



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

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## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

### COMING ACTIVITIES

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

#### January

- January 3 – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count
- January 5 – Climate Action Panel Discussion
- January 15 – Virtual Program, “Florida Reflections”
- January 17 – Waterfowl Count
- January 19 – DOAS Board Mtg
- January 23 – Eagle Trip CANCELLED

#### February

- February 19 – Virtual Program, “Great Gray Owls”

#### March

- March 2 – DOAS Board Mtg
- March 19 – Virtual Program, “Highlights from Down Under”

#### April

- April 16 – Virtual Program, “Members and Friends Photo Share”
- April 20 – DOAS Board Mtg

More information on page 7

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

### FLORIDA REFLECTIONS January Virtual Program with Rick Bunting

The January program features everyone’s favorite naturalist/photographer, Rick Bunting. Rick will present “Florida Reflections.” Participants will get to view and hear about photos of some of Rick’s favorite birds found in the Fort Meyers/Sanibel area where he has visited for many years.

Quoting Rick, “It is the kind of program that will hopefully be a mid-winter, Covid 19 pandemic spirit-lifter, at least for me!” The program was originally put together for the Sanibel-Captiva Audu-

bon Society in Florida.

Since his retirement from SUNY Potsdam and the Crane School of Music, Rick Bunting pursues his passion for photography full time. Also an accomplished and well-known musician, Rick photographs wherever he travels.

Join us on Zoom,  
January 15th at 7:30 p.m.  
Pre-Registration is required.  
REGISTER TODAY AT  
<https://bit.ly/2Wsfh0m>



Roseate Spoonbill  
Photos by Rick Bunting



Great Egret

### SAVE THE DATE: FEBRUARY 19, 2021

“Great Gray Owls” with wildlife photographer Kyle Dudgeon

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE by Co-president Andy Mason

Will we be seeing each other on bird walks this Spring? That seems like a dream in this Covid era, and realistically it will probably remain just that. As health experts and the media emphasize, even with the advent of vaccines, social distancing and avoiding group gatherings will be necessary for the foreseeable future. Bird walks and other field trips result in clusters of observers, despite good intentions, so will have to wait a while for the all clear. Maybe Spring 2022!

Despite the inability to meet face-to-face, our Chapter has continued to function remotely, and the board of directors is addressing issues and challenges. One major concern has been loss of view at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, due to tree growth. This has been an ongoing problem for a number of years, and now threatens the viability of this popular and important activity. The hawk watch is our greatest contact with non-members and is a large part of our identity with other Audubon groups, birding organizations and the general public. In addition, it represents a decades-long research effort, providing data on raptor populations and movements, and has led to outgrowths including our wintering Golden Eagle and satellite-tracking projects, as well as efforts to reduce lead poisoning of eagles, and impacts from large-scale wind facilities.

There are no easy solutions to the view issues on the mountain.



Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch  
Photo by Landa Palmer

Trees on the Sanctuary property have been cut, but the main problem is trees on adjoining property. We have had excellent relations and cooperation from our neighbor, and are exploring agreements to clear an area here, but need to be very thoughtful and considerate with any additional work on this property.

In July, DOAS purchased an approximately 13-acre parcel that also contains blocking trees; trees that will likely become more problematic in the future. This land was available at a reasonable price and this was an opportunity to act proactively, as well as protect the parcel.

Another hawk watch option considered has been constructing a viewing tower. However, such a structure would be expensive, unsightly, a liability risk, and unlikely to provide space for all visitors to have a clear view.

We continue to move cautiously in our considerations of the best solution to this dilemma, but the board has decided that the hawk watch is a key part of our Chapter and worthy of saving. We will keep you informed of activity regarding this effort.

Meanwhile, let's keep our fingers crossed for a return to enjoying those Spring warblers in each other's company!

## THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Janet Potter

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Historian: Rod Sutton  
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### ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

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Oneonta, NY 13820  
Email: [info@doas.us](mailto:info@doas.us)

ON THE WEB: [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)

[www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety](https://www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety)

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

## CONSERVATION AND LEGISLATION

by Andy Mason

**NY Takes Big Step Forward in Halting Fossil Fuels**—The movement to reduce the world's reliance on fossil fuels and resulting climate change takes a number of forms—political, scientific, grassroots, and perhaps most effectively—economic. As long as there is money to be made exploring, drilling, producing and selling coal, gas and oil, there will be companies willing to do it, regardless of the larger consequences.

One pressure point is investments in these companies. Without value in their stocks, they are less able to raise capital for increasingly expensive and decreasingly competitive operations. A push has developed for colleges, churches, non-profits, and other institutions to divest from the fossil fuel industry. Another target is government investment funds, and in this department, NY State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli has set an example for other states and municipalities to follow.

In December, Comptroller

DiNapoli announced that the \$226 billion NY State Common Retirement Fund had adopted a goal to transition its portfolio to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. This process will include completion within four years of a review of investments in energy sector companies, with divestment of companies failing to meet minimum standards of climate-related investment risk. The aim is for these firms to transition to a non-carbon future or lose NY's investment dollars. As the third largest public pension fund in the US, this action will be viewed widely and used as an impetus for others to consider similar divestment.

**What You Can Do**—Comptroller DiNapoli deserves kudos for this bold action. He has been a careful, cautious trustee of the retirement fund, but clearly sees this as a necessary environmental and fiduciary step. A note of thanks is in order: Office of the State Comptroller, 110 State Street, Albany, NY 12236; [www.osc.state.ny.us](http://www.osc.state.ny.us).



**A Big Step in Washington too**—Also in the climate change arena, the pending inauguration of Joseph Biden on January 20 looks to bring a major reversal of the Trump administration's unrelenting attack on science and global efforts to address CO<sup>2</sup> and other greenhouse gas emissions. Biden has vowed to immediately return the US to the Paris Climate Agreement, has appointed John Kerry as special presidential envoy for climate, and has repeatedly prioritized the issue both in his campaign and since election.

**What You Can Do**—The President-elect has a daunting list of Trump environmental wrongs to address, but this is a good place to start. He should be encouraged for facing the issue head-on and be assured of our support going forward. Joseph R. Biden, 918 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E., Washington, DC 20003; [www.facebook.com/joebiden](http://www.facebook.com/joebiden); [www.joebiden.com](http://www.joebiden.com).



Snowy Day  
Photo by Rick Bunting

Sun sparkling off fresh white snow. Bushes bejeweled with hoar frost. Blue skies. These factors

## Oneonta Christmas Bird Count Highlights

made up for the frigid temperatures that heralded this year's Oneonta Christmas Bird Count on December 19th. Hardy participants bundled up and ventured out despite the cold and the record snowfall from two days earlier, which affected bird activity and limited access to some areas of the count circle.

The most uncommon species

reported were the flock of Red Crossbills observed by Peter Fauth and a lone Fox Sparrow discovered by Bill Ehmann. Bob Donnelly reported Winter Wrens and a Brown-headed Cowbird, and Marilyn Leahy found several American Robins. These and the Eastern Bluebirds seen near the county jail may have regretted not flying further south. Watch for the full report in the next *Kingfisher*.



# CHOOSING EQUIPMENT FOR WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

by DOAS Director Rod Sutton

I am often asked what photographic equipment I use to photograph wildlife. Never in the history of photography has there been so many choices, from cell phones, point-and-shoot pocket cameras, mirror-less cameras, bridge cameras to consumer and professional digital single lens reflex (DSLR) cameras. There are 35 mm film cameras still in use. Choosing the best option depends on what will be photographed and the desired end result.

2020 turned into a year of postponed travel plans with my family. I had planned a trip to the Florida Everglades to photograph wildlife. With traveling no longer an option, finding local wildlife proved equally enjoyable. Photographing birds in the yard at home is rewarding. In this environment, one of the challenges is how to get close enough to the subject to compose a good picture. One solution would be to use a telephoto lens. Telephoto lenses narrow the angle of view causing the subject to be magnified on the camera's sensor, resulting in the subject seeming closer. However, telephoto lenses can be very expensive, large, and heavy. Another option that has become recently available are super zoom bridge cameras. Bridge cameras resemble the more complex DSLRs, but feature fixed, telephoto zoom lenses in an easy-

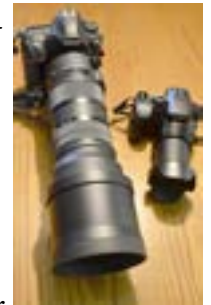
to-use design similar to point-and-shoot models. The capabilities of these cameras are amazing. Before digital cameras became available most wildlife photography was done using 35mm film cameras. For these cameras, a telephoto lens started with (focal) length measurements around 70mm and included super telephoto lenses up to 800mm or longer. Today, digital cameras of all sizes frequently use 35mm film camera lens equivalents, even though the number used may not be the digital camera's actual focal length. There are many sites on the Internet explaining camera types and uses. A site that gives a useful overview of bridge cameras can be found at: <https://fixthephoto.com/best-bridge-camera.html>

A trip to Saranac Lake offered an opportunity to photograph Common Loons (*Gavia immer*). For

*Super-zoom bridge camera with lens set at 60  
Photo by Rod's daughter, Ally*



equipment, I selected a 600mm super telephoto lens. This was mounted on a DSLR camera. This camera can produce large display prints. My daughter Ally chose to use a super zoom bridge camera, which is smaller and less expensive. Ally's super zoom bridge had a 600mm equivalent. A disadvantage of using this camera would be a greater limitation on the degree of enlargement while maintaining quality. So, which is better? It depends on the desired end result. For posting on the world-wide-web, placing images in presentations, or creating modest enlargements, super zoom bridge **"Photography" Continued on page 5**



*Camera on left: DSLR with 150mm to 600mm telephoto zoom lenses set at 150mm. Camera on right: Super-zoom with 25 to 600 millimeter equivalent zoomed to 600*

*DSLR and zoom lens at 600mm  
Photo by Rod Sutton*



## Eagle Trip Cancelled

In light of the continuing risk from the Covid virus, we have decided to cancel the Delaware County eagle trip scheduled for January 23. This trip has been held annually for nearly three decades, and is our most popular field trip,



*Black-capped Chickadee*  
Audubon Photo by Gail DuBois

“Chickadees that live in areas with harsh winters are very diligent about storing food for the winter, and a single chickadee can store up to a thousand seeds in a day, or eighty thousand in a season. This

so it is not an easy string to break! We hope to resume the trip next winter.

As an alternative, we have prepared a map and written description of the route usually taken on the trip, with good eagle viewing locations marked. We encourage

family groups to use this for their own eagle viewing adventure. The best viewing times for seeing concentrations of Bald Eagles are January through mid-March. Get the map and description at <https://doas.us/self-guided-eagle-trip/>. For more information contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

## Chickadees—Did you Know?

strategy is called scatter hoarding, as the birds simply tuck food away in any crevice where it will fit—in a cluster of spruce needles, in a bark crevice, and so on. Incredibly, the bird can remember where each item is stored, and at least some information about which ones are the best quality and which ones have been eaten already. The hippocampus—the part of the brain involved in spatial memory—is larger in birds that live in colder climates, where storing food is

more important; it grows large in the fall to accommodate multiple storage locations, and then shrinks again in the spring.”

From: **What It's Like to Be a Bird, From Flying to Nesting, Eating to Singing—What Birds are Doing, and Why**, written and illustrated by David Allen Sibley, published by Alfred A. Knopf, 2020.

### DOAS Reusable Bags

\$5.00 each

Bag dimensions are 12” front x 5” side x 13” high.

There is an insert included for base stabilization.

Contact Jane Bachman - [bachmanj@hartwick.edu](mailto:bachmanj@hartwick.edu) or call 607-431-9509

Also contact Jane if you want to order **bird-friendly coffee**.

More information at <http://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>



### “Photography” Continued on page 5

cameras are hard to equal.

When photographing loons, I found the biggest challenge to be framing and focusing on them in the viewfinder, combined with how quickly they can appear

and disappear. Ally's super zoom bridge camera had an advantage over my 600mm lens. On the lake in a kayak, the weight saving was a plus and her camera's smaller size made handling easier. Holding the camera steady while keeping control of the kayak was a challenge

when zoomed in on the quick birds. The loons did not appear to be bothered by us at the distances made possible with the telephoto lenses. Looking at the pictures from each camera that evening showed a comparable quality on a computer screen.

***Irruption*** [ih-ruh-p-shuhn]:  
a breaking or bursting in; a violent incursion or invasion; a sudden increase in an animal population (Merriam-Webster dictionary)

This promises to be a good year for irruptive species, and hordes of Pine Siskins or Evening Grosbeaks raiding feeders demonstrate how apt the above definitions are. It began here with about 50 Siskins passing over the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch (Becky Gretton, 10/7). A week later they settled into feeders in Delhi (Kathryn Davino), Cobleskill (Susan Carver), Maryland (Linda Pearce), Jefferson (Barb Palmer), and Milford (Gerianne Carillo). Evening Grosbeaks first descended near Milford at Dave Kiehm's feeder (10/17), then Milford (Gerianne Carillo), Delhi (Kathryn Davino), Richfield Springs (Becky Gretton), Middlefield (Dick deRosa, who also reported Purple Finches and Red-breasted Nuthatches), and Treadwell (Linda Burkhart and Pam Peters, who spotted the first Fox Sparrows on 10/31).

White-throated Sparrows flitted about Linda Pearce's yard in Jefferson. Kathryn Davino enjoyed the acrobatic flight of a Northern Harrier after their field was mowed in Delhi. Barb Palmer photographed an Eastern Phoebe (Jefferson), and found Great Blue Herons, a raucous Kingfisher, and six Brants in Portlandville. It was no exaggeration when Tom Salo noted "literally tons of Brant" migrating near West Burlington; one of the several flocks contained over 800 birds



*Evening Grosbeak*  
Audubon Photo by Mick Thompson

(10/24). He also spotted a Rough-legged Hawk. Andy Mason found Cedar Waxwings and American Robins feeding on crab apples in Oneonta's Neawha Park, and two adult Bald Eagles soaring over the nearby river.

Becky Gretton went to Otsego Lake to check a report of a Peregrine Falcon and Black Scoter. She arrived in time to spot both birds, then watched the Scoter dive in an attempt to avoid a pair of Bald Eagles looking for a meal. The Eagles won.

In early November, Suzanne Gaynor didn't mind when a Sharp-shinned Hawk visited her feeders, which ravenous Blue Jays had been emptying every day (East Meredith). Cindy Bauer discovered a Greater Yellowlegs at the pond behind her house in South Valley. A Great Horned Owl hooted in Susan Brunswick's yard in Oneonta.

In mid-November, Golden-crowned Kinglets flitted about Silas Lane in Oneonta. Several Hooded Mergansers visited Barb Palmer's pond in Jefferson. Julene Waffle watched a female Northern Harrier hunting near Morris. Jane

Bachman saw a Brown Creeper at Wilber Park, Oneonta. Becky Gretton observed small groups of Common Redpolls at the Hawk Watch, and more feeding on seed heads a few days later in the town of Otsego. About twenty Red-winged Blackbirds dropped by Stan Salthe's feeders in Deposit. Dorian Huneke was struck by how small Red-tailed Hawks look while harassing a Golden Eagle (Treadwell).

Later in the month, Mitch Light discovered a Northern Shrike near Cooperstown; David Diaz found a second shrike north of Fly Creek. Tom Salo reported a Carolina Wren at the high altitude of over 1600 feet in West Burlington. A Merlin in the Town of Springfield was spotted by Becky Gretton. Accipiters have been busy lately: one spotted by Marilyn Bailey in Oneonta left several piles of feathers as evidence of successful hunting; Stan Salthe found a pile of dove feathers one day, then subsequently found the lucky-but-now-tailless Mourning Dove.

Early December brought a flock of Eastern Bluebirds to Middlefield, seen by Kelly Branigan, who also reported a still-present resident Great Blue Heron. A Red-breasted Nuthatch visited Suzanne Gaynor's feeder in East Meredith. Barb Palmer managed to get pictures of the red(-ish) belly of a Red-bellied Woodpecker. Rick Bunting's post of 80+ Siskins verifies that the irruption continues, so keep your eyes peeled for those winter visitors!

***If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, [brights@hartwick.edu](mailto:brights@hartwick.edu) or 607 287-4465.***

# 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.

## January

**January 3** – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Pam Peters: [ovenbrdp@gmail.com](mailto:ovenbrdp@gmail.com) or 607-829-6545.

**January 5** – Climate Action Panel Discussion: Virtual Program. A special panel discussion from local and regional experts about actions that can be taken to reduce carbon emissions and begin planning for your step down program. Questions from our prior Climate Action presentations in November/December will be answered here by our panelists. A snapshot view of what you can do to address electricity, home or business heating, transportation, goods and services and more. The program begins at 7p.m. More information at <https://doas.us/event/climate-action-panel-discussion/>

**January 15** – DOAS Virtual Public Program: “Florida Reflections” with Rick Bunting sharing photos. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://doas.us/events/>.

**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](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

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

**January 23**– Eagle trip CANCELLED. As an alternative, we have prepared a map and written description of the route usually taken on the trip, with good eagle viewing locations marked. We encourage family groups to use this for their own eagle viewing adventure.

Get the map and description at <https://doas.us/self-guided-eagle-trip/> or contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

## February

**February 19** – DOAS Virtual Public Program: “Great Gray Owls” with wildlife photographer Kyle Dudgeon. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://doas.us/events/>.

## March

**March 2**– DOAS Board Mtg

**March 19** – DOAS Virtual Public Program: “Highlights from Down Under” with Dr. Pamela Lea, retired local veterinarian, describing and showing photos of her last big trip to Tasmania, Australia and New Zealand in the fall of 2019. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://doas.us/events/>.

## 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!**



Thank you to Rod Spangle, Antique Clock Repair in Unadilla for once again renewing a business sponsorship donation to support our Chapter's Programs and Activities for the 2020-21 Year. **SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT DOAS!** We are very appreciative of our business sponsors.

For information about becoming a business sponsor, please contact Susan O'Handley at [sjohandley@gmail.com](mailto:sjohandley@gmail.com)



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.  
PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820  
[www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)



For four days each February, the world comes together for the love of birds. To celebrate birds, participants watch, learn about, and count birds during the Great Backyard Bird Count, organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. Over the four days from February 12th to the 15th, people are invited to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them. These observations help scientists better understand global bird popula-

tions before the spring migration.

Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](https://birdcount.org). Each checklist helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share.

Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to ex-

## February 12-15, 2021 How many birds will you count?

perts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world. Go to <https://www.bird-count.org/participate/> to learn how to participate.



Belize Audubon Society/GBBCphoto