



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

October

October 5 – DOAS Open House

October 15 – DOAS Board Mtg

October 18 – Charter Dinner

October 20 – Montezuma

November

November 9 – Bird seed pickup

November 15 – DOAS Public and Member Meeting

November 19 – DOAS Board Meeting

December

December 7 – Owl Field Trip

December 14 – CBC Oneonta

December 28 – CBC Ft. Plain

January

January 11 – Eagle Field Trip

More information on page 7

All DOAS programs are free and open to the public

♻️ Printed on recycled paper ♻️

The Naturalist as Artist

Sculptor Todd McGrain's film "The Lost Bird Project", which highlighted the program at September's DOAS meeting, is one of two recent reminders of the inspiration so many artists find in the natural world. Also, earlier in September, a front page story in the the Oneonta Daily Star had reported

the happy news that local artist and DOAS stalwart Dave Kiehm was the winner of a major award in Britain's 2013 BBC Wildlife Artist of the Year Competition. Dave, who lives in Milford with his wife Ann (also an artist), won first prize in the the contest category *International Artists: Birds* for his oil painting "Foundation Wall", which depicts an Otsego County scene - a great horned owl perched beside the stone foundation of a derelict Milford farmhouse. In the same contest a second entry by Dave - an oil painting of a peregrine falcon guarding a recent kill (a blue jay that was not "fast enough" - hence the painting's title, "Slow Jay"), reached

the final round of judging but was beaten out by "Foundation Wall."

An avid naturalist, Dave Kiehm works in a variety of media - oil, watercolor, wood-carving, photography - and has exhibited in a number of museums and galleries in recent years. Although art is

his livelihood, Dave has been extremely generous to DOAS with his artistic talent, contributing exquisite watercolors for sale or raffle at our events and remarkable bird photographs for publication in our newsletter. And Dave is not alone among local artist-naturalists in his generous support of our organization; no one who attended our Brewery Ommegang fundraiser in



Slow Jay, by Dave Kiehm

June can forget Jonathan Dowdall's contribution: a magnificent life-sized wood carving of a great blue heron, the signature sale item of that event. Two exquisite framed images by master photographers were also contributed for sale at the Ommegang fundraiser - a jewel-like portrait (continued on page 5)

DOAS to Dedicate Bench in Memory of Jean and Bob Miller

The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will dedicate a bench and plaque at our wildlife sanctuary to recognize the great contributions of Jean and Bob Miller to the organization. As noted in last month's *Belted Kingfisher*, Bob passed away in July of this year, and Jean in 2010. Both were among the founders of our Chapter and served in many capacities over four decades.

The dedication is scheduled for 9:30 a.m., Saturday, October 5, the day of our Open House at the Sanctuary. We invite all friends and colleagues of Bob and Jean to attend.

In addition, DOAS is seeking donations for the bench and plaque in the Miller's memory. These can be sent to: DOAS, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820.

Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser

The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is holding a fund-raising bird seed sale this fall. Featured are locally-grown black oil sunflower seeds, as well as a variety of seed mixes, nyjer seed and suet. All proceeds will benefit DOAS conservation and education programs.

Use the online store at <http://www.doas.us/store> to view product information and place your order with a credit card or to download an order form to mail.

- **All orders and payments must be received no later than October 31, 2013.** (If you are running late with your order, or if you have any questions, please call Susan O'Handley, 607-643-5680.)
- **Pick up your order on Saturday, November 9, between 10 AM and 12 noon** at Walmart Parking Lot, Route 23 (Southside) in Oneonta (just off I-88 at Exit 15).

Note: Please ensure that you pick up your seed on the pickup day! Our storage space is limited, but in an emergency, we will try to hold your order. Call Andy Mason at 607-267-8491 with any problems and/or questions.

Donations Needed to Benefit Golden Eagles

Eastern Golden Eagles need our help. Their numbers are few but they concentrate in our area. We are seeking funding through grants and private donations for more research. We hope to trap and track 4 eagles next winter at our camera traps. The GPS units and expertise to make this project a success is expensive – each telemetry unit costs \$2500. Costs involved in trapping and data processing equal that of the hardware. Private donations are our biggest source of funding. Telemetry data from eagles trapped in the central Appalachians has already resulted in a changed risk assessment for a Delaware County wind project that was thought safe but actually had large numbers of eagles. Even small donations will help us protect eagles. Your tax-deductible donation will help ensure that Golden Eagles do not needlessly suffer from our ignorance.

If we do not reach the threshold for the trapping project, all donations will be used to benefit Golden Eagles in New York in other ways. Please send your donation to: DOAS Golden Eagle Research, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820



Golden Eagle, by Dave Kiehm

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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ON THE WEB:

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To contribute notes or articles for
The Belted Kingfisher, email:
editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

Last chance for wolf protection—The federal government is planning to remove Endangered Species Protection for nearly all grey wolves in the lower 48 states. This extreme action would leave wolf management in the hands of openly anti-wolf states such as Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. A public comment period ending October 28 is the final opportunity to speak out for these iconic creatures that in many ways define our nation's wildlife values.

The story of wolves in America is one of tragedy and success. Until the 1880s there were hundreds of thousands of grey wolves in the United States, from all the states west of the Mississippi across the northern tier of states to Maine, including New York. By 1930, they were nearly all gone. Persecuted by ranchers, hunters, and even governments, wolves were on the brink of disappearing from the US.

Wolves received protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1973. After a long, hard-fought battle, wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho in 1995. As wolf populations recovered, scientists witnessed a corresponding recovery of healthy ecosystems where this top predator had been missing for so long. It seemed that wolves were headed to reclaiming their place at least in America's west.

However, in an unprecedented act, Congress in 2011 removed grey wolves from ESA protection in the northern Rockies and turned control over to the states. These states are killing large numbers of wolves through aggressive lethal control and reckless, unsustainable hunting. And now, the Obama administration intends to drop all ESA protection for grey wolves.

This species' recovery is far from complete, nor is the species beyond danger of extinction. Wolves occupy only 8.4% of their original habitat, and 36% of the habitat judged suitable for them. Without protection, it is highly doubtful they will ever exist beyond these limited areas.

What you can do—Unless conservationists speak out now, the hard-won gains in protecting grey wolves could be lost. Contact the US Fish & Wildlife Service and let them know the job of recovering wolves from endangered species status is far from done.

Some points to make:

- Wolves are not recovered in key parts of their range. Delisting could prevent the return of wolves to California, Colorado and Utah, where there is excellent habitat, and short-circuit recovery in the Pacific Northwest. Colorado, for example, does not have a confirmed wolf presence yet, but possesses great wolf habitat. The federal government manages about 55% of the land in the state, including 9.5 million acres of roadless areas, and the state hosts an estimated 300,000 elk, or 30% of the nation's total elk population.
- If we had previously put in place the policies that USFWS is now using to delist the wolf, not only would we have not protected bald eagles or grizzly bears, but we would not have achieved these and other success stories such as alligators and peregrine falcons.
- By lowering the bar for endangered species recovery, the federal government is setting a dangerous precedent that could impact conservation and recovery efforts across the country for other imperiled species.
- States where wolves have already been delisted are not managing their wolves like other wildlife – instead their goal is to aggressively drive wolf population numbers down to the bare minimum required by law.



Grey Wolf, Canis Lupus, US Fish & Wildlife Service

Comments on the wolf proposal

can be submitted online at <http://www.regulations.gov/#!submitComment;D=FWS-HQ-ES-2013-0073-19350> or by mail to:

Public Comments Processing
Attn: FWS-R2-ES-2013-0056
Division of Policy and Directives Management
US Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM
Arlington, VA 22203

In addition, Defenders of Wildlife has excellent background information and an easy prepared online submission at

<http://www.defenders.org>.

Please take action to save the wolf!

Andy Mason

It's Time to Phase Out Lead Bullets

Last month California passed the first law in the nation banning lead bullets for hunting. As of this writing it still awaits the Governor's signature. It is the first state to take such action. This law was motivated by the critically endangered California Condor. A limiting factor in their recovery has been lead poisoning from bullet fragments. Condors – like other scavengers - are attracted to the remains of dead animals. Hunters leave behind gut piles. Unfortunately, they sometimes wound animals that die without being recovered. Any bird that feeds on carrion resulting from the use of lead bullets is at risk.

Lead bird shot was banned for waterfowl hunting years ago because ducks and other water birds ingested the toxic pellets. This killed waterfowl. Still living lead-impaired ducks and geese were easy for eagles to catch. The eagles then suffered secondary poisoning. Lead is a neurotoxin with well known harmful affects. A bird only needs enough lead in its blood to impair its ability to function. Individuals become more vulnerable to predation. Raptors ability to hunt and scavenge becomes impaired. That little bit of lead will cause an eagle to starve.

Our area is special. Bald and Golden Eagles concentrate here during migration. People travel – sometimes hundreds of miles – to see these birds. They migrate south during deer season and north during coyote hunting season. The hunting of both coyotes and deer results in contaminated carrion spread across the landscape. Both eagle species scavenge and consume lead.

Compounding the toxicity issue, lead bullets fragment on impact. Some fragment more than others. The more fragmentation, the more contamination of the meat. The worst bullets leave hundreds of fragments, some as far as 14" from the entry hole. Hunters that are willing to do some research can choose a bullet that fragments very little. An even better choice is to buy bullets that have no lead. Excellent lead-free cartridges are available for most rifles and shotguns. They are more effective than lead bullets. Actually, they were not designed to be non-toxic, they were designed to be more effective. I can attest to this. My whole family uses copper and gliding metal bullets for deer hunting very successfully.

During hunting season we sometimes see Golden Eagles foraging around our hill. It is a comfort knowing we are not putting these birds at risk.

One downside to the non-toxic products is increased cost. Using lead-free ammo costs me an additional \$3 or \$4 each year.

Anyone who eats wild meat should be concerned about consuming lead. Studies in Minnesota and North Dakota found a large proportion of venison donated to their states' venison donation programs had detectable levels of lead. In the case of North Dakota, more than half the packages of ground venison donated in 2007 contained lead. It is difficult, nearly impossible,

to find and remove all the lead. When meat with lead is ground, it can be mixed with otherwise uncontaminated meat. Lead on the grinder parts can contaminate a large volume of meat.

Lead is especially problematic when consumed by children. Exposing growing brains to a neurotoxin can have lasting effects. The NYS Department of Health lists these possible effects on children: lower IQ; behavior problems; growth problems; anemia; kidney damage; and hearing loss. Just as we need to protect our children from old peeling paint, we need to think about the food on their plates.

I urge hunters to go lead-free right now. While availability of non-toxic ammunition is improving, it can still be hard to find in retail stores. The state has put out some good information but does not appear willing to take any forceful action.

If non-toxic bullets are not available at your local gun shop, for a limited time they can be purchased from catalogs or online. Cabela's has a good selection. After January, New York State will require a background check to buy ammunition. Then we will be totally dependent on local retailers to stock these safer and more effective products.

For more on this issue, visit http://www.peregrinefund.org/lead_conference.

Tom Salo



Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch Update

Mid-September was notable at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, located on the DOAS Sanctuary outside Oneonta. This is known as peak season for Broad-winged Hawks, a species that congregates in large flocks during migration, and that certainly held true this fall.

On September 14, Larry Dake tallied 523 broad-wings, an excellent flight for our site. This was followed on September 17 by 916 broad-wings counted by Becky Gretton—breaking the previous high daily count of 900 for the species at Franklin Mt. The day's total raptor count of 962 birds fell just short of the record of 975 set in October 1990.

In between these two big days were other noteworthy sightings: two early Golden Eagles seen on 9/15 by Andy Mason, and a Black Vulture—only the second in the 25 year history of the site—spotted by Randy Lynch on 9/16.

October is an exciting month at the hawkwatch, with the greatest variety of raptors passing through, including growing numbers of Golden Eagles. Visitors, spotters and counters are always welcome. 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 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 can be found at www.franklinmt.org.

The Naturalist as Artist (continued from page 1)

of a cedar waxwing by Gail and Nelson Dubois and a dramatic image of a common loon by Warren Greene. These gifted photographer-artists are already well-known to DOAS members, having presented fine programs at several of our monthly meetings. Thanks to them all, whatever their artistic medium, for their notable generosity over the years.

The careful, inspired work of these naturalist-artists and of others in our upstate area can't help but stimulate in the rest of us a deeper appreciation of the natural glories around us. Perhaps their example will awaken our own inner artist - even in some of us who would never consider ourselves "artists". To the professionals in our midst we may owe the impulse in ourselves to wander afield with a sketchbook, or - no longer content with being simple snapshot photographers - to pause and thoughtfully *compose* our photo before we push the button!

Joe Richardson

Broad-wing
Hawk,
by Dave
Kiehm



October 5 Open House to Feature Live Owls

On Saturday, October 5, 2013 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.

At 1 PM Trish Marki from The Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York will present a variety of live owls. This program is very interesting for bird watchers of any age. The hawk watch will be staffed through the day and refreshments will be served at the barn. See page 2 for information about the Miller Memorial dedication.

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.

For more information on the hawk watch visit:

<http://www.doas.us/> or contact:

Tom Salo 607-965-8232 or salothomas@gmail.com or

Andy Mason 607-652-2162 or andymason@earthling.net.

DOAS Annual Charter Dinner will feature Adirondacks Speaker John Thaxton

Save the Date: Friday, October 18, 2013

John Thaxton has written five books, including *New York's 50 Best Places to Go Birding In and Around the Big Apple* (City & Company) and *Natural Attractions: A Select Guide to Experiencing North America's Unique Wildlife and Wonders* (Warner Books) as well as feature articles for periodicals such as *Birder's World*, *Conde Nast's Traveler*, *Adirondack Life*, *Nature Photographer* and *The New York Times*.

For the past seven years John has written the *Birdwatch* column for *Adirondack Explorer*.

John has lectured about birds at The American Museum of Natural History, Paul Smiths Visitor Interpretive Center, Adirondack Interpretive Center, Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge, Adirondack Loj, Vermont Field and Forest Society and the New Jersey Sierra Club.

He serves on the board of *Northern*

New York Audubon and edits their newsletter. He served as president of *Happiness Is Camping: For Children With Cancer*, and remains on the board.

John will be accompanied by his wife Pat Thaxton. Pat served as Laboratory Director at *Long Island College Hospital* in New York City and as the Laboratory Manager at *Elizabethtown Community*

Hospital in the Adirondacks. She served as President of the *High Peaks Audubon Society* and currently serves on the board of *Northern New York Audubon* and as chairperson of its Membership and Finance Committees.

John and Pat are both *Licensed New York State Guides and Adirondack 46ers*, fully insured and rarin' to go. They are members of the *American Birding Association* and the *New York State Ornithological Association*. For *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State, 2000-2005* (Cornell University Press) John and Pat covered 25 atlasing blocks, which included most of the Adirondack High Peaks. For the past ten years they have led trips for the Paul Smiths Visitor Interpretive Center's *Great Adirondack Birding Celebration* and for eight years have led trips for Hamilton County's *Adirondack Birding Festival*.



John and Pat Thaxton, by Tom DuBois
adirondackbirdingtours.com

Annual Charter Dinner - October 18, 2013

DOAS will hold its 45th Annual Charter Dinner on Friday October 18, 2013 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 John Thaxton, a well-known Adirondacks writer, naturalist and lecturer.

The buffet cost is \$20 per person, and \$15 for children under twelve.

Reservations must be made by October 14th 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

October

October 5 – Dedication of Bench in Memory of Jean and Bob Miller: At 9:30 AM, DOAS will dedicate a bench and plaque at our wildlife sanctuary to recognize the great contributions of Jean and Bob Miller to the organization.

October 5 – Open House at the DOAS Sanctuary: Hours are 10 AM - 2 PM. Includes a beginner's workshop on identifying Flying Hawks at 10:30 AM, a trail walk at 11:30 AM and a presentation of live owls with Trish Marki from The Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York at 1 PM.

The hawk watch will be staffed through the day; refreshments will be served at the barn.

October 15 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

October 18 – DOAS Annual Charter Dinner – 7- 9 PM at Brooks Roost. See details on page 6.

October 20 – Annual Fall Montezuma trip: Field trip to the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, to view the migrating waterfowl and shorebirds on their annual journey to warmer climates. Participants will meet at 7:30 AM in the Dietz Street Parking Lot, across from the YMCA in Oneonta. Please pack a lunch for our break at the Montezuma New York Audubon Center. To register, contact Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054 or email eleanormr955@gmail.com.

Last year Dave Kiehm had found and photographed a Yellow-headed Blackbird. It is not unusual to view interesting vagrants migrating through this National Wildlife Refuge.

November

November 9 – Bird Seed pick up day: Walmart parking lot, Oneonta, 10 AM - 12 noon. Order seeds online:

<http://www.doas.us/store>

November 15 – DOAS Public and Member Meeting: Dave Nicosia, *Birds and Radar*. Meeting 7:30 PM - 9 PM at the Elm Street United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

November 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

December

December 7 – Short-eared Owl Field Trip: Meet at the Cooperstown village docks at the end of Fair St. at 3:00 PM. Contact Bob Donnelly at rsdonn@yahoo.com or 607-264-8156.

December 14 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count (CBC): This is our 45th year of participating in the 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 find in their assigned area, within our designated 15-mile radius circle centered around Milford, 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 within our circle. If you are a new counter for either the group counts or the feeder counts, please contact Sandy Bright: email sbright@hartwick.edu, or phone 607-287-4465. People who have participated before will be contacted.

December 28 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count (CBC):

Contact Tom Salo at 607-965-8232, salothomas@gmail.com

January

January 11 – Eagle Field Trip: Details in next issue.

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; family memberships \$20 annually or \$30 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: _____

Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation: \$ _____



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DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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August–September Bird Sightings

I always like the last two weeks of summer when several birds start banding together to make the long journey south. I've seen groups of starlings, bluebirds and red-winged blackbirds spread the word that it is time to hit the road. This doesn't mean there still aren't some surprising bird discoveries also at this time. On our regular morning walks recently my husband and I have seen green herons, great blue herons, flickers and of course the chatty gray catbird. Birding is fun any time of the year.

On 8/19 Rod Spangle saw 2 Common Nighthawks in Otego. September ushered in several bird sightings. On the 5th Angelika Rashkow watched a Swainson's Thrush rustle through her yew hedge in Hartwick. On the 8th Angelika was standing at a low section of a bend of Oaks Creek between Rtes. 11 and 59 when a Bald Eagle flew directly toward her

almost into her face. It was just a few feet away when it saw her and it quickly swung around taking off. What a spectacular sight. Dorian Huneke watched a group of Eastern Bluebirds flock together in Treadwell on 9/11 probably starting their long trip home to their winter digs. On Sept. 12th Sandy Bright found it difficult to focus on her teaching as the neighborhood Carolina Wren sang its heart out outside her classroom window in Oneonta. She couldn't help interrupting her math lesson by telling the students how to identify the wren's signature "tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle" call. I'm sure she enlisted



Bald Eagle, by Dave Kiehm

some budding ornithologists on that day. Also on the 12th Andy Mason thought it was more like a May day in Jefferson after hearing a singing Eastern Phoebe, a Carolina Wren and a Warbling Vireo. While weeding her backyard garden in Ashland on 9/16 Liz Dewell heard quite the chattering and rattling commotion as a Belted Kingfisher darted back and forth across the creek looking for a tasty treat. That same day Marilyn Huneke saw her first Golden Eagle migrating down Elk Creek valley over her farm in Delhi. It was such a thrill! The next day also in Delhi Marilyn saw a flock of 20-30 Broad-winged Hawks along with one Bald Eagle, two Golden Eagles and two Sharp-shinned Hawks magnificently soaring overhead. What great sightings!

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*