



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

Please check for cancellations
at <https://doas.us/events/>

April

April 4 – Spring Waterfowl Trip –
Cancelled

April 7 – Woodcock Walk –
Cancelled

April 17 – Program, “Slogs
Through Bogs”

April 18 – Earth Festival Can-
celled

April 18 – Optics Raffle Drawing

April 21 – DOAS Board Mtg

May

May 9 – Susquehanna Greenway
Bird Walk

May 15 – Program, “Birds From
Near and Far”

May 17 – Sanctuary Bird Walk

May 19 – DOAS Board Mtg

May 20 – Wildflower Walk

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**

Please Note: All event notices are correct to the best of our knowledge at the time of publication. **Any changes will be posted at the DOAS website** (<https://doas.us/events/>) and Facebook Page and will be included in our ENews. If you don't currently receive the Enews Updates/Announcements - sign up at <https://doas.us/sign-up-for-doas-news/> ENews is an email notification and is different from the *Belted Kingfisher* newsletter.

APRIL PROGRAM: SLOGS THROUGH BOGS, BEAUTY, LOSS AND PRESERVATION

Join us on Friday, April 17 at Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY at 7:30 PM for a presentation “Slogs Through Bogs.” Bogs and wetlands are arguably the richest habitat environments in our region. The program will be presented by Dr. Donna Vogler, Professor of Biology at SUNY Oneonta. Dr. Vogler teaches courses in Ecology, Wetlands, and Ethnobotany. She earned a B.S. and M.S. from Ohio State and

Iowa State, respectively, and a Ph.D. from Penn State where she focused on pollination biology. Recently she has become more involved in regional plant surveys, especially of invasive species and re-vegetation of restored wetlands. This past summer (2019) Donna completed a survey of the relatively pristine Cranberry Bog of the Greenwoods Conservancy, which will be a focus of her talk.



Cranberry Bog, Photo by Janet Potter

Save the Date:

May 15 Program—“Birds From Near and Far” Local photographers Gail and Nelson DuBois will share photos and stories from their favorite locations. Held at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE GOING VIRAL

by Co-president Andy Mason

As I write this in mid-March, the nation and the globe are in a mega-tizzy over the Covid-19 virus, its spread and ramifications. With the state of affairs seemingly changing hourly who knows what conditions will be when this reaches readers.

The situation has touched everyone and everything and DOAS is no exception. The first decision our board had to face was the upcoming March 20 public program—whether to cancel or not. Various views were expressed, and mine was for going ahead with the event. But by good fortune, our newest board member, Landa Palmer, a nurse and Associate Professor at SUNY Delhi's School of Nursing, weighed in with a firm and convincing voice of experience and knowledge and we quickly decided to cancel.

Our Chapter is fortunate to have a variety of expertise in a number of areas on our board. We rely on that for guidance in planning and decision-making—not generally for such weighty matters—but it is an invaluable resource that greatly benefits the organization.

That expertise surfaced again after cancellation of the meeting—which was to be a presentation on NY's Breeding Bird Atlas III by Project Coordinator Julie Hart. The program was highly anticipated following an earlier workshop



on the project which had over 40 attendees, seeking further Atlas information. We were disappointed in losing this opportunity to promote an important project, but Co-President Susan O'Handley suggested changing Julie's presentation to an online webinar. Who among us would know how to do that? But Susan did! She connected with Julie and within a few days arranged to test a webinar platform with high hopes for Julie to virtually be with Atlasers at the scheduled time of our program.

With the future of the pandemic unknown, these types of 'gatherings' will likely become more prevalent and necessary. Thanks to Susan for taking us one step further into the computer age.

A final point on the virus—birds don't carry it! With the increasing isolation and separation required to minimize spread of the disease, a solitary birding walk might be the safest activity of all—and just in time for return of spring migrants.

Happy birding.

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY FOUNDED 1968

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

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CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

by Andy Mason

Plastic Pollution—Could the Tide be Turning?—On March 1, New Yorkers abruptly faced a change that will affect each of us, on a nearly daily basis. On that day, retail stores collecting sales tax could no longer provide single-use plastic bags to shoppers. Considering that 23 billion bags are used in the state each year, this represents a significant step in cutting back on plastic—comparable to the 5-cent deposit on many beverage containers.

Discarded plastic is a scourge worldwide, with wildlife suffering the consequences. The Great Pacific Plastic Patch, which has been compared in size to the state of Texas, is actually only one of numerous plastic gyres found in other oceans, including the Atlantic, Indian and even the Mediterranean Sea. Seabirds and other marine creatures become tangled in plastic, and also ingest it, mistaking it for food. An Audubon magazine article documented albatrosses regurgitating plastic into their chicks' mouths.

Plastics degrade slowly—taking decades or even centuries to break down, and the resulting bits of



Plastic on a California Beach
Wikimedia Photo by Kevin Krejci

plastic, sometimes microscopic, also enter the food chain through smaller organisms. They are persistent and omnipresent, with even humans ending up with plastic in our bodies. In fact, a study by the World Wildlife Fund estimates that each of us consume the equivalent of a cereal bowl full of shredded plastic every 6 months!

Despite the immense size of the plastic patches, some oceanographers suggest they make up only 1% of plastic in our seas—the balance having been taken up by animals or suspended in the water column or laying in bottom sediments.

The publicity resulting from these ocean plastic findings has led to the beginnings of an effort to reduce plastics—particularly

disposable, single-use items. NY's plastic bag ban is an outgrowth of this. But this and other bans are a modest start. Plastic packaging still makes up a large part of our solid waste and much is still dumped at sea. As part of an incremental effort, Governor Cuomo has proposed a ban on Styrofoam packaging to the legislature this year.

A more ambitious national effort is legislation put forth in Congress that shifts the burden of plastic waste disposal to the producers. It would also institute a national container deposit bill, ban plastic bags and Styrofoam containers, among other items, and set standards for recycled content in materials including paper and plastic.

What you can do—Contact your state senator and assemblymember and urge them to push NY's Styrofoam ban across the finish line this session. Ask your representative in Congress to co-sponsor the Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act to make a substantial change in plastic disposal and ocean pollution. (*Legislative contacts can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, DOAS.us.*)

Birding By Ear Unlock the secrets of bird ID through birdsong at Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park in the Town of Westford on **Sunday, June 7 at 8:30 AM till Noon**. Enjoy a hike to listen for bird song and observe breeding behavior, followed by an educational session in the Sunset Pavilion, a delicious “Bruncheon” and an additional hike for those who can stay longer. Cost, pre-paid and non-refundable, is \$25 for adults, and \$15 for children 12-17 accompanied by an adult. Register online at <https://doas.us/event/birding-by-ear-2020/> or pay with a check mailed to DOAS (no later than 5/27). Contact Becky Gretton at 607-547-5648 for information.





A MESSAGE FROM SUSAN O’HANDLEY ON CLIMATE LEADERSHIP TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Dear Members,

Climate change is likely the most important environmental conservation issue of the century. What was anticipated as a slow progression of change a few decades ago is escalating at a rate significantly faster than was expected, to the point where we are already witnessing impacts throughout the world. Our government leaders and our communities need to understand the urgency for action in order to alleviate and minimize our risks for devastating effects in the coming years. Our environment, our governments, our communities, our families and our

children will each be affected by climate change within our lifetimes.

DOAS recently applied for and received a \$10K grant from the National Audubon Society’s “Audubon in Action” program to conduct two regional workshops in our chapter area that result in local, achievable projects. Our goal is to educate and inspire people within our communities to understand climate change and its potential impacts to our region, and to develop and support community citizen-leaders who can drive action at local, regional, state and federal levels towards the minimization of climate change effects. Projects can include things like bird-friendly habitat restoration, water quality initiatives, educational components, and advocacy for political action. We

will be seeking additional grant funding to support dollars towards projects that are developed through the workshops.

We will keep members updated with details as they become available and hope that many of you will join us in our commitment to be a catalyst for action to make our communities more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

To receive details and information when available, sign up using the form on the DOAS website at the following link: <https://doas.us/email-list-for-climate-leadership-training-and-action-plan-workshops/>

For additional information, please feel free to contact me at info@doas.us.

Warmly,
Susan O’Handley
DOAS Co-President



From the National Audubon Society *Bird Therapy* Get Lost in the Joy of Birds

Birds bring us happiness in so many ways. Whether you’re unable to enjoy the outdoors or just in need of distraction, here’s a bird-themed care package, from Audubon to you. <https://www.audubon.org/joy-of-birds> **Enjoy!**

Red-bellied Woodpecker Audubon Award Photo, by Peter Brannon

Bird Friendly Coffee

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/>

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



The Cornell Ornithological Lab in Ithaca is an amazing organization. I was reminded about what great work they do when I recently got a message to members from their director, John Fitzpatrick, offering support and encouragement as the entire world hunkers down for the extended fight against COVID-19. He said: **“I often talk about the power of birds, but this year they take on an even more powerful meaning. They enliven our days, brighten the trees, serenade in our backyards and city parks, and bestow us with so much joy and hope, all bundled together in feathers and lively personalities.”** He went on to describe some of the educational and recreational ways the resources of the Cornell Lab can help during this time of crisis.

The Lab grew out of Cornell University’s graduate Ornithology program, established in 1915, the first in the nation. In the 1950s, Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary was established, named by founders after scientists discovered the first breeding Yellow-bellied Sapsucker ever reported in that area. This woodpecker, now more common, is part of the Lab’s logo.

About 250 scientists, professors, staff and students work at the programs devoted to the Lab’s mission: “interpreting and conserving the Earth’s biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds.”

In addition to the educational resources offered to citizen scientists, and to those supporting



graduate and undergraduate programs through Cornell, the Lab offers a wide variety of K-12 programs with lesson plans and activity programs for these younger bird enthusiasts. The educational resources at all levels are designed to be multimedia-rich and interactive.

Research is central to the Lab’s mission, with a unique emphasis on citizen science to supplement the work done by Cornell Lab scientists, students, and visiting scholars who conduct original research in behavioral ecology, conservation, education, evolutionary biology, information systems, and population genetics. Citizen Science projects done by bird watchers of all ages and skill levels help gather data about the distribution and abundance of birds. Nearly 500,000 people participate in the Lab’s numerous projects including two projects in partnership with the National Audubon Society: eBird and the Great (Global) Backyard Bird Count. Cornell Lab engineers also develop hardware and software tools used in researching bird and animal communication and patterns of movement.

A key outcome of the research done at the Lab is promoting conservation throughout the world. As stated in the 2019 Annual Report: “The Lab is dedicated to using our best-in-class science to inspire conservation action and inform decision-makers and individuals all around the world.”

The Lab’s AllAboutBirds website (www.allaboutbirds.org/news) is a treasure trove of information. Through it you can easily connect to Merlin, the Lab’s interactive app for bird identification, and get advice about making your yard bird-friendly with plantings, bird boxes and feeding stations. The world-class Bird Academy, while not free, offers a low-cost way to improve your birding expertise. Just for fun, you can also connect to bird cams to watch birds all over the world in real time.

The 226-acre Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary is also a great place to visit, featuring a Visitor Center that offers exhibits and a shop for bird lovers to enjoy. Over four miles of trails take visitors around Sapsucker Pond through wetlands and forest where more than 230 species of birds have been recorded.



So, during these uncertain times, take the advice of Dr. Fitzpatrick and use the power of birds to enliven your life. Explore the offerings of the Cornell Ornithological Lab to help in your quest. There is much more the Lab does, but if you haven’t been aware of this great organization, I hope this will provide a brief introduction.



Red-winged Blackbird
Photo by Rick Bunting

Our first bird sighting reports brought both the promise of spring and a reminder that it was still winter. In mid-February, Kay Crane discovered a Red-winged Blackbird in Walton. Pam Peters found a small flock of Horned Larks in Deposit.

In Oneonta, Marilyn Bailey had two Red-bellied Woodpeckers visit her feeders and watched a Sharp-shinned Hawk dining on a bird. Pairs of Bald Eagles were reported at nest sites across the region.

Near Schenevus, when huge shadows passed by her window, Eva Davy rushed to investigate; 35 Wild Turkeys had flown in. Most foraged in small groups, while several perched in a small crabapple tree, creating quite an amusing sight. Nearby, Charlie Scheim watched a Rough-legged Hawk hunting a field.

During the last week in February, there were numerous sightings of large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, now migrating in full force.

Though most birds haven't laid eggs yet, many are displaying breeding behavior. Kathryn Davino reported a few strutting male

FEBRUARY AND MARCH BIRD SIGHTINGS

BY SANDY BRIGHT

Turkeys in Delhi. Pigeons were doing the same in Oneonta. Gerianne Carillo watched courtship between two Cardinals in Milford, and House Sparrows investigating her neighbor's eaves for suitable nesting habitat.

John Davis reported a large, all-white raptor near Cooperstown. While unable to get a definite identification, he noted many details that indicated a Snowy Owl. This elusive bird was spotted in subsequent days twice, by Gerianne and Carly Carillo, still with no positive ID.

In early March, Angelika Raschkow found a flock of Cedar Waxwings on her crabapple tree near Cooperstown. A Red-breasted Nuthatch visited Kay Crane's yard in Walton. Lance Verderame reported a Northern Shrike in Deposit. Near the Cannonsville Reservoir, Pam Peters observed at least 3,000 migrating Canada Geese and a few hundred Snow Geese, and a Northern Pintail hidden among Canada Geese and Mallards in Portlandville. Seven Turkey Vultures wheeled over Neawha Park in Oneonta (3/2). Randy Lynch spotted Horned Larks in Harpersfield. Barb Palmer saw an eagle on a nest in Stamford and a soaring Broad-winged Hawk in Jefferson.

Charlie Scheim discovered an American Kestrel near Laurens. Pairs of Hooded Mergansers and

Mallards were on Tom Salo's pond in West Burlington. Near Jefferson, Randy Lynch saw an American Woodcock, a Merlin eating breakfast atop a utility pole, and a Northern Shrike, which landed on one of his feeder hangers.

A Robin and a Song Sparrow sang in Deposit (Pam Peters), and a Bluebird in Delhi (Kathryn Davino). Sue Whitney heard a pair of Great Horned Owls dueting near the YMCA in downtown Oneonta. Bob Donnelly observed American Woodcocks performing in two locations in Roseboom.

Purple Finches showed up in Cooperstown (John Davis) and Franklin (Pam Peters). Andy Mason discovered Killdeer in the Lowes parking lot in Oneonta (3/10). Randy Lynch found two Fox Sparrows in Jefferson. In Delhi, a pair of mating Wild Turkeys were photographed by Kathryn and Al Davino. As winter begins finally to wane, it's exciting to watch our feathered friends as they sing, strut, and check out nest sites.



Bald Eagle on Nest
Photo by Barb Palmer

*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

Please check for cancellations at <https://doas.us/events/>

April

April 4 – Annual Waterfowl Trip: Cancelled

April 7 – Woodcock Walk: Cancelled

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– Optics Raffle Drawing: Prizes include Nikon binoculars and harness. More info at 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.

May 15 – DOAS Public Program: “Birds From Near and Far” 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 for directions to the Sanctuary. Contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

May 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

May 20 – Jean Miller Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake: In cooperation with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – Central Region. Meet at the beach area at 10 AM. The walk is approximately 2 hours in the Park. Led by DOAS member and local plant expert Connie Tedesco. Bring water, insect repellent, binoculars if on hand, and your curiosity! This is a free program but registration is required at <https://doas.us/event/2020-jean-miller-memorial-wildflower-walk-at-gilbert-lake/>. Contact Connie at ctedesco1026@gmail.com for additional information.

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.

Summer

June 7 – Birding by Ear with Brunch: Unlock the secrets of bird ID through birdsong at the Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park in the Town of Westford on Sunday, June 7, 2020 at 8:30 AM till Noon. See article on page 3. Cost, pre-paid and non-refundable, is \$25.00 for adults 18 and older, and \$15.00 for children 12-17 accompanied by an adult. The event is limited in size, and registration will be on a first-come basis. Pre-paid registration is available online at <https://doas.us/event/birding-by-ear-2020/> or pay with a check mailed to DOAS (no later than 5/27). Contact Becky Gretton at 607-547-5648 for more information.

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.

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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OPTICS RAFFLE 2020

WIN NIKON BINOCULARS!

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO MAKE THIS FUNDRAISER A SUCCESS!
Please consider sharing the information about the raffle with friends -
Tickets can be ordered online at <https://doas.us/optics-affle/>
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 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-affle/>



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



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



**Third Prize: Shoulder
Harness**