



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

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## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

### February Program: Bering Seabirds and Environmental Change from 3,000 Years Ago to the Present Day

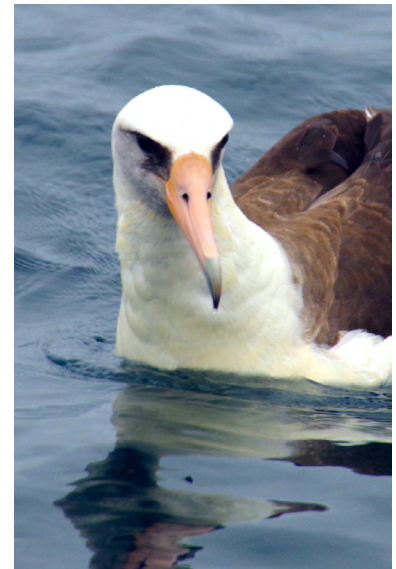
We are in the midst of rapid climate change, and the Arctic and Subarctic are warming three to four times faster than the rest of the world. In order to get a better idea of how these environmental changes may affect breeding seabirds in the Bering Sea, Douglas Causey and his students have been looking closely at rapid changes in the past 15 years as a way to understand what the future may hold. But before we can understand how great or quick the effects may be, it's important to know how seabirds reacted to past environmental events.

Join us on Zoom on February 18th at 7:30 p.m. for Dr. Causey's talk about what the archeology of early Aleut middens tells us about the abundance and distribution of all breeding seabirds over the past 3000 years. Doug will present

images and videos of Beringian seabirds and colonies that few ornithologists have seen. He will work to convince you that cormorants are probably the most interesting seabirds in the world.

Dr. Douglas Causey is Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Alaska Anchorage and Senior Fellow of the Arctic Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School. An ecologist and evolutionary biologist by training, he has authored over two hundred publications on topics as diverse as the biology of Arctic marine birds, policy issues related to the Arctic environment, Arctic environmental security, and bioterrorism and public health.

Join us on Zoom,  
February 18th at 7:30 p.m.  
Pre-Registration is required at:  
<https://bit.ly/3ruWUad>



Left, Short-tailed Albatross and Below—Crested Auklets; Photos by Douglas Causey



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### Mark Your Calendar — Yellowstone Stories—A Summer in America's First National Park

Our March 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 threatens the security of that wildness moving forward. Join us by Zoom on March 18th at 7:30 p.m. Register at <https://doas.us/yellowstone-stories/>.



# Climate Change and Birds in 2022

by Co-president Susan O'Handley

I cannot count the number of times in the past few years that we have received email, FaceBook or phone messages about changes in what people in our region are seeing in their backyard birds. Birds they had seen often may not be there this year and people are noticing a difference. In many cases, these observations will happen during the summer breeding season or in the fall months when the weather is typically good. Those differences can mostly be explained by shifting focus to raising young or the availability of natural food sources. That being said, there are birds that can be targeted for observations that can be indicative of population changes or shifts that are a result of climate change.

Species that are indicators for tracking in our region include Eastern Bluebird, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, American Goldfinch and Eastern Towhee. Surveying for these birds during specific times of each year can provide information about range changes and can add important data to the predictions for the impacts of climate change.

As an example - our Red-breasted Nuthatch is expected to face a 66% loss in summer range if we see a +3.0° C change. Our DOAS regional bird checklist, updated in 2020, (find it on our web site at <https://bit.ly/3rgugcD>) indicates that both Red-breasted and White-breasted are common in our region throughout the year. So watching this species closely

should present a good indication of range changes.



© Landa Palmer  
*Red-breasted Nuthatch*  
Photo by Landa Palmer

DOAS does not currently participate in the Audubon Climate Watch surveys, mostly due to the lack of our ability to coordinate another project on top of what we already do. And we do a lot! (View our annual report video here: <https://doas.us/2021-doas-annual-report/>). Volunteers are our primary limiting factor in what we can accomplish each year. If we have members or friends who are interested in working on projects like this, or if you have an idea for something you might like to do for birds or conservation, please reach out to us by email at [info@doas.us](mailto:info@doas.us). We have some great projects planned for 2022 including additional improvements and new accessibility features for the DOAS Sanctuary and Hawkwatch, a Native Plant Sale fundraiser, a how-to presentation to get a native plants program in your community, and continued work in engaging our region in climate action initiatives, reducing our carbon impact and more.

**Please let us know if you would like to be more involved!**

**DELAWARE - OTSEGO  
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FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Janet Potter

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# Conservation and Legislation

*By Andy Mason*

## **Priorities for 2022 in Albany —**

With a tumultuous political scene nationwide, it is unlikely any significant environmental legislation will be forthcoming from Congress in this election year. So, activity on the state level becomes even more pertinent and that is certainly true in New York.

In her State of the State address, Governor Kathy Hochul put forth some promising messages. She called for increasing to \$4 billion the size of the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act that will go before voters this fall, after being postponed in 2021. The bond act would provide funding for open space conservation and recreation, flood risk reduction, climate change mitigation, and water

quality improvement.

The Governor also called for expanding the state's wetlands protections by including smaller wetlands under state law. She also proposed shifting responsibility for proper disposal of plastic waste from the consumer to the producer, a long overdue and sensible change. And she continued her push for electrifying New York's transportation sector and for zero emission buildings.

All good proposals that will need support from our legislators to come to fruition, which is where Auduboners and other conservationists can help.

## **What You Can Do —**

We will be providing information on specific legislation as the 2022 session moves ahead in



*Wetlands at the DOAS Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain*

*Photo by Andy Mason*

Albany. But for now, the budget is the number one priority. We should urge our state Senators and Assemblymembers to support the expanded bond act and to provide dollars for the state's environmental needs, including the Environmental Protection Fund, alternative energy production, and promotion of electric vehicle use and infrastructure.

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

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## 2022 Optics Raffle—Winners Choose from Four Prizes! Win a Spotting Scope or Binoculars and Support DOAS.



**\$15 Donation per ticket. Only 250 tickets available.**

**Drawing will take place on Friday, April 15, 2022, 7:30 p.m.  
during the online monthly DOAS program.**

**More information at <https://bit.ly/3A5PkGZ>**

**Proceeds to benefit the DOAS Sanctuary and Franklin  
Mountain Hawkwatch.**

**Notes: You must be 18 years of age or older to purchase tickets. Winners need not be present to win. If you live outside our pick-up area, we will coordinate for first class mail to you. Shipping and Handling fees will be charged at cost.**



# Next Door Neighbors

By *DOAS Director Dorian Huneke*

Here in the little village of Treadwell we are blessed with a nesting pair of bald eagles. I have been watching this pair for quite a few years now and never get tired of observing their behavior.

I believe the female is the same bird that moved into this area many years ago, nesting on the mountain that is just north of the current nest. A logging disturbance forced the eagles to move downstream from the village center, where they took over a Red-tailed Hawk's nest in a white pine stand. This only lasted a couple of years when a storm dumping 30 or more inches of snow on all of us destroyed much of this nest—and they had just started sitting on eggs! They moved to the current location, and survived that year's nesting season, but a year or so later it was noted that one of the pair is banded. So, at some point a new mate was taken and this nest has been thriving ever since.

From the bridge on Case Hill Road you can look upstream and just about see their nest—in the winter, that is. Too much foliage in the summer. The nest is near the top of a very tall white pine that stands away from the base of that mountain. I imagine this provides some advantages for both hunting and protection from predators. When I'm outside, which is much of the day in spring, summer, and

fall, and even quite a bit in the winter, I see one or both adult eagles almost every day. Most often they give me a fly-by, going up or down the creek valley in the early morning or late afternoon. Sometimes I'm out in our village's park with my dog and they fly right smack over my head; other times I'm at my barn uphill from the creek and have gone outside for some reason and there's one, appearing to fly right at me! Sometimes one or both are perched in a tree along the creek, and I am lucky to be far enough away not to disturb them, but close enough to watch them until I am the one that has to leave.

So far, I don't believe they have ever migrated away for the winter. Even in very cold weather they

are still around, apparently finding enough food to sustain them through snow and cold.

Most likely few birds of any species were flying in the brutal wind and cold of January 10th. But leave it to the Bald Eagle to brave the weather. I was out in my yard with my dog and happened to look up at just the right moment. If you have ever watched two raptors challenge each other in the sky, you can imagine the twisting, turning, darting and diving that takes place. Well, this eagle was the only bird in the sky, but the wind had it diving, dipping, ducking, twirling, and many more kinds of contortions, trying to stay aloft and keep moving forward. It appeared as though it was competing with a ghost eagle! Move forward it did though, and finally disappeared downstream.

I will always keep looking up—I don't want to miss any of those great aerial displays!



*Banded Adult Bald Eagle in Treadwell  
Photo by Patricia Leitenberger*

*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.*

# December—January Bird Sightings

By Sandy Bright

In mid-December, Bald Eagles were active in the area. Jeff Waffle reported two eagles feeding on a dead deer at the 14th green of Colonial Ridge Golf Course near Laurens. Near the Elk Creek Fishing Access, my husband and I noticed a large flock of Canada Geese peacefully foraging in a field. Suddenly, hundreds of wings were desperately flapping as they frantically scrambled toward the water; an adult Bald was lazily following the path of the creek, seemingly oblivious to the panic it had caused below. Another eagle flew over Susan Brunswick in Oneonta, dove at something, and knocked some dead branches to the ground as it landed in a Maple tree. Crows harassed it for a while, then aggressively escorted it out of the neighborhood.

Susan also spotted a Belted Kingfisher at the Mill Race in Neahwa Park and found a decapitated pigeon on a sidewalk else-

where in Oneonta. The following day, she saw a Merlin feasting on the leftovers, leaving behind just a small pile of feathers. Barb Palmer photographed a Red-tailed Hawk posing against a clear blue sky in Middleburgh.

On New Year's Day, Leigh Eckmair noticed a half dozen or so Dark-eyed Juncos in her ancient Quince Bush in Gilbertsville. Though the Quince was extra-prolific this year, she did not observe any birds taking advantage of the bounty. In the following days, Becky Gretton had the good fortune of seeing a Northern Harrier working a field in the Town of Springfield. David Diaz reported a small owl – probably an Eastern Screech-Owl – perched in the Village of Cooperstown. Stan Salthe had a Hairy Woodpecker coming to his suet feeder and noted that, though they appear every winter, he never sees them at other times of the year.



*Partial Leucistic Female Cardinal*  
Photo by Sandy Bright

A partial leucistic female Cardinal returned to our feeders in Oneonta after spending the summer and fall elsewhere. She's quite striking with her snow-white head, and sports a pink eyebrow, buffy cheek, and fashionable red-and-white crest. Selectively intolerant of competition at the feeders, she chases other female cardinals away but tolerates the male when he's around. Observing bird behavior such as this makes these cold winter days more bearable, but I do look forward to warmer days and spring migration!

*If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, [brights@hartwick.edu](mailto:brights@hartwick.edu) or 607 287-4465.*

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A logo for Wild Birds Unlimited featuring a stylized house with a birdhouse on top and two birds flying nearby.

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## Bird-Friendly Coffee

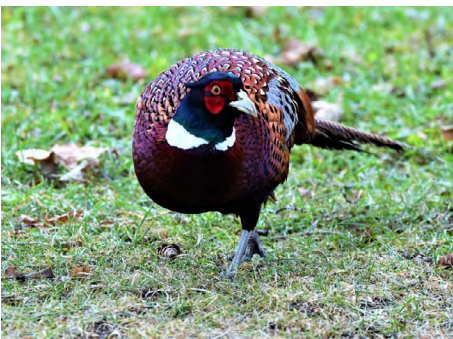
You may order bird-friendly coffee by emailing Jane Bachman ([bachmanj@hartwick.edu](mailto:bachmanj@hartwick.edu) or call 607-431-9509). Contact her to arrange for payment and pickup from Jane's front porch in Oneonta. Cash, checks and credit cards are accepted. More information at <https://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>.



# Christmas Bird Count Wrap-up

## Oneonta Christmas Bird Count (CBC) by Sandy Bright

The 53rd Oneonta CBC took place on the worst day, weather-wise, of the entire count week, with steady rain, sleet, and snow. No records were set, as many birds seemed determined to stay either too far away to be identified or out of sight completely. Scant numbers of species generally represented by multiple individuals were found, including a lone Purple Finch and single Song Sparrow. The 3,371 birds tallied was well below average. Despite that, our hardy groups of participants scrounged up a decent 46 species and a few good finds. Two birds that were absent during the first three decades of the CBC, Hooded Mergansers and Eastern Bluebirds, were found in multiple locations this year. Perhaps the most colorful sighting was the Ring-necked Pheasant photographed in Westville by Randy Lynch. Bob and Karen Donnelly hunted down 3 species of owls (Eastern Screech, Great Horned, and Barred), 3 Belted Kingfishers, and the only



*Ring-necked Pheasant*  
Photo by Randy Lynch

Great Blue Heron and Golden-crowned Kinglet. As Bob stated about his group's results, "Any day with more kingfishers than pigeons is good."

Many thanks to our 17 field participants: Bob Ciganek, Jennifer Hyypio, Peter Fauth, Becky Gretton, Gerianne Carillo, Susan Brunswick, Andy Mason, Bruce Milavec, Rob and Mary Kate Katz, Dave and Ann Kiehm, Randy and Carol Lynch, Charlie Scheim; and 7 feederwatchers, Cheryl Boise, Janice Downie, Margo Graham, Linda Pearce, Meg Preston, Merry Lou Wickham, and Hannelore Young.

## Delaware County Christmas Bird Count by Pam Peters

The 5th year for the Delaware County Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on January 2nd fielded six teams that found 3,611 birds and 48 unique species. Highlights include 10 Eastern Bluebirds observed in three different sectors of the count territory, two Belted Kingfishers, and two large flocks of Cedar Waxwings totaling 149. A lone Brown-headed Cowbird and a Field Sparrow made first-time appearances for the CBC, both observed in Downsville. Black-capped Chickadee earned the highest number of all birds reported, at 533, and 65 Common Ravens is a record for the count.

American Goldfinch and Slate-colored Junco both had high numbers with 110 and 192 re-



*Red-bellied Woodpecker*  
Photo by Landa Palmer

spectively, and a healthy number of Bald Eagles were counted, at 21. Wild Turkey (31) and Red-tailed Hawk (10) had the lowest numbers in the five years we have been doing the count. The mixed precipitation forecast was much milder and not as bad as all had anticipated. It had rained much of the previous week and temperatures hovered in the 30s, dropping by end of the day. Possibly as a result of the weather, feeder activity was quiet, and homeowners testified to the lack of birds.

Many thanks to our awesome counters: Lance Verderame, Renee Davis, Kate Yard, Matt Walter, Landa Palmer, Linda Burkhart, Sandy Bright, Charlie Scheim, Kathryn & Al Davino, Kathy Mario, Kay Crane, Tom & Laurie Rankin, Chris DeCesare and yours truly, Pam Peters.

**Complete results, current and past, for both Oneonta and Delaware County CBCs are on our web site at**

<https://doas.us/bird-counts/>



**Like us on Facebook!**

<https://www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety>

# Upcoming Activities

## 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 article on page 1. Our Zoom program will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Register at <https://bit.ly/3ruWUad>.

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 on page 8 and at <https://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.” Register at <https://bit.ly/3Goy7L8>.

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://bit.ly/3tlOwMw>.

## 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 <https://bit.ly/3zTxK8E>.

April 15– Optics Raffle Drawing during April Public Program: Prizes include spotting scope and binoculars. Tickets only \$15! More information on page 3 and at <https://bit.ly/3A5PkGZ>.

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

April 22 – EARTH DAY. Details coming soon.

## May

May 7 – Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk: Meet at 8 AM in the parking lot by the fields near the school district bus garage, just past the transfer station for a two-hour walk to view returning migrant birds on the Greenway trail, located on Silas Lane, off Rte. 205 in Oneonta. This will be an easy hike on level ground. Contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu).

May 14 – 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 [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu)).

May 17 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

May 20 – DOAS Public Program: “Breeding Bird Atlas: 2022 Update.” The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. Venue to be determined. More information at <https://bit.ly/3K5D4uw>.

**In Case You Missed It** — Past Webinars Are Available Online at <https://doas.us/webinars/>. **To stay up-to-date about events, visit the DOAS website** (<https://doas.us/events/>) or Facebook Page and sign up for our ENews at <https://doas.us/sign-up-for-doa-news/>. ENews is a monthly email notification and is different from the *Belted Kingfisher*.

## 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!**

**Is your Membership Current?** 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.

*“I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order.” — John Burroughs*



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.  
PO Box 544, ONEONTA, NY 13820  
[www.doas.us](http://www.doas.us)

# The Great Backyard Bird Count



## **February 18-21, 2022** **Join the 25th Great** **Backyard Bird Count**

For four days each February, the world comes together for the love of birds. To celebrate birds, participants watch, learn about, and count birds during the Great Backyard Bird Count, organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. Over the four days from February 18th to the 21st,

people are invited to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting them. These observations help scientists better understand global bird populations before the spring migration.

Participants are asked to count birds they see or hear for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event. The count should be reported online with participants choosing eBird or another tool at <https://www.birdcount.org>.

Each checklist helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share.

Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world. Learn more at <https://www.birdcount.org/participate/>.