



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Landscaping with Native Plants with Lisa Tessier A “How To” and “Why” Guide for the Homeowner

For our April program on Friday, April 15, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., we will host Lisa Tessier on Zoom for a special program on landscaping with native plants. She will explore the process and numerous benefits of designing home landscapes with native plants. Key planning steps for ensuring a successful design will be discussed—from a careful site analysis to purchasing considerations. Along the way, Lisa will share her favorite native species for our region.

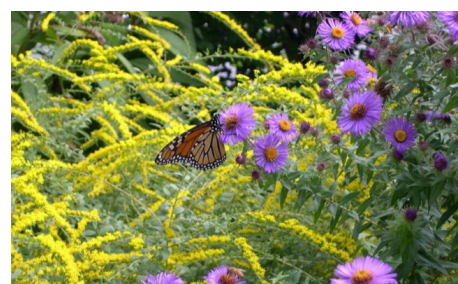
Please come to the presentation with one piece of your garden in mind that you would like to work on in the future. If you have a photo of this that you would like to share, please email your image file to info@doas.us with “GardenPhoto for 4/15” in the

subject line, or upload at <https://doas.us/share-your-photos-with-doas/>

Lisa Tessier has degrees in landscape architecture from Cornell University (B.S.) and from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF, M.S.). She teaches in the Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Sustainability programs at SUNY Delhi. She previously taught at Capital Community College and SUNY ESF, and has worked for two landscape architecture firms and the non-profit Center for Community Design Research.

More information and register for this Zoom program at:

<https://doas.us/landscaping-with-native-plants/>



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Mark Your Calendar—Breeding Bird

Atlasing 2022

Birders of all experience levels are invited to attend a presentation by Charlie Scheim regarding the on-going NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III on Friday, May 20th at 7:30 p.m. The BBA is a five-year effort conducted every twenty years to document which avian species live and breed in various areas of the state. Plan to join us by Zoom to find out how the Atlas is organized, what results have been accumulated state-wide and more specifically in Delaware and Otsego counties in the first two years, and what birders of all abilities can do to participate in this citizen science project. More information and register at: <https://doas.us/breeding-bird-atlasing-2022/>.

Perspective From Florida

by Co-president Andy Mason



Young Least Bittern
Audubon Photo by Jim Guyton

It's good periodically to take an objective look at things that are close to us, as our organization is to me. I find such a view to often come about along with physical separation, such as the few weeks I'm spending in Florida. Although still well-connected by email and the excellent DOAS Network (which I recommend to all—<https://www.network.doas.us/>), the distance and time away make for a chance to look at DOAS as something of an outsider.

When this happens, I am always impressed with the range and depth of our activities. There is the full complement of varied public programs we offer—even with Covid limitations—spearheaded by co-President Becky Gretton; our educational efforts, including children's programs and a return of summer day camp this year, organized by co-President Susan O'Handley; the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch with Tom Salo, Becky, and Pam Peters in the forefront as counters and

organizers; lively and informative web site and Facebook page, maintained by Susan and Kathryn Davino respectively; this fine newsletter put together by Janet Potter; successful fund-raising by a committee led by Dorian Huneke, with sales organized by Jane Bachman; conservation work including challenges to dangerous energy projects, and community engagement addressing climate change; and much more.

And it's not as if the Chapter rests on its laurels. New initiatives just in recent months include support for Kathy Mario and the Delhi Homegrown National Park, the subject of one of our March programs; our native plant sale to benefit birds, pollinators and gardeners alike; and the "Birdability" initiative lead by Landa Palmer to improve accessibility to the Sanctuary and our activities.

While in Florida I check out Audubon Chapters here and occasionally participate in field trips and other activities. All are good organizations, but few—even those in large population centers—can compare with DOAS's achievements and ongoing success. I thank our terrific board and volunteers and members for their hard work, commitment and support. We have an organization to be proud of—even viewed from Florida!

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
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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

Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act — There is no shortage of problems that birds face, from habitat loss to climate change to invasive species to poorly sited energy projects. But one serious threat that is largely out of sight out of mind is plastic pollution of the world's oceans.

An incredible 17 billion pounds of plastic enter the marine environment each year, according to the American Bird Conservancy. While we often think of plastic as recyclable, less than nine percent of plastics in the United States are actually recycled.

Many seabirds such as albatrosses, petrels, pelicans and others are seriously injured or killed when they ingest or become entangled

in plastic trash. In addition, a number of these species return to their nests and regurgitate food containing plastic for their young, dooming the chicks.

Legislation to address the plastic pollution crisis has been introduced in Congress. The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act (S.984/H.R.2238) would put the onus on manufacturers to take care of the plastic waste they produce. It would also set minimum percentages of products that must be reused, recycled, or composted; and establish an increasing percentage of recycled content in beverage containers. The legislation would phase out a variety of single-use products, such as plastic utensils and enact other



Albatross in Galapagos by Floodmfx
Wikimedia Commons

provisions to reduce plastic waste.

What You Can Do — Contact your U.S. Representatives Antonio Delgado and Claudia Tenney and Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and ask them to cosponsor and pass the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act.

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

Quote of the Month: "There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter." — Rachel Carson



You can support the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society and bird conservation each time you shop on Amazon!

When you sign up for the Amazon Smile program, the Amazon Smile Foundation will donate 0.5% of each purchase to DOAS—at no cost to you. It's an easy way to help birds and your local Audubon chapter.

Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7014319> to support the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society while you shop on Amazon.

For more information go to <https://www.aboutamazon.com/news/community/how-to-sign-up-for-amazonsmile>. From just a few people signing up for this program, DOAS has already received over \$275. If everyone who supports DOAS and shops at Amazon signs up, it will add up fast.



Like us on Facebook!

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

Crossbills! Find Them Now!

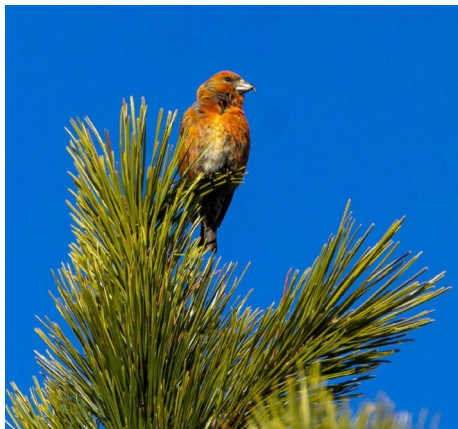
By DOAS Director Tom Salo

I've seen a lot of crossbills – at least I think so. Even so, I haven't seen them many times. One winter I crept along a 7-mile-long stretch of newly sanded road in the Adirondacks while a ribbon of gritting Red Crossbills hesitantly got out of my way. Other years it's been White-winged Crossbills by the hundreds.

Red and White-winged Crossbills are peculiar and infrequent visitors to our region. They have a specially adapted bill for prying open conifer cones. When the bill is inserted between the scales of a cone, they force the scales to open, exposing the seed. There are at least 10 different types of Red Crossbill. Each has a bill adapted for a specific size group of cones and makes slightly different calls from the other types.

Both species are irruptive, ranging over huge areas in search of cone crops. When conditions are right, nesting commences based on food availability, not season or weather. I confirmed crossbill breeding during the last NYS Breeding Bird Atlas while cross country skiing in Otsego County.

Being conifer specialists,



Red Crossbill, Michigan Upper Peninsula
Photo by Landa Palmer

crossbills find the Adirondacks to be excellent habitat. This year there are huge cone crops across the state. Crossbills are showing up in more southern areas. Red Crossbill are being found in western New York and in State Parks and Forests locally.

The time to seek them out is now! This spring will be the best opportunity during this Breeding Bird Atlas to document these irruptive species.

Crossbill expert Matt Young, writing about this winter in the Adirondacks said "This is the best overall crossbill year I've seen for both species at the same time. Unless a weather event leads to a quick seed fall or makes the crop inaccessible, I expect

February into April to be a great time to document breeding for both species. There are type 1 and some type 10 (red) in the southern part of the state too. For atlasing, this will be the winter-spring to document crossbills and Pine Siskins breeding!"

There are a lot of cones out there on Norway and white spruce, hemlock and red pine. In Otsego and Chenango Counties, Red Crossbills are being found in red pine, but more often in plantations of white and Norway spruce. While crossbills may be found in any of these tree species, the smaller coned species seem to be favored by White-winged Crossbills and some of the Red Crossbills around this winter. Search the spruces but don't ignore hemlock groves since they are potential habitat. Just being present in conifers is considered "possible" breeding using Atlas code H.

Matt Young conducted workshops on finding crossbills in March. If you missed him, there is a recording of his Zoom workshop on the Breeding Bird Atlas YouTube channel – <https://tinyurl.com/nhb6yhfp>. It is worth watching.

Anyone interested in documenting these species should spend some time in conifer stands or plantations early this spring before this opportunity ends.

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February — March Bird Sightings

By Sandy Bright

Mid-February may seem pretty inhospitable to us humans, but the longer period needed for the maturation of some species' offspring necessitates their beginning to breed in mid-winter. In Treadwell, Dorian Huneke watched two Red-tailed Hawks chase a third buteo away, possibly protecting their breeding territory from a hopeful intruder. This behavior was repeated by the local pair of Bald Eagles, which were harassing a pair of Redtails. In Dorian's words, "the Redtails weren't doing anything spectacular to avoid the attacks from the eagles, but the eagles were putting on quite a show!" This included flipping over, then one eagle executed two full rotations, one right after the other. Quite a show, indeed!

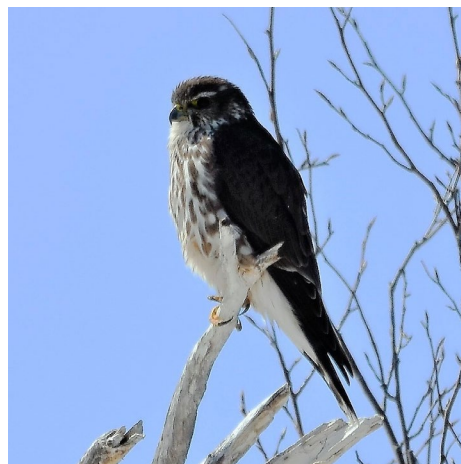
On the 18th, the first Red-winged Blackbirds made an appearance in Milford, with several foraging under Gerianne Carillo's feeders, while on Grange Hall Road Jennifer Hyypio found the only Evening Grosbeaks reported this winter. A few days later, Barred Owls were calling back and forth and Chickadees were checking out bluebird houses at Barb Palmer's in Jefferson. Linda Burkhart spotted a Brown-headed Cowbird in Franklin. On the 23rd, Andy Mason observed the first Turkey Vulture soaring over

Richmondville and found the first Common Grackles in Oneonta. Dorian and Eric Huneke reported Canada Geese, about 200 over the west end of Oneonta, and a lone goose flying over Treadwell.

Near the end of February in Delhi, Jane Cormack got close-up views of a Bald Eagle flying just 10 feet over her lawn. She also observed 5 American Crows chasing a hawk in the woods. Barb Palmer spotted an American Kestrel in Blenheim.

In early March, Randy Lynch photographed an immature Red-shouldered Hawk and a very accommodating Merlin in Harpersfield. On the 6th, he heard Wood Ducks in the wetlands near his house. Barb Palmer watched a pair of Bald Eagles mating off Westkill Road, Jefferson. Kathryn Davino found a Bald Eagle sitting on a new nest near Kortright. Al Davino watched as another bird chased one of the eagles from that pair, causing it to fly within 10 feet of his car. On the 8th, Kathryn posted pictures of displaying Wild Turkeys near Delhi.

During the March 9th snowstorm, Stan Salthe enjoyed watching three Grackles "searching through the accumulating snow and challenging each other with the 'heads-up' posture" in Deposit. A trip to the Hartwick State Forest



*Merlin in Harpersfield
Photo by Randy Lynch*

with Tom Salo and Charlie Scheim yielded a few Red Crossbills (3/9).

On the 10th, Bob Ciganek reported Merlins, Common Ravens, and a Brown Creeper along the Otsdawa Road in West Oneonta. A day later, Eastern Bluebirds were singing in East Meredith (Suzanne Gaynor) and at the Hawk Watch at Davis State Park (Becky Gretton). The first Killdeer was spotted by Randy Lynch in Harpersfield. The next day, Suzanne Gaynor listened to the querulous song of Eastern Bluebirds as they checked out a nest box in East Meredith.

The 12th brought more snow, driving birds to feeders. Both Fox and White-throated Sparrows appeared at Barb Palmer's in Jefferson, while Song Sparrows joined the feeding frenzy at my feeders in Oneonta. The next day one of the Song Sparrows began singing, adding to the spring chorus of Juncos, Titmice, Cardinals, and Carolina Wren.

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

Bird-Friendly Coffee You may order bird-friendly coffee by emailing Jane Bachman (bachmanj@hartwick.edu) or call 607-431-9509. Contact her to arrange for payment and pickup from Jane's front porch in Oneonta. More information at <https://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>.

DOAS Native Plant Sale Fundraiser to Support Community Climate Action Projects

By Susan O'Handley

In 2020-21, DOAS was awarded a grant from National Audubon Society's 'Audubon in Action' program to develop a network of community climate leaders. As part of the grant, we awarded over \$8,000 to support local climate projects. Now we are embarking on a special fundraiser to help DOAS continue our work in this arena and to provide small grants to support climate action projects in our region.

Through this fundraiser you can acquire beautiful native plants and support climate action programs in our area at the same

time. Native plants pre-orders will be accepted through 5 p.m. on Friday, April 22. (If you are mailing payment by check, it has to arrive by 4/22.) Order online or download a form to print at <https://doas.us/native-plant-sale-2022/>.

Pickup of all orders will be on Saturday, May 21 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the DOAS Tent at the Town of Hartwick EV Car Show at Husky Park, County Route 11 (the car show event runs from 11 to 3).

Join us by Zoom at our April program to learn more about Native Plants (complete description is on page 1 of this newsletter). If



you missed our recent program describing the Delhi model Native Plant Project last month, you can view the recording of the program at: <https://doas.us/webinars/>.

Please note: If you are coordinating supplies for a community climate action program, we may be able to offer special pricing. Contact Susan at info@doas.us for more information.



By Charlie Scheim

Birders of all experience levels are invited to join the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Big Day! The Big Day is a group effort in which birders, working alone, in pairs, or in small groups, will try to locate as many bird species as

we can in a single fun day on Saturday May 14. Birders can spend any amount of time they choose within that 24 hours, and report on their efforts to the Big Day coordinator, Charlie Scheim. Last year, 20 teams totaling 35 DOAS Big Day participants found 120 different species in our DOAS area!

Everyone is welcome, novice or experienced. If you are interested and have not participated before, please contact Charlie at 607-434-

4880 (voice or text) or scheimc@hartwick.edu to get information on joining in the fun.

Note that even though this year they occur on the same day, the DOAS Big Day is not the same as the Global Big Day sponsored by Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology. All birders are welcome to report their results via eBird to Cornell, of course, but reports will also need to be submitted to Charlie.

Optics Raffle Drawing Reminder

Our thanks to all who participated in the Optics Raffle fundraiser! Special thanks also to Barry and Sue Stevens of Wild Birds Unlimited in Johnson City for their help with this fundraiser. Proceeds will benefit the DOAS Sanctuary and Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch. Lucky winners will select from four prizes including a spotting scope and binoculars. The drawing will take place Friday, April 15, 2022, 7:30 p.m., during the online monthly DOAS program. Good luck!



Upcoming Activities

April

April 15 – DOAS Public Program: “Landscaping with Native Plants, a “How-to” and “Why” Guide for the Homeowner.” Our Zoom program featuring Lisa Tessier will begin at 7:30 p.m. During this program, she will explore the process and numerous benefits of designing home landscapes with native plants. Key planning steps for ensuring a successful design will be discussed—from a careful site analysis to purchasing considerations. Along the way, favorite species for our region will be shared. More information and register at <https://doas.us/landscaping-with-native-plants/>.

April 15– Optics Raffle Drawing during April Public Program: Prizes include spotting scope and binoculars. Tickets only \$15! Only 250 will be sold. More information at <https://doas.us/optics-raffle-2022/>.

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

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.

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

Save the date: This year’s “Photo Share” will happen on September 16, 2022. We will share contributed photos of birds taken by our members and friends. Each photo will include a description of why it is meaningful to the photographer and tell where it was taken. It’s not too early to start thinking of what bird photos you will submit! Look for more details on submitting your photos in the May *Belted Kingfisher*.

bird species as possible. See article on page 7. Contact is Charlie Scheim (607-434-4880 (voice or text) or scheimc@hartwick.edu).

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

May 18 – Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake State Park: Meet at the beach area at 10 AM. Led by plant expert Connie Tedesco, the walk is approximately 2 hours in the Park. Bring water, insect repellent, binoculars if on hand, and your curiosity! Register at <https://doas.us/wildflower-walk-2022>

May 20 – DOAS Public Program: “Breeding Bird Atlasing 2022.” Birders of all experience levels are invited to attend a Zoom presentation by Charlie Scheim regarding the on-going NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III on Friday, May 20th at 7:30 p.m. More information and register at: <https://doas.us/breeding-bird-atlasing-2022/>

May 21 – Native plant sale pickup (11 a.m. to 1 p.m.) at the DOAS Tent at the Town of Hartwick EV Car Show at Husky Park, Wells Avenue (the car show event runs from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.).

Summer

July 9 – ECO-FEST: Saturday, July 9 at Neahwa Park, Oneonta. This new environmental event is in the works. Please email info@doas.us to request information on how you can participate!

The John G. New Audubon Summer Day Camp program is scheduled to resume this year for youth entering grades 3 through 6. Details coming soon! Contact info@doas.us to be added to our notification list.

DOAS Membership

Cost is \$25 annually or \$35 for two years; family memberships \$30 annually or \$40 for two years. Please make your check payable to “DOAS” and mail payment to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544 or go to <https://doas.us/membership/>

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Barberrys and Ticks

By Sandy Bright

Is That Low-maintenance Shrub in Your Yard Endangering Your Health?

What bush is hardy, deer-resistant, shade- and drought-tolerant, easy to maintain, and ornamental? A popular choice for years was Japanese Barberry, an invasive plant that was banned for sale in New York State in 2015. While its competition with native plants is reason enough to avoid and remove it, this plant poses a much more ominous and immediate threat to humans: it creates an environment conducive to ticks, those bloodsucking pests that spread disease. Research has found a greater prevalence of Lyme Disease in areas with more barberry, because this plant:

- reduces sunlight, which increases the humidity of the microenvironment, providing great habitat for ticks
- also provides good habitat for mice, which host ticks, especially in the nymph stage
- causes long-reaching effects to the food web, including reducing the quantity and variety of insects and arthropods
- changes the chemical composition of the soil, improving chances for the barberry to spread while discouraging native plant species
- has a high germination rate and many seeds which, though not nutritious, are still eaten and spread by wildlife
- is avoided by deer, which browse native plants around it allowing the barberry to spread.

Ticks can't drink water, but absorb moisture from the air. Thus they avoid low moisture areas such as lawns and bushes with no low branches. If you have barberry in your yard, ideally it should be removed. However, drastically cutting the barberry back every five years will reduce ticks significantly.

For more information, check out the following articles:

Dirt Magazine: "The Tick-Resistant Yard"

Ecosystem Gardening: "Japanese Barberry: A Threat to Public Health"

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources: "Good Natured: When Bad Attracts Worse!"

