



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

October

October 4 – DOAS Open House

October 17 – Charter Dinner

October 21 – DOAS Board Meeting

October 26 – Montezuma

November

November 1 – Signs of Winter

November 8 – Bird seed pickup

November 21 – DOAS Program

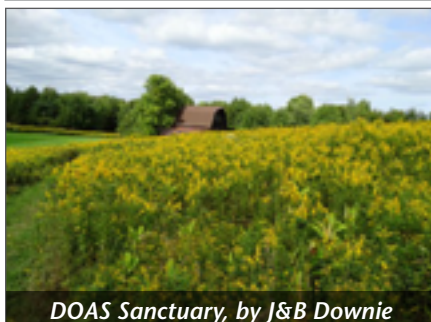
December

December 2 – DOAS Board Mtg

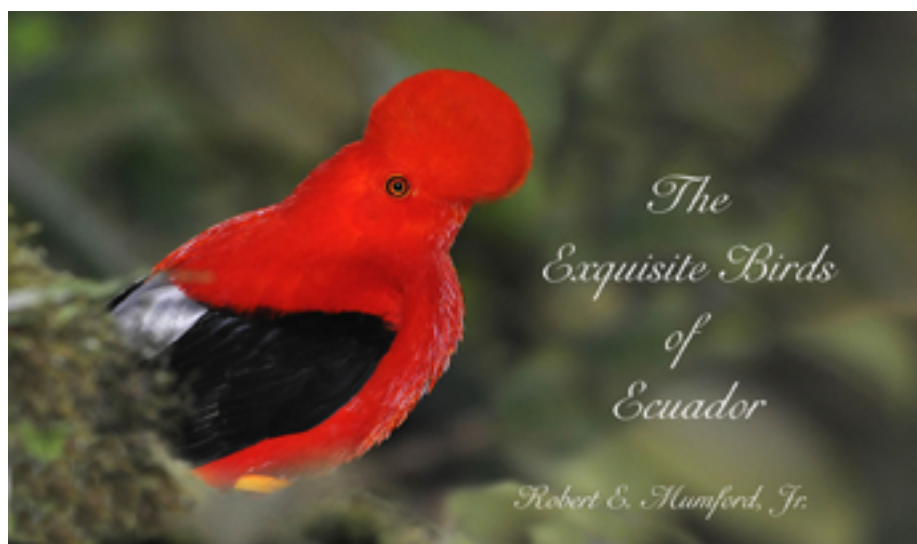
December 14 – Oneonta CBC

December 27 – Fort Plain CBC

More information on page 7



DOAS Sanctuary, by J&B Downie



Annual Charter Dinner: The Exquisite Birds of Ecuador

Bob Mumford was raised in Westfield, NJ. He became interested in photography early in life, receiving a Kodak Brownie 127 camera when he was 9 years old. He tried to photograph birds with this camera, but it was obviously inadequate for the job. His earliest (blurry) bird image was a Long-eared Owl flushing from a pine tree.

Bob graduated with a degree in history from the University of Rochester. While still in college he acquired his first 35mm camera. Most of his early work with this camera was of people and scenics from his travels with the Navy. He served 24 years in the Navy, retiring with the rank of captain.

Bob has always been drawn to the natural world. Since we was quite young he has been deeply concerned about threats to the environment and the rapid loss of critical wildlife habitat. As a young man he was a hunter, but outgrew that activity and is now happy to shoot with just a camera. The skills he learned about spotting wildlife in the field and the knowledge of wildlife behavior that he acquired while hunting have been invaluable now in photography.

He photographs with the Nikon system and now shoots a D300s camera. Almost all his work is done with just three lenses, a 600mm f4AF, a 80-400mm stabilized zoom, and a 16-85mm wide angle zoom.

Bob's work has been published in many books and national magazines, including National Wildlife, Birding, and a four page centerfold in "Ranger Rick". One of his images is on permanent display at the National

(continued on page 6)

What You Don't See

There is a great deal of activity going on with DOAS—so much that it requires more than one president to handle! For the past two years we have been fortunate to have had a triumvirate of sorts, including Joe Richardson, Susan O'Handley, and myself. We were somewhat apprehensive about this arrangement at first, not sure how duties would overlap or if items would slip through the cracks. But it worked out well—we decided to assign each co-president four months of the calendar year, and the transition between these terms was relatively seamless. Having two backups made substituting when necessary very easy.

This year Joe decided to step down as co-president, although he remains on the board. He has always been a steady influence in the DOAS leadership, and both Susan and I appreciated having his thoughtful input and guidance on those decisions that we felt required a consensus, regardless of who was serving at the time. Joe is a true conservationist, experienced and worldly, and we thank him for sharing his knowledge and abilities with us as co-president, and are *very* pleased that he will be close at hand as a director.

Returning to the subject of DOAS activities, we try to keep you, our members, informed of what's going on, and both *The Belted Kingfisher* and our website, www.doas.us, do a fine job of this. But there is much more going on behind the scenes that leads to the activities and programs you read about, and hopefully join. For example, our ground-breaking and important efforts to protect Golden Eagles require significant funds for equipment and technology. Tom Salo and Susan O'Handley spent a great deal of time and effort in late summer preparing two grant applications to help with the Golden Eagle work. Grant writing is an intensive job, requiring well-written descriptions of the project and expected outcomes, tailored to each grantor. Also, each application must include a detailed budget including anticipated funding sources and expenditures. These submissions run to many pages—in fact, they are so much work that professional grant writers are very often hired by non-profits.

The value to DOAS of having Tom and Susan, with the assistance of treasurer Charlie Scheim, carry out this task is immeasurable. In reality, we could not engage in this Golden Eagle research without their efforts. And remember—this is all on a volunteer basis, as is all the other work in the organization.

So I hope you will give two things consideration: helping support the Golden Eagle project, and lending your talents, whatever they may be, to DOAS, so we may continue to work to protect birds and our natural world.

Andy Mason



*Measuring Golden Eagle Maxine,
by Helen McLean*

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Helen McLean

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

Conservation and Legislation

Elections 2014—Election Day is November 4 this year, and as always, provides an opportunity to make a change in the environmental policies of our government. All seats in the US House of Representatives as well as all seats in the NY State Senate and Assembly are up for grabs. It is difficult to judge incumbents' environmental records, as actual clear-cut votes are rare. However, public interest groups do evaluate positions, sponsorships and activity of candidates, and rank incumbents by these standards.

In New York, EPL/Environmental Advocates (www.eplvotersguide.org) and the League of Conservation Voters (www.lcv.org) are good resources for evaluating candidates. The EPL/Environmental Advocates Environmental Scorecard is a particularly thorough examination of incumbents' records.

Here is a synopsis of the stances of candidates in races in our region regarding energy and environmental issues:

- In the governor's race, Democratic incumbent Andrew Cuomo is up against Republican Rob Astorino. The Green Party also has a gubernatorial candidate, Howie Hawkins, who is emphasizing the environment in his campaign. Cuomo is credited with holding off hydrofracking for natural gas in the state to date. However, he has not agreed to a ban on this activity as called for by most of NY's environmental community. He has largely been pro-development and had no major environmental successes in his first term. EPL termed the governor's tenure "failed leadership".

Westchester Co. Executive Rob Astorino is a strong supporter of hydrofracking and has had little else to say on environmental issues.

Howie Hawkins is a working teamster who opposes hydrofracking, and calls for New York to go to 100% clean renewable energy by 2030. He also wants no new fossil fuel infrastructure, including pipelines and oil trains.

- In the 19th Congressional District, incumbent Republican Chris Gibson faces off against Democrat Sean Eldridge. The LCV gives Gibson a rating of 43%, relatively high among his Republican colleagues. He has voted to control CO2 emissions and for other clean air measures. On hydrofracking, Gibson has straddled the fence, stating he is not in a position to endorse or oppose it.

Opponent Sean Eldridge is a strong opponent of hydrofracking, and his website states "... he will advocate for urgent action to address climate change as well as greater investments in conservation programs and renewable energy." He is a board member of Scenic Hudson, a respected Hudson Valley environmental group.

- In the 42d State Senate District, Republican incumbent John Bonacic, and in the 51st District Republican incumbent James Seward are running unopposed. In the State Senate—termed the environmental graveyard—both Bonacic and Seward received 42% positive ratings from EPL in 2013, low even among all Senate Republicans.
- Local State Assembly races include the 121st District where Democratic incumbent William Magee is challenged by Republican John Salka. Magee has supported a moratorium on hydrofracking and says he will not support it without comprehensive scientific evidence proving its safety. His EPL rating is 78% positive. Opponent John Salka has said that the state needs a comprehensive energy strategy, including natural gas.

122d District Assemblymember Clifford Crouch, a Republican, is running unopposed. His EPL rating last year was 53%.

What you can do—Number one—get out and vote! Research candidates and query them on their environmental positions if you have the opportunity. Most contested races will have public debates, another opportunity to get a question in front of a candidate, and to judge their answer. Make your ballot count for conservation!

Andy Mason

Birders of All Levels Sought for Research

Vanderbilt University is conducting research on visual perception and is focusing on the birding community to help them with their studies. They have created tests of visual recognition and memory to understand what makes expert perceivers experts. Birders of all levels of experience, from new beginners to renowned experts are invited to help by taking a series of tests, available online at expertise.psy.vanderbilt.edu.

Bird Seed Sale Fundraiser 2014

Bird seed sale orders to support DOAS Education Initiatives are being accepted throughout October! Look for Birds and Beans certified bird-friendly coffee as well. If you are using the order form from last month's *Kingfisher*, please note your name and phone/email on the order submission or you can order online at doas.us/store. Deadline for ordering: October 31; Order Pickup: Saturday, November 8th at Walmart Lot.

Birding from the Back of a Horse

My primary passion in life is my horses, especially riding them. Because of that I don't often get out birding in the traditional way. I do most of my birding from the back of a horse. This does have its disadvantages. I almost never have my field glasses with me; pursuing a bird through dense habitat could present a challenge; and getting my horse to stand still for the time it may take to spot and identify the bird – well, good luck with that.

However, I hear everything since the birds are not silenced by the presence of the horse and this is a joy, even if I don't get to see all of them. Over the years I have had some wonderful experiences from this exceptional vantage point – one that has often allowed me to get very close to some species of birds (and other wildlife) that otherwise would not tolerate my presence.

In 2002 my husband and I bought 20 acres and built our horse barn. A pair of Red-tailed hawks nested in an adjacent white pine stand and frequently perched in nearby trees. Often a group of us would go out on a trail ride and pass directly under an adult perched on a branch not 10 feet above our heads. We'd get a very intense stare from these adults, but they never flew off. Every summer for many years their fledglings would perch on the fence posts begging to be fed. They didn't seem to mind that we'd pass



Adult Red-tailed Hawk, by Dorian Huneke

by on horseback only 10 or 15 feet from them – they just wanted to be fed, apparently by anyone.

One late June day my friend and I were out on the trail up on the top of the mountain in a very wooded area. We heard a screeching, screaming, and kek-kek-keking getting louder and louder. Flying straight at us at full speed was a Goshawk! Fortunately the horses didn't panic, but we ducked, it was that close! This attack was repeated until we exited that area of the woods. I later discovered the nest that was being guarded, and we avoided that section of woods for the rest of the summer.

For years I had always wondered where the juncos go in the summer. They certainly were no longer around my yard, and I never seemed to spot them in the woods when riding. One day I was heading up a trail that runs at a slant up a steep hill, carved out of the hillside. The uphill side was mostly dirt and rocks,

with very little vegetation. Suddenly a ruckus broke out right at my horse's hooves. She stopped and looked down, as did I, to see a junco attacking her legs! Tucked in a rocky alcove in the uphill bank was a roughly made nest with a few eggs in it. I gave that trail a wide berth for a few more weeks. No matter how often I check for junco nests on that trail and others with similar habitat, I've never seen another one.

Grouse and turkeys are other species that I get very close to when on the horse. The adult grouse often stay put as they feign injury as a decoy. But the young of either typically burst off in all directions, including right under the horse. I'm always grateful when this happens and I'm on my steady older mare, who never bats an eye. My younger mare doesn't have this figured out yet and a few times I've nearly joined the turkeys.

Last summer I frequented a trail where in a certain place I kept hearing soft peeping noises. I finally found the dead tree right alongside the trail and the nest hole. I was almost high enough up to see in it – but not quite, darn it! I never did spot the adults, although I'm fairly sure this was a woodpecker nest, and the peeping got louder as the days passed. I was hoping to see the young on fledging day, but my timing didn't match theirs and one day the tree was silent.

Over the years there have been numerous April trail rides that positioned me very close to the nest of a pair of Great Horned Owls. On a few of those occasions the fledglings have been out of the nest, either on the ground or on low branches close by. A few other times I have come upon an adult GHO sitting in a tree right alongside the trail. I was so close I could hear the rush of wings as it took flight from its perch nearly above my head.

There is no shortage of great birding opportunities on both my own land and the 400 or so acres of wonderfully varied habitat that I am so privileged to use - whether on one's own two feet or those of a hoofed friend.

Dorian Huneke



Tom Salo with Griffon Vulture

Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch Update

As of mid-September the season was on schedule at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch,

located on the DOAS Sanctuary outside Oneonta. Broad-winged Hawks, the only raptor species we have that congregates in large flocks during migration, were showing up in increasing numbers, moving toward their typical peak between the 15th and 25th of the month. Two triple digit days had been recorded: 288 on Sept. 12 and 334 on the 15th.

Last season this peak came early, with 534 broad-wings counted on Sept. 14, followed by a Franklin Mt. record day of 916 on the 17th. These big groups of birds are a challenge for the counters, often streaming out of the high sky with little predictability as to location and direction. In addition, it is possible for multiple flocks to appear at the same time, requiring three or four spotters to get an accurate count. Despite the difficulties, broad-wing season is always an exciting time at the lookout.

Bald Eagles, Osprey, and falcons, including kestrels and Merlins, also move through in good numbers in September. Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks also are on the increase, so by early October the greatest variety of raptors is possible on the mountain.

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, salothomas@gmail.com.

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.



Cooper's Hawk, by Matt Tillet (Wikimedia Commons)

Tom Saves a Baby Bird

My parents spent a couple of weeks this summer visiting us in France. After we got home from a week in Brittany, we spent time in the Basque Pyrenees (a little town called Larrau) because my dad wanted to visit Col d'Organbidexka, one of the most renowned bird migration sites in the Western Pyrenees. This is in part of the Pyrenees that none of us had seen before. On our second day it rained. Since birds would not be flying at the col, we spent some time exploring the region. Just before we were to go back to the home, we made a wrong turn and ended up on a small road in a fairly steep gorge called Kakoueta. We were admiring the stream that flows through the gorge when Jo saw something struggling in the gorge - that something happened to be a Griffon Vulture - which can reach 4 feet long with over a 9-foot wingspan - that couldn't pull itself out of the river. It turns out, despite its size, it was a baby - a baby bird that one of Tom's friends later referred to as more like a "baby dragon".

Not really knowing what to do, Tom tried to find a phone number on the various documentation that we had accumulated. This failed so Plan B was executed: SAVE THE BIRD.

The river was down about 50-60 feet off the road and it was

pretty much a straight drop, but Tom hooked himself up with a couple of nylon tie-down straps we had in the car and shimmied down, wrapped the bird up in a shopping bag and came back up. Now we had a 20 lb, stinky, sopping wet bird and no idea what to do with it. We eventually got in touch with a rehabilitation center that was a 3 hour drive away and we arranged to meet up in St. Jean Pied de Port - a 1:15 one-way drive over a severe mountain pass in the pitch black. After weaving through the flocks of sheep that spend the night in the road, we made the exchange in a darkened supermarket parking lot at 11pm. The woman who runs the center said it was the third juvenile vulture that had been pulled out of that stretch of river that week. She already had 2 other birds in her van picked up that day from other locations in the Western Pyrenees. The birds nest on the cliffs above the gorges and the babies fall into the river on their first sorties from the nest.

To see a video of us pulling the bird out of the gorge, visit the doas.us web site.

Kris Salo

Epilogue: The baby bird was hungry and dehydrated. It recovered quickly at the rehab center and was released in early September with the other young Griffon Vultures.

Annual Charter Dinner - October 17, 2014

~ New Venue: Depot Restaurant ~

DOAS will be having their annual Charter Dinner Friday October 17, 2014. This year it is at the **Depot Restaurant, 4½ Railroad Avenue, Oneonta**. Social hour begins at 6PM, the buffet at 6:30PM, and the program at 7:30PM. The public is invited to join us for the program.

The speaker this year is Robert Mumford, a well known photographer whose work has been published in many books and magazines including *National Wildlife*, *Birding*, *The New York Times* and *Wild Bird Magazine*. He travels extensively to photograph birds, wildlife and natural scenes. Mr. Mumford over the past six years has traveled 15 times to Ecuador to photograph the beautiful birds. His photographs from his Ecuador travels will be published in a forthcoming book.

The buffet cost is \$20 per person

*Reservations must be made by October 13th by calling 607-563-2924
or mailing a check to: Julia Gregory, PO Box 641, Unadilla, New York 13849*

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Amount enclosed: _____

***The Birds of Ecuador** (continued from page 1)*

Aquarium in Baltimore by the puffin tank. He has exhibited at Chincoteague, Bombay Hook, Blackwater, Patuxent National Wildlife Refuges as well as the Audubon Naturalist Society. His work has also appeared in *Wild Bird Magazine*, *Rails and Trails*, and the *NY Times*. One of his images was a winner in the prestigious National Wildlife's annual international competition and another was honored in Nature's Best Windland Rice contest.

Bob travels extensively to photograph natural scenes and wildlife. He has worked in most of the states and Canadian provinces. He also traveled to Iceland, Costa Rica, Tanzania and Kenya. Bob has worked extensively in Churchill, Manitoba, mainly concentrating on polar bears. He recently visited South Georgia Island, a destination made famous by Sir Ernest Shackleton. And in late 2013, New Zealand, where he saw and photographed three new (to him) penguin species.

The locus of his most recent work has been Ecuador, where he has made fifteen trips over six years. His book on the birds of Ecuador is expected out in early summer 2014.

Bob resides in Darnestown, Maryland, twenty-five miles as the raven flies from the White House, but a world apart. It is an oak woods without a blade of grass, populated by deer, squirrels, opossums, raccoons and foxes... not to mention tons of birds.



Plate-billed Mountain Toucan, by Robert Mumford



Aracari, by Robert Mumford

Upcoming Activities

October

October 4 – Open House at the DOAS Sanctuary: Hours are 10 AM - 2 PM. Includes a beginner's workshop, a trail walk and a presentation of live raptors with Trish Marki from The Wildlife Institute of Eastern New York. See page 7 for details.

October 17 – DOAS Annual Charter Dinner – 6 - 9 PM at the Depot Restaurant. See details on page 6.

October 21 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

October 26 – Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

View the migrating waterfowl and shorebirds on their annual journey to warmer climates. Participants will meet at 7:30 AM in the Dietz Street Parking Lot, across from the YMCA in Oneonta. Please pack a lunch for our break at the Montezuma New York Audubon Center.

Please contact Eleanor Moriarty, 607-435-2054 to register.

October 31 – Bird Seed Order Due – Be sure to get your bird seed order in by October 31st.

November

November 1 – Saturday program at DOAS Sanctuary : Signs of Winter - Pre-Registration required.

To pre-register for a program, or to learn about business sponsorship opportunities, please contact Education Chair, Susan O'Handley at 607-643-5680 or by email at sjohandley@gmail.com.

November 8 – Bird Seed Pick Up Day: Walmart parking lot, Oneonta, 9-11 AM. See order form on website doas.us/store.

November 21 – DOAS Program Monthly Meeting: Kim Corwin, will speak about her experiences in the clean up efforts of the Deepwater Horizon Spill.

The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Refreshments will be served. For more information contact Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054 or email eleanomrmt955@gmail.com.

December

December 2 – DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM

December 14 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count (CBC) - Contact Sandy Bright: brights@hartwick.edu, 607-287-4465

December 27 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count (CBC) - Contact Bob Donnelly: rsdonn@yahoo.com, 607-264-8156



*"Where have all the Bluebirds gone?"
photo by Doris Hartung*

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: _____



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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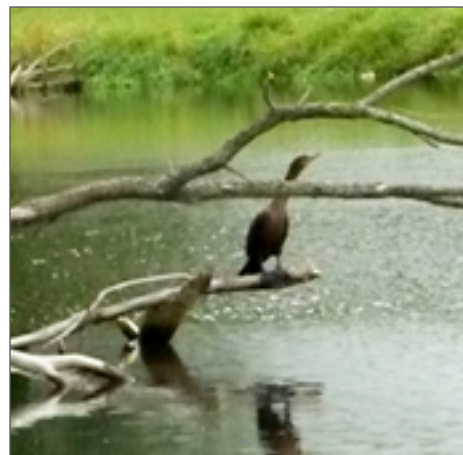
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August–September Bird Sightings

Tinges of color are appearing in the landscape's foliage as fall quickly approaches. Nest boxes have been abandoned and nestlings have fledged. The great bird migration is on.

A pair of Carolina Wrens fed their young in Lisa Gorn's garage in Morris on 8/23. Featured on the menu were big savory spiders, yum yum. A few days later it was exciting to watch the first young Carolina Wren fledge. Becky Gretton was treated to a wide variety of Carolina Wren sounds in Springfield Center on 8/25. Early the next day specifically at 4:00 AM Tom Salo was awoken by single hoots that sounded very much like a Long-eared Owl. That would be a new species for the West Burlington area. When Steve Hall was coming home from the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch on 8/29 he saw two Northern Bobwhites on Route 205 a couple of miles south of Hartwick. Apparently they must have been released birds.

Carol and Randy Lynch spotted a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron at the Oneonta West End boat launch on 9/3. It was less than 100 yards off the road on the right side of the entrance. On the left side a larger pool revealed a Great Blue Heron, Wood Ducks and Black Ducks. A few days later Becky Gretton enjoyed the visit of a Great Egret at the big swamp on McRorie Road in the Town of Springfield. Donna Cooperman was surprised and delighted to see a Double-crested Cormorant in the pond behind the fire hall in the village of Hobart on 9/12. In all my many years writing this article, this is the first time I've listed this bird species. Birdwatching couldn't be anymore exciting and of course it's just so much fun! If you have bird sightings to report, contact me at dbenko@frontiernet.net, at 6815 Co. Hwy. 16, Delhi. NY 13753, or at 607-829-5218 for the next issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*.



*Double-crested Cormorant
by Donna Cooperman*