



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

OCTOBER

10/03: DOAS Sanctuary and Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch Fall 2009 Open House, 10am - 2pm (see below right).

10/16: 41st Annual DOAS Charter Dinner, (see right).

10/20: Board Meeting, 7pm, home of Dave Kiehm.

NOVEMBER

11/20: Program: Jean Miller to present “Does the Pika Have a Future? Climate Change May Decide” (details in the November edition).

DECEMBER

Mark your calendar for the upcoming Christmas Bird Counts: 12/19 in Otsego County (Bob Miller, contact), and 1/2/10 in Fort Plain (Tom Salo, contact).

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

GOLDEN EAGLES the topic at Charter Dinner 2009

It is estimated that there are 1000-2000 Golden Eagles in eastern North America. Golden Eagles have been counted in significant numbers as they migrate through our region. The threat of wind facilities on the Golden Eagle has been substantiated, and will be the topic of discussion at this year's Charter Dinner.

Presenting her research on the Golden Eagle will be Trish Miller, PHD student in Ecology at the Pennsylvania State University. Trish is the current GIS Lab Manager at Powdermill Nature Reserve, which is the biological field station of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Trish's dissertation research seeks to identify locations of potential conflicts between diurnal raptors and wind power development. The goal is to create management tools that can be used by developers and decision makers to prevent,



minimize or mitigate negative interactions between turbines and raptors.

In the Fall of 2006, Trish and her colleagues began tracking Golden Eagles using satellite telemetry from the

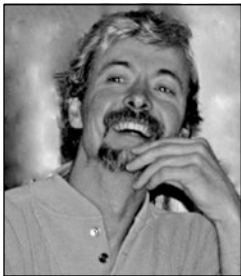
Gaspe Peninsula (breeding grounds) in Quebec, Canada through Pennsylvania's Appalachian Mountains. The maps created from this research identify where these birds are most likely to fly, roost, and forage. Managers can then use these maps to site Turbine Facilities so that they have a minimal impact on eagle habitat and flight patterns.

The 2009 Charter Dinner will take place on Friday, October 16, 2009 at the Foothills Performing Arts Center on Market Street in Oneonta. A social hour with appetizers and cash bar begins at 5:30 pm, dinner begins at 6:30 pm, and the program begins at 7:30 pm. See page 5 for registration form.

FALL OPEN HOUSE FEATURES HAWK ID WORKSHOP

On Saturday, October 3rd DOAS will host an Open House at the Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain. At 10:30 am there will be a 45-minute beginner's workshop on Identifying Flying Hawks. A trail walk will leave the barn at 11:30 am and will cover most of the Sanctuary grounds. The hawk watch will be staffed through the day, and a nice array of refreshments are always served at the Barn.

For more information on the hawk watch visit <http://www.doas.us>, or contact Tom Salo at 607-965-8232 or tomsalo@localnet.com.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tom Salo

Our activities range from watching birds and maintaining the sanctuary to serious involvement in public policy decisions. While we occasionally hire people for things like roofing the barn, dedicated volunteers are responsible for all of our environmental advocacy. This month I want to thank all the volunteers who make this organization successful. These people work for the satisfaction of knowing they are helping and making a difference. We are very lucky to have so many people who care about nature and the environment. They give so

much to the organization. If you have the time and interest in helping, the list below gives a sampling of different volunteer jobs we need help with. If you like what we do, please support us by generously donating your time.

- We organize a number of citizen science projects each year and support others. You can count birds during the May Big Day Bird Count or the 2 Christmas Bird Count held in the area – Oneonta and Fort Plain. The statewide waterfowl count is held in January. There is always a need for extra eyes at the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch. We also plan to count raptors east of Cooperstown next March as part of our Golden Eagle research. A number of citizen science projects run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology can be found on their web site – www.birds.cornell.edu. Project FeederWatch, the Great Back Yard Bird Count and Birds in Forested Landscapes are popular locally.
- We can always use help maintaining the sanctuary trails and the barn. We would also like to address the invasive plants.
- We are actively seeking people to write columns for this newsletter. If you are interested in writing, check with the Editor (editor@doas.us) beforehand on the subject and length. Short items are needed for the favorite places series. We also want to know about your interesting wildlife experiences.
- Consider leading field trips and walks.
- Do you have an area of expertise? Give a talk to DOAS. We also often get requests for speakers from schools and nursing homes.
- The Finance, Conservation, Hospitality and Membership Committees can always use help.
- Help us lobby decision makers.
- We occasionally need help with things like stuffing envelopes or providing refreshments at programs.

Please contact me if you are interested in helping with any of our activities.

Tom Salo
607-965-8232
tomsalo@localnet.com

Editor's Note: In the September 2009 edition of The Belted Kingfisher, an article and letter recognizing Bob Miller's service mistakenly omitted several signatures at the bottom. Also signing this letter was Andy Mason, Jean Miller, Eleanor Moriarty, Tom Salo, Joe Richardson, and Stephen Rice.

**THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO
AUDUBON SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1968**

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THE BELTED KINGFISHER PLEASE SEND TO
"KINGFISHER EDITOR" AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS,
OR EMAIL EDITOR@DOAS.US

COVER ARTWORK BY DAVE KIEHM

CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

BY ANDY MASON

Energy/Climate Change Next in Washington?

With health care legislation dominating the agenda in Congress, it would seem there are no other issues being addressed. However, there is significant movement on facing up to the nation's need to realign its energy usage in order to reduce our immense carbon footprint.

In June the House passed the American Clean Energy And Security Act that includes a cap-and-trade global warming reduction plan to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions 17 percent by 2020. Other

provisions include new renewable requirements for utilities, studies and incentives regarding new carbon capture and sequestration technologies, energy efficiency incentives for homes and buildings, and grants for green jobs, among other things.

Although not perfect legislation, the act is considered a giant step in moving America towards a more energy efficient future and making a dent in the power plant and auto emissions that bring about global warming.

However, the US Senate has not yet acted on similar legislation, and opponents are expected to put up a strong fight in that body. Also in June, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee reported out weaker energy legislation that would increase gas and oil production and not mandate greenhouse gas reductions. Other Senate legislation would enact such mandates. It is expected the Senate will take up energy legislation this fall.

The Pika vs. Global Warming

The November DOAS program will be presented by Jean Miller on the American Pika, a small mammal of the high elevations of the Rocky Mountains (see program details next month). Pikas rely on snow and high altitude to stay cool -- and keeping cool is critically important. Just a few hours of exposure to 78 degree temps can kill a pika.

Rising temperatures from global warming are forcing pikas to seek refuge at higher and higher altitudes in order to stay cool in the summer months. This makes them one of the many species, from polar bears to monarch butterflies to Bicknell's Thrush, which likely will not survive major climate change.

It is critical for us to address global warming now -- for wildlife and for humans alike.

What you can do: Contact US Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and urge them to work for strong climate legislation when the Senate takes up energy legislation. Tell them the threats from climate change are right here in NY and that you expect them to stand up for the state's interests.

Saveourenvironment.org has an easy way to contact senators on this issue: www.ga3.org/campaign/senate_clean_energy.

Addresses

US Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand/Charles Schumer
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Gillibrand — www.Gillibrand.senate.gov, (202) 224-4451
Schumer — senator@schumer.senate.gov, (202) 224-6542

Oneonta to Choose New Mayor

The City of Oneonta will vote on a new mayor in November, and the choice will make a difference in such issues as open space, green living, and energy.

It appears there will be three candidates on the ballot: Democrats Jason Corrigan and Dick Miller, and Republican Erik Miller. All have expressed support for the environment as part of their campaigns.

Jason Corrigan (www.unifyingoneonta.com) has made support of the rail system passing through the city one of his key points. He has proposed a commuter rail line from Albany to Binghamton to service Oneonta and other communities. He also calls for using solar panels on city buildings to reduce energy costs and pollution.

As part of his platform, Dick Miller (www.pickdick.net) states that, as mayor, he would: "Assure that in every decision made that sustainable practices, and environmental implications are always given careful consideration."

Erik Miller (www.erikmillerformayor.com) has the most extensive environmental track record of the candidates. He has served as Director of the Otsego County Planning Department, and is currently Executive Director of the Otsego County Conservation Association. In the latter position, he has advocated for protection of Otsego Lake, sustainable agriculture, and expanding area trail systems, as well as strong oversight of natural gas drilling in the area.

What you can do: If you are a city resident, inform yourself about the candidates and where they stand on the environment, and most important -- vote on Nov. 3!

AUDUBON CAMP 2009

Audubon Nature Camp was held August 10-13 at the Franklin Mountain Sanctuary. Ten children, ages 8-12, spent four sunny days engaged in a variety of activities under the supervision of science teachers Eamonn Hinchey and Peter Pollock. On Monday, Andy Mason guided the campers in building two more walkways for the wet parts of the trails. They then hiked the trails to the cave formations in the shale bank. After lunch the students made journals using a paper marbling technique. Each day the campers would make note of new discoveries and fun activities in their journals. The group hiked along the trails and played a predator-prey game called camouflage. The week's one and only homework assignment on Monday night was to find out who John James Audubon was and what he was famous for.

Tuesday morning started with a discussion of the life of Audubon. A summary of the discussion was logged in journals. The campers then

learned how to use a GPS unit to locate a geocache, hidden just above the hawk watch station. They continued hiking along the trails and trekked to the cave area to play another game of camouflage. After lunch, campers launched rocket balloons from the grassy area near the barn and chased them down as they flew in all directions. After cooling down from that, the children made cement tiles by gluing leaves and bark into large plastic Petri dishes and then covering them with cement.

On Wednesday morning the campers entered the coordinates for two other geocaches located at the sanctuary and spent the morning tracking them down to see what treasures had been hidden. After lunch they spent time playing a variety of logic games, and solving puzzles. Upon completion of each game or puzzle the students were rewarded with "magic" UV beads, which change colors when exposed to sunlight. The children then hiked over to the bog area and used aquatic

dip nets to capture and identify amphibians and various aquatic invertebrates.



Abby and friend

On Thursday morning the campers created two new geocaches, which were then hidden in separate locations in the sanctuary. They were named "Bullfrog, Bullfrog Braniac", and "Camocache". (Go to geocache.com to get their coordinates and try to find them!) They then hiked back to the barn to open up the cement tiles created on Tuesday. After lunch, the children participated in many experiments with liquid nitrogen, capping it off by making ice cream. Final entries were made in their journals and they were shared for "autographs." To celebrate the end of the week of camp, the children had a spirited squirt gun fight on the lawn.

Special thanks go to Corning Incorporated for the donation of Petri dishes.

Special thanks to the Clark Sports Center for the loaning of six GPS units.



2009 campers and camp leaders

~ Barbara Marsala

HAWKWATCH NEWS

At this writing the Broad-winged Hawk season is in swing at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, located on the DOAS Sanctuary. Broad-wings move through in large numbers in mid-September en route to the tropics—as far south as the Amazon basin. On Sept. 10, Tom Salo tallied 316 broad-wings out of a total 346 raptors that day.



Redtail,
Dave Kiehm

As we head into October, other buteos such as Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks will increase, as will accipiters including Cooper’s Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Late October also brings the first Golden Eagles—one of the hawkwatch’s major draws.

Visitors, spotters and counters are always welcome at the hawkwatch. For more information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, tomsalo@localnet.com. If you do visit, be sure to dress warmly!

Forecasts of anticipated good flights at the hawkwatch are sent out by email a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit www.pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/hawkcast/ to sign up. Daily tallies from Franklin Mt. are also available by email—contact Andy Mason as above.

More information and directions to the hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at www.franklinmt.org.

~ Andy Mason



Over 20 members of the St. James Episcopal Church enjoyed a picnic lunch in the barn at the DOAS Sanctuary on August 16th. The St. James Church has owned the Sanctuary property since 1965, with DOAS managing it since 1980.

**NEED A RIDE?
WANT TO HELP?**

If you would like a ride to our monthly programs, or would like to volunteer as a driver, call Jean Miller at 432-5767.



2009 Charter Dinner Registration Form

Reservations for the Charter Dinner must be made by October 11th. Menu choices are: herb encrusted pork loin, chicken marsala, and vegetable lasagne. The cost is \$28.00 per person. Complete this reservation form and mail, with your payment, to: Julia Gregory, P.O. Box 641, Unadilla, NY 13849, or call 607-563-2924.

Attendee Names: _____

Menu Choice: _____

Address: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Phone: _____

Thank you!

FAVORITE PLACES SERIES: WILBER PARK, ONEONTA

Wilber Park, set between Center Street and the High School on East Street in Oneonta, provides varied habitat for creatures and a nice variety of birds for birdwatchers. It can be an easy stroll on level ground, or a more strenuous hike if one chooses to explore the extensive trails above the park.

Ambling through the lower level reveals many common species, including woodpeckers, chickadees, juncos, and finches. Pileated woodpeckers are frequently seen at various locations around the park, and even on busy streets nearby. Kingfishers occasionally patrol the stream, announcing their presence with their loud, rattling cry. At the upper level, woodland species can be heard and found, including brown creepers, pewees, and black-throated green warblers. Hiking the

extensive trails on the hill above the large pavilion yields various thrushes and warblers, and an occasional surprise such as a Nashville warbler, a raven or an owl. If you extend your walk to include a trip around the high school, you'll



Wilber Park, Oneonta

hear yellow warblers, common yellowthroats, and many more field birds, as well as killdeer on the athletic fields, and red-tailed hawks soaring overhead. Owls have been known to perch on the goalposts of the practice field, as evidenced by pellets left behind.

This park also hosts the county's first nesting pair of merlins. During this past breeding season, these fast, powerful falcons could often be seen at the top of the dead tree near the swimming pool, preening or searching for prey. From mid- to late July, they were nearly impossible to miss, as the chicks fledged and became very vocal. Since merlins have successfully raised chicks here two years in a row, it seems likely they will become regular summer residents.

Wilber Park is also pedestrian-friendly, with most roads closed to cars, and nature trails that border the stream and wind through the forest. Add easy access and parking, and you have one of the Oneonta area's nicest birding spots.

~ Contributed by Sandy Bright

Editor's note: Visit <http://www.oneonta.ny.us/pdf/wilbermap08.pdf> and <http://www.oneonta.edu/visitoneonta/wilber2.asp> for further information, including maps, directions, and photos for Wilber Park.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME, CONTINUED

I offer my own "Favorite Place" as a coda to Dick DeRosa's engaging article "Nature's Pleasures Start at Home" in last month's Belted Kingfisher. There are so many Favorite Places around here, and we're fortunate compared to so many others... . But the best appreciation of the amazing natural world around us is quite possibly accomplished just outside our front or back door. Observing the incredible ecological framework of life forms that have co-evolved over eons requires only a set of willing eyes and ears and a bit of concentration suffused by wonder, as you step through that door. Blue Jays, ravens, and barred owls call, and hearing those coyotes howling at night still sends an exhilarating chill down the spine. The excitement of finding a red-bellied snake under a rock in your garden, the chance to rescue a tiny red eft paused in the middle of your driveway or to marvel at how much growth has occurred in trees, shrubs and other plants during the spring and summer. Each season has its own beauty and always amazing scenarios of nature to be savored by sight or sound, day or night. Home base is clearly the easiest place to relish nature's resiliency and beauty each and every day. The air is still fresh around here, and our area streams still have native trout! Will our upcoming generations continue to notice all this extravagance of nature, instead of increasing their devotion to electronic "virtual reality"? And does our nation and the world have the energy, money and will to continue to shepherd all of these products of our incredible evolutionary sequence? But for now, take advantage of the exciting natural world right around your home, while doing one's best to help guide our leaders into more constructive directions!

~ John Davis

DRAMATIC EAGLE CHASE AND ATTACK

If you spend enough time on the ridges of Otsego County in March or November, you are bound to see Golden and Bald Eagles migrating along with other raptors. I am lucky enough to live on one of these ridges. I see small numbers of eagles moving each spring and fall. It is always a treat to see these big, iconic birds. If I'm lucky, they do something besides gliding past on fixed wings.

One day last March, Jo Ann and I were walking the dog around the property. We spied an adult Golden Eagle about 200 feet high coming towards us in a glide. It was heading southwest along the ridge. The bird had a very full crop. Its head was illuminated as it moved directly towards the late day sun..

Within moments of spotting the golden, we watched a Red-tailed Hawk buzz it. Our local redtails are very intolerant of eagles.

After the redtail broke off, while the golden approached our location, I noticed it was heading towards 2 other eagles that were soaring close by. This pair of adult Bald Eagles stopped soaring and started gliding towards the golden. Then, suddenly, the larger bald flew aggressively towards the golden under power. The golden changed direction and fled out over the valley. Both balds pursued the golden side by side. With all 3 eagles close together, it was clear the golden was the smallest bird. The large female Bald Eagle was the lead attacker. It went after the golden repeatedly in what

seemed intended to be deadly attacks. The male bald stayed with the others but did not come any closer to the golden than about a wing span.

From the moment it fled, the golden was flying under power and could not gain any distance on the larger birds. The balds were able to stay right on top of it. Four or five times, the big eagle attacked the golden only to have its intended victim dodge and slip to the side to avoid its talons. We watched this chase and series of attacks for about 10 minutes until the birds went behind a nearby hill about a half mile away. I am convinced the golden was in mortal danger if it could not escape the other eagles' attacks.

I consulted several eagle experts about this attack. All seemed to think the Bald Eagles were defending a breeding territory. With all respect to the experts, these were the only adult Bald Eagles I saw in the area all spring or summer. If our property was part of their territory, it is unlikely that I would have only seen them once.

Another interesting eagle chase story was sent to me by Richard George of Edmeston. Last spring he watched a Golden Eagle chase a cat through a field from his house. It tried unsuccessfully several times to catch it while flying behind, the cat reached the house, jumped on the porch and went around the house. The eagle followed. Both disappeared so the outcome is unknown. How ironic when the birds are chasing the cats.

~ Tom Salo

BIRDING TIDBIT: MIGRATORY NAPS

Birds that normally sleep at night don't appear to suffer unduly from sleep loss when they migrate at night. This may be due to a string of daytime naps. The Swainson's Thrushes spend 5% of their daylight hours (while resting from flying) with their eyes closed in sleep. Thrushes, like many other birds, sometimes sleep with one eye shut, which means that half the brain is asleep. Half a brain and one eye allow the birds to react quickly to predators.

~ Natural History
Biology Letters.
May 2009



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.

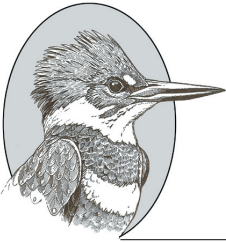
Note: Please mail National Audubon *renewals* to address on renewal notice.

NAME: _____

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Golden Eagle, by Dave Kiehm

AUGUST BIRD SIGHTINGS

Summer is officially over and flocks of birds perched on telephone wires are calling one another to start the long migratory trip together. A new stage of bird watching begins.

This past summer a few bird sightings were overlooked. Flo Loomis saw a pair of American Woodcocks in New Lisbon (6/18). She spotted a Red-tailed Hawk madly chasing a Bald Eagle in Oneonta (7/10) and she almost stepped on a Hermit Thrush nest harboring 3 nestlings in Morris (7/12). Carol Davis had a great surprise this summer. She had a pair of nesting Eastern Bluebirds for the first time ever which resulted in a brood of 3 baby bluebirds. She sent me several lovely photos of the family feasting at her bird feeder.

Kay Crane saw 12 Baltimore Orioles in Walton (8/11). What an incredible sight. In W. Burlington Tom Salo reported 2 Northern Harriers (8/22). Two days later in N. Harpersfield Randy Lynch spotted Common Nighthawks flying overhead. Tom Salo, on an evening canoe paddle on Canadarago Lake, also saw a Common Nighthawk (8/28). Jean and Bob Miller watched a male Red-bellied Woodpecker feeding a fledgling in Oneonta (8/31).

If you have bird sightings to report, please contact me
dbenko@frontiernet.net, 6815 Co. Hwy.
16, Delhi, NY 13753, 607 829-5218 by
October 18, 2009 for the November issue
of *The Belted Kingfisher*.

~ Dianne Benko



Bluebird, by Dave Kiehm