



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## COMING ACTIVITIES

### January

January 5 – Delaware Christmas Bird Count

January 11 – Eagle Trip

January 17 – Program, “Australian Adventure”

January 19 – Waterfowl Count

January 21 – DOAS Board Mtg

### February

February 14 - 17 – Great Backyard Bird Count

February 21 – Program, “Heat Smart Otsego”

### March

March 3 – DOAS Board Mtg

March 20 – Program, “NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III: Learn With Us!”

### April

April 17 – Program, “TBA”

April 18 – Earth Festival

April 21 – DOAS Board Mtg

More information on page 7

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

## JANUARY PROGRAM: “AN AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE: FROM REEF TO RAINFOREST”

Australia...home of myriad marsupials, bizarre birds like the Cassowary, and bordered by the largest barrier reef on our planet. During this presentation, you will travel “down under” with Kathryn Davino as she shares photos and videos of land and sea creatures she encountered in this fascinating and magical country.

Kathryn and her husband Al spent three weeks traveling about the east coast of Australia during January and February of 2018. Her talk will primarily focus on their experiences on Heron Island and at Lamington National Park. Heron Island is a small island located 45 miles from the mainland on the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef. It is a temporary home to an estimated 200,000 nesting sea birds and is a significant nesting location for two threatened sea turtle species, the Green and Log-

gerhead turtles. The surrounding waters are teeming with fish and coral – a snorkeler’s paradise.

Beautiful Lamington National Park, part of the Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area, is a lush subtropical-temperate zone that shelters abundant and highly diverse plant and animal life. The Davinos encountered friendly Crimson Rosella parrots, Satin Bowerbirds and Red-necked Wallabies in great abundance, to name a few species.

Share the adventure on January 17th at Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY at 7:30 PM.

Kathryn Davino is a retired High School Biology Teacher from Delaware Academy in Delhi. She is an enthusiastic birder, gardener, and watcher of wildlife. She has served on the DOAS Board of Directors since 2016.



**February 21, 2020—Save the date for “Heat Smart Otsego” with Bennett Sandler at Elm Park Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY at 7:30 PM.**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### DOAS YEAR IN REVIEW by Co-president Andy Mason

Previously I have used this space to list some of our Chapter's activities. It never fails to surprise me—pleasantly so—how much a small not-for-profit volunteer group can accomplish in so many ways. Here we are at the end of the year, so time for a review and update.

#### Here are some achievements:

- We offered eight well-attended public presentations through the efforts of Program Chair Becky Gretton.
- Becky also organized the fourth sold-out Birding by Ear event at Davis State Park.
- A very pleasant and successful Charter Dinner with lots of prizes and an entertaining presentation by Rick Bunting was organized by Kathryn Davino.
- We offered three summer sessions of the John G. New Day Camp—two at our Sanctuary and one at Fortin Park in conjunction with Oneonta World of Learning (OWL). Camp Directors Liz Brown and Chris DeCesare, assisted by Rob Katz, gave 35 kids a great outdoors environmental experience. Susan O'Handley worked behind the scenes with registration, health forms and other organizational duties. Also, at the Sanctuary this summer Jane Bachman arranged two family-oriented programs, on odonates and on herps.
- We continued our efforts regarding the proposed Bluestone Wind Project which we consider a serious threat to eagles (see conservation column). We also submitted comments and urged

others to participate in review of the Unit Management Plan for the Treaty Line State Forest in Delaware and Broome Counties, where an ill-advised effort to put off-road vehicle trails on public lands is underway.

- Susan O'Handley continued and expanded her excellent work in promoting and publicizing our Chapter, which has played a big part in pushing our membership to its highest level ever. In addition, fund-raising efforts including coffee and bird seed sales, organized by Susan, have been very successful.



*Boys Scout Troop 25 from Mohawk at the Open House, October  
Photo by Landa Palmer*

Jane Bachman has taken over responsibility for sales and has good ideas for the future. Our Chapter was well-supported for causes such as our Eagle Conservation Fund and camp scholarships. We appreciate this continued investment in our work from members.

- At the Sanctuary, Susan acquired grant funding for new entrance signage and for directional signs to the property.
- “President’s” Continued on page 3**

## THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Janet Potter

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Jane Bachman  
Kathryn Davino  
Landa Palmer  
Pamela Peters  
Janet Potter  
Tom Salo  
Rod Sutton

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS\* AND ASSIGNMENTS

Conservation\*: Andy Mason  
Education\*: Susan O'Handley  
Field Trips\*: Vacant  
Hawkwatch\*: Andrew Mason  
Tom Salo  
Hospitality\*: Kathryn Davino  
Membership\*: Andy Mason  
Programs\*: Becky Gretton  
Publicity\*: Susan O'Handley  
Sanctuary\*: Andrew Mason  
Bird Counts: Sandy Bright  
Charter Dinner: Kathryn Davino  
Finance: Gray Mason  
Historian: Rod Sutton  
Sales\*: Jane Bachman

### ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Delaware Otsego Audubon Society  
P.O. Box 544  
Oneonta, NY 13820  
Email: [info@doas.us](mailto:info@doas.us)

**ON THE WEB:** [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)

[www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety](http://www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety)

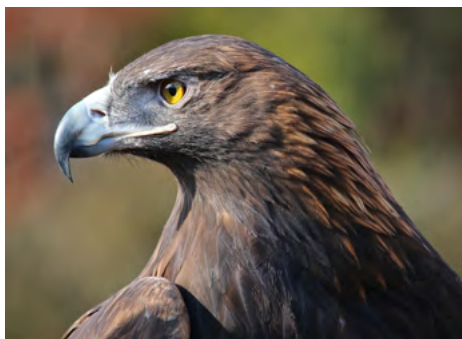
To contribute notes or articles for The Belted Kingfisher, email: [editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@doas.us)



## CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION by Andy Mason

**Bluestone Wind Project**—By the time you read this, a final decision will likely be made on the proposed Bluestone Wind Project in Broome County, west of the Cannonsville Reservoir. DOAS has been deeply involved in the review of this project over the past 2 ½ years, including 384 hours of raptor observation at the project site; coordination of five reports on various aspects of the project's impact on eagles and the developer's avian studies; submission of briefs and testimony as a party in the quasi-judicial proceeding on the application for the project; and much more. Most of this work was coordinated and carried out by Tom Salo who deserves our appreciation for his time and dedication in this effort.

DOAS observations documented a major presence of Bald and Golden Eagles in the project area, both wintering and migrating. Eagles were observed directly in locations where the swept areas of the tur-



*Golden Eagle  
Audubon Photo by Elizabeth Jaffin*

bine blades will fall. The concentration of wintering Golden Eagles is the highest that has ever been recorded in NY State. Bald Eagles are very common year-round in the Cannonsville area and were regularly sighted near turbine locations.

In our testimony, we pointed out significant shortcomings in the developer's raptor studies, including limited geographic distribution and poor visibility from survey locations. The wind company put forth very low estimates of eagle deaths from the project over its anticipated life expectancy but had much higher estimates that they did

not disclose to the public, claiming confidentiality.

Unfortunately, the state Department of Environmental Conservation and Department of Public Service turned a blind eye to the high risk to eagles and recommended approval of the project, as did the Administrative Law Judges in the case. It is likely that the State Siting Board, which makes the final determination, will follow their lead and give the project a green light by the end of the year.

**What You Can Do**—DOAS is considering participating in a legal challenge to the anticipated approval of the Bluestone Wind Project. This would involve other parties who have raised other issues during the review. Our organization will need to provide a share of the costs of such a challenge, and we welcome any and all contributions toward this effort. Contributions can be made at the DOAS website, [www.doas.us](http://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.

**Bluestone Wind Project Update**—On December 16th, the NYS Siting Board granted Bluestone Wind, LLC approval to build and operate the Broome County Wind Farm. More information from DOAS to follow.

### "President's" Continued from page 2

These should all be in place by spring and will enhance visitor experience. And another good Open House and hawk watch season brought many up on the mountain.

- We sponsored a good number of field trips to various locales including Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Delaware County reservoirs for eagles, and lots of spring bird walks.
- Our hard-working board held a forward-looking strategizing session and finalized vision and mission statements.
- And finally, but hardly least, newsletter editor Janet Potter put together nine informative and interesting issues of *The Belted Kingfisher*, and steered the process of redesigning the newsletter and creating the terrific color editions you are now enjoying!

We look forward to as successful a year in 2020 and are pleased to have all our members as supporters and participants.



*Andy, Dorian, Tom and Becky doing trail maintenance at the Sanctuary  
Photo by Jane Bachman*

## WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK! BELTED KINGFISHER NEWSLETTER SURVEY

You may have noticed that we have made some changes recently to our printed newsletter. (Members receive a hard copy of each issue in the mail.)

We would love your feedback.

Go to <https://doas.us/2019-newsletter-survey/> and take the quick survey. It takes less than five minutes and your responses will help us improve this newsletter. DOAS thanks you for participating.



### SAVE THE DATE

Session 1 (Grades 3&4)  
July 13-16

Session 2 (Grades 5&6)  
August 3-6

Session 3 (Grades 1&2)  
August 17-21 at OWL

### DOAS CAMPS



#### Bird Friendly Coffee

Coffee pre-orders for pickup at our January 17th meeting are due by Tuesday, January 7, 5 PM. If you would like to order coffee, please email your order to [bachmanj@hartwick.edu](mailto: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/>

### 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).



# PHOTOGRAPHING BEARS

by DOAS Director Rod Sutton

Over the past few years, I have visited North Carolina to photograph American Black Bears in the Alligator River Nature Preserve. This year the trip took place in early June. My wife Jo Ann and daughter Ally with her husband James accompanied me.

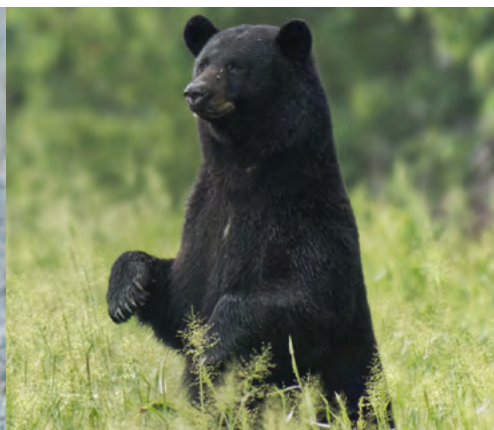
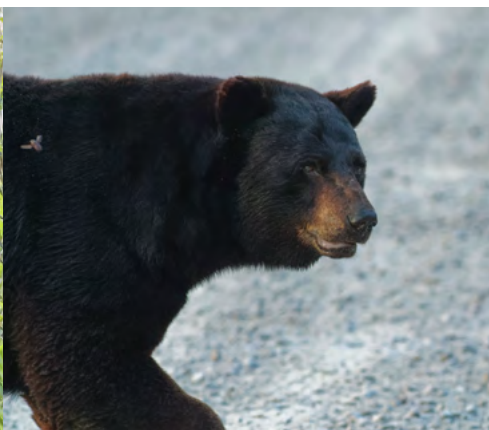
Locating bears means getting up at 4:30 AM, gathering equipment together, and arriving at the preserve before dawn. The bears are best found feeding in agricultural fields during the early morning hours before they move back into the woods and marshes. Coastal

100 pounds and will stay with the mother for 17 to 24 months.

The next morning, I went off by myself, as the others thought the trip should be more like a vacation where you sleep in. When I arrived at the appropriately named Bear Road, I stepped out of the vehicle to look at some fields through binoculars. I found myself swarmed by greenheads, a type of horsefly that is active for only a brief 3-4 weeks during the year. In a very short time, I received over twenty painful, scarring bites. Greenhead

and camera with a 500mm lens. The previous night, I had staged my equipment by the door of our room to help with getting an early start. This just happened to be next to the air conditioner. When I set the cold lens on the tripod in the warm, moist air the glass rapidly and irreversibly fogged over.

The bear was getting closer, so I grabbed a second 300mm lens and photographed the bear as it crossed the road in front of me. It then went down a bank into a swampy area, where it covered its head with



North Carolina is home to some of the largest black bears with reports of 800-pound bears in the area. The record for the region is 880 pounds.

Our first morning out, we were driving down Sawyer Road, when my wife Jo Ann told me to stop and back up. She saw a Barred Owl perched in a tree over a water filled ditch. After a short time, the owl went into the ditch and emerged with a fish. As we continued down Sawyer Road, we passed turtles, egrets, and a deer before we found a mother bear (sow) and two cubs. Cubs are born in January and weigh about ½ pound. At one year of age, a cub can attain a weight of

horsefly (*Tabanus nigrovittatus*), is a species of biting horsefly commonly found around coastal marshes of the Eastern United States. Only the females bite, attacking humans and animals to obtain a source of blood protein used only for egg production. Their mouthparts act like scissors that slice open skin, causing a stinging pain. Several bears I observed during the trip displayed swollen lumps around their eyes from the greenheads and other horseflies.

Further down the road, I found a large bear crossing a field in the direction of Long Curve Road. I moved ahead and set up a tripod

mud. The mud bath was followed by a few minutes of back scratching.

I am often asked what type of equipment I use. Although I pack several cameras and lenses, I most often use a 300mm and 500mm telephoto lens on a Canon or Nikon camera. Those seem to cover most of the subjects of interest to me.

More information on the black bears of North Carolina can be found on the website for the North Carolina Bearfest at <https://www.ncbearfest.com/> and the Coastal NC Refuges Gateway Visitor Center at <https://www.fws.gov/ncgatewayvc/>

## OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER BIRD SIGHTINGS

BY SANDY BRIGHT



Turkey  
Photo by Rick Bunting

In mid-October, I was outside enjoying some warmer weather and an unusual variety of bird sounds, including Meadowlark, Pewee, and Killdeer, an unusual combination for both my neighborhood and the season. I chuckled, realizing it was just a few very vocal starlings. Yes, they are an invasive species, but, doggone, they are talented mimics!

Throughout October at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, counters were seeing migrating summer birds along with visitors from the north, including White-throated Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, Golden-crowned Kinglet (Peter Fauth, who also noted Spring Peepers vocalizing); Wood Duck, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Flicker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Eastern Phoebe (Becky Gretton, Tom Salo). Leslie Preston observed a small flock of turkeys and an albino hawk, possibly Red-tailed, on a telephone pole near Morris. In late October, a pair of Wood Thrushes visited Susan Brunswick's yard in Oneo-

nta. Kathleen Meszler spotted an adult Golden Eagle outside Delhi. Becky Gretton found 3 Northern Harriers and a Short-eared Owl on Dingman Road near Fort Plain.

In early November, Kathryn Davino reported two male House Finches which had hung around since Halloween, and flocks of Canada Geese flew low overhead most mornings for a week. A lone turkey, head and neck "rid-dled with the wart-like growths indicative of avian pox" visited her yard in Delhi. Near Morris, Mona Waffle discovered a Greater Yellow-legs, unfortunately dead, near a pond. In Andes, Charlie Scheim heard a Bluebird calling and Ruffed Grouse drumming repeatedly.

November 4th was a big migration day for passerines. Up at the hawkwatch, Marilyn Leahy and Tom Salo reported hundreds of Robins and Red-winged Blackbirds heading south, along with some Double-crested Cormorants. Down in the valley filling bird feeders, I was astounded to watch an adult Bald Eagle appear just over the roof of my house and land in a tree above me, dislodging a dead branch. I froze, unwilling to look away as the branch fell, just missing me. When I shifted my weight ever so slightly, those eagle eyes caught the movement. The gig was up, and the eagle flew

away.

In the first half of November at the Hawkwatch, Fox Sparrows arrived (Becky Gretton), as well as Tree Sparrows (Andy Mason, Kathryn Schneider). Tom Austin got a nice video of two male Ring-necked Pheasants on Hamden Hill Road. Later that month, an American Robin visited Barb Palmer's yard in Jefferson.

In the first days of December Kay Crane discovered a Brown Creeper in Walton, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker at her feeder. Dorian Huneke spotted about 50 Canada Geese heading south (Treadwell), and, days later, watched an immature Bald Eagle fly lazily across Rt. 10 (Town of Kortright). Andy Mason found a Great Blue Heron and a few Mallards at the fishing access site in Oneonta's west end. Susan Brunswick observed a Belted Kingfisher hunting the Mill Race in Oneonta's Neawha Park. Near that area, Charlie Scheim noticed a large flock of pigeons suddenly rise up. The reason became apparent when he saw a former flock member being carried off by a hawk, probably Cooper's.

Carolina Wrens returned to our neighborhood several weeks ago. As they perform their duet with the female's rattle and the male's cheery "teakettle", I am thankful that this species continues to vocalize at this quieter time of year.

*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.*

# Upcoming Activities

## January

**January 5 – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count.** All are invited to participate. Contact Pam Peters if you can drive or count: [ovenb1rdp@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.doas.us). More information, see below or contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto: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 19 – 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. More information, see below or contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

## February

**February 14 -17 – 2020 Great Backyard Bird Count**

**February 21 – DOAS Public Program:** “Heat Smart Otsego.” Speaker Bennett Sandler of Heat Smart Otsego will educate us about renewable, clean heating and cooling technologies like air and ground source heat pumps and modern wood burning appliances, and connect interested building owners with pre-vetted local installers. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

## March

**March 3 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**March 20 – DOAS Public Program:** “NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III: Learn With Us!” Speaker Julie Hart will talk about the history of the atlas, the importance of atlas data, and how you can get involved. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

## April

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

**April 17 – DOAS Public Program:** To be determined. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

**April 18 – Earth Festival:** Details soon at <http://oc-cainfo.org>.

## REMINDER: 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](http://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](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net) for information about these trips.

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







DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.  
PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820  
[www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)

## HAWKWATCH NEWS: FROM FIRST TO WORST

by Andy Mason

The current season and the 2018 season have been near opposites for Golden Eagles at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch. October 2018 was a major aberration from the typical migration pattern of these large raptors. Over the second half of the month, 250 Golden Eagles passed the lookout, including an incredible 128 birds on October 25, 2018, a single-day record for eastern North America.

A typical October at Franklin Mountain would bring 50 or so Golden Eagles, so the concentration in 2018 was a shock and unprecedented. And, of course, the question on everyone's mind was if it would be repeated this year. Well, the answer is a resounding "NO!" Not only was last year's extrava-

ganza not repeated, but there was only one Golden Eagle spotted at Franklin Mountain this October! This is the lowest October count since full-time coverage began at the site.

There is no apparent explanation for this dramatic swing in October Golden Eagles. Both years are extremes and presumably counts will balance back out in the future, but that remains to be seen.

Golden Eagles did recover in November though, with a good count of 157, including double-digit days of 39 on the 8th, 43 on the 12th, 23 on the 13th, and 14 on the 20th. As of mid-December, the Golden Eagle total stood at 165, somewhat below the 18-year average of 183.

Red-tail Hawks totaled 914 at this



*Red-tailed Hawk*  
Audubon Photo by Mei Chen

point, only half of the average of 1772, continuing a downward trend for this stalwart of Franklin Mountain numbers. Total raptors is 5228, largely due to an excellent Broad-winged Hawk count back in September. This makes two seasons in a row above average for total birds.

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch 2019 season will end in early January and a season wrap-up will appear in the next *Belted Kingfisher*.