

# Philadelphia Larus



the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

VOL. 12 NO. 1

WINTER 1985

## The Women Who Shadowed DVOC

by EDWARD D. FINGERHOOD

**A** BRIEF NOTICE IN the first *Cassinia* intriguingly stated, "On December 7, 1900, there was organized in Philadelphia, the Spencer F. Baird Ornithological Club, *composed entirely of women . . .*" (my italics).

During the long debate during 1982 that culminated in the vote to accept women members in the DVOC, it was never mentioned that an all-women's ornithological club had existed contemporaneously with the early years of the DVOC.

Curious, I tried to discover who they were, what they did, why they organized and what became of the club.

Research has revealed few satisfactory answers. Here is what little we know of this nearly forgotten group that almost slipped through the cracks of Philadelphia's ornithological history.

Based on the list of officers published for several years in early *Cassinias*, it seems that the Spencer F. Baird Ornithological Club was exclusively female. In addition, an undated club constitution and bylaws in the library of the Academy of Natural Sciences, while not stating anything about the gender of its members, asserts that the president presides but, "in her absence . . ."; also, that a member may be expelled upon evidence "that she is an improper person . . ."

It is likely that the SFBOC was founded in response to the unwritten all-male policy of the DVOC. There is no direct evidence for this, but in a 1902 *Bird Lore* article (Vol. IV, pp. 57-61), Samuel Rhodes, a DVOC founder, relates that the club "debated" the establishment of an "honorary lady membership." This course of action was rejected because "the establishment of Audubon and other societies about that time seemed to cover the ground so well that no action in this matter is ever likely to be taken."

**R**HODES WAS REFERRING TO the Pennsylvania Audubon Society, a short-lived, Philadelphia-based precursor to the National Audubon Society that had its offices in the Academy at least as early as 1899. His allusion to "other societies" presumably meant the SFBOC.

The constitution of the SFBOC limited the membership to 25 individuals. Many, according to the first *Cassinia*, were associates of the American Ornithological Union. Only the names of a handful of the 25 elect were recorded in those early *Cassinias*. No membership roster has been found.

The known members were Mary K. Bates, Mrs. Harry L. Davis, Miss Elizabeth Wilson Fisher, Miss Mary Parker Nicholson, Mrs. Edward Robins, Mrs. William Channing Russel and Mrs. Spencer Trotter.

Only one of these women was married to a DVOC member — Spencer Trotter was a DVOC founder and outstanding ornithologist of his day. In the years he was president of the DVOC, 1905-06, his wife was secretary of the SFBOC.

The name Mrs. Edward Robins might also be familiar to ornithological historians. Philadelphian Julia Stockton Hopkins — Mrs. Edward Robins — was a confidante of Elliott Coues, America's

outstanding ornithological personality of the last quarter of the 19th century.

She contributed an article on Alexander Wilson's unsuccessful suit of William Bartram's daughter, Ann, to *The Osprey*, a short-lived ornithological journal of which Coues was editor in the late 1890s. She was president of the SFBOC from at least 1902 until  
(Continued on Page 3)

### Lament of a Womanless Bird Watcher

(Written to be sung on more or less appropriate occasions by those who would share all things with females, even the sacrosanct precincts of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club. Can be sung to the melody of "Galway Bay," with some variations.)

*Oh the chuck-will's mate awaits him at McDonald's,  
And the myrtles neck in Pocono, says Street;  
And the Groskin finches pair themselves in private,  
But there's no sweet wren around for me to meet.*

Chorus:

*O the birds sing sweet along the Delaware-o  
Where the river takes its burden to the sea.  
I can hear the mud-hens mating everywhere-o  
And I sorrow 'cause there's no female for me.*

*Miller's killdees do a love dance up in Frankford,  
Brady's birches shield the loving chickadee,  
Dornan's waxwing kisses beaks not far from Philly;  
But there's no dove here to swap a kiss with me.*

*Oh, whence comes this sorry set of circumstances?  
It's because that all-male club, Dee Vee Oh See  
Bans the women who would like to share bird watching  
With the lonesome wild bird lovers such as me!*

This gem of classic poetry was dug up by Roy Imsick, who attributes it to Harvey Moore, editor of the DVOC newsletter *The Crow*. In a letter to *Larus*, Imsick, who believes it was written in 1950, provides a little background:

"The 'Mc' should have been 'Mac,' for Norman MacDonald (Mac had a place in South Jersey, Rio Grande, one of the early place Chuck-will's-widows were found.) The Street mentioned is for Phil Street. Groskin specialized in banding purple finches. (Of course there were no house finches in the East then, and Groskin must be rolling in his grave!) Miller is an oldtimer, an expert field man, whom I did not bird with, much to my regret. Brady, I guess, is Alan, although he was but a kid then. John Dorman, a Scotsman, was another character, now dead, who lived here in Wyndmoor."

# PROGRAMS

Meetings are held the first and third Thursdays of each month at 8 p.m. at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th St. and Benjamin Franklin Parkway.

FEB. 7 — JIM BRETT, curator of Hawk Mountain: "The Mountain Journey: Fifty Years of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary."

FEB. 21 — BRUCE COLVIN, Bowling Green University: "The Secret Life of the Barn Owl."

MARCH 7 — PAUL CASTELLI, wildlife biologist, New Jersey Bureau of Wildlife Management: "Changing Migration Patterns of Canada Geese in New Jersey."

MARCH 21 — ANNUAL SLIDE CONTEST.

APRIL 4 — PETE MYERS, Academy of Natural Sciences: "Shorebird Migration."

APRIL 18 — CHARLES MANN, Princeton University: "Permanent Mixed Species Canopy and Understory Flocks in Amazonian Peru."

MAY 2 — PAUL WEIRICK: "A Birding Adventure in Greece."

MAY 16 — CHARLES LECK, Rutgers University: "Conservation Problems of Local Migrants in Their Summer and Winter Habitats."

JUNE 6 — SPRING ROUND-UP REPORTS.

# FIELD TRIPS

Jan. 27: Shark River-Manasquan Inlet. Leader: Brian Moscatello, 609-235-1739 (home) or 609-261-2495 (work). Meet at 8 a.m. at Municipal Pier, Belmar, N.J., opposite Pat's Diner.

Feb. 16-18 Annual DVOC New England Weekend. Meet at boat ramp at Salisbury Beach State Park, Mass., Feb. 16 at noon.

March 31: Baltimore Sewage Plant. Leader: Jim Stasz, 609-547-1749.

April 27, 28: Elliott Island, Pocomoke Swamp, Md., and Chincoteague, Va.

May 4-19. May Run. For forms and information, call Bill Stocku, 215-586-2098.

May 11: Ridley Creek State Park. Leader: Frank Haas, 215-565-6319 (home), 215-566-4800 (work). Meet at park office at 5:30 a.m.

May 25, 26: DVOC-Urner Club Pelagic Trip to Hudson Canyon.

# CLASSIFIED

**NEEDED TO COMPLETE** my set of *Cassinias*: All issues from first to 1907 (except 1901), 1946, 1948-49, 1950, 1961-62, 1964. Also seeking Volume I of Edward Forbush's *Birds of Massachusetts and Other New England States*. Contact Jesse Grantham, Condor Research Center, 2291-A Portola Rd., Ventura, CA 93003.

# Philadelphia Larus

Send information you would like considered for publication in *Philadelphia Larus* to:

Sandra Sherman, editor  
316-Rear S. Olive St.  
Media, Pa. 19063  
215-566-6569 (home)  
215-893-5739 (work)

# Committee Proposes Changes in Bylaws

After lengthy study by the club's Bylaws Committee of Fingerhood, Hill and Walters, and with suggestions from Brady, Street, Meritt and others, and with the approval of the officers and Council, a new set of revised club bylaws has been prepared. Approval by the membership is required and will be voted on at an upcoming meeting. Copies of the full new proposed bylaws are available from Chris Walters.

The major changes proposed are as follows:

1. Both a standing Bookstore Committee and a standing Library Committee are established. The club president, as in the past, appoints an such committees.

2. Both the treasurer and the trustees (who hold the club's endowment monies) shall be bonded.

3. To be eligible for election, a new member must have attended at least two club meetings prior to election to membership.

4. The Nominating Committee shall make its slate public at the first December meeting of the club (rather than at the annual meeting in January); other nominations may be made at either the first or second December meeting.

5. Council shall meet, at the discretion of the president, at the conclusion of the regular meetings held on the first Thursday of each month from October to May. Prior bylaws required Council meetings before the commencement of regular meetings.

6. One of the club's spring meetings may be designated as a special meeting which, in addition to a speaker, will recall past members and the traditions and heritage of the club since its founding by Witmer Stone and others in the 1890s.

Any questions concerning these proposed changes can be discussed with any member of the Bylaws Committee.

# DVOC Re-elects Officers, Presents Awards

Harry Franzen heads the list of officers of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club who were re-elected at the club's annual meeting on Jan. 3.

Joining President Franzen for 1985 are Dr. John T. LaVia, vice president; Richard Mellon, secretary; and James Meritt, treasurer.

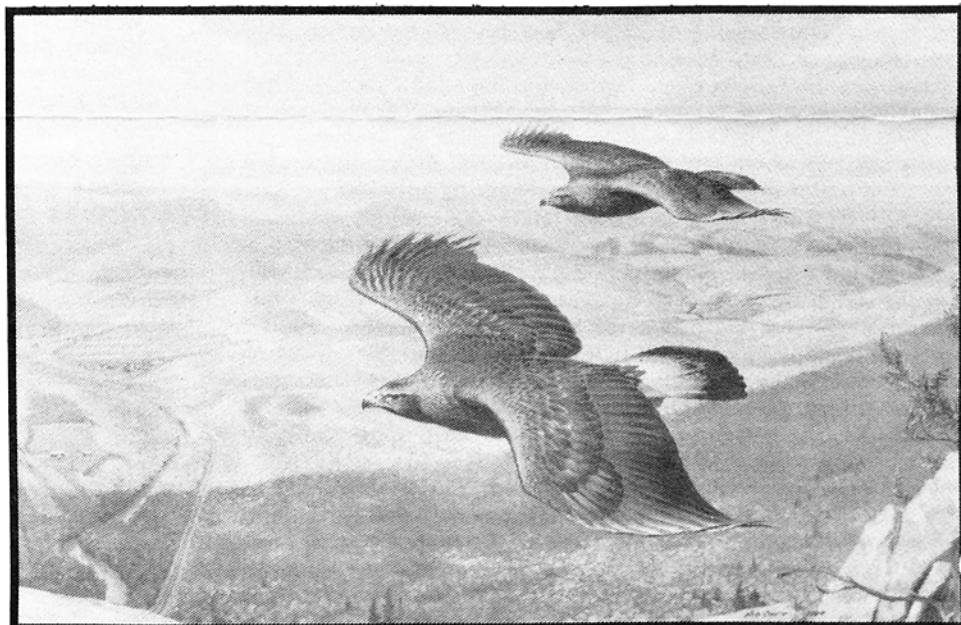
Newly elected to three-year terms on Council were Brian Moscatello and Judge William Hart Rufe III. Sidney Lipschutz was elected to replace Edward D. Fingerhood, who resigned his position on Council when he moved to Baltimore.

Christopher Walters and Dr. John J. Harding were elected fellows of the DVOC. James K. Meritt was named an honorary member.

Two awards were also presented at the annual meeting.

Alan Brady once again received the Julian K. Potter Award for outstanding contributions to the field of ornithology in 1984. The Witmer Stone Award, for publication of an outstanding paper on ornithological research, was given to Ed Fingerhood for his articles in *Cassinia* on the sightings of Gyrfalcons in Pennsylvania.

# A View of North Lookout



"Hawk Mountain Gold" was donated to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary by wildlife artist Ned Smith to commemorate the sanctuary's 50th anniversary. Smith's oil painting, which was given away in a drawing, features a pair of Golden Eagles soaring over the North Lookout. Proceeds from the drawing will help pay for 185 acres of woodland recently added to the sanctuary.

Photo by John K. Bachman

# BOOKS: What's Where and Whose Hoots

by EDWARD D. FINGERHOOD

**BIRDS OF THE LEHIGH VALLEY AREA**, edited by Bernard L. Morris, Richard E. Wiltraut and Frederic H. Brock. 1984. 49 pages.

The Lehigh Valley Audubon Society's *Birds of the Lehigh Valley Area* is the second regional bird book to be published recently. (See *Philadelphia Larus*, September 1984, *A Guide to the Birds of Lancaster County, Pa.*) It is a welcome addition to the avifaunal literature of the area.

The publication of this booklet is especially important because, unlike other regions of southeastern Pennsylvania, there is no lengthy tradition of bird publications associated with the Lehigh Valley. In fact, save for one pamphlet on birds in the Bethlehem area (1965) and two previous checklists of Lehigh County (1956, 1979), there were only scattered references to the bird life of the region in such publications as *Cassinia*, *The Auk* and Warren's *Birds of Pennsylvania*.

Now these diverse sources, plus additional data from *American Birds*, the Poole "Pennsylvania Birds" manuscript and the excellent field notes reported in the LVAS newsletter have been organized into a comprehensive account of the region's bird life.

Authors Bernard L. Morris, Richard E. Wiltraut and Frederic H. Brock say the book is "designed to help Lehigh Valley area bird watchers by indicating the times of the year and the habitats where birds are most likely to be found."

This immediate goal is achieved through yearly bar graphs that visualize the abundance of 309 species plus five hybrids and forms. Annotations that describe habitat and cite important records accompany the bar graphs. The achievement, however, of this deceptively modest-appearing paperbound booklet, is much greater. All subsequent area and statewide works will have to use this as one of the chief sources of eastern Pennsylvania ornithology.

The area covered includes all of Lehigh and Northampton counties and small parts of Bucks, Monroe, Carbon, Berks and Montgomery counties. These extensions into nearby counties allow coverage of such local hot spots as Green Lane Reservoir. A small area of New Jersey opposite Easton also is included.

Twenty-two selected birding areas are described with accompanying maps, directions and species likely to be found. This booklet can lead you to the most likely spots for hawks, nesting warblers such as Golden-winged, Brewster's and Hooded; grassland birds such as Bobolinks, Vesper Sparrows and Grasshopper Sparrows; shorebirds, waterfowl or winter finches.

Despite all the positive sides of *Birds of the Lehigh Valley Area*, there are some annoying aspects to it. The authors chose to order and name their birds by the Fifth AOU Check-list and subsequent 1973 and 1976 supplements, rather than by the 1983 Sixth AOU

edition. Their justification for this was "to avoid confusing bird watchers when they compare this booklet with their field guides, since all but one of the popular guides are based on the older list."

One wonders at this backward-looking policy, especially since neither Peterson (1980) nor Robbins (1983), presumably the guides based on the "older list," are in strict Fifth AOU order, and Robbins frequently uses Sixth AOU names.

Even so, certain inconsistencies with this policy immediately appear. In the first few pages of bar graphs, we read of the "Green-backed Heron" and the "Tundra Swan," both Sixth AOU names. And, later on, we see the long-antiquated — in *all* recent field guides — of "Long-" and "Short-billed Marsh Wrens."

There also were at least two misspellings of observer names.

These errors, in the final analysis, are mere inconveniences rather than major flaws. When we consider the thoroughness of the annotations — I doubt that any important record has been missed — the clarity of the presentation, and the usefulness of the maps and birding location descriptions, we realize that the LVAS compilation is an important contribution to our knowledge of eastern Pennsylvania birds.

Copies can be ordered from the LVAS at \$3.50 each (\$2.50 for LVAS members) at P.O. Box 290, Emmaus, Pa. 18049.

by ALAN BRADY

**THE GUIDE TO OWL WATCHING IN NORTH AMERICA**, by Donald S. Heinzelman, Winchester Press, 193 pages. \$8.95.

Consider, for a moment, that you have never seen an owl or possibly only one or two, and you would like to find more but you have little knowledge or expertise in finding them.

*The Guide to Owl Watching in North America*, a paperback by DVOC fellow Donald S. Heinzelman, is just the choice to fill you in on some of the established methods and general locations that will enable you to add some new owls to your list.

Heinzelman discusses the various angles to owling: food habits and the accompanying pellets, migrations and invasions of owls, nest structures and descriptions; equipment used in owling, as well as a special section on field marks and identification photos.

One section of the book is devoted to general locations in many states where owls can be found. The locations mentioned are not so specific as to cause any harm to the owl roost sites, but they do indicate the possibilities of calling up birds in each place.

There are conservation measures worked into the text, as well as a list of conservation organizations interested in the well-being of owls and other birds of prey.

All in all, this is a useful guide with an assortment of information.

## The Women Who Shadowed DVOC . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

her death in 1906. And she has the distinction, I believe, to be the only woman whose obituary has been published in *Cassinia* (Vol. 10, p. 68).

The club lived on after Robins' death. As late as 1910, the secretary, Mary Bates, wrote Witmer Stone thanking him on behalf of the SFBOC for the use of a meeting room in the Academy.

What did they do? Again, only scraps of information remain. In the club's third year, 1903, they planned to celebrate annually Baird's birthday "at a public meeting." Baird, as Christopher Leahy says in his *Birdwatcher's Companion* (1982), was, "perhaps more than any other single person, responsible for bringing knowledge of the North American avifauna from the pioneering stages of Wilson and Audubon to the

comprehensiveness and meticulous classification of the modern era."

As secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Baird persuaded Congress to build the National Museum of History that now houses the vast national collection. His *Birds of North America* (1859) is the first scientifically organized checklist of this continent's avifauna. He was responsible for sending pioneering naturalist-doctors with the Army Medical Corps to obscure posts in the American wilderness to collect new mammals and birds; among those doctors were such men as Elliott Coues.

In 1904, *Cassinia* noted that the SFBOC "still maintains an active organization," but gives no details. The bylaws required that members present "two or more papers annually consisting of original observations, studies from ornithological authorities or, in

extreme cases, articles by well-known authorities."

Perhaps that's what they did. We do not know. Field trips? Christmas counts? Witmer Stone spoke at one of their meetings in 1901. He gave them a tour of the Academy in November 1909. The club was required to meet twice monthly from November to April. Dues were 25 cents.

This seems to be all we know about the all-male DVOC's all-female counterpart in the first decade of the 20th century. We know the names of a few of its members; we have a few hints of their activities. The rest is lost.

*The author wishes to thank to Carol Spawn for retrieving the scarce scraps of information remaining in the Academy library.*

# A Capital Bird for an Atlantic Pelagic

"A capital ship for an ocean trip" is the *Miss Barnegat Light*; and, with 63 souls aboard, we cast off at 4:07 a.m. Oct. 28, 1984, from Barnegat Light, N.J. Dawn crept in at 6:45, and already several Manx Shearwaters had been identified in the darkness — no mean feat!

Thirty-one miles offshore, 7 a.m., we made our stand, dumping out quantities of fish chum and Wesson oil to make our slick.

A concentration of 1,000 Greater Shearwater's, a few Cory's and a dozen or so Manx came in extremely close to the boat. Several Northern Fulmars, a sprinkling of kittiwakes, Northern Gannets, Parasitic and Pomarine Jaegers kept up for a bit until suddenly a voice shouted, "There's something different!" and a truly different shearwater type came close along the bow, back over our fish-oil slick, turned and returned forward, then disappeared in the haze. Immediately the word "Buller's" was tossed about, all eyes scanning pictures in the books.

The bird was seen only once again at some distance forward of the boat. Fortunately, several photos were made at the original sighting by Gerry DeWaghe, Mike Danzenbaker and Serge LaFrance. The bird was so close I couldn't find it in my 750mm lens.

The exact location of this historic sighting was 31 miles ESE of Barnegat Light, 39° 38'N, 173° 25'W in 20 fathoms of 60.6°F water.



Photo by Mike Danzenbaker

A complete description of the bird will be printed elsewhere; suffice it to say that photographs have ensured the identification of the bird as a Buller's Shearwater, a Pacific Ocean bird that breeds in New Zealand. It is probably the first ever sighting in the Atlantic Ocean.

— Seaman I/C Brady reporting

## LOCAL NOTES

**SOUTHBOUND MIGRATION:** Ed Fingerhood, whose employment has relocated him in Baltimore, has resigned from Council, since he won't be able to make it to most meetings. But he wants members to know he has retained editorship of *Cassinia* and is, in fact, seeking manuscripts, local notes and photographs for Volume 61, which will cover 1984 and 1985. Send material to him at 402 Summit Drive, Fallston, MD 21047. The loss to DVOC — as well as the Valley Forge Audubon Society, of which he was president, and the West Chester Bird Club — will, no doubt, be the Maryland Ornithological Society's gain.

Ed's first trip back to the area was for the Dec. 15 Glenolden Christmas Count, which, in 1984, returned from Ideal Model status to status quo. National Audubon Society officials decided that since they only had six Christmas Bird Counts out of 1,453 participating in the Elite Counts, the information derived from all that extra work wasn't worth it and they dropped the idea.

**THE LATEST IN LEGWEAR:** Eight of the 17 California Condors remaining in the wild now wear radio transmitters, says Jesse Grantham, staff scientist with the National Audubon Society's Condor Research Center and DVOC member. The center plans to release in May the first of the immatures raised in captivity. Jesse has high hopes for the project as a whole, but expressed some concern over whether the young condors will be aggressive enough to vie with eagles for food.

Hats off to Jim Brett and Stan Senner at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary for a well-planned and well-executed 50th-anniversary

program in mid-October. Besides such ornithologists as Roger Tory Peterson, Bermuda's David Wingate and the Israel Raptor Information Center's director, Yossi Leshem, in attendance were Irma Broun-Kahn, widow of Maurice Broun, Hawk Mountain's first curator, and at least one local man who once stood at the trigger end of the gun barrel on that very same mountain.

While in the area, Broun-Kahn presented Muhlenberg College in Allentown with Maurice Broun's personal reference collection and journals from 1934, when he first came to Hawk Mountain, until shortly before his death in 1979. The Maurice Broun Library, in the John V. Shankweiler Biology Building at Muhlenberg, also includes ornithological, botanical and general natural history references used by Broun. The library will be open to researchers through prior arrangement with the Department of Biology.

**HAPPY BIRDING:** To Jim Meritt, who retired from General Electric at the end of 1984 to devote full-time to the worldwide pursuit of birds. Brazil's first, then Africa, then Brigantine. . . . Bob Ridgely will be co-leading an ecology and tropical ornithology workshop in Trinidad and Tobago from March 9 to 22. The Academy of Natural Sciences is part sponsor of the trip.

DVOC is saddened by the death of Fellow Dr. C. Brooke Worth, 76, on Dec. 22. A member since 1927, he was a former professor at Swarthmore College and author of *A Naturalist in Trinidad*, among other titles. Dr. Worth had been a director of the Wistar Institute and a consultant to the Philadelphia Zoo and was a founder of the Wetlands Institute at Stone Harbor.

*The bittern points his bill up high,  
While flocks of geese go flying by.  
The redwing in phragmites sings,  
While pintails land on fluttering wings.  
The shorebirds along the edges ply,  
While redtails circle way up high.  
Nature seems to have come this way,  
On this cool and brilliant day.*

— William Meyer

Dear DVOC Member,

**SEND MONEY!**

Dues are still \$10 a year.  
Send your check, payable to DVOC, to:  
Jim Meritt, DVOC Treasurer  
809 Saratoga Terrace  
Turnersville, NJ 08012