

Philadelphia Larus

the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

Celebrating our 100th year



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SPRING 1990

Happy Hundredth, DVOC!

by ARMAS HILL
Centennial Chairman

The DVOC is now into its second century. Its Centennial "birthday" occurred on Feb. 3. On that day, back in 1890, the organization of the club, by its seven founders, was completed; its constitution was adopted, and the first slate of officers was elected.

In celebration, the club is planning a series of events to be held throughout the year.

On Feb. 1, two days prior to the 100th anniversary of the club's founding, I had the honor of hosting a special DVOC meeting that served as the kick-off event.

Others events to follow will include a lecture by renowned British seabird authority and author, Peter Harrison, on April 26; a picnic during the summer for club members and guests; and the annual banquet on Nov. 15, which will be the climax of our Centennial year. We are hoping to get a fine speaker for the banquet, but details are still being worked out.

Fliers for the Harrison lecture, which will be held in the Academy of Natural Sciences auditorium, have already been sent to club members, as well as to a number of other bird clubs in the region. Those who wish to attend the lecture should return the bottom section of the flier to the DVOC — with name, address, phone number and number of seats requested. There is no charge for the lecture, but reservations will be accepted for only as many seats as the auditorium has. So far, the response has been great.

Incidentally, there is also a DVOC-sponsored pelagic trip, with Harrison expected to be on board, scheduled for the Friday night-Saturday after the lecture, to go out onto the Atlantic from New Jersey, but the trip is already sold out.

A number of club members have been involved with the Centennial, contributing their talents in their respective ways. A Centennial Committee has been meeting since 1987. Generally, about a dozen people have attended most Centennial Committee



meetings, with a total of about 20 individuals involved. There has been certainly adequate discussion, but also a number of things have been done.

Noteworthy have been some contributions by certain members, in conjunction with the Centennial, that will last after the Centennial celebration is over, and into the next century.

A set of audio-cassettes is now being prepared that will contain the sounds of DVOC members through the years, both at meetings and on field trips, as well as sounds of birds — particular species, plus choruses, songs, and calls at dawn and dusk and in between. This set of sounds will be available for a reasonable price.

A number of artifacts — such as old and not-so-old pictures, both prints and slides,

as well as field notes and the like — are being gathered to be put into the archives for preservation. Cumulatively, they are interesting indeed.

Some of the current club members have been writing articles for the 1990 Centennial edition of the *Cassinia*. The articles will refer to the birders of the DVOC over the decades, as well as the bird life observed by the birders during that time. Another article will focus on the places and habitats in the region, where both the birds and birders have occurred.

Some of the items that DVOC members can get as keepsakes of the Centennial, in addition to the cassettes and *Cassinia*, include a special Centennial plate, featuring Earl Poole's drawing of *Larus philadelphia*, the Bonaparte's Gull, and a hand-painted coffee mug, made to order and designed by Margaret Blair, the artist for a number of state bird stamps issued a few years ago by the postal service.

At the Feb. 1 meeting, I was only able to include a portion of what could have been included. We looked at slides made of old prints from as far back as the 1890s and through the years since. Some of the photos were from a very old club scrapbook; others were taken by members present at the meeting.

I would love for another similar meeting that could contain segments relating to occurrences and people that could not be included on Feb. 1, 1990. The history of the DVOC is so rich.

Come Celebrate With Us This Year

Save the following dates to celebrate our 1990 Centennial with us:

- **APRIL 26:** Peter Harrison lecture at 7:30 p.m., at the Academy of Natural Sciences. For information, call Alan Brady, 215-598-7856 (home) or 215-968-2833 (work).

- **JUNE 9:** Covered-dish picnic at the home of Dr. Kenneth and Janice Gordon, 1250 Upper Gulph Rd., Radnor. 2

p.m. to ? Bring food to share; soft drinks, beer and wine will be provided. Rain date: June 23. To RSVP and for directions, etc., call Chris Dooley, 215-788-7143.

- **NOV. 15:** Annual banquet, at the Academy of Natural Sciences. Details will be forthcoming in the fall *Larus*. For information, call Sandy Sherman, banquet chair, 215-237-6814.

PROGRAMS

Meetings are normally held the first and third Thursdays of the month at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th St. and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, unless otherwise indicated. For information on programs, call program chairman John Harding, 215-642-6394.

MARCH 15 — PAT SUTTON, teacher/naturalist at the Cape May Bird Observatory: "Operation Flightpath: Backyard Habitat."

APRIL 5 — LARRY NILES, of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Endangered Species Program: "Coastal Raptor Restoration."

APRIL 19 — DR. JAMES BEDNARZ of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association: "Winged Hunters of Los Medanos."

MAY 3 — DR. FREDERICK SHELDON of the Ornithology Department, Academy of Natural Sciences: "Birds of Borneo."

MAY 17 — CLAY SUTTON, DVOC Conservation Committee chairman: "The Delaware Bayshore: A Place That Time Forgot."

JUNE 7 — May Round-up Reports.

FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, March 10. Shark River area. Meet at 8 a.m. at Pat's Diner, Route 35, Belmar, N.J. Leaders: Don Jones, 609-859-0281 (home) or 215-785-8010 (work), or Earl Harrison (see below).

Saturday, April 7. Pedricktown, N.J. The Ruff search continues. Meet at 8 a.m. on the causeway (Pedricktown Road). Trip leader: Frank Windfelder, 215-673-0240.

Friday-Saturday, May 25-26. Pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon. Meet at 9 p.m. on Friday night at the *Miss Barnegat Light*, 18th St. and the Bay, Barnegat Light, N.J. Boat returns at 6 p.m. Saturday. Cost: \$65. Send check, payable to DVOC, to Alan Brady, Box 103, Wycombe, Pa. 18980. For information, call Alan, 215-968-2833 (work) or 215-598-7856 (home).

Sometime in May: Pocomoke Weekend. Dates still in formation. Either May 4-5 or 11-12. Check with Earl Harrison.

Saturday, June 2. Meesing Nature Center and Worthington Tract. Golden-winged Warblers on their breeding grounds in Pennsylvania. Meet at 7:15 a.m. in shopping center at the junction of Routes 402 and 209, Marshall's Creek, Pa. Trip leader: Bill Murphy, 215-885-2488.

Sunday, July 22. Bombay Hook and Delaware Bayshore. Last year's trip produced White-winged Tern and a funny-looking Golden Plover. Past years have brought Rufous-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper. Trip leader: Sandy Sherman.

For a detailed copy of the field trip list or for more information, contact Earl Harrison, field trip chairman, 424 S. Hutchinson St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19147, 215-842-6315 (work) or 215-592-7950. (home)

Centennial Officers Are Installed

Brian Moscatello was elected president of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club for 1990, the club's 100th year. The election took place at the club's annual meeting on Jan. 4.

Serving with him this year are Dr. John J. Harding, vice president, and Judge W. Hart Rufe, secretary. Barbara M. Haas was re-elected treasurer.

Phillips B. Street chaired this year's Nominating Committee.

Newly elected to Council for three-year terms are Colin Campbell and William R. Stocku. They join Daniel Brauning and William Murphy, whose terms expire in January 1991, and Chris Dooley and Sandra L. Sherman, whose terms are completed in January 1992. Also serving on Council is immediate past president Richard Mellon and Franklin C. Haas, editor of *Cassinia*.

Paul Guris and Chris Dooley were named fellows of the club at the meeting.

Singled out this year for special awards were David Ward Jr. and John C. Miller.

Ward received the Witmer Stone Award for the best paper dealing with ornithological research not undertaken in the course of professional duties for his work along the coast of Avalon, N.J., monitoring south-bound waterfowl migration.

Clay C. Sutton Jr. chaired the Stone Award Committee.

Miller received the Julian K. Potter Award for outstanding contributions to field ornithology for his coverage of the birds of Tinicum National Environmental Center and the surrounding area. It was the second time he received this honor.

His updated findings, "Birds of the Tinicum Wildlife Refuge and Adjacent Areas, 1970-1987," were published in the 1986-87 issue of DVOC's *Cassinia*.

Chairing the Potter Award Committee was Dan Brauning.

Robert H. Sehl presented the trustees' report, and Frank Haas read the treasurer's report for Barbara Haas.

A Call for a DVOC Telephone Directory

by PAUL A. GURIS

On Dec. 30, 1989, the day the Western Tanager was found in Blue Bell, Pa., I received a phone call about it, and I went to see it. When I tried to spread the word, I found out two things.

First, I had no idea who was truly interested in Pennsylvania birds. And second, I discovered that my list of less frequently used phone numbers was horribly out of date.

As a result, I have decided to try to create a DVOC telephone directory. Inclusion is strictly by request, and updates will probably be made annually.

Fill in the form below. Work phone numbers are optional. If you are filling out the form for more than one person at an address, please designate who each work number is for.

The bird-interest checkoffs are also optional. This will, however, give people some idea of who to call when something good makes an appearance. This is not for a tree-

type hot line, but it could be the basis of one if there is enough interest.

The "long-distance" category is defined as anything that is drivable by Bill Stocku, Anita Covington and me in a three-day weekend. To give you some idea of what area this might cover, it definitely includes Nova Scotia and Florida. It also covers "close" areas like Ottawa, New England and North Carolina.

Please reply by April 15, since nothing else important is going on around that time. Songbird migration won't start for a few more weeks yet.

Feel free to call if you have any questions, suggestions or constructive commentary. Please save abuse for the meetings, where it may be enjoyed by all.

Return the form to Paul A. Guris, 402 Ferris Lane, New Britain, Pa. 18901. My home number is 215-348-HAWK. *Please print neatly.*

NAME(S) _____
 ADDRESS _____

 HOME PHONE _____
 WORK PHONE(S) _____ EXT _____

I am interested in good birds for:
 PA NJ DE GENERAL LONG DISTANCE

I would be interested in participating in a telephone tree:
 YES NO

**Philadelphia
Larus**

Sandra Sherman, editor
912 North St.
Collingdale, Pa. 19023
215-237-6814 (home)
215-893-5739 (work)

Day Trip to the Coast

Annotated Field
Notes From a
DVOC Trip
on Feb. 22, 1938

EDITOR'S NOTE: In honor of the DVOC's 100th anniversary, Philadelphia Larus takes a look back at a club trip on Feb. 22, 1938, as richly captured in the unpublished field notes of Roy Imsick, who joined DVOC the following year.

Reading Roy's notes 51 years later reminds us of some things we now take for granted — such as the ease with which we transport ourselves to our favorite birding spots or the array of quality optical equipment and field guides now at our disposal. On the other hand, we see some things never change — such as the nature of a DVOC field trip and the status of the bridges over to Tuckerton!

The lefthand column is Roy's original field notes; on the right are 1990 annotations. The author's comments are in bold face, the editor's in italics.

by ROY IMSICK

Washington's Birthday gave me a good opportunity to get in another trip with Ray before his departure for Minnesota.¹ Jimmy Wright and I met Ray at Broad and Race Streets at 8 a.m. Waiting at the Academy, we finally picked up Fred Schmidt, who works at the Academy and were on our way.

Arriving somewhat late at the Tuckerton Marsh, we proceeded to hunt for the DVOC gang. Crossing one of the hazardous, narrow bridges out on the marsh, Fred called our attention to a small gull at the bridge's edge.

Bursting out of the car, we discovered it to be the little Bonaparte's Gull, which is considerably smaller than the common Herring Gull and distinguished in the winter plumage from it by the black spot behind the eye, in addition to the notable difference in size. Our efforts to flush it by tossing stones were of no avail. It was unafraid and quite contented to stay where it was, despite the prying bird hikers.

Continuing on for two more bridges, we met up with the experts returning, who signalled us to do likewise. The marsh was apparently barren of bird life. Following the group back, we added two Horned Grebes to the list.

Pulling up to a patch of woods, we discovered that there were 12 cars in the party and that Maurice Broun, the warden of Hawk Mountain, was along, among others, including: Potter; Street, the notorious sandwich snatcher; and the ever-smiling McDonald.²

The woods produced but one White-throated Sparrow for the bird lovers, but the rare and uncommon Curly Grass Fern for pteridophytists McDonald and Broun.

Losing the main crowd, we now continued pretty much on our own. The DVOC as a group usually flit hither and yon, never spending very much time in one spot. Some bird people are of a different mind and care to exhaust a spot before moving on. Such were we and the occupants of two other machines³ who voluntarily joined us.

Traveling then to Beach Haven, we had quite some time with ducks and shorebirds. The ocean had nothing to offer, but the bay was productive of many species and individuals. Considerable time was spent in trying to identify some sandpipers and plovers out on a small island.

Fred Schmidt disappeared to return later with a gunner's sneak box (a low-riding rowboat). Ray, John Hess⁴ and I piled into the frail craft, the capacity of which was about two, and Fred maneuvered us out to the island.

Here we found the sandpipers to be the fairly common red-backs⁵ of the fall and the plovers to be the cosmopolitan Black-bellied Plover. Also on the island were about a dozen Horned Larks, which we chased back and forth the length of the island until our patience and wind ran out. Out in the distance, we caught glimpses of a compact flock of Brant hovering back and forth as a cloud of smoke.

Barnegat was next on our itinerary. John Hess, minus his overcoat, now became a member of the party in Ray's Ford, having become stranded from the car he was traveling in.

Before reaching Barnegat, we halted at the beckon of part of the original gang along the main road. Here we found to everyone's delight, and mine particularly, a bird I had never before seen: the Common Redpoll.

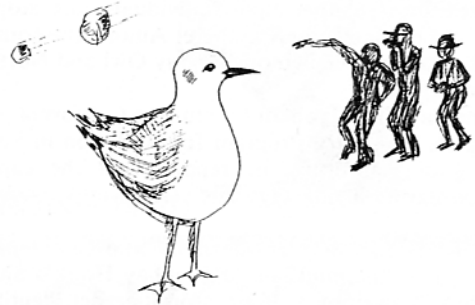
Some 50 or 60 of them were flitting about in the brush of the dunes. A very pretty bird, the redpoll is goldfinch-like in general appearance but with a red cap and a heavily streaked breast. The males had pink breasts, some very deep, almost red.

Witmer Stone⁶ arrived on the field and for a few minutes, the redpolls were neglected.

Moving on to Barnegat, we found it had nothing to offer except one old, decrepit but somewhat historical lighthouse.

This was the first trip to my knowledge that I had seen anyone with a telescope. After using the one John Hess had, all of us were convinced of the serviceableness of such an instrument. We found it of particular help in running down the ducks that customarily

(Continued on Page 4)



Illustrations by Dr. Erica Brendel

¹F. Raymond Keating, who joined DVOC with me in 1939 under sponsorship of H.W. Rolston and Norman McDonald. Keating and I were scouts together in a South Philadelphia troop and later a troop in West Philadelphia. We began bird watching together. Ray went on to the Mayo Clinic after receiving his M.D. from Cornell University. Dr. Keating and his wife were killed in an auto accident in late 1969 in Rochester, Minn. We had corresponded all those years up until the time of his death.

²Hawk Mountain Sanctuary was founded in 1934, so Maurice Broun would have been on the job for four years.

Julian Potter, a Jersey banker and one of the kingpins of the club at the time. J. Fletcher Street, Phil's father, never carried a lunch but examined others' lunch bags and often swiped a sandwich.

³In a less complicated world, when neither engines nor electricity powered such items as pencil sharpeners or knives, automobiles were known as "machines."

DVOC field trips to Cape May in the '30s were usually by train — not many had cars in those days. In the '30s, one could stop his auto on the road, disgorge the passengers and all leave the auto to track down a bird.

⁴John Hess was from West Philadelphia. He was an active member in 1939.

⁵Dunlin.

⁶Witmer Stone, a club founder, was semi-active with DVOC at the time, attending field trips, especially to Cape May. He died in April 1939.

GEMS AT THE KING RANCH: Word comes from **Jesse Grantham** that the 837,000-acre, privately owned King Ranch in the Lone Star State is about to be opened to birders. Details are still being worked out, but Jesse, who's been at the National Audubon Society's Robert Allen Porter Sanctuary in Corpus Christi for the past few years, says chances are the ranch will be opened to organized tours, rather than individuals just stopping by. He's already done some surveying there: Among the common species he says he's had are Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet!

By the way, Jesse is about to return to California, where he'll head that state's Sanctuary Program for Audubon in Sacramento. And speaking of California, he reports that the captive California Condors started laying eggs this year in mid-January, earlier than usual.

LIFER IN LIMBO: Those of us who saw a particular golden plover out on the mudflats of Bombay Hook's Shearneck Pool in July are still awaiting a decision on its exact identity, according to **Dave Cutler**. The evidence is in the hands of several shorebird experts — including club member **Kenn Kaufman**. A big chunk of that evidence is **Hart Rufe's** Super 8 film.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER: New club president **Brian Moscatello** has taken on a few new mantles. He has a new work title, as head of the Tenaflly Nature Center, and new domestic title, as husband of club member **Janet Sedicino**. . . . **Paul Guris** and **Anita Covington** also have decided to tie the Knot. Congratulations to all!

Frank Haas is still seeking local notes and photos for publication in *Cassinia*. Send material to him by mid-March at 2469 Hammer-town Rd., Narvon, Pa. 17555, or call him at 215-445-9609 to let him know it's coming. He hopes to have the journal in the mail by the beginning of the summer. Highlights will include centennial-related pieces by **Phil Street**, **Rick Mellon** and **Skip Conant**. **Dan Brauning** is chairing a committee to revise and reprint the club's checklist of birds of the Delaware Valley. He's hoping to finish it by the end of the summer.

WINNER BY A RINGER ON A STRING: **Rick Mellon** took top honors in this year's slide contest, which featured about as many entries as there were members of the audience. (Perhaps everyone left early for New England.) Rick won in the birds category for his Great Gray Owl, taken in Ottawa several years ago. Number 2 in the

category was **Brian Moscatello's** White-eyed Vireo at Ding Darling Refuge in Sanibel, Fla., and third place went to **Colin Campbell** for his straight-on shot of an Atlantic Puffin on the Shetland Islands.

In the category of scenery, top honors went to **Sid Lipschutz**, for his solar eclipse in Moshi, Tanzania. Next-to-top honors were taken by Brian, with a rainbow and thunderstorm in Canyon City, Colo., and third-place belongs to **Earl Harrison**, for an early morning pond in Brielle, N.J. Colin took first place in natural history with a Green-veined White Butterfly resting on a Heath-spotted Orchid on the Scottish Islands; second place went to **Harry Todd**, for a Golden-mantled Ground Squirrel in Rocky Mountain National Park; and **Sandy Sherman** received third-place mention for a Rufous Hummingbird visiting a blooming Century Plant in the Chiricahua Mountains in Arizona. Judges were **Dan Brauning**, **Chris Walters** and **John Harding**.

SHOW AND SELL: Former member **Harry Goldstein**, who was among those oldtimers shown in the slides that **Armas Hill** included in his Feb. 1 Centennial birthday party, would like to sell his Questar. He's asking \$1,000, which includes the scope, a porro-rectifying lens, a case, a tripod and a camera adapter. For information, call Harry at 215-365-4676. . . . **Ed Fingerhood** is trying to complete his run of *Cassinia* and is seeking the following issues: Volume 19 (1915), Volume 21 (1917), Volume 23 (1919), Volume 25 (1922) and Volume 26 (1925). Contact him at 215-843-5818.

Betsy Jones, formerly of the Avian Rehabilitation Center in Seaville, N.J., checks in from her home in Shoreview, Minn. Among her birding trips in 1989, she tells us, she went to Southeast Asia, Bali, Indonesia and Hawaii. In February, she was to visit southern India and the Andaman Islands. . . . **Stephen Hartly**, DVOC president in 1976 and 1977, has moved to Venice, Fla. He reports that he's living on a "1½-acre jungle paradise" and that he "cuts his own bananas" on his property. He welcomes visitors: 5848 Denisor Drive, Venice, Fla. 34293, 813-497-6167. . . . Also traveling recently were **Jim Meritt** and **John Danzenbaker**, who trekked to Texas in December.

DVOC welcomes new members **Myra Goldfarb**, **Jeff Belford**, and **Rosemary** and **Larry Wilson**. We wish condolences to the family of long-time member **Jay B. Hurst**, who died in February.

Field Notes From the Jersey Coast

(Continued from Page 3)

are well out in the center or on the distant shore of whatever body of water one is observing — much to the distress of the observer.

This introduction to the usefulness of a telescope on bird trips was to be responsible for the large demand later on of the fine scope owned by Thomas G. Cairns,⁷ who unquestionably is no bird watcher.

At Barnegat, John Hess located his car and much-needed overcoat and his place in our machine was filled by another stranded chap.⁸ Going back over the same route on which we had seen the redpolls, we met with no success in finding the identical spot, nor the birds. But we did, however, find our stranded passenger's car.

Shortly after this, we stopped at a small thoroughfare to consume considerable time with a heavily built duck, which we could only run down by elimination as a possible White-winged Scoter in some sort of unusual plumage. Built stocky as a scoter, very similar in shape and size, long white wing patches, dark brown head, almost the density of black, mottled dark brown back, plain brownish-gray breast, black bill, no white patches on the cheek. We all agreed to list it as a White-winged Scoter subject to further confirmation.⁹

By the time we had scribbled adequate notes, it had started to rain, and along the way home, it was discovered that the windshield wiper needed some attention. Completing the adjustment, we casually surveyed the nearby bay. Deciding that the bayshore demanded some inspection, we tramped to the edge. Here we had a brief view of a Holboell's Grebe.¹⁰ In circumventing the land that jettied out into the bay, we were able to see more scaups and Horned Grebes, to say nothing of getting our feet good and wet.

The trip home was uneventful, except for Ray passing a red light at Broad and Olney and getting one terrific lecture from one vile traffic policeman.¹¹



⁷Thomas G. Cairns was a Philadelphia Scout executive. He had procured the scope for star studying at the scouts' Treasure Island Camp.

⁸His car took off without him, perhaps as a joke.

⁹I believe it was ultimately identified as a scoter.

¹⁰Red-necked Grebe.

¹¹But no ticket!

