



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

January

- January 5 – Delaware County CBC
- January 12 – DOAS Eagle Trip
- January 13 – NYSOA Waterfowl Count
- January 15 – DOAS Board Mtg
- January 18 – Program, “European Starlings”

February

- February 15 – Program, “Conservation Begins with a Revolution of One”
- February 15-18 – Great Backyard Bird Count

March

- March 5 – DOAS Board Mtg
- March 15 – Program, “Turtle Talk”

April

- April 13 – Earth Festival
- April 16 – DOAS Board Mtg
- April 19 – Program, “What Montana Taught Me”

More information on page 7

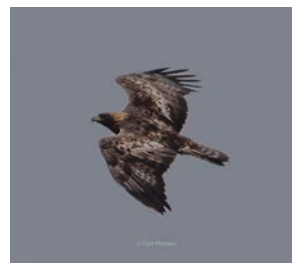
**DOAS PROGRAMS
ARE FREE & OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC**

Record-breaking Day at Franklin Mountain

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch was the site of an historic event on October 25th, when an amazing 128 Golden Eagles were tallied by counters Peter Fauth and Becky Gretton.

This number is by far the highest single day total for any hawk watch in eastern North America. Flying on northwest winds which provide lift from the Franklin Mountain ridge, the big raptors glided past steadily from 10 AM until 4:30 PM when the gathering dusk ended the flight. The many visitors were awestruck by the concentration of these rare birds.

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch has documented the raptor migration through the upper Susquehanna watershed for 30 seasons. Prior to this year, we had never had a day in October with more than 31 individual Golden Eagles. We never had an October month total of more than 76. The previous single-day high count in the East was 75, set at the Allegheny Front hawk watch in western Pennsylvania in 2015, but the October 25th flight shattered those records.



**Golden Eagle at Franklin Mt.
Photo by Curt Morgan**

In six days starting on October 21st, we had 217 Golden Eagles pass the site. The 41 birds on the 21st were just a teaser for the 128-bird day on the 25th. The month ended with 254 on the tally sheet, surpassing the annual record with 2

months remaining.

DOAS has two tagged birds whose tracking devices are still working. Marie (6Y female) crossed the border on October 22, 23 days earlier than her average. Sisu (3Y female) entered the country November 4, 22 days ahead of her crossing date last year. On the big 128 Golden Eagle day, Marie started moving at 8:36 AM near Morristown, VT. She kept moving until 5:56 PM when she settled for the night near Altamont, NY. She covered 144 miles while averaging 15.5 mph. Sisu (3Y female) started that day near Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, Quebec. She departed at 7:19 AM, traveling until 4:10 PM to a spot just NW of Quebec City. She covered 104 miles averaging 12 miles per hour.

This 3-week early shift of the migration continued into November.

“Record-breaking” Continued on page 3

President's Column

by Co-president Andy Mason

We are occasionally asked about the relationship between DOAS and the National Audubon Society, often with confusion about the connection or lack thereof, between the two organizations. The forerunner of the National Audubon Society (NAS) came about in the late 1800s, as the nation's first bird protection organization. Over the early years of the 20th century, various local Audubon groups and state societies came together to form a national organization that grew into the NAS of today. (There are still a number of active state Audubon societies not formally connected to NAS—Massachusetts Audubon and Florida Audubon, for example.)

NAS has grown to now include around 500 Chapters, a group that DOAS joined over 50 years ago when we received our charter from NAS. These Chapters are independent organizations with their own governance, priorities, budgets, programs, etc. However, in order to retain our status as a NAS Chapter, we must be recertified each year. This involves demonstrating to NAS that we are active, involved in the community, and engaged in work that protects birds and habitats. Fortunately, our Chapter has always surpassed these standards, and remained in good standing.

There have been changes in the relationship over the years. Two decades ago, a significant



portion of local Chapters' budgets came from a share of the dues paid by Audubon members. The National Audubon board ended that sharing under President John Flicker, despite Chapter opposition. The replacement was an annual payment of the last dues share amount before the change. However that figure has not changed over the years and is an ever-shrinking part of Chapter finances. This led many Chapters—including DOAS—to recruit local members to make up for the loss of NAS support. Again, we have been fortunate in having a healthy base of Chapter members who believe in our work. There remains a sizeable pool of around 400 National Audubon members in our Chapter area who are not DOAS members. We periodically reach out to these folks who would be naturals for joining DOAS!

In other news, we must report the resignation of one of our longest-serving leaders, Bob Donnelly, from the Board of Directors. Bob's time on the board goes back over two decades, including several terms as treasurer. An excellent birder, he has led popular annual owl trips, as well as organizing other field trips and in recent years compiling the Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count. He also served as Region 4 co-coordinator for the second *NY State Breeding Bird Atlas*, and covers a Breeding Bird Survey route in the spring.

"President" Continued to page 3

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Janet Potter

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Co-Presidents	Becky Gretton Andrew Mason Susan O'Handley
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Education*:	Susan O'Handley
Field Trips*:	Bob Donnelly
Hawk Watch*:	Andrew Mason Tom Salo
Hospitality*:	Kathryn Davino
Membership*:	Andy Mason
Programs*:	Becky Gretton
Publicity*:	Susan O'Handley
Sanctuary*:	Andrew Mason
Bird Counts:	Sandy Bright
Charter Dinner:	Julia Gregory
Finance:	Gray Mason
Historian:	Rod Sutton
Sales:	Vacant

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ON THE WEB:

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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

Election Wrap up—Environmentalists were very concerned and involved with the November elections and that focus paid off, with pro-conservation candidates helping switch control of the US House of Representatives. This should fend off the legislative efforts to gut our basic environmental laws that we have witnessed over the past two years.

However, that does not mean clear sailing. The Trump administration has and will continue to use regulatory changes via agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and Department of the Interior to weaken environmental protections. The most recent proposal is to change definitions of federally-protected waters, which poses significant threats to our streams and wetlands. In December, acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler announced new rules that would remove vast amounts of wetlands and thousands of miles of U.S. waterways from protection under the Clean Water Act. This means that these smaller, but ecologically important waters will be fair game for filling and draining.

There will be a public comment period on this proposal (see www.epa.gov/wotus-rule), and legal challenges are anticipated, but may end up before the US Supreme Court, not an environmentally-friendly venue at present.

The outlook is brighter in NY State where also a power switch took place in the Senate. Long the graveyard for common-sense environmental proposals, the logjam that has existed for decades in the legislature may now be broken. Hopefully progress on protection of smaller wetlands—even more important with the potential changes noted above—can come about. Other legislation that may finally move forward includes climate protection and the Environmental Bill of Rights that would amend the state constitution to state that “Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment.” Also, a ban on neonicotinoid pesticides that poison pollinators and birds could see the light of day, as could proposals to ban disposal of fracking waste in the state, and to promote alternative energy.

What you can do—Watch for positive environmental bills when the state legislature reconvenes in January. Let your senator and assemblymember know that the time is now to get this important legislation to the floor and voted on. A good source of information on these issues in Albany is Environmental Advocates, www.eany.org.

(Contact information for elected officials is available on the conservation page of the DOAS web site, www.doas.us.)

Andy Mason



Green Heron in Wetland--Paul Daz-Audubon Photography Awards



Bob Donnelly

“President” Continued from page 2

Fortunately, Bob will stay active with field trips and the upcoming 2020 *Atlas*.

We will miss Bob’s sense of humor and good grace at board meetings, but we wish him well as he moves into retirement and more time spent with family. Thanks Bob!

“Record-breaking” Continued from page 1

The numbers during the second half of that month were more like mid-December than November.

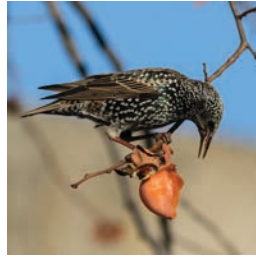
While seeing such large numbers in October was a thrill, it is so unusual as to cause some concern. Our Canadian contacts said the summer was very dry in northern Quebec. October was unseasonably cold—more like November than October. These combined factors may have affected the prey base and given the birds an impetus to move early. But whatever the cause, it provided a memorable day for those present.

Note: You can contribute to DOAS’s Golden Eagle Research Fund by making a donation online at <http://doas.us/financial-support-needed-for-wind-project-eagle-surveys/> or mail a check to our PO Box specifying the donation is for the Golden Eagle Research Fund.

Andy Mason and Tom Salo

January Program—European Starlings: Love ‘em or Hate ‘em, They Do Amazing Things!

On Friday, January 18th, we host Professor Peter Fauth for a public program about the European Starling. Most birders don't give European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) a second glance. Seen as dirty, loud, and aggressive, European Starlings are the birds most North Americans love to hate. During our January program, Dr. Peter Fauth will describe some of the natural history of European Starlings in an effort to convince you that the species is worth getting to know. In particular, Pete will describe studies, including his own, that explain their unusual behavior of incorporating sprigs of green plants into their nests. By the end of the presentation, your disdain for starlings may become an uncomfortable appreciation for this misunderstood bird.



European Starling
CCO

Dr. Peter Fauth studied the nesting behavior of European Starlings at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center as part of his M.S. program in zoology at the University of Maryland. Despite his fascination with starlings, Pete shifted his research focus to conservation of bird populations and communities at Purdue University where he earned his Ph.D. He is currently the chairperson of the Biology Department at Hartwick College where he teaches ecology, evolution and ornithology courses and conducts forest-monitoring projects at Robert V. Riddell State Park. This free program takes place at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta, at 7:30 PM. Refreshments will be available before and after the program.

Save the Date (February 15th at 7:30 PM): Conservation Begins with a Revolution of One.

Mary Jo Cronin and Jim Doherty, founders of Revolution Solar – a local solar installation company, will give a presentation about Residential and Small Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Systems. Please join us at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street in Oneonta to learn about what options are available for solar projects, whether you have a good site for solar, what financial incentives are available, and to answer any questions you may have about solar power. Refreshments will be served.

News from DOAS

Boy Scouts Camp-out Held at the Sanctuary

Members and leaders of local Boy Scout troops experienced an overnight camp-out at the DOAS Sanctuary in late October. The program focused on older scouts teaching newbies the basics of responsible camping. Despite chilly weather, the youths persevered and also enjoyed a visit to the Hawkwatch.



the site was largely responsible for its success over the past three decades.

The award came with a plaque—now mounted at the lookout—and a contribution to the DOAS Golden Eagle Research Fund.

Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch Receives Award

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch was presented with the James & Virginia Francis Conservation Award from the Kirkland Bird Club in Madison County on October 21. Tom Salo and Andy Mason accepted the award on behalf of the Hawkwatch, noting that the dedicated team of counters at



Year of the Bird in Otsego County

On behalf of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Board of Directors, chapter members and friends, we thank the Otsego County Board of Representatives for recognizing the importance of birds through the passage of a resolution proclaiming 2018 as the Year of the Bird in Otsego County at the October 3rd County Board meeting.

Full resolution at <http://doas.us/otsego-county-board-passes-resolution-recognizing-the-importance-of-birds/>

“Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8

Tom Salo observed the activity of several Bald Eagles, a Rough-legged Hawk trying to evade an annoying Raven, two Golden Eagles (including an adult carrying a tracking device), and a half dozen Bluebirds.

In early November, Becky Gretton listened to a Barred Owl vocalizing by Otsego Lake, and a Great Horned near the Springfield Community Center. Elliott Adams reported another Great-horned in Sharon Springs, the first in years. Dorian Huneke discovered two immature Bald Eagles at a cemetery in Treadwell. Scouting out Wilber Lake, Oneonta, Leslie Preston found Hooded Mergansers and Buffleheads. John Davis watched a Fox Sparrow hunt in its typical lurching style in Cooperstown. The most unique find during this period was a Cattle Egret in a pasture in the Town of Laurens, probably a first for this species in Otsego County (Tom Salo).

Mid-November brought Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches, a Siskin, and a late Chipping Sparrow to Tom Salo’s yard (Burlington). A flock of over 50 Cedar Waxwings, a handful of Robins, and an Eastern Towhee converged on Barb Palmer’s yard in Jefferson. Steph Restuccia discovered the first Tree Sparrow at her feeder in Root. A hardy Red-winged Blackbird and a Fox

Sparrow visited Andy Mason’s feeder in Jefferson. Peter Regan enjoyed the antics of 3 Bald Eagles cavorting at Hyde Hall, Cooperstown while two Loons fed in Hyde Bay. Also, in his neighborhood is a very vocal Screech Owl.

A female Ring-necked Pheasant stayed in Suzanne Gaynor’s yard, “eating under the feeder then running off to roost under the shrubs” (East Meredith). Barb Palmer spotted the first flock of Snow Geese (Jefferson). Leslie Preston had a Carolina Wren at her feeder (Oneonta).

Becky Gretton reported two flocks of Sandhill Cranes heading south (Richfield Springs).

In early December, Kyle Dudgeon observed a male Long-tailed Duck fly low along the river near the Greenway Trail (Oneonta). A Belted Kingfisher absent for months, returned to Neawha Park’s Mill Race in Oneonta.

Prudence Danforth snapped a picture of a female Evening Grosbeak in Unadilla. At the Hawkwatch (Franklin Mountain), a Northern Shrike chased a Chickadee (Randy Lynch).

Unfortunately, space doesn’t permit listing all the many sightings that were submitted for this report. Many thanks to those who took the time to share.

Sandy Bright



Cattle Egret
Photo by Tom Salo

January Field Trips

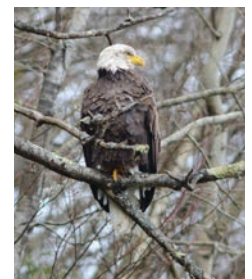
Eagle Trip: This year’s field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles around the Delaware County rivers and reservoirs is scheduled for Saturday, January 12, 2019. Eagles concentrate around open water in the region to feed, and recent trips have turned up 20+ birds, including 30 last year. Other raptors and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

This year the trip will be limited to DOAS members, and pre-registration is required at the DOAS website, www.doas.us. Memberships are available at the web site and also the day of the trip.

The trip will leave the Dietz Street parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 AM. 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.

Statewide Waterfowl Count: The NY State Ornithological Association’s annual waterfowl count is scheduled for Sunday, January 13, 2019. DOAS covers Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and Cannonsville Reservoir and the West Branch of the Delaware River. This effort involves surveying waterways where they can be seen and identifying and counting ducks and geese. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year.

For further information about either of these events, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net



Bald Eagle, taken at last year’s trip by Rod Sutton

Northern Goshawk Adventure

By Board Member Rod Sutton

Photographing wildlife and nature is something I find enjoyable and challenging. I find it beneficial to have some knowledge of the subject I am photographing. This is particularly true when photographing animals in their natural habitat, both for the benefit of the animal's well-being, as well as for my own safety.

In four decades of photographing animals, I have only been attacked once. I was cross-country skiing during one of the snowfalls just before spring weather arrived. My wife, Jo Ann, and I were making our way back home on a horse trail that reminded me of a long, straight hallway. The trail was carved first through a stand of pines, which were growing in a manner that showed they had been planted in an organized pattern, then through an old stone fence before entering a combination of hardwood and softwood forest. I don't remember who saw it first, but there, at the top of a long straight tree was a large nest with a bird I had never before encountered. When we arrived home, I looked in a field guide to identify the species. The bird, a raptor, was a Northern Goshawk.

Females are up to 25 percent larger than males, displaying what is called "reversed sexual size dimorphism." Their name comes from the Old English word for Goose Hawk. They apparently dined on someone's flock.

Goshawks are accipiters, and with short, broad wings and a long tail, they possess the agility to grab birds in flight. Goshawks prey on birds, as well as small mammals.

James Audubon wrote "when the passenger pigeons are abundant in the western country, the Goshawk follows their close masses and subsist upon them. A single Hawk suffices to spread the greatest terror among their ranks, and the moment he sweeps towards a flock, the whole immediately dive into the deepest woods, where not withstanding their great speed, the marauder succeeds in clutching the fattest.

<https://www.audubon.org/birds-of-america/goshawk-and-stanley-hawk>

Before writing this article, I looked online to check information, which is where I came across the John James Audubon quotation. If the Internet existed before my experience with the Goshawk, things may have transpired

differently.

When the snow melted and the weather warmed, I decided to revisit the nest to see how things were progressing. When I arrived at the location, I sat down by a tree a short distance away from the nest. The Goshawk was on the nest and watched me watching her. Watching the Goshawk sitting on the nest through binoculars I could see in detail its orange eyes and the distinctive markings of her head. She watched me the entire time I was gazing at her. I got up to leave and as I was walking down the hall-like trail I heard her repeating a sound I will not forget. It got louder and I realized the sound was getting closer. I turned to look and saw her gliding toward me about chest high. I ducked; she flew close over my head and turned into very dense woods. I could hear her clipping branches as she circled around for another pass. Again she came in chest high and



Northern Goshawk
Photo by Curt Morgan

went for my head. Her acrobatic flying skill was akin to watching a stunt plane at an air show. She kept repeating her dives, as I tried to get away by running down the trail. That turned out to be a mistake in judgment. On her next pass, she landed squarely on my head. When she flew off for another pass, I picked up a pine bough and held it in front of my face causing her to fly higher and over my head. She eventually gave up the pursuit and I made it back home, bleeding and very excited about being fortunate to have a memorable encounter.

In retrospect, I realized that it was a mistake to get that close to her nest, although at the time it didn't seem intrusive. Learning more about Goshawks, I found that what I experienced was not a rare behavior for Goshawks. I inadvertently disturbed her nesting and she made that very clear. With Internet resources now available, it is much easier to get verified information. I enjoyed a program in October at the DOAS Annual Dinner; Rick Bunting gave a presentation on the Great Blue Heron and their nesting rituals, which he illustrated with photographs he had taken. He has obviously taken time to educate himself on his subject.

I now research the animals I photograph ahead of time, so I will not disturb them, as well as keeping myself safe.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

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.** Depart from the Dietz St. parking lot across from the YMCA 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.

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.

March

March 5 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

March 15 – DOAS Public Program: “Turtle Talk.” Alexandra Vlk, a Graduate Student at SUNY Oneonta will describe her research and show photographs of Wood Turtles. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

April

April 16 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

April 19 – DOAS Public Program: “What Montana Taught Me.” SUNY Oneonta senior Kyle Dudgeon will share last summer’s experiences in remote areas of Montana through photographs and stories. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

April 13 – Earth Festival: Milford School, 11 AM -3 PM. Visit the DOAS table! For full details about Earth Festival, visit <http://occainfo.org>

Help our membership grow! Encourage your family and friends to join DOAS.

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.

Support our Sponsors. Thank you to Rod Spangle Antiques in Unadilla for being a sponsor!



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October- December 2018 Bird Sightings

It's fascinating how the population of birds outside our windows is always changing. In autumn, some birds return from nearby breeding grounds, some prepare to migrate, some wander outside of their normal range, and species from the north pass through or arrive to spend the winter here.

In mid-October, Randy Lynch discovered a Peregrine Falcon in Harpersfield, then a Rusty Blackbird in Jefferson. Charlie Scheim found a Red-breasted Merganser, Winter Wren, and Brown Creeper at Wilber Lake, Oneonta. In Delhi, Kathryn Davino observed White-crowned Sparrows foraging among Mourning Doves, and a Ruffed Grouse on her front porch. In

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. 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.

Milford, Gerianne Carillo watched Cedar Waxwings, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Purple Finch, and White-crowned Sparrow.

With food scarce in the north this year, some irruptive species made their appearance early. Andy Mason was the first to report Pine Siskins, at least a dozen in Jefferson, a sighting soon followed by several more.

Later in October, reports of Evening Grosbeaks started rolling in, starting with four seen by Linda Burkhart in Treadwell and eight found by Mike Porter (Halcott Center). These were followed by many more sightings in the next weeks, throughout the area. Andy Mason found lingering Chipping Sparrows at his feeder (Jefferson).

In Jefferson, Randy Lynch had a nice variety of sparrows – Chipping, Song, White-throated, White-crowned, Fox, and Junco - until a Cooper's Hawk showed up. In Burlington, **“Bird Sightings” Continued on page 5**



Cooper's Hawk
Photo by Randy Lynch