



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

## January Program: Unbroken Wings A Story of Birds and the People Who Save Them

Our January virtual program features Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner. At the turn of the last century, birds in the US were facing multiple challenges. Entire species were disappearing or severely threatened. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act was enacted in 1918 and has been credited with bringing species back from the brink. But despite this strong protection, new threats have appeared.

From plume hunters and pesticides to the recovery of the Bluebird and Bald Eagle, our presenters will look at the history of species lost and species saved, conservation heroes, and birds whose range has changed in our lifetimes. They will celebrate the successes along with the beauty of birds to fortify the resolve to address current chal-



*Great Egret*

*Photo by Scott Stoner, Naturelogues*

lenges facing avian populations.

The award-winning nature photography of Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner has been widely exhibited in New York State. Their work has appeared in numerous publications and books, including *Birder's World*, *National*

*Wildlife*, *New York State Conservationist*. Their photos have been featured on several covers of *The Kingbird*, the journal of the NYS Ornithological Association.

Denise and Scott of Naturelogues are long-time avid birders, each having served as officers, field trip leaders, and directors for the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. They've given many slide presentations to birding, nature, and other groups across New York State, and teach birding and attracting birds in the adult education programs of several local school districts.

Join us on Zoom,

January 21st at 7:30 p.m.

Pre-Registration is required.

Register at

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_nO5Ndgn\\_SQ6vcsQ3\\_0teSg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nO5Ndgn_SQ6vcsQ3_0teSg)

**Mark Your Calendar** For our February program, Dr. Douglas Causey will be talking about zooarchaeology and bird bones, and will also have images and videos of live birds from remote, isolated colonies in the Aleutians and Bering Sea. Join us by Zoom on February 18th at 7:30 p.m. for "Bering Seabirds and Environmental Change from 3,000 Years Ago to the Present Day."



Dr. Douglas Causey is Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Alaska Anchorage and Senior Fellow of the Arctic Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School. Register at [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_ZZUgcrpmRP-ltFrYdoKZMA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZZUgcrpmRP-ltFrYdoKZMA).

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*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.*

# DOAS Field Trips

by Co-president Andy Mason

Do you enjoy getting out and sharing the natural world, including birds and other wildlife, with like-minded people? Well, who doesn't? Field trips are consistently one of the most popular activities of groups such as ours. They are an opportunity for learning, for teaching, for socializing, for exercise, and for just embracing the great outdoors.

In recent times, field trips have become a challenge, due to the risks of Covid. But actually outdoor activities, with appropriate restrictions, are relatively safe and a way to stay connected when other gatherings are limited. Our upcoming eagle trip is one of these—details elsewhere.

Spring is the most favored time for field trips, with everyone eager to greet the returning migrants and enjoy the welcomed warmth. DOAS typically sponsors several outings during this season, but also has summer walks, fall trips to such locations as Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, winter owl prowls and more. There have even been 2 or 3 day trips to locales such as Cape May, eastern Massachusetts and the owl woods of Amherst Island in Canada.

The limiting factor for these activities is trip leaders. People



*Field Trip to West Branch Preserve near Hamden, NY; Photo by Al Davino*

often think they need to be highly knowledgeable or even experts to lead a field trip, but that is not the case. Modest organizational skills and a willingness to research the logistics of a destination are all that is necessary, with enthusiasm being a plus also!

DOAS is presently in need of a field trip chair or co-chairs (sharing is a good thing). Again, this may seem daunting, but such persons do not need to participate in every trip, just to find dates and encourage leaders. If you like field trips and have thought of volunteering with DOAS, this may be the job for you. Feel free to contact any of the co-Presidents to find out more.

And even if this is too much of a challenge, please consider leading a trip to share a favorite spot with others. Our area is full of great parks, forests, preserves and other natural areas waiting to be explored. You can help open the eyes of children and grown-ups alike to the joys of the outdoors.

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The Belted Kingfisher, email:  
[editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@doas.us)

## 2022 Optics Raffle, Coming Soon!



The popular **OPTICS RAFFLE** returns in January 2022 with 4 great prizes! Watch for details in the next Kingfisher and on DOAS social media.

# Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

## Environmental Bill of Rights Strongly Supported by Voters —

One of the brightest spots of the November elections was overwhelming passage of an amendment to the NY State Constitution stating, “Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment.”

This amendment received the support of nearly 70% of voters, after previously passing two consecutive legislative sessions, required for constitutional amendments to reach the ballot. This was in an election where other measures were rejected, showing the great support in NY State for a clean, healthy environment.

How the Environmental Bill of Rights will be used remains to be seen. Even though it consists of only fifteen words, it does give citizens a way to stand up to laws and actions that pollute and otherwise harm our natural world.

**Ask Governor Hochul to Sign the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure bill —** Environmental Advocates NY (EA), the strongest voice in Albany for positive legislation, is urging Governor Kathy Hochul to sign the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure bill (A.3876/S.3929) which would direct the state’s utilities to change their rates for EV charging stations from a demand basis to more consistent and dependable rates. This will encourage building of charging stations and also encourage purchase of EVs, providing drivers with the confidence of consistent costs for fueling vehicles.

Governor Hochul, then Lieutenant Governor, visited Oneonta last summer to dedicate new chargers at the Mirabito store on Southside, and has been a consistent supporter of moving the state toward zero-emission EVs. Sign-



ing this bill would continue her leadership in keeping New York in the forefront of addressing climate change.

## What You Can Do —

Visit Environmental Advocates at [www.eany.org](http://www.eany.org) to send a letter to the Governor asking her to sign the pending legislation. EA is an excellent resource and guide to the State Legislature and pending bills, with informative memos and alerts. In addition, they prepare an annual voters’ guide with ratings of legislators and other leaders based on their sponsorship and votes on important environmental measures. EA is a valuable organization worthy of support.

*Legislative contacts can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, [www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us).*

## Bird-Friendly Coffee

You may order bird-friendly coffee, as well as DOAS mugs, and reusable bags, by emailing Jane Bachman ([bachmanj@hartwick.edu](mailto:bachmanj@hartwick.edu) or call 607-431-9509). Contact her to arrange for payment and pickup from Jane’s front porch in Oneonta. Cash, checks and credit cards are accepted. More information at <https://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>.

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*“Conservation is a cause that has no end. There is no point at which we say our work is finished.” — Rachel Carson*



# A Year of Birding in Colorado

By DOAS Director Rob Katz

At the beginning of 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic had truly set in, my fiancée and I moved to Denver, Colorado to pursue job opportunities. As the reality of the pandemic set in and jobs were hard to come by, I used most of my time last year to explore our area for birds that are absent from or less frequent than in New York.

We were fortunate to live about half an hour from Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, a federal property that features a beautifully restored prairie. Observing western grassland birds in such a setting was a real treat, as I got to add many new species to my life list. Among my favorites were Horned Larks, with their signature “horned” plumes above the eyes. Western Meadowlarks were also entertaining to watch as they belted their songs from the tops of fenceposts. Lark Sparrows and Lark Buntings, both residents of healthy prairie ecosystems, showed up in flocks during warmer months. The rarest sighting, and one limited to few areas in the country, was the Burrowing Owl. Several pairs call “the Arsenal” their home, nesting in the prairie dog burrows that range across the open grassland.

A frequently visited site during the pandemic was Washington Park, located in our neighborhood. A large manmade reservoir sits in the middle of the park and features a forested island where both Snowy Egrets and Black-crowned Night Herons nest in the summer. In winter, hundreds of

Northern Shovelers congregated to vortex-feed on microorganisms. Canada Geese were joined by a new species for me, the diminutive Cackling Goose. Scores of other waterfowl call the pond home in winter, with an ever-changing cast of ducks ranging from Hooded Mergansers to Canvasbacks.

Another urban park full of birdlife is Belmar Park in Lakewood, a suburb of Denver. A tiny island in the middle of the park’s lake hosts nesting cormorants and herons. Cinnamon Teals and American Avocets are spring and summer residents of the pond.

Venturing into the mountains and canyons brought even more western specialties. Canada Jays were frequent visitors to our picnic tables when we would pack a lunch to the mountains – like all jays, they are intelligent and resourceful, and know where people gather with the hopes of gathering fallen food. In both the highland conifer forests and the dry, oak-filled canyons, I spotted one of

North America’s most beautiful birds – the Steller’s Jay. These jays are beautiful shades of blue, fading into a deep navy coloration on the head and crest, and are restricted to the western part of North America.

Among my favorite locations to visit was Barr Lake State Park, about forty-five minutes from Denver. A large, manmade reservoir attracts enormous flocks of geese, pelicans, and ducks, and I was fortunate enough to spot bands of Sandhill Cranes passing overhead. Shortly before we returned to New York, I visited during the winter to observe the concentrations of Bald Eagles that arrive to hunt for fish and waterfowl. Scores of eagles of various ages can be observed at the park.

Though we only lived in Colorado for a short period of time, it was incredible to witness the diversity of habitats and corresponding birdlife in our area. I highly recommend visiting the parks and natural areas around Denver if the opportunity presents itself – at all times of the year, there is wildlife in abundance in and around the city.



American Avocet Photo by Rob Katz

# October—December Bird Sightings

By Sandy Bright

In mid-October, while conducting his Drone Pilot Training course at the Oneonta Airport, Chris Kuhn was focused on his phone while controlling the mini-aircraft. Suddenly, his students were yelling and pointing. Turning his gaze upward, he watched as a Turkey Vulture attacked the drone. Though it got hit, the drone somehow escaped unharmed.

Claudia Koeppel was amazed to encounter a very tame Ruby-crowned Kinglet, which allowed her to get close enough to take some good photos with her phone as it hopped around foraging near her yard. So completely at ease with her presence was the bird that she wondered if it had been someone's pet.

Eastern Meadowlark, Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglet, Blue-headed Vireo, Brant, and Common Loon were among the species reported at the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch. On a particularly windy day, Pam Peters noted that several Eastern Bluebirds "struggled to fly over the ridge." Barb Palmer spotted Bluebirds and Yellow-rumped Warblers on a walk in Jefferson one day. A few days later she found a juvenile Red-tailed Hawk hunting along Westkill Road. Halloween brought two hooting Great Horned Owls to Treadwell

(Dorian Huneke) and a murder of crows, reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock's thriller *The Birds*, to Marilyn Bailey's neighborhood in Oneonta.

A "friendly little grouse" followed Barb Palmer around her yard in Jefferson in early November. John Davis reported two Ruffed Grouse drumming near Cooperstown. At the Hawk Watch, winter visitors began to appear, including Evening Grosbeak, Fox Sparrow (Marilyn Leahy, 11/5), and American Tree Sparrow (Pete Fauth, 11/9).

On November 6th, a bird walk at the Fenimore House in Cooperstown on a sunny fall day with Becky Gretton, Charlie Scheim and a dozen other participants yielded Common Merganser, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Bald Eagle, Belted Kingfisher, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, plus four distant waterfowl that we thought may have been Scaups.

In mid-November, Carol and Randy Lynch spotted a Rough-legged Hawk in Jefferson. Lisa Gorn watched a pair of Bluebirds scouting out one of her birdboxes in Morris. Pete Fauth watched a massive flock of perhaps 500 Common Grackles fly past the Hawk Watch. In the next week, flocks of Cedar Waxwings and Red-winged Blackbirds migrat-



*Northern Shrike*  
Mick Thompson  
2018 Audubon Photography Awards

ed through, along with the first Snow Geese and 3 Cackling Geese (Pam Peters). Both Pam and Becky Gretton reported a Northern Shrike there, which hung around for a few days.

In early December, Becky heard a Great Horned Owl calling near her home in Richfield Springs. Pam Peters reported a single Brown-headed Cowbird at the Hawkwatch. One morning, Kathryn Davino was struck by the total absence of birds in her usually-busy yard. Then she noted the reason: a beautiful adult Goshawk, probably hoping for breakfast. Before she could snap a photo, a Blue Jay flew in with harassment in mind, and the hawk took flight.

On a cold, sunny day in mid-December, a Robin sang high in a tree, silhouetted against the blue sky. Though spring is months away, its cheery song seemed to offer a promise of warmer days to come.



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# Hawkwatch Wrap-up

By Andy Mason, Pam Peters, and Tom Salo

As of mid-December, the 2021 Hawkwatch season was drawing to a close. It was an interesting fall in a number of ways, including changes to the lookout itself, an unconventional Golden Eagle season, and a time of remembering and reminiscing.

If you did visit the Hawkwatch this year, you could not miss the major tree removal operation that successfully restored much of the view that had been lost over the last three decades. The equipment and work required to achieve this 1/3-acre clearing was daunting and an in-your-face presence for several weeks. Visitors were largely understanding even though it rendered the term “sanctuary” questionable for a while.

The hawk counters, however, were elated. Raptors that had disappeared after a brief glimpse, or been missed entirely in recent years, are now back in view. A few comments: From Becky Gretton, “Today I was once again reliving those views that we used to see. Looking at last year’s totals on the kiosk, it will be difficult to evaluate the differences in totals with so much more of the birds’ migratory route now visible.” From Sandy Bright, “I was able to follow a Bald Eagle along the valley until it rose slightly then veered south just before disappearing behind the hill. That bird might have been dismissed as a local bird unless someone was looking at the right place at the right time.” And most poetically, from Marilyn Leahy, who “...was blind, but now can see.”

We again thank our supporters and particularly Nancy New for their generous contributions that make improvements to the Hawk-

watch and Sanctuary possible.

On October 1st we held a memorial service for Richard Hendrick at the watch site. Richard was a regular at Franklin Mountain for two decades, traveling from Washington State each fall. Those who encountered him knew a kind, generous and modest soul who loved raptors. Richard’s good friend Kent Woodruff brought some of his ashes from Washington State to spread on the mound.

Also this fall, Josiah Johnson, a local student who is studying wildlife biology at Oregon State University, completed an internship at the Hawkwatch, under the guidance of Pam Peters. He learned about raptor migration, hawk identification, and also how citizen science plays a role in conservation and wildlife research. Thanks to Josiah for his assistance as an observer, putting in over 45 hours at the Hawkwatch, and for his helpful engagement with visitors.

Now to the birds themselves. As noted, fall 2021 was an interesting season. The counters did an excellent job covering the watch, occasionally scrambling to fill days according to weather.

Our volunteers had scanned the sky for almost 600 hours at this writing, and visitation was also impressive with 620 aficionados climbing the hill. Gross numbers of raptors were good, totaling well over 5000 migrants of 16 species. High numbers of Turkey Vultures, Bald Eagles and Broad-winged Hawks contributed substantially to the count. With few exceptions, species numbers seemed to follow established trends. The Turkey Vulture count of 808 is more than double



*Golden Eagle in the Snow at Franklin Mountain; Photo by Landa Palmer*

the long-term average but similar to recent years. Bald Eagles have also steadily increased since we started in 1989. During the first 20 years of surveys, Golden Eagles were always counted in higher numbers than Bald Eagles, sometimes much higher. Recently this flipped—Bald Eagle numbers have exceeded Golden Eagle numbers for ten of the past thirteen seasons.

Broad-winged Hawks are a hit or miss species at our site. We got lucky this season. There were no huge days but there were a lot of good days. The 2338 Broad-wings made up almost half the total number of birds this season.

Although in decline since the beginning of the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk and all three falcons were slightly higher than the ten-year average. Northern Harriers were below average. Red-tailed Hawk numbers continue to be low. This does not appear to be a conservation concern. These adaptable raptors look to be wintering further north resulting in lower migration counts (see the article by Pam Peters and Tom Salo in the *Belted Kingfisher* February 2021 issue).

The late season was somewhat disappointing. Franklin Mountain “Hawkwatch” Continued to page 7



# Upcoming Activities

## January

January 2 – Delaware County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Pam Peters: [ovenb1rdp@gmail.com](mailto:ovenb1rdp@gmail.com) or 607-829-6545.

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/eagle-trip-for-doas-members/>. See article on page 8. For further information, contact Andy Mason 607-652-2162, or email [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

January 16 – NYS Ornithological Association's Annual Statewide Waterfowl Count: This effort involves identifying and counting ducks and geese. See article on page 8. More information at <https://doas.us/statewide-waterfowl-count-on-january-16/>. Anyone interested in helping with the census, contact Andy Mason, phone 607-652-2162, or email [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

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

January 21 – DOAS Public Program: "Unbroken Wings: A Story of Birds and the People who Save Them." During our Zoom program beginning at 7:30 p.m., presenters Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner will discuss the history of species lost and species saved, conservation heroes, and birds whose range has changed in our lifetimes. See article on page 1. Register at [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_nO5Ndgn\\_SQ6vcsQ3\\_0teSg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_nO5Ndgn_SQ6vcsQ3_0teSg).

## February

February 18 – DOAS Public Program: "Bering Seabirds and Environmental Change from 3,000 Years Ago to the Present Day," presented by Dr. Douglas Causey. See reminder on page 1. Our Zoom program will begin at 7:30 p.m. Register at [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_ZZUgcrpmRP-ltFrYdoKZMA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ZZUgcrpmRP-ltFrYdoKZMA).

February 18-21 – Join the 25th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count as people from around the world come together to watch, learn about, count, and celebrate birds. More information at [www.birdcount.org/](http://www.birdcount.org/).

## March

March 1 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

March 15 – Native Plant Sale Kickoff and DOAS Panel Discussion on Zoom: "Delhi Homegrown National Park - Project Presentation."

March 18 – 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. Register at <https://doas.us/events/>.

## April

April 15 – DOAS Public Program: "Landscaping with Native Plants." Our Zoom program featuring Lisa Tessier will begin at 7:30 p.m. Register at [doas.us/events/](https://doas.us/events/).

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

April 22 – EARTH DAY. Details coming soon.

"Hawkwatch" Continued from page 6 depends on specific weather conditions to concentrate large soaring birds along the ridge. Golden Eagles and Red-tailed Hawks in particular are seen in good numbers migrating on strong northwest winds. This year those conditions were rare. We did not have a day with double digit Golden Eagle numbers until the 23rd of November when 19 went by. A couple of fronts after that brought our numbers up over 100 but they remain low for the site. The 120 tallied by mid-December is 70% of the most recent 10-year average. All Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch data



is at [www.hawkcount.org](http://www.hawkcount.org).

We are grateful for the skill, time and dedication of our counters. Regular counters this season included: Peter Fauth; Fred Fries; Becky Gretton; Marilyn Leahy; Andrea Lodovice; Randy and Carol Lynch; Pam Peters; Tom Salo. We also thank the many people who spotted birds and otherwise contributed to the count.

## 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.

**Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation!**



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## January Outings

*By Andy Mason*

**DOAS Eagle Field Trip** This winter's field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles around Delaware County rivers and reservoirs is scheduled for Saturday, January 15, 2022. Eagles concentrate around open water in the region to feed and recent trips have turned up 20+ birds. Other raptors and waterfowl are also usually sighted.

This trip is limited to DOAS members, and pre-registration is required at <https://doas.us/eagle-trip-for-doas-members/> (membership form is below registration). Memberships will also be available on the day of the trip.

The trip will leave the Dietz Street parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 a.m. Participants can also be met enroute

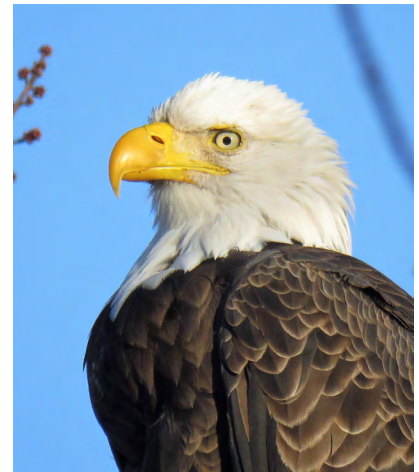
in Delhi and Walton. We will be following Covid protocols: social distancing and masks required, vaccinations strongly encouraged. Ride sharing will be limited to family groups. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon.

For further information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

Can't make the trip? Follow the DOAS eagle route yourself. Details at: <https://doas.us/self-guided-eagle-trip/>.

### **NYSOA Waterfowl Count**

Each winter, DOAS participates in the NY State Ornithological Association's annual statewide waterfowl count. This year the count is scheduled for Sunday, January 16, 2022, although a day or two either side is acceptable. Our Chapter covers Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, the Unadilla River, and



Bald Eagle; Photo by Rick Bunting

Cannonsville Reservoir and the West Branch of the Delaware River. This effort involves surveying waterways where they can be viewed, and identifying and counting ducks and geese. The totals are used by the Department of Environmental Conservation in managing these species over the upcoming year.

Anyone interested in helping with the census, please contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).