

MEETINGS:

- December 2 No Meeting
 December 3 (NB This is a Wednesday) Wilson Lecture Series: Social Systems of Birds, Steve Emlen. The Fuertes Exhibition will be open before the lecture.
 December 16 Birding Alaska with Peter Dunne
 January 6 Annual Meeting in the Auditorium
 January 20 Attu with Phil Street
 February 3 Four Cringos in the Yucatan with Dick Bell, assisted by LaVia, Miller, Tucker, and his lovely Lerma.
 February 17 Bird Banding in Panama with Art Bergey
 March 3 Annual Slide Contest
 March 17 West Coast Trip with Ed Fingerhood and Harry Todd

Field Trips:

- December 4 (Saturday) Lancaster County Specialties. Meet Sid Lipschutz (215-CE2-8645) at the Burger Chef on Rt. 23, west side of New Holland, 8AM.
 January 6-8 Pocono Winter Birds (cost \$24) Phil Street 215-687-6542 at work and 215-363-7776 at home.
 January 30 Shark River with Jim Meritt. Meet at Pat's Diner at 7:30AM.
 February 12-14 New England with Al Brady. Meet at Salisbury Beach Boat Ramp, Saturday 1PM.

Christmas Bird Counts:

- December 18 Lower Bucks; Delaware County
 December 19 Brigantine; Bombay Hook
 December 26 Cape May

Newsletter Editor Steps Down

It was a full nine years ago that President Steve Wing suggested that I do something original to replace the twice a month post cards that only notified members of the meeting but still were quite expensive. The informal DWOC Newsletter began as a twice a year publication and was favorably enough received and reasonable enough to produce to expand to a September, November, February schedule. The cost of professional printing more than doubled during the last several years, and their folding and addressing rates were always beyond our means. By making it an entirely LaVia family enterprise, however, I have been able to keep the cost for the most recent Newsletters under \$100, e.g. September and November 1982, \$70.00.

A perspective new editor should be warned of the steps involved:

1. Beg the Program Chairman for the list of programs.
2. Beg the Field Trip Chairman for his list.
3. Get mocked at meetings for being late with the Newsletter.
4. Lay out about \$46.00 for the stamps.
5. Buy the envelopes.
6. Correlate the current address list with the pre-printed labels that Bill Tucker has so kindly provided for the last several years; they all used to be done longhand. Expect scathing notes if a Newsletter should be misdirected.
7. Compose the Newsletter.
8. Type the Newsletter.
9. Buy the printing paper.
10. Send an SOS to the Treasurer for reimbursement.
11. Beg the secretaries at work to retype and to run off 250 copies.
12. Affix address labels to the envelopes.
13. Write out new and changed addresses.
14. Place moistened stamps on the envelopes (yuck!).
15. Fold the Newsletters.
16. Stuff the Newsletters in the envelopes.
17. Seal the envelopes (disgusting!).
18. Cart the whole lot to the Post Office.
19. Wait for complaints.

The nicest thing that happened over the years was when my account of a family birding excursion to Montauk Point was picked up by the Birding News Survey and appeared along side an article by O.S. Pettingill. Well, I cannot resist--one last effusion--dedicated to my two biggest fans, Bill Stocku and Rick Mellon.

THE CHESS PLAYERS OF BIRD WATCHING

In birding the top field men are the biggest heroes, but with the burgeoning popularity of the sport, many other special talents are being recognized. Why, my friend Tucker knows by heart the location of the McDonald's closest to any birding hotspot in North America; he would qualify as a birding-logistics expert. We also have the map men who can pinpoint any given bush where a notable bird has ever been seen. Only in one major area have we failed to honor our finest, that of the conversational exchange (CE) of birding information.

The scene is a familiar one: just after dawn in the Pocomoke Swamp of the Delaware-Maryland border, two men with binoculars walking towards each other, clearly both are birders. "Seen anything good this morning?" "Not yet, but I had a pretty good day yesterday." "Was the Swainsons in?" "No, I haven't seen that one since I found its nest in '78." Surely a conversational exchange of this sort is common and innocent--don't be fooled! That was just the opening salvo by two CE experts.

The first speaker puts immediate pressure on the other by forcing him to commit himself as to what he considers "good." If he mentions the "lovely Cardinal," the CE is no longer a contest, and the first speaker will politely agree and quickly move on. If he should start with a Prothonatory Warbler, he may be in the same league, but he has little chance of preventing a put-down by number one, who can attest to having heard one every fifty feet. In fact only the rarest of sightings can prevent a quick kill by the opener.

Our second speaker knows what he is about, however, and deftly parries the opening thrust by refusing to limit himself to the time chosen by his rival, whose list for the previous hour of daylight would be very much the same as his. Better to switch to yesterday's good total of twenty-four species of warblers and take the initiative away from his counterpart, but number one is not about to give up his attacking position that easily and casually mentions the most sought after of the swamp's birds. If the Swainsons Warbler was what number two had intended to cite, number one has effectively stolen his thunder by his casual and familiar reference to the bird. If, as the case turns out, the second speaker's good day did not include the coveted Swainsons, he can do nothing but recite his list of second bests. Number two cannot win the game now, but just as in chess, the black side is happy to salvage a stalemate from the opening white side, so our second speaker averts defeat by establishing his intimacy with the Swainsons as well as his expertise in the demanding area of nest finding. There will be no quick victory in this CE, for now the field is broad enough to provide thrust and counter-thrust for as long as either chooses. We may well wind up in the cloud forests of Central America before these

My friend George has a completely different approach to the CE, and he always wins. He's a birding historian and is persistently effective in eliciting each passing birder's full lineage. "When did you start birding?" may seem innocent enough, but, you see, George goes way back and never tires of hinting at what parvenus the rest of us are. He always manages to reject your birding beginnings as pampered because he used to hitch-hike from Scranton, PA, to Cape May, and with a pair of four power field glasses (they weren't yet called binoculars) and no reliable field guides (he doesn't look older than Roger Tory Peterson), he taught himself all about the birds. Moreover, while most of us are proud of our modern equipment and enjoy being the first with the latest advance in binoculars or scopes, George makes his vintage paraphernalia a virtue and, again, it's impossible to best him at this reverse game, for who else has his scope tied to his tripod by old rags and bits of garden hose?

However inevitable George's victories may be, it sure is fun to watch him discomfit your world-traveling, L.L. Bean outfitted, Leitz toting, field guide reciting, big-time birder. George just gets back to basics: "And where did you cut your teeth on warblers?" is a favorite counter to any opening the other may try, and you're in real trouble if you say at Point Pelee on a Bird Bonanza's weekend. George is certainly a refreshing change from the newbreed of super-sophisticated birders, and he's my first candidate for the CE hall of fame.

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