



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

September

September 15 – Catskill Private Forest Landowner Workshop

September 18 – DOAS Board Meeting

September 21 – DOAS Program

September 29 – NYSOA Annual

October

October 13 – Open House DOAS Sanctuary

October 16 – DOAS Board Meeting

October 19 – Charter Dinner

November

November 16 – DOAS Program

More information on page 7

All DOAS programs are free and open to the public

Grackles Evolving?

We've had the pleasure from time to time of observing the doings in and around a big old mill pond in the Unadilla River. Sometimes we see a kingfisher diving from a crossing electric wire, sometimes we see tree swallows skimming over the surface, and sometimes there's a plop at the surface of a big eddy on one side. Occasionally one can see a peep running, tipping, and probing along the shore, or mergansers drifting downstream, headfirst like viking boats. But the stars of the show in season are the grackles. It's really a wonder what can be conceived behind that bright white eye!

Maybe they learned from the sandpipers how to tip up small stones and probe into pebbles along the shore. They fly from one shore to other, plying this trade here and there. But that's not all. Here's one actually wading into the quiet water at the edge of the eddy, up to its heel and probing under the water. And that's still not all at all! There's a big old silver maple on the edge of the mill pond. It has long branches curving down toward the water in characteristic fashion.

One dips down to about six feet from the water's surface. Suddenly there's a grackle grasping the lowest twig, with its head cocked in a way that tells you it's looking at the water. "At it"? No 'into it', and this we know because suddenly it drops into the water and remains at its surface in the manner of a storm petrel, seeming to walk on its surface for about a yard or so. It didn't get anything that time, but it must have succeeded in the past.



Stan Salthe

Grackle at water's edge, by Stan Salthe

President's Message

2012's Weird Weather – What Comes Next??

Big surprise! Cornell's climatologists have now confirmed that the first seven months of 2012 were warmer in New York and New England than any January-through-July period since good record keeping began in 1895 – 117 years ago. We weren't just imagining it! Moreover, the first seven weeks of our summer were far drier than usual, echoing in milder form the scorching droughts of the Midwest. Last year's "summer monsoon" in the Southern Tier, when unexpected springs were bubbling up all over my lawn, is a rapidly dimming memory; this summer the lawn turned crispy-brown in July, and the mower sat idle in my barn.

Do you remember how warm it got this past March? Apple and peach farmers certainly do! Their trees blossomed early, only to be stung badly in April when "normal" overnight frosts returned and killed many of those early blossoms. In consequence, many orchardists expect a very meager fruit harvest this year, as summer turns into fall. We'll pay for it! Backyard vegetable gardeners like me, on the other hand, have been enjoying this year's early start to the growing season and the dry weather's scarcity of slugs and snails. Ever since we moved to our Morris farm property I have hopefully planted okra, the southern crop my wife adores. This year, finally, our okra looks as if it might mature before the first frost. I'll surprise her!

So there are winners and losers in this year's weird weather. Birds that nest in hayfields have mostly been losers. The warm spring promoted lush early grass growth, and when the bobolinks, meadowlarks and savanna sparrows arrived on their usual schedules the hay was almost ready for an early cut. In early and mid-May I winced on my drives to town to see how much mowing was already occurring, doubtless ravaging the new nests and nestlings. Grassland bird species were in serious decline in New York State even before 2012, and this year must have been especially bad for them. We owe a vote of thanks to those farmers who, despite favorable early mowing conditions this year, delayed their first hay harvest a month or more until the young birds had fledged and left the nest. My own special thanks go to friendly neighbors Louis and Mel, who left their beautiful ridge-top hayfield unmowed until July – an ornithological haven! In mid-August, probably thanks to them, my own small, weedy meadows hosted pre-migration flocks of bobolinks feeding greedily on knapweed and goldenrod. If you too have neighbors who delayed mowing their hayfields this year till nesting season was over, please thank them – and make them aware that DEC's bird conservation program includes financial incentives to hay farmers who are willing to spare their "bobolink fields" till July.



Savannah Sparrow
by Randy Lynch

What's next? Deer will have slim pickings under our apple trees this fall, but they may do all right if we have another warm winter. But a warm winter may mean that Lake Ontario won't freeze over, providing moisture all winter long for more "lake effect snow". Poor deer! And if we do have another warm winter, it will probably encourage woolly adelgids, the hemlock scourge, to inch farther north next spring – and the adelgids are already destroying hemlock forests just south of us in the southern Catskills. Most climatologists predict that climate will continue warming and weather from year to year will get even more variable. So, maybe, "weird 2012" is the kind of weird we'll begin thinking of as normal. Hold onto your hats! – Joe Richardson

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Helen McLean

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Conservation and Legislation

New York legislative wrapup—The 2012 NY State legislative session ended in early summer with very little to celebrate for environmentalists. As per the usual routine, the state Senate failed to take up most of the beneficial bills that the Assembly put forward, leaving gridlock as the rule of the day.

A number of bills to address the dangers of hydrofracking passed the Assembly, including legislation to make all hazardous waste produced from oil and gas drilling subject to the same regulations that apply to other industries operating in the state. This common sense bill would have addressed disposal of carcinogenic benzene, toluene, and formaldehyde found in fracking fluid, along with heavy metals, and radioactive particles. As a result of the Senate's non-action, these materials and others will continue to threaten the environment and public health should fracking proceed in the state.

Other bills that died in the Senate include the Solar Industry Development & Jobs Act that would promote clean photovoltaic electric power in the state; legislation that would have required a public health assessment of hydrofracking; and closed the loophole for protection of small wetlands created when federal protection ended.

The one bright note for the session was legislation passed by both the Assembly and Senate dedicating \$56 million of the revenue from the state's most successful recycling program—our bottle

deposit law—to the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) in the coming years. The EPF is the source of dollars for programs to protect clean air and water, parklands, farms and other green spaces. It also provides funds for the state's burgeoning green economy, creating jobs and other benefits.

What you can do—This is a year when all members of the state legislature are up for election. Scrutinize your representatives' environmental records, and ask the candidates where they stand on issues such as hydrofracking, wildlife protection and green space. Next month we will provide ratings for candidates from environmental watchdog groups.

Hydrofracking near?—Rumors are flying that the Cuomo administration's decision on hydrofracking in New York will come shortly after Labor Day, and that the Southern Tier will be targeted as the sacrificial test area for the first wells. There may be a requirement that local municipalities will have to OK drilling before it can proceed. This can be a double-edged sword—giving citizens the ability to protect their town, but also giving pro-drilling politicians a way to bypass public opinion.

What you can do—Obviously it is more important than ever to engage your local officials in the hydrofracking issue. They may well be deciding whether or not hydrofracking takes place in your community. Let them know where you stand, and ask your neighbors to do the same.

~ Andy Mason



Migrating Redstart by Dave Kiehm



Migrating Northern Parula by Dave Kiehm

Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch and Fall 2012 Open House

The Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch on the DOAS Sanctuary began its 24th consecutive season on August 22 and will continue through December.

Our team of dedicated volunteers record thousands of raptors each season. The count for the 2011 season was over 4609 raptors of 14 species, somewhat below the average since full-time counting began at the site.

The middle two weeks of September are prime time for Broadwings, which are often sighted in sizeable flocks or “kettles”. Franklin Mountain had 1424 Broadwings in 2011, near average for the site. Other early season species include Osprey, kestrels, and the first wave of Bald Eagles.

On Saturday, October 13, 2012 from 10 AM to 2 PM, the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will host an open house at the sanctuary. At 10:30 AM, there will be a 45 minute beginners workshop on *Identifying Flying Hawks*. A trail walk will leave the barn at 11:30 AM and will cover most of the sanctuary grounds. The hawk watch will be staffed through the day and refreshments will be served at the barn.



Osprey by Dave Kiehm

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, salothomas@gmail.com.

Forecasts of anticipated good flights at the hawk watch 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 Mountain are also available by email— contact Andy Mason as above. More information on the hawk watch at the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at www.franklinmt.org.

Directions: The sanctuary can be reached by taking Oneonta’s Main Street south across NY Route 28. After passing through the light, turn immediately left at the T onto Southside Drive. Turn right after 8/10 mile on Swart Hollow Road. Go 1 1/2 mile and take a sharp right on Grange Hall Road. After 2/10 mile, take a sharp left into the driveway, or park nearby on Grange Hall Road. The hawk watch is 100 yards up the hill from the barn.

Andy Mason

Important Notice to National Audubon Society Members

Please Join Our Local Chapter

- If you are a member of the National Audubon Society, you are receiving this issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*, compliments of our local Chapter, the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society. Due to printing and postage costs and the loss of the portion of National Audubon Society (NAS) dues that our Chapter receives, we are not able to send the newsletter to NAS-only members.
- NAS-only members receive the September *Kingfisher*—this issue--each year. However, the other eight issues go only to those who have taken a local membership or are joint local/NAS members.
- **We encourage all NAS-only members to consider a local membership in order to help defray the costs of the newsletter and support our Chapter’s education and conservation activities.** Local memberships are \$15 per year or \$25 for two years—a membership form can be found elsewhere in this issue.
- Your mailing label will inform you of your membership status: an L indicates a local member, with expiration date (year and month, e.g. ‘1211’ indicates November 2012); an N indicates an NAS-only member; both an L and an N indicates a joint local/NAS member. **If you are an NAS-only member, you will need to take a local membership in order to continue receiving *The Belted Kingfisher*.** If you are a local member or a joint local/NAS member, you will continue receiving the newsletter as in the past.

We appreciate the continued support of all members for our efforts to protect the natural world.

Proposed Constitution Gas Pipeline Meets Local Opposition

Natural Gas pipeline companies Williams and Cabot are proposing to build the “Constitution” Pipeline, a thirty-inch diameter, natural gas transmission line, approximately 120 miles in length, from Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, through Broome, Chenango, Delaware, and Schoharie Counties in New York State. The two longest portions of the proposed pipeline would be a 43.3 mile section in Northern Delaware County and a 30.7 mile section in Schoharie County.

According to the gas companies, the purpose of this proposed pipeline is to deliver up to 650,000 Dekatherms (equal in energy output to 4.68 million gallons of oil) of natural gas per day from the fracking fields of Pennsylvania, to the existing Iroquois and Tennessee Gas Transmission line in Schoharie, NY. From Schoharie, the gas would be delivered to northeastern markets including the New York City and Boston natural gas markets. The Constitution line would initially require two compressor stations, one in Brooklyn, PA and the other in Schoharie, NY. The proposed Schoharie station is a 32,000 horsepower compressor facility.

Because the Constitution would be an interstate transmission line, its construction will require the approval of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Currently, Williams/Cabot is in the pre-filing stage, which means they are attempting to assess public sentiment about the project before filing their official application with FERC. The project schedule for final FERC application is January 2013. If FERC approves this pipeline, then Williams/Cabot would be allowed to seize privately owned property for building purposes through eminent domain.

In Delaware County alone, there are about 300 private landowners who would be directly affected by the project, as the pipeline would cross their properties. The 125-foot wide construction pathway and the 50-foot permanent pipeline easement would leave landowners vulnerable to other encroachment, adding to further property degradation and devaluation while limiting their own use of the property under easement. This permanent easement could be transferred to and utilized in the future by other utilities and transmission lines.

In addition to the affected landowners, and their neighbors, a number of other citizens, and some elected officials are voicing concerns about this project. One area of particular concern is the connection between the construction of this pipeline and the infrastructure that would be required for high volume, slick water horizontal hydrofracking in this part of New York State when and if Governor Cuomo lifts the moratorium on fracking. Pipelines are “open access”, meaning the pipeline company will

have to accept gas through “gathering lines” along the route. This gas would come from local fracking operations. Additional gas transmission will require additional compressor stations, which are notorious for emitting toxic chemicals.

Williams/Cabot must prove to FERC that this pipeline is necessary in order to serve the public good. As there is currently a huge glut of natural gas in the USA, and Williams/Cabot has told their investors that this gas could be exported to the international market, many do not believe there is a need for the proposed Constitution pipeline. For the purpose of transmitting natural gas to the New York City and Boston markets that they plan to serve, future expansion efforts by Williams/Cabot could avoid routing this proposed pipeline through our area, by using existing gas and electric easements further to the north and south of our region. For additional information on the proposed Constitution pipeline, visit the Williams website at:

constitutionpipeline.com

According to FERC regulations, new gas transmission lines should be sited in a way that avoids or minimizes effects on an area’s scenic, historic, wildlife and recreational values. FERC asks utility companies to avoid locating within forested areas and on steep slopes. When comparing published resource reports with Williams/Cabot’s proposed route, it would repeatedly climb and descend steep slopes, run along or near the top of hills and ridges, cut through mature second growth forests and wetlands and disrupt fertile farmland. Additionally, one third of the entire route would require major rock excavation, which would be a critical and disruptive component of the construction process. A new pipeline running through the hills, valleys, forests, wetlands and farmland just to the west of the Delaware watershed, would unnecessarily destroy this pristine area and severely compromise its utility. Scenic, historic, wildlife and recreational values would unnecessarily degrade.

FERC has commenced with its pre-filing environmental review in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). As part of this process, FERC will prepare a detailed environmental analysis of the Project. FERC will use this analysis to consider the potential environmental impacts that would result from issuing the Constitution a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity under Section 7 of the Natural Gas Act.

Your input is valued and could help FERC in deciding whether this project is necessary. Additionally, significant opposition by the public to this project may cause Williams and Cabot to withdraw their project proposal. To see who has filed comments with FERC or to make your own comment, go to their website at www.ferc.gov click on the e-library link and enter PF12-9 in the Docket Search box to register.

Eileen Kline

NYSOA Annual Meeting in Owego September 29

The annual meeting of the NY State Ornithological Association will be held September 29 in Owego, NY. DOAS is a long-time member organization of NYSOA, whose purpose is to promote and document the ornithology of NY State.

The meeting will include field trips and a presentation by Dr. Kevin McGowan of the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell University. Dr. McGowan is one of the world's authorities on crows, and his topic will be "A Real Murder of Crows: life, love and treachery in your own backyard".

For information on NYSOA, including registration for the meeting, visit www.nybirds.org



Crow by Dave Kiehm

Annual Charter Dinner

Birding in New Zealand: A Brief Travelogue of New Zealand's North and South Islands

On October 19th, Cynthia and Frank Waterman will present *Birding in New Zealand; A brief travelogue of New Zealand North and South Islands* with a focus on New Zealand birds; their characteristics, habitats,

songs and predator problems. Sanctuaries that have been established for endangered species will be discussed.

Cynthia Waterman is the President of the Delhi Bird Club and an avid birder. Upon her retirement as a special education teacher from New York State and Virginia after 32 years, she pursued her love of birding, monitoring bird boxes, playing the hammered dulcimer and accordion with the Delaware Dulcimers. Frank is a retired professor of Medical Physics from Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia. He is currently president of the Meredith Historical Society, supporting his passion for historical research. Both Cynthia and Frank love to travel in their restored 1955 MG hoping to survive many more tiki tours.

Annual Charter Dinner – October 19, 2012

DOAS will hold its 44th Annual Charter Dinner on Friday October 19, 2012 at the Brooks Roost Banquet Room. We will gather at 6 PM for a social time before the buffet at 6:30 PM. The program for the evening begins at 7:30 PM and is free and open to the public.

Our speaker will be Cynthia Waterman, President of the Delhi Birding Club, presenting *Birds of New Zealand*.

The buffet cost is \$20 per person, and \$5 for children under twelve.

Reservations must be made by October 15th by calling 607-563-2924 or mailing a check to:
Julia Gregory, PO Box 641, Unadilla, New York 13849-0641

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Amount enclosed: _____

Upcoming Activities

September

September 15 – Catskill Private Forest Landowner Workshop and Woods Walk: Refreshments at 8:30 AM, workshop 9-11:30 AM, woods walk 1-3 PM, lunch provided. Margaretville Fire Dept., 77 Church St., Margaretville.

Free but registration is required – contact: Graham Cox at g1cox@audubon.org or call 518-869-9731.

September 18 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Stephen Rice.

September 21 – DOAS Program: *Invasive Species -Asian Longhorned, Ash-Borer, and Whitespotted Sawyer* by Erin Brady, DEC Environmental Educator. Erin is an avid birder and has been with the Division of Lands and Forest for 5 years, and a resident of the Catskills for 12 years. The program will begin at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For more information contact Program Chairman Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054.

September 29 – NYSOA Annual Meeting: For more information see page 6 and www.nybirds.org.

DOAS Officers for 2012-2013

The DOAS board has chosen the following officers for the coming year:

Co-Presidents: Andy Mason
Susan O’Handley
Joe Richardson

Secretary: Eileen Kline

Treasurer: *Under consideration*

Bob Miller, Elections Chair

October

October 13 – Open House at DOAS Sanctuary: 10 AM - 2 PM. For details see page 4.

October 16 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

October 19 – Annual Charter Dinner: Cynthia and Frank Waterman will present *Birding in New Zealand; A brief travelogue of New Zealand North and South Islands*. See details on page 6.

November

November 16 – DOAS Program: *Journey from Delaware County Eagles to an African Safari* by local photographer John Adams. The program will begin at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For more information contact Program Chairman Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054.



Delaware County Bald Eagle, by Dave Kiehm



www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

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: _____



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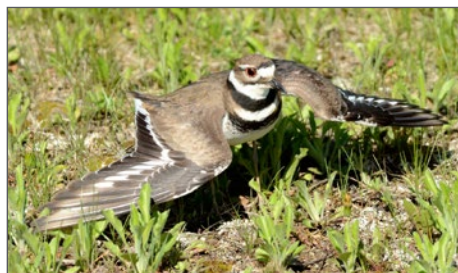
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May-August Bird Sightings

As I was attending to my raised bed vegetable gardens I kept hearing a rustling and scratching sound near my bushy purple clematis that winds itself against the house and onto my kitchen window shutter. After focusing my attention in that area for a bit I watched as a dark-eyed junco flitted up to the midway point of the bush and burrowed deep into the leaves. Seconds later it scooted out, went foraging for food again, returned and repeated this same procedure. I was surprised to find a nest of baby juncos safely encased in the clematis.

On 5/17 Sandy Bright found a nest of baby Killdeer behind Oneonta High School as a parent Killdeer feigned injury to protect them. In W. Burlington Tom Salo heard a singing Eastern Wood-Pewee and Rod Spangle saw a Common Nighthawk flying low and calling over Unadilla village on 5/24. Three days later in Martha Frey's yard in Middlefield, she

saw four Cedar Waxwings and an Indigo Bunting happily singing perched at the top of a small pine tree. On the 29th Dennis Fowler saw two Bobolinks on opposite sides of the road in Otego calling back and forth.



Killdeer, by Dave Kiehm

June brought a few interesting sightings. On the 10th Becky Gretton heard the repeated buzzy call of a Clay-colored sparrow in Springfield. Singing, perched on an electric wire quite tolerant of his presence, John Davis watched and enjoyed the song of a Savannah Sparrow in Cooperstown on 6/18. On the 21st Angelika Rashkow saw a Golden-crowned Kinglet around her property in Hartwick and Peter and Vivienne Clark caught

sight of a Pileated Woodpecker busily pecking for grubs high in a tree along the Susquehanna River trail near Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown. On the 26th they saw an adult Wood Thrush foraging along the ground just outside their Cooperstown kitchen window.

On Fourth of July Andy Mason observed a Solitary Sandpiper patrolling a mudflat around a pond close to his home in Jefferson apparently on patriotic guard duty. On 8/7 Becky Gretton saw four Great Egrets on the Northern end of Otsego Lake and on the 16th Flo Loomis also saw a Great Egret in New Lisbon. On 8/19 Andy Mason spotted four Common Nighthawks, first in many a year, flying westward from Jefferson just before dusk. As fall approaches so ends nearly another season of bird watching.

If you have bird sightings to report, contact me at dbenko@frontiernet.net, or 6815 Co. Hwy 16, Delhi, NY 13753, or at 607-829-5218 for the next issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*.
Dianne Benko