



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

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

November

November 7 – Bird Seed Pickup
November 20 – Virtual Program,
“Costa Rica’s Biodiversity”

December

December 1 – DOAS Board Mtg
December 19 – Oneonta
Christmas Bird Count
December 26 – Fort Plain Christ-
mas Bird Count

January

January 3 – Delaware County
Christmas Bird Count
January 15 – Virtual Program,
“Florida Photos”
January 17 – Waterfowl Count
January 19 – DOAS Board Mtg
January 23 – Eagle Trip

February

February 19 – Virtual Program,
“Great Gray Owls”

More information on page 7

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

COSTA RICA’S BIODIVERSITY November Virtual Program

Costa Rica is known for its ecotourism. With about 26% of its land area set aside as national parks, wildlife reserves, and other protected lands, Costa Rica hosts more than 500,000 plant and animal species (including approximately 900 bird species, about the same number as in all of the contiguous U.S.). Nearly 1.3 million U.S. tourists traveled to Costa Rica in 2019, most hoping to observe some of its amazing biodiversity. But how much biodiversity can you really see in a short visit to Costa Rica? During our November program, Dr. Peter Fauth will describe some of the fascinating natural history of Costa Rica and share with you some of the biodiversity he has observed during several visits to Costa Rica.

Join us on Zoom,
November 20th at 7:30 p.m.
Pre-Registration is required.

Registration Information can be found at the DOAS Website at <https://doas.us/event/costa-ricas-biodiversity/>

Dr. Peter Fauth is an ecologist and conservation biologist who studies bird populations and communities in the eastern United States. While working on his Ph.D. at Purdue University, Pete made his first trip to Costa Rica in 1995 to assist a colleague studying the cooperatively breeding Brown Jays. Since then, Pete has returned to Costa Rica seven times, primarily as a co-instructor for one of Hartwick College’s off-campus January programs. Pete is currently the chairperson of the Biology Department at Hartwick where he teaches ecology, evolution and ornithology courses and conducts forest-monitoring projects at Robert V. Riddell State Park.



Coati
Photos by Peter Fauth



Red-eyed Tree Frog

Thank you to all who supported the DOAS Bird Seed Sale!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GRASSLAND HABITAT FOR NESTING BIRDS

by Co-president Becky Gretton

I have witnessed grassland nesting for many years, cheering the efforts of Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Savannah Sparrows and Red-winged Blackbirds to fledge their young successfully. They are fearless defenders against crows and hawks.

My interest in conserving habitat has engendered discussions with those who use the land. A conversation with a local land manager led to a commitment to mow certain areas later in the nesting season. This individual is devoted to sustainability while staying true to the traditional use of the fields he manages. Employees there have become more connected with birds as a result. One young gentleman noticed a Red-tailed Hawk in distress and took action that led to its successful rehabilitation and release.

This spring a birding buddy and I were invited by a landowner to visit her wonderful property to observe Bobolink behaviors. These were the happiest Bobolinks imaginable, for the land is managed each year specifically for grassland nesting, a dream come true.

A look at recommendations for maintaining grassland habitat can seem daunting. Ideally, birds need roughly 20 acres of connected grassland. A small grassland surrounded by open space is better



Eastern Meadowlark
Audubon Photo by Derrick Robinson

than one surrounded by trees. Clearing out fence lines reduces the presence of foxes, raccoons, skunks, crows and more: species that feed on eggs and young birds. Reducing hedgerows is important for the same reasons. For abandoned fields, mowing a patch every 2 or 3 years removes tree and sapling growth which changes the habitat's usefulness for grassland nesters. Mowing/haying dates are obvious influencers on nesting.

I've noticed some area Parks that hold back on mowing, and have thanked them for that effort, as the fields are wonderful nesting habitat: an annual delight. Encouragement goes a long way. Once again, I'm thinking about spring and what other actions from me might positively impact our nesting bird populations.

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

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CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

by Andy Mason



Looking Ahead—At this writing, two weeks before the election, it is difficult to impossible to judge what will be the environmental outlook at the federal and state levels in the new year. However, at least in New York, it appears the more conservation-friendly legislature and administration will prevail, and possibly with a stronger majority that can continue to move forward with positive initiatives on climate change, wildlife protection and pollution reduction, among other issues.

However, this must be counter-balanced by the realities of a state budget decimated by the Coronavirus response and economic slowdown. The Governor and Legislature will start the budgeting process in January and it promises to be more challenging than ever.

A coalition of groups are taking proactive steps in this regard, putting together arguments and talking points emphasizing the importance of maintaining funding for environmental programs, focusing on economic, health and safety benefits. These include:

- Environmental funding is critical to the health, safety, and prosperity of all New Yorkers.
- Economy: New York's environmental programs create

thousands of jobs, and support industries that add \$40 billion to our economy every year.

These programs also leverage federal, local, and private dollars, which New York cannot afford to lose.

- Health: As the COVID pandemic has once again demonstrated, clean air, clean water, and access to nature are vital in protecting public health. Yet, many New Yorkers don't have safe water to drink, clean air to breathe, or green space where they live.
- Safety: This year, we endured fatal fires, heat waves, and two dozen hurricanes. Ignoring the escalating climate crisis would be a grave mistake. Millions of New Yorkers are vulnerable, and we cannot afford to slow the state's work fighting climate change.
- New York's environmental programs provide what New Yorkers need: clean air and water, local food, and outdoor recreation. They also create good-paying jobs and stronger local economies.
- Environmental programs can be a key driving force in New York's economic recovery, just as they have been in the past recoveries. By investing

in programs with a proven track record, we can make our communities stronger and healthier.

- Each of these programs creates thousands of jobs, saves communities and taxpayers money, and supports several multi-billion dollar industries including agriculture, outdoor recreation, construction, tourism, and commercial fishing.

What You Can Do—At this point, the best targets for these messages are Governor Cuomo and the leaders of the State Senate and Assembly, who put together proposed budgets. A letter or email can serve as a reminder that the environment remains important to New Yorkers even in these troubled times. Contact: Governor Andrew Cuomo, Executive Chambers, Albany, NY 12224, gov.cuomo@chamber.state.ny.us; Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, LOB 907, Albany, NY 12247, scousins@nysenate.gov; Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, LOB 932, Albany, NY 12248, speaker@nyassembly.gov.



Bird Friendly Coffee

You may order our delicious bird-friendly coffee by emailing Jane Bachman (bachmanj@hartwick.edu or call 607-431-9509). Pick up may be arranged from Jane's front porch in Oneonta. You may leave a check (made out to DOAS) in her mailbox, or mail the check to her. Shipment of coffee is also possible, in which case you will be responsible for covering the cost of shipping. Payment is due at the time of delivery. Cash, checks and credit cards are accepted. More information at <http://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>

FARMING AND CONSERVATION GO HAND-IN-HAND

by DOAS Director Landa Palmer

Farming is dependent on many factors that are influenced by nature and the living world around us. All farmers know how the weather impacts all types of farming. We are at the mercy of nature, economists, politics, predators, trends, and as we all know, pandemics.

What can a farmer control? We can control how we use our land and resources. Individual farmers and landowners do have the ability to control the impact on our land and nature. It is important to consider how our way of life, skills, and hobbies impact the environment around us.

I am a Registered Nurse and live with my family on a dairy farm in Delaware County, NY. We welcome select hunters to our land. We need the help of the hunter in controlling the flocks of turkeys, herds of deer, and the occasional black bear, which, sadly, enjoy our crops and do damage that is very costly. As farmers we are grateful that the hunters who use our land are respectful of the environment and of our land. Our farm has an abundance of American Bald Eagles; at one point we had six feasting on the leftovers from hunting.

We have asked the hunters to consider using non-lead ammunition to protect the American Bald Eagle and other raptors. We ask this of our hunters to protect the environment and those who consume the meat they are harvesting. The hunters who visit our farm are



Bald Eagle

Photo by Landa Palmer

good stewards of the land and the environment and have agreed to use non-lead ammunition. We ask this of them with the hopes that they will find the benefit of protecting the American Bald Eagles.

Consider for a moment the pros of using non-lead ammunition for hunting. I turn to Tom Salo, a fellow Audubon board member. Tom considers himself to be a hunter-conservationist. Tom has been using non-lead ammo and I see him as an expert on this issue. He states the many benefits in the results of using non-lead ammunition, “the bullet is less prone to fragmenting as it is harder than traditional lead; eliminates bullet fragments in the wound channel as it forms a “mushroom” or peels back upon impact; yields more high quality meat as it retains 95-100% of the original bullet weight; and it reduces risk of harming other wildlife, particularly eagles, from getting sick and dying from lead consumption.”

Switching to non-lead ammunition is not only a good conservation practice to help save raptors, who are at risk from lead poisoning when consuming the remains left by hunters, it is also a good decision to help prevent lead exposure to those people who are eating the harvested meat. One study revealed that of 32% of ground venison (234 packages) contained lead fragments (http://huntingwithnonlead.org/lead_in_meat2015.html).

I believe it is a reasonable request of the landowner to ask any hunters hunting on their property to use non-lead ammunition. This is a good way to protect America’s symbol, the Bald Eagle, and it is a prudent means to be sure that when consuming venison, you are protecting your family from lead exposure. There are resources available to landowners and hunters, which discuss the issues of lead poisoning of eagles as well as the reasons for choosing non-lead ammunition.

Most deer hunters find the performance of non-lead bullets equal to, or better than lead. Please take time to ask hunters to consider non-lead ammunition and to protect the American Bald Eagle.

Resources:

Video “Lead Ammunition: A Needless Danger to Eagles and Ourselves”

<https://doas.us/prevening-lead-poisoning-in-eagles/>

Website: More Hunting Less Lead
<http://huntingwithnonlead.org/>

Update from the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch

Dry weather was prevalent at Franklin Mountain during the first half of the season. This resulted in steady, though sometimes modest counts. There were a couple of good days in mid-September that contributed to a new record for Broad-winged Hawks. The last broadwing counted on October 3 brought the total to 2950. This surpassed the previous record by 538 birds.

When this issue arrives, we should be near the peak of the Red-tailed Hawk flight (late October). The Golden Eagle peak will shortly follow (first half of November). Since we are not issuing migration alerts, pick your days based on our weather recommendations. Good flights most often occur when the wind blows from the northwest, especially following

periods of rain and the passing of a cold front.

You are welcome to visit but please respect the posted rules. Maintain a 6-foot distance from other people and groups. If this is not possible, masks should be worn. At times, social distancing may make it necessary to observe from off-the-mound. Do not enter the counters' area unless you are invited.

We are limiting hawk watch publicity, but many people are visiting and walking the property, especially on pleasant days. Be aware. Sometimes they stop at the mound and unexpectedly approach someone looking through binoculars.

When visiting, if you spot birds that have not been seen by others, make sure you are heard.



Peregrine Falcon
Photo by Ronald Kotinsky

With distance, wind, and masks, it is difficult for counters to hear visitors.

Christmas Bird Counts

The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), begun in 1900, is the oldest and one of the largest citizen science projects in the Western Hemisphere. This will be our local Audubon's 52nd year of participating in the national count, and three areas will be covered on different days during the three-week count period (see below for locations and dates). For more information, go to www.audubon.org/conservation/



November 2020

[science/christmas-bird-count](http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count).

The National Audubon has set some additional requirements for this year's count due to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Carpooling may only occur within existing family or social pod units;
- Social distancing and/or masking are required at all times;
- We must comply with all state and local health mandates.

Feeder Watchers are always welcome, and participating in this way requires none of the above restrictions. Simply count birds from the comfort of your own home. The only caveat is that Feeder Watchers must count within an existing

count circle (to see where these circles are located, go to <https://preview.tinyurl.com/CBC-Circles>, click on the link, then zoom in to our area). If you would like to participate in any of the counts, please contact the compiler for that area at least one week before the event. People who have participated before will be contacted.

Oneonta CBC December 19

Compiler Sandy Bright
email brights@hartwick.edu
phone 607-287-4465.

Fort Plain CBC December 26

Compiler Bob Donnelly
email rsdonn@yahoo.com
phone 607-264-8156.

Delaware County CBC January 3

Compiler Pam Peters
email ovenb1rdp@gmail.com
phone 607-829-6545.

The fact that even domestic animals are constantly aware of predators was brought home one day when I was taking care of a friend's chickens. They no sooner strutted eagerly out of their coop than they scurried right back in. Though there was nothing in sight, their behavior was explained by the call of a nearby Red-shouldered Hawk!

Between the 18th and 21st of September, several people reported still seeing hummingbirds. The last report came from Becky Gretton on the 30th (Richfield Springs). Kathryn Davino was visited by a Brown Thrasher in Delhi. DOAS has been tracking a lead-poisoned, rehabilitated and released Bald Eagle, and Tom Salo reported that it was on the east side of Otego Creek on the 22nd. Up at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, Tom noted the "slow, almost casual movement" of Blue Jays toward the southwest, not obviously migrating, but nonetheless moving in the right direction.

In the last week of September, Jessie Ravage observed an Osprey fishing along the east side of Otsego Lake. Bonnie Graves spotted three Bald Eagles flying close together near the Chenango River. Lynn Wassell had a Rose-breasted Grosbeak visit her feeder in Cooperstown. Barb Palmer was still seeing Gray Catbird, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Flicker, Bobolink, Killdeer, a couple of Kestrels, and a Common Yellowthroat in fall plumage. She also reported

Song Sparrow
Photo by Landa Palmer



a Black-crowned Night Heron, photographed on a friend's pond in Jefferson.

In early October, Eleanor Moriarty watched a group of birds foraging in apple trees, including several Yellow-rumped Warblers, a Song Sparrow, and others flitting too rapidly for identification (Davenport). Barb Palmer saw three Bald Eagles along the Schoharie Creek. Landa Palmer got pictures of Field and Song Sparrows. Kathy Dawson spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in her Crabapple tree in Guilford. Tom Salo watched a Peregrine Falcon pumping its way south in Burlington, while here in Oneonta its smaller cousin, a Merlin, flew over our house, kek-kek-kekking, landing atop a neighbor's tree. Bill Vining took a video of a classic and impressive murmuration of European Starlings over his field near Morris.

In mid-October, Landa Palmer photographed a Magnolia Warbler,

Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Brown Creeper, and Hermit Thrush. On a misty morning, Pam Peters reported that the "roadside bushes and trees were alive with dozens of Juncos, White-throated Sparrows and Ruby-crowned Kinglets." After some rain, birds were active in the woods above Wilber Park, Oneonta; Susan Brunswick and I found several Red-breasted Nuthatches, a few woodpeckers (Downy and Hairy), and three thrushes, probably Hermit. Oh, why did I leave my binoculars home that day?

The single White-throated Sparrow at Kathryn Davino's house in Delhi in late September had grown into a small flock of eight. She noted that one made a single, pathetic, squeaky attempt at the "Old Sam Peabody" song. I often hear that at this time of year, making me think it must be a young male getting ready to wow the females next spring, after a good deal more practice!

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.

Upcoming Activities

To stay up-to-date about events, visit the **DOAS website** (<https://doas.us/events/>) or Facebook Page and sign up for our ENews at <https://doas.us/sign-up-for-doas-news/>. ENews is a monthly email notification and is different from the *Belted Kingfisher* newsletter.

November

November 7 – Bird Seed Sale Pickup: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Pickup Location at VP Supply Corp., 41 Country Club Road, Oneonta.

November 20 – DOAS Online Public Program: “Costa Rica’s Biodiversity: What Can You Really Expect to See?” During our online program, Dr. Peter Fauth will describe some of the fascinating natural history of Costa Rica and share with you some of the biodiversity he has observed during several visits to Costa Rica.

December

December 1 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

December 19 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count. Contact Sandy Bright at brights@hartwick.edu or phone 607-287-4465. See article on page 5.

December 26 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird. Contact Bob Donnelly: rsdonn@yahoo.com or 607-264-8156. See article on page 5.

January

January 3 – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count.

Contact Pam Peters: ovenb1rdp@gmail.com or 607-829-6545. See article on page 5.

January 15 – DOAS Online Public Program: “Florida Photos” with Rick Bunting.

January 17 – New York Statewide Waterfowl Count. We cover the upper Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers and tributaries. Anyone interested in helping with this census, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net.

January 19 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

January 23 – Eagle trip to Delaware County reservoirs. Due to Covid concerns, this year’s trip will be limited to 15 participants and to DOAS members only. Social distancing and restricting car occupants to families only will be required. Registration information will be included in the January newsletter.

February

February 19 – DOAS Online Public Program: “Great Gray Owls” with wildlife photographer Kyle Dudgeon.



Support our Sponsors!

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

DOAS Membership Application

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*.

Cost is \$25 annually or \$35 for two years; family memberships \$30 annually or \$40 for two years.

Please make your check payable to “DOAS” and mail payment with this form to:
DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

Memberships can also be purchased online at <http://doas.us>.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation: \$ _____



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820
www.doas.us

JOIN OUR NEW NETWORK!

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is kicking off a new series of programs and trainings this fall as part of the Climate Action Community Leadership Program made possible through our Audubon in Action Grant.

This program will help build a regional network of people who are interested in working towards making our communities more climate-resilient. It will help provide resources and information for participants to move local projects forward with funding support (as available). Project areas include: educational, native plants, riparian buffers, local government projects, advocacy initiatives, and more.

We encourage all to participate including municipal officials, government representatives, educators, college students and community members.

Join Our New Network!

We have created our own network to discuss topics, share resources and information and support participants, provide feedback, and more. Please email Susan O'Handley at sjohandely@gmail.com for an invitation to join our DOAS Network for Climate Action Leadership.

