



Philadelphia Larus

Vol. 28 No. 4

Christmas Count Issue 2001

Christmas Bird Counts How and where you can help:

Saturday, December 15

- * **Oceanville, NJ: Brian Moscatello**, 201-871-7226 (h) or 201-568-6093 (bmoscat@ix.netcom.com)
- * **Wyncote, PA: Martin Selzer**, 215-233-9090 (after 8 PM) (mselzer@prius.jnj.com)
- * **Glenolden (Delaware County), PA: Nick Pulcinella** 610-583-3201 (nickpul@bellatlantic.net)
- * **Southern Bucks, PA: Bob Mercer**, 215-785-1177 (slnc@bellatlantic.net)

Sunday, December 16

- * **Cape May, NJ: Louise Zemaitis**, 609-898-9578 (obrienm@algorithms.com) Tally at house after count: Michael O'Brien & Louise Zemaitis 152 Stevens Street, West Cape May, NJ 80204
- * **Middletown, DE: Bruce Lantz**, 302-378-8469 (princeps@juno.com)
- * **Upper Bucks, PA: Hart Rufe**, 215-257-8677 (wrufe@starband.net)
- * **Salem, NJ: Jerry Haag**, 856-358-3039 (haagj@algorithms.com)
- * **Pinelands, NJ: Bob Confer**, 609-859-2973 (parula9@hotmail.com)

Saturday, December 22

- * **Wilmington, DE: Howard Brokaw**, 302-655-8076
- * **Elverson, PA: Bob Cook**, 610-286-9919 (dunlin50@aol.com)

Sunday, December 23

- * **Moorestown, NJ: Ted Young**, 856-488-8410 (tedyoung@aol.com)
- * **Bombay Hook, DE: Andy Ednie**, 302-792-9591 (ednieap@wittnet.com)
- * **Belleplain, NJ: Paul Kosten**, 609-861-5827 (floraff@algorithms.com)

Wednesday, December 26

- * **Elmer, NJ: Jerry Haag**, 856-358-3039 (haagj@algorithms.com)

Friday, December 28

- * **Seaford, DE: Glen Lovelace**, 302-628-3978 (glovelace@dol.net)

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Dale Twining: A Life of Birding

By Jane Henderson



Dale and I sat across from each other at his kitchen table, as he reminisced about his life of birding. While we talked, I couldn't keep from looking over his shoulder at the bird feeders just outside the window. I guess birding has taken over my life, too. There I was, talking with Dale, not looking at him, but checking out the feeders behind him. Dale has been a dedicated birder since he was 12, so I hope he understood. On that chilly November morning I watched a Tufted Titmouse, a Carolina Chickadee, American Goldfinches and a Downy Woodpecker taking turns at his feeders.

Dale has seen lots of good birds at his feeders this month, Fox Sparrow and Pine Siskin among them. Stuck on Dale's kitchen cabinet are three sheets of graph paper, one for each month this autumn. He records the birds he sees at his feeders on those sheets, with bird species listed on the Y-axis and days of the month on the X-axis. It's a convenient way of keeping a daily yard list, and I think I'll try it in my own kitchen and see how it works for me.

Dale keeps a scrapbook of every trip he and his wife Jeanette have taken. On the dining room table were pictures and notes for the book in progress. The most recent one features last winter's trip to the Everglades.

Like so many other veteran Delaware Valley birders, Dale got his start at Treasure Island Scout Camp, on the Delaware River. He worked on Eagle Rank, for which

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Saturday, December 29

- * Rehoboth Beach, DE: Joe Swertinski, 302-292-1592 (swertinski_j@med.gen.de.us)
- * Audubon, PA: Edie Parnum, 610-964-8331 (eparnum@aol.com)
- and Tony Fernandes, 610-647-7868 (fernandest@suburbanwater.com)

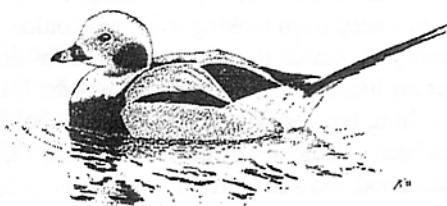
Sunday, December 30

- * Elkton, MD: Gary Griffith, 410-392-4491 (garygriffith@mrisc.com)
- * Cape Henlopen, Prime Hook, DE: Frank Rohrbacher, 302-475-5771 (rohrbaf@aol.com)
- * Cumberland County, NJ: Pat Sutton, 609-465-3397 (pcsutton@bellatlantic.net)
- * Central Bucks, PA: Diane Allison (dallison@postoffice.ptd.net)

Saturday, January 5

- * Milford, DE: Glen Lovelace, 302-628-3978 (glovelace@dol.net)
- * Philadelphia Midwinter Bird Census: Keith Russell (krussell@birdsofna.org)

Note: Jim White is new DOS CBC Coordinator. Phone: 302-652-1952



Long-tailed Duck © Adrian Binns

In Memoriam

Bob H. Sehl

October 17, 2001

President DVOC 1962-63

Joined DVOC 1939

Remembering September 11

This is the first issue of Larus to appear since the terrible events of September 11, 2001. That day changed, in some cases forever, the lives of many people all over the world. Our concern and sympathy go out to those who lost friends or loved ones on September 11, especially now, with the approach of the winter holidays.

Visiting natural areas can be a reminder of the things and places we need to value, preserve and protect, even in the face of worldwide tragedy and distress. With the world in a state of upheaval, birds continue to migrate, animals prepare for the winter, plants go dormant and wait for spring.

JH

Congrats to Winners

Witmer Stone Award: Sandra L. Sherman for "Tracking Stone's Tome: The Dispersal of 1,400 copies of 'Bird Studies at Old Cape May'"

Julian Potter Award: Don Jones, Doris McGovern and Augie Sexauer for their research into identifying and graphing songs of individual Prothonotary Warblers.

Letters to the Editor:

Sept. 25, 2001

Dear Ms. Henderson,

During a recent visit with (the late) Bob Sehl, the *Larus* arrived in the mail. Bob's eyes lit up when he saw the photo of John LaVia and his two sons.

During the past year, Bob often spoke of his friendship and fondness for John. The tribute by Jay LaVia brought tears to Bob's eyes. Please thank Jay and all of John's family on Bob's behalf.

DVOC was an important part of Bob's life.

Sincerely,
Joseph M. Gavin
Philadelphia

May 2, 2001

Dear Jane,

Last week I received from Jim Meritt a copy of the "Philadelphia Larus," with your story on Jim. It was of considerable interest to me, since I am the close friend who "had the bug." Jim and I had done a lot of canoeing and playing together. He must have "got the bug" from me in 1938 or 1939. . . .

Again, I enjoyed your story, and wish you many happy birding trips.

Cordially,
Don MacDonald
Corvallis, Oregon

21 badges were required. Of these, 11 were specific, and one of these was Bird Study. The Cutlers, Herb and David, and Alan Brady were campers there, too, and were also working on the Bird Study badge.

Roy Imsick, an avid birder and DVOC member, was Scoutmaster of Dale's troop. 6' 2" tall "Shorty" Ralston was a member of the Camp Council. As a teenager, Dale went with them and Norman "Mac" McDonald on expeditions to Cape May and other good birding spots.

Dale did his first two Christmas Bird Counts at Cape May with the legendary Witmer Stone, "a nice guy." He said not many people spent winters at Cape May then, but they all knew and respected Witmer Stone. In fact, Dale said, birders were the "highlight" of the residents' winters there, and were invited inside to check out bird feeder activity.

Dale joined DVOC when he was 16. Alan Brady joined around that time too. Dale said DVOC field trips were a "big event" then, with interesting people and good birders. He recalled one trip he took to Cape Charles with Shorty, Mac, and Phil Livingston in Phil's Reo, the first American car with automatic transmission. An axle snapped and they stayed at the Eastville Inn while a local garage sent to Philadelphia for a part. They visited Cobb's Island, opposite Eastville and walked among nests of Willets and terns.

The following year other members of DVOC, 25 people or so, went to Eastville to bird. Louise Nottingham ran the Eastville Inn, a quaint old place, and the birders nicknamed her "The Duchess of Nottingham." She arranged to get a gross of soft-shelled crabs for them when she found out how much they liked them.

The birders walked the country road behind the inn looking for what were then southern species: Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks, and Yellow-throated Warblers. Around that same time there was a DVOC trip to Havre de Grace, Maryland to look for Red-bellied Woodpecker and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, both then southern species. Dale added that the Northern Cardinal was called "Kentucky Cardinal" then because of its range.

From my first conversations with Dale, in the early 1980s, I learned that he was deeply concerned about drops in bird populations. He still is. As a youngster, he lived across from North Hills Country Club in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. He said warblers came through in little flocks. He would see as many as 20 American Redstarts at one time.

Common in the fields next to the Country Club were Eastern Meadowlarks, Brown Thrashers, Pheasants, Henslow's Sparrows, Bobwhite Quail, and Grasshopper Sparrows. There were 15 bluebird boxes in the area. At one time he was surprised to find about half of them occupied by flying squirrels.

American Woodcocks displayed on his front lawn. Skunks hibernated under the front porch. In bird boxes in his yard were American Kestrel, Yellow-shafted Flicker, and Eastern Screech Owl. American Tree Sparrows came through in flocks of 30 or 40 or more. Field and Chipping Sparrows

were common yard birds.

Dale enlisted in the Marines shortly after high school and was sent to Hawaii, Guadalcanal and some smaller islands in the Pacific. He was on Kume Shima off Okinawa when the war ended in 1945. He birded whenever and wherever he could in those places. No field guides were available then, but he was able to figure out bird families on his own, and made careful notes. In Honolulu he found a book, Birds of the South Pacific, and tracked down some bird IDs from his notes. He spotted a Sanford's Eagle, normally indigenous to the Philippines, in an area farther north, where they had never been reported. He served in the Marine Reserves in 1951-52 during the Korean War, and was an instructor at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Dale attended Glenside Elementary School, Thomas Williams Junior High School, and Cheltenham High School, Class of 1938. He met Jeanette when they were in second grade, and they were married in 1951. They had their 50th wedding anniversary this past March and have lived in the same house in Wyncote since 1956.

Dale and Jeanette have done lots of traveling together in their trademark Dodge RAM. When the company Dale worked for, the Insurance Company of North America (INA) was absorbed by Cigna, Dale retired and had more time for travel. In June of 1964, they traveled the Trans Canada Highway through the prairies along the Great Lakes. A few miles west of Calgary they saw flocks of thousands of Long-billed Curlews in the pothole lakes along the road.

On a trip home from the Grand Tetons in late October 1990, when snow was already on the ground, they passed by a small pond where they saw a couple of ducks. When

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Please submit announcements, pieces to be considered for publication, schedules and other information

for *Philadelphia Larus* to:

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Flourtown, PA 19031

215-836-1965 (phone + fax)

janeh008@aol.com

DVOC Website Address:

<http://www.acnatsci.org/dvoc>

Field Trips 2002

January 12, Saturday: Florence, NJ excellent gull-watching in the east. "White-wing" gulls, Lesser Black-backs, search for Yellow-legged. Meet at boat ramp at 9:00 AM. Ward Dasey 609-953-1685 or w.daseyiii@worldnet.att.net

February 16-18, Sat.-Mon. Montauk, L.I.: winter finches, eiders, scoters, alcids, Eurasian accidentals. Car pool from N.E. Phila. at 6:00 AM. First come, first served. Max. 16. Erica Brendel 215-844-3456 or ericamb@prodigy.net
Chris Walters 215-642-6862 or ckwalter@rsm.com

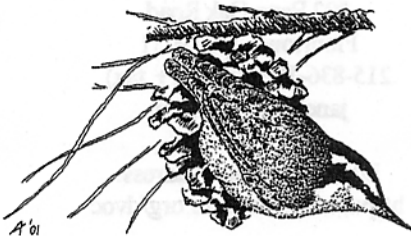
March 11-21, Sat.-Mon. Trinidad & Tobago. Join Kevin Karlson's Jaeger Tours for intro to tropical birding. Bearded Bellbird, Barred Antshrike, Collared Trogon, Oilbird, Ornate Hawk Eagle, Red-billed Tropicbird, Scarlet Ibis. From Port of Spain. Adrian Binns 215-364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com

April 6, Sat. Pedricktown & Mannington Marsh (SW NJ) for winter stragglers and early migrants, including Ruff. Frank Windfelder 215-673-0240 or windfelder@yahoo.com

April 12-21 (Fri-Sun) Colorado Chicken Odyssey. Nine days of birding in Colorado, going for all the "chickens" including Gunnison's Sage Grouse, all the Rosy-finches, Mountain Plover, and McCown's and Chestnut-collared Longspurs. From Denver. Adrian Binns 215-364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com

April 23-26 (Tues-Fri) Dry Tortugas, FL. Sail aboard the Tiburon. Spend 3 days exploring height of spring migration. Masked & Brown booby, Brown Noddy, Sooty Tern, Magnificent Frigatebird. From Key West. Adrian Binns 215-364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com

Apr. 27-May 5 (Sat-Sun) South Florida & Dry Tortugas. Loxahatchee NWR, Everglades NP, the Keys and the south-central prairie region in search of all of South Florida's specialties: Smooth-billed Ani, Shiny Cowbird, Mangrove Cuckoo, Antillean Nighthawk, Florida Scrub-Jay, Short-tailed Hawk and the Miami exotics. Visit Dry Tortugas for 3 days aboard the Tiburon at the height of spring migration. Space limited. From Miami. Adrian Binns 215-364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com



Red-breasted Nuthatch © Adrian Binns

Programs

December 6: Doug Tallamy, Professor of Entomology and Applied ecology, University of Delaware, "Alien Plants: Yet Another Reason to Worry":

December 20: DVOC Members' "Memorable Moments in Birding." You are once again invited to enthral the audience with a tale or two about your adventures in birding. Long or short, old or new, rough or smooth - just let Colin Campbell know in good time that you have a tale you know we'd like to hear! Slide projector available for illustrations.

January 3: General meeting and Christmas Bird Count results.

January 17: Matt Sharp, Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee.

February 7: TBA

February 21: Doug Gill: "Restoring Eastern Grassland Prairies: A Success Story."

March 7: Joe Majdan, "The History, Habits and Research on Purple Martins."

March 21: Nate Rice: "The Academy's Expedition to New South Wales and Southern Australia."

April 4: Kevin Karlson: "Birds on the Wind: The Miracle of Migration."

April 18: Bob Mercer: Annual Book Auction

Correction: Frank Windfelder's name was omitted from the participant list for the 2001 Chicken Odyssey (Autumn 2001 issue of *Larus*). Sorry, Frank.

Dale, Cont'd from Page 3

they moved closer they discovered a flock of a couple of hundred Barrow's Goldeneyes.

Dale and Jeanette often travel to Florida in the winter. This past February they visited Charlie and Libby Wonderly at their campsite in Flamingo at the southern tip of the Everglades. Dale found a Pygmy Rattlesnake on that trip.

Dale said his interest in birding rubbed off on his daughter, Wendy, who became a naturalist. Dale and Jeanette's son, David, "knows what he sees," in the way of birds, though his hobby is miniature trains. Both Wendy and David live in Willow Grove. Dale and Jeanette have five granddaughters.

ORNITHOLOGY COLLECTION UPGRADES AT THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES

Nathan H. Rice, Ornithology Department,
Academy of Natural Sciences

The Ornithology collection at The Academy of Natural Sciences is one of the largest and most historically important in the world. Included in the bird collection are nearly 190,000 study skins, representing over 75% of the world's bird diversity. Nearly 20,000 specimens from the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club's collection, started by Witmer Stone in the mid 19th century, are now curated by The Academy's Ornithology Department. Although the collection is truly global in its scope, the major strengths of the collection are in South America (particularly the Andes), North America, and Asia. Equally impressive to the size and scope of the collection is its historical. Specimens collected and prepared by the fathers of North American Ornithology, Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon, are curated in the collection along with material from other early ornithological greats such as Charles Bonaparte, John Cassin, and Thomas Nuttall. Starting with Wilson and Audubon, continuing with Witmer Stone and Rudolph Meyer de Schauensee, and persisting with Frank Gill, Robert Ridgely, and Leo Joseph - throughout the Academy's history - some of the greatest and most influential ornithologists of the time have worked in the bird department.

The Academy of Natural Sciences was founded in 1812 by a group of Philadelphians with a shared interest in natural science and history. Over the last two centuries the Academy has worked to maintain the highest levels of curation quality for collection specimens. In the late 1970's, the Academy became the first natural history museum to house its collection on space saving compactor systems. This spring, the Ornithology Department made the next major step in collection upgrades by beginning to replace outdated wooden specimen storage cabinets and trays with modern steel cases and aluminum trays. The end result will be the entire collection rehoused in 165 insect-proof cabinets that are larger than the current cases to provide a stable storage environment and room for future expansion of the collection.

The Ornithology Department has received several grants over the last year for the purchase of new cabinetry including money from the National Science Foundation (\$350,000), Institute of Museum and Library Services (\$47,000), Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (\$15,000), Pennsylvania Game Commission (\$13,000), and the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club (\$4,500) all with matching funds from the Academy's Collections Care Endowment Fund (\$250,000). The funds currently in hand are enough to purchase most of the state-of-the-art collection cases and specimen trays. An additional \$60,000 is still needed to purchase

additional collection cabinets and specimen trays that will ensure the preservation of the entire collection and provide proper storage for future collection growth. To date, we have installed 90 of the 156 new cabinets needed to complete this project. This represents over 100,000 specimens now stored in state-of-the-art collection cabinetry. When completely rehoused, the Ornithology Collection will become the best-curated bird collection in the world.

The DVOC, as a group, has committed funds to purchase a new collection cabinet and specimen trays to help with this project. We are now looking to the DVOC membership to help raise the remaining funds for this important project. DVOC members can participate in several ways. Contributions for individual trays can be made at \$50 per half-width tray or \$100 for a full-width tray. Funds for the purchase of an entire cabinet can be made at \$2,000 or \$4,500 for a cabinet with the appropriate number of specimen trays. Members who contribute \$4,500 or more will be recognized with a special nameplate placed on the outside of the cabinet acknowledging their gift.

The Academy's Ornithology Department greatly appreciates the contribution the DVOC has made to this project. By contributing now to this one-time request for funds you will not only be helping to care for current specimens - especially the DVOC collection - but also provide curation space for decades to come.

NABA Meeting Set for January 13, 2002

Jeffrey Glassberg, founder and president of the North American Butterfly Association, will be the featured speaker at the meeting of the Southeastern PA chapter of NABA on January 13, 2002. Glassberg, author of the popular "Butterflies Through Binoculars" series, will be presenting a program on "The Butterflies of Veracruz, Mexico. The meeting will be held at the Schuylkill Center at 1:00 PM Gates will open at 12:30 PM. For directions, call SCEE at 215-482-7300.

Militia Hill Hawkwatch Report

On the first day of the hawkwatch, September 1, the first Bald Eagle of the season made an appearance. On three dates, this year's biggest Broadwing numbers were recorded: 526 birds on September 15; 648 birds on September 16; and 491 birds on September 27. The total number of Broad-wings for the two-month season was 2756.

Other totals for the year were 42 Bald Eagles (close to the Militia Hill record of 44), 249 Ospreys, 845 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 149 Cooper's Hawks (very near a new record for the Hill) and 8 Peregrine Falcons. American Kestrels, Red-tailed Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Northern Harriers, and Merlins as well as Black and Turkey Vultures were also identified and counted. Absent from the count this year were Rough-legged Hawks, Golden Eagles, Northern Goshawks and Swainson's Hawks.

JH

Tuckerton- Brigantine Field Trip

The annual Tuckerton- Brigantine field trip was held on Saturday, October 13, 2001. The meeting place was at the end of Great Bay Blvd, which is sometimes called "Seven Bridges Road". Of course, there are really only five bridges. The meeting time was 7:30 AM.

Participants included Frank Windfelder (leader), Margie Keefe, Dennis & Anna Bert, Bill & Naomi Murphy, Kate Sommerville, Chris Walters, Cele Deemer, JoAnn Raine, Bill Haber, Cameron Rutt, Glen Seeholzer, Martin Selzer, Jane Henderson, Margot & Tom Southerland, & Ian Baldock.

Highlights were 10 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows, eight of which were of the race *subvirgatus* & the other two *nelsoni*. To our surprise, there were five Brown Pelicans flying around in the adjacent bay. Several Tri-colored Herons were present as well. Migrants were nonexistent.

More importantly, for the first time in three years, no one fell into the marsh.

After birding Tuckerton, we headed to Forsythe NWR (Brigantine Division). Although birding there was generally slow, Martin discovered an American Bittern. The bird put on quite a show; it was right out in the open for quite some time. FW

Bake Oven Knob Field Trip

This trip was originally scheduled for November 3rd, but conditions were not conducive to good hawk watching, so we opted for Sunday, November 4th instead. We met in the parking lot at Bake Oven at 8:30 AM.

Participants included Frank Windfelder & Bill Murphy (trip leaders), Dennis & Anna Bert, Kate Sommerville, JoAnn Raine, Bill Haber, Bert Filemyr, Ian Baldock, Colin Campbell, Ken Riecker, Harvey Tomlinson, & Ted Young.

The hawks were "really flying" until about noon, when things suddenly tapered off. We had managed to see four Golden Eagles by that time. Three of them were visible at once. The highlights of the day were three close Northern Goshawks, one of which was an adult. We also saw two Red-shouldered Hawks, two Cooper's Hawks, three Northern Harriers, 30 Red-tailed hawks, and 19 Sharp-shinned Hawks. Passerines included Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, & Cedar Waxwings.

Two Black Vultures made an appearance, and JoAnn Raine & Bill Haber had a Merlin and two American Pipits on the way up the mountain. Bill Murphy proved his mettle when he correctly identified a high-flying raptor as a large female Cooper's Hawk.

Colin Campbell's day was made when the sky divers put in an appearance again, albeit not as impressive as last year. Thanks to everyone who participated. FW