason submitted our DOAS "Position Statement" on gas drilling to the EPA. (See DOAS website to see the statement.)

Another outstanding piece of gas news is a lawsuit - one of the first in the nation to link hydraulic fracturing to tainted groundwater - which was brought by 13 families in northern PA against SW Energy Co. It states that the well's cement casing was defective and fracking fluid leaked into the aquifer, contaminating wells within several thousand feet, or more. It also

cites spills of industrial waste, diesel fuel and other hazardous substances.

Riverkeeper, NY's clean water advocate, has just made available a very fine 38 page report titled Fractured Communities which documents hundreds of cases demonstrating that gas drilling, including horizontal drilling and hydrofracking, results in adverse environmental impacts. It is well worth the time to check out. (However, their recommendations do not go far enough in protecting all NY residents.) • <http://www.riverkeeper.org/news-events/news/safeguard-drinking-water/report-on-environmental-impacts-of-gas-drilling/>

*The groundswell of information about environmental impacts of industrial gas drilling across the US is slowly having an impact!*

*Jean T. Miller*

### Hawkwatch Forecasts

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

### DOAS Acquires Updated

### Audio-visual Equipment

As noted in previous issues, DOAS received a grant this spring from the A. Lindsay and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation for purchase of updated audio-visual equipment for use at our monthly programs and other presentations. The grant required that we raise matching funds for the projector, screen, stand and other items, and we achieved that goal in late summer.

The projector and screen were in place for our September program and will allow use of the computer presentations that have supplanted slide shows. We are very appreciative of the O'Connor Foundation's support of our organization, and that of the members and others who provided funds to match the grant.

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.  
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## August-September Bird Sightings

On one of the last days of summer, Sept. 18th to be exact, I donned my traditional weeding outfit, an old bathing suit and shorts and proceeded to attend to some much needed gardening. My neighbors probably thought I was crazy, but I wanted to eke out the last lingering warmth of summer before autumn descended upon me. My presence didn't disturb a pair of chatty blue jays who called to each other repeatedly across the road. I lamented the end of another season.

On 8/2 Sandy Bright saw a Merlin in Oneonta grab what she thought was a House Sparrow and with its treasure land in a nearby tree. A week later she saw a warty faced Muscovy Duck hanging around the Woodhaven Golf Course in West Oneonta. Perhaps the ugly duck scared away all the Canada Geese much to the delight of area golfers.

September ushered in an interesting bird sighting. On 9/10 John Davis heard the thunderous whirring of hundreds of Red-winged Blackbird wings in Cooperstown. The migration process had truly begun. On that same date Dorian Huneke was out on a nightly trail ride in Treadwell and

heard a Great Horned Owl calling with its stentorian voice. A few days later on 9/15 Andy Mason also had the pleasure of hearing a Great Horned Owl calling. On that same day Elsie Myers, stopped at a traffic light on Oneida Street in Oneonta, was excited to see a Bald Eagle flying overhead on its journey toward Otego. It was a breathtaking moment announcing the beginning of a new season.

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.

*Dianne Benko*

*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.*