



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

April

April 4 – Field Trip: Lake Otsego

April 11 – Earth Festival

April 17 – Program: Adventures in the Dominican Republic

April 21 – Board Meeting

April 26 – Bird Walk, Andes

May

May 2 – Bird Walk, Glimmerglass

May 2 – Family: Plant and Tree ID

May 9 – Field Trip: Oneonta

Susquehanna Greenway

May 10 – Bird Walk, Stamford

May 15 – Program: A Photo Journey to the Galapagos

May 16 – Big Day Bird Count

May 17 – Bird Walk, DOAS Sanctuary

May 19 – Board Meeting

May 20 – Gilbert Lake Wildflowers

May 23 – Oaks Creek Bird Walk

May 24 – West Branch Preserve

June

June 6 – Family: Wild Edibles

June 7 – Birds, Brunch, Beer

June 13 – Wolf Mountain & Rogers Environmental Education Center

More information on page 7

The Keys to the Kingdom: Ear-D the Birds

Birding is a rewarding, and yet, frustrating experience. How many times have you walked through the woods and not seen any birds, even though you can hear all sorts of birdsounds around you? Or you've finally found one, off in the treetops, but the foliage blocks your view, or the difficult lighting doesn't really show the bird's coloring, or the sun is right in your eyes, or by the time you finally have the bird in sight, it flies off to another spot? "Oh well," you say, "I do love nature, and the walk was so enjoyable."

How can you possibly ID a bird when it's so hard to get a good look at it? This frustration might motivate you to expand your skill set. Instead of trying to "Eye-D" the birds, it might be time to learn to "Ear-D" them! It might be time to learn to identify a bird by its sounds.



Black-throated Green Warbler, by Dave Kiehm

I first started birding when I was in college, in southeastern Massachusetts. I learned to identify the standard common birds: robins, song sparrows, crows, starlings (they're not baby crows?), etc. Fortunately, I made friends with Chet, a Physics professor at my school who was into birding. He had a portable telescope that he used for night-time astronomy classes, but that we would use for early-morning birding. It was the first time I ever had such clear looks at faraway birds!

(Continued on page 4)

What We're Up to This Spring...

RoundTable and Earth Festival

Regional Chapter RoundTable: In early March, DOAS hosted an annual gathering of Audubon Leaders from 7 total Chapters in our Central/Upstate region. We enjoyed a terrific day of sharing our respective successes and challenges in a beautiful setting at the SUNY Oneonta College Camp. Warmed by a cozy fire and great company, we gained a perspective on how other chapters operate and opened doors for peer support and maybe even some collaborative work in the future. One of the day's highlights was a presentation by Virginia Kennedy, Executive Director of the Otsego Land Trust. Everyone appreciated the resources that were shared along with insights from her recent experiences of going through a strategic planning process for her organization. In all, the day was too short, but it left us all looking forward to getting together again next year.



RoundTable, photo by Lisa Curtis

April 11 will mark the 10 year celebration of **Earth Festival** at Milford Central School (11 AM–3 PM). This is the most comprehensive gathering of environmental organizations and earth-friendly businesses in Otsego County and it is an event that we have enjoyed participating in every year since its inception. DOAS will have three tables at the event this year with one area dedicated to children's activities led by our Interns from Hartwick College. Our Camp Director, Megan, will be there too! Please stop by and say hello. Our other tables will feature our DOAS Exhibit with a letter campaign to support a Bald Eagle Conservation Plan and our retail items highlighting Birds & Beans coffee (certified bird-friendly, shade-grown, fair-trade, organic) with samples available. Also, don't miss our annual Earth Festival Bird Walk led by Bob Donnelly. Carpools will leave the school parking lot at 8am.

There will be many recycling opportunities at Earth Festival this year including the ConfiData shredder for personal documents from 11am-2pm, and all day collections of styrofoam, old video tapes, shoes, and clothing/household textiles and more. Details on what you can bring will be available at occainfo.org along with complete list of vendors and exhibitors as well as the schedule for the Spring Gardening Day events with CCE Master Gardeners.

Since Earth Festival falls on April 11th this year, there will be a special 4-1-1 Information Station where attendees can sign up once and choose to receive

information from many of the represented organizations and businesses. DOAS will be on the list for those who would like to opt in for our information - just check the box for DOAS when you sign up!

Susan O'Handley

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Helen McLean

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ON THE WEB:

www.doas.us
www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

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



Conservation and Legislation

Threat to lead control--Under the leadership of Tom Salo, our Chapter has been in the forefront of an effort to reduce or hopefully eliminate the significant danger that spent lead ammunition poses to wildlife, particularly scavenging birds such as vultures and eagles. Toxic lead is found in wounded or discarded deer and other animals, and in gut piles left on the landscape. Birds are particularly susceptible to lead, and injury and mortality from lead poisoning is well-documented. This was a major factor in the near-extinction of California Condors.

Closer to home, we strongly suspect that the disappearance of a Golden Eagle, dubbed Maxine, that we captured and fitted with a GPS unit in 2014 was a result of lead poisoning. Her last known location was in the vicinity of a pile of feral hogs shot by government agents using lead ammo. In addition, a Bald Eagle with toxic lead levels was found nearby and subsequently died.

There is also evidence that lead fragments in venison can impact human health.

DOAS' approach has been to promote non-lead alternatives to hunters through displays, visits to sportsmen's groups and discussions with the Department of Environmental Conservation. Regulation of lead ammunition, although successful in the case of banning lead shot for waterfowl hunting, is unlikely to come about in NY State anytime soon, given the current political climate.

However, the federal Environmental Protection Agency could take action under the Toxic Substances Act—as the country has done so with lead in gasoline, paint, toys, plumbing and other sources of this dangerous material. The EPA has been hesitant to act—again due to political pressures. And now, legislation has been proposed in Congress that would prevent the EPA from addressing lead contamination through ammunition.

Passage of this bill—the “Sportsmen’s Act of 2015” would mean that the threat of lead to birds, other wildlife, and humans would be embedded in law, and likely never be addressed. Not only would this make permanent an ongoing danger to wildlife and humans, but it would set a precedent for Congress to override the scientific process and public involvement that is required when considering regulations.

The legislation has any number of additional anti-wildlife provisions including allowing the import of 41 sport-hunted polar bear “trophies” from Canada. Polar bears are protected as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and the trade and import of their parts violates federal law. Giving an exemption to the trophy hunters that killed these bears would put polar bears—and other imperiled species—at risk.

Also, the bill would require federal agencies to open up millions of acres of public lands to hunting and trapping. This provision could wreak havoc on endangered and threatened species like wolves, grizzly bears, and wolverines. Giving the green light to yet more indiscriminate trapping would put native species of all kinds at untold risk.

Further increasing the threat of lead, the measure currently before the Senate would direct land managers to build or expand shooting ranges on public lands. Outdoor shooting ranges have been found to be major sources of environmental lead contamination.

What you can do—Contact US Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and ask them to oppose the Sportsmen’s Act of 2015, S.405. Point out that lead ammo is a proven cause of death of eagles and other birds in NY State—including locally, and that this toxic material should not be exempted from regulations to protect wildlife and human health.

Sen. Charles Schumer:

Mail: US Senate, Washington, DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-6542

Fax: (202) 228-3027

Email: www.schumer.senate.gov/contact/email-chuck

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand:

Mail: US Senate, Washington, DC 20510

Phone: (202) 224-4451

Fax: (202) 228-0282

Email: www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact

~ by Andy Mason

**Nominations are currently being accepted for the
DOAS Board of Directors**

Please send nominations to info@doas.us

2015 Audubon Summer Camp

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is now accepting registrations for the John G. New Audubon Day Camp at Franklin Mountain Sanctuary 2015. The program provides fun, hands-on experiences in natural science and environmental education through field investigations, crafts and games. Campers will explore a variety of habitats and learn about creatures that live there. There is limited space in this program, so registrations will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

This year, we have two sessions available!

Programs run Monday through Thursday from 9:30am to 3pm

- Session 1: July 13, 14, 15, 16
For children entering grades 3 and 4.
- Session 2: August 3, 4, 5 & 6
For children entering grades 5 and 6

DOAS Camp Director, Megan Gigandet is returning for her third year in 2015!

We are seeking a Camp Assistant for both weeks of the program. Applicants must be a 18+.

Find additional information and our new online registration form at our website at doas.us or contact Susan O'Handley, Education Chair at 607-643-5680.



Megan Gigandet



Summer camp, photo by Megan Gigandet

Ear-D the Birds (Continued from page 1)

But what really opened my mind to birding ID was the morning we were ambling along a forest edge and Chet said, "Oh, there's a rufous-sided towhee!" (nowadays, they are "eastern towhees").

"A what? Where? I don't see it! I've never seen one!" I whispered, a bit frantically.

"No, I don't see it either," he responded. "But listen: it says 'drink-your-tee-ee'." And on cue, I heard the song "drink-your-tee-ee" coming from somewhere out of sight. I wanted to go find it, so I could add it to my lifelist, but Chet said "Well, you can add it already, since you know you've identified the bird."

"But I haven't seen it!"

Chet responded "So, blind people can't have lifelists?"

I have learned that sounds are the keys to the Bird Kingdom (taxonomically, I suppose it's "Class"). With this knowledge, most walks through the woods yield multiple species. I may not actually see them, but I know they're there. If I hear something I don't recognize, I know right away that there is a "bird of interest" lurking among the leaves, and that it's time to focus on finding that bird. My lifelist has a number of birds I've heard, but have never seen (whip-poor-will, screech owl, and others). If I go in search of some specific bird, I make certain to know the sounds it might make, since these reveal its presence long before I ever see it.

In this modern age, learning birdsounds (songs, chips, alarm calls... birds have multiple modes of communication) is much easier than a few decades ago. Back then I studied sonograms and mnemonics ("drink-your tee-ee", or "pleased, pleased, pleased to meetcha"). After birdsong recordings became available, I listened repeatedly to Dick Walton's *Birding by Ear*, as he explained how to distinguish between similar sounding birds (downy vs. hairy woodpeckers, purple vs. house finches). Nowadays, many websites offer multiple versions of the various sounds a species makes, and online shopping offers dozens of "birding by ear" opportunities, including apps for your smartphone.

To start, of course, you can seek out help from birding friends, or go to a workshop (e.g. "Birding by Ear" at "Birds, Brunch & Beer", Sunday June 7). But why wait? I suggest picking a common species (chickadee, song sparrow, whatever) and listening to the sounds found online. Then go out and find that common bird and hear it make those sounds. And listen again, and again, and again. And then go out in a week and listen for the sounds before you see the bird. Then, pick another species and repeat the process. You can often record an unknown birdsound in the wild on your smartphone for playback and comparison later.

Learn to Ear-D and expand your birdworld!

Charlie Schiem

Golden Eagle Update

As I mentioned last month, it seems like everything that could go wrong did. Our transmitters arrived late - at the beginning of the coldest month since they started keeping records. Golden Eagles became so irregular in February no trapping attempts were made until March. The few attempts that were made did not result in any eagles being captured. Unfortunately, this is the nature of field work. Even though goldens were erratic, the camera traps were quite active all winter.

We will patiently await next winter, and hope for more normal weather. We know going into the next trapping season that we have hardware in hand. When the eagles arrive, we will be ready. Thanks to everyone who helps us with this project.

Tom Salo



Camera trap photo



Camera trap photo



Camera trap photo

2015 Environmental Education Grant Awards

The DOAS Education Committee selected recipients for the 2015 Environmental Education Grants this March for programs taking place in May and June. Close to \$600 total was awarded to two recipients this year. These grants enable educators in our region to add new environmental and conservation focused activities to their curriculum or to continue existing initiatives. Congratulations to both educators and their lucky students!

- *Environmental Field Day (Butterflies) and Trout Release*, Andes Central School, Jennifer Finkle
- *Gardening and Plant Life Cycles*, Greater Plains Elementary School, Oneonta, Kim Baskin

DOAS offers a variety of educational opportunities each year including a new Saturday series for families and a Summer Day Camp program at the Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain. Monthly member programs and great birding field trips are also offered through the year from September through June.



Trout release



Delaware Otsego Audubon Society presents:

Birds Brunch & Beer

Join us for our third Birds Brunch & Beer at the Ommegang Brewery!

June 7, 2015 from 11:00am – 4:00pm – \$30 per person

- morning walk
- Coffee
- view raffle and silent auction items
- tasty Ommegang brunch

9:00am - 11:00am Birding by Ear Workshop

12:30pm - 1:00pm Raffle of Art Items

1:15pm - 3:15pm Photography, Painting, Warbler ID Workshops

Limited to 75 people, so be sure to sign up early!

For registration information call Eleanor Moriarty at 607-435-2054

OR view online at doas.us

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SPRING FUNDRAISING EVENT

JUNE 7, 2015

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 or 3):

WORKSHOP A ____	BIRDING BY EAR (NO LIMIT RESTRICTION) 9:00AM-11:00AM – ANDY MASON & BECKY GRETTON
WORKSHOP B ____ 1 2 3	IDENTIFYING WARBLERS (LIMITED TO 20) 1:15PM-3:15PM – SANDY BRIGHT
WORKSHOP C ____ 1 2 3	PHOTOGRAPHING BIRDS – LIVE RAPTOR (LIMITED TO 15) 1:15PM-3:15PM – DAVE KIEHM & WARREN GREENE
WORKSHOP D ____ 1 2 3	BOTANICAL PAINTING (LIMITED TO 15, SUPPLIES INCLUDED) 1:15PM-3:15PM – DOUG JAMIESON

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

Upcoming Activities

April

April 4 – Lake Otsego Waterfowl Trip: The annual spring waterfowl trip around Lake Otsego and environs will leave from Cooperstown's Lake Front Docks at the foot of Fair St. 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 11– Earth Festival Morning Bird Walk: Led by Bob Donnelly. Carpools leave Milford Central School parking lot at 8 AM. See occainfo.org for more information.

April 11– Earth Festival: At the Milford Central School from 11 AM - 3 PM, see occainfo.org for more information.

April 17 – DOAS Adventures in the Dominican Republic: Andy Mason and Peg DiBenedetto will present a program about the recent DOAS supported ornithological trip in the Dominican Republic. In January the pair, along with Dr. Peter Fauth of Hartwick College and two others, traveled to the DR to conduct a week-long avian inventory of a cocoa plantation in the northwest area of Guanico. This resulted in specific recommendations to the plantation's owners on how to improve habitat, and the potential for ecotourism. Enjoy photos and stories of the mountainous surroundings, the plantation, and the group as they discovered which species are using this important but threatened region. 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

April 21 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

April 26 – Bird walk in Andes – Meet at the Andes Rail Trail, 266 Depot St. at 8 AM. Visit andesworks.com/rail-trail for directions. For further information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 652-2162.

May

May 2 – Bird Walk at Glimmerglas for I Love My Park Day: Led by Becky Gretton, meet at 8 AM at the Nature Center, Glimmerglas Park.

May 2 – Plant and Tree ID at DOAS Sanctuary: Guided activities with Educator and DOAS Summer Program Director, Meghan Gigandet. Pre-registration is required by email to Susan O'Handley, Education Chair at sjohandley@gmail.com. \$4 per child fee/adults are free. 10 AM-12 noon.

May 9 – Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway: Field trip led by Sandy Bright and Charlie Schiem, starts at 8 AM.

May 10 – Bird walk in Stamford – Meet at parking lot at the corner of Main and Beaver Sts at 8 AM. For information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 652-2162.

May 15 – A Photo Journey to the Galapagos: The Fielders

May 16 – Big Day Bird Count: Count birds wherever you choose! For information on how to participate, contact Director Bob Donnelly at 607-264-8156.

May 17 – Bird Walk at DOAS Sanctuary: Bird walk from 8 AM-12 noon. For information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 652-2162.

May 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

May 20 – Gilbert Lake Wildflower Walk

May 23 – Oaks Creek Bird Walk: Land Trust Property

May 24 – Bird Walk at West Branch Preserve: Charlie Scheim will lead a bird walk at the West Branch Preserve. The Preserve is located on NY Rt10 in the Town of Hamden, Delaware County, NY, about 10 miles southeast of Delhi. We will meet at 8 AM at the preserve entrance and parking area, on Rt10, about 0.9 mi beyond the junction with County Route 26. The walk, which will last about two hours, includes some moderate up-and-downhill ground. For more information: Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or scheimc@hartwick.edu

June

June 6 – Wild Edibles: Guided activities with Educator and DOAS Summer Program Director, Meghan Gigandet. Pre-registration is required by email to Susan O'Handley, Education Chair at sjohandley@gmail.com. \$4 per child fee/adults are free.

June 7 – 3rd Annual Birds, Brunch, Beer: See page 6 for details!

June 13 – Wolf Mountain Nature Preserve and the Rogers Environmental Education Center: This full day trip will include bird watching, wildlife viewing, and spectacular looks at wolves, arctic foxes, and our northeastern coyotes. A guide will be available at the Wolf Mountain Nature Preserve.

The trip will be approximately an hour drive from Oneonta to our first stop in the morning, Wolf Mountain Nature Preserve. Hiking will be easy to moderate and boots or waterproof footwear is required as we will be going through bogs and wetlands. An admission fee of \$5 is charged. Participants need to pack a picnic lunch.

In the afternoon the group will continue to Rogers Environmental Educational Center for birdwatching and wildlife viewing. Carpooling will be available.

This trip is limited to 15 participants. For reservations and information contact: Eleanor Moriarty at 607 435 2054.



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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February–March Bird Sightings

Uber-SNOW! Uber-COLD! Uber-WINTER! I've had enough!!! The only saving grace for me was seeing an American Robin and an American Kestrel on March 10th. Maybe uber-SPRING!

On 2/18 Flo Loomis watched a mature Bald Eagle soar over snowy fields near Ommegang Brewery in Middlefield. On the 20th Dorian Huneke spotted a Red-tailed Hawk sitting on a "mound of feathers" prey in North Franklin and Marion Karl caught a quick glimpse of two male Eastern Bluebirds in Cooperstown. On Feb. 28th Common Redpolls were very common. Charlie Scheim saw them in Oneonta, Gerianne Carillo saw them in Milford and Bob Donnelly had 70+ going through thistle big time in Roseboom. On the same day American Tree Sparrows cleaned out Tom Salo's thistle feeders in W. Burlington.

On the 1st of March Gerry Pearlberg was a bit surprised to see four male Brown-headed Cowbirds and one female

in Kortright Center. On 3/2 Sue Gaynor heard Great Horned Owls calling in the woods opposite her home in East Meredith. On the 8th Stan Salthe took many pics of a Sharp-shinned Hawk devouring a Blue Jay. The Jays were noticeably scarce the next day! On the



12th Tom Salo watched an adult Golden Eagle for about ten minutes kite over the hill in W. Burlington. The next day Kathryn Davino photographed a very bold and patient Barred Owl in her Delhi backyard. On 3/13 while Rod Spangle was walking his dog Beulah in Unadilla a Killdeer flew overhead calling away. Also on that day Andrew Cooper had the



FOS Turkey Vulture sighting in Oneonta, Bob Donnelly observed a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds around a large frozen pond outside Cherry Valley and Dorian Huneke heard an Eastern Screech Owl calling from the tall spruces near the Treadwell Cemetery. On 3/14 Andrew Cooper watched two Merlins who were harassing European Starlings from a tree in Oneonta. The next day a Red-bellied Woodpecker visited Ellen Sokolow in Treadwell.

Apparently there is a peaceful war taking place by email on osbirds discussing the species of bird that is the real harbinger of spring. Is it the Turkey Vulture, the American Robin, the Red-winged Blackbird or the Eastern Bluebird? After this brutal winter I think we should just agree that seeing any spring bird is the winner.

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*. Dianne Benko