

THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

SEPTEMBER

9/17: <u>Program:</u> Sandy Bright and Charlie Scheim presenting on Merlins (see below right).

9/21: <u>Board Meeting</u>, 7pm, home of Stephen Rice.

OCTOBER

10/2: <u>Open House</u> at the DOAS Sanctuary, 10am-2pm.

10/15: <u>Charter Dinner</u> and <u>Program</u>: the Ice Age History of Oneonta, by Dr. Robert Titus.

10/19: <u>Board Meeting</u>, 7pm, home of Dave Kiehm.

NOVEMBER

11/19: <u>Program</u>: Joe Richardson to present on the topic of Rain Forests.

SEE P. 4-5 FOR DETAILS

MERLIN ...



... The very name conjures up images of a mystical, magical figure. During my early years of birdwatching, these diminutive falcons seemed to be exactly that: small, elusive blurs bulleting past the Hawkwatch during their fall migration. Each time an experienced hawkwatcher identified a Merlin, it would speed past before I could focus my binoculars. It seemed they would remain forever mysterious.

Then came the spring of 2008, a report of Merlins in Cooperstown, and another pair found in Oneonta. Wilber Park suited these Merlins well, and they took over an old crow nest near the High School road. They didn't seem to mind the many passing school busses, bikers and teenagers, or even the gawking birdwatchers that gathered to gaze.

(Continued on Page 5)

LOCAL MERLINS HIGHLIGHT SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

On Friday September 17, 2010 at DOAS' first monthly program since the summer break, Sandy Bright and Charlie Scheim will present their observations, data and photos for a pair of Merlins located in the Oneonta area. Over the past two years, Sandy and Charlie have been following the lives, behaviors and breeding habits of these two amazing birds.

Sandy and Charlie are two of our local chapter's most valued and involved mem-

bers. As a local educator, Sandy has fostered environmental awareness in youth through actively engaging her classes in wonderful projects focused on birding.

The program will take place at 7:30pm at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For further information, please contact Eleanor Moriarty, program director at 607-278-4083.

All DOAS programs are free and open to the public.

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President's Message



Tom Salo

DOAS HAS A NEW PRESIDENT

At the August 17 meeting of the Board of Directors, the board unanimously elected Dave Kiehm to fill the position of President. I will remain on the board as a Director. I have complete faith that Dave will do an excellent job. He will also benefit from a very amicable and dedicated board. This column was prepared before that meeting and is my last as DOAS President. At this moment, I want to reflect on a few things I feel were important during my tenure.

For me, one of the most satisfying efforts of the past few years has been our involvement in research on how Golden Eagles use our area both as a migration corridor in spring and fall, and as winter range. We had a very successful fund raising effort in 2007 to which many of you donated. Some of these funds were used by the National Aviary to purchase a telemetry device for tracking a Golden Eagle. Our relationship with the National Aviary has led to an excellent working relationship with a number of eagle researchers in Pennsylvania. The balance of the proceeds from our fund raising was used locally to cover the cost of spring migration counts we conducted in Delaware and Otsego Counties over the past 2 years. These count sites were chosen using telemetry data from our partners in Pennsylvania. We also had success last winter identifying areas with winter resident goldens. Two of 3 motion triggered cameras baited with road-killed deer carcasses captured photos of Golden Eagles. We plan to do more eagle monitoring this winter.

Another effort that represents a significant accomplishment by a number of people is this redesigned newsletter. It took a committee several months and a lot of hard work to decide on the final look. I hope you find the changes to your liking.

Early in 2008, personnel changes at Audubon New York presented an excellent opportunity for us to improve relations with National Audubon's NY State organization. Since that time we have been a regular presence at both the spring and fall meetings of the Audubon Council. We are in regular communication with the state office and I expect this relationship to continue to improve to the benefit of all involved.

Recently, we have been working to generate interest in New York for supporting the replacement of lead bullets used in hunting with non-toxic bullets that will not poison scavengers like eagles and vultures. Last spring the Audubon Council endorsed a resolution to that effect. The NY State Ornithological Association will consider a similar resolution this fall. The NY State Chapter of The Wildlife Society has been approached. We expect their support for this effort as soon as we gather some requested information from the New York State DEC.

I have enjoyed my time as President. I now look forward to the changes that Dave will bring.

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

THE DELAWARE—OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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"KINGFISHER EDITOR" AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS,

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COVER ARTWORK BY DAVE KIEHM

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CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

By Andy Mason

STATE LEGISLATIVE SESSION OVER—OR IS IT?

This year's marathon session in the NY State Legislature came to an end on Aug. 3, with passage of a near-record late state budget that contained deep cuts for state environmental agencies and programs.

Worst hit was the Environmental Protection Fund, which supports everything from recycling to waterfront revitalization and land conservation. The EPF, already short from cuts in previous years, was slashed over 30 percent.

As for legislation, it was a mixed bag this year. Among good bills that fell short: a proposal for a 5 cent fee on plastic shopping bags; protection for small wetlands; and efficiency rules for new or replacement outdoor lighting by public agencies.

Also left hanging were several bills related to regulation of the use and storage of hydro-fracking fluids and waste.

On the plus side was passage of a requirement on electronics manufacturers to collect and recycle or reuse their products

at the end of the useful lives of these items. Another measure will ban rechargeable batteries from NY's solid waste stream.

Also passed was a law mandating use of ultra-low sulfur home heating oil, starting in 2012. The Child Safe Playing Fields Act, that will keep pesticides off school and day care center playing fields and playgrounds, was signed by Governor Patterson.

There is hope that the Assembly will reconvene to take up the moratorium on horizontal drilling passed by the Senate.

What you can do: You can check on how your state reps voted on these and other measures at the Senate and Assembly web sites: www.senate.state.ny.us and www.assembly.state. ny.us. Let your legislators know your sentiments on their actions on these bills. Also, contact Gov. Patterson and urge him to sign the gas drilling moratorium bill if it reaches his desk.

GOOD NEWS FOR WOLVES—TENTATIVELY

We have written here about the Obama administration turning over wolf management to the western states, where the goal is to kill as many wolves as possible.

However, the tide may have turned. In August, a federal judge restored protection for wolves in the northern Rockies. The court ruled that the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) violated the Endangered Species Act by allowing different degrees of protection in different states. Wolves in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Utah will have their protections restored. In addition, wolf hunts in Montana and Idaho will be canceled.

The court's ruling strengthens the capacity of the ESA to

conserve wildlife near extinction. USFWS should use the best available science when it moves forward with future wolf delisting.

As might be expected, anti-wolf forces are already trying to strip ESA protections from wolves. They are pushing legislation in Congress to remove wolves from the ESA.

What you can do: Let your federal representatives and President Obama know that wolves are an iconic part of our wild heritage, and should not be persecuted. Point out that the ESA is well-supported by Americans, and should be science—not politics—based.

Addresses

President Barack Obama The White House, Washington, DC 20500 www.whitehouse.gov/contact (202) 456-1111

US Congress (US House of Representatives, Washington DC 20515)

Rep. Scott Murphy

(202) 225-5614 www.scottmurphy.house.gov Rep. Paul Tonko (202) 225-5076 fax: (202) 225-5077 www.tonko.house.gov

Rep. Maurice Hinchey (202) 225-6335 fax: (202) 226-0774

www.house.gov/hinchey Rep. Michael Arcuri (202) 225-3665 fax: (202) 225-1891 www.arcuri.house.gov

US Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand/Charles Schumer US Senate, Washington, DC 20510 Gillibrand: www.Gillibrand.senate.gov (202) 224-4451

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DOAS Hosts its 2010 Charter Dinner

The 42nd Annual Charter Dinner of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will be held Friday, October 15, 2010 at the Foothills Performing Arts Center on Market St. in Oneonta. The evening will begin at 5:30pm with a social hour, including appetizers and a cash bar, followed by a 6:30 buffet dinner. The program, which is open to the public, will begin at 7:30pm.

This year we are proud to present Dr. Robert Titus, Professor of Geology at Hartwick College, as our featured speaker. Dr. Titus will present on the Ice Age History of Oneonta and the local Susquehanna Valley. Dr. Titus has authored numerous articles, essays and books that highlight his passion for Catskill geology. He has gained a reputation for his incredible ability to communicate the geological history of the Catskills to the general public. Trained as a paleontologist, he researched the fossil record of NY State, producing a great deal of professional data. Since 1991 he has been committed to writing the story of our region's geological history, acquiring a growing readership in his articles featured in "Kaatskill Life Magazine", "The Woodstock Times" and "The Columbia County Independent". He recently published his third book, "The Other Side of Time." This, as well as his other publications, are aimed at the general reader.

Dinner Menu Choices for the event are Herb Encrusted Pork Loin, Chicken Marsala, or Vegetable Lasagne, for a cost of \$30.00 per person. Reservations must be made no later than October 10, 2010 by calling 607-563-2924, or returning the reservation form below to Julia Gregory, P.O. Box 641, Unadilla, NY 13849-0641. For further information, please contact Julia directly at the above number.

Julia Gregory and Eleanor Moriarty

SPRING EAGLE COUNT REPORT AVAILABLE

The spring migration counts we conducted in eastern Otsego County were very successful. Volunteers from the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch counted migrating raptors at 3 sites east of Otsego Lake centered around the Cherry Valley Creek Valley during March. This effort counted 79 migrating Golden Eagles moving through the area in March. 46 of these eagles were observed moving through the 10 mile wide, 3 site transect during the week of 7-13 March when all 3 sites were covered. Casual counting done at the central site - Davis State Park - on other days in March, recorded the additional 33 migrating Golden Eagles.

22 Bald Eagles were counted migrating through the transect during the organized count week. An additional 12 were observed moving north at Davis State Park on other dates. Counting at Davis State Park ended on 2 April. We are discussing the possibility of more counting at the park in spring 2011.

DOAS conducted a week of similar counts south of Cannon-sville Reservoir in Delaware County during March 2009. The Delaware effort had more total eagles but fewer Golden Eagles than the 2010 Otsego County surveys. Reports on both efforts can be found on the DOAS web site www.doas.us on the page for Golden Eagle research.

Tom Salo

OFFICERS ELECTED

We are pleased to announce the officers for the 2010-11 term, who were elected at the August Board of Directors meeting.

Welcome President Dave Kiehm, Vice Presidents Andy Mason and Joe Richardson, Secretary John Davis and Treasurer Bob Donnelly. The Board extends its heartfelt thanks to outgoing President Tom Salo for his four years of leadership and dedication to our Audubon Chapter mission and activites.

Barbara Marsala

2010 Charter Dinner Registration Form			
Please Complete identifying information below:	Menu Choice (Circle one next to each name)		
Name:	Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Name:	Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Name:	Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Name:	Pork Loin	Chicken Marsala	Veggie Lasagne
Address:	Please remit \$30 per person		
Address:	Total remitte	Total remitted:	
Phone:	Thank you!		

("Merlin", continued from front page)

They were a little annoyed when a researcher came from Maine and captured the female to band and test her, but even that was quickly forgiven and forgotten. Birds raising a family don't have time to hold grudges.

By the time three fledglings left the nest in mid-July, word of their existence had spread, and many birdwatchers came to observe the winsome juveniles as they practiced their flight and begged for food.

In the spring of 2009, with the original nest tree sacrificed to widen the road, Merlins chose a more secluded nest site, somewhere near the large pavilion in Wilber Park. While the nest site was never found, the three juveniles were easy to spot once they fledged. When quiet, most park visitors remained unaware of their presence. Whenever the adults brought food, though, loud vo-

calizations drew the attention of all but the most oblivious of picnickers.

Though they've been more elusive this year, sporadic sightings of Merlins confirm that they're still in Oneonta. Be on the lookout for these fast and fascinating birds, as it looks like they're here to stay!

Contributed by Sandy Bright

Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch Hosts its Fall 2010 Open House

Thousands of raptors of 15 species are counted moving south each fall as they concentrate along the ridges overlooking Oneonta. The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch began in 1989 as a survey of hawks and eagles migrating past DOAS' wildlife sanctuary in the Town of Davenport.

The site is noted for its flights of Golden Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks. In some years over 200 Golden Eagles have been seen—more than pass through any other hawkwatch in NY State. Most seasons tally over 2000 Red-tailed Hawks each fall. The middle two weeks of September are prime time for Broad-winged Hawks; Franklin Mountain had a record 2097 broad-wings in 2009. Other early season species include Osprey, kestrels, and the first wave of Bald Eagles.

This year, volunteers began tallying raptors the third week of August as the Hawkwatch began its 22nd consecutive counting season. Daily counts will continue through December. Our team of

dedicated volunteers records thousands of raptors each season: in 2009, 6334 total raptors of 15 species were counted. This was only the third time the watch topped 6000 birds, and was not far be-



Sharp-shinned hawk, by Dave Kiehm

hind 2003's record high of 6546.

On Saturday, October 2nd from 10am-2pm, DOAS will host an open house at the sanctuary. At 10:30 there will be a 45 minute beginners workshop

on Identifying Flying Hawks. A trail walk will leave the barn at 11:30am covering most of the Sanctuary grounds. The hawkwatch will be staffed throughout the day and refreshments will be served at the barn. This is an excellent opportunity to meet DOAS board members and get acquainted with the sanctuary, which offers varied terrain and beautiful vistas.

Forecasts of anticipated good flights at the hawkwatch are sent by e-mail a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit www.pets.groups.yahoo. com/group/hawkcast/. Daily tallies from Franklin Mountain are also available by e-mail—contact Andy Mason. Visitors, spotters and counters are always welcome. For more information on the Open House or the Hawkwatch, contact Andy Mason, (607)652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or Tom Salo, (607)965-8232, tomsalo@ localnet.com. Directions to the hawkwatch can be found at www. franklinmt.org (see "Favorite Places" article on page 6 of this

newsletter for directions as well). For more information on the hawk watch visit http://www.doas.us/.

Andy Mason and Tom Salo

FAVORITE PLACES: THE DOAS SANCTUARY

No list of favorite outdoor sites in the region would be complete without our own Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain! The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Sanctuary overlooks Oneonta from the south, providing a panoramic view of the Susquehanna River valley and surrounding hills of Otsego and Delaware Counties.

The Sanctuary encompasses approximately 100 acres, with a mix of habitats including open fields, second growth woods and a spruce plantation. A wetland with emergent shrubs is an important part of the protected land.

A series of marked trails provide access to much of the Sanctuary. The uphill trail is moderately strenuous, but others are easy hiking. A short boardwalk into the wetland is presently difficult to reach, due to beavers raising the water level, but other spots allow views.

A wide variety of wildlife can be found on the Sanctuary, including deer, muskrats, porcupines and mink. On rare occasions, black bears have been seen seeking out blueberries in the higher fields. For reptile and amphibian lovers, the wetland has turtles, frogs,

snakes and salamanders. Monarch butterflies, dragonflies and numerous other insects frequent the meadow blooms.

The bird life is as diverse as the habitats. Summer residents include orioles, swallows, bluebirds and other thrushes, and warblers such as Black-and-white, redstarts, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Blue and Green, Ovenbirds, Northern Waterthrushes. Blue-headed Vireos are common and cuckoos, Indigo Buntings, Pileated Woodpeckers, and a variety of flycatchers are present.

The wetland hosts herons, Wood Ducks and other waterfowl, and territorial Red-winged Blackbirds. Turkeys, Ruffed Grouse, woodland hawks are found in the forests, and Ravens are regularly sighted and probable nesters on the property.

Hartwick College Oneonta

Neathwa St 7

Neathwa Park Ust Southeade Mail

Borne Depot Depot

Map courtesy of Charlie Scheim

The Sanctuary is also the site of the <u>Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch</u>, one of NY State's premier fall hawkwatches (see article P. 5).

The flora is not to be overlooked either. Spring wildflowers, fruiting shrubs, pine woods, and bog plants along the wetland edges are all attractions. In fall, the Sanctuary provides excellent views of colorful foliage both on the property and up and down the valley.

Consider a visit in the next couple of months to explore this wonderful spot. The sanctuary can be reached by taking Oneonta's Main Street south across NY Route 28. After passing through the light, turn immediately left at the T onto Southside Drive. Turn right after 8/10 mile onto Swart Hollow Road. Go 1 1/2 miles and take a sharp right on Grange Hall Road. After 2/10 mile, take a sharp left into the driveway, or park nearby on Grange Hall Road. The hawk watch is 100 yards up the hill from the barn.

Andy Mason

IRWIN GOOEN: A REMEMBRANCE

Former DOAS director and officer Irwin Gooen passed away May 28, 2010 in Oneonta. Irwin was a well-known environmentalist and peace activist fondly remembered by many local outdoor enthusiasts and conservationists.

Among his many talents, Irwin was a skilled canoeist who lead local outings, and Outward Bound classes in Minnesota's Boundary Waters Wilderness. His love for waterways prompted much of his activism; for instance, he helped to lead the battle against the clearing and filling of a river bottom forest in Oneonta where Hannaford and Home Depot now sit. In addition, he organized Earth Day river cleanups along the Susquehanna River for several vears.

Irwin served as DOAS secretary as well as a board member, and promoted conservation in our Chapter. His witty sense of humor and insouciance were among the qualities that endeared him to his many friends in Audubon and the local ADK chapter where he was also active.

It can truly be said that Irwin Gooen lived his convictions. His simple, lowimpact lifestyle was an extension of his love and concern for our natural world. It is a lesson he has left for all of us.

Andy Mason

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IMPORTANT NOTICE TO NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY MEMBERS: PLEASE JOIN OUR LOCAL CHAPTER

If you are a member of the National Audubon Society, you are receiving this issue of The Belted Kingfisher compliments of our local Chapter, the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society. Due to printing and postage costs and the loss of the portion of National Audubon Society (NAS) dues that our Chapter receives, we are not able to send the newsletter to NAS-only members.

NAS-only members receive the September Kingfisher—this issue—each year. However, the other eight issues go only to those who have taken a local membership or are joint local/NAS members.

We encourage all NAS-only members to consider a local membership in order to help defray the costs of the newsletter and support our Chapter's education and conservation activities. Local memberships are \$15 per year or

\$25 for two years—a membership form is below.

Your mailing label will inform you of your membership status: an L indicates a local member, with expiration date (year and month, e.g. '1011' indicates November 2010); an N indicates an NAS-only member; both an L and an N indicates a joint local/NAS member. If you are an NAS-only member, you will need to take a local membership in order to continue receiving *The Belted Kingfisher*. If you are a local member or a joint local/NAS member, you will continue receiving the newsletter as in the past.

We appreciate the continued support of all members for our efforts to protect the natural world.

Andy Mason

NATURAL GAS UPDATE AVAILABLE

Concerns about the impacts of new gas exploration technologies led DOAS to pass a position statement in December 2009 opposing high volume hydrofracturing of horizontal gas wells in New York. Since then, much has happened on this issue. A complete update on this high-risk practice was prepared for this newsletter by Director Jean Miller. Unfortunately, a lack of space prevents us from running the full update this month. We have made the article available on our web site, www.doas.us, along with a link to a pledge to not lease land for this purpose. The pledge - http://sustainable-otsego.org/pledge - was prepared by the Citizens Against Unsafe Gas Drilling Coalition.

Tom Salo

NYSOA MEETING AT MONTEZUMA OCTOBER 22-24

The 63rd Annual Meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) will be held October 22-24 in the Auburn, NY - Montezuma Wetland Complex Region, hosted by Onondaga Audubon Society, and the Montezuma Audubon Center.

The meeting will feature an excellent mix of field trips including visits to Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and other sites in the Montezuma Wetland Complex; Fair Haven Beach and Little Sodus Bay; Derby Hill; and Onondaga Lake.

A papers session, social events, and the NYSOA delegates meeting are among the other weekend activities. Well-known Cape May author, photographer and birder Richard Crossly will speak at Saturday evening's banquet.

A registration form for the meeting can be found on the NYSOA web site: http://www.nybirds.org.

Andy Mason

DOAS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION			
Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, <u>The Belted Kingfisher</u> . 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:		
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Late summer Common Yellowthroat, by Dave Kiehm

MAY THROUGH SUMMER BIRD SIGHTINGS

September starts a new publication year for The Belted Kingfisher and also a new season of bird watching and bird activity. If you have bird sightings to report, please contact me dbenko@frontiernet.net, 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi, NY 13753, 607 829-5218 by September 19, 2010 for the October issue of The Belted Kingfisher.

The month of May saw a few interesting bird sightings. Andy Mason saw his first of season Alder Flycatcher and also a Canada Warbler in Jefferson on 5/17. A male Indigo Bunting was spotted in Treadwell by Dorian Huneke on 5/23.

Flo Loomis saw a Scarlet Tanager flitting through a tall oak tree in New Lisbon on 6/6. In North Franklin on 6/9 a Chestnut-sided Warbler was flying to and tapping on a window of Rose Beers house. Peter Clark reported a couple of fun bird happenings in Cooperstown. As of June 1st, a Baltimore Oriole had built a nest in his willow tree and never failed to scold him as he walked under the nest. Peter joined in the exchange by whistling and talking to the bird. Also a friendly Red-winged Blackbird visited the Clark's birdbath for a ritual dinnertime bath display. The bird announced its arrival with repeated tweets, checked for possible enemies and then perched on the birdbath and took a number of dips in the water. On 6/16 Elizabeth Dewell was weeding a flowerbed in Ashland and heard a hoarse grunting sound. She was surprised to see a Double-crested Cormorant sitting on top of her chimney. On the same day a Pileated Woodpecker flew in front of Martha Frey's windshield in Manlius. John Birkett saw two Great Egrets and four Great Blue Herons in Bainbridge on 6/18. John Davis reported a possibly unusual pre-migratory bird behavior by sighting a flock of 25 Killdeer in Cooperstown on 6/27. On the last day of June Becky Gretton saw a singing Clay-colored Sparrow in Springfield.

On 7/19 Dennis Fowler observed an early morning drama on the pond on Mill Creek Road in Otego. In a shallow section of the water a Great Blue Heron was raising a rumpus. Apparently a bold snapping turtle set its sight and mouth on the foot of the heron. As the siege raged on several ducks and another soaring heron looked on to eventually see the embattled heron successfully free itself. The war was over.

On 8/1 Henry Weil observed an immature Merlin in Cooperstown as it was flying well and fast, but its landing was an obvious challenge and compared the sight to the lyrics of a Tom Petty song. "I'm learning to fly; Coming down is the hardest thing". The next day in Oneonta Sandy Bright saw a Merlin grab a house sparrow or a similar looking bird and watched as it landed in a nearby tree with its prey. She also saw a warty faced Muscovy Duck hanging around the Woodhaven Golf Course in West Oneonta. Its golf game was just par for the course and thus ended an exciting summer of bird watching activity.

Dianne Benko