



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

November

November 9 – Bird seed pickup

November 15 – DOAS Public and Member Meeting

November 19 – DOAS Board Meeting

December

December 7 – Owl Field Trip

December 14 – CBC Oneonta

December 28 – CBC Ft. Plain

January

January 11 – Eagle Field Trip

January 17 – DOAS Program

January 19 – Waterfowl Count

February

February 21 – DOAS Program

More information on page 7

All DOAS programs are free and open to the public

♻️ Printed on recycled paper ♻️

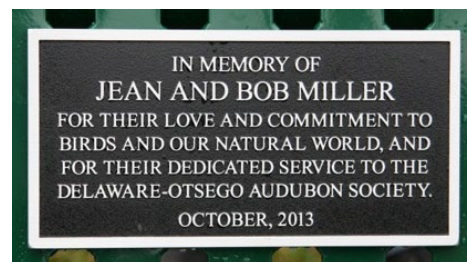
DOAS Dedicates Bench in Memory of Jean and Bob Miller



Sarah Root

On October 5, our Chapter dedicated a bench at the DOAS Sanctuary in remembrance of Jean and Bob Miller who had been integral parts of DOAS since its founding in 1968. Jean Miller served as President for over a decade, and Bob as *Belted Kingfisher* editor for 30 years, among their many contributions to the organization.

DOAS Historian
Julie Smith



prepared remarks noting Jean and Bob's commitment to the environment and their deep love for birds in addition to their positive presence in the community in many ways. Sarah Root, Bob and Jean's daughter, also spoke about her parents instilling an awareness and appreciation for nature in her and her siblings.

The DOAS Board of Directors is pleased to be able to remember the Millers in this way, and thanks all who contributed to the memorial.

Andy Mason

Photos by Gerianne Carillo and Helen McLean



Winter Waterfowl Watching

As the weather in Central NY continues to grow colder, birdwatching activities shift to feature new species. Our migratory songbirds are mostly gone from the area and it is again time to drag out our waterfowl guides. I don't know about you, but for me, I feel as though I need to re-learn my waterfowl ID each year (just as my brain can't seem to retain warbler species from one spring to the next).

The nice thing about waterfowl is that they are out in the open, not frustratingly



Wood Duck By Frank Wouters
(Flickr) [CC-BY-2.0
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)],
via Wikimedia Commons

hidden amongst leaves and flitting to a new obscure location as soon as my binoculars are trained on where they were. In the open, yes, but alas, not always close enough to shore to make out more than brownish blobs on water.

I am always pleasantly surprised to find something unusual within the rafts of more common species. My first instinct is to write off larger groups of birds as "only" a flock of Canada Geese or Mallards, but I have learned that stopping to inspect these groups more closely can typically result in finding other waterfowl as well - and makes it valuable to look despite what I might initially think.

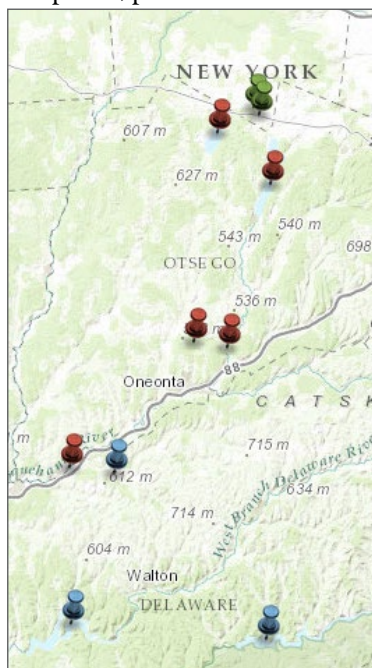
If you want to spend some time this winter on viewing waterfowl, grab your favorite field guide and your binoculars and spotting scope (if you have one). Don't forget to dress in layers so you can be comfortable, and bring a friend - it's more fun that way. Although some locations are accessible from the roadside, other areas require hiking to the shoreline.

Some favorite spots for waterfowl watching in our area are depicted in the map pictured here (available as an interactive map at the doas.us website). If you would like to share your favorite spot that is accessible to the public, please feel free to email the location to sjohandley@gmail.com along with any specific species to highlight for that location.

Map Markers include:

- Otsego Lake
- Canadarago Lake
- Weaver Lake/Youngs Lake
- Goodyear Lake & Crumhorn Boat Launch Wetlands
- Wilber Lake - City of Oneonta Reservoir
- East Sidney Lake
- Ouleout Creek
- Pepacton Reservoir
- Cannonsville Reservoir

Conservation Note: Feeding waterfowl is strongly discouraged. Visit the NYSDEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7001.html to find out why!
Susan O'Handley



THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Helen McLean

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To contribute notes or articles for
The Belted Kingfisher, email:
editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

Green power—it's available now!—We spend a great deal of time focused on the threats posed by fossil fuels—oil, coal and gas. The environmental dangers of climate change, oil spills, open pit mining, groundwater and air pollution are all too familiar to us, and conservationists battle locally, nationally and globally to resist production and use of these energy sources.

But what can we do ourselves to reduce our carbon footprint? There are many ways, from energy conservation in our homes to hybrid cars to local-produced fuel pellets to installing solar panels, among others. However, there is nearly always a need for energy from local utilities, and that usually means electricity from coal or gas or nuclear power plants.

However, consumers do have choices for the source of their electricity. In New York State, utilities may offer green energy they generate themselves, or consumers can avail themselves of low-impact electricity from a number of suppliers using the existing grid system. These options require no change in equipment or utility—the green power you use is just added to the mix of regional energy, increasing the percentage of wind, solar, small hydro, and other environmentally preferable electricity in the system. Likewise, the amount of fossil-fueled energy is reduced.

The US Environmental Protection Agency maintains a list of green power suppliers at their website,

<http://www.epa.gov/greenpower/>

For example, in our area, NYSEG offers a 100% windpower option, and National Grid offers various mixes of wind and small hydro. Other companies are listed also.

There is typically a premium of 1.5 to 2 cents per kilowatthour for green energy, but this represents a relatively small portion of

electric bills, and it is probably one of the most cost-effective ways of doing something positive for the environment.

An even better way to reduce the impacts of our electricity use is through installation of solar panels. However, this does require a significant commitment and change, including purchase and installation of panels and electronic equipment to safely send surplus electricity back to the grid for credit. Fortunately, utilities are now required to purchase excess power, eliminating the need for a large, complicated battery array as in the past.

This initial investment, and the technical challenges keep many homeowners and businesses from considering solar. However, a relatively new industry of companies that install and lease solar systems to consumers makes this more feasible. Typically, there is no up-front cost and companies claim that the energy savings will equal or exceed the monthly lease fee for the equipment.

There are some caveats: not all homesites are suitable for solar—the companies survey your location beforehand; also, the solar companies garner the significant federal and state tax credits available for the equipment. Homeowners would get these credits if they owned the solar equipment. And, the solar panels and lease agreement can complicate selling a home. It is important to carefully evaluate a leasing program before committing.

But, generating your electricity right on site, with a fraction of the impacts of fossil fuels, is very appealing for environmentalists, and may be worth a look.

What you can do—Check the EPA website or your local utility for green power options. Solar leasing company web sites include sungevity.com, solarcity.com, and sunrun.com. Other can be found with a web search.

Andy Mason

Removing Invasive Plants

We live in a world full of invasive plants. For me, the question is – Which invasives do I decide to live with, and which ones do I remove? Secondly, how do I remove them?

My approach to the first question seems arbitrary. Plants like



knapweed, dame's rocket and wild carrot I leave in the fields. But I remove others, such as parsnip, garlic mustard, and Japanese honeysuckle. To my mind, the former never seem to monopolize the land, but the latter plants do around me.

Garlic Mustard (Alliaria petiolata). Photo by sannse, Tapeley Park, Instow, North Devon; from Wikimedia Commons

I cannot always defend my method of removal. Some plants I can remove just by carefully timing when I weed them. For instance, honeysuckle has shallow roots and can generally be torn out completely. Parsnip has a taproot, but if I wait until the plant is starting to flower, the taproot weakens considerably and it pulls out easily.

However, there are plants which I know of no other way to get rid of other than pesticides. I have stands of myrtle, lily-of-the-valley, and crown vetch. It completely takes over if I let it live. I have resorted to using strong pesticides to kill them. This method works better for me. I don't know which is worse; the use of pesticides or leaving invasive plants all over. If anyone has any better ways to remove these plants, I would like to hear about it.

Bob Donnelly

Introducing Becky Gretton

DOAS Board of Directors

I would like to introduce myself as the newest member of the DOAS Board of Directors. A lifetime of interest in birds has led me to this new venture.

I was raised in Western New York in a country setting surrounded by farmland. My mother was interested in birds and this undoubtedly focused me in that direction. My brothers and I were sent “outside to play” all year around, with ice skating, bicycling, hiking the fields and swimming in the creek being regular activities. How better to become familiar with one’s habitat?

I taught Elementary Music (a Band Director, primarily) for 32 years. A trip to Cape May Point for a Spring Birding Weekend led to my discovering the wonder of birding by ear. Music manifests itself in many ways, and I studied bird song in hopes of using this

form of identification well. Bird sounds became better organized in my mind with timbre, rhythm, tempo, and dynamics being key points. This is still a daily wonder (and challenge)! A trip to Hawk Mountain piqued an interest in hawk watching which was necessarily delayed for many years.



Over the years, activities offered by the DOAS have expanded my range of birding activities, and each year I look forward to the Christmas Bird Count, a Breeding Bird Survey route, spring migration, summer birding, and fall migration. Who knew about Golden Eagles in winter until camera trapping evolved? My interest in hawk watching finally became reality with my retirement from teaching. The Franklin Mountain hawk watch offered the opportunity to participate regularly.

Living in our beautiful part of the world is a privilege. Stewardship is a necessity. The DOAS provides resources that lead us toward this goal.

Becky Gretton



Red-Tailed Hawk

Her shrill “kee-er-r-r” startles the air

The raptor stirs above Katahdin

Her span of wings

Floats on the warm push of a thermal column

Her fanned-out tail glows from the solar cauldron

The God-hawk radiates over the universe.

Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr.



Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch Update

Late September and early October have been relatively quiet at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch. An extended period of fair weather, brought on by steady high-pressure systems, kept raptors largely settled down. The usual early October variety did occur, however, with 13 species being recorded.

The second half of October and the first half of November typically bring larger flights of Red-tailed Hawks and Golden Eagles—Franklin Mt.’s premier species. Cold fronts, with the following north and northwest winds are the ticket the birds need to move. Other later season species include Red-shouldered Hawks, Northern Goshawks, and possibly Rough-legged Hawks.

Visitors, spotters and counters are always welcome at the hawkwatch. Keep your eye on the weather, or sign up for Hawkcast, (www.pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/hawkcast/) our email alerts of anticipated good flights. Daily tallies from Franklin Mt. are also available by email—contact Andy Mason, below. Remember that conditions on the mountain can be cold and dress accordingly. Counters are present at the lookout each day, unless it is raining.

For more information, contact:

Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, salothomas@gmail.com. Directions to the hawkwatch can be found at www.franklinmt.org.

Basic Eagle Identification

By Tom Salo

Illustrations by Dave Kiehm

Distinguishing between our two eagle species can be difficult. People who spend a lot of time watching raptors look for specific identification traits which make it possible to separate Bald Eagles from Golden Eagles. If you've ever found yourself puzzled after a large dark bird passes out of sight, remember these key questions to help identify these species:

Are you certain it is an eagle?

Where is there white on the bird?

Is the head more or less than half the length of the tail?

Is the profile flat or a dihedral?

More information can help clinch the identification. Consider:

Other physical details.

The date.

The habitat.

The bird's behavior.

Are you certain it is an eagle? Dark Rough-legged Hawks greatly resemble immature Golden Eagles. They are smaller, lighter and hold their wings in a dihedral which levels at the wrist. Their secondaries and primaries show much more white underneath than an eagle. Both species of vultures are large black birds. The way Turkey Vultures rock in flight is very unlike a stable eagle. Black Vultures have light primaries and a very short tail. Study your field guide to rule out these species.



Immature Bald Eagle



Immature Golden Eagle

Where is there white plumage? Adult Bald Eagles are obvious because of their all white head and tail. Birds with noticeable white on the body or in the wing linings are Bald Eagles.

Immatures of both species can have a white tail with a dark terminal band. Birds with white plumage limited to the base of the tail and a patch in the flight feathers of the wing are Golden Eagles. Adult Golden Eagles have no white feathers of note (occasionally a small amount of white at the base of the tail or some small spots of down can be seen).

Is the head more or less than half the length of the tail? Bald Eagles have large heads with large beaks relative to Golden Eagles. A rule of thumb for separating these species: if the head is more than half the length of the tail, the bird is a Bald Eagle. Golden Eagle's heads are about a third the length of their tail. Flying overhead, goldens present a shape similar to a buteo.

Is the bird's profile flat or dihedral? Bald Eagles soar on flat wings. Golden Eagles generally soar with their wings held up in a dihedral.



Bald Eagle profile top, Golden Eagle bottom

Other physical details: In good light, look for the iridescent gold head and nape that gives the Golden Eagle its name. If visible, a bare, scaled leg belongs to a Bald Eagle. Feathers all the way to the foot are found on a Golden Eagle.

Date: Bald Eagles are found in New York all year. Relatively large numbers will congregate in some areas in winter. Golden Eagles in New York are mostly migrants observed in mid-late fall and early spring. A small number winter in New York. Others may linger into early winter and depart when severe weather arrives. Golden Eagles are quite rare in New York from May to September.

Habitat: Bald Eagles are associated with open water. Golden Eagles are open country birds. Occasionally, individual goldens will be found among the Bald Eagles in the Delaware watershed in winter. Both species will travel long distances searching for food. When goldens are in NY, either species may be found where there is carrion, regardless of habitat. During the migratory period, goldens can be found perched or foraging in the open areas of upstate New York.

Behavior: While Bald Eagles prefer the most energy efficient way of acquiring a meal – often scavenging - Golden Eagles are more apt to be seen hunting. Goldens are regularly reported attacking Wild Turkeys in New York. Bald Eagles are often seen perched above rivers waiting for a morsel to float by.

Montezuma Field Trip Sightings

On Sunday October 20th, the Annual Fall Montezuma trip produced a rare find for a group of about 12 participants – a close-up view of a juvenile White-faced Ibis with a juvenile Glossy Ibis. A number of species were seen that day, so instead of making a long list I will mention the most impressive in this article.

On the way into the Montezuma Center, the group spotted a Peregrine Falcon, Pectoral Sandpipers, Northern Shovelers, Green and Blue-winged Teal and Northern Pintails. As we traveled along the main wildlife viewing trail, it was quite noticeable that Montezuma is going through major stages of draining and re-configuring the wetland areas. Piles of grasses and muck were located around the whole area, along with dredging machinery. In spite of this, we spotted numerous ducks such as the Green-winged Teal, Pintails, Coots and the little Pied-billed Grebe. It was on this route that we had the close-up of the White-faced Ibis with the Glossy Ibis juvenile.

We experienced lots of photo ops with the Ibis, along with a great view of an immature Bald Eagle. During the day we spotted about five to six Bald Eagles, mature and juveniles.

When we scanned the marshes along the main wildlife route, at least eight juvenile and female hunting Northern Harriers were seen

flying low over the grasses.

Moving on to the different pools heading north, we stopped at the large marsh area located off East Road and spent a great deal of time with spotting scopes from two different roads. In this marsh grass area, we observed Sandhill Cranes (at least nine),

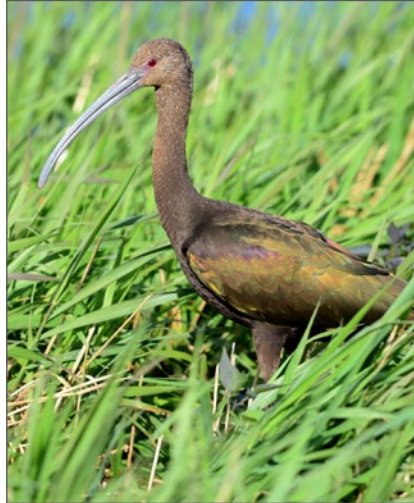
many Snow Geese with a few blue morphs mixed in, some Northern Pintails, American Black Ducks, two beautiful American White Pelicans, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, and a Black-bellied Plover (a wonderful surprise).

A new viewing area has been established, located on the way to the Montezuma Administration Offices. This requires going north through the town of Savannah and taking a right at the first road out of town. A beautiful viewing stand has been built and while there we spotted a juvenile Black-crowned Night Heron. About five participants went on to the Audubon Montezuma Center to see what might be hanging out in those wetlands. They observed more Great Blue Herons, Sandhill Cranes and a possible Dowitcher. Please mark this date: The Annual Spring Montezuma Trip will be Sunday March 23rd, 2014. We will greet the migration upon their return.

Eleanor Moriarty

White-faced Ibis by Dave Kiehm

Juvenile Bald Eagle by Randy Lynch



Trish Marki and her husband brought owls to the Hawkwatch Open House in October. Starting from top left, Screech Owl, Barred Owl, Eurasian Eagle Owl, Barn Owl and Snowy Owl.

Photos by Helen McLean



Upcoming Activities

November

November 9 – Bird Seed pick up day: Walmart parking lot, Oneonta, 10 AM - 12 noon. Order seeds online:

<http://www.doas.us/store>

November 15 – DOAS Public and Member Meeting:

Binghamton National Weather Service meteorologist Dave Nicosia, will speak on “*Highways in the Sky: Wind and Weather Patterns for Bird Migration*.” The talk will cover detecting bird migration using weather radar, predicting migration patterns through the BirdCast program at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, and Hurricane Sandy’s impact on bird movements. Dave Nicosia has over 20 years of experience with the National Weather Service, and he is a knowledgeable birder and field trip leader with the Cornell Lab and the Naturalists’ Club of Broome County.

The program will be presented at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St. in Oneonta. The program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

November 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

December

December 7 – Short-eared Owl Field Trip: Meet at the Cooperstown village docks at the end of Fair St. at 3:00 PM. Contact Bob Donnelly at rsdonn@yahoo.com or 607-264-8156.

December 14 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count (CBC): This is our 45th year of participating in the national count. Everyone, novice or experienced, is welcome to join us on this fun day. Small groups in one or two cars count all the birds they find in their assigned area, within our designated 15-mile radius circle centered around Milford, for whatever hours they choose.

Each group has a leader who will have received appropriate materials beforehand. Alternatively, instead of joining a group, you can count birds at your own feeder off and on throughout

the day if you are within our circle. If you are a new counter for either the group counts or the feeder counts, please contact Sandy Bright at sbright@hartwick.edu or 607-287-4465. People who have participated before will be contacted.

December 28 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count (CBC):

Contact Tom Salo at 607-965-8232, salothomas@gmail.com

January

January 11 – Eagle Field Trip: The outing visits rivers and reservoirs in Delaware County where the birds concentrate to feed. Recent trips have turned up 20+ eagles. Other raptors and waterfowl are usually sighted also. We 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 7:00 AM. Carpooling is strongly encouraged and participants can be picked up en route in Delhi and Walton. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon. For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

January 17 – DOAS Program: *Some Shore Birds of Bunche Beach and Sanibel Island*, by Rick Bunting.

January 19 – Waterfowl Count: The NY State Ornithological Association’s annual statewide waterfowl count. DOAS covers Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and Cannonsville Reservoir and the W. Branch of the Delaware River. This effort involves surveying waterways where they can be seen, and identifying and counting ducks and geese. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year.

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

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; family memberships \$20 annually or \$30 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: _____

Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation: \$_____



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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September–October Bird Sightings

The past month has been a glorious example of the perfect fall. My husband and I have been taking daily walks enjoying the fresh air and the beauty of the natural setting. We've been thrilled to see two Eastern Meadowlarks, two soaring Red-tailed Hawks, one screeching repeatedly like the opening to the TV show *Northern Exposure*, a hunting marsh hawk, a flock of soon-into-flight Mallards, Eastern Bluebirds flitting from telephone wire to telephone wire, American Robins scurrying through a grove of apple trees and a mature Bald Eagle perched with an immature staying very close in a nearby tree. It couldn't get any better.

On 9/19 while walking his dog on an early Cooperstown morning John Davis suddenly saw 8-9 American Crows come from behind a wooded area harassing a low-flying Northern Harrier while two

croaking Common Ravens joined the mix. Bob Donnelly saw a pair of Great Egrets at the mill pond just north of Richfield Springs the next day. Ted Buhl had a special sighting that he thinks is an Otsego County first. On 10/2 he saw a Eurasian Widgeon, very handsome in eclipse plumage, on the northwest corner of Allen's Lake hanging out with 6-10 American Widgeons with neighboring Wood Ducks floating by. On 10/9 Andy Mason heard two Great-horned Owls volleying at 5:30 am in Jefferson. They were evidently near enough and loud enough to be heard through closed windows. Oct. 9th was a birding bonanza. Jo Ann Salo heard an Eastern Screech Owl in W. Burlington on her daily walk, she and Tom have been hearing Barred Owls regularly both in the day and in the dark and Betty Armbruster saw a Merlin perched at the top of a tree in the parking area of Weaver Lake. Peter Regan wondered about this Eastern Bluebird



Merlin, Wikimedia Commons

activity. He had 7 bluebirds by his house in Pittsfield in a tree that has a bird box nailed to it. The group repeatedly landed on the box and peeked in. He thought this was odd to see on Oct. 15th. Cindy Campbell heard a Great-horned Owl calling persistently in Cherry Valley on 10/18. The owl was hidden in the pines and she was thwarted from getting very close and from having a better view by thorny blackberry bushes. Tom Salo watched 80 Brant fly overhead going South in W. Burlington on 10/20. Nearly another birding season has gone by and we will soon begin enjoying our winter friends at our feeders.

If you have bird sightings to report, contact me at:

dbenko@frontiernet.net, or
6815 Co. Hwy 16, Delhi, NY 13753, or at
607-829-5218 for the next issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*. Dianne Benko