

Philadelphia Larus

Vol. 30 No. 3

Christmas Count Issue 2003

Christmas Bird Counts How and where you can help

Sunday, December 14

- * **Cape May, NJ: Louise Zemaitis,**
(obrienm@algorithms.com)
- * **Upper Bucks/Montco, PA: Hart Rufe,**
(wrufe@starband.net)
- * **Middletown, DE: Bruce Lantz,**
(emdb2lantz@aol.com)
- * **Wilmington, DE: Howard Brokaw,**
(hbrokaw@aol.com)
- * **Pinelands, NJ: Bob Confer,**
(parula9@hotmail.com)
- * **Salem, NJ: Jerry Haag,**
(haagj@algorithms.com)

Saturday, December 20

- * **Wyncote, PA: Martin Selzer,**
(after 8 PM) (mselzer@prdus.jnj.com)
- * **Oceanville (Brigantine), NJ: Brian Moscatello,**
(bmoscat@ix.netcom.com)
Meet at Pomona Diner at 6 AM. Please advise Brian if you are coming so he can assign territories.
- * **Glenolden (Delaware Co), PA: Nick Pulcinella,**
(nickpul@bellatlantic.net)
- * **Southern Bucks, PA: Bob Mercer,**
(ramercer@co.bucks.pa.us)

Sunday, December 21

- * **Belleplain, NJ: Paul Kosten,**
(floraff@algorithms.com)
- * **Bombay Hook, DE: Andy Ednie,**
(ednieap@wittnet.com)
- * **Moorestown, NJ: Ted Young,**
(tedlyoung@aol.com)

Saturday, December 27

- * **Valley Forge Audubon, PA: Edie Parnum,**
(eparnum@comcast.net)

Sunday, December 28

- * **Cumberland Co, NJ: Pat & Clay Sutton,**
(pcsutton@bellatlantic.net)
- * **Central Bucks Co, PA: Diane Allison,**
(dalliso@mail.ptd.net)

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A PRESIDENTIAL SWAN SONG

By nature, I'd prefer to be a MUTE than a TRUMPETER. However, I am very pleased with what's been accomplished in the Club during my tenure as President. Financially, we're very nicely in the BLACK. Do I hear a WHOOPER joy from our Treasurer?

COSCOROBA, enough, I hear you cry!

We do need to keep the impetus generated this year going and, though he failed miserably with the Atkins diet, our Presidential nominee for 2004 will surely do that, as he is one of the leading lights in the Club's resurgence into its new-found popularity and mission to be the ornithological club of the region, catering for the keen beginner, the birder with the need to go to the next stage, and the expert with both the acumen and willingness to impart knowledge and experience and the desire to learn more.

Membership is buoyant (girls are joining too). Anita Guris and her team are to be congratulated for their efforts in adding almost 10% to the Club's membership this year. A major change in the By-laws of the Club has eased the joining process. Spearheaded by Chris Walters, a move to get enthusiastic youngsters to join is proving successful. The 'old' DVOC of yore really encouraged those teenagers who showed the verve and tenacity to pursue their birding (just ask Dave Cutler or Rick

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Xmas Counts, cont'd

Sunday, December 28

* **Milford, DE: Glen Lovelace,**
(glovelace@dol.net)

Tuesday, December 30

* **Seaford, DE: Glen Lovelace,**
(glovelace@dol.net)

Wednesday, December 31

* **Elmer, NJ: Jerry Haag,** (haagj@algorithms.com)

Saturday, January 3

* **Rehoboth, DE: Joe Swertinski:**
(swertinski.j@mcd.gen.de.us)

Sunday, January 4

* **Cape Henlopen, Prime Hook, DE:**
Frank Rohrbacher,
(rohrbaf@aol.com)

Saturday, January 10

* **Philadelphia Midwinter Bird Census,**
Keith Russell, (keith.russell6@verizon.net)

2004 Meetings / Programs

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. Guests are always welcome.

January 1: No meeting.

January 8: Annual meeting to be followed by refreshments. Election of new officers, members of Council, Fellows and new Honorary members. Review of the area's Christmas Count results.

January 22: Bob Mulvihill: "Forty Years of Avian Birding Studies at Powdermill Nature Reserve in Western PA, and the New PA Breeding Bird Atlas."

Powdermill Nature Reserve has served as the headquarters for a wide range of avian studies of local, regional and even global significance over the past 21 years. A powdermill Field Ornithologist for the past 21 years, Bob Mulvihill, currently also serving as Pennsylvania's Breeding Bird Atlas Project Coordinator, will talk about some of Powdermill's familiar and not-so-familiar bird studies and will give us lots of details (and answer lots of questions!) about the upcoming Atlas project.

February 5: Clem Fisher: "Australian Birds in Philadelphia and Other Unexpected Places: A Tribute to John Gould's Assistant, John Gilbert." Clem Fisher, resident of Great Britain based at the Liverpool Museum, is one of the world's experts on Australian birds and their great illustrator, John Gould. She will address the Club during one of her occasional visits to the United States.

February 19: Dan Brauning: "Wandering Falcons: Tales of Peregrine Falcon Recovery and Dispersal." Dan is the PA Game Commission biologist who oversees Peregrine studies, runs the state's Breeding Bird Surveys, and was project director of PA's first breeding bird atlas in the 1980s. He will tell us the findings of recent research in juvenile dispersal of Peregrines and of recent cliff nesting in PA.

March 4: Jeff Gordon: "The Bird Song Grammys," is a survey of some of the best (and worst) vocal efforts by North American birds, and a look at some of the evolutionary history and ecological function of bird songs and calls. This program is designed not so much to teach how to identify specific bird sounds, but more to impart a broader and deeper appreciation of the vital role played by sound in the lives of birds.

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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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janeh008@aol.com

DVOC Website Address:
www.dvoc.org

2004 Field Trips

Adrian Binns and Martin Selzer, Co-chairpeople

NOTE: PLEASE NOTIFY THE FIELD TRIP LEADER THAT YOU PLAN TO ATTEND

These field trips have been scheduled as of this printing. Check the DVOC website, www.DVOC.org, for additional field trip listings.

Jan 2 (Fri) – PELAGIC Christmas Count to the Hudson Shelf Valley ~ explore the underwater trench called the Hudson Shelf Valley that extends from near shore all the way to the Hudson Canyon, covering mostly the Mud Hole and Glory Hole areas. We will set up a fixed transect for CBC purposes, and it will be selected to hit both New York / New Jersey pelagic waters. Looking for Fulmar, Gannet, Razorbill, murres, Dovekie, Puffin, Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, Great Skua, Black-legged Kittiwake.....From Belmar 7:30 AM. to 3:30 PM approx. Fee.

Leader: Paul Guris paul@paulagics.com

January 10 (Sat) – Philadelphia Mid-Winter Bird Census (PMWBC) ~ help count birds within the city limits.

Contact: Keith Russell or keith.russell6@verizon.net

January 11 (Sun) - Winter Birding in the DIX Wildlife Management Area ~ Check out a seldom birded area in Cumberland County, NJ. The mixture of farm fields with great hedgerows (a scarce habitat these days), oak/holly woodlands, salt-marsh, and bayshore provides excellent food and cover for a variety of winter birds. This territory on the Cumberland County CBC has produced some notable winter birds like Gyrfalcon, Sandhill Crane, Northern Goshawk, Saw-whet Owl, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Lincoln's Sparrow. Both diurnal and nocturnal raptor numbers can be excellent, and this area produced the nation's highest CBC counts for Eastern-Screech and Great-horned Owls ever. Some years it holds large numbers of sparrows, can be very good for Hermit Thrush and Fox Sparrow, and often holds numbers of lingering birds like Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Eastern Towhee. So come out and try birding someplace new. Meeting Time: 7:00 AM. Meeting Place: The end of Duck Cove Road, Fairton, NJ (DeLorme NJ Atlas Page 68, Block G-1) This is the first right turn off Route 601 / Back Neck Rd., and overlooks an area of the Cohansey River where the local Bald Eagle pair can often be seen.

Leader: Paul Guris paul@paulagics.com

Jan 15 (Thurs) – FLORENCE - Is this the gull capital of the east? Find out as we look through the more common species for Iceland, Glaucous, Thayer's and hope to find a California, Yellow-legged or Slaty-backed. Great Cormorants are also likely. Meet at the boat ramp at 9 AM Leader: Adrian Binns wildlifegd@aol.com

Jan 17-19 (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 – first come, first served! Shared expenses.

Leaders: Erica Brendel ericamb@prodigy.net

Chris Walters CWalters@ReedSmith.com

Jan 24 (Sat) – FLORENCE ~ for some of the best gull watching in the east. 'White-wing' gulls, Lesser Black-backs, and a search for Thayer's, California, Slaty-back and Yellow-legged Gull. Meet at the boat ramp at 9 AM

Leader: Adrian Binns wildlifegd@aol.com

Jan 31 (Sat) – The NORTH JERSEY SHORE ~ We'll search the ponds, inlets, jetties and shoreline from Manasquan to Sandy Hook for loons, ducks, gulls and alcids. Meet at the south jetty of Manasquan Inlet at 8:30 AM. We'll be birding through early afternoon. Leader: Adrian Binns wildlifegd@aol.com

Feb 15 (Sun) – CONOWINGO DAM and MUDDY RUN

After birding the dam we will head north to Muddy Run, a PPL reservoir.

Meet at 9 AM at Fisherman's Park.

Directions: From Rt. 1. Immediately after crossing the dam, turn left on Fisherman Park Rd. for .07 mile and follow signs to Fisherman's Park.

Leader: Tom Reeves tomrevs7@verizon.net

Feb 28 (Sat) – INDIAN RIVER INLET NORTH. Join us as we search for wintering waterfowl, gulls, seabirds and other late winter visitors. We meet at the Super Wawa on Route 1 just outside of Lewes at 9 AM Besides birding Indian River Inlet and Rehoboth Bay, we will stop at Silver Lake, Cape Henlopen State Park, Prime Hook and Bombay Hook as we bird our way back north. Meet at the Super WAWA on Route 1 just north of Cape Henlopen at 9 AM.

Leader: Martin Selzer msselzer@prdus.jnj.com

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HIMALAYAN SNOWCOCK TRIP - August 2003

by Adrian Binns

Participants: Anna and Dennis Bert, Adrian Binns, Erica Brendel, Dennis Brennan, Colin Campbell, France Dewaghe, Gerry Dewaghe, Bert Filemyr, Scott Henderson, Jeff Holt, Butch Lishman, Barbara McGlaughlin, Bob Rufe and Doug Schaller.

15 of us joined our local guide Mark Stackhouse in Salt Lake City and made a beeline for Nevada, with a brief stop at the Bonneville Salt Flats. We spent 2 nights in Elko, making it an easy base from which to head up to the Ruby Mountains as well as explore to the Lamoille Valley. Starting bright and early Tuesday morning we had breakfast at the Lamoille Canyon trail head before making the 1 ½ hour trek up 1400' in the dark to our vantage point just above Island Lake in the cirque. Colin soon made quick work of the scree and 800' cliff-face and located the snowcocks at a fair distance. There were at least 6 in view at any one time. Eventually a Golden Eagle managed to frighten the snowcocks and we were rewarded with eleven birds calling as they flew in squadron formation to safety.

France almost stepped on a Blue Grouse, which flew into a spruce tree for all of us to see. Mountain Bluebirds, Clark's Nutcrackers, Cassin's Finches, a Golden Eagle being chased by a Prairie Falcon, a Black Rosy-Finch feeding on grass seeds and several Long-tailed Weasels and Pikas running amongst the rocks rounded out an outstanding morning in the cirque.

Back at the car park we picked up MacGillivray's Warblers, Dusky Flycatcher and had wonderful looks at a circling Prairie Falcon. Descending into the Canyon, a stop at Humboldt Power Station Picnic Area produced Olive-sided Flycatcher, a speeding Merlin, a juvenile Red-naped Sapsucker and several Lewis's Woodpecker amongst the Cottonwoods.

After a much needed early afternoon rest we headed to South Fork Reservoir. As with all our water birding spots on this trip, the sheer numbers just blew us away. Long-billed Dowitchers, Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Wilson's Snipe, Snowy and Great Egrets, both Yellowlegs, Eared, Clarke's, Western and Horned Grebe, Marbled Godwits and an assortment of ducks including Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, Redhead, Shoveler, Ruddy Duck, Pintail, a Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, and ubiquitous Cinnamon Teal.

Our third day began in the Lamoille Valley, visiting the agricultural fields and wet meadows where Sandhill Cranes and their young were keeping an eye out for Coyotes roaming the area. Common Nighthawks were seen on fence posts, and White-faced Ibis flew over in small flocks. Raptors were well represented with Kestrels, a Peregrine and dark morph Red-tails and Swainson's.

Turning onto a dirt road, sparrows became more numerous with Vesper and Brewer's dominating the numbers. Several Savannahs and a small group of Lark Sparrows were also seen. Anna spotted a large bird walking the roadside ditch – it was Greater Sage Grouse, which eventually flew over the barbed wired fence and into the sage. As Mark had promised us, Sage Thrashers were trash birds along this stretch!

At a riparian area with a cattle pen and small puddles we had about 75 Wilson's Snipe and as many Killdeer. Willow Flycatcher, Cedar Waxwing, Lazuli Bunting and rows of Cliff Swallows lined the telegraph wires. In Lamoille, a walk around the block produced Rufous, Black-chinned and Broad-tailed Hummingbirds at various feeders. After lunch we headed back to Utah, stopping in the Pinyon Pine and Pinyon Juniper habit of Pequop. Juniper Titmouse eventually came into the tape in a flock with a Plumbeous Vireo, Gray Flycatcher and several Mountain Chickadees.

We proceeded down the road to a beautiful ranch, which produced Green-tailed Towhee, Western Tanager, a female Bullock's Oriole, Western Scrub Jay, Mountain Bluebird, and great looks at Gray Flycatcher. In Utah we stopped along the Bonneville Salt Flats where about two-dozen Snowy Plovers and Baird Sandpipers were feeding along with numerous Western Sandpipers. After dinner and a change of rooms for Butch and me due to a bathroom flood (he did it), we headed up East Canyon to look for Flammulated Owl. Several responded immediately to the tape, but shut up as soon as a Long-eared Owl made an appearance over our (and their) heads! It was not long before they began to call again and eventually one flew across the road almost striking Dennis in the head. It perched in the open giving us stunning looks in the spotlight.

On Thursday morning we headed up Big Cottonwood Canyon, stopping first at Big Spruces Campground where a juvenile American Dipper was catching the early morning rays on a branch over the stream, a Hammond's Flycatcher was flitting about the spruce trees near the bridge, and both Townsend's and Black-throated Gray Warblers were also seen. Red Crossbills and Clark's Nutcrackers flew over and an Olive-sided Flycatcher was spotted perched atop a snag high on the ridge. A small brushy area beside the road produced Yellow-rumped, Nashville and MacGillivray's Warblers, Lincoln's Sparrow and a pair of Western Tanagers.

Further up the canyon at the Solitude Nordic Center we walked around the pond where a Sora was spotted on a log at the edge of the sedges. Western Wood Pewees were constantly calling, and a family group of Ruby-crowned Kinglets was feeding in the evergreens. On one of the trails that winds through groves of aspens and evergreens we paused to see a mixed flock of Mountain and Black-capped Chickadees, Red-breasted Nuthatch, a Red-naped Sap-

sucker, Pine Siskins, Warbling Vireo and Hairy Woodpecker. Making a loop around the trail in an effort to locate a reported Goshawk nest, we managed to find 'gray-headed' Juncos, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush, Wilson's Warbler, Steller's Jays and an Olive-sided Flycatcher, but not our target species.

At this stage Gerry and the beer wagon (France, Jeff and Scott) left us, and several hours later we dropped Bob off at the airport, followed by Dennis and Doug in Salt Lake City, but not before driving past some of the city's finer landmarks, much to Bert's delight!

By late afternoon we were at Bear River Bird Refuge driving the loop. We came across thousands of Bank Swallows lined up on wires, along fencing and en masse on the ground – it reminded me of a swarm of locusts. On the water were large groups of American White Pelicans, American Avocets, White-faced Ibis and Black-neck Stilts as well as masses of Wilson's Phalaropes, far too numerous to count. Dotted amongst them, Long-billed Dowitchers, Solitary Sandpipers and both Yellowlegs as well as some 100 Marbled Godwits. This spectacle stretched as far as the eye could see down the causeway - mind-boggling numbers, which we just don't get to see back East.

We finished the day dodging a rain storm and got to White's Valley as the light faded. A Gopher Snake crossed the road, giving us a reason to stop. While Mark handled the snake, Butch spotted 30 odd Gray Partridges on the far edge of a ploughed field. Driving further down the valley scanning the fields, it was almost totally dark before we picked up a Short-eared Owl beside the road. Later several were seen crossing in front of the van.

Today we were on our own, heading to the Uinta Mountains, specifically Mirror Lake, some 30 miles up the canyon, but not before several stops. At Shingle Creek Campground a Goshawk flew across the road only to disappear behind spruce trees. At Washington Lake we looked for Williamson's Sapsucker, finding a nest hole but no bird. Pine Grosbeaks were calling from the tops of trees along the track, and a walk into the forest produced a small group of Gray Jays as well as a very confiding young Grosbeak, which allowed me to get within three inches of it. Milbert's Tortoiseshell, Ruddy and Purplish Copper were seen well and Colin and Erica had a staring contest with a Long-tailed Weasel – the weasel won. When we reached Mirror Lake a male Three-toed Woodpecker flew into a dead snag above us and we watched several Golden Eagles being chased by a pair of Red-tails.

In mid afternoon we dropped Colin off at the airport and proceeded to Antelope Island, stopping just before the entrance to check on a pair of Barn Owls in a silo – great vent views! The causeway was alive with waders and shorebirds including great looks at a small group of Red-necked Phalaropes, but it was the sheer numbers of Eared Grebes estimated at 10,000, in all plumages, that left a lasting impression on us. What a sight! After a quick ice cream we headed to the far end of the island at the Fielding Garr Ranch. Here Lazuli Buntings, Townsend's, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Nashville and Wilson's Warblers were seen amongst the cottonwoods and bathing in the water sprinkler. And what about that other bird? The one that had pretty much eluded us - was that a Cassin's Vireo?

A final stop at the visitor's center produced several family groups of Chukars amongst the rock outcropping, and about eight Burrowing Owls in the grasslands. At one stage we had both species in the scope. After dinner, we hooked up at the Salt Lake City Cemetery with Mark to try for Western Screech Owl, but it was not to be on this night. We did get a good laugh when Dennis was frightened out of his wits by a scream coming from a gravesite and shortly thereafter having him turn around to see someone in white (Butch) sitting on a tombstone. I do not think he'll be owling in a cemetery any time soon!

David Wheeler joined us for our final day. We started in the Summit Park section of Parley's Summit, where we found Evening Grosbeak, Black-headed Grosbeak, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Steller's Jay, Spotted Towhee, Orange-crowned and MacGillivray's Warbler and Downy Woodpecker.

From here we journeyed to Deseret Ranch via Evanston in Wyoming. This 250,000 acre ranch is dominated by sagebrush and grasslands in the lower elevations along with various bodies of water and scattered Aspen and Fir stands and open brush amongst the upper elevations. Managed to enhance the ranch's resources, it is an Important Bird Area. We finished with 104 species for the day on the ranch, including three Sage Sparrows, Say's Phoebe, Long-billed Curlew, Sharp-shinned Hawk, a Bald Eagle which scattered thousands of waterfowl, Barn Owl, Purple Martin, Green-tailed Towhee, Virginia's Warbler and a very cooperative male Common Poorwill, that sat in the dirt track for some 10 minutes. Mammals were also a common sight, with White-tailed Jackrabbits, Elk, Pronghorn, Coyote and White-tailed Prairie Dogs taking a back seat to an affectionate pair of swimming Beavers.

This was an outstanding trip that far exceeded my expectations, not only in the number of species seen (193) but the sheer volume of waders, shorebirds and ducks on passage was a sight to behold. It is good to know that some species seem to be faring well in some parts of the country.

Mellon and others - such as Kenn Kaufmann) and we want to encourage that same spirit today. The senses so acute when a 'kid' - sight and sound - are those needed to get the most out of birding.

Our indoor meetings - and we are one of the few Clubs in the area with two meetings per month - have taken on a new, exciting format. Adrian Binns is largely (and I don't mean that personally) responsible with not only getting some top-notch speakers but also, with Chuck Hetzel, re-instigating the "Ornithological Moment" into our programs, in which a Club member brings forth an item of interest for the delectation of the assembled multitude. Stay tuned for new initiatives on alternate sites for occasional DVOC meetings to the north (Palmyra) and the south (Tinicum). Our recent banquet, with record attendance, was organized by Bernice and Joe Koplin, who are to be congratulated for a wonderful evening.

Our field trips - also organized by Adrian, now assisted by Martin Selzer - are increasing as new venues and leaders come forward. With the whole of the incomparable Delaware Valley for local trips (led by local experts) and the increasingly popular trips outside our domain, this truly remains as one of the best ways to get to know your birds, your area and your birding buddies. Just look at the new DVOC Checklist to see the amazing number of species in our area.

Our Conservation Committee - basically Jan and Ken Gordon - once again did a wonderful job and this year was truly excellent as all of you contributed to a local project to the tune of \$5000 by sponsorship of our ever successful World Series of Birding Team, who this year excelled themselves with a record-setting total in NJ 24-hour events. Thanks to Paul Guris (captain), Mike Fritz, Bill Stocku, Adrian Binns and Rick Mellon!

Communications are crucial. We have a great team here. The written word is through our quarterly newsletter, the *Larus*, and editor Jane Henderson has coped marvellously well with gathering info, beating people up (I feel the scars even now), and getting it out. *Cassinia*, our biennial journal, suffered - as did we all - with the untimely loss of editor Sandy Sherman in June; however, as interim editor, I will deliver a very interesting centennial edition shortly with the noble assistance of Bert Filemyr, Steve Kerr, and Clay Sutton. Art McMorris will take over as editor for the next volume. Bert also has taken over the reigns of the Club's website (www.dvoc.org) from our 'founding father' Emerson Bowes, who is to be congratulated on his pioneering work. Frank Windfelder's "instant e-mail" line should be a must for all DVOC members with e-mail access - giving news and advice on meetings, trips, weather conditions, etc. We all rely on archival information now and again for publications and communications and this year Lynn Jackson came on board as DVOC archivist with immediate positive effect.

A Club can only be as good as the support it receives from its membership. And you've been great, so thanks a TUN, DRAmatis personae. Hmm, time to leave, methinks.

Colin (Cygnature)

Swifts Roost in a Chimney on Chico Avenue – A Santa Cruz, CA County Record

by Jane Henderson

On Saturday, September 20, 2003 my husband Bob and I were returning from an evening walk along West Cliff Drive from Natural Bridges in Santa Cruz, CA when I heard some twittering high in the sky. It sounded very much like the chittering of Chimney Swifts. I looked up and saw hundreds of Vaux's Swifts, swirling high in the sky.

Hmmm, I thought. If these birds behave like Chimney Swifts they are looking for a place to roost for the night. My first thought was, "I've got to find out where they're going!" I assumed that it would be in a hollow tree somewhere in the Natural Bridges area.

If I hadn't been tracking Chimney Swifts in Philadelphia just before we went out to Santa Cruz ... If I hadn't written an article about Chimney Swifts for *Bird Watcher's Digest* several years ago ... If, last fall, I hadn't given a series of talks about Chimney Swifts to students at a Philadelphia elementary school where these birds roost nightly in the chimney ... If I were not preparing an Ornithological Studies talk about Chimney Swift roosting behavior to present to a November DVOC meeting ... I might not have noticed the evening gathering of Vaux's Swifts near Natural Bridges in Santa Cruz.

The Vaux's Swift is a dark gray bird, 4.75 inches long, with a wing span of 12 inches. In flight, they appear even smaller, and mostly black. They are a little smaller than the Chimney Swift; it is very difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the two in the field. They fly with stiff wings, and in flight, make chittering sounds. They disperse over a wide area in the daytime, eating insects as they go. Their legs are positioned so far back on their bodies that they are unable to perch on a horizontal surface. At night, when they roost in a hollow structure, they hang on by their toenails to the vertical surface, even overlapping with one another if space is tight. In preparation for roosting, the swifts circle around and around the site, often disappearing from view altogether. As the time for roosting approaches, they form tighter and tighter circles around the site, and finally start dropping in, at first one by one, and finally in a steady stream. They winter in Mexico; their roost in Santa Cruz is just a stopping place.

On Monday, September 22, when I was on a pelagic trip out of Monterey Bay, I mentioned my swifts sighting to a fellow participant. She referred me to Todd Newberry, the president of the Santa Cruz Bird Club. From the SCBC website, I found Todd's email address, and messaged him with an inquiry about the swifts. He, in turn, forwarded my inquiry to David Suddjian, Bird Records Keeper for SCBC.

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TINICUM FIELD TRIP WITH KENN KAUFMAN

November 7, 2003 by Doris McGovern

Tinicum has never had a more gracious or knowledgeable walk leader than Kenn Kaufman. He led our group of 36 birders on a walk that included birds, butterflies, a baby snapping turtle, and dragonflies, many of which landed on participants' clothing and were easily studied. We began at 8 AM just as the foul weather was being pushed out by a moderate NE breeze and we ended in sunshine with fall colors aglow in the trees. No exotic species were seen, but Kenn elaborated on many of the resident and winter visitors with interesting facts of their identification and ecology. Among the 43 species American Bittern was probably the best bird. We watched the Bittern for 15 minutes from the small boardwalk where he was hunkered down in a hibiscus clump at the edge of the impoundment. He was relatively still, but preened occasionally to the delight of several teenagers who got to tick him off as a life bird.

Kenn Kaufman and Followers - Photo by Tom Reeves

Other good sightings, mostly overhead, were 2 Black Vultures, moving south; a flock of 15 Dowitcher Sp. (Sorry, Frank, we did not see the tertials!); Sharpies, Mute Swans. The impoundment held Pied-billed Grebe, lots of Great Egrets, and Bufflehead, Am. Wigeon, and Gadwall. So-called "good" sparrows could not be phished up, but Winter Wren, Cedar Waxwing and Rusty Blackbird were heard and seen. Each and every Tree Swallow was studied to exclude any record Blue and White.

Kenn lingered at the EEC, talking to individuals and signing his books for them. Three refuge staff, including biologist Brendalee Phillips and the new manager, Kate McManus, attended the walk.

Annual Banquet a Big Success

Over 130 people attended the annual DVOC banquet, held at Williamson's Restaurant atop the GSB Building in Bala Cynwyd. Speaker Kenn Kaufman entertained the group with a talk about the power of personal observation that connects people with mystery and adventure and helps them comprehend the importance of preserving the natural world. Kaufman has pursued birds in remote regions. However, he contends that the natural unknown that they inhabit begins right outside our doors.

Author of *Birds of North America*, *Kingbird Highway*, *The Peterson Guide to Advanced Birding*, *Lives of North American Birds* and *Butterflies of North America*, Kaufman is a field editor to Audubon Magazine and regular contributor to every major birding magazine.

Congratulations to Awards Recipients

Julian Potter Award:

Keith Russell, for organizing and running the Philadelphia Midwinter Bird Census.

Witmer Stone Award:

Colin Campbell, Ward Dasey, Bert Filemyr, Rick Mellon and Bill Murphy, for their work on producing the DVOC Checklist of Delaware Valley Birds.

Conservation Award:

Bonnie Van Alen, Alice Hausmann and Alex Van Alen (Willistown Conservation Trust, WCT)

This team has worked for more than 20 years to achieve the permanent protection of over 4,500 acres of wildlife habitat, and is continuing its work towards the protection of more than 5,000 additional acres.

The three are focusing their efforts in Willistown, PA and vicinity in Delaware and Chester counties, which is roughly the area between Newtown Square and Paoli, PA. Over 200 species of birds have been recorded in this area. Breeding species include Acadian Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, Eastern Bluebird, Veery, Wood Thrush; Blue-winged, Chestnut-sided, Pine, Prairie, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers; Louisiana Waterthrush, Scarlet Tanager, Field Sparrow and Eastern Meadowlark. Bald Eagle, Osprey and Bobolink have been observed, and Upland Sandpiper has been seen in migration.

The three have worked tirelessly and selflessly for conservation in the Delaware Valley area; each of them has been centrally and indispensably involved in this effort; and they have been impressively successful in achieving their conservation goals.

**SAW-WHET OWL BANDING STATION FIELD TRIP
November 8, 2003**

Wow. As luck would have it this trip could not have worked out any better. An absolutely stunning total lunar eclipse, with red moon, just happened to take place at the same time as the first batch of Saw-whets were brought into the 'chateau' for processing. Arriving around 6:30 the mist nets had already been installed and the tape was playing at regular intervals. The nets were checked 5 times during the course of the next 6 hours, returning 0, 5, 3, 5 and 2 birds upon each successive check.

Under the cover of the eclipse and at the peak time for Saw-whet migration along the Appalachians, our first success came when 5 birds were caught in the mist nets around 7:30 and by the end of the evening 15 had been banded and released, though one was a recapture from earlier in the evening. Excitement and enthusiasm ran high throughout the evening as Scott Weidensaul and Rosemary Spreha weighed, measured, aged and discussed each bird. All the birds banded were females. Are the males staying north? Are they venturing south later in the season? Are the females just finding this calling male irresistible? Are the males just not interested in him? Are the males frightened by his brazen late fall advertising? These are still unanswered questions that Scott's research is hoping to provide answers to. With the exception of two birds, all were hatch year adults, meaning they were born this year, this being determined by the even coloration of their flight feathers.

With eyes glued on our smallest eastern owl, everyone could not get enough of these adorable creatures, which as it turns out may not be as uncommon as we think. Like kids in a candy store, everyone's eyes and smiles were huge. We got to pet, stroke, hold, and have a bird perched on our shoulders, until they felt comfortable enough to fly away. We now know what makes women happy. Very happy!

Field Trip to Bake Oven Knob - November 1, 2003

by Frank Windfelder

The annual DVOC trip to Bake Oven Knob, PA had an inauspicious beginning. We were actually going to experience the horror of some nice weather – good for people, bad for birds.

We met at 8:30 AM, and proceeded to the North Lookout. Our fears were realized in the first hour when our highlights were a fly-over Praying Mantis and an unexpected inland Great Cormorant. We were all wishing we had taken up Chinese Brush Painting instead. At 10:30 AM, co-leaders Frank Windfelder, Bill Murphy and Chris Walters decided to reposition the troops at the South Lookout, which is better for hawks on southwest winds.

Our fortunes immediately picked up, and as the day wore on, the number of hawks passing over increased exponentially and we actually had a wonderful day. When Murphy and car mate Bert Filemyr decided to go AWOL at 2:00 PM, we knew we had to stay longer in order to "grip them off". Sure enough, the Red-tailed Hawks and Sharp-shinned Hawks began pouring through, reminiscent of the "river of raptors" that one experiences in Vera Cruz, MX. The birds had been low all day, but now they started appearing overhead in waves. Even non-birders were in awe of all the hawks in the sky at that point.

Where else can you enjoy 75 degree weather and the following bird counts ?

Sharp-shinned Hawk (130), Red-tailed Hawk (100), Red-shouldered Hawk (8), Northern Goshawk (3), Cooper's Hawk (6), Bald Eagle (2), Osprey (2), American Kestrel (1), Black Vulture (4), Common Raven (4), and Turkey Vulture (75). The Northern Goshawk was a life bird for Glenn Seeholzer.

A bird had been called as a Golden Eagle by practically everyone on the ridge until it gave us better looks and proved to be a second year Bald Eagle. A little humility is a good thing.

Other participants were Mike Lymon, Andy Fayer, Jim Best, Mick Jeitner, Colin Campbell, Bob Rufe, Erica Brendel, and Glenn's father Steve along with the rest of their family.

Field Trips, continued from Page 2

April 3 (Sat) - SOUTH WEST NEW JERSEY (PEDRICKTOWN and MANNINGTON MARSH) for possible winter stragglers (Ross's Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, blackbirds) and early migrants (Ruffs have previously been seen on this trip). Leader: Frank Windfelder fwindfelder@yahoo.com

April 25 (Sun) - BIRDING THE THREE OLD FORTS, DE/NJ

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: \$6.00 for the ferry; state park fees applicable (DE fee - \$2.50 for Delawarians, \$5.00 for aliens) so carpool where you can. Pay as you go.

Please let Colin know if you intend to join; the small ferry needs to know approximate numbers if there's a crowd.

Details: in flyer at DVOC meetings (March 18, April 1, 15) or by request from leader (send e-mail or stamped, addressed envelope by post)

Leader: The 4th old fort Colin Campbell

Contact Information: colin.campbell@cibasc.com

April 30, May 1 and 2 (Fri - Sun) - BIRDING SOUTHERN DELAWARE and into MARYLAND.

This weekend trip starts at Bombay Hook NWR on Friday morning and works south to Trap Pond State Park where you can camp or you can motel nearby. Saturday we bird Nanticoke WMA and areas around Seaford before returning to Trap Pond. Sunday, we bird the Cypress Swamps in DE and MD, then head north to the bayside areas. Interspersed throughout is a gourmet tour trying local delicacies such as crab, scrapple and muskrat. Yummy. Full details on a flyer nearer the time. Let me know in advance if you intend to come.

Leader: Colin Campbell

Contact Information: colin.campbell@cibasc.com

Meetings / Programs continued from Page 2

March 18: Jim Chace: "Southeast Arizona's Response to Cowbird Parasitism." Want to (re)visit Southeast Arizona? Tag along as Dr. Jameson ("Jim") Chace from Villanova University recounts his field studies on cowbird parasitism in Southwestern Arizona birds. Jim promises to show us the bird hosts, not just the cowbirds!

April 1: Clay Sutton: "Birding Cumberland County, NJ." Our own DVOC-er Clay Sutton will stop writing books for one evening and come tell us the undiscovered benefits of birding the Jersey bayshore of Cumberland County. His talk is based on his recently-published book "Birding Cumberland, A Birder's Guide to Cumberland County, NJ." Copies of this \$12.00 book will be available for purchase.

April 15: Laurie Goodrich (Hawk Mountain): "Saving Species While They Are Still Common." Learn the recent trends in NE raptor populations, the efforts being made to better monitor raptors both in Central America and North America, and the research being done at Hawk Mt. on habitat use, behavior, and feeding by migrating raptors.

DVOC Group Takes Kids out Birding

by Martin Selzer

For the third year in a row, Jane Henderson, Lynn Jackson and I met a group of 7th graders from the Langley School in McLean Virginia for a birding field trip to Bombay Hook NWR. The sponsor of the field trip is the class's science teacher, Craig Berman, a friend from his days as the Naturalist at Briar Bush Nature Center. This year we met the group on Halloween, October 31. As in years past, this birding trip is the culmination of the class's fall trip to the Delaware Valley that includes stops at the Independence Seaport Museum at Penn's Landing, the Reading Terminal Market and the Mutter Museum.

An enthusiastic group of about 40 students met in the Bombay Hook headquarters and listened to a short welcome by the refuge manager and myself and then watched a short video tape about the National Wildlife Refuge system before we went out birding. This year's trip was well timed to catch the Snow Goose flock as it was still building; recent censuses placed the number of geese at close to 60,000. A walk along the boardwalk trail brought the students out into the Spartina marsh. This first hand look at this habitat was probably a first for all the kids. It was a beautiful day, but rather quiet bird-wise.

As is always the case on these field trips, the huge number of Snow Geese, herons and egrets are the biggest hits. For almost all these students, this was their first birding experience and some demonstrated genuine interest.

As we stopped at Shearness Pool to look at the gathering flock of ducks and geese, I scanned the tree line for a Bald Eagle. A decade of leading these trips for Craig at Langley and his previous school have shown that even the most uninterested 7th graders will pay attention if you show them an eagle. As luck would have it, a pair of adult, Bald Eagles were perched together on the edge of a nearby island of tress. Quickly, we put all three telescopes on the eagles and the students lined up to take a look at our national emblem.

In the mudflats opposite Shearness were a group of 75+ American Avocets as well as lots of other shorebirds. Again, the flash of the avocets won out over the other shorebirds. A stop at the tower at Bear Swamp got everyone a look at five American White Pelicans. Remember, the point on these trips isn't necessarily to build up a big list but to show these students something they wouldn't see in a classroom and hopefully, to spark an interest in the natural world in at least a few of them. Still we manage to see some good birds ourselves. At this point it was lunchtime and we headed to Boondocks for crab cakes.

Did we create any birders that day? Only time will tell but according to Craig, we do manage to get a student or two interested every year. A chance to get out birding, to engage the interest of a few kids, and the promise of a good crab cake lunch will bring us back for next year's trip.

Swifts, cont'd from page 7

It wasn't until a few nights later that we discovered the roost. Bob and I headed out toward Natural Bridges around 7:00 PM. He was convinced that the birds were roosting somewhere near Chico Avenue; I thought they must have found a place in the woods at Natural Bridges, so I was on my way there. I was rounding a corner on West Cliff Drive when I looked back and saw Bob gesturing frantically. I ran back to where he was and saw the last few swifts funneling down the chimney at 219 Chico Avenue. The mystery was solved.

I reported the finding to David Suddjian, whom I never did meet in person, and asked him about the migration route of Vaux's Swifts. He sent me this reply: "We are indeed on their normal migration route, which occurs along a broad front through the state. However typical sightings on a given day may only be of a few to a few dozen swifts, and larger flocks are just occasional. It seems that many just zip through and pass at heights where they go by undetected. The unusual thing in your observations is the documentation of a communal roost. That has been rarely noted in the local region, and indeed this is the first such observation for this county. Such roosts may occur regularly, but you have to be in the right place at the right time to find them. In the urban areas, many chimneys are not accessible to the swifts, and I think their opportunities are quite limited. In the forest habitat finding a roost is sort of like looking for a needle in a haystack."

After finding the swifts' roost at the Chico Avenue chimney, Bob and I walked over there nearly every night where we met and had conversations with local birders as well as with Chico Avenue neighbors who are all very much interested in the birds. As the days went on, the swifts' numbers began to dwindle as more and more of them took off for their final winter destination.

On September 28, we met Todd Newberry at the roost site. There had been some concern that the owner of the house planned to cover the chimney, believing, as many do, that the swifts were bats. With the knowledge that this is the first observation of a Vaux's Swift roost site in Santa Cruz County, we hope that the chimney on Chico Avenue will be left as it is, and interested folks will be able to enjoy the spectacle year after year.

In Memoriam

Dr. William R. Kerschner

April 22, 1920 - November 4, 2003