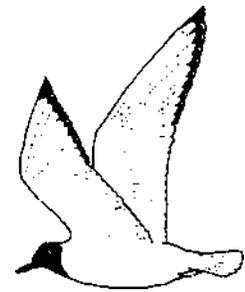


# Philadelphia Larus



Vol. 28 No. 3

Autumn 2001

## WSB Report

*Cornell Team Ties with DVOC's Lagerhead Shrikes, and Takes Home Urner Stone Cup.*

Paul Guris, Mike Fritz, Bill Stocku and Adrian Binns started out at midnight with an Eastern Screech Owl at Great Swamp and pulled up to the finish line at Cape May Point with 214 species. In Adrian's words, "At the finish line the two teams that had shared the most showed that with a great deal of scouting and some luck thrown in, they would come in with very respectable scores once again. But this time it was with identical totals - 214 species. We couldn't have been happier for the Cornell team. With all the hard work that they put in they finally got to take home the Urner Stone Cup to go along with the title of undisputed conservation fund-raisers that they have held for so long, raising over \$150,000 this year alone."

## 2001: A Chicken Odyssey

by Adrian Binns

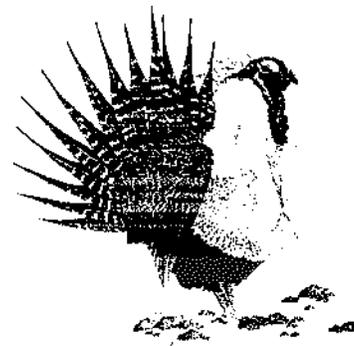
Last April, Erica Brendel, Bert Filemyr, Lynn Jackson, Karl Lukens, Martin Selzer, Chris Walters and I shared a truly amazing experience viewing all of North America's lekking "chickens" in Colorado.

From the foot-stomping Greater .....



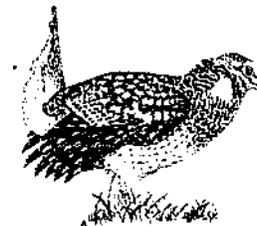
© Adrian Binns

and the Lesser Prairie-Chickens, to the statuesque Greater Sage Grouse.....



© Adrian Binns

and its smaller, filoplume-tossing cousin, the Gunnison's, to the remarkable "windup-toy-like" Sharp-tailed Grouse



© Adrian Binns

## Upcoming Events

### Explorer Series Lecture

featuring

Robert S. Ridgely, Ph.D.

Special presentation of

his new book: *The Birds of Ecuador*

Academy of Natural Sciences

**Wednesday, September 19, 2001**

5:30 P.M. Registration - Parkway Entrance

6:00 - 7:00 P.M. Presentation - Academy Auditorium

### Special DVOC Meeting featuring

Sam Fried, birder, naturalist, writer, photographer:

"Belize - Little-known Jewel of the Caribbean."

**Thursday, September 20, 2001**

(see Programs on Page 3)

### Annual Banquet

**Thursday, November 15, 2001**

Williamson's Restaurant

(see Flyer on Page 7)

Continued on Page 6

## Looking Ahead ...

Greeting, members! How time flies! Here we are already into fall migration and about to start our 112th season of the DVOC. This season will welcome us with many changes, all of them positive.

For starters, we have received a special invitation from the Academy to attend an evening of tribute on September 19. Our member, Robert Ridgely, will introduce his new book, *Birds of Ecuador*. He will also announce exciting renovations in the Ornithology Department. It will be a gala evening. Plan to attend.

This year's programs are starting early this year with Sam Fried's presentation of "Belize - Little-known Jewel of the Caribbean." The DVOC will have a blockbuster opening this year with back to back events you won't want to miss.

Colin Campbell promises an extraordinary list of programs for succeeding DVOC evenings. In the meantime, Adrian Binns is already contemplating programs for next year.

Continuing in this vein of renewal, our banquet this year will be at Williamson's Restaurant on City Line Avenue near the Schuylkill Expressway. There will also be more about this in this newsletter. It was decided that we needed a change with both good food and a more central location. We think our choice will please.

Yet another change, and one not easily arrived at, was the decision to raise the cost of dues. Our dues have been the lowest of most clubs in the country for many years. Expenses to run the club (paid speakers, printing costs, meeting space, etc.) have either increased or will shortly do so. In order to keep up with the times and to insure the solvency of our beloved organization, a dues increase has become necessary. We of the Council feel that the rewards of membership more than compensate for this increase.

Looking forward to another great year, I am

Your president,  
Ron French

## Field Trips

**Sat., Aug. 18:** Bombay Hook and Environs, Delaware.  
Meet at visitors center at 7:30 AM.  
Leader: Ellen Short

**Sun., September 2:** Cape May Pelagic on "Morning Star" for White-faced Storm-petrel; shearwaters, incl. Cory's, Greater, Audubon's; 3 jaegers; South Polar Skua; Bridled Tern; Red-necked Phalarope.  
Armas Hill

**Sun., Sept. 16:** Fall birding at Palmyra Cove Nature Park, Palmyra, NJ. Migrating warblers and sparrows. 7 AM in car park.  
Ward Dasey

**Sat., Oct. 13:** Tuckerton Marshes, NJ for Sharp-tailed Sparrows incl. all races of Nelson's as well as Salt-Marsh Sharp-tails. 7:30 AM at end of 7 Bridges Road.  
Frank Windfelder

**Sat., Nov. 3:** Bake Oven Knob, PA for raptors, incl. Golden Eagle and Goshawk. 8:30 AM at car park.  
Frank Windfelder  
Bill & Naomi Murphy

**Sat., Dec. 1:** Pelagic out of Brielle, NJ. Going close to Hudson Canyon for Great Skua, Manx Shearwater, alcids, kittiwakes and fulmars. 5 AM to 7 PM  
Paul Guris  
Armas Hill

**Sat., Dec. 8:** Pelagic out of Brielle, NJ. See Dec. 1 above.

## Council Votes to Raise Club Dues

(Excerpts from Minutes)

At a special DVOC meeting on July 12, 2001, Council members voted unanimously to raise annual membership dues from \$15 to \$25, and life membership dues from \$225 to \$375, payable in three annual installments of \$125 each. Any current member who wishes to initiate a life membership has until December 31, 2001 to make a payment at the current rate of \$225 in three annual installments of \$75.

Greater costs such as fees for guest speakers, publishing and mailing *Larus* and *Cassinia*, and meeting space necessitate the increase. It was noted that club dues have not been raised in 15 years, and are currently among the lowest for any comparable club.

Other items discussed at the summer meeting were: the status of Phil Street's birding library, which is being catalogued by Sandy Sherman; meeting space at the Academy, for which there appears to be no viable alternative; and fees for speakers.

## Programs .....

**September 20: Sam Fried: "Belize -Little-known Jewel of the Caribbean."** Sam is a birder, naturalist, writer and photographer who lives in Connecticut. He is past-president of the Hartford Audubon Society and cofounder of Flights of Fancy Adventures, Inc., a birding and natural history company specializing in North, Central and South American destinations. His talk will take us to Lamanai, Chan Chich and Crooked Tree for a look not just at birds, but at mammals and Mayan ruins as well.

**October 4: Frank Windfelder: "Vagrant Birds - The Western Willet."** DVOC member, field trip leader, raconteur and generally good egg, Frank will use the power of high technology to present his meticulously researched program in what is hoped to be only the first in a series of educational and informative seminars on unusual birds in our area.

**October 18: Daphne Gemmill: "Madagascar - A Conservation Challenge."** Daphne, an accomplished photographer, writer and editor, is president of Going Birding, Inc. She has served as president of her local Sierra Club, and on the boards of directors of the Audubon Naturalist Society and local bird club. She was editor of the 20th Anniversary issue of Birding Magazine, and a birdfinding guide to our national forests. A manager in the environmental field for more than 25 years, Gemmill recently retired from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

**November 1: Members' Slide Night.** Bring along your slides, videos, digitized images, etc. for an evening of fun and entertainment. Enter your slides in the all-embracing categories: Birds, Birders, Landscapes and Fauna & Flora. Prizes for best, but no extra prizes for 47 in one category.

**November 15: Annual Banquet. Guest Speaker: Bill Murphy, author of "The Birds of Trinidad and Tobago,"** the definitive where-to-guide for these bird-rich islands. We are assured of an excellent presentation by the expert in the field.

**December 6: TBA.** The speaker booked is about to move to new horizons. A top quality replacement will be found.

**December 20: DVOC Members' "Memorable Moments in Birding."** Following last year's highly successful evening featuring no less than 14 members' contributions, you are once again invited to enthrall the audience with a tale or two about your adventures in birding. Long or short, old or new, rough or smooth (stories, not people ... oh, I don't know, though) - just let me know in good time that you have a tale you know we'd like to hear! Slide projector available for illustrations.

[www.delawarevalleybirding.com](http://www.delawarevalleybirding.com)

by Adrian Binns

The Delaware Valley Birding website is up and running. Lynn Jackson and I have been setting up the site to inform everyone of ALL that the Delaware Valley can offer birders. No one site caters to the needs of area birders and this is the goal of this site. I have received a lot of assistance and support from a number of people, and this is greatly appreciated. As one can see, there is still an awfully long way to go. In a nutshell, it will be a never-ending project, particularly the section on site guides. If anyone can help out by writing a site guide to a favorite hotspot that you visit, know well or would like others to know about, we would be most appreciative.



Barn Owl © Adrian Binns

I hope that you find the site useful and visit it often. For those of you who make purchases over the Internet, I hope that you will consider the sales department, including Amazon.com. We get a percentage of the sales, and every little bit will help in supporting the cost of maintaining the cost of the website.



Please submit announcements, pieces to be considered for publication, schedules and other information for *Philadelphia Larus* to:  
Jane Henderson

DVOC Website Address:  
<http://www.dvoc.org>

## Memorial

by Lyndia Terre © 2000

They were all climbing the war memorial  
each at their own pace  
some left their bikes on the lowest hill  
some strong enough raced to the top

the birding was not good that day  
because there had been too many  
days of warming weather  
and this was another

he sat down. "Tired?" he thought, "Why?"  
feeling indigestion, "maybe too much breakfast?"  
and then he fell back, forever.

and with his falling, the beauty of the day  
disappeared and they rushed to him  
wondering why a man would snore  
as he sat back  
and they called for help by radio  
and they worked his heart  
and she gave him mouth to mouth  
and some encouraged as she breathed

and they came by truck  
so quickly and the doctor on the ATV  
and they drove him down the hills  
an I.V. running fluids, hoping, hoping

and a son was with him  
and a second son was brought  
and they were hoping, hoping  
but he had already taken his last breath  
on the remotest island in the world

a place of beauty  
he had dreamt of seeing  
with his sons

and late that afternoon  
a garganey was sighted  
flying back and forth  
back and forth  
and the sons came out to watch it  
knowing that their father dreamt of seeing one  
knowing he could only see through their eyes  
not his own

and the garganey flew  
back and forth  
before the crowd accompanied by two mallards

and was it not strange that  
there were three birds?  
and was it not strange that the garganey  
appeared that day?



Jay, John and Vernon LaVia arriving at Airport on Attu

## John LaVia (1939-2000)

Nearly one year ago (September 9, 2000), my father died on a rare sunny day on the Island of Attu, Alaska, while on a bird watching trip with my brother Vernon, and me. I waited a year to write this column because I had hoped that the passage of time would provide me with some great insight or revelation. It hasn't—I am still deeply saddened and I miss Dad every day. But I will try to tell you a little something about him.

My father viewed the trip to Attu as a trip of a lifetime. He retired early from his job as an English teacher at Moorestown Friends School to go to Attu and he talked my brother and me into joining him. How could we say no? My memories of growing up during the mid 70's are infused with vivid images from our 4-6 week summer birding expeditions in our VW bus—Arizona one year, Montana the next, and capped off with a trip from New Jersey to Guadalajara, Mexico and back. Attu was the chance for the birding LaVias to take their show on the road again.

On September 9, 2000, my father was chasing Rock Ptarmigans (a yearbird) in the interior of Attu. In a little valley, surrounded by tundra, my father got off his bike, sat on the ground, and had a massive heart attack. He died instantly. At least two doctors and a nurse were in the group birding with Dad, and they unsuccessfully tried to resuscitate him. The Ptarmigans were in sight, but we'll never know if he saw them. Dad died with his binoculars on doing what he loved to do; and from that I gain great solace.

Dad's passion for birding was inextricably tied to the DVOC. Dad loved everything about the DVOC. He loved editing the newsletter in the 1970s. (I have vivid memories of stuffing what seemed to me to be hundreds of envelopes with those paper-cut-inducing newsletters.) He loved being President of the DVOC from 1986 to 1987. He loved the Thursday night meetings (both the official and the unofficial portions of the meetings). He loved the people and the camaraderie. But most of all, he loved the birding. From the early DC-3 trips to Churchill, Manitoba and St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, to trying to pick out the white-rumped sandpiper amongst the peep at "Brig", to standing on a freezing New Jersey jetty looking for alcids, Dad was an exuberant birder.

My father had great birding plans for his retirement too. He was looking forward to birding every morning during spring and fall migrations, something he had never been able to do. He was looking forward to exploring the pine barrens and finding more southern specialties. He had booked a birding trip to Cuba for the fall of 2000, (which I had to cancel) and he was trying to talk me into joining him somewhere in the tropics in 2001. He was also planning to travel extensively with my mother, Jo, on "non-birding" trips. (Though, I know well that there is no such thing as a non-birding trip—I got my life European Kestrel at the Vatican.) It is too bad these plans will remain forever incomplete.

I have experienced an interesting phenomenon during the year since my father's death—I find myself birding less. Perhaps it is because when I am alone in the field, my thoughts invariably wander to my father and I can barely suppress the tears. I hope I snap out of it because I do love to bird.

Without being too maudlin or trite, I leave you with these thoughts. Next time you gather for a morning bird rendezvous at a Jersey diner, pull up a chair for my father; next time you go to Bake Oven Knob, save him a flat rock and a beer; next time you go on a pelagic trip, save Dad a spot by the rail; and the next time you go to the Bailey Tract or Brig or Cape May or Bombay Hook, look carefully for my father—you may see him just around the corner. I promise you that though he cannot be there in body, he is surely there in spirit.

Thank you for all the support and kind words you have offered me and my family since my father's death.

Jay LaVia

## May 25 - 26: Super Pelagic Trip out of Hudson Canyon

by Alan Brady

5:00 A.M. 89 miles out, 26.144 Lat., 43.083 Long. 60.6 F. Water Temp., Also traveled 8 miles further east to about 4,000 ft. depth. Low wind northeasterly, changing to a southeast direction. Good visibility, mild and some sun early, changing to all sun later. No rain, but occasional fog on our return from 40 miles in to the beach.

Common Loon	1
Northern Fulmar	39
Cory's Shearwater	5
Greater Shearwater	32
Sooty Shearwater	13
Wilson's Storm-Petrel	950
Leach's Storm-Petrel	5
Northern Gannet	2
D.C. Cormorant	3
Red-necked Phalarope	4
Red Phalarope	32
Pomarine Jaeger	49
Parasitic Jaeger	3
Long-tailed Jaeger	1
South Polar Skua	1
Laughing Gull	2
Herring Gull	2
Lesser Black-backed G.	1
Greater Black-backed G.	6
Bl.-legged Kittiwake	1
Common Tern	17
Atlantic Puffin	2

Also Barn Swallow, Common Dolphin, Loggerhead Turtle, Mola-Mola.

Our BEST trip in many years. Birds were extremely confiding, giving knee-buckling looks, or is said by the Brits, "cripling looks." We were never out of sight of several Pomarine Jaegers, and the Skua followed us like a puppy.

The Long-tailed Jaeger was 37 miles from the beach and was spotted, low on the water, by Kate. It was chasing two phalaropes which disappeared, and the Jaeger glided back in our wake. Unfortunately, the captain said we were running too late to turn back to chase it.

Three magnificent dark poms. All the Fulmars, Red Phalaropes, the close Parasitic Jaegers, lovely immature Kittiwake, and, of course, the pair of PUFFINS were all the tops.

Many thanks to all who participated, and to the many who spotted birds. Sorry only for the very wrong weather forecast by the weather bureau.

## Chickens, cont'd from Page 1

the dancing "chickens" will surely rank amongst the highlights of everyone's birding experiences.

We were surrounded by stunning scenery, from the flat Pawnee Grasslands to the steep-sided walls of Cottonwood Canyon, to the snow-covered peaks of the Rocky Mountains.

We saw over 20 species of waterfowl, including side-by-side comparisons of female Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes; 14 species of raptors, including Prairie Falcons and Golden Eagles; all three species of Rosy-Finch, including the Hepburn's race of Gray-crowned in a large flock of 125 at Loveland Ski Basin; 5 species of owls including a very confiding Northern Pygmy-Owl; and 6 other gallinaceous birds including White-tailed Ptarmigan .....



© Adrian Binns

and Blue Grouse.....



© Adrian Binns

We finished with a very respectable 175 species, and have scheduled this again for April 2002.

**Black Rail or Bust: DVOC Pokomoke Weekend May 4-6**  
 Very Short Summary of Colin's report:  
 "Well, it was a bust. No Black Rail seen, one only one heard distantly by one participant. Coupled with the almost total lack of migrants (throughout the region, by all accounts) one may be forgiven as thinking that this trip was a loser. No way. To the ten participants who lasted the whole three days, it had some really magic moments." Highlights: 160 species, including pipits, Screech-Owl, Barred Owl, warblers, sparrows, flycatchers, shorebirds, crab cakes, beer, BBQ.

# Annual DVOC Banquet

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Cocktails 6:00 PM (cash bar)

Dinner 7:00 P.M.

## Williamson's Restaurant

atop the GSB Building  
City Line and Belmont Avenues  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004  
(215) 839-7946

Ample Parking

**Speaker: Bill Murphy**

**Author of *The Birds of Trinidad and Tobago***

Bill has led more than 600 birding forays for the Smithsonian Institution, National Wildlife Federation, and on his own. This September he will visit Trinidad and Tobago, his 45th trip there. His book, *The Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*, first published in 1985, is now in its third edition, due out in December. His publications, 56 to date, cover books, book chapters, peer-reviewed articles, and book reviews. He discovered the first Reef-Heron for South America and a number of species new to Trinidad and Tobago. Currently in press: "Noteworthy observations of seabirds wintering in the southern Caribbean" (in "El Pitirre") and "First records of Caribbean Martin for Trinidad." Several DVOC members have accompanied him on trips to Trinidad and Tobago.

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## Banquet Reservation Form

Thursday, November 15, 2001 at  
Williamson's Restaurant  
atop the GSB Building  
City Line and Belmont Avenues  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004  
(215) 839-7946

6:00 PM Cocktails (cash bar) 7:00 PM Dinner

I (we) wish to order:

#\_\_ Beef Prime Rib @ \$28 (slow roasted to perfection) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
#\_\_ Chicken Elizabeth @ \$22 (baked breast of chicken with asparagus in lemon dill sauce) \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
#\_\_ Pasta Primavera (vegetarian) @ \$21 (pasta with choice of marinara or white wine sauce) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner includes cream of mushroom soup, garden salad, red bliss potatoes, broiled tomato Florentine, rolls & butter, and coffee and dessert, Williamson's lemon chiffon pie.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town, State and Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your and check, made out to DVOC, by November 10, 2001 (NO LATER) to:

Bernice and Joe Koplin, DVOC Banquet,



Atlantic Puffins & Pomarine Jaeger © Alan Brady

DVOC Larus