



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## Coming Activities

### January

January 14–Eagle Trip

January 15–Waterfowl Count

January 17–DOAS Board Mtg

January 20–Program, On Heron Time

### February

February 17–Program, Amazon Travels

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

April 29–Jefferson Bird Walk

**More information on page 7**

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

## Christmas Bird Count

by Sandy Bright

Conditions were excellent for owling on December 17th, the day of the Christmas Bird Count. Bob Donnelly found some very responsive Eastern Screech Owls, along with a Northern Saw-whet and Great Horned. By the time the rest of us got out for our counts it was a different story, with near white-out conditions in places. Though not all results were in as of this writing, it seems the weather didn't deter the birds, and a fair number were found, especially at feeders. By afternoon, precipitation had turned to very light, scattered showers. Many of the birds, having gorged during the storm, seemed to go into hiding.

We found no unusual bird species in our territory, but we did watch a mink,

spotted by team member Elizabeth Partlow, for several minutes before it finally became aware of our presence and vanished into a snowy tunnel. Bob's team discovered a large group of Ravens picking gravel in the road. While Peter Fauth was out covering his territory, his family found proof that any bird can learn to be a feeder bird!

More information will follow in the next Belted Kingfisher, and the complete list of birds tallied will be posted on the DOAS website.



*Turkey at  
Peter Fauth's  
feeder*

## January 20th - Join Us! "On Heron Time" with Rick Bunting



*photo by Rick  
Bunting*

Popular and gifted photographer Rick Bunting will present this program featuring photographs and observations gathered from several years of monitoring a small Great Blue Heron rookery in Chenango County. He will follow the cycle of activity there from the arrival of the first bird to the last bird to fledge.

Since his retirement from SUNY Potsdam and the Crane School of Music, this accomplished and well-known musician pursues his passion for photography full time. Please join us on January 20th at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St. in Oneonta, N.Y. Refreshments will be served.

## President's Message

### *The Timing was Perfect*

by Co-president Becky Gretton

Mother Nature often enables us to feel more grounded in times of unease. Being outdoors with each other and especially with perfect strangers, in search of natural beauty, provides welcome diversion from stress. An event at the Fenimore Art Museum on November 12 in conjunction with Otsego 2000's Glimmerglass Film Days proved this to be true for me.

Having a bird walk in mid-November has less potential for actually seeing birds than it would a few months prior. Nevertheless, having a bird walk in advance of a poignant film, "The Messenger," was a wonderful time for everyone. DOAS volunteers Charlie Scheim, Sandy Bright and Becky Gretton hosted a dozen enthusiastic visitors on a chilly, brilliant day in search of birds. What we found, in addition to a few American Crows, some American



Goldfinches, about 7 Red-heads, and three Common Mergansers, was genuine interest in birds, their environment, their habits, and their needs. People who were drawn to the films were drawn to each other as they became acquainted, and found common ground through nature. They visited our display table on their way to the film. We look forward to welcoming some new members. We will seek each other out at the next event, and enjoy getting to know some more perfect strangers as well. Memories of that beautiful setting will last all year long.

Volunteering for events is always rewarding in one way or another. We welcome those interested in volunteering and encourage you to contact [info@doas.us](mailto:info@doas.us) to get started.

Our environment needs protection now and most definitely in the future. Thanks for your willingness to be engaged in a manner that is meaningful to you.



**Save the Dates for Future Programs** at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St. in Oneonta, NY:

**February 17th** Vicky Lentz, Assistant Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta, will present a program about her recent trip to the Amazon.

**March 17th** 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 DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Janet Potter

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To contribute notes or articles for  
The Belted Kingfisher, email:  
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## Conservation and Legislation

**A bleak landscape**—Perhaps it is fitting that the cold and dark days of January will bring a similar chill to the environmental community with the ascent of the new administration in Washington. Indications are that we face an all-out assault on protections for birds and wildlife, on addressing climate change, on protecting public lands, and on improving air and water quality.

The rhetoric of the campaign has faded away, replaced by the realities of President-elect Trump's appointments to key environmental posts. While there are any number of moderate, experienced and competent Republicans who could have filled these posts, Mr. Trump's picks are individuals who have been among the most antithetical to the very agencies they will now be heading.

As Director of the Environmental Protection Agency, Trump tapped Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt. In that position, Pruitt has repeatedly sued the EPA over environmental rules and regulations, at times in direct cooperation with fossil fuel companies. He is known as a climate change skeptic, stating, "Scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and its connection to the actions of mankind."

An official of an oil and gas producing state, Pruitt is a strong supporter of fracking and questions any connection between the activity and groundwater pollution, despite the fact that Oklahoma regularly experiences earthquakes resulting from fracking activities.

For Secretary of the Interior, Trump's nominee is Montana Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke. In Congress, Zinke has been a supporter of gas, oil and coal extraction on public lands—which he will now oversee. He is also in favor of the stalled Keystone Pipeline. If there is any bright spot here, it is that Rep. Zinke opposes the sell-off of public lands being pushed by conservatives.



President-elect Trump has put forth former Texas Governor Rick Perry to head the Department of Energy. While a candidate for President, Gov. Perry named Energy as one of three agencies he would abolish if elected. Another energy state leader, Perry has been unabashed in his support of oil and gas companies and has taken campaign funds from them. He is presently a director of the company attempting to complete the Dakota Access Pipeline which has met with major opposition and protest.

Although not directly an environmental position, Trump's choice for Secretary of State will impact our overseas relationships, including the Paris Accord on Climate Change reached earlier this year. Rex Tillerson, a long time Exxon Mobil executive and present CEO, has expressed support for the Accord, although some believe this to be a tactic to distract from evidence showing Exxon Mobil suppressed evidence for global warming in the past while questioning climate change.

**What you can do**—These nominees require confirmation by the US Senate. Although the Senate has a Republican majority, the margin is thin, and some Republicans have already expressed concern about some of Donald Trump's picks. At the least, confirmation fights can demonstrate that there is not overwhelming support for the wholesale environmental waste that the President-elect and others have promised.

Contact New York's US Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and ask them to stand strong against the extremes of the Trump appointments. Senator Schumer, now Democratic leader in the Senate, will play a major role in determining where his party takes a stand.

See the conservation page at [doas.us](http://doas.us) for contact information.

Andy Mason

### Panel Discussion Video Available

Watch a video of the lead ammo panel discussion co-sponsored last month by DOAS at SUNY Cobleskill at <https://schopeg.vids.io/videos/189bd0b4121aecc990/suny-cobleskill-lead-ammo-discussion>.

The program runs 1 hr. 36 min. including the 13-minute video at the start.



## Great Backyard Bird Count

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the



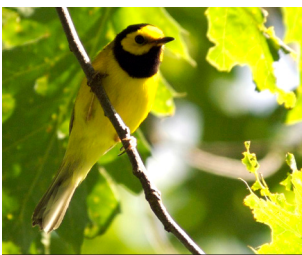
environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

The 20th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2017. Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information and be sure to check out the latest educational and promotional resources.

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## Year of the Yardbirds 2016 by DOAS Board Member Bob Donnelly



**Hooded Warbler**  
photo by David Kiehm

I try to pay attention to the changes in bird activity each year on my property in Roseboom. It's hard for me to guess what causes fluctuations in species, and whether it's a trend or an anomaly.

This year started with feeders overrun by Goldfinches, but no irruptive species. With

no snow cover through the winter, bird feeding was rather dull. Every March I hope to lure Woodcocks to my fields; I have started mowing in alternate years, but still no luck. They prefer other fields near mine which look similar.

When the warblers returned in May, I was saddened to find a dead Hooded Warbler beside a picture

window near the house; I assumed that meant I would find none. Instead, I had two singing males all summer by the house, and two more further down the driveway. So they are doing well. Finally, I was able to erect more bluebird houses than the Tree Swallows could fill; it resulted in two batches of young Bluebirds.

A nesting Broad-winged Hawk was the first I have found there also, along with Barn Swallows.

On the negative side, I don't think that I heard a Cuckoo all summer. I never have wrens or cardinals nesting. What had been a resident pair of Kestrels did not stay, leading me to wonder if I need to clean their box more often, which is not easy, or if it has something to do with leaving fields unmowed.

In any case, it is always delightful to see the changes through the year. As winter comes, I've heard a Saw-whet Owl occasionally. You never know.

## Environmental Education Grants Offered

Each year, Environmental Education Grants are awarded to classroom teachers in the DOAS area (Delaware, Otsego, eastern Chenango, and western Schoharie Counties) through the DOAS EE Grant Program. This competitive grant program is also available for Home School Programs as well as 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. Grants are competitive and will be evaluated by a committee of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society. Previous grants have funded projects such as an environmental field day; construction of a weather station; backyard birds and animal habitats study kits; and pond studies.

The deadline for receipt of submission for a 2017 DOAS EE Grant is 5pm, Saturday,



*Tree planting- photo by Eileen Kline*

March 4, 2017. Selected recipients will be notified no later than 4/1/17. Download the Grant Guidelines and Application at <http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/EEGrantGuidelinesandApplicationCoverForm-1.pdf>.

DOAS accepts donations to specifically support the DOAS EE Grant Fund. If you would like to make a contribution, please send check to DOAS, PO Box 541, Oneonta, NY 13820 with EGrantDonation in the memo of your check. For additional information, please contact Education Committee Chair, Susan O'Handley at 607-643-5680 or at [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com).

## Raptor Research Foundation Conference Highlights

Peg DiBenedetto represented DOAS at the 2016 Annual Conference of the Raptor Research Foundation in Cape May, New Jersey this past October. This conference celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Foundation with three days of continuous fast-paced "speed talks" and superb plenary talks by premier birders Dr. Ian Newton of England, Dr. Carol McIntyre of Alaska, and Dr. Yossi Lesham of Israel. Dr. Trish Miller and Mike Lanzzone held a session on telemeters and applying them, providing many tips which DOAS will be able to use in replacing a transmitter on one of our golden eagles this winter.

Two of the recurring themes were climate change and lead poisoning. An informative block of talks about lead contamination was conducted one



afternoon, followed by a panel discussion. Notably, Dr. Helene Van Doninck, a veterinarian from Nova Scotia, has implemented a ground-breaking and successful information campaign, along with a non-lead ammunition and angling exchange program in the region of Atlantic Canada. What DOAS has begun with our own non-lead information effort is very similar to Dr. Van Doninck's. Lastly, it was suggested that some organization needs to carry the lead reduction movement on a national level.

Our thanks to Peg for attending the conference and preparing a report for DOAS. The full report can be found on our web site at <http://doas.us/raptor-research-foundation-conference-highlights/>.

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

Lake. Evening Grosbeaks visited Kay Crane’s yard in Walton, along with Red-breasted Nuthatch and Red-bellied Woodpecker. A Screech Owl made use of the Barn Owl box Tom Salo had installed in his barn decades ago.

Just before winter storm Argos blew the first pair of Tree Sparrows into Delhi for Kathryn Davino, she counted 29 Mourning Doves at her feeder. The occasional Robin Andy Mason was seeing before the storm didn’t stick around, but afterwards he found a Fox Sparrow, a healthy flock of House Finches, Purple Finches, Goldfinches, Juncos, Chickadees, Nuthatches both Red- and White-breasted, Titmice, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, and “too many House Sparrows”. Randy Lynch discovered a Rough-legged Hawk, plus Red-winged Blackbirds and 13 Horned Larks feeding on grit in North Harpersfield. He observed a Bald Eagle chasing a Raven, who in turn was being followed by another Raven. Later in the month, a Barred Owl hunted in Tom Salo’s yard in West Burlington.

As November came to an end, there was plenty of open water for fishing birds. A Belted Kingfisher was



**Belted Kingfisher-**  
**photo by Rick**  
**Bunting**

still fishing Kathy Mario’s pond. A Great Blue Heron foraged in the Mill Race in Oneonta on December 3rd.

In mid-December Randy and Carol Lynch found a small flock of Snow Buntings (Harpersfield), an immature Golden Eagle (Kortright), a Cooper’s Hawk (Delancey), a “very puffy, cold, male American Kestrel” (Walton), and, in various locations, tallied 9 Bald Eagles and 23 Red-tailed Hawks.

A Brown Creeper picked at the bark of a red maple outside Becky Gretton’s window in Richfield Springs.

I’ve read about the co-dependence between wolves and ravens. One day, as I brushed the snow off our feeders, my neighbor’s dog trotted over. There were a number of crows around, but he paid them no mind, being far more interested in the friendly scratch he was receiving. When the distinct “quork” of a Raven sounded, however, some instinct in his wolf-brain made him wheel away from me and search the sky, serving as a reminder that we are not the only species that pays attention to birds.

Sandy Bright

## 57 Golden Eagle Day at Franklin Mountain!

The Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch had its second highest daily count for Golden Eagles on November 11, when Steve Hall tallied 57 of these magnificent raptors passing the site. Counters Fred Fries and Kyle Dudgeon, as well as a number of visitors, were also present for the big day.

The high count came exactly eleven years after Franklin Mountain’s highest Golden Eagle count—71 on November 11, 2005—also by Steve Hall. That number stood for several years as the highest single day count for the species in eastern North America.

The November 11 count, along with seven other double-digit days this season, has pushed the hawkwatch to its best year for Golden Eagles in over a decade and second highest seasonal count, topped only by 2005’s 252 birds. As of mid-December, the 2016 Golden Eagle tally stood at 230.

Also on the Golden Eagle front, an adult bird was photographed on November 4th by Curt Morgan with a transmitter on its back. It apparently was not one of the eagles DOAS has fitted with transmitters, and we have an inquiry out for further information.

Despite the high Golden Eagle count this season, Red-tailed Hawk numbers are down. These Buteos often produce good flights on the same days as Golden Eagles, but this year their counts have been modest. Other species vary above and below average this season.

A full wrap-up will be in the February Belted Kingfisher. Counting is expected to continue on promising days until New Years Day.

Andy Mason



**Northern Harrier-photo**  
**by Curt Morgan**



# Upcoming Activities

## January

**January 14 – Eagle Trip:** View wintering Bald Eagles around the Delaware County rivers and reservoirs on Saturday, January 14, 2017. Eagles concentrate around open water in the region to feed, and recent trips have turned up 20+ birds, including 27 last year. Other raptors and waterfowl are also usually sighted. We will stop at a local restaurant for lunch for interested participants.

The trip will leave the Dietz Street parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 8:00 AM. Carpooling is strongly encouraged and participants can be picked up en route in Delhi and Walton. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon. For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

**January 15 – NYSOA Waterfowl Count:** The NY State Ornithological Association's annual statewide waterfowl count is scheduled for Sunday, January 17, 2017. DOAS covers Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and Cannonsville Reservoir and the West Branch of the Delaware River. This effort involves surveying waterways where they can be seen, and identifying and counting ducks and geese. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year.

Anyone interested in helping with the census, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

**January 17 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**January 20 – DOAS Public Program, On Heron**

**Time:** Photographer Rick Bunting will present a program about Great Blue Herons. The program begins at 7:30 PM

at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. See article on page 1.

## February

**February 17 – DOAS Public Program, Amazon**

**Travels:** Vicky Lentz, Assistant Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta, will present a program about her recent trip to the Amazon. 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 article on page 4

## March

**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. See article on page 1.

## April

**April 1 – Spring Waterfowl Trip,** watch the February newsletter for more details.

**April 18 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**April 22 – Earth Festival**, Milford School. Watch the February newsletter for more details

**April 29 – Jefferson Bird Walk,** watch the February newsletter for more details..

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**Friday Facts** Visit our web site (<http://doas.us/category/1-fridayfacts/>) to read an interesting tidbit about the history of DOAS every Friday in celebration of our 50th year. Here's a recent one:

*“Jean Miller, an avid birdwatcher and naturalist, served on the DOAS Board for 38 years (1973-2010). She was Board president for many of these years. Wow!”*





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## October-December Bird Sightings

With Halloween looming, Randy and Carol Lynch went on an early morning “owl prow” in Jefferson. They spotting a Barred Owl on a telephone pole, vocalizing. Driving around, they located the resident leucistic Red-tailed Hawk feeding, and an immature Cooper’s Hawk. Their real windfall occurred on County Route 33, where they found 3 Bald Eagles, which were joined by several more, with yet more perched in trees. All told, they tallied an astounding 23 Bald Eagles in the area, plus a couple of Ravens, all attracted by the remains of a carcass.

That same day, Leslie Preston counted 17 Common and 3 Hooded Mergansers, a Pied-billed grebe, and a Great Blue Heron at Wilber Lake (Oneonta).

***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.***

Dorian Huneke’s November birdwatching commenced with a pair of Bluebirds flitting from tree to ground along the edge of a field in Treadwell. Jennifer Hyypio reported a Cooper’s Hawk hunting the streets of Oneonta at lunch time, diving after pigeons from one side of the street to another, in and out of traffic. She snapped a picture of the raptor, perched on a building, hawk eyes searching.



A Ruffed Grouse sauntered through Kathryn Davino’s yard (Delhi), sticking around long enough for her to grab her camera, but not long enough for her to get a good shot. How many times has that happened to each of us?

A few days into the month, Becky Gretton found 5 Snow Buntings at Otsego Lake, and a Northern Harrier along with a Barred and 3 Short-eared Owls in Montgomery County.

In mid-November, Leslie Preston discovered a Ruddy Duck at Wilber “Bird Sightings” Continued on page 6