



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## COMING ACTIVITIES

### March

March 12 – DOAS Board Mtg

March 15 – Program, “Turtle Talk”

March 24 – Montezuma Trip

March 30 –Lake Otsego Waterfowl Trip

### April

April 13 – Earth Festival and Bird Walk

April 16– DOAS Board Mtg

April 19– Program, “What Montana Taught Me”

### May

May 11 – Sanctuary Bird Walk

May 17 – Program, “Costa Rica Photos”

May 21 – DOAS Board Mtg

May 23 – Wild Flower Walk

### July-August

DOAS Summer Day Camp

**More information on page 7**

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

## Turtle Talk

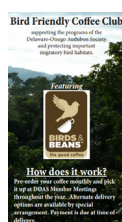
**Join us to learn about Wood Turtles, their habitat and ecology!**



On Friday, March 15th at 7:30, Alexandra Vlk will describe her research and show photos of Wood Turtles. Wood Turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) face decline due to human disturbances, including pollution, road mortality, habitat destruction, and illegal exploitation. To further Wood Turtle conservation, this program seeks to provide vital information regarding this species' habitat and nesting preferences in an area with high interaction with humans. Information from this study will be used to identify, protect, and manage Wood Turtle

populations, especially in disturbed areas. This program will take place at Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY on Friday, March 15, 2019 at 7:30 PM.

Alexandra Vlk is currently a graduate student at SUNY Oneonta getting her Master of Science in Biology, studying the reproductive ecology of Wood Turtles in a disturbed site. She has held various other wildlife biology jobs with the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Virginia Department of Conservation, and the Wildlife Center of Virginia. She is passionate about wildlife conservation and hopes to continue her research when she graduates in May 2019.



**Bird-Friendly Coffee:** Coffee pre-orders for pickup at our March meeting are due by 5 PM, March 5. Email your order to [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com) or call 607-643-5680. More information at our web site: <http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/CoffeeInformation2018b-final.pdf>.



## President's Column

by Co-president Becky Gretton

### New York State Breeding Bird Atlas III

In the *Belted Kingfisher* of June, 2018 Board Member Charlie Scheim wrote a wonderful, comprehensive article about the *New York State Breeding Bird Atlas (NY BBA)*, including an overview of the previous two Atlases, sharing his personal experiences, and anticipating the next one in 2020: [http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/kf\\_jun18.pdf](http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/kf_jun18.pdf).

I've been anticipating 2020 too, and have looked over my materials and records from 2003, when I became involved for the first time. It was wonderful to explore new areas locally, to bird sensitively in order to observe behaviors, and to know that I provided valuable data. I invited my "birding buddies" to get out there with me, and it was very fun. A by-product from the search for breeding birds was new awareness of migrating birds passing through. Having a project on which to focus made me bird consistently and carefully. When I pass through "my" survey blocks to this day I remember the juvenile Barred Owl sounds that alerted me to breeding, the uniquely non-musical Blackpoll Warbler sounds ("not a breeder", I was told), and so many other field experiences.

There is now an official logo for

the *NY BBA* created by a young birder from Massachusetts, Evan Lipton. A project coordinator, Julie Hart, has been hired by NYSOA from a field of 80 applicants. She has "hit the ground running", according to an article just released by NYSOA: [nybirds.org/Articles/Atlas/AtlasUpdt-Feb2019.pdf](http://nybirds.org/Articles/Atlas/AtlasUpdt-Feb2019.pdf).

Regarding Julie Hart and the Atlas, the final paragraph of the above article says it all:

"Everyone on our committee is delighted to have an individual on the team whose sole responsibility is the management and coordination of the atlas project, but we all know that the success of a project as large, complex, collaborative, and long term as our state atlas depends first and foremost on large numbers of skilled volunteers to gather the data. In the coming year we will be asking birders to commit to field surveys using atlas methodology. We are relying on you to get involved! We will want you to go places that you've never been before, and we will need you to watch and document the birds you see in new and different ways. Are you up to the challenge?"

**"NY BBA" Continued to page 3**

#### THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

#### AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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Janet Potter

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[www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)  
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## Conservation and Legislation

**Potential in Albany**—For many, many years, looking over the tabulation of environmental bills provided by Environmental Advocates, the primary group in Albany monitoring the state legislature, has been an exercise in frustration. Worthy legislation would show up as passed in the State Assembly, but as unsponsored or bottled up in committee in the State Senate. This was true even of bills that had overwhelming support in both houses—the Senate leadership would never let them out for a vote.

With the monumental changes made by NY voters in 2018, the situation has changed dramatically. Bills now have a chance of being voted on and even passed! Among the promising measures:

- The Environmental Bill of Rights—this would establish in the NY State Constitution a right to clean water, clean air and a healthful environment. It addresses a gap in our legal foundations, and provides an expression of values that other states have already seen fit to establish and to pronounce. Thirty-five states or commonwealths have some form of “environmental rights” or expression of environmental values in their constitutions. This bill would have to be approved by the voters if passed by the legislature.
- The New York State Climate and Community Protection Act—this legislation establishes rules to ensure New York’s economy is powered by 100% clean, renewable energy in the next 30 years; an aggressive, but achievable climate and clean energy goal.

Other measures that hopefully will become legislation and funded in the state budget include:

- Congestion pricing to fix and modernize mass transit.
- Increased funding to support electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, EV purchase rebates, and grants for

local governments to convert their entire fleets to EVs.

- Provide more funds to increase staff of environmental and health agencies and also ensure adequate resources for them to do their jobs.



EV Car Charging Station  
Photo-Slowking4  
Wikimedia Commons

**What you can do**—Even though the makeup of the legislature is more promising, it is still important to let our representatives and the Governor know they need to follow through with their work. Urge them to seize the moment to make New York a green leader, and to make up for decades of lost time.

**More good news from Washington**—Last month we reported on a rare bipartisan success in Congress—passage of a Farm Bill that included important conservation measures. Well, it happened again—this time reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund in the Senate, with likely passage in the House. The Land and Water Conservation Fund has been described as America’s most important conservation program, responsible for protecting parks, trails, wildlife refuges and recreation areas at the federal, state and local level.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund does not use any taxpayer dollars. It is funded through a small charge on oil and gas drilling revenues and has provided millions of dollars to create and protect public lands over the years. Much of this is critical and prime wildlife habitat.

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

Andy Mason



### “NY BBA” Continued from page 2

The *NY BBA III* probably interests you, too. DOAS is exploring ways to educate interested birders about birding strategies through a workshop which will take place in early June and other birding experiences. Details will be forthcoming.

If you would like to express your interest in *NY BBA III*, please email [info@doas.us](mailto:info@doas.us) and request to be put on a group email list to receive communications about upcoming activities.



### Save the Date, April 19, for “What Montana Taught Me.”

SUNY Oneonta Senior Kyle Dudgeon will describe his experiences and show photos from last summer spent in remote areas of Montana surveying birds and photographing wildlife. Kyle's passion for photography and the natural environment will draw us to the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY on Friday, April 19, 2019 at 7:30 PM. Please join us!

Kyle is a senior at SUNY Oneonta majoring in Environmental Sciences with a minor in Geography. He shared his knowledge and photographs of Shorebirds last April to a large and enthusiastic audience.



Mountain Goat  
Photo by Kyle Dudgeon

### Spring Waterfowl Trip—March 30th

On Saturday March 30th, the annual spring waterfowl trip around Lake Otsego and environs will leave from Cooperstown's Lake Front Docks at the foot of Fair St. promptly at 8:30AM sharp. Each year in early Spring, DOAS hosts a waterfowl watching trip that carpools to locations around Otsego Lake in search of waterfowl. Temperatures during this time of year tend to be unpredictable - with equal chances for either a mild day or freezing cold weather. Thankfully, there is usually open water available either naturally or as a result of dock bubblers that help to provide viewing areas for our local species.

Sightings from the past have included unusual duck species, such as the Eurasian Wigeon (spotted alongside an American Wigeon), along with more common area



Hooded Merganser  
Photo by Rick Bunting

waterfowl like Ring-necked, Wood and Black Ducks, Bufflehead, Hooded, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers, Greater Scaup, American Coot, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, and Canada Goose.

Other bird species are seen as well along the trip - Bald Eagle, Great Blue Herons and a Cooper's Hawk are sightings that have been recorded in the past.

Birders at all levels are welcome. Participants are encouraged to dress for the weather. Cars will be pooled and radio-connected, and the trip will last until around noon. For more information, contact DOAS member and trip leader, Bob Donnelly at [rsdonn@yahoo.com](mailto:rsdonn@yahoo.com) or 607-264-8156.

### January 19th Waterfowl Count Results

The statewide waterfowl count was held the weekend of January 19, with DOAS volunteers covering Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and Cannonsville Reservoir and the West Branch and main stem of the Delaware River to the Sullivan county line. Results:

- Canada Goose--779
- Mallard--592
- American Black Duck--98
- Redhead--4
- Ring-necked Duck--1
- Common Goldeneye--4

- Hooded Merganser--30
- Common Merganser--68
- American Coot--46

Total—1622

Other species of interest included many Bald Eagles, Great-blue Herons, Wild Turkeys, Snow Buntings, Red-tailed Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Ring-billed Gull, Ravens, mink and muskrat.

Thanks to participants Matt Albright, Linda Burkhart, Bob Donnelly, Lisa Gorn, Kathy Griswold, Carol and Randy Lynch, Andy Mason, Marge Mathis, Pam Peters, Tom and Joanne Salo, Carolyn and Ward Stevens.

**“Bird Sightings” Cont. from page 8**

In early February, Gerianne Carillo’s daughter Carly spotted a lone Chipping Sparrow at their feeder in Milford. Chickadees alerted Barb Palmer to the presence of a handsome Goshawk in her yard in Jefferson; she managed to get some decent pictures through the tree branches. Dorian Huneke spotted about 20 ducks, possibly Buffleheads on the river near the South Side dam in Oneonta but was unable to get a positive ID because she was driving. We all know how frustrating it can be to know we see something interesting, but have to consider safety first! Near Schenevus, Eva Davy admired the “gorgeous lemony bellies” of at least thirty Cedar Waxwings, which hung around for a half an hour. A



*Northern Goshawk*  
Photo by Barb Palmer

thump alerted Kathryn Davino to the presence of a Sharp-shinned Hawk in Delhi; the hawk had chased a Mourning Dove into the side of her house. Also, a male House Sparrow visited, a first at her feeder.

February 18th brought to our yard four male cardinals, glowing scarlet against the white snow, along with one female. While those birds were cheering us on a wintery day in Oneonta, Kay Crane was heartened by an early sign of spring in Walton: two Red-winged Blackbirds. Sightings like this remind us that the days are getting longer, and it won’t be long now before the arrival of more spring birds.

Sandy Bright

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### **Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Trip**

On Sunday, March 24th, Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will lead a birding field trip to Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge to view migratory waterfowl and shorebirds on their annual journey to their breeding grounds. The Montezuma Wetlands Complex is a globally significant Important Bird Area because of the incredible number of waterfowl that stop there during the migration seasons.

Those interested in carpooling will meet at the Dietz Street Parking lot (across from the Oneonta YMCA) at 7:30 AM. This is an all-day trip with an expected return to Oneonta around 5:00 PM. Participants should plan on packing a bagged lunch and snacks, water, etc. For additional details, contact DOAS Member and local environmental educator, Chris DeCesare at 607-244-5496 or [chris.decesare444@gmail.com](mailto:chris.decesare444@gmail.com).

**REGISTER ONLINE (FREE) at <http://doas.us/event/montezuma-national-wildlife-refuge-spring-migration-2019/>**

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge provides more than 9,000 acres of protected lands that are actively managed to benefit wildlife and includes freshwater wetlands, grasslands, shrub fields and forested area habitats. There are miles of hiking trails, observation towers and a “Wildlife Drive” for visitors to enjoy on the property as well as a Visitor Center complete with education programs, viewing opportunities and a Nature Store.



*Great Blue Heron at the  
Montezuma National Wildlife  
Refuge*

Photo by Bear Golden Retriever,  
CC BY 2.0

The Montezuma Audubon Center, Audubon New York’s first education facility in central NY, is located just north of the refuge and provides programming to educate residents and tourists about one of New York’s greatest resources for wildlife.

These properties are part of the overall Montezuma Wetlands Complex, comprised of over 50,000 acres of wetlands and upland habitat located at the north end of Cayuga Lake. Complete information about all these properties can be found at: <http://friendsofmontezuma.org/>.

**DOAS Membership:** Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*. Cost is \$15 annually or \$25 for two years; family memberships \$20 annually or \$30 for two years. Mail your name, address and email, along with your check payable to “DOAS” to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544. Memberships can also be purchased online at <http://doas.us>.

## Grouse Love

By Board Member Kathryn Davino

As reluctant as I am to admit it, I have been smitten with a Ruffed Grouse. This bird was hanging around our property, making an appearance every few days. I first noticed him or her (it's difficult to tell the genders apart) standing on my front porch in mid-October. I couldn't help but wonder if this was the same creature that was a regular visitor in 2017, from November to late December. The grouse seemed quite tolerant of me, and my husband Al, as we went about our daily chores. I recall, in particular, one encounter on a cold November morning when I was shoveling snow from a narrow walkway that borders our house. After completing several passes near a tall Blue Spruce, I happened to glance into the branches. Just a few feet away was the grouse, all puffed up, attentive, and apparently not the least bit alarmed by my activity. This seemed to be the amusing butterball's favorite spot, as I often found him there in the mornings, perfectly still whenever I approached. As most birds do when challenged by frigid temperatures, a Ruffed Grouse puffs up all the feathers on its trunk to trap an insulating layer of warm air beneath. In so doing, a grouse resembles a comical, brown-streaked basketball. The fact that our avian visitor showed so little fear seems both fascinating and unusual. Most grouse encounters over the years have more often left me startled, as a bird I was unaware of would noisily erupt from the underbrush, leaving my heart pounding as it soared off into the woods. Thanks to its cryptic coloration and slow, deliberate movements, a Ruffed Grouse can be difficult to spot as it forages on the forest floor. I also find it curious that this bird seems to have no interest whatsoever



in my feeders or any kind of birdseed. I have experimented, leaving cracked corn and mixed seeds on the ground in the areas where I have seen the grouse foraging, but have yet to witness any feeding on what is offered. On two occasions, I was working at the computer and glanced out the window to see the grouse staring back at me. He was sitting in the Burning Bush just outside the screen, where he would nibble at the bright red berries and buds on the branches. He also showed a fondness for the pink fruits on the Kousa Dogwood in my yard, and I've observed him pecking at who-knows-what on the ground as he strolled across the lawn or walkway. Upon doing a bit of research about the bird's preferred diet, I learned from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that "Ruffed Grouse feed almost exclusively on vegetation, including leaves, buds, and fruits of ferns, shrubs, and woody plants. In fall, soft fruits and acorns become an important part of the diet. A Ruffed Grouse's ability to digest foods high in cellulose makes it possible for them to survive harsh winter conditions in the northern part of their range, where they feed on buds and twigs of aspen, birch, and willow... insects and other invertebrates make up a small part of the adult grouse's diet..." I guess that explains why my birdseed experiment failed. As I write this tale in late January, my Ruffed Grouse buddy is missing in action (or inaction). He was last seen January 4th. Soon after, the snow started to build up. Perhaps he buried himself in the soft snow to roost. I've searched for the fluff ball every day since, but sadly, he seems to have moved on.

Photos by Kathryn Davino

### 2019 Environmental Education Grants

These grants are awarded to educators in the DOAS area (Delaware, Otsego, eastern Chenango, and western Schoharie Counties as well as small parts in southern Herkimer and Montgomery Counties) to enable them to add new or continue existing environmental education activities. This competitive grant program is available all educators, including those in Home School Programs

and Student Service Organizations. The maximum award amount is \$500. Applications Now Being Accepted. Deadline for applications is 5 PM, March 29, 2019.

Educators can download the Grant Guidelines and Application at <http://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2019-EE-Grant-Guidelines-and-Application-Cover-Form.pdf>. For more information contact: Susan O'Handley at (607) 643-5680 or email [info@doas.us](mailto:info@doas.us).



# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

## March

**March 12 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**March 15 – DOAS Public Program:** “Turtle Talk: Wood Turtles.” Alexandra Vlk, a Graduate Student at SUNY Oneonta, will describe her research and show photographs of Wood Turtles. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. See article on page 1.

**March 24 – DOAS Montezuma Migration Trip:** Meet at the Dietz Street Parking lot (across from the Oneonta YMCA) at 7:30 AM. See article on page 5. Contact Chris DeCesare at 607-244-5496 or [chris.decesare444@gmail.com](mailto:chris.decesare444@gmail.com).

**March 29 – Applications due for Environmental Education Grants:** See article on page 6.

**March 30 – Annual Lake Otsego Waterfowl Trip around the lake and its tributaries:** Leave from Cooperstown’s Lake Front Docks at the foot of Fair Street at 8:30 AM. See article on page 4. For more information, contact Bob Donnelly: [rsdonn@yahoo.com](mailto:rsdonn@yahoo.com) or 607-264-8156.

## April

**April 13 – DOAS Earth Festival Bird Walk:** Carpools leave Milford Central School parking lot at 8 AM. For more information, contact trip leader Bob Donnelly: [rsdonn@yahoo.com](mailto:rsdonn@yahoo.com) or 607-264-8156.

**April 13 – Earth Festival:** Milford School, 11 AM -3 PM. Visit the DOAS table! For full details about Earth Festival, visit <http://occainfo.org>.

**April 16 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**April 19 – DOAS Public Program:** “What Montana Taught Me.” SUNY Oneonta senior Kyle Dudgeon will share last summer’s experiences in remote areas of Montana through photographs and stories. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401

Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

## May

**May 11 – 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 17 – DOAS Public Program:** “Costa Rica.” Nelson and Gail DuBois will show photographs taken on their recent trip to Costa Rica. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

**May 21 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**May 23– Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake State Park:** Meet at the beach area at 10 AM. The walk is approximately 2 hours in the Park. Led by Connie Tedesco. See <http://doas.us> for more information.

## July

**July 15-August 23 – DOAS Summer DAY Camp:** At DOAS Sanctuary at Franklin Mountain, Monday - Thursday, 9:30AM to 3 PM

- July 15-18 for children entering 3rd and 4th grades
- July 29-August 1 for children entering 5th and 6th grades

At Oneonta World of Learning in Fortin Park, Monday - Thursday, 9AM to Noon

- August 19-23 for children entering 1st and 2nd grades

Register online at [doas.us/2019-audubon-day-camp](http://doas.us/2019-audubon-day-camp). For more information, contact Susan O’Handley, Education Chair, at 607-643-5680 or at [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com).



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## January - February 2019 Bird Sightings

In January, as we turn up the heat and huddle in our homes, eagles are preparing for their breeding season. On the 19th, Dorian Huneke reported eagles toting nesting materials to their nearby nest in Treadwell. Later, she watched their aerial antics, amazed at the obvious size difference between male and female. She is also keeping her eye on a couple of immature eagles in the area, curious as to what will happen come nesting time.

The Brown Creeper visiting Tom Salo's suet feeder in West Burlington became a regular, taking advantage of the high-calorie food. Another regular is a Cooper's Hawk, which may be more interested in the abundance of rodents than in the birds. He also reported his first-of-season House

Sparrow and watched a Long-tailed Weasel pop out of the snow like a Jack-in-the-box.

A flock of Evening Grosbeaks alternates between Pam Peters' feeders and her neighbor's in Franklin, sometimes

in small numbers, at others up to 32 birds. She has also enjoyed hearing a Barred Owl calling for a couple of weeks. A Carolina Wren visited Larry Mirarchi's feeder in the town of Oneonta, a first in wintertime for him. It must have liked what it found there, as he continued to observe it often in the following weeks. In Delhi, Kathryn Davino was happy to find a dozen Goldfinches at her feeder, after being mostly absent since November. Flocks of Turkey have also been regular visitors, about 21 birds when all together. As January came to an end, Elliott Adams had a very hungry male Cowbird at his feeder several times in Sharon Springs. Dorian Huneke reported two Golden Eagles in the Treadwell area.



Evening Grosbeaks  
Photo by Rick Bunting

***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 5**