



# THE BELTED KINGFISHER

## DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

### April Program: Preventing Bird-Window Collisions and Why it Makes a Difference

By Susan O'Handley

Join us on Friday, April 18, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. on Zoom for a presentation with Susan O'Handley on preventing bird-window collisions in our homes.

Birds are facing significant population challenges all over the world. Changes in habitat, severe storms and increased temperatures are all playing a part in an overall decline in numbers. The National Audubon Society is working to find ways to change those trajectories through ambitious goals in conservation from both ends of the spectrum: increasing the chances for successful breeding bird seasons, and reducing bird mortality rates.

We hear a good deal about bird-window collisions that occur in urban environments; photos of hundreds of bird deaths in a day during migration season becomes news. In response,

we work to find solutions to prevent it from happening again. What we don't hear about are the average of two bird deaths per residence each year that occurs from window strikes in suburban and rural neighborhoods. Although these may not feel like they are significant in comparison, if you add those numbers up, the deaths of birds as a result are staggering - more than in any city. It is estimated that over 1 billion birds die as a result of window collisions per year in North America. It is considered to be the third highest cause of bird mortality, following habitat loss and predation by domestic cats.

Susan will provide an overview of the issues that surround building collisions and actions that can be taken at our homes, businesses,

schools and other public buildings to help reduce the number of bird deaths each year. Registration is required at

<https://mobilize.us/s/4Mcrr7>

Susan O'Handley has been involved with local Audubon chapters for over 30 years and has served on the Board of Directors for DOAS since 2012 (10 years as a Co-President); she is chair of DOAS' Education Committee.

Susan also works with the Audubon NY/CT Council Board, composed of 27 Audubon Chapters in New York State and six chapters in Connecticut, and serves on the Advisory Board for Audubon NY/CT Regional Office as the Chapter Representative. She owns and operates a small digital marketing agency in Hartwick, NY.

### Mark your Calendars...

By Kathryn Davino

In order to escape the winter cold of 2024, Kathryn and Al Davino booked a world cruise. On January 6, they boarded the Viking Sky in Los Angeles and sailed 30,872 nautical miles by the time they disembarked in Greenwich, England on May 6, 2024.

Along the way, Kathryn chronicled

their adventures, and she has compiled a photo slideshow presentation of the fascinating plants and animals that they encountered.

Join DOAS on Friday, May 16 at 7:30 p.m. at Elm Park Church, 401 Chestnut Street in Oneonta, to enjoy the highlights of their trip.

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# Conservation and Legislation

By *Andy Mason*

## **EPA-More Like Environmental**

**Destruction Agency**—The wholesale undoing of our basic protections of air, land and water continues in Washington. The Environmental Protection Agency, under the leadership of administrator Lee Zeldin (former candidate for governor of NY) has targeted dozens of environmental rules as it redefines its purpose.

Zeldin recently announced that the EPA's new mission is to "lower the cost of buying a car, heating a home and running a business." Does he not even understand the name of his agency? According to the New York Times, " . . . *the Trump administration said it would repeal dozens of the nation's most significant environmental regulations, including limits on pollution from tailpipes and smokestacks, protections for wetlands, and the legal basis that allows it to regulate the greenhouse gases that are heating the planet.*"

The effort to remove EPA's authority to control CO<sub>2</sub> is probably the most disturbing of these schemes. It would mean an end to the federal government's efforts to reduce this critical pollutant, the primary driver of climate change. There will be opportunities to push back against these changes with public comments and possible legal challenges. But as we mentioned last month, the most effective action right now is to strengthen NY's laws and regulations.

As the legislature and the governor hash out the state budget, it is vital that the NY HEAT Act be included. This bill would accelerate the transition from natural gas—a fossil fuel—to electricity by removing the "100-

foot rule," which forces New Yorkers to subsidize free gas hookups and drives up utility costs. It also would shift ratepayer funds away from new gas infrastructure and toward clean energy, and cap household energy costs at 6% of income to protect families from unaffordable bills.

Another worthy state effort is the "Cap-and-Invest" program which Gov. Hochul proposed over two years ago as a key part of NY's plan to cut emissions and reduce pollution. It would set a limit on greenhouse gas emissions, require polluters to pay for their pollution, and reinvest those funds into clean energy, lower utility bills, and healthier communities—a win-win proposition.

However, the governor has pushed back this plan for at least another year. She needs to stick to her guns and implement "Cap-and-Invest" right away, particularly in light of the Trump administration's plans to go in the wrong direction on climate change.

**What you can do**—Contact your state legislators and Gov. Hochul and let them know of your support for these actions and the importance of the state stepping in to help fill the federal void. A personal letter, email, or call is best, but an easy way to speak out on the HEAT act can be found at: <https://p2a.co/fozmxbi>.

Similarly, to let the governor know she needs to enact "Cap-and-Invest", visit: <https://p2a.co/nket52a>.

**Contact information can be found in the Advocacy section of our website, DOAS.us**

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

*Founded 1968*

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jane Bachman

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To contribute notes or articles for The Belted Kingfisher, email: [editor@doas.us](mailto:editor@doas.us).

# Save Wildlife by Using Lead Free Fishing Tackle: Valuable Information from a Zoom Program

*By Co-President Becky Gretton*

The Delaware Otsego Audubon Society has thoroughly documented the toxicity of lead ammunition through the study of Golden Eagles. As a result, many hunters are now using lead free ammo.

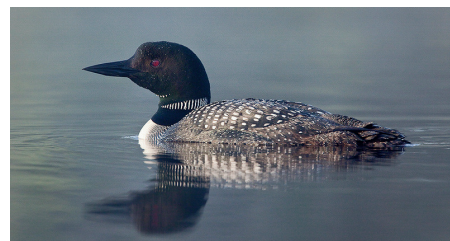
I recently learned that lead fishing tackle is an unregulated and highly toxic danger to wildlife. It has been polluting lakes and surrounding areas for a very long time and continues to do so. Many people are unaware that they are furthering this harm. This information needs to go to everyone who goes fishing so they have an opportunity to improve their environment and save aquatic wildlife.

I watched a "Loon Zoom" from the

Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, presented by Margie Manthey, an angler and conservationist from Otisco Lake and Fishing Director of the Wolfe Lake Association in Ontario, Canada.

Aquatic birds accidentally ingest lead from fishing tackle, and lead poisoning is the leading source of mortality for Loons. It's a huge threat to Trumpeter Swans, and impacts eagles, geese, ducks, birds, turtles, and fish.

The analysis of this issue is masterfully done by Margie. I learned that some behaviors of aquatic birds other than ingesting tackle directly are surprising and fascinating. I know that you will be surprised as well. Her



*Common Loon  
Photo by Benjamin Olson  
Audubon Photography Awards*

love for fishing is contagious.

The solution is of course to use lead free products. Her recommendations are practical and accompanied by warnings to avoid products that are misrepresented in the marketplace.

Please take time to look at this talk and share it with everyone who believes in conserving wildlife. Thank you.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ny7QIjBWTFs>

## Butternuts Christmas Bird Count

*By Sandy Bright*

There's a new Christmas Bird Count in town. Organized by Samuel Weaver and centered in the town of Butternuts, it took place on January 1. The day started with fog and clouds with light precipitation and temperatures around freezing, climbing to the 40s. The 24 participants found 44 species with 3510 individual birds.

Seven species of raptors were

sighted, including 15 Bald Eagles and 24 Red-tailed Hawks, plus Golden Eagle and Rough-legged Hawk seen during the count week but not the day of the count. Two exceptionally abundant species that day were the 87 Common Ravens and 30 Golden-crowned Kinglets. Field and Swamp Sparrows were unusual winter finds, and the appearance of a Short-eared

Owl was a special treat.

Thanks to all the participants: John Chanik, Mike DeWispelaere, Lisa Gorn, Anthony Kanagy, the Millers - Marcus, David, David Lee, Clara, Nancy, Ellen, Ada, and John Mark; Nancy New, Tom and Jo Salo, Isaac Troyer, the Weavers - Samuel, Caleb, Isaiah, Jared, Eunice, and Marcus; and Adin and Isaiah John Yoder.

## DOAS Big Day *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 17. 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. 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](mailto: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.





# Bird Sightings - February and March

*By Sandy Bright*

While the weather around here can seem harsh, there are a few bright spots. Winter visitors provide a different mix of birds and a greater variety of waterfowl, easily seen as they congregate in open water. In Cooperstown, Tom and Jo Salo found both Greater and Lesser Scaup; Suzanne Summers saw Greater Scaup and Redheads. At the Cannonsville Reservoir Lance Verderame spotted Trumpeter Swan, Common x Barrow's Golden-eye hybrid, and Greater White-fronted Goose (a new county record for Delaware County).

Snow squalls and winds caused a fallout of waterfowl in early March. Lance Verderame found two groups of Tundra Swan at the Cannonsville Reservoir, totaling 57 individuals, plus Cackling Geese. Barb Palmer discovered another group of these majestic birds at Minekill Park. More were photographed by Rick Bunting in the Bainbridge area among several hundred Canada and Snow Geese, including a few of the less common dark morph. A mid-March sighting of a Mute gave Lance a Swan Trifecta.

Snow Buntings made appearances, in Harpersfield (a group of 200, Randy Lynch), Bainbridge (Rick Bunting) and Treadwell (Pam Peters). Suzanne Summers discovered several Horned Larks in Richfield Springs. Rod Spangle spotted an American Tree Sparrow in Unadilla. Pine Siskins were reported by Chris DeCesare, Lance Verderame, and Ruth Pedersen, who also found a Fox Sparrow.



*Barred Owl*  
*Photo by Landa Palmer*

One day Landa Palmer got that odd sensation of being watched, and looked up to find a Barred Owl checking her out. Rough-legged Hawks were found by Landa, Jo Salo, and Pam Peters. Pam also spotted a Golden Eagle perched along a tree line; Tom and Jo Salo watched a sub-adult Golden heading south "under power". An accipiter frequented their feeder, and one day a Northern Shrike chased a chickadee around it.

Barb Palmer's feeders were busy with 40-plus goldfinches, and she noted a new record of five Downy Woodpeckers at one time. On one particularly unpleasant day, she found six Mourning Doves sheltering on the cross pieces of her picnic table in a gazebo.

Carolina Wrens are one of the few songbirds that sing year-round. They have been expanding their range



*Snow Buntings*  
*Photo by Randy Lynch*

northward, with the first documented breeding pair appearing in Otsego County 20 years ago, and are now found well into Canada. Betsy O'Brien has enjoyed their melodic song since summer, and managed to get some photos.



*Killdeer*  
*Photo by Rick Bunting*

Red-winged Blackbirds were spotted by Bob Ciganek, Barb Palmer, Tom and Jo Salo, and Gerianne Carillo, who also had grackles at her feeder. Lance Verderame discovered a Rusty Blackbird near Deposit. There were several reports of robins, some foraging in trees, some on the ground (Sarah Root, Janice Downie, Eileen Kline, Jo Salo, and Pam Peters).

In more signs of spring, March 10th brought the first-of-season Turkey Vulture (Jane Bachman) and Killdeer (Rick Bunting). Pam Peters heard Juncos, Brown Creepers, and a Song Sparrow singing. Bluebirds sang in Meredith (Eileen Kline).

Each morning for a week, a Red-bellied Woodpecker drummed on the roof where Charlie Scheim and I stayed in Florida, advertising for a mate. Turkey Vultures copulated on the driveway next door. Breeding season has begun.

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



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# Have Birds Touched YOUR Life?

*By Director Nancy New*

Have you ever stopped to think about special “bird” moments -- times that have made an impression on you, and caused you to seek more interaction with birds and nature? Over the recent frigid winter months, I’ve thought of several experiences that made my heart sing, and gave me hope for Spring!

One day I was changing the outside lock on the front door when I heard a Golden-Crowned Kinglet wisping away. I quickly looked up in the nearby bush, since past experience led me to believe that’s where I’d find this beautiful little bird, briskly moving about. Much to my delight, I found it directly at eye-level, peering curiously at me and sitting still. What a breath-taking view! Then, quick as a flash (much more typical of kinglet behavior) it was off and away, leaving me in awe of a rare closeup encounter with a precious feathered creature.

Then there was the day one

summer when I was mowing a hayfield. Suddenly, the “Gray Ghost” (Male Northern Harrier) swooped directly in front of the tractor, and began its definitive wingbeat, slow and powerful: up - down - up - down - up, holding its position until a meadow mouse jumped out of the grass to escape the tractor, only to find itself captured by the raptor who then flew off gracefully. I’ll never forget the majesty of that bird and the gift it gave me by hanging out near me, just being.

Remembering special birds and spots where I first saw them brings me joy, whether or not I see the bird in that spot again. I laugh at myself, but that doesn’t keep me from hoping.

What special “bird” moments have you had? Do they make you want to get out and have more of those interactions? I hope so, since by now, Spring has officially sprung, and we can all look forward to increased awareness of birds’ value in our lives.



*Male Northern Harrier  
Photo by Landa Palmer*

John Burroughs, a naturalist writer in the early 1900’s said, “I go to nature to be soothed and healed.” Time alone with nature can uncover inner peace and insights, while at other times it’s synergistic to share that joy with others.

DOAS works hard to bring field trips and informational seminars to all interested people. Check this edition of the newsletter for more details of activities you might like to join. We may not find exactly what we seek but we always find something worthwhile. Please join in the fun as we grow knowledge, understanding, and caring for birds and the natural world around us. Let’s allow the birds and their songs to give our hearts wings!

## The DOAS Atlas

*By Charlie Scheim*

A number of people have mentioned to me that they are sorry that the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas came to an end as of last season. They really enjoyed the process and the idea of slowly and carefully observing our local birds for signs of breeding behavior. I know that my wife Sandy and I certainly feel that way. In response to this, I have decided to try continuing a more local version of the BBA for anyone who is interested.

I am calling this the “DOAS Atlas”. It is a simplified version of the NYS BBA. It is quite easy to participate.

I have created a dummy eBird username called “doas-atlas”. To participate in the DOAS Atlas, all birders need do is share their eBird checklists with the eBird user doas-atlas when they submit the checklist.

In the NYS BBA, the state was broken into blocks and some blocks were “priority blocks”. There will be no blocks in our DOAS Atlas, and no “priority” areas. Simply submit your checklists from wherever in our area you bird (your backyard, your local park, your favorite swamp, etc.) and they will count in our atlas. I will

probably organize our data by counties, since eBird automatically identifies the county where the checklist is done. (I must admit that I haven’t completely thought through the data recording process, so it will be one of those “build the airplane while you fly” sorts of endeavors.)

eBird will continue to have all the breeding codes that were available during the NYS BBA (Sandy and I use them all the time, even for our checklists while we’re down in Florida), and of course, I hope you will add breeding

*Continued on page 6*



*By Tom Salo*

After getting enough sun to boost its battery, the ancient tracking device on Marie the Golden Eagle downloaded the 2024 breeding season's data on January 30. Something was different. After discussing the data and maps with others, my "click-bait" title for this article might read: "Scientists Gobsmailed by New Data."

Hatched in 2013, Marie was 11 years old in 2024. We have nine years of breeding season data since she was released carrying a tiny solar-powered GPS device. Each year we've been following Marie, she spent most of those summers around the northernmost land east of Hudson Bay, along Hudson Strait just west of Salluit. This year was no different, except for Marie's behavior. In the past, the bird would wander, sometimes leaving core range for days or even weeks. This year the bird remained in a very focused area. Almost every point from early May through August falls within a one mile radius of the center. When you include a few outlining points the summer range is

Help Center provides lots of information on how to use eBird and enter breeding codes. Most folks find the process fairly easy to learn.

I encourage everyone, from inexperienced to proficient birders, to join in the DOAS Atlas. It would be wonderful if we could build our own long-term database of breeding

about the size of a Breeding Bird Atlas  
Survey Block.

What does this mean? Did Marie nest?

To get answers to these questions, I contacted Trish Miller, the Senior Research Wildlife Biologist at Conservation Science Global. Trish has vast knowledge about Eastern Golden Eagles. To determine if Marie nested, Trish examined where the bird was from 11 p.m.-1 a.m. every day. Marie did not consistently roost in the same place. This bird wasn't in a nest. One possibility was that she was holding and defending a territory. When I brought up Marie's small size, it raised another possibility. Marie is very small for a female, even smaller than one of the two males we tagged. Could Marie's sex determination have been a mistake?

To sex eagles, the standard method is to measure the tarsus, the lower leg. Marie's tarsus depth and width put the bird in the female range. However, among the 120 birds tagged by the Eastern Golden Eagle Working Group,

observations for the DOAS area. And, as those who have atlased before know very well, observing the breeding behaviors of birds is a wonderful way to learn much more about our avian neighbors.



Marie was smaller than every other female. Male Golden Eagles average about 70% of the weight of females. Could Marie be a male? The measurements and scattered roosting sites suggest this is a possibility.

When Marie was tagged, we took blood and feather samples. DNA could have determined the bird's sex. Unfortunately, those 9 year old samples seem to be lost.

Given the evidence, there is a very good chance that Marie is a male with thick legs; given the extended period the bird spent in that tight territory, possibly a successful breeding male.

*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.*

## Upcoming Activities

Please visit <https://doas.us/calendar/> for further details on field trips, including directions

### April

April 14 - **Parslow Road 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://tinyurl.com/fshy4htv>

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. (see article on page 1). Registration required: <https://mobilize.us/s/4Mcrr7>

April 26 - **Riddell State Park Bird Walk** with Bob Donnelly. Meet at the Milford Central School parking lot at 7:50 a.m. to carpool to the Riddell parking lot (just north of I-88's Exit 17, off Rt 28). Unpaved trails through fields and forests are mostly flat; wear sturdy footwear and be prepared for wet areas and mud. There are a few benches along the trail and an outhouse at the parking lot.

April 26 - **Earth Festival**, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Milford Central School. DOAS will offer exhibits and will sell coffee, hats and mugs. Register at <https://mobilize.us/s/bhowyu> for the opportunity to make Acopian BirdSavers window treatments, designed to reduce bird-window collisions.

### May

May 6 - **Bramley Mountain Bird Walk**: Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the trailhead on Glen Burnie Road, east of Delhi. Join Pam Peters and Eileen Kline on a four mile loop in mixed deciduous woods to see and hear some early returning birds. The first mile is relatively flat but uneven, followed by a steep mile ascent to the summit; walk is about two hours. Bring water, snacks, bug spray and hiking sticks if needed; wear sturdy shoes and be prepared for mud. No restrooms available; a dog-free walk. All levels of experience welcome. Contact Pam to register at [ovenbirdp@gmail.com](mailto:ovenbirdp@gmail.com)

May 10 - **Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Bird Walk**: Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot on Silas Lane (at the fields near the school district bus garage, just past the transfer station). Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a walk to view returning migrant birds. This trail is unpaved and mostly flat; some areas may be uneven or muddy. No restrooms available; there are benches along the way. For more information: [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu) or 607-434-4880.

May 11 - **DOAS Sanctuary Bird Walk**, 8 a.m. Andy Mason will lead a spring bird walk (about two hours) at the DOAS Sanctuary on Grange Hall Road. Trails include uneven

ground and moderate climbs; an accessible porta-john is available. Birds expected include returning migrants; waterfowl and raptors are also possibilities. For more information, contact Andy: [AndyMason@earthling.net](mailto:AndyMason@earthling.net), (607) 267-8491.

May 15- **Jean Miller Memorial Wildflower Walk**: Meet at the Gilbert Lake State Park beach area at 10 a.m.; we'll look for spring ephemerals. The one mile walk is on unpaved, mostly level trails and takes about two hours; restrooms and seating are at parking lot. Bring water, insect repellent, and your curiosity! Led by Chris DeCesare, DOAS board member and former environmental educator. For more information, contact Chris at 607-244-5496 or [chris.decesare444@gmail.com](mailto:chris.decesare444@gmail.com)

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

May 17 - **DOAS Big Day Bird Count**, Charlie Scheim, Coordinator (see article on page 3)

May 20- **Pine Lake Bird Walk**: Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot of Hartwick College's Pine Lake Environmental campus in Davenport Center. Join Jane Bachman and Suzanne Gaynor for a 1.5 mile, two hour walk past a variety of habitats including Pine Lake, Charlotte Creek, woods, a swamp, and open field. There is one moderate climb; much of the walk is on uneven woodland trails. Sturdy footwear is recommended. We can expect warblers and other song-birds, ducks, and possibly Bald Eagles that nest nearby. A restroom is available at the start and end of the walk. For more information contact Suzanne Gaynor at 607-435-2939.

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

May 24 - **West Branch Preserve**: Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the West Branch Preserve parking area, on NY Route 10, about 0.9 miles west of the intersection with County Route 26. Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a 1.5 hour bird walk, on unpaved and at times uneven paths, with moderate uphill and downhill walking. There are no restrooms at the preserve and no resting benches. For more information, contact Charlie Scheim at [scheimc@hartwick.edu](mailto:scheimc@hartwick.edu) or 607-434-4880

### 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



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

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

<https://doas.us/>

## Avian Flu Safety Notice

Per recommendations from Cornell and the DEC, DOAS recommends observing birds in yards and at bird feeders at a safe distance and checking regularly whether local, state, or federal wildlife agencies are recommending that wild bird feeders be taken down. If at least one of your local agencies indicates to take down feeders, we recommend removing them. In the meantime, we suggest following the recommendations of the CDC and other regional health authorities to follow general guidelines, like avoiding touching dead birds.

Unusual illnesses and deaths of wild birds should be reported to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NY DEC). This link will take you to an online reporting form. The form includes questions on your contact information, the bird species and the location of the bird:

<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/dee381coee8a4114a83dc1892fcof7ed>

Backyard poultry owners: Think you may have HPAI in your flock? Report it! If a large number of your birds are sick or dying, it is important to report it immediately. To report, you can call: New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets: 518-457-3502; United States Department of Agriculture: 866-536-7593.

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### 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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