

# Philadelphia Larus



the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

VOL 19 NO. 1

JANUARY 1992

## The Bailey Tract

# Taking Time to Save a Site

by SANDRA SHERMAN

The six Saw-whet Owls are back again this winter.

Where? Same place Ward Dasey saw all those Connecticut and Mourning warblers and Lincoln Sparrows; where Kate Somerville and Jack Siler had that Painted Bunting this fall. Same place Tom Bailey found both Snowy and Long-eared owl last month.

We've come to know it as the "Bailey Tract," but, for many years, Tom Bailey has known it as an extension of his backyard. The 400 acres or so are tucked up against the New Jersey side of the Delaware River in the shadows of the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge.

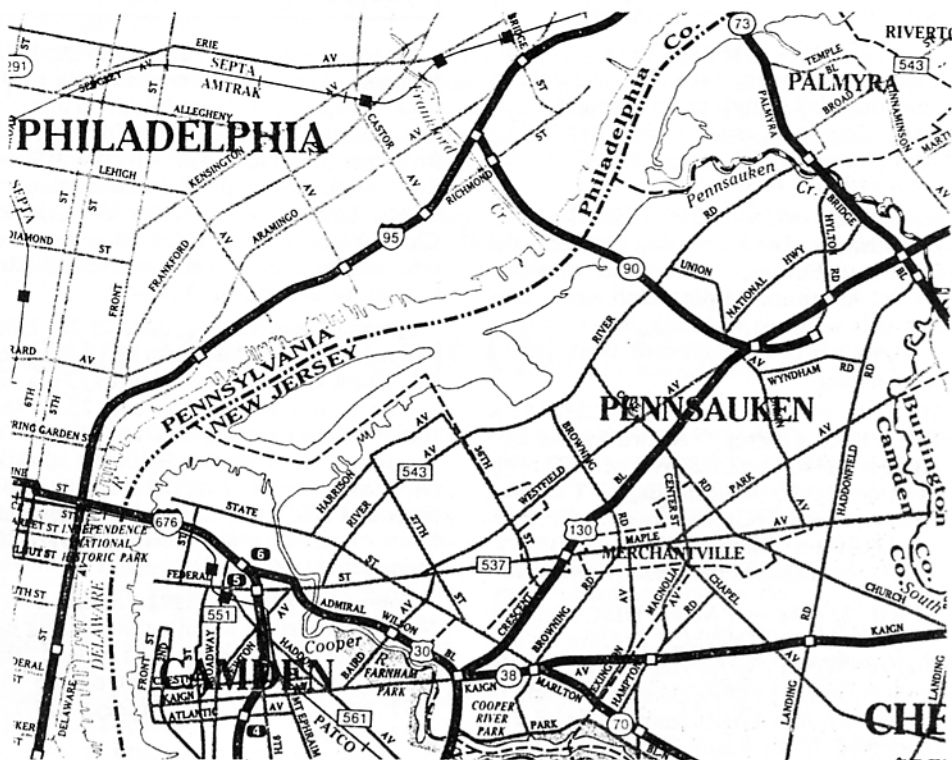
For about 10 years, Tom has tallied the avian species that have been seen here — the Snowy Owl was No. 211, the Long-eareds 212. Fifty-one of those are confirmed breeders.

During migration, especially southbound, anything might be discovered: Among those that have been are eight flycatchers, all six expected thrushes, all six vireos, 34 species of warblers, and an assortment of other goodies such as Mississippi Kite, Bald Eagle, Glaucous Gull, Western Kingbird and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Sounds like a place worth saving, no? Well, Tom's working on it.

The land is a combination of wetlands, including a freshwater tidal cove that attracts shorebirds, and woods and fields covered by grasses, low bushes, willows and cottonwoods. It is located at the mouth of the Pennsauken Creek; the boundaries are the river, the creek and Route 73.

Most of the land, Tom says, is already owned by the State of New Jersey and is under the administration of the Department of Environmental Protection, but more than a quarter of the land is privately owned. According to an article in the



The boundaries of the Bailey Tract are the Delaware River, the Pennsauken Creek and Route 73. It is seen here in the upper right-hand corner, just below the Route 73 sign.

*Philadelphia Inquirer* in June 1991, the site is one of 22 from Philadelphia to Trenton that the Army Corps of Engineers uses to dump mud and sand dredged from the river.

From Route 73, an ex-drive-in movie is visible. That area is now used for weekly flea markets. The area close to the river is where the dredge is dumped. Marloco, a sand-mining company based in Hainesport, N.J., owns about 100 acres and uses the dredge in its operation.

Since part of the tract is wetlands, Tom

says he hopes it is protected. He adds that Angelo Campo, the owner of Marloco, wants to sell part of his land, but that the asking price is too high. However, Tom stresses, Campo has been cooperative in trying to come to an agreement about preserving the land, as long as he can continue to do business there.

So what Tom has been trying to do — with the help of local resident Joan Quinn, president of the Palmyra Historical Society

(Continued on Page 3)

## PROGRAMS

Meetings are held the first and third Thursdays of the month at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th St. and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, unless otherwise indicated.

NOTE: A vote was taken at the annual election meeting to keep the starting time at 7:30 p.m.

For information on programs, call Hart Rufe, program chairman, 215-257-8677.

**JAN. 16, 1992 — FIRST BIRDING BONANZA AUCTION** (perhaps to become an annual event): Auctioneers Bob Mercer and Chris Dooley have already gathered members' bird books and other paraphernalia. See accompanying flier for details. All proceeds will benefit the DVOC Endowment Fund.

**FEB. 6, 1992 — PAT AND CLAY SUTTON:** "Birding the Llanos of Venezuela. Pat and Clay, both of whom are club members, authors and photographers, will share slides from their previous trips.

**FEB. 20, 1992 — RANDOLPH S. LITTLE,** research associate and seminar instructor in recording bird sounds at the Laboratory of Ornithology of Cornell University: "Birding by Sound." His program will feature slides and tape recordings.

**MARCH 5, 1992 — PETE DUNNE:** "The Featherquest: The Search for Birds and the Future of Birding." Pete, who considers DVOC his prime birding club again now that he's returned to South Jersey, will be hawking his newly published book of the same name.

**MARCH 19, 1992 — EARL SCHRIVER JR.:** "Birds of Prey." A bird bander and falconer for 40 years, Schriver will bring five live birds: Golden Eagle, Common Raven, a yellow Great-horned Owl, Peregrine Falcon and Northern Goshawk. Guests and cameras particularly welcome.

**APRIL 2, 1992 — PANEL DISCUSSION:** "How to Set Up, Organize, Prepare for and Run a World Series Big Day." Panel moderator will be Greg Hanisek, captain of the Bausch and Lomb team who has won more New Jersey Audubon World Series of

(Continued on Page 4)

## Philadelphia Larus

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

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

## New officers take over for new year

Dr. John J. Harding was elected president of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club at the group's annual meeting Jan. 2, 1992.

Other new officers are Judge W. Hart Rufe III, vice president and program chair, and Sandra L. Sherman, secretary. Barbara M. Haas continues as treasurer.

Newly elected to Council for three-year terms are Robert Mercer and Naomi Murphy. They joined Colin Campbell and William Murphy, whose terms expire in January 1993, and Dr. Earl H. Harrison and Paul Guris, who will serve until 1994. Also serving on Council is Franklin C. Haas, editor of *Cassinia*, and Brian Moscatello, as immediate past president.

Robert Sehl, a DVOC member since 1939, has been given the club's highest honor, the

DEVOC Award. Sehl is an honorary member of the club, as well as a trustee.

Edward R. Manners, a DVOC member since 1941, was named an honorary member.

Newly elected as club fellows are Dr. Erica Brendel, Ronald French and Sidney Lipschutz.

For his work in censusing the bird population of the Palmyra Tract and in taking steps to preserve the property, Tom Bailey was awarded the Julian K. Potter Award for outstanding contributions to field ornithology. William R. Stocku chaired the Potter Award Committee.

No Witmer Stone Award, given for outstanding publications, was presented this year.

## FIELD TRIPS

**Saturday to Monday, Jan. 18 to 20, 1992: Montauk Weekend.** A three-day trip to the tip of Long Island. Meet Friday, 6 a.m., at Kronschnabel Studios, 2866 Forrest Ave., Bensalem (one block west of I-95 at Street Road exit). Overnight accommodations in private homes, we hope, for all. Leaders: Chris Walters and Erica Brendel. For information, call Chris, 215-642-6862 (home), or 215-851-8278 (work).

**Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 25-26, 1992: Pocono Weekend at Pocono Environmental Education Center.** Meet Saturday, 8 a.m., at Day's Inn, Routes 309 and 22, Allentown. Bring sleeping bag and lunch for Saturday. \$30 includes Saturday cocktail party and dinner, overnight accommodations at PEEC, and Sunday breakfast and lunch. Leader: Phil Street, 215-647-8324 (home) or 215-687-6542 (work).

**Saturday, Feb. 1, 1992: Shark River, N.J., area.** Meet at 8 a.m. at the marina just off Route 35 in Belmar. Leaders: Bob Mercer, 215-968-1992 (home) or 215-785-1177 (work) and Chris Dooley, 215-785-1177 (work).

**Saturday to Monday, Feb. 15 to 17, 1992: Presidents Weekend in New England.** For information, call Colin Campbell, 302-478-5263 (home) or 302-996-2905 (work).

**Saturday, Feb. 29, 1992: Leap Year Day trip to Conowingo Dam, Md., and Southern Lancaster County.** Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Visitors Center in Fishermen's Park at the base of the dam. Leaders: Chris Dooley and Bob Mercer.

**Saturday, April 11, 1992: Pedricktown, N.J.** Meet at 6:30 a.m. on the causeway (Pedricktown Road) in Pedricktown. Leader: Frank Windfelder, 215-673-0240.

**Friday to Sunday, April 24 to 26, 1992:**

**Pocomoke Weekend.** Meet Friday night, 9 p.m., on the road to Elliot Island, Md. For details and maps, contact leaders Don Jones, 609-859-0281 (home) or 215-785-8010 (work), or Earl Harrison, 215-592-7950 (home) or 215-842-6315 (work).

**Throughout May: May Runs.** Contact Earl Harrison for reporting forms.

**Friday and Saturday, May 29-30, 1992: Hudson Canyon Pelagic Trip.** Meet Friday, 8:30 p.m., at 18th St. and the Bay, Barnegat Light, N.J. Boat returns Saturday, around 6 p.m. Cost: \$75. Send check, payable to Alan Brady, to him at Box 103, Wycombe, Pa. 18980. For information, call Alan, 215-968-2833 (work) or 215-598-7856 (home).

**July 9 to 19, 1992 (or close to that): Trip to Colorado.** Leader: Chris Dooley. Details still being worked out.

**Sunday, July 26, 1992: Bombay Hook and Delaware Bayshore.** Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Greater Wilmington Airport on Route 13. Leader: Sandy Sherman, 215-237-6814 (home) or 215-893-5739 (work). Note: Starting time may change depending on tides. Please call to confirm.

**Aug. 10 to 16, 1992: Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario.** A week of canoeing and birding in the North. Leader: Chris Dooley.

**Saturday to Monday, Sept. 5-7, 1992: Labor Day Weekend at Cape May.** Meet at dawn at Higbee Beach parking lot on any or all days. Leader: Chris Dooley.

**Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 19-20, 1992: Barnegat to Cape May Weekend.** Meet Saturday, 7:30 a.m., at Barnegat Light State Park. Leaders Don Jones or Earl Harrison.

**Sunday, Nov. 1, 1992: Bake Oven Knob.** Meet at the lookout parking lot at 9 a.m. for traditional day of hawk-watching. Leader: Chris Dooley.

# Another side to the banding story

*EDITOR'S NOTE: An article in the Fall 1991 Philadelphia Larus reported on the system of bands and flags used by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network's Pan American Shorebird Program.*

*The columns of this newsletter are, naturally, open to opinions of all DVOC members; the following article is presented, therefore, as another side to a controversial issue. It was written as a letter to the editor of the Atlantic City Press, in response to a May 27, 1991, article on shorebird banding.*

by KEITH SEAGER

The [New Jersey] State Fish and Game Department encourages the public not to disturb the shorebirds from feeding and resting along the major beach feeding areas that line Delaware Bay. State Zoologist Paulette Garron states, "It is very important not to disrupt the birds so they can feed as much as possible."

Nothing is more disruptive than banding operations, both state-run and state-authorized. All four species that are banded are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty. Since it is vitally important for birds to feed, rest and gain weight before making the journey to their destination in arctic Canada, these banding procedures and use of the cannon nets should be stopped.

It's already very well-known that the birds involved migrate from South America to arctic Canada. After many years of banding shorebirds, we know all the major stopover areas en route to their wintering and breeding grounds. The weight of the arriving birds and the weight, age and sex of departing birds have been very well-documented.

In Massachusetts and Canada, shorebirds are color-coded and then painted yellow, orange, etc. This is great for identifying a particular bird in a large flock, but it also makes the colored bird the preferred target for the main shorebird predators, the Peregrine Falcon and the Merlin.

The [Press] article states that as many as four leg bands may be

put on a single bird; this is appalling. It has been proven that these metal leg bands have caused leg abrasions, sores, infection and eventually death due to the loss of a leg or to the infection itself. These shorebirds prefer water areas where there already are pollution problems due to sewage, chemical wastes, etc. . . .

Banders often like to band just for the sake of banding. It's fun; they like to handle and see the birds close-up. This is the case with hawks and owls, as well as shorebirds and passerines. Many birds are injured, and some die during these banding operations. The bander's philosophy seems to be: Well, yes, we do have accidents once in a while, but in very small amounts compared with the numbers of birds we band.

Multiply the number of accidents from a single banding operation by the hundreds of banding operations in North America and you have a rather distressing statistic.

For one bird to be injured or to die while in a banding operation is inexcusable. These birds have thousands of hazardous miles to fly each year. Losing their lives in their natural environment is to be expected. However, to have injury or death occur as a result of human curiosity is intolerable.

The banders and the state and federal governments will defend themselves until the cows come home on the grounds of necessity of banding research. How many years are necessary and how many hundreds of thousands of birds need to be banded in order to make a conclusion?

The shorebirds that frequent the Delaware Bay shore were doing so before man appeared on the earth. It is only since they were "discovered" in the early 1970s that these shorebirds have been disturbed, banded and harassed by birders and banders. From 1900 to 1970, only a handful of birders were aware of the shorebird phenomenon.

The Delaware Bay has now been designated an International Shorebird Preserve. That's great, but let's stop researching our birds to death.

## Palmyra: A Little Cape May in Our Own Back Yard

*(Continued from Page 1)*

who also has taken an interest in the land — is to get the Burlington County Bridge Commission to agree to manage the land. The commission, Tom explains, has the resources to do this and is expected to rule on the proposal soon. The scenario would include the Army Corps dumping the dredge in a different part of the site — on Marlo's land, since it currently uses the dredge there. Volunteers would then be needed to do cleanup and trail maintenance.

Tom says that, in looking back at DVOC history, he realized the role the club played in saving the Tinicum area. The Palmyra site, he points out, is only five or six miles from where DVOC meets, and he'd like to see the group be as active in preserving this area on the other side of the river. He is hoping that the club will do more than just support his efforts verbally: Once the area is preserved, he hopes members will come forward to volunteer to do some of that maintenance.

You never know what you might see while you're hanging around.

Ward Dasey knows. He's the one who spotted the Mississippi Kite over the tract — while he (Ward, not the kite) was waiting at

the toll booth on the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge several years ago.

"It's not a beautiful place," Ward says, since parts of it are a covered-over landfill. But he finds at least two things to recommend it. First, he notes that during migration, "unlike Higbee's Beach, the birds are there all day." And second, "it's the best place in New Jersey to find Common Waxbills." He assures us, though, the waxbills, African natives, are not one of Tom's 212 species.

Tom is quick to praise the work Joan Quinn has done in contacting the various authorities, government agencies, other conservation organizations, etc., to get people and groups interested in keeping the land from being developed.

Among her accomplishments is getting PSE&G (Public Service Electric and Gas Co.) to agree to kick in some financial assistance. The utility, he says, has offered to build a boardwalk into the marsh and to put up boxes for Barn Owls and poles for Osprey nests. It also says it will provide telephone poles for outlining a parking lot and putting up lighting there.

Besides the many hours she has spent lobbying for the preservation of this land,

Joan has incurred some debts, having spent her own money on telephone calls, mailings, travel, etc. At the suggestion of Council member Chris Dooley, who also has been involved in the preservation efforts, Council has granted Joan Quinn a one-time \$500 grant to continue her work.

Joan, who is not a birder — but is starting to catch on since Tom has been showing her around the area — wants the club to know she is very grateful for the help. But, beyond the money, she says, "It means a heck of a lot more to me to be recognized for my work."

The site is currently not readily open to the public. Even though there is access to the state lands, visitors now must cut through the private land to get to the good birding areas. Parking is a problem because of the possibility of vandalism.

Tom says he has permission from the owners to go in and that he is willing to take DVOC members in with him, if they arrange the trip in advance. He hopes that once the land is preserved, all will be able to bird there on their own.

For information, call Tom, at 609-426-4727.

## LOCAL NOTES

**AUTHORS' ALERT:** Mark Robbins of the Academy of Natural Sciences' Ornithology Department, is awaiting imminent publication of *The Birds of Missouri: Their Status and Abundance*, of which he is senior author. He began work on the effort, with 13 color plates and 67 black and white plates, in the fall of 1984. Besides all the trained ornithologists in the club who have penned birdworks, we are honored to have others in the "author" category. The latest is **Howard Boyd**, who labored only five years on his book, *A Field Guide to the Pine Barrens of New Jersey*. Others, of course, are **Jack Connor**, whose *Season at the Point* reveals secrets about the Cape May scene and certain DVOC members, and **Pete Dunne**, whose *Featherquest* is about to be released and which mentions a few DVOCers, as well. Here's a sneaky Pete preview: Among those named — besides the locals and the famous — are **Armas Hill, John LaVia, Bill Tannery, Paul and Anita** (the former Covington) **Guris, Brian Moscatello and Janet Sedicino**.

Speaking of the Cape May scene, this town is hot. It is attracting quite a coterie of top-flight birders, including artist **David Sibley**, who is reportedly returning to the area soon. Another fascinating natural phenomenon happening down there is the attention being paid to other winged creatures: Interest in butterfly and dragonfly/damselfly identification, while still in the nymphal stages compared with birding, is growing by leaps and bounds, partly because of better field guides and partly due to the quality of close-focus binoculars.

**COMING OUT OF HIS SHELL:** Back to the Academy for a second — replacing **Steve Holt** as collection manager at Project VIREO is **David Wiedner**, who had worked in the Academy's Malacology Department.

Best wishes to **Edward S. Weyl**, who now resides in Columbia, S.C. Ed, who joined us at the Centennial Banquet in November 1990 while still living in Philadelphia, is the club member of longest standing, having joined DVOC in 1927. "I don't know whether I should be considered a migrant or an accidental," he has written to old friends up here.

**ONLY THE FINEST:** **Rick Mellon** is marketing a device to keep his Nikon 8x30E binoculars from doing an imitation of Coleridge's albatross: He has created an easy-access holster-like pouch to keep the binocs in and will be glad to arrange a demonstration of both the holster and the glasses to convince you of their worthiness. Call him at 215-493-0697. Nikon sponsored Rick's DVOC-1 team in the New Jersey World Series of Birding.

**Roy Imsick** reminds us of former club member **Dale Rex Coman**, who used to be a columnist for the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. Remember Rex? Remember the *Bulletin*?

**NOW IT CAN BE APPRECIATED:** Captain **Alan Brady's** voyage into the Final Frontier continued on Dec. 14 with his first public winter pelagic out to the Hudson Canyon. Those of us who were on Christmas Counts that day will remember it as a balmy but wet start that turned sharply autumnal when the winds picked up late in the day. Guess what that means when you're 75 miles out? (Ask **Frank Windfelder** and most of the others on the boat.) The chumming was good, and so were the birds, as the boat picked up a Razorbill, Pomarine Jaegers and a Great Skua that came up to the bow of the boat and hung around for about a half-hour.

Thanks to **Harry Todd**, who sparked the idea for the club's birding bonanza auction, set for Jan. 16, when he donated two boxes of books to the club. And thanks, too, to those who joined in the spirit.

**Jim Meritt** reports that **Chris Danzenbaker** has topped the 700 mark in the Lower 48. No. 700 was a Whooper Swan in California and 701 was a Tufted Flycatcher in Rio Grand Village, Texas.

**MADE TO BE BROKEN:** If they were looking, **Frank and Barb Haas** saw their records for big years in both Pennsylvania and Delaware fall in 1991. Six birders — club members **Joe Swertinski, Colin Campbell, Ellen Short and Andy Ednie**, as well as Maurice Barnhill and Joe Russell — all surpassed the Haases' 1981 Delaware record of 280. And, in Pennsylvania, their young friend **Deuane Hoffman** of Harrisburg made it to 293 species, topping their 1986 record by five.

The "winner" in Delaware, Joe ended up with 311 (unless he confirmed that three-second look on Dec. 29 at what he hoped was an Orange-crowned Warbler). On Dec. 28, he added Saw-whet Owl, one of only two "heard" birds (for the record, the other was Black Rail, and no, he currently does not count "heard" birds on his life list), and Common Murre, a nearshore flyby at Fenwick Island. Joe says he put almost 30,000 miles on two different vehicles during the year. He added 30 new state birds, bringing his total to 324, and 12 lifers.

He attributed the high count to a lot of luck, an exceptionally good year for rarities in the state, the Delmarva Ornithological Society's rapid notification system and the ability to get out of work quickly. He's an O.R. nurse — can you imagine the announcements on the hospital's P.A. system? STAT! Mr. Swertinski! Code Reddish (Egret)! STAT! Mr. Swertinski! Code Gray (Flycatcher)! STAT! Mr. Swertinski! Code Rufous (Hummingbird)!

Colin ended the year with 302 — and a Common Redpoll in Montreal, a new addition to his North American list.

Welcome to new members, from 1990 and '91: **David Wiedner, Mitch Smith, Louise Zemaitis, Jack Siler, Bill Hoenhe, David Jezyk, Robert Rufe, Ellen Short, Bruce Lantz, Joe Swertinski, Andy Ednie, John Freiberg, Steve Schnur, William Handley, Kate Somerville and Mary Ellen Krober**.

## PROGRAMS

(Continued from Page 2)

Birding titles than any other leader. Remaining panel members to be announced. Any volunteers?

APRIL 16, 1992 — **BETSY CROZER-JONES:** "The Effects of Oil on Birds." Betsy, a DVOC member, works for Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research Inc. She will explain her group's work both in the Delaware Bay and in the Persian Gulf.

MAY 7, 1992 — **COLIN CAMPBELL:** "The Scottish Highlands and Islands." Another talented club member, Colin will describe birds, birding and habitat in the wilds of his native land. He has promised to

deliver the program with an authentic Scottish accent.

MAY 21, 1992 — **ANNUAL SLIDE NIGHT** (Thought we'd never get to it, didn't you?). Besides the old stand-by categories — Birds, Natural History and Scenery — we're adding a fourth: Birders! Maximum of three slides per category per person.

JUNE 4, 1992 — May Run reports.

JULY 2, AUG. 6, SEPT. 3 AND SEPT. 17, 1992: Informal summer meetings.

OCT 1, 1992 — **DON FREIDAY:** "Fine Points of Raptor Identification."

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP: THE BEST BARGAIN FOR 1992

Only \$225, payable  
in three installments.  
Call Barb Haas,  
215-445-9609.