



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## Coming Activities

### February

February 17–Program on the Amazon, see article p. 6

February 17–20–Great Backyard Bird Count

### March

March 7–DOAS Board Mtg

March 17–Program, Planes, Plains and Food Chains

### April

April 1–Spring Waterfowl Trip

April 18–DOAS Board Mtg

April 22–Earth Festival, Bird Walk and DOAS Display

### May

May 16–DOAS Board Mtg

May 18 –June 8 – Audubon Photography Awards-Traveling Exhibition

May 19–Program, Bears

**More information on page 7**

**DOAS programs are free & open to the public**

## Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch End of Season Wrap-up by Andy Mason

The traditional Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch New Year's Day end of season came under mostly sunny skies and light westerly winds today. An adult Red-tailed



Hawk went south at 11:24 AM, making it the only raptor of the day and last bird of the season. This marked the 28th consecutive year of counting at the site.

This was a year when Golden Eagle numbers returned to a level Franklin Mt. has not seen in a decade. The season total was 231 Golden Eagles, the first time the site has surpassed 200 since 2006. That year was the last of four consecutive 200+ GE seasons.

This year's success was aided mightily by the 57 Golden Eagles tallied by Steve Hall on November 11. This stands as the second highest single day GE count at the site, topped only by the 71 also counted by Steve

exactly 11 years earlier, November 11, 2005. That day, in turn contributed to the 252 Golden Eagles in 2005, still the site's annual high.

The 57 Golden Eagles on November 11 this year ended a two-week stretch that included 6 double-digit days for the species, but also largely closed the door on Golden Eagles for the rest of the year. The big birds were spotted on only 11 of the remaining 28 dates through January 1.

Golden Eagles were one of the few bright spots of the season at Franklin Mt. however. Notably, Red-tailed Hawk numbers were significantly down; the 1751 counted is 41% below the 16-year average since full-time counting began. This continues a trend observed at other ridge sites over the past decade, and may be a result of this species becoming less migratory, rather than a population decline.

**"Hawkwatch" Continued on page 4**

## The Great Backyard Bird Count is February 17-20

Help create a real-time snapshot of bird populations by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as you wish) on one or more days from February 17-20 and report your

sightings online to [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org).

Locally, the Otsego Land Trust will host a Great Backyard Bird Count event with a DOAS volunteer at their Parlsow Road Conservation Area from 9-11 AM on Sunday, February 19. Please join us for some winter birding fun!

## President's Message

### Vigilance

by Co-president Susan O'Handley

I write this column today, on Inauguration Day, and think of our outgoing President's farewell address and his words of advice to "be vigilant". Having been involved in environmental conservation, research and education efforts throughout the bulk of my career, I have a keen awareness of how far we have come in the last fifty years, and that much of our progress has been a result of administrative action on the part of our government - those who worked hard to put into place strong and pro-active legislation like the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water and Air Acts, Conservation and Stewardship Legislative Mandates, etc. which came upon the tide of environmental activism spurred on by Rachel Carson's Silent Spring.

Vigilance is defined as the action or state of keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties. DOAS has long been a proponent of vigilance and activism and has consistently encouraged members and friends to voice their opinions through direct contact to elected officials. We have updated contact information for representatives throughout our region at our website at <http://doas.us/how->



to-contact-your-elected-officials/ so that these resources are easy to access. In addition, each issue of the DOAS newsletter, The Belted Kingfisher, contains our Conservation/Legislative Update section (typically on page 3) to help bring awareness to items that require attention.

Environmental protections need to be continually strengthened at all levels of government as we face current and future challenges like climate change, impacts of invasive species and continued destruction and degradation of global, national and regional habitats. Our birds and wildlife are dependent upon and affected by our actions and we have a responsibility to protect them. Our organization will do our best to remain vigilant during this administration and take action as we are able. We ask our members and friends to support our efforts and similarly remain vigilant and take action as you are able. Please sign up for our Enews at <http://doas.us>, become a member if you aren't already and participate with us.

### Reminder--Environmental Education Grant Applications Due

DOAS is now accepting proposals for our 2017 Environmental Education Grants. The deadline for applications is Saturday, March 4th. Details and application are online at <http://doas.us/education/environmental-education-grants/>

## THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

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FOUNDED 1968

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Janet Potter

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## Conservation and Legislation

### State Legislature Reconvenes—no improvement

**in sight**—The NY State Legislature has begun its 2017 session and the forecast is for more of the same, i.e., lots of one house bills that would make needed environmental progress, lots of political posturing, lots of lofty rhetoric, and in the end stalemate on the part of the State Senate with nothing to show for months of ‘work’.

This annual charade got underway with Governor Andrew Cuomo’s State of the State message—this year delivered in several doses across the state. The governor put forth some grand funding proposals, including \$60 million to improve state lands and parks to allow greater public access. \$5 million of this would go to the Catskill Park. He also proposes to put \$300 million into the Environmental Protection Fund—the primary source of state monies for acquiring open space lands, protecting clean water, and supporting recycling. And he recommends making \$2 billion available to municipalities to improve water supply and wastewater treatment systems.

Cuomo also envisions a 750-mile long Empire State Trail that would run east and west from Lake Erie to the Capital District and north and south from New York City to Canada. This multi-use trail would encompass existing trails and greenways.

Also proposed is lowering the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) by 30 percent by 2030. This multi-state effort would result in a 3% annual drop in carbon pollution. The Governor plans to expand the network of charging stations for electric vehicles across the state to encourage their use.

The state’s efforts towards its goal of requiring 50% of its electricity to come from renewables by 2030 would be pushed by the governor’s proposal to develop 2.4 gigawatts of offshore wind power, and also by investment of \$360 million for 11 large-scale renewable projects.

These are all worthwhile endeavors and the governor should receive credit and recognition for pushing New York as a leader in reducing greenhouse gases and turning toward renewable energy, but the reality is that much of this will be chopped dramatically by the legislature, in part by denying funding and also by blocking or watering down needed legislation to carry out this work.

With the change of administrations in Washington, there is more need than ever that states increase their role in environmental protection. That does not look likely in New York with legislators using an entrenched system to avoid votes and public scrutiny on important issues.

**What you can do**—Let your legislators know that the state needs to do more to protect our natural resources and wildlife. Tell them you will be watching for what legislation and programs actually make it through the process and become reality and will hold them responsible for the final product.

### Resistance needed against sell-off of federal lands—



Speaking of changes in Washington, one of the first efforts by the Republican majority in Congress to reduce environmental protections may be authorizing transfer of federally-owned lands to the states, particularly

in the west. Bills were introduced in the last Congress to transfer millions of acres of public lands and threaten the basis of America’s national forest system, fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and public access to quality outdoor recreation, including birding.

This sell-off of public lands was one of the main goals of the protesters who occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon last year. Evidently a significant number of legislators are willing to cave in to these strong-arm tactics.

These lands have protected important habitat and provided recreational opportunities for over a century and are unique among the nations of the world. They should not be handed off to local interests who will use them to exploit resources like timber, oil and water.

**What you can do**—Contact your representative in Congress and let them know these lands belong to all the people of the United States and represent a national treasure. Oppose any sell-off of public lands.

Contact information for state and federal public officials can be found at [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us). Andy Mason

## What's in a Name?

### by DOAS Board Member Janet Potter



By Louis Agassiz  
Fuertes

As I listened to the loud kic-kic call of the Cooper's Hawk in my backyard this summer, I wondered how these agile hunters got their name. I thought it would be great if their namesakes were related to the Coopers of Cooperstown. A quick search proved that idea wrong, and I learned that my backyard hawk was first described by French naturalist

Charles Lucien Bonaparte in 1828 who chose the name to honor naturalist William Cooper (he doesn't appear to be related in any way to the William Cooper who founded Cooperstown). This William Cooper was one of the founders of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, best known for his expertise in the study of mollusk shells. In the realm of birding, he is credited with being the first to describe the Evening Grosbeak.

Monsieur Bonaparte, who named the Cooper's Hawk, had the favor returned when the Bonaparte's Gull was named for him. He was the nephew of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, but his main claim to fame is that he authored a landmark catalogue of every known bird species in the world at that time.

The vast majority of bird species common names are descriptive, often including color references. Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Scarlet Tanager, Goldfinch, and Blue Jay come to mind. For some, there are other

physical characteristics that appear in their names, like Grosbeaks, Crossbills, and the Broad-winged Hawk. Some take their names from their calls, like the Chickadee, Killdeer and Bobwhite. Some descriptive names are misleading or confusing. The Red-bellied Woodpecker, for example, has bright red on the back of its head, but the red on the belly is pale and hard to see. I'd guess that the Red-headed Woodpecker name was already taken when this one was named. Perhaps you would be misled by the name Evening Grosbeak, named by William Cooper mentioned above, to think this bird would be nocturnal, but not so.

In addition to common names, many birds have nicknames. The Loggerhead Shrike is sometimes called the Butcherbird. The American Bittern becomes "Thunder-pumper" because of the distinctive sounds it makes. Did you ever hear an American Woodcock called a Timberdoodle or Night Partridge?

I'm sure you can think of many other examples of interesting names for birds. Whatever common or colloquial name birds go by, they certainly do enrich our lives.

#### References

ABA Blog, THE TOP 10: Best Colloquial Bird Names, By George Armistead June 20, 2012

Audubon web page, Birdlist Rule #101: Learn About the People Certain Birds Are Named After, By Nicholas Lund, November 03, 2016

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**"Hawkwatch" Continued from page 1** Audubon Christmas Bird Counts in New York State show Red-tail counts holding steady over the past 15 years.

Most other species were down 30-50% from their 16-year average, and the year's total raptor tally of 4688 was 10% below average.

Other species on the up side were Bald Eagles, at 197 rising 22% above average—also a continuing trend. Although not known as a Broad-winged Hawk site, 2060 of these September migrants were spotted—the site's third highest count and 42% above average. A big day of 1089 broad-wings on September 20 provided over half the season's total.

All data, including this and prior year totals for each species counted, for the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch can be found at [www.hawkcount.org](http://www.hawkcount.org).

101 days and 586 hours of coverage—all volunteer—were supplied by our counters. As always, a special thanks to Steve Hall who covered three days a week through the season. Other counters this year include: Larry Dake, Kyle Dudgeon, Fred Fries, Becky Gretton, Randy Lynch, Andy Mason, Pam Peters and Tom Salo. We also had a great supporting cast of spotters and hawk enthusiasts who made the mountain a fun place to be this fall—thanks to all!

## Bird Counts and Field Trips

Details of all counts can be found on the DOAS web site

### Christmas Bird Count: December 17th

Sandy Bright reports that there was heavy snow and unplowed roads on the day of the Christmas Bird Count in December. That meant some areas of our circle went uncovered. Because of this, both overall number of birds found and variety of species were down. Her analysis of the data did reveal some interesting results. Despite less coverage, DOAS counters had higher numbers of some species than the average for the last 6 years. Feeders seemed particularly active during the storm, and feeder bird numbers were actually up (Tufted Titmouse, Nuthatches, Cardinals, Juncos, the common finches, and House Sparrows). The count of 44 Common Ravens set a record for our circle. This is a species that has steadily increased its range and population in New York State. No Ravens were ever recorded in our count circle until 2004, when a single Raven was spotted. The species has made an appearance in every CBC since then.

### NYS Ornithological Association waterfowl count for Otsego Lake and its tributary streams, lakes and ponds: January 15th

Andy Mason reports that waterways were largely open after a recent warm spell, resulting in an especially good variety of waterfowl species recorded by DOAS counters. As usual, Otsego Lake turned up the most birds, including Common Loons, Redheads, and Am. Coots, with Canada Geese, Mallards, and Common Mergansers recording the largest numbers. A total of 1809 birds were counted over 80.6 party-hours of coverage. Other species of interest

included: Ring-billed Gulls, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tail Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Bald Eagles, Golden Eagles, Great Blue Heron, Turkeys, Pileated Woodpeckers, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Brown Creepers, Eastern Bluebirds, Am. Robins, minks.

Thanks to participants: Matt Albright, Jane Bachman, Kay Crane, John Davis, Bob Donnelly, Lisa Gorn, Becky Gretton, Kathy Griswold, Marion Karl, Dave Kiehm, Eric Knight, Carol Lynch, Randy Lynch, Andy Mason, Marge Mathis, Katie Ray, Tom & Joanne Salo, Cindy Staley.

The Salos covered Canadarago Lake watershed reporting four species of waterfowl, Canada Geese, Mallards, Black Ducks, and Hooded Mergansers.

### Eagle Field Trip, January 14

Another good day for this year's DOAS eagle field trip to the upper Delaware River region in Delaware County. Thirty participants joined the trip from Oneonta, Delhi and Walton and spotted a combined total of 30 Bald Eagles along the route. The best sighting was a pair of adult eagles at an active nest site near Deposit. These tolerant birds put on quite a show for observers.



**Bald Eagle on Nest**  
Photo by Barb Palmer

Several Red-tailed Hawks and a variety of waterfowl were also spotted, and the trip wrapped up with a well-earned lunch at the Old Schoolhouse Restaurant in Downsville.

## Brown Creeper by Stan Stan Salthe, DOAS member from Deposit, NY



What a dowdy little creature! -- with its proper white breast. I have read (possibly in Burroughs) that in the Nineteenth Century New York forests chickadees, nuthatches and creepers would forage through the trees as a small society -- each pointing to the possibility of food in different modalities. Today, at

our feeders this little winter society persists -- joined at a later time, after global warming began, by the tufted titmouse. But the creeper is scarce at best. At my feeding station in Deposit I have in the last years noticed a creeper going through its traditional routine of landing on a tree near its base and working its way upward propped by its stiff tail until it leaves higher up for another

**"Brown Creeper" Continued on page 6**

**“Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8**

their white undersides when they as a group changed direction,” moving to another spot to settle down, but never really settling. Back in Oneonta, she found eleven Wild Turkeys and some Tree Sparrows.

A few days later, Angelika Rashkow watched a female Hairy Woodpecker enjoying the seed in her feeder along with a Tufted Titmouse and Chickadees. On January 8th, Donna Cooperman snapped some photos of a Barred Owl she found near Hobart. The next day, Andy Mason listened to two drumming Downy Woodpeckers volleying back and forth in the woods in Jefferson. It seemed “unusual for territorial behavior on this cold mid-winter morning.”

In mid-January, a Great Blue Heron was still fishing the Mill Race in Oneonta. Charlie Scheim reported that, each evening as he leaves work, hundreds of crows stream past Hartwick College, returning to their roost. In Cooperstown, John Davis carefully examined a flock of 16 Cedar Waxwings in a tree near his feeders to rule

out any Bohemians. He was, unfortunately, successful in this endeavor.

Bob Donnelly had hundreds of Goldfinches invading his feeders on the 15th. They didn’t seem to mind the Ermine darting in and out of the rocks, into spaces that appeared too tight, but when a Northern Shrike showed up, the birds disappeared!

We may grumble about cold weather, short days, and fewer birds being in the area, but one advantage of the season is that the birds that are around can be easier to find. So keep those binoculars handy, and keep those reports rolling in!

Sandy Bright



*Cedar Waxwing  
photo by Dave  
Kiehm*

**February 17th - Join Us! “An Amateur Photographer in the Amazon” with Dr. Vicky Lentz**

Visit the amazingly beautiful Amazon through photos and a program with Vicky Lentz based on her recent trip



with National Geographic. Dr. Lentz is a tenured assistant professor in the Biology Department at SUNY Oneonta. She attended Indiana State University and the University of Delaware, earning her PhD in immunology from the University of Pennsylvania. She is currently studying the immunological relationship between American eels and one of their parasites. She joined the Otsego County Conservation Association board of directors in January 2007, and has served as board president since 2010.

Her program will be presented on Friday, February 17th at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St. in Oneonta, N.Y. Refreshments will be served.



**Save the Date: March 17th** at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St. in Oneonta, NY Donna Vogler, Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta, will present “Planes, Plains and Food Chains: Using native grasses at airfields to reduce bird strike hazards.”

**“Brown Creeper” Continued from page 5** tree. (I wonder what it would feel like for the creeper to meet a nuthatch going down the same tree!) Only one lone creeper! and many of the others working the suet and the black oil seeds. I found a way to let the creeper partake of something too. I smear peanut butter

into the cracks of the bark of the tree from which the feeder and suet cage hang. Sure enough, the creeper does manage to stumble upon the smeared stuff and stops to partake. Well, so that’s how to help bring this little ancient winter society back together at your feeder. Photo from Wikimedia by Cheepshots

## Upcoming Activities

### February

**February 17 – DOAS Public Program, An Amateur Photographer in the Amazon:** Vicky Lentz, Assistant Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta, will present a program about her recent trip to the Amazon with National Geographic. See article on page 6. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

**February 17 - 20– Great Backyard Bird Count:** See reminder on page 1

### March

**March 4 – Deadline for Environmental Education Grant applications:** See reminder on page 2.

**March 7 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**March 17 – DOAS Public Program:** Donna Vogler, Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta, will present “Planes, Plains and Food Chains: Using native grasses at airfields to reduce bird strike hazards.” The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

### April

**April 1 – Spring 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 8AM 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 18 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**April 21 – DOAS Public Program:** Jenny Murtaugh, Wildlife Technician with the Department of Environmental Conservation, will present “Marvels of Avian Migration.” The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

**April 22 – Earth Festival Bird Walk:** Led by Bob Donnelly. Carpools leave Milford Central School parking lot at 9AM.

**April 22 – Earth Festival:** Milford School, 11 AM -3PM. Visit the DOAS table! For full details about Earth Festival, visit <http://occainfo.org>.

**April 29 – SUNY Cobleskill Fish and Wildlife Festival:** April 29, 10AM-4PM. DOAS Exhibit with Videos from camera traps and a Slideshow

### May

**May 6 – 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 8:00AM. 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.

**May 16 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**May 18 – June 8 – Audubon Photography Awards-Traveling Exhibition:** watch the March newsletter for more information

**May 19 – DOAS Public Program:** Larry Bifaro will present a program about Bears. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

### Is your Membership Current?

Your mailing label will inform you of your membership expiration date (year and month, e.g. ‘1706’ indicates June 2017). DOAS memberships are \$15 per year or \$25 for two years; family memberships are \$20 per year or \$30 for two years. **View membership benefits and download application from our website: [doas.us/join-us/](http://doas.us/join-us/) OR join online at [doas.us/store](http://doas.us/store)**





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## December-January Bird Sightings

This time of year brings winter birds from the north, lots of feeder activity, and sometimes common birds found in surprising places. In mid-December, Charlie Scheim found a flock of about 20 Snow Buntings near Laurens. Marilyn Bailey had 3 species of woodpeckers visit her yard in Oneonta: Downy and Red-bellied on the feeder together, Hairy feeding alone. She also discovered turkey tracks near Valleyview Elementary in Oneonta... not a species we usually see wandering through that residential area!

Later in the month, I happened upon 2 large birds in the Mill Race in Oneonta: a Great Blue Heron fishing, and a Red-tailed Hawk, which flew up into a nearby

tree and shook off, probably having just finished a cool bath. Elliott Adams observed 2 Short-eared Owls near Canajoharie. Andy Mason found one immature Bald Eagle at the Cannonsville Reservoir, then watched a pair at a newly-discovered nest, one eagle on, the other flying in to position a stick. Eagles certainly are a hardy lot to be nest-building in December!

Early morning on New Year's Eve, Charlie and I found three hawks near Milford on our way to Fort Plain. One Red-tailed Hawk soared above, another perched in a tree, and a Kestrel zipped over the road ahead. In my experience, I don't often find raptors out hunting early in the day.

On New Year's Day, Leslie Preston discovered a flock of about 120 Snow Buntings gritting in the road near Harpersfield. Typical of these birds, they didn't stay in one place for long, busily foraging, scurrying here and there, rising up, diving and turning "in perfect sync with the others, flashing



**Red-tailed Hawk**  
by David Kiehm

***If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, [brights@hartwick.edu](mailto:brights@hartwick.edu), at 40 Fair St., Oneonta, NY 13820, or at 607 287-4465 for the next issue of The Belted Kingfisher. We regret that not every report can be included due to limited space. Additional information may be requested for sightings of rare or unusual birds.***

**"Bird Sightings" Continued on page 6**