



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

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 21 Program, Marvels of Avian Migration
April 22–Earth Festival, Bird Walk and DOAS Display
April 29–Cobleskill Fish and Wildlife Festival

May

May 16–DOAS Board Mtg
May 18–June 8 – Audubon Photography Awards Traveling Exhibition

May 19–Program, Bears

June

June 9–11 – Birding in the Catskills

More information on page 7

DOAS programs are free & open to the public

Winter 2017 Camera Trapping and Golden Eagle Tracking by Tom Salo

DOAS volunteers are operating eight camera traps in our local counties this winter. A camera trap is a baited, remotely-activated camera that is equipped with a motion sensor. These cameras are used for capturing digital images of wildlife when researchers are not present. The DOAS program was begun in 2010 primarily as a distribution and demographic study of golden eagles. It has grown into a wide-ranging study of scavengers throughout the east. Over the season we have filmed fishers, bobcats and even a northern goshawk.

This winter has been unusual. While Otsego County sites have had plenty of action from ravens,



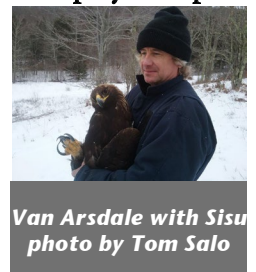
"Sisu" Golden Eagle Photo
By Peg DiBenedetto

coyotes, hawks and bald eagles, golden eagles have been scarce. They have been present in good numbers in southern Delaware County, and were photographed in

Orange and Ulster Counties. One was trapped by Scott Van Arsdale on February 2nd at one of the Delaware sites. That large, second-winter female was named "Sisu" and fitted with a GPS tracking device. This is the eighth and last tracking device we deployed as part of this project.

DOAS tracking data is shared with Researchers at West Virginia University.

We also recently agreed to share it with the US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of a large home range study of golden eagles. Maps with data analysis done by GIS can be found at [doas.us \(http://doas.us/research/appalachian-golden-eagle-project/golden-eagle-project-telemetry-work/\)](http://doas.us/research/appalachian-golden-eagle-project/golden-eagle-project-telemetry-work/).



Van Arsdale with Sisu
photo by Tom Salo



Bald Eagle at DOAS site in Otsego County; Photo By Kyle Dudgeon

President's Message

by Co-president Andy Mason

One of DOAS' great strengths over the years has been the monthly public presentations we have faithfully put forth nine times a year for nearly our entire 50-year history—somewhere around 400 programs. The topics covered by these events have been very broad, ranging from discussions of recycling to land use planning to geology to birding equipment to art history and everything in between.

And of course, the birds! We have been treated to showings of the birds of all continents, as well as natural history, travelogues, scientific research and conservation efforts. We have been most fortunate to have extremely talented photographers, both local and from afar share their beautiful images with us.

In DOAS' earlier days, the programs were often part of National Audubon's traveling film series, which included a knowledgeable speaker to accompany the film. Even Roger Tory Peterson visited Oneonta as part of this series. These showings were before my time, unfortunately, but I well recall films on 35 mm projectors, along with the associated hassles of a broken reel in the middle of the show.

DOAS' programs have always been popular and are a third Friday fixture in Oneonta. I do believe attendance has risen in recent years, and is now as high or higher than it has ever been. The 70+ attendees at Vicky Lentz' February program on

the Amazon bear that out. In these days of on demand video, excellent nature programming on TV, and computer access to nearly everything, that is quite an achievement.

The public presentations are important to us, helping us carry out part of our purpose to engage in educational pursuits. This is often the first contact between DOAS and new and potential new members. There is great social camaraderie at the programs, first class refreshments, and a commonality of interest and concern.

Of course, these events do not just spring from the ground by themselves. We have had a number of terrific program chairs over the years who research and contact speakers and work out the details for the evening's activities. Our current chair, Becky Gretton, is no exception and has put together a great mix of presentations for this year, and is already working on the next.

Program chairs always appreciate suggestions for programs and ideas and topics for the future, so don't hesitate to contact Becky if you know a good speaker or have thoughts on our programs.

Here's to Becky and all her predecessors who have made the Audubon programs a great tradition in our community over the years.



THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Janet Potter

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ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Delaware Otsego Audubon
Society
P.O. Box 544
Oneonta, NY 13820
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Conservation and Legislation

by Andy Mason

Net metering under attack

in NY—You may not be familiar with the term ‘net metering’, but it is one of the most important parts of the current growth in use of solar power in the country, including NY State, and is critical to continuation and expansion of this renewable resource.

Net metering is a provision in energy regulations that allows homeowners to sell electricity they produce with roof top solar panels, or other means, back to their electric utility at the same rate per kilowatt hour as the utility charges the homeowner. This common sense requirement allows those who invest in solar panels to fully benefit from their environmental commitment, and serves as an incentive to others to go solar.

However, net metering is not looked on favorably by utilities or by the fossil fuel generating companies whose power is increasingly being displaced by clean alternative energy. Clearly they feel threatened by the growth in solar power that now is near the cost of their polluting energy, and dropping steadily.

These utilities and power companies are trying to push

through surcharges on existing solar homes and a cap on net metering in the future. Governor Cuomo has set an ambitious goal of moving the state toward renewable power and home solar will be a big part of that and should be encouraged. The state Public Service Commission is the body that will make any decisions regarding net metering.

What you can do—Contact Gov. Cuomo and the PSC and urge them to continue New York’s policies on net metering. Point out that the growth of solar power has been one of the bright spots on the state’s energy horizon and that the social and environmental benefits of this change go to all New Yorkers.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, NY State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224.

Kathleen H. Burgess, Secretary; NY State Public Service Commission, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223-1350. (Note Case 15-E-0751)



Award-Winning Nature Photographs Coming to the Arkell Museum this Spring

DOAS will be sponsoring the exhibition of the winning bird photographs from the 2016 Audubon Photography Awards as part of our 50th Anniversary Celebrations. Selected from over 7,000 entries, the winning photos were published in the May-June 2016 issue of Audubon Magazine. The exhibit features 12 large-scale photographic prints, each 24”x36”, nine of which are the award-winning and runner-up photos and an additional three selected from the gallery of top 100 photos. They will be available



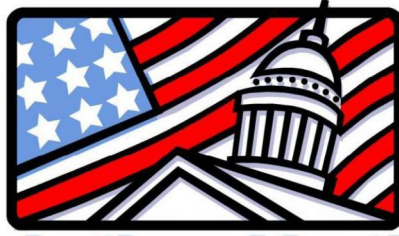
for viewing from May 18 through June 8 at the Arkell Museum in Canajoharie. In conjunction with the exhibit, there will be a DOAS presentation about the ongoing Golden Eagle Project, a birdwatching field trip, and possibly a screening of “Audubon: The Film”. Dates and times for these activities will be announced once finalized.



Bird Friendly Coffee orders for delivery at our March 17 Program are due by noon on Saturday, March 11. To order, contact Susan at 607-643-5680 or by email at sjohandle@gmail.com.

The 115th Congress' Assault on Public Lands and the Environment by DOAS Board Member Tom Salo

On day one of the new Congress, everything changed. The House – including local Representatives John Faso and Claudia Tenney – voted to change federal rules, thus laying the foundation for a massive transfer of federal lands to state and local governments (HR 5 - <http://www.fieldandstream.com/gop-house-moves-against-public-lands-on-its-first-day>).



It is generally my practice to be positive, hopeful and educational when I write columns for this newsletter. Given the moment, with powerful forces arrayed against environmental protection, I am positive we are right. Hopeful? I am hoping we can stop some of the worst of the assault. My educational goal is to raise an alarm. The House is now considering a bill to eliminate the Environmental Protection Agency (HR 861). Consider the alarm sounded.

Advocates of transferring federal lands to states and local governments justify it as serving the interests of local residents. However, these lands belong to all the people. Being mostly rural, these local residents represent a tiny group. Federal land should be managed on behalf of all Americans, not a few. Once lands are put in state or local hands, there are no guarantees they will even remain public. They could be sold. Hunters, fisherman, birders and hikers would lose access to some of these areas forever. Even if they do remain public, extractive industries would no longer be constrained by the rules of federal agencies. Be assured there will be fewer protections, leading to degradation of habitat and

water quality. Wildlife will suffer.

Candidate Trump promised to revive the coal industry. Congress is aligned with him. The first week of February, both the House and Senate voted to repeal a regulation known as the Stream Protection Rule. This recent rule would bar mining companies

from putting waste into local waterways. Faso (NY19) and Tenney (NY22) both voted to repeal the rule.

These issues are just the beginning. Clean air and water are not partisan issues even if votes are being cast along party lines. I clearly remember the heroic efforts of local Republican Congressman Sherwood Boehlert. Preserving Americans access to their public land is not a partisan issue. Climate change is not a partisan issue. It is an existential threat.

We can fight this assault, and perhaps stop much of it. Your Representatives in the House and Senate need to hear from you.

If you are reading this newsletter, you appreciate wildlife and environmental quality. Express your concerns, and if your Representatives vote the wrong way, your disapproval. Thank your Senators for their vote on the Stream Protection Rule, and criticize your 19th or 22nd Congressional District Representative for sacrificing streams and water quality for the coal industry. And, let your Representatives know you want climate change addressed, and the EPA preserved.

Note: Contact information for Representatives can be found on the doas.us "Legislative Updates" page.

Save the Date--April 21st! The Marvels of Avian Migration



Jenny Murtaugh, Ecologist with the Department of Environmental Conservation, will address the questions: "Why do birds migrate?" and "Which birds migrate at night and which by day?" We will learn about migration strategies, mechanics, and techniques used to study our marvelous avian travelers. This is perfect timing for everyone preparing for spring whether through a bird count or survey, a hike or spot birding, or in the back yard!

March 17th--Join Us for Dr. Donna Vogler's Talk:

Planes, Plains and Food Chains: Using native grasses at airfields to reduce bird strike hazards.



Bird strikes remain a serious concern at airports, costing the aviation community \$957 million in aircraft damage & delay. More importantly, bird strikes threaten human life at take-offs and landings. Donna Vogler will report

on a project she and her student Kristin Dorsch Baciуска conducted at Oneonta, Rome-Griffiths and Elmira airports with FAA funding. Her talk will show the test plots of native grasses planted at these airports and report on their ability to deter birds, deer and other wildlife.

Dr. Donna Vogler is Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta, with emphasis on ecology and conservation biology. Her professional experiences include working as a botanist with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, and teaching at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Slippery Rock PA, and University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pittsburgh. She has been at SUNY Oneonta since 2000.

This free program is open to all and will take place on Friday, March 17th at 7:30pm at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY.

Time for Nest Box Spring Cleaning by Kathryn Davino

If you didn't clean out your nest boxes last fall, it's time to get ready for all the migrants who will soon arrive to raise a new brood. Why bother? Most birds will not typically clean out old nests by themselves. They may build a nest on top of another previously used nest, but this may promote disease and parasite infestation, and increase the likelihood that a predator will be able to reach in and nab eggs/nestlings that are closer to the entrance hole. Accumulated feather dander can make the interior dusty, especially when older fledglings are exercising their wings. Also, most birds won't use a box filled to the top with House Wren sticks. Unless you want to encourage House Wrens to reuse a nest box, it's best to tidy up.

Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Stand upwind to avoid inhaling detritus. Wear a face mask to avoid disease exposure, especially if you have a compromised immune system.
- If you are allergic to bees, bring your Epi-Pen/Benadryl.
- Never stick your hand into a nestbox if you cannot see clearly inside - there could be snakes, biting insects, mice, etc. inside! Use a tool like a long-handled putty knife, wooden paint stirrer, or burger flipper to slip under the old nest.
- Put it into a plastic bag (you can invert the bag onto your hand like a glove to avoid touching the nest). Close the bag in case there are any insects/mites or larvae in

the nest.

- Brush out (with a stiff brush) and scrape the interior (a hive tool or putty knife is useful). If you find any paper wasp nests, remove them, as they may attract more wasps. If drain holes are plugged, clean them, too.



- If desired, disinfect boxes with an enzyme solution like Carefree Birdhouse and Feeder Cleaner, or a 10% bleach solution in a spray bottle. If you do use bleach, leave the box open for a day to air and dry it out. You can rinse it out with water if you have some handy, but chlorine oxidizes rapidly and becomes harmless, and should be gone in 24 hours. If you don't want to use bleach, mix 1 cup of distilled vinegar and 1 gallon of water and put it in a spray bottle.
 - Dispose of the nest far away or in the trash to avoid attracting predators. Since the beneficial Jewel Wasp parasitizes blow fly larvae, some people like to dispose of the nest outdoors.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer immediately afterwards (before eating, drinking, or touching your face or steering wheel.)
- For more information about nest box care, go to <http://www.sialis.org/clean.htm>.

“Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8

Creek Road, and a red-winged blackbird in their back yard in Davenport on the 8th. Four days later it was back to winter weather and sightings: Vivienne Clark reported that she and Peter “witnessed a Rough-legged Hawk swoop down and attack a Blue Jay in our yard near our feeders (Cooperstown). Later I inspected the area where there were many feathers and a pool of blood. The Blue Jay put up quite a fight, but it was not to be.”

Mid-February’s snowstorm brought a Fox Sparrow scratching under Gerianne Carillo’s feeders in Milford, and a vocalizing Raven above. As the weather became a bit milder on Valentine’s Day, Charlie Scheim discovered a pair of Hooded Mergansers in the Otego Creek in Laurens. Later, we returned from a pleasant, sunny walk in time to see a Cooper’s Hawk swoop through the trees in our backyard in Oneonta and land on a nearby branch, having grabbed something for dinner on the way through. It spent a long time on that branch, eating, then preening, illuminated by the setting sun. A few days later, Jennifer

Hyypio caught some video of the leucistic Red-tailed Hawk and 7 Snow Buntings near Hobart.

As the days lengthened, Suzanne Gaynor began hearing Tufted Titmice singing their spring song in East Meredith and Oneonta. Charlie and I have heard dueling woodpeckers drumming in Oneonta, and I’ve recently enjoyed my walks to work a bit more as I listen to songs I haven’t heard in months from Cardinals, Nuthatches, and House Finches. Seems the birds appreciate the longer days as much as we humans do.

Sandy Bright

**Save the Weekend**

Taking Flight: Birding in the Catskills is scheduled for June 9 - 11, 2017 at Frost Valley YMCA in the heart of the Catskill high peaks. Sponsored by the Catskill Center the weekend will feature field trips, workshops and presentations by speakers such as Richard Crossley, internationally acclaimed birder, photographer and

award winning author of ‘The Crossley ID Guide’ series.

This promises to be an outstanding event. For more information, visit www.catskillcenter.org/taking-flight-about/.

Visit the DOAS Web Site!

Want a downloadable checklist for birding in Delaware and Otsego County? Want information about legislation, including action alerts, policies and positions, links and resources? Want to read about our organization, or our programs, field trips, and other events? Want to find out about our DOAS Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain? Want to sign up for DOAS e-news? The place to go is www.doas.us.

Our web site, ably managed by co-president Susan O’Handley, is a treasure trove of information. Check it out!



Upcoming Activities

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.

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, Ecologist 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. Reminder on page 4.

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: DOAS-sponsored exhibition of the winning bird photographs from the 2016 Audubon Photography Awards at the Arkell Museum in Canajoharie. See article on page 3.

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.

June

May 18 – June 8 – Audubon Photography Awards-Traveling Exhibition: see article on page 3.

June 9 – June 11 – Birding in the Catskills: see article on page 6.

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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/ OR join online at doas.us/store**



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January-February Bird Sightings

Winter returned with a vengeance! Though we did have one day mild enough to chase the grandson around the park without jackets, the weather for this reporting period has been mostly good old-fashioned winter, complete with snow and ice storms.

During the ice storm in the last week of January, Kay Crane found 2 Pine Siskins among the Goldfinches at her feeders in Walton. A couple of days later, Pam Peters observed a light morph Rough-legged Hawk in Hamden, alternately perching, then hunting and kiting over the fields. Dorian Huneke watched an eagle devour a meal, then fly with its mate to their nest in Treadwell. Bob Donnelly had a nice long view of a Short-eared Owl on

the ground near Sprout Brook.

We've all been caught without our binoculars before. It happened to Dorian Huneke several times over a period of weeks. The large, dark, mystery bird that had frustrated her attempts at identification finally revealed itself to her when it vocalized in early February: a Raven, accompanied this time by two others.

On the 4th, despite the ice forming at the edges of the Mill Race in Oneonta, a Great Blue Heron flew silently along the stream. A few days later, Randy Lynch found a Belted Kingfisher eyeing a small opening in a mostly frozen creek near Harpersfield. Also in the area he has observed a Carolina Wren vocalizing, an immature Golden Eagle soaring along a ridge, a pair of Bald Eagles building a new nest for the last three weeks, a flock of 30+ Horned Larks, and 18 American Tree Sparrows.



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. 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.

As if to tease us between storms, Leslie and Ginnie Sanford discovered a flock of robins on the west end of the Charlotte "Bird Sightings" Continued on page 6