



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

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

May

May 8 – Gone Birding Scavenger Hunt Deadline

May 15 – Online Webinar, “Birds From Near and Far”

May 16 – DOAS Big Day

May 19 – DOAS Board Mtg

Summer

Note: Summer Day Camp at the Sanctuary is cancelled for 2020

Fall

October 3 – Sanctuary Open House

October 16 – Charter Dinner

More information on page 7

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

MAY PROGRAM: BIRDS FROM NEAR AND FAR WITH GAIL AND NELSON DUBOIS



Keel-billed Toucan, CCO

Join us online on Friday, May 15 at 7:30 PM for a special program, “Birds from Near and Far” with Gail and Nelson DuBois.

Register in advance for this webinar at: <https://doas.us/event/birds-near-far/> After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

We will spend the evening viewing images from Africa, Antarctic, Bonaire, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Galapagos, and local images taken in Otsego County.

Gail and Nelson DuBois are well-known local photographers who have received recognition in birding publications, with Gail receiving awards for her photos that capture songbirds, Eastern Bluebirds in particular, in their natural habitat.

BIRDING BY EAR: SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

We will not gather at the Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park on June 7 for BBE 2020 due to current circumstances. We intended to focus on Atlasing this year, which brings to mind the active American Redstart nest that one of our sharp-eyed participants spotted last June and the Dark-eyed Junco singing from the top of a pole which upon later research revealed a ground nest with young. The Atlas continues through 2024, so we will simply delay the session until 2021.

Learning, birding, eating, and socializing at the Sunset Pavilion have become a wonderful tradition at the Park for the past four years. Our friend Heather from the Tally Ho Restaurant on Main Street in Richfield Springs has been closed since the onset. Please visit her for a meal when things have settled down.

Speaking on behalf of our dedicated DOAS BBE Team: be safe, stay healthy, and happy birding! We look forward to seeing you again or for the first time next spring.

Becky Gretton



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

OUR BRAVE NEW WORLD

by Co-president Susan O'Handley

As I write this, we are a little over a month into 'self-isolation' and 'social-distancing'. In many ways it has been the longest month ever. We have had the 'luxury' of watching from our remote, and somewhat secure piece of our world while only a few hours away, New York City is suffering on a massive scale from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We watch with angst as our country becomes more disparate and divided. The cancellation of our DOAS programs and trips this Spring feels trivial in comparison.

We are concerned for our neighbors and friends who own local businesses. In other economic downturns, our region has been somewhat protected from damage since people would still travel to Cooperstown. This is different. People aren't traveling—and we don't know how long it will take for people to feel comfortable again to venture forth. As a destination region that relies on tourism dollars for a good portion of our economic health, this pandemic is already hitting us hard. We are waiting and watching to see what businesses are going to be able to make it through this.

On the plus side, from an environmental standpoint, we have witnessed something incredible. For anyone who has ever questioned or doubted the impact of human activities on our environment, we need only to look at the air quality improvements in cities like Los Angeles where the records indicate 'good' ratings that haven't been



seen since 1994 (from a Washington Post Article). Our individual actions have collectively rolled back air pollution in some areas by more than 20 years.

That success (and the good feeling that came with it) was short lived. In early March, the EPA lowered fuel economy and emission standards for the auto industry and then in late March, the Agency (EPA) determined that it would be 'unable to take enforcement action' against entities that are, due to COVID-19, unable to comply with laws, permit requirements, EPA administrative orders and judicial consent decrees—another win for the fossil fuel industry and other large corporate polluters.

'One step forward and two steps back' seems to fit here (recognizing however that the step forward is one that was not truly taken voluntarily by the masses), but I'll take it - because purely from an educational standpoint, it shows that we CAN make a difference. This gives me hope—at least in this moment in time.

Well wishes to all. Find time 'amidst the noise' to wander to a peaceful setting and enjoy nature. Take precautions, stay healthy and go 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

CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

by Andy Mason

COVID-19 and Wildlife—

'Zoonotic'—not a word most of us have in our lexicon, but one that affects us, past, present and almost certainly future. Defined as “any disease of animals communicable to humans”, zoonotic diseases include SARS, Ebola, HIV, Lyme disease and most recently, COVID-19. According to the Centers for Disease Control, scientists estimate that more than 6 out of every 10 known infectious diseases in people can be spread from animals, and 3 out of every 4 new or emerging infectious diseases in people come from animals.

Increasingly, trade in wildlife—often illegal—is seen as a route for these diseases from animals to humans. A recent paper in the journal *Nature* found evidence that a small proportion of pangolins carry coronaviruses related to the strain responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. Pangolins are endangered, scaly, ant-eating mammals found in Asia and Africa, about the size of domestic cats. Although international commercial trade of pangolins is strictly forbidden, they are believed to be the most trafficked mammal in the world. The scales of thousands of pangolins are smuggled every



Pangolin; Photo by David Brossard, Oregon State University

year for use in traditional Chinese medicine, and their meat is considered a delicacy by some people in China, Vietnam, and elsewhere in Asia.

Researchers consider it most likely that COVID-19 originated in bats, passed to another species of wildlife, and then on to humans. Although not proven, markets selling live wild and domestic animals for food, such as that found in Wuhan, China, are thought to be a path for zoonotic diseases to reach humans.

The welfare and very existence of wildlife is sufficient cause to end the trade in these animals, but the high proportion of infectious diseases originating or transmitted through mammals and birds is an important added incentive to push back against the practice.

What you can do—Contact your state and federal representatives and let them know epidemics like

we are experiencing are sure to continue, and that strong, enforced bans on wildlife trafficking are necessary here and overseas. This requires legislation and funding—an investment that could have avoided or minimized the crisis we now face.

Mixed results from the state

budget—NY legislators passed a budget for the coming year at the April 1 deadline. Unfortunately, the budget included a late insertion by Governor Cuomo that significantly weakens environmental review and public participation in renewable power projects. This makes an effort such as DOAS's opposition to the Bluestone wind project much more difficult if not impossible, and raises the threats to birds.

There was good news in the budget: a state ban on Styrofoam; an environmental bond act to be on the ballot this fall; funding for water infrastructure; and \$300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund. A caveat is that the Governor was empowered to cut funding as necessary to address the state's fiscal decline in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic.

(Legislative contacts can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, DOAS.us).

Nominating Committee

The DOAS Nominating Committee (Jane Bachman, chair; Landa Palmer, Janice Downie, and Jeff O'Handley) will present six candidates for election to the Board of Directors at the May 15, 2020 meeting. The nominated slate consists of the following incumbents: Jane Bachman, Becky Gretton, Dorian Huneke, Andy Mason, Tom Salo, and Charlie Scheim. Nominations also may be made from the floor at the May Program webinar.

TIMES CHANGE

by DOAS Director Jane Bachman

In February, my husband Bob and I went to Florida for a week to visit family. We spent our time on the beach, kayaking, reading on the balcony, taking walks, enjoying the sunshine and warmth. And birding, with four other adults with at least a modicum of interest in birds. It was fabulous.

It offered a sharp contrast to a trip my family took to Orlando about 15 years ago. Our kids were perhaps 7 and 10. We spent a couple of days at Disney World, and a couple of days exploring some of the beautiful state parks outside of Orlando. At one point we rented a canoe for an hour or two—what a treat for the kids! While Bob and I paddled the river, the kids sat in the middle of the wide aluminum canoe and bickered (as I remember) for the entire trip. I pointed out herons and anhingas, a limpkin, and otters. Otters! They were not impressed.

Times change. The kids are in their 20s. I've retired, my husband is close to it, and it was finally an option for the two of us to spend a week in Florida in February.

Waking up on my first morning in Naples, I heard a mix of bird calls that stumped me, and it took me days to figure out that the slightly electronic-sounding calls and rattles coming from the surrounding palm trees were made by boat-tailed grackles. The birds I saw at the nearby beach and along the Intercoastal Waterway--great blue herons, anhingas, white ibis, pelicans, great frigatebirds, willets, ospreys--were more familiar. I lived in Key West just out of college, and camped and traveled in Florida over the years, so I knew from notes in my circa 1987 bird book that I'd previously identified most of the birds I encountered (including those grackles). But, like the novels I inadvertently re-read, sometimes it's a whole new



Painted Bunting
Audubon Photo by Larry Smith

experience.

We made a day trip to the J.N "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, one of the largest undeveloped mangrove systems in the country. Along its one-way drive, we saw an amazing variety of water birds: reddish egrets dancing across the shallow water, yellow-crowned night herons, great and little blue herons, roseate spoonbills sweeping their bizarre bills back and forth, great and snowy egrets, ibis, and white pelicans as well as brown.

Later in the week we headed to Corkscrew Swamp Audubon Sanctuary. We walked a 2 ½ mile boardwalk that meandered through pine woods, wet prairie, marshes, as well as the largest old growth bald cypress forest in North America. The variety of habitats meant a variety of birdlife, from the many painted buntings at the bird feeders, to the palm, pine and black and white warblers that winter there, purple gallinules, black-crowned night herons, red-shouldered hawks and a swallow-tailed kite (a first for me!). It was a leisurely walk, rich in sights and sounds, and a highlight for all of us.

"Times Change" Continued on page 5

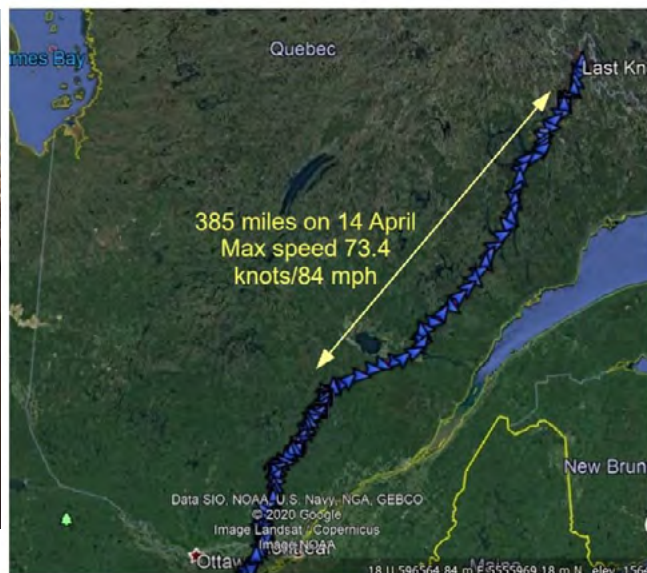


Roseate Spoonbill
Audubon Photo by Paul Brooke

SISU TRAVELS NORTH



Sisu, Golden Eagle; Photo by Peg DiBenedetto



This is Sisu, a four-year old Golden Eagle, tagged during her first winter as part of our Golden Eagle telemetry project. Although the project has concluded, the units are still reporting data from time to time.

On April 9th this year, Tom Salo, DOAS Director & Research Coordinator, reported:

“Sisu traveled 385 miles point to point on Tuesday. It was a fairly straight line but she certainly traveled a bit more than that. She started moving about 5:52 AM and stopped at 5:11 PM. In 11 hours 19 minutes she averaged 34 mph. However, there were some incredible bursts in there. At a number of points she was going 68-70 mph. Remarkably, she was going over 84 mph at one point. I suspect she had a good tail wind.”

“Times Change” Continued from page 4

Times certainly do change. As I write this in early April, it’s hard to grasp that we were in Florida just six weeks ago. Much has changed since then, both locally and globally, as we practice social distancing to keep ourselves and others safe.

One thing that hasn’t changed is my ability to walk outside and listen to and watch birds. I try to take a walk daily, either in my neighborhood, or at the

DOAS sanctuary, the Susquehanna Greenway, or further afield. Some days it’s just a walk, but more often I bring my binoculars and post sightings on ebird for the Breeding Bird Atlas. It’s been a lifesaver, both physically and emotionally, and I’m grateful that it is an option in our area. And I look forward to the certainty that times will change, yet again.



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MARCH APRIL BIRD SIGHTINGS

BY SANDY BRIGHT

While we humans are limiting our social interactions to family members, the birds are beginning to do the same, though for different reasons. Gone are the large flocks of Blackbirds and Grackles. Instead, they, along with many other species, are pairing off, beginning their yearly task of procreation.

In mid-March, Alice Pantaleoni reported a female wood duck checking out a nest box (East Worcester). Becky Gretton heard a Ring-necked Pheasant at Davis State Park. Gerianne Carillo spotted a Song Sparrow skulking quietly around her feeder, its behavior soon explained by a Cooper's Hawk flying overhead. In Cobleskill, three Black Vultures soared over Susan Carver's house. Sarah Root found a Bald Eagle on the Portlandville nest.

Charlie Scheim described a tailless Song Sparrow, and a rather bizarre story involving House Sparrows, beginning with five males chasing a female. When one leaned toward the female, as would happen in courtship feeding, the female grabbed him, perhaps by his tongue. Pulled off his perch, he just hung there, slowly spinning. Switching from bizarre to cute: when Kathryn Davino went to her mailbox one day, the local Wild Turkey flock saw her and "came running like little hungry puppies."

Later in March, Barb Palmer observed a Golden-crowned King-

let in Jefferson. A Fox Sparrow scratched around Andy Mason's feeder in Oneonta. Kingfishers were spotted near East Meredith by Suzanne Gaynor, and West Kortright by Kathryn Davino, along with Brown-headed Cowbirds (3/27). Other early migrants were Eastern Phoebe (Pam Peters, 3/26, South Kortright), Tree Swallows (Becky Gretton, 3/26, Davis State Park), and Northern Flicker (Charlie Scheim 3/28, Oneonta). Tom Salo discovered "peenting" American Woodcock and displaying Wilson's Snipe in West Burlington. Merlins began appearing in Cooperstown (Chris Kjolhede) and our neighborhood in Oneonta. Jessie Ravage watched a Great Blue Heron standing stock-still in tall grass by the river in Cooperstown, and lots of Buffleheads on Otsego Lake.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, often thought by non-birders to be a fictional bird, appropriately showed up on April Fool's Day, spotted by Jo Salo (West Burlington). A few days later, Woodcocks began courtship in earnest, and were discovered near Cooperstown (Chris Kjolhede), and on West Street and Emmons Bog, Oneonta (Charlie Scheim, who also reported Barred Owls in both locations). Barb Palmer sent the first report of nesting Canada Geese and a singing Eastern Meadowlark (4/5, Jefferson). In East Meredith, Suzanne Gaynor heard Ruffed Grouse drumming and a Winter



Pine Warbler
Photo by Barb Palmer

Wren singing. A Hermit Thrush serenaded in the woods near Franklin (4/5, Pam Peters). Common Loons were found on Otsego Lake by Becky Gretton and Peter Regan.

A week into April, Pine Warblers arrived, spotted by Dave Kiehm (Milford) and photographed by Barb Palmer (Jefferson). Pam Peters discovered pairs of Green-winged Teals and Hooded Mergansers near Franklin. Becky Gretton observed Osprey rebuilding their nest near Riddell Park. Four Chipping Sparrows sat feasting at our feeder in Oneonta. A Brown Thrasher braved the snow April 10th to visit Kathryn Davino's lawn (Delhi).

In mid-April, Becky Gretton heard two Louisiana Waterthrushes singing in a ravine in Springfield. A Yellow-rumped Warbler warbled in Oneonta's West End, and American Wigeons paddled around a pond in West Oneonta. A Swamp Sparrow trilled on the DEP wetlands near Walton (Pam Peters).

Reports like these show us that despite what might be befalling humankind, nature goes on. They also make me thankful for all the contributors to this column.

*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*.*

Optics Raffle a Big Success!

All 250 tickets were sold with proceeds going to continue some of our site improvements at the DOAS Sanctuary and Hawkwatch on Franklin Mountain. Thank you to all who bought raffle tickets to support our fund raiser and to Barry Stevens of Wildbirds Unlimited in Vestal, NY!

Congratulations to our Optics Raffle winners!

1st prize - Kyle Parker, Sidney Center

2nd prize - Germaine Gogel, Clinton, NY

3rd prize - Carolyn Austin, Oneonta



Upcoming Activities

Please Note: All DOAS group events for May through August have been cancelled or converted to digital format to avoid opportunities to spread COVID-19. Events listed 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.

May

May 8 – Gone Birding Scavenger Hunt Deadline:

The contest began on Friday, 4/17 and ends at 5 PM on Friday, 5/8 - One entry per person. Experienced and novice birders can submit entries. More information and link to **DOWNLOAD A PRINTABLE CHECK-LIST SHEET** at <https://doas.us/event/2020-gone-birding/> Also includes links to favorite nearby bird watching spots (Map with Sites and Trail Descriptions) and FREE Digital Bird Identification Resources:

May 15 – DOAS Public Webinar: “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. *Register in advance for this webinar at:* <https://doas.us/event/birds-near-far/> After register-

ing, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

May 16 – DOAS Big Day: The Big Day is a group effort in which birders try to locate as many bird species as we can in a single fun day. Birders can spend any amount of time they choose within that 24 hours, and report on their efforts to the Big Day coordinator, Charlie Scheim. See article on back page.

May 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 PM

Summer

Note: Summer Day Camp at the Sanctuary is cancelled for 2020

Fall

October 3 – Sanctuary Open House

October 16 – Charter Dinner

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!



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



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
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Of the many events that have had to be cancelled this spring due to COVID-19, the Big Day is not one of them! The Big Day is a group effort in which birders, working alone, in pairs, or in small groups, can maintain social distance and adopt infection-avoidance procedures while enjoying the outdoors. We will try to locate as many bird species as we can in a single fun day on Saturday May 16. Birders can spend any amount of time they choose within that 24 hours, and report on their efforts to the Big Day coordinator, Charlie Scheim.



Last year, 17 teams of DOAS Big Day participants found 126 different species in our DOAS area! Everyone is welcome, novice or experienced. If you are interested and have not participated before, please contact Charlie at 607-434-4880 (voice or text) or scheimc@hartwick.edu to get information on joining in the fun.

Note that DOAS Big Day is not the same as the May 9 Global Big Day because May 9 is a bit too early in the year for our location. A lot of late migrants can arrive during that extra week!

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/>

