

# Philadelphia Larus

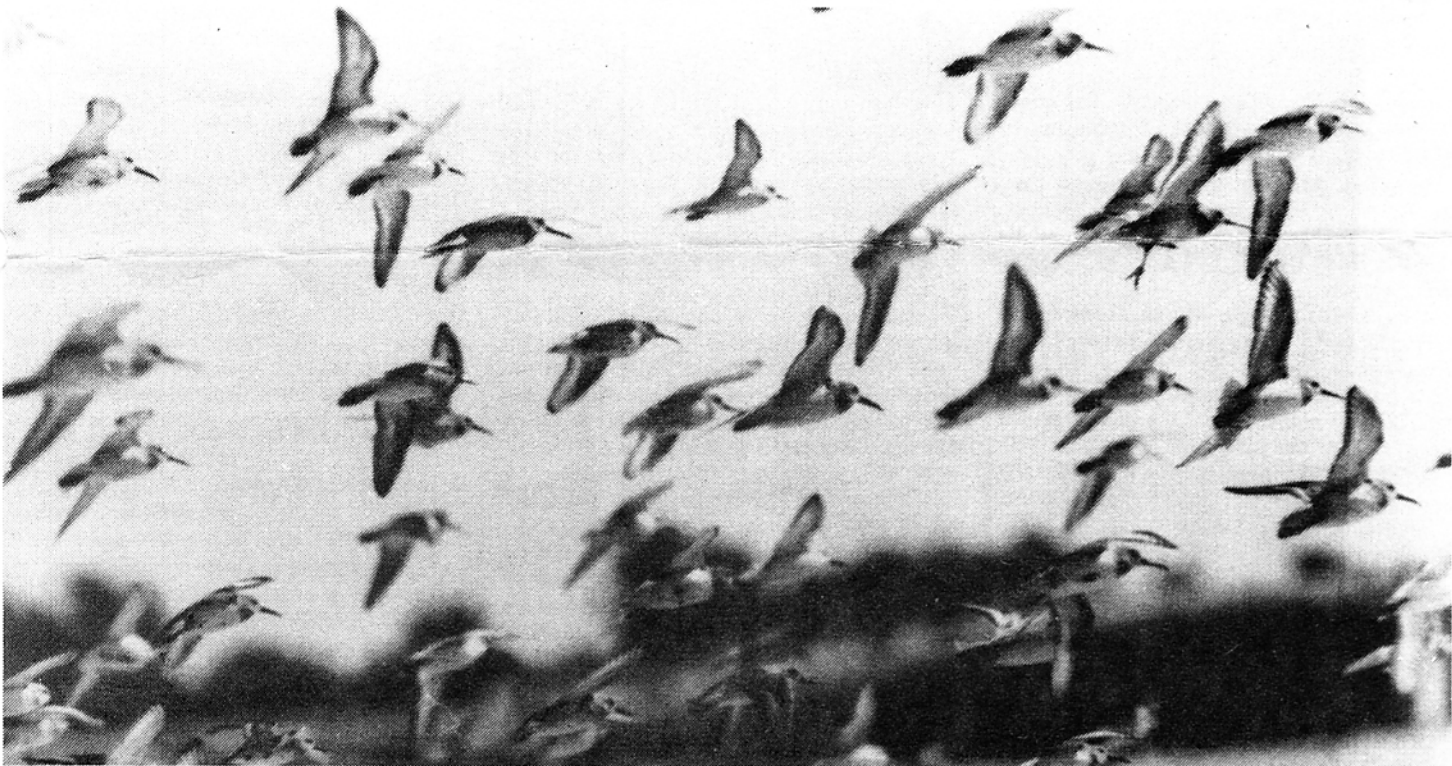
the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

VOL. 13 NO. 1

SPRING 1986



## New Jersey Receives a Million Clams For Shorebirds and Horseshoe Crabs



Shorebirds will still have a place to rest and feed on the Delaware Bay shore.

Hank Webster/VIREO

by J.H. HEAD and J.P. MYERS

**D**VOC members know well of the massive congregation of horseshoe crabs and shorebirds along the Delaware Bay beaches in spring. Steps under way now will ensure that this chaotic scene persists despite the pressures of population growth and inexorable urban creep.

Last fall New Jersey Public Service Electric and Gas transferred \$1 million to the state to be used exclusively for shorebird conservation in the bay. This transfer completed more than a year's negotiations and planning, orchestrated chiefly by Paul D. McLain, deputy director of New Jersey's Department of Fish, Game and Wildlife, and James Shissias, PSE&G representative.

Several research and conservation organizations were deeply involved in the process, principally the Academy of Natural Sciences

and the World Wildlife Fund-U.S. Important international support for the effort was provided by CEMAVE (Brazil), Canadian Wildlife Service, the International Council for Bird Preservation-Cambridge and ICBP-Pan American, INFO (Peru), Manomet Bird Observatory, National Audubon Society, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wader Study Group and a number of individual scientists actively involved in wader research and conservation from throughout the world.

The principal and thorniest negotiating point rose out of the money's source. In expanding road access to the Salem Nuclear Power Plant in southern New Jersey, PSE&G needed to fill several acres of *Phragmites* intertidal marsh. To obtain federal and state

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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.

APRIL 3 — DAN ROBY: "Alcid Islands."

APRIL 17 — FRANK GILL: "Dodos, Kiwis and Others." The Academy's top-flight leader of the bird department will discuss the evolution of flightless birds.

MAY 1 — DICK BELL: Argentina. No doubt with a little help from a few friends who accompanied Dick on last year's trip.

MAY 15 — RICK MELLON: Shorebird identification.

JUNE 5 — ANNUAL MAY RUN-BIG DAY-ROUNDUP REPORTS.

All programs subject to change. For information, call Rick Mellon, 215-493-0697.

## FIELD TRIPS

**Sunday, April 6: Pedricktown.** Meet on the causeway at 7:30 a.m. Leader: Frank Windfelder.

**April 26-27: Elliott Island, Pocomoke Swamp and Chincoteague.** Details to be announced at a later meeting.

**Saturday, May 10: Meesing Nature Center.** Checking the Pocono area for Golden-Winged Warblers. Meet at 5:30 a.m. at the Holiday Inn, Routes 309 and 22. Leader: Bill Murphy.

**May 23-24: Pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon.** Leaving from the Barnegat Light, N.J., marina, 18th St. and the Bay, the *Miss Barnegat Light* will depart promptly at 10 p.m. Friday night, May 23, and will return about 6 p.m. the following day. Cost: \$40. Checks can be sent to Jim Meritt, 809 Saratoga Terrace, Turnersville, N.J. 08012, or call him at 609-227-5948.

All participants are responsible for finding replacements if they cannot go. Jim says if there is a waiting list, he will try to assist. Refunds will be made if the trip does not go. There is no alternate date.

Bring sleeping bag and warm clothes. Food can be purchased aboard, but you are welcome to bring your own.

**May 3-18: May Big Days.** For forms and information — and the difference between a Big Day and a May Run — call Frank Windfelder, 215-673-0240.

For information on the above trips, call field trip chairman Frank Windfelder, 215-673-0240.

John LaVia ascended to the presidency of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club at the club's annual meeting Jan. 2. He succeeds Harry Franzen, who served for two years.

Other new officers are Richard Mellon, vice president, and Brian Moscatello, secretary. James Meritt continues as treasurer.

Sidney Lipschutz and Frank Haas were named to fill three-year terms on Council. Lee Yoder is serving the remaining two years of Moscatello's Council period, and Bill Tannery has replaced Jim Stasz, who has relocated, for his remaining year. Also on Council are Judge Hart Rufe and John Harding, as well as Edward Fingerhood, editor of *Cassinia*.

## Message From the President

by JOHN LAVIA

It is with a considerable degree of nostalgia that I take pen in hand again to write something for the DVOC newsletter.

Back in the early '70s I was what I guess they call "the founding editor" of the newsletter, and for about a decade it was a cottage industry of the LaVia household to produce and distribute the newsletter. My three children, for instance, did all the addressing by hand in those computer-innocent days.

Today, as incoming president of the club, I thought I'd mention a few of the plans I have for immediate action.

Clearly we have to decide on a suitable celebration of the DVOC's centennial in 1990. I have named Armas Hill to chair the Centennial Committee. The occasion seems a good opportunity to remind everybody of just how venerable a group the DVOC is.

## Report From Shark River

by DICK BELL

The fact that it was Super Bowl Sunday and that it was raining did not deter a few crazy — make that enthusiastic — birders from the DVOC.

The annual Shark River field trip produced all the usual waterfowl, including outstanding views of Horned Grebes, Canvasbacks, Oldsquaw, Redheads and Red-breasted Mergansers, to mention but a few. It seems as if the annual Barrow's Goldeneye can no longer be counted on, since this is the second winter in a row that it has not been seen here.

Unfortunately, poor visibility and an an-

As traditional, individual honors were accorded at the annual meeting. This year, Alan Brady was named an honorary member of the organization, and Judge Rufe was raised to the status of fellow.

For his excellent photography, Serge LaFrance was presented with the Julian K. Potter Award for outstanding contributions to field ornithology. Dick Bell, who chaired the award committee, presented LaFrance with a copy of *The Dictionary of Birds in Color*, by Bruce Campbell.

No Witmer Stone Award was presented this year. The committee was headed by Brady. The award is given for the best paper dealing with ornithological research not undertaken in the course of professional duties.

A major anniversary of this sort is also a good time to re-examine the general direction of the club. With a fine group of officers and councillors to assist me, we should be able to chart a course that meets the needs of our diverse membership.

For instance, a more active Conservation Committee seems in the offing, but not one that merely reacts to requests for contributions. We, no doubt, will continue to give some money away, but I'm more interested in initiating our own local conservation projects.

Let me assure the members, however, that we are not going to badger everyone with a multitude of projects. The DVOC has always been a fun organization, and I would not want to lose that special quality by overextending our corps of volunteers.

Please do feel free to contact me about any club matter that concerns you.

gry ocean limited the observations along the coast to a few close gulls and a pair of Common Scoters. No loons or white-winged gulls were seen.

We observed Purple Sandpipers on the jetty at the Manasquan Inlet, and there was a huge concentration of American Robins on the wet parade grounds at the National Guard headquarters in Sea Girt. Also at Sea Girt were many Brant and a flock of European Starlings with a few Brown-headed Cowbirds mixed in.

When the weather improved somewhat, we intrepid birders moved on to Barnegat Light, where we added Harlequin Ducks and Surf Scoters to the day's list.

On the way home, we stopped at the Rohm and Haas pool in Bristol, Pa., where we found the Ring-necked Ducks and Hooded Mergansers that are always there in the winter.

While it was not a super day for the New England Patriots or the birders, it certainly was a super one for the New Jersey ducks and the Chicago Bears.

## Philadelphia Larus

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

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

# The 'A Team' Invades Argentina

## Trip's 'Most Memorable Species' List Produces Tie for First Place

by PHIL STREET

**T**WELVE MEMBERS OF the intrepid "A Team," dominated by DVOC members, set off last November for a fabulous 18-day trip to Argentina under the expert guidance of the country's noted ornithologist, Maurice Rumboll. Representing the club were Ned Altemus, Dick Bell, Dede and Howard Brokaw, Ann O'Leary, Bob Sehl, Phil Street and Bill Tucker.

We birded on the pampas southeast of Buenos Aires, at Tierra del Fuego along the Beagle Channel, on the eastern slope of Patagonia and out onto the Valdes Peninsula, with its Right Whales and Elephant Seals. We visited Punta Tombo, which is home to a colony of more than 1 million Magellanic Penguins, and we spent time in tropical forest around spectacular Iguazu Falls on the Brazilian border.

Bell garnered 235 life listers, and even I, who had taken the same trip two years before, added 64. The total trip list was approximately 350 species.

A vote for the most memorable species seen resulted in a first-place tie with everyone selecting the Common Potoo, which Altemus found perched atop its nest stub at Iguazu, and the Torrent Ducks, which were discovered along a rushing stream in Tierra del Fuego, where two pairs put on an exciting performance of dispute and/or



**THE COMMON POTOO**

Does this look like a common bird?

Neal Smith/VIREO

antics.

The incredibly beautiful Many-Colored Rush-Tyrant took third place with six votes, followed by a very tame and accommodating Austral Pygmy-Owl with five.

Fifth place, with four votes, was a tie between the Andean Condor, seen several times, and the Rusty-barred Owl, which came on stage just before dark along a woodland trail at Iguazu, exactly as Rumboll had predicted.

The last winners, all tied with three votes each, were Guanay Cormorant, Magellanic Woodpecker, Blond-crested Woodpecker, Greater Rhea and Toco Toucan, the latter selection no doubt influenced by the sight of 13 of them in one bare tree.

Also-rans, with two votes each, included Giant Wood-Rail, Hooded Grebe — a species that Rumboll discovered — Magellanic Penguin, Tawny-throated Dotterel, the secretive Andean Tapaculo and the Magellanic Plover.

Among the many species cited only once were such goodies as the Black-browed Albatross, White-faced Whistling-Duck, Black-headed Duck, Austral Caracara, Snowy Sheathbill, White-eared Puffbird, Southern Ant-Pipit, White-throated Cachalote, Swallow-tailed Manakin and Thorn-tailed Rayadito.

The "A Team" went to Argentina in uniform, with "A" baseball caps courtesy of Dick Bell and DVOC "A" T-shirts from Bill Tucker. As the "A" uniform would also be in order for Australia, there has been talk of a trip there in 1987.

Let me know if you want to be on the trip.

## Among the Highlights: A Close Encounter With an Elusive Duck

by DICK BELL

**I**T IS 9 A.M., and we have been on the road for about an hour. The temperature is a comfortable 45° and the ever-present Patagonian winds are merely brisk today instead of gale force, which is common here in late November.

All around us are scenes of great beauty. There are the snow-capped Andes surrounding the Canal de Beagle. Whitecaps appear on the rich, dark blue water, and the evergreen beech forest contrasts with the sea.

We are in Argentina's Parque Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, and we are about to witness an extraordinary series of events.

As we walk through a beautiful meadow tucked between high mountains, we hear the song of the Austral Thrush, a bird not unlike our own American Robin. A small but powerful stream rushes through the canyon at the head of the Canal de Beagle. A flock of Ashy-headed Geese takes off as we approach, affording us excellent views of this handsome bird.

Nearby, a Bar-winged Cinclodes bathes in a puddle and the Thorn-tailed Rayadito scolds from a thicket.

The sun has not yet reached into the canyon as we quietly move along a trail next to the stream.

Mingo, our self-taught and excellent local

guide from Ushuaia, suddenly beckons. We creep up and over a large boulder.

As we crest the rock, we see them: not one, not one pair, but two pairs of secretive Torrent Ducks.

The beautiful cinnamon and gray of the female contrast with the black and white of the handsome male. They pay little attention to us, as there seems to be great activity related to territory and courtship.

The birds' heads move right and left. They take turns swimming upstream. The female leads, and the male follows. Sometimes the roles are reversed.

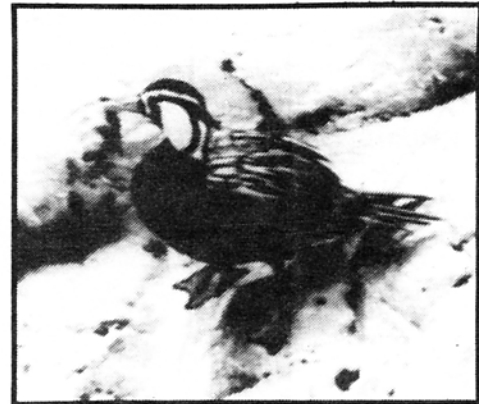
Periodically they dive into the cataract, surfacing unexpectedly. Every so often they leave the water to stand on a rock in midstream or on the bank. All the while their heads swing right and left.

Suddenly one male holds his rival underwater by the bill. Only one emerges. Has the other drowned? Later we find the missing male about 100 meters downstream. We realize we have watched a male Torrent Duck establish territory.

The female renews her courtship by swimming with the male close behind.

She suddenly leaps about a foot out of the water and throws a shower of water on the male with her feet and long tail. She continues to repeat the action.

Both dive and stay underwater for what



**THE TURRENT DUCK**

... tie for the top

Alejandro Santo/VIREO

seems to be a longer time than usual. We guess that mating is taking place.

We watch for about an hour from as close as 10 meters. The light is dim, but we shoot what photographs we can. Maurice Rumboll, the leading Argentine ornithologist, who is with us on this trip, suggests this is the first time these behaviors have been recorded.

Whether or not this is true, we all agree that in this crazy pursuit of ours — the observation and study of birds — it doesn't get any better than this!

# A Million Clams for Shorebirds and Crabs

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permits for altering these intertidal lands, PSE&G agreed to replace an equivalent acreage of marsh.

The management plan for this area, developed by McLain, will achieve two major goals.

First, to satisfy the agreement, PSE&G intends to restore several hundred meters of a disturbed beach to something approximating its original condition.

Second, the state will procure and manage a series of beaches critical to shorebird use during migration. This should halt the gradual usurpation of land for resort and commercial development that devoured much of New Jersey's shore over the last two centuries.

These measures taken by New Jersey and PSE&G are historic for conservation. At the simplest level, a large sum of money is being applied to protect a wildlife resource, migratory shorebirds, which has in the past lost out in the steps between conservation research and management plan implementation. This may be one of the largest single steps ever taken in the name of shorebird conservation — or, more positively, it may be the first of many.

Last November, the states of New Jersey and Delaware took this action one step further. In a joint decision, they declared that shorebird protection will encompass the lower estuary of the Delaware Bay. Governors Castle and Kean pledged their commitment to work with the World Wildlife Fund-U.S. and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA) in

developing a multinational conservation management strategy.

Toward that end, New Jersey and Delaware's joint action is first in what ideally should be a series of sister reserves distributed over migration routes. The sister-reserve network seeks to link critical staging areas upon which migrating shorebirds depend throughout the hemisphere.

Russell Train, president of the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., says, "The needs of the shorebirds, not geography or local values, define the multinational reserve. A danger to one of the links would become an international matter, and the system as a whole would defend its weak segment."

The Academy of Natural Sciences, the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., the IAFWA and other organizations are working toward defining and establishing the importance of various sites for shorebird migration throughout the hemisphere.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: J.P. Myers is director of the Pan American Shorebird Program and assistant curator of ornithology at the Academy of Natural Sciences. J.H. Head is an administrative assistant to Myers. With northward shorebird migration just around the corner, it's time to start looking for shorebirds with legbands, markers or flags — a sure sign these birds are participating in Pete's program. Anyone spotting such birds should contact Pete Myers at the Academy, 19th St. and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia, Pa. 19103, (215) 299-1181.*

**DVOC**  
**c/o Academy of Natural Sciences**  
**19th St. and the Parkway**  
**Philadelphia, Pa. 19103**