



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

November Program: "Got Cavities?" Presented by Rick Bunting



Red-bellied Woodpecker, by Rick Bunting

One of our favorite photographers, Rick Bunting, will present his program, "Got Cavities?" on Friday, November 18. The program is a compilation of photos taken in the past few years that focuses on some of our cavity nesting bird species and the family life they create in their special "homes."

We are pleased to offer this program in person at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut St., Oneonta, NY, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Unlike our Zoom meetings, you can look forward to tasty refreshments and seeing friends and neighbors face to face, socially distanced, of course! Masks are encouraged.

Rick Bunting is Professor Emeritus from the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam where he served as Chair of Music Education and conductor of the renowned Crane Chorus. Previous to his work at Potsdam he taught at the Bainbridge-Guilford Central School, SUNY Fredonia and Jacksonville University. He continues his musical endeavors as a guest

conductor and as a member of the Susquehanna String Band. Since his retirement from teaching he has devoted a great deal of time to his passion as an amateur naturalist. He enjoys taking pictures of what he sees and sharing them whenever he can. His programs for DOAS are always enjoyed by all who attend.



White-breasted Nuthatch by Rick Bunting

January Program: Plan to Attend



Photo by Landa Palmer

On January 20, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom, Landa Palmer will present "Puffin and Bird Adventure." Landa will share photos and stories from her recent trip to Grimsey Island, Iceland. Registration required and will soon be available at <https://doas.us/>.

Bird Seed Fundraiser Reminder

Thanks to all who ordered for our bird seed fundraiser. Orders should be picked up on **SATURDAY, November 5, 9 a.m.-11 a.m. PICK UP LOCATION:** VP Supply Corp., 69 Country Club Road, Oneonta, NY.

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Recognizing Susan O’Handley

by *Co-president Andy Mason*

I doubt many readers of our newsletter peruse the page 2 column listing officers and directors and others critical to the organization each issue. But if you do, you will notice that Susan O’Handley’s name is no longer listed as co-president. Susan has served in that role for a decade but has stepped down after leading our Chapter through a period of change, growth and improvement.

Susan has been involved in all aspects of DOAS, but none more than bringing us into the digital age. We have been incredibly fortunate to have her expertise as a technology professional in web design, communication, publicity, online commerce and much more. I can’t imagine what Susan’s work would have cost us if she had not generously donated her time, talents and energy.

In addition to completely revamping and maintaining our website, Susan played a major role in redesigning this newsletter, establishing a network for board communication, and developing action groups for climate change, native planting and education, among others. She professionalized and expanded our public relations activities with commensurate growth in participation at our events. Her efforts in putting DOAS before the public has also been a major factor in a 50% increase in membership over her term as co-president.



Past Co-President Susan O’Handley

A born environmental educator, Susan revived and extended our summer day camp, instituted a grant program for schools, represented DOAS in planning Earth Day and other community activities, interacted with college interns and presented workshops on conservation issues.

Clearly, having Susan O’Handley in a leadership role was one of the best things that ever happened to DOAS. Fortunately, she will remain a strong presence in DOAS, continuing to serve on the Board of Directors. Thankfully she has agreed to continue as our internet and tech guru and lead publicity person, as well as staying on as education chair. We are grateful to Susan for her dedication and commitment to the environment and to DOAS. Although no longer one of the co-presidents, she remains an active and important part of our organization.

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

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Programs*: Becky Gretton
Publicity*: Susan O’Handley
Sanctuary*: Andrew Mason
Bird Counts: Sandy Bright
Charter Dinner: Kathryn Davino
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Historian: vacant
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Email: info@doas.us

ON THE WEB: <https://doas.us/> and
[www.facebook.com/
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To contribute notes or articles for
The Belted Kingfisher, email:
editor@doas.us

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.

Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

Recovering America's Wildlife Act Pending in Washington—A very important and positive piece of wildlife legislation may soon be voted on in the US Senate. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act passed the House of Representatives on June 14. It has good bi-partisan support but needs to overcome the gridlock in Washington.

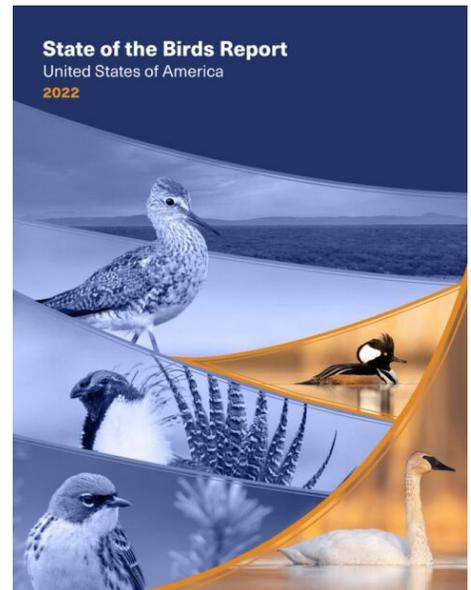
This bill would provide much-needed resources for wildlife conservation across the nation by increasing funding for state action plans by more than \$1 billion overall, and for tribal programs by more than \$90 million.

One-third of all fish and wildlife species in the United States are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered. Urgent action and funds are needed to halt biodiversity loss in this country, including the loss of nearly 3 billion birds in the U.S.

and Canada since 1970. A new *State of the Birds* report indicates that 39 species of “common” North American birds such as Prairie Warbler, Evening Grosbeak and Chimney Swift are headed toward loss of another 50% of their populations in the next 50 years, on top of already dramatic declines over the past half-century.

Numbers of our eastern forest birds have dropped by 27% since 1970 and statistics for grassland birds, shorebirds and others are even worse. When we seem to be seeing and hearing fewer birds, we in fact are.

Most of the programs that could play an essential role in addressing species loss are at the state, tribal and territorial level, but there is a massive gap in funding for their conservation programs. This legislation would re-energize these efforts



From: <https://www.stateofthebirds.org/2022/>

where the dollars do the most good. **What you can do**—Contact US Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and particularly Chuck Schumer (US Senate, Washington, DC 20510), who can play a large role in pushing the Act forward. Ask them to support and vote for this needed legislation.

Happy Thanksgiving Quote of the Month: “Nature’s beauty is a gift that cultivates appreciation and gratitude.” — Louie Schwartzberg

Holiday Gift Ideas

By Jane Bachman

It’s not too early to think about holiday gift shopping. A DOAS membership makes a wonderful gift for the nature lover on your list. Membership information is on page 7 or online at <https://doas.us/membership/>.

DOAS mugs or delicious bird-friendly coffee make nice stocking stuffers. A new inventory of Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch hats is being ordered and should be available for the holidays! You may order these items 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. Cash, checks and credit cards are accepted.



Like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

Land and Time: Thoughts from a Boulder

By DOAS Director Nate Cutting

My annual October hunting trip to the Adirondacks with my father got me thinking, as it usually does. Something about spending a few days and nights away from electricity, cell service, thermostats, and a shower tends to do that for a person. We stayed near a picturesque brook, raging with white-water down a stretch of massive granite boulders. I sat on a granite throne and watched the water, passing the time.

Time... What was this place like 50 years ago? Judging by the diameter of the trunks around me, it had far fewer trees and almost no large ones. Surely this whole area was either nearly or wholly clearcut within the last 100 years, just as most of New York's forests were. What about farther back? A couple of these largest trees may be old enough to have been scent marked by a wolf (and judging by the recent admission by DEC from Cherry Valley, maybe they will be again). Like wolves, countless other species are resurging after a notable absence from these woods, and all the while water rushed over this granite. I try for a moment to contemplate how much must have changed since this boulder formed, but it starts to make my head hurt and I think better of it; I am content with thinking about the geologically recent past.

Otter Brook is the name of this raucous run of water, and although we weren't lucky enough to see any otters, surely it had an abundance at one time to be baptized thusly. Before we returned to civilization we visited Lost Pond, which must

Photo submitted by Nate Cutting



have received its name by some hapless stranger; Squaw Lake, sadly and ignorantly named for a native people no longer common in these woods; and we crossed the Moose River, which was only recently reacquainted with its namesake in any significant numbers. These place names give clues about their histories, and harken to a time of wilderness, but we know that much has changed since then. These ecosystems were tamed, cut, overharvested... virtually biologically neutered in the recent past, and are only now starting to re-wild, thanks to State protection and the efforts of conservation-minded citizens.

It's impossible to think about the past without also thinking of the future. That razor-thin line that we call the present is constantly moving toward the unknown. Working and living with young people is a daily reminder about the future of their experience in nature. Happily, what will they see that I haven't? Or depressingly, what will they never see because they were lost during my time? Speaking of

which, what countless things have I never seen because of the ecological ignorance of generations before my time?

Land-use history is surely one of the most blessing or scarring characteristics of any habitat, and although we can't change past sins, we can act wisely to ensure habitat recovery and perseverance. Please folks (at the risk of preaching to the choir), use our land wisely because it's not just our land. Small acts make a difference and voting matters every November. Whether you measure your land in square feet or square miles, own private land or make use of public land, we can all do more to ensure habitat presence and diversity for our beloved fellow Earthlings.

The ecological history of the Adirondacks and New York State as a whole, complicated as it is, teaches a valuable lesson in land use. This is a changing, chaotic world, and we humans are the only ones capable of conserving the biological wonder of our planet. Time will tell if we will succeed.

September — October Bird Sightings

By Sandy Bright

In mid-September a Great Blue Heron stood immobile, eyeing a school of 5 inch fingerlings near the bridge entering Neahwa Park. It eventually flew off empty-billed, giving in to its apprehension about all the foot, bike, and auto traffic.

Barb Palmer was entertained by families of Tufted Titmice, Cardinals, and young Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and still had a Ruby-throated Hummingbird hanging around her place in Jefferson on the 19th. Bob Ciganek heard a Black-billed Cuckoo calling on the 20th of September.

The counters at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch reported a nice variety of non-raptor species, including an Olive-sided Flycatcher that hung around for some time, Nashville, Yellow-rumped and Black-throated Green Warblers, Towhee, Cedar Waxwings, Belted Kingfisher, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Great Blue Heron, a Common Loon flying through

the valley, and a sparrow “that fled from the local Sharpie.”

In early October Barb Palmer captured photos of a number of birds before they left for warmer climes, including House Wren, Pine Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Northern Parula. A White-crowned Sparrow visited her yard.

Jennifer Hyypio sent out a photo of a fledgling bird weeks ago, looking for help with identification. Undeterred by my ignorance, she reached out to Cornell. Her persistence was rewarded when she received their response recently: it was a young Yellow-billed Cuckoo. A distinctive species, they are nonetheless tough to identify when lacking their classic long tail.

One mid-October morning John Davis listened to hundreds of blackbirds, mostly if not all Redwings and Grackles, cackling in the trees and on the ground near his house in Cooperstown. It must have been quite a cacophony! The

14th brought the sweet cheerful notes of a Blue-headed Vireo singing in the woods near Andes.

Wild Turkeys incubate their eggs for four weeks and the young stay with their mother for about four months, so it's not uncommon to find hens with poults in September. It was quite a surprise, however, when Jo Salo found a hen with a half-grown poult on October 14th. Hopefully that youngster will find enough nutrition to grow strong for the coming winter.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Photo by Jennifer Hyypio

What are you seeing at your feeders? If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, brights@hartwick.edu or 607 287-4465.

Mark Your Calendar for Winter Field Trips

By Andy Mason



Bald Eagle near Cannonsville
Photo by Rod Sutton

The DOAS Eagle Trip is scheduled for Saturday, January 15, 2023. This field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles in Delaware County is open to DOAS members only. For more information contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162, or AndyMason@earthling.net. On January 16th, DOAS will participate in the NYS Ornithological Association's Annual Statewide Waterfowl Count. This effort involves identifying and counting ducks and geese in our region. Anyone interested in helping with the census, please contact Andy Mason, phone 607-652-2162, or email AndyMason@earthling.net.

At the DOAS Audubon Sanctuary

By Susan O'Handley and Andy Mason

Nearly 100 people attended the Audubon Sanctuary's Open House on October 8th. The big draw was a presentation by wildlife rehabilitator Deb Saltis of Falcon Heart Rescue in Herkimer. Deb displayed several live rehabilitated hawks and owls, birds that cannot be released but are used for educational purposes. The program ended with the release of a rehabbed Peregrine Falcon, thrilling the large audience as it flew into nearby woods and then circled overhead several times. The falcon had been found with a broken wing near Canajoharie. It was most likely the victim of a vehicle strike, according to Saltis.

In addition to the live raptor presentation, the Sanctuary Open House included a nature walk for children, a raptor ID workshop, a guided trail walk around the Sanctuary, and many refreshments.

The Open House provided an opportunity to show off improvements recently done at the Sanctu-



Open House at the Sanctuary, Photo by John Heidecker

ary, particularly those designed to make the site more accessible and welcoming to all. Over the past month, crusher run was added to make the drive near the barn and around the roofed area smoother and more attractive. The last issue of the Kingfisher reported on the



Peregrine Falcon just prior to release
Photo by Landa Palmer

donation of two new benches and a picnic table, and we can now report the addition of a handicapped accessible portable toilet rented for the remainder of the season. The benches on the path up to the Hawkwatch, in particular, have been well used, with many comments about their usefulness.

DOAS's Accessibility Committee has plans to continue working towards a more user-friendly site, including creating a more accessible boardwalk trail, with an overlook for the wetland area, as well as additional educational and interpretive trail signage.



Golden Eagle
Photo by David Kiehm

The first Golden Eagle of the 2022 season showed up early at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary. Becky Gretton recorded an adult bird on September 24, ushering in what we hope will be a flight of a couple of hundred of these spectacular raptors by the end of the year.

The best days for Goldens and for hawks generally come with colder

Golden Eagle Season is Here!

By Andy Mason

weather and northwest winds. These conditions often follow passage of a cold front, so watchers should keep an eye on the weather reports. These weather conditions require extra layers of clothing, so be sure to dress appropriately if you visit the lookout. Forecasts of good flights are sent out by email a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit the web site <http://www.franklinmt.org/> to sign up.

November also brings increasing numbers of Red-tailed Hawks, with several hundred possible on similar promising conditions. Other lat-

er-season species making appearances include Red-shouldered Hawks, Northern Goshawks, and Rough-legged Hawks.

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. Daily raptor tallies are also available by email. To receive those, or you want to find directions to the Hawkwatch, visit <http://www.franklinmt.org/>.

Upcoming Activities

November

November 5 – Bird Seed Sale Pickup: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., Pickup Location is VP Supply Corp., 41 Country Club Road, Oneonta.

November 18 – DOAS Public Program: “Got Cavities?” with Rick Bunting sharing his photos. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

December

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

December 17 – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count. Contact Sandy Bright at brights@hartwick.edu or phone 607-287-4465. See article on page 8.

December 31 – Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count. Contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or scheimc@hartwick.edu. See article on page 8.

January

January 1– Delaware County Christmas Bird Count. Contact Pam Peters at ovenb1rdp@gmail.com or phone 607-829-6545. See article on page 8.

January 15 – DOAS Eagle Trip: Field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles in Delaware County. This trip is open

to DOAS members only. For more information contact Andy Mason, 607-652-2162, or 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. Anyone interested in helping with the census, please contact Andy Mason, phone 607-652-2162, or email AndyMason@earthling.net.

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January 20 – DOAS Public Program: “Puffin and Bird Adventure.” Landa Palmer will share her photos and stories from Grimsey Island, Iceland via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. Registration required and will soon be available at <https://doas.us/>.

February

February 17 – DOAS Public Program: “Symbolic Meaning of Birds to the Unangan Inuit People” presented by Debra Corbett via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. Registration required and will soon be available at <https://doas.us/>.

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

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Support Rod Spangle, Antique Clock Repair in Unadilla, a business sponsor who supports our Chapter’s Programs and Activities.

SUPPORT THOSE WHO SUPPORT DOAS!

DOAS Membership

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*.

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 with this form to:
DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

Memberships can also be purchased online at <https://doas.us/membership/>

Name: _____ Phone: _____

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Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation: \$_____



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



2022 Christmas Bird Counts

By Sandy Bright and Pam Peters

Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), begun in 1900, is the oldest and one of the largest citizen science projects in the Western Hemisphere. This will be our local chapter's 54th 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 (e.g., 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. New feederwatch participants should contact the coordinator at least two days in advance to receive protocols for recording birds. People who have participated before will be contacted. If you want 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 <https://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 17, 2022

Compiler: Sandy Bright
email brights@hartwick.edu
phone 607-287-4465.

Fort Plain CBC

December 31, 2022

Compiler: Charlie Scheim
email scheimc@hartwick.edu
phone 607-434-4880.

Delaware County CBC

January 1, 2023

Compiler: Pam Peters
email ovenb1rdp@gmail.com
phone 607-829-6545.