



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

March

March 1– DOAS Board Mtg

March 18– Program: Tom Salo,
DOAS Golden Eagle Research

April

April 2–Waterfowl Trip

April 9– Earth Festival and Bird
Walk

April 15– Program, Dr. Jeffrey
Heilveil: Insects Stranger than
Fiction

April 19– DOAS Board Mtg

May

May 1– Bashakill Wetlands Field
Trip

May 1– Oneonta Greenway Bird
Walk

May 15– DOAS Sanctuary Bird
Walk

May 17– DOAS Board Mtg

May 20– Program, Barry
Stevens:Focus on Optics

May 22– Stamford Spring Bird
Walk

June 5–Birding By Ear. Stay tuned

More information on page 7

Golden Eagle Research Update

Eastern Golden Eagles are a small, isolated population, which puts them at risk. DOAS has participated in Golden Eagle data collection, research, and education since we realized the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary was a major fall concentration point for Golden Eagles in New York. The Hawkwatch was established in 1989. DOAS research efforts have also shown our region to be regular winter habitat for Golden Eagles. Focused counting in 2009 and 2010 confirmed it is an important spring concentration area for migrating adult birds. In 2010 DOAS began to operate winter camera traps as part of a distributional and demographic study organized by Dr. Todd Katzner, now with the USGS and a lead researcher with the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group.

We have used our data to respond to proposed wind projects in our region, and to advocate for hunters to use non-toxic ammunition. This species is unusually susceptible to impacts from wind turbines and lead poisoning. We conduct public

education on Golden Eagles in New York, addressing conservation concerns and threats.

Another effort involves trapping and telemetering Golden Eagles to track their movements. Collecting GPS data every 15 minutes allows us to identify important habitats used by Eastern Golden Eagles. This program was supported by the Norcross Wildlife Foundation, the Hawk Migration Association of North America and many individual donors. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation helps by providing a licensed trapper.



*Golden Eagle--photo by
Walter Putrycz*

“Golden Eagle Update”-cont. on page 4

President's Message

A Day in Delaware County

As a participant in a Golden Eagle Survey, I was pleased to spend a day driving through a section of Delaware County for slightly over five hours on the fifth of February. No, we didn't see a Golden Eagle, but we did see some Red-tailed Hawks, and a Cooper's hawk.

I needed a map of the county to keep track of all the roads travelled, and locating such an item was impossible in Otsego County. The Chamber of Commerce in Delhi was an excellent find, along with a wonderful locally sourced food market! The staff is very helpful and friendly.



Once into the countryside, voices of the past were everywhere, with endless miles of beautiful rock walls whispering tales of the hours, days, and years during which they were built. Many were in disrepair, and some were lovingly restored.

Barns are tumbling these days. The remaining foundations inspired visions of farming as it once was. A modern home built nearby was a remarkable contrast!



All photos by Becky Gretton

One barn in particular spoke of the desperate efforts made through the years to keep it alive, and the inevitable ending coming soon. A few hours later, a gleaming treasure appeared with every board and rock in place, proudly sporting a very recent paint job!



Wetlands, woodlands, fields and mountains invited spring birding. I look forward to witnessing their awakening in a few months! *Becky Gretton*

Reminder to Educator--Applications for DOAS Environmental Education Grants are due March 18, 2016. For Grant Guidelines and Application call 607-643-5680 or email sjohandley@gmail.com

**THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO
AUDUBON SOCIETY**
FOUNDED 1968

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

Conservation and Legislation

Update on Constitution Pipeline—Last month we reported on the status of DOAS’ legal efforts regarding the Constitution Pipeline project. In the interim there has been a flurry of activity with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), who granted permission for construction of the pipeline and the use of eminent domain to acquire rights-of-way across people’s land.

Constitution had requested permission to begin felling trees along the pipeline route, despite lacking a crucial permit from the NY State DEC. Earthjustice, the environmental law firm representing DOAS and others, filed for a stay of this activity. FERC has denied permission for tree felling in NY, but has approved it for Pennsylvania.

Earthjustice is now in court attempting to halt the Pennsylvania cutting.

In a more fundamental action, FERC has denied a petition from us and Sierra Club, Catskill Mountainkeeper and others for a rehearing of the entire project. Local group Stop the Pipeline also had a similar petition rejected. These petitions had been pending for nearly a year. Although a setback, there is a silver lining to FERC finally acting on the petition. This exhausts the administrative appeals, allowing Earthjustice to go to court to seek reversal of FERC’s approval of the project. This has now been done with filing of a challenge with the US Court of Appeals.

We will keep you informed of this ongoing legal action.

Cover your crude—Transportation and storage of crude oil by rail and barge has expanded dramatically in recent years, and upstate New York is a major corridor for this activity, and a locale for facilities to move oil from one vehicle to others. This increased activity raises the likelihood of leaks and spills and the resulting health, environmental and safety impacts—as well as great economic consequences. Our region is certainly at risk for

these impacts with major rail lines passing through the Mohawk and Susquehanna Valleys.

The materials transported include the notorious Bakken Shale oil and Canadian tar sands crude oil. Accidents involving the ‘bomb trains’ carrying this oil have killed dozens of people and decimated communities and waterways. To add insult to injury, companies responsible for these disasters often claim bankruptcy and walk away, leaving taxpayers to cover cleanup costs.

Legislation has been introduced in the NY State legislature that would require the Department of Environmental Conservation to ensure that companies

operating facilities handling crude oil have adequate financial security to cover all cleanup and decontamination costs from an accident before they are allowed to store oil. Railroads would have to provide DEC information

pertaining to their ability to pay for the cleanup of spills including those associated with “worst case” scenarios. The Department would make this information public.

What you can do—This is common sense legislation that would help protect NYers and the environment from the devastation of an oil spill or explosion, and encourage transportation and handling companies to do all they can to avoid such catastrophes and related costs. However opposition can be expected from majority Republicans in the State Senate. Contact local Senators James Seward and John Bonacic and tell them you are concerned over the risks to our communities and environment. Ask them to support S.5751-A to enact this law this year.

See the conservation page at www.doas.us for legislators’ contact information.

Andy Mason



NON-TOXIC AMMO ACTIVITIES – CAN YOU HELP?

The \$10,000 grant for education on non-lead ammunition is currently being implemented. We are working on table displays, a video and a bunch of other activities. We underestimated our financial needs in the budget. We are short about \$400 for tabling fees at gun shows. There are some other unanticipated expenses. If you would like to help us fund this effort to protect eagles and people from the impacts of lead, even a small donation would be very helpful for the effort. Donations should note it is intended for the Alternatives to Lead Ammunition Campaign.

“Golden Eagle Update”--cont. from page 1

The project launched in the winter of 2014 with the successful telemetering of three Golden Eagles. 2015 efforts to trap and telemeter more eagles were suspended after manufacturing problems caused delays and extreme cold weather made the eagles erratic.

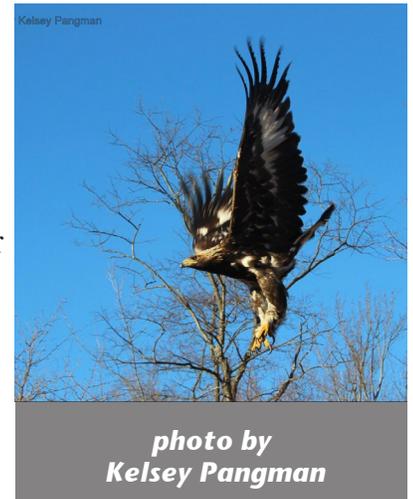
This season, Golden Eagles were scattered and scarce early. They started arriving after the first of the year. As of this writing, we are tracking 3 eagles captured this season. On January 14th, volunteers trapped a three year old female. This bird was feeding at the site where she was caught the following day. Over the next few days she moved west to the Beaverkill. She spent much of two days alongside NY 17 near East Branch. At one time she went down into Pennsylvania almost to Mount Pocono but returned to the Catskills.

On February 2nd, another young female was captured and telemetered. Since capture she has been around the area of Cannonsville and Pepacton Reservoirs. On February 12th, the DEC's Scott Van Arsdale and others caught a third eagle. It was a small male (only

8.5 pounds). This little eagle was sporting a band that had been put on him in West Cape May, NJ in October 2013 when he was less than a year old. Younger birds tend to wander more than adults. At last check, he was near Port Jervis.

Golden Eagles that are trapped and tracked as part of this project add valuable data to a growing database. Little is known about the birds wintering at the most northern and southern parts of their range. Our efforts help us learn more about these beautiful and rare eagles.

Tom Salo



*photo by
Kelsey Pangman*



*Tom Salo documenting
Golden Eagle plumage--
photo by
Becky Gretton*

March 18th DOAS Program

Golden Eagle Update Join us for our regular monthly program on March 18th when DOAS Research Committee Co-Chair Tom Salo will discuss the Golden Eagle Project over the past few winters. The talk will include information about camera trapping, the actual trapping and tracking of Eagles, data gathering on known roost locations, and the results of winter raptor counts DOAS has organized in Delaware County. Tom will also show numerous informative and entertaining photos and videos from the past two seasons.

The program will take place on March 18th at 7:30PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY. DOAS Programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

And mark your calendars for an exciting program on April 15th, when Dr. Jeffrey Heilveil, Associate Professor and Chair of the Biology Department at SUNY Oneonta, will speak on **Insects: Stranger than Fiction**. Jeffrey Heilveil's research and education have specialized in the life history, dispersal patterns, and pathologies of insects from trout streams. Jeff teaches courses in entomology, stream ecology, and population genetics.

Hiking Across Spain

by DOAS Board member Kevin Hodne

People can do some crazy things when they retire and I am one of them. In October, I walked across Spain—east to west, 790 kilometers, on the Camino de Compostela.

On October 5 I started my walk in Roncesvalles, in Basque country just over the French border in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains. This village of stone houses, cobblestone roads and medieval churches has changed little over the ages. There I was transported in time, language and culture, and was ready to take my first steps in a month long pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, the site of the cathedral said to contain the remains of Apostle Saint James. It was exhilarating to be one of millions who have undertaken this walk over the centuries.

Upon arriving in Roncesvalles, I registered in the albergue (a hostel for pilgrims), threw my backpack on a bottom bunk among the 60 beds, and set out to experience this medieval village. After checking in I went to the donativo (donation) peregrino (pilgrim) meal followed by Mass in a humble stone medieval church. At the meal all introduced themselves and it was a wonder to be among people of all ages from around the world: Koreans, Russians, Czechs, Swedes, Danes, French, Germans, Austrians, Spanish, Israelis, Americans and the list went on. And people of all faiths, and non-faiths, with the common goal of walking to Santiago and having a personal experience unique to each person. Following Mass I lit a candle for a friend with Parkinson's who asked for the favor.

Throughout my journey I was amazed by artifacts of invasions, conquests and changes of power shifts: the Celts (with their round stone buildings and thatched roofs), Germanic Visigoths, Romans (with their roads and bridges and bath houses), Moors (Islamic rule is said to have been the most tolerant of invaders), and the Christians (the Knights Templar castles, the brutality of Queen Isabella deporting and killing Jews, and the many churches and statues and crosses erected).

I soon fell into the daily ritual of a 21st century pilgrim and loved the simplicity: up at dawn, pack up, café con leche (coffee with steamed milk) and a

croissant, consult the map, and walk, listen and see. While walking, I generally had short conversations and walked alone. It was during meals and in the evening where conversations flourished. At the dinner table and sitting in the plaza, there was a measure of serious discussions punctuated by joking and ribbing, especially pouncing on national stereotypes.



On the pilgrimage I was all eyes and ears because what I saw and heard was so incredible. Stone bridges—both medieval and Roman—with graceful arches. Everywhere were stone houses with wonderful wooden curved beams over doors, the doors themselves in rich blues and greens I saw churches in every village (some with white stork nests on the very top). There were the sheep grazing in the Pyrenees and the dairy farms to the west in Galicia Province. I walked for miles in the vineyards in La Roija Province, famous for its wine (I sampled this wine with most dinners). How spectacular were the cathedrals in Burgos, Leon, Astorga and Santiago. And so moving were the Spanish people on their porches, taking siesta, at their stores and cafes (pastries, cheeses, chorizo sausages, tapas, garlic soup, fruit, and bread, all to die for).

On November 5 I looked down upon the city of Santiago de Compostela with its narrow, winding streets, its many plazas with their statues, the stone buildings with iron railings, and the high Cathedral that was the centerpiece. There I was, 790 kilometers from my start in Roncesvalles, among the many pilgrims at the journey's end.

How did I feel? I felt profoundly grateful: for my legs and eyes and ears that work so well to take me on this journey; to the wonderful people I met along the way; for the opportunity to see culture and history and beauty unfold as I walked; and for family and friends back home.

Crow Roost Project

Crow researcher Anne Clark of Binghamton has established a new website, www.crowroosts.org, to identify locations of crow roosts across NY State. These are sites where crows congregate for the night and can range from 50 birds to 50,000!

The website provides information on roosts, but also



invites everyone to fill in a form about any known roost. The goal is to quantify the habitat characteristics of roost sites, which can then be compared with surrounding areas the birds aren't using.

Visit the site for more information and to provide data on any known crow roosts.

Waterfowl Count Results

This year's statewide waterfowl count was held on January 17. DOAS members covered Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River and tributaries to Wells Bridge, Canadarago Lake and tributaries and surrounding ponds, the Unadilla River and tributaries, West Edmeston to Sidney, Ouleout Creek to East Sidney Lake, and the W. Branch of the Delaware River, headwaters to Deposit and Cannonsville Reservoirs.

With the warm early winter, nearly all water was open. The best variety was seen on and around Otsego Lake with 14 species recorded.

Other sightings of interest included Bald Eagles, Great-blue Herons, Belted Kingfisher, Red-tailed Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, American Kestrel and Wild Turkeys.

Thanks to participants Matt Albright, Kay Crane, John Davis, Bob Donnelly, Lisa Gorn, Becky Gretton,

Kathy Griswold, Jim Hill, Eric Knight, Carol and Randy Lynch, Andy Mason, Marge Mathis, Tom & Joanne Salo, Tracy Sheldon and Cindy Staley.

Successful Bald Eagle Trip

This year's field trip on January 9 to view wintering Bald Eagles in the upper Delaware River basin brought out over 50 participants who spotted 27 eagles along the East and West Branches of the Delaware and Cannonsville Reservoir in Delaware County.

Waterways and the reservoir were nearly all open, leading to the birds being more dispersed than usual. Other species sighted included Red-tailed Hawks, Belted Kingfisher, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Buffleheads, Black Ducks, Mallards and Canada Geese.

Over half the birders enjoyed a well-deserved lunch at the Old Schoolhouse Restaurant in Downsville after the trip.

"Bird Sightings" Continued from page 8



Photo By David Kiehm

Randy Lynch found 9 of those along the Delaware. A tenth was perched in a tree across from Kathy Mario's driveway for three days. Though aware of her presence, it simply observed her while she watched and took pictures of it. Dorian Huneke keeps

tabs on her local pair, which interacted with a third eagle on February 3rd (Treadwell). Suzanne Gaynor watched a pair beside a nest in West Davenport. Stacy Grocott observed a pair working on a nest near Schuyler Lake

(2/1). Steve Hall reported two on a nest at Canadarago Lake – perhaps the same pair. Chris Kjolhede watched two soar over Rte. 33 near Cherry Valley.

Sometimes the common birds grab our attention with their behavior or sheer numbers. Dorian Huneke watched a Turkey seemingly taking a puddle-bath. Kathryn Davino reported 37 Blue Jays, a record number for her, above her feeder station in Meredith. Ellen Sokolow enjoyed the whoo-whooping of a pair of owls (Treadwell, 1/31).

I've noticed that on especially sunny days I hear many more birds singing as I walk to work, regardless of the temperature. Here's hoping that their song really does bring a promise of spring.

Sandy Bright

Upcoming Activities

March

March 1– DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

March 18– DOAS Public Program: On March 18, DOAS Research Committee Co-Chair Tom Salo will discuss our research efforts over the past two winters on Golden Eagles, illustrated by numerous photos and videos including information about camera trapping, tracking of the eagles, data gathering on known roost locations, and the results of winter raptor counts. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

April

April 2–Waterfowl Trip: The annual spring waterfowl trip around Lake Otsego and environs will leave from Cooperstown's Lake Front Docks at the foot of Fair St. at 8AM sharp. Co-leaders will be Matt Albright, Bob Donnelly and John Davis. Cars will be pooled and radio connected, and the trip will last until around noon. For more information, contact John Davis at davi7js4@hughes.net or 607-547-9688.

April 9–Earth Festival and Morning Bird Walk:

Bird Walk, meet in the Milford Central School parking lot to car pool, at 9 AM. See ocainfo.org for more information. Earth Festival, at the school, 11AM-3 PM - Vist the DOAS table!

April 15– DOAS Public Program: Dr. Jeffrey Heilveil, Associate Professor and Chair of the Biology Department at SUNY Oneonta, will speak on **Insects: Stranger than Fiction**. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

April 19– DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

May

May 1– Bashakill Wetlands Field Trip: Canoeing and kayaking in Sullivan County (1131 South Road, Wurtsboro, NY). Leave Oneonta at 7 AM and meet participants en route.

May 7–Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk:

A walk at the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway trail, located on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta's west end, 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 parking lot by the soccer fields just past the transfer station. For more information, contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880.

May 15–DOAS Sanctuary Bird Walk: This walk will explore the Audubon Sanctuary's varied habitats. There is some moderate climbing on the property. The walk will begin at 8AM and last about two hours, followed by a visit to the nearby Emmons Pond bog for interested participants. Species expected include a variety of warblers, vireos, waterfowl, orioles, tanagers and others. For directions, visit www.doas.us/conservation-and-environment/franklin-mountain-sanctuary/. For further information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 652-2162.

May 17– DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

May 20– DOAS Public Program: Barry Stevens from Wild Birds Unlimited in Johnson City will present "Focus on Optics." In our digital age, it can be difficult to experience optics in a hands-on manner. Barry will bring a variety of optics, explain how they work, compare brands and answer questions that you may have. We may have our eyes opened to some interesting products available from his bird-centered business! The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

May 22–Stamford Spring Bird Walk: Meet at parking lot, corner of Beaver and Main Sts. at 8AM. This is an easy, level walk that will last about two hours. Birds expected to be seen include a variety of warblers, orioles, sparrows, and wetland species. For information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 652-2162.

June

June 5–Birding By Ear. Stay tuned for details in future newsletters.

DOAS programs are free and open to the public.

For more information on any of these events contact Susan O'Handley at (607) 643-5680 or email sjohandley@gmail.com



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January-February Bird Sightings

The strange weather this winter has made for some interesting reports. When summer birds are seen in January and February, one can't help but wonder why.

Andy Mason was visited by a "very cold" female Red-winged Blackbird January 19th. On that day also, Debbie Mack reported that a small flock of Brown-headed Cowbirds had been at her feeder for a couple of weeks. In Oneonta, Nancy New was treated to the song and sight of a beautiful male Bluebird (1/27). Both Stephanie Restuccia and Fred Johnson reported Bluebirds visiting birdhouses in February (in Root and Middlefield).

On January 31st, Suzanne Gaynor enjoyed listening to a singing Tufted Titmouse. On her way to Fort Plain, Stacy Grocott spotted a half dozen Turkey Vultures; she

If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, brights@hartwick.edu, at 40 Fair St., Oneonta, NY 13820, or at 607 287-4465 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher.

hoped it was a sign of spring, little knowing that Mother Nature had some bitter cold in store for us two weeks later.

February 6th was a day for fishing birds: Bob Plath found a Great Blue Heron fishing the backwaters at New Island (Oneonta), while Charlie Scheim discovered a Kingfisher on the Delaware River near Delhi.

A Starling imitating a Phoebe had Gerianne Carillo going for a second. (I think that Starling visits our neighborhood every March, Gerianne!) Amongst lots of bird song and activity, she also heard a calling Raven and singing Carolina Wren (2/4). George Siatos reported 2 Brown Creepers on February 12th.

Randy Lynch saw a Kestrel in Harpersfield late in January, but also reported a number of winter birds: a Rough-legged Hawk, and small flocks of Snow Buntings and Horned Larks. On a bitter-cold Valentine's morning (-23°) Bob Donnelly found 3 Pine Siskins, about 20 Purple Finches, and 2 Cardinals.

Eagle sightings have continued, with at least 19 reported this month.

"Bird Sightings" Continued on page 6