



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

March 17 Program:

Young Forest Birds and Young Forest Management

Join us on March 17, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. for Roger Masse's Zoom presentation, "Young Forest Birds and Young Forest Management in New York and the Northeast."

In recent decades, concerns for declining populations of young forest birds have sparked much research and management to help conserve these species. Young forest birds are unique in that they require early stages of forest succession which normally result from natural disturbances or human intervention. On contemporary landscapes, active management to create and maintain areas of young forest is increasingly necessary to conserve young forest birds. For example, strategic forest clearcutting is an effective way to create young forest vegetation types for species like Eastern Towhee, Blue-

winged Warbler, and American Woodcock. This practice, along with other forest management strategies, has been used within regional Young Forest Initiatives to provide important acreage of young forest vegetation for this suite of declining species. During this presentation, Dr. Masse will discuss aspects of the ecology and management of young forest birds. Resources where additional information can be found will also be highlighted so that landowners, birdwatchers, and other nature enthusiasts can better understand the need for active management of these species and their habitat.

Dr. Masse currently works as an associate professor of wildlife management at SUNY Cobleskill. He is particularly interested in bird ecology and management with an emphasis on American woodcock



Roger Masse, Contributed Photo

and other young forest birds. He is also a birdwatcher and nature enthusiast. He enjoys sharing those interests and experiences with his students at SUNY Cobleskill and with his 6- and 4-year-old sons at home.

Registration required; click on event date, March 17, at <https://doas.us/calendar/>.

Mark Your Calendars for the April 21 Program:

"How High Temperatures are Affecting Birds and Their Songs," at 7:30 p.m. at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Guest speaker Casey Coomes will present a slideshow about how rising temperatures are affecting birds all over the world. Climate change poses a huge threat to the persistence of songbirds in North America—in fact, we have already lost almost 30% of our species in the last 50 years. During her presentation, Casey will discuss how heat can influence bird survival, reproduction, and even the songs they sing! The Optics Raffle drawing will be conducted after the program.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Behind the Scenes.....	2
Early Spring?.....	2-3
Conservation & Legislation.....	3
Hiding in Plain Sight.....	4
Bird Sightings	5
Accessibility Committee	6
January Waterfowl Report.....	6
Upcoming Activities	7
Optics Raffle.....	8

Behind the Scenes

by Co-president Andy Mason

There is much going on behind the scenes at DOAS these days. The end results usually reach this newsletter or our website or Facebook page, but the efforts of our board and other volunteers are often out of view.

For example, the fundraising optics raffle described on page 8 required gathering up prizes, writing publicity, setting up an online method of purchasing and tracking tickets and drawing winners, and more. This work fell to our Fundraising Committee members: Chair Dorian Huneke, Pam Peters, Susan O'Handley, Jane Bachman and Kathryn Davino.

The programs you read about here, and hopefully attend, are organized by Becky Gretton. This job requires coming up with program ideas, contacting potential speakers, working out technical program issues, creating publicity and finally ensuring all goes well the evening of the presentation, including

introducing the speaker.

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, one of our most visible and important activities, is a particular challenge: scheduling counters and coordinating coverage, making sure data is collected, recorded accurately, and submitted to the large database where all North American hawk migration data is kept. Also, physically maintaining the site for view, visitation, safety, and more is an ongoing issue. Tom Salo, Pam Peters and Becky Gretton carry the load at the hawk watch and get credit for keeping it one of NY's premier hawk migration sites.

I could go on with more examples of the often unseen and unrecognized work that makes DOAS a vibrant and successful Audubon Chapter. Suffice it to say that we have a great, committed board of directors.

We are always seeking new volunteers, for board positions and other help. If you appreciate what we do and would like to participate at a higher level, please contact me or any other board member.

Early Spring? *Excerpted from a report by Jennifer*

Gray, CNN meteorologist, published February 13, 2023

This year might be another strike in the "loss column" for Punxsutawney Phil, which isn't much of a surprise since he's wrong about 60% of the time. He forecast six more weeks of winter, yet it seems spring is already in full bloom across parts of the country where blooms should still be nearly a month away.

Much of the "early spring" has to do with the warm start to 2023. Philadelphia and New York City

are experiencing their warmest start to the year on record. Megan O'Connell, a research associate with the Botanical Research Institute of Texas, stated that spring is coming early more frequently – and climbing to warmer temperatures – because of climate change. The timing of when plants bloom is critical for the pollinators who depend on them. If the blooms

"Early Spring" Continued on page 3

DELAWARE - OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC. FOUNDED 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Janet Potter

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Co-Presidents Becky Gretton

Andrew Mason

Treasurer

Charlie Scheim

Secretary

Dorian Huneke

Directors

Jane Bachman

Nathan Cutting

Kathryn Davino

David Diaz

Susan O'Handley

Landa Palmer

Pamela Peters

Janet Potter

Tom Salo

COMMITTEE CHAIRS* AND ASSIGNMENTS

Conservation*: Andy Mason

Education*: Susan O'Handley

Fundraising*: Dorian Huneke

Hawkwatch*: Andrew Mason

Tom Salo

Hospitality*: Kathryn Davino

Membership*: Janet Potter

Programs*: Becky Gretton

Publicity*: Susan O'Handley

Sanctuary*: Andrew Mason

Bird Counts: Sandy Bright

Charter Dinner: Kathryn Davino

Finance: Gray Mason

Historian: vacant

Sales*: Jane Bachman

ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Delaware Otsego Audubon Society

P.O. Box 544

Oneonta, NY 13820

Email: info@doas.us

ON THE WEB: <https://doas.us/> and

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety)

[DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety](https://www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety)

To contribute notes or articles for
The Belted Kingfisher, email:
editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

Birds and Bees Protection Act—

We have written here before about this Albany legislation that would limit the use of neonicotinoid or “neonic” pesticides in the state. Neonics are used on crops and on lawns, gardens, and golf courses. The neurotoxic pesticides have been linked to losses of bees, birds, and other wildlife. There is a growing body of research indicating the chemicals also affect human health.

Last summer the Environmental Protection Agency released a report finding that the pesticides likely adversely impact a majority of America’s endangered species. Their use is widespread--neonics are now the single-most popular insecticide class in the United States. So the breadth of their consequences is no surprise.

Neonics work by attacking the nervous system of insects, causing uncontrollable shaking and twitching followed by paralysis then death. They are effective--some of the most deadly pesticides ever created. However,

they kill indiscriminately, exterminating not only targeted insects but also countless butterflies, bees, and other wildlife. In fact, according to National Geographic, since their introduction neonics have made U.S. agriculture nearly 50 times more harmful to insect life.

Neonics are systemic pesticides, meaning they are taken up by plants as they grow. That makes the plant itself—its nectar, pollen, leaves, stems, and fruit—toxic. Over 90% of the chemical enters the soil, where it remains active for years.

The widespread use, longevity and sweeping impacts of neonics have brought about vast ecosystem contamination. The decline of honey bees—essential for pollination of many crops—and Monarch butterflies, from neonics has been well-publicized. In addition, a good proportion of the 29% decline in U.S. bird populations since 1970 has been linked to neonics. Birds are poisoned by ingesting pesticide coated seeds, and by the overall loss of insects they depend on for food.



Honeybee Pollinating Fruit

Photo by Ivar Leidus

Wikimedia Commons

The Birds and Bees Protection Act would prohibit agricultural use of corn, soybean and wheat seeds coated with neonics, beginning January 1, 2026. This provides time for users to switch to available alternatives. The use of some neonics on turf or ornamental plantings would take effect immediately. Others would be banned as of July 1, 2025.

What you can do—Unfortunately, none of our local state legislators are co-sponsors of this bill. Contact your State Senator and Assemblymember and let them know the documented dangers of neonics deserve their attention and action.

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

“Early Spring” Continued from page 2 appear early, the blooms could already be gone by the time pollinators appear, creating what scientists call “ecological mismatch.”

One example is the Monarch butterfly. Scientists have seen the milkweed they depend on to lay their eggs



bloom earlier and earlier, but the butterflies are still showing up on time to fields where milkweed has already finished blooming and is gone. The mismatch might seem small but could have huge implications affecting all of us.

But O’Connell pointed out we can help pollinators by planting as many native species as possible in our own yards. “You can create little pollinator resorts for them throughout the year. Look up different species of flowers that flower at different times in the season, and then plant flowers so that you can provide food to them all season,” O’Connell advised.

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/13/weather/weather-news-early-spring-warm-spring-wxn/index.html>

Hiding in Plain Sight

By DOAS Director Janet Potter

I am writing this from sunny Florida where the abundance and variety of bird life makes a birding paradise. A recent encounter with an American Bittern in Sarasota, Florida got me thinking about bird camouflage. Standing on a boardwalk looking out at a wetland area, I was directed by a helpful stranger to point my binoculars at a particular spot where an American Bittern was standing. I searched for quite a long time before I finally saw a movement and was able to pinpoint the location.

The bird was essentially invisible to me as it faded into the grasses and reeds. These birds have evolved to be able to hide in plain sight, with the streaks on their necks mimicking

the vertical lines of the reeds in which they stand. They lift their heads to accentuate the disguise and, according to Cornell Lab of Ornithology, they are even known to sway with the breeze to better blend in.

Predators hide to enhance the element of surprise when hunting and their prey hide to avoid being another critter's dinner. Birds have several kinds of adaptive strategies to stay hidden. Like the Bittern, many birds rely on color and pattern to camouflage themselves. Ground feeders are often streaky brown or gray. Birds who frequent leafy trees can be hard to see if they are green or olive colored. I love seeing the beautiful green female Painted Buntings, alongside their much more colorful mates.

Owls win the prize for matching the appearance of the bark.

For some birds like the Painted Buntings, the survival advantage of camouflage only applies to the females and juveniles. A female sitting on a nest can safely blend into the background if the coloration matches the environment. Most young birds also need the add-ed advantage of camouflage. For



American Bittern at Celery Fields, Florida
Photo by Janet Potter

many male birds like the colorful Northern Cardinal, it seems evolution has rewarded those who stand out; in those birds the ability to attract a mate trumps being able to hide from predators.

So, my American Bittern was using all these strategies to hide in plain sight: his brown and buff color blended into the marshy environment, the streaks on his neck mimicked the reeds around him, and the way he moved, lifting his head and stretching his neck upwards, and perhaps he swayed in the breeze as well, although I didn't see that! In the spring, we can look forward to help finding these clever disguise artists when their distinctive American Bittern call will help give them away. Listen for what Cornell Lab of Ornithology describes, "the marshes resound with their odd booming calls that sound like the gulps of a thirsty giant."



Great Horned Owl
Photo by Kenn Kaufman
Audubon Photo Awards

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

Judging by the number of sightings reported things are picking up in the bird world. Barb Palmer had 7 Northern Cardinals at once in her yard, a record for her, along with 10 Evening Grosbeaks and a large flock of European Starlings, which luckily didn't stay long. A few days later Stan Salthe reported a Winter Wren in Deposit two days in a row. Three Pine Siskins and a Red-breasted Nuthatch visited Kay Crane's feeders in Walton.

On a mild winter day in the last week of January, a House Finch sang its cheerful tune in Oneonta. An American Robin foraged on the last of the crabapples in Barb Palmer's yard during a snowstorm. She found flocks of Snow Buntings near Blenheim and North Harpersfield.

Early February brought more Buntings, with a "huge" flock discovered by Landa Palmer and Becky Gretton near Richfield Springs, along with a half dozen Horned Larks. For the first time in their 45 years of bird feeding, a Pileated Woodpecker became a regular at Tom and Jo Salo's suet feeder in West Burlington. One day they spotted a Cooper's Hawk on prey in a field. Further investigation revealed evidence –

wing tracks in the snow and lots of feathers - that the hawk had caught a Mourning Dove in mid-air, quite a feat!

Barb Palmer photographed a juvenile Bald Eagle on a deer carcass on a frozen stream and listened to the song of a Carolina Wren in Jefferson. A Northern Mockingbird perched in the same spot one was seen exactly a month ago by our driveway. Eileen Kline found a Pileated Woodpecker tapping in mixed woods in Delhi one day, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker moving through nearby trees the next.

Tom and Jo Salo found the first "breeding bird" evidence of the year on the 9th in West Burlington: a Bald Eagle in a nest. The previous day they had observed a pair engaged in a "limited aerial display" in the area.

At the Cannonsville Reservoir Pam Peters found about 70 Ring-necked Ducks, 6 Redheads, and "the usual cluster of Canada Geese" below the dam. Exiting the car to investigate an eagle soaring overhead with a Common Raven, she identified a young Golden Eagle slowly moving higher, then disappearing over the ridge, Raven in tow. An adult Bald Eagle



Snow Buntings

Photo by Landa Palmer

circled the reservoir at a much higher elevation.

In mid-February, Lisa Gorn watched a flock of about a hundred Snow Geese flying north, high over Morris. In Richfield Springs Becky Gretton was stretched out on the couch with sleeping cat after a productive, fun day of birding when a Barred Owl perched outside her window. She watched it look around some, then fly off. What a great end to her birding day!

And a good way to end this article is with the hope inspired by sightings of some early arrivals on February 13th: Susan Carver spotted a "quartet of Turkey Vultures" in Cobleskill; 10 American Robins flew over Tom Salo's property in West Burlington; Pam Peters found a Song Sparrow singing in Treadwell, and in East Meredith, Suzanne Gaynor listened to the spring song of a Brown Creeper.



Like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/DelawareOtsegoAudubonSociety

Bird Friendly Coffee

You may order bird-friendly coffee, as well as DOAS hats, mugs, and reusable bags 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.

More information at <https://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>.

Making the Sanctuary More Accessible

By Landa Palmer

The DOAS Accessibility Committee is moving forward with plans and ideas that will help to bring the joys of birding and bringing nature to as many people as we can. While our efforts are focused on the Sanctuary, we are hoping to collaborate with other organizations in the community to help facilitate accessibility at other sites. Birding trips are being planned and will include descriptions of what to expect for those with special needs.

We are progressing with our efforts to have a universal trail assessment completed of the walking

trails at the Sanctuary, which the Catskill Independence Center will do. Once the assessment is complete, we will be able to list our site on the Birdability.org website, with a goal of encouraging use of the Sanctuary by those who may be unaware of the possibilities. We are also beginning efforts to create an accessible parking area, walking path to the wetland and barn area, and evaluating a new overlook for the wetland area, which will be able to accommodate mobility needs. We are hoping to place three additional resting benches in other areas of



Resting Bench at the Sanctuary
Photo by Jane Bachman

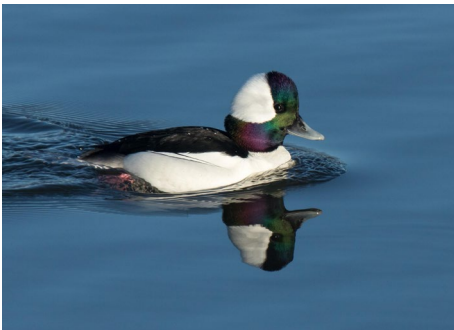
the Sanctuary.

If you'd like to help with this effort, either by volunteering, providing financial support, or if you have any ideas or questions, please contact Landa Palmer through email landavpalmer@gmail.com.

January Waterfowl Report

By Andy Mason

Below are results of the DOAS section of the statewide waterfowl count held the weekend of January 14-16, 2023. Areas covered include Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River above Unadilla, Canadarago Lake and nearby streams, the Unadilla River, the West Branch of the Delaware River and Cannonsville Reservoir.



Bufflehead
Audubon Photo by Kenn Kaufman

Most waterways were open which no doubt contributed to the good number of species spotted, as well as high counts.

In addition to the waterfowl, other sightings of interest included Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Ring-billed Gulls, Great Blue Herons, Wild Turkeys, Barred Owl, muskrat, and beaver.

Thanks to participants: Carolyn & Jim Austin, Italo Bironi, Susan Brunswick, Bill Carbine, Bob Ciganek, Kay Crane, David Diaz, Bob & Karen Donnelly, Lisa Gorn, John Heidecker, Laura Kilty, Carol & Randy Lynch, Andy Mason, Tom & Jo Ann Salo.

Goose — 830
Gadwall — 15
Mallard — 823
Canvasback — 2
Redhead — 250
American Black Duck — 54

Ring-necked Duck — 109
Green-winged Teal — 1
Bufflehead — 119
Common Goldeneye — 103
Hooded Merganser — 141
Common Merganser — 140

Red-breasted Merganser — 7
Common Loon — 5
American Coot — 45

TOTAL—2644

Quotation of the Month: "Come with me into the woods. Where spring is advancing, as it does, no matter what, not being singular or particular, but one of the forever gifts, and certainly visible" — Mary Oliver

Upcoming Activities

March

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

March 17 – DOAS Public Program: “Young Forest Birds and Young Forest Management in NY and the Northeast,” presented by Roger Masse via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. Registration required; click on March 17th at <https://doas.us/calendar/>.

April

April 15 – Earth Festival at the Milford School.

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

April 21 – DOAS Public Program: “How High Temperatures are Affecting Birds and Their Songs,” presented by Casey Coomes at 7:30 p.m. at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta. Optics Raffle drawing after the program.

May

May 6 – Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk: meet at 8 a.m. 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 for more information.

May 14 – Spring Bird Walk at the DOAS Sanctuary beginning at 8 a.m. Returning migrants at this location should include warblers, vireos, orioles, tanagers, and possibly waterfowl and raptors. The

walk will last approximately two hours, and will require some hill-climbing and hiking over uneven and possibly muddy ground. For further information, contact Andy Mason, 607- 267-8491. Directions to the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at the doas website:

<https://doas.us>

May 17 – Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk at Gilbert Lake State Park: Meet at the beach area at 10 a.m. 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/events/2023-wildflower-walk/>

May 16 – DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

May 19 – DOAS Public Program: “Trip to Antarctica” presented by Pam Lea at 7:30 p.m. at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta.

May 20 – DOAS Big Day Bird Count

June

June 3 – Native Plant Sale pickup at the Electric Vehicle Car Show in Oneonta. Watch coming newsletters for details.

Fall

Mark your calendars for the Sanctuary Open House on October 7 and the Annual Charter Dinner on October 20.

2023 Business Sponsors: Support Those Who Support DOAS!



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!



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



2023 Optics Raffle

Help DOAS and enter to win one of three prizes!

\$15 Donation per ticket. Only 300 tickets available. Three winners! Our first place winner will get first pick from the prize options; second place winner will then choose from remaining items, third place winner will receive the final item. Prize choices: Canon SX70 Camera (super-zoom bridge camera with 20 Megapixel resolution) with memory card, valued at

\$624, Nikon Monarch HG 10×42 binoculars, valued at \$999.95, and Nikon Monarch HG 8×30 binoculars, valued at \$979.95. Drawing will be held on April 21 during our monthly program meeting. You don't need to be present to win. Proceeds will benefit the DOAS Sanctuary and Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch. Purchase tickets and find more information at <https://doas.us/optics-raffle-2023/>.

