



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## COMING ACTIVITIES

### November

November 3 – Bird Seed Sale Pickup

November 16 – Program, Tyra Olstad, “Arctic Alaska”

### December

December 4 – DOAS Board Mtg

December 15 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count

December 29 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count

### January

January 5 – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count

January 12 – DOAS Eagle Trip

January 13 – Waterfowl Count

January 15 – DOAS Board Mtg

January 18 – Program, “European Starlings”

### February

February 15 – Program on solar, “Conservation Begins With a Revolution of One”

**More information on page 7**

**DOAS PROGRAMS  
ARE FREE & OPEN TO  
THE PUBLIC**

## Don't forget to VOTE NOVEMBER 6

In this year when the National Audubon Society has mounted a “Birds Can't Vote, But You Can” campaign, we urge you to do your part and VOTE ON NOVEMBER 6th! Your vote matters.



## October Events

The annual DOAS Open House was held at the Sanctuary on October 6th, with enthusiastic nature lovers enjoying the event despite occasional showers. Tom Salo instructed on hawk identification, Becky Gretton led a trail walk cut short by a quick downpour, Wildlife Rehabilitator Missy Runyan fascinated all with her



Missy Runyan's Kestrel entertains one of the participants at the Open House Photo by Janet Potter

beautiful birds. A grand finale was the release of a rehabbed Red-tailed

Hawk.

On Friday, October 12th, a group of about 55 people enjoyed the annual DOAS Charter Dinner at the Quality Inn in Oneonta. Throughout the dinner, Master of Ceremonies, Andy Mason, doled out bird-themed door prizes to lucky guests, and the winners of seven fine donated raffle items were chosen while everyone enjoyed dessert. The evening culminated with a keynote presentation “Collected Stories of 2018” by well-known local photographer, Rick Bunting. He exhibited an array of stunning photos and related the stories of each of the birds, butterflies, foxes, frogs and other natural subjects he encountered in his travels around New York and Florida during the past year.

## Wildlife Rehabilitators: Angels with Hearts of Gold

by Co-president *Becky Gretton*

A recent chain of events focused my attention on those who provide rehabilitation for injured wildlife, specifically birds. Not long ago, I received a call when an alert passerby spotted a Red-tailed Hawk that



Becky holding the injured Red-tailed Hawk  
Photo by Jeff O'Handley

didn't fly away. Luckily a team of helpers was quickly assembled; the bird was easily captured because it was so compromised. Eventually a rehabilitator was located. Not long after we heard that the bird was making a good recovery.

I have learned that rehabbing is emotionally, physically and financially demanding. There aren't many rehabbers in the Delaware-Otsego County region. After much phoning, "our" Red-tail found its way to Deborah Saltis of "Falcon Heart Rescue" in Herkimer, NY ([www.falconheartrescue.org](http://www.falconheartrescue.org)). Deb's mission to rehab developed through her involvement with the Utica Peregrine Falcon Project, becoming a fledge watch volunteer and feeling the passion to help birds in need. She rehabs at her home with the help of her husband John



Deborah Saltis with Red-tailed Hawk

after training locally and in Syracuse, NY, all at her own expense while working in Utica.

Those of you who have attended our Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch Open House in recent years have experienced Missy Runyon and

"her" beautiful birds and learned about the "Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center" ([www.fffwildlifecenter.com](http://www.fffwildlifecenter.com)). Missy's mission is to return wildlife back to nature whenever possible, to take the measures necessary to prevent suffering, and to never keep an animal in captivity that could otherwise live in the wild. Her respect for the wildness in each creature is ultimate. She and her team travel far and wide to bring animals in need to Hunter, NY.

Our friends through DOAS and the Otsego County Conservation Association, Jeff and Susan O'Handley, rehabbed and educated for many years, driven by their innate need to help, ultimately finding it impossible to continue helping in that manner due to the financial demands that occur in this field of work. They have described the emotional stress that accompanies this work, not a small challenge for those who deal with it on a daily basis. Luckily, Jeff was available to manage the capture of the Red-tail!

Those who work in rehab do not  
**"Rehabbers" Continued to page 3**

### THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Janet Potter

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The Belted Kingfisher, email:  
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## Conservation and Legislation

### **World Population, a Growing**

**Problem**—With Congress and the state legislature out of session for the elections, this is a good time to look at an overarching issue that affects every aspect of our environment and human well-being.

The human population of our world is today 7,600,000,000. That's 7.6 billion people. It is a staggering number on its own, but it is growing at 227,000 people each day, or 83 million people each year. Even more disconcerting is that world population stood at 3 billion in 1960, within the lifetimes of most Auduboners, and even in the year 2000 was 1.5 billion less than today.

Human population affects every aspect of our environment—in profound ways. Polar explorer Adrian Hayes has said:

“I've seen melting ice caps with my own eyes and got very wet in the process, but it is pointless campaigning against climate change or to 'save the Arctic' without addressing the root cause behind it and virtually every other environmental issue we face: our unsustainable numbers on this planet. That is the real 'inconvenient truth'.”

We have consumed more resources in the last 50 years than the whole of humanity before us. This is particularly true for energy; use of fossil fuels tripled between 1966 and 2016, with a corresponding effect on CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere. And predictions are for continuing increases with growing third world populations.

More humans obviously require more food—meaning more intensive, chemical and fertilizer-driven agriculture;



Earth from Space  
NASA photo

more heating and cooling and cooking fuel; more transportation, increasingly cars even in developing nations; greater demand for housing and the raw materials and energy it requires; more fresh water; and much more.

We know well the impacts of resource extraction on wildlife: oil spills, strip mining for coal, loss of habitat for gas fields and pipelines all take their toll.

Climate change is already showing effects among Arctic and Antarctic birds and

other wildlife, and even at high elevations in our region. The immense seas of plastic in our oceans are a result of growing human populations and their demands for consumer goods. These materials are now in the food chain and showing probably irreversible effects in wildlife and humans.

**What you can do**—At one time, the US was a leader in providing birth control information and access to the developing world. But the issue got conflated with the abortion debate and such funding was largely cut off. We need Congress to look at population growth as a serious security and environmental issue and to put politics aside. Contact Senators Schumer and Gillibrand and your US Representative and urge them to restore the low-cost and effective birth control programs that are wanted and needed, particularly by third world women. Remind them that we live in a finite world, that is increasingly shrinking, and that America is not immune to a growing world population.

Andy Mason

*(Contact information for elected officials is available on the conservation page of the DOAS web site, [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us).)*

**“Rehabbers” Continued from page 2** do it for the money, and in fact do need financial support from those of us who are able to provide for them. They also need supplies, which are noted on their websites or may be discussed personally. In my opinion they are angels with hearts of gold, and I will now include them on my list of donation priorities.

Thanks to all who rehabilitate wildlife, and to their loyal supporters, united through their love of nature. If you are

interested in learning more about what it takes to obtain the permits to become a rehabilitator, we have resources posted online at <http://doas.us/wildlife-rehabilitation/>. If you need to find a rehabber, try [data.ny.gov](http://data.ny.gov) for a list of currently licensed rehabbers.

Good news: The local Red-tail was released back into its territory twenty days after its capture, having passed flight and live prey testing. A video of the release is available at [doas.us](http://doas.us).

## Winter's Pleasures

By Board Member Pamela J. Peters

I've never been much of a snowbird, i.e. those humans who migrate from the north to Florida, the Carolinas and other southern climes each winter. It's not that I love everything about cold weather in upstate New York, but there are many things I look forward to experiencing that are unique to winter. A chance to rest from all the busy outdoor work and long days of summer. Catching up on the reading and research I put aside during the warmer months. Planning next year's garden. Guilt-free days binge watching British mystery TV while knitting in front

of the wood stove. But the real winter treasures for me lie in the outdoors. The unobstructed views on a winter hike in the Catskills are incredibly rewarding. Fresh snow is the best time to track coyotes, bobcats, fishers and other animals through the woods. And then there's winter birding. Birding without bugs. A leisurely drive to the nearby

Delaware River, Cannonsville, or Pepacton Reservoir offers a reliable variety of waterfowl, Bald Eagles, and interesting gulls. Along the way there is a good chance I will see Wild Turkeys, Snow Buntings and Horned Larks feeding in the farm fields. If the winter angels are with me, a Rough-legged Hawk or Snowy Owl will be hunting over the windswept terrain. From the comfort of my living room, I enjoy many winter birds outside at the feeders. Goldfinches, Nuthatches, Titmice, Tree Sparrows, Juncos, various woodpeckers, and some years, Pine Siskins and Redpolls. The latter two species are more likely to appear when there is a poor cone crop in Canada, and the birds travel south in search of food.

This winter I am anticipating a good turnout at the feeders thanks to a promising Winter Finch Forecast. Published annually by Canadian Ron Pittaway, this year's forecast came out on September 20 and it looks pretty encouraging. And I tend to trust Ron's numbers. He is a member of the Ontario Field Ornithologists (OFO) and has been publishing the winter finch forecast for almost 20 years, unofficially 20 years before that. According to a 2016 interview, (<http://jeaniron.ca/articles/FinchForecasterFe2016.pdf>), Ron was an avid birder

growing up in western Quebec, near Ottawa. He noticed birds like crossbills and siskins would be abundant one year but not the next. Through his own observations, comparing data with friends and experts, he started making informal predictions in the 1970s and 80s about the winter bird abundance. Ron says "Finch forecasting is an example of citizen science. I get tree seed crop information from staff of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, and contacts from across Canada, New York State, New Hampshire and Alaska."



Common Redpoll  
Audubon Photo by Norm Dougan

So what's in store for the 2018-19 season? Poor cone and birch seed crops in Ontario and Northeastern Canada (exception is Newfoundland) make this an irruption, or flight year. Ron says: "Expect flights of winter finches into southern Ontario, southern Quebec, Maritime Provinces, New York and New England States, with some finches going

farther south into the United States. Stock your bird feeders because many birds will have a difficult time finding natural foods this winter."

Here are some of the birds to look for and their favorite foods: Pine Grosbeak (mountain ash, conifer seeds); Purple Finches (conifers and hardwood seeds); Red Crossbills (pines); White-winged Crossbills (spruce, hemlock, European Larch); Common and Hoary Redpolls (birch, alder, conifer seeds); Pine Siskins.

It's safe to say most of these birds will feed on black oil sunflower seeds in backyard feeders, with Redpolls and Siskins favoring Nyger (or Niger) seeds. Pine Siskins have already been seen in numbers across New York State this October, including Delhi and Hobart (eBird data). Local Christmas Counts could be really exciting this year!

For the complete Winter Finch Forecast and more information about these beautiful winter birds, see <http://jeaniron.ca/2018/wff18.htm>.

If you observe any of these northern visitors, please share the news. Email [brights@hartwick.edu](mailto:brights@hartwick.edu) who compiles the DOAS newsletter column "Bird Sightings," or post to eBird database. Happy Winter Birding!

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**“Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8** in, I heard a Ruffed Grouse drumming at the Audubon Sanctuary. Becky Gretton watched a Northern Pintail splash down among many Mallards at the Portlandville fishing access site. Peter Regan had been seeing a Common Loon in Hyde Bay on Otsego Lake, and hearing Great Horned, Barred, and Screech Owls in the area. Rod Sutton reported that his wife, Joann, had found a Screech Owl on their porch, of all places!

At the Audubon Sanctuary, I heard a Red-bellied Woodpecker one day, while Randy Lynch reported every other common species of woodpecker on the 8th. Pam Peters found a singing Winter Wren, and Becky Gretton discovered three non-migrating Black Vultures. Be on the lookout for this species, which has been expanding its range. Kyle Dudgeon reported a group of five Common Loons, plus a few stragglers, as well as many skeins of Canada Geese and Brant on the 12th. Marian Quinn from Chester PA observed and photographed a migrating Merlin carrying a dragonfly on the 14th at the Hawkwatch.

In Jefferson, Randy Lynch watched Bald Eagles, which seemed to be reestablishing their territory with one



Merlin with Dragonfly  
photo by Marian Quinn

perching in the nest on occasion. A pair of Red-tailed Hawks and the resident leucistic Red-tail also worked to maintain their territories. He found large flocks of Dark-eyed Juncos returning to his feeders and spotted White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows in the area.

This next sighting was inadvertently left out of the August report, but is too amusing not to share now. We all know that opportunistic crows will grab food left unattended, but at Colonial Ridge Golf Course, Mona Waffle was astounded to watch a Great Blue Heron meander among the parked golf carts peering into each, looking for goodies left behind by golfers. Another species learning to live among humans....

As this reporting period came to a close, I enjoyed a crisp fall morning walk with a friend around Wilber Lake. A Bald Eagle soared overhead, white head and tail brilliant against the blue sky, circling, then coming to a rest in a tree across the lake. Another Bald Eagle flew in, this one an immature, landing in the same tree. No matter how many eagles I see, the thrill of that majestic sight will never fade.

Sandy Bright

## January Eagle Trip

This year's field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles around the Delaware County rivers and reservoirs is scheduled for Saturday, January 12, 2019. Eagles concentrate around open water in the region to feed, and recent trips have turned up 20+ birds, including 30 last year. Other raptors and waterfowl are usually sighted also. We will stop at a local restaurant for lunch for interested participants.

**This year the trip will be limited to DOAS members; pre-registration is required at the DOAS website, [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us). Memberships are available at the web site and also the day of the trip.**

The trip will leave the Dietz St. parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 a.m. Carpooling is strongly encouraged and participants can be picked up en route in Delhi and Walton. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon. For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).



Bald Eagle  
Photo taken at last  
year's trip  
by Rod Sutton

**Eagle Survey Fundraising Continues**—Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Golden Eagle Research Fund in order to help us conduct additional surveys in the Bluestone Wind Project area. The developer's response to the large number of non-migrant Golden Eagles we documented has been to imply these eagles were migrants. Their behavior and demographics suggest otherwise.

We plan to survey again in March 2019 during migration. To address the suggestion that these birds are migrants – and not local winter residents – we also intend to survey the site several times a week in February.

If you would like to support this effort, you can donate online, or send a check to our PO Box specifying the donation is for the Golden Eagle Research Fund. The on-line donation can be made at <http://doas.us/financial-support-needed-for-wind-project-eagle-surveys/>.

## Hawkwatch News

The Golden Eagle season got underway at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch on October 12 when Kyle Dudgeon counted four of the big birds on gusty northwest winds. On October 21st, Pam Peters counted 41 Golden Eagles at the Hawkwatch. This ties for the 6th biggest Golden Eagle day and is the highest tally for any date in October. The next few weeks will provide a good chance of seeing these birds, especially when winds come from the north or northwest, and following a cold front.

214 Goldens were tallied last season, the highest count for any of the eastern North America fall watches that year. Our big Golden Eagle day was November 27, with 31 birds counted. The stretch from November 17-22 provided 5 double-digit Golden Eagle days totaling 66 birds.

Also moving in November are Red-shouldered Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, Bald Eagles, and possibly Rough-legged



Golden Eagle  
Photo by Mick Thompson  
Eastside Audubon

Hawks and Northern Goshawks. Visitors and spotters are always welcome. Counters are present each day at the Hawkwatch, except during rain. Visitors should dress warmly as the site is often colder than anticipated. 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, and for directions and other information, visit [www.franklinmt.org](http://www.franklinmt.org). Daily tallies from Franklin Mountain are also available by email—contact Andy Mason as above.

A Hawkwatch thank you: Richard Hendrick drives just about every year from Washington State to help out at the Hawkwatch. We are grateful for all he does, but especially that this year he generously topped the bench and the picnic table benches with new lumber.

## Join Us for the November Program!

Join us for Tyra Olstad's program, "Arctic Alaska: Opportunities and Challenges for Conservation" on November 16 at 7:30 PM at Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street in Oneonta. Tyra's talk will be illustrated by photos and stories from her first-hand experience of Alaska's North Slope this summer.

She says that Alaska's North Slope is a somewhat misunderstood, maligned, and mythologized landscape, variably seen as a vast, frozen wasteland, a remote, pristine wilderness, crucial habitat for numerous species, longtime home to Inuit peoples, bellwether for climate change, and rich repository of energy resources. Above all, it is both a remarkably wild and an extremely vulnerable region. In this talk, Tyra Olstad will share research into land

management and conservation priorities on the North Slope, including her observations in Gates of the Arctic National Park and the National Petroleum Reserve.

Tyra Olstad is an Assistant Professor of Geography and Environmental Sustainability at SUNY Oneonta, with research interests centering on sense of place and public land management. When not teaching or conducting research, she has spent several years working as a park ranger, paleontology technician, artist-in-residence, and "summit steward" for the National Park Service, US Forest Service, and Adirondack Mountain Club.



European Starling  
CCO

## Save the Date (January 18 at 7:30 PM): Get to Know and Respect European Starlings!

Dr. Peter Fauth, chairperson of the Biology Department at Hartwick College, will help us to look at the amazing things that European Starlings do, through his research at the University of Maryland's Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. You may leave our public program at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street in Oneonta, with new and grudging respect for the bird we love to hate!

# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

## November

November 3 – Bird Seed Sale Pickup: 9 AM to 11 AM, New Pickup Location at VP Supply Corp., 41 Country Club Road, Oneonta.

November 6 – Don't forget to VOTE!

November 16 – DOAS Public Program: Arctic Alaska, Opportunities and Challenges for Conservation presented by Tyra Olstad. See article on page 6. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

## December

December 4 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM.

December 15 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count: Everyone is welcome to count as part of a group or at your own feeder, contact Sandy Bright at sbright@hartwick.edu or phone 607-287-4465.

December 29 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count: All are welcome to participate regardless of birding experience. For information contact Bob Donnelly: rsdonn@yahoo.com or 607-264-8156.

## January

January 5 – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count. All are invited to participate. Contact Pam Peters if you can drive or count: ovenb1rdp@gmail.com or 607-829-6545.

January 12 – DOAS Eagle Trip: Field trip to view wintering bald eagles in Delaware County. Trip is limited to DOAS members and pre-registration required at [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us). Depart from the Dietz St. parking lot across from the YMCA

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in Oneonta at 7:30 AM. Participants can be picked up en route in Delhi and Walton. For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net. See article on page 5.

January 13 – NYSOA Statewide Waterfowl Count: This effort involves surveying waterways in Otsego and Delaware County where ducks and geese can be seen, and identifying and counting waterfowl. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year. Anyone interested in helping with the census, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

January 15 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM.

January 18 – DOAS Public Program: “European Starlings: Love ‘em or Hate ‘em, They Do Amazing Things.” Peter Fauth, chairperson of the Biology Department at Hartwick College will describe some of the natural history of European Starlings. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

## February

February 15 – DOAS Public Program: Conservation Begins With a Revolution of One.” Mary Jo Cronin and Jim Doherty of Revolution Solar will speak about their local solar installation company whose mission is to help anyone in our community join the conservation movement via clean, renewable energy products. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.



## 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.

Mail your name, address and email, along with your check payable to “DOAS,” to:

DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

Memberships can also be purchased online at <http://doas.us>.

Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation.



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## DON'T FORGET- VOTE ON NOVEMBER 6TH!



### September-October 2018 Bird Sightings

At this bittersweet time of year, some of our favorite summer birds have begun to disappear but migrating species and late breeders still provide an opportunity for observing a nice variety of birds. At the end of September, the nearly constant begging of Goldfinch fledglings filled our yard, while an immature male Cardinal, perfectly capable of feeding itself, would nonetheless beg to be fed whenever an adult was present. Working outside, my husband Charlie and I spotted an unusual silhouette of a large bird overhead. Grabbing binoculars, we confirmed a Sandhill Crane.

In Davenport, Eleanor Moriarty had a still-vibrant Black-throated Green Warbler in her apple tree, along with

***If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, [brights@hartwick.edu](mailto:brights@hartwick.edu), at 40 Fair St., Oneonta, NY 13820, or at 607 287-4465 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher. We regret that not every report can be included due to limited space. Additional information may be requested for sightings of rare or unusual birds.***

Brown Thrashers, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, a first year male Redstart, two non-breeding male Grosbeaks, and fourteen Flickers descending on her Staghorn Sumac.

The Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch continued to be a great place to find migrants

other than raptors, including Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, various warblers (Yellowthroat, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, Palm, Nashville, Cape May, and American Redstart), Vireos (Red-eyed, Blue-headed, and Warbling), Cardinal, Eastern Towhee, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, various woodpeckers, Cedar Waxwing, Wild Turkey, Sparrows (Field, Song, and White-throated), Finches (Gold- and Purple), Gray Catbird, House Wren, Hermit Thrush, Wood Ducks, and, of course, the ubiquitous Blue Jays, Crows and Ravens. On the 28th, an adult and 3 juvenile Eastern Bluebirds landed right on Peter Fauth's telescope!

As October rolled **"Bird Sightings" Continued on page 5**



Red-breasted Nuthatch  
Audubon Photo by Megumi Aita