



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

A Glorious Galapagos Adventure

By Kathryn Davino

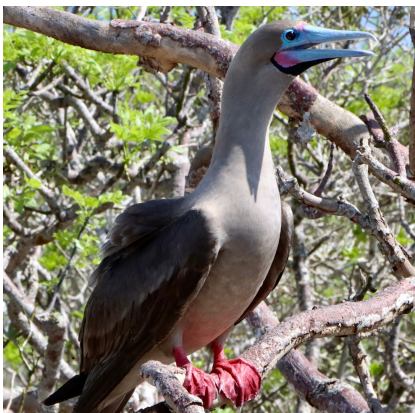
Join us via Zoom on November 17 at 7:30 p.m. as Kathryn Davino shares her photos and stories about Galapagos wildlife. In April 2023, Kathryn and Alan Davino embarked upon an exciting journey, exploring part of the remote Galapagos Archipelago aboard the ship National Geographic Endeavor II. During their week among the enchanted isles, they walked, paddled, and snorkeled amidst an

array of fascinating creatures, many of which are found nowhere else on earth. The most remarkable thing they witnessed is that the animals there are uniquely unafraid of people. They found the shipboard naturalists to be excellent guides, introducing the passengers to the flora and fauna on each of the nine islands they visited.

Many bird species were either beginning courtship or raising young, and the land and marine reptiles were busy burying eggs and defending territory. Endemic marine and land iguanas, Boobies, nesting Frigate birds, Flamingos and penguins were observed up close. Dozens of Giant Tortoises, for which the Galapagos Archipelago is named, were discovered roaming in the lush highlands. These represent just a sampling of the wildlife that will

be spotlighted in the program.

Kathryn Davino is a retired High School Biology Teacher from Delaware Academy in Delhi. She is an enthusiastic birder, gardener, and observer of wildlife. She has served on the DOAS Board of Directors since 2016.



Red-footed Booby
Photo by Kathryn Davino



The Author and Friend
Photo by Kathryn Davino

Bird Seed Sale: Order Pickup Reminder

Thanks to all who supported DOAS by ordering bird seed and coffee!

PLEASE NOTE: Orders must be picked up on

SATURDAY, November 4, 9 a.m.-11 a.m.

PICK UP LOCATION: VP Supply Corp., 69 Country Club Rd., Oneonta, NY



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January Program--Mark your Calendar!

by *Andy Mason*

On January 19, 2024, our Zoom program will feature Linda Melchionne discussing Richard O. Prum's Pulitzer Prize finalist book, *The Evolution of Beauty: How Darwin's Forgotten Theory of Mate Choice Shapes the Animal World - and Us*. An evolutionary biologist and ornithologist, Prum dusts off Darwin's long-neglected theory of mate selection in which the act of choosing a mate for purely aesthetic reasons—for the mere pleasure of it—is an independent engine of evolutionary change.

Mate choice can set the stakes for sexual conflict, in which the sexual autonomy of the female evolves in response to male sexual control. Most crucially, this framework provides important insights into the evolution of human sexuality, particularly the ways in which female preferences have changed male bodies, and even maleness itself, through evolutionary time.

Registration is required and will be available at <https://doas.us/>.

"Guilford Pollinators" Receive Award

By *Sharon Hager, DOAS member and Educator*

On October 5, 2023, the Bainbridge Guilford School District was presented with a "Champions of Change" award by the NYS School Board Association.

The "Guilford Pollinators" received the award due to their ongoing efforts to create an outdoor classroom environment where students and staff have the opportunity to learn how to support and appreciate our native pollinators. The pollinator garden was initially funded in 2021 by a Climate Action grant from DOAS.

The NYSSBA Champion for Change is a program for children who foster creative change that enriches educational opportunities and improves academic results.

The NYSSBA Awards Committee reviews submitted Champion for Change Award nomination forms based on the following:

- The creativeness of the innovations
- Evidence of the improvements

to school district programs and operations

- The ethical leadership skills employed by the candidate that led to the ground-breaking changes
- The extent to which the candidate's recognition will inspire other school board members to make similar or even greater contributions. The winner should be a role model for future school board members.



Back row l- r: Sandy Ruffo (NYSSBA V.P.), Sharon Hager, Heather Pain (Kindergarten teacher), Linda Maynard (Guilford Principal), Timothy Ryan (BG Superintendent), Keith Hanvey (BG BOE President). Front row: Mrs Pain's students

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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ADDRESS CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society
PO Box 544
Oneonta, NY 13820
Email: info@doas.us

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

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

Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

A Climate Change Sampler

With the state legislature in recess until January, and with Washington in gridlock, there is not a great deal of activity in these arenas. So it may be a good time to look at the growing body of evidence on the effects of the overarching environmental issue that is climate change.

This is a highly researched field, of course, and many studies delve into the smaller, often overlooked changes that increasing greenhouse gas concentrations bring to our planet.

From the University of Melbourne:

Australia's emerging pattern of severe mega bushfires and heavy rainfall may be driving platypuses from their homes, a new study has shown.

Analysis of platypus DNA in rivers and creek water samples collected before and after the 2019-2020 megafires suggest Australia's beloved semi-aquatic monotremes might be abandoning severely bushfire-affected areas for up to 18 months after a fire,

especially if heavy rainfall has followed the fire.

From Syracuse University:

Trees depend on fungi for their well-being. As climate change and global warming cause higher temperatures and amplified drought, little is known about how these important fungi will respond. To investigate this issue, a research team conducted a climate change experiment where they exposed boreal and temperate tree species to warming and drought treatments. Their findings revealed that the combined effects of warming and water stress will likely result in major disturbances of ectomycorrhizal networks and may harm forest resilience and function.

From the University of Arizona:

Climate change is causing extinctions at an increasing rate, a new study by researchers shows. They surveyed populations of the Yarrow's spiny lizard in 18 mountain ranges in southeastern Arizona and analyzed the

rate of climate-related extinction over time. "The magnitude of extinction we found over the past seven years was similar to that seen in other studies that spanned almost 70 years" said John J. Wiens, senior author of the study. And, from **Cornell University**, a potentially positive study: As the Earth's human population grows, greenhouse gas emissions from the world's food system are on track to expand. A new study demonstrates that state-of-the-art agricultural technology and management can not only reduce that growth, but eliminate it altogether by generating net negative emissions--reducing more greenhouse gas than food systems add.

What you can do:

Keep aware of the broad effects of climate change and spread the word to others, including governmental leaders. Letters to the editor, social media posts and communication with friends and family can all have an impact.

Updates at the Sanctuary

By Pam Peters

On Saturday October 14, 2023, nine SUNY Delhi students arrived at the DOAS Sanctuary for a morning of community service. This group is one of two student chapters in NYS of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA). Joined by one of their professors and DOAS board members Andy Mason and Pam Peters, this ambitious group removed the old viewing platform in the wetland.

Built over 20 years ago, this

platform had deteriorated and was no longer safe to walk on. With some tools and strong rope and a lot of muscle, the platform was dismantled and pulled from the water. DOAS provided lunch for the students and we were done before it started raining. What a great group of young people.

The Accessibility Committee is discussing plans for a new wetland viewing area that can be accessed via the wetland parking lot. Stay tuned as these plans develop.



SUNY Delhi's NECA Chapter in Action
Photos by Pam Peters

Q&A with New Board Member, Dr. Pam Lea

Compiled and edited by DOAS Director Pamela J. Peters

Pam joined the DOAS board in the spring. Welcome, Pam!

PP: How did you end up in Otsego County?

PL: When I applied to veterinary school, I was required to work on a farm. I took a summer job on the Babcock farm in Otsego County. After graduation from Cornell, I worked with Dr. John Leahy in West Oneonta for three years before opening my own practice in the town of Exeter, which I operated for thirty-seven years.

PP: You've traveled to seven continents. Where would you go if you returned to any of them again? Did you ever want to move to any of the places you've been?

PL: Of all the places I've traveled, the climate in New Zealand was exceptional, but they still have earthquakes and volcanoes! I can think of no better place to live than right here in Otsego County in upstate New York.

PP: When did you first realize you had a passion for nature and birding?

PL: I was the second of five kids, and my mother was always kicking us outside to play. We lived on the edge of the Adirondacks in St. Lawrence County. My brother and I would spend countless hours "exploring". I remember coming upon injured rabbits, birds, etc. and thinking I should learn to take care of them.



Dr. Pam Lea

I got involved in birding later in life, thanks to Becky Gretton.

PP: You've taken some amazing photographs over the years. What are your favorite birds to photograph? What are some of the challenges photographing birds?

PL: Bluebirds are my favorites. My mirrorless Sony works well on a tripod for zooming in on nests etc. Of course, motion is always an issue.

PP: Do you keep a life list of birds? If so, what's the last life bird you saw?

PL: I don't keep a list, and keep thinking I should get online with eBird. The last memorable birds I saw were various species of penguins in Antarctica. Although last month in Alaska, I saw some diving ducks that nobody was able to identify. Once I get them identified, they might be my latest life bird.

PP: Describe one of your favorite walks or birding spots.

PL: The trails right out my back door which I mow and maintain.

PP: What did you do for fun outside of work when you were a practicing veterinarian?

PL: I was my own boss, so I made time to do the things I loved. I followed my kids around to their sports and musical events when they were growing up. I also got outside whenever I could, kayaking and sailing, swimming, fishing, water skiing, anything to do with water. I also raised old-style Morgan horses for 25 years, producing over 40 foals during that time.

PP: What made you decide to take a conservation easement on your land?

PL: I knew about easements through my involvement with OCCA and OLT. In 1998, I purchased 140 acres and was kind of starting my life over after a divorce. When I retired, I sold 60 acres, the house, the horsebarn and the clinic, and put the other 80 acres into a conservation easement. I wanted to protect it from future development, to keep it agricultural and as "wild" as possible.

PP: How did you get interested in the DOAS? What areas would you like to focus on as a Board member?

PL: I have been a member of National Audubon and DOAS for many years and have known many of the DOAS Board members. Once I retired, I couldn't find an excuse not to join the Board! I look forward to working with others on conservation, research and education.

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.

October Bird Sightings

By **Sandy Bright**

Kayaking on a gorgeous fall day in mid-September, Laura Hurley, Susan Brunswick and I watched a Bald Eagle dive on Goodyear Lake, come up with something, and fly off into the trees to enjoy its catch. What a breathtaking experience to watch these master hunters at work.

I have always been impressed with the depth of knowledge required to identify less common birds and the non-breeding plumage of warblers. Rick Bunting is a birder with the patience and fortitude to spend many hours watching wildlife, waiting for good photo-ops, and finding those subtle markings that identify a species. Many of the images he posts, mainly from the Unadilla area, show details hidden to the casual observer. In mid-September he posted photos of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, “uncommon in our



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Photo by Rick Bunting



Rufous Hummingbird
Photo by Kathryn Davino

area...I suspect he is in migration” and a first-year male Common Yellowthroat, “you can see the shadow of what will become his black mask”. Later in the month he found five sparrow species, including Lincoln’s Sparrow.

In late September, Charlie Scheim and I watched a partial-leucistic male House Sparrow with a pure-white tail feeding young. A cardinal family took advantage of Barb Palmer’s feeders, the adults still feeding young into early October. A Merlin hung around vocalizing in our neighborhood for a couple of days. Kathryn Davino enjoyed the acrobatic maneuvers of a small flock of Ruby-crowned Kinglets that swarmed shrubs at her place, chasing insects invisible to the human observer.

Sometimes procrastination pays off. Kathryn Davino intended to take down her hummingbird feeders October 1 but didn’t get to it. Three days later, a female hummingbird

visited. Since Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have generally migrated by this time, Tom Salo suspected a vagrant from the west. Luckily Kathryn had taken some pretty good pictures, and these helped in identifying the bird as a Rufous Hummingbird; as Tom had suggested, likely a vagrant from the west.

The loudest and often most alluring bird vocalizations are for the purpose of attracting mates and defending territory. That business is mainly a summer enterprise though, and, as one walks along a woodsy path now, it’s easy to think the birds have mostly disappeared but for the call of a jay or a scolding crow. Yet birds are there for the careful observer. Charlie Scheim and I hiked the main loop at the Texas School House State Forest and were rewarded with 11 species, including two skulking, silent Wood Thrushes, several quietly calling Golden-crowned Kinglets, one agitated House Wren, and, at the end of our hike, a Blue-headed Vireo bidding us farewell with his cheery song.



Golden Eagle
Photo by Landa Palmer

Golden Eagle Season Underway

By **Andy Mason**

The first Golden Eagle of the 2023 season came by on Oct. 15 at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, followed by a second on Oct. 16, just about on schedule for the species that the site is best known for. Goldens should continue through November on days with north or northwest winds—hopefully totaling 200+ by season’s end. Forecasts of anticipated good flights of raptors are sent out by email a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit www.franklinmt.org to sign up.

New Educational Signs at Franklin Mountain

By Pam Peters, Board Member

Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch (FMHW) brings people together each fall for the autumn migration. Often it's a mix of counters, local residents, college students, and raptor enthusiasts from near and far. The volunteer counters at FMHW get a lot of questions from visitors, e.g., Why do birds fly over Franklin Mountain, How do we know we're not counting the same bird, and How many birds do we see in a day. If the counter is the only volunteer on the site, it can be difficult to answer questions while scanning for birds.

To this end, three permanent signs were designed over the summer



Photo by Pam Peters

and installed at the Hawkwatch in September:

- A raptor ID sign provides color photographs of the most common raptors seen at FMHW
- A panoramic view of landmarks across the valley orients visitors to the site--and helps them to communicate the location of raptors to the counters
- A sign about migration explains how birds use thermals and lift to travel long distances.

These signs are sturdy, made for the outdoors, securely mounted on posts and set in concrete--we hope they will

last a long time. A QR code on the signs links visitors to the DOAS web site for more information.

Many thanks to Nancy New for her generous funding and input, and to the late Richard Hendrick and other friends of DOAS for their support. Special appreciation to Lindy Lapin and her BOCES graphic design class for their efforts on the art work. Thank you everyone. The signs look fantastic and have received many compliments.

If you are interested in helping at the FMHW, contact any member of the HW committee: Becky Gretton, Andy Mason, Pam Peters, or Tom Salo.



Tom Salo installing new signage

Photo by Jane Bachman



Nancy New and new Hawk ID sign

Photo by Charlie Scheim

Open House a Success in the Rain

By Andy Mason

Despite a cool, drizzly day, this year's Open House at the DOAS Sanctuary on Oct. 7 drew around 25 attendees. Activities started with Tom Salo's hawk identification session, held undercover in the barn picnic table area to keep dry. The rain let up enough for a trail walk around the Sanctuary property, which ended at the Hawkwatch.

At the site, two recent improvements were dedicated: three interpretive signs (see article above) recently installed thanks to the support and efforts of Nancy New and others.

Nancy spoke of her parents, John and Betty New, both ornithologists and instrumental in DOAS' history (see photos, page 8).

In addition, a new bench, built and donated by Charles Spencer, was dedicated with a plaque in memory of Richard Hendrick, a conservationist and long-time Hawkwatch supporter.

Attendees then gathered by the barn for a presentation by rehabilitator Deb Saltis of Falcon Heart Rescue. Deb and her colleagues shared four educational birds (which can't be released into the



Plaque on new bench at Hawkwatch

Photo by Charlie Scheim

wild): Screech, Saw-whet, and Barred Owls, plus an American Kestrel. The kestrel was vocalizing (common for this individual) and Deb spotted a Peregrine Falcon responding with a flyover.

Many thanks to all who helped put the Open House together.

Upcoming Activities

November

November 4 - **Bird Seed Pickup**, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at VP Supply Corp, 69 Country Club Road, Oneonta

November 17- **DOAS Public Program**: “A Glorious Galapagos Adventure.” Kathryn Davino will share her photos and stories from the Galapagos Archipelago via Zoom at 7:30 p.m. Registration required at <https://tinyurl.com/yy4k7va4>

December

December 5 - **DOAS Board Meeting**: 6:30 p.m.

December 16 - **Oneonta Christmas Bird Count**. See article below for more information

December 30- **Fort Plain Christmas Bird Count**. See article below for more information

December 31 - **Delaware County Christmas Bird Count**. See article below for more information.

January

January 13 - **DOAS Eagle Trip**: Field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles in Delaware County. This trip is open to the public. Contact Andy Mason if you are interested in joining this trip (see contact info below)

January 14 - **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

January 16 - **DOAS Board Meeting**: 6:30 p.m.

January 19 - **DOAS Public Program**: 7:30 p.m., via Zoom, featuring Linda Melchionne

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

In Case You Missed It — Past Webinars Are Available Online at <https://doas.us/webinars/>.

Christmas Bird Counts

By Pam Peters and Sandy Bright

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 55th 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://tinyurl.com/4936u6rz> click on the link, then zoom in to

Chickadee Feeding
Photo by Pam Peters



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 urge continued caution in participating in the CBC. Carpool within existing family or social pod units only and practice social distancing. If transmission rates increase and local health departments impose stricter measures, please follow those.

Oneonta CBC

December 16, 2023

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

Fort Plain CBC

December 30, 2023

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

Delaware County CBC

December 31, 2023

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



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*John New and Betty New
(with Bunny) at the FMHW.
John New was instrumental in
identifying Franklin Mountain
as a migratory flyway*

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and mail payment to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

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