



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

COMING ACTIVITIES

April

April 16 – Virtual Program,
“Birds and Beans: Simple Ways to
Save Migratory Birds”

April 20 – DOAS Board Mtg

April 22-24 – Earth Festival

May

May 15 – DOAS Big Day Bird
Count

May 18 – DOAS Board Mtg

May 21 – Virtual Program,
“PhotoShare from Members and
Friends”

Summer

DOAS Summer Camp is
canceled; Family Programs
Planned.

More information on page 7

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



Bird Friendly Coffee

Want to order coffee? 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 accept-
ed. More at

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

BIRDS AND BEANS: SIMPLE WAYS TO SAVE MIGRATORY BIRDS with Pulitzer Prize Finalist, Scott Weidensaul

**IMPORTANT – THE DATE FOR THIS PROGRAM
HAS BEEN SHIFTED FROM MAY 21 TO APRIL 16**

Join us on Friday, April 16 at 7:30
p.m. for a very special program
with Scott Weidensaul. Since the
dawn of human imagination,
we have been spellbound by the
migration of birds, in which
even the smallest species traverse
immensities of space the way we
cross the street. But while the
populations of many migratory
birds are in drastic decline, there
are many things we can do to save
them. Naturalist and author Scott
Weidensaul explores the wonder
and mechanics of migration, and
the simple, effective ways we can
preserve them, from what we
plant in our gardens to what we
pour into our morning mug of
coffee.

Scott Weidensaul is the author
of more than two dozen books
on natural history, including the
Pulitzer Prize finalist *Living on the
Wind*. His newest book, *A World
of Wings* about global migration,
will be released in March 2021.
Weidensaul is a contributing ed-
itor for *Audubon*, a columnist for
Bird Watcher's Digest and writes
for a variety of other publications,



Scott Weidensaul, Photo by Chris DeSorbo

including *Living Bird*. He is also
an active field researcher, having
studied saw-whet owl migration
for more than two decades, as
well as winter hummingbirds,
bird migration in Alaska, and the
winter movements of snowy owls
through Project SNOWstorm,
which he co-founded.

Pre-Registration is required.

REGISTER AT

[https://doas.us/event/birds-beans-
save-birds/](https://doas.us/event/birds-beans-save-birds/)

Wait to Mow, Let Grassland Birds Grow

by Co-president Becky Gretton

Grasslands are ready to grow! There is evident interest in preserving and/or creating grassland bird habitat, and proper development and management of these potential nesting areas can help to increase the numbers of some declining species.

In November 2020 I listed some basic information about grasslands: https://doas.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/kf_nov20-1.pdf. Further research has provided a variety of information, and I will share links for further study in this article and on our web site at www.doas.us/grassland-birds/.

If you have potential grassland acreage or know someone who may be interested in this, now may be a good time to have a conversation. DOAS will recognize efforts with a simple sign if the landowner wishes!

Mass Audubon provides management resources directed towards land that is publicly owned or owned and managed by land trusts and other conservation NGOs. Privately owned land is equally valuable, but landowners must be able to handle the financial demands necessary to keep grassland habitat viable. General guidelines include not mowing after May 15 or before mid-July. The same nest-site fidelity that often dooms those birds returning to frequently mowed fields will guarantee their success under these circumstances.

www.massaudubon.org/content/download/19413/274073/file/Best-Management-Practices_Grasslands.pdf

The Grassland Bird Trust whose



Bobolink
Audubon Photo, Diane Taylor

mission is “Conserving critical habitat for endangered, threatened and rapidly declining grassland birds” offers a wealth of information focused on conserving land, preserving biodiversity, and mitigating climate change. Your time will be well spent at their website.

www.grasslandbirdtrust.org/

The Rochester Birding Association has posted a program featuring Allan Strong who addresses “Conserving Grassland Birds in Agricultural Landscapes.” This program is comprehensive, and I highly recommend spending time viewing this.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBHPp4Kzc8

Cornell Cooperative Extension has information entitled “Hayfield Management and Grassland Bird Conservation.”

www.nyfoa.org/application/files/6314/7948/6092/HayfieldsGrassland_Birds_3MB.pdf

NYSDEC offers general information on their website. Mention is made of monetary incentives for farmers who delay cutting, but that funding is no longer available.

www.dec.ny.gov/pubs/86582.html

“Grassland Birds” Continued to page 3

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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

Bird protection dodges a bullet—

It is a great pleasure to be able to write about positive actions in the environmental arena after 4 years of gloom and doom. I have focused on the good and the bad of activity surrounding the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), the basic and most important bird protection law we have. In simplest terms, the MBTA makes it a federal crime to kill or injure birds, with the exceptions of game and introduced species.

Through MBTA's century-plus existence, this meant harming birds either intentionally or unintentionally. However, in 2017, the Trump administration changed this interpretation, asserting that the law applied only to intentional harm. Had this misguided rule applied at the time of the Exxon Valdez and the Deepwater Horizon Gulf of Mexico oil spills, the responsible parties would have walked away with no obligation for the hundreds of thousands of birds that died in these disasters.

A federal judge reviewing the changed interpretation of the law ruled against the Trump administration, but the Interior Department pushed ahead regardless. However, as an indication of how important the MBTA is, President Joe Biden suspended the rule on his first day in office. Then, in early March, the new administration reversed the Trump administration, stating it *"overturned decades of bipartisan and international consensus and*



Scarlet Tanager
Audubon Photo, Linda Steele

allowed industry to kill birds with impunity."

There are still steps remaining to fully reverse the attack on the MBTA, including a public comment period. But it appears this critical bird protection has been rescued from the brink of extinction.

What You Can Do—Thank President Biden for his recognition of and immediate attention to this threat to birds.

Budget Time in Albany — The Governor and State Legislature are presently putting together their own proposed state budgets, including funding for environmental programs. So it is time to push for sufficient dollars for this important work.

The primary source of these monies is the Environmental Pro-

tection Fund. The State Senate has proposed \$300 million for the fund and the Assembly \$400 million. This supports wildlife programs, clean water projects, recycling, open space protection, and more.

In addition, the Senate proposes reintroducing a \$3 billion environmental bond act, to be approved by the voters. The bond act was dropped last year due to the Covid crisis.

What You Can Do— Contact your state legislators and ask them to work for a fully-funded Environmental Protection Fund and ask your Assemblymember to introduce and pass the Clean Water, Green Jobs, Green New York Bond Act this year. *Contact information can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, <https://doas.us/>.*

“Grassland Birds” Continued from page 2

Your interest and efforts are appreciated, and hopefully

your reward will be bubbling, piercing, buzzing and other fascinating sounds emanating from your grasslands.

One of the joys of visiting Florida in the winter is the excellent birding so common in the area around Sarasota. When I arrived this year, I was delighted to see several birds keeping a plastic Flamingo company in the backyard of the condo I rented. A majestic Great Egret came every day, joined by White Ibises, Cattle Egrets, and Snowy Egrets. A couple of days brought Wood Storks. All were awaiting food put out by my neighbor. His feeding of these birds made for a wonderful opportunity for me to see them up close and watch their behavior. Such a pleasure.... But somehow I began to feel that this was a little off. It bothered me to see these wild birds becoming used to getting close to humans. When I asked about what was being fed to the birds, I found out some of their favorite foods were hot dogs and dog food. Maybe both are good food sources for such birds, but I know they don't eat either in the wild, which added to my feelings of unease.

I asked myself if this is anything different from my feeding the wild birds in my backyard in upstate New York? I put out suet and various seeds that I hope are good for the birds that frequent my feeders. It got me thinking. The backyard birds bring me a great deal of enjoyment. But are there negative effects from feeding the birds, whether north or south?

Bird feeding has grown in popularity since the pandemic has kept us at home more of the time. Even before the pandemic, Bruce Beehler reports in his excellent article on the subject, that around 57



Great Egret Waiting at the Door for a Handout, photo by Janet Potter

million Americans feed the birds, spending \$4 billion on bird seed each year. See his article at <https://thehill.com/changing-america/opinion/538044-is-backyard-bird-feeding-good-for-our-feathered-friends>. That can make a big impact on bird populations, some positive and some negative. Among the negative effects, Mr. Beehler tells us that bird feeding can make birds vulnerable to predators like cats and hawks. He suggests that sometimes birds are more likely to strike windows because of the proximity of feeders to homes. He also reports that feeding birds can bring unintended consequence to the health, reproduction, behavior, demography, seasonal migration, and geographic distribution of particular species. He theorizes, as an example, that an increase in Blue Jay population because of ready supply of food at backyard feeders can negatively

impact other species. More Blue Jays could mean trouble for birds like the Wood Thrush which may experience an increase in egg theft by the larger population of Jays. And as Kathryn Davino detailed in her column last month, there is the possible problem of spreading disease through bird feeders.

We all must weigh these negatives against the positive effects of helping birds to survive in winter. But Beehler also says: "We feed the birds for one simple reason — this activity brings us joy. The birds that come into our yards are little missionaries from Mother Nature, giving us a direct link to the natural world around us, especially in a time of pandemic. If engaging with our neighborhood birdlife increases our awareness and appreciation for the natural world, that is a good thing." Certainly food for thought for all of us.

FEBRUARY-MARCH BIRD SIGHTINGS

BY SANDY BRIGHT

Late winter brought several reports of Carolina Wrens, a testament to the expansion of their range in recent decades. Two wrens wintered in West Burlington, a first for neighbors Tom Salo and Jonathan Dowdall. Wrens were also reported near Delhi (Barb and Fred Onasch), Otego (Joseph Happle), Treadwell (Ellen Sokolow, Dorian Huneke), and in Oneonta's east and west ends (Marilyn Bailey and Andy Mason).

In mid-February, Dorian Huneke heard a Pileated Woodpecker drumming and a Tufted Titmouse singing its early season calls. She also reported a juvenile Goshawk reducing the pigeon population at her sister's farm near Maryland. In Delhi, Blue Jays fussed when a young Goshawk perched above Kathryn Davino's feeders, eyeing a fat squirrel. Later, a Red-tailed Hawk swooped through, landing nearby. An occasional Cooper's Hawk visits Gerianne Carillo's feeders in Milford.

Later in February, 18 Cedar Waxwings foraged for crabapples in Cherry Valley (Bob Donnelly). Despite mostly frozen water, Hooded Mergansers paddled (Franklin, Pam Peters) and a Belted Kingfisher hunted (Richfield Springs, Becky Gretton). Both Pam and Becky also saw Eastern Bluebirds. A White-throated Sparrow visited Marilyn Bailey's yard in Oneonta. In Springfield Center, 20 Redpolls frequented Cindy Staley's feeders. Kathryn and Al Davino spotted American Robins in Meredith. Joseph Happle's feeders hosted

Red-breasted Nuthatches and up to a dozen Northern Cardinals in Otego.

It began to sound like spring, with House Finches singing in Oneonta (Andy Mason) and West Burlington (Tom Salo), Dark-eyed Juncos trilling in Richfield Springs (Becky Gretton), and Black-capped Chickadees "fee-bee"ing in Milford (Gerianne Carillo).



Ferruginous Hawk
Photo by Randy Lynch

Randy Lynch's sighting of a Ferruginous Hawk near Goshen, though not quite local, is unusual enough to note here, especially since he got some great photos. After the first Turkey Vulture report of the season (2/27, Oneonta), a few more were sighted in early March in Oneonta (Barb Palmer), Cooperstown (Sarah Root), and Davis State Park (Becky Gretton). Elliott Adams spotted two Black Vultures in Sharon Springs. A male Robin pecked at hawthorn apples near John Davis' house, then was replaced by a few Cedar Waxwings (Cooperstown). A large flock of Waxwings munched on dried crabapple-berries at Angelika Rashkoff's place in Cooperstown. Brown Creepers crept along trees in East

Meredith (Landa Palmer).

In the second week of March, several Rough-legged Hawks were reported, near Laurens, Oneonta, and Davenport (Charlie Scheim), and New Lisbon (Tom Salo). The "black birds" began to make appearances with Red-wings showing up on the 7th in Delhi (Kathryn Davino) and Jefferson, along with Brown-headed Cowbirds and Common Grackles (Barb Palmer). Canada Geese were on the move in Treadwell (Dorian Huneke), and were joined by Snow Geese in Cooperstown (John Davis) and Westford (Pam Peters).

Pam Peters spotted the first-of-season Killdeer near a flock of grazing turkeys (3/7, Franklin). At Brookwood Point David Diaz and Marcie Foster discovered Red Crossbills (3/10). Sarah Root found multiple Song Sparrows in Maryland.

In mid-March, Gerianne Carillo watched in awe as about 50 Common Redpolls flitted around her, one even landing on her seed-filled hand (Milford). Tom Salo observed a Fox Sparrow coasting over West Burlington. Jessie Ravage witnessed around 40 Turkey Vultures circling over Cooperstown, and the next day expressed concern about the Great Blue Heron standing next to the mostly frozen Otsego Lake. Early breeders began nest-building, with Common Ravens spotted carrying nesting material at Davis State Park (Tom Salo), Delhi (Kathryn Davino) and Davenport Center. Bluebirds began construction of a nest in Franklin (Pam Peters). Fred Onasch observed a second Eastern Screech-Owl joining the resident owl near Delhi, a good sign as breeding season begins!

If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, brights@hartwick.edu or 607 287-4465.

OPTICS RAFFLE 2021

WIN NIKON BINOCULARS AND SUPPORT DOAS!
Get your tickets today!

\$10 Donation per ticket. Only 250 tickets available.

Drawing Date: Friday, April 16, 2021, 7:30 p.m., during the online monthly program.

Proceeds to benefit the DOAS Sanctuary and Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch.

Purchase tickets and more information at doas.us/2021-optics-affle/



FIRST PRIZE

Nikon Monarch 7 Binoculars with Shoulder Harness
(Value \$510)

SECOND PRIZE

Nikon Monarch 5 Binoculars with Shoulder Harness
(Value \$310)

THIRD PRIZE

\$50 Gift Card to Wild Birds Unlimited, Johnson City, NY

You must be 18 years of age or older to purchase tickets. If you live outside our pick-up area, we will coordinate for first class mail to you. Shipping and Handling fees will be charged at cost.

MAY PROGRAM: PHOTOSHARE FROM MEMBERS AND FRIENDS



New Deadline to Submit is **April 30, 2021**, but submit as soon as possible.

Rescheduled: from April 16. For our **May 18 online program**, we will feature favorite birding photos from our members and friends! We have some talented photographers in our audience (both amateur and professional) and all are welcome to contribute. This is not a contest – it is a chance to share bird images. Each person may submit **UP TO THREE** of their favorite photos. Photos must have been taken by the person submitting our form – your own original images. Depending on the number of submissions we may need to select from among these for our program. Your description is very important. Include information about where the photo was taken, identification information if you can, and information about why it is a ‘favorite’ photo. Learn more and submit at <https://doas.us/share-your-favorite-bird-photos/>.

SUMMER CAMP CANCELED; FAMILY PROGRAMS PLANNED

Regrettably, we have made the determination again this year to not run the DOAS Summer Day Camp Programs. We are hopeful that we can resume in 2022.

As an alternative, we will be offering a series of 2-hour Family Programs on selected dates in late June through August. Topics to include Forest Animal Scavenger

Hunt Hike, Firefly Night Program, Pond Exploration and Activities and Insects and Field Activities. Full details to follow in the May Kingfisher and at the website at www.doas.us! To maintain proper safety protocols, pre-registration will be required with a limit on the numbers of participants per program.

Upcoming Activities

In Case You Missed It — Past Webinars Are Available Online at <https://doas.us/webinars/>.

April

April 16 – DOAS Virtual Program: “Birds and Beans — A Simple Way to Save Migratory Birds.” The webinar begins at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://doas.us/events/>. See article on page 1.

April 20–DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

April 22-24 –Earth Festival 2021: Visit <https://occainfo.org/earth-festival/> for complete details or call 607-547-4488.

May

May 15 – DOAS Big Day Bird Count: See article on

page 8.

May 18 –DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

May 21 – DOAS Virtual Program: “PhotoShare from Members and Friends.” The program begins at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://doas.us/share-your-favorite-bird-photos/>. See article on page 6.

Summer

DOAS Summer Camp is canceled; Family Programs Planned. Watch for announcement of a series of 2-hour Family Programs on selected dates in late June through August.

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 <https://doas.us/join-us/>

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

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



Like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

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 2020-21.

SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT DOAS!

For information about becoming a business sponsor, please contact Susan O’Handley at sjohandley@gmail.com.





DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820
<https://doas.us/>



Of the many events that have had to be canceled 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 15.** 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, 21 teams totaling 35 DOAS

Big Day participants found 108 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 8 Global Big Day because May 8 is a bit too early in the year for our location. A lot of late migrants can arrive during that extra week!