



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

April

April 7 – Field Trip

April 9 – Documentary

April 14 – Earth Day Festival

April 17 – DOAS Board Meeting

April 19 – Earth Day at SUCO

April 20 – DOAS Program

April 25 – Earth Day Lobby Day

April 28 – Sanctaury Work Day

May

May 12 – Field Trip

May 13 – Field Trip

May 15 – DOAS Board Meeting

May 17 – Field Trip

May 18 – DOAS Program

May 19 – May Big Day Bird Count

May 26 – Field Trip

More information on page 7

**All DOAS programs
are free and open
to the public**

Piping Plovers and Pesticides

Spring is here, migratory birds are returning, and so begins the season of pesticide poisoning on our agricultural lands, in our schools, our backyards, and in our homes.

The piping plover is just one of more than 200 species across the U.S. that many environmental organizations seek to save from pesticide poisoning. The American Bird Conservancy (ABC) estimates that 20% of the pesticides applied world-wide are used in the U.S. In 1992 it was estimated that 67 million birds per year were dying from pesticide poisoning. Since then, fortunately, campaigns to restrict over a dozen pesticides have dropped the death toll to fewer than 15 million birds per year; still, this is a horrific number. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, more than a billion pounds of pesticides are used every year in the U.S., with the EPA approving more than 18,000 different types! Many of us know the frightening history of DDT and its impact, especially on peregrine falcons, bald and golden eagles, osprey, kestrels, and other predatory birds. But what about the many other pesticides in use today? DDT's chemical relatives, the organochlorine insecticides, are still decimating bird populations. EPA-approved pesticides

and herbicides are believed to play a role, too, in the recent disappearance of bees--not to mention cancers and other severe



Piping Plover, by Dave Kiehm

health effects in animals and humans.

Diazinon, an organophosphate insecticide, although prohibited for use on golf courses and sod farms, is still used in the U.S. Six million pounds are applied annually, with 70% used by home owners and pest control companies to kill fleas, aphids, carpenter ants grubs, termites and cock roaches. Birds that migrate through agricultural areas are at significant risk from direct contact with pesticides, and birds are susceptible to back yard pesticides as well. Broad spectrum pesticides can also kill or injure birds indirectly by depriving them of their food source.

(continued on page 4)

President's Message

Audubon at Work

I've had the good fortune to spend the last few winters in Florida. As with most 'snow birds', it's the balmy weather that is the main draw—although from the weather reports I hear, this would have been a good year to stay home. Of course, another attraction is the abundance and diversity of birds. Egrets and herons seemingly appear in every puddle and ditch; osprey are profuse, spoonbills and ibis add color, and red-shouldered hawks and swallow-tailed kites patrol the skies. Barred owls call every night and this week whip-poor-wills began joining in.

Audubon is closely connected with Florida. The Audubon Society was founded in response to the widespread killing of waterbirds—often on their nests—to gather their breeding plumes for use in women's fashions in the late 1800s. The worst of this slaughter took place in Florida, and the first Audubon sanctuary and wardens were in the state. The Everglades have long been a priority for National Audubon, and their restoration remains so to this day.

There has been success in bringing the state back from the ravages of overdevelopment, industrial agriculture, and ill-advised drainage projects. One of the most visible is the return of the Kissimmee River to a wild meandering waterway from the drainage canal the US Corps of Engineers created in the 1960s. This multi-million dollar effort has brought back a wide floodplain habitat and with it, the ecosystem and wildlife that was lost to channelization. Over 90% of the waterfowl had disappeared, with similar numbers of waders and other birds. They now have returned ahead of schedule, and bald eagles, snail kites, anhingas and other species are common to abundant. I camped and hiked along the Kissimmee floodplain a couple of weeks ago, and it is inspiring to see this part of Florida returning to its natural state.

Audubon at the state and national level was instrumental in pushing through this restoration, and remains so for the work still to be done. There is now an exciting new initiative to create a Florida wildlife corridor—a collaborative vision to connect remaining natural lands, waters, working farms and ranches from the Everglades to Georgia, protecting a functional ecological corridor for the health of people, wildlife and watersheds. This is particularly critical for the isolated populations of Florida panther, scrub jay, gopher tortoise, black bear, and other at risk species in the state. This corridor will go a long way toward protecting the genetic diversity that all species need to remain viable.

Again, Audubon will play a large role in lobbying for funding for land acquisition for the wildlife corridor, as well as grass roots efforts by local Chapters to identify and help publicize the lands needed for protection. The work Audubon has done in Florida shows our organization at its best. It is a testament to what committed environmentalists can achieve.

Andy Mason



Snowy Egret, by Dave Kiehm

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Helen McLean

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To contribute notes or articles for
The Belted Kingfisher, email:

editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

Time for environmental action in Albany—The state legislative session is moving along at a rapid clip this year, with an on-time budget anticipated in April. This means lawmakers will be wrapping up other items in short order, and it is important that environmental priorities not be pushed aside.

There are several priority bills being pushed by a coalition of conservation organizations. At the top of the list—and very important locally—are measures dealing with industrial gas drilling or hydrofracking. A.7013/S.4616, would make all hazardous waste produced by fracking subject to regulations for hazardous waste generation, transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal that apply to all other industries in New York. Also, A.3245/S.3472 would allow local governments to have more control over where fracking occurs in their communities.

As an alternative to fossil fuels, the Solar Industry & Jobs Development would provide better incentives for solar photovoltaics (PV) by creating an obligation for utilities and energy service companies to acquire tradable solar renewable energy credits. This legislation would also establish a target of 5,000 megawatts of installed solar PV capacity by the year 2025.

New York State needs a law that requires polluters to reduce climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions. A.5346-A is legislation that would direct the Department of Environmental Conservation to develop programs to reduce statewide greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050.

Repeated budget cuts, layoffs and hiring freezes in recent years have hurt the state's primary environmental agencies—DEC and the Parks Office. In addition to increasing appropriations for staffing, New York should pass A.6272/S.4277, which would establish a fee on disposable (paper and plastic) shopping bags used in grocery stores and other retail outlets, reduce plastic bag consumption, and help support the state parks system.

The Environmental Protection Fund, the state's main source of monies for environmental programs has been cut disproportionately in recent years. A.7137-A/S.5403-A would phase in additional resources allowing the EPF to meet its obligations. With a restored fund, New York can keep more family farms working, help ensure quality drinking water sources for communities, encourage recycling, and provide economic investment.

What you can do—contact your State Senator and Assemblymember and ask them to support these legislative initiatives. Remember this is an election year, and tell them that you will have their environmental record in mind in November.

Senators can be reached at: NY State Senate, Albany, NY 12247; and assemblymembers at: NY State Assembly, Albany, NY 12248. To find out who your representatives are, and for email and fax contacts, visit the DOAS conservation page at www.doas.us.

Andy Mason

For New Members Joining National Audubon Society

A new online membership form is now available at

https://ssl.palmcoastd.com/pcd/app/index.cfm?imagid=10102&ipage=chapter_membership

New members can use a credit card to pay for their Audubon membership and direct 100% of their initial donation to our Chapter. This form is for new members only, who will need to select Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society's Chapter code, R12, from the drop down menu next to "Chapter Code". This will allow Audubon to credit our Chapter.

Membership Reminder

Please check your address on this newsletter for your membership expiration date. This date is shown by four numbers—the first two digits indicate the year and the second two digits indicate the month, i.e., '1206' is June 2012.

See renewal information on page 7—please renew and continue your support of DOAS and our programs.

To join or renew DOAS, see Membership Application on page 7

Bluebirds are Back!

Eastern Bluebirds—favorites of birders everywhere, and New York's official state bird—will soon set up housekeeping in our area. Properly placed bluebird houses can help this species compete with starlings and house sparrows that have led to its population decline.

Bluebird house plans and ready-built bluebird houses are available from DOAS. Plans are free and houses are \$13.00 each. Plans and houses can be obtained at DOAS functions or by mail. All proceeds benefit DOAS conservation and education programs.

Contact Andy Mason, 1039 Peck St., Jefferson, NY 12093, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.



*Bluebird feeding young (above),
Bluebirds building nest (below)
by Dave Kiehm*



*Immature Bald Eagle at Glimmerglass State Park in February
by Diane Graf*



DOAS is Now Part of the Facebook Community

Why join us here?

- Be notified of all planned outings and presentations
- Pictures and details of events posted regularly
- Get involved with member discussions on our Facebook wall
- Become "friends" with likeminded people in the Delaware/Otsego area
- Get updated news on birding and other related topics

Find us online at:

www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

We look forward to interacting with all new participants.

Tiffany Wilkie – Facebook Administrator



(Piping Plovers and Pesticides – continued from page 1)

Piping plovers and killdeer are just two of the many species that feed on aquatic insects, and like all insectivorous birds and nestlings, are especially vulnerable.

What you can do: Buy organic food to help decrease the demand for harmful toxins. Write to local and state representatives asking them to promote alternatives to pesticides. The American Bird Conservancy suggests pushing the EPA to ban imported crops containing residues of harmful pesticides that are banned or restricted here in the U.S. but still used on crops throughout Latin America where many U.S. migratory birds spend the winter. Avoid using pesticides in and around your home. Keep in mind that commercial brands of "weed and feed" products for your lawn contain chemicals that are harmful to people, pets, and of course birds and the environment. Apply organic fertilizers, pull weeds by hand, and learn to live with an imperfect lawn, or better yet, no lawn at all! Create a natural environment for birds, butterflies, and bees.

Stephen Rice

Spring Eagles

Hawk counters spent time in early March counting migrating raptors simultaneously at Davis State Park and Franklin Mountain. Our goal is to determine the magnitude and concentration areas of the local spring Golden Eagle migration. There were 12 days when counting occurred at both sites. There was a bit more coverage at Franklin Mountain on those days. The Golden Eagle count totaled 12 at each site, for the days when there was some coverage at both sites. More hours and eagles were recorded on days when only one site was covered. Counter availability and motivation determined the total amount of coverage at each. Full results can be found at hawkcount.org.

Look for site names *Franklin Mountain* and *DOAS – Davis State Park*.

Eagles continued to visit several of our baited sites in March after



Golden Eagle feeding on carrion in March, captured on motion-activated camera

the migration had started. Golden and Bald Eagles visited 3 of the 4 sites that continued operating. One Golden Eagle, a regular visitor, was still present as of this writing March 19. *Tom Salo*

| Date | Hours FMHW | Hours Davis | GEs at FMHW | GEs at Davis | Weather |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--|
| 03/05/12 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | Cold, sunny NNW to W winds |
| 03/06/12 | 2.75 | 2 | 1 | 0 | Light to moderate SW wind, clear skies |
| 03/07/12 | 8 | 6.5 | 0 | 5 | Warm, sunny, strong south winds |
| 03/08/12 | 6 | 3.5 | 2 | 0 | Warm, rain by 1:30, strong mostly SW winds |
| 03/09/12 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 3 | NW winds moved SSW; lake effect snow and squalls |
| 03/11/12 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 1 | Sunny, southern winds, mild temps |
| 03/12/12 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 0 | Warm, south wind, spring like |
| 03/13/12 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 0 | Warm SSW wind changed to N with showers |
| 03/14/12 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 0 | Moderate WNW wind, clear, moderate temp |
| 03/15/12 | 6.5 | 6 | 2 | 2 | Davis - ESE in AM / FMHW - SW |
| 03/16/12 | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | Rain, fog, haze, light SW wind |
| 03/17/12 | 7 | 6.25 | 0 | 1 | Sunny, very light northerly wind |
| Totals * | 76.25 | 64.25 | 12 | 12 | |

* Totals are only for days when there was coverage at both sites. See hawkcount.org for complete spring data.

Key: FMHW = Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; GEs = Golden Eagles

April Program

The Everglades

On Friday April 20th, Scott and Denise Stoner will present *The Everglades* at the monthly meeting. Well-known for their birding and photographs, Scott and Denise have explored from the islands of Hawaii to the shores of Labrador. Scott is the past president of both the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and the Audubon Society of the Capital Region. Denise is a past officer and director of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. Their photographs have appeared in the *Birder's World Magazine* and the *NYS Conservationist*. The span of groups throughout New York State that benefit from their wide variety of natural history presentations includes numerous Audubon Chapters, garden clubs and community libraries. To view more of Scott and Denise's work, please visit: www.naturelogues.com.

Program starts at 7:30 PM, at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Free and open to the public; refreshments are served. For further information, please contact Eleanor Moriarty: eleanormrrt955@gmail.com or (607) 435-2054.

Sanctuary Work Day

A work day at the DOAS Sanctuary is scheduled for Saturday, April 28. We will be clearing and marking the trails and making minor repairs from 9 AM until noon. Those interested in birding for an hour or so beforehand should arrive at 8 AM.

Bring pruning shears, loppers, saws, etc. We will have some tools for workers to use. Contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net for more information.

Documentary on Banning Pesticides to be Screened in Cooperstown

The documentary film, *A Chemical Reaction*, presents the story of how the town of Hudson, Quebec, goaded by a relentless woman physician, voted to ban the use of pesticides and herbicides. This inspiring film will be shown at Templeton Hall at on the corner of Pioneer and Church Streets in Cooperstown, Monday, April 9 at 7 PM. An open discussion will follow.

Although legally challenged by the chemical industry, the right of Hudson to pass the ban was ultimately affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada, basing its decision on the "precautionary principle", the concept that if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public or to the environment, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking the action.

An effort is underway to limit pesticide use in Cooperstown, and this documentary demonstrates a successful effort to stop these dangerous chemicals.

Earth Day Events

Earth Festival, Milford, NY

Saturday, April 14, 11 AM-3 PM, Earth Festival at Milford Central School - FREE

Environmental exhibit fair with natural history and conservation focus. Early morning birdwalk – carpool leaves Milford Central School at 8 AM. Milford Community Spring Cleaning Sale & Swap, 9 AM-3 PM. Recycling opportunities for styrofoam (white only), bubble wrap, empty inkjet cartridges, cell phones, eyeglasses, videotapes and CDs, and used nylon monofilament fishing line at no charge. Empire Recycling Confidata Shredder from 11am to 2pm FREE.

Special Feature This Year - CCE Master Gardeners Spring Garden Day Workshops (\$10 pre-registration required) 8:30 AM-12 PM featuring Beekman Boys keynote at 9 AM (FREE). Complete information at www.occainfo.org.

Other Earth Day Events

Thursday, April 19, 11 AM-1 PM, SUNY Oneonta, Environmental Club Expo – Quad Areas IRC Quad A-F; Environmental Exhibits and more.

Wednesday, April 25, Earth Day Lobby Day, Albany, NY. Details through www.citizenscampaign.org.

Susan O'Handley

May Big Day Bird Count

Saturday, May 19, is this year's Big Day for DOAS, the day on which small groups enjoy trying to locate the maximum number of bird species they can in any amount of time they choose within that 24

hours. Everyone is welcome, novice or experienced. If you are interested and have not participated before, please contact Bob Miller at 607-432-5767 to join or start a group. People who have participated

before will be contacted by their leaders; leaders will receive materials prior to the count. The DOAS data obtained are pooled with that of the Delhi Bird Club for a report of results in *The Belted Kingfisher*. Wish for favorable weather and southerly winds the night before. *Bob Miller*



Hooded Warbler, by Dave Kiehm

Upcoming Activities

April

April 7 – Lake Otsego 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 Street at 8 AM sharp. Co-leaders will be Matt Albright, Bob Donnelly and John Davis. Sponsored by the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society for several years, the trip has always attracted many area birders. 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 – Documentary on Banning Pesticides: See page 6 for details.

April 14 – Earth Day Festival: 11 AM - 3 PM in Milford, NY, with a pre-festival bird walk at 8AM led by Bob Donnelly.

April 17 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Julie Smith.

April 19 – Earth Day at SUNY Oneonta: 11 AM - 1 PM Environmental Club Expo, Quad Areas IRC Quad A-F; environmental Exhibits and more.

April 20 – DOAS Program: *The Everglades - Florida's Jewel* by birders and activists Scott and Denise Stoner. The program will begin at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For more information contact Program Chairman Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054.

April 25 – Earth Day Lobby Day: Albany, NY. For more information see www.citizenscampaign.org.

April 28 – DOAS Sanctuary Work Day: See page 6 for details.

May

May 12 – Onderdunk Road Field Trip: Meet at the Stewarts store in Sharon Springs at 5 PM. On this trip to a wetland we

will look for bitterns, rails and snipe. There may be some easy walking over wet ground. For more information contact Bob Donnelly at rsdonn@yahoo.com.

May 13 – South Hill State Forest Field Trip: Meet at the Pine Lake parking lot in Davenport at 8:00 AM. For more information contact Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054.

May 15 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Bob Donnelly, (607) 264-8156.

May 17 – Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake State Park: 10 AM - noon. Meet at the beach area for an easy walk. We will look for spring woodland wildflowers along the trail around the lake. For more information, contact Barbara Marsala at (607) 988-7805.

May 18 – DOAS Program: *Nature and Songbirds of the Adirondacks* by Warren Greene. The program will begin at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For more information contact Program Chairman Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054.

May 19 – May Big Day Bird Count: See details on page 6.

May 26 – Weaver Lake Field Trip: A canoe/kayak field trip to Weaver Lake, Rt 20 about halfway between Richfield Springs and Springfield Center. Meet at the lake at 7 AM. Rails, soras, bitterns, moorhens, grebes and unusual ducks can be found at this unusual wetland. Bring a boat and a life jacket. For more information contact Bob Donnelly at rsdonn@yahoo.com.

June

June 10 – Mountaintop Arboretum (Tannersville) Field Trip: Meet in Stamford at the Rite-Aid parking lot at 7:30 AM. This will be an all day trip. A stop for lunch is planned. For more information contact Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054.

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. Please make your check payable to "DOAS" and mail payment with this form to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

Note: Please mail National Audubon renewals to address on renewal notice.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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February–March Bird Sightings

Just when you thought winter couldn't get any milder in these parts, the first three weeks of March brought incredibly warm, sunny pleasant days, great for bird watching. My husband and I took advantage of this summer-like weather with frequent walks in the late afternoons. On March 13th a pair of Eastern Meadowlarks shot past us. We first stared at them and then stared at each other in utter amazement. I've been keeping bird sighting records for this article since 1997 and no Eastern Meadowlarks have been seen this early as far as my notes indicate. It truly was a birding delight.

Leslie Preston observed a Bald Eagle in the top of a tree near a farm just outside Mt. Vision on 2/18. A Carolina Wren greeted Marge Mathis in Morris on 2/21. Feb. 22nd was a big bird sighting day. Edna Straney had 2 American Goldfinches at her feeder in Oneonta, Tom Salo saw a Red-winged Blackbird in W. Burlington and an American Kestrel in Edmeston, and Germaine Connolly witnessed a Golden Eagle feeding on a deer carcass

in an open area of Springfield. The next day a lone Canada Goose flying over Treadwell honking like mad was seen by Dorian Huneke. On Feb. 24th Angelika Rashkow suddenly noticed about 15 Cedar Waxwings feeding on her crab apple tree in the front of her house in Hartwick. Later on that same afternoon around 4 PM to her surprise she noticed a Barred Owl placidly sitting on a fence post in the field opposite her house. It was a birding treat. Tom Salo's first of the season Killdeer appeared in W. Burlington on 2/27. On 2/28 two miles west of Hobart Tom Whitney spotted a Peregrine Falcon eating on top of a pole next to the road. He stopped his car and excitedly watched as the bird tore apart its prey enjoying each bite until the food was totally gone. That same day Dorian Huneke watched a Turkey Vulture rocking back and forth in the sky in Treadwell. The last day of February, a leap year, brought a Common Grackle to Tom Salo's feeder in W. Burlington.

On 3/2 a male Red-winged Blackbird was seen by Eileen Kline in Delhi and a flock of American Robins was observed by Dennis Fowler in Otego. On the 4th Leslie Preston



Carolina Wren, by Dave Kiehm

watched a kettle of 13 Turkey Vultures circle around downtown Oneonta. The Glimmerglass Opera birdwatchers saw an Osprey hovering over the north end of Otsego Lake on 3/6. The next day Carol & Randy Linch heard the distinctive peent of an American Woodcock in Jefferson and Diane Graf, Becky Gretton and Tom Salo saw, I'll say, a herd of 15, 830 Canada Geese and 210 Snow Geese in Davis State Park. Incredible!!! On 3/9 49 American Robins visited Prudence Danforth's backyard in Unadilla. The next day Marge Mathis had her FOS Song Sparrow in Morris, Tom & Sue Whitney saw a Fox Sparrow in Delhi and Fred Johnson had a Red-bellied Woodpecker at his feeder in Gilbertsville. Charlie Scheim heard Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers near Strawberry Fields at Hartwick College on 3/12. The next day Sandy Bright heard her FOS Eastern Phoebe in Oneonta. Amazingly spring had just been around the corner for nearly a full month now.

If you have bird sightings to report, contact me at dbenko@frontiernet.net, at 6815 Co. Hwy 16, Delhi, NY 13753, or at 607-829-5218 for the next issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*. Dianne Benko