



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

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## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

### March Program: How Birds Created the World

By *Becky Gretton*

DOAS will host author Randi Minetor via Zoom on March 21, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. Minetor will speak on "How Birds Created the World and other stories from *The Complete Language of Birds*."

Ancient Egyptians believed that the Earth began as an egg laid by a giant goose. Ojibwa people of America's northern plains tell of a Great Flood that swept away the world's evils, and the bird that braved the deep waters to bring a bit of soil up from the bottom to bring land back to the surface. European scientists once believed that swans survived the

winters by turning themselves into barnacles and adhering to the bottoms of ships, transforming back into swans in spring. These and many other tales told in Randi Minetor's latest book, *The Complete Language of Birds*, bring us back to a time when birds seemed like magical beings with the answers for so many of the world's questions.

Bestselling author Randi Minetor writes the *Birdfinding* and *Best Easy Bird Guides* series for Falcon Guides/Globe Pequot Press and is the author of *Backyard Birding* and *Butterfly Gardening* for Lyons Press.



*Randi Minetor*

Her most recent book, *The Complete Language of Birds*, is an encyclopedia that unites classic illustrations, science, folklore, and mythology about more than 400 bird species around the world. She writes for *Birding Magazine* and *North American Birds* and serves as president of the Rochester Birding Association in upstate New York.

Registration required:

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

### Bird-Friendly Windows Workshops

By *Susan O'Handley*

These informational workshops will focus on helping homeowners reduce bird-window collisions at homes throughout our communities. Attendees will make Acopian BirdSavers window treatments for up to three windows in their homes (for free while funding lasts).

Details and registration links for each workshop are available at <https://doas.us/doas-launches-area-workshops-for-bird-friendly-homes/>.

**Bird-Friendly Windows Workshops**

SIDNEY, NY March 22  
at Sidney Memorial Public Library 11AM-1PM;  
Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/1X3j0s>

ONEONTA, NY March 29  
at Southside Mall 11AM-1PM;  
Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/CWbZ62>

COBLESKILL, NY April 12  
at SUNY Cobleskill, Natural Resources 10AM-12PM;  
Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/1X3j0s>

MILFORD, NY April 26  
at Earth Festival, Milford Central School 10AM-5PM;  
Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/1X3j0s>

DELHI, NY May 3  
at SUNY Delhi 10AM-12PM;  
Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/1X3j0s>

Attend the DOAS April Program, on Friday, April 18, 7:30 p.m. on Zoom, to learn more about this topic! Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/4Mcr7>.

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# Conservation and Legislation

By *Andy Mason*

**Can the State Save Us?** From the environmental ravages coming from Washington, that is. Realistically, probably not. The broad and deep assault President Trump and his appointees have already made on agencies such as the Department of the Interior, the EPA, Forest Service, and others will at best set back years of progress on clean air, water and wildlife protection. At worst, control of our national parks, forests and other federal lands will be handed over to fossil fuel companies, ranching interests, loggers and commercial developers.

But the states that rejected the Trump candidacy—including New York—plus the voters in the narrowly divided states make up nearly half of the country's population. Those citizens did not vote for the reactionary approach taken by the administration. It is important to resist and particularly to encourage the judiciary and Congress to push back.

Meanwhile, forward-looking states can act on their own to move ahead with positive environmental action. In New York, a good place to start is passage of the critical Packaging

Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act, Senate Bill 1464 and Assembly Bill 1749. This bill will reign in polluting single-use plastics, reduce toxic chemicals in packaging, and require companies to pay for their packaging waste cleanup.

Ideally, this sort of legislation would be passed by Congress and be effective nationwide. But New York can make a start and set an example to keep plastics from polluting our waterways and oceans, and breaking down into micro particles that enter our own bodies.

**What you can do** The first order of business is to get state legislative leaders to put this bill on committee schedules. Contact Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie (Legislative Office Building 932, Albany, NY 12248; 518-455-3791; [Speaker@nyassembly.gov](mailto:Speaker@nyassembly.gov)) and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins ([scousins@nysenate.gov](mailto:scousins@nysenate.gov); Legislative Office Building 907, Albany, NY 12247).

## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Founded 1968

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To contribute notes or articles for The Belted Kingfisher, email: [editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@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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# Co-President's Column

By *Andy Mason*

Perhaps you noticed in last month's Kingfisher the report on January's Bald Eagle field trip. As usual, we had a good showing of birds and people. For me it was particularly noteworthy as it was my final time leading this long-running trip.

I can't pinpoint when I started with the eagle trip—I would have to peruse old newsletters to figure it out. But I believe it was the mid-1980s, so somewhere around 40 years ago! I took it over from Anita Este, who started the tradition a few years earlier. I recall I was on the initial trip.

Those first trips were to an area below Monticello in Sullivan County. At that time, Bald Eagles were in the early stages of recovery in New York. NYDEC was bringing eggs from nests in Alaska, incubating them and raising the chicks in artificial nests at a few locations around the state. The Sullivan County site was one of these, and a small population had become established.

Of course this program was wildly successful and after four or five years, the Delaware County rivers and reservoirs held their own

populations, including winter migrants from further north. Since then, we've always traveled the East and West Branches of the Delaware River, and Cannonsville and occasionally Pepacton Reservoirs.

It has surprised me in recent years how this outing has maintained its popularity—after all, one hardly needs to be led on a trip to find Bald Eagles these days. At one point a few years ago we had a string of over 20 cars on the trip, rather unwieldy and potentially dangerous, so we limited participation to DOAS members for a while.

I'm particularly proud of a couple of achievements. Except for one Covid year, we never missed a trip. I recall one Saturday after a heavy overnight snowfall nearly canceling, but decided to go anyway. One hardy participant met me in Walton and it turned out to be a beautiful day with some great sightings. The second is never being shut out with eagles, even in the early days. One trip we scoured all the usual spots and could not find a bird. Finally, in mid-afternoon, just before returning



*Bald Eagle*  
Photo by *Landa Palmer*

to Oneonta, a magnificent adult eagle dropped out of a tree near Cannonsville Dam and glided low over everyone's heads. It was only one, but a thrilling view and a great relief to me!

There was always great camaraderie among the trip participants and always a thrill to show someone their first eagle, particularly youngsters. We've generally enjoyed a good post-trip meal and rehashing the day. I met many people who became friends and acquaintances—all in all a great 40-year experience!

P.S. We had many requests from people who could not make a trip, or wanted to explore themselves, so we posted a map of our usual route and good viewing locations on the DOAS website: <https://doas.us/self-guided-eagle-trip/>.

## Waterfowl Count Results

By *Andy Mason*

Here are results of the 2025 DOAS portion of the statewide waterfowl count the weekend of January 19.

Areas covered include: Otsego Lake and tributaries; Susquehanna River, Cooperstown to lower Unadilla Bridge; Ouleout Creek to East Sidney Lake; Canadarago Lake and watershed; West Branch Delaware River,

Delhi to Deposit including Cannonsville Reservoir.

Large waterways were at least partly open. As usual, Otsego Lake and the West Branch Delaware River in Deposit had the highest numbers and variety of birds. The weather changed dramatically following the count, with Otsego Lake freezing

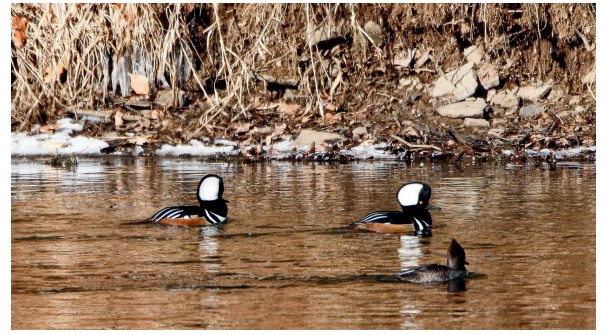
over the next day.

Other species of interest included Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Sharpshinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Great-blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Ring-billed Gull, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Eastern Bluebird, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark.

*Continued on page 4*

Thanks to participants: Italo Bironi, Bill Carbine, David Diaz, Bob Donnelly, Becky Gretton, John Heidecker, Laura Kilty, Pam Lea, Carol and Randy Lynch, Nancy New, Andy Mason, Tom and Jo Ann Salo. Party hours: 43.1.

Common Loon--1	Bufflehead--127
Canada Goose--397	Common Goldeneye--111
Mallard--759	Hooded Merganser--140
Gadwall--1	Common Merganser--178
Green-winged Teal--7	Ruddy Duck--52
Pintail--4	American Coot --52
American Black Duck--129	Double-crested Cormorant--1
Ring-necked Duck--93	TOTAL--2001



Hooded Mergansers on the Delaware River  
Photo by Landa Palmer

## Bird Sightings - January and February

By Sandy Bright

Unrelenting cold, gray skies, blustery winds, and icy sidewalks have defined this winter, keeping me inside more than usual. The occasional sunshine is a magnet, drawing me out, lifting my spirits; it seems to have the same effect on the birds. On a cold sunlit January day, the spring songs of Tufted Titmouse and House Finch cheered the air, the view brightened by red berries and birds (cardinal and robin) against the backdrop of snow.

Pam Peters watched a light morph Rough-legged Hawk near Treadwell leave its perch near the road, fly a

few trees away, and perch again in a field. In the wee hours of January 24th, Chris Wood found an Eastern Screech-Owl and a Great Horned Owl on Stillwater Road in Oneonta.

Regardless of season, Rick Bunting can always be counted on to get out to photograph birds several times a week, spending hours observing birds and their behaviors, jockeying into position for photo ops. Subscribers to his posts are treated to the best of those photographs as well as interesting and informative commentary. Highlights of his encounters during this reporting period include Eastern Bluebird, Northern Flicker, Gadwall, Peregrine Falcon, female Ring-necked Pheasant, American Kestrel, a female Mallard reflected in the water below, a closeup of Mourning Dove revealing the intricate details and colors on the bill, and a very common bird with unusual coloration: a Rock Pigeon with a “purple-bordering-on-magenta neck tinged



Gadwall  
Photo by Rick Bunting

with green”, the piebald head and bill adding another layer of appeal. His closeup of a male Purple Finch brought to mind the description of these birds being “awash in magenta”.

Bonnie Ratnoff Seegmiller had “a nice surprise in front of my house in Colchester - a Northern Shrike chasing a chickadee”. It had been more than three decades since she had seen a shrike there.

Tom Salo, Becky Gretton, and



Rock Pigeon  
Photo by Rick Bunting



Peregrine Falcon  
Photo by Rick Bunting

Nancy New checked out the mill ponds north of Richfield Springs and found good numbers of Northern Pintails and Green-winged Teal, a Gadwall drake, and other waterfowl. Barb Palmer spotted a couple dozen American Robins in Cobleskill, and about 15 Snow Buntings near Jefferson.

In mid-February, we took a break from winter to enjoy some Florida sunshine. In our neighborhood here there are, unfortunately, a number of outdoor cats and at least one person who feeds them outside. One day I watched a line of creatures walking along the road. Bringing up the rear of a parade of cats was one black vulture, looking for all the world like a chicken, head bobbing as it marched along. I can only assume that it has learned that where the cats go, there's going to be food. An environmentally-

disturbing but amusing sight.

While working outside one day, Samuel Weaver heard the sound of air pushing through large wings. He looked up to see a Golden Eagle diving at a Red-tailed Hawk over his barn. The relentless eagle continued to dive at the hawk, the Redtail being pushed closer and closer to the ground as they made their way down the valley. Was it territorial or was the eagle looking for a meal? Samuel also heard the spring song of Brown Creepers in February, much earlier than I've ever heard it! Here's hoping more spring songs – and spring weather – will be here soon.

*If you have bird sightings to report, contact Sandy Bright, [brights@hartwick.edu](mailto:brights@hartwick.edu) or 607-287-4465.*



*Eastern Bluebird  
Photo by Rick Bunting*



*Purple Finch  
Photo by Rick Bunting*



*Mourning Dove  
Photo by Rick Bunting*

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training program  
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# Connecticut's Birdcraft Sanctuary

By Director Jane Bachman

I grew up in Fairfield, Connecticut, and in the mid-60s I walked to the junior high school, passing almost daily a rustic haven called the Birdcraft Museum, surrounded by stone walls and vegetation, and sandwiched between I-95 and the railroad. I developed the habit of stopping periodically on the way home, to wander the museum filled with taxidermied birds, to check out the live birds at the feeders beyond the wide windows, and to visit with the elderly director, Frank Novak. For many years that's all I knew about the place. It wasn't until I brought my own kids there that I discovered the grounds surrounding it, the pond behind it, the trails and boardwalks. And it wasn't until much later that I discovered Mabel Osgood Wright and her connection with the site.

Mabel Osgood Wright grew up in Manhattan, where, through her family, she had many connections with notable persons and institutions in New York City. She explored the natural areas of the city, and became passionate about the beauty around her. In 1895, after spending two years studying in the ornithology department at the American Museum of Natural History, she wrote a bird guide entitled *Birdcraft*. The book was so popular that it was reprinted nine times before 1934, when Roger Tory Peterson's *Field Guide to the Birds* was published. She went on to write 27 books during her lifetime, and became an editor of *Bird-Lore*,



*Birdcraft Sanctuary  
Photo by Sasqua Garden Club/  
Connecticut Audubon*

created in 1899 as the official journal of state Audubon societies (later *Audubon* magazine).

Wright's family had a 'country home' in Fairfield (across from that same junior high school), which eventually became her permanent home. She was very active in the town, and, in 1898, was a part of creating Connecticut's first Audubon Society, the fourth in the country. Wright became its first president. She felt the organization needed to reflect a broader message than simply to reject wearing plumes and shooting birds, so set out to educate the younger generation by bringing presentations—which included stories, taxidermied birds and lantern slides—to area schools.

Among Wright's close friends was Fairfield resident Annie Burr Jennings, heir to the Standard Oil fortune. Wright was interested in creating a "songbird reservation" and Jennings offered to purchase a 10-acre plot across the street from Wright's home for that purpose. A caretaker's cottage was built, and they worked on creating trails, planting bird-friendly trees and shrubs, building benches, bird blinds and walls with bird-friendly

cavities. In October of 1914 the Birdcraft Sanctuary (named in honor of Wright's 1895 guide) opened to the public.

The sanctuary was very popular, so much so that the birds disappeared, driven away by the numbers of visitors and children playing in the sanctuary. The board decided that education—and the birds—might be better served by learning indoors, and watching the wildlife from there. Work on a small museum began later that year.

Frank Novak, originally hired as a construction worker, was made caretaker in 1914. In addition to being an accomplished birder, he was a taxidermist. When townspeople brought in dead birds for identification, he began preparing and stuffing them. Dioramas were painted along the wall of the museum, and the taxidermied birds placed in natural settings, but without labels. Novak himself served as the guide and instructor for generations of visitors, young and old—including me.

The Birdcraft Sanctuary continues to be a magnet for birds, particularly during migration. Bird banding began in the 1970s, with more than 18,000 birds banded since then, including over 124 species. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1983.

*Many thanks to Tom Andersen, Director of Communications, Connecticut Audubon, for much of this information (from his essays, written in 2023 to celebrate 125 years of Connecticut Audubon) and photo.*

# Upcoming Activities

Additional information on Bird Walks will be available in the April newsletter

## March

March 4 - **DOAS Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m.

March 15 - **Montezuma NWR Field Trip** with Chris DeCesare. Meet at the Dietz Street parking lot, Oneonta at 7:30 a.m. to carpool, or at 10:00 a.m. at the NWR Visitor Center. We'll make 5-6 stops to view waterfowl and shorebirds. Bring a bag lunch; planned return is at 5 p.m. (Snow date March 22)

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>

## April

April 15 - **DOAS Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m.

April 18 - **DOAS Public Program:** "Preventing Bird-Window Collisions and Why it Makes a Difference" via Zoom, 7:30 p.m. Registration required: <https://mobilize.us/s/4Mcrr7>

April TBA - **Parslow Road Woodcock Walk** with Sandy Bright and Charlie Scheim

April 26 - **Riddell Park Bird Walk** with Bob Donnelly  
**Earth Festival, Milford Central School**

## May

May 10 - **Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk** with Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright

May TBA - **DOAS Sanctuary Bird Walk** with Andy Mason

May 15 - **Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk** with Chris DeCesare and Sarah Root

May 16 - **DOAS Public Program:** "The Nature of a World Cruise" with Kathryn Davino, 7:30 p.m.

May 17 - **DOAS Big Day Bird Count**, Charlie Scheim, Coordinator

May 20 - **Pine Lake Bird Walk** with Suzanne Gaynor and Jane Bachman

May 20 - **DOAS Board Meeting**, 6:30 p.m.

May 24 - **West Branch Preserve Bird Walk** with Sandy Bright and Charlie Scheim

## June

June 7 - **Uplands Center, Walton Bird Walk** with Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright

June 14 - **Hanford Mills Bird Walk** with Suzanne Gaynor and Kathryn Davino

June 21 - **Kirkside Park, Roxbury Bird Walk** with Jeanne Ellsworth, Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright

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

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



## Bird-Friendly Coffee

DOAS promotes the use of bird-friendly coffee to protect critical habitat for neo-tropical migrant bird species. Birds & Beans® Bird Friendly® Shade Grown, Fair Trade coffee is certified by The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center as coming from 100% organic farms which meet strict biodiversity criteria. Their shade-grown coffee requires little or no chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides. The shade trees filter carbon dioxide and aid in soil moisture retention, which minimizes erosion. Plus it tastes great!

You can order your bird-friendly coffee by contacting Jane Bachman (607-431-9509 or [jbachwim60@gmail.com](mailto:jbachwim60@gmail.com)). Pick up and payment can be arranged from her front porch in Oneonta. For more information go to <https://doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee/>



**DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.**

**P.O. Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820**

**<https://doas.us/>**

## **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!**

## **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.