

Philadelphia Larus



Vol. 31 No. 3

Christmas Count Issue 2004

Christmas Bird Counts How and where you can help

Saturday, December 18

* **Wyncote, PA: Martin Selzer**, 215-233-9090
(after 8 PM) (mselzer@prdus.jnj.com)

* **Oceanville (Brigantine), NJ: Brian Moscatello**,
201-871-7226(h) 201-568-6093(w)
(bmoscat@ix.netcom.com)

Ed Bristow, Co-compiler

Additional counters needed.

* **Glenolden (Delaware Co), PA: Nick Pulcinella**,
610-696-0687 (nickpulcinella@comcast.net)

* **Southern Bucks, PA: Bob Mercer**,
215-785-1177 (merceslesra@aol.com)

Sunday, December 19

* **Cape May, NJ: Louise Zemaitis**, 609-898-9578
(obrienm@algorithms.com)

* **Upper Bucks/Montco, PA: Hart Rufe**,
215-257-8677 (wrufe@starband.net)

* **Middletown, DE: Bruce Lantz**,
302-378-8469 (emdb2lantz@aol.com)

* **Wilmington, DE: Howard Brokaw**,
302-655-8076 (hbrokaw@aol.com)

* **Pinelands, NJ: Bob Confer**,
609-859-2973 (parula9@hotmail.com)

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

* **Sandy Hook, NJ: Scott Barnes**, 732-872-2500,
scott.barnes@njaudubon.org

Sunday, December 26

* **Belleplain, NJ: Paul Kosten**,
609-861-5827 (floraff@algorithms.com)

* **Bombay Hook, DE: Andy Ednie**, 302-792-9591
or 302-661-3314 (w) (ednieap@wittnet.com)

* **Moorestown, NJ: Ted Young**,
856-488-8410 (tedlyoung@aol.com)

* **Valley Forge Audubon, PA: Edie Parnum**,
610-964-8331 (eparnum@comcast.net)

* **Central Bucks Co, PA: Diane Allison**,
610-847-2085 (dalliso@mail.ptd.net)

Wednesday, December 29

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

More CBCs on Page 2

Electronic Larus

Thanks to our readers who have indicated a willingness to receive *Philadelphia Larus* electronically. We hope you are reading this issue electronically because you have received email notification that this new edition has been posted on the Web, and you've successfully downloaded and printed it from www.dvoc.org. We appreciate your willingness to give this method a try.

The good news for everybody else is it is not too late to go this route. Any of you who are willing to download Larus in lieu of having a paper copy mailed to you can contact either Naomi Murphy (ndmurphy3@hotmail.com) or Jane Henderson (janeh008@aol.com).

You will receive an e-mail notification each time a new edition is available for download. Once we know of your interest we will add you to the list of progressive members who will receive their *Larus* sooner and save the club some money at the same time.

Please note: For the **most current information** about field trips and meetings / programs, consult DVOC's website: www.DVOC.org which is updated regularly.

Holiday Greetings to All

from our Peripatetic President,
Adrian Binns

Congratulations to Award Winners

The following awards were bestowed at DVOC's annual banquet on November 18, 2004:

Julian K. Potter Award for contributions to field ornithology:
Adrian Binns and Martin Selzer

Witmer Stone Award, which embodies the results of ornithological research not undertaken in the course of professional duties:
Jen Johnson

Conservation Award, in recognition of work done that has contributed to the overall welfare of the birding community:
Dr. David Robertson, for land stewardship at the Pennypack Environmental Restoration Trust

Christmas Counts, Continued

Thursday, December 30

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

Friday, December 31

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

Saturday, January 1

* Rehoboth, DE: Joe Swertinski:
302-292-1592 (swertinski.j@mcd.gen.de.us)
* Trenton, NJ: Brad Merritt 609-921-8964
balmerritt@aol.com
and Mary E. Doscher 609-586-3185
doschem@msn.com

Sunday, January 2

* Cape Henlopen, Prime Hook, DE:
Frank Rohrbacher,
302-475-5771 (rohrbaf@aol.com)
* Cumberland Co, NJ: Pat & Clay Sutton,
609-465-3397 (pcsutton@bellatlantic.net)



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

for *Philadelphia Larus* to:

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Please notify Naomi Murphy of change of address,
phone number or email address

215-885-2488
ndmurphy3@hotmail.com

DVOC Website Address:
www.dvoc.org

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, Philadelphia. Guests are always welcome.

Thursday, December 16, 2004: Pat Sutton, "How to Spot an Owl": Surely one of the greatest owl-finders around, every year her team finds the largest number of owls on the Cape May Christmas Count; she has "written the book" on the subject. Come hear Pat's secrets, and see how you, too, can learn to find owls by yourself.
Ornithological Studies: Dutch Birding - Peter Scholten

Thursday, January 6, 2005: Annual Meeting to be followed by refreshments. Election of officers and new Council members and Fellows. Review of Christmas Count results.
Ornithological Studies: Newly-discovered Bird Species - Anita Guris

Thursday, January 20, 2005: Adrian Binns, "Bharatpur: India's Bird Paradise and Crown Jewel of Asia": Our president will describe this premier wetland, the former hunting grounds of the maharajahs and British nobility, and wintering ground of the Siberian Crane. Over 130 bird species nest there.

Thursday, February 3, 2005: Randy Little, "For the Birds: Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology at Sapsucker Woods." A trustee of the Lab, Randy Little will educate us on the nation's foremost center of bird study and research.

Thursday, February 17, 2005: Prof. Martin Wikulski, "Migration of Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes." Martin Wikulski teaches at Princeton University, and has done groundbreaking field research on whether out migrating thrushes use more energy foraging for food or more energy flying south.

Thursday, March 3, 2005: Carolee Caffrey, "Effects of West Nile Virus on Crows and Other Wildlife." Currently at National Audubon Society's Citizen Science unit, Carolee is a researcher and field expert on West Nile Virus's impact on American Crows. She will recount the American Crow's struggle with this modern threat to its survival, and discuss the virus's effect on other wildlife as well.

Thursday, March 17, 2005: Henderson & Selzer, "A Birding Adventure in the Yukon Territory."

2005 DVOC FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE

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

December 31 (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, murre, 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 (215) 234-6805 or paul@paulagics.com

January 9 (sun) - Winter Birding in the DIX Wildlife Management Area ~ Come check out a little 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 (215) 234-6805 or paul@paulagics.com

Jan 13 (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 (215) 364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com

Jan 15-17 (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! Shared expenses.

Leaders: Erica Brendel (215) 844-3456 or ericamb@prodigy.net
Chris Walters (215) 642-6862 or CWalters@ReedSmith.com

Jan 22 (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 (215) 364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com

Jan 29 (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 (215) 364-4407 or wildlifegd@aol.com

Feb 13 (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 Fishermans Park.

Leader: Tom Reeves (610) 544-4217 tomrevs7@verizon.net

Feb 19-21 (sat-mon) – NEW ENGLAND. A three day trip over President's Weekend to look for alcids, loons, Red-necked Grebe, white-wing gulls, King Eider, Barrow's Goldeneye, Snowy and Short-eared Owl, Rough-legged Hawk, longspurs, Snow Buntings and any winter invasion species. Limited registration. Fee.

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

More 2005 Field Trips

Feb 26 (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 (215) 233-9090 or msselzer@prdus.jnj.com

March 19 (sat) – CHERRY ISLAND LANDFILL, WILMINGTON DE. Join DOS for a half day trip to search for rarer gull species and study plumages at the Wilmington Landfill.

Meet at 7:30 AM. at Fox Point State Park off the EdgeMoor/Hay Rd exit on I-495. Coming from the north, the exit is about 4-5 miles past the DE/PA line, take the second exit, marked for Hay Road, follow the cloverleaf back underneath I-495, then make a left (north) onto Hay at the stop sign. Follow this to the end, straight into Fox Point Park. We go to Cherry Island Landfill, so if folks miss us at Fox Point they can head straight down Hay Road (south) to the end, right onto 12th street then quickly left into the landfill. Or they can hop back on I-495 to the next exit, left onto 12th street almost to its end, then right into the landfill.

Leader: Mike Smith smithma@che.udel.edu

April 2 (sat) - SOUTH WEST NEW JERSEY (PEDRICKTOWN and MANNINGTON MARSH) for possible winter stragglers (Ross's'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

DVOC FIELD TRIP CHAIRPEOPLE:

Adrian Binns
791 Bridgetown Pike, Langhorne PA 19053
(215) 364-4407
(215) 364-1652 (fax)
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Martin Selzer
1907 Hemlock Rd., Flourtown, PA 19031
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Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at City Hall

Kate Somerville

DVOC Group Takes Kids out Birding

by Jane Henderson

In keeping with DVOC's expressed purpose of attracting youngsters to the avocation we all know and love - birding - a number of club members have taken kids out in the field this fall.

In October, Bert Filemyr, Lynn Jackson and I met Langley School (VA) teacher Craig Berman at Bombay Hook, DE for the 7th graders' annual birding day at the Hook. The highlight of the day for the youngsters was the spectacle of thousands of Snow Geese stirred up by a young Bald Eagle. It was hard to top that.

They were also impressed by a nice flock of American Avocets. We called their attention to a Marbled Godwit, huddled down in the midst of the godwits, and explained that this was an unusual visitor to the Hook.

A little later, we were treated to a nice look at three Golden-crowned Kinglets hopping about on a dead branch, crowns displayed brightly. We all enjoyed a nice lunch at Boondocks afterwards.

Then, in November, Dottie, Baumgarten, a science teacher at Oak Lane Day School, contacted Adrian Binns, looking for someone from DVOC to take her 5th and 6th grade students out birding. Naomi and Bill Murphy and I responded to the call, and met with Dottie one Friday afternoon.

We were most impressed with the site. Located at the corner of Butler Pike and Stenton Avenue in Whitpain Township, it originally belonged to the Cadwallader family. The mansion still stands, though it is in dire need of repair.

Dottie had set up a bird feeding station, and we helped her identify White-throated, Fox and Song Sparrows, Juncos, Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice. On our walk around the property we found Purple Finches and Cedar Waxwings. We arranged to return and meet with the kids on another day.

In her classroom, Dottie had posted pictures of birds that the kids had drawn, and on a work table she had displayed photos of birds the kids were likely to see on the school grounds. As the students came into the room, she asked them to point out birds that they were not sure how to identify. Common Grackle was one.

When we walked the grounds with the Dottie and her students, they were able to identify many of the birds we encountered, and, with the aid for our own field guides, we helped with the others. They were particularly excited by a group of 30 or more Cedar Waxwings. We were fortunate in being able to borrow several pairs of loaner binoculars that belong to Militia Hill Hawkwatch. We promised to make a return trip in the spring.

No article about inspiring youngsters to take up birding would be complete without acknowledging JoAnn Raines's long-term fostering of Glen Seeholtzer's enthusiasm. On many, many occasions, JoAnn chauffeured Glen on birding field trips. Glen is now in his first year at Cornell University.

Bake Oven Knob Trip Report: November 6, 2004

By Frank Windfelder

A strong cold front with northwest winds had passed through the previous day, bringing with it 10 Golden Eagles, 2 Northern Goshawks, and a Rough-legged Hawk. With this in mind, I was eager to get to the ridge, only to find to my dismay that the winds had shifted to the West-Southwest. The DVOC must have been forewarned, because only Steve Kacir joined me in the parking lot for the trek along the Appalachian Trail up to Bake Oven Knob.

We arrived at the top at 9:00 AM, where we were treated to good looks at a perched Purple Finch, but no hawks. Chris Walters soon joined us, and the three of us basically had some nice conversations during the next two hours, but only two Red-tailed Hawks to show for our birding efforts.

Finally, Chris spotted a Red-shouldered Hawk down in the valley, and things started to look up. In fact, we were soon treated to great views of an adult Northern Goshawk, with its bold eye line and gray markings. It obviously had eaten well, for it had a full crop.

Meanwhile, Nancy Cooke, Steve Liebhaber, and Deborah Dorn had joined our group. They were in time to see the first of two Golden Eagles seen by most of us. This bird was an immature. We could clearly see the white tail with a black terminal band and the white panels at the base of the flight feathers. We had a glimpse of the golden nape hackles.

We also had 1 Cooper's Hawk, 3 Sharp-shinned Hawks, and a total of 35 Red-tailed Hawks during the day. At 2:30 PM, Art McMorris showed up on the knob, just as I was about to leave. He was on his way to the DVOC Saw-whet Owl banding field trip, as were Nancy and Steve L.

When I got to the bottom of the ridge, I found an American Kestrel. I was also wondering what lies Art and a lingering Chris Walters would tell me later about what they saw after I left. I shouldn't have checked my email that evening. Alas, Chris wrote about having two more Golden Eagles, both adults. Four Golden Eagles and a Northern Goshawk - just another day at the office!

Vaux's Swifts Update

by Jane Henderson

You may remember my story, in last year's Christmas Count issue of *Larus*, about finding a Vaux's Swifts roost site in a neighborhood chimney in Santa Cruz, California. On our return this past fall, we found that the house has been remodeled, and the chimney capped. We hope that the swifts have found a roost elsewhere.

Notes from City Hall

by Kate Somerville

September 26, 2004. I saw a Hooded Warbler at 5:45 PM by the northwest entrance. Later, as I stood across the street at Broad & JFK, a Sunday evening, I stared at the four City Official cars with tinted windows, one of them a Hummer; likely they had a late meeting. And I watched tourists milling around City landmarks taking their last photos of the day, and the homeless people jockeying their positions for later opportunity.

I could still hear the Hooded Warbler's chip notes, even with sirens, cell phones, horns and planes noising their way across the landscape. I thought about the other amazing City Hall birds I have been fortunate to find - Mourning Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Swainson's, Hermit, and Wood Thrushes, Chat, et al. I had seen a Hooded Warbler about three years ago, at the same spot as today.

As fortunate as I am to find these jewels, I am disturbed by the cesspool that we are developing for their brief migratory visit. The deteriorating habitat is diminishing this phenomenon. There is no solution short of a City ordinance requiring street people to gather elsewhere.

But then I wonder: there is no proof that the homeless do not help the birds. They leave their trash, food, clothes, cardboard mattresses, bottles, spills and bags all over the place - behind bushes, under benches, in the hosta plants. This could all attract bugs?

Last week I watched the Hooded Warbler squabble with two Common Yellowthroats over a bug. Same NW corner. It was a nice pale, chunky bug.

The problem perhaps is not the trash and urination. The night bums are cutting paths through the plants on the west side leaving increasingly bare spots. The lariope used to be thick on the north side. There are not enough plants left to protect foraging birds.

So far this fall I've seen 2 Common Yellowthroats, a White-throated Sparrow, a House Wren, five Catbirds, a Redstart and this male Hooded Warbler. Not bad for a cement palace, but there had been more during prior years.

I do fear less and less will appear due to poor management of plants to shelter and feed these migrant birds. What to do? Yesterday (October 13), I went over to the west side and watched three young rats foraging; and no birds.

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c/o Jane Henderson
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