



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## 2020 GONE BIRDING SCAVENGER HUNT

This year's Gone Birding Scavenger Hunt has been a great hit! We seem to have struck a chord with people—when all sorts of activities have been cancelled, this has provided something to do either as a solo activity or with small family groups. The fact that you can do it anywhere also helped!

DOAS received just under thirty official entries in time for the May 8 deadline, but the information remains online at [doas.us/2020-gone-birding](https://doas.us/2020-gone-birding) for anyone who would like

to do it just for fun.

The following people held the highest scores in each category and prizes are currently being coordinated:

Shamus Murphy, Cooperstown, NY – Age 4-14 – Novice

Samantha Misa, Delhi, NY – Age 15-30 – Novice

Danielle Tucker, Delhi, NY – Age 15-30 – Intermediate

Shane LeClair, Denver, NY – Over 30 – Novice

Tom Austin, Walton, NY – Over 30 – Intermediate

We are grateful to all our participants for your enthusiasm, your wonderful comments and your photos! Participants: Tom Austin, Emma Kingsbury, Eli Kingsbury, Caleb Kingsbury, Lynn Oles, Samantha Misa, Katie Palm, Debbie



American Goldfinch  
Photo by Katie Murphy

DeKoeyer, Eric Blackman, Emily Blackman, Shane LeClair, Nina Hart, Danielle Tucker, Debra Ann Miller, Shamus Murphy, Molly Murphy, Katie Murphy, Eileen Hill, Robert Holstead, The Brown Family (Liz, Jonathan, Robin and Keira), Sarah Patterson, Jon Hansen, Lisetta Coffin, and Janice Downie.

An image gallery of submitted photos can be found at <https://doas.us/gone-birding-image-gallery/>

## COMING ACTIVITIES

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

## COMMENTS FROM GONE BIRDING PARTICIPANTS:

- We have been having so much fun! It gets us outdoors during this pandemic, while still social distancing. (Katie Murphy, Cooperstown)
- I became interested in identifying the different birds that came to the feeder and spent a few days looking up what they were. I was surprised and amazed at how many there were! (Samantha Misa, Bovina Center)
- The most exciting find was the Prairie Warbler. (Shane LeClair, Denver)
- The last week of this was the most fun! This was when I spotted the most birds that I don't see regularly. I loved the rush I got whenever I saw a new bird, and especially when I was able to get a picture of it! (Danielle Tucker, Delhi)
- My thanks to whoever was involved for offering this activity. It has been a welcome distraction during this stay-at-home time. (Nina Hart, Franklin)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## "AT HOME" WITH NATURE

by Co-president Becky Gretton

We are sharing a new reality, be it long or short term, accompanied by moments of joy and accomplishment and certainly by frustration, inaction and anxiety. We miss each other, communicating as best we can.

Getting together with Julie Hart in her March webinar was wonderful, and revisiting her information online is so useful. Donna Vogler's willingness to present her information online was much appreciated and a big success. The DuBois' birds photos were delightful. I echo Andy Mason's huge thanks to Susan O'Handley for transitioning us to this forum. Please continue to join us!

Atlasing is strangely well-timed for this new reality. A birding friend and I set out to check "our" Bald Eagles' nest for signs of incubation. While there, we kept eBird Mobile lists for an Atlas report, all of which quickly faded into the background as we noticed motion high in the trees: a male Wood Duck! Another motion revealed a female. They performed fascinating head motions, walking on a branch and then flying to another and another to continue their display. The lighting was perfect, their beautiful markings were jumping out at us from a long distance, and we were captivated for over a half an hour. Everything else faded away as these moments of wonder enveloped us. We harkened back to Atlasing in the past, remembering quiet, relaxed birding in lovely habitats that were a privilege to share with



Wood Duck; Wikimedia Photo by Rick Leche

nature, locations that we never would have sought if not for the Atlas goal. We have the time to take right now.

Our personal distancing while birding has now become birding in separate cars, using masks without sharing the scope. "Spot" birding in chairs properly distanced revealed Merlin activity we never dreamed of seeing, and a surprise attack by a Cooper's hawk on a Flicker. The Flicker survived.

Spending leisurely time on remote roads that I haven't traveled in years takes me back in time as I see the remnants of hard-working residents long gone. Stone walls carry their echoes. This diversion from the undercurrent of the unknown is mind-freeing for me.

By the way, "our" eagle pair is once again without eggs, the fourth consecutive year unfortunately. They've fluffed the nest, copulated, and remained at the nest area. I saw the female eating food that had been left in the nest. "NB" (nest building) once again. Let's hope for a stronger Breeding Code next season.

Stay safe, be well, keep in touch and happy Atlasing!!

## 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

**America's Conservation Enhancement Act**—Legislation is moving in Washington that would lump the reauthorization of several conservation laws and funding into one measure. The America's Conservation Enhancement Act is a rarity in that it enjoys bipartisan support and has already passed the Senate in a unanimous vote.

Among the measures included in the bill are the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, reauthorization for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Program, and the National Fish Habitat Partnership Program.

In order to gain such wide support, the legislation does include some provisions that are not supported by all conservation organizations, but the consensus is that the funding and authorizations on balance do benefit wildlife and the environment.

The ACEA is now pending in the House of Representatives and its full passage would show that support for conservation overrides the extreme partisan politics of



*Great Blue Herons nesting in a local wetland; Photo by Rick Bunting*

Washington—a positive sign in difficult times.

**What you can do**—Contact your member of Congress and ask them to support and vote for America's Conservation Enhancement Act when it reaches the floor.

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

**Update on Bluestone Wind project**—DOAS, in conjunction with Broome County Concerned Residents (BCCR) has filed an Article 78 challenge in state Appellate Court to New York State's approval of the Bluestone Wind Project in

Broome County. We have been involved in review of this project for over three years, including on site monitoring of migrating raptors. These surveys show the site to likely be the worst location in the state for danger to resident and migrant Bald and Golden Eagles.

Despite this evidence, the State Siting Board charged with granting a permit for the project has allowed the wind developer to go ahead with construction and operation. As a result, we have brought this challenge, looking for independent consideration from the court. BCCR has their own set of concerns related to noise, visibility, compliance with local laws, among others.

Legal action such as this is expensive, and the DOAS board has committed money to partially defray costs, but we are appealing for donations for these expenses. These can be made payable to 'DOAS', with the notation 'Bluestone', and sent to DOAS, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820.

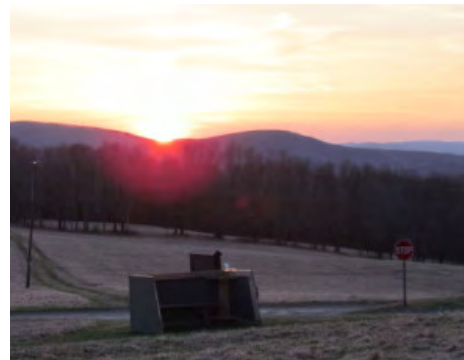
## DAVIS STATE PARK HAWKWATCH SPRING 2020

by Becky Gretton

Thirteen days of migration data were recorded at the Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park from February 23 through April 28. A total of 90 migrating raptors were counted, including 3 Golden Eagles. A non-migratory immature Northern Goshawk was observed in the area on three separate days, and an adult carrying prey flew low across a field affording a wonderful look to those of us lucky enough to witness this unusual sight.

Watching and hearing spring arrive was once again delightful, as was enjoying the company of fellow bird lovers. Social distancing was easy.

We are grateful to the Park for providing a weather station and a wind break for our use this spring.



*Wind break at Sunset; Photo by Diane Graf*

## APRIL MAY BIRD SIGHTINGS

BY SANDY BRIGHT

In late April to early May, birds that spend their winters in South America finally complete their return journey. As early migrants were noted in May's article, this issue focuses on new arrivals and less common species.

Wintry weather didn't deter sparrows on April 16th; a Field Sparrow hopped about in the snow in Franklin (Pam Peters) and a Savannah Sparrow sang in the town of Springfield (Cindy Staley). John Davis reported a Fox Sparrow in Cooperstown (4/17). On the 19th, Pam heard a Blue-headed Vireo singing near Deposit and Masonville, along with a Winter Wren. Randy Lynch observed a Merlin enjoy-



Merlin  
Photo by Randy Lynch

### Directors Elected

At the May 15th meeting, the DOAS Nominating Committee (Jane Bachman, chair; Landa Palmer, Janice Downie, and Jeff O'Handley) presented six candidates for election to the Board of Directors. Jane Bachman, Becky Gretton, Dorian Huneke, Andy Mason, Tom Salo, and Charlie Scheim were all elected for two-year terms.

ing a meal in Jefferson. The birds weren't wasting any time getting down to business, as evidenced by Tree Swallows found in a nest box in Oneonta (Andy Mason), Wild Turkey nest discovered by Tom Salo (Burlington), and Eastern Bluebirds on eggs in Milford (Gerianne Carillo).

The 20th brought to Franklin the return of Broad-winged Hawks (Pam Peters), Eastern Towhee, and Brown Thrasher (Linda Burkhardt). The first Baltimore Oriole braved the cold, hanging around Sarah Root's suet feeder near Morris (4/22). Marilyn Bailey spotted a Double-crested Cormorant on Goodyear Lake (4/25). A nest of loud Common Raven nestlings was easy to find near Emmons Bog (Charlie Scheim, 4/26). A Nashville Warbler sang in Oneonta's West End (Andy Mason, 4/26). Becky Gretton discovered the first Rose-breasted Grosbeak perched in her apple tree in the Town of Springfield (4/27).

Barn Swallows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and Northern Waterthrush showed up on Evening Inn Road, Oneonta (4/28). At a marsh in Jefferson, Barb Palmer spotted Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a ubiquitous species in following days as they migrated through the area. In



Black-throated Green Warbler  
Photo by David Kiehm

East Meredith, Suzanne Gaynor came across the first Black-throated Green Warbler (4/30). It was April that went out like a lion this year: Tom and Jo Salo flushed a Northern Flicker in West Burlington that made backward progress flying into strong winds.

May dawned much calmer, and Sarah Root saw Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue and Black-and-white Warblers near Portlandville. The beautiful melody of a Wood Thrush and the varied song of a Gray Catbird rang out on Winney Hill Road, Oneonta. A House Wren sang joyously in Milford (Gerianne Carillo), and a Black-throated Green Warbler in Franklin (Pam Peters).

On May 3rd, Marilyn Bailey found a Common Loon on Goodyear Lake. Least Flycatcher and Common Yellowthroat arrived in  
**"Bird Sightings" Continued on page 5**

## “Bird Sightings” Continued from page 4

Franklin (Pam Peters). Tom Salo discovered Great-crested Flycatcher up at the DOAS Burlington wetland. Andy Mason observed Bobolink in Stamford. Sandhill Cranes appeared in a field in the Town of Springfield (Becky Gretton).

On the 4th, Barb Palmer chanced on a Yellow Warbler, and got her thrill of the month when she photographed a recently-fledged Great Horned Owl. Pam Peters found Warbling Vireo and American Redstart near Franklin. The 5th brought Eastern Kingbird to Walton (Pam Peters), Chimney Swifts to our neighborhood in Oneonta, Chestnut-sided Warbler to Riddell Park, and, amazingly, a White-tipped Dove to Ilion (Steve Hall).

On the 6th, Redstarts returned to Glimmerglass State Park (Becky Gretton). A plethora of birds flitted around Emmons Bog, including Palm Warblers, one of which almost flew into Jane Bachman. Bob Donnelly discovered an active Belted Kingfisher nest outside of Roseboom. The first Ruby-throated Hummingbird appeared in Milford Center feeding on lungwort flowers (Betsy O'Brien). These tiny avians need lots of calories just to survive their long migration but were



*Bald Eagle feeding eaglets; Photo by Barb Palmer*

faced with freezing temperatures and snow the next day. That night, Emma Kirsch carried her feeder in to prevent freezing. Realizing a hummingbird was trying to follow the feeder into the house, she immediately put it back out, and the bird went right to it, looking cold and hungry.

Pam Peters found Great Egrets at a beaver marsh between Franklin and Walton (5/8). Several mystery swans floated on a pond near Milford; after extensive online discussion it was decided some were most likely Whooper Swan escapees, some either hybrids or Mute Swans.

Distinguishing between Willow and Alder Flycatchers is problematic when they are silent, so remain an unsolved mystery for Eleanor Moriarty, who saw one

or the other in Davenport (5/9). On May 10, Barb Palmer snapped pictures of eaglets being fed in Jefferson; John Davis observed Least Flycatcher in scrubby trees near Cooperstown; White-crowned Sparrows passed through Deposit (Stanley Salthe). May 11th brought Indigo Buntings, found by Kay Crane (Franklin), Eleanor Moriarty (Davenport), and Tom Salo (West Burlington). Two days later, Tom discovered Tennessee Warblers and Veery, and heard begging calls coming from the kestrel box on his land in Burlington. David Diaz spotted Cape May Warbler and Scarlet Tanager at Brookwood Point, Cooperstown (5/14).

Many thanks to all who sent sightings.

*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*.*



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## Q & A WITH NEW BOARD MEMBER LANDA PALMER

Compiled by DOAS Director Pam Peters

**PAM:** How did you end up in Delaware County?

**LANDA:** When I graduated from college, my first job was working in intensive care at Fox Hospital. While on a blind date, I met a local dairy farmer who was from Delaware County. We married a year later, and here I am.

**PAM:** What got you interested in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society?

**LANDA:** Birds have always been a part of my life. I had been looking for a hobby unrelated to my work. Audubon was a natural extension for me. Our farm is close to the Audubon Sanctuary, and I have visited it many times over the years. I joined the DOAS to see what the organization was about, and it was a good choice.

**PAM:** How does farming tie in to conservation?

**LANDA:** I did not grow up on a farm. My husband is the 3rd generation (son now taking over) on the farm. What I learned when joining this family is farmers are incredible stewards of the land. They want to preserve open landscapes, forests, and water.

**PAM:** What are some ways DOAS can connect young people with nature?

**LANDA:** Young people are on social media. I have found that exposure to birds, like the Gone Birding scavenger hunt we just



hosted, is a great way to grab a young person's interest and engage them. We also need to get young people to the Sanctuary and our programs throughout the year so they can see the diverse group of people involved in Audubon.

**PAM:** Your photographs are inspiring. How did you get interested in photographing birds?

**LANDA:** It really started with learning about photography. The first workshop I attended was at Great Camp Sagamore in the Adirondacks. I ran into my first Great Horned Owl and after taking pictures of it, I was hooked. I took another photography workshop in Yellowstone National Park and we focused on wildlife. The group would be taking pictures of a black bear, and I would be chasing a White-throated Sparrow. Learning about photography has also pushed me to learn more about birds.

**PAM:** What are your favorite birds

to photograph? What are some of the challenges photographing birds?

**LANDA:** You have to take the moment when you get it. Sometimes it's hard to get into a position where you can get a decent shot. On the day of the recent May 9 snowstorm, I came home with 340 shots and kept 12.

Favorite birds to photograph? My initial response would be the Cedar Waxwing. They give you a lot of opportunity and are so majestic. Capturing an owl on camera is special. I've been fortunate to see Short eared, Great Horned, Snowy, and Barred Owls.

**PAM:** Do you keep a life list of birds? If so, what's the last life bird you saw?

**LANDA:** I started a life list a few years ago, and I'm obsessed with it. Eastern Meadowlark was my most recent new bird. Keeping lists is another way to encourage young people.

**PAM:** Describe one of your favorite walks or birding spots.

**LANDA:** My farm. We have a swamp, a pond, woods, open fields. Any season, no matter the weather, our farm is my favorite place. Audubon Sanctuary is right behind that. It's close, and I have been going for years. The wetlands area is amazing all year round.

**PAM:** How have you kept sane

“Q&A” Continued on page 7

## “Landa” Continued from page 6

during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**LANDA:** I have committed to taking a walk every day no matter what the time or weather. I just go. We have an old cemetery on our farm. I saw some birds there the other day, and I sat on the stone wall and just watched the birds for an hour. Connecting with nature keeps me sane.



Great Horned Owl  
Photo by Landa Palmer

**PAM:** Anything you would like our

readers to know about you?

**LANDA:** I feel lucky to have a passion for birds. I always had a passion for taking care of other people and farming. That's a focus on other humans. When I am out birding, I am really focused on nature. It's a good feeling. My maiden name is Vogel, which means bird in German. So I guess I was destined for this adventure.

## Upcoming Activities

**Please Note:** All DOAS group events for June 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.

### Summer

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

August 18 – DOAS Board Meeting

### Fall

October 3 – Sanctuary Open House

October 16 – Charter Dinner

## DOAS Membership

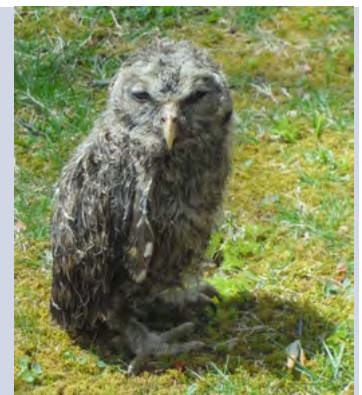
Cost is \$25 annually or \$35 for two years; family memberships \$30 annually or \$40 for two years. Memberships can also be purchased online at <http://doas.us> or make your check payable to “DOAS” and mail payment to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

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

## Juvenile Owl Rescue

On May 17th an intense storm came through the area late in the day. The storm dislodged several young Barred Owls from their nest. DOAS got involved in helping to create an improvised nest in child's play house. Read the story and view photos at: <https://doas.us/juvenile-owl-found-on-the-ground-after-severe-storms/>

Juvenile Barred Owl; Photo by Tom Salo





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## Big Day Bird Count Report by Charlie Scheim

After weeks of disappointingly cold and wet weather, The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society's Big Day Count of May 16, 2020 had beautiful weather. We assembled 17 teams of 30 total birders this spring. The teams ranged over our DOAS region, with reports coming in from Otsego, Delaware, and Schoharie counties. Some teams ranged over extensive areas by car, some walked our meadows and forests, some paddled in canoes, and some folks simply observed their backyard birds.

There were a number of species that were found by just a single team (a few examples: Ring-necked Pheas-

ant, Wilson's Snipe, Carolina Wren, Barred Owl), which shows just how important it was to our effort to have so many teams scouting our area.

In total, we found 120 different species. Among these were three species of sandpipers (Spotted, Solitary, and Semi-palmated), nine raptors (Turkey Vulture, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Kestrel, Merlin, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-tailed, Red-shouldered, Broad-winged Hawks), six woodpecker-type species (Downy, Hairy, Pileated, Red-bellied, Flicker, and Sapsucker), six flycatchers (Pewee, Willow, Least, Great-crested, Phoebe, Kingbird), five swallows (Barn, Tree, Cliff, Bank, Rough-winged), five thrushes (Hermit, Wood, Veery, Robin, Catbird), and twenty-one species of warblers

(too many to mention!). One especially unusual sighting, documented with a picture, was of an Orchard Oriole in Oneonta, by Nancy and Betty New. A complete listing of all of this year's sightings will be posted on the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society website [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us).

While it is wonderful that we are able to find so many species in a single day in our area, equally as important is that we were all able to get outdoors, connect with nature, and generate so much fun and happiness to counteract the distressing enforced isolation during this Covid-19 pandemic. The DOAS and I, personally, thank you all for joining in this excellent adventure.



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