



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

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## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

### COMING ACTIVITIES

#### March

- March 3 – DOAS Board Mtg
- March 20 – Program, “NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III: The Joys of Atlasing”
- March 28 – Montezuma Wildlife Refuge Field Trip

#### April

- April 7 – Woodcock Walk
- April 17 – Program, “Slogs Through Bogs”
- April 18 – Earth Festival
- April 18 – Optics Raffle Drawing
- April 21 – DOAS Board Mtg

#### May

- May 9 – Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk
- May 15 – Program, “DuBois Photography”
- May 17 – Sanctuary Bird Walk
- May 19 – DOAS Board Mtg
- May 23 – West Branch Preserve Field Trip

#### Summer

- June 7 – Birding By Ear
- July 13–August 21 – Summer Day Camp at the Sanctuary

More information on page 7

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

### MARCH PROGRAM: THE JOYS OF ATLASING

Join us on Friday, March 20 at Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY at 7:30 PM for a presentation about the third edition of the *New York Breeding Bird Atlas*.

It has been 20 years since the last breeding bird atlas in New York State and a lot has changed! Data gathering for the third atlas will take place from 2020-2024 and involve thousands of volunteers from across the state. Our program will be presented by Julie Hart, Project Coordinator for the NY Breeding Bird Atlas. Learn about the history of the Breeding Bird Atlas, the importance of atlas data, and how you can get involved. Find out how the third atlas will differ from previous atlases, including how we will be using eBird for data entry.

Atlasing is a great excuse to explore new areas and provides an intimate look into the daily lives of birds. Whether you are a beginner

or advanced birder, this unique opportunity will strengthen your bird-watching

skills, while contributing valuable data to a large conservation-oriented project.



Julie Hart is a native Vermonter who started birding while working as a bird conservation intern with National Audubon, Audubon New York, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. She traveled for several years doing field work around the globe before returning to Vermont to serve as the coordinator for Mountain Birdwatch with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies. She spent some years chasing Bicknell’s Thrush around the mountains of the Northeast and Hispaniola before moving to Wyoming where she earned her Master’s degree. In her travels she has participated in two bird atlases and considers atlasing her favorite type of birding.



**April 17 Program—Save the Date: “Slogs Through Bogs: Beauty, Loss and Preservation” at Elm Park Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY at 7:30 PM, presented by Donna Vogler, Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta.**

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE FOR SOME: NY BREEDING BIRD ATLAS III AND TECHNOLOGY

by Co-president Becky Gretton

Being of a "certain age", I admire those of my peers who chose to take on digital technology from the start, evolving with the changes and "speaking the language" with one another, advancing their command in so many ways through the years. I dragged my feet through the years. The purist in me resented cell towers contaminating gorgeous ridgelines, necessary eye pollution in the long run.

I was forced to learn some computer skills while teaching, enjoying posting information on my school website page with the high-speed school computer and looking up things like recordings of bird sounds (after-hours of course...). At that time, I came home to dial-up and land line phones, two of which were rotary, and they worked just fine! My flip phone(s) recently evolved into an Android LG, and I have a mini iPad in addition to my PC. DSL replaced the dial-up long ago, a time saver for me, but I can see eyes rolling as you read this. Just last week, my Windows 7 was updated to Windows 10, more stuff to learn.

Birding has pushed me to report data online for activities such as Hawkwatching and Breeding Bird Surveying so now it's easy, which makes everything more fun.

The 2000 *Breeding Bird Atlas* was paper based in the field with some data entry online, and when it was over I was thrilled to see my efforts



appear on the Internet! Looking back, documenting behaviors that indicated breeding became a daily goal, and I befriended many birding buddies during that time. We're still birding together. Keeping informed in anticipation of the 2020 Atlas has been somewhat of a journey as I visit websites and practice harder at eBird Mobile. Thanks to some knowledgeable friends who share, and affording myself time and patience, it's coming along. I also see web sites changing into more comfortable formats.

I had a pleasant surprise as I birded today: eBird Mobile has been updated to a more fluid format with options presented in a fashion that feel more useable.

DOAS will assist all of us who are excited about learning to Atlas efficiently. Join us for the March 20 program. Think about attending the 5th annual Birding By Ear on Sunday, June 7 at Betty and Wilbur Davis Park, as we apply *Atlas* skills on the trails and learn at our own pace!

Happy birding.

## THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Janet Potter

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

# CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

by Andy Mason

## State Legislature—back at it—

The State Legislature has reconvened in Albany with the opportunity to expand on last year's productive session in the environmental arena.

In 2019, legislation was passed for aggressive legally binding targets to move New York off fossil fuels; to amend the State Constitution to guarantee New Yorkers a right to clean air, clean water, and a healthful environment (this must pass next year's legislative session before going to voters statewide); to ban most single-use shopping bags in the state (goes into effect March 1); and to phase out the use and sale of chlorpyrifos, a pesticide dangerous to human and wildlife. The Legislature did much more, breaking a multi-decade logjam on bills held back by the State Senate.

But other important measures remain on the table. Perhaps highest on the agenda is legislation to protect smaller wetlands that lost their federal protection several years ago. With the current anti-environmental agenda from the Trump administration, there is growing awareness that states must do more to make up for Washington's retreat on clean air, clean water, wildlife protection and more. This bill does just that, by adding wetlands over one acre in size to the state's regulatory authority.

Birders and other wildlife en-



Great Blue Heron  
Audubon Photo by Robert Hunt

thusiasts know well the benefits of wetlands. They provide important habitat, cleanse water of sediments, pollution and nutrients, absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, buffer high and low water flows, and provide recreation opportunities—all at no cost to the public.

These smaller wetlands are routinely drained and filled by developers, agriculture and industry. They need to have their protections restored.

**What you can do**—Contact your State Assemblymember and State Senator and urge them to support bills A.3658 and S.5576 to protect clean water and wildlife in the state.

(Legislative contacts can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, [DOAS.us](https://doas.us))

## Washington—a different story—

As noted, the administration is attacking all areas of environmental protection with a vengeance. It is hard to know how and where to respond to the assault, but for birders, probably most critical is the pending proposal to redefine

provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) to allow incidental killing or injuring of protected birds. This will allow energy companies, mining industry, big agriculture and others to avoid responsibility to minimize bird impacts in their activities. Clearly this means more bird deaths from collisions, toxic holding ponds, poisoning, oil spills, and other dangerous activities.

**What you can do**—Time is short. The comment period on this misguided change in policy ends March 19. Please take action and ask others to do the same before the deadline.

Find background information, talking points and sample letter to the editor at:

<https://doas.us/mbta-action-alert-march-19-deadline-for-comments/>

Comments can also be made online at [www.regulations.gov/docket?D=FWS-HQ-MB-2018-0090](https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=FWS-HQ-MB-2018-0090).

More information is available from National Audubon ([www.audubon.org](https://www.audubon.org)) and the American Bird Conservancy ([www.abcbirds.org](https://www.abcbirds.org)).



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## 2020 WATERFOWL COUNT RESULTS

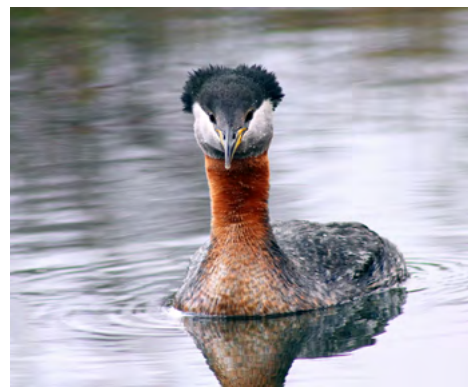
### By ANDY MASON

The DOAS section of the statewide waterfowl count was held January 18-20, covering Otsego and Canadarago Lakes, the Susquehanna River and tributaries to Unadilla, and West Branch Delaware River and Cannonsville Reservoir to Long Eddy. A total of 2502 birds were tallied, of 13 different species, including Common Goldeneye, American Coot, and a Red-necked Grebe, spotted by Bob Donnelly.

In addition to the waterfowl, other sightings of interest in-

cluded: Great-blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Red-shouldered Hawk, Bald Eagle (including 36 counted by Randy and Carol Lynch at Cannonsville Reservoir), Golden Eagle, Northern Harrier, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Ring-billed Gulls, Raven, White-throated Sparrow, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Wild Turkey, muskrat.

Thanks to participants Bob Donnelly, Carol and Randy Lynch, Tom and Joanne Salo, Lisa Gorn,



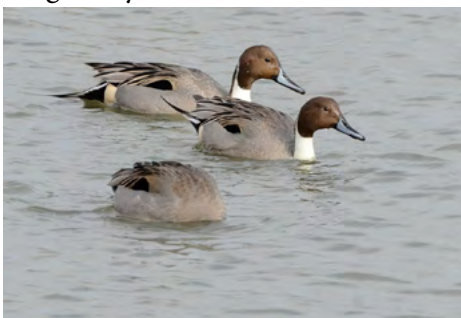
*Red-necked Grebe*  
Audubon Photo by John Pizniur

Suzanne Gaynor, Kathy Griswold, Andy Mason, Pam Peters, Linda Burkhardt, Sarah Newtown, Brian Stevens, Carolyn Stevens, Bill Carbine and Italo Bironi.

Full results are available at [doas.us/2020-waterfowl-count-report/](https://doas.us/2020-waterfowl-count-report/)

## MONTEZUMA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TRIP

Join us for a field trip to Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, March 28 to view migratory waterfowl and shore-



*Northern Pintail*  
Photo by Dave Kiehm, Dead Drift Studio

birds on their annual journey to their breeding grounds. Our trip will involve traveling by car to different hot spots on the refuge and also other parts of the wetlands complex. 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.

There is no charge for the trip but we ask that you register online at <https://doas.us/event/>

[montezuma-national-wildlife-refuge-spring-migration-2020/](https://doas.us/montezuma-national-wildlife-refuge-spring-migration-2020/). 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, snacks and water. For additional details, contact Chris DeCesare at 607-244-5496 or [chris.decesare444@gmail.com](mailto:chris.decesare444@gmail.com).

### Bird Friendly Coffee

The pre-order deadline for coffee delivery at our March 20 meeting is Tuesday, March 10, 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/>

If you forget to pre-order, we will have bags available for sale at the meeting—while supplies last!





Over the years of feeding birds, I have come to enjoy visits from Wild Turkeys. Yes, I know their constant scratching has been the single-most important force in reshaping the landscape below my feeders into a muddy bowl. And I freely admit to occasionally chasing them out of newly planted flowerbeds. But they are magnificent, intelligent beasts with stunning iridescence and interesting behaviors. During the fall hunting season, they become skittish and make themselves scarce. By December, however, their hunger for my ready supply of seeds brings them back around, wary at first, but more and more trusting as the winter snows make other foods less accessible. Until recently I didn't put any seeds on the ground, assuming that the turkeys would get plenty from the food carelessly dropped or scattered by Blue Jays and other birds. Then, one year, we had a prolonged period of bitter cold and deep snow. A group of three hens had become daily visitors, quite often hanging around the entire day. One

day, my neighbor alerted me that one of the three was floundering in the woods nearby, so I waded through hip-deep snow to her rescue. I tucked her under my arm and brought her out to the plowed road and set her down, but she would not move. She was exhausted and covered with patches of ice, so I brought her inside and put her in my bathtub. Long story short, she died after a few hours, and it was apparent that she was merely skin and bones when I checked her body. From that time on, I've scattered cracked corn on the ground daily during the winter, specifically for the Turkeys.

As spring approaches, one or more gobblers will usually join the flock, hoping to court the ladies. Every few minutes he'll interrupt his feeding and burst into full display with shining body feathers puffed, and wings protruding stiffly at the sides. Two layers of tail feathers form a perfect fan at the back as he does an inviting tango around the hens. Gobblers also have a fascinating array of fleshy, warty folds of skin on the neck, called caruncles, which become engorged with blood and turn bright red during courtship. In addition, what was once a little "horn" above the beak fills with blood, turns red and elongates up to five inches. This fascinating caruncle is called the snood. It extends into a pint-sized version of an elephant trunk over the male's beak, dangling there to help draw attention to his prowess and worthiness as a mate. The larger the

caruncles, the more testosterone a gobbler has. At the risk of being perceived as a "Peeping Tom," I had an opportunity to observe the birds mating this past May. When the hen was receptive, she sat down flat in the grass and the male climbed up on her back and appeared to be giving her a back massage with his claws. A short time later, the hen lifted up her tail and bent it back, and the whole affair was over in less than a minute.

I was thrilled that two hens brought their combined flock of 13 poults to the feeders many times this past summer. On two



occasions, we were surprised to see the adult hens demonstrating the same feather-fluffing and tail-fanning behavior as courting males. My husband and I were watching through the window, and perhaps they noticed us and began displaying to protect their brood. It could be they were masquerading as males to send the message, "Don't mess with our chicks!" Whatever the case, we found their behavior to be very unusual and fascinating!

Currently, we have a flock of 22 birds that visit daily, delighting us with their antics and beauty.



*Black-capped Chickadee*  
Photo by Barb Palmer

As a result of the eagerly awaited third *NYS Breeding Bird Atlas* beginning in January, my husband Charlie and I have been out birdwatching more than usual during these sometimes-frigid months. Yes, it seems awfully early for breeding birds, but now is the time to start looking for some of the hardier species. Even birds like Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice will start displaying some breeding behavior; listen for their sweet spring songs on a crisp, cold sunny day. We've already found a pair of Bald Eagles at their nest, owls, a few promising hawk nests, and lots of resident and wintering birds along the way, including some Horned Larks near Hobart.

In mid-January, three Tree Sparrows visited Kathryn Davino's feeders in Delhi. Pam Peters saw a Golden Eagle feeding in a field near her home in Franklin. A mob of Crows harassed it, and it soon took off and got up high in the sky before heading over

## JANUARY AND FEBRUARY BIRD SIGHTINGS

BY SANDY BRIGHT

the ridge. Birding on McShane Road in Richfield Springs, Becky Gretton and Cindy Staley discovered Horned Larks and Snow Buntings. Gerianne Carillo was walking past a bluebird box on her land in Milford when a male Eastern Bluebird flew out. Taking a closer look, she saw another head peeping out, then another Bluebird burst out. At another box she found a White-breasted Nuthatch. Those boxes can provide much-needed shelter on cold nights.

During the last week in January, Barb Palmer watched a half dozen or so American Robins feed on rose-hips in Jefferson. A few days later, a Northern Goshawk swooped through her yard, terrifying the hungry songbirds. She reported "No fatalities. Gorgeous hawk." They are truly impressive birds. In the West End of Oneonta, Andy Mason listened to two Great-horned Owls volleying back and forth. I found some Golden-crowned Kinglets foraging while walking the trails at Silas Lane in Oneonta.

In early February, Barb Palmer got some photos of two Pileated Woodpeckers working a dead tree in Jefferson. A couple of Red-winged Blackbirds seemed to lend

credence to Punxsutawny Phil's prediction of an early spring when they arrived in her yard on the 5th, while over near Canajoharie, Steph Restuccia reported that a flock of over four dozen Robins had been in her yard. On the 7th, seven Cardinals were among the many birds taking part in a feeding frenzy in our Oneonta yard before a snowstorm. The next day brought a Purple Finch along with eighty or so American Goldfinches to Bob Donnelly's feeder, and two Great-horned Owls calling (Cherry Valley). A Tree Sparrow visited Gerianne Carillo's yard in Milford. More signs of spring arrived in the next two days, with a Robin in Oneonta's West End (Andy Mason) and two Red-winged Blackbirds at Bruce Milavec's feeder near Milford Center.

Blackbirds and Robins, being so common in summer, normally don't get a lot of press. But in the cold winter months we appreciate them so much more, as signs of better days to come, and it's significant to note that there were more reports of these two species during the past month than has occurred during the same period in the past several years at least. Let's keep our fingers crossed hoping that this means spring really will arrive early this 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.*

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

# Upcoming Activities

## March

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

**March 20 – DOAS Public Program:** “The Joys of Atlas-ing.” 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.

**March 28 – Montezuma Wildlife Refuge Field**

**Trip:** 7:30 AM to 5 PM. 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 PM. To RSVP and for additional details, visit <https://doas.us/event/montezuma-national-wildlife-refuge-spring-migration-2020/>.

## April

**April 7 – Woodcock Walk:** 7 PM. Co-sponsored by Otsego Land Trust and Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society at the Parslow Road Conservation Area. Chris DeCesare and Joe Homburger will lead a walk to observe the spring mating ritual of the woodcock. To RSVP and for additional details, visit <https://doas.us/event/woodcock-walk-at-parslow-road-tuesday-april-7/>.

**April 17 – DOAS Public Program:** “Slogs Through Bogs: Beauty, Loss and Preservation.” Donna Vogler, Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta, will share her findings from a 2019 plant survey of the relatively pristine Cranberry Bog of the Greenwoods Conservancy. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

**April 18 – Earth Festival:** Milford School, 11 AM – 3 PM. Visit the DOAS table! For full details about Earth Festival, visit <http://occainfo.org>.

**April 18 – Optics Raffle Drawing:** Prizes include Nikon binoculars and harness. More info at [doas.us](https://doas.us).

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

## May

**May 9 – Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk:** Meet at 8 AM in the parking lot by the fields near the school district bus garage, 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. Contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu). **May 15 – DOAS Public Program:** “World Travels” with Gail and Nelson DuBois. We will spend the evening traveling with them to favorite locations, as they share photos and stories. The program begins at 7:30 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

**May 17 – 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 19 – DOAS Board Meeting:** 6:30 PM

**May 23 – Field Trip to West Branch Preserve:** Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a bird walk at the West Branch Preserve, located in the 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).

## Summer

**June 7 – Birding by Ear with Brunch:** Save the date, more information in the April newsletter.

**June 13 - August 21 – DOAS Summer DAY Camp** at The Sanctuary at Franklin Mountain. For more information, contact Susan O’Handley, Education Chair, at 607-643-5680 or at [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com).

## DOAS Membership

Cost is \$25 annually or \$35 for two years; family memberships \$30 annually or \$40 for two years. Memberships can also be purchased online at <http://doas.us> or make your check payable to “DOAS” and mail payment to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

**Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation!**



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[www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)

## OPTICS RAFFLE 2020

## WIN NIKON BINOCULARS!

**Drawing Date: Saturday, April 18, 2020, 3 PM at  
Earth Festival, Milford Central School (DOAS Booth)**

**You don't need to be present to win.**

**Proceeds to benefit the DOAS Sanctuary and Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch**

Our new Fundraising Committee has launched its first initiative to help raise money to continue some of our site improvements at the DOAS Sanctuary and Hawkwatch on Franklin Mountain.

We kick off 2020 with a raffle for some great birding binoculars and a limited number of only 250 tickets available between now and Earth Festival (April 18). **\$10 donation per ticket**. Tickets are available at all of our upcoming events as well as through some of our board members. You can also purchase tickets online at <https://doas.us/optics-raffle/>



**First Prize: Nikon Monarch 7**  
Binoculars (8x42)  
with Shoulder Harness



**Second Prize: Nikon Monarch 5**  
Binoculars (8x42)  
with Shoulder Harness



**Third Prize: Shoulder  
Harness**