



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

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DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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## COMING ACTIVITIES

### April

April 4–Woodcock Walk

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 5–Greenway Bird Walk

May 5–Big Day Bird Count

May 12–West Branch Preserve Trip

May 13–Sanctuary Bird Walk

May 15–DOAS Board Mtg.

May 18–DOAS Program, “Monarchs  
and Milkweed”

May 20–Mine Kill Bird Festival

May 13–Gilbert Lake Wildflower  
Walk

May 25–May 27–Birding in the  
Catskills

### June

June 3–Birding by Ear

**More information on page 7**

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

## April Program: Life at Sea Level Kyle Dudgeon Photography

Join us on Friday, April 20, at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church (401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta) to view a special collection of photographs by Kyle Dudgeon and hear his stories portraying the birds and wildlife found throughout the coastal regions of the Northeast.

Kyle is a twenty-one-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.

Photographing animals along the coast means getting low; in the mud, the sand and even in the waves rolling up

the shore. It means exploring new angles, and getting into places you wouldn’t otherwise be, making each and every photograph unique in its own way. Life at Sea Level will reveal different aspects of these coastal environments, and provide fascinating views of the beach’s most treasured species.

Kyle is a junior at SUNY Oneonta majoring in Environmental Sciences.



**Piping Plover**



**Dunlin**

## Co-President's Column Charting Our Future

*by Andy Mason*

As most of you know, last fall DOAS celebrated its 50th anniversary at our annual Charter Dinner. Throughout the year we featured snippets and recollections of those five decades on Facebook and our web page. It was illuminating even to old-timers like me to see how much we have achieved over the years in the areas of conservation, education, and research. And it was heart-warming to remember how many members and leaders had played a part in those successes.

To continue to thrive in changing times and with new challenges, it is important and necessary to look to the future. Our Chapter certainly has adapted over the years—keeping up with the electronic age in communications and education via our web site and other means, utilizing cutting edge technology in our Golden Eagle projects, and addressing new conservation challenges such as climate change and evolving energy issues.

But the 50-year mark is probably a good point to step back and take a hard look at what we think our organization could and should be going forward. To that end, the board of directors has scheduled a strategizing session for April to try to take an objective and realistic measure at our capabilities, challenges, strengths and weaknesses, and yes, that fuzzy word—vision—for the DOAS of the



future.

Should the hawkwatch continue (we are facing serious visibility issues at the lookout), is the summer Day Camp the best use for our energies and resources, are our political and conservation efforts worthwhile, are our monthly programs relevant in an age of streaming video everywhere and on nearly every topic??

These and other questions are topics for discussion and although the board is most involved in our governance, the voices of our members are most important too. We would like to hear your thoughts on how you see the DOAS of the future and where we can best focus our efforts going forward. You can drop a note to PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820; an email to [info@doas.us](mailto:info@doas.us) will reach all three co-Presidents, Susan O'Handley, Becky Gretton and myself; or speak to any board member—a listing is found elsewhere in the newsletter.

It is exciting to be thinking about the next 50 years—even if most won't be around to see the 100-year celebration! There is no doubt the pressures and threats to birds and our environment will continue and almost surely increase in a warming world with a growing human population. How can we best be positioned to continue our work locally and globally?

### THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Janet Potter

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#### ON THE WEB:

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To contribute notes or articles for  
The Belted Kingfisher, email:  
[editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@doas.us)

## Conservation and Legislation

**Plastics, continued**—In last month's column, we mentioned that efforts to restrict or ban single-use plastic bags in New York had been stymied by Governor Cuomo and the state legislature. But in early March, the governor signaled that he would consider a ban on these bags that litter our landscape and waters. However, indications from legislative leaders, particularly in the State Senate, continue to be negative toward such action.

Now would be a good time to urge Governor Cuomo to push forward with addressing the bag problem, and to ask local legislators to step up and follow the lead of the municipalities that have either banned or put fees on plastic bags.

### Local Legislators Promote Hunting Mourning Doves

State Senator James Seward and Assemblymember Clifford Crouch have teamed up to sponsor legislation that would legalize hunting Mourning Doves in New York State. Why they would do this is anyone's guess; the hunting community has not particularly called for this, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation has come out against it. And certainly birders and back-yard bird feeders would not want this regular visitor to be targeted.

According to the present New York State hunting guide, there are already over 50 species of birds that can be legally killed in the state. One would think this would

provide ample opportunities for hunters, along with the numerous other species of game available to them.

Hunting Mourning Doves poses other threats, including mistaking similar-shaped species such as declining American Kestrels for doves perched on wires. The doves would almost certainly be gunned with toxic lead shot

that is picked up for grit by other birds and can prove fatal. Injured birds that are not retrieved by hunters would be scavenged, with lead passed on to other wildlife. We are already well-aware of the threat from lead ammo to Eagles and other scavengers.

It is argued that the Mourning Dove population could withstand a hunting

season. The same can be said of robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, Great-blue Herons, and any number of other species. Are they to be next in the gunsights?

**What you can do**—Contact Senator Seward and Assemblymember Crouch and ask them to drop their ill-advised effort to allow hunting of Mourning Doves. Point out that this is a gentle, well-loved bird, appreciated by millions of wildlife watchers. Surely we don't need to add another species to the dozens already on the wrong end of a gun barrel.

*(Contact information for elected officials is available on the conservation page of the DOAS web site, [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us).)*

by Andy Mason



Mourning Dove  
Audubon Photo by Douglas Croft

## Help Needed to Survey Mountaintop Birds

The Vermont Center for Ecostudies, sponsor of the Mountain Birdwatch program, is seeking citizen scientists to survey long-term bird monitoring routes in the Catskills. Routes available this year are located on Hunter and Slide Mountains.

Routes consist of 3-6 sampling stations along hiking trails in the montane spruce-fir forest. Observers choose any morning in



Bicknell's thrush  
Photo by Jeff Nadler

June to complete their survey, which consists of 5-minute point counts for 10 species of birds including Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and Bicknell's Thrush.

The habitat for these birds is one of the earliest to be affected by climate change, so tracking their presence is particularly important. More information can be found at [vtecostudies.org](http://vtecostudies.org).



## Birds: Up Close and Personal

### By DOAS Director Janet Potter

“Eggciting” news, the headline read in mid-March, when Cornell’s female Red-tailed Hawk, Big Red, laid her first egg this year. The event was captured on camera by one of several live, high definition video cameras that have documented activity at her nest over the past six years. The news was especially welcomed because Big Red lost her long-time mate, Ezra, last year, and it was unsure if she and her new mate, Arthur, would breed at this site, high on a light pole above Cornell’s athletic fields. This egg was celebrated by the Cornell Red-tailed Hawk fans, just as Ezra’s death last year brought an outpouring of mourning, both feelings eloquently expressed over the nest cam’s Twitter feed and the Cornell Hawk Cam Chatters FaceBook page.



Millions of people from around the world tune in to the nest cam over the web site, [AllAboutBirds.org/CornellHawks](http://AllAboutBirds.org/CornellHawks), hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Fans watch with fascination as the hawk parents are buffeted by cold winds and snow, as the eggs hatch, the baby hawks are feed and kept warm, and even once they have fledged, their fate is tracked.

This amazing world of online bird-watching via bird cams is fascinating and addictive. There are hundreds of cams available all over the world that give you a “birds-eye view” of the intimate day-to-day lives of a wide variety of species. Examples of what you can watch range from Albatross nests in Kauai, Hawaii, to Panama fruit feeders, to Barred Owls raising owlets in Indiana, as well as feeder watches from all over the world. It would be easy to find birds to watch online all day, every day.

These cams not only entertain and educate bird lovers, the live feeds are incorporated into educational curriculums in schools at all levels. At Cornell, ornithologists have created educational materials outlined in their Bird Sleuth K-12 Life in a Nest program that help students explore the life cycles of birds by viewing the nest cams. In addition, the nest cams are used by ornithologists studying and documenting everything from mating and parenting behavior, chick development, predation and nest failure.

Finding bird cams is easy, just Google “bird cams” or use one of the web sites that list links for easy access. My two favorite lists are: Cornell Lab of Ornithology at <http://>

[cams.allaboutbirds.org/all-cams/](http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/all-cams/) and Audubon’s at <http://www.audubon.org/birdcams>. For a more international scope, try <https://www.viewbirds.com/>, which has separate lists for nest cams and feeder cams.

Viewers watch all facets of daily life of the nesting birds. From viewers’

comments, it seems they are especially interested in egg laying, incubation, and the thrill of the first look at a new born chick. It is often amazing to see the size and quantity of food these little chicks wolf down. As the babies develop, we can watch them practice for adulthood, with constant wing flapping to strengthen them for fledging. Sibling rivalry can be intense. We celebrate when they fly off successfully.

Sometimes, nature being what it is, the difficulty of life for birds is illustrated by what the camera captures. Viewers might be horrified to see predators attacking, like when the Hog Island Maine Osprey web cam recorded a Great Horned Owl carrying off two of the chicks. We might cheer when they overcome adversity, as viewers did at Hog Island when a few weeks later the mother Osprey fended off the Great Horned Owl’s efforts to take the last chick. Viewers can get very emotional in situations where parenting birds abandon their chicks, or siblings push their nest-mates to their death. Charles Eldermire, who manages the Cornell Lab of Ornithology cams, occasionally puts a warning on the screen when things get gruesome, along with a little context.

If you want to set up a feeder cam or a nest cam in your yard, Cornell’s Project NestWatch has a slideshow to help you: <https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/installing-a-nest-box-camera/>. They encourage you to review their NestWatch Code of Conduct beforehand to ensure that you won’t disturb or endanger the birds. Whether you set up your own or take advantage of the wide variety streaming on the internet, you will learn a great deal and come to better appreciate the birds that share our world.

P.S. Big Red is now incubating three eggs, having laid two more since I started writing this!



## Taking Flight: Catskil Bird Fest

The third Taking Flight Catskill birding conference, sponsored by the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development is scheduled for May 25-27 at the Emerson Resort & Spa, Mt. Tremper, NY. Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is a partner for the event, which this year will focus on warblers, in recognition of the 27 breeding species,

**MAY 25 - MAY 27**  
**TAKING FLIGHT 2018**  
**WARBLER WEEKEND**



plus migrants, that can be found in the Catskills.

Scott Whittle, co-author of The Warbler Guide, is keynote speaker and will also lead a field trip and workshop. More information, including registration details, can be found at [catskillcenter.org](http://catskillcenter.org).

## Mark Your Calendars

### May Program: "Monarchs and Milkweed."

Tannar Cliffe will be our speaker on May 18th at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St. in Oneonta. Tannar raised and released 177 Monarch butterflies in 2017 through Monarch Watch, a program managed by the University of Kansas in an attempt to document the fall flight routes of Monarchs born in the Northeast US and Southern Canada. Tagged Monarchs recovered during their five month resting period in

Mexico reveal information about migration. This citizen effort will hopefully reveal where critical milkweed populations need to be conserved or enhanced. Interested attendees will receive milkweed seeds to take home.



## Youth Programs - Summer 2018

Registration is now underway for our 2018 Summer Youth Programs. Space is limited in each session, so be sure to secure your spot early! You can register online using a credit card or you can download a form to mail with payment. Complete details are available at <http://doas.us/education/summer-day-camp/>. Please contact Susan O'Handley at [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com) if you have any questions about any of the the summer sessions.

July 16-19 at DOAS Sanctuary - 9:30 AM-3 PM (for children entering 3rd/4th grades)

July 30-Aug 2 at DOAS Sanctuary - 9:30 AM-3 PM (for children entering 5th/6th grades)

NEW THIS YEAR-- August 20-24 Audubon at OWL - Fortin Park - 9:30 AM-noon (for children entering 1st/2nd grades)



## Birding by Ear, with Brunch!

Birding by Ear will take place this year on Sunday, June 3 at Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park from 8:30 AM to noon. Register online today at <http://doas.us/event/birding-by-ear-2018/>.

### “Bird Sightings” Continued from page 8

Early March: When driving home to Pierstown, Peter Clark was startled when a large hawk, likely a Red-tail, flew across the road with a squirrel in its talons. This period seemed the beginning of a second winter, with lots more snow and cold weather to come. American Tree and White-throated Sparrows joined our usual feeder birds in Oneonta. Despite the weather, breeding season has begun for some species. Becky Gretton found a Raven on a nest in Springfield. Gerianne Carillo reported Crows collecting nesting material in Milford. Pam Peters heard a Brown Creeper singing and saw 5 Hooded Mergansers near Delhi.

Mid-March: The ever-deepening snow cover made subsistence difficult for many creatures. Angelika Rashkow observed a flock of Robins surviving on tiny, dried out crabapples in Cooperstown. In Jefferson, two dozen Wild Turkeys strained Randy and Carol Lynch’s sunflower seed budget. They found the first Kestrel near Hanford Mills, and 3 small flocks of Horned Larks. They also reported the last Siskins seen on the 18th, Tree Sparrows still feeding on the 20th, and the arrival of a Rusty Blackbird.

White-breasted Nuthatches caching sunflower seeds

in a White Ash tree provided entertainment for Kathryn Davino. Barb Palmer watched a Bald Eagle fly, then perch on a snow-covered branch in Harpersfield. Marilyn Bailey spotted both a Pileated and a Red-bellied Woodpecker within five minutes on her trees in Oneonta, and a Carolina Wren and Hairy Woodpecker feeding on opposite sides of the same feeder. Michael DeBenedetto sent photos of an unusual partial leucistic Raven, taken at a camera trap site in Delaware County. I’m reasonably certain I observed a Fish Crow in Oneonta.



leucistic Raven  
Michael DeBenedetto

Goldfinches can be quite territorial about food supplies. Rarely do even four tolerate each other at our wire mesh thistle feeder. But desperate times require desperate measures, and the hoard that moved into our area during that long snowy stretch did share. Hosting up to a dozen hungry birds at a time, the feeder has seemed almost carpeted with feathers. While I’m ready for winter to end, I’ll miss watching those finches!

Sandy Bright

## 2018 DOAS Environmental Education Grants Awarded



Congratulations to Grant Awardees:

Jennifer Finkle, Andes Central School

Lori Wrench, Cooperstown Elementary School

Sharon Vesely, The Place, Norwich

The 2018 DOAS Environmental Education Grants are sponsored, in part, by Rod Spangle Antique Clock Repair, Unadilla, NY and others.

**Bird-Friendly Coffee:** Coffee pre-orders for pick up at our April 20 meeting are due by April 10. More information at our web site: <http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CoffeeInformation2018b-final.pdf>

### Is your Membership Current?

Your mailing label will inform you of your membership expiration date (year and month, e.g. ‘1810 indicates October 2018). DOAS memberships are \$15 per year or \$25 for two years; family memberships are \$20 per year or \$30 for two years. **View membership benefits and download application from our website: [doas.us/join-us/](http://doas.us/join-us/) OR join online at [doas.us/store](http://doas.us/store).**



# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

## April

**April 4 – Woodcock Walk:** DOAS Board Director, Bob Donnelly will be leading a Woodcock Walk in conjunction with the Otsego Land Trust at the Otsego Land Trust at the Parslow Road Conservation Area in Oaksville on Wednesday evening, April 4 at 7:00 PM. Contact the Otsego Land Trust for more information at 607-547-2366 or by email at [info@otsegolandtrust.org](mailto:info@otsegolandtrust.org).

**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. See article on page 1.

**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 5– Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk:** meet at 8 AM in the parking lot by the soccer fields just past the transfer station for a two-hour walk to view returning migrant birds on the Greenway trail, located on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta. This will be an easy hike on level ground. Information contact: Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880.

**May 5 – Big Day Bird Count:** Counters help find as many species as possible in Otsego or Delaware County. Contact Bob Donnelly at [rsdonn@yahoo.com](mailto:rsdonn@yahoo.com).

**May 12– Field Trip to West Branch Preserve:** Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a bird walk at the West Branch Preserve, located Town of Hamden, about 10 miles southeast of Delhi. Meet at 8 AM at the preserve entrance and parking area, on Rt10, about 0.9 mi beyond the junction with County Route 26. Contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu).

**May 13 – DOAS Sanctuary Spring Bird Walk:** Meet

at 8 AM. The walk should turn up a variety of returning migrants, including warblers, orioles, thrushes, tanagers and others. Waterfowl and raptors are also possibilities. The walk will last about two hours and include some moderate climbs. See [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us) for directions to the Sanctuary. Contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

**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. See reminder on page 5.

**May 20 – Mine Kill State Park Bird Festival:** North Blenheim, Schoharie County. Featuring live birds of prey, introduction to birding by DOAS, a birding competition, and local vendors. Free admission. Further information at [www.facebook.com/MineKillStatePark](http://www.facebook.com/MineKillStatePark).

**May 23– Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake State Park:** Meet at the beach area at 10 AM. The walk is approximately a mile around the lake and takes about two hours. Contact Julia Gregory at (607) 563-2924.

**May 25 –May 27– Taking Flight-Birding in the Catskills:** Taking Flight: Birding in the Catskills. A weekend of bird field trips, workshops and presentations. Information and registration, <http://catskillcenter.org/takingflight2018-details/>. See article on page 5.

## 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](http://doas.us) to reserve your spot.



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON  
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## February-March Bird Sightings

We started this period with the promise of spring, warm weather enticing bird-watchers outside, but were soon back to wintery weather, with lots of feeder-bird sightings. During the warm spell in the last week in February, Barb Palmer reported Red-winged Blackbirds at her feeder and Mallards on the pond in Jefferson. Two Pine Siskins showed up at Kathryn Davino's feeders in Delhi, a sight she hadn't seen there in a couple of years, plus a Common Grackle, 2 male Red-winged Blackbirds, and some migrating Canada Geese. Leslie Preston found Golden-crowned Kinglets along the Greenway trail in Oneonta. Kay Crane reported the first Robin in Walton,

and 5 Bluebirds at her friend's house in Eastbrook. Despite much ice still on ponds in the area, a pair of Wood Ducks found their way to Pam Peters' pond in Franklin; she also heard a singing Song Sparrow.

The last day in February brought several reports. A Fox Sparrow visited Barb Palmer's yard (Jefferson). Bob Donnelly had 10 Cedar Waxwings along his driveway, along with a singing Bluebird (Cherry Valley). Dorian Huneke watched a pair of Red-tailed Hawks soaring, hanging around an old nest that had been taken over but subsequently abandoned by eagles after a snowstorm. Andy Cooper spotted a couple of Bald Eagles and the first Turkey Vulture in Oneonta. There were many more reports of Blackbirds and Grackles around this time, several people commenting on the sheer number of birds invading feeders. The first female Blackbird was noticed by Kathryn Davino (Delhi).



**Wood Duck**

**Photo by Mick Thompson**

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

**Bird Sightings" Continued on page 6**