



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## Birding By Ear: Always Perfect Timing

It's spring already, birds are arriving daily from points south, first resting and then nesting! Are you a birder who has marveled at the magic of birdsong? Experienced birders anticipate revisiting favorite habitats, using identification skills that have been honed over time. Many of these birders are happy to reach out with a willingness to teach interested, less experienced birders. Please consider joining us for Birding By Ear – with Brunch!

DOAS will once again offer a Birding By Ear-with brunch! event at the scenic Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park in the Town of Westford on Sunday, June 2, 2019 at 8:30 AM till Noon to unlock



the secrets of bird ID through birdsong.

We will enjoy a hike to listen for bird song and observe breeding behavior, followed by an educational session in the Sunset Pavilion, a delicious “Bruncheon” in the pavilion and an additional **“Birding By Ear” Continued on page 2**

## COMING ACTIVITIES

### May

- May 4 – Greenway Bird Walk
- May 12 – Sanctuary Bird Walk
- May 17 – Program, “Costa Rica: Recent Adventures”
- May 18 – Big Day Bird Count
- May 19 – Jefferson, NY Celebrates Birds
- May 21 – DOAS Board Mtg
- May 23 – Jean Miller Memorial Wild Flower Walk
- May 25 – West Branch Field Trip

### June

- June 2 – Birding By Ear with Brunch
- June 8 – Invasive Species Removal at DOAS Burlington Wetland
- June 16 – Father’s Day Hike at Emmons Pond

### July-August

- DOAS Summer Day Camp

### October

- October 5 – Fall Open House
- October 18 – DOAS Charter Dinner

**More information on page 7**

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

## May 17 Program: Let's Go To Costa Rica!

Our May program will feature photographs of Costa Rica from area photographers Gail and Nelson DuBois. Join us



on Friday, May 17 at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church (401 Chestnut Street in Oneonta). Gail and Nelson will share their very recent photographs and stories from their trip to Costa Rica. These two well-

known area photographers have received recognition in birding publications, with Gail receiving awards for her photos that capture

songbirds, Eastern Bluebirds in particular, in their natural habitat. The DuBoises always bring wonder and excitement to our public meetings.

## President's Column

by Co-president Susan O'Handley

### DOAS Awarded Grant Funding for New Signage

We are thrilled to report that we have been awarded grant funding for improved signage for the Sanctuary and Hawkwatch on Grange Hall Road Spur. The project provides for new road and directional signs to allow for greater visibility and how to get to the site from the main corridors coming from Oneonta and Delhi. Road signs are being generously provided by the Town of Davenport.

In addition to the directional signage leading up to the Sanctuary, we will be developing and installing new visitor signage at the site. Two new signs are planned - one at each entrance area to the property. Upon arrival, visitors will be able to check in, download a trail map or a bird checklist if needed, learn about the Hawkwatch and what we do at DOAS. When leaving, visitors can check out and learn about other upcoming DOAS activities. There will be suggestions for places nearby they might want to visit, as well as a way to leave us a message.



This project is made possible through funding from the Delaware County 2019 Tourism Promotion and Development Grant Program as well as The O'Connor Foundation and the Town of Davenport.

### Updated Vision and Mission Statement

On another note, as one of our first decisions that has resulted from our strategic planning process, our board recently passed a motion to revise our official Vision and Mission Statements.

**Our Vision: A healthy world where people and wildlife thrive and natural resources are protected.**

*The mission of Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is to protect our natural environment and connect people with nature to benefit birds and other wildlife through conservation, education, research and advocacy.*



More information at <http://doas.us/education/summer-day-camp/>

### THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Janet Potter

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Field Trips*:	Bob Donnelly
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Membership*:	Andy Mason
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#### ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

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#### ON THE WEB:

[www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)  
[www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety](https://www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety)

To contribute notes or articles for The Belted Kingfisher, email: [editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@doas.us)

## Conservation and Legislation

**Environmental rights in NY State Constitution**—We have written here previously about a proposed amendment to the New York State Constitution that would establish a right to a clean environment for the people of the state.

Amending the Constitution is not an easy task, and rightfully so. It requires passage of an amendment by two consecutive sessions of the State Legislature, then approval on the ballot by voters of the state. If passed this year, this would be the first step in the process.

The language of the amendment is simple: “Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment.” But it establishes an important principle—a basic human right. This amendment will complement other important provisions of the state Constitution, such as Article XIV, which protect the state’s natural resources including its forest preserve and call for the management of those resources to secure clean air and water.

Establishing a civil environmental right will drive better government decision-making at all levels to prevent situations or conditions in which land becomes too contaminated, water becomes too polluted, and air too dirty. People and private enterprises would also likely make better decisions based on a value set that all New Yorkers have environmental rights.



Plastic Bags  
EPA Photo

Thirty-five other states have similar environmental rights enshrined in their constitutions. Doing the same for our state will send a message to all that New York places a high priority on and a value to ensuring clean water, safe drinking water, and air healthful to breathe.

**What you can do**—Contact your state legislators and urge them to support A.2064/S.2072 to establish environmental rights in the state constitution.

**Plastic bag ban success!**—In a great victory for the environment and against litter, the state legislature has passed and the Governor has signed into law a measure banning single-use plastic bags at any store that is required to collect sales tax—the vast majority of shops in the state. The law will take effect in March, 2020. Paper bags are still permitted, but counties and cities have the option of requiring a 5-cent fee on these, three cents of which will go into the state’s Environmental Protection Fund.

**What you can do**—If you did contact your state representatives in support of the plastic bag ban, thank you! Locally, Senator James Seward voted against the bill and Senator Jen Metzger voted for it. We all can call our legislators and give them a thumbs up or thumbs down.

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

Andy Mason

**“Birding By Ear” Continued from page 1** hike for those who can stay longer. A raffle will be available as well. There is a variety of habitats at this park, with a number of species possible. Bring your binoculars and learn with us! All skill levels are welcome.

The cost, pre-paid, for the BBE is \$25.00 for adults 18 and older, and \$15.00 for children 12-17 who are accompanied by an adult. This cost is non-refundable, as the food is pre-ordered. The event is limited in size, and registration will be on a first-come basis. Bruncheon includes muffin varieties, cheese-hash brown casserole, sausage-hash brown casserole, green salad, chicken/grape salad with croissants, coffee, tea and water. If the weather makes hiking impossible, we will have expanded educational sessions and Bruncheon, and enjoy each other’s company! (We haven’t been rained out yet.)

Pre-paid registration is available on line at [doas.us](http://doas.us) via PayPal or with a check which must be mailed to DOAS. You may contact Becky Gretton at 607-547-5648 for more information. If the event is full, you will be notified and your payment/check will be refunded or returned with our thanks.

Please come to meet new people or reunite with friends from the past, and to learn more about our beautiful spring birds! We look forward to seeing you.



**May 18 – DOAS Big Day Bird Count:** The Big Day is a group effort to locate as many bird species as we can in a single fun day. Birders, working in groups of whatever size they desire and spending any amount of time they choose within that 24 hours, will attempt to identify as many species as possible and report on their efforts to the Big Day coordinator, Charlie Scheim. Everyone is welcome, novice or experienced. If you are interested and have not

participated before, please contact Charlie at 607-434-4880 or [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu) to join or start a group. People who have participated before will be contacted by their leaders.

Note that DOAS Big Day is not the same as the May 4 Global Big Day because May 4 is a bit too early in the year for our location.

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### Special DOAS Online Auction

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is hosting a single-item online auction as a fundraiser to help support maintenance work at the DOAS Sanctuary & Hawkwatch on Franklin Mountain. We will be working on much-needed visitor welcome signage at the site this Spring.

The artwork featured below has been generously donated by member and long-time Board Director, Dr. Bob Donnelly.

This is a beautiful, one-of-a-kind, original watercolor

painting of Magnolia Warblers by award-winning Cooperstown area artist, Dave Kiehm.

The dimensions are roughly 17.5" x 11" and it has a double layer of white matting, with a cherry wood frame. Dimensions with the frame are 25 3/8" x 19 1/2". The watercolor painting depicts a pair of Magnolia Warblers on a branch of a spruce tree.

To place your bid or for more information go to <http://doas.us/doas-2019-online-auction/>



*Detail*

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### Nominating Committee Report

The DOAS nominating committee (Jane Bachman, chair, Kathryn Davino, Jeff O'Handley and Janice Downie) presents six candidates for election at the May 17th meeting. The slate consists of Barb Palmer, running for the first time, and the following incumbents: Rod Sutton, Pam Peters, Susan O'Handley, Kathryn Davino, and Janet Potter. Terms for all candidates are two years ending in May of 2021. Nominations may also be made from the floor at the meeting.

**“Bird Sightings” Cont. from page 8**

*Bald Eagles*  
Audubon Photo by Stephanie Orlando

nest-watching began with Charlie Scheim’s report of an eagle on nest near Davenport Center (3/20). Early April brought more news of active nests in

Walton (Pam Peters), Oneonta (behind Lowe’s) and North Harpersfield (Andy Mason). Dorian Huneke reported that the Treadwell pair’s first chick arrived around Tax Day.

Bonnie Seegmiller found Ring-necked Ducks in Downsville. March 30th brought several “FOS” birds: Eastern Towhee (East Meredith, Suzanne Gaynor); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (also some Fox Sparrows: Delhi Kathryn Davino), Chipping Sparrow (Oneonta, Charlie Scheim). Brown Creepers sang their spring song in Wilber Park, Oneonta.

Despite snow and below-freezing temperatures April 1st, Rod Spangle got a great look at a Palm Warbler at the Unadilla Boat Launch. Leslie Preston found Golden-crowned Kinglets in Oneonta’s West End. A Field Sparrow visited Andy Mason’s feeder in Jefferson (4/2). Kyle

Dudgeon found a Pine Warbler singing atop a white pine at SUNY Oneonta (4/3). Barb Palmer spotted a Northern Flicker (4/6); the next day a half dozen Tree Swallows hunted over her pond in Jefferson. That same day, Leslie Preston spotted an Osprey at Riddell Park, and a Hermit Thrush called in the woods by Pam Peters’ house. Kathy Mario was amazed to hear a Winter Wren near her house in Delhi, a sound she hasn’t heard there in years. Jessie Ravage reported several pairs of Common Grackles carrying nesting materials into a row of arborvitae in Oneonta, with a few sentries posted nearby.

In mid-April, a flock of Evening Grosbeaks were still frequenting Linda Burkhart’s feeders in Franklin. Peter Fauth also still had some Grosbeaks in Oneonta, along with Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins. Barb Palmer found Ruby-crowned Kinglets in Delhi. Tom Salo discovered a Brown Thrasher in West Burlington. Becky Gretton watched as Ospreys worked to rebuild a nest near Riddell State Park.

On April 7th a pair of Merlins arrived in Milford (Gerianne Carillo). Several days later Oneonta’s Merlins showed up, one pair at the Country Club, the other near Wilber Park, where I watched as one landed in a nest high in a conifer while its mate called nearby. It seems too early for egg-laying, but they are definitely thinking about it!

Sandy Bright

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## Remove Invasive Species on June 8, National Get Outdoors Day

The DOAS wetland in Burlington is a marvelous place filled with interesting plants and wildlife. Beavers opened the forest canopy a few years ago. Since then, invasive buckthorn has become a dominant understory plant, out-competing the native vegetation. We are recruiting volunteers to pull small buckthorn and give the natives a fighting chance. These are thornless glossy buckthorn. The half-mile hike in through a swamp requires a moderate level of physical fitness, as does the work. We will meet at 8 AM and work until early afternoon.

Volunteers should bring water, lunch and gloves. The work is on dry ground but the path traverses some very wet areas. Rubber boots will keep your feet dry. If you are interested in helping, please contact Tom Salo at [salothomas@gmail.com](mailto:salothomas@gmail.com) or 607-965-8232.



**Bird-Friendly Coffee:** Coffee pre-orders for pickup at our May 17 meeting are due by 5 PM, May 5. Email your order to [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com) or call 607-643-5680. Payment by cash, check, or credit card is due at the time of delivery. LAST ORDER UNTIL SEPTEMBER. More information at our web site: <http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CoffeeInformation2018b-final.pdf>.

## Connecting People with Nature By Board Member Jane Bachman

The spring season brings many wonderful things—among them, a flurry of DOAS field trips scheduled to take advantage of the spring migration. While DOAS may request pre-registration for these trips, they are open to all, regardless of experience.

Last month I joined a group that headed to the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, near Seneca Falls, NY. Carpooling is common with DOAS trips—and this trip was no exception. In addition to saving gas, sharing vehicles offers the opportunity to get to know fellow birders.

Upon our arrival at the refuge's visitor center, some went inside to check on recent sightings, while others ranged along the back deck facing the open water. The sounds of tundra swans, snow geese, Canada geese, and sand hill cranes were all around us, and an immature bald eagle flew overhead. The binoculars and the spotting scopes came out. Skeins of snow geese flew above us—and joined up with many, many other snow geese, the skeins swirling together in the sky. It brought to mind a murmuration of starlings (very big starlings)—and that sight alone made the trip for me.

Montezuma is a system of marshes that developed at the north end of Cayuga Lake, around the Seneca and Clyde Rivers. While I'd heard rumors that the name 'Montezuma' had something to do with the notorious 'revenge', per the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service website, it originated with a Dr. Peter Clark, who moved to the area from New York City in the early 19th century. He built a 12-room house on top on a drumlin, which he compared to the palace of the Aztec emperor Montezuma—and the name stuck.

Historically the marshes provided habitat for thousands upon thousands of migrating birds (and provided hunters with seemingly unlimited waterfowl hunting). In the early 20th century, however, construction of the New York State Barge Canal resulted in a change in water level that drained the marshes. In 1937 the Bureau of Biological Survey purchased two thousand acres, and in 1938 the Montezuma Migratory Bird Refuge was established. Work began on building dikes to create pools and to maintain the critical water level in the marshes.

Trip leader Chris DeCesare had scouted the refuge in the previous weeks and led the caravan of vehicles from pool to marsh to overlook. We experienced the thrill of spotting the first gadwalls, northern shovelers, northern pintails, and American widgeons—until eventually, we saw hundreds of them. And snow geese in the thousands.

In the way of birders, we were alerted that a woodcock had been spotted sitting next to a parking area at our next stop. It took some searching, but there it was—looking weirdly beautiful and beautifully camouflaged among last year's leaf litter.



*American Woodcock*  
Photo by Rod Sutton



*Snow Geese*  
Photo by Rod Sutton

Across the road, in the reeds alongside the water, was a very large group of great blue herons—I counted forty of them. I named them a 'stalk' of herons (a completely fabricated collective noun; the more accurate word, evidently, is a 'siege'). No one watching had ever seen such a mass of herons—though it is, after all, the time of the year for courtship and mating. It was a very good day of birding for me.

While not every DOAS trip can guarantee a once-in-a-lifetime experience, it can promise an outing to an area rich in birdlife with expert birders as guides, as well as an opportunity to get to know like-minded individuals. While the emphasis may be on birds, participants are always on the lookout for other fauna and flora.

If you have never joined a DOAS bird walk or wildflower walk, try one! Many are local to Oneonta: on May 4, there will be a bird walk along the Greenway, and the May 12 walk will explore the Audubon Sanctuary. Check the schedule of upcoming events in this issue and add one or two to your calendar. All promise to provide an outing to a wildish spot, with sightings and songs of migrating warblers, among many others. I don't think you'll regret it (rain or shine, I never have). And watch for news of trips and programs scheduled over the summer!

You may read Chris DeCesare's full report of the Montezuma trip on the DOAS website: <http://doas.us/montezuma-trip-march-2019-recap/>

# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

## May

**May 4 – Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk:** Meet at 8 AM in the parking lot by the soccer fields just past the transfer station for a two-hour walk to view returning migrant birds on the Greenway trail, located on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta. This will be an easy hike on level ground. Contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu).

**May 12 – DOAS Sanctuary Spring Bird Walk (Please note change of date):** Meet at 8 AM. The walk should turn up a variety of returning migrants, including warblers, orioles, thrushes, tanagers and others. Waterfowl and raptors are also possibilities. The walk will last about two hours and include some moderate climbs. See [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us) for directions to the Sanctuary. Contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

**May 17 – DOAS Public Program:** “Costa Rica: Recent Adventures.” Nelson and Gail DuBois will show photographs taken on their recent trip to Costa Rica. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

**May 18 – DOAS Big Day Bird Count:** Counters help find as many species as possible in Otsego or Delaware County. Contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu) for more information.

**May 19 – Jefferson, NY Celebrates Birds:** 8AM bird walk at Paulson Preserve, sponsored by Schoharie Land Trust followed by breakfast at Buck Hill Farm for interested participants. Stay for DOAS member Barb Palmer’s photography exhibit and Andy Mason’s talk on returning birds ([www.schoharielandtrust.com](http://www.schoharielandtrust.com) and [www.facebook.com/The-Jefferson-Historical-Society](http://www.facebook.com/The-Jefferson-Historical-Society) for information).

**May 23– Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake State Park:** Meet at the beach area at 10 AM. The walk is approximately 2 hours in the Park. Led by plant expert Connie Tedesco. Bring water, insect repellent,

binoculars if on hand, and your curiosity! Contact Connie at [ctedesco1026@gmail.com](mailto:ctedesco1026@gmail.com) for additional information.

**May 25– Field Trip to West Branch Preserve:** Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a bird walk at the West Branch Preserve, located in the Town of Hamden, about 10 miles southeast of Delhi. Meet at 8 AM at the preserve entrance and parking area, on Rt10, about about 0.9 miles west of County Route 26. Contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu).

## June

**June 2 – Birding By Ear with Brunch:** The workshop will be held at the Davis Park in the Town of Westford, NY. Register at <http://doas.us/event/birding-by-ear-2019/>. See article on page 1 or contact Becky Gretton at 607-547-5648.

**June 8– Invasive Species Removal at Burlington Wetlands.** See article on page 5 or call 607-965-8232.

## June 16 – Father’s Day Hike at Emmons Pond

**Bog:** DOAS Member and local Environmental Educator, Chris DeCesare will lead a 1.4 mile walk from 9 AM to 11 AM. to observe the plants and animals of Emmons Pond Bog Preserve. Binoculars and sturdy walking shoes are recommended. Meet at the Preserve entrance on White Hill Road at 9 AM. Pre-registration required at <http://doas.us/event/fathers-day-hike-at-emmons-pond-bog/> or contact Chris DeCesare at 607-244-5496 or [chris.decesare444@gmail.com](mailto:chris.decesare444@gmail.com).

## July

**July 15-August 23 – DOAS Summer DAY Camp:** Register online at [doas.us/2019-audubon-day-camp](http://doas.us/2019-audubon-day-camp). For more information, contact Susan O’Handley, Education Chair, at 607-643-5680 or at [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com).

**October:** Save the dates, more information to follow

**October 5 – DOAS Fall Open House**

**October 18 – DOAS Charter Dinner**

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

DOAS memberships are \$15 per year or \$25 for two years; family memberships are \$20 per year 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/join-us/>



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.  
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## March - April 2019 Bird Sightings

Early migrants begin to arrive as some of our year-round residents announce the beginning of breeding season with their lovely spring melodies. A Sunday morning in late March brought the sounds of a Song Sparrow singing near Dorian Huneke's barn in Treadwell, and a Belted Kingfisher calling loudly by the nearby creek. Jessie Ravage discovered two Great Blue Herons near the Susquehanna River. At Davis State Park, Becky Gretton found the first-of-season (FOS) Eastern Phoebe (3/27).

In Andes, Lore Mahler was enjoying a peaceful view of deer grazing, when suddenly the group was running at full speed with an immature Golden Eagle only a few feet behind. When those deer took cover under trees, the eagle

***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.***

tried its luck with another group of deer, which also escaped unharmed.

Leslie Preston discovered Bufflehead among Coots and Mergansers at Otsego Lake, and a Cooper's Hawk at Brookwood Gardens. At Goodyear Lake, she observed two White-breasted Nuthatches go at each other as though fighting, locking together, falling to the ground, yet still not breaking away.

An elusive Ruffed Grouse finally gave Jennifer Hyypio the opportunity to snap some photos as it stepped in slow motion crossing Grange Hall Road (Oneonta). In Bloomville,



Ruffed Grouse

Gerry Pearlburg had Evening Grosbeaks visit her feeder, as well as a partial-leucistic Red-winged Blackbird with a snow-white tail and white wing feathers. Three Brown-headed Cowbirds perched at Charlie Scheim's feeders in Oneonta. Barb Palmer reported two Kestrels in Jefferson.

Bald Eagle

**"Bird Sightings" Continued on page 5**