



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

April

April 5 – Lake Otsego Waterfowl

April 12 – Earth Festival

April 15 – Board Meeting

April 18 – DOAS Program - Eagle Research - in Cooperstown

April 19 – Snipe and Woodcock

May

May 3 – Glimmerglass Bird Walk

May 4 – Stamford Bird Walk

May 10 – Greenway Bird Walk

May 11 – DOAS Sanctuary Walk

Mid May – South Hill Bird Walk

May 16 – DOAS Program

May 17 – Onderdunk Rd Bird Walk

May 17 or 18 – Big Day Bird Count

May 20 – Board Meeting

May 21 – Wildflower Walk

June

June 1 – *Birds, Brunch and Beer*

June 20-22 – Adirondack Trip

More information on page 7

More Golden Eagle News

On March 18 we tagged and released our third Golden Eagle of the season. This was an aggressive 3 year old male bird which was named Greg by one of the supporters of the project. At 10 pounds it was average weight for a golden but large for a male. I had the pleasure of sharing the trapping blind in New Lisbon with NYSDEC eagle expert Scott Van Arsdale when the bird was captured. I had a moment of panic when I was watching the bird through binoculars. The bird put its head down to feed. Peripherally, I saw Scott hit the contact button on the remote controller. Nothing



Greg, photo by Becky Gretton

happened! Scott too had been watching the bird closely and had just missed the button. The next time the bird put its head down, pop went the launcher and Greg was caught.

Greg is the first Golden Eagle captured in Otsego County. Being an immature bird, he may remain in our area well into April before moving north.

Jean, the large adult caught in Andes, was out of cell range for an extended time. Since the transmitters only connect to the cell network at a specific time each day, we were wondering

if she migrated without checking in. It is possible she could have been in a cell dead zone at connection time each day. However, on March 17 she moved further north into Delaware County where there is cell service. She had not migrated as of March 19.

Maxine's unit has not connected in a while. The lack of reliable cell service in the wild parts of our area complicate locating the birds. It is these wild areas that are most likely to harbor Golden Eagles. Maxine's last location was between Hancock and Roscoe. We expect to provide more information on her soon.

We had hoped to catch 4 eagles this winter. Considering the extreme wariness of these birds, some hardware problems and the severe winter weather, the season was a great success. We will use the remaining transmitter next winter. Experts who have trapped Golden Eagles in the east and west tell us that eastern birds are much more wary and difficult to catch. Our experience seems to support that view.

Being present when Scott trapped Greg was a thrill I will never forget. After releasing the bird, Scott was left blooded and smiling. He too should find him hard to forget.

If you would like to see more photos, and learn more about our efforts to document, trap and track Golden Eagles in Delaware and Otsego Counties, come to the program in Cooperstown on April 18. Also see page 5 for more photos.

Tom Salo

Hepatica Hollow

Finally! It's that longed-for time of year when winter has lost its grip on the land. Geese are winging overhead; Alice heard grouse drumming on the hill beyond the creek; and this evening, we'll listen for the "peent" of male woodcocks in our hillside meadow, and strain to see then rocketing out of the grass into the dimming sky in their "skydance" courtship display. All this tells us that tomorrow – tomorrow we must pay a visit to Hepatica Hollow!

Hepatica Hollow lies beyond the creek and its fringing hemlock grove, where the conifers give way to the mixed hardwood forest that clothes the slopes above. Several years ago we found in this little basin the richest abundance of spring wildflowers anywhere on our property. Spring wildflower season is a short one, and it also is the season when our little creek often becomes a bank-full torrent.

Thus, for a few years Hepatica Hollow successfully hid from us during its season of glory. Once discovered, though, the hollow draws us back each spring, torrent or no. The progression of blooms begins with hepatica itself, its delicate, cream-to-violet blooms rising like sparkling stars above the long-dead leaf litter of autumn. Hepatica is followed closely by pink-striped spring beauty, then purple trillium, blue cohosh, foam-flower, toothwort, jack-in-the-pulpit. All these species crowd their flowering and leafing into the few, short weeks between snowmelt and the re-leafing of the trees, when deep shade returns to the forest floor. Spring wildflowers are not shade-loving; they flourish when nights are still cool but when daytime illumination reaches the forest floor virtually unobstructed. During this season the woodland flowers stockpile nutrients and energy in small underground bulbs that persist in near-dormancy through summer, fall and winter, then send up shoots and flowers to celebrate again their season in the sun. Surprisingly, these "spring ephemerals", as they often are called, really are long-lived perennials despite their small size and months-long disappearance from view. They persist successfully from year to year, but only if the soils they live in are left undisturbed, and only if their flowers, leaves and bulbs are left in peace.

Chances are, there is a "Hepatica Hollow" somewhere near you. Go looking for it! – but please control your urge to pick or transplant!



Joe Richardson

P.S. Julia Gregory and I will lead a wildflower walk at Gilbert Lake State Park on Wednesday, May 21st at 10 AM. Come along! – in late May the earliest species will probably have ceased blooming, but there should be many others. And bring your binoculars for warblers.

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Helen McLean

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ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Delaware Otsego Audubon Society

P.O. Box 544

Oneonta, NY 13820

Email: info@doas.us

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To contribute notes or articles for

The Belted Kingfisher, email:

editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

NY State at the oil crossroads—There is a growing trend toward transport of crude oil by rail across North America and through NY State that threatens the state’s premier waterway, the Hudson River, and could have ramifications for our area.

According to Hudson Riverkeeper, “With very little public awareness and no study of environmental impacts, the oil industry has made the Hudson Valley into one arm of a dangerous ‘virtual pipeline’ for crude oil that snakes thousands of miles by rail, barge and ship from oil fields in North Dakota and elsewhere, to refineries on both coasts.”

At present, the NY segment of this route brings crude from the growing oil fields of North Dakota by rail to the Port of Albany, where billions of gallons are off-loaded to ships and barges for transport to East Coast refineries. This is the same oil being carried by a train that derailed and exploded in Quebec last summer, killing 47 people and leveling several square blocks. That train was destined for a New Brunswick refinery that is also the destination for some of the oil traveling through the Hudson Valley.

There is a pending proposal by a multi-national company to expand this flow by adding a thick, heavy crude oil—possibly Alberta, Canada tar sands oil—along this route. This oil would require heating to allow transfer and Global Partners LLC has already applied to build up to seven boilers at the Albany port for this purpose. The material poses a greater environmental risk in a spill, as it would sink, making cleanup much more difficult.

Oneonta and the Susquehanna Valley have a real stake in this matter. Canadian Pacific Railway, one of the major railroads carrying crude oil—and the original carriers of the oil that

exploded in Quebec—owns and operates the tracks that run from Albany to Binghamton, passing through numerous communities and closely paralleling the Susquehanna in many places.

Although not a major route for oil at present, this could change if volumes and sources and destinations change.

There is a long history of spills, derailments, collisions and other accidents with oil tank cars. In fact, these are known as “bomb trains” by railroad workers. Even the railroad industry admits the standards for tank cars are inadequate to safely transport crude oil.

Clearly, this is a dangerous activity for humans and the environment that could be coming to our region soon.

What you can do—In mid-March, the Albany County Executive imposed a one-year moratorium on new or expanded crude oil facilities at the Port of Albany. This prudent step buys some time in addressing the issue, but it is important that the state take a hard look at its policies on crude oil transport. Contact Gov. Andrew Cuomo and ask that he order the state Department of Environmental Conservation to direct Global Partners to prepare a full environmental impact statement that evaluates the potential impacts connected with all of its current and proposed operations in the Port of Albany and provides all potentially impacted communities with the opportunity to fully participate in that environmental review.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo
Executive Chambers
Albany, NY 12224
gov.cuomo@chamber.state.ny.us

Andy Mason



Oil Train in the Hudson Valley, photo by Chad Gomes/Courtesy of Riverkeeper

Birds, Bats, and Bees: World Pollinators

Can life on planet earth go on without birds, bats, and bees? For those scientists in the know, the question is not exaggerated drama: these pollinators (among others) are responsible for one third of our food supply—one out of every three bites of food!

They also sustain our ecosystems by helping plants reproduce. Without the actions of these pollinators our agricultural economies, our food supply, and our surrounding landscapes would



collapse. The current death rate for bats is being called the most serious threat to the North American bat population since the beginning of recorded history. It has been estimated that in New York up to 90 percent of hibernating bats in four specific caves and mines have died since last year. Biologists predict up to a half million bats could be lost; and since bats are necessary for crops to survive, this would have a major impact on the upcoming growing season. Bats are absolutely needed to help maintain a healthy environment: they help to pollinate wild plants, disperse fruit seeds, and keep insect populations under control. Bats are even used by organic farmers as a natural means for pest control as one bat can eat up to 2,000 mosquitoes in one night.

The problem of disappearing bats is magnified because other pollinators, namely birds and bees, are also in rapid decline. The National Audubon Society has reported that some species of birds have plummeted by 60 percent in the last decade, and that in 27 states 25 percent of bee colonies have died. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is calling the growing absence of these creatures an “impending pollination crises”. When there are not enough creatures to carry pollen to complete the fertilization process, farmers often have to lease thousands of bee colonies to do the job. In California alone, for example, 1.4 million honeybee colonies are needed to pollinate 550,000 acres of almond trees each year. But the dramatic drop in honeybees due to the non-indigenous varroa mite has forced almond growers to import honeybees from outside North America. Needless to say, the USDA needs to support research to develop new and safe pest management and bee-breeding practices.

So what’s killing off the birds, bats, and bees? Researchers have compiled compelling evidence for the decline of our pollinators: Pesticides and other environmental toxins; habitat degradation and loss; non-native parasites; genetically modified crops; radio waves from cell phones and other devices. The reasons for the declines of our wild pollinators are frustratingly complex; however, there are some steps we can take on our own to help mitigate the environmental degradations: protest the spraying of pesticides; put up bat houses, bird houses, and bird baths; and plant native flowers to enhance pollinator habitats. *Stephen Rice*

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SPRING FUNDRAISING EVENT

JUNE 1, 2014

BIRDS, BRUNCH & BEER

Our chapter’s educational goal is to expand and enhance outreach programs for the families of our community through grants, projects and events. Please indicate workshop choice in order of preference (i.e., 1, 2, 3 or 4):

WORKSHOP A ____ 1 2 3 4	BIRDING BY EAR 9:00AM-11:00AM
WORKSHOP B ____ 1 2 3 4	PHOTO WALK (LIMITED TO 12) 1:30PM-3:00PM
WORKSHOP C ____ 1 2 3 4	BEGINNERS BIRDING SKILLS (LIMITED TO 20) 1:30PM-3:00PM
WORKSHOP D ____ 1 2 3 4	BOTANICAL PAINTING (LIMITED TO 15) 1:30PM-3:00PM

NAME: _____ NUMBER OF PEOPLE _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____ (FOR BIRDS, BRUNCH AND BEER UPDATES ONLY)

TELEPHONE: () _____ \$30 EACH, AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO DOAS AND MAIL TO: DOAS, PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820

Viburnum Leaf Beetle

In a recent Belted Kingfisher, Tom Salo told us about problems arising from the invasive insects, the Woolly adelgid killing hemlocks, and the Emerald ash borer killing ash trees. I would like to note a third species, potentially of significance to birds, who eat the berries of their victims. This is the Viburnum leaf beetle. It was introduced somewhere near Toronto, Canada, and by five years ago had reached us at Deposit after appearing a year earlier at Port Crane. My daughter tells me it arrived near Middletown, New York last season. These bugs attack most viburnum species, doing severe damage. They especially like highbush cranberry, squashberry and the arrowwood viburnum, but also attack the nannyberry viburnum and even hobblebush. They deposit their eggs in the branches in late summer, doing a similar kind of damage here as leaf hoppers do. When the maggots hatch in the spring they feed on the



Viburnum Leaf Beetle, via Wikimedia Commons, by Ettore Balocchi

leaves. After pupating in the soil, the adult beetles eat the newly sprouted leaves. After defoliating a plant they fly to the next nearest one to continue eating, mating and laying their eggs. The plants are basically defoliated much of the time, with a breathing space of about a month between the generations. I have two young nannyberries that I have been protecting manually. The beetles are very skittish and jump to the ground

as you approach the bush they are on. I have found that an aquarium fishnet is a good weapon, by creeping up to the plant while holding the net below it and then flushing the bugs in its direction, after which I crush them in the net. This I have to do three times a day just in order to allow a few leaves to survive long enough to show their beautiful fall colors in the purple range. These plants, when impacted, would be outcompeted in my region by the invasive shrubs, multiflora rose, bush honeysuckle, goumi or silverberry, and burning bush.

Stan Salthe

Greg

*Golden Eagle, 3 Year Old Male
Captured, tagged and released March 18, 2014*



Scott Van Arsdale, Brian Ryther and Tom Salo placing telemetry unit on Greg, photo by RR Eklund Photography



Scott Van Arsdale, Tom Salo and Warren Ryther with Greg, photo by Becky Gretton



Greg's feathers, photo by RR Eklund Photography



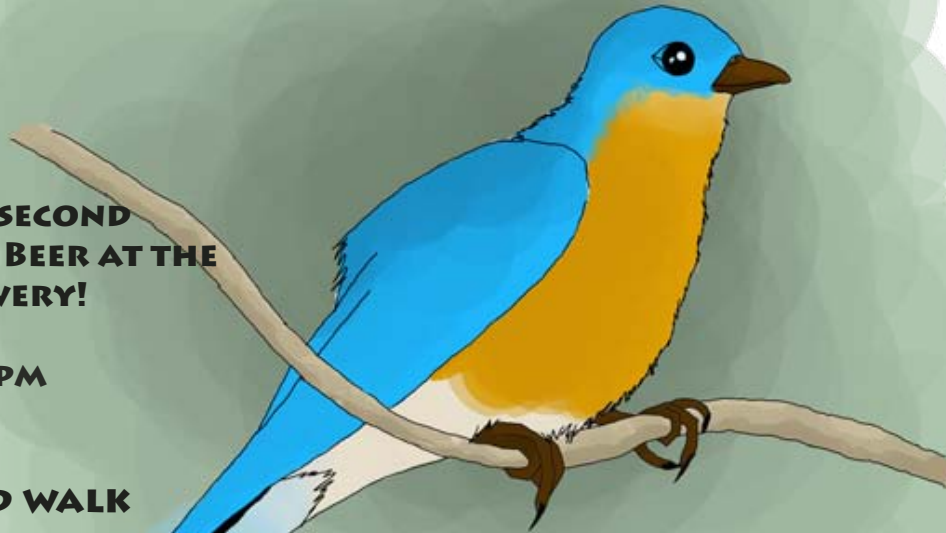
Tom Salo gives Greg a boost, photo by Brian Ryther

DELAWARE OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY
PRESENTS
Birds Brunch & Beer

**JOIN US FOR OUR SECOND
BIRDS, BRUNCH & BEER AT THE
OMMEGANG BREWERY!
JUNE 1, 2014**

**11:00AM - 3:00PM
\$30 PER PERSON**

- MORNING BIRD WALK**
- COFFEE**
- VIEW RAFFLE AND SILENT
AUCTION ITEMS**
- TASTY OMMEGANG BRUNCH**
- WORKSHOPS**



FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION CALL
ELEANOR MORIARTY AT (607) 435 - 2054
OR VIEW AT WWW.DOAS.US

See registration form on page 4

Nomination and Election of Directors

The DOAS Nominating Committee consisting of two board members, Joe Richardson and Julie Smith, and two non board members, Fred Johnson and John Davis, is pleased to announce the candidacy of Dorian Huneke, area birder, for election to the DOAS Board of Directors to replace Eileen Kline who had to step down this year.

Thanks, Eileen, for the time you spent on the Board.

The committee also contacted five current board members, Julia Gregory, Andy Mason, Becky Gretton, Tom Salo, and Charlie Scheim, whose term was due to expire. All were positive to continue for the next two years.

The slate of nominees and election for Directors will be held at the May 16 meeting at the Elm Park United Methodist Church.



www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

Upcoming Activities

April

April 5 – Lake Otsego Waterfowl: Annual spring waterfowl trip around Lake Otsego and environs will leave from Cooperstown's Lake Front Docks at the foot of Fair Street at 8 AM sharp. Co-leaders will be Matt Albright, Bob Donnelly and John Davis. Sponsored by the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society for several years, the trip has always attracted many area birders. Cars will be pooled and radio connected, and the trip will last until around noon. For more information, contact: John Davis at davi7js4@hughes.net or 607-547-9688.

April 12 – Earth Festival

April 15 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

April 18 – Eagle Research: Tom Salo will discuss the trapping and tracking of Golden Eagles this past winter. He will also show some highlights from this season's camera trapping effort. The camera trap sites are our eagle trapping locations. Following Tom's presentation, DOAS Interns and Hartwick College students Zach German and Jessica Henderson will each make a short presentation on their analysis of DOAS data. Zach is doing a demographic study of Golden Eagles passing the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch. Jessica is continuing the work started by Abby Nelson last year. She is counting the juvenile Bald Eagles that were part of a large congregation in Burlington in 2012.

Location: Program will be in **Cooperstown** at the Presbyterian Church at 7:30 PM. The church is on Pioneer Street one block south of the flagpole on Main Street (corner of Church Street).

April 19 – Snipe and Woodcock

May

May 3 – Glimmerglass Bird Walk: 8 AM at Glimmerglass Nature Center. Becky Gretton will lead the walk.

May 4 – Stamford Spring Bird Walk: Meet at parking lot,

corner of Beaver and Main Streets, Stamford. Contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162 or AndyMason@earthling.net.

May 10 – Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk: A walk at the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway (OSG) trail to view returning migrant birds. This will be an easy hike on level ground for about 2 hours, starting at 8:00 AM. Participants should meet at the OSG parking lot on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta's west end. For more information, contact: Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880.

May 11 – Spring Bird Walk: DOAS Sanctuary (see www.doas.us for directions). Contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162 or AndyMason@earthling.net.

Mid May – South Hill Bird Walk

May 16 – Program: Larry Federman, well known bird expert, Education Coordinator for Audubon New York at the Rheinstrom Hill Audubon Center and the Buttercup Farm Audubon. Larry's program will be his expertise on dragonflies.

May 17 – Onderdunk Road Bird Walk

May 17 OR 18 – Big Day Bird Count

May 20 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

May 21 – Wildflower Walk: Gilbert Lake State Park at 10 AM. Come along! – in late May the earliest species will probably have ceased blooming, but there should be many others. And bring your binoculars for warblers. Led by Julia Gregory and Joe Richardson.

June

June 1 – Birds, Brunch and Beer: See registration form on page 4, and poster on page 6.

June 20-22 – Adirondack Boreal Birding Trip: This trip is filled. We are creating a waiting list in case of cancellation. If interested, contact Eleanor Moriarty, 607-435-2054 or eleanormrtrt955@gmail.com.

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: _____

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March Bird Sightings

March in New York: winter stubbornly hangs on, but spring has begun pushing her way in. Winter birds prepare for their northward journey, some early harbingers of spring arrive, and year-round residents begin their spring songs.

Late February brought more reports of Robins, and a report of Bluebirds from Nancy New, who saw two in Oneonta. Tom Salo discovered a Bald Eagle sitting on eggs on the Otsego side of the Unadilla River, and a flock of about 30 Snow Buntings. Dorian Huneke heard pairs of Great Horned and Screech Owls calling in Treadwell, and observed a Golden Eagle heading East, being mobbed by crows. In Walton, a Northern Shrike made its 7th annual appearance at Dan Heglund's property. Dan also saw Bald Eagles feeding on a deer carcass on East Brook Road.

On the first of March, Suzanne Gaynor discovered a Long-tailed Duck where Charlotte Creek meets the Susquehanna at Fortin Park. Several people visited the area, including Dave Kiehm, who also reported

Red-breasted and Common Mergansers, Black Ducks, Mallards, and a rattling Belted Kingfisher. Andy Cooper and his daughter watched a Bald Eagle flying overhead as Dave, oblivious to the eagle, focused his camera on the ducks below.

On March 3rd, Peter Clark (Cooperstown) watched a Pileated Woodpecker making a bowling-ball sized hole in a dead part of his Box Elder, where he had observed an Eastern Giant Ichneumon depositing eggs last summer. He also had a Red-bellied Woodpecker enjoying his suet. Mid-March brought more Pileated reports; Gerianne Carillo watched one at her neighbor's tree in Milford, while another became a regular visitor to Rich George's suet feeder in Edmeston.

A visit to Stamford on the 8th brought views of a Rough-legged Hawk, Horned Larks, Snow Buntings, Red-tails, and a Ring-necked Pheasant for

Leslie Preston. A week later, Fred Johnson spotted a Pheasant in Butternuts.

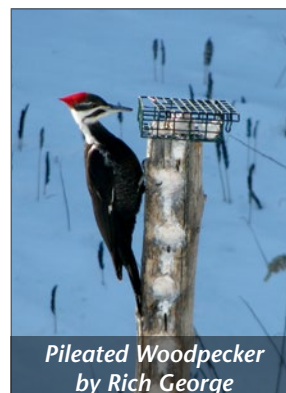
Becky Gretton spotted the first Turkey Vulture of the season while manning the Hawk Watch at Davis State Park on the 11th; Cindy Staley reported another the next day in Warren. The following day brought a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker for Gerianne Carillo in Milford, and a Great Blue Heron for Dorian Huneke in Treadwell. A Red-winged Blackbird was

seen by Nancy New in Oneonta on the 15th; Becky Gretton had a flock of 30 mob her feeders the next day.

As March draws to a close, Charlie and I spot a large flock of Snow Geese heading north, while American Tree Sparrows forage in bushes near West Oneonta. Back home in Oneonta, the wind howls, and, through swirling snowflakes I

see a crow carrying nesting material. Yes, it's definitely March in upstate New York!

Sandy Bright



*Pileated Woodpecker
by Rich George*