

Philadelphia Larus

the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

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SUMMER 1985



DVOC Sticks It to New Jersey

by ALAN BRADY

WITMER STONE, A FOUNDER OF the Delaware Valley Ornithology Club and author of *Bird Studies at Old Cape May*, would have been proud.

The DVOC team of Chris and Mike Danzenbaker, Armas Hill, Kate Brethwaite and Alan Brady captured the New Jersey Audubon Society's Urner-Stone Cup right out from under the noses of the best birders in the country.

The May 18 "World Series of Birding," or Biggest Day, included 23 teams from near and far who participated in this 24-hour birding marathon in the state of New Jersey.

Who could think that a couple of youngsters, Mr. Delaware Valley Hot Line and a couple of old-time birders could check off 182 species of birds on a foul-weather day — 13 more than the nearest competitor?

We covered the same general area as we did last year and used that route to work from. We defined it, turned it around a bit, found a few new important bird stops and made up for lost time by prunning and rerunning to get the route and alternate routes down pat.

This team was on a roll from the moment we had our first two birds at Brigantine — Whip-poor-will and Chuck-will's-widow. When Mike picked up a Northern Saw-whet Owl calling, I knew we had a chance for a good run, and when a Wild Turkey gobbled, there was no stopping us.

The Upland Sandpiper was waiting for us on top of a pole, the warblers were in the location at Princeton that Kate had scouted out and the Black Vulture couldn't have been more obliging.

Birds kept falling into place despite the misty, rainy morning and



DVOC's proud winners of New Jersey's "World Series of Birding" (from left) are Chris and Mike Danzenbaker, Alan Brady, Kate Brethwaite and Armas Hill.

windy afternoon. When we saw Naomi Murphy looking through the window of the boat house at Brigantine, we new something was up, and, sure enough, we found the handsome Curlew Sandpiper.

Chris and Mike had a back-up shorebird spot near their home in Somers Point. It was there that we found our missing Whimbrels and three bonus waterfowl: Common Loon, Lesser Scaup and Surf Scoter.

After picking out some Northern Gannets offshore and a Caspian Tern in Hereford's Inlet, we made a futile attempt to find the elusive Eastern Bluebird at Cape May County Park. Later we lucked into a pair of them at Higbee Beach, along with a Yellow-breasted Chat and the last lone Cattle Egret flying off to roost.

Still rolling along, we headed north, up along the bayshore and found Northern Harriers at Jake's Landing Road, a Brown Thrasher saying his vespers and a final Swamp Sparrow, our last bird after sunset.

We wrapped it all up about 11:30 p.m., as my old Volvo turned over the 239,000-mile mark, a spectacular feat in itself. We had covered about 300 miles, consumed two thermoses of black coffee, numerous cokes and juices and high-protein snacks consisting of cream cheese and dried beef and now felt pretty good, despite not having slept for a day-and-a-half.

When we turned in our list at Cape May Point State Park, we were stunned to learn that we had taken the day and that the others had failed to bad weather farther north in the Great Swamp. Nevertheless, our competitors congratulated us with gusto.

We thank all who aided us early on with bird locations, and we thank Mother Nature for dumping quantities of water on the Great Swamp at the critical time in the early morning.

WE HAVE DECIDED, for competition's sake, not to release the details of our route. Well, I must admit there is some truth to the rumor that our route is so secret that even the driver didn't always know where he was going.

For next year, Pete Dunne, you'd better bring back Roger T.

By vote of Council, the DVOC has agreed to donate profits from the Biggest Day — pledge collections, minus a registration fee — to the restoration of Alexander Wilson's gravesite at Gloria Dei, Old Swedes Church in Philadelphia.

Contributors include Ed Altemus, Ann Bacon, Erica Brendel, William Church, Robert Cook, Harry Franzen, Ron French, Jean Fuschillo, Barbara and Frank Haas, Hank Hollowell, Stanley Harrison, Sam Jones, Doris McGovern, Jim Meritt, Charles Mohr, Bob Myers, Ann O'Leary, Tom Reeves, Hart Rufe, Sandy Sherman, Gene Stern, Phil Street, Walt Thurber, Harry Todd, William Toffey, Dale Twining and Charles Wonderly.

Also participating in the Jersey Birdathon, representing Rancocas Nature Center, were Brian Moscatello, Bill Stocku, Paul Guris, Serge LaFrance and Bill Murphy.

PROGRAMS

Informal summer meetings will be held Thursdays, July 11, Aug. 1 and Sept. 6, at 8 p.m., at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th St. and Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Please note the change in the July meeting. Regular meetings will resume Oct. 3.

OCT. 3 — ELMER ROWLEY of New Jersey Audubon Society: Zimbabwe, Botswana and Kenya.

OCT. 17 — HOWARD BROKAW: Attu.

NOV. 7 — GEORGE RENNARD: Cuba.

NOV. 21 — ANNUAL BANQUET. Armas Hill will present his version of birding in Brazil. Kate Brethwaite is chairwoman; banquet will again be held at Walber's on the Delaware, Essington, Pa.

FIELD TRIPS

Aug. 25: Warblers in Pennypack Park. Leader: Frank Windfelder. Meet at 7 a.m. in south parking lot at Verree Rd. and the creek.

Sept. 7: Warblers in Cape May. Meet at 7 a.m. in parking lot at Higbee Beach.

Sept. 28 and Oct. 26: Pelagic trips. Two Saturday nights out of Barnegat. The boat leaves at 2 a.m. Cost: \$40. Send checks, specifying which trip, to Alan Brady, Box 103 Wycombe, Pa., 18980.

Oct. 5 and 6: DVOC Weekend. Barnegat Light to Cape May. Meet Saturday morning at 7:30 at Barnegat Lighthouse State Park.

Nov. 3: Bake Oven Knob. Meet at parking lot at 9 a.m.

Nov. 16: The World of Birds, a trip to the New York Zoological Society. Leader: Sidney Lipshutz, 215-232-8645. Meet at 10 a.m. at the Vince Lombardi rest area on the New Jersey Turnpike (just past the last toll gate going north).

For information on any field trips, call Frank Windfelder, field trip chairman, 215-673-0240

CLASSIFIED

LEITZ TRINOVID 10x40 binoculars. Leather coating, with leather case. Purchased about 9 yrs. ago, but purchaser died that yr., so not much used. Lauren Young, 215-248-5445.

Philadelphia Larus

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

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LOCAL NOTES

OUT OF THE CLOSET: The unsigned poem in the Winter 1985 *Larus*, "Lament of a Womanless Birdwatcher," which strongly implied that the author was Harvey Moore, has prompted former DVOC president Les Thomas to come forth after 25 years. Les, now living in Lake Luzerne, N.Y., wrote to George Rennard, "I have no idea how it got in Roy Imsick's hands, but it must have come by way of Bob Haines. The author, I am forced to confess, is me, of course. I may have given it to Bob and he gave it to Harvey Moore to put in the Crow. The original is in my file of trivia.

"For the sake of argument, Harvey Moore could not have written in. Harvey stopped attending meetings at least by the early 1950s when I came on the scene. He could not, therefore, have heard those small unimportant items certain members would report from which I got some of my information, Dick Miller told me of his killdeer observations and Phil Street told us of nesting myrtle warblers. Only a few of us saw John Dornan's film of the waxwing family passing a cherry down the line.

"This urge of mine to write doggerel came out in a report I made when you, Steve Harty and I saw the Rufous-necked Sandpiper at Holgate, and in a long report of a DVOC trip to the shore to find the Bar-tailed Godwit with Potter. There were a few other occasions of silliness under the urging of Ernie Choate or Bob Haines, and they are best forgotten."

FLASH! SLIDE CONTEST WINNERS AGAIN! Way back on the first day of spring, when there were no leaves on the trees and nothing else to do, we had our annual slide contest. Here are the results. General nature: Naomi Murphy, two leaves on water; John Harding, sunflowers; and Charles Mohr, Hyla frog on a leaf. Scenery: John Harding, Ridley Creek; Don Jones, Mount Rainier; Ann Bacon, sunset on the Nile; and Lucy Tyrrell, Sierra Nevada. Birds: Brian Moscatello, Greater Prairie Chicken; Ann Bacon, Northern Saw-whet Owl; and Harry Todd, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper at Chincoteague. The astute judges were Hart Rufe, Chris Walters and Frank Haas.

The June meeting was sparsely attended, with Bob Sehl and Charlie Wonderly in Attu,

Naomi and Bill Murphy, John Danzenbaker, Jim Meritt and John LaVia in Africa, Brian Moscatello in Churchill and Rick Mellon off whaling in Cape Cod. I'm sure there were plenty of others out and about, too. Drop me a line, and I'll try to include you in future lists of wanderings. Wouldn't it be nice to be the official travel agent for DVOC members?

NEW BLOOD: Welcome to Frank Windfelder, who has brought new enthusiasm to his position as field trip chairman, and thanks to Bill Stocku for the job he did. Now if more club members would only join Frank . . . Also, Frank Haas has relieved Armas Hill of Ornithological Studies duties, and has come up with some interesting programs thus far. Fred Ulmer has informed President Harry Franzen that he has had to resign as conservation chairman. Harry is seeking a replacement.

MANDATORY SERVICE: Council should amend the bylaws to make Pete Myers a permanent guest speaker. His talks on migrating shorebirds have been among the most fascinating of the club's programs.

. . . And speaking of speakers who deal with banding programs, here's a reminder to help out recent speaker Paul Castelli's Canada Goose neckband observation program. Observation forms can be obtained from Paul at Assunpink Wildlife Management Area, RD 3. Robbinsville, N.J. 08691, or from *Larus* editor Sandy Sherman, 60 Plainfield Ave., Edison, N.J. 08817.

Phil Street tells us that Stephen R. Wylie has moved on from the St. Louis Zoological Park to become general curator of birds at the Oklahoma City Zoo.

DVOC welcomes new members (or those who haven't been welcomed yet in the *Larus*): Ann Bacon, Tania Bailey, Wyatt Barnes, Michael Brawley, James Brett, Paul Buckley, Jesse and Jack Connor, Polly Crawford, Chris Dewaghe, Gerard Dewaghe, Chris Dooley, Ron French, Albert Guarente, Henry Hallowell Jr., Frank Hamilton, Jeff Hoagland, Mike Homel, Steve Hopkins, James Knowlton, Geoffrey LaBaron, Rey Larsen, Stephen Lawrence, Doris McGovern, William McLean III, Robert Myers, Ann O'Leary, Glenna Schwalbe, William Schipper, Ruth Spendelow, Chris Thompson, John Williamson and Elizabeth Woodford.

Club Splits on Approving Bylaw Changes

In the Winter 1985 issue of *Larus*, proposed changes in DVOC's bylaws were presented to the membership.

In a vote taken at the May 16 meeting, members accepted three of the changes and rejected the remaining three.

Those bylaws that were passed were: Both a standing Bookstore Committee and a standing Library Committee are established. The club president, as in the past, appoints such committees.

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

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.

The proposals that were voted down suggested prospective members must attend at least two meetings prior to election, that Council meetings be held after regular meetings and that a special meeting be held to recall past members.

The approved proposals are effective immediately.

Audubon and the Academy: Fiery Feud

by EDWARD D. FINGERHOOD

ABOUT 160 YEARS AGO, with a portfolio of hundreds of bird paintings and the notion that he was the greatest bird portraitist in America as well as the individual with the most field experience, John James Audubon approached the Philadelphia scientific establishment with the aim of publishing the whole lot.

Astonished by this audacity, this elite of artists, scientist and naturalists looked askance at this unknown upstart from the wilds of Kentucky and the bayous of Louisiana. The reception for him was barely cordial.

Philadelphia in the spring of 1824 was the artistic and scientific center of the New World. Artists gathered at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; the scientists and naturalists focused on the Academy of Natural Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. The two groups overlapped in the area of natural-history illustration.

Among the artists were Thomas Sully, Rembrandt and Titian Peale and the engraver Thomas Lawson. The naturalists included Charles Lesueur, Thomas Say, Richard Harlan, Charles Lucien Bonaparte and George Ord.

Almost all ornithological work in America emanated, at that time, from Philadelphia and this distinguished group of men. And they tended in things ornithological to follow the lead of George Ord.

Ord had inherited the mantle and had become the champion of Alexander Wilson, whose monumental *American Ornithology* (1808-1814) has rightfully earned him the title of "Father of American Ornithology."

Ord, as a younger man, associated with Wilson and had completed Wilson's *Ornithology* upon his death in 1813.

Lawson was the engraver of Wilson's work. Both he and Ord were involved, when Audubon showed up, in a three-volume revised edition of Wilson's work, which was published in 1828-29. It is hardly surprising that their reception was cool.

Ord acknowledged Audubon's talent, but wryly objected to depicting birds and plants together. He became Audubon's most formidable and life-long enemy. Lawson found his paintings "too soft, too much like oil painting."

Disappointed, Audubon eventually returned to Louisiana. But the Philadelphia trip did have its dividends. He became friends with a number of people who admired and respected his talents. Among them were artist Sully, ornithologists Bonaparte and Harlan and Dr. Richard Harris of Morristown, N.J. These individuals were to play a continuing role in Audubon's Philadelphia connection.

Two years after Audubon's unsuccessful trip to Philadelphia, he left New Orleans for the British Isles with 400 bird paintings, searching for another engraver. His reception and rise in England were phenomenal, and soon the first group of five engravings was ready.

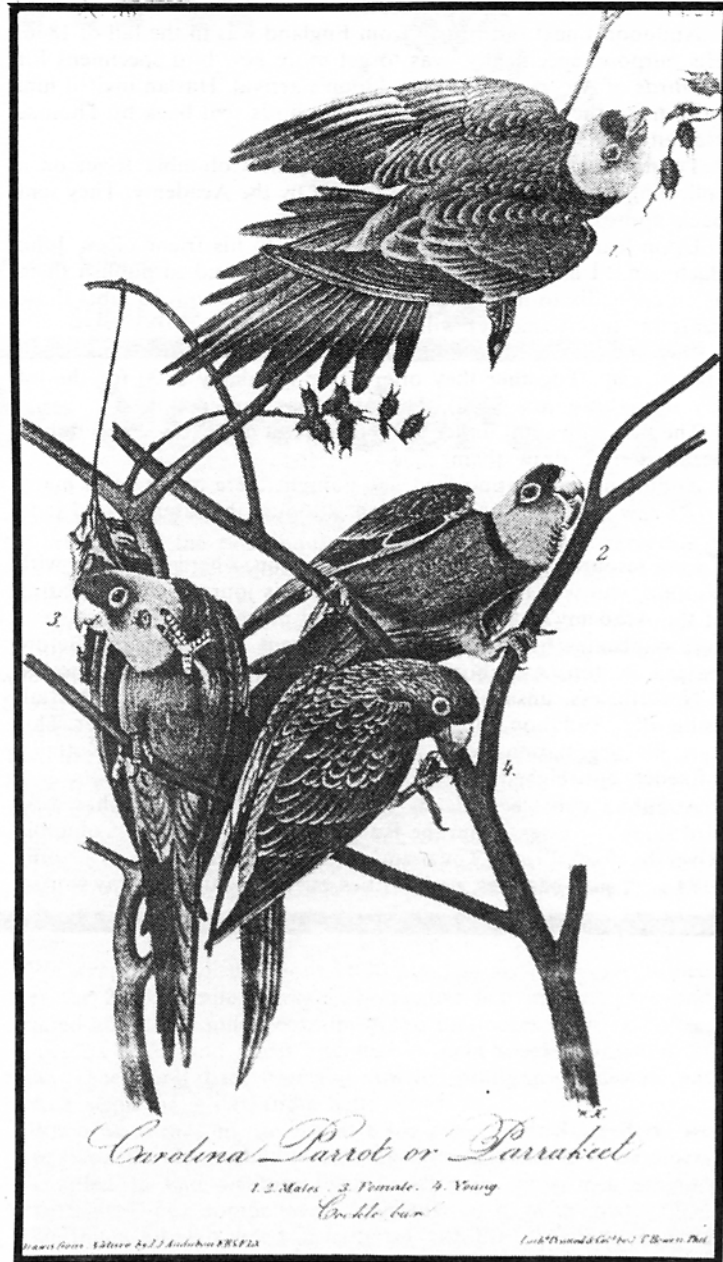
Bonaparte, returning to America from Europe, brought these first five plates and exhibited them at the Academy in the fall of 1827. He also brought a prospectus that described the work and appealed for buyers. The Academy, however, was not buying anything of Audubon's.

Interestingly, that prospectus, now one of only 16 extant copies, is one of the rarities in the library of the Academy.

With work well under way in England, Audubon returned to the United States from early May 1829 to April 1830. During this time he made two brief visits to Philadelphia (May and June). Now, with more plates to exhibit and with the help of Harlan, Audubon again attempted to sell a copy to the Academy. They refused.

Harlan suggested that he gather together a group of friends for a subscription. Audubon refused. Harlan remarked in a letter to William Swainson, "He has a great deal of pride on this subject."

Audubon's fame and prestige continued to grow in England and on the Continent. All the important scientific institutions in England and Europe elected him to membership; his subscription list included royalty, heads of state and the major centers of learning and scientific institutions. Returning to England to supervise his "great



Audubon's Carolina Parakeets

work," Audubon began the account of *The Ornithological Biography* (1831-1839).

It was during his second trip back to the United States in 1831 and 1832 that he finally got the Academy to subscribe. That was sometime late in September 1831. However, by this time, Audubon swallowed his pride and allowed the subscription to be among a group of his Philadelphia friends.

THE SUBSCRIPTION WAS SIGNED by Harlan; among the contributors was Harris, but not Ord or Lawson. Soon after, in October, Audubon was elected a member of the Academy. Evidently the power of the Ord faction, which had kept him out since 1824, was crumbling, but still not dead.

Before Audubon's return to England, he attended a meeting at the Academy in July 1832. At that time he donated 14 species of birds from those he had just collected in Florida. As far as I know,

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Audubon and the Academy

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these birds cannot now be located.

Audubon's next return trip from England was in the fall of 1836. His purpose, specifically, was to get more new bird specimens for his *Birds of America*. Upon Audubon's arrival, Harlan invited him to come to the Academy to look at the birds sent back by Thomas Nuttall and John Townsend.

The two naturalists had been sent to the Columbia River on a collecting expedition, sponsored in part by the Academy. They sent back approximately 100 species of birds.

Upon learning of this, Audubon wrote to his friend, Rev. John Bachman, "I am anxious to portray all those and to publish them as an appendix to my present work. But, I have some doubts those gents [at the Academy] will allow me to do so."

Audubon hastened to Philadelphia, where he recruited his friend Harris' help. Together they offered the Academy \$100 for the lot (by some accounts, \$500). The offer was turned down.

The Academy, still under the influence of Ord, refused Audubon permission to draw them.

Audubon was disappointed. He thought there might be as many as 40 new species in the collection, although he later revised it to 8.

Ever resourceful, Audubon went to Boston, where he met up with Nuttall, who was freshly returned from his journey. After hearing of the Academy's stubbornness, Nuttall promised Audubon whatever duplicates he had from what he sent the Academy. Before leaving Boston, Audubon had picked up five or six new species.

Nevertheless, unsatisfied and undaunted, and now with Nuttall as his ally, Audubon returned to the Academy in late October. This time his negotiations were more successful. Evidently, Nuttall's influence outweighed Ord's.

Audubon wrote ecstatically to Bachman, "I have purchased 93 bird skins . . . sent from the Rocky Mountains and the Columbia River by Nuttall and Townsend — cheap as dirt, too . . . only \$184 . . . such beauties, such rarities, such novelties. Ah, my worthy

friend, how we will laugh and talk over them."

These birds provided 70 figures among Audubon's 435 plates. As far as I know, the entire collection is now lost.

Audubon's difficulties with the Academy now shifted to financial matters. In June 1839, the artist wrote Dr. Samuel Morton, corresponding secretary of the Academy, from England, that the *Birds of America* was finished on June 16 "consisting of 435 plates including 497 species."

This note to Morton was a not so subtle way of reminding the secretary that monies were due him. Back in June 1837, Audubon had written Morton requesting his aid in collecting tardy payments. He wrote Morton again in August 1837 and again in July 1840 — a year after completion of the work. The Academy still owed him \$300.

Seven years later, settlement still had not been made. Victor Audubon, one of the artist's sons, wrote Harris requesting his aid in collecting the now \$200 balance outstanding.

Evidently, settlement was finally made. So, today, the double elephant folio is one of the Academy's greatest treasures. The folio is part of an exhibit at the Academy through October honoring Audubon's 200th birthday.

Also in the Academy's bird collection are the priceless specimens collected by Audubon on his trip with Edward Harris up the Missouri River in 1843. This collection includes the extinct Carolina Parakeet, which is part of the current display. The birds reached the Academy through Harris, Harris' son and finally J. Fletcher Street.

The old enmities, rivalries and quarrels have long since died. Upon Audubon's death in 1851, the Academy's proceedings called Audubon "a truly great man. Science has lost one of her most zealous and gifted disciples of the Arts. . . . The splendid volumes which are the fruit of his labors will diffuse the knowledge and love of science to the latest generation."

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