



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Fall Programming

By *Becky Gretton*

This is our last newsletter for a couple of months. Publication will resume in September.

We do want to give you something to look forward to--so mark your calendar for our September 18 program! Local photographer and



Wood Duck
Photo by Rick Bunting

nature lover Rick Bunting will share his amazing gifts with us at the Elm Park Church in Oneonta and via Zoom. Rick has been a favorite for many years and never disappoints. Look for more about Rick's upcoming program in the September Belted Kingfisher.

Franklin Property Bird Walk

By *Pam Peters*

A chilly 40 degree morning did not deter the nine hearty birders who ventured out to our property on May 7. Tree Swallows and Bluebirds were busy defending their nest boxes in the open field, and higher up in the woods, we were fortunate to watch a pair of Blue-headed Vireos weaving a nest in a beech sapling. Yellow-rumped Warblers offered their soft trills while chasing each other through the trees and snapping up insects. The high, squeaky song of the Black and White Warbler followed us along the trail, though it was very hard to spot. Both Black-throated Green and Black-throated Blue Warblers were singing, and we had some great looks at the Black-throated Green's brilliant plumage. A Winter Wren treated us to its cascading song, with the Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak



Hermit Thrush
Photo by Shirley Salton

singing nearby. We had a close-up with the normally elusive Hermit Thrush and heard its call, but it never gave its beautiful song. Ovenbirds were everywhere -- a good species for first-timer birders to learn. By morning's end we had observed 38 species (plus two unidentified), and best of all - no black flies!



Tree Swallows
Photo by Shirley Salton

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Conservation and Legislation

By Andy Mason

Albany Update— Things are still in flux in Albany concerning environmental issues, and everything else for that matter. There are conflicting reports on whether there is agreement on a state budget, but it appears there may be significant setbacks to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and to the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. So there is still time to contact Governor Kathy Hochul and local state legislators to oppose these threats to the state's review law and to targets for reducing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Beyond these two landmark laws, there are other bills—good and bad—that are before the legislature:

- The SUNNY (Plug-In Solar) Act (A.9111C) would allow for use of small portable solar generation devices to be plugged into outlets in homes and apartments. These devices are a fraction of the price of large rooftop solar systems, and while not generating as much power as bigger arrays, can lower a home's energy costs at a time when electricity rates are on the rise. Already in widespread use in Canada, Germany and other countries, plug-in solar uses existing home outlets with no complicated installation.
- The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (A.1749A/S.1464A), a bill that nearly made it over the finish line last year, would shift the

financial burden of managing packaging waste from taxpayers to its producers, while reducing the amount of packaging and plastic waste produced in New York State by 30%. We all know the toll plastic waste takes on birds and other wildlife, as well as impacts on human health. The packaging industry is fighting tooth and nail against taking responsibility for what they create. We need to fight back.

- Clean Fuel Standard (A.472A/S.1343B)—this bill, which has a laudable goal of reducing carbon from on road fuels, is lacking in a number of respects including depending on other programs and rules that are not in effect and may not come to pass in the near future. In addition, the bill does not establish interim benchmarks, caps, or combustion phase-out timelines. A clean fuel standard is needed but this version is fatally flawed.

What you can do—Contact your state legislators to express your views on this and other legislation. There are more worthwhile measures pending this session—a good source for information is Environmental Advocates, <https://www.eany.org/>. This year's session is scheduled to end June 10, so let your voice be heard.

Information on finding and contacting your elected officials can be found at <https://doas.us/how-to-contact-your-elected-officials/>

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

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

Woodcock Walk at Otsego Land Trust

By *Sandy Bright*

Warnings of strong winds and storms caused a one-day delay, but Friday April 17th brought comfortable temperatures, clear skies, and a gentle breeze, making for perfect conditions for the ten Woodcock Walk participants hoping for a good woodcock show.

While we waited, there were several opening acts: vocal flyovers by Wood Ducks and Canada Geese, several short sets by Belted Kingfisher, Wild Turkey, Barred Owl, Robins and Song Sparrows, and a long singing engagement by a Brown Thrasher that continued well after most others had settled for the evening. The sharp retort of a tail smacking on water drew our attention to a short

drama being played out by two beavers. Justin Williams, our host from Otsego Land Trust, theorized that one male was warning another away from its territory.

The Woodcock show began slowly with a few faint “peents” as a teaser, followed by a long silence. Finally, some louder peents followed by twittering announced a male spiraling into the air, pulses of twittering as he circled overhead, and twitters and chirps as he returned to earth and resumed his peenting. This act was repeated many times by at least two individuals.

It seemed there were fewer woodcocks this year, but that didn't detract from the experience, as much



*American Woodcock, Bryant Park NYC
Photo by Vincent Iadevaia
Audubon Photography Awards*

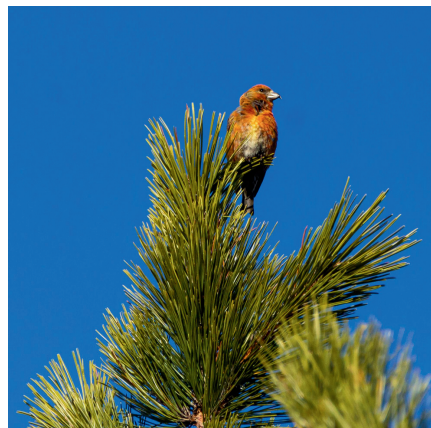
of the action was quite near the audience. It was tantalizing to hear those “peents” so very close that you believed the bird was right in front of you, but in such poor light it couldn't be seen. Except just once, and by only one participant: at the end of one flight display, the woodcock descended and landed on the path, to the surprise and delight of Gerianne Carillo standing ten feet away!

DOAS Big Day

By *Charlie Scheim*

The DOAS Big Day was held on Saturday May 16, 2026. Eleven teams totaling fifteen individuals ranged over our DOAS region, with reports coming in from throughout Otsego and Delaware counties. Some teams traveled over extensive areas by car, some walked our meadows, forests, and wetlands, and some folks simply observed their backyard and neighborhood birds.

Nineteen species were found by just a single team, including four species never before reported on a DOAS Big Day: Virginia Rail, Least Bittern, Red Crossbill, Olive-sided Flycatcher. This highlights the importance to our effort of having multiple teams scouting our area. Birding is to some degree a matter of being in the right



*Red Crossbill
Photo by Landa Palmer*

place at the right time. The more teams, the more likely it is that someone will be around when seldom-seen species show up!

In total, we found 124 different species. Among our many finds were three wrens (House, Winter, Carolina), six woodpecker-type species (Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied, Northern Flicker, Pileated, and Yellow-bellied

Sapsucker), six flycatchers (Least, Great-crested, Alder, Phoebe, Olive-sided and Kingbird), four swallows (Barn, Tree, Cliff, and Northern Rough-winged), seven sparrow species (Chipping, Swamp, Savannah, Song, Field, White-Crowned, White-throated) and twenty-four species of warblers (see the list!). Our warbler count is usually 21 or 22. The participants this year were particularly sharp-eyed (or sharp-eared) to get 24!

A complete listing of all this year's sightings will be posted on OSBirds and (eventually) on the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society website www.doas.us.

I thank all our participants for contributing to a fun and bird-filled day, fulfilling one of our DOAS goals: to connect people with nature!

April-May 2026 Bird Sightings

By *Sandy Bright*

Despite weather that was less than welcoming, short-distance migrants continued arriving in mid-April.

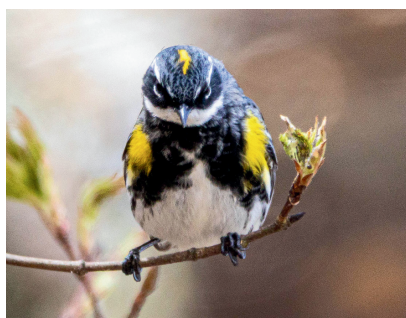
Rick Bunting photographed Wilson's Snipe (4/14). The 18th brought Common Yellowthroat (Suzanne

Summers) and Eastern Towhee (Gerianne Carillo). Black-throated Green and Yellow-rumped Warblers arrived April 22nd (Pam Peters), followed the next day by Rose-breasted Grosbeak (Suzanne Summers).

Mitch Light found a familiar species with a new name on the 24th: Northern Yellow Warbler, a migratory species recently split from the non-migratory Mangrove Yellow Warbler (which lives year-round in mangrove tropics) based on genetic differences. On the 25th, Suzanne Gaynor heard a singing Louisiana Waterthrush, Suzanne Summers reported Baltimore Oriole, and Pam Peters heard Ovenbirds on the 27th.

As April ended, Andy Mason spotted Red-eyed Vireos at the DOAS Sanctuary, while Pam Peters found Eastern Warbling Vireos—another newly adopted name distinguishing eastern and western populations that differ by genetics and song.

May opened with another wave of



Yellow-rumped Warbler
Photo by Landa Palmer



Baltimore Oriole
Photo by Rick Bunting

arrivals. On the 3rd, Jane Bachman encountered Gray Catbird and Fish Crow, with a bonus sighting of a mink, while Andy Mason spotted the season's first Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Chimney Swifts circled over Oneonta on the 4th. Several species appeared on the 5th: Great-crested Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager (Sarah Root), Wood Thrush (Barb Palmer and Becky Gretton), Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlark (Becky Gretton), Least Flycatcher, Nashville and Chestnut-sided Warblers (Pam Peters). I added Magnolia Warbler and American Redstart to that day's list. Near Milford, Mitch Light reported Canada Warbler (5/6) and heard the Alder Flycatcher's familiar "Free Beer" song (5/8).

The Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Trail at Silas Lane continues to be a hotspot for migrants. Mitch Light found Spotted Sandpiper, Northern Parula, Cape May Warbler, Eastern Kingbird, and Veery (5/7). Jane Bachman added Northern Rough-winged Swallow (5/8), and Charlie Scheim identified a Black-throated Blue Warbler quietly foraging low in the canopy (5/10).

Bob Donnelly's early-morning

Mother's Day trip to Onderdunk Road yielded many birds, including American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren, Green Heron, and Blue-winged Warbler, and a pair of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers building a nest. Jane Bachman found Prairie Warbler in Morris (5/11).

While many birds are just arriving, others are already immersed in nesting season. Rick Bunting reported on active nests of White-breasted Nuthatches and Eastern Bluebirds, and photographed Canada Goose goslings (one riding on a parent's back), Wood Duck ducklings, Bald Eagle eaglets, and Great Blue Heron chicks.

Evening Grosbeaks, unlike true migrants, are irruptive wanderers, and this has been an excellent year to see them locally. Reports began in early November and continued at least through mid-May as I write this article. Both Barb Palmer and Kathryn Davino commented on the unusual pleasure of hosting Evening Grosbeaks and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at their feeders simultaneously.

Some species breed in New York State but remain uncommon in our



Canada Goose and Gosling
Photo by Rick Bunting

Continued from page 4

local area. Two such species, one looking like a miniature version of the other, are Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, reported by Suzanne Summers, and Northern Mockingbird, spotted by Ruth Pedersen. Others are passing through on their way north; Rick Bunting photographed Solitary Sandpipers during their stopover in Unadilla.

The final sighting of the period, by Tom Salo, was a flock of 30 Brant flying over the river near the DOAS Sanctuary. These hardy travelers were still more than 1,500 miles from their breeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic—a striking testament to the endurance and scale of avian migration.

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

Birding: YES YOU CAN!

By Director Nancy New

Too frequently we get caught up in responsibilities and commitments in life and feel we don't have time, desire, or energy to "go birding." However, you can be a birder without going on a specific trip. Whenever you are outside (or inside with windows open) you can be a birder. Just listen and watch while walking to the mailbox, working in the yard, or walking with friends. The birds are all around, no matter your location. Birds can tease our sense of curiosity if we let them, and can encourage us to expand our understanding about what is all around us. Why would someone want to do this? This slight change in perspective could add to your quality of life, perhaps reducing stress, and adding refreshing focus on what is right outside your door.

If we listen and look, birds and their songs can bring us joy. Many a time when faced with large to-do lists (especially weeding the garden), I'd start to trudge through the tasks. Then I'd realize a Baltimore Oriole or Cardinal was singing nearby, and I'd soon forget my drudgery while listening to a beautiful concert drifting over me. I'd find energy and even

joy in performing the formerly dreary tasks.

Studies repeatedly show that time spent with nature benefits our mental and physical well-being. John Burroughs, famed naturalist writer, said, "I go to nature to be soothed and healed." I've been blessed throughout my life by birds, learning about their identities, songs and sounds, habitats and behavior. My life is deeply enriched and more fulfilling and I feel connected to my surroundings, all of which add soothing and healing to my life.

My friends used to roll their eyes when walking with me during which time I was regularly pointing out birds seen and heard. Now, they call to tell me about the birds they've experienced, or to ask questions. They've made the connection that birds can bring joy and spark awareness of and care for our surroundings. Perhaps they recognize long-term value in a world that is bird-healthy. They may even realize they want to leave more than financial assets to future generations, such as a legacy of a world with healthy natural assets as well.



*White-breasted Nuthatches (above) and Rose-breasted Grosbeak (below)
Photos by Rick Bunting*



So, how do you start "birding"? Make a choice to get outside and look and listen, even when doing daily activities. Be inquisitive. Explore on your own until you find you have questions that need answers: What is that bird singing nearby? What was that flash of brilliant red/orange/ yellow/ blue that just zipped by? What are those busy little birds flitting around the bushes? "Merlin", developed by The Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, is a free bird guide application for your phone that can help answer those questions and lots more. Many of you may already know someone who is an experienced birder, and you can check with them. Once you start including birds in your daily activities you may find you DO want to go on a specific birding trip. DOAS welcomes all to our wide range of programs and field trips. Just check our webpage (doas.us) and join the fun!

Earth Festival

By Co-president Andy Mason

For over a decade now, DOAS has been a major participant in the local Earth Festival, held around the anniversary of the first Earth Day in 1970. The event has been organized by the Otsego County Conservation Association and this year moved to a new location on a new date, in SUNY Oneonta's Chase Gymnasium on May 9.

Susan O'Handley has spearheaded our involvement, as well as a significant part of planning the festival itself. We and all of the local environmental community owe her a debt of gratitude for her efforts.

I was not able to attend this year's Earth Festival, but from all reports it was a good one. Board member Nancy New was a welcome presence at the DOAS table, engaging attendees with her cheerful and outgoing persona.

Our brewed bird-friendly coffee was a big hit at the festival. Nancy New noted that, "Near the end of the day a woman came by to buy some bagged coffee and mentioned she had been hearing all day about how GOOD the coffee was from the many who bought it by the cup. Other people returned after buying their cup's worth to buy one or more bags. Still others said they couldn't function without their DOAS Bird-Friendly Coffee." Nancy



also delivered a concise education to those who were unaware of the benefits of the shade-grown coffee to birds. Jane Bachman organizes our coffee orders, so kudos to her for an effort that helps avian life in the tropics and satisfies our coffee lovers too.

Jane is in charge of our other sales items too, and the Earth Festival resulted in purchases of hats, mugs, a vintage sweatshirt and other items that help fund our conservation and education programs. Becky Gretton was our cashier, keeping things organized and engaging with many long-time local participants of Earth Festival. Pam Lea assisted in every activity of the day with calm and steady dependability.

Among our educational displays was information and an opportunity to make Acopian Bird Savers to

prevent bird-window collisions. Prudence Danforth did a good job helping Susan O'Handley, who manages this project, as well as elsewhere throughout the day.

Another big draw at the DOAS table is a video display of our work to document the presence of Golden Eagles wintering in the region. Tom Salo led this project, which involved trail cameras and road-killed deer. Tom was on site to answer questions about the project and the video he produced. There's nothing like loudly vocalizing ravens and eagles actively feeding to get people's attention. Youngsters in particular are fascinated by the action.

I also want to note the help of Amanda Bryla at the festival. Amanda is a Hartwick College student who assisted at the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch last fall and has been helping DOAS this spring on several projects. She is an enthusiastic and welcome infusion of youth!

So thanks to all for a terrific event—I'm sorry I missed it. Final observations from DOAS participants noted that by the time the event closed up all were running low on energy, but grateful for a satisfying day of public interaction, and appreciation for such a superb team of Board Members!!! Amen!

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.

Pine Lake Walk *By Jane Bachman*

It was already warm when co-leaders Suzanne Gaynor and Jane Bachman met with six participants at 8 a.m. at Pine Lake on May 20--quite a difference (close to 40 degrees worth) from the scouting trip five days earlier. Birds seemed a bit less plentiful (perhaps due to the temperature) but we still saw and heard a total of 36 species, spread across the varied habitats at Pine Lake. Warblers--Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided, Pine, American Redstart, and Vireos--both Red-eyed and Warbling-- were prominent. We got good looks at a Red-eyed Vireo and Chestnut-sided Warblers as they picked silk off a caterpillar nest, for use in their own nests. Common Merganser and Canada Geese were the only waterbirds we saw, and a Kestrel the only raptor. A fisherman pointed out a good-sized snapping turtle submerged in the lake. On our way back to the parking lot we were very happy to hear a Northern Waterthrush and Black-billed Cuckoo, and to see and hear a brilliant Baltimore Oriole.



Chestnut-sided Warbler
Photo by Shirley Salton

Upcoming Activities

Please note that all DOAS Bird Walks are dog-free, aside from service dogs

June

June 7 - **West Branch Preserve Bird Walk:** 8 a.m. Charlie Scheim and Sandy Bright will lead a bird walk at the West Branch Preserve, located in the Town of Hamden, about 10 miles southeast of Delhi. Meet at the preserve entrance and parking area, on NY Route 10, about 0.9 miles west of the intersection with County Route 26. The parking area is adjacent to the Watershed Agricultural Council building at 33195 NY-10. The walk will be on unpaved and at times uneven paths through the fields and forests of the Preserve and will likely last about 1.5 hours. There will be a certain amount of moderate uphill and downhill walking. There are no restrooms at the preserve and no resting benches along the path. For more information, see the website: https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/eny-west-branch-nature-preserve/?en_txn1=bl.ch_ny.eg.x.g For any questions or last minute weather concerns, contact Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880.

June 13 - **Uplands Center Bird Walk:** 8 a.m. 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 in Walton, NY (2641 Dunk Hill Road). 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 downhills, 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. You may call Charlie Scheim at 607-434-4880 for more information or for any last minute weather concerns.

DOAS PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

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



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Return Service Requested

Board of Directors Election

By Prudence Danforth

The DOAS Nominating Committee (Kathryn Davino, Katie Boardman, Prudence Danforth, and Melody Gibson), presented the following slate for the Board of Directors at the May 2026 meeting. All were approved:

- Jane Bachman
- Becky Gretton
- Andy Mason
- Nancy New

- Charlie Scheim
- Tom Salo
- Zoë Vandermeulen

In addition, Pat Norton-White was appointed to fill the remaining term of Landa Palmer, who resigned earlier this year due to personal reasons. We thank all of our Board of Directors for their generosity and time as they volunteer to keep our organization thriving!

Is Your Membership Current?

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

DOAS Membership

Cost is \$25 annually or \$35 for two years; family memberships \$30 annually or \$40 for two years. Memberships can 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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