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September 2021

THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

2021 Fall Open House

On Saturday, October 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Delaware Otsego Audubon Society will host an open house at the DOAS Sanctuary and Hawkwatch on Franklin Mountain. The event is free and open to the public. We ask all visitors to practice Covid safety measures, to maintain a 6-foot distance from anyone not in their party and to wear masks when that isn't possible. The address of the Sanctuary is Grange Hall Spur Road, Oneonta; directions at doas.us/conservation-and-environment/franklin-mountain-sanctuary/.

At 10 a.m., one of the Franklin Mountain hawk counters will conduct a workshop on how to identify flying hawks. Two activities are planned at 11 a.m. A special activity for kids will take place at the barn. Also at 11, a trail walk around the Sanctuary will end at the Hawkwatch. At 12:30 p.m. Wildlife Rehabilitator, Missy Runyan from the Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center will feature live raptors. Missy's presentation is always a treat for children and adults.

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Saturday, October 2
10am-2pm

Hawk ID Workshop
Activities for Children
Guided Trail Hike
Live Birds of Prey
Bird-friendly Coffee
Free Refreshments
2021 Bucket Raffle

2021



HAWKWATCH
OPEN HOUSE

at the DOAS Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain
www.doas.us/2021-hawkwatch-open-house/



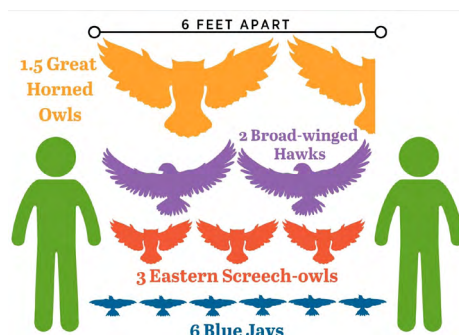
Fall Programs, Precautions Continue

by Co-president Andy Mason

There has been much discussion among the DOAS Board of Directors in recent weeks regarding how to proceed—or not—with fall activities, in light of the fluctuating Covid-19 situation. We circulated a questionnaire to members to seek their views on these matters. Based on responses and on easing of governmental rules, we thought our organization could largely return to pre-pandemic practices, with some limitations. However, recommendations to that effect from a board sub-committee had to be reconsidered at the August Board meeting.

Fall is a busy time for our Chapter, with startup of public programs and the Hawkwatch, our annual dinner, seed sale and Sanctuary Open House. All of these involve gatherings of people, some indoors and some outside, and the board decided to err on the side of caution for these activities.

It was determined to continue our public programs via Zoom for the present time, as we have done for over a year now. There has been a good response to these presentations, with attendance often exceeding that for in-person programs. An added outcome of members' comments and board discussion is that DOAS is exploring the possibility of live streaming programs when in-person programs do resume. This would provide a choice of attending or viewing online. Watch this space for more on this possibility.



Regarding the Charter Dinner, it was decided that this event also posed too high a risk for this year. It too will continue as a virtual event with a great speaker and online raffle—details elsewhere in this issue.

The bird seed sale will not take place this fall—not a victim of Covid, but of concern over an illness striking birds in states to our south. The cause and spread of this disease has still not been determined, but recommendations to take in feeder as a precaution make promoting bird seed questionable. This has been a successful fund-raiser for our Chapter, but hopefully this loss will be made up by a planned spring native plant sale.

And on the bright side, the Sanctuary Open House will take place as planned on October 2, with precautions to mask and distance when crowds gather, and sans refreshments. Similarly, the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch will start up on time in late August—see the article on page 8—with distancing
“Precautions” Continued to page 3

**DELAWARE - OTSEGO
AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.**
FOUNDED 1968

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

Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

2021 NY State Legislative Session—Opportunities Missed—

The NY State Legislature wrapped up its 2021 session in mid-June with a mixed record of environmental action. Regarding birds in particular, three positive measures moved forward but fell short of final approval. The Birds and Bees Protection Act would have put New York in the forefront of protecting critical pollinators, including insects and birds, from the class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, or neonics for short. These chemicals are increasingly recognized as a cause of declines in numbers of insects such as bees and butterflies. They no doubt affect other insects, including those on which birds are heavily dependent during nesting and other periods. Birders have commented on a recent scarcity of swallows and other insectivorous birds. There may well be other factors, but putting an end to neonics, which are readily replaced in agriculture and other uses, would be a definite plus for birds.

A second piece of legislation would have added protection to smaller wetlands that currently fall below the state's 12.4 acre threshold. These areas lost federal protection due to a court decision



*Leslie Larsen
Audubon Society Photo*

several years ago, and currently may be drained or filled or otherwise altered, with the obvious loss of bird habitat. Other environmental benefits such as flood and drought mitigation, groundwater recharge, carbon storage and water purification also disappear when wetlands are compromised. Small wetlands need to be protected by New York State to fill the current regulatory gap.

A bill to ban lead ammunition on state-owned land and lands within the New York City drinking watershed passed the State Senate but was not voted on in the Assembly. Fragmented lead bullets in deer carcasses and gut piles pose a major threat to eagles and other scavenging birds—a piece of lead the size of a grain of rice is sufficient to kill an eagle.

Non-toxic alternatives that are ballistically superior are available for hunters and would eliminate this danger to both wildlife and human health.

Each of these measures had good support in the legislature but was held back from final votes in the end-of-session rush that characterizes Albany politics. They will be considered in the next session. Conservationists should let their representatives know they are important and deserve passage.

There was some positive action in Albany this year however: the legislature agreed to put a \$3 billion environmental bond act on the ballot in 2022. If passed, a portion of these funds would go to acquiring and protecting forests and other lands. On this year's ballot will be an amendment to the State Constitution stating that "Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment." This provision can be used to address polluted air, land and waters to the benefit of all wildlife.

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

When you tug at a single thing in nature, you find it is hitched to the rest of the world. — John Muir

"Precautions" Continued from page 2 rules to protect the counters and safety recommendations for visitors.

So with two steps forward and one step back, we will continue to connect with our members and the public as best we can, with safety in mind. What winter and spring will bring cannot be predicted and most likely the best laid plans will need to be revisited. We thank all for your continued interest and support of DOAS and look forward to communing once again!

"Favorite Stories from 2021," with Rick Bunting

Rick Bunting, photographer, storyteller, and nature lover will once again treat us to this season's favorites. In the past we have enjoyed photographs from Florida, the Bainbridge, NY area and other environs where Rick captures what may seem everyday and turns it into magic with insight, humor and appreciation. We have learned little-known facts through Rick's research. We will enjoy many laughs and experience inspiration as he finds that which connects us with nature.



Photos by Rick Bunting

Rick will join us virtually. We are grateful for this season's highlights from behind the camera lens.

**Join us on Zoom,
September 17th at 7:30 p.m.
Pre-Registration is required.
REGISTER TODAY AT
doas.us/2021-favorite-stories-from-rick-bunting**

54th Charter Celebration, featuring Scott Weidensaul's presentation: "The Northern Saw-whet Owl"



*Scott Weidensaul with Saw-whet Owl
Audubon Connecticut Photograph*

Mark Your Calendars for the 54th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, taking place on Friday, October 15, 2021 starting at 6:30 p.m. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, we will not be hosting our usual Charter Dinner in-person this

year. After reviewing the results of our online survey and after lengthy discussion, the DOAS Board of Directors, out of an abundance of caution, concluded that it would be best to forgo the in-person dinner.

Like last year, the celebration will take place completely online. The familiar Bucket Raffle is currently underway and has gone virtual. It features many fine items generously donated by local artisans and patrons. Photos of all raffle items and information for how to obtain raffle tickets are available online at doas.us/2021-charter-celebration. For patrons who do not use the internet, we will gladly mail you the raffle information. Contact us by phone at 607-397-3815 or by mail at PO

Box 544, Oneonta, 13820.

Our featured presenter will be naturalist and author Scott Weidensaul, who provided a captivating program for us in April on the wonders of migration. His Zoom presentation for the Charter Celebration will focus on the smallest owl found in the east, the Northern Saw-whet Owl, a species he has been researching for over a quarter of a century.

A donation of \$25 is suggested (but not required) in lieu of dinner fees. You must register in advance for the celebration/webinar at doas.us/2021-charter-celebration by October 15th. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. You will receive a reminder email the day before the event.

Summer Bird Sightings

By Sandy Bright

May is a time for lingering winter birds to finally depart. The last sighting of Evening Grosbeaks was near Oneonta, by Nancy and Betty New (5/16). A Snowy Owl was reported in East Worcester by Alice Pantaleoni (5/24). It's also a time for late summer migrants to finally appear. The May Big Day count brought Eastern Wood-pewee (Julia Gregory); Red-eyed Vireo, Bank and Rough-winged Swallows, and Nashville, Bay-breasted, and Magnolia Warblers (Randy and Carol Lynch). Arriving in the following days were Black-billed Cuckoo and Canada Warbler (Pam Peters, 5/17, Cannonsville Reservoir); Cedar Waxwings (Linda Burkhart, 5/19, Franklin); Tennessee and Blackpoll Warblers (Becky Gretton, Cindy Staley, 5/20, Springfield); Mourning Warbler (Charlie Scheim, 5/23, Laurens).

Early breeders were busy raising young, while others were getting started. Barb Palmer enjoyed watching a female Common Merganser, six chicks riding on her back, two paddling frantically to keep up (5/25, Otsego Lake). Tom Salo lost sleep when a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker drummed on his gutter downspout for about 2 ½ hours early one morning.

Poor weather and lack of insects seemed to be responsible for concern about nest failures and fewer

sightings of swallows. Several people, including Kevin Berner in Seward and Tom Salo in West Burlington, noted a significant decrease in the Tree Swallow population, though Kathryn Davino in Delhi and Alice Pantaleoni in East Worcester found their swallow numbers stable. In early June, Dorian Huneke was relieved when Barn Swallows returned to their nest in Treadwell.

Sometimes birds act in unexpected ways. Sarah Root watched a Downy Woodpecker eating from an orange put out for Orioles. Barb Onasch had Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Gray Catbirds going for an orange and grape jelly. A Bald Eagle carrying hay had Suzanne Gaynor puzzled; was it building a nest at this late date, or did it pick up the hay accidentally when grabbing something else? (East Meredith) Over in Deposit, Stan Salthe wasn't the only one watching as a caterpillar dangled on a silk thread from a branch: suddenly a Brown Thrasher swooped in and snatched it from mid-air!

In Milford, Gerianne Carillo reported both good and bad news: Bluebirds successfully raised chicks on her property, but Blue Jays raided a nearby Chickadee nest. A Broad-winged Hawk flew low overhead as Dorian Huneke crossed a small field (Treadwell).

A family of Woodcocks kept Bob Donnelly waiting to use his driveway in Cherry Valley (6/28).

In mid-July, two more Osprey nests were reported, in Colliersville (Marion Mossman, Carly Carillo) and Cherry Valley (Bob Donnelly). Gerianne's neighbor discovered a wren nest built in her hammock swing (Milford). Sarah Root watched as a pair of Least Flycatchers chased a Blue Jay, diving and snapping their beaks at it, likely defending a nest. Jane Cormack was amused by the bald Red-winged Blackbird on her deck in Bovina.

In late summer, some larger birds tend to wander far from their breeding grounds. Laura Hurley discovered a Double-crested Cormorant on Goodyear Lake. I found a Great Egret flying over Unadilla Forks and was invited to view a Roseate Spoonbill "vacationing" at a pond near Delancey. By the time this is published, they and many others will be back in warmer places.



Roseate Spoonbill
Photo by Landa Palmer

DOAS Officers Elected

The Board met in August and elected officers for the 2021-2022 term. All incumbent officers were re-elected. They are co-presidents Becky Gretton, Andy Mason, Susan O'Handley; secretary Dorian Huneke; and treasurer Charlie Scheim. We thank them for their willingness to serve.

Bird Seed Sale Suspended

By Jane Bachman

Since the spring, concerning numbers of fledgling songbird deaths in the Southeastern and mid-Atlantic states have been reported, as a result of a disease whose symptoms include crusty eyes, tremors, and difficulty standing. The cause of this disease is unknown as of this writing.

While cases have been reported in Pennsylvania and Connecticut, so far there have been no cases officially reported in New York State. All the same, last month New York Audubon recommended that bird feeders and bird baths be removed from yards in order to eliminate places where birds gather and where the potentially infectious disease might be transmitted.

As a result, after much discussion, and out of an abundance of caution, the board of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society has decided to suspend the annual seed sale this year.

We will still offer for sale our delicious Bird-Friendly coffee, DOAS mugs and reusable bags with the Kingfisher logo, and Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch

baseball caps--all great ideas for holiday gifts! A price list is below; orders may also be placed on the DOAS website or by contacting Jane Bachman at 607-431-9509 or bachmanj@hartwick.edu. **The deadline for orders is October 31.** Orders will be fulfilled before the deadline depending on availability. Pick-up may be arranged on the front porch of 43 Church Street, Oneonta.

We will look forward to resuming our seed sale next year!



Support DOAS and help the birds by buying Smithsonian-certified bird-friendly coffee. More information at <https://www.birdwatching-bliss.com/bird-friendly-coffee.html>

Birds & Beans Bird Friendly Coffee:

American Redstart Light Roast, 12 oz ground or whole bean	\$ 9.50
American Redstart Light Roast, 2 lb ground or whole bean	26.00
Scarlet Tanager Dark French Roast, 12 oz ground or whole bean	9.50
Scarlet Tanager Dark French Roast, 2 lb ground or whole bean	26.00
Chestnut-sided Warbler Medium Roast, 12 oz ground or whole bean	9.50
Chestnut-sided Warbler Medium Roast, 2 lb ground or whole bean	26.00
Wood Thrush Medium Roast, 12 oz ground or whole bean	9.50
Wood Thrush Medium Roast, 2 lb ground or whole bean	26.00
Baltimore Oriole French Roast Decaf, 12 oz ground or whole bean	13.50
Baltimore Oriole French Roast Decaf, 2 lb ground or whole bean	28.00
Kingbird Espresso Roast, 12 oz ground or whole bean	13.50
Kingbird Espresso Roast, 2 lb ground or whole bean	28.00

DOAS Gear:

DOAS Kingfisher 15 oz mug	10.00
Reusable bag with Kingfisher logo	5.00
Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch baseball cap	20.00

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!

Please Note: Your mailing label on the back page of this newsletter will inform you of your membership expiration date. This is the only notice you receive to let you know you need to renew your membership. Thanks for rejoining when your membership expires.

Upcoming Activities

September

September 17 – DOAS Virtual Public Program: “Favorite Stories from 2021” with Rick Bunting sharing photos. The Zoom program begins at 7:30 p.m. Register at doas.us/2021-favorite-stories-from-rick-bunting. See article on page 4.

September 21 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

October

October 2 – Open House: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at DOAS Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain. Join us for a Raptor ID workshop at 10, a children’s activity at 11 a.m. concurrent with a trail walk for others. At 12:30 p.m. Wildlife Rehabilitator, Missy Runyan from the Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center will present and describe live raptors. More information on

page 1.

October 16 – 54th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society: Our virtual celebration will feature author and naturalist Scott Weidensaul’s presentation “The Northern Saw-whet Owl” See article on page 4 and register at doas.us/2021-charter-celebration.

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

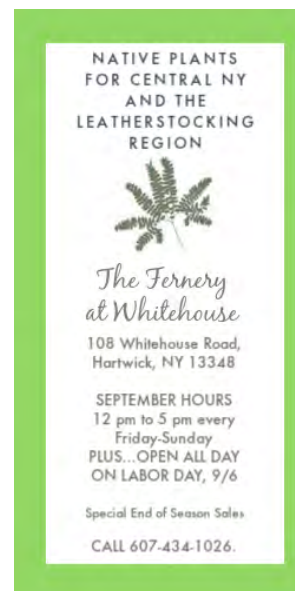
October 31 – Coffee Order Deadline by 5 p.m. See article on page 6.

November

November 19 – DOAS Public Program: “American Crows” During our Zoom program, Dr. Anne Clark of Binghamton University will speak about her research on the American Crow.

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

2021 Business Sponsors Support Those Who Support DOAS!



The mission of Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society is to protect our natural environment and connect people with nature to benefit birds and other wildlife through conservation, education, research and advocacy.



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

Hawkwatch is Underway

By Andy Mason

The 33rd consecutive season of counting at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch was scheduled to begin on August 22. The hawkwatch, located on the DOAS Sanctuary off Grange Hall Road, will continue into early January, covering portions of 6 months, with temperatures varying over the seasons from eighty degrees to below zero at times.

Along with the change in weather comes a change in birds, with Broad-winged Hawks and Osprey leading the charge, and Golden Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks bringing up the rear. In between will be a mix of 16 different species of raptors that pass by the Hawkwatch lookout.

Last season Broad-winged Hawks made an excellent showing, with a record season total of

2951. The big day came on September 11, with a tally of 912. The season total represents an 84% jump over average. Broad-wings are a hit-and-miss species, but have favored us with good flights in recent years. They are largely responsible for last year's total raptor count of 5438, slightly above average.

Best chances for a good Broad-wing flight come in the middle two weeks of September, on a relatively calm day, with sunshine to provide the rising thermals of warm air the birds use to gain elevation. The species travels in flocks of 20-30 birds, or more.

Visitors and spotters are always welcome at the Hawkwatch. For more information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or



Broad-winged Hawk
Photo by Rick Bunting

Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, email at salothomas@gmail.com.

Forecasts of anticipated good flights at the hawkwatch are sent out by email a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit www.franklinmt.org to sign up. Daily tallies from Franklin Mountain are also available by email—contact Andy Mason as above.

More information and directions to the Hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at www.franklinmt.org.