



THE BELTED KINGFISHER

DELAWARE-OTSEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY, INC.

Coming Activities

October

Oct 8 — Sanctuary Open House

Oct 15 — Montezuma Field Trip

Oct 18 — DOAS Board Meeting

Oct 21 — Charter Dinner

Oct 22 — Hike at DOAS Sanctuary

November

Nov 18 — DOAS Program

December

Dec 6 — DOAS Board Meeting

Dec 17 — DOAS Christmas Count

January

Jan 17 — DOAS Board Meeting

Jan 21 — Annual Eagle Trip

More information on page 7

**All DOAS programs
are free and open
to the public**

The Hum in the Hummingbird

Recently, a *New York Times* article addressed the findings of Christopher Clark of Yale University who identified for the first time, the exact source of the hummingbird's high pitched fluttering sound. Clark published his findings in the *Journal of Science* in September of this year.

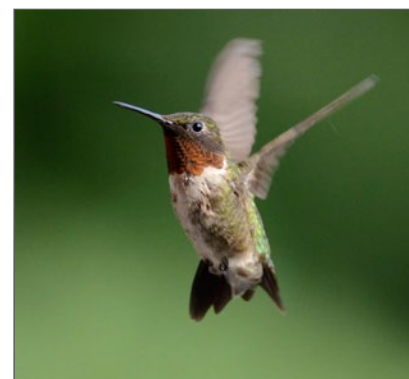
Clark and his colleagues found that during the courtship ritual, the male hummingbird would climb into the air 5 to 40 meters and dive bomb down past a female. The male would swiftly spread and close his tail feathers making that fluttering sound at the lowest point of his dive. The courtship sound is produced by the air flowing past the tail feathers making them flutter.

The research team, by collecting a number of feathers from the bee hummingbirds, through specialized instruments were able to study and record the sounds produced by the fluttering feathers interacting. They compared the ability of one feather to create another feather to flutter, as a tuning fork can cause another tuning fork in close proximity to vibrate.

Clark concluded that each species has a signature sound, produced by such factors as shape, size, mass and stiffness of the hummingbird's feathers. "The sound that the hummingbird feathers make are more varied than I expected." Clark suggested that a male bird to be chosen by a female hummingbird would have to demonstrate fitness, using the high volume of the fluttering produced by its tail feathers.

William Zamer, Director of The National Science Foundation's Ecological and Evolutionary Physiology Program stated about Christopher Clark's findings, "it reveals aerodynamic, rather than vocalized signaling during courtship - it is significant that the diversity of feather structures in these hummingbirds may result from sexual selection.

Eleanor Moriarty



Hummingbird, by Dave Kiehm

DOAS Annual Charter Dinner, Reserve by October 16th – details page 6

President's Message

Take a Hike

We, on the DOAS board of directors, have been looking at a wide range of issues and activities that define our Audubon chapter. What always comes to the top during these discussions is the importance of environmental education and the conservation, maintenance and wise use of our natural resources. We think one very good way to accomplish this is for folks to get outdoors. That is the fun thing to do and when you get to know an area, learn about it's birds or it's plants, fish or paddle it's streams or just enjoy the scenery, you grow to care about it. We knew this and recent research has confirmed it.

DOAS has always sponsored field trips and we plan to offer even more of them. In September, we went to the Mountain Top Arboretum in Tannersville. Our fall Open House at the Sanctuary on Franklin Mt. will be October 8. This is a great way to learn about the raptors we count during their fall migration, to walk the trails of the sanctuary and enjoy this special property. This winter, there will be trips to see eagles, owls and other winter birds. Many more trips/walks are planned for the spring. DOAS board members usually lead these field trips but we would like to have more folks lead trips to their favorite places. If you would be interested in leading a trip or in having someone lead a trip with you, please contact field trip coordinator Bob Donnelly at rsdonn@yahoo.com or speak to any board member at a meeting or the next trip you attend.

Speaking of Favorite Places, I hope you have enjoyed reading this series of articles and perhaps gotten out to walk some place that may be new to you. Again, it is often a board member who writes but you have seen guest's articles about their favorite places in recent issues. We invite you to write a paragraph or two about your favorite place. You can email it to the *Kingfisher* editor at editor@doas.us.

So, go take a hike and better yet, take someone with you and enjoy being outdoors.

Barbara Marsala



by Dave Kiehm

THE DELAWARE - OTSEGO

AUDUBON SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1968

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To contribute notes or articles for *The Belted Kingfisher* please send to "Kingfisher Editor" at the above address, or email:

editor@doas.us

Conservation and Legislation

Local elections—they will make a difference this year—

In November, we will be voting to elect local government representatives—town, village and county board members, supervisors, mayors, and others. Normally these officials don't play a big role in environmental decisions and policies; these are largely set at the state and national levels. However, the actions of our local leaders may be critical in determining whether or not we see hydrofracked gas drilling in the next few months and years.

With release of the latest draft of regulations (see below) it is apparent that Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Joe Martens have decided the state will go ahead with this drilling, despite opposition from the citizens of central NY and elsewhere. However, there has been action in some municipalities to ban drilling within their borders. Locally, the Otsego Co. towns of Middlefield, Otsego and Springfield have done so, as has the City of Oneonta. Gas companies and lessees are challenging these laws, and the outcome is not certain, but there is a good chance the bans will stand.

Other towns are considering similar actions, and some are awaiting legal determinations. These decisions will be made by town and county boards and other local officials, so their views on hydrofracking should be a major issue in the upcoming elections. A number of candidates—including political newcomers—have made opposition to fracking the centerpiece of their campaigns. This is grassroots action at its best—citizens stepping forward to lead when those in charge are not doing so. The makeup of your town or county board in the next couple of years may well determine whether or not you have drilling in your neighborhood.

What you can do—Learn the positions of the candidates in your town and county elections. Many delayed taking a stance until the DEC regulations appeared—they can no longer use that excuse. Ask if they will support a ban on drilling in your town. If there is an anti-drilling candidate, give them your support as well as your vote—talk to your friends and neighbors. Local elections often turn on just a handful of votes. Letters to the editor are particularly effective in local elections. Remember—this is where you live, and your voice matters when your neighborhood is threatened.

Comment period for hydrofracking regulations—As noted above, the draft regulations for horizontal hydrofracked gas

drilling are now complete, and the NYS DEC has opened a 90-day comment period through Dec. 12. A preliminary discussion of the document appeared in last month's *Kingfisher*, and DOAS will be preparing comments on behalf of our organization. These will follow our existing position statement on hydrofracking, which calls for a ban on the practice. When these are complete, they will be posted on the DOAS web site (www.doas.us), and can be used for reference. Our position statement is also there.

However, it is critically important that citizens speak out during the comment period, and ideally attend the yet-to-be-announced public hearings. **Only a strong and continued show of opposition can halt or limit this dangerous activity.**

What you can do—Take this opportunity to review at least the executive summary of the draft regulations (a link to all the documents is at www.dec.ny.gov). If you would like to receive notification when the DOAS comments are available, please contact me at AndyMason@earthling.net, (607) 652-2162.

Andy Mason

Book Corner

J.J. Audubon's *Birds of America* World's Most Expensive Printed Book

A new record for the world's most expensive printed book was set late in 2010. A four-volume copy of John James Audubon's elephantine *Birds of America* was bought for \$11.6 million at auction at Sotheby's in London. The price went far beyond the expectations of \$6 million to \$9 million, and exceeded the \$8.8 million paid a decade ago for another copy of the work. (Only 119 copies still exist, so move quickly if you really want a set!)

Audubon (1785-1851) the self-taught ornithologist, naturalist, and painter struggled for almost a dozen years creating what we now view as a masterpiece.

Michael Tollemache, a London art dealer, bird enthusiast, and the book's new owner, remarked, "I think it's priceless, don't you?"

—From the *Birding Community E-bulletin*

www.refugenet.org/birding/birding5.html

*Favorite Places***Birding on Onderdunk Road**

All too often, finding wetland birds involves getting into a boat or slogging through wetlands. I know of a great place not far away where these birds can be found without having to get off the paved road.

Onderdunk Road is located in Schoharie County. To get there go east on US 20 from Sharon Springs around four miles. At the hamlet of Sharon, turn north at the blinking light onto Argusville Rd. In less than one mile, stay left onto Sharon Hill Rd. In another mile, there is a four way intersection. Onderdunk Rd is on the right, and White Rd is straight ahead. If one turns right, within one half mile, a wonderful large open wetland appears right next to the road on the left, American Bittern are easy to find near the road in spring, along with Virginia Rails. Great Blue and Green Herons are regularly seen there also, along with flights of Mallards and Wood Ducks. Northern Harriers nest in the fields across the road and are often flying over the wetland. There are also numerous flycatchers, swallows, and other water-loving species in the area. Snipe are common in the area.

Another option is to go straight at the Onderdunk Rd intersection onto White Rd. Within a short distance, the wetland is right next to the road and American Bitterns sometimes will come out onto the road.

Further down Onderdunk Rd past the wetlands are some abandoned fields with new woody plants. Towhees, Brown Thrashers and Blue-winged Warblers are relatively easy to find there.

The best time to go there is late April through late June, especially early morning or toward dusk. The noise from the blackbirds and geese can be almost deafening.

Bob Donnelly



Virginia Rail, by Dave Kiehm

Under the Feeder

Summer '11 saw the return of birds that have been scarce lately, like redwings and grackles. These, as "rice birds", have been slaughtered down south in recent winters, where they flock together with other blackbirds in large swarms. We were glad to see the grackles again, with their up-front personality. What luxuriant shiny black plumage forming a backdrop for that bright button eye! And that fine classic stride! Grackles are high steppers, compared to robins who are skippers (we used to skip as kids when imitating cowboys on horses). That crisp grackle walk was inherited from dinosaurs. (You may have heard that Archaeopteryx has been chased from its perch as bird ancestor by some Chinese fossil.) Anyway, just as, in walking our arms swing opposite to our legs for balance, birds' heads bob to balance their steps. And so grackles, and some peeps, look like wind-up toys popping along, 'neck connected to the leg bone'. All of this is more dignified in the slower crows.

In the mating season the cock grackle makes a show. Spying a hen bird, he races to confront her, hunches his shoulders, spreading its feathers, and bows (as do cowbirds and redwings -- a family trait), 'at your service'. She turns and runs off in a different

direction. He races after her, catching up to block her path again. Again she turns away, coy creature, but he isn't exhausted at all, confronting her again. And again. Then she flies off, followed by the insistent blade. They don't mate where they eat. Grackles occasionally eat some of the oil seeds that are spilled from the feeder by grosbeaks and finches, who stand in their food. A week or so later we see a result in half a pale blue, streaked egg shell lying on the blacktop under the shade tree.

In the autumn they used to pass through in groups of ten to twenty or more. One year I had strewn some mothballs in my gardens, attempting to discourage voles. The grackles found them and began making what looked like a ball game. One would pick up a mothball and run from others who tried to get it away for themselves. Back and forth over the lawn -- what a sight! Catching a few moments alone, a grackle would raise a wing and rub the mothball around under it. That was a clue. Avian ecologist Ann Clark tells me they will pick leaves from certain plants, for example in the mint family, and rub them over and into their feathers to discourage vermin. Clearly they can smell, and think. Long live grackles!

Stan Salthe

Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch and Fall 2011 Open House

The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society will hold its annual Open House on Saturday, October 8, 2011 from 10 AM to 2 PM, at the DOAS Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain near Oneonta. Hawk watching, a trail walk and a hawk identification workshop for beginners are scheduled. Refreshments will be available at the barn.

The DOAS Sanctuary is the home of the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch - one of the best locations in the Northeast for fall migrations of Red-tailed Hawks and Golden Eagles. Volunteer counters record thousands of raptors each season. This fall they have already recorded large numbers of Bald Eagles passing the site. Some years counters record over 200 Golden Eagles, a late season bird, moving south past the lookout. October is noted for species diversity when the migrations of early and late raptors overlap. The hawkwatch started its 23rd year of counting raptors on August 21. More information can be found at:

www.doas.us/franklinmt.htm

One of the long time Franklin Mountain hawk watchers will conduct a 45 minute beginner's workshop called "Identifying Flying Hawks" at 10:30 AM by the barn. This will include the basics of hawk identification, focusing on the species typically seen in the area. The ID workshop can be complimented by the immediate use of the newly acquired skills at the hawkwatch. The watch will be staffed through the day. The trail walk will start at 11:30 AM.

For more information contact:

Tom Salo 607-965-8232, tomsalo@localnet.com or John Davis at 607-547-9688, davi7js4@hughes.net

To find the DOAS Sanctuary, travel south on Oneonta's Main Street to Route 28 and go straight at the light. After crossing Route 28 turn immediately left at the T onto Southside Drive. Turn right on Swart Hollow Road (.8 mile). Go 1.5 mile and take a sharp right on Grange Hall Road. After .2 mile take a sharp left into the driveway or park nearby on Grange Hall Road.

All are welcome.

Hawkwatch News

Counting has now been underway for a month at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, and the early season has been productive. As of the third week of September, over 1600 raptors had been spotted, with 1300 of these being Broad-winged Hawks. A number of triple-digit days for these flocking migrants had been recorded during their mid-September peak.

Other good counts included 75 Bald Eagles, 44 Osprey, and 138 Sharp-shinned Hawks.

The first half of October provides the greatest diversity of the season. On a good day a dozen or more species can be seen, as the later season species join the birds already moving. We may even get the season's first Golden Eagle.

Best flights are on north or northwest winds, often the day or two following passage of a cold front. Counters will be present each day except when rain grounds the hawks.

Visitors, spotters and counters are always welcome at the hawkwatch. For more information, contact Andy Mason, (607) 652-2162, AndyMason@earthling.net, or Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232, tomsalo@localnet.com

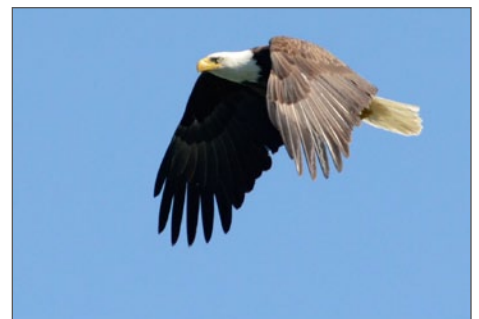
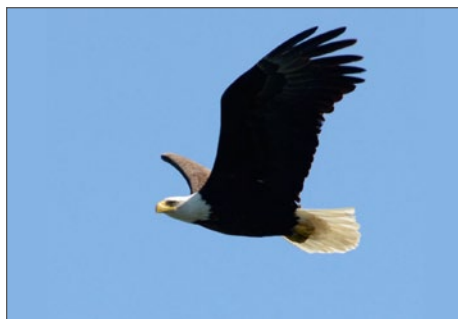
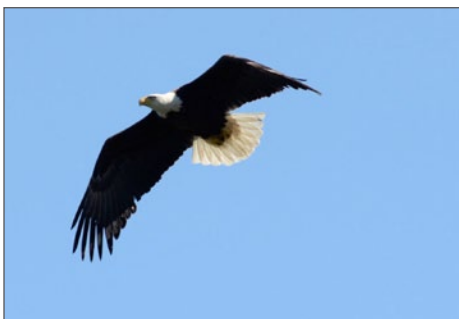
Forecasts of anticipated good flights at the hawkwatch are sent out by email a day or two in advance. To receive these alerts, visit www.pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/hawkcast/ to sign up. Daily tallies from Franklin Mt. are also available by email—contact Andy Mason as above.

More information and directions to the hawkwatch at the DOAS Sanctuary can be found at www.franklinmt.org

Membership Reminder

Please check your address on this newsletter for your membership expiration date. This date is shown by four numbers—the first two digits indicate the year and the second two digits indicate the month, i.e., '1110' is October 2011

Renewal information is found elsewhere in this issue—please renew and continue your support of DOAS and our programs.



Bald Eagles, by Dave Kiehm

DOAS Annual Charter Dinner

DOAS will hold its 43rd Annual Charter Dinner on Friday October 21, 2011 at the Brooks Roost Banquet room. We will gather at 6 PM for a social time before the buffet at 6:30 PM. The program for the evening begins at 7:30 PM and is free and open to the public.

New York State Audubon's Director of Conservation and Science, Mike Burger, will discuss the Great Lakes and the migration of land birds in his presentation entitled: *All that water and no place to land: Stopover ecology of migrant land birds near the Great Lakes.*

The Great Lakes contain the largest body of freshwater in the world and provide important migratory corridors and critical breeding, feeding and resting areas for numerous species of migratory and resident birds especially shorebirds, waterfowl and neotropical migrants.

A number of birds have been identified for priority concern and have committees and services actively involved with the species. This list is partial:

American Bittern, Least Bittern, Black Rail, Yellow Rail, Sedge Wren, Golden-Winged Warbler, Henslow's Sparrow, Bobolink, Dickcissel, and the Eastern Meadowlark.

As New York State Audubon's chief scientist, Mike Burger oversees the migrant bird use of stopover sites near Lake Ontario as well as Important Bird Areas, grassland bird conservation,

and forest stewardship. Mike has spent time, energy and knowledge in beginning coordinated efforts to increase collaboration across the Audubon network in the East, which is now known as the Atlantic Flyway Initiative and is providing a framework for Audubon from Maine to Florida and into Central and South America.

We are looking forward to the Annual Charter Dinner presentation by Mike Burger, a well respected and recognized scientist, along with great raffle prizes – a Dave Kiehm print, an Ann Kiehm pottery piece and a JulieWexler quilted tote –

plus a terrific buffet in Brooks's Bar-B-Q banquet room.



Least Bittern, by Dave Kiehm

DOAS Annual Charter Dinner Reservations

It promises to be both a fun filled and informative evening. The buffet cost is \$20 per person, and \$15 for children under twelve. Reservations must be made by October 16th by calling: 607-563-2924 or by mailing a check, **payable to DOAS**, to: Julia Gregory, PO Box 641, Unadilla, New York 13849-0641

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Amount enclosed: _____

Coming Activities

October

October 8 — Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch Open

House: 10 AM - 2 PM, at the DOAS Sanctuary on Franklin Mountain. At 10:30 AM, there will be a 45-minute beginners' workshop on *Identifying Flying Hawks*. A trail walk will leave the barn at 11:30 AM and will cover most of the sanctuary grounds. The hawk watch will be staffed through the day and refreshments will be served at the barn. For more information contact Tom Salo, (607) 965-8232.

October 15 — Field Trip to Montezuma National Wildlife

Refuge: This is a trip to observe migrating birds on their way south. The trip will leave the Dietz Street parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 7:30 AM. Carpooling is strongly advised and participants can be picked up en route to Cooperstown. Return to Oneonta will be late afternoon. The trip takes a few hours each way so participants should pack a lunch. We will picnic lunch at the beautiful Audubon Center near Montezuma. For further information contact Eleanor Moriarty at (607) 435-2054.

October 18 — DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Tom Salo.

October 21 — DOAS Charter Dinner and Program: featuring Mike Burger, Director of Conservation and Science, New York Audubon.
See details on page 6.

October 22--Hike at the DOAS Sanctuary with a stop at the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch--in conjunction with Main Street Oneonta's American Music Festival event. Meet at the Ford Ave. parking lot across from the YMCA in Oneonta at 9:30 a.m. For more information on the festival, visit:

www.mainstreetoneonta.com

November

November 18 — DOAS Program: Scott VanArsdale, Senior Wildlife Technician of NYSDEC Region 4 and well-known presenter, will share his photos and experience with the Bald and Golden Eagles of the Catskills.

December

December 6 — DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the home of Barbara Marsala.

December 17 — DOAS Christmas Count: Bob Miller, compiler. Further information in the next issue.

January

January 17 — DOAS Board Meeting: 7 PM at the Elm Park United Methodist Church.

January 21 — Annual Eagle Trip: Further information in the next issue.



Snow Geese at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, by Dave Kiehm

DOAS Membership Application

Membership in the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society includes 9 issues of our newsletter, *The Belted Kingfisher*. Cost is \$15 annually or \$25 for two years. Please make your check payable to "DOAS" and mail payment with this form to: DOAS Membership Chair, PO Box 544, Oneonta, NY 13820-0544.

Note: Please mail National Audubon renewals to address on renewal notice.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____



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August-September Bird Sightings

The arrival of two very destructive storms has changed the landscape of our local area. Hurricane Irene struck on August 20th leaving Delaware and Schoharie counties greatly damaged and altered. Tropical storm Lee proceeded to dump several inches of rain on our region causing additional flooding. These two events could explain the lack of reporting many bird sightings during this time period. Nevertheless the migration process of several species has begun. I've particularly noticed several large flocks of European Starlings banding and grouping together to start their long trek to their winter havens.

Some time during the last days of August and the first days of September David Kiehm had been seeing small waves of migrating warblers visiting his apples each morning. The wave that exploded on 9/3

in his yard in Milford was as diverse as he has ever observed. At 7:30 AM on two apple trees located 25 feet from his porch Dave witnessed the arrival of Bay-breasted, Cape May, Magnolia, Blue-winged, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Nashville, Chestnut-sided, Yellow-rumped and Black-and-white Warblers. Joining the warbler party he also saw a pair of Golden-crowned Kinglets and a Blue-headed Vireo. This can only have been an exciting and colorful bird phenomenon.

On 9/9 Matt Albright saw a Greater Black-backed Gull roosting on a swim platform on Otsego Lake. That same day from the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, Steve Hall watched a Sandhill Crane flying and flapping down the valley overlooking the



Black and White Warbler, by Dave Kiehm

city of Oneonta. Two additional Sandhill Cranes were seen feeding on a farmer's property in West Exeter by Jonathon Dowdall on 9/13.

If you have bird sightings to report, contact me at dbenko@frontiernet.net, at 6815 Co. Hwy 16, Delhi, NY 13753, or at 607 829-5218 for the next issue of *The Belted Kingfisher*. *Dianne Benko*