



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

April Program: A Birding Week in Florida

By *Becky Gretton*

PLEASE NOTE: For the April 19 program, the location has been changed to the Foothills Performing Arts Center, 24 Market Street in Oneonta. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. and the program will start promptly at 7:00 p.m. so please **ARRIVE EARLY** to enjoy refreshments.

Enter Foothills through the door of the brick building; follow the signage to the nearby elevator and upstairs. The site is accessible, and there is lots of seating, so spread the word!

Join the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society on April 19, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. for "A Birding Week in Florida" with well-known local photographer and naturalist Rick Bunting. Rick spent time in Florida recently, and came



Sandhill Crane Family
Photo by Rick Bunting

home with photos of natural wonders both common and uncommon, all of which will amaze and at times amuse us. There will be stories as well, delivered in Rick's unique style. Experience his enthusiasm, respect and ever-present creativity as he shares his photographs of Florida's avian life.

Since his retirement from SUNY Potsdam and the Crane School of Music, Rick pursues his passion for photography full time. Also an accomplished musician, Rick photographs at home and wherever he travels.

Join Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society for
A Day at MONTEZUMA NWR & Wetlands
~~Saturday, March 23, 2024~~
DATE CHANGED TO SATURDAY, APRIL 6, 2024
Carpool from Oneonta at 7:30am
or meet at Headquarters at 10am
Details at WWW.DOAS.US

Mark your Calendars for the May Program

By *Becky Gretton*

Dr. Carmen Greenwood will present a program on "Bringing the Endangered American Burying Beetle back to New York" at the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society's public meeting on Friday, May 17, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. at the Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, NY.

The American Burying Beetle is an iconic figure in the history of the Endangered Species Act. Learn how this species, once prevalent throughout the eastern U.S. and Canada, was lost, and how a dedicated team of researchers is working to bring it back to its historic homeland.

Dr. Greenwood, Professor and Insect Ecologist at SUNY Cobleskill, has been working on insect conservation for 15 years.

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Conservation and Legislation

by *Andy Mason*

Flaco the Owl - Readers may be familiar with the saga of Flaco, the Eurasian Eagle-owl who escaped his enclosure at the Central Park Zoo in New York City in February 2023. Born and housed in captivity for 13 years, concern was high that he could not survive in the wild, but attempts at recapturing him failed.

However, Flaco thrived in the park. Within a week he was observed catching rats and his flying skills improved even after so many years in his small enclosure. As it became clear that Flaco was able to fend for himself, zoo officials abandoned efforts at recapture and the owl became a park celebrity, tracked and photographed by many birders and the public.

Eurasian Eagle-owls are the same genus as our Great-horned Owl, but larger. As the name suggests, their range is much of Europe and most of Asia. Their natural habitat is mountainous regions and forests edges, but on occasion they have lived in city parks and other urban green spaces.

In fall 2023, Flaco wandered further afield, leaving Central Park with forays into lower Manhattan, showing up on balconies and fire escapes, sometimes peering into apartment windows. Concern for his well-being continued, as he faced hazards such as traffic, window collision, and secondary poisoning from rodenticides.

On February 23 of this year, Flaco was found on the ground on West 89th St. He was badly injured with trauma to his chest and eye, either from colliding with a building or



Flaco in Central Park

Photo by

Rhododendrites, Wikimedia Commons

falling to the ground. He died shortly afterwards. Examination has not yet determined a cause of death. Speculation has centered on rodenticide poisoning or lead poisoning, which can cause symptoms that could affect flight and coordination—as we know from the frequency of lead-poisoned eagles in our region.

What you can do - A bill in the New York Legislature to require more bird-friendly design in state-owned or leased buildings was renamed the FLACO (Feathered Lives Also Count) Act on February 26, the Monday after Flaco's death. An estimated one billion birds die annually in the US from building strikes, including some 250,000 in NYC alone.

Building design changes can be effective. According to the New York Times, the Javits Center, once considered one of the deadliest buildings for birds in New York, installed glass panels visible to birds that have cut deaths by 90%.

Ask your state legislators and Gov. Kathy Hochul to support S7098A, the FLACO Act.

Government contact information may be found in the Advocacy section of our website, doas.us.

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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

NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III Update – Spring 2024

By *Charlie Scheim*

The NYS Breeding Bird Atlas (BBA), a state-wide volunteer effort to document the birds that live and breed in New York, has finished four of five scheduled seasons. While a good deal of progress has been made, there is still much work to be done and the focused effort of many birders is needed in our final 2024 season.

The BBA divides the entire state into blocks labeled, for example, Afton CE (for Central East), Schenevus SE (South East), or Otego NW (North West). About a third of these are designated as “priority blocks” for purposes of research. It is concerning that after four years of work with only one season left, only about half of the priority blocks have met the minimum requirements for completion. Equally distressing is that the number of Atlas participants has decreased over the years. In order to ensure enough coverage throughout the state for scientific analysis, the Atlas Steering Committee has requested that for 2024, birders focus on visiting incomplete CE blocks, especially during the core breeding season of mid-May through mid-July.

“Atlasing” differs somewhat from our usual notion of “birding” in that atlasers not only record the presence of avian species, but also any breeding behaviors observed. Birds observed are coded as “Possible”, “Probable”, or “Confirmed” breeders, based on behaviors observed. Birds whose presence is revealed either visually or by sound, which is what we generally do while “birding”, are marked as Possible breeders. More detailed



Yellow Warbler, singing
Photo by Landa Palmer

observations such as finding pairs engaged in courtship behaviors or adults feeding young qualify as Probable or Confirmed breeders. Thus, whenever any of us are out birding this spring and summer, we could contribute to the atlas by recording species we encounter as at least Possible breeders. To learn more about breeding behaviors, please consult <https://ebird.org/atlasny/about/breeding-behaviors>.

Sightings for the atlas are easily submitted, simply by using eBird. If you already use eBird, you need only change the portal to “New York Breeding Bird Atlas” and then add breeding codes to your checklist information. For further information about using eBird to atlas, see <https://ebird.org/atlasny/about/3-atlas-portal-data-entry>.

There are large areas of the state, including northern New York, the Catskills, and southwestern New York, that still have seen relatively little coverage. Locally, there are 13 incomplete CE blocks in Delaware county, 10 in Schoharie, 9 in Broome, 7 in Madison, and 15 in Oneida. Happily, our local dedicated atlasers have

already completed all priority blocks in Otsego and Chenango counties.

In this final 2024 BBA season, we need to try to have as many folks as possible contribute to the atlas. If you like to travel, you might consider atlasing in the less-visited regions mentioned above. If you prefer to bird more locally, you can add to results in an already completed priority block or visit non-priority blocks. Blocks designated as Complete simply meet a minimum standard, and there are likely holes to be filled in every block. All the data you can contribute is valuable for the atlas.

Participating in an atlas is a wonderful way to improve your birding skills and enjoy beautiful areas of our state. The time spent in the field carefully observing birds and their behaviors is incredibly rewarding. Birders of all levels gain a deeper understanding of the lives and habits of our avian companions. The BBA asks you to consider joining our endeavor. If you want to volunteer or would like more information, contact me, Charlie Scheim, at scheimc@hartwick.edu.



Red-Tailed Hawk
carrying nesting materials
Photo by Landa Palmer

Co-President's Column

By Andy Mason

In my 40-plus year involvement with our organization, there have of course been many changes. But one of the results of those changes has been a constant—we have always had an active, committed board of directors even as board members have come and gone over that time. We couldn't have thrived for over five decades without these individuals who have given so much to DOAS.

That is the case for Dorian Huneke, who is stepping down as a director and officer at the end of her term in May. Dorian joined the board in 2014

and has been a hard worker, a sensible voice, and a cheerful presence ever since. She took over as Secretary in 2016 and has held down that post dependably as we went through the changes that the Covid pandemic brought, along with other modifications to the board's procedures. She streamlined the board's agendas and minutes, definitely appreciated by the Co-Presidents and the rest of the board.

In addition, Dorian led very successful fundraising efforts, most

notably optics raffles that required soliciting donations of binoculars and other equipment, and organizing both on-line and in-person ticket sales. The proceeds have funded improvements to the DOAS Sanctuary and Hawkwatch, two of our most important endeavors.

Dorian has always been willing to pitch in for other activities, including the fall Open House, the Charter Dinner, bird seed sale and more. We thank her for sharing her talents and work ethic with DOAS—you will be missed, Dorian!

Can You Lend Some Tech Help to DOAS?

By Andy Mason

As anyone who has had any connection with DOAS in recent years is aware, we have been brought into the digital age through the efforts of Susan O'Handley. Susan has transformed nearly every aspect of our Chapter, from creating and maintaining a professional web site to expanding and vastly improving our publicity efforts, to revamping the keeping of membership records to establishing a system for board communications and record-keeping, and more. Much of this is behind the scenes and it is difficult to list all that Susan has done in this regard.

At the same time, Susan has served as Education Chair—her true passion—and she has been

chomping at the bit to expand our efforts in that regard. She has many ideas for education initiatives, but despite, or perhaps because of her tech abilities, she has not been able to fully engage in education. As a result, Susan will be relinquishing her web maintenance, publicity, and other administrative chores in the next couple of months.

This is a good news/bad news situation. There is no doubt Susan will amplify and bring her creativity to our environmental educational efforts—a key part of our mission and critical for the future. But there is no doubt we will miss her extraordinary work for our online presence and public outreach.

So we are seeking help from you—

our members. Susan is leaving the systems she has set up in good shape for anyone—even those with limited tech skills—to pick up some of this work. And she is an excellent and willing instructor/supervisor to help with the transition. Also, nearly all the systems are online, so working from home at flexible times is certainly feasible.

These responsibilities will take more than one individual—unless we clone Susan! Please consider discussing one of these jobs with us. Contact Andy Mason (AndyMason@earthling.net) or Becky Gretton (16onogu@gmail.com) for further information.

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.

February-March Bird Sightings

By *Sandy Bright*

Larger bird species must begin breeding season when nights are chilly and the ground frozen. On February 21st, Chris Burrington heard a Great Horned Owl calling near Valleyview School in Oneonta. Tom Salo was regularly seeing a pair of Bald Eagles flying along a ridge and dropping into a valley near West Burlington. He also observed eagles aggressively chasing other eagles, one male trying to initiate talon grabbing (part of a courtship ritual) but being rebuffed by the female, and a prolonged chase involving two eagles of similar size (same sex), using “a tremendous amount of energy – powerful and rapid flapping – for more than 5 minutes” before they moved out of sight.

February 27th was busy, with Eastern Bluebirds appearing near Portlandville (Sarah Root), Treadwell (Pam Peters), and Schenevus (Becky Gretton). Becky also spotted some Red-winged Blackbirds, as did Gerianne Carillo in Milford and Barb Palmer in Jefferson, where a grackle joined in. A day later falling snow brought about 50 blackbirds flocking to Deb Miller’s feeders in Fly Creek.

How times have changed since 40 years ago, when there were only two



Brown Creeper
Photo by Barb Palmer

confirmed breeding pair of Bald Eagles in the entire state: on Leap Day Randy and Carol Lynch did a five-nest tour of Bald Eagle nests in the area, finding eagles at most of them. They also found 3 Great Blue Herons in Davenport.

March may come in like a lion, but this year it sounded much sweeter as the melody of a Song Sparrow filled the air, heard by Sarah Root who remarked that the sparrow was “right near the Canada Geese skating on a pond.” Her attention drawn by wings fluttering near a ditch, Barb Palmer realized she was witnessing a brutal fight between two starlings. On a happier note, she discovered a raven on a nest atop the ladder of a silo.

On March 4th Pam Peters found Killdeer at a farm between Franklin and Walton. In Treadwell she saw 2 pairs of Ruffed Grouse and heard the songs of White-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper. The following day Barb Palmer

photographed a creeper in Jefferson. Gerianne Carillo observed Blue Jays engaged in courtship, one feeding the other, then they “seemed to explore each other’s bills” as though kissing. On the evening of the 8th while looking for Woodcock, Becky Gretton experienced something much less common: the enthusiastic “tooting” of a Northern Saw-whet Owl! On that day also, Tom Salo observed a busy pair of Red Crossbills. The 9th brought 2 Golden-crowned and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet to the witch hazels at Sarah Root’s property, the earliest by three weeks that she’s seen a Ruby in Portlandville. Dorian Huneke had a close encounter with a Carolina Wren, perched atop a fence post just 12 feet away, ignoring her presence and calling repeatedly for several minutes before departing.

In mid-March, Sarah Root observed nuthatches and chickadees feeding on maple sap dripping from old sapsucker holes. Randy and Carol Lynch found a mating pair of American Kestrels, a pair of Wood Ducks, and Common Ravens nesting on a silo platform (Harpers-field). They noted that the ravens were there last year and have made some improvements, making the nest more substantial this year.

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

Big Day 2024

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 18. 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, 16 teams totaling 26 DOAS Big Day participants found 122 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 for information on joining in the fun.

Note that the DOAS Big Day is not the same as the Global Big Day sponsored by Cornell University’s Lab of Ornithology, which occurs the Saturday before ours.



Upcoming Activities

April

April 6 - Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge: THIS TRIP HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED FROM MARCH 23. Join Chris DeCesare for a birding field trip to Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and the adjacent Wetlands Complex to view migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. Past sightings include a variety of ducks, snow geese, swans, bald eagles, herons, and sandhill cranes. Participants can plan to meet at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters at 10:00 a.m. Those wishing to carpool can meet at the Dietz Street Parking Lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 a.m. The trip will begin at the refuge headquarters and then proceed by car to hotspots around the complex. There may be a small amount of walking on level ground; restrooms are available at the refuge headquarters. There is no charge for admission. This is an all-day trip with an expected return to Oneonta around 5:00 p.m. Participants should plan on bringing a bag lunch, snacks, water, etc. For more details, contact Chris DeCesare at 607-244-5496 or chris.decesare444@gmail.com.

April 14 - Woodcock Walk, 6:30 p.m. at Parslow Road Conservation Area, led by Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright and the Otsego Land Trust. This is a short walk over fairly level ground. There is a restroom in the parking lot. Space is limited. **Register to attend at** <https://otsegoandtrust.org/events/annual-woodcock-guided-walk>

April 16 - DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m

April 19 - DOAS Public Program: In-person program featuring Rick Bunting. **PLEASE NOTE program will start promptly at 7:00 p.m at Foothills PAC** (see article on page 1)

April 20 - Earth Festival Bird Walk: Join former DOAS Board member and long-time birder Bob Donnelly for a walk at Robert V. Riddell State Park. This will be a mostly flat walk along unpaved trails through fields and mature forests. A raised railroad bed makes it possible to see returning migrants and year-round resident birds more readily than usual. We will meet at the Milford Central School parking lot at 8:00 a.m. and travel the short distance to the Riddell parking lot just north of I-88's Exit 17, off Rt 28 North. Wear sturdy footwear and be prepared for possible wet areas on the trail. There are a few benches along the trail, and an outhouse at the parking lot.

April 20 - Earth Festival: 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Milford Central School. DOAS will offer exhibits and will sell Bird-Friendly Coffee, FMHW hats and Kingfisher mugs. DOAS Director Susan O'Handley will present "Working Toward a Net Zero Carbon Household" and "Birds and Climate Change: Survival By Degrees". For additional information: <https://doas.us/calendar/>

May

May 11 - Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway: Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a walk to view returning migrant birds on the Greenway trail. This trail is unpaved and mostly flat; some areas may be uneven or muddy. Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot by the fields near the school district bus garage, just past the transfer station on Silas Lane. No restrooms are available; there are a few benches along the way. For more information: scheimc@hartwick.edu

May 12 - DOAS Sanctuary, Grange Hall Road: Andy Mason will lead a spring bird walk at the DOAS Sanctuary starting at 8 a.m. Birds expected include returning migrants such as warblers, orioles, thrushes, catbirds, among others. Waterfowl and raptors are also possibilities. The walk will last approximately two hours. Sanctuary trails include uneven ground and moderate climbs. An accessible porta-john is available. For further information, contact Andy Mason, AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 267-8491.

May 15 - Robert V. Riddell State Park: Join long-time birders and DOAS members Suzanne Gaynor and Sarah Root at Lower Riddell State Park. This will be a mostly flat, half-mile walk along field hedgerows, along the Schenevus Creek, and through mature forests, lasting about two hours. A raised railroad bed makes it possible to see treetop warblers and other migrant birds more readily than usual. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot just north of I-88's Exit 17, off Rt 28 North. Wear sturdy footwear and be prepared for wet areas on the trail. There are a few benches along the trail, and an outhouse at the parking lot. Contact Sarah Root at 607-433-2831 or sarah@radiantalignment.com for more information.

Continued on page 7

Upcoming Events, continued

May 17 - DOAS Public Program: 7:30 p.m at Elm Park Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street; "Bringing the Endangered American Burying Beetle back to New York" presented by Dr. Carmen Greenwood, Professor and Insect Ecologist at SUNY Cobleskill.

May 18 - DOAS Big Day: Charlie Scheim, coordinator (see article on page 5)

May 21 - DOAS Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

May 25 - West Branch Preserve: Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a bird walk at the West Branch Preserve, located in the Town of Hamden, about 10 miles southeast of Delhi. Meet at 8 a.m. at the preserve entrance and parking area, on NY Route 10, about 0.9 miles west of the intersection with County Route 26. The parking area is adjacent to the Watershed Agricultural Council building at 33195 NY-10. The walk will be on unpaved and at times uneven paths through the fields and forests of the Preserve and will likely last about 1.5 hours. There will be a certain amount of moderate uphill and downhill walking. There are no restrooms at the preserve and no resting benches along the path. For more information, contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 or scheimc@hartwick.edu.

May 29 - Pine Lake: Join Suzanne Gaynor and Sarah Root on Wednesday, May 29 from 8:00-10:00 a.m. at Hartwick College's Pine Lake Environmental campus in Davenport Center. This will be a 1.5 mile walk past a variety of habitats including Pine Lake, Charlotte Creek, woods, a swamp, and open field. There is one moderate climb and much of the walking is on uneven woodland trails. Sturdy footwear is recommended. We can expect warblers and other songbirds, ducks, and possibly Bald Eagles who nest nearby. A restroom is available at the start and end of the walk. Meet at 8 a.m. in the Pine Lake parking lot at 1894 Charlotte Creek Rd, Oneonta, NY. Contact Suzanne Gaynor at 607-435-2939 for more information

June

June 8 - Roxbury location: With Jeanne Ellsworth, Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright

June 22 - Uplands Center: Led by Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright

July 13 - Landis Arboretum Butterfly Walk: Led by Chris DeCesare

Additional trips are in the works, so check this space next month!

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

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act

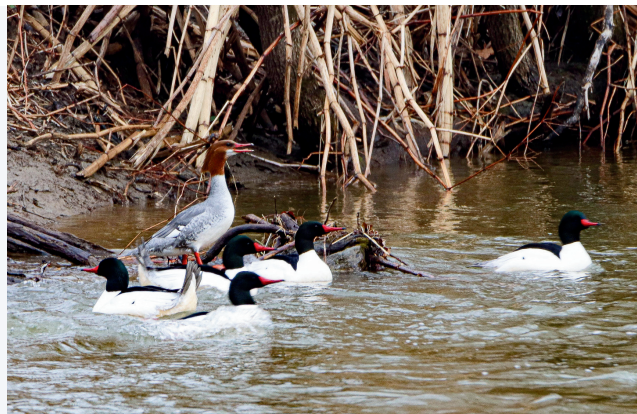
NY State support is critical for this legislation to pass. The bipartisan Migratory Birds of the Americas Conservation Enhancements Act expands available funding for the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act grant program. **Please urge Congress to support urgently needed conservation funding for America's migratory birds.** You can use the Action Alert link below to quickly and easily notify your representatives of your support. Thank you in advance for your action!

<https://act.audubon.org/a/nmbca-2024?ms=R12>



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Common Mergansers Courting
Photo by Landa Palmer

12 million
Wood Thrush travel thousands of miles from all over the Eastern USA to Central America every year.

Audubon
WOOD THRUSH
PHOTO: JUAN ZANORA/
FLICKR (CC BY 2.0)



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Support DOAS education and conservation programs with an additional donation!

DOAS Audubon Camp 2024

By Susan O'Handley

The John G. New Audubon Summer Day Camp provides fun, hands-on experiences in natural science and environmental education through field investigations, crafts and games for children entering grades 1-6 in the Fall of 2024. Campers explore a variety of habitats and learn about creatures that live there. There is limited space in these special sessions; registrations are accepted on a first come, first served basis.

Full and partial scholarships to offset the per-child registration fee are distributed each year on a needs basis. Donations towards this dedicated fund are accepted throughout the year and are greatly appreciated.

Visit <https://doas.us/camp2024> for full details and online registration.



Session 1: July 8, 9, 10, 11 - 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. at DOAS Sanctuary, Oneonta (for children entering grades 3 and 4)

Session 2: July 22, 23, 24, 25 - 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. at DOAS Sanctuary, Oneonta (for children entering grades 5 and 6)

Session 3: August 5, 6, 7, 8 - 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at OWL, Fortin Park, Oneonta (for children entering grades 1 and 2)