



Philadelphia Larus

Vol. 29 No. 4

Christmas Count Issue 2002

Christmas Bird Counts How and where you can help

Saturday, December 14

* Oceanville (Brigantine), NJ: Brian Moscatello,
Dr. Ed Bristow,

* Glenolden (Delaware Co), PA: Nick Pulcinella,

* Southern Bucks, PA: Bob Mercer,

Sunday, December 15

* Cape May, NJ: Louise Zemaitis,

* Upper Bucks/Montco, PA: Hart Rufe,

* Middletown, DE: Bruce Lantz,

* Wilmington, DE: Howard Brokaw,

* Pinelands, NJ: Bob Confer,

* Salem, NJ: Jerry Haag,

Saturday, December 21

* Wyncote, PA: Martin Selzer,

Sunday, December 22

* Belleplain, NJ: Paul Kosten,

* Bombay Hook, DE: Andy Ednie,

* Moorestown, NJ: Ted Young,

Saturday, December 28

* Valley Forge Audubon, PA: Edie Parnum,

* Rehoboth, DE: Joe Swertinski:

Xmas Counts cont'd on Page 2

Johnny Miller: World Class Birder

By Doris McGovern



Brrring Brrring. Hi John. "Seen anything good?"...so begins an evening call from John Miller, DVOC member since 1951. He'll ask me for my 'good birds,' but with his life list at 727 and his world list of 2657, he'll use a different definition of 'good' than mine. He'll tell me what other birders have seen, because in spare moments at his 3-11 job with Northwest Airlines, John talks to birders all over the Delaware Valley and beyond.

DVOC members know the Miller family as synonymous with the Tinicum area and birding, but no member of the family is so admired for his birding knowledge and skill as John, a DVOC Fellow, master bird bander, world lister, contributor to *Cassinia*, and mentor to some of the region's best birders.

John stands 6'4", a bear of a man who served in Korea as an MP. There he met and captured the heart of his beautiful wife Soonja. They took birding trips together and banded more than 700 birds in a day during the incredible fallouts at Island Beach State Park. Soonja became a fine birder in her own right and she was at John's side birding until their daughters, Laura and Tammy, arrived. The little girls, that I remember in the back seat of his old tan Ford as he birded around Tinicum NWR, are now in college and still the apple of their daddy's eye.

It was a slow day at Cape May in the far north hawk blind when I had a chance to reminisce with John about how he became a birder and what part DVOC had played.

"My best friend Sam Orr and I were always in the marshes, catching turtles and watching wildlife. We knew where all the owls were and I caught my first Snowy Owl when I was 13. He was too exhausted to fly. I fed him for a few days before I released him."

John, were you a birder at 13? "No, but ANS men came to the marshes to collect Short-eared Owls, and groups from the Academy came by trolley car, all walking around with binoculars. I was curious. Then one day in 1949, I was on the dike, just

Roxborough Reservoir Update

(Compiled from communications by Kris Soffa of Roxborough Reservoir Friends):

A rally was held on October 27 in support of an effort to persuade Fairmount Park to adopt this 40 acre piece of surplus city property, at Port Royal and Hagys Mill Roads, as a wildlife sanctuary and wetlands habitat. Phil Goldsmith, Interim head of Fairmount Park, attended. The City Managing Directors office, headed by Estelle Richman, has funded the restoration project. Early in October, cleanup crews began removing debris and opened up vistas to Center City. Her efforts have brought the project to this point.

Partners include: Friends of the Wissahickon, ANS, Morris Arboretum, SCEE, Scott Arboretum-Swarthmore College, natural lands Trust, Greater Philadelphia Preservation Alliance. Civic and environmental groups, neighbors and businesses have written letters of support.

If you wish to learn more about this project, you may contact Kris Soffa at KSoffa@aol.com

To write a letter of support, address it to: City Managing Director Estelle Richman, Suite 1430, Municipal Services Building, 1401 JFK Blvd., Philadelphia, PA 19102

Xmas Counts, cont'd

Sunday, December 29

* Cape Henlopen, Prime Hook, DE:
Frank Rohrbacher,

Sunday, December 29

* Cumberland Co, NJ: Pat & Clay Sutton,

* Central Bucks Co, PA: Diane Allison,

Wednesday, January 1

* Elmer, NJ: Jerry Haag,

Saturday, January 4

* Seaford, Nanticoke, DE: Glen Lovelace,

Sunday, January 5

* Milford, DE: Glen Lovelace,

Saturday, January 11

* Philadelphia Midwinter Bird Census, Keith Russell,

Presidential Ramblings

Video digitalis

Did you ever pause to wonder how you can look in the close-up eye of a Keel-billed Toucan on TV and see David Attenborough's face? I've got a 20" TV screen and, being genetically Scottish in origin, I chose to use my Swarovskis to get a closer picture of this phenomenon; boy, counting those pixels was as nearly exciting as counting Snow Geese in Raymond Pool - and a lot more colorful. Those with 84" home theatre jobs with wraparound sound and built-in popcorn machines must really be asking the question - how close can we go? Follow the reflected image back to the retina and then down the optic fiber nerve? Like you, I'm used to spotting the double flash in the eye of a photographed bird caught in profile with twin flashes to reduce the hardness and think I'm clever in pointing this out to the innocenti. But now, you can doctor all that electronically for the perfect shot, just like removing my red-eye from my daughter's wedding photos, making me look totally unnatural. You can digitally superimpose your - or anyone's - head or other body parts on pictures of Schwarzenegger, Xena, Saddam, Britney Spears, Pete Dunne and give everyone a good laugh. You can also do it seriously, even maliciously, and often get away with it. Video digitalis is coming in rapidly and is indeed spectacular with live action, zoom-in, instant reply, stop-in-mid-whatever - right there for you to verify in seconds the primary emarginations, who chummed on the last pelagic, those crucial buff-fringed tertials, incomplete beer passes at speed on I-95 and orbital ring colors - things that you missed with your own good eyes and can hardly believe once you see it on your own screen. Digiscoping is the in-thing in birding circles now - connect your digital camera to your high-powered, stabilized scope and you can get excellent, almost in-focus shots of that Golden-crowned Sparrow sitting 200 yards away on a wire in Sussex County, DE. I wish. You don't have to be a Kevin Karlson but this is the way to convince your State Records Committee these days. And, these new high-tech thingies have sound recording. They may not be the George Reynards of this world with sophisticated Sony recorders and Sennheiser mikes, but they do a fair job on a singing Mourning Warbler, the chip note of a flyover Henslow's Sparrow.....and, unfortunately but frequently hilariously, inadvertent comments from erstwhile pillars of the birding society. Records committees are increasingly demanding photographic or sonographic documentation for unusual bird sightings/soundings in the area, some are even specific in not accepting written documentation for either first or very rare reports for the state. In the case of difficult to separate species this a laudable request, but we are now witnessing the demise of the barely decipherable scrawled field notes on a crumpled Burger King bag; the hurried sketch in which a Purple Gallinule looks more like an Ostrich; the 3-page odyssey describing who saw the bird, what they had for

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Meetings/Programs/Field Trips

DVOC Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first and third Thursdays of the month at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia. Guests are always welcome.

December 5: Amir Balaban: “Jerusalem Bird observatory: Urban Wildlife in Jerusalem.”

The talk will include a presentation about the establishment of the Jerusalem Bird Observatory, and how it was turned into Israel’s first urban wildlife site. The presentation will review the research and educational projects that the JBO is involved in, and future plans for a network of urban wildlife sites all over Israel.

December 19: Members’ Memorable Moments in Birding

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 (Colin Campbell) know in good time that you have a tale you know we’d like to hear! Slide projector available for illustrations.

January 2: Annual General Meeting and CBC’s

Reports and highlights of the CBC’S and Annual General Meeting with Elections, food & beverages (Wine, Beer, & Soda)

January 16: Jim Lockyer “Rose Tree Hawk Watch”

February 6: Bill Evans “Nocturnal flight calls of migratory birds - the new century ahead”

Bill’s presentation will be an overview of his studies on avian nocturnal flight calls. He will challenge the audience by playing recordings of night flight calls that can be heard in eastern Pennsylvania, present night flight call data from more than ten years of monitoring in central New York State, and encourage everyone to tune into night migration by building their own monitoring station.

February 20: Steve Hoffman “The Important Bird Area Program and the Conservation of Pennsylvania’s Birdlife”.

Steve Hoffman, PA Audubon’s Director of Bird Conservation, will provide an overview of PA’s unique contribution to bird populations in the Western Hemisphere, discuss long-term trends in populations, and summarize the most serious threats facing PA’s birds. Finally, Steve will provide a historical perspective for the development of PA’s Important Bird Area (IBA) program, along with a discussion of current activities and future plans for PA’s 78 IBA sites.

March 6: George Armistead “Pribilofs”

March 20: Kevin McGowen “The Uncommon Crow”

Learn about some surprising details of the life of the familiar, but little known American Crow. Despite being common and widely recognized, the American Crow has a complicated social and family life that is unknown to most people. Long-lived birds with extensive long-term family ties, crows have the most human-like social lives of any American bird. Come find out about some of the complex and often soap-opera-like biology that takes place in your own backyard.

April 3: David Brinker “Goshawks”

Winter Field Trips

January 11th (sat) - PHILADELPHIA MID-WINTER BIRD CENSUS.

Contact: Keith Russell

January 18th-20th (sat-mon) - MONTAUK (LONG

ISLAND), NY for winter finches, eiders, scoters, alcids and any Eurasian accidentals. Car pool from N.E. Phila at 6 AM. Space is limited due to lodging constraints - first come, first served! Max. 16

Leaders: Erica Brendel

Chris Walters

January 25th (sat) - FLORENCE, NJ for some of the best gull watching in the east. ‘White-wing’ gulls, Lesser Black-backs, and a search for Thayer’s and Yellow-legged Gull. Meet at the boat ramp at 9 AM.

Leader: Ward Dasey

CORRIGENDA

The last issue of *Philadelphia Larus* contained more than the usual number of errors.

1. A chunk of El Presidente’s letter was missing. It disappeared in the transition from Page 1 to Page 2. I hate it when that happens.

2. The caption under the migrating raptor drawing on the last page should have read “Swainson’s Hawk with Migrating Broadwings.”

2. The DVOC website address given was the old one. The correct, new, improved one is www.dvoc.org

breakfast and detailed descriptions of the weather and specifications of optical equipment used but little indication as to whether the brown thing 'described' was a thrasher, a cow pat or a squirrel. These gems, which keep members of records committees commendably human, are soon to go - along with the selfsame adjudicators. In the brave new world of records committees, video grabs or sonograms of birds will be scanned into a massive database, three keys pressed and the "Yeah" or "Nay" will spew out of a machine to the delight or despair of the finder. Then the hackers take over.....

Please support your State Records Committees. Birding is one of the few pleasurable sports where an immense contribution to the conservation of birds can be made by amateur participants, including the documentation of unusual birds in your area. Our tri-state area has websites containing State Records Committees "Review Lists", noting the species requiring documentation. Copy them and take them into the field with you.

If you have no camera, learn to describe birds in a way that will give the Committee no option but to accept your report; a good way to do this is to record exactly what you see on a microcassette recorder while you actually watch the bird. Try it on a House Finch from your kitchen window. You'll soon learn! I did.

Good rarebirding, Colin Campbell



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

DVOC Website Address:
www.dvoc.org

CLASSIFIED ADS

"Paradise Islands" ~ Trinidad and Tobago, March 3-13: 215 species in 2002 including Ornate Hawk Eagle, Plumbeous and Pearl Kite, Bearded Bellbird, Tufted Coquette, Ruby-topaz Hummingbird, Oilbirds and tropicbirds on Little Tobago. \$2,400.

Adrian Binns, Jaeger Tours (215) 364-4407
wildlifegd@aol.com www.jaegertours.net

"Chicken Odyssey" ~ Colorado, April 11-20:

both prairie-chickens; Sharp-tailed, Sage and Gunnison's Grouse; Blue Grouse; White-tailed Ptarmigan and Chukar...the ultimate "chicken odyssey". Also rosy-finches and the Pawnees for Mountain Plover. \$1,595.

Adrian Binns, Jaeger Tours (215) 364-4407
wildlifegd@aol.com www.jaegertours.net

"Spring Migration" ~ Dry Tortugas, April 22-25:

aboard the "Tiburón" for Masked and Brown Boobies, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Sooty Tern, Brown and (last year) Black Noddy. Passerines galore - last year Yellow-faced Grassquit and Bananaquit. \$775.

Adrian Binns, Jaeger Tours (215) 364-4407
wildlifegd@aol.com www.jaegertours.net

"Spring Migration" ~ South Florida and Dry

Tortugas, April 26- May 4: for all the specialties including Short-tailed Hawk, Swallow-tailed and Snail Kite; Mangrove Cuckoo; Black-whiskered Vireo; Miami exotics; Caribbean strays (last year Zenaida Dove and Western Spindalis) as well as the seabirds and passerines in the DT's. \$1,700.

Adrian Binns, Jaeger Tours (215) 364-4407
wildlifegd@aol.com www.jaegertours.net

Pelagic birding trip from Barnegat Light, NJ, Sat.

Dec. 7. 5am to 5pm on the large, fast "Doris Mae IV", to Hudson Canyon, for alcids and other "winter birds", including, hopefully Great Skua. \$99.

Focus on Nature Tours at 1-800-721-9986.

email: font@focusonnature.com

website: www.focusonnature.com

Caribbean Birding Tours in early 2003.

Cayman Is. & Jamaica, Feb. 20-Mar. 1.

Lesser Antilles, Mar. 1-9.

Puerto Rico, Mar 9-14.

Dominican Republic, Mar. 14-21.

Focus on Nature Tours, 1-800-721-9986

email: font@focusonnature.com

website: www.focusonnature.com

Also in website, info re: upcoming tours in Iceland, Japan, and Central and South America.

NOTE: Classified ads may be purchased for \$5.00 per small ad. Make check out to DVOC.

beyond the gate, and Dave Cutler, Dick Miller, Bill Jay, and Ed Finkle stopped and asked if I'd seen a Bald Eagle? 'There are no Bald Eagles around here,' I said. Dave Cutler gave me his binoculars and pointed overhead. 'What's that?' I saw the Eagle, his white head and tail, and I was amazed.



Bald Eagle © Adrian Binns

He pointed to a Loggerhead Shrike, skewering its prey in a hawthorn tree, but I didn't know what it was. After that, Charley Price and Ted Rigby, Sr. arranged for me to go on trips. Bill and Dick took me to DVOC meetings and I loved to meet them on the weekends at Tinicum. They taught me all the tricks of birding." Like what? "Like throwing a stone into cattails to get the Sora's squawking, bird songs and call notes, behaviors, all the stuff you have to know. Charley Price loaned me a pair of binoculars until I sold enough newspapers and mowed enough lawns to buy a pair of Bausch and Lomb 935's." You're noted (or notorious?) for not using binoculars. Some (read Rick Mellon) had to force you to use them. How come? "Well, I got started without them, watching flight patterns, wing shape, and behavior, so I've depended on those skills. I have the Nikons I was given on a Big Day, but I still use my old 935's."

"I was nominated to DVOC membership in 1951 when I was 15. I remember people shouting, 'He's too young.'" They were joking, weren't they? [Where were the PC police then?...age discrimination!] "No, they were serious. They thought I was too young to know what I needed to." So did you get in? "Julian Potter always took kids under his wing. I was on a DVOC trip and no one identified a group of ducks that lifted off, so I shouted out BALDPATES! and he took notice of me after that. He said, 'He's okay, give him a chance' and they did." John chuckled at the remembrance. The rest is legend.

You've birded the world? "Not Africa!" Okay, but you've been all over. What was your best trip? Without blinking . . . "South Carolina. I saw two Bachman's Warblers, one singing and one in the bushes. I was a young birder and all those southern birds were lifers. I was excited. But, in Australia I saw the Satin and Regent Bowerbirds, Scarlet Honeyeater and Splendid Wren. I had hosted some Australian birders when they were here and they returned the favor. The trip was

s p e c t a c u l a r . "

So, John, over the years you've met many famous birders? They wooed you to help with their projects, didn't they? "Yeh, I birded with Ernie Choate, Chan Robbins, Paul Kellogg, Alan Cruikshank, and Roger Peterson. I was on the dunes at Cape May before dawn, banding Clapper Rails and Peterson came by. That was the first time I met him." How'd you band rails in dunes at night? "I ran after them. They had just landed and they were tired, so it wasn't hard." Uh-huh! Who did you admire most? "Ted Parker, he was incredible, but William Russell and Chan Robbins, so many others, they were all special and had something to teach."



Clapper rail © Adrian Binns

I see John in his banding lanes at Island Beach. He leans back to rest, but when he sits up, he takes his checklist and that stubby pencil from his shirt pocket, and checks off all the calls and songs he's heard while resting. Have you kept records every day you've birded? "Yeh, each day, every trip, at my feeders, at Tinicum, and of course, banding for fifty years." His birding records take up filing cabinets now. "Charley and Ted told me it was important to keep records, so I always have. Then when people asked for something, I had it." And did they ask? "Sure, for all the breeding bird atlases, I gave them my records for the historical picture. I looked back through my files for what was important and there it was."

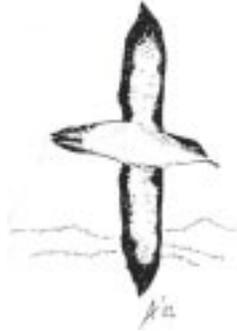


Least Tern © Adrian Binns

John found the Least Tern nest where the Philadelphia Airport is now, and the Black-tailed Godwit at Tinicum, the European Lapwing at Bombay Hook, the Purple Gallinule, the Audubon's Shearwater on the Delaware River, and a host of other records of lesser note. The information is priceless, and he shares it freely. In addition, universities have sent people to study his Tree Swallows in the 800 boxes he built and tends. He told me how he counted migration across the moon for the University of Louisiana and shorebirds for Manomet and waterfowl for the government, participated in breeding bird surveys and Swamp

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Sparrow surveys for the Smithsonian, worked six years banding Redwing Blackbirds for the Banding Lab at Patuxent, MD and banding for Chan Robbins in Operation Recovery. Of course, banding more than 110,000 birds has yielded recoveries as far away as South America and numerous age records. I'm breathless writing about it, but he did it all for years, for the love of birds and birding. It sounds like the career of an ornithologist, but John did it as an amateur with total dedication and above all concern for the welfare of the birds.



Audubon's Shearwater © Adrian Binns

When Arthur Allen asked him to attend Cornell and work under him, John declined. He wonders out loud how his life would have changed had he accepted Allen's offer. "I was a kid and I thought all that desk work would take me away from birds." But, John did get to Cornell when Allen hired him to identify bird songs on 100's of hours of acoustical tapes.

"I make plenty of mistakes." What do you consider your biggest? "I was at Absecon banding a rookery. I banded some Ibis, but I had never seen babies like that before. They were so different and I didn't know what to make of them. When I got home, I wrote to a guy in Colorado and he sent me pictures of White-faced Ibis nestlings and they matched my birds. I tried to find the nest again, but the birds had fledged. And, there was the Bell's Vireo in Maryland. I didn't document it like I was supposed to, so they rejected it, as they should have. The important thing is to recognize when you make a mistake and own up to it."

Johnny was chuckling to himself again. What? What? "Well I was remembering the Haas' picnic. They always had a feather when they greeted you and you had to ID the feather. They showed me a feather no one could name, and I said, "It's a Yellow Rail breast feather." They were surprised." How'd you know a Yellow Rail feather? He was getting impatient with me now. "You just have to look at it. It looked like a Yellow Rail breast feather. What else could it have been? Okay.

Johnny will retire soon, so I asked how life would change. "I want to bird more and band more." I know he will. And, if the past is an indication of the future, there'll be lots of good birding in store for John and his birding friends.

Annual Banquet a Success

120 DVOC members and guests attended the annual banquet at Williamsons's on City Line Avenue on November 21. Awards were given (see "Awards") after which Scott Weidensaul gave a slide talk entitled "The Ghost with Trembling Wings." His own summary of his talk follows:

"From ivory-billed woodpeckers in the swamps of Louisiana to Tasmanian tigers in the mountains of Australia, we cannot let go of some animals. Though written off as extinct, tantalizing hints of their continued existence surface from time to time - enough to keep alive the hope that they may not be gone. And, every so often, one of these lost species does in fact reappear, like a gift to a depauperate world. What is it about these ghost species that enthalls us, compelling some people to spend their lives in the hunt for evidence? And what does the rediscovery of species once thought extinct mean in this day of global diversity loss?"

Scott showed slides of his expeditions to South America in search of "ghost species."

Congratulations to Awards Recipients

Julian Potter Award: Frank Windfelder for his outstanding field work.

Conservation Awards: Corey Jarin for her longtime commitment to Peace Valley Park and Marylea Klauder for her work at Ft. Washington State Park, including the Militia Hill Hawkwatch.



A Note from George Reynard:

I would like to DONATE the following periodicals - AUK 1924-2001, Condor 1963-1999, Wilson Bulletin 1950-2001. These are twine-bound in 1 to 3 year bundles, and recipients must pick them up here, in Riverton, NJ 105 Midway Street. Main is a continuation of Riverton Road off of Route 130 between Trenton and Camden. My zip code 08077-1012 (No e-mail or Web). DVOC members or a library representative, send 1/2 page, typed explanation-request for these journals, and a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Beyond the List

As long as I serve as the editor of *Larus*, I plan to establish this column as a regular feature. It will recognize club members' efforts to spread the word and draw new people to birding. If the concept needs justifying, just look around the room during a meeting of the club. Our population is growing older, and our numbers are shrinking. We could stand some new blood!

DVOC Group Takes School Kids on Field Trip by Martin Selzer

On October 4th, Jane Henderson, Lynn Jackson and I met the 7th grade class from the Langley School in McLean Virginia for a birding field trip to Bombay Hook NWR. This was the latest in a long-standing series of such trips the three of us have led. Here is a brief history of these trips.

Craig Berman, the 7th grade science teacher at Langley, and I are friends. We met when Craig was the naturalist at Briar Bush Nature Center. At Langley, Craig wanted to help his students learn about native wildlife by developing a multi-disciplined project that incorporated chemistry, ornithology, art, and language arts. He chose one of his favorite natural areas, Bombay Hook, and concentrated the school's efforts there.

With help from the graphic and language arts teachers, the students made drawings and wrote poems about the birds. Morning birding with us was the final event of a two-day field trip to the area. The students had spent the previous day in Philadelphia visiting the College of Physicians Mutter Museum and the Independence Seaport Museum.

While we always try to show each student his or her assigned bird (easily achieved for the student assigned snow goose, not so easily achieved for the student assigned brown creeper) we have always been pleasantly surprised. Highlights both years included a Bald Eagle, a large flock of American Avocets, and thousands and thousands of Snow Geese. Last year's special moment came when a Peregrine Falcon captured a Dunlin right in front of our eyes. This year's treat was watching a flock of 50+ Black-crowned Night-herons settle in to the marsh at Bear Swamp.

Prior to teaching at the Langley School, Craig taught at the School of the Holy Child in Wayne, PA. Jane, Lynn and I led our first field trip for those students in April of 1995. The project resulted in spring and fall field trips to Bombay Hook NWR and Brigantine NWR for the next five years.

Over the years, Craig has heard from former students and their parents, and at least some of the kids we've had on these trips are still interested and looking at birds. So the next time you think about where tomorrow's birders are coming from, consider taking the time to share your knowledge and passion for birds. You never know when the seed may take root and a new birder take flight.

Kids Learn about Chimney Swifts

by Jane Henderson

Here's what I did recently: Because of an article I wrote about Chimney Swifts for *Bird Watcher's Digest* some time ago, I was asked to give a talk to 6th and 7th graders at the Dobson School on Umbria Street in Roxborough. The chimney of that school is one of the swifts' preferred roosting spots during migration. A good friend of mine, who had read my article, is sister-in-law of the principal at Dobson and a volunteer at that school. The school librarian was interested in the idea of my teaching the kids about the birds, and she made the arrangements with the classroom teachers to bring the kids to the library for the presentations.

Bill Thompson III of BWD was kind enough to send free copies of the magazine for the kids and teachers to check out after the talk. That's the background.

In the course of my talk (I spoke to four classes in a row – it reminded me of my teaching days) I got the youngsters to tell me what they already knew about birds. Some of them knew quite a lot already. Then I talked about birds in general, including the wonders of bird migration. I told them that their school is kind of "famous" in birding circles for the way the birds use the chimney. Using some slides from the VIREO collection at ANS I explained how the birds funnel down the chimney each evening and emerge in the morning. Some of the neighborhood youngsters had noticed the swifts and wondered what they were and what was going on.

Afterwards, some of the kids wrote thank-you letters to me. Here are some quotes: "Thank you for teaching us about the Chimney Swifts. I learned a lot about them. I see them every night when I play basketball." "If it wasn't for you I would still be thinking they were bats flying over the school's chimney." "I never knew that they could be so compact (new word I learned!)" "I didn't know that birds would sleep in a chimney." "You showed us about a bird I never heard of before you visited us." "We know where they are going by 'bird banding' which you educated me about." "Now sometimes I look at birds to see if I could identify one." "I know a lot about Chimney Swifts, for example, how they make their nests with sticks and their own saliva." "I didn't only get information I also enjoyed a period with no classwork." "That was the greatest 45 minutes of my life." "Keep on doing what you do."

Maybe next year I can help to organize a field trip to the school in the evening (many of the kids are bused in from other neighborhoods) so the youngsters can see the swifts in action.

Field Trip to Bake Oven Knob

by Frank Windfelder

The annual Bake Oven Knob field trip was held on Saturday, November 2nd. In addition to leader Frank Windfelder, the participants were Colin Campbell, Ellen Short, Paul Guris, Chris Walters, Herc Hoffman and Glenn & Steve Seeholzer.

The winds were right, and the hawks were flying. Because of the partial cloud cover, everything was seen low and well. It was a spectacular day.

Our first hawk was a Northern Harrier that flew over the parking lot. Early on, Paul had a Snow Bunting and a Purple Finch, which flew over the lookout. Shortly thereafter, all enjoyed a Common Raven.

The highlight of the day was a spectacular flight of 6 Golden Eagles, all of which were observed closely and in good light. We even had 2 Bald Eagles for good measure.

In addition, we saw another Raven and Harrier, 3 Red-shouldered Hawks, 12 Sharp-shinned Hawks, an American Kestrel, 2 Black Vultures, and 60 or more Red-tailed Hawks.

Colin had hoped for the usual skydivers in the air, and he was not disappointed, as a small but hardy contingent put on an aerial display near the lookout.

Afterwards, we retired to a local pub for some liquid refreshment, where Paul Guris held court with an assortment of anecdotes and jokes.