



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

May Program: Bringing the Endangered American Burying Beetle Back to New York

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. She received her B.S in Biology at



*American Burying Beetle
Photo by Carmen Greenwood*

Western Carolina University, M.S. in Environmental Studies at Longwood University and Ph.D. in Entomology at North Carolina State University.

This in-person program takes place in an accessible building, and is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be available, and bird-friendly coffee, FMHW hats, and DOAS mugs will be for sale. The program will also be available via Zoom, for which registration is required at

<https://tinyurl.com/2bfat6ce>

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, and 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)

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Conservation and Legislation

by *Andy Mason*

Follow-up on Flaco the Owl—Last month we related the saga of Flaco, the Eurasian Eagle-owl who escaped his enclosure at the Central Park Zoo in New York City in February, 2023. Against all odds, Flaco survived for a year until succumbing to a building collision. One of the leading theories for the cause of Flaco's death was neurological damage from eating rats—one of his favorite prey. Poisoning rats is commonplace, and secondary poisoning happens all too often. Following a necropsy, results were recently released showing Flaco had high levels of rat poison in his system and was suffering from "severe herpesvirus" that he contracted from eating pigeons.

Use of rodenticides is hardly limited to urban locations. In our area these poisons are widespread—just take a look around the perimeter of commercial buildings, including stores and restaurants, and you will see black boxes or other containers with an entrance hole. The rats, mice, chipmunks, squirrels and other small animals that feed on the poison inside become disoriented and unsteady—easy prey for raptors, owls and other predators. The resulting secondary sickness and death is obvious.

What you can do—Two bills in the state legislature would reduce the risks to birds from collisions and poisoning. The FLACO Act would require more bird-friendly design in state-owned or leased buildings. Hopefully this will carry over to commercial and residential structures. Also, Senate bill S9069, the Restriction of Anticoagulant Pesticide Transactions for Online and Retail Stores (RAPTORS) Act, prohibits use of the most commonly used rodenticides (including four of the poisons Flaco was exposed to) within 500 feet of a wildlife habitat area—defined as any park, wetland, wetland buffer, nature reserve or preserve, or wildlife refuge managed by a state agency, regional government or quasi-government agency.

Ask your state legislators and Gov. Kathy Hochul to support both the FLACO Act and the RAPTORS Act to lessen the proven threats to birds of building collisions and secondary poisoning. Also consider asking the management of stores with black poison boxes if they truly have a rodent problem, and if so, to switch to non-poison control.

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



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

Spring Hawkwatching at Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park

By Co-President *Becky Gretton*

2024 is the 15th year of spring hawkwatching at the Davis Park, something we look forward to every year. For those of us who enjoy the challenges and rewards of hawkwatching, January and February can be a letdown from fall migration at Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch. We don't necessarily miss spending hours in the wind and cold, however!

As the sun feels warmer and daylight minutes increase, I am contacted by Glimmerglass Park inquiring if we'd like the wind break installed, something they graciously do for us at Davis Park each spring. We heartily thank them!



*Spring at Davis State Park
Photo by Becky Gretton*

At the start of this season an analysis of wind direction from the past was done by Tom Salo to hopefully optimize our results. Spotting migrating raptors is exciting, and so

are the first Eastern Bluebirds and the breeding behaviors they demonstrate. American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, Song Sparrows, Tree Swallows and other "common" birds begin to arrive and sing, and it's all new again. An uncommon Red Crossbill was in the area for a spell, something we would never have known had we not been there.

Our "team" included Tom Salo, Diane Graf, Jane Bachman, and Joe Ritton. Many folks who enjoy the Park learned about migrating raptors as well.

Check out DOAS Davis Park reports on hawkcount.org.

A Bird of a Different Color

By *Sandy Bright*

Barb Palmer discovered a very unusual pink finch among a large mixed flock of Purple, House, Goldfinches and Pine Siskins. It was obviously leucistic, and the black wing and tail feathers made me think "Goldfinch". But where did that pink coloring come in? A bit of sleuthing was in order, and luckily Barb had taken some excellent photos.

I first turned to Facebook, posting the pictures on the groups "What's That Bird?" and "Studying Color Mutations in Wild Birds". The photos received a great deal of attention, admiration for the beauty of the bird, lots of guesses, and a few specific comments about why responders thought Gold or Purple, but no consensus.

Google came next. The search "can

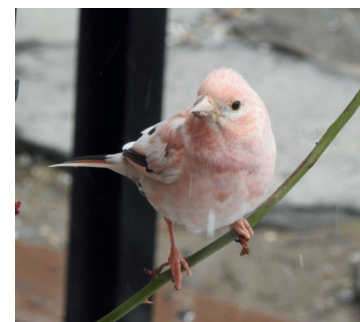
a goldfinch be pink?" revealed an article in Cornell's Feederwatch blog: *Pinkfinch, a Pink Goldfinch*. Carotenoids, present in seeds and berries, are what makes House Finches red and Goldfinches yellow. More pigments in the diet makes more colorful feathers. The bird pictured in the article was similar to Barb's bird, but not quite right.

Then, from the same blog, came *A Surprising Purple Finch*. The bird shown in this photo seemed a perfect match.

As a final check, the photos were sent to two highly regarded ornithologists. Jared Feura, assistant coordinator of the Breeding Bird Atlas, was unsure about species but did explain how a Goldfinch could be pink: "If the coloration pathways causing leucism are messed up, the bird could be processing their carotenoids incorrectly as well, giving it a pink



*Leucistic Purple Finch
Photos by Barb Palmer*



hue". It was gratifying that Julie Hart, BBA coordinator, said she too initially thought Goldfinch. On closer examination she decided it was likely a Purple Finch based on the size of the beak and heftiness of the body. So it appears this little beauty is a Purple Finch.

Marie the Golden Eagle: Eight Years of Data

By Tom Salo

Between 2014 and 2017 DOAS trapped and GPS-tagged eight Golden Eagles, six females and two males. Data from these birds added a great deal to what is known about this species in New York. On January 14, 2016, Scott Van Arsdale pushed a button that sent a 20' square net over our fourth eagle, a young female. This bird, hatched in 2013, was in her third winter. At 8.8 pounds, she was the second lightest eagle we caught, and the lightest female. The eagles we tagged ranged from 8.3 pounds to over 13 pounds. We called her Marie, in honor of Marie Petuh, a Broome County birding legend and former Franklin Mountain counter.

In spite of the failure of a number of devices, Marie's hardware continues to send data after 8 years. Our most recent download was March 17. The device is now old. Its weak battery is giving us data gaps. The GPS is acquiring coordinates intermittently. Still, we have a huge amount of data from this bird.

Marie has a reputation as a scavenger. In 2016, she was back at the capture site feeding one day after being netted and handled. She then moved to another spot and focused there. An investigation found this site baited with deer for coyote hunting. Several times we noticed she was almost stationary along roadsides, including a full week adjacent to NY 17. It is likely she was feeding on roadkill at those sites.

Every summer she spends time along the shore of Hudson Strait. This passage is as far north as she can go on the east side of Hudson Bay. One likely source of food there is seabirds.

A Nunavik reporter told me that area is where local hunters butcher narwals and belugas. It's even possible she is feeding on the remains of those whales. In winter, she usually inhabits the forests around Roundout Reservoir. Occasionally, she will go into Pennsylvania for a week or two, then return to her regular haunts.

During the spring of 2016 she went northeast through New England and Maine. She found herself stuck on the Gaspé Peninsula for 19 days, unable to continue north. Golden Eagles will not cross big water, including those 25 miles of the St. Lawrence River at Gaspé. She did some figure eights before traveling 230 miles southwest over two days. On April 16 she flew over Quebec City after crossing the mile-wide river. While she has no preferred migratory paths, she does avoid that springtime route through Maine.



Marie, held by Tom Salo
Photo by Becky Gretton

Surprisingly, Marie still has not nested. We don't know why. She moves around too much during breeding season to be raising young. There has been some speculation that contaminants from scavenging may have affected her health. It is likely she is consuming sea birds along the coast. Marine mammals and seabirds



Marie's tracks 1/2016-1/2023
Image by Google Earth

accumulate toxins. Bald Eagles eating fish contaminated with DDT are one example of birds being impacted by a diet high on the food chain. Scavengers are also more likely to consume lead fragments from bullets. This can cause neurological problems.

However, any speculation about her health is countered by her longevity. She will be 11 this spring, a mature bird that successfully migrates thousands of miles every year. It is possible that her size may be a factor. Size matters, especially in a cold environment. Big females are better able to protect eggs and young from predators and weather. As a result, males may find small females less attractive as mates.

In March Marie checked in from 200 miles northwest of Quebec City, heading north. She was right on schedule for a bird of breeding age. Maybe this will be the year she finds a mate.

Our 8 eagles provided a wealth of data that we've shared with numerous researchers. Recently, those data were shared with National Audubon's Bird Migration Explorer. You can visit that site and search for Golden Eagle at <https://explorer.audubon.org/home>.

March-April Bird Sightings

By *Sandy Bright*

Despite the late start to spring, birds are on the move. March 16th brought an Eastern Phoebe and Wood Ducks to Tom Salo's property (West Burlington). Hearing an American Kestrel, he looked up to see it go "blasting by with a Bald Eagle in hot pursuit".

Barb Palmer photographed a Trumpeter Swan at her neighbor's pond (Jefferson). She continues to monitor the Raven nest discovered in early March. Cindy Campbell reported American Woodcocks. On the 22nd, Landa Palmer enjoyed seeing a Fox Sparrow in her yard "as the snow was swirling around" and found a Cape May Warbler sitting on her railing (East Meredith). Becky Gretton spotted female Red-winged Blackbirds, which migrate north later than males (4/22). A Northern Flicker took advantage of Barb Palmer's suet, and a Merlin loudly announced his arrival to our Oneonta neighborhood (4/23). He continued vocalizing every day, and as March was going out like a lamb, he finally got an answering call.

Prudence Danforth had two Eastern Meadowlarks gleaning in her backyard (Unadilla, 3/24). Chipping



Trumpeter Swan
Photo by Barb Palmer

Sparrows and a Fish Crow returned to our area (3/26). Fox Sparrows were reported by Sarah Root and Gerianne Carillo, who also spotted an Osprey returning to its Springbrook nest. Bob Ciganek found a Red Crossbill and several Red-breasted Mergansers (4/1). Sarah Lewis watched a Woodcock "slowly bobbing across a country road" and a big flock of Tree Swallows that competed for her bird boxes (Andes, 4/6). Sarah Root saw Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on April 8th and noted that



Fox Sparrow
Photo by Landa Palmer

the Belted Kingfisher "is back on the Susquehanna after departing for a month or so". In East Meredith Suzanne Gaynor found her first Hermit Thrush (4/10). A day later Pam Peters spotted Field Sparrow, Brown Thrasher, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and listened to a Blue-headed Vireo singing in Franklin on the 13th. Marilyn Leahy reports at least one eaglet in a nest in West Oneonta.

The 14th brought lots of action to West Burlington: Red Crossbill calling from atop a spruce, Golden- and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, copulating kestrels, grackles carrying nesting material, and displaying grouse and snipe (Tom Salo).

On the day of the eclipse, Charlie Scheim and I headed north to experience totality. During partial eclipse, most birds fell silent. Corvids vocalized more, and then they too became subdued. In the last moments before totality (which happened surprisingly fast) the silhouette of a Turkey Vulture passed overhead. In the gloaming, spring peepers started singing.

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

Five-Day Outdoor & Environmental Education Training, June 10 to 14, 2024

By *Susan O'Handley*

Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society (DOAS) will host a 5-day Intensive Outdoor and Environmental Education Training this June (6/10-6/14) in Oneonta, NY for college students who are working in summer camp programs, as well as those who are pursuing careers in education or science education. Homeschool parents and other educators are welcome to attend as well.

The program will be held in Oneonta at various locations including the DOAS Sanctuary at Franklin Mountain. Space is limited, so we do urge interested participants to register as soon as possible. Registration will close on 5/14 or before that if we reach our capacity of 30 total. For more information or to register: <https://doas.us/ee2024/>

Summer Family Program Schedule to be announced in late June ! Sign up to receive the schedule: <https://doas.us/sign-up-for-doas-news/>

Upcoming Activities



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.

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. (See article on page 1).

May 18 - DOAS Big Day: 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. Birders can spend any amount of time they choose on the day. If you are interested and have not participated before, please contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 (voice or text) or scheimc@hartwick.edu for information on joining in the fun. Final tallies should be submitted to Charlie.

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 15 - Hanford Mills Exploration Day Bird Walk: Join Suzanne Gaynor and Kathryn Davino at 8 a.m. in the event parking lot (south side of Rt.12, opposite the museum, at 51 Cty Rd. 12, East Merideth, NY). This walk covers fairly level terrain and will last about 1.5 hours. The trail traverses a variety of surfaces: grass, gravel, and boardwalk, and does include an occasional step up/down and a few gentle slopes. The total distance traveled is about .5 miles. There are no rest areas

Continued on page 7

Upcoming Events, continued

along the route, but there are benches near the pond, and picnic tables at the parking lot. Accessible bathrooms are available at Hanford Mills.

June 8 - Kirkside Park: Join Charlie Scheim, Sandy Bright, and local birder Jeanne Ellsworth at 8 a.m. for a birding walk in Kirkside Park, Roxbury, NY. We will meet in the Kirkside parking area accessed via Kirkside Driveway. The walk will last about 1.5 hours and will wander along level unpaved pathways, looking for the birds of late spring and early summer. Restrooms are available near the parking area. For more information or for any last-minute weather concerns, contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880.

June 29 - Uplands Center: Join Charlie Scheim, Sandy Bright, and Renee Hardenkamp, the Environmental Director of the Uplands Center at 8 a.m. for a 1.5 hour bird walk at the Uplands Center in Walton, NY (2641 Dunk Hill Road). Our focus will be on observing birds and their breeding behaviors. We will meet just outside the main lodge. The walk will begin on a mostly level grassy path through a field where we will likely find grassland species, and continue through a wooded area with some gentle uphill and downhill, seeking woodland inhabitants. There are accessible rest rooms at the walk's beginning and end and some rest spots along the way. You may call Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 for more information or for any last minute weather concerns.

July

July 13 - Landis Arboretum: Chris DeCesare will lead a field trip to view butterflies in the fields and gardens of Landis Arboretum, Esperance, NY. Meet in the Visitor Center Parking lot at 11:00 a.m.; the walk will last about 1.5 hours. Bring binoculars. Program is free, but there is a \$5 suggested donation for non-members of Landis.

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

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Upcoming Board of Directors Election

By Landa Palmer

The DOAS Nominating Committee (Landa Palmer, Shirley Salton, Susan Brunswick, and Andy Mason) will present two candidates at the May 17th program for election to the Board of Directors. The nominated slate includes incumbents Becky Gretton, Andy Mason, Charlie Scheim, Tom Salo and Jane Bachman. Additionally, Nancy New and Shirley Salton have been nominated to join the Board.

Nancy shares, "DOAS has always been important in my life. I was raised in Oneonta by parents John and Betty New, who helped found and grow DOAS. I have a Natural Resources and Communications undergraduate degree from Cornell University and a Master's degree in Energy and Environmental Policy from Washington University. I spent my career working

for state legislative and executive branches of government and national organizations representing those branches, including 30 years in Washington, DC, working in air and water pollution control and other areas, and leading education programs at marine science centers nationwide. I am thrilled to have helped at the Hawkwatch for the last few years and I look forward to continuing to support DOAS in a variety of ways as needed."

Shirley Salton lives in Delancey N.Y. and shares the following: "I am writing to express my interest in joining the DOAS board. At present, I am a member of DOAS and have attended many of the activities they offer. My profession for the first half of my career was in the medical field as an RN and the latter part as a Nurse Practitioner. I am

currently retired and would like to pursue further involvement and help with promoting the philosophy of DOAS.

For many years I have had a great interest in bird/wildlife photography and have also kept journals, which include my drawings/watercolors of many of my photos. I have taken several online courses offered through Cornell, which have enabled me to better understand bird behavior, more accurately identify birds, and be a proponent of ethical bird watching. I am also educating myself, and others, regarding planting native plants that I hope will attract more birds, butterflies, and bees and hopefully ensure their survival."

Please come to the May 17th program, when members will vote on the nominated slate for a two-year term to the Board of Directors.



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.
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<https://doas.us/>

Trip to Montezuma NWR

By Chris DeCesare

On April 6, Chris DeCesare led 10 participants on a field trip to the Montezuma Wetlands Complex to view spring migrants. The group met at the National Wildlife Refuge visitor center, then traveled to Tschache pool, Mays Point pool, East Road, and Carncross Road. They saw 25 species of birds in total. Highlights included 25 Sandhill Cranes at the refuge, Ospreys building nests, a very large and active heron rookery, a group of Greater Yellowlegs feeding in the saltmarsh, and some good looks at Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teals, Blue-winged Teals, and Bald Eagles. They also caught a fleeting glimpse of a flock of Horned Larks over the mucklands on route 31. All in all, it was a lovely day!

*Montezuma NWR Visitor Center
 Photo by Karen Joest*



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.

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