



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

May 16 Program: The Nature of a World Cruise

By Kathryn Davino

In order to escape the winter cold of 2024, Kathryn and Al Davino did a rather unusual thing and 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, 120 days later on May 6.

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

There were frequent dolphins and flying fish accompanying the vessel, and interesting plant forms like the Cannonball trees in Malaysia and the Baobabs of Africa. Throughout Indonesia, raptors known as

Brahminy Kites were commonly seen, often in large flocks swirling near the water's edge, and they spent an evening observing a breeding colony of Little Blue Penguins on Phillip Island, near Australia. In Komodo National Park, people were the ones restricted to the caged-in walkways, as they made their way through the land of the venomous Komodo Dragons.

Tourists were warned to tuck away any loose items while visiting the Batu Cave temples in Malaysia, since the colony of mischievous Long-tailed Macaques found there were adept at thievery. Kathryn found them fascinating to photograph, and she was able to keep all of her belongings. Others were not



Brahminy Kite
Photo by Kathryn Davino

so lucky!

Join DOAS at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, May 16 to enjoy the highlights of Kathryn and Al's trip. The program will be in-person at the Elm Park United Methodist Church, 401 Chestnut Street in Oneonta. The program will also be available via Zoom; registration is required at <https://mobilize.us/s/V9rkHS>

Kathryn Davino is a retired High School Biology Teacher from Delaware Academy in Delhi. She is an enthusiastic birder, gardener, and observer of wildlife. She has served on the DOAS Board of Directors since 2016.

Upcoming Board of Directors Election

By Landa Palmer

The DOAS Nominating Committee (Landa Palmer, Jennifer Hyypio, Todd Jones, and Andy Mason) will present candidates for election to the Board of Directors at the May program. The nominated slate includes incumbents:

- Kathryn Davino
- Chris DeCesare
- Prudence Danforth

- Pam Lea
- Susan O'Handley
- Landa Palmer

We are seeking more nominations, and if you are interested in learning more about the director's position, please contact Andrew Mason (andymason@earthling.net) or Landa Palmer (landavpalmer@gmail.com)

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Conservation and Legislation

By *Andy Mason*

Oneonta Considering Firearms for Deer Management

—The City of Oneonta Common Council is considering expanding its deer management program to allow use of firearms for hunting white-tailed deer on city-owned lands within its boundaries.

An overpopulation of deer in the city has led to complaints over damage to gardens and ornamental plantings, overbrowsing of woodland understory, vehicle collisions, and even threats from aggressive deer. In response, the city established a Deer Management Taskforce to make recommendations to address the issue. The taskforce developed a management plan including survey of deer conflicts, public education to avoid deer conflicts, increasing warning signage in high use deer areas, monitoring for deer damage in woodland areas, and other efforts to largely coexist with deer.

However, deer numbers and complaints remain high, and the City adopted a deer reduction program that would allow approved hunters to kill deer on city-owned land and on private land in the city using crossbows, with the approval of property owners. In addition to properties in the city limits, hunting is permitted on city-owned land outside the city, primarily the watershed area for Wilber Lake, a drinking water reservoir.

The City is now taking steps to permit deer hunting with firearms

on city-owned lands, in addition to the areas beyond the city limits. There are no restrictions on the type of ammunitions that may be used in these activities. As we and others have documented, serious human health risks, and dangers to wildlife—including eagles and other scavengers—result from use of lead ammunition. (See the DOAS-produced video at <https://youtu.be/qffN1D3Boj8>).

Lead bullets fragment into many small, even microscopic, particles when they strike a target. These disperse as far as 14 inches from the entry point and remain in venison which is consumed by hunters and their families and recipients of donated venison. According to the CDC, there is no safe level of lead in humans. It can result in nervous system, brain and other organ damage, particularly in children, leading to learning disabilities and behavior problems.

Eagles, which commonly feed on carcasses of wounded deer and on gut piles left after field dressing, are also highly susceptible to lead poisoning. They suffer neurological harm, reduced vision and balance and typically cannot survive ingesting lead from bullet fragments. A piece of lead the size of a grain of rice can kill an eagle.

DOAS is asking the City to require use of non-lead ammo for hunting on all city-owned lands. This change would not decrease the effectiveness of the deer management program—

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DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Founded 1968

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Jane Bachman

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<https://www.facebook.com/Delaware-OtsegoAudubonSociety>

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

hunters report that the typical alternative copper bullets are ballistically superior to lead. This relatively simple adjustment would go a long way towards protecting human health and the well-being of our eagles and other wildlife.

What you can do—If you are a city

resident, contact your council representative and the mayor and ask that any change to deer management include a requirement for non-lead ammunition. Oneonta does have a deer population problem, but addressing it should not bring about the new dangers that

lead bullets bring. If you do not live in the city, make the point that requiring non-lead ammo demonstrates civic responsibility that can be adopted by other municipalities and the state of New York.

Contact information for city officials:
https://www.oneonta.ny.us/common_council/index.php

New York State Ornithological Association Meeting Registration Open

By Andy Mason

The 78th Annual Conference of the New York State Ornithological Association will be hosted in September 2025 by the Cayuga Bird in Ithaca, New York. DOAS is a member organization of NYSOA.

Birds will be on the move, and there will be plenty of field trips to local hot spots, from Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge to Sapsucker Woods. There will also be behind-the-scenes tours at the Cornell Lab and time to explore the newly

renovated Visitor Center.

At the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center, there will be vendors, a silent auction, and a Breeding Bird Atlas luncheon. The Friday night speaker, Dr. Adriaan Dokter, will present a talk on Birdcast and bird migration. The Saturday evening banquet features keynote speaker Peter Kaestner, an active bird conservationist and the first person to have seen 10,000 birds from around the world.

The conference is open to the public and attendance is encouraged for all with an interest in New York State birds, birding, and conservation. Early bird registration before June 30th is \$70. Young birders 21 and under may register for \$5, thanks to sponsorship provided by Visit Ithaca (www.visitithaca.com).

For more information and a complete conference schedule, please visit www.nysoa2025.org

Woodcock Walk

By Charlie Scheim

On a relatively balmy evening, about 20 people joined leaders Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright on Monday April 14 at the Otsego Land Trust's Parslow Road Conservation Area to seek out American Woodcocks. This area is a very reliable woodcock habitat, a damp overgrown meadow near Oaks Creek, and the birds did not disappoint.

Woodcocks become most active

shortly after sunset, and after waiting in the gathering dusk for a bit, we began to hear their loud nasal "peents". As the skies darkened, the peents multiplied and grew more frequent. Shortly thereafter, a few birds began their remarkable vertical courtship flight displays, spiraling upward with the wind twittering through their wings and then falling back to the ground chirping. As an added bonus, a number of Wilson's Snipe were also heard winnowing nearby but



*American Woodcock
Photo by John Troth
Audubon Photography Awards*

out of sight as they flew about in their own courtship circles.

DOAS thanks the Otsego Land Trust for organizing this walk each year.

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.

March - April Bird Sightings

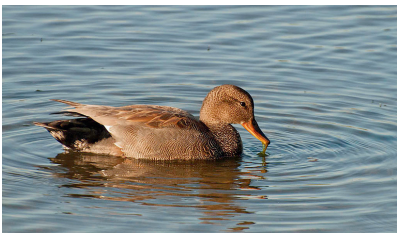
By **Sandy Bright**

While mid-March is officially the tail end of winter, it most certainly was not the end of winter weather this year. But animals go about their business anyway, with seemingly much less grumbling about it than we humans do.

Early migrants began to make appearances. Lance Verderame found the first-of-season (FOS) Wilson's Snipe (Deposit 3/16), Savannah Sparrow (Downsville 3/29,) and Rough-winged Swallow (Cannonsville Reservoir 3/30). On the 19th, Jo and Tom Salo found an Eastern Phoebe in their barn in West Burlington. Pam Peters and Nancy New found FOS Eastern Meadowlarks on East Brook Road (3/28), a singing Winter Wren and a Bald Eagle on a nest.

Longer days brought melting ice despite day after gray day of snow flurries. Rick Bunting had a great photo session with a pair of Hooded Mergansers, and watched a pair of Canada Geese begin their dipping courtship moves. In Pittsfield Tom Salo found six Green-winged Teals. Horned Grebes were found by Mike DeWispelaere at Chenango Lake and by Lance Verderame at the Cannonsville Reservoir. Cindy Staley spotted a Gadwall at Clarke Pond in Springfield.

A Tree Swallow arrived in Jefferson,



Gadwall

Photo by John Heidecker

<https://johnheidecker.smugmug.com/>



Hooded Merganser
Photo by Rick Bunting

swooping over Barb Palmer's newly-exposed pond, then checking out nest boxes. Barb photographed a pair of Common Mergansers on the water and found a Belted Kingfisher nearby. Gerianne Carillo reported that the Osprey pair near Springbrook were on the nest on March 25th. A Merlin was loudly proclaiming its presence in my neighborhood on the 26th; two days later Gerianne spotted Merlins in Milford.

In early April Eileen Kline enjoyed occasional parades of turkeys, with at least 50 participants, traipsing through her yard. Barb Palmer spotted a Golden-crowned Kinglet in Jefferson. Lance Verderame discovered 58 Red-throated Loons near the Cannonsville Reservoir, an "incredible sight, and by far the largest number I have ever seen together on an inland body of water."

A Palm Warbler took advantage of Landa Palmer's suet offering in East Meredith (4/8). April 11th brought two more "FOS" species: a singing Field Sparrow in Oneonta's West End (Andy Mason), and a Northern Flicker in Treadwell (Pam Peters). Becky Gretton spotted a Golden Eagle near Richfield Springs. Mike DeWispelaere had an unusual find at the Sidney Veterans' Memorial Park on the 12th, a Vesper Sparrow.

Fish Crows have been expanding their range along major river systems, and the Susquehanna is no exception. I observed a half dozen of these smaller crows discussing something amongst themselves as they flew over my neighborhood in Oneonta, with a nearby American Crow getting his 2 cents in also.

Ruffed Grouse are easy to hear when drumming, but difficult to find and even harder to photograph. Setting out "on a chilly, cloudy, snow-flurried day when I had not great expectations," Rick Bunting encountered an astonishingly cooperative male along the roadside "in full display, strutting his stuff." The resulting photos from this encounter beautifully showcase the origin of this species' name.

While driving home on a dark, foggy evening, Charlie Scheim and I were surprised by an Eastern Screech Owl flying across the road near Gilbert Lake. Moments later we spotted a bonus owl, this one Barred, standing sentry on the roadside. And a frog hopping across the pavement brought reassurances of spring's arrival.

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



Ruffed Grouse
Photo by Rick Bunting

Co-President's Column

By Co-President Andy Mason

To quote my neighborhood Cardinal, "Birding! Birding! Birding!". May is indeed bird time, when we welcome back the returning migrants in waves through our woodlands, overgrown pastures, roadsides and back yards. We have a few short weeks to experience this spectacle, so don't miss out.

DOAS has an excellent lineup of bird walks this Spring, mostly thanks to the organizational efforts of Charlie Scheim. See pages 6-7 in this newsletter or the online calendar (<https://doas.us/calendar/>) for walks that are scheduled through the third week of June with wide geographic distribution, from Oneonta to Delhi to Roxbury to



*Northern Cardinal (above)
and Yellow Warbler (below)
Photos by Landa Palmer*



Walton and more.

These walks are suitable for novices and experienced birders alike,

with knowledgeable leaders who are happy to share their enthusiasm for birds. We particularly encourage children to participate in hopes that they will catch the birding bug and become future conservationists and bird protectors. Trips cover a variety of terrain, and we have tried to include information on difficulty and available facilities in the trip descriptions.

Just think of the avian delights that await in the coming weeks—Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Yellow Warblers, and so much more. Please join us on a walk, or just get out in the morning to a patch of woods or a weedy field or a wetland and be rejuvenated by these wonderful creatures.

Montezuma Field Trip

By Chris DeCesare

On March 15, Chris DeCesare led a trip to the Montezuma Wetlands to view migrating waterfowl. Starting at the National Wildlife Refuge, a group of 12 birders ranging from beginner to experienced explored a number of wetlands and flooded fields in the area. Right from the start we were able to view Sandhill Cranes, Tundra Swans, Northern Shovelers, Pintails, Green-winged Teals and a Northern Harrier. At Tschache Pool, we saw Great Blue Herons building nests in their rookery and a few juvenile Bald Eagles soaring overhead.

Buffleheads were spotted at May's Point along with adult Bald Eagles

standing on the lingering ice on the pond. Snow Geese were not gathered in the fields in large numbers, but the group saw many flying in formation overhead and got a great look at seven flying low over the mucklands along Route 30.

Along the way, we picked up Ring-necked Ducks, American Wigeons, Mallards, Black Ducks, a Pied-billed Grebe, a few songbirds, and Turkey Vultures. The group also enjoyed watching muskrats swimming next to the road among their many cattail lodges. The wind was very gusty, but the participants were hearty and a good time was had by all.

While carpooling with Laurie



*Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese and
Tundra Swans
Photo by Laurie Rankin*



*A hearty group
Photo by Terry Silba*

Rankin, we learned about the activities of the NYS Forest Fire Lookout Association, which she leads. Check out their calendar: <https://nysffla.org/>

Upcoming Activities

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

May

May 6 - **Bramley Mountain Bird Walk:** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the trailhead on Glen Burnie Road, east of the village of Delhi. (From State Route 28, turn onto Glen Burnie and drive 3.3 miles, parking is on the right. From State Route 10, get onto CR 18, turn onto Glen Burnie Rd and parking area is .7 miles on the left). 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 four hours total. We might be able to climb the tower and access the cab at the top if a steward is available. 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

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 a few benches along the way. For more information: 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, (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

May 16 - **DOAS Public Program:** "The Nature of a World Cruise" with Kathryn Davino, 7:30 p.m., Elm Park Church (see article on page 1).

May 17 - **DOAS Big Day Bird Count**, Charlie Scheim, Coordinator (see article on page 7)

May 20- **Pine Lake Bird Walk:** Meet at 8:00 a.m at the parking lot of Hartwick College's Pine Lake Environmental campus, 1894 Charlotte Creek Rd, Davenport NY. Join DOAS board member Jane Bachman and long-time birder Suzanne Gaynor for 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; much of the walk is on uneven woodland trails. Sturdy footwear is recommended. We can expect warblers and other songbirds, ducks, and possibly Bald Eagles that nest nearby; the walk will last about two hours. A restroom is available at the start and end of the walk. No pre-registration required; for more information contact Suzanne Gaynor at 607-435-2939.

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

May 24 - **West Branch Preserve Bird Walk:** 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 or 607-434-4880

June

June 7 - **Uplands Center Bird Walk:** Join DOAS Director Charlie Scheim, *Bird Sightings* author Sandy Bright, and the Environmental Director of the Uplands Center Renee Hardenkamp for a morning bird walk at the Uplands Center,

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2641 Dunk Hill Road, Walton, NY on Saturday June 7 at 8:00 a.m. Our focus will be on observing birds and their breeding behaviors. The Uplands Center (www.uplandscenter.org) has acres of fields and forests, great habitat for breeding birds. We will meet just outside the main lodge. The walk will begin on a mostly level grassy path through a large field where we will likely find a number of grassland species. We will then follow a path 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. The walk will likely last about an hour and a half. This program is free and there is no pre-registration required. You may call Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 for more information or for any last minute weather concerns.

June 14 - **Hanford Mills Bird Walk:** Join Suzanne Gaynor and Kathryn Davino at 8 a.m. for a morning bird walk in conjunction with Free Family Saturday at Hanford Mills. Veteran birders Suzanne Gaynor and Kathryn Davino will co-lead the walk around the Hanford Mills property. We invite both beginners and experienced birders. The walk covers fairly level terrain and will last about 90 minutes. 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 along the route, but there are benches near the pond, and picnic tables at the parking lot. Accessible bathrooms are available. Participants should meet in the event parking lot (south side of Rt. 12, opposite museum buildings) and bring binoculars, insect repellent, water, and curiosity about birds! When we return to the parking lot, we invite folks to join us as we drive a short distance to see a Bald Eagle nest that currently has a pair of adults caring for one or more nestlings. As of early March, the adults have been sitting on the nest. This is a free program. Call Kathryn Davino (607-746-7396) with questions.

June 21 - **Kirkside Park, Roxbury Bird Walk:** Join Charlie Scheim, Sandy Bright, and local birder Jeanne Ellsworth for a birding walk in Kirkside Park, Roxbury, NY. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. in the Kirkside parking area accessed via Kirkside Driveway. The walk will last about 1.5 hours and will wander through the park 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.

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

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

A Reminder...DOAS Big Day

By Charlie Scheim



Birders of all experience levels are invited to join the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Big Day on Saturday May 17! 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 day. 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.

If you are interested and have not participated before, please contact Charlie at 607-434-4880 (voice or text) or scheimc@hartwick.edu for information on joining in the fun.



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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!

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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.

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