



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

March

March 6–DOAS Board Mtg.

March 16– DOAS Program,
“Climate Change in New York”

March 31– Lake Otsego Waterfowl
Trip

April

April 17–DOAS Board Mtg.

April 20–DOAS Program,
Photographer Kyle Dudgeon “Life
at Sea Level”

April 21–DOAS Earth Festival Bird
Walk

April 21–Earth Festival

May

May 15–DOAS Board Mtg.

May 18–DOAS Program, “Monarchs
and Milkweed”

June

June 3–Birding by Ear

More information on page 7

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

March Program: Climate Change in New York What could happen and how we can avoid the worst of it.

Dr. Kevin Schultz,
Associate Professor
of Physics at
Hartwick College
will present our
program, “Climate



Change in New York” on Friday,
March 16 at 7:30 PM at the Elm
Park United Methodist Church in
Oneonta. The primary purpose of
this talk is to explain how scientists
believe the climate will change
for New York State over the next
century and how those changes
will affect the environment and
our society. While predictions for
unmitigated climate change are
dire, there is still time for us to
avoid the worst of it. Kevin will
discuss personal and community
strategies to reduce humanity’s
carbon footprint.

Dr. Kevin Schultz received his PhD
in atomic physics at Stony Brook
University and did post-doctoral
research in atomic physics at
Brookhaven National Laboratory
and Ohio State University. He and

his family moved
to Oneonta in
2012 when he
accepted a job at
Hartwick College.

At Hartwick,

every J-Term, he teaches a course
called “Energy, Environment and
Society”. Occasionally he writes
on his blog “Hot New World” at
Medium.com and he has recently
joined the Oneonta Environmental
Board.



**Climate-threatened
Baltimore Oriole
By Patty McGann
Flickr Creative Commons**

Co-President's Column Searching for Inspiration in the Snow

by *Becky Gretton*

It has felt like “real winter” this season, with brief, dark days and some unusual cold. Storms with plenty of wind and snow made it unappealing to get outside. Fall migration is over and spring migration seems distant. Birding is not as easy or comfortable right now...

My winter doldrums improved a few days ago, when I heard a Tufted Titmouse muttering a quiet, intricate series of sounds which changed to a strident “Peter, Peter, Peter” soon after. Another rendition of that song came from across the field, which really sounded like a spring warm-up for Titmice! The Juncos are sounding more musical as well. Since then I have heard the Hairy Woodpeckers make their “Week-a, Week-a” calls, which is associated with courtship behavior. My bird feeders are a source of inspiration.

Yesterday, February 10, I went to many of my local favorite spots, envisioning certain warblers, vireos, and other migrants that will eventually fill the area with sound and color. Those spots were already active with Downy Woodpeckers, Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, Red-tailed Hawks (3 pairs), a Pileated Woodpecker in



Raven's nest on a silo

flight, gangs of Blue Jays, and Bald Eagles sprucing up their nests. How soon will the Ravens nest again at their silo? As I approached a favorite “gold mine” for spring birds at Glimmerglass State Park, two friends were out for a walk, and we hiked through the snow sharing stories and laughs.



Golden Eagle on Camera Trap

I have been fortunate to participate in the Appalachian Eagle Project for the last five years with a “camera trap” set up in the area from late December through March, thanks to a wonderfully dedicated landowner and a road crew that delivers! This has guaranteed that I make the hike, either by foot or with showshoes, to swap camera cards, check battery power, manage bait and enjoy spectacular, inspirational scenery to and fro. This is frequently interpreted by me as a reward for making it through each storm. Viewing the photos is tremendous fun, hoping for “jackpot” birds and admiring the determination of crows and ravens at the same time.

Pine Siskins, Rough-legged

“Becky’s Column” Continued to page 4

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Janet Potter

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Conservation and Legislation

Plastics—worldwide problem, local solutions—

Recent press coverage has documented the plight of albatrosses in the central Pacific Ocean that are ingesting and then feeding their chicks an array of plastic items from disposable cigarette lighters to bottle caps to pieces of plastic bags.

Albatrosses, normally long-lived birds that only come to land in order to breed and nest, are mistaking plastic for food. Lighters and syringes and strips of plastic somewhat resemble the squid that normally make up a portion of the birds' diet. Albatrosses range over vast stretches of ocean to find food, which they swallow and then regurgitate for chicks on return to nesting islands. Examination of the stomachs of dead chicks find them filled with plastic—the young birds dying of lack of nutrition and dehydration. An albatross expert on Midway Island, nesting site for Laysan Albatrosses, said “every single albatross in this landscape has been fed plastic,” according to a CNN report.

The amount of plastic in our oceans is staggering. A whirlpool, or gyre, of floating plastic in the Pacific is estimated at twice the size of Texas. It is anticipated that by 2050 there will be more plastic by weight in the ocean than fish. It is no surprise that albatrosses and other seabirds end up eating these materials. Nearly all seabirds, including all 22 species of albatross, are in population decline.

In addition to these larger plastic objects, it is known that plastic that does degrade ends up as tiny, sometimes microscopic particles that enter the food chain both on land and water. These are toxic in many animals, including humans. Plastic microfibers are now found in our drinking water. Another threat is the production and disposal of plastic micro-beads used in such products as body washes, cosmetics, toothpaste and other personal products.



Albatross chick remains with plastic--
Duncan Wright - USFWS

These plastics come from improper disposal of the huge quantities produced and discarded by humans. Plastics permeate every aspect of our lives, but there is no suitable method to handle the materials at the end of their useful life. Plastic is not naturally degradable, despite claims by industry, and what now litters our planet will be there for thousands of years.

What you can do—The plastic problem is overwhelming, but we can make a difference in our own lives. One of the worst sources of plastic pollution is single-use plastic bags. Americans use 100 billion plastic bags a year, with the average family taking home 1,500 yearly. Using canvas bags when shopping is an obvious improvement, but this is not a widespread practice.

Municipalities are starting to ban these bags or require a charge for them. In NY State, a governor's task force released a report earlier this year that documented the problem and listed possible solutions but failed to put forth a recommendation—essentially a waste of time and money. In fact, the state legislature and Governor Cuomo have acted to stop counties and other municipalities—including NY City—from imposing plastic bag regulations.

Contact the Governor and state representatives and urge them to join the growing movement to ban or restrict plastic bags. This is a small and painless first step to ending this scourge on our planet.

The CNN report on albatrosses and plastics is at www.cnn.com/2016/12/11/world/vanishing-walsh-plastic-albatross/index.html. More information on reducing plastic use and waste can be found at plasticpollutioncoalition.org.

(Contact information for elected officials is available on the conservation page of the DOAS web site, www.doas.us.)

by Andy Mason

Bird-Friendly Coffee: Coffee pre-orders for pick up at our March 16 meeting are due by March 5. More information at our web site: <http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CoffeeInformation2018b-final.pdf>

“Becky’s Column” Continued from page 2

Hawks, and Snow Buntings are wintering here, great for daytime birding. Great Horned and Barred Owls are vocalizing as their nesting occurs. Bundling up and listening for night sounds is fun! I wonder if the Short-eared Owls are still here. Better take a drive.

There is inspiration in the snow when I get out there, anticipating the change of season while enjoying what’s happening here and now. Speaking of anticipation,

plans are under way for another “Birding by Ear” event at Betty and Wilbur Davis Park in early June. Davis Park will also install a wind break by March 1st for anyone interested in spring raptor migration. Migrating Golden Eagles have been observed there during the month of March. Counting will be on a casual basis. If you wish to inquire about migration coverage at Davis Park, email info@doas.us. Inspiration awaits!

Successful Eagle Trip

Andy Mason reports that thirty-five eagle seekers turned out on January 20th for this year’s excursion to the Delaware County reservoirs and rivers. It was a pleasant, balmy 40-degree day that provided a welcome outdoor experience after a month of cold and snowy weather.

The eagles cooperated, although not in the numbers of recent years. Ten to fifteen birds were spotted, depending on which car you were in. Good sightings included an adult and an



Bald Eagle
Photo by Andy Mason

immature Bald Eagle on a deer carcass on the ice of Cannonsville Reservoir, and a very placid adult pair at a nest in Deposit.

Other species spotted during the trip included Red-tailed Hawks, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Canada Geese, Redheads, Mallards, Black Ducks, and Wild Turkeys.

The day ended with a good meal and good company enjoyed by 25 of the participants.

Mark Your Calendars

April Program: “Life at Sea Level”: Join us on Friday, April 20, at 7:30 PM at Elm Park United Methodist Church in Oneonta to view a special collection of photographs and stories portraying the birds and wildlife found throughout the coastal regions of the Northeast, as expressed by Kyle Dudgeon. Kyle photographs animals along the coast by getting low; in the mud, the sand and even in the waves rolling up the shore. He explores new angles, and gets into places most people don’t go, making each photograph unique. “Life at Sea Level” will reveal different aspects of these coastal environments, and provide fascinating views of the beach’s most treasured species.

Kyle Dudgeon is a twenty-year-old wildlife photographer from Orange County, New York. Photography has led Kyle’s journeys all over the country, capturing the vast wildlife North America has to offer. He enjoys spending his summers on the coast photographing the various beach-nesting birds in their breeding habitats, as well as

his winters back home, where he has access to the vast populations of wintering raptors in the region. Working along the shores of New Jersey has inspired Kyle to create images illustrating the incredible wildlife that exists there, as well as the struggle of the coast to hold its ground against the changing climate.

This program will take place at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta NY. Refreshments will be available.



Dunlin, top, and Piping Plover
Photos by Kyle Dudgeon

Solution To Bird Collisions

By DOAS Director Kathryn Davino

Like many of you, I get a great deal of enjoyment from feeding birds. I have about 9 feeders at any one time hanging on poles and hooks surrounding my house. These provide the requisite variety of seeds, suet, fruits and nectars to attract the local avians and migrants so I can get a close-up look, and perhaps a great photo. It's always exciting when an unusual bird shows up at the feeder. There's a feeling of anticipation as I approach a window near a feeder, hoping there might be a group of noisy Evening Grosbeaks, or perhaps a Flicker feeding on the suet, or even a Cooper's Hawk swooping through to snatch a meal. On the other hand, it saddens me whenever I come upon the dusty imprint and a few tiny feathers left clinging to the outside of the window after a bird has struck the glass. Unfortunately, one of my windows near the feeder area is a large picture window, and over the years it has taken the lives of many birds that were confused by the reflections of nearby trees. The lucky ones were merely stunned, recovered eventually, and flew off. Over the years I've tried a number of things to make the glass more apparent to the birds and to mitigate the loss of life. I've found using decals that cling to the outside of the glass inadequate. They never seemed to help much, no matter what shape they were. The silhouette of a flying raptor made no more difference than that of a maple leaf. I saw improvement when I attached colorful ribbons to the outside of the glass using suction cups with hooks. The fluttering strips of vertically strung ribbons noticeably reduced bird strikes so that it became a rare occurrence. The biggest downside to the suction cups occurred during winter. Occasionally a frozen suction cup would detach and could not be reattached until warmer temperatures resumed.

Several years ago, I came upon a magazine article discussing the widespread problem of bird deaths due



to glass strikes. It estimated that glass kills between three hundred million and one billion birds each year. The article discussed a variety of solutions that researchers were recommending, including a new type of window tape called BirdTape. I was intrigued, so I ordered some. BirdTape was designed and tested by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC). It's a translucent tape that

is easy to apply or remove, and it should last 4 years or more on the outside surface of a window. It comes in a variety of forms. I ordered a 50-foot roll of 3/4-inch tape. I placed the strips vertically about 3 and 1/2 inches apart on the outside of two windows with a history of bird collisions. It's important to place the vertical strips 4 inches apart or less (and horizontal strips must be 2 inches apart or less). This way the bird sees the tape as a barrier to avoid, not a space to fly through. That's the problem with the decals. Birds simply try to fly around them. ABC reported that a scientific evaluation of the 3/4-inch tape revealed that 81% of the birds tested avoided vertical strips placed 4 inches apart. I applied the tape to my windows in early October 2017, and I'm pleased to report that 5 months later, the tape is still adhering very well, and so far, I am unaware of any bird strikes on those windows. I am still able to take photos and view birds with my binoculars through the taped windows. The 50-foot roll of tape allowed me to cover a large and small window with some leftover at a cost of \$19.95 (shipping included).

If you have concerns about birds colliding with your windows, I highly recommend it. For more information about bird collisions and BirdTape, or to order BirdTape, go to www.collidescape.org/abc-birdtape. I'd love to know if it works as well for you as it has for me.

“Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8

Horned Larks (75+), and a few Snow Buntings. He reports that the leucistic Red-tailed Hawk and his mate have been working on their nest, as have their local Bald Eagles. He found two other Red-tail nests in the vicinity.

In mid-February, Gerianne Carillo’s feeders were invaded by 20+ Pine Siskins in Milford. Barb Palmer felt fortunate to watch a Pileated Woodpecker in her yard in Jefferson. She also has a resident Red-bellied Woodpecker, counted 19 Tree Sparrows one day, and saw two Golden-crowned Kinglets while walking. Thirty Cedar Waxwings have been around Tom Salo’s place in West Burlington, an unusual sighting in the winter, and he counted eleven male Red-winged Blackbirds at his feeder, a species also spotted by Kay Crane in Walton. Julie Smith found the Pine Lake Bald Eagles on their nest.

As if the unseasonably warm, sunny weather on the

20th weren’t treat enough, Pam Peters and Kathy Mario spied a Bluebird near Delhi, which flew into some Sumacs to forage. A day later, with the weather still inviting, I sat on my deck putting the finishing touches on this article, enjoying the constant chatter of goldfinches, thinking about all the birds that go unseen and unheard when stuck inside. Suddenly the unmistakable call of a Merlin drew my attention. It zipped right over my head, not much higher than the rooftop. We know we’ll pay later for this pleasant weather, but this has been a nice, and productive, respite from winter.

Sandy Bright



Merlin
John James Audubon

Waterfowl Count Results

It was a tough year for the DOAS section of the NY State Ornithological Association’s annual waterfowl count held the weekend of January 14. Lakes and ponds were nearly completely frozen, and even the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers had few areas of open water. Otsego Lake did provide a variety of waterfowl, including a Red-Breasted Merganser, Redheads and American Coots. Carol and Randy Lynch also found 6 Redheads on the West Branch of the Delaware.

Areas covered included Susquehanna River and tributaries, Otsego Lake, Cherry Valley Creek, Unadilla River and tributaries, Canadarago Lake and surrounding area, West Branch Delaware River and Cannonsville Reservoir, Ouleout Creek and East Sidney Lake. Totals:

Canada Goose--570	Gadwall--4	Common Merganser--68
Mallard--748	Redhead--41	American Coot—39
American Black Duck—39	Ring-necked Duck--1	Red-breasted Merganser--2
Mallard x Am. Black Duck-4	Common Goldeneye--6	
Northern Pintail—1	Hooded Merganser--30	Total—1553



Common Merganser
Audubon photo by
Alice Cahill

There were 63.5 party-hours of coverage.

Other species of interest included: Ruffed Grouse, Cooper’s Hawk, Red-tailed Hawks, Rough-legged Hawks, Bald Eagles, Turkeys, Belted Kingfishers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Common Ravens, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Bluebirds, American Robins, and Snow Buntings.

Thanks to everyone who participated: Matt Albright, Linda Burkhart, Bob Donnelly, Lisa Gorn, Becky Gretton, Eric Knight, Carol Lynch, Randy Lynch, Andy Mason, Marge Mathis, Linda Melchionne, Landa Palmer, Pam Peters, Tom & Joanne Salo, and Cindy Staley.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

March

March 6 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

March 16 – DOAS Public Program, “Climate Change in New York”: Dr. Kevin Schultz, Associate Professor of Physics at Hartwick College, will talk about climate change and its impact on the environment and our society. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. See article on page 1.

March 31 – Lake Otsego 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 Street at 8 AM sharp. Co-leaders will be Matt Albright, Bob Donnelly and John Davis. 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

April 17– DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

April 20 – DOAS Public Program, “Life at Sea Level”: Photographer Kyle Dudgeon will present a special collection of photographs and stories portraying the birds and wildlife found throughout the coastal regions of the Northeast. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

April 21 – DOAS Earth Festival Bird Walk: Earth Festival Morning Bird Walk led by Bob Donnelly.

Carpools leave Milford Central School parking lot at 9AM.

April 21 – Earth Festival: Milford School, 11 AM -3PM. Visit the DOAS table! For full details about Earth Festival, visit <http://occainfo.org>.

May

May 15 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

May 18 – DOAS Public Program, “Monarchs and Milkweed”: Rick Bunting and his grandson Tannar will talk about Monarch Butterflies and raising milkweed to support them. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

June

June 3 – Birding by Ear: This event will be held the Betty and Wilbur Davis Park in the Town of Westford. An educational session including slides, recordings and handouts at 8:30 AM will be followed by a bird hike with DOAS experts, “Bruncheon” buffet, raffle, and another hike for more species. Prepaid reservations will be required, and group size will be limited. Children 12 and older are welcome and must be accompanied by an adult. Cost is \$25 per adult over age 18 and \$15 for youths age 12-18. Please contact Becky Gretton at 607-547-5648 or visit doas.us to reserve your spot. A full article will appear in the April newsletter.

Support our Sponsors! Thank you to Rod Spangle Antiques in Unadilla for being a sponsor!



Is your Membership Current?

Your mailing label will inform you of your membership expiration date (year and month, e.g. ‘1710 indicates October 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

Things were mighty slow this period in the birdwatching arena, with few reports trickling in initially. Luckily, it picked up enough to provide some interesting sightings.

In the latter half of January, Kathy Dawson was happy that her three woodpecker species – Red-bellied, Downy, and Hairy - were still enjoying her feeders. Stan Salthe snapped some nice photos of two Carolina Wrens at his suet. Gerianne Carillo hit the jackpot at Lake Front Park in Cooperstown. Her search for Coots netted her that species and more: about 10 Canvasbacks, a pair of Mallards, a female Red-breasted Merganser, and two Common Goldeneyes. She also had a few Brown-headed

Cowbirds at her feeder in Milford, a number that swelled to 15-20 on February 1st.

As February began, Dorian Huneke enjoyed the antics and vocalizations of three Ravens. In Oneonta, a Carolina Wren visited Marilyn Bailey's feeder, and a White-throated Sparrow perched on one of ours. I've never seen them feed at a feeder before. Dorian Huneke witnessed an accipiter (Cooper's or Sharp-shinned) nab a Mourning Dove in Treadwell.



Common Raven
Audubon Photo by
Andrew Lunt

Over in Harpersfield, Randy Lynch has been trying to keep about four dozen Wild Turkeys from his feeders. He was chasing them off one day when a Goshawk flew low overhead, circled a few times, then left. When the turkeys returned another time, a huge bird flew by, also very low... an immature Golden Eagle. He has also been seeing a skittish Cooper's Hawk, lots of Pine Siskins, some Purple Finches, American Tree Sparrows, a large flock of

Bird Sightings" Continued on page 6

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