



Philadelphia Larus

Vol. 30 No. 1

Spring 2003

Presidential Pleas(e)

- Your Council's aim is to make the DVOC the premier birding club of the region. By this is meant that we shall offer to members, visitors and guests a schedule of programs and field trips designed to cater to those who want to extend their interest in ornithology another step. Visitors and guests will be encouraged to become members and to actively participate in all our activities which are designed to increase knowledge of bird life in our area. Experienced DVOC birders will help them in not only the identification of species, but also where and when to bird (both locally and globally), the need for local habitat protection and the support of scientific endeavors to achieve this. The DVOC is for the total enjoyment of the art and science of birding. The Club depends on its current members' expertise to pass on their knowledge, often gained from former Club members, to our enthusiastic newcomers. **Please** make our new friends welcome.
- Your Council has decided to launch a membership drive not only to attract new and active members to the Club, but also to promote a new initiative to welcome guests, expand programs and encourage audience participation. I have formed a new subcommittee - the Membership Committee - with Anita Guris as Chairperson. The last few weeks have seen the most active communications within the Council in years mainly concerning encouraging new members, their active participation and their retention. Anita has a dynamic team, she welcomes new volunteers to the team (anita@paulagics.com) and new ideas. She writes about our aspirations on page 4 of this issue. **Please** contribute.
- A simple DVOC brochure, designed and produced by Bert Filemyr, will be available at Club meetings for advertising the Club and encouragement to join. **Please** feel free to take as many as you need for distribution and stocking (with permission, of course) in your local nature centers etc.
- My next **plea** is for financial support for the DVOC World Series of Birding Team in 2003. This team is the best in the whole country. They've finished in the top two positions (out of over 60 teams) in each of the last five years and won the coveted winners trophy on three of those occasions. This event has national press and TV coverage. Our team, comprised solely of DVOC members and generously sponsored by Nikon, is able to contribute substantially to the local conservation cause of your choice if sponsorship is forthcoming. The response from DVOC members last year was rather disappointing, so this year I would like to see a total of \$5,000 being collected on behalf our team's effort in 2003. This is just \$20, tax-deductible, per DVOC member. To win this famous event is not easy; many days of scouting, staking out, route finding and shortening, communicating, trading and even bribing are crucial. Monies collected from sponsorship for our team this year (Come on! Let's make it \$5,000!) will go to the exciting East Park Reservoir renewal scheme at 33rd St. near Diamond in Philadelphia. It eventually will become a major birding area in an urban environment. See the story on page 7 of this issue by Jan Gordon, our Conservation Chair (610-688-8422, janandkengordon@aol.com). **Please** read further about our team, its successes and its 2003 ambitions in the article by the DVOC/Nikon "Lagerhead Shrikes" team leader, Paul Guris, on page 7 of this issue.
- The history of the Club is replete with ornithological gems. The big "O" in DVOC is for ornithology. Your Council would like to readdress that issue and ensure that our tradition of informing, teaching, entertaining those who take the effort to attend our meetings at the Academy of Natural Sciences do end their evening with a little ornithological gem learned. The last few meetings have included such pieces and all Council members are being asked to contribute items so that we have at least one per meeting. Don't feel left out! We would love contributions from anyone prepared to give a few moments to the audience on some topic which you know would be of interest - it does not have to be an identification puzzle; but your slant on items gleaned from the copious ornithological literature,

Pleas(e) Continued on Page 2

Meetings / Programs

DVOC Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first and third Thursdays of the month, from the third Thursday in September through the first Thursday in June, at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia. During the summer months, informal meetings are held once a month on the first Thursday evening. Guests are always welcome.

April 3 - David Brinker: "The Northern Goshawk: a Bird Driven by its Prey."

Northern Goshawks were extirpated from West Virginia, Maryland, and seriously declined throughout most of Pennsylvania as a result of timber harvesting during the late 1800's and early 1900's. In the past 50 years, goshawk populations have increased throughout the northeast. They are now returning as a breeding species to the mountains or the central Appalachians and have recently expanded their breeding range into the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Northern Goshawks are the top avian predator in northern forested ecosystems. Mr. Brinker will discuss the natural history and ecology of goshawks in the east as a result of 30 years of research in Wisconsin and more recently the central Appalachians.

April 17 - Bob Curry: "Chickadees - The Hybrid Zone."

May 1 - Paul Kerlinger: "Birds and Wind Power."

May 15 - 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, as well as future plans for a network of urban wildlife sites all over Israel.

June 5 - Chris Walters: "DVOC May Run Reports"

Chris Walters will be hosting the May Run's reports. Anyone planning a big day (anywhere and of any kind) during the month of May is requested to contact Chris to participate by handing in your results, so that Chris can compile them, and give a brief summary at this meeting (as we do with the CBC's).

Contact: Christopher K. Walters 21- 851-8278 fax: 215-851-1420 e-mail: dvocwalters@reedsmith.com

Presidential Pleas(e) continued from Page 1

personal experiences of unusual bird behavior, a report from an ornithological conference you attended, recorded

bird sounds, etc. would be welcomed. **Please** let Chuck Hetzel (hetzel@acnatsci.org), our ornithological studies chair, (or any Council member) know before (a must if you need equipment) or on meeting night if you'd like to make a short presentation.

- Your President, Officers and Council were elected by you to guide the Club. Comments on the above, new ideas, suggestions for improvements, for speakers, for trips, for a new President, are always welcomed.

Good DVOC birding,

Colin



Please submit announcements, changes of address, pieces to be considered for publication, schedules and other information for Larus to:

Jane Henderson, Editor
202 Penn Oak Road
Flourtown, PA 19031
(215) 836-1965 (phone + fax)
janeh008@aol.com

DVOC Website Address:
www.dvoc.org

Field Trips

Trip Chairman : Adrian Binns

April 5th (Sat) - SOUTH WEST NEW JERSEY (PEDRICKTOWN and MANNINGTON MARSH) for possible winter stragglers (Ross's Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, blackbirds) and any early migrants (Ruffs have previously been seen on this trip). Leader: Frank Windfelder (215) 673-0240 or fwindfelder@yahoo.com

April 27 (Sunday) - THE THREE OLD FORTS TRIP, DE/NJ

A new adventure. We bird three State Parks all having comprehensive remains of war fortifications. We start at Fort Dupont State Park, Delaware City, DE for migrants; we catch a ferry to Pea Patch Island in the Delaware River to see the second largest heronry in the eastern US (and Fort Delaware). We catch the ferry again to Fort Mott in NJ to traverse the nature trail and see the extensive fortifications and finally return by ferry to Delaware City.

Meet: 7 AM at the Ferry Dock, end of Clinton St., Delaware City. Late risers can join us at the same place at 9.30 AM. Return about 5 PM.

Cost: ferry was \$6.00 round trip in 2002; state park fees applicable (DE fee - \$2.50 for Delawarians, \$4.00 for aliens - OK for Fort Mott) so car pool where you can. Pay as you go.

Leader: the 4th ol' fort - Colin Campbell - 302-792-2506 (H), 302-996-2905 (W) or colin.campbell@cibasc.com.

Please let him know you intend to join; the small ferry needs to know approximate numbers.

Details: in flyer at DVOC meetings (March 20, April 10, 24) or by request from leader (send e-mail or stamped, addressed envelope.

May 2,3,4th (Fri-Sun) - "BIRDING IN THE DELMARVA PENINSULA". A 3-day event which you can join at any time.

Meet 7:30 AM Friday, 2 May at Bombay hook NWR HQ/Visitors Center. Going for late night rails will be decided on the day, depending on weather conditions. Campers or motellers welcome. Full details at DVOC meetings or on the web at www.dvoc.org.

Leader: Colin Campbell (302) 792-2506 (H) (302) 996-2905 (W) or colin.campbell@cibasc.com

May 18th (Sunday) - HAWKIN ROAD and BRIGHTVIEW FARM, Burlington Co., NJ. The target species at Hawkin Road will be breeding Prothonotary, Worm-eating, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers and grasslands species at Brightview Farm.

Meet at 6:30 AM at Hawkin Road where the macadam turns to dirt road (the bridge over Little Creek)

Leader : Don Jones (609) 859-0281

May 31st (Sat) - "BIRDING NATIVE GRASSLANDS", PENNYPACK TRUST, PA

This restoration effort at the Pennypack Trust in Huntington Valley is in the fifth growing year and is 60 acres of five different native grasses on the Raytharn Farm property. These fields should be prime to host some grasslands birds and your morning will help us survey the possibilities. Meet at the Trust Center off Edgehill Road at 7:30 AM. Call the Trust @ (215) 657- 0830 for directions. Leader: JoAnn Raine (215) 659-3921 or joannr36@aol.com

June 7th and 8th (Sat-Sun) – SUSSEX COUNTY, NJ an overnight trip to the Highlands to look for the breeding birds; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker and an assortment of warblers including Golden-winged, Nashville, Cerulean, Blackburnian and Canada.

Leader: Chris Walters (215) 642-6862 or CWalters@ReedSmith.com

July 20th (Sun) - BOMBAY HOOK NWR and ENVIRONS, DE to witness the annual spectacle of shorebird migration.

Meet at 7:30AM at the headquarters

Leader : Sandy Sherman (610) 237-6814 or paavocet@aol.com

August 11th –14th (Mon-Thurs) – HIMALAYAN SNOWCOCK, UTAH/NEVADA. An early morning hike through the Ruby Mountains provides us with one of our greatest birding challenges as we search for the successfully introduced Himalayan Snowcock, our largest grouse.

Surrounded by stunning scenery Black Rosy-Finch and Lewis' Woodpecker can be found here and we will visit pinyon-juniper and sagebrush habitat as well as salt flats. 110-130 species are possible including California Quail, Chukar and Flammulated Owl.

Leader: Adrian Binns (215) 364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com

Field Trips, cont'd

September 20st (Sat) - FALL BIRDING at the BAILEY TRACT, PALMYRA, NJ. Focusing on migrating warblers anything is possible including numerous Connecticut's. Up to 20 species of warblers have been seen in past trips at this wonderful birding location. Meet at 7:00 AM at car park.

Leader : Ward Dasey (609) 953-1685 or w.daseyiii@worldnet.att.net

October 11th (sat) - TUCKERTON MARSHES, NJ for Sharp-tailed Sparrows, with great comparison of all races of Nelson's as well as Salt Marsh Sharp-tail's. A walk along 7 bridges road, is likely to add another a dozen sparrow species. Meet at the end of 7 Bridges Road at 7:30 sharp!

Leader: Frank Windfelder (215) 673-0240 or fwindfelder@yahoo.com

November 1st or 2nd (sat or sun) - BAKE OVEN KNOB, PA for raptors and possible Golden Eagle and Goshawk. A decision on which day should have the best conditions will be made the week prior. Meet at car park.

Leaders : Frank Windfelder (215) 673-0240 or fwindfelder@yahoo.com , Bill Murphy (215) 885-2488 or ndmurphy@voicenet.com and Chris Walters (215) 642-6862 or CWalters@ReedSmith.com

December 5th - 8th (fri-mon) - NIAGARA FALLS & ONTARIO, CANADA - Visit the Niagara River at the peak time for gulls. 10 plus species are likely, including California, little and Thayer's, as well as Bonaparte's by the thousands. Also 20 plus species of ducks are possible, including staggering numbers of Long-tailed Ducks and scaup. One day will be spent birding areas away from the river in southern Ontario. Group size limited to 12. Car pool. Details to follow.

Leaders; Bert Filemyr (215) 379-6359 or afilemyr@comcast.net and Martin Selzer (215) 233-9090 or mselzer@prdus.nj.com



Harlequin Duck © Adrian Binns

A New Membership Initiative

Anita Guris

The DVOC Council is launching a membership drive which not only seeks new active members for the Club, but also promotes a new initiative to welcome guests, expand the programs and encourage audience participation.

Our president has formed a new Membership Committee - with me as Chairperson. Bert Filemyr, Dennis Bert, Lynn Jackson, Art McMorris and Sandy Sherman have agreed to serve on the committee. If any other Club Members would like to participate, please let me know (anita@paulagics.com).

Objectives of the Membership Committee are to foster good will, encourage potential members to join, and make the club more visible to the public.

One particular type of member we would like to target - YOUTH! As Chairperson, I will start an outreach program to arouse enthusiasm for the club, and pique the interest of all birders, especially young ones. Dennis, Lynn and I will greet guests at each meeting and help to make them feel welcome.

Current members are encouraged to bring guests to meetings and to look for potential club members while out in the field. The committee has designed a club brochure/handout to give to interested birders. They are also being placed in Nature Centers, and other appropriate public locations. Please feel free to take a handful at Club meetings. We have also decals with the Club logo for (internal) car windows which are available to all members.

In addition, the route to membership is being simplified which will require modification of the by-laws; more about this later.

The Committee will gladly accept any ideas from the membership to help further these aims.

Winter Birding on the Niagara River

by Martin Selzer, edited and abridged by Jane Henderson

This past December, 2002, with our homework done and our winter gear packed, a group of ten of us from DVOC rented a van, assembled before dawn, and headed for Niagara. Adrian, Bert, Karl, Frank, Martin, Lynn, Jane, Chris, Bill and Naomi were on the road at 6:15 AM heading north on the PA Turnpike. With his GPS plugged into a laptop computer, Bert served as navigator. We were always knew exactly where we were even if we didn't know where we wanted to be or how we were going to get there! The trip took us about 9 hours from the Philadelphia area.

The Niagara River runs north from Lake Erie about 35 miles to its mouth on Lake Ontario. It is largely ice free in winter and is a source of food and shelter for gulls. Nine species regularly occur there in winter, and 19 have been recorded over the past several years. The one-day record of 14 species occurred during the peak fall-winter window in November, 1995.



California Gull © Jane Henderson

Two of the ABA Birdfinding Guide Series publications give detailed information to help plan a weekend trip. *Birdfinder: A Birder's Guide to Planning North American Trips* and *A Birder's Guide to Metropolitan Areas of North America* have chapters devoted to the Niagara area. The *Niagara River: An Important Bird Area*, published by the Minister of the Environment, Canada, gives an overview of the area, explaining the river's importance to the gulls and outlining what a visiting birder is likely to encounter.

We made one stop on the way before getting off the NY State Thruway to get petrol and stop at Montezuma NWR. We were filling up the gas tank just outside the refuge when an adult bald eagle soared overhead. The refuge was frozen over, so we didn't stay long.

After a stop for lunch, we headed for the American Falls in Buffalo. Although access to the river is best from the Canadian side, we'd been advised to check out the American

Falls and Goat Island on the American side. Strong winds blew spray from the falls right into our faces and made it very hard to see much.

We crossed the border and headed for Niagara on the Lake (NOTL) to witness the evening fly-by of Bonaparte's gulls. The thousands of these gulls that feed along the Niagara River during the day roost on Lake Ontario at night. From just before dusk until dark, they fly by in small groups to their roosting sites. From a boat landing on the river's edge, birders can watch them as they funnel along this narrow section of the river. This is the time and place to try to pick out Little and Common Black-headed Gulls as they fly by with the multitude of Bonaparte's.

We arrived a bit after 3:30 PM and stayed for about an hour. The next day we learned that the gull fly-by continues until dark and that around 5:00 PM that day, a Black-headed Gull was seen from the very boat landing where we had been standing not 20 minutes earlier.

It had been a long day and, by the time we checked into the hotel, we had had a four-gull day (Great Black-backed, Herring, Ring-billed and Bonaparte's). We knew we still had some work to do, but we still had 2+ full days ahead of us.

We got underway at 8:15 the next morning. Our plan was to start at Fort Erie and bird our way back along the river, ultimately ending up at NOTL again for the fly-by. At Fort Erie we saw a virtual "sea of ducks." There was an enormous flock of Long-tailed Ducks, as well as Lesser and Greater Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Canvasback and Redhead.

We searched the Legends of Niagara Golf Course for wintering raptors. We were rewarded with a light-phase Rough-legged Hawk. When we did a Bird-of-the-Trip tally at our last dinner together, this buteo was the hands down winner!

It was now time for a Tim Horton's stop for lunch where there's a varied menu and, very importantly, bathrooms. What more could a visiting birder want?

After lunch, we checked out neighborhood feeders. We didn't find anything spectacular, but we knew that passerine birding opportunities would be scarce on this trip, and we welcomed the opportunity to see Downy Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, White-throated Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos and other usual suspects.

A stop at the Control Gates area above the falls yielded our first Little and Lesser Black-backed Gulls of the trip. Our next stop was Horseshoe Falls. At the pumping station above the falls, we found another Little Gull. While looking for the juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake that had been reported at the base of the American Falls the previous week, we ran into another group of birders who put us onto a young

Niagara, cont'd

Iceland Gull. We never found the Kittiwake, and from reports we heard all weekend, no one else did either.

The Sir Adam Beck power plant overlook was one of the best spots along the entire route. It is a great vantage point from which to scan the river below. It is also historically a favorite spot for California and Thayer's Gulls. While we didn't see either on our first visit, we did see several more Iceland gulls and Lesser Black-backs as well as a huge concentration of Herring, Ring-bills, Great Black-backs and Bonaparte's.

Then it was time to head back to the fly-by at NOTL. The Bonaparte's were flying by in big numbers as it grew darker. We were joined by a group of birders from Ohio, and two local birders. When it was nearly dark, one of the local guys spied a Black-headed Gull streaming by.

Fortunately, the bird banked in front of a light along the far side of the river and we were all able to get on it. The bird was readily identifiable, but we all agreed that without the assistance of the local birder, we would probably have missed it. With an eight-gull day behind us (GBBG, LBBG, Iceland, Ring-billed, Herring, Bonaparte's, Little, Black-headed) we headed back to the hotel.

On Sunday morning we stopped at the Adam Beck overlook before heading off to Brantford in hopes of Gray Partridge and assorted waterfowl at Hamilton Harbor. At Adam Beck, Frank and Karl found a likely candidate for California Gull. After a fly around, the bird returned to its perch. We were all able to study it, and much debate followed. The discussion continued as we drove to Brantford. Frank made a very strong defense for California gull. Karl's post-trip digital photo backed him up.



Long-tailed Duck © Adrian Binns

At the Brantford Airport, while braving a fierce snow squall, we searched in vain for a partridge. The best we could manage was partridge footprints in the snow. The birds had more sense than we did. They had found cover.

The next stop was LaSalle Park on Hamilton Harbor where we found a group of 30 Trumpeter Swans. These birds are part of a reintroduction project at Wye Marsh. We stopped at several other vantage points along the harbor. We got distant looks at huge numbers of Long-tailed Ducks out in Lake Ontario.

A little later, from the parking lot of Green Street Condominiums, we had birds close enough to appreciate. Besides Long-tailed Ducks and Scaup, we had White-winged, Surf and Black Scoters. A Peregrine Falcon cruised by.



Black-headed Gulls © Bob Cohen

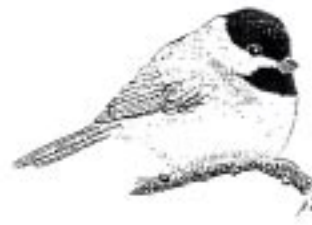
Then back to Adam Beck. We didn't re-find the California gull, but we did locate an adult Thayer's Gull. Once we were all on it, we watched this bird for at least 15 minutes, leaving no doubt as to its identity. It was another great gull day bringing our trip total to 10.

On our last morning, we headed straight to the Control Gates in search of the Glaucous Gulls. Shortly after arriving and setting up our scopes, Martin found an adult bird on the gravel bar in the river, and Adrian found a juvenile bird on the control structure itself. It was a good thing we found them so quickly because a car backfired in the chill of this Monday morning and all the gulls took off and scattered.

We returned to Fort Erie and scanned the river one last time. Before heading for home, we drove through the Legends of Niagara golf course one more time. We found the Rough-legged Hawk again, along with several Red-tailed Hawks and a perched adult American Bald Eagle.

Before crossing the border, we stopped at the duty free shop to use up our Canadian currency. At 10:30 we were back on the road for home. The Glaucous Gulls had been our 11th gull species, and our total trip list was 72 species. Not bad for winter birding.

The gulls and waterfowl make this a must do trip for any birder who wants to see large concentrations of birds. It was indeed an avian spectacle that lived up to its advance billing!



Carolina Chickadee © Adrian Binns

Support the DVOC Lagerhead Shrikes on Their World Series of Birding “Dry Run”

by Paul Guris

People often ask us, “what is the most difficult part of doing the World Series of Birding?”. Is it the pressure to do well? Is it the hours and hours of scouting? Is it the sleep deprivation? Is it dealing with the snow fence that ripped Bill’s hand open? (Hey! Mike and I didn’t feel a thing!) Is it worrying about Adrian’s food mathematics (for example, Rick’s arm + 2 rolls = lunch)? Is it explaining to the Marketing Director of Nikon’s Sports Optics Division why we are submitting an expense for a \$500 insurance deductible on the van? Actually, that last one was pretty tough.

NO! It is none of the above. The true sacrifice for our merry band of birders is the self deprivation for over 24 HOURS of that sweetest of elixirs, that taste of Nirvana, that liquid lubricant of life, that nectar of the Gods. I refer to, of course, BEER!

You know you are in for a rough day ahead when hours before midnight even arrives, the first question out of 130 kilos of prohibition facing Brit (sounds a lot lighter in kilos than pounds, doesn’t it Adrian?) is “which cooler has the beer?”. And each year he asks again, with a futile hope akin to what must have been felt each Spring by the last Eskimo Curlew.

So as you can see, we do our part. We make sacrifices for the greater glory of DVOC. And now we’re asking you to do your part. Please help out our fund-raising efforts for this event. For the last 5 years, we’ve found 198-224 species on the day. Maybe 10 cents per species? Maybe 20? Maybe a brand new Mercedes SLK320 with manual transmission and 3.2 liter engine for the team Captain? (Uh, ignore that last one.) And before anybody asks, we do not accept food stamps, used clothing, Iraqi war bonds, or small crying children.

Please help out our fund-raising efforts for this event, and thank you for supporting the DVOC team.

NOTE: This story does have a happy ending each year. After the birding, after the finish line, and after the bleary-eyed drive back to our “digs du jour”, Anita always ensures that we have a throng of our little 12 ounce buddies just waiting for us.

Please send your tax-deductible pledge to our Treasurer, Naomi Murphy at 234 Orlemann Ave., Oreland, PA 19075 , on-line at ndmurphy3@hotmail.com or by phone at (215) 885-2488.

East Park Reservoir: A Future Urban Oasis - A Most Worthy Target for 2003 WSB Contributions

This year, DVOC’s World Series of Birding contributions in support of our team, The Lagerhead Shrikes, will go toward the funding of the planned education and conservation center at East Park Reservoir, off 33rd Street near Diamond Street in Philadelphia. A joint project of Fairmount Park Commission and National Audubon Society, the center is now in the planning stages, and will open in about five years. DVOC will be among the first to get on board this great project.

Jan Gordon, DVOC Conservation Chairperson, who has been interested in this site for many years, wrote: “The new center is really a marvelous example of where DVOC’s newly encouraged ornithological studies can lead. Keith Russell informs me that early issues of *Cassinia* contain reports of bird observations at East Park Reservoir...*Cassinia* reports and talk with older birders led him to believe he could find a way to gain access to the reservoir, by that time fenced so that the water surface was not visible from outside. He managed to make the arrangements necessary to get in. Two years later, when he began the Philadelphia winter counts, Keith assigned East Park to Dave Cutler, who had birded there as a teen, and helped Dave with arrangements to get in on the necessary Saturdays. Dave always took care to teach Joe Schultz, the Philadelphia Water Department mechanic, about the ducks he was seeing so that Joe would become interested. This later made it possible for (the late) Ed Fingerhood to begin, and for Keith Russell and Louis Bevier to complete a systematic study of the bird life there over several years, through all seasons. National Audubon’s assumption that a viable and interesting education and conservation center can be built there is based fully on the Academy of Natural Science’s Ornithology Department and DVOC studies.

Jan continued: “Here is some history of our deep involvement with the West Basin at East Park... DVOC bird sightings records go back to or before 1900. Herb and Dave Cutler, both DVOC members for over 50 years, birded there as kids and were active in DVOC at an early age. Dave still does the winter count there, but there are many other DVOC contributors over the years who left behind a very valuable record at ANS and for Ed and Keith’s forthcoming book, *Birds of Philadelphia*.. Ed, Bob Ridgely and Frank Gill determined that as THE major wintering and migration site for diving ducks, especially canvasbacks, in PA, the West Basin must be saved. In supporting this project we would be honoring Ed.

When National Audubon established new conservation priorities, the focus changed to saving the whole East Park site. This became possible because of OUR records and Jon Flicker’s (NAS President) vision of what it can become. An opportunity to visit the site will be announced soon.”

CLASSIFIED ADS

PLEASE NOTE: Space for these ads was purchased at the rate of \$5 per small ad. By vote of Council, following this issue, *Larus* will no longer be carrying ads.

“River of Raptors” Veracruz Sept 30- Oct 12. Imagine 80,000 raptors per hour; 15 plus endemics; 20 species of humming-birds; 30 species of raptors; 35 plus species of warblers and a possible 350 species.

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

Overnight Hudson Canyon pelagic trip from Barnegat Light, NJ Memorial Day weekend, Sun-Mon, May 25-26 on the 100-foot “Doris Mae” to be at the canyon at dawn, chum on the water. Space limited to 45 participants.

Reservations required. \$109.

Focus on Nature Tours, (302)529-1876 font@focusonnature.com www.focusonnature.com

This is the most proven pelagic out of New Jersey over the years. Birds that have been seen are noted in the FONT website.

Tours in Iceland, May 29-Jun 3: Birds & Solar Eclipse and June 4-10: Around the Island, Seabirds and Cetaceans.

Nesting Great Skuas, Manx Shearwater, Euro Storm-Petrel, and thousands of alcids.

Spain Birding Tour, Jun 23-28, including Pyrenees, Ebro Delta, for birds as diverse as Wallcreeper, Lammergeier, Stone-Curlew, Flamingos.

Other upcoming birding tours include: Honduras, Panama, Brazil, Washington State & California.

Armas Hill at FONT (Focus On Nature Tours, Inc.) (302) 529-1876, font@focusonnature.com www.focusonnature.com

It Pays to Know the Language, or We Should’ve Studied the Latin

by Jane Henderson

This past winter I was in Paris for a week visiting friends who had rented an apartment there. Kaaren had made arrangements for us to meet a French birding friend of hers for a walk at Bois de Vincennes on Saturday morning. The day before that, the friend, Julien, had e-mailed her to say that he would not be able to be there. We decided to forge ahead and go anyway and see if we could catch up with the birding group. This would be my only birding experience that week in France.

At Ecole Militaire, we boarded the Metro and got off at the Port Dorée stop. It was very cold. It was beginning to get light, but no one else had materialized at the established meeting place in front of the Musée des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie. So we walked around a bit. We found Blackbirds in the bushes and House Sparrows all over the place.

Finally a small group began to assemble at the appointed place. When we joined them it became apparent that no one was comfortable speaking English. And we were not comfortable speaking French.

The group formed a kind of huddle and spoke softly to one another. They seemed to be wondering who in the world we were and how in the world we’d gotten there. One man said he spoke a little English. Kaaren said, “Oh, oh. He’s the one who’s going to be stuck with us.” One woman finally admitted to a pretty good knowledge of English. She asked the question we knew the rest of them wanted to ask: “Who are you and how did you two Americans know about this bird walk?” Kaaren explained that her friend Julien had told her about the walk and had planned to meet us there. They seemed satisfied with that.

I think I said it was cold. It was. The paths through the Bois were entirely ice-covered. I was wearing all the warm clothes I had brought on the trip, and was grateful for every one.

We followed the group along the trails. We stuck close to the man who spoke a little English. Between his little bit of English and our little bit of French, we began to talk about the birds. One easy one was the *Kestrel*. The name even sounds similar. Then there was the *Accenteur*. Kaaren got all excited about that one. She thought it was a life bird for her. My mind started racing. I knew something about a European accentor, I was sure. And then, from someplace deep in my brain, came “Dunnock!” “Are you sure it’s not a Dunnock? Isn’t that an accentor?” I asked Kaaren. We’d birded Europe a couple of times together - once in England’s Lake District and once in the Czech Republic. “Oh-oh, that gray cheek – it’s a Dunnock,” she conceded. So much for her life bird.

At one point, our English speaking guy and his co-leader started up an extremely steep, icy hill with a rickety hand rail. I said to Kaaren, “We’d better follow them. We have no idea where we are, or how to get back to the Metro stop.” The Bois de Vincennes is a big place. So up we went, grabbing the rail wherever we could to avoid sliding back to the bottom. When we had struggled to the top, Kaaren said, “Turn around.” I did, and saw all the rest of the group waiting safely at the bottom of the hill. We laughed. Kaaren asked our leader if this group monitored raptor migration anywhere. “From here,” he said. It was certainly high enough to do that. There was a very nice view of the Chateau de Vincennes from there.

We continued the walk with the two men. The rest of the group had evaporated somewhere. If I kept a France list I could’ve put some birds on it from that day’s outing: As it was, we counted 33 species. We saw lots of *Tarins des aulnes* – Eurasian siskins. Also a *Bergeronnette des ruisseaux* – a Grey Wagtail. And we mustn’t forget the many *Mouettes rieuses* – Black-headed Gulls. And the *Pic vert* – Green Woodpecker and the many very beautiful *Geais des Chènes* – Eurasian Jays. As Steve Martin said, “The French have a different name for **everything**.”

Kaaren e-mailed me later after I’d gone home. She said she returned to the Bois de Vincennes, this time with Julien. One of the men reported to Julien that, on their last walk to the Bois, they had seen a *renard* - fox - and two Americans! Julien pointed to Kaaren and said, “Was this one of them?” They took another look and recognized her. It was her impression that the group was more amazed at the appearance of the two Americans than at the appearance of the *renard*.