



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

May

May 1– Bashakill Wetlands Trip

May 7– Oneonta Greenway Bird Walk

May 7–Glimmerglass Bird Walk

May 14–Big Day Bird Count

May 15– DOAS Sanctuary Bird Walk

May 18–Gilbert Lake Wildflower Walk

May 20– Program, Barry Stevens: Focus on Optics

May 22– Stamford Spring Bird Walk

May 24– DOAS Board Mtg

June

June 4 – West Branch Preserve Field Trip

June 5–Birding By Ear Workshop

June 18– Nichol Nature Preserve Bird/Nature Walk

June 19– Birds and Brunch at Origins Cafe

More information on page 7

Wild Birds Unlimited's Barry Stevens: Focus on Optics

Have you ever wondered what optics would best serve your needs? Would you like some hands-on experience to help you better understand optics? Barry Stevens will be here to help in May!

Binghamton native Barry Stevens is a Vietnam veteran who retired after 30 years at IBM Endicott.

His attention turned to owning a business at a time when feeding birds was a hobby second only to gardening, and something he and his wife Sue, also a former

IBM employee, had enjoyed for many years. He opened his owner-operated Wild Birds Unlimited store in 1994, located in Johnson City, and in 1997 became partners with the Fayetteville WBU to own and operate the WBU at Sapsucker Woods in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, a mecca for birders and a huge source of information about binocular and spotting scope needs for all types of birders.

Wild Birds Unlimited is a franchise based in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The Johnson City store is in its 22nd year and the Ithaca store, the 19th year. Both provide bird and nature knowledge, and are sources of the best in bird seed, feeders, gardening and nature books, gifts, binoculars, scopes and accessories.

Barry meets with various optics representatives to understand the

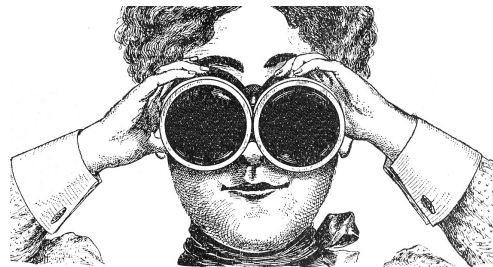
value of each product. He has participated in lab-testing of products to better serve each customer.

He says: "The

beauty of this business is that there are very few unhappy customers. Everyone enjoys sharing their bird and squirrel stories and, best of all, seeing birds better with optics."

Please join us on May 20 at 7:30 at the Elm Park Methodist Church for a program that will answer questions of all types with a "Focus on Optics." Refreshments will be served.

Becky Gretton



President's Message

Earth Festival Thank you to everyone who came out on a chilly day to visit the Earth Festival event in Milford on April 9. It's always a great learning opportunity to be in the same room with all of the other environmental organizations from our region. We had a very busy day featuring our non-lead ammunition initiative and promoting the use of bird-friendly coffee - complete with samples throughout most of the day.

Coffee Update What exactly is bird friendly coffee? Bird-friendly coffee meets rigorous standards set by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center for 100% organic and shade-grown certification to ensure the preservation of tropical 'agroforests'. It is coffee grown on small plantations in the Americas where teams of research scientists work with growers to address challenges that organic farmers face, where the preservation of bird habitat is critical.



Birds and Beans brand coffee

Their most recent efforts have been in Nicaragua, to produce great tasting coffee from traditional family farms. This project provides coffee workers with a viable living at a fair wage and preserves critical habitat for over 60 species of migratory birds that we know and love from our North American springs and summers. Several Nicaraguan farms and co-ops have qualified to meet the stringent demands of the Smithsonian's 'Bird-friendly' certification for organic, shade grown coffee. Birds & Beans now buys coffee from over 100 family farms across Nicaragua owning over 20,000 acres of Bird Friendly® certified land, mostly in the Northern Highlands of the country. (Birds & Beans also buys coffee from Mexico, Peru, El Salvador and Guatemala).

We believe that promoting Bird Friendly coffee is good for birds, as well as farm families and workers, and the local rural economies. It is great tasting coffee too! If you would like to try a bag, our next order deadline is on Saturday, May 14 with delivery at our May 20th Program in Oneonta. You can find information at our website at <http://doas.us/store>.

DOAS Historian I would like to thank Julie Smith, former DOAS Board Director, for her work as Historian for the organization since October of 2011. We very much appreciate her work over these past years. We are currently seeking to fill the Historian vacancy from our membership. The job involves keeping photo albums and scrapbooks of chapter activities, collecting items such as articles and pictures about the club, all of which may be displayed at chapter meetings. Having a camera to take pictures at Audubon functions would **President's message continued on page 4**

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Janet Potter

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Co-Presidents	Becky Gretton Andrew Mason Susan O'Handley
Treasurer	Charlie Scheim
Secretary	Dorian Huneke

Bob Donnelly
Julia Gregory
Janet Potter
Stephen Rice
Joe Richardson
Tom Salo

Vacant Position

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Conservation*:	Andy Mason
Education*:	Susan O'Handley
Field Trips*:	Bob Donnelly
Hawk Watch*:	Andrew Mason Tom Salo
Hospitality*:	Julia Gregory
Membership*:	Andy Mason
Programs*:	Becky Gretton
Publicity*:	Susan O'Handley
Sanctuary*:	Andrew Mason
Bird Counts:	Sandy Bright
Charter Dinner:	Julia Gregory
Finance:	Gray Mason
Historian:	Vacant
Sales:	Stephen Rice

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ON THE WEB:

www.doas.us

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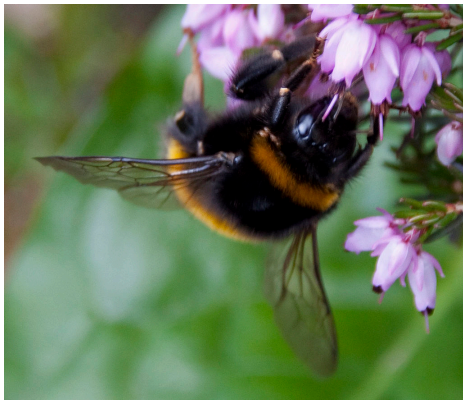
To contribute notes or articles for
The Belted Kingfisher, email:
editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

Good news on neonics—We have written here previously about the dangers of neonicotinoids—neonics for short—a class of pesticides that pose a particular risk to bees. These important pollinators are in decline for a number of reasons, including disease and habitat loss, and possibly unknown causes. But neonics are linked to this downslide, and both state and federal agencies are studying the problem and considering regulations. Most recently the Maryland General Assembly voted to restrict the sales of retail home and garden products that contain neonics.

Now Ortho, a leading brand of home and garden pest-control products, has announced they will no longer sell neonics. The company has already begun to phase out the chemicals and says this will be complete by 2021.

Meanwhile, neonics continue to be used widely in agriculture, as well as other brands of home and garden products. The products are also suspected in declines in insectivorous bird populations. Currently, at the direction of the



Obama administration, the Environmental Protection Agency is assessing the effect of neonics on the health of

bees. Hopefully this will lead to a complete end to the use of these pesticides.

What you can do—Try to avoid neonics when doing your spring gardening. Visit the Xerces Society web site--www.xerces.org—and search ‘neonics’ to find a report on how to protect bees from these chemicals in your garden.

Rally to stop oil trains—Another topic discussed here has been the threats of the oil trains—often hundreds of cars long—that pass through our communities on their way to the Port of Albany where they are transported to barges and ships traveling down the Hudson River to refineries. There are numerous incidents of spills and explosions from these trains, and the Hudson is also at risk from oil spills and leaks.

Now there is an opportunity to act directly against this rolling oil pipeline. The “Break Free from Fossil Fuels” rally is scheduled for May 14 at the Port. A coalition of communities and organizations across the Northeast has come together in an act of mass civil disobedience against oil trains, fracked gas pipelines, and other fossil fuel projects -- while standing up for frontline communities in the oil train “blast zone.”

It is expected many will participate in direct action to stop these trains, and others will come to rally and stand in solidarity. However rallyers choose to make their support known, their presence is important.

What you can do—More information on the rally is available at <http://www.albany2016.org>. *Andy Mason*

Update on the Constitution Pipeline

As has now been widely reported, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has denied a water quality permit for the proposed Constitution Pipeline, after a thorough review of the project’s impacts on the streams and wetlands that would be crossed. DEC cited threats to trout spawning habitat, steep slopes, dangers from scouring around the pipeline, and the cumulative effects of the impacts on the over 250 waterways affected. The agency also noted Constitution’s failures to provide necessary information for them to fully assess alternatives to trenching across streams.

DOAS has been involved in legal efforts to halt the pipeline, and submitted comments on the permit application. It is heartening to see our state government take a stance protective of the environment in the face of the federal government’s rubber stamping of the pipeline.

There no doubt will be further action regarding the project, including Constitution possibly suing DEC over the decision. DOAS will likely be an intervenor on behalf of DEC in that event.

Thanks to all who wrote letters or spoke at a hearing or in any other way took action to stop the pipeline. This is a great grassroots victory and cause for celebration!

President's message continued from page 2

be a plus. If you are interested in this wonderful chance to get more involved and to provide a very important service to the chapter, contact me at sjohandley@gmail.com.

Spring and Summer Exhibits We are often invited to participate in local events to set up an exhibit table to share information about our organization and our activities. We would like to take advantage of

these opportunities to reach new people throughout the region, but we need help with staffing. If you are a member who is interested in volunteering to staff an exhibit table on our behalf, please let us know so that we can provide information and details. Some of the upcoming events are the Build, Fix, Grow Festival at Hanford Mills Museum on May 22, the Sharon Springs Garden Party on May 28 and 29, and the Otsego Lake Festival at Lakefront Park in Cooperstown on June 11. Contact sjohandley@gmail.com. *Susan O'Handley*

DOAS Announces 2016 Environmental Education Grant Recipients

Our 2016 Environmental Education Grants distributed \$700 in grant awards to help fund the following three projects:

- Trout Release Program & Environmental Field Day with Focus on Tracking - Jennifer Finkle, Andes Central School, PreK-6
- Bird Studies Program- Dayle Allen, Valleyview Elementary School, 2nd Grades
- Build a Birdhouse Activity - Linda O'Brien, Hancock Community Education Foundation, K-8

DOAS Environmental Education Grants are awarded each year to educators in the DOAS area (Delaware, Otsego, eastern Chenango, and western Schoharie Counties). This competitive grant program is available for formal and informal educators, home school programs and student service organizations. These grants enable educators in our region to add new environmental and conservation-focused activities to

their curriculum or to continue existing initiatives.

The number of awards and grant amounts are determined based on funds available and the number of qualifying proposals received. Teachers may receive one grant per school year.

Donations to the DOAS EE Grant Fund are always appreciated. For additional information, please contact Susan O'Handley, DOAS Co-President and Education Chair, at 607-643-5680 or by email at sjohandley@gmail.com



Trout Release Program - Andes Central School; Photo by Jennifer Finkle

DOAS Board News

The following DOAS directors are renewing their commitment for a two year term ending in May of 2018: Becky Gretton, Andy Mason, Dorian Huneke, Charlie Scheim, Julia Gregory, and Tom Salo. The election will be held at the program meeting on May 20th (see upcoming activities on page 7 for details). There are two vacancies for terms expiring in May of 2017 that will be appointed in the future by the DOAS Board.

A committee of the Board of Directors has proposed several changes to the DOAS Bylaws. The Board voted at the April meeting to make those changes available for membership review prior to a vote by the Board in August. The revisions include allowing more than one president, as is the current practice, creation of an Executive Committee to make urgent decisions between board meetings, and requirement that all directors, officers and committee members comply with our new Conflict of Interest Policy. The changes can be viewed at <http://doas.us/2016-proposed-changes-to-doas-bylaws/>. All members are urged to send any questions or concerns to info@doas.us or call Andy Mason or any other Board member before August 1.

Otsego County--Home Sweet Home?

by DOAS Board member Joe Richardson



Yes, indeed! – for Alice and me. So why the question mark? Because the answer may well be No or Yes, but.. for the struggling dairy farmers of the county, or for graduating high schoolers and college students in search of

employment, or for businesses seeking to succeed and grow. For years and years the economy of the whole Southern Tier has been lagging.

But for retirees like Alice and me, a move from Lancaster, PA to Morris, NY fifteen years ago was a wonderful choice. Lancaster, a growing city of 60,000 plus, is rich in history, culture and amenities, and is a mecca for retirees. For us it is also rich in friends, having been our home for 33 years while we raised our families and pursued careers in college teaching and landscape architecture. Surrounding the city are Lancaster County's famously fertile limestone farmlands, where Amish communities have prospered ever since their forebears arrived in America 300 years ago. Yet Alice and I, living on a lovely, sycamore-lined street at what once was the city's edge, were ripe for a move from our comfortable 1920's duplex on 1/8 acre of land. Rural properties of the sort we now craved were scarce and expensive; and Alice, raised in the South, wanted a place that was cool in the summer and snowy in the winter. So we looked north and found both – and so much more besides – on a hillside outside Morris. We sold our Lancaster house for almost as much as we paid to acquire a renovated farmhouse and well-kept barn on 82 acres of truly rural land, part meadows, part forest, with a hemlock-lined stream

running into a sizeable gorge at the rear of the property. And lots of wildlife! - Coyotes and deer, of course, and two species of foxes, porcupines, fishers... and woodcocks courting at evening in the meadows where harriers swooped low by day, sapsuckers hammering on our gutters, hummingbirds and rose-breasted grosbeaks at our feeders all summer long. And also, for us transplanted “townies”, the bright lights of the county's biggest city only 10 miles away, inviting us to concerts, classes for seniors at Oneonta's colleges, and an organization headed by a core of remarkably skilled, energetic and dedicated birders, nature enthusiasts and environmental activists – what else but the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society! We promptly joined, and soon afterwards Tom and JoAnn Salo dropped by our house to ask if we would be interested in monitoring a couple of 5X5 km Atlas blocks for the NY State breeding bird survey then under way. At that time we were naturalist-ecologists rather than true ornithologists, but Tom helped us out, and we muddled through happily. If we did it again now, we'd still be weak links, but we'd be better with our IDs and bird songs. However, we no longer can roam the forests and meadows nearly as nimbly as back then!

Now, very reluctantly, Alice and I are facing the prospect of another move, to be closer to our children in Massachusetts as part of a “semi-rural” retirement community for people still able to “cope”, though no longer able to cope with the upkeep of an 82-acre property. Last summer we donated a conservation easement on our property to the Otsego Land Trust, and we are happy in the knowledge that whoever owns the property in future, its wildlife-friendly acres will be subject to development restrictions. We hope that future owners will love it as much as we do, and will quickly discover kindred spirits in DOAS – new friends who might enjoy it also!

Birding By Ear Workshop Reminder! Educational session, hikes, “Bruncheon” and raffle on June 5, starting at 8:30 AM at the Betty and Wilbur Davis Park in the Town of Westford. Pre-paid registration is required and groups are limited in size. More information and digital registration is available on line at doas.us. Registration is first come, first serve! Contact Becky Gretton for more information at 607-547-5648.



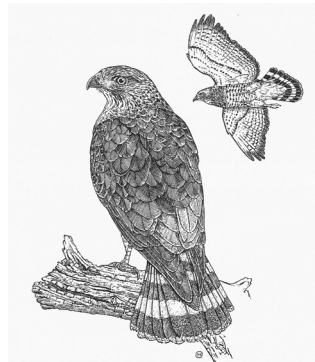
“Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8

Sparrows in Harpersfield.

In early April, Randy reported several arrivals, including Field Sparrow and Sapsuckers. Andy Mason reported lots of activity at his feeders during the bad weather on April 3rd, including Brown-headed Cowbird and Fox Sparrows (Jefferson). Gerianne Carillo reported a White-throated Sparrow (Milford, 4/5). Angelika Rashkow watched a flock of about 30 hens with 4 tom turkeys strutting about in her fields in Cooperstown (4/11).

Though I’m sure our local songbirds don’t agree, it’s interesting to learn of the spread of nesting Merlins. Andy Mason watched a pair engaged in courtship in Stamford (4/11), and Jessie Ravage observed a pair in Cooperstown.

Pam Peters heard Broad-winged Hawks, and also the first flute-like song of a Hermit Thrush on April 13th after



Broad-winged hawks
by
David Kiehm

seeing some passing through a week earlier (Treadwell). On the 14th, Tom Salo reported Northern Harriers in W. Burlington, and Sarah Root listened to a Ruby-crowned Kinglet singing in Maryland. Towhees were discovered on the 16th in Root (Steph Restuccia) and Oneonta (Leslie Preston), and Dave Kiehm reported the first singing Blue-headed Vireo near Milford. Kathryn Davino had three Brown Thrashers feeding on her lawn (4/17).

In mid-April, Joseph Happle snapped a picture of a Screech Owl in the nest box in his yard in Otego. Over in Guilford, Kathy Dawson enjoyed a nice mix of birds including Titmice, WB Nuthatches, and Ravens.

As the deadline for this article loomed, we took a trip to Vroman’s Nose with Dave and Ann Kiehm to look for the Peregrine Falcons that often nest there. Patience plus Dave’s knowledge of their favorite haunts paid off. We had seen both a male and female when suddenly, a large juvenile appeared. The male climbed and dove again and again in incredible aerial maneuvers to chase off the interloper. That’s birdwatching for you; pleasant, serene, relaxing... and occasionally thrilling.

Sandy Bright

Taking Flight: Birding in the Catskills, June 10-12

A major birding event is scheduled for the area in June at the Ashokan Center in Olivebridge, Ulster Co., NY. Presented by the Catskill Center, with DOAS as a partner organization, Taking Flight: Birding in the Catskills combines the best of a birding conference with a birding festival in an event rich with knowledgeable presenters.

Scheduled for June 10-12, activities will include birding before breakfast hikes and moonlit owl walks, as well as bird walks in surrounding areas. In addition, workshops on a variety of birding topics will be held throughout the weekend.

The keynote speaker for Friday is Chris Rimmer, Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies. Chris’ talk is titled “Bicknell’s Thrush: Conserving a Bird of Two Worlds.” Chris will lead an early Saturday morning hike up Slide Mountain in search of both Bicknell’s and Swainson’s thrushes, as well as other

mountaintop breeding birds such as Blackpoll and Magnolia Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, and Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.

Keynote speakers for Saturday, are Chris Wood and Jesse Barry of Cornell Lab of Ornithology who will discuss the Lab’s e-Bird project.

The Ashokan Center is an educational retreat center teaching about nature, history, and the arts, located near the Ashokan Reservoir west of Kingston, NY. All meals are included in the conference registration fee, and on-site lodging is available, as well as the opportunities for camping. Visit www.catskillcenter/taking-flight for a complete schedule, information and registration.



Upcoming Activities

May

May 7–Bird Walk at Glimmerglass State Park’s “I Love My Park Day,”: 8AM with Becky Gretton. Meet at the Nature Center.

May 7–Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk: A walk at the Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway trail, located on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta’s west end, to view returning migrant birds. This will be an easy hike on level ground for about 2 hours, starting at 8AM. Participants should meet at the parking lot by the soccer fields just past the transfer station. For more information, contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or scheimc@hartwick.edu.

May 14–DOAS Big Day Bird Count: Small groups enjoy trying to locate the maximum number of bird species in any amount of time they choose within that 24 hours. Everyone is welcome, novice or experienced. If you are interested and have not participated before, please contact Bob Donnelly at 607-264-8156 to join or start a group. People who have participated before will be contacted by their leaders.

May 15–DOAS Sanctuary Bird Walk: This walk will explore the Audubon Sanctuary’s varied habitats. There is some moderate climbing on the property. Meet at 8 AM at the Sanctuary. The walk will last about two hours, followed by a visit to the nearby Emmons Pond bog for interested participants. Species expected include a variety of warblers, vireos, waterfowl, orioles, tanagers and others. For directions, visit www.doas.us/conservation-and-environment/franklin-mountain-sanctuary/. For further information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 652-2162.

May 18–Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake State Park: Meet at the beach area at 10 AM. The walk is approximately a mile around the lake and takes about two hours. Bring water, insect repellent, binoculars if on hand, and your curiosity. For more information please contact Julia Gregory at (607) 563-2924.

May 20– DOAS Public Program: Barry Stevens from Wild Birds Unlimited in Johnson City will present “Focus on Optics.” **See article on page 1.** The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

May 22–Stamford, NY Spring Bird Walk: Meet at the parking lot, corner of Beaver Street and Main Street,

at 8AM. This is an easy, level walk along the Catskill Scenic Trail that will last about two hours. A variety of songbirds can be expected along with wetland species. For information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, or 607-652-2162.

May 24– DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

June

June 4–Field Trip to West Branch Preserve: Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright 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 8AM 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 contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or scheimc@hartwick.edu.

June 5–Birding By Ear Workshop at Davis Park in Westford: Have you been interested in unlocking the secrets of bird ID through song? Educational session, hikes, “Bruncheon” and raffle begins at 8:30 AM. The Betty and Wilbur Davis Park offers a variety of habitats and a perfect pavilion for our event. Pre-paid registration is required and groups are limited in size. More information and digital registration is available on line at doas.us. Registration is first come, first serve! Contact Becky Gretton to register by phone or for more information at 607-547-5648.

June 18–Bird/ Nature Walk, Robert W. Nichol Nature Preserve in the Village of Hancock, Delaware County: Join Pamela J. Peters for a bird walk for beginners of all ages at 7:00 am. Take an easy stroll through the preserve while learning the basics of bird identification. This is a free activity and everyone is welcome. For further information, call 607-434-4853. 607-434-4853/607-434-4853

June 19–Birds and Brunch at Origins Café near Cooperstown: Join us for an easy bird walk followed by a delicious brunch at the Origins Café, located on Beaver Meadow Rd., south of Cooperstown. The café is known for its healthy, locally-sourced food. The walk will start at 8 a.m. with brunch at 10. Reservations are required—contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or 607-652-2162



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Bird Sightings--March-April

In mid-March, Charlie and I watched a Red-tail carrying nesting material in Oneonta, reminding me that our early nesters would be hard at work. Several Bald Eagles were reported on nests, including one in Treadwell (Dorian Huneke, 3/24). Randy Lynch found the nest that the leucistic Red-tail in Harpersfield is using.



**Barred Owl Photo by
David Kiehm**

Other birds are busily attracting mates and defending territory. On March 17, Bob Donnelly found lots of Snipe displaying in Roseboom, and Cindy Campbell reported Barred

Owls in Richfield Springs. Steph Restuccia heard the unmistakable “peent” of a woodcock in Root (3/18). Bluebirds have been reported checking out birdhouses, including Gerry Pearlberg’s in Bloomville (3/21).

Early migrants are arriving and winter visitors were still being observed. Leslie Preston watched Ring-necked Ducks and other waterfowl at Wilber Lake (Oneonta, 3/21). Dorian Huneke found Coots on Cayuga Lake on the 22nd, while Becky Gretton reported the first Tree Swallows and Eastern Phoebes (Richfield Springs). Dave Kiehm reported large waves of Fox Sparrows passing through the Milford area (3/26). Germaine Connolly found American Widgeon on a pond in Springfield (3/28).

On March 26th, Kathryn Davino reported Northern Flickers in Delhi. Charlie Scheim found a large flock of Purple Finches on New Island (Oneonta), along with 2 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, a species not seen there before.

At the end of March, Tom Salo watched a Kestrel and a Red-tail bombing a Golden Eagle (W. Burlington), while Dorian observed a Golden Eagle among some Turkey Vultures (Treadwell). Randy Lynch was still seeing Tree

“Bird Sightings” Continued on page 6

If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, brights@hartwick.edu, at 40 Fair St., Oneonta, NY 13820, or at 607 287-4465 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher.