

# Philadelphia Larus

the newsletter of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club

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## RECORDING HISTORY

Quietly, George Reynard has built a legacy through sounds

By MEGAN EDWARDS

If you listen very carefully on a certain street in Riverton, N.J. — ignoring the roar of lawn mowers and the laughter of playing children and the rush of passing cars — you just might hear the odd whooping call of the Common Potoo. Or the tuneless grumbling of an Old Man Bird. Or even the raucous chatter of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

As hard as you might try though, you wouldn't find any feathers attached to those calls. The sounds, if you were to hear them, would come from an upstairs window in a comfortable tree-shaded house. This is where George Reynard works his magic.

For nearly four decades, Reynard, a past president and honorary member of DVOC, has wandered the fields and forests of the United States and the Caribbean islands, taping the grunts, squeaks, squawks, songs and calls of the birds and beasts he comes across. Back in his Riverton study, he has spent countless hours hunched over his splicing machine, organizing and cataloging the treasures he and a small army of co-operators have captured.

Reynard's interest in bird song stems from a DVOC program he attended shortly after he found out about the club. Dr. Peter Paul Kellogg, cofounder of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, was the speaker, and he brought with him some of the tapes he had made during his years in the field. Reynard was fascinated, and it wasn't long before he was emulating Kellogg, lugging his own 18-pound recorder along with him on bird walks.

"I soon had back trouble," Reynard jokes, recalling the cumbersome equipment of those

early days.

Now the Reynard study overflows with the evidence of George's passion. Two walls are lined with dozens of field guides and hundreds of boxes of reel-to-reel tapes. A profusion of works-in-progress litters the desktops. And perched on one corner of one desk is the splicing machine Reynard uses to create order from the chaos.

In the field, the song hunter — Reynard or one of a handful of Caribbean natives he has trained in the use of the equipment — fills each tape with as many of the songs and calls of a particular species as possible.

Each large reel-to-reel tape might contain the music of five to 15 species — and equipment noises, barking dogs, backfiring trucks and so forth. In his study, Reynard carefully edits out the blips and background noises, creating a comprehensive composite of a species' repertoire. The result is transferred onto a smaller tape, which is stored separately.

Reynard has taped some 850 positively identified species of birds — and several dozen "mysteries" — since the 1950s. Many of those recordings are now part of Cornell University's Library of Natural Sounds. He knows the songs, chip notes and calls of most of the birds of the eastern United States and the Caribbean and is the DVOC's resident expert when it comes to identifying an unknown bird call.

But if it weren't for a chance encounter at a Camden paint store, none of this might ever have happened.

Reynard's interest in birds began, typically enough, with scouting. Two professors involved with his Hiram College, Ohio, scout troop got him started. Reynard still has the small field guide he used then, though its crude illustrations draw a chuckle from him now.

But by the time he got to high school, Reynard had long since lost his youthful enthusiasm for birdwatching. Though he went to college in Maryland and later lived in spots where birds clustered thick around him, nothing resparked his interest in ornithology until a casual conversation at a neighborhood paint store — with former DVOC member Bob Haines — led to an invitation to attend a club meeting. And the rest, as they say, is history.

In the early days of his membership — he was voted in in 1949 —

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GEORGE REYNARD

# New 'Ticks' Discovered in New Jersey

By ALAN BRADY and GENE GLADSTON

The authors of this article believe that the problem of ludicrously tiny Big Day lists can never be solved, given the antiquated rules under which we must operate. Our modern transportation and optical equipment, combined with skilled and dedicated teams, have so far been able to garner lists of barely over 200 species — an amount so puny it would be laughable were it not for the dire realities of the situation.

The present Environmental Rule: "If a species is known to be on a nest or feeding nestlings in a nest, birders may go a short distance from the nest and wait the amount of time it would take to see the bird. The species may then be counted." On the New Jersey World Series of Birding, this is noted as an E.T. (Environmental Tick).

This rule, while laudable, is only a small beginning and will not produce the lists of over 500 (and subsequent monetary remuneration) that are certainly our due. With the aforementioned in mind, we believe the following simple and logical "ticks" will solve the problem and lead to happier and more altruistic Big Days.

**H.T., Historic Tick:** Passing the precise location and knowing the exact date of a former observation of years gone by (prime example: the Fork-tailed Flycatcher on New England Road, May 16, 1985).

**A.T., Anticipated Tick:** When a bird such as a bittern is known to be in a marsh, and you know it could appear at any moment, that cer-

tainly is a good, honest tick.

**T.T., Thrush Tick:** While waiting for dawn, one can hear a variety of migrants overhead. If at least five calls are heard, check off the five thrushes. Saves valuable daylight birding time. If Bicknell's Thrush becomes a full species, six calls result in a six ticks.

**Ph.T., Phantom Tick:** Already in common use today, and not just on big days. A Rough-legged Hawk disappears behind the trees, but when seen again has turned into a crow. The original spotter is positive there are two birds. What the hell, count the hawk.

**B.G.T., Big Gun Tick:** When the big-time birder makes a bad call and other team members are too abashed to correct him. (We could give examples, but they're too embarrassing.)

**Th.T., Theoretical Tick:** "We're here at the right time, at the right place. The Whips should be calling. They're always here. Never missed them before. I think I hear one."

**T.T., Too Tick:** Too windy, too quiet, too noisy, too cold, too hot, too wet, too dry, too bright, too dark, too far, too hazy. It must be a Greater Golden.

**G.T., Geographical Tick:** The area being birded is within the geographical range, migratory route or possible wandering of desired species.

**F.B.T., The Forgotten Bird Tick:** When checking over the list before handing it in, someone says, "We must have had a Hairy somewhere. It's been a long day."

## Projects in Three States Benefit From DVOC Funds

By JANICE GORDON  
Co-Conservation Committee Chair

On the recommendation of the DVOC Conservation Committee, several area projects are to receive funds raised through the club's support of its team in the 1995 New Jersey World Series of Birding. This year, the recipients were announced prior to the World Series so that those supporting the team would know how their pledges would be used.

First-time team member and new captain Megan Edwards spurred her charges — Paul Guris, Bill Stocku and Mike Fritz — into ninth place in a field of 51. The DVOC/Nikon team identified 198 species during the 24-hour birddathon in the state of New Jersey. Along the way, they raised more than \$1,100 for the Conservation Committee to disburse.

The club chose projects that could have an impact on the quality of local bird habitats and birding. Here are the projects:

✓ The first \$250 was targeted to sponsor the raising of one or two Osprey platforms at the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum.

The idea is the brainchild of Ed Fingerhood, who corralled Alan Poole, Academy of Nat-

ural Sciences' ornithologist and Osprey expert, as a consultant. Ed then secured the approval of Dick Nugent, refuge manager. Tinicum will be responsible for building the platform(s), which will be placed on the edge of the main impoundment in full view of refuge visitors. Work is expected to begin this winter.

It is hoped the potential nesting sites will attract Ospreys to return to the city for the first time since the 1930s. The closest site to the south that they breed now is just south of the Commodore Barry Bridge; to the north, the Poconos is the closest area.

✓ The next \$500 has been set aside for additional land acquisition at the new Nature Conservancy sanctuary on the Manumuskin River in Cumberland County, N.J.

This 39-square-mile tidal marsh, once planned as a hazardous waste-disposal site has hosted 232 bird species. It has a direct impact on nearby Delaware Bay sites such as Thompson's Beach, Moore's Beach and Reed's Beach, where hundreds of thousands of hungry Red Knots feast on horseshoe crab eggs each May.

✓ The remaining funds were voted to be

used to continue support of last year's project, the Nature Conservancy's Pocono land acquisition.

In 1994, the DVOC/Nikon entry in the World Series of Birding raised more than \$500 in pledges. On the recommendation of the Conservation Committee, the club donated \$500 to the Nature Conservancy for land acquisition at Two-Mile Run, now known as the Thomas Darling Preserve, near Blakeslee in the Poconos.

With ever more roads planned to speed travelers to and through the Poconos, the Nature Conservancy has mounted a concerted campaign to acquire and conserve as much of the remaining unspoiled environment of the Poconos as possible.

Although it is primarily the unique plant communities that have inspired the conservancy's efforts, the tracts are also vital resting and breeding places for neotropical migrants. Analysis of data collected for the *Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992) shows that 105 species of birds, including neotropical migrants, use the Darling and Long Pond

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# PROGRAMS

Meetings are usually held the first and third Thursdays of the month at 7:30 p.m., at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, 19th St. and Benjamin Franklin Parkway. For information, call Sandy Sherman, 610-237-6814 (home) or 215-893-5739 (work).

Parking is available at the Logan Square Parking Garage, 1815 Cherry St., at a reduced rate. This is an indoor, patrolled lot. Get your parking ticket validated at the Academy.

SEPTEMBER 21, 1995 — Informal summer meeting.

OCTOBER 5, 1995 — RON AUSTING, "That Was Then, This Is Now: Ramblings of a Professional Bird Photographer." An Indiana resident, Austing has had his works published in many national magazines, including *Audubon*, *Field and Stream*, *Outdoor Life* and *Natural History*. Some of his magnificent, 16x20-inch, double-matted color prints will be available for sale at this meeting.

OCTOBER 19, 1995 — LOUIS BEVIER and FRED PURNELL, "The Philosophy of Birding in Italy." A highbrow travelogue. Purnell, chairman of the philosophy department at Queens College in New York, studied Italian Renaissance philosophy for two years at the Vatican in Rome. Bevier is an environmental consultant and editor of the *Atlas of Breeding Birds of Connecticut*.

NOVEMBER 2, 1995 — DVOC BOOK AUCTION. Auctioneer Bob Mercer has come up with some gems this year. Bring donations by Oct. 19 meeting. All proceeds are turned

over to the Conservation Committee.

NOVEMBER 16, 1995 — DR. NOEL SNYDER, ANNUAL BANQUET. "Pining for the Pines: Reintroduction of the Thick-billed Parrot to Arizona." Dr. Snyder, a former area resident, is director of the parrot program for the Wildlife Preservation Trust International, headquartered here in Philadelphia. He will have just returned from Mexico, where he is conducting research on both the Thick-billed and Maroon-fronted parrots, both of which prefer pine-forest habitat. He is also well-known for his work in protecting the California Condor.

DECEMBER 7, 1995 — SHAWNEEN FINNEGAN, "A Cross-Country Photo Quiz." Finnegan, photo editor of *Birding* magazine, is a professional wildlife artist and photographer. She serves as a field trip leader for WINGS and Cape May Bird Observatory.

DECEMBER 21, 1995 — TOM WALKER, "Managing for Birds at Tinicum." The assistant manager of the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, Walker has served as a ranger at Yellowstone National Park and as a Navy regional biologist.

JANUARY 5, 1996 — ANNUAL MEETING. Election of officers and reports of Christmas Bird Counts, plus famous refreshments.

*Alan Brady and other DVOC members will work with the Academy of Natural Sciences staff to make use of the Academy's collection of bird skins to help birders make difficult identifications. Beginning Sept. 23, the skins*

will be available in the auditorium lobby from 7 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month.

## FIELD TRIPS

For information about these or other trips, contact Tom Bailey, Field Trip chairman, 609-426-4727 (home) or 908-758-4402 (work).

Sunday, Sept. 17, and Saturday, Sept. 23. Palmyra, N.J. For the fall passerine migration. Call for meeting time and location. Leaders: Sept. 17, Tom Bailey; Sept. 23, Ward Dasey 609-953-1685 (home) or 215-886-2220 (work).

Saturday, Nov. 4. Raccoon Ridge, Warren County, N.J. One of the best sites in New Jersey for raptor migration, especially Golden Eagle. Call for meeting time and location. Leader: Tom Bailey.

Saturday, Dec. 2. Pelagic trip out of Brielle, N.J. Contact Armas Hill at Focus on Nature Tours, 302-529-1876.

National Audubon Christmas Count Period: Dec. 16, 1995, to Jan. 2, 1996.

## Philadelphia Larus

Send information you would like considered for publication in Philadelphia Larus to:  
Sandra Sherman, editor  
912 North St.  
Collingdale, Pa. 19023  
610-237-6814 (home) / 215-893-5739 (work) / paavocet@aol.com

You are cordially invited to the  
DVOC Annual Banquet  
Thursday, November 16, 1995  
at

Dugan's Restaurant  
7900 Roosevelt Blvd.  
Philadelphia, Pa.

Cash Bar: 6 p.m.; dinner: 7 p.m.  
Guest Speaker:

Dr. Noel Snyder

Research biologist, Portal, Ariz.  
"Pining for the Pines: Reintroduction of  
the Thick-billed Parrot to Arizona"

Reservations must be received by November 9.

For information, call Ed Fingerhood,  
banquet chairman, 215-637-2741

Clip this half and mail to:  
Ed Fingerhood  
70205 Delaire Landing Rd.  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19114-4468

Please reserve \_\_\_ spaces for:

\_\_\_\_\_ (names)

No.

_____	Breast of Capon, Stuffed Wild Rice	@ \$19.00
_____	Roast Prime Rib of Beef au jus	@ \$24.00
_____	Flounder Stuffed With Crabmeat	@ \$24.00

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to DVOC. Indicate dinner choice on check.

# RECORDING HISTORY

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the club was quite different, Reynard says now. For one thing, of course, its members were exclusively male.

The club took a lot of field trips, he said, but destinations were strictly local. Trips farther afield — to Guatemala, Belize, Alaska and other exotic locales — didn't come until years later. In the early days, members went out alone or in small groups, rising at 4 a.m. to pay visits their regular "spots." And they took copious notes on what they saw and where they saw it. Reynard hooked up with fellow member Steve Harty, who worked for the Academy of Natural Sciences.

"I went out with him quite a bit," Reynard recalled. "He lived over in Rancocas Woods, so we made kind of a little team and went on all of our trips together."

Reynard remembers well some of the adventures they had while birding. One year, when his job as a botanist with Campbell Soups took him to Homestead, Fla., to oversee the winter tomato crop, fellow DVOC members Bob Haines, Ed Manners and Steve Harty came to visit and bird. The four took a canoe trip into the Everglades, where Reynard taped a number of nocturnal birds.

The group planned to spend the night in the Glades, Reynard said. The other three brought their jungle hammocks, but George, who didn't have one, spent the night in the canoe. He covered himself with a tarp to protect himself from the mosquitoes ("with my nose sticking out," he explains), and drifted off to sleep.

Late in the night, the boat suddenly reared out of the water, then dropped back in. Minutes later, it happened again. Startled, Reynard tried to figure out what was happening. Time passed with no further levitation, so eventually he dozed off again.

He might not have slept so peacefully had he known then what the morning light later revealed — a shark cruising around the shallow area where the boat was tied.

In the early years of Reynard's taping, few bird species had been recorded; most people weren't interested in chasing birds around with tape recorders. Though his friends and fellow birders appreciated the work he was doing, few followed his example. Ed Manners was a notable exception, Reynard said. Manners took his recording equipment as far as Tierra del Fuego, at the very southern tip of South America.

Reynard found the lack of existing recordings challenging. Coupled with his lifelong interest in things musical, the thrill of recording a previously uncaptured sound drew him in.

Reynard has assigned himself the project of documenting the birds of the Greater Antilles.

"Just to be able to go out and get things that nobody else had; that's part of it," he said.

That eagerness allowed Reynard to be one of the chief agents in the rediscovery of the Puerto Rican Whip-poorwill, a species that had been declared "extinct" by no less an authority than James Bond. When a local Fish and Wildlife employee came to Reynard with the request that he help identify an unknown night call, he scooped up his equipment and went along. He captured the song but couldn't identify the singer. So, for the next several months, after his workday at Campbell Soup had ended (more tomato crops), he interviewed people in the area and fruitlessly hunted for the mysterious songster.

Finally, Harty, down for a visit, managed to see a singing bird in a flashlight beam. Several days later, a expert marksman brought down a male bird that was later identified as the whip-poorwill.

Reynard, now 81, is showing no signs of slowing down. Though he doesn't travel much anymore, and his hearing may have slipped a little ("Those Grasshopper Sparrows sing a lot quieter now," he admits), his instinct for what constitutes a good recording remains as sharp as ever.

In addition to creating a battery of tapes for researchers from all corners of the country, Reynard has assigned himself the project of documenting the birds of the Greater Antilles, a chain of islands in the Caribbean.

From tapes he donated, Cornell Lab released bird-song records for three islands, Puerto Rico (out of print), Cuba and Dominican Republic. A fourth, for Jamaica, is now under way and is planned as both CD and cassette. And if that's not enough to keep him busy, he adds with a laugh, he'll need at least 15 years to fill out all the paperwork that must accompany submissions to the Library of Natural Sounds.

The most important contribution Reynard has given to DVOC is his three-volume "Voices of Birds and Birders," a set of three, 90-minute audio cassettes issued for the club's centennial celebration in 1990. Along with a descriptive booklet, Reynard has compiled a set of about 150 bird songs and calls, some of which were recorded on DVOC field trips in North and South America, as well as other trips to the Caribbean, Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Also on the tapes are the voices of more than 100 club members, as well as a few special guests over the years.

Copies of the tapes are available by sending \$10 to Barbara Haas, Treasurer, 2469 Hammertown Rd., Narvon, Pa. 17555-9726.

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tracts during breeding.

The 1993 Conservation Committee donation, which included funds raised from the club's Centennial Fund, sent \$2,000 to the Natural Resources Defense Council for use in its suit against Texaco for releasing harmful chemicals into the Delaware River from the company's Delaware City refinery.

For those who have yet to pay their 1995 pledges, or for those who wish to donate additional funds to the Conservation Committee, send your checks to Barbara Haas, DVOC Treasurer, 2469 Hammertown Rd., Narvon, Pa. 17555-9726.

Thanks again to the DVOC/Nikon team members, as well as to all those who, by supporting the team, also support the tristate area's birds and their habitats.