



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

May Program

PhotoShare from Members and Friends



Join the DOAS Board on Friday, May 21, at 7:30 p.m. on Zoom as we present shared favorite photos from our members and friends! We have some talented photographers in our audience (both amateur and professional) as well as avid birdwatchers. The online program

will feature some of *YOUR* favorite photos. Along with the photos, we will be sharing information from the photographer including where the photo was taken and why it is a 'favorite' photo. The program starts at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://doas.us/share-your-favorite-bird-photos/>.

Electric Vehicle Car Show

As part of the 2021 Climate Action Leadership Program, DOAS is presenting an Electric Vehicle Car Show at the Damaschke Field parking lot in Oneonta's Neahwa Park on Saturday, May 22 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Find information about how car owners, electric car dealerships and sponsors can participate at <https://doas.us/electric-car-show-2021-registration/>. Masks and social distancing will be required.



DOAS Big Day Bird Count

Reminder: the DOAS Big Day Bird Count is on Saturday, May 15. The Big Day is a group effort in which birders, working alone, in pairs, or in small groups, will 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. Last year, 21 teams totaling 35 DOAS 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 by email at 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!

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Changes in Store For the Hawkwatch

by *Co-president Andy Mason*

Spring is not usually the time our group focuses on the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch. However, we have been actively planning a much-needed improvement to the Hawkwatch to restore the view to its previous scope.

Trees grow—and over the 30-plus-year history of the lookout we have experienced this usually positive phenomenon with increasing alarm. The original view from the lookout included the far horizon from west of Winney Hill east to South Hill above Colliersville. Hawks could even be spotted in the valley below eye level. With ash, spruce, maple and other trees reaching for the skies, over half of the horizon is now blocked, including the important northeast view, and birds in the valley are increasingly undetected.

The Hawkwatch Committee and the Board of Directors have discussed the problem for a number of years, with no easy answer forthcoming. However, all concerned agree that the Hawkwatch is an important part of DOAS, providing long-term, scientifically valid data. In addition, more people are introduced to our Chapter through the Hawkwatch than any other means, and it generates a good share of our identity in the conservation and birding community.

Among the options considered have been a platform or tower to enable counters to see over the trees and moving the lookout to another

location. Both of these have significant drawbacks in terms of costs, safety and effectiveness. So the Board has decided to pursue clearing about 1/3 of an acre of trees which are the primary problem. This will involve Sanctuary land as well as property of our neighbor, who has generously allowed us to do this work.

The cleared area will be maintained as low vegetation, possibly with plantings of apple trees that will not reach a problematic height. As with any tree cutting, it will no doubt be unsightly at first but should recover to potential forest edge bird habitat within a year or two. The work is scheduled for late July or August to avoid interfering with bird nesting.

This will be an expensive endeavor, involving a professional crew and equipment and costing several thousand dollars. We hope members and the hawk watching community will help defray this expense, as they have with our conservation efforts in the past.

We have a good start towards this, recently receiving a \$2000 grant from Southern Tier Tuesdays, a philanthropic venture that provides grants each month to worthy non-profits. DOAS was nominated anonymously, and grant winners were chosen by popular vote. If you did vote for us in March, your support is much appreciated! We look forward to an improved Hawkwatch this fall.

Panoramic Photo by Andy Mason

DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC. FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Janet Potter

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Fundraising*: Dorian Huneke
Hawkwatch*: Andrew Mason
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Hospitality*: Kathryn Davino
Membership*: Janet Potter
Programs*: Becky Gretton
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Sanctuary*: Andrew Mason
Bird Counts: Sandy Bright
Charter Dinner: Kathryn Davino
Finance: Gray Mason
Historian: Rod Sutton
Sales*: Jane Bachman

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

Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

Lots of EV Buzz — There is much talk and some action in New York State and beyond on moving automobiles and even trucks toward electric propulsion to reduce fossil fuel use and resulting greenhouse gas emissions. Gasoline and diesel vehicles are the largest pollution and emissions source in NY and changing over from internal combustion engines will be a big part of reaching the state's emissions reduction goals of 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050.

Several bills promoting electric vehicles, or EVs, are before the New York State legislature:

- 100% Electric Vehicles by 2035 (A.4302/S.2758) — This bill sets a goal of requiring all passenger vehicles sold or leased in New York State be zero-emissions by 2035 and all medium and heavy-duty vehicles be zero-emission by 2045. California has already enacted similar standards.
- Clean Trucks (S.4097) — This legislation directs the Department of Environmental Conservation to



Nayax Photo

establish targets to phase in sales of zero emissions medium and heavy-duty vehicles with a goal of 40-75% by 2035.

- Leading by Example: EV State Procurement (S.2838-A) — This bill uses the power of state purchases to promote EVs. It directs the Office of General Services to develop a procurement plan requiring 25% of the state fleet be made up of zero emission vehicles (ZEV) by 2025 and 50% by 2030. By January 1, 2030, all passenger vehicles purchased or leased by the state must be ZEVs.
- Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (A.3876/S.3929) — This legislation directs the state's combination electric and gas utilities to provide alternative electricity

rates for EV charging stations. A widespread and available charging network is necessary for consumer confidence and convenience when considering EVs. Current utility rate structures can make owning and operating fast charging facilities cost prohibitive. This bill would make rates flexible and facilitate build-out of the charging network.

What You Can Do — Contact your state legislators and ask them to support these bills that will move NY State toward a cleaner and brighter future.

Contact information can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, <https://doas.us/>.

Government is not the only place for EV activity. Several major automobile manufacturers have committed to fully transition to electric vehicles over the next decade, including General Motors, Volvo, Volkswagen and Jaguar. Locally, DOAS is sponsoring an EV car show in Oneonta this spring — details on page 1 and on our web site at doas.us/electric-car-show-2021-registration/.

Bird Friendly Coffee



While Jane's Oneonta Porch sale venue has been open throughout the pandemic, you'll soon have an opportunity to buy in person! Bird-friendly coffee and DOAS hats, mugs and reusable bags will be available at the Electric Car Show scheduled for 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. on May 22, 2021 in the parking lot of Damaschke Field.

If you prefer to pick up an order from Jane's porch, please email 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 doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/.

Reminder: DOAS is now accepting applications for funding for Community Climate Action Projects, (local projects that address climate change through the Audubon in Action 2021 Community Climate Action grant program). The deadline is 5pm Friday, May 14, 2021. Details about this opportunity are available at doas.us/climate-action-rfp/.



THE NEW NORMAL

by DOAS Director Jane Bachman



Jane Bachman, on a birding adventure
Photo by Carolyn Wolf-Gould

I recently heard on the news that sales of recreational equipment--bicycles, campers and boats, for example--experienced a terrific upsurge in the past year. Restrictions on meeting inside made getting together in the great outdoors a much better option, and many found that exercise also helped to alleviate anxiety. Manufacturers are using the phrase 'the new normal' in the hope that the public's interest in outdoor recreation (and the toys needed for it) will persist even when mass vaccinations make it safer to gather inside again.

I was among those who found being outside a welcome option. I traded breakfast get-togethers for socially distant walks; and DOAS-led birding trips and the Birding by Ear event for online webinars and frequent treks into local state parks and preserves. At the same time, I was becoming involved with the Breeding Bird Atlas. While I didn't take responsibility for a 'block,' I regularly



Yellow-rumped Warbler photo by Landa Palmer

posted my sightings in the BBA portal of *e-bird*. In addition, I reconnected with a friend of many years over our mutual interest in birding. The gift of a new birding partner plus an incentive to get out birding frequently turned out to be a very bright spot for me, in a year that filled the world with anxiety, hardships, and tragedy.

Prior to 2020, my birding trips had been limited to April and May, months when many birds, perhaps most enjoyably warblers, migrate through our area--and when a lack of leaves makes it relatively easy to spot them. The objective of recording breeding behaviors for the BBA changed the way I watched birds. I birded from March right through the fall, and took my time, watching Canada Geese courting; a female Baltimore Oriole building a nest; a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker feeding its young. My friend and I sat near a small pond--probably for hours in total--where we watched Eastern Phoebes flitter out to catch insects, joining a half-dozen Yellow-rumped Warblers that flew around us as if it were an aviary. We learned to recognize the song of the Eastern Towhee and Black-throated Blue Warbler and were rewarded by their up-close-and-personal appearances. As the summer progressed, we came across a family of Common Mergansers, and from overhead heard a relentlessly noisy pair of young Ravens.

The fact that I was out so frequently--sometimes three or

four times a week--meant that I learned a lot, both about birds new to me, and about birds I've known all my life. I watched Red-winged Blackbirds, whose 'o-ka LEE' I knew well; but I'd never connected a loud, musical whistle with them, until I saw a male delivering his alarm note. My smugness over familiarity with the Eastern Phoebe's song faded once I became aware of the Alder Flycatcher's, and I had to wonder how many times I'd misidentified them. Having a birding partner meant that we could debate these and many other burning questions: Were we hearing a Red-eyed, Blue-headed or Yellow-throated Vireo? Which woodpecker did we hear drumming?

After what seemed a long winter, and despite a snowy and frigid start to spring, the light lengthened and the sound of birdsong accompanied my outings again. As the snow melted I walked the trails I'd followed over the last year, thinking about the progression of the seasons that I had seen as I really never had before.

I'm amping up my outings, and watching closely, for courtship displays, birds carrying nesting materials, etc. For me, *this* is my 'new normal.'

March-April Bird Sightings

By Sandy Bright

About a week before the official start of spring, with snow still falling, Dennis Fowler's feeders in Otego were "rife with birds." A pair of Hooded Mergansers graced the waters of Tom Salo's pond in West Burlington; a few days later, a Red-shouldered Hawk made a run at his feeders. Becky Gretton spotted the first Northern Flicker at Davis State Park (3/17), and an Eastern Screech-Owl peering out of a hole in a tree in Richfield Springs. A Merlin hung around Glenwood Cemetery in Oneonta (Andy Cooper). Kestrels arrived in Root (Jessie Ravage, 3/21) and an Eastern Phoebe sang in Treadwell (Pam Peters, 3/21).

Later in March, Barb Palmer snapped a picture of a Fox sparrow in Jefferson. Sarah Root heard a Winter Wren singing in a ravine and found a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Portlandville. A Common Redpoll visited Kathryn Davino's feeders (Delhi). In Springfield, Becky Gretton discovered American Woodcock displaying, and, spotting a large bird and expecting to find a Turkey Vulture, she instead identified an immature Golden Eagle. Andy Cooper did find vultures but of the Black rather than Turkey variety. He has been seeing between one and three near the Oneonta Home Depot since late February.

As March went out like a lamb, Tree Swallows swooped over Barb Palmers pond (Jefferson). Several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were spotted in Milford, with Charlie Scheim describing the dramatic

image of one male sporting the "yellowest belly I have ever seen on a Sapsucker set against the bright red of his throat."

April Fools Day brought a Brown Thrasher scraping in the snow under a Forsythia bush near Portlandville (Sarah Root), a Pine Warbler in Jefferson (Barb Palmer), Robins collecting nesting material in Treadwell (Dorian Huneke), and the return of Evening Grosbeaks to West Burlington (Tom Salo). In the next few days, Kathryn Davino reported Fox Sparrows in Delhi, Buffleheads paddled Barb Palmer's pond in Jefferson, and Sarah Root found a Hermit Thrush in the woods (4/4) and a pair of Wood Ducks scouting out nest holes (Portlandville). Great Blue Herons were busy in a rookery near Cooperstown (Jessie Ravage). The first Osprey was reported hunting over Summit Lake (Becky Gretton, 4/6). Rick Bunting spotted the first Swamp Sparrow of the season (4/7), and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers began their ritual drumming in Cooperstown (John Davis).

Coming into the second week of April, a Saw-whet Owl commenced tooting in Portlandville (Sarah Root). Landa Palmer began hearing the distinctive winnowing of a Wilson's Snipe (East Meredith). Os-



Buffleheads- Photo by Barb Palmer



*Eastern Bluebirds
Photo by Barb Palmer*

prey were located at many of their known nests in the area, including in Springfield (Becky Gretton), Goodyear Lake (Andy Mason), Colliersville (Randy Lynch) and Middlefield (Bob Donnelly). Becky Gretton listened to a Louisiana Waterthrush singing in a ravine (Richfield Springs, 4/10). Barb Palmer discovered Eastern Meadowlarks (4/11, Jefferson). On the 12th, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet sang in Springfield (Becky Gretton), and a Winter Wren brightened Suzanne Gaynor's morning walk in East Meredith. Kathryn Davino reported Chipping Sparrow in Delhi (4/13). The 14th brought Blue-headed Vireo to Portlandville (Sarah Root), Savannah Sparrows to Franklin (Pam Peters), and a Sandhill Crane circling fairly high over Springfield (Becky Gretton and Cindy Staley). Barb Palmer spotted the first Eastern Towhee on the 15th (Jefferson).

Over in Bovina, Jane Cormad enjoyed the spring bounty of birds, including Purple Finches and a pair of Bluebirds, which have been visiting her suet feeder. When she watched an immature Bald Eagle grab the heron decoy from her pond and try to drag it away, she expressed hope that it would soon improve its hunting savvy!

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



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 fundraiser, and to Barry Stevens of *Wild Birds Unlimited* in Vestal, NY!

Congratulations to our Optics Raffle winners!

1st prize – Walter Ashley, Cooperstown

2nd prize – Rod Spangle, Unadilla

3rd prize – Laura Tuite, Susquehanna, PA

Board News

Upcoming Election

The DOAS Nominating Committee (Jane Bachman, Chair; Landa Palmer, Pam Lea, Laura Kilty) will present seven candidates for election to the Board of Directors at the May 21, 2021 online program meeting. Directors' terms are two years. The nominated slate includes the following incumbents: Kathryn Davino, Susan O'Handley, Landa Palmer, Pam Peters, and Janet Potter. The following candidates are also on the slate:

Robbie Katz, a graduate of Cooperstown HS as well as the Cooperstown Graduate Program in Museum Studies, is currently working with co-president Susan O'Handley on the Climate Change Grant.

Nathan Cutting, a teacher of Biology & Environmental Science at Walton Central School, earned a B.S. in Conservation Biology from SUNY-ESF and an MAT in Biology Adolescence Education from Binghamton University. He assisted in the placing of the new signage at the Hawk Watch in 2020.

Nominations also may be made from the floor at the May program webinar.

Proposed Bylaws Change

The Board is reviewing a proposed bylaws change to authorize Board Meetings being held digitally. Please contact any Board member if you have comments.

Article III - Board of Directors

Section 6

Meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held at least once a year, at the discretion of the President or a majority of Directors. (PROPOSED ADDITION) *Board Meetings may be held virtually provided that all directors have access to communications for the meeting (phone, computer, other) and provide consent to electronic format.*

New Policies Approved

The following DOAS policies were approved at the April meeting of the Board of Directors.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: Diverse perspectives are essential for the effective achievement of the vision and mission of our organization. We respect the individuality of each member of our community, and we are committed to providing an environment that is free of any kind of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, national or ethnic origin, politics, income level, or veteran status.

Operational Code of Ethics: DOAS Board, Staff and Volunteers, as representatives of the organization, will be held to the highest ethical standards in their behavior when interacting with each other and members of the public, particularly when carrying out related operational tasks and responsibilities. (This also applies to those participating in projects and events that are presented by DOAS.)



Like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

Upcoming Activities

May

May 15 – DOAS Big Day Bird Count: The Big Day is a group effort in which birders, working alone, in pairs, or in small groups, will try to locate as many bird species as possible. Contact is Charlie Sheim (607-434-4880 (voice or text) or sheimc@hartwick.edu). See article on page 1.

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 1.

May 22 – DOAS Electric Vehicle Car Show: Damaschke Field parking lot in Oneonta’s Neahwa Park, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Information about how car owners, electric car dealerships and sponsors can par-

ticipate: <https://doas.us/electric-car-show-2021-registration/>. Masks and social distancing will be required.

Summer

DOAS Summer Family Programs (Registration information will be posted in the June Belted Kingfisher). See article on page 8. All programs will be held at the DOAS Sanctuary.

June 27 – Forest Animal Scavenger Hunt Hike: 2-4 p.m.

July 9 – Nature’s Symphony and Fireworks: beginning at 8:15 p.m. Bring a container for fireflies catch and release.

August 7 – Insects and Field Activities: 2-4 p.m.

August 21 – Pond Exploration: 2-4 p.m.

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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

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.



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: \$ _____



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
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<https://doas.us/>



Summer Family Programs Planned

We really didn't want to cancel the DOAS John G. New Summer Day Camp Program for the second year in a row but felt that it was best to err on the side of caution. Instead, we have come up with alternative programs for families

- two-hour time slots where the need for materials and bathrooms are minimal. Registration for these special programs will be available soon with information going to DOAS members first as space will be limited (2 instructors, 20 people total per program). Information will be in the June issue of the *Belted Kingfisher* before it is promoted online. A special thank you to camp directors Liz Brown and Christina DeCesare for their fine work in putting together this wonderful alternative!

Forest Animal Scavenger Hunt Hike: Sunday, June 27, 2-4 p.m. Who travels the trails at the Audubon preserve when people are not around? Join us as we hike through

the woods and fields looking for signs of wildlife.

Nature's Symphony & Fireworks: Friday, July 9 beginning at 8:15 p.m. Join us to learn about nature at night. Crickets and owls, bats and fireflies all have something to share. We'll talk. We'll walk. We'll look and listen. Then, finish by catching some fireflies. Bring a container for catch and release.

Insects and Field Activities: Saturday, August 7, 2-4 p.m. Summer is a great time to learn about insects! Grab a net and head into the fields with us to get a close-up look at these tiny (and not-so-tiny) creatures that are all around us.

Pond Exploration: Saturday, August 21 2-4 p.m. Ponds provide great habitat for all sorts of creatures, from tiny arthropods to frogs and great blue herons. Bring your family to explore the pond at Audubon through observation, activities, and crafts.

Mark your calendars now and check the June newsletter for registration information.