



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

November

November 2 – Bird Seed Order Deadline

November 9 – Bird Seed Pickup

November 15 – Program, “Structure and Function in Forested Ecosystems”

December

December 3 – DOAS Board Mtg

December 14 – Oneonta

Christmas Bird Count

December 28 – Fort Plain

Christmas Bird Count

January

January 4 or 5 (TBD) – Delaware

Christmas Bird Count

January 11 – Eagle Trip

January 17 – Program, “Australian Adventure”

January 18 – Waterfowl Count

January 21 – DOAS Board Mtg

February

February 14 - 17 – Great Backyard Bird Count

February 21 – Program, “Heat Smart Otsego”

More information on page 7

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

NOVEMBER PROGRAM: “STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION IN FORESTED ECOSYSTEMS”



Jack Tessier, SUNY Delhi



Join us on Friday, November 15 at 7:30 PM for a pictorial tour of forested ecosystems to see what is in them and how they work. We will consider spatial scales from individual plants to landscapes. The program will take place at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY.

Our presenter, Dr. Jack Tessier, SUNY Delhi, Biology, completed his Bachelor’s degree at SUNY Geneseo and his PhD at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. His research is based in plant ecology, especially that of forest understory plants.

January 17, 2020—Save the date for “An Australian Adventure: From Reef to Rainforest” presented by DOAS Board member Kathryn Davino.

SANCTUARY OPEN HOUSE HELD

The annual Open House took place at the DOAS Audubon Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain on October 5th. Visitors to the event included bird watchers, boy scouts, and families, all seeking to enjoy the beautiful weather and fun on the mountain. Andy Mason led a trail walk on the Sanctuary’s trails. The children were excited to make bird masks with the help of Caroline



Bird Mask created in Caroline Fay’s Workshop for kids at the Open House.

Photo by Landa Palmer

Fay and then enjoyed learning about Rehabilitator Missy Runyan’s beautiful owls and Red-tailed hawk.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE "NATURE'S NEIGHBORHOODS"

by Co-president Becky Gretton

It is a privilege to spend time in the world of nature, and we are fortunate to have a variety of habitats matched with activities in our area, or fairly nearby. It seems there's something for everyone, whether the focus is on fall raptor migration (Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch), waterfowl migration (Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge trips, Spring Waterfowl Counts), hiking and birdwatching (Audubon Sanctuary, Susquehanna Greenway, area parks, etc.), eagle watching (January Eagle Trip), or specifically spring birding (Birding By Ear, and the MANY bird walks that are sponsored by DOAS). Christmas Bird Counts are just around the corner, and the Wildflower Walk will be here before we know!

As one explores nature's neighborhoods, another kind of neighborhood develops over time: kindred human spirits that seek peaceful challenges together. It's a matter of interest, not age, with acquaintances that often develop into friendships. A few bring in a few more, and the



West Branch Ausable Flume
Photo by Diane Graf

circle widens. Knowledge is shared, questions lead to more questions, and the circle of knowledge widens. Stories are told with humor and empathy, a refuge in itself.

Interest in Conservation, Education, Research and Advocacy brings us together at Public Programs in Oneonta, where we meet some for the first time and happily reunite with others: more neighborhood dynamics at work.

Dedication to the defense of nature in these trying times will preserve a true source of solace for so many, and for future neighborhoods as well.

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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To contribute notes or articles for The Belted Kingfisher, email: editor@doas.us

JANUARY EAGLE AND WATERFOWL COUNT TRIPS

View wintering Bald Eagles around the Delaware County rivers and reservoirs on Saturday, January 11, 2020. **This trip is limited to DOAS members, and pre-registration is required at the DOAS website, www.doas.us.** Memberships are available at the web site and also the day of the trip. The trip will leave the Dietz Street parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 AM. Carpooling is strongly encouraged, and participants can be picked up *en route* in Delhi and Walton. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon.

The NY State Ornithological Association's annual statewide waterfowl count is scheduled for Sunday, January 19, 2020. DOAS counts ducks and geese on Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and Cannonsville Reservoir and the West Branch of the Delaware River. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year.

Contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net for information about these trips.

Recycling—a basic tenet of environmentalism—Recycling has fallen on hard times lately as much of the market for materials has disappeared due to China's cut-back on purchases. Last year, China banned import of mixed paper and most plastics and the result has been a glut of these materials, even as Americans continue to separate their recyclables.

Increasingly, municipalities are faced with either paying more to remaining recycling firms or land-filling and—even worse—incinerating recyclables. Overseas, in other nations that counted on China's purchases, plastics are ending up in the ocean—adding to an already major environmental disaster.

This situation has come about as recycling in the US was on the rise, both because of regulations and public understanding and acceptance of the benefits. Now recycling programs are cutting back or halting. Some are stockpiling materials in the hope that markets will return, but that cannot go on forever.

Americans produce a lot of trash—an average of 5 pounds per



Logo from Globe, AZ Recycling

person per day. This figure will rise as more recyclables end up as garbage. The increase in disposable containers, bags, electronics, etc. has contributed to this, and society has not addressed the issue.

Domestic recycling firms do exist, but they are plagued by a major problem—dirty recyclables. In China, labor costs are low enough that recyclables containing inappropriate objects—pizza boxes, laundry baskets, coat hangers, etc., can be picked clean by hand. In the US, this is cost prohibitive, so the 25% of recyclables that are contaminated make the rest less valuable or unsalable.

The environmental costs of a failing recycling system are manifold: more trees cut, more demand

for oil and gas to produce plastics, more mining and energy use for extracting ores, as well as the disposal issues described above.

What you can do—Help improve markets for recyclables by purchasing items produced from recycled materials—paper, some plastic containers and bags, metal items rather than plastic, clothing, etc. And keep your recyclables clean and uncontaminated—check the rules for your town or trash hauler and follow them.

P.S.—Go a step beyond recycling to reuse. The Otsego ReUse Center, 23 Duane Street, Oneonta, is one of any number of stores in the region offering good quality used furniture, clothing, appliances, building materials and much more for free or at bargain prices. The Oneonta Center in particular has an extensive collection of sale items, is staffed by friendly and helpful ARC workers, and is well worth the visit. Plus, they take clean white styro-foam items which are compressed and used to manufacture other materials. The Center is open daily from 9 AM – 5 PM.

Update on Bluestone Wind—This large wind project in Broome County is nearing the end of the regulatory process for approval by NY State. DOAS has found serious risks to raptors, particularly eagles, from the hilltop turbines, however the administrative judges overseeing the case have recommended approval. As a result, our Chapter has agreed to participate in a legal effort challenging the anticipated OK by the state, based on a lack of adequate studies by the developer, failure to recognize the documented threats to birds, and inadequate provisions for avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating for dangers to eagles.

This challenge will result in legal fees and other expenses, and we are seeking donations to defray these costs. Contributions can be made at the DOAS website, www.doas.us or by sending a check payable to DOAS with the notation "Eagle Conservation Fund", to DOAS, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820.



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HAWKWATCH NEWS

by Andy Mason



Sharp-shinned Hawk
Photo by Kyle Dudgeon

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch has moved into the mid-season migration period, seeing increased numbers of the largely bird-eating hawks, the accipiters, including Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. Franklin Mountain spotters identify these smaller raptors by their distinctive "flap-flap-flap-glide" flight. The two species can be a challenge to separate, but the skilled counters use such clues as how far the head protrudes ahead of the wings, speed of the flaps and tail shape to tell them apart.

Also on the increase are Red-tailed Hawks, often Franklin Mountain's most numerous species, although with this year's record Broad-winged Hawk count in September, that may not be the case in 2019.

As October progresses, and through November, Franklin

Mountain's superstars—Golden Eagles—will be making their appearance. The lookout cemented its place as one of eastern North America's premier GE locations last fall, with a single-day record of 128 on October 25, 2108. Golden total of 323 was a record for Franklin Mountain and the second-highest seasonal total of any site in the east.

If you are interested in visiting the hawkwatch, look for north and northwest winds following a cold front to bring good flights. This also makes for chilly to frigid conditions on the mountain so add an extra layer—or two—to what you would normally wear.

Visitors and spotters are always welcome at the hawkwatch. For more information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, Andy Mason@earthling.net, or Tom Salo,

(607) 965-8232, salothomas@gmail.com.

Forecasts of anticipated good flights at the hawkwatch are sent out by email a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit www.franklinmt.org to sign up. Daily tallies from Franklin Mountain are also available by email—contact Andy Mason as above.

More information and directions to the hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at www.franklinmt.org.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS PLANNED



This will be our 51st year of participating in the national count. Everyone, novice or experienced, is welcome to join us on this fun day. Small groups in one or two cars count all the birds they find for whatever hours they choose. Each team is assigned a territory within one of three designated 15-mile radius circles. We especially need people who live within each count circle to participate as Feeder Watchers. If you would like to participate, please contact the compiler for that circle. People who have participated before will be contacted.

December 14 Oneonta Christmas Bird Count (centered in Milford). Compiler Sandy Bright: email bright@s@hartwick.edu, phone 607-287-4465.

December 28 Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count. Compiler Bob Donnelly: email rsdonn@yahoo.com or 607-264-8156.

January 4 or 5 (TBD) Delaware County Christmas Bird Count. Compiler Pam Peters: ovenb1rdp@gmail.com or 607-829-6545.

Bird Friendly Coffee Last Chance to Buy Before the Holidays! Coffee pre-orders for pickup at our November 15th meeting are due by Tuesday, November 5, 5 PM. If you would like to order coffee, please email your order to bachmanj@hartwick.edu or call 607-431-9509. Payment is due at the time of delivery. Cash, checks and credit cards are accepted. More information at <http://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>



WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIRDS GONE?

by DOAS Director Charlie Scheim

“If you were alive in the year 1970, more than one in four birds in the U.S. and Canada has disappeared within your lifetime”. So says Cornell Lab of Ornithology scientist Ken Rosenberg, one of the authors of a landmark new study, which found that the total U.S. bird population has declined by 29% since 1970 (see www.allaboutbirds.org/vanishing-1-in-4-birds-gone/). So, where have all the birds gone? What can we do about it?

Our avian population decline has both short-term causes that can be

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service article “Threats to Birds” (www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/threats-to-birds.php) summarizes short-term annual avian fatality data in a table giving estimates for various human-related direct causes of bird deaths for 2017. The charts shown are derived from that data.






The USFWS article does not address the longer-term causes of bird loss. Habitat destruction and general climate change are highly significant in overall avian pop-

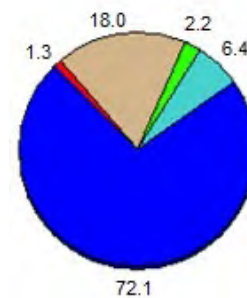


have more than doubled due to the Endangered Species Act and the banning of certain pesticides.

But there is also much that we as individuals can do. For example, almost 600 million annual birds’ deaths are caused by building collisions, with around 253 million, or 42% caused by single homes and other shorter buildings. Installing screens over windows or equipping them with avian-detering devices can help lower these numbers. We can avoid using pesticides on our

Human-related Direct Causes of Bird Death

	Collisions/Electrocutions via Turbines or Power Grid	43.5 million	1.3%
	Collisions with Buildings or Glass	599 million	18.0%
	Other Industry (e.g. Solar Farms, Poisoning, etc.)	73 million	2.2%
	Collisions with Vehicles	214.5 million	6.4%
	Feral or Domestic Cats	2.4 billion	72.1%



measured on an annual basis and long-term causes that can better be seen over decades. For example, each year birds are killed by collisions with wind turbines. An American Bird Conservancy article “Understanding Wind Energy’s Threat to Birds” cites estimates of about 500,000 annual avian deaths due to collisions with wind turbines. But, the article continues, this number, while disturbingly large, is dwarfed by estimates that annually somewhere around 43 million birds die each year from collisions with or electrocution from the towers and powerlines that make up the U.S. electric grid.

ulation decline, but much more difficult to quantify on an annual basis. However, these have played a huge role in the overall long-term decline of our avian population, as the Cornell Lab of Ornithology article cited above makes very clear.

What can we do to help halt this decline? On the long-term large scale, certainly, political advocacy and community action for environmental causes is necessary and useful. For example, waterfowl populations have actually grown by 50% over the last few decades due to wetlands conservation efforts and dedicated conservation funding. Similarly, raptor populations

lawns, and purchase foods grown in a bird-friendly way. Since cat predation, by far, is the largest single cause of annual bird deaths, we can make concerted efforts to curb this by keeping cats indoors, equipping them with various collar devices, or fencing in your bird feeding areas. See “Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds” (<https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/seven-simple-actions-to-help-birds>) for more ideas and greater detail.

The time to act is now. As Ken Rosenberg says, “I don’t think any of these really major declines are hopeless at this point. But that may not be true 10 years from now.”

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER BIRD SIGHTINGS

BY SANDY BRIGHT

In summer, bird song often lets us know who's hiding in those bushes. But the birds are quieter now, their business of reproducing over; no need to attract a mate and, for many species, no need to claim territory. They're busy instead bulking up for migration or for the long winter months when food is less plentiful. More often than not, I find I need my binoculars to figure out who's there.

At the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch, counters often have plenty of time to do just that when raptors aren't skybound. In the waning days of September, counters contributed these sightings, along with some more common year-round species: Olive-sided Flycatcher, Northern Flicker, Gray Catbird, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee, Brown Thrasher, Purple Finch, Cedar Waxwing, and American Robin (Pete Fauth); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (Pam Peters); Downy Woodpecker, Black-throated Green and Bay-breasted Warblers, American Redstart, Northern Parula (Becky Gretton, who also reported Black-throated Blue, Magnolia and Cape May found by Bill Purcell on the woods trail; Tennessee, Nashville, Magnolia, Blackpoll, and Black-and-White Warblers, Solitary and Red-eyed Vireos, Scarlet Tanager, Hairy Woodpecker, and Eastern Phoebe (Shane Blodgett);

White-throated Sparrow (Randy Lynch); Pileated Woodpecker (Steve Hall).

During a paddle on Goodyear Lake, in a span of just 15 minutes, Marilyn Bailey found Green and Great Blue Herons, Belted Kingfisher, Great Egret, Bald Eagle, and numerous ducks. At home in the East End of Oneonta, she watched scolding crows harassing a large raptor, possibly a Rough-legged Hawk. In Treadwell, the tables were turned and the hawks were the aggressors: Dorian Huneke observed two Cooper's Hawks chasing a crow.

Pam Peters had visitors from the far north near Treadwell: Gray-cheeked Thrushes calling back and forth in the woods around her house near Treadwell. Barb Palmer contributed Chipping Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, House Wren, Ovenbird, and Palm Warbler.

In early October, Becky Gretton heard a Carolina Wren (Oneonta). In Jefferson, a White-crowned Sparrow and Red-winged Blackbird visited Barb Palmer's yard. On two occasions she observed American Kestrels and Northern Flickers hunting the same area. Up at the Hawk Watch, Randy Lynch reported Blue-headed Vireo; Becky Gretton found Eastern Bluebird and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. In mid-October, Pete Fauth saw



White-throated Sparrow
Audubon Photo by John Pizniu

Yellow-rumped Warbler and Wood Duck:

The tables were turned again when Dorian Huneke watched a Kingfisher chasing a Sharp-shinned Hawk, which swung around to go after the Kingfisher, which then did an acrobatic twisting dive and came up behind the Sharpie. A brief but exciting encounter!

In mid-October, Barb Palmer discovered some late-departing Bobolinks near Stamford. Species added at the Hawk Watch were Field Sparrow (Tom Salo, Becky Gretton), Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Hermit Thrush (Randy Lynch). Randy also reported an ermine unsuccessfully chasing ground feeders at the feeding station there. After it left, a Cooper's Hawk gave it a try, with no more success than the ermine.

Though most species begin breeding early in the season, American Goldfinches wait until June or July to begin nesting. Even knowing they are late breeders, it was still a surprise to find Goldfinch fledglings in October here in Oneonta, announcing their presence with their loud, insistent begging. We'll keep those feeders stocked and hope they learn to feed themselves soon!

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.

Upcoming Activities

November

November 2 – Bird Seed Order Deadline by 5 PM

November 9 – Bird Seed Sale Pickup: 9 AM to 11 AM, Pickup Location at VP Supply Corp., 41 Country Club Road, Oneonta.

November 15 – DOAS Public Program: “Structure and Function in Forested Ecosystems.” Jack Tessier from SUNY Delhi will lead us on a pictorial tour of forested ecosystems to see what is in them and how they work. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

December

December 3 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

December 14 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count. Everyone is welcome to count as part of a group or at your own feeder, contact Sandy Bright at sbright@hartwick.edu or phone 607-287-4465.

December 28 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count. All are welcome to participate regardless of birding experience. For information contact Bob Donnelly: rsdonn@yahoo.com or 607-264-8156.

January

January 4 or 5 (TBD) – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count. All are invited to participate. Contact Pam Peters if you can drive or count: ovenb1rdp@gmail.com or 607-829-6545.

January 11 – DOAS Eagle Trip: Field trip to view wintering bald eagles in Delaware County. Trip is limited to DOAS members and pre-registration required at www.doas.us. Depart from the Dietz Street parking lot across

from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 AM. Participants can be picked up *en route* in Delhi and Walton. For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

January 17 – DOAS Public Program: “An Australian Adventure: From Reef to Rainforest.” Travel “down under” with DOAS Board member Kathryn Davino as she shares photos and videos of land and sea creatures she encountered in this fascinating and magical country. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

January 18 – NYSOA Statewide Waterfowl Count: This effort involves surveying waterways in Otsego and Delaware County where ducks and geese can be seen, and identifying and counting waterfowl. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year. Anyone interested in helping with the census, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

February

February 14 -17 – 2020 Great Backyard Bird Count

February 21 – DOAS Public Program: “Heat Smart Otsego” with Bennett Sandler. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.



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

DOAS Membership

Cost is \$25 annually or \$35 for two years; family memberships \$30 annually or \$40 for two years.

Please make your check payable to “DOAS” and mail payment with this form to:

DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

Memberships can also be purchased online at <http://doas.us>.

Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation!

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*.

Your mailing label will inform you of your membership expiration date (year and month, e.g. ‘1911 indicates November 2019).



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820
www.doas.us

SURVIVAL BY DEGREES: 389 BIRD SPECIES ON THE BRINK



America's birds are at greater risk to climate change than previously believed, according to *Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink*, a report issued last month by the National Audubon Society. The report, an update to the *Birds and Climate Change Report*, originally released in 2014, states that climate change is the number one threat to bird species, nationally and locally.

Audubon's new science shows that two-thirds (64%) (389 out of 604) of North American bird species are at risk of extinction from climate change. The good news is that the science also shows that if we take action now we can help improve the chances for 76% of species at risk.

Read the DOAS Press Release at <https://doas.us/survival-by-degrees-389-bird-species-on-the-brink-doas-news-release/>

View the report at <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees>

BIRDS CAN'T FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE. WE CAN.