



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Inc.
Founded 1968 P.O. Box 544, Oneonta, N.Y. 13820

Volume 39, No. 1, Jan. 2006

Editor — Bob Miller

COMING ACTIVITIES

- Jan. 13 Eagle Trip with Andy Mason. See page 4.
Jan. 15 Annual Waterfowl Count. See page 4.
Jan. 16 Board Meeting. Home of Barbara Marsala.
Jan. 19 General Meeting. *Sustainable Forestry* Dr. Mike Burger, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon New York. Free and open to the public. See below.
Feb. __ Owl Trip with Bob Donnelly. Date TBA.
Feb. 16 General Meeting. "Grasslands" by Mike Morgan.
Feb. 20 Board Meeting. Home of Gerianne Carrillo.
Mar. 16 General Meeting. "Bluebirds" by John Rogers
Mar. 20 Board Meeting. Home of Cheryl Boise
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DOAS field trips are open to the public. Participants should meet at the stated time and location — please be prompt We encourage carpooling — please help with expenses if you are sharing a vehicle. Most trips include a moderate amount of easy walking; leaders will note any strenuous hiking. Please expect to provide your own food and drink unless a food stop is indicated. In case of bad weather, check with the leader about cancellation.

Promoting Biodiversity Stewardship on Private Forestland in New York State
Our January program will take a look at private forestland: how do we best manage it to support the wildlife that inhabit it? **Dr. Michael Burger**, Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon New York, will present "Promoting Biodiversity Stewardship on Private Forestland in New York State". His program will overview a 3-year research project Audubon conducted in New York State to learn more about how breeding birds and other wildlife respond to logging as it is conducted on private lands in the state. In addition to describing the results of the research regarding how the wildlife communities differ among various age classes of managed forests, Michael will explore historical trends in early-successional forests and landscape considerations that inform management decisions. Lastly, Michael will describe an outreach program that Audubon New York and several partners developed to deliver this information to private landowners.

Our program will begin at 7:30PM on January 19th at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. It is free and open to the public, and refreshments will be served. For more information contact Gerianne Carillo, 286-3855, e-mail gerianne@earthlink.net

Printed on recycled paper with soy ink

President's Message

DOAS is more than programs, field trips and the hawk watch. If you read Conservation Chair, Andy Mason's regular conservation column, you know we are regularly advocating on behalf of environmental protection. A good deal of our energy is directed towards the serious business of government planning, regulation and legislation. We also comment on Environmental Impact Statements such as the recent draft EIS for the Jordanville Wind Power Project. For many years Andy has led a group of members to Albany for Environmental Lobby Day. We've met a number of times with former Congressman Sherwood Boehlert and State representatives on behalf of the environment. Some of you may recall our opposition to the James Bay power projects and proposals to build ATV trails in local forests. We just submitted encouraging comments to help guide the drafting of a Unit Management Plan for State Forests around Pharsalia in Chenango County. Those forests are an Audubon Important Bird Area.

In the political arena, the new year brings reason for optimism. We had always had a good relationship with Sherwood Boehlert. Unfortunately, he lost influence in recent years as the Republican leadership became hostile towards environmental protection. With this new congress, and new local representatives from the majority party, the opinions and positions of Delaware-Otsego Audubon may carry more weight than they have in recent years. Andy and I are planning to arrange meetings with new Congressional Representatives Michael Arcuri and Kirsten Gillibrand early this year. We will share our concerns about global warming, the need for a permanent Wind Energy Tax Credit and other things. If you are interested in joining us to meet with the new representatives, please contact one of us.

At the state level, a new Governor will bring new management and new attitudes to the Department of Environmental Conservation. We are hoping they work in our interest. Some of us have been disappointed in the agency. Its priorities seem to be mostly the desires of its traditional constituency – outdoor sportsman – and the business community. We hope that Mr. Spitzer, with his environmental record, will create an atmosphere that is more receptive to a broader interpretation of environmental protection. We will try to meet with high ranking DEC officials as early as possible in 2007. High on my list of concerns is possible impacts of wind projects on endangered species.

Andy does much of the work of the Conservation Committee. Small groups help out on specific issues, however, in practice it is a committee of one. There is an opportunity for others to involve themselves in these activities as members of the committee. Please consider helping on these important efforts. The more people who are involved, the more we can do.
Tom Salo, DOAS President

HABITAT, HABITAT, HABITAT...

For birds, it's really all about habitat. Both as a bell weather for all of nature and for each and for all avian species in particular. For some new insights on the matter, "Bird Conservation", the magazine of the American Bird Conservancy has published, in its 2006 summer and fall issues, "Most Threatened Bird Habitats in the U.S." A lucid discussion of "What is Habitat Loss?" opens the series, where it is pointed out that habitat "loss" really means "conversion of habitat conditions required by specialized bird species to conditions in which those birds cannot survive". Of course the issues are complex and multidirectional; any habitat change, such as from fire, floods, overgrazing may benefit some species while devastating others. Twenty critical habitats are then detailed, pretty much covering the United States from east to west, including Hawaii. Since the series covers the U.S. discussions of the northern boreal forest and tundra are notably absent.

For our own area, entitled "Early Successional Habitats in Eastern Deciduous Forests" the complexities of forest succession including silviculture, conversion of lowlands to agriculture, and lack of forest modification by natural fires are emphasized. Not discussed in any detail are the effects of pesticides, contaminants such as mercury from coal-fired electricity and the overarching specter of climate change. Particular species noted to be in trouble are Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers, and a variety of grasslands birds. Add the recent revelation of mercury poisoning in Wood Thrushes, as a studied example, from contamination of the food web (air pollution -> take up by leaves -> insect contamination -> ingestion by the bird as revealed by wing feather analysis) and there sure are problems out there! For Auduboners, and hopefully for everyone, the message seems clear: act, advocate and teach locally and keep up the pressure on government and industry to act more responsibly.

John Davis

Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

Follow up to Roadless Rule court victory--Last month we noted that US District Court Judge Elizabeth LaPorte had provided environmentalists a major victory in in September when she ruled that the Bush administration had illegally repealed the Roadless Rule for National Forests. The Roadless Rule protected 58.5 million acres of roadless areas on National Forests and Grasslands from most logging and road construction. On Nov. 29, Judge LaPorte strengthened her decision by ruling that work already begun under the Bush administration's rollback of the rule must be halted. The US Forest Service argued that these projects and timber sales were started in good faith, but the judge did not agree and issued an injunction halting road building associated with oil and gas drilling on inventoried roadless areas in 14 national forests, mostly in the Rocky Mountains. The order also halts construction of two miles of new roads through the Borah Peak roadless area in Idaho's Salmon-Challis National Forest.

Report documenting global warming impacts in NY released--In late November, Environmental Advocates of NY issued a report on the anticipated effects of global warming on our state's public health, economy, agriculture, water supply and other areas of our society. Environmental Advocates, of which DOAS is a long-time member, is the state's premier environmental organization and is to be commended for preparing this important study.

Forecast for New York: Projected Global Warming Impacts & Next Steps, looks at numerous sources in drawing its conclusions, including recent climate projections that show substantial changes for NY. These including higher annual temperatures, more extreme heat days, sea level rise, declining snow cover, more frequent floods, and increased drought. These projections indicate that without significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, NY's weather will resemble that of Georgia and South Carolina by the end of this century.

Public health impacts of global warming include heat stroke, increases in asthma and other respiratory illness, and infectious and vector-borne diseases. Estimates are that summer heat related deaths in NY may increase between 50 and 200 percent.

Wildlife will also be affected. The state may lose over 30 species of songbirds in summer, and the ranges of another 20 could contract significantly. Duck populations are forecast to decline 19-39 % by 2030.

Invasive species, particularly those from warmer climates, can be expected to increase and expand, further stressing native plants and wildlife.

The report makes clear that NY will be profoundly affected by global warming in all areas of our environment and society. The full report is available at <http://www.eany.org/gw/ForecastForNewYork.pdf>.

What you can do--The Environmental Advocates report makes a number of recommendations to lessen or eliminate the anticipated threats from global warming. Among these are:

- establishing more aggressive statewide greenhouse gas emissions limits for all economic sectors
- creating a statewide standard so that electricity demand growth is met by projects that increase New York's overall energy efficiency
- establishing a permanent Climate Change Commission responsible for establishing an emissions baseline, evaluating policies, and making recommendations for future actions
- auctioning 100% of the CO₂ emission allowances envisioned under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in NY, a seven-state plan to cut carbon dioxide emissions from electric power generators in the Northeast

Contact your state representatives and ask them to redouble NY's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. More renewable energy, stronger appliance and lighting efficiency standards, and cleaner transportation and industrial sectors are critical to the state's future.

(Note that newly-elected state officials will take office January 1, 2007.)

Addresses

State Sens. James Seward/
John Bonacic
NY State Senate
Albany, NY 12247
Seward--(518) 455-3131
seward@senate.state.ny.us
Bonacic--(518) 455-3181
bonacic@senate.state.ny.us

Assemblymembers William Magee/
Clifford Crouch/Daniel Hooker
NY State Assembly
Albany, NY 12248
Magee--(518) 455-4807
mageew@assembly.state.ny.us
Crouch--(518) 455-5741
crouchc@assembly.state.ny.us
Hooker--(518) 455-5363
hookerd@assembly.state.ny.us

Gov. George Pataki
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Gov.pataki@chamber.state.ny.us (518) 474-7516

Waterfowl Count

The NY State Ornithological Association's annual statewide waterfowl count is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 15, 2006. DOAS covers Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and Cannonsville Reservoir and the W. Branch of the Delaware River.

Anyone interested in helping with this census, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

Hawkwatch News

The season is winding down at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch on the DOAS Sanctuary outside Oneonta. This has been another good year, with over 5000 raptors tallied the fifth time that mark has been crossed in the 18 year history of the hawkwatch.

Records have been set for Red-shouldered Hawk and Merlins, with a very good count of Red-tailed Hawks also. It appears we will not approach last season's record of 252 Golden Eagles, but do have a shot at reaching 200 GEs for the fourth consecutive year.

The count is scheduled to end on New Year's Day. A complete wrap up will appear in the next Kingfisher.

... Andy Mason

Eagle Trip Scheduled for Jan. 13, 2007

Jan. 13, 2007 is the date for the annual DOAS field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles. The trip visits rivers and reservoirs in Delaware and/or Sullivan Counties where the birds concentrate to feed. Our destination will be determined by reports and scouting prior to the trip.

Other raptors and waterfowl are usually sighted on this trip. We also will stop at a local restaurant for lunch for interested participants.

The trip will leave the Dietz St. parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 8 a.m. Carpooling is encouraged and participants can be picked up en route. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon.

For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162 AndyMason@earthling.net.

Oneonta Freecycle

Do you have the environmentalist's guilt that comes from throwing away something that may still have life left, but don't have the time to search out someone who could use it? The solution to your conflict may be Oneonta Freecycle, an online exchange for goods that can easily connect you with someone to take those toys, books, furniture, etc. off your hands.

Here is the official description: "The Oneonta Area Freecycle (TM) Network is open to all who want to "recycle" that special something rather than throw it away. Whether it's a chair, a fax machine, piano or an old door, feel free to post it. Or maybe you're looking to acquire something yourself! Nonprofit groups are also welcome to participate too!

One constraint: everything posted must be free. This network is brought to you by The Freecycle Network (TM), a nonprofit organization and a movement of people interested in keeping good stuff out of landfills. Check out freecycle.org for other cities and info on the movement! E-mail oneontafreecycle-owner@yahoogroups.com for questions or improvement ideas! "Oneonta Freecycle can be found at: www.groups.yahoo.com/group/oneontafreecycle/.

... Andy Mason

Plan B 2.0, Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble

By Lester R. Brown 2006 Earth Policy Institute

Strong leadership and a demanding public are needed to rescue our planet from present overwhelming crises - global warming, collapse of fisheries, loss of rivers and lakes, deforestation, erosion and soil loss, vast dust storms, polluted air, water shortages, etc etc.

Les Brown gives us hope with his many wise suggestions - leading us to act unselfishly and responsibly, and to slowly effect solutions to our problems. But we STILL need a strong leader!

... Jean T. Miller

Four Environmental Successes

Farmers along the Susquehanna River areas in PA are using new techniques which cut the amount of fertilizers and thus reduce the amount of nitrogen run-off by two thirds. This is helping to heal the vast dead zones in Chesapeake Bay. Farmers routinely had applied excess fertilizer, and crops could absorb only about half. The excess ran off into the Bay.

Trees pay us back in many ways: shade, cooler temperatures, beauty, less CO2. Economic benefits are now being measured, also. As tree plantings in urban areas continue to decline, we need to view trees as necessary for a healthy economy. They boost property values by both energy saving and esthetic values. Benefits far outweigh the costs of tree care.

Finally - a way to rid the west of ever-increasing unwanted weeds! Cashmere goats devour the weeds. They are trucked around by Lani Malmberg, who has an MS in Biology and Weed Science, and who carefully controls the goats. The goats do not eat the native vegetation.

Along the Mexican coast and in the Gulf of CA introduced cats, dogs, rabbits, goats, pigs, and rats have evicted Murrelets, Albatrosses and Shearwaters from ground burros and have decimated endemic plants. Scientists and conservationists have recently eradicated 39 invasive mammal populations from 25 islands, and results are dramatic. Seabirds and "extinct" plants reappear and flourish. These fragile islands once again have healthy ecosystems.

... Jean T. Miller

Choose Green Electricity

NY State Electric & Gas (NYSEG) is currently in an open choice period to allow its customers to pick their electricity supply company. NYSEG only delivers electricity—the source is a company chosen by each customer. This choice period closes Dec. 29, 2006.

A number of the supply companies offer all or partial 'green power', typically wind, small hydro, or landfill methane gas derived electricity. If you choose green power, the company purchases an additional amount from these sources, increasing their economic viability,

and reducing the amount purchased from traditional sources such as coal or oil-fired generating plants.

There is an increased cost for green power—typically 1-2 cents per kilowatt hour above the 5-7 cents per KWH base price. However, the supply amounts to about half of the average electricity bill, so the overall cost increase is around 10%—a small price to pay to personally reduce the environmental impacts of our electricity usage.

Go to www.nyseg.com for more information on electricity choice, and a list of suppliers. Each supplier must be checked to see which green energy options they offer and the cost. ... *Andy Mason*

Ethanol Is A Stupid Investment

Ethanol is supposedly the new savior found by the administration to combat high gas prices and coming oil shortages. It has all sorts of virtues, as when blended with gasoline it reduces greenhouse-gas emissions, and the sources of it can be found all over the world. Congress has mandated that four Billion gallons of ethanol annually be blended with gasoline and it SUBSIDIZES ethanol production with a 51 cent/gallon tax credit.

Unfortunately - ethanol produced in US comes from corn, and pretty close to 100% of the savings (in oil consumption) that you get is consumed by the hydrocarbon fuel used to grow the corn.

In Brazil they distill ethanol from sugar, and it generates far more energy per unit of input than does corn. Other crops like switch grass would give substantial savings, also. In US the government subsidizes sugar so heavily that no one can import sugar to make into ethanol. So the prospects for a domestic sugar-ethanol industry are very dim. And the government has imposed a tariff on importing sugar-based ethanol in order to protect corn producers.

Thus Congress is paying billions in subsidies to get us to use more ethanol, while keeping in place tariffs and quotas that guarantee that we will use less! So we are saddled with an inferior and less energy efficient technology and are as dependent as ever on oil producing countries.

Are we more secure importing oil from Venezuela than ethanol from Brazil? "Tariffs are bad economic policy. bad energy policy and bad foreign policy." And corn-based ethanol for the US is a stupid investment.

Jean T. Miller ...from *The New Yorker* Nov.27 '06
NRDC *onearth* Winter 2007

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
 PO Box 544
 Oneonta, NY 13820-0544
www.doas.us

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Membership Application

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Soc. includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*. Cost is \$12 annually or \$20 for 2 years. Please make check payable to DOAS and mail to DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544, with name, address and phone.

(NOTE: Please mail National Audubon renewals to address on renewal notice.)

NAME _____

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To contribute notes or articles for *The Belted Kingfisher*, please send to: Kingfisher Editor, DOAS, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

All meetings are free and open to the public.