



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

November Program: Paved Paradise: Addressing the Ecological Impacts of America's Road System

By **Becky Gretton**

Join us on November 23 at 7:30 p.m. via Zoom for a timely program about addressing ecological impacts of America's roads. Some 40 million miles of roadways encircle the earth, yet we tend to regard them only as infrastructure for human convenience. While roads are so ubiquitous they're practically invisible to us, wild animals experience them as alien forces of death and disruption. More than a million animals are killed by cars each day in the U.S. alone; creatures from antelope to salmon are losing their ability to migrate in search of food and mates; and the noise of traffic chases songbirds from vast swaths of habitat.

Today road ecologists are seeking to blunt that destruction through innovative solutions. Conservationists are building bridges for California's



Presenter and author **Ben Goldfarb**

mountain lions and tunnels for English toads; engineers are deconstructing the labyrinth of logging roads that web national forests; and community organizers are working to undo the havoc highways have wreaked upon American cities.

In his talk, Ben Goldfarb will discuss the ecological harms wrought by transportation and the movement to redress them — and how we can create a better, safer world for all living beings.

Ben Goldfarb is an environmental journalist whose work has appeared

in *National Geographic*, *The Atlantic*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, and many other publications, and has twice been anthologized in the *Best American Science & Nature Writing*. His most recent book, *Crossings: How Road Ecology Is Shaping the Future of Our Planet*, was named one of the best books of 2023 by *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*, and received the Rachel Carson Award for Excellence in Environmental Writing as well as the Banff Book Competition's Grand Prize. His previous book, *Eager: The Surprising, Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter*, won the PEN/E.O. Wilson Literary Science Writing Award. He lives in Colorado with his wife, Elise, and his dog, Kit — which is, of course, what you call a baby beaver. Registration for this Zoom program is required at www.doas.us

January 2026 Program

By **Becky Gretton**

You'll want to mark your calendars for our January 16, 2026 program at 7:30 p.m., "Stories from Greater Yellowstone: A Deep Dive into the Heart of the Rockies and How to Defend this Threatened Wilderness." Wildlife photographer, storyteller and award-winning filmmaker Kyle Dudgeon will share with us some of his encounters with animals that have left lasting impressions, and inspired a fight to protect the future of this special place. The program will be via Zoom with registration required at www.doas.us

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Beyond the Board

By Co-president Andy Mason

Readers of this newsletter and others who attend our events are familiar with our officers and board members and their many activities for the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society. However, you may be less aware of the good work these people do outside the organization for environmental and other worthwhile causes.

Probably at the head of the class in this regard is Susan O'Handley. Susan currently serves as Chair of the Audubon Council of New York State, the umbrella group for Audubon Chapters in the state. She holds this position after several years of participation in the council, with a particular emphasis on education. Susan has also been active with other local groups, including the Otsego County Conservation Association, the Otsego Lake Association, and the Coopers-town Chamber of Commerce. In addition, she runs a digital marketing service for small businesses and organizations, including DOAS' web site. Susan's experience and connections have been invaluable for our Chapter.

Treasurer Charlie Scheim served as regional coordinator for the recently completed field portion of the third New York State Breeding Bird Atlas—a big, big job. Not only



did Charlie recruit, organize and lead the work of birders throughout a large portion of Central New York, but he and wife Sandy Bright covered many Atlas blocks themselves, contributing lots of data to this important project. In addition, Charlie has presented bird programs and walks for numerous outside groups. DOAS recognized Charlie for his Atlas efforts at last year's Charter Dinner.

Director Chris DeCesare has worked as a park ranger at a US Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and as a seasonal Biological Technician for the US Forest Service. She also had a twenty year career as an environmental educator for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Presently she directs an afterschool program for the Creating Rural Opportunities Partnership (CROP) program.

All of DOAS' leadership is committed to bettering both our environment and our communities. It is a pleasure and a gift to have connection to these great individuals. I thank them for their efforts for DOAS and beyond.

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Founded 1968

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Historian:	vacant
Sales:	Chris DeCesare, Jane Bachman

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



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Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

Gas Pipelines Coming Back?—It was just a few years ago that a broad coalition of New York citizens and organizations—including DOAS—beat back the proposed Constitution Pipeline which would have brought fracked natural gas from Pennsylvania to an existing pipeline in Schoharie County. The line would have passed very near Oneonta and other local communities. In fact the DOAS Sanctuary was part of a potential route for the pipeline.

There were any number of negatives for the pipeline, but perhaps most important is that it would increase greenhouse emissions and set back New York's ambitious efforts to transition to clean energy. Williams Company, the firm behind the pipeline, was so confident of success that they had pipes shipped to various locations along the route. However, faced with overwhelming opposition and the inability to obtain Clean Water Act certification,

the project was dropped—a great victory for all.

Now, with support and encouragement from the Trump administration, Constitution and other pipelines in New York have been resurrected. The president has threatened the state with funding cuts if pipelines and other fossil fuel projects are not approved. In addition to Constitution, Williams is seeking to construct the Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) pipeline from Pennsylvania through New Jersey into New York City. NESE threatens the rivers, bays and wetlands around New York City, and has the same negative climate change impacts as Constitution. Its approval in New York would signal a significant change in policy and increase the chances that Constitution will be the company's next effort to bring back moribund pipelines.

What You Can Do—Key to New York's response to these new

pipeline proposals is Governor Kathy Hochul. Her predecessor, Andrew Cuomo, banned fracking in the state and ensured the state Department of Environmental Conservation gave the Constitution pipeline a vigorous review, particularly for environmental impacts. Governor Hochul has recently waffled in her responses to pipeline questions, and no doubt will be affected by the Trump threats. The upcoming revision of the state's energy plan pulls back from clean energy targets—not a good sign.

You can contact Kathy Hochul to let her know that New York should stand strong against gas pipelines and stay the course on its renewable energy goal of 70% electricity from renewable sources by 2030.

Governor Kathy Hochul
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224
518-474-8390
www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form

Winter Blues Retreat

By Laura Tuite, DOAS member

Here they come again, the winter winds. You are welcome to enjoy some possible winter scenes, tea, or bird-friendly coffee when I'm at home (and not too worried about tax season or home viewings, as my house is on the market). I live on the Susquehanna River, so there are lots of eagles, mergansers, and as many feeder birds as I can keep happy. There's a handicap ramp to the front door, and ample safe parking off Rte 92. So if you crave a little binocular time, without frozen fingers, feel free to send me an email or leave a message at my phone number: frostytuite@gmail.com; 203-748-8562. My address is: 28684 State Route 92, Susquehanna, PA. 18847 (one mile from the New York border if coming from I-88).

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.

Woolly Bears... Fact, Fiction, or Just Fun?

By Director *Chris DeCesare*

It's that time of year when animals that remain here in winter are heading for overwintering sites or have built up their physical attributes and are hoping food resources will be abundant. It's easy to think of mammals and birds preparing for winter, but I'm always taken by the woolly bear caterpillars that cross my path at this time of year. I find myself dodging them with my car as I drive down the road and moving them from the driveway to nearby grass or a perennial garden.

Maybe it was hearing that they could predict winter weather. Or maybe it was learning that they overwinter as a caterpillar that got me interested. I'm not really sure. I do know that I'm not the only one who notices them. I often run into people who know a little about the woolly bear folklore, but not necessarily the specifics or to which caterpillar the folklore refers. In fact, many people think that any brown or black caterpillar is the woolly bear of legend, but that's not the case. Only the brown and black striped ones are said to predict the weather. They are the caterpillar of



Woolly Bear
Photo by *Chris DeCesare*

the Isabella tiger moth.

The Isabella tiger moth caterpillar has 13 bands of hair circling its body from head to tail. Each end segment is black with a brown segment in the middle. Legend states that the wider the brown bands, the milder winter will be. This folklore has been around 'forever', but became more commonplace in 1948 when an entomologist from the American Museum of Natural History, Dr. Howard Curran, collected a dozen or so woolly bears at Bear Mountain State Park to predict the winter weather that year. He told a friend at the newspaper his prediction and the news spread. He continued this practice for a number of years, trying to correlate science with folklore. It didn't really hold up.

In the end, it seems that science has shown that the width of the middle band is related more to the

age of the caterpillar, which gets a wider brown band as it grows and molts, than a weather predictor. As such, some scientists have said that it may be a result of how mild the previous spring was. Since woolly bears overwinter as caterpillars, a mild spring allows them to come out of hibernation sooner to resume eating and pupating. Thus, they get a head start on growth and starting the next generation of Isabella tiger moths.

Each fall, I think to myself that I would like to collect some woolly bears and do my own citizen science just for the fun of it. It would be interesting to measure caterpillars and look at the weather patterns and see what I could learn. I think it could be a fun project for kids to make predictions to see what happens. Anyone want to try?

According to the Farmer's Almanac, this coming winter is supposed to be cold and snowy in the Northeast. That means the woolly bear's brown bands should be small. Spring was cold and wet, but our summer weather extended into fall. Science says that the brown bands should be wide. Hmm... what do the caterpillars show?

The Christmas Bird Count

By *Pam Peters and Sandy Bright*

Audubon's annual Christmas Bird Count, begun in 1900, is the oldest and one of the largest citizen science projects in the Western Hemisphere. This will be our local chapter's 57th year of participating in the national count, and three areas will be covered on different days during the three-week count period (see page 5 for locations and dates). There are two ways to participate in the CBC: either out in the field (walking and/or driving) or watching feeders at a stationary location (e.g. from the comfort of your own home).

Continued on page 5

If you would like to get out in the field, please contact the appropriate coordinator for that count at least a week in advance to see if there is a need for additional counters. New feederwatch participants should contact the coordinator at least two days in advance to receive protocols for recording birds. People who have participated in recent years will be contacted.

If you would like to know if you live in one of the count circles to be a feeder watcher, go to <https://gis.audubon.org/christmasbirdcount/>, click on the link, then zoom into our area of New York State.

For more information about Christmas Bird Counts, go to <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count>

Oneonta CBC

December 14, 2025

Compiler Sandy Bright

email brightsh@hartwick.edu

Phone 607-287-4465

Fort Plain CBC

December 27, 2025

Compiler Charlie Scheim

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Phone 607-434-4880

Delaware County CBC

January 4, 2026

Compiler Pam Peters

email ovenbirdp@gmail.com

Phone 607-829-6545



Purple Finch
Photo by Landa Palmer

Holiday Gift Ideas

By Jane Bachman

Get a jump on the holidays with these items available from DOAS!

DOAS promotes the use of bird-friendly coffee to protect critical habitat for neotropical 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 (it's also delicious!). For further details on the variety of coffee available, visit www.doas.us/bird-friendly-coffee

Our current prices reflect recent increases at Birds & Beans: a 12 oz. bag (ground or whole bean) of Decaf Baltimore Oriole is \$16; a 12 oz. bag of all other blends is \$15. A two pound bag of Decaf (ground or whole bean) is \$33; a two pound bag of all other blends is \$30.

In addition, DOAS mugs and Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch baseball caps are for sale, along with signed copies of *The Eagle Guy* by Scott Van Arsdale, and



FeatherFriendly Window Collision Tape to protect birds from hitting windows. You can order any of these by contacting Jane Bachman (607-431-9509 or jbachwim60@gmail.com). Pick up and payment may be arranged from her front porch in Oneonta.

September-October 2025 Bird Sightings

By **Sandy Bright**

Early fall brought a lively mix of migration movement, unusual behaviors, and late nest success. This period began with a surprise of my own: on a golden September morning near Wilber Lake, a large black bird lifted from the roadside. As it banked, sunlight flashed across silver wingtips—a striking view of a Black Vulture against blue sky.

In mid-September, feeders across the area were bustling. On September 15th, Barb Palmer still hosted a couple of determined hummingbirds lingering among her last flowers, as well as a Brown Thrasher and an Eastern Towhee. Dark-eyed Juncos were venturing into the open after retreating from their woodland breeding grounds. That day also brought some early arrivals: American Tree Sparrows, a species that typically signals the shift toward colder weather, were found in Delhi by Eileen Kline and at the Cannonsville Reservoir by Lance Verderame. Farther west in Andes, Ruth Pederesen was regularly seeing Palm Warblers.

Wet weather brought renewed activity elsewhere. On September 24th, Prudence Danforth watched as a goldfinch and junco appeared at a feeder she'd only just reinstalled. A



Mallard stretching in high winds
Photo by Rick Bunting

Northern Flicker foraged energetically across her lawn, followed soon after by a bold Red-breasted Nuthatch that, for reasons known only to itself, inspected her hummingbird feeder and then began picking at her brick patio.

Rick Bunting watched a solitary Canada Goose for more than an hour as it called plaintively for companionship, its cries echoing off the surrounding hills. During other outings he photographed two young Double-crested Cormorants resting on a log, a Red-tailed Hawk striking a pose against a blue-sky backdrop, and a Mallard bracing itself mid-stretch against 20 mph winds.

New success stories emerged too. In late September, Barb Palmer was thrilled to see her local cardinals return — this time with young in tow. Their earlier nesting had failed, but a late-season courtship had paid off.

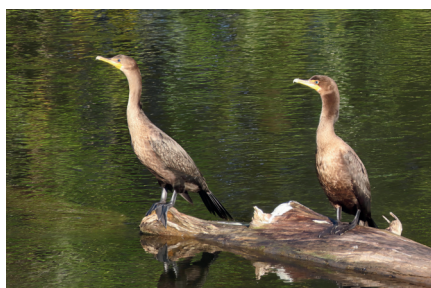
Migration was well underway: a Greater Yellowlegs at the Unadilla Boat Launch and a Vesper Sparrow along River Road in Sidney (Rod Spangle), two Yellow-throated Vireos at The Upland Center (Christopher Montero). Hiking the new Oneonta Creek Trail, Charlie and I encountered Golden-crowned Kinglets, Winter Wrens, and others where meadow meets woods. On October 8th the

piercing whistles of a Broad-winged Hawk split the air near Laurens.

The Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch provided its own treasure trove: Common Nighthawk, Cape May Warbler, Swainson's Thrush, Lincoln Sparrow, and many other migrants — warblers, vireos, finches, woodpeckers, and more. Six Eastern Bluebirds perched together in a dead spruce. One brazen Eastern Phoebe perched on the spotting scope next to the counter, Peter Fauth. Nancy New had a fabulous view of a Peregrine Falcon as it swooped by at eye level. A Sharp-shinned Hawk migrated through carrying food. During the Open House, visitors observed a murmuration of starlings, probably a couple thousand birds, that initially mimicked a tornado, bled into a smoke-like appearance, then separated into three groups swirling about.

In mid-October, a raucous flock of Red-winged Blackbirds (possibly with others in the mix) gathered in trees beside the Silas Lane Greenway wetland, audible from hundreds of yards away despite highway traffic noise. An Eastern Meadowlark, always a welcome sight, appeared in Prudence Danforth's meadow. A Black-capped Chickadee made daily visits for a while, hanging upside down as it probed the tiny pockets holding the ribs of our deck umbrella. What it was finding remains unknown — but like the rest of nature, it was busy gathering what it could before the cold sets in.

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



Young Double-Crested Cormorants
Photo by Rick Bunting



*Left, Monarch Butterfly
Photo by Jane Bachman*



*Right, Educational Barred Owl from
Falcon Heart Rescue
Photo by Landa Palmer*

Upcoming Activities

November

November 1 - **Bird Seed Pickup**, 9 a.m. to a.m. at VP Supply Corp, 69 Country Club Road, Oneonta

November 18 - **DOAS Board Meeting**: 6:30 p.m.

November 21- **DOAS Public Program: "Paved Paradise: Addressing the Ecological Impacts of America's Road System"** with environmental journalist Ben Goldfarb. Via Zoom at 7:30 p.m.; registration required at www.doas.us (see article, page 1)

December

December 2 - **DOAS Board Meeting**: 6:30 p.m.

December 14- **Oneonta Christmas Bird Count (CBC)**. Contact Sandy Bright at brights@hartwick.edu or phone 607-287-4465 (see article, page 5)

December 27 - **Fort Plain CBC**. Contact Charlie Scheim at scheimc@hartwick.edu or phone 607-434-4880 (see article, page 5)

January

January 4 - **Delaware County CBC**. Contact Pam Peters at ovenbirdp@gmail.com or phone 607-829-6545 (see article, page 5)

January 16- **DOAS Public Program: "Stories from Greater Yellowstone: A Deep Dive into the Heart of the Rockies and How to Defend this Threatened Wilderness"** with SUNY Oneonta grad Kyle Dudgeon. Via Zoom at 7:30 p.m.; registration required at www.doas.us (see article, page 1)

January 18 - **Annual Waterfowl Count**

January 20 - **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/>.

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 at www.doas.us



DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820

<https://doas.us/>

October DOAS Events

By Jane Bachman

DOAS hosted its annual Open House at the DOAS Sanctuary and Hawkwatch on Saturday, October 4. The day seemed more like summer than October, with sunny, clear skies, and temperatures in the 70s. There was a good turnout, lots of snacks on offer, a trail walk and a great presentation by Falcon Heart Rescue, featuring educational Common Ravens, a Barred Owl, a Screech Owl, and a Red-tailed Hawk. In addition, visitors had the opportunity to make Acopian Bird Savers to prevent bird-window collisions, and to work on making a bird for the *Bird Collisions in the Anthropocene*

art project, with the help of members of the Binghamton University Audubon Campus Chapter.

Our annual Charter Dinner on October 17, at the Sixth Ward Athletic Club's banquet room (a new venue for us), was a great success, with good company and good food. Julie Brown, Director of the Hawk Migration Association, was the featured speaker, and she presented fascinating information about hawkwatches around the country and beyond, along with raptor trends resulting from the data collected. Many thanks to Kathryn Davino, who spearheaded the event!

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.