



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

THROUGH THE EYES AND LIVES OF CROWS

November Virtual Program

Anthropogenic change, especially urbanization and climate change, is challenging all organisms, including humans, to adapt. Evolutionary ecologists predict that behaviorally more flexible animals, especially those that learn and transmit information socially, will adapt most successfully. Crows and Ravens (*Corvus* sp.) certainly fit our idea of behaviorally flexible, generalist species with plenty of cognitive capacity.

Based on a 30-year study of one population in Ithaca, NY, Anne Clark will introduce you to the complex social world of American Crows, how they do or don't fit our expected "urban adaptor," but also how even small cities are dynamic environments that continue to challenge them. Finally, she will



Dr. Anne Clark

Photo from CrowRoosts.org

extend the discussion to crow species globally, to the scientific and ecological value of this surprisingly diverse group, and to the possibility that many crow species could disappear in the face of complacency and anthropogenic change.

Her research team includes her collaborator, Dr. Kevin McGowan of Cornell University, and more than a dozen Binghamton University graduate students.

Dr. Anne Clark is a behavioral ecologist at Binghamton University. She is broadly interested in the evolution and ecology of animal social behavior. She has taught classes in "Animal Behavior", "Primate Behavioral Ecology" and "Behavior and Disease" plus diverse graduate seminars.

Join us on Zoom,

November 19th at 7:30 p.m.

Pre-Registration is required.

Registration Information can be found at the DOAS Website at <https://doas.us/through-the-eyes-and-lives-of-crows/>

Mark Your Calendar — Our January program will feature nature photographer, writer and naturalist Kyle Dudgeon. He

will take us through his journey as an interpretive guide in one of America's wild places, Yellowstone National Park. Experiences amongst grizzly bears, wolves and bison represent the true embodiment of the American west still found in this place; but drastic growth in annual visitation threaten the security of that wildness moving forward. Join us by Zoom on January 21st at 7:30 p.m.



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"I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape - the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn't show." — Andrew Wyeth

Peace, Quiet, and Nature's Beauty

by Co-president *Becky Gretton*

The unfortunate developments over the last twenty months have had unfathomable consequences, most of which do not need to be reviewed at this time. The incredible quiet in the countryside during this time has taken me back many years to days when real quiet existed in the airways, on streets and waterways, and in the woods. Now I once again find myself stopping the car to check out a bird with no other vehicles in sight, while reminding myself that UPS or FedEx can and will show up frequently. I've appreciated increased opportunities to bird by ear in many locations without fighting through simultaneous sounds produced by mankind. It usually takes a drive to the Adirondacks to seek this form of

peace. I muse about the possible benefits to wildlife that this may have afforded.

The trees are changing as I write this, and the beautiful back roads where quiet birding has always been most likely to occur are riotous with colors that change daily. It seems to come as a surprise each fall, with this fall being especially beautiful. I find it to be an antidote to anxiety, so timely right now.

There has been concern about American Kestrel populations in decline. Happily, my traditional places to spot them have once again come through this season with Kestrels perched on their usual wires. Much-needed good news is especially meaningful these days. May we share more of it as time marches on!



Autumn Colors; Photo by Becky

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.

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The Belted Kingfisher, email:
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Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

California oil spill highlights offshore drilling threats — The recent underwater oil pipeline break and resulting contamination off the southern California coast is the latest in an ongoing series of spills from oil production on both coasts and the Gulf of Mexico. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, thousands of oil spills occur in US waters each year, but most are small, spilling less than one barrel of oil.

Since the iconic 1969 oil well blowout in Santa Barbara, California, there have been at least 44 oil spills, each over 10,000 barrels (420,000 gallons), affecting U.S. waters. The largest of these was the 2010 Deepwater Horizon well blowout in the Gulf. These spills often reach beaches and wetlands, directly oiling birds and other wildlife, and damaging habitat with long-lasting effects.

The California spill affected endangered Snowy Plovers among other birds. The timing, falling between nesting and peak migration seasons, was considered

fortuitous, but a natural resource assessment has not yet been done.

What You Can Do — Let your federal legislators and President Biden know that offshore oil drilling and production should end, and certainly not be expanded. These accidents will continue and likely increase with aging infrastructure and stronger storms.

MBTA Protections to be restored — In a much more positive development, the Biden administration announced on September 29 its intention to restore protections of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland stated, “The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, one of our first environmental laws, represents more than 100 years of America’s commitment to protecting migratory birds and restoring declining bird populations.”

In revoking some of the most important provisions of the Act on his way out of office on January 7, former President Trump would have given a free ride to those responsible for oil



Oiled Scoter
Brocken Inaglor, Wikimedia

spills such as those described above. President Biden put the action on hold shortly after being inaugurated and has now moved to make it permanent.

What You Can Do — Thank President Biden for following through on his promise to restore the MBTA. Also, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will soon be accepting public comments on hopefully strengthening and broadening bird protections. Watch this space for information on how to express your views.

Legislative contacts can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, www.doas.us

Thank you to all who supported the bird seed sale!



DON'T FORGET! PRODUCT PICK UP
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 9 a.m. - 11a.m.

Pick up is at VP Supply Corp, 69 Country Club Road, Oneonta, NY.

Here are some other ways to Support DOAS (and do some holiday shopping!): Birds and beans coffees, Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch hats, DOAS mugs and reusable bags may be ordered by contacting Jane Bachman for porch pickup in Oneonta. More information at <https://doas.us/shop/>.

November Musings

By DOAS Director Nate Cutting

November harkens the foreboding shadow of winter to some but brings the glow of anticipation to New York's many hunters. I'm not sure how many of our DOAS members pursue the ancient tradition of hunting, but I thought I'd share a sportsman's perspective as we approach the most exciting time of year for hunters. It was while earning my B.S. in Conservation Biology at SUNY-ESF that I developed a new respect for hunting. I grew up hunting a little, but by high school I thought the practice cruel and outdated. That later changed when a Wildlife Ecology and Management professor and avid hunter described to us one day the scientific merits of hunting that don't make it into influential children's movies like *Bambi* or *The Fox and the Hound*: that while hunting certainly isn't for everyone, it is the most valuable tool for wildlife management given our extirpation of top predators. As Aldo Leopold so poetically noted in *Thinking Like a Mountain*, the wanton appetite of too many deer and not enough predators can devastate forest ecosystems. More influentially, he taught us that responsible, mature hunters do not hunt out of cruelty or bloodlust, or even a desire to fill tags, but out of a deep, loving respect for animals and their precious ecosystems. I started hunting more seriously after that lecture and was hooked after finally stalking and successfully taking my first gray squirrel, a wild one

from a Wildlife Management Area, mind you, not the tame ones raiding your bird feeders—it may not sound like much, but wild squirrel hunting is much harder than you might imagine.

It's difficult to articulate to non-hunters why I enjoy hunting, but for me (as a still-hunter that prefers to creep through habitat rather than sit in a treestand or blind), being on a hunt is when I feel a part of nature, not just an eager observer. I need to use all my senses while hunting: to look, listen, and smell, feel the wind, and acknowledge my almost unconscious intuitions. I need to predict the movements of wild animals that must think I am (at best) an unwelcome guest in their home. They have no conception that I hold the deed to this property; to them I am the stranger that needs to be avoided. I need to notice the unnoticeable, to sense the movements of a creature acutely adapted to avoiding predators like me.

Fair-chase hunting is not about taking an animal every time you go afield, and suspiciously successful hunters (if not outright poachers) that illicitly use bait, trespass, hunt out-of-season or without a license are more reprehensible to responsible hunters than they are even to non-hunters. I've only taken two bucks, two grouse, and a handful of squirrels in the last seven years but I've never come home feeling unsuccessful on those many trips in-between be-



Selfie of Nate (right) on a Grouse hunt with his father, Steve Cutting (left)

cause every minute spent hunting satiates that desire to feel one with nature. Seeing a Blue Jay cock her head at me, wondering why I'm sitting on her rock wall, or flocks of migrating birds feeding as they head south is success enough, and seeing a game animal without having a clean shot is still a win in my book, because at least you were adept enough to see one.

During the times when an animal is cleanly taken, the adrenaline rush of success is coupled with a feeling of remorse, but I am reconciled knowing that the animal will feed my family some of the most natural, eco-friendly, healthy meat available; that the animal died quickly and humanely rather than feeling winter's slow starvation or a predator's painful maw; that the money I and millions of other hunters have happily paid through license fees, Duck Stamps, and the Pittman-Robertson Act's tax on firearms and ammunition has gone to fund conservation agencies that protect animals and their ecosystems; and I know that albeit momentarily, I was part of nature, and I smile as I thank the animal that gave me the opportunity to be a hunter.

September — October Bird Sightings

By Sandy Bright

Strolling through the woods at the Audubon Sanctuary recently, I was struck by the utter silence, with nary a bird sound to be heard. Eventually, we heard a faint “tsee-tsee-tsee” and, after significant neck-strain, found a few Golden-crowned Kinglets and Chickadees foraging high in the canopy. At the Hawkwatch, we heard the pathetic “Poor Sam Peabody” of a young White-throated Sparrow practicing to get his song up to snuff before next year’s breeding season.

This is a quiet time of year for the birds, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t around; many don’t announce their presence with calls, and few are singing. It takes more patience and searching to find the bird, but the effort is rewarded with a different variety.

Rod Spangle counted 27 Common Nighthawks in the weeks leading up to mid-September (Unadilla). Over in Jefferson, Barb Palmer observed Black-throated Green and Nashville Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Wood Duck, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Thrasher, Pileated Woodpeckers, and a young Goldfinch incessantly pestering its father. Out canoeing on Goodyear Lake, Marilyn Bailey spotted a tree with

nine Double-crested Cormorants perched for the night, some silhouetted against the evening sky. A Merlin was still hanging around our neighborhood in Oneonta.

Later in the month, a mix of juvenile and adult Rose-breasted Grosbeaks with varied plumage visited Sarah Root’s feeders in Portlandville. Pam Peters counted 15 American Kestrels hunting the fields near Arabia early one morning. Kestrels aren’t the only birds that enjoy a good small-rodent meal, but the sight that greeted Linda Pearce one day was still quite unexpected. Strolling past her deck, a Great Blue Heron grabbed a chipmunk. That first one got away, but, after more than an hour of hunting, it successfully nabbed another.

Early October brought large flocks of Mourning Doves to Kathryn Davino’s feeders in Delhi. Barb Palmer had White-throated Sparrows and a Carolina Wren in her yard in Jefferson and watched an American Crow harassing a Red-tailed Hawk. A trip to Glimmerglass State Park with Becky Gretton and Pete Fenner yielded White-crowned and Lincoln’s Sparrows, five species of woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped



Peregrine Falcon
Photo by Randy Lynch

Warblers, and more. A few days earlier, Pete and Becky had found Swainson’s Thrushes there also. Randy Lynch got an interesting photo of a Peregrine Falcon posed in such a way as to evoke an angel in Harpersfield.

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch is a great place to observe migrating songbirds as well as raptors. Pete Fauth observed a Nashville Warbler “bathing” in a film of water on the surface of a large wild grape leaf. Among the other species observed during this period were Black-billed Cuckoo, Palm, Pine, and Magnolia Warblers, Northern Parula, Eastern Bluebirds perched on the John Deere equipment, Scarlet Tanager, Purple Finch, Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, and, of course, lots of Canada Geese.

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



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Red-tailed Hawk
Alan Vernon, Wikimedia Commons

Raptor migration continues at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary. The first two weeks of October brought the greatest variety of hawks and eagles, with both early and late species overlapping. Respectable numbers of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, and all three falcons have been recorded.

The earlier tally of Broad-winged Hawks, which pass through in September, presently stands at 2336--above the seasonal average of 1600 birds, but short of last year's record of 2951. Counters are eagerly awaiting arrival of the first Golden Eagle of the season. These spectacular raptors start in late October, peak

Hawkwatch News

By Andy Mason

in November, and taper off in December. The seasonal average is 182, and the birds often come in big days of 20-40 or more. Franklin Mountain is one of the premier eastern North America sites to see Goldens.

Other late season species include Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, and possible Northern Goshawks and Rough-legged Hawks.

Work has largely been completed on clearing trees to improve the view to the northeast. Unfortunately, this has left the immediate area below the hawk watch temporarily aesthetically-challenged, but it has been seeded and should be back to green space next summer.

In sadder news, long-time friend of the Hawkwatch, Richard Hendrick of Washington State, was remembered with a scattering of his ashes on the mountain in early October. Richard would cross the country each fall, stopping at

various hawk watches, including a week or so at Franklin Mountain. He always brought a supply of his self-produced honey to share with counters. A kind and generous man—he will be missed.

Counters are present each day at the hawk watch, except during rain. The best flights come on north and northwest winds, especially following a cold front. Visitors should dress warmly as the site is often colder than anticipated.

Visitors and spotters are always welcome at the Hawkwatch. For more information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, salothomas@gmail.com.

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



Missy Runyan at 2016 Sanctuary Open House, photo by Tina M. Niesluchowski

In Memoriam, Missy Runyan

We are sad to report the passing of Wildlife Rehabilitator Barbara "Missy" Runyan, who died unexpectedly on October 6th at age 51. Missy was the founder and director of the Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center (FFFWC) in Hunter, NY.

Many of our members will remember Missy from the presentations she did at the DOAS Fall Open House for many years. Always informative and passionate about the animals she told us about, she never failed to bring children into her presentations, often giving them personal hands-on experiences with the birds she brought. Missy rehabilitated animals and birds of all kinds, developing specialty with lead-poisoned raptors. We are grateful, too, for her work collaborating with DOAS on our non-lead ammunition campaigns.

Although she was unable as planned to attend our Fall Open House this year, she sent a rehabbed Bald Eagle which one of her colleagues released at the Sanctuary to the great pleasure of those attending. Missy Runyan was a tremendous advocate for wildlife and her death is a heartbreaking loss for our environmental community. You can learn more about FFFWC, and donate in Missy's memory if you like, at www.fffwildlifecenter.org/.

Upcoming Activities

November

November 6 – Bird Walk at the Fenimore Art Museum in conjunction with Glimmerglass Film Days: trip leaders Becky Gretton, Sandy Bright, Charlie Scheim and Rob Katz will lead a local bird walk to complement the Glimmerglass Film Day's Documentary Feature Film, *The Falconer*, presented November 4-11. Participants will meet promptly at 11 a.m. outside the entrance to the Fenimore Art Museum. Birdwatchers of all levels are welcome to attend.

November 19 – DOAS Public Program: "Through the Eyes and Lives of Crows." During our Zoom program beginning at 7:30 p.m., Dr. Anne Clark of Binghamton University will speak about her research on the American Crow. See article on page 1 and register at <https://doas.us/through-the-eyes-and-lives-of-crows/>.

December

December 7 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

December 18 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count. Contact Sandy Bright at brights@hartwick.edu or phone 607-287-4465. See article on page 8.

December 26 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count. Contact Bob Donnelly at rsdonn@yahoo.com or phone 607-264-8156. See article on page 8.

January

January 2 – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count.

Contact Pam Peters: ovenb1rdp@gmail.com or 607-829-6545. See article on page 8.

January 15 – DOAS Eagle Trip: Field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles in Delaware County. Trip is limited to DOAS members and pre-registration required at <https://doas.us/2022-eagle-trip>. Depart from the Dietz Street parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 a.m. or meet en route in Delhi and Walton. For further information, contact Andy Mason, phone 607-652-2162, or email AndyMason@earthling.net.

January 16 – NYS Ornithological Association's Annual Statewide Waterfowl Count: This effort involves identifying and counting ducks and geese in our region. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year. More information at <https://doas.us/statewide-waterfowl-count-on-january-16/>. Anyone interested in helping with the census, please contact Andy Mason, phone 607-652-2162, or email AndyMason@earthling.net.

January 18 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

January 21 – DOAS Public Program: "Yellowstone Stories - A Summer in America's First National Park." During our Zoom program beginning at 7:30 p.m. Kyle Dudgeon will take us through his journey as an interpretive guide in Yellowstone National Park.

In case you missed it—Past webinars are available online at <https://doas.us/webinars/>.

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 <https://doas.us/membership/> or make your check payable to "DOAS" and mail payment to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

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2021 Christmas Bird Counts

By Sandy Bright and Pamela Peters

The annual Christmas Bird Count, 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 53rd 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).

There are two ways to participate in the CBC, either out in the field (walking and/or driving) or watching feeders at a stationary location

(eg. from the comfort of your own home). If you would like to get out in the field, please contact the appropriate coordinator for that count at least a week in advance to see if there is a need for additional counters. People who have participated before will be contacted.

If you would like to know if you live in one of the count circles to be a feeder watcher, go to <https://preview.tinyurl.com/CBC-Circles>, click on the link, then zoom in to our area. For more information about Christmas Bird



Counts, go to www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to use the guidelines set by the National Audubon:

- 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

Oneonta CBC

December 18, 2021

Compiler: Sandy Bright
email brights@hartwick.edu
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Fort Plain CBC

December 26, 2021

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email rsdonnn@yahoo.com
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