



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

June

May 18–June 8 – Audubon Photography Awards Traveling Exhibition

June 9–11 – Birding in the Catskill

June 11 – Birding by Ear Workshop

July

July 10–13 –John New Summer Day Camp, grades 3 and 4

August

July 31–August 3 –John New Summer Day Camp, grades 5 and 6

August 19–DOAS Board Mtg

September

September 1– Bird Seed Sale Begins

September 15– Program , Coyotes (tentative)

September 19–DOAS Board Mtg

October

October 7 – Open House

October 20 – DOAS Charter Dinner

More information on page 7

**DOAS PROGRAMS
ARE FREE & OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC**

President's Message –The Years Do Add Up

by Co-president Andy Mason

In this issue of The Belted Kingfisher, and elsewhere this year, you have heard of DOAS' celebration

of our 50th anniversary. This is a noteworthy milestone for any organization, and we are proud of continuing as a strong, vibrant group.

Three women were the original core group that imagined and carried through the founding of our Audubon Chapter. Elizabeth Feldhusen, Johanna Koenig, and Jean Miller had the vision and energy to gather community members and support to coalesce a brand-new organization and carry it through to recognition and adoption by the National Audubon Society.

I had the good

Society starter 9-17-68
Anyone interested in helping to start a local chapter of the Audubon Society is invited to an organizational meeting at 7:30 p.m., (sharp) Friday at Huntington Library (upstairs). For information call 432-4986 on Thursday evening.

fortune to know all three of these ladies to varying degrees, although my time with DOAS did not begin until over ten years after the founding.

Jo Koenig was an active outdoor enthusiast, and in addition to her efforts with Audubon, was also a major influence in the local Susquehanna Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club, and was active with that group nearly until her passing. I did not know Elizabeth Feldhusen well, but did spend two weeks with her on a birding trip in Costa Rica organized by Bob and Jean Miller.

She was a lively, adventurous person who did not back down from any of the rigors of that trip. I heard she passed away a couple of years ago, but was unable to find any details. However, her role in starting DOAS was important and will be remembered.

Jean Miller I did know well,
"50 Years" Continued to page 3



Jean Miller

"50 Years" Continued from page 1 and she was a personal hero of mine. Jean was president when I connected with DOAS, and she encouraged me in conservation efforts and asked me to take on the Conservation Chair position after the untimely death of John New. Jean lived her life as a true conservationist and was committed to birds and to the environment. She was a role model for many of us, and her dedication to causes such as world population, endangered species, and education remain an inspiration for me.

There have been many others who have nurtured and carried along DOAS over the past decades and I'm afraid to even start listing them. But we have been fortunate to have had strong leadership throughout the group's existence that began with three special individuals and continues to this day. I am confident that we have another good 50 years ahead of us!



Big Day Bird Count

Bob Donnelly reports that there were nine DOAS groups in Otsego, Delaware and Schoharie counties counting birds for the Big Day Bird Count on May 20th.

Altogether the reporting groups found 120 different species of birds with most groups finding some species that nobody else found. There were 22 species of warblers alone. Even though the day started cold, it warmed up enough that birds were active much of the day. Some of the people who participated include Eleanor Moriarty, John Davis, Becky Gretton, Julia Gregory, Karen and Bob Donnelly, Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright, Kay Crane, Kathy Mario, Pam Peters and Cynthia Waterman.

Charlie Scheim was the only counter to have Merlin, Cedar Waxwings, Cliff Swallows or Creepers. Kay Crane had the sole Golden-crowned Kinglet and Black-billed Cuckoo, and John Davis reported the only Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Becky Gretton had a Blackpoll Warbler, while only Julia Gregory had Ospreys, Ruby-crowned Kinglet or Parula. Despite the lack of gulls, terns, or Accipiters, Bob declared it "a great count." Results from DOAS will be submitted to the American Birding Association. Thanks to all who helped.

Pam Peters of Treadwell shared some **"Big Day" Continued on page 3**



THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Janet Potter

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Kathryn Davino
Bob Donnelly
Julia Gregory
Janet Potter
Tom Salo
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One Vacancy

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Hospitality*:	Julia Gregory
Membership*:	Andy Mason
Programs*:	Becky Gretton
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Bird Counts:	Sandy Bright
Charter Dinner:	Julia Gregory
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Historian:	Kathryn Davino
Sales:	Vacant

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

A Victory--of sorts--in

Washington—There has been a steady stream of bad environmental news from Washington this year, but in early May there was a flash of brightness with passage of an omnibus funding bill for the remainder of the fiscal year, which provides strong funding for important conservation programs. Although the Trump administration has vowed to slash budgets for the EPA, Departments of the Interior and Energy and other environmental agencies, Congress stood strong and actually increased funding for these programs, including many that benefit birds and other wildlife.

To be clear, much of the pressure to OK this bill came from the threat of a government shutdown if no action was taken. Republicans who control both houses did not want to appear to be the bad guys in such a scenario. However, they did ultimately support dollars for important conservation work, and resisted attempts to attach damaging riders by anti-environment zealots in Congress. As National Audubon president David Yarnold put it, the bill's passage "... proves that a bipartisan commitment to conservation still exists—even in a hyperpolarized political environment like the one we have today."

This may be a brief respite, however. A detailed budget proposal from the administration for fiscal year 2018 was recently released, and it cuts federal spending for land, air and water protections and bird programs. It will be up to us to let representatives know that these are important to us and we expect them to maintain the nation's commitment to a clean, healthy environment.



What you can do—Contact your Congressperson—particularly John Faso and Claudia Tenney—regarding the Trump budget. Both have shown a tendency to go along with the administration, but need to know that their constituents are watching closely.

Will Albany do anything?—The end draws near for the legislative session in Albany with continuing gridlock over environmental issues. The prognosis is for more of the same, i.e., good legislation proposed and passed in the Assembly, but no action in the Senate. Worthwhile bills are pending that would protect smaller wetlands, require oil transport companies to have adequate financial protections in case of accidents, and establish in the New York State Constitution a right to clean water, clean air and a healthful environment—to name just a few.

The odds are long for these proposals however. The Senate leadership prevents the bills from even reaching the floor for a vote, knowing that many, if not most, would pass by a wide margin. Until the system changes by legislators showing some backbone and standing up to their party, these bills will continue to languish.

What you can do—Contact your State Senator and let them know you expect up or down votes on these bills. Point out that they are abdicating their responsibility to represent their constituents by hiding behind this no-vote scam. We did not elect legislators to do nothing.

Contact information for these public officials can be found at www.doas.us.

Andy Mason

"Big Day" Continued from page 2 memories of earlier Big Day Bird Counts "I was looking over my old count sheets, the ones Jean Miller would mail out to groups. I usually birded with Jo Koenig, Mary Lou Austin and later, Julie Smith. We covered Arnold Lake (where there was often a loon), D&H Swamp and Otego Creek (where the Rowleys let us walk their property). My daughter rode along in her car seat in the early years. The best count was May 22, 1993. We had 132 species. What I notice in the counts from the 1990s up to 2001—there are no Bald Eagles except ones I found scouting the week before around Delaware County. Maybe we didn't know where to look on our route, or maybe there weren't any nesting in our territory. Good memories."

Thanks to Pam for sharing this look back at our earlier days.

***Birder Bio*--Kyle Dudgeon**

With this article, we begin a series of profiles of people who love birds. Our inaugural *Birder Bio* is about Kyle Dudgeon, who agreed to be interviewed by Belted Kingfisher editor, Janet Potter



Kyle Dudgeon

Janet—Tell our readers a little bit about yourself.

Kyle—So yeah! I'm 20 years old and I'm from Warwick, NY - an awesome town down in Orange County. I'm currently going into my junior year at SUNY Oneonta, studying environmental science and with a minor in biology. I've always had boundless passion for

nature in general. As a kid I always

loved being outside, whether it was hiking, fishing, or just enjoying time with friends. Growing up here in Warwick really helped spark that love from an early age; although, it wasn't until recently that I realized I wanted to start directing my studies that way. I transferred to Oneonta just this past year, and I have to say I really found my home there.

Janet—How did you get interested in birding?

Kyle—I love telling this story actually. There is a hawk watch in my town called Mt. Peter hawk watch. It's right up the hill from Bellvale Farms Creamery, a local ice cream place my parents used to take my sister and me and our friends to eat ice cream and then hike the trails by the hawk watch. I always thought it was so cool that people sat up there and just looked for hawks all day. I began working at the Creamery (as we call it) in high school. One day in my junior year I decided to walk up to the hawk watch after work and see what was going on. Well long story short, it became a regular thing. Before work, after work, even when I wasn't working, I would be up there watching hawks and birds. I really hoped to see a bald eagle more than anything. It took almost the whole fall but on one cold

November day, I finally did see one. Right around that time I had purchased my first camera too, so I would run around my yard chasing the local Cooper's hawk with my little 55mm lens and be incredibly stoked with the pictures that were actually terrible... Another long story short, I stuck with the photography and ended up buying some nice gear only a year or so later, thus the beginning of my love for birds. It started with the photos. At first I only looked for raptors, but soon enough it would evolve into an "every bird" thing. Now I'm an avid birder, and look forward to spring migration of warblers just as much as I do hawk migration in the fall.

Janet—Where are some of your favorite birding spots?

Kyle—My favorite birding spots are along the coast. I'm in love with shorebirds. If I could spend the rest of my life anywhere with any type of birds, you bet it would be on the shore with sanderling, plovers, dunlin, etc. I'm currently working as a shorebird monitor on a dredging project along the coast of New Jersey.

Janet—How did you connect with the Delaware Otsego Audubon Society?

Kyle—I began my connection with DOAS last fall when I assisted in counting hawks at Franklin Mt. Last winter I participated in the golden eagle camera trapping project as well, and only a few months ago, the board named me an official hawk counter! So stoked to get my own day up there in the fall. It can't come soon enough!

Janet—What's your most exciting birding experience?

Kyle—That's a tough question, but I can probably say the most exciting birding experience of my life was the great gray owl I saw in "*Birder Bio*" Continued on page 4

Election Report The DOAS nominating committee presented five candidates for election at the May 19th meeting. The membership elected Rod Sutton, running for the first time, and the following incumbents: Bob Donnelly, Susan O'Handley, Kathryn Davino, and Janet Potter. Terms for all candidates are two years ending in May of 2019.

DOAS Memories

by Warren Ryther of Garrattsville

I'm Warren Ryther of Garrattsville. I started birding not long after my discharge from the Marine Corps in 1968. I had been badly wounded in Vietnam, and getting involved with nature was therapeutic. The following are some memories.

It was some time in the 1970's that I went on an all-day Spring bird count with two early pillars of the local Audubon chapter, Mary Dobinsky and Katherine Wilson. Accompanying us was their friend, Cora Wellman. Cora was advanced in age—late 80's, I think—and frail. We eventually made our way to Milford State Forest where there was supposed to be a Goshawk nest, and it being around noon we decided to eat lunch there. After lunch, Cora announced that she had to take a nap, and she spread a blanket on the ground and laid down, while the rest of us sat quietly nearby. Several minutes later, without sitting up or opening her eyes, Cora matter-of-factly and softly said, "A Red Tail Hawk and a Red Shoulder Hawk are fighting above us," and scanning the sky with our binos, the rest of us were able to find two hawks flying very high up. We hadn't heard them. A birding neophyte, I was astonished by Cora's acute hearing and right-on identification. It was memorable.

On another Spring census in the 1970's, John New was the leader. His expertise was legendary, as were his energy levels and enthusiasm. One of his carefully planned stops was a spot on the Susquehanna near Portlandville. There he had discovered a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher's nest. The nest was quite a ways out on a tree trunk which leaned horizontally over the river.

The nest (with bird sitting in it) was so tiny that it seemed impossible that John had been able to spot it. Also, it was very cold that day (snow flurries), and it was remarkable that anything so small could be sitting, so exposed, on eggs.

I can't recall the year, except it wasn't long after an informal hawk watch had started on Franklin Mountain. If I'm not mistaken, it was largely a one-man operation then, with Ron Milliken coming from his home in the Binghamton area whenever he could. I showed up to help a few times, despite a serious lack of identification skills. At least I could help spot. The day that sticks in my memory was a blustery, bitterly, bitterly cold one, and there were just three of us present: me, Ron and Chris Vredenburg. Chris was good at identification. Scores and scores of Red Tails flew over that day; undermanned, to keep up the count, we had to section the sky and tally them as best we could. They'd arrive in kettles of 20 to 40, and the constant up-and-down and southward motion made it a challenge to count them. When Ron left the hill for about an hour to take a lunch break and warm up, Chris and I soldiered on. At the end of the day, we had counted over 900 Red Tails, if memory serves me correctly. I believe that record held for several years.



Warren Ryther with Golden Eagle Greg,
Photo by RR Eklund
Photography

"Birder Bio" Continued from page 3 New Hampshire this past winter. Hands down one of the most amazing days of my life.

Janet—Is there anything you'd like to add?

Kyle—After all these years, I can proudly say that I'm an established wildlife photographer! A few years in now and it's only the beginning. My camera gear is quite impressive now for a self-funded, broke,

starving college student! Unlike other kids, I actually sold my gaming system senior year of high school to buy my first "real" wildlife lens. It cost me right around \$1,000. A lot of savings went into that one. Since then I've bought another lens, camera and so much other gear. Pretty soon I'll be adding my next camera to the bag. My website can be reached at: KyleDudgeonPhotography.com.

“Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8

Springs). Sightings of Red-breasted Nuthatches are up, with several people reporting first-ever visitors to their area: Debra Mack (Exeter Center), Ellen Sokolow (Burlington), and Stacy Grocott, who also reported a Cerulean Warbler at the “cranberry bog” in Burlington. Charlie Scheim discovered Chimney Swifts in the skies above Oneonta. Kay Crane topped off this busy day with the first Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Indigo Buntings, plus an unusual sighting of Orchard Orioles!

5/2 John Davis spotted a White-crowned Sparrow (found also by Rod Carter on 5/14) mingling with white and tan morph White-throated Sparrows beneath his feeder in Cooperstown. On another trip to the OSG (Oneonta), Kyle Dudgeon found American Redstarts, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos, and a Worm-eating Warbler! Andy Mason watched three Osprey fishing over Utsayantha Lake (Stamford).

5/3 Kathryn Davino discovered Bobolinks chattering in a field near Delhi, and a Hummingbird 9 days earlier than last year.

5/8 Juliana and Peter Fauth reported the first Scarlet Tanager near Oneonta.

5/12 Prairie Warblers and Great-crested

Flycatchers showed up at Riddell Park (Gerianne Carillo). 5/14 Charlie and I finally heard the hauntingly beautiful song of the Veery at the West Branch Preserve in Hamden. And, in a tribute to mothers everywhere on Mothers’ Day, an eaglet peaked over the new nest built after the first was devastated by the late snowstorm in Treadwell.

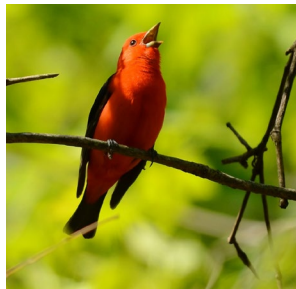
5/16 Tom Salo timed lunch at the Otesaga perfectly for a fascinating show by fledging Common Merganser chicks, which dropped 20 feet to the ground before scurrying off to the lake.

5/17 In Jefferson, Andy Mason found Great-crested Flycatcher. At Bear Spring Mountain Pam Peters and Kay Crane found Alder Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, Magnolia, Black-throated Green, Canada, and a special treat, Bay-breasted Warblers.

5/18 Cedar Waxwings returned to Barb Palmer’s yard in Jefferson.

This month’s article covers all of the new arrivals, plus a few species migrating through. Regrettably, space prevents the inclusion of some sightings. Thanks to all who took time to send the many, many reports.

Sandy Bright



Scarlet Tanager
Photo by David Kiehm

May Field Trip Highlights

Saturday May 6—Charlie Schiem and Sandy Bright led about a dozen participants on a bird walk at the Susquehanna Greenway in Oneonta. The highlight of the trip for several participants was finding the Worm-eating Warbler reported earlier in the week by Kyle Dudgeon. Yellow-rumped Warblers were everywhere. Numbers of

Baltimore Orioles, American Redstarts, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and Gray Catbirds were seen and heard. A Purple Finch and a Black-and-white Warbler afforded good views, while several Yellow-throated Vireos teased

but remained mostly unseen. An immature Bald Eagle made an appearance early on. Later, an Osprey and a Turkey Vulture shared the sky above.

Sunday May 7—Led by Andy Mason, five hardy birders turned out for a bird walk at the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society’s wildlife sanctuary near Oneonta. Andy reported that conditions were chilly and drizzly and the birds were subdued but they saw more than 25 species including some that made a colorful splash for the gray day—Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore Oriole and Purple Finch.

Saturday May 27—Charlie and Sandy led another bird walk, this time at the West Branch Preserve near Hamden. A half dozen knowledgeable birders joined them to find at least 42 species. Sandy reported, “With that much experience amongst us, we were able to focus on the different songs of birds of the same species.”



Greenway Bird Walk
Photo by Janet Potter

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

June

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

June 9–June 11– Taking Flight-Birding in the Catskills: A weekend of bird field trips, workshops and presentations. For further information and registration, www.catskillcenter.org/taking-flight-about/.

June 11 – Birding By Ear Workshop: The workshop will be held at the Davis Park in the Town of Westford, NY. Contact Becky Gretton at 607-547-5648 for more information.

July–August

July 10–July 13 – John New Summer Day Camp: For children entering grades 3 and 4. Held at the DOAS Franklin Mountain Sanctuary. Register online at www.doas.us.

July 31–August 3– John New Summer Day Camp:

For children entering grades 5 and 6. Held at the DOAS Franklin Mountain Sanctuary. Register online at www.doas.us.

August 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

September

September 1– DOAS Bird Seed Sale Begins

September 15– DOAS Public Program: Michael Clark of the DEC will present a program on Coyotes (tentative-watch www.doas.us for confirmation/alternative program news). The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

September 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

October

October 7– Open House: 10 AM-2 PM at DOAS Sanctuary

October 20– Charter Dinner: See description below.

Mark your Calendar! We are planning a very special charter dinner on October 20th. The dinner will culminate a year of celebrating our 50th anniversary. The speaker will be the renowned Joan Collins, president of the New York State Ornithological Association and editor of New York Birders. As president of Adirondack, Avian Expeditions and Workshops, LLC, she leads bird field trips year-round. She is a licensed guide, an Adirondack 46er and a frequent speaker and teacher on ornithology topics. Full details and the registration form will appear in the September issue.



Joan Collins
Photo by George Yellott

Birding by Ear Workshop: June 11



Call Becky Gretton at 607-547-5648 to see if there is still space in our Birding By Ear workshop to be held on Sunday morning, June 11 at the Davis Park in the Town of Westford, NY. An educational session at 8:30 AM will be followed by a bird hike with DOAS experts, “Bruncheon” buffet, raffles, and another hike for more species. Prepaid reservations are required. Cost is \$25 per adult 18 and over, and \$15 for youths age 12-17.

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



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April-May Bird Sightings

Spring heralds migrants from far-away places. While a few species made it here in time for the last report, the majority wait for foliage to provide some cover. Then the rush begins!

4/23 In Sharon Springs, Bob Donnelly found a pair of Blue-winged and numerous Green-winged Teal, many Virginia Rails, and American Bitterns, including “one that jumped up at one of the two Harriers coursing over low”.

4/24 A late Fox Sparrow joined 3 other sparrow species under Dave Kiehm’s feeder near Kelly Corners. John Davis found the first ever Red-bellied Woodpecker at the Leatherstocking Golf Course (Cooperstown). He also observed three scrapping Chipping Sparrows in a territorial fight. The next day, he reported Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

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.

4/27 A Black-throated Green Warbler sang outside Pam Peters window in Treadwell. Peter Fauth managed to both hear and see a Blackburnian Warbler in his yard near Oneonta, a species generally hard to spot in the treetops!



**Blackburnian Warbler,
photo by David Kiehm**

4/28 The first Ovenbird sang outside Pam Peters’ house in Treadwell. Kyle Dudgeon discovered Yellow and Blue-winged Warblers at the OSG (Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway trail, west end). Rose-breasted Grosbeak visited Suzanne Gaynor’s feeder in East Meredith. Barn Swallows returned to Treadwell (Dorian Huneke).

4/29 Pam Peters heard the first Wood Thrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Least Flycatcher (Treadwell). The first Oriole appeared in Gerianne Carillo’s Lilac bush in Milford, and Spotted Sandpipers returned to the Susquehanna in Oneonta.

5/1 Leslie Preston found an Eastern Kingbird between Oneonta and Pine Lake, and, once there, found a Cape May Warbler, a species also spotted on the 10th by Becky Gretton (Richfield) **“Bird Sightings” Continued on page 6**