



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

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## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

### January Program: Creating Access for People with Disabilities

By *Becky Gretton*

Join us on Friday, January 17 at 7:30 p.m. on Zoom for a presentation on Birdability and its initiatives to enhance access and inclusivity for birders with disabilities and other health challenges.

Cat Fribley, Executive Director of Birdability, and Virginia Rose, founder of Birdability, will delve into the organization’s mission, providing a detailed exploration of its efforts to make birding more accessible and inclusive, and how we all have a role.

This session will introduce the Birdability Map, provide information about barriers and what helps create access for birders with disabilities and other health concerns, and offer practical insights for creating



accessible events and spaces.

Registration is required:

<https://mobilize.us/s/SI8mCC>

Cat Fribley (she/her) serves as the Executive Director of Birdability. With a rich background in nonprofit development, a passion for birding, and a steadfast commitment to disability rights, she brings a unique perspective to this role. Cat’s journey into birding began in college, where it became a source of mental health support and healing following a

PTSD diagnosis. Over time, a series of physical injuries and illnesses led her to seek adaptive ways to continue birding as a form of mindfulness and connection with nature, despite limited mobility.

Virginia Rose (she/her) fell off a horse at the age of 14 which resulted in a spinal cord injury. A wheelchair user ever since, she began birding 17 years ago and discovered her best self in nature. She founded Birdability in 2018 and leads accessible Birdability outings for Travis Audubon and at birding festivals each year. As a retired high school English teacher, she is passionate about bringing the same joy, empowerment and community she found in birding and nature to others who have mobility challenges.

### Mark your Calendars...

By *Susan O’Handley*

Join DOAS on Friday, February 21, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. on Zoom for a presentation with DOAS Education Chair Susan O’Handley to look at ways to reduce your household carbon impact and discover why it is important to take action. Susan’s program will focus on seven areas where our households, businesses and community operations have carbon impact and will provide an overview of tools and resources to help you establish baseline data and track your progress. Susan will also briefly overview her family’s own journey towards a carbon neutral household, along with the financial and quality of life benefits realized through investing in energy retrofits to their 1902 Victorian Farmhouse in Hartwick.

Registration is required: <https://mobilize.us/s/AVfczt>

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# Presidents' Column

By Andy Mason

There is often confusion over the connection between our local Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society and the National Audubon Society, particularly when it comes to membership. Here's an explanation.

The forerunner of the National Audubon Society came about in 1901, when a collection of state organizations and related groups coalesced into the National Association of Audubon Societies. Starting in 1944, community-based chapters were formed. DOAS became one of these chapters in 1970 when it received a charter from National Audubon. Today there are over 500 chapters nationwide.

DOAS must recertify its charter annually by demonstrating it is in compliance with the current Audubon Mission through our activities. We have always met this standard easily. Although we have this connection with National Audubon, DOAS is a separate, independent entity, able to take our own positions and actions.

Regarding membership, at the time our chapter was formed, membership in National Audubon and DOAS was one and the same—no separate chapter memberships were permitted, and all members in our chapter area were considered DOAS members. National Audubon shared a proportion of dues from members with us and other chapters annually. This was a

significant part of our revenue.

In 1986, National Audubon unilaterally changed this arrangement by ending this dues share and replacing it with an annual payment equal to the amount a chapter received that year. That amount has remained unchanged for nearly 40 years and obviously has much less value today.

However, with this change, National Audubon also allowed local chapters to have their own memberships if they chose. Faced now with servicing 'members' who provided no financial support, DOAS decided to create the chapter membership we now have. This has been embraced and our member numbers have risen considerably.

This is where the confusion comes in. Many members of the National Audubon Society in our area believe they are also DOAS members—and we wish they were! (And many DOAS members are also National Audubon members.) We periodically reach out to these folks and invite them to join, with only limited success. If you are one of these National Audubon members reading this, please consider it a call to join us.

We believe membership dollars do the most good locally. We are an all-volunteer, non-profit and hard-working organization. The support of our members is crucial and much appreciated!

## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Founded 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jane Bachman

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# Conservation and Legislation

By *Andy Mason*

**Four Years of Struggle Ahead**—The results of the November election are ominous for conservation and the environment. Donald Trump's first term as President brought a swath of negative impacts to climate change, open space, wildlife, clean air and water, and more. His proclamations before and after the election promise continued attacks on the environment—with the help of majorities in both houses of Congress.

A sampling of viewpoints:

“With President Trump's recent election victory, the United States faces a shifting policy landscape. The potential negative repercussions for climate and environmental action are gargantuan.”—World Resources Institute

“The policies of the incoming administration will be a significant setback on climate progress. Four more years of Trump will likely put the global climate goal of 1.5°C out of reach, making devastating climate impacts more likely.”—Forbes

“President-elect Donald Trump's election victory casts immediate

doubt over the future of U.S. climate measures and raises questions about the country's commitment to cutting planet-warming pollution.”—Politico

“Donald Trump was a disaster for climate progress during his first term, and everything he's said and done since suggests he's eager to do even more damage this time.”—Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous

“Scientists around the world expressed disappointment and alarm as Republican Donald Trump won the US final votes needed to secure the presidency in the early hours of 6 November.”—Nature

“A second Trump administration could alter the lives of all sorts of animals, whether they live in laboratories, zoos, fields or forests.”—New York Times

Trump's proposed appointments to key cabinet and agency jobs signal plans for an assault on the nation's environmental protections. Secretary of the Interior, North Dakota governor Doug Burgman, has connections to the oil and gas industry,

and is expected to lead the push to open more public lands to fossil fuel leasing and roll back environmental protections. For EPA Administrator, Trump is nominating New Yorker Lee Zelden, former candidate for governor who has stated support for increasing fossil fuel production and reducing incentives for electric vehicles.

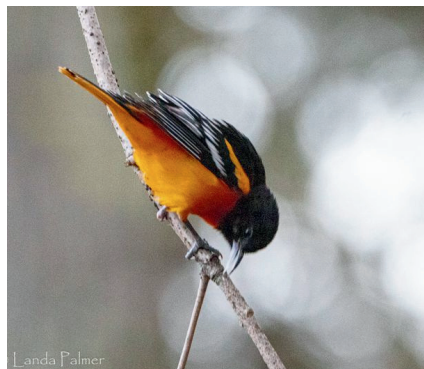
**What You Can Do**—One of the critical lines of defense against the coming Trump environmental attack is the Senate filibuster. Expected Senate minority leader Chuck Schumer will need to stand strong against efforts to weaken laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Air and Water Acts. As constituents, we need to be sure he hears this message. In the House, the Republican majority is thin, so New York's delegation, including newly-elected Representative Josh Riley, will play an important role. Our federal legislators need to know that America did not vote to abandon environmental protections.

## Bird Sightings October-December 2024

By *Sandy Bright*

At this time of year, many birds have traded their showy breeding plumage for more practical camouflage colors. So it was a special treat in mid-October when Landa Palmer photographed a brilliantly-orange Baltimore Oriole that showed up in the most miserable of weather, grabbing some suet in sleet at dusk.

Suzanne Summers spotted a



Baltimore Oriole  
Photo by Landa Palmer

Swainson's Thrush in Hartwick. In Jefferson, Barb Palmer noted a Brown Thrasher feeding in a bush, Belted Kingfishers and Wood Ducks at her pond, two singing Carolina Wrens, multiple White-throated Sparrows, and a woodpecker peeking out of a tree cavity. She watched five Bald Eagles converge on carrion, an impressive sight.

*continued on page 4*

Al Kresock shared a photo of a leucistic Bald Eagle seen in Harpursville. Over in Harpersfield resides a leucistic Red-tailed Hawk, followed for the past decade by Randy and Carol Lynch.

A few of the many non-raptor species reported this fall at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch include Brant, Common Loon, American Pipit, Fox Sparrow, Red Crossbill, Golden-crowned Kinglet, flocks of Eastern Bluebirds and a singing female Purple Finch. Feeder birds had to watch their backs when a Sharpshinned Hawk hung around for several days, and on a couple of occasions when Northern Shrikes came calling. Black Vultures have been expanding their range and were reported several times at the Hawkwatch, as well as in Cobleskill by Andrew Block .



*Leucistic Bald Eagle*  
Photo shared by Al Kresock



*Leucistic Red-tailed Hawk*  
Photo by Randy Lynch



*Golden Eagle*  
Photo by Curt Morgan

Tom Salo remarked on the “year’s supply of rainbows” there one day, and Curt Morgan got a particularly stunning picture of a sun-lit Golden Eagle. Becky Gretton discovered a short-tailed weasel in the shelter, and no sign of the many mice that had been nesting there.

The Cannonsville Reservoir hosts a great variety of waterfowl. On October 27 Lance Verderame discovered a Pacific Loon, a first for Delaware county and possibly for the state. During his regular visits he has also found Red-throated Loon, Black Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Green-winged Teal, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Common Goldeneye, and American Black Duck as well as Peregrine Falcon, American Pipit, and Bonaparte’s, Iceland, and Herring Gulls. In the Deposit area he found at least 60 Horned Larks (12/3), White-winged Scoter, Northern Pintail, and Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Bluebirds checked out nest boxes in Chris DeCesare’s backyard in early November. Tom and Jo Salo reported a White-crowned Sparrow passing

through West Burlington, and a very late Eastern Phoebe picking bugs off a large window (11/5). Later in the month a female Evening Grosbeak foraged below their feeders, and Pine Siskins showed up during the Thanksgiving Day snowstorm. They also reported Cackling Goose and Greater and Lesser Scaup at Canadago Lake, and a partially leucistic Common Raven.

Ruth Pedersen spotted the first American Tree Sparrow of the season near Andes in mid-November. A Fox Sparrow scratched around Barb Palmer’s garden. Two male Downy Woodpeckers faced off in our viburnum, dancing around each other, always about a foot apart. After several minutes, they locked in battle, falling to the ground. They separated and one flew off, the victor laying claim to our suet offering. In late November, a lingering Great Blue Heron foraged in the pond at New Island.

December’s arrival pushed many birds southward. On the 6th, geese were visible virtually all day in the skies above the Hawkwatch, with 29,000 reported, mostly Canada, with some Snow Geese. A few days later Snow Buntings arrived in Bainbridge, enjoyed and photographed by Rick Bunting.



*Partially Leucistic Common Raven*  
Photo by Tom Salo

*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.*

# People Who Fly Should Buy Carbon Offsets

By Director Kathryn Davino

I love to travel, and it seems especially appropriate that I am writing this column while sitting on a plane. I find it exciting to explore foreign lands, observing and photographing birds and other life forms on land and sea. Snorkeling tropical waters is among my favorite vacation pastimes, but over the past two decades, I've witnessed a noticeable decline in the health of coral reefs due to the warming of the oceans, as CO<sub>2</sub> levels have risen. Climate change is the single greatest threat to North American birds as well. And it's also true that I am personally contributing to the destruction of the habitats of the creatures I love when I travel. The climate crisis is human-made, and flying contributes a fair amount of greenhouse gases. For example, a flight from Seattle to Honolulu, through San Francisco, produces about one ton of CO<sub>2</sub>, round trip, per person. That's more CO<sub>2</sub> than many people in the world produce in a year.

This conundrum has been niggling at me for a long time, and I've decided that it's time to do something that might make a difference, so I've started buying carbon offsets. At this point, I am very new to the practice, and I still have a lot of research to do, but I thought I might share some of what I have learned so far.

When you buy a carbon offset, you are funding a project that reduces greenhouse gases to make up for the greenhouse gases you are creating. It might fund green power plants, like solar, landfill gas capture, and wind farms, or pay for energy efficient

public buildings and transportation, or a reforestation project. There are lots of interesting options. The idea behind buying carbon offsets is to invest in something that removes an equivalent amount of CO<sub>2</sub> as you create by flying. Does this cost hundreds of dollars for each trip we take? No, it is remarkably affordable. The cost for a carbon offset is generally between \$12 to \$47 per ton. So, you might only spend \$25 to offset a short flight, which is a complete no-brainer to me.

Many airlines give you an option of buying a carbon offset when buying your ticket, through partnerships with carbon offset organizations. You should research what is offered and verify it is legitimate. Some are not worth contributing to, although many now have great partners. The other option is to buy carbon offsets directly from different organizations, selecting programs that you are happy to help.

It is easier today to buy carbon offsets with confidence that a very high percentage of your money is going where it should, and that it will do some good. There are now entire organizations that certify offset programs, to make sure that they are valuable and doing what they agreed upon. Gold Standard [<https://www.goldstandard.org/>] is often recognized as an internationally trusted certifier of these programs. Another option is Climate Action Reserve [<https://www.climateactionreserve.org/>].

Before you buy carbon offsets, you



*Galapagos Plane  
Photo by Kathryn Davino*

may want to know how much to buy. You can use one of the calculators below to determine how much personal greenhouse gases your flight will create:

<https://www.icao.int/environmental-protection/CarbonOffset/Pages/default.aspx>

[https://co2.myclimate.org/en/flight\\_calculators/new](https://co2.myclimate.org/en/flight_calculators/new)

You can buy offsets directly or sign up for a monthly subscription for a set amount. Then you pay a monthly amount for your total carbon offsets, and never have to think about it again. The following organizations have monthly subscription options:

<https://terrapass.com/product/subscription/>

<https://shop.climeco.com/>

If you're a skeptic like I was initially, you will want to consider the arguments against offsets. The following article addresses four arguments against carbon offsets, and it provides some useful counterpoint that helped encourage me to go ahead:

[<https://ensia.com/voices/carbon-offsets/>]

So, my New Year's resolution is to develop and implement a plan to reduce my carbon footprint by buying carbon offsets. If you fly, I hope you will consider doing the same.

# Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch 2024 Season Wrap Up

By Tom Salo & Pam Peters

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch was in the final weeks of its 36th season when this issue went to press. Official numbers can be found at [hawkcount.org](http://hawkcount.org).

The weather this fall was exceptionally warm into early November. This included some of the peak Golden Eagle season. After a serious winter storm arrived on November 22, the rest of the month and early December brought mostly winter conditions. A number of days had bad winds or poor visibility. There were few big, late season migration days.

Based on the average of the previous 10 years, the 4700 total migrants was close to our recent average. Turkey Vultures surpassed the average with 849 counted, continuing their upward trend. Osprey numbers continue their decline. The 41 Osprey counted were 75% of the 10 year average and less than half of the 20 year average. This decline seems odd when compared to the dramatic increase in local nesting. Bald Eagle numbers remain high. The species is especially difficult to count now that we see so many resident birds. Northern Harriers showed an increase with 63 tallied, up 49%.

Accipiter and falcon numbers were a mixed bag. Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers were up about 17%. Cooper's Hawk numbers were down about 24%. American Goshawk numbers (formerly Northern Goshawk) remain dismal. American Kestrel was up 40%. Merlins and Peregrine Falcons were down, 36% and 56% respectively. Red-shouldered Hawks were about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of what we expect. Red-tailed Hawk



Golden Eagle  
Photo by Curt Morgan

numbers were way down: 58% of 10 year average, 40% of 20 year average. Broad-winged Hawks had a good year, surpassing the average.

Golden Eagle numbers were low into December. There were only 3 double-digit Golden Eagle days all season, the last on November 12th. During the 37 days we consider peak season (November 1 to December 7) there were 16 days without any migrants recorded. Even though we try to cover every tolerable day during that period, 9 days had no coverage due to weather.

On 12/7, Golden Eagle numbers were 65% of both the 10 and 20 year averages. For 18 days from 11/20 to 12/7, we only counted 10 Golden Eagles, 17% of the 10 year average for those dates. It was a disappointing late season.

Over 770 visitors were recorded at



Northern Harrier  
Photo by John Heidecker  
<http://johnheidecker.smugmug.com/>

the Hawkwatch this fall. That includes 107 college students from SUNY Cobleskill and Oneonta, and a home-schooling group. Professor Roger Masse's students from Cobleskill were present on September 13, our biggest Broad-winged Hawk day, and spotted a kettle of 320, the largest recorded at Franklin Mountain.

We continue to make improvements for our counters and visitors. Before the season started in August, we contracted with an excavator to bring in fill and expand the mound to provide more space for visitors. The additional space has been very helpful. Three pairs of loaner binoculars were secured through a grant from the Hawk Migration Association (formerly HMANA) and were very well received by visitors. A beautiful new weathervane, hand fabricated by Tom Salo, now towers over the shelter.

Finally, thanks to the counters-- Jane Bachman, Pete Fauth, Bob Gramling, Becky Gretton, Randy & Carol Lynch, Pam Peters, Tom Salo. Their skills and dedication continue to add to our knowledge of raptor migration in the region and to the education of visitors.

# Habitat and Ecosystems Land Pro (HELP) Program: A 3-Day Program for Landscape Professionals, March 11–13, 2025

By Susan O'Handley

Ecological landscaping makes it possible to create rich habitats in a variety of spaces that support birds, insects, and other wildlife. This knowledge also improves our ecosystem services and is highly sustainable. This program will enable attendees to:

- Learn strategies to create sustainable habitats through landscaping, as well as how to advertise and leverage these highly-desired services to your clients.
- Earn continuing education credits.
- Get listed as an Endorsed Eco-scaper on the HELP Program web page, National Audubon Plants for Birds and Native Plants Databases, and the Homegrown National Park website. For more information, go to <https://doas.us//HELP>



## Winter Field Trips

By Andy Mason

### Eagle Trip - January 18

This winter's DOAS field trip to view wintering Bald Eagles in Delaware County is scheduled for Saturday, January 18. The trip will leave the Dietz Street parking lot (across from the YMCA in Oneonta) at 8:00 a.m. Participants can be picked up in Delhi and Walton. Return to Oneonta will be mid to late afternoon.

Past trips have turned up 20+ birds. Other raptors and waterfowl are also usually sighted. We will stop at a local restaurant for lunch for interested participants. For more

information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 267-8491, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

### State Waterfowl Count - January 19

NYS Ornithological Association's Annual Statewide Waterfowl Count is scheduled for Sunday, January 19. This effort involves identifying and counting ducks and geese in our region. DOAS covers area lakes and rivers; totals are used by NYS DEC in managing these species over the upcoming year. To help with the census, contact Andy Mason, (607) 267-8491, [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net).

## Upcoming Activities

### January

January 5, 2025 - **Delaware County CBC**. Contact Pam Peters at [ovenbirdp@gmail.com](mailto:ovenbirdp@gmail.com) or phone 607-829-6545

January 17 - **DOAS Public Program**: "Creating Access for People with Disabilities" via Zoom, 7:30 p.m.  
Registration required: <https://mobilize.us/s/SI8mCC>

January 18 - **Annual Eagle Trip**, 8 a.m. To register: <https://mobilize.us/s/05h92c> (see article above)

January 19 - **Annual Waterfowl Count**. To register: <https://mobilize.us/s/A9U8lC> (see article above)

January 21 - **DOAS Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m.

**DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

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

### February

February 14-17 - **Great Backyard Bird Count** (see article on page 8)

February 18: **DOAS Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m.

February 21 - **DOAS Public Program**: "Reducing Your Household Carbon Impact" via Zoom, 7:30 p.m.  
Registration required: <https://mobilize.us/s/AVfczt>

### March

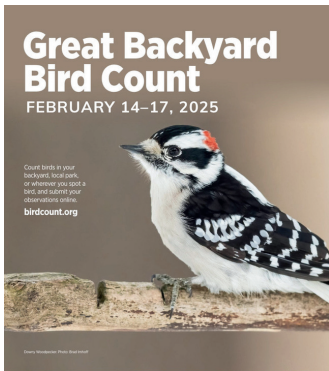
March 18: **DOAS Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m.

March 21 - **DOAS Public Program**: "How Birds Created the World and other stories from *The Complete Language of Birds*" via Zoom, 7:30 p.m.  
Registration required: <https://mobilize.us/s/SONRoX>



**DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.**  
P.O. Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820  
<https://doas.us/>

## The Great Backyard Bird Count



*By Charlie Scheim*

The world-wide Great Backyard Bird Count occurs on February 14-17, 2025. It is easy to participate: simply plan to watch birds for at least 15 minutes on any or all of these four days, wherever you'd like, and record all birds you see or hear (the Merlin app is a great tool for helping to identify bird sounds!). If you're comfortable with eBird, you can use it to record your observations. Alternatively, if you prefer to enter your observations via your computer, perhaps from a paper list you kept during this time while watching out your window or hiking through fields and forests, go to the eBird website [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) and use the Submit option (you will need an eBird account).

All checklists entered in this time period will be entered into the GBBC.

For more information, go to the DOAS website <https://doas.us/events/great-backyard-bird-count-2025/>, or go to the GBBC website [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) to learn how to count, how to use eBird and Merlin, and to see a neat video portraying checklists as they are submitted as dots of light flickering on across a world map.

### Is Your Membership Current?

Your mailing label above will inform you of your membership expiration date. This is the only notice you receive to let you know you need to renew your membership. Thanks for rejoining when your membership expires.

### 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!**