



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

May

May 3 – Glimmerglass Bird Walk

May 4 – Stamford Bird Walk

May 10 – Greenway Bird Walk

May 10 – Kernan Trust Bird Walk

May 11 – DOAS Sanctuary Walk

May 14 – Bashakill, Sullivan County

May 16 – DOAS Program

May 17 or 18 – Big Day Bird Count

May 20 – Board Meeting

May 21 – South Hill Bird Walk

May 21 – Wildflower Walk

May 24 – Onderdunk Road

June

June 1 – *Birds, Brunch and Beer*

June 20-22 – Adirondack Trip

More information on page 7

What Happened to Maxine the Golden Eagle?

On 8 February we caught our first Golden Eagle of the winter, a beautiful 2 year old bird female named Maxine. She was fitted with a tracking device and released on a glorious winter day. Two days later she fed at the same site where she was captured. She then moved 25 miles west, straying occasionally into Pennsylvania.

This area has spotty cell phone service. Some days the transmitter connected to the network but we stopped receiving location data after 17 February. This didn't make sense. The unit continued to connect, always to the same tower. It would transmit a hardware update then disconnect. I suspected a hardware problem and contacted the manufacturer. Early in March the manufacturer's representative urged us to search the bird's last known location.

A month after releasing Maxine, four of us went to where Maxine's unit had last recorded a location. We met the landowner, a nice farmer who allowed us to search his property. We did not find Maxine. However, we learned the US Department of Agriculture had also been there, killing invasive Eurasian boars. The boars had escaped from an adjacent private hunting preserve. The pigs had done thousands of dollars of damage to the farmer's crops. We found the remains of some of those pigs. Pigs that had been killed with lead ammunition.

The following morning we learned that a dying Bald Eagle was found just over a mile from that location earlier in the winter. It had lead in its blood three times the lethal level. Lead bullets fragment on impact, spreading the toxic metal through the animal. Bullets, bullet fragments and lead shot are the only likely source of lead in scavengers.

Whether the lead in the Bald Eagle's blood came from the pigs we will never know. When NYSDEC staff learned that USDA had left pig carcasses - a possible source of lead - where scavengers might feed on them, they immediately drafted a letter to USDA to correct the problem. This method of disposal will not be repeated.

I do not allow hunters to use lead bullets



*Peg DiBenedetto releases Maxine
photo by Gerianne Carillo*

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LOTS Going On!

I have had the good fortune to be part of DOAS for over three decades now, which gives me a pretty good perspective on the ups and downs of the organization over the years. I think I can safely say that I do not recall any period when we were more active, with so much going on in all aspects of our Chapter.

We have always had a full and varied schedule of monthly programs, and this continues under the direction of Eleanor Moriarty who manages to balance pleasurable presentations and serious subjects to entertain and educate us. Eleanor is also the driving force in our Birds, Brunch and Beer event—coming up for its second year at Brewery Ommegang (be sure to sign up soon!).

Our field trip list is longer than it has ever been, with eight trips scheduled for May alone. Bob Donnelly coordinates these field events and provides plenty of opportunities to get out and enjoy the birds we all love.

On the education front, the John G. New summer day camp has been restarted, and plans are underway for this year's session at our wildlife sanctuary. Susan O'Handley is organizing this, along with our school grants and Audubon Adventures classroom programs.

We have been deeply involved in the hydrofracking and Constitution Pipeline debates, submitting comments this month to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on the latter. We also weigh in on statewide and national issues as opportunities arise, and our views and actions are often used as guidance and models by other Audubon Chapters and the state Audubon office.

The DOAS Sanctuary continues to be well-used by the public, as well as the site for the day camp, the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, our fall Open House, and other activities.

But the recent initiative that we all should be most proud of is Tom Salo's work for conservation of eastern Golden Eagles. Growing out of observations of goldens at Franklin Mt., combined with our involvement in review of several windpower proposals, Tom set up a spring eagle survey in lower Delaware County that confirmed what satellite-tracked birds showed—that this is a major corridor for migrating Bald and Golden Eagles.

Following up to investigate the presence of wintering Golden Eagles here, Tom established a number of camera traps baited with road-killed deer. Again, this provided hard evidence that numerous goldens are present through our region in winter.

And from the camera traps grew this past winter's effort to capture and fit with transmitters three Golden Eagles. This will provide invaluable information on the winter movements of the eagles, as well as their migrations to and from their nesting grounds in northern Canada. Unfortunately, it appears one of the captured birds has died, quite likely from ingested lead ammunition. (See Tom's article in this issue.)

This incident will increase our efforts to publicize and bring about change in the use of lead ammunition. Again we are a leader in protecting not just Golden Eagles, but all wildlife threatened by scavenging on lead-killed carcasses, and even humans who eat venison at home or through donation programs. We have already been instrumental in getting the Department of Environmental Conservation to promote use of non-toxic ammunition, and have raised awareness among the rest of the Audubon community and the general birding community in New York.

Continued on page 5

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Helen McLean

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[www.facebook.com/
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To contribute notes or articles for
The Belted Kingfisher, email:
editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

Monarch butterflies—are they doomed?—A major topic of discussion last summer and fall among naturalists and others who enjoy the outdoors was the dearth of monarch butterflies in our fields and skies. These well-known creatures have introduced many children to nature, and captivate our imaginations with their long-distance migration.

Last year, monarchs were nearly non-existent in our region and elsewhere in the eastern US. At the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch near Oneonta, where observers often note good flights of monarchs, the reports were of one or two or none daily. This and other anecdotal information has been confirmed by data from the butterflies' wintering grounds in the mountains of Mexico. The area occupied by the insects in 2013-2014 measured only 1.65 acres, compared to 2.93 acres last year. They covered more than 44.5 acres at their recorded peak in 1995.

Monarchs have been in decline for some time, and logging in and around the evergreen forests where they overwinter has been considered to be the main reason. However, scientists are now pointing to the loss of milkweed, the monarch larvae's sole food source, as the primary cause.

Milkweed is a hardy and widespread plant, but the amount of milkweed in Midwest farm fields has fallen by more than 80 percent, according to Karen Oberhauser, a conservation biologist at the University of Minnesota. The reason: introduction of genetically-modified corn and soybeans designed to survive heavy applications of herbicides that kill milkweed among other unwanted plants. Chief among these chemicals is the Monsanto Corporation's Roundup, widely used by both agribusiness and by homeowners. In 2013, 83 percent of all corn and 93 percent of soybeans in the United States were herbicide tolerant.



Monarch larvae and butterfly on Milkweed

Oberhauser and a colleague estimated that as Monsanto's Roundup Ready corn and soybeans spread across the Midwest, the loss of milkweed almost exactly mirrored the decline in monarch egg production. In Iowa alone, 98% of milkweed that was found in farm fields is gone.

Some scientists believe the days of the monarch butterfly migration are numbered. Lincoln Brower, a leading entomologist at Sweet Briar College in Virginia, wrote that "the migration is definitely proving to be an endangered biological phenomenon."

What you can do—One obvious step concerned conservationists can take is to avoid using genetically-modified foods (GMOs). However, considering that nearly all of these two basic commodities now fall into that category—and how pervasive corn and soy are in our food supply—this is not easy to do. However, natural food stores and restaurants do specialize in GMO-free food, and even some foods so labeled can be found on supermarket shelves.

One fairly easy action is to encourage milkweed by not cutting it until after monarch larvae are done feeding in the fall (this is the policy at the DOAS Sanctuary). Consider planting a milkweed patch if you have room. The organization MonarchWatch (monarchwatch.org) has information on propagating the plant.

Let your lawmakers know that genetically-modified organisms are not the wonder plants that the chemical companies claim. This technology is outlawed in many countries, precisely because of the unanticipated side effects such as we are now seeing.

Andy Mason

DOAS Submits Comments on Constitution Pipeline

Our Chapter has submitted comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Constitution Pipeline, proposed to run from Susquehanna County, PA to Schoharie County, NY, a distance of 122 miles. The DOAS comments focus on the 100 foot wide corridor that will be cut through 32 miles of mature forest along the pipeline route. This corridor will have serious negative impacts for nesting woodland birds such as Wood Thrush and Scarlet Tanager, by allowing predators and cowbirds access to the forest interior. These and other species are already in decline, and the pipeline will reduce

the habitat they need to successfully breed.

The DOAS comments are available on our web site, www.doas.us

Online Resources

Interested in keeping up with DOAS news and events online? Sign up for DOASNews to receive emailed notifications in a timely fashion by visiting

www.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/DOASnews/info

Also be sure to visit our terrific web site, www.doas.us.

To keep abreast of local bird sightings, and to contribute your own, join OSBirds at:

www.groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/osbirds/info.

Gardening for Birds

Spring is finally here and now is the time to begin gardening for the birds. The process can be quite simple or as complex as you want to make it. The first step is to go organic and not use the pesticides and herbicides that harm the birds you are trying to attract. It will also allow the bees and other beneficial insects to do their jobs.

Lawns are monocultures and sterile environments. Keep a small area near the house mowed and neat if you must, but allow some areas of taller grasses and flowers to grow as well. Let some corners “go wild” by planting native trees, understory trees like serviceberry and dogwood, taller shrubs like elderberry and winterberry, and lower bushes like blueberry and blackberry. Leave the leaf litter on the ground there for the towhees and sparrows to scratch around in.

Plant native flowers as much as possible. Sunflowers, coneflowers, beebalm, cardinal flower, blue lobelia and columbine are some of the showiest. Hummingbirds love the flowers and finches love the seeds.

Water is also necessary for the birds and again can be very simple or very ornate, or any level between. A standard bird bath works fine. A plastic gallon jug with a tiny pinhole hung over the bath makes a dripper birds enjoy. Place it near some cover and of course keep it clean.

Bird gardening is easy, and much less time consuming than the usual mowing and trimming routine. With a few feeders for the birds and a comfortable seat for yourself, you’ll be entertained all summer.

Julia Gregory



Blackberries from Morguefile

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SPRING FUNDRAISING EVENT JUNE 1, 2014 BIRDS, BRUNCH & BEER

Our chapter’s educational goal is to expand and enhance outreach programs for the families of our community through grants, projects and events. Please indicate workshop choice in order of preference (i.e., 1, 2, 3 or 4):

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| WORKSHOP A ____ 1 2 3 4 | BIRDING BY EAR 9:00AM-11:00AM |
| WORKSHOP B ____ 1 2 3 4 | PHOTO WALK (LIMITED TO 12) 1:30PM-3:00PM |
| WORKSHOP C ____ 1 2 3 4 | BEGINNERS BIRDING SKILLS (LIMITED TO 20) 1:30PM-3:00PM |
| WORKSHOP D ____ 1 2 3 4 | BOTANICAL PAINTING (LIMITED TO 15) 1:30PM-3:00PM |

NAME: _____ NUMBER OF PEOPLE _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____ (FOR BIRDS, BRUNCH AND BEER UPDATES ONLY)

TELEPHONE: () _____ \$30 EACH, AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO DOAS AND MAIL TO: DOAS, PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820

2014 Environmental Education Grant Awarded

Jennifer Finkle of Andes Central School has been awarded funding to continue the Environmental Field Day that will serve 60 students PreK through 6th Grade this spring. Having raised brown trout eggs in their classrooms through the school year, the grown fish will be released into Liddle Brook. Activity stations that focus on honey bees will complement the release activities. Students will learn about bees, pollination and honey production as well as communication and nest building. This outdoor event helps to bring students outside and provides experiences that encourage stewardship ethics. Congratulations to Andes Central School and to Mrs. Finkle for your continued commitment to Environmental Education!

LOTS Going On (Continued from page 2)

We are considering ways to expand this campaign, starting with getting wildlife agencies to stop using lead as an example to hunters. With the current political climate, regulating lead ammo by law will be a difficult task, but I am confident that these are the early days of what will ultimately be a successful effort to eliminate this toxic material as a major threat to eagles and other wildlife. Tom Salo's work on behalf of Golden Eagles has put DOAS at the forefront of this important issue, and we all owe him a debt of gratitude for his energy and commitment.

Andy Mason

What Happened to Maxine the Golden Eagle

(Continued from page 1)

on my property. I don't want to eat lead. I don't want scavengers eating it. Gut piles - and that rare deer that is not recovered - are a threat to scavengers when lead bullets are used. This is a concern here where migrant eagles are common during deer season. It is an even greater concern in winter concentration areas such as Delaware County.

Given the circumstances, I believe Maxine is dead. Her unit continues to connect to a single cell tower near that area. Apparently, the GPS cannot acquire three satellites to triangulate coordinates. This can happen in thick cover or near steep slopes, both of which are common in the area. Three searches were made without success. It is quite possible she suffered lead poisoning. The loss of Maxine is tragic but some good has already come from it. USDA has improved its practices. A number of people connected to the project have switched to copper bullets, or convinced family members to do so. We will continue to work on education and research efforts that will hopefully convince more hunters to switch to non-toxic ammo. There is no reason not to use it. Monolithic bullets perform better. They are better for human health, especially children whose developing brains are extremely sensitive to lead. Any additional cost is minimal. The benefits are manifold.

Tom Salo

DOAS Announces 2014 Dates for John G. New Audubon Summer Day Camp

Camp Director, Megan Gigandet returns for the 2014 Summer Program which will run Monday, August 4 through Thursday, August 8 at the DOAS Sanctuary in Oneonta from 9:30am to 3pm each day.

Registration is available to children entering grades 3 through 5 in the Fall of 2014 (limited enrollment). The cost is \$125 per child, DOAS membership required. Partial and full scholarships are available.

Complete details and registration form are available at www.doas.us. Questions can be directed to Education Chair, Susan O'Handley at info@doas.us or by phone at 607-643-5680. More photos here: doas.us/summer-camp-2013-photo-gallery (All photos by MGigandet via public upload)



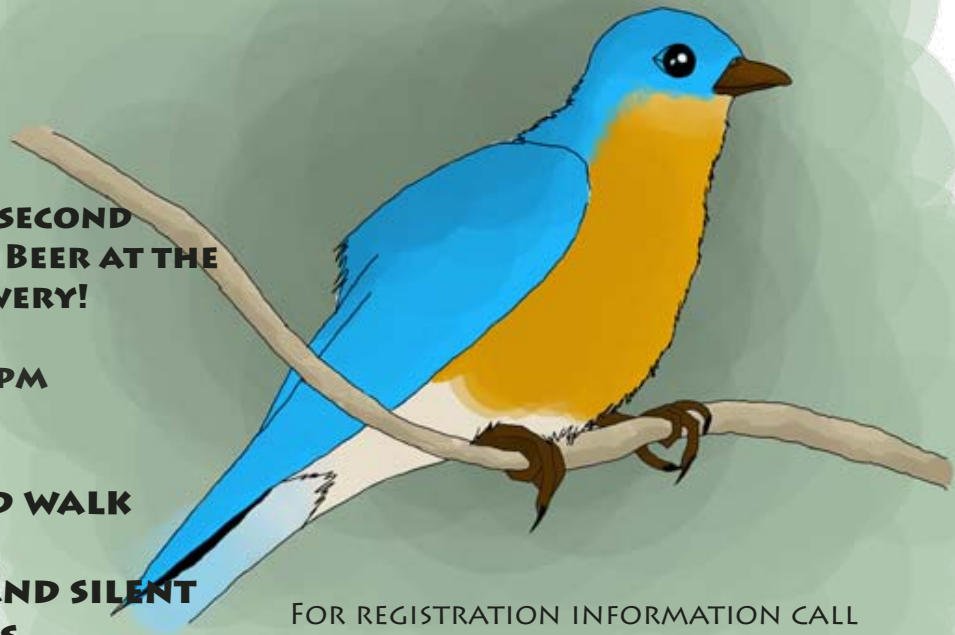
April Bird Sightings (Continued from page 8)

Kathy Mario heard a Winter Wren at the West Branch Nature Conservancy and an Eastern Bluebird was checking out Gerianne Carillo's nesting boxes in Milford. April 8th was a big bird bonanza day! Andrew Cooper saw a Black Vulture eerily soaring over the Glenwood Cemetery in Oneonta, David Kiehm spotted an Osprey perched over the river backwater in Portlandville, Jo Ann Salo saw displaying American Woodcocks and some Common Snipes on her early morning walk in W. Burlington and there was a male Northern Flicker in Dorian Huneke's yard in Treadwell. On the 10th a Merlin zipped over Sandy Bright's home in Oneonta calling loudly as it flew. The next day Chipping Sparrows appeared greeting Charlie Schiem in Oneonta, Tom Salo in W. Burlington and Dorian Huneke in Treadwell. So ends another burst of spring in spite of the cold that won't let go.

Many thanks and kudos to Sandy Bright for writing my bird sightings article over the past three months. I greatly appreciated it.

Dianne Benko

DELAWARE OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY
 PRESENTS
Birds Brunch & Beer



**JOIN US FOR OUR SECOND
 BIRDS, BRUNCH & BEER AT THE
 OMMEGANG BREWERY!
 JUNE 1, 2014
 11:00AM - 3:00PM
 \$30 PER PERSON**

- MORNING BIRD WALK**
- COFFEE**
- VIEW RAFFLE AND SILENT AUCTION ITEMS**
- TASTY OMMEGANG BRUNCH**
- WORKSHOPS**

FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION CALL
 ELEANOR MORIARTY AT (607) 435 - 2054
 OR VIEW AT WWW.DOAS.US

See registration form on page 4

Nomination and Election of Directors

The Nominating Committee is pleased to present the following slate for the the DOAS Board of Directors for the 2014-2016 term:
 Julia Gregory, Becky Gretton, Andy Mason, Tom Salo, Charlie Scheim and the candidacy of area birder, Dorian Huneke. The slate of nominees and election for Directors will be held at the May 16 meeting at the Elm Park United Methodist Church. Other nominations may come from the members present.



Bluebird by Dave Kiehm



www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

Upcoming Activities

May

May 3 – Glimmerglass Bird Walk: 8 AM at Glimmerglass Nature Center. Becky Gretton will lead the walk.

May 4 – Stamford Spring Bird Walk: Meet at parking lot, corner of Beaver and Main Streets, Stamford. Contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162 or AndyMason@earthling.net.

May 10 – Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk: A walk at the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway (OSG) trail to view returning migrant birds. This will be an easy hike on level ground for about 2 hours, starting at 8:00AM. Participants should meet at the OSG parking lot on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta's west end. For more information, contact: Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880.

May 10 – Kernan Trust Property Bird Walk: Andy Mason will lead group. Participants should meet at the Mirabito Convenience store on Rt 23, south of Davenport Central School -traveling south from Oneonta. Contact Eleanor Moriarty at 607-435-2054 for further information.

May 11 – Spring Bird Walk: DOAS Sanctuary (see www.doas.us for directions). Contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162 or AndyMason@earthling.net.

May 14 – Bashakill - Sullivan County: Contact Eleanor Moriarty at 607-435-2054 for further information.

May 16 – Program: Speaker will be Larry Federman, education coordinator of Rheinstrom Hill, Buttercup Farm, RamsHorn Livingston Sanctuary.

Larry as a staff member of New York Audubon has contributed greatly to expanding the environmental education to adults and youngster alike. He is a firm believer that environmental education is one of the most important keys to maintaining and furthering the appreciation of birds, wildlife and their habitats in instilling a commitment to conservation. Along with his responsibilities as a staff member of Audubon NY, Larry's time is spent as president of

his local Audubon chapter, newsletter editor, council delegate, and field trip leader.

The presentation of *The Magic of Dragonflies* displays Larry's expertise of dragonflies, the flying jewels of our insect world. Program is held at Elm Park Methodist Church, Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY. Start time is 7:30pm, free and open to the public, and refreshments are served. For further information contact; Eleanor at 607-435-2054 or eleanormrtr955@gmail.com

May 17 or 18 – Big Day Bird Count - Anyone interested in participating, please contact Bob Donnelly, rsdonn@yahoo.com

May 20 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

May 21 – South Hill Bird Walk: Meet at Pine Lake parking lot by 7:30 AM. Contact Eleanor Moriarty at 607-435-2054 for further information.

May 21 – Wildflower Walk: Gilbert Lake State Park at 10 AM. Come along! – in late May the earliest species will probably have ceased blooming, but there should be many others. And bring your binoculars for warblers. Led by Julia Gregory and Joe Richardson.

May 24 – Onderdunk Road: A field trip to a large wetland on Onderdunk Road in Schoharie County. This is a place to see many wetland species while keeping your feet dry. We will meet at the Stewart's gas station in Sharon Springs at 7:00 AM. This is a date change from before. If you have questions please contact Bob Donnelly at 607-264-8156 or rsdonn@yahoo.com.

June

June 1 – Birds, Brunch and Beer: See registration form on page 4, and poster on page 6.

June 20-22 – Adirondack Boreal Birding Trip: This trip is filled. We are creating a waiting list in case of cancellation. If interested, contact Eleanor Moriarty, 607-435-2054 or eleanormrtr955@gmail.com.

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: _____



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April Bird Sightings

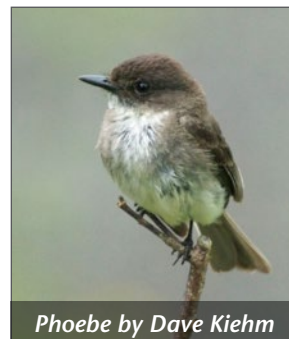
“April is the cruelest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land” according to T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. March 2014, with its intolerably low temperatures and frosty, blustery winds, was NOT heeding these poetic words.

On Mar. 17th Gerianne Carillo observed a Pileated Woodpecker in all its beauty as it investigated an old tree in Milford. The next day she heard the cheery Carolina Wren’s “teakettle teakettle” song announcing spring. On the 19th Leslie Preston’s first Bald Eagle of the new year swooped in over her car and circled just above the treetops in Oneonta and a White-throated Sparrow visited Angelika Rashkow’s feeder in Hartwick. On the morning of Mar. 20th, a Red-bellied Woodpecker who had been calling down the creek below Dorian Huneke’s barn in Treadwell made its glorious appearance on a nearby tree. On the 21st Angelika Rashkow watched a Red-breasted Merganser with his “white pearl” shoulder patch dive and swim in the waters of

Oakscreek and Pam Peters watched 2-3 streamlined American Kestrels in Unadilla as they displayed their vibrant colors. The next day Warren Ryther saw a Turkey Vulture perched on a fence post in New Lisbon, Dorian Huneke watched at least 2000 Canada Geese in Treadwell flying north as they constantly shifted and regrouped in the wind, and Sandy Bright gazed at a flock of about 130 Snow Geese as they flew overhead in West Oneonta. On the following days Mar. 23rd-26th Gerianne Carillo sighted her FOS Song Sparrows at her feeders amidst a snow squall and a Turkey Vulture swirled overhead in Milford, Warren Ryther spotted a Killdeer in a pasture next to his Garrattsville house and enjoyed watching a pair of fish-eating, diving Hooded Mergansers on Butternut Creek in New Lisbon and Dorian Huneke saw a Golden-crowned Kinglet flit from branch to branch of a split leaved maple in

Treadwell.

April brought more cold weather but also more exciting bird sightings. On the 3rd Tom Salo spied an American Tree Swallow and an Eastern Phoebe in Norwich and his FOS Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Brown-headed Cowbird in W. Burlington, Eleanor



Phoebe by Dave Kiehm

Moriarty’s Eastern Phoebe showed up in Davenport Center checking out the usual nesting spot, and Sandy Bright explored New Island in Oneonta and startled a pair of Wood Ducks and a pair of American Woodcocks next to a trail near the

interstate. As Leslie Preston was filling her feeder in Oneonta on April 5th, she happened to turn around and noticed a Brown Creeper climbing up the side of a tree and Warren Ryther had his FOS Rufous-sided Towhee at his New Lisbon feeder. On the 6th Pam Peters and

Continued on page 5