



Great Gray Owl  
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## From the Editor

Welcome to the new, improved Larus. We are calling it Larus-on-Line and we hope you like it. The idea here is to expand the content of the on-line version and fill it up with timely, relevant information that is of interest to you. Now, Larus has always had lots of great information, but the

size and content of the newsletter was limited somewhat due to the printing and mailing costs. An on-line version does not have those kinds of limitations.

Members who have not opted to receive Larus electronically will still get a paper copy of the newsletter. Although it will be a greatly abbreviated version, the paper copy will still have the kinds of info most members need such as meeting dates, field trips, reminders and some topical pieces. Of course, non-subscribing members can always check out Larus-on-Line to see additional articles and items of interest. We hope that eventually more of you will elect to forego a paper copy in favor of Larus-on-Line.

With this issue we are establishing some regularly occurring Larus-on-Line columns. Conservation, programs, field trips, ID articles, quizzes, rarity round-ups and member interviews will all be included in each issue. And to supplement all of that, we will publish topical articles from members or guests on a full array of bird related subjects.

As far as this issue is concerned, well, it was an incredible winter for birding and we've got it covered here. There was a major irruption of Great Gray Owls into southern Canada and the northern United States.

Many birders headed north, braving snow and cold to witness this spectacle first hand. This issue includes an article by Bert Filemyr which details the exploits of some DVOC members on a trip to Ontario. Another incredibly hot spot for birds and birders this winter was the lower Rio Grande Valley and Hart Rufe regales us with an article about how he did there. Finally, Colin Campbell headed to the Pacific Northwest on a major twitch. During his travels in both Washington state and Vancouver, Colin was able to tick Redwing, Baikal Teal, Falcate Teal and McKay's Bunting. We were successful in wrangling a report on his trip from him before he headed to Antarctica so be sure to have a look at it.

Other items to look for in this issue include: 20 Questions with Al Kronschnable, two articles on the recent oil spill on the Delaware River, a report on the DVOC trip to Bosque del Apache, a piece on the Avalon shorebird survey and an article on the Pennypack Preserve and their efforts to restore habitat.

Larus-on-Line will be published in March, June, September and December. Cutoff for submissions is March 10, June 10, September 10 and November 20. We need the submissions for the final issue early in order to get the Christmas Bird Count information into everyone's hands in a timely fashion.

Thanks to everyone who submitted articles for this issue. I think it is great and there is a lot here to enjoy. We need your submissions for future issues so that we can continue this momentum. When you travel, send us your trip report and photos, If you know of any interesting topics, write them up and send them along to me at ndmurphy3@hotmail.com.

Naomi Murphy  
Editor-in-Chief

## From the President

Surfing through the sports channels on any given weekend, one is often faced with hunting and fishing programs. I caught a program recently that involved a celebrity on a waterfowl shoot in the prairie potholes



*Adrian Binns*  
*DVOC President*

of Nebraska. The quarry was the “abundant” Mallard although, in order to avoid giving offense, they never actually show any being shot. This reminded me of the Barrow’s Goldeneye that was found wintering a few years ago along the Delaware in Bucks County. Its discovery created a lot of excitement in the birding community. Sadly, we subsequently found out that this cooperative individual became the target of a hunter in New Jersey.

Now I’m not here get into a debate about hunting, but it occurred to me that this hunting program has an audience and sponsorship. Hundreds of thousands of hunting and fishing licenses are sold every year and this generates a multi-million dollar a year industry.

Birdwatchers also spend millions of dollars every year. We purchase birdseed, books, feeders, optics and some spend considerable amounts on eco-tourism both in the US and abroad. So why is it that there is no television programming geared to birdwatchers?

Many of us spend a lot of time in the field in pursuit of birds, as do hunters, but we are left out in the cold in regards to viewing programming geared to our hobby. If bird watching is really the number 1 or 2 hobby, along with gardening, then surely there is the need for a quality show or two. Donald and Lillian Stokes had a bird watching series for awhile, but how many of us actually tuned in? Britain with its 1,000,000 Royal Society for the Preservation of Birds (RSPB) members has numerous shows about birds. I know that the Discovery channel shows avian related programs once in a while, some of which are BBC products, and that the outstanding Life of Birds was shown several years back. The question that I have is when are we going to get something that we can tune in to on a regular basis?

Just grouching.... A

## Avalon Bird Surveys

By Chuck Hetzel

These observations were made during the Fall 2004 Avalon shorebird survey sponsored by New Jersey Audubon and the New Jersey Department of Endangered and Non-game Species. My periodic counts began in mid-July and ended in early October. Initially I was surprised and then intrigued by the large number of shorebirds on the beaches of southern Avalon. The maximum counts were observed at falling tides as the beaches were newly exposed revealing the best feeding opportunities on critters such as sand worms and crabs. At the approach of low tide, the sand is drained and worms and crabs burrow down becoming harder to find by foraging shorebirds. By dead low tide, most of the shorebirds have fled west to the newly exposed mud banks along the waterways of the Cape May Wetlands WMA. It only takes the birds a minute or so to reach this new feeding ground but it’s awe inspiring to stand amongst them as they are

poised, communicating and then suddenly whirl up in a mass to head west to the wetlands.

Together, the seaside sand flats and the muddy banks of the wetlands comprise a unique feeding bonanza. No wonder that shorebirds are so plentiful in this region. Between these feeding frenzies they can be found roosting high on the beach or back in the wetlands to the west. During abnormally high tides, such as on a full moon, or during “Nor’easters”, birds are flooded out of the wetlands and take refuge on Avalon’s broad beaches and dunes. At Stone Harbor Point in the middle of Hurricane Floyd all birds, including Oyster Catchers, Black Skimmers and other shorebirds hunkered down side by side high in the dunes at the North end of the Stone Harbor Point. The Point is a coming together of wetland and ocean beach.

# Ontario 2005

by Bert Filemyr

On January 24 2005 six DVOC members (Bert Filemyr, Karl Lukens, Adrian Binns, Connie Goldman, Naomi Murphy and Bill Murphy) headed north on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. The road was clean and dry for most of the way to the border crossing at the Thousand Islands Bridge (NY). The snow belt near Watertown NY generated the only sloppy roads we saw and we cleared Canadian Customs and Immigration with no problem. The birding part of our adventure was about to begin.

The “hot ponds” at the Kingston Dupont Plant held hundreds of ducks. While most were Mallards, we managed to spot Common Merganser, Gadwall, Common Goldeneye, plus a single American Coot. From here, we headed to the ferry that crossed to Amherst Island. Our timing was working out as planned and we were on the 1:30 pm boat to the island. Upon arrival we were greeted by a snow showers that continued during much of our stay. Our first area of interest was the fields on the east end of the island. With the exception of a couple of flocks of snow buntings, we did not see much there, so it was off to Owl Woods. By 2:30 pm, we were walking the trail towards the feeders.

It was great to see the flock of Black-capped Chickadees take feed from our hands but we needed to move on and find our target bird – Boreal Owl. While Long-eared Owls, Short-eared Owls, Snowy Owls and even a great Gray Owl had been reported on Amherst, we were focused on locating the Boreal Owl. As luck would have it, after checking only about 20 trees, we found our target bird sitting calmly in a

cedar tree about 15 feet off the ground.

A check of the rest of Owl Woods gave us only a brief look at a single Short-eared Owl. The plan for the remaining daylight was to drive the island roads targeting Snowy and Short-eared Owls. On our first pass along the north shore, Adrian spotted a Snowy Owl on a fence post. It blended in against the background and was a great spot by Adrian. Along the east side of the island, we picked up a Short-eared Owl hunting over the fields. We did not have a great number of individual birds, but we certainly had quality. We took the 6:00 ferry off the island and went directly to our motel. A great day and a great start to this trip.

The next morning we were packed up and on the road at 7:10 am. After checking the “hot ponds” again, we piled back in the van and headed to Port Hope. Northern Hawk Owl was one of the trip targets and one had set up territory along a road near Port Hope. Stopping for coffee and a pit stop right by the area, the store clerk asked if we were there to see the owl. We quickly said yes and he said he sees it almost everyday on the way to work. We asked if he had seen it that morning and he said “no” – not a good sign. Leaving the store, we scoured the area with no luck. While cruising the roads we saw a flock of 800-900 Snow Buntings, an amazing site. By noon, we had had enough and we left the Port Hope area.

We moved up to a concentration of Great Gray Owls

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*Great Gray Owl*  
© N. Murphy



*Barred Owl (left)*  
*Boreal Owl (right)*  
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## A Pacific Northwest Twitch by Colin Campbell

My old schoolboy dictionary defines the verb to 'twitch' as to 'pull with a light jerk, pull at, jerk at, esp. to call attention; (of features, muscles, etc) move or contract spasmodically'. There is no mention of anything avian, so I can only leave those pondering what the heck I'm talking about to those with a more imaginative dimension to their lives. However there are clues in this juvenile but informative tome, apparently published by the University of Oxford in the late Devonian era. The next two entries in the dictionary are 'twite', a kind of linnnet (a European finch), and 'twitter' - to utter a succession of light tremulous notes or to chirp continuously; thus 'twittering' - a state of tremulous excitement. The two entries prior to 'twitch' are 'twit' - a foolish or insignificant person, and 'twister' - a liar, a dishonest person, a crook.

So, summing it all up, a twitcher, that is one who twitches, is an insignificant, spastic jerk, of whom it is said twitters in tremulous excitement when (s)he purports to see an operatic finch.

I am one of these.

Here's one such twitching story from a long weekend in January this year.

A friend from California called me and said "I just got numbers 791, 792 and 793 in Texas and there're three in the Pacific Northwest right now. Are you on?" This is twitch-speak for the numbers on your ABA list ... and the big 800 is the number of species you need to put you into the stratosphere of North American birding. The answer was obvious, and a direct flight using frequent twitching miles from PHL to SEA on a Thursday night, a late night drive to Olympia, a 5 hour sleep in all the fabulous comfort that a Motel 6 can offer saw us almost pre-dawn at the holly trees outside Mrs Winterbottom's (I have to change the true name to protect the occupant from having three dozen pairs of binoculars focused on her bedroom window at dawn, should it ever happen again) home in Olympia, WA. And, sure enough, after the third group of American Robins had descended, there was the Redwing, posing beautifully in a light still too early to get good photos. We spent an hour there as an increasing population of birders arrived and the usual

camaraderie, exchange of latest info, sightings and times passed to and fro until exhausted then ..... off to the next.

The next was a search for a drake Baikal Teal at the Kent Ponds in Seattle. There were enough birders to cover all the angles and many had Motorola radios for instant contact, which worked a treat. Sure enough, after about an hour and a half - during which time Eurasian Wigeon and Cackling Goose were checked off and a Bald Eagle had defecated onto some anorak-clad humans below - the Teal was spotted and afforded excellent scope views. High excitement - this bird did not always pop into view like this. Will the Washington Records Committee accept it? The prevailing opinion was yes as recent records in neighboring states and Alaska were considered to be genuine vagrants - numbers of these migratory ducks in Siberia have increased considerably in recent years following a decline a decade or two ago (when none was seen in the US). We were almost embarrassed with our good fortune. We'd allowed a day to see these two species and it was now just 10 am on the first

day. Weather reports suggested a snowstorm arriving in the south of the area the next day; we compressed our schedule and decided to head to Coburg, just north of Eugene, Oregon for our next species. About 250 miles due south.

My birding buddy was Todd McGrath, whom I'm sure many DVOC

members have met doing pelagics out of Hatteras or Manteo with Brian Patteson or out of Monterey with Debi Shearwater. A top-line birder, totally dedicated and great fun, to boot. And now a father of twin girls, aged 4 months. His wife Pam needed quality time with her daughters and Todd, having had no new birds in the ABA area in 2004 for obvious reasons, was on a roll. He did not need our next target, Falcated Duck, having seen it in both Washington state and California, but, recognizing that I needed it and "it would be really neat getting it in all three western coastal states," then it was worth the 500 mile round trip. Great stuff. We arrived at the RV campground at 4 pm with light fading and, having got permission, drove to the first pond and .... a twitcher's dream ... the closest bird was the drake Falcated Duck, surely one of the most handsome

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*"Twitching is dramatic, intense, adrenaline-pumping & great, great fun."*

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## A Pacific Northwest Twitch *Continued from page 4*

ducks in the World. Will the Oregon Records Committee accept it? Well, they accepted the one last year, in the same place, so it sounds like the same bird returning, so chances are high.

I took the wheel of the rental with instructions to drive north until I dropped. At 10 pm we anchored in another Motel 6 in Seattle. What a day. Food would have been good, but for three potential lifers, one is prepared to make sacrifices.

At dawn on the Saturday, we headed north, crossing the Canadian border en route for Iona Island jetty, on the outskirts of Vancouver. It was crisp. Bloody freezing, in fact. The jetty, built to cover the sewage outfall into the Puget Sound, was 2.3 miles long and our target bird had been reliably seen, needless to say, at the extreme end of the jetty for the previous few weeks. It was very exposed, and very, very cold. A dozen Barrow's Goldeneyes kept us warm. But we were not alone - a couple of birders, intent on the same targets, were there at the end, watching the female McKay's Bunting at close range with three nicely comparative Snow Buntings. A sigh of relief, a high five, a wee dram of malt scotch. We'd done it. The walk back against the breeze was easy. Thayer's Gull, Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owls and over 100 Bald Eagles rounded off that day.

How long do you make your twitch? We'd gone for

arriving Thursday night, full days Friday, Saturday and then Sunday a.m. so we could get a flight back to arrive home Sunday night. As it happened, we could have gone home Saturday afternoon. You just never know. You've got to allow for a second chance. But, there were other birds to see, other new and interesting places to visit and, with the pressure off, we made the most of it. Riefel Reserve in Vancouver was great, with Varied Thrush amongst many good birds. After a bit of hassle, we eventually found the reported Gyrfalcon at the shore, perched by a strong light, apparently overlooked by other birders. A good meal, a fall on the ice (which cost me a bunch of grief later!) and a relatively long sleep in the inevitable Motel 6 in Bellingham, WA, saw us making our relaxed way back to Seattle on Sunday via some good spots - Samish Flats (500 Trumpeter Swans), Whidbey Island (2000 Western Grebes).

Twitching is dramatic, intense, adrenaline-pumping and great, great fun. And exhausting. And frustrating. You do not always see everything you want. Planning is essential with Plans A, B, C ready and the ability to be flexible depending on conditions and local birders reports. Communications critical - e-mail, cell phone, radio phones, loud voice, gestures, body language ..... whatever it takes .... Try it at your peril.



*Redwing*

### *Waterthrush ID* by Adrian Binns

Without vocalization (and even chip notes can be hard to differentiate) some waterthrushs can be a challenge to tell apart, in particular when trying to separate a 'white' Northern from a Louisiana. By this we mean a Northern that shows a white underbelly and flank which is similar to what Louisiana shows, though one should be able to make out buffy flanks or a contrast between underbelly and flanks on a Louisiana. But as is the case with a great many birds, not all birds are as portrayed in the books, and there certainly is variation amongst both these species.

The best field mark to begin with is the supercilium, though again there can be great variation. Louisiana usually shows a contrasting supercilium that is bright white behind the eye and broadens towards the rear of the head while it is grayish in front of the eye. On the other hand, Northern usually shows a yellowish tinged or even colored supercilium of even width or slightly narrowing behind the eye and not going back as far as in a Louisiana.

Louisiana is overall a bulkier bird and the bill is heavier and longer though this may be hard to figure out unless 2 birds are side by side. Easier to see is the clean, unmarked throat



*Louisiana Waterthrush*  
© A Binns

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## 20 Questions (and then some) with Al Kronschnable



Al Kronschnable

“Next year Al will become a 50-year member of the Club. He has been a regular on our annual Long Island/Montauk weekend trip for the last dozen years, and this past December traveled to Antarctica. Al was DVOC’s Field Trip Leader—and a member of Council—back in the ’60s. For many years Al was de facto leader of a gaggle of members known as “the Mayfair Mafia”; they met to eat at Al’s place and went on to DVOC club meetings. Al learned to cook in the Army, and he is still the best food/drink logistics man in the club. His jokes are legendary, insulting, but (as jokes go) pretty clean” – Chris Walters

### **What got you started birding?**

I became an Eagle Scout in 1945 and needed the bird study merit badge. After I joined the DVOC I found out many of our members were eagle scouts and because of their bird study badge, I got interested in birding

### **How and when did you join DVOC?**

I first attended the DVOC in November of 1955 and became a member in March 1956 when Bob Sehl sponsored me. I met Bob Sehl in 1948 when I was at Camp Hart on Treasure Island and he was the councilor for the Bird Study Merit Badge.

### **Did any older birder influence you?**

Ed Weyl (President 1947-49). He started me birding at Treasure Island. He showed me Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Louisiana Waterthrush and Cerulean Warbler among other birds.

### **What has the DVOC meant to you?**

Most of my life my friends came from either scouting or the DVOC.

### **What is your ABA life list?**

Between lumping and splitting around 715. I never considered myself a good birder; I just traveled with people who were.

### **What new ‘life bird’ discoveries impressed you the most?**

The bird I worked hardest for was the Connecticut Warbler. Phil Street found it for me in the Dry Tortugas but it took me over 3 hours to locate it in a buttonwood tree.

### **Where outside the USA have you birded and what is your world life list?**

All of South America, Central America, the Caribbean, Canada, Iceland and some of Europe. I do not keep a life list. I do not even keep trip lists. I just like to look at birds.

### **Who are and were your most frequent birding companions?**

Bob Sehl, Harold Jackson, Ron Logon, John LaVia, Dick Bell, Bill Tucker, Frank Windfelder and Alan Brady. The first four are no longer with us.

### **What trip sticks out the most for you and why?**

Tikal. Not only were the birds beautiful, but the temples were amazing. We made the trip to Tikal in “Rocky’s” airplane. Armand “Rocky” LeRoche never joined the Club. He was an acquaintance who had access to a DC-

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## 20 Questions with Al Kronschnable

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3.(editor's note: this 30 year old DC-3 airplane was owned by the Revyuk Foundation and was available only to non-profit scientific groups, such as....DVOOC)

### **Tell us about any other field trips you did on "Rocky's" airplane?**

Our first trip was to Churchill. We saw the most beautiful Aurora Borealis when we flew over Manitoba. Our second trip was to St. Louis, Texas and Big Bend. The third trip was to Belize and the last to Alaska. Every trip in Rocky's airplane was memorable. I cannot confirm this, but I understand that Rocky's airplane was given to the Smithsonian Institute.

### **Is there any place in particular that you have not been to that you would like to visit?**

Not really. I'm not as spry as I used to be and it's getting difficult to get around.

### **What sorts of jobs/work have you done to support your birding addiction?**

I have a small workshop where I built well over 200 birdhouses. I keep an eye out while driving on trash day and if I see any lumber I pick it up. This keeps costs down.

### **What positions have you held at DVOOC and when?**

Field Trip Chairman around 1960-1965 and on Council around 1966-1970

### **What advice would you give a new birder?**

Get a good pair of binoculars and if you decide to continue birding, get a good scope.

### **What have been your most enjoyable birding destinations and why?**

My favorites were any trip in Rocky's airplane. It was nice to have private transportation and be able to go wherever you want.

### **You are a master of storyteller. You have had your share of funny birding stories. What's your favorite story that you can share with us? Keep it clean!**

To tell a story it has to fit in with the occasion and sometimes it's very difficult especially with Windfelder interrupting you 2 or 3 times before you can get to the punch line.

### **What if any other bird related organizations have you been a part of?**

The Bucks County Audubon Society and the Pennypack Bird Club

### **What kind of bird records do you keep?**

None. (That was easy)

### **What is your favorite Delaware Valley bird (feathered kind)?**

I really do not have a favorite bird. Like I said earlier I just enjoy all birds.

### **What is your favorite Delaware Valley birding location?**

My two favorites are Tullytown and Warner Lakes. I started birding there and got so many birds, like Red Phalarope and Red-necked Grebe on the lakes, great gulls on the landfill and Saw-whet, Long-eared and Short-eared Owls in and around the woods .

### **What other interests do you have?**

None. At present I am really retired.

### **What optics do you own and use?**

I have a pair of Zeiss 8x56 glasses (good night vision) and Bausch & Lomb scope.

## Ontario 2005

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east of Peterborough in the Division Road area. In most years, reports of even a single Great Gray Owl is a major event. The winter of 2004-2005 was a major



Black-capped Chickadee  
© N. Murphy

irruption of wintering Great Grays in areas where they could be observed. Our first view of a Great Gray was a distant owl in a tree and we expected better views. Conventional wisdom was that the owls became more active after 3 pm and that held true. Right around 3 pm, we saw an owl sitting in a tree

within 30 yards of the road. Piling out of the van, we were disappointed as we realized that it was "only" a Barred Owl. However, in the distance we spotted our second Great Gray of the day. We continued to drive the area and by 4:30, we'd seen nine Great Gray Owls. The last one put on a prolonged show of hunting in a field right beside the car. It was an amazing sight. At 4:30, we reconnoitered and realized that we had a 2.5 hour drive ahead of us to Huntsville and our lodging for the night. Leaving an area with owls along the roadside was tough but necessary.

Our general plan for the third day was to bird Algonquin Park. However, the continued presence of a Northern Hawk Owl in the nearby town of Bracebridge caused us to head there first thing in the morning. We spotted the owl sitting at the top of a tree about ¼ mile away. We were able to get somewhat closer, but a scope was necessary. By 8:00, we were headed back to Huntsville and into Algonquin Park.

Our first stop in the park was at the West End Entrance facility. In previous years, we had found a concentration of birds at the feeder there but budget cuts eliminated seed for the feeder. We had a nice flock of White-winged Crossbills along the main road and, up a side road, we had a Ruffed Grouse walk across

the trail in front of us. At Mew Lake Campground, we fed the Gray Jays peanuts and at the campground hosts feeders we watched a Pine Martin. The chickadees there were very hungry and certainly glad for our handouts.

The feeders at the Visitor's Center there had little besides Blue Jays and chickadees. We did learn that several groups had recently spent considerable time on the Spruce Bog Trail without finding any Spruce Grouse. We drove to the end of the Opeongo Trail. It took some work there but we did end up with excellent views of Boreal Chickadees.

By 2:30 pm, we had finished up in the park and we decided to head back to Bracebridge to get better looks at the Hawk Owl and to seek out a Great Gray Owl reported nearby. We located the Hawk Owl with no problem and were treated to the owl flying over

our heads and vocalizing. A major treat! Moving down the road, we found the local Great Gray right where it had been reported. A local resident showed up and it fed on a mouse as we watched. It was a super end to the day. As dusk fell, we headed to our motel.

Our last day of the trip was a full one. We wanted to do some serious birding and still make the long ride home. Leaving the motel at 7:00, we stopped by Bracebridge to see the Hawk Owl and the local Great Gray Owl. These were our "friends" from the evening before. On the drive from Huntsville to Bracebridge, we had the coldest temperatures of the trip. The lowest temperature the exterior car thermometer showed was -31 F.

The first stop we had for the day was a private home east of Orillia. A Varied Thrush had been coming to the feeder there. Extending hospitality that is common among birders but may seem unusual to others, the homeowners invited us into their home to stand watch for the thrush. After a wait of about 35 minutes, the bird appeared and gave us all a great show. By 10:20 am, we said our good-byes and were back in the van. There was a concentration of Great Gray Owls east of Orillia. Driving through the area we quickly spotted 20 Great Gray Owls. Many were right by the road and provided tremendous photographic opportunities for our master photographers – Adrian and Naomi. While we could have spent all day there, we still had other locations to check on our way

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*"..reliable means  
you might see the  
partridge"*

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## Conservation

### *Athos I Oil Spill Update*

By Bill Buchanan

When the tanker Athos I began to leak what turned out to be 265,000 gallons of crude oil into the Delaware River on November 26, 2004, one of the first responders was the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The spill eventually affected approximately 57 miles of shoreline. Since the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum is just downriver from the site, and other National Wildlife Refuges, such as Supawna Meadows, Cape May and Bombay Hook are further downstream, FWS had a vested interest in getting involved. But a much wider area than just the refuges was very likely affected as well.

FWS Law Enforcement (LE) agents quickly became involved with gathering information on every oiled bird and other species of wildlife that had been, and still continue to be, brought in - whether dead or alive. This group was also at the forefront in sending out recovery teams on both land and water and responding to reports from those in the field as well as from the general public. The most recent numbers from the Coast Guard indicate that 366 birds were treated and released and that 178 were dead. No one knows just how many more may have drowned or made their way to inaccessible areas.

FWS Ecological Services staff from around the entire northeast and mid-Atlantic areas worked cooperatively with Law Enforcement. The two groups tracked the flow of the oil, scoured the area looking for impacted wildlife and habitat degradation, and made assessments of impacted areas.

Along with the Coast Guard which was the lead agency involved with the spill and the clean-up effort, FWS personnel from refuges throughout the region, assisted with recovery, logistics, and many other aspects of the spill. FWS also coordinated efforts with many other local, state and federal agencies, contractors and organizations to deal with the spill and its short and long term consequences. FWS Regional Office staff was actively involved with logistics and external affairs issues related to the spill. Even now (early February, 2005) FWS is assessing information and will continue to monitor the health and welfare of the Delaware Estuary and its environs

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### *Tri-State Responds to Delaware River Oil Spill*

by Christina Motoyoshi, Executive Director  
Tri-State Bird and Rescue

On November 26, 2004, the Greek tanker, *Athos I*, released 265,000 gallons of oil into the Delaware River. The tanker was carrying crude oil bound for a refinery when it hit a submerged object which punctured the hull of the ship. This spill is the second largest spill on the Delaware River and it is taking a devastating toll on the environment and wildlife. Nearly 60 miles of coastline have been contaminated.

Tri-State was immediately called in to manage the wildlife response efforts for the spill. To date, 450 animals have been retrieved. While most of the birds involved were Canada Geese, other species included Bufflehead, Great Blue Heron, Northern Gannet, American Coot, Mute Swan, Belted Kingfisher, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Black Duck, Mallard, Mallard hybrids, Double-crested Cormorant, Peking Duck, Snow Geese and domestic geese.

Just over 375 animals so far have been successfully rehabilitated and released or placed (domestics). Currently, there are 9 birds undergoing treatment at Tri-State's Frink Center for Wildlife.

Treatment for the animals includes stabilization, washing and a minimum recuperation period of several weeks. Small numbers of oiled birds still remain along the river, and Tri-State is working with the USFWS and USDA to capture these birds.

Nearly 200 new volunteers were trained to assist in the care of these animals, and over 4,000 volunteer hours have been donated. Tri-State is extremely grateful to these individuals for their time, as well as to all of the individuals, schools and community groups that donated supplies to help with the effort. The outpouring from the public has been overwhelmingly positive. The *Athos I* oil spill response for wildlife is currently still in progress. To report oiled wildlife, please call our center at 302-737-9543.

*On behalf of the Board, staff and volunteers of Tri-State Bird Rescue, we would like to extend a special thank you to members of the DVOC for their generous support during this crisis!*



*Cleaned Buffleheads*  
© Tri-State.

# RIO GRANDE VALLEY RARITIES

by Hart Rufe

And so we retired and bought a condo in Florida so we could chase all those rare birds and lifers that show up there each winter. The plan worked pretty well the first five years as we added flamingoes on a chartered fishing boat out of Flamingo (where else); La Sagra's Flycatcher; Red-footed Booby on a one day air flight to Ft.



*Crimson-collared Grosbeak (above)*  
© H. Rufe

Jefferson; Bananaquit; Yellow-faced Grass-quit; a gorgeous uncountable Scarlet Ibis; and a Eurasian Kestrel. Of course, we also chased and missed quite a few species including both Ruddy and Key West Quail Doves, the Cuban Pewee, (which Don Jones came down to see from New Jersey, but we, an hour and a half away, missed); the Red-legged Honey-creeper, and last years' Black-faced Grass-quit, which we missed by one day. Nevertheless, this year through December and January there were no rarities we deemed worthy of chasing anywhere in Florida. It seemed all the rare birds were in Texas, a state well known for rare birds, including some of the avian variety.

After hearing reports from Colin Campbell and Ron French, and following up with some research on the internet, we became aware of five (no - FIVE!!) possible life birds in Texas. Now we haven't had five life birds in one year since Attu in 1992. Green-breasted Mango was a guarantee, as it had been seen faithfully every day at a backyard

feeder in McAllen for the past five months; Crimson-collared Grosbeak and White-throated Robin were reliable regulars at Frontera Audubon Center in Weslaco; Blue Bunting was being found almost daily with a lot of searching and an even greater amount of luck at Santa Ana; and a Golden-crowned Warbler had been seen at two different locations just north of Brownsville a few days before our trip to Texas. Only the Warbler seemed to be a fairly long shot. The Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, Rose-throated Becard, Elegant Trogon, Muscovy Duck, Red-billed Pigeon, Hook-billed Kites, White-collared Seedeaters, numerous Clay-colored Robins, and Tropical Parulas being reported would all be nice birds to see again, but not LIFE! Birds. Actually, since Jewel saw the Blue Bunting and Golden-crowned Warbler some years ago on the "Crane Hawk" trip with Bill and Naomi Murphy, the FIVE LIFE! Birds only applied to Hart

After much procrastination, indecision, dilly-dallying and delay (inertia is a definite malady to be guarded against in retirement) we finally made the trip on Wednesday, January 26, and upon arriving in McAllen headed directly from the airport to the back yard at 500 Rose Ellen where we figured we'd tick our first LIFE! Bird. At 11:00 a.m. we paid our \$10.00 per person fee (allegedly contributed by the property owner to charity) to enter the inner sanctum where the bird appears regularly at a feeder and perches in a nearby tree when not feeding. Wrong! We met six other birders who had been there since 7:00 that morning waiting for the bird, all expecting to make a quick 'tick' and get on with other birding. We were assured by those birders and others who came and went during the remainder of the day that the Mango had been there all day the previous day. There were four Buff-bellied Hummingbirds, several Orange-crowned Warblers, a Greater Kiskadee, Curve-billed Thrasher, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, and a Rufous Hummingbird that diverted our attention as we waited for the hummer, but eventually even they failed to make up for the missing Mango. We finally left at 3:00 p.m., leaving others to stand guard at the Mango site, while we headed down to Weslaco to search for the grosbeak and the robin. Frontera Audubon charged only \$2.50 a head to enter the birding area, but we were chagrined to learn they closed at 4:00 p.m. Nevertheless, we paid and entered the birding area where with minimal effort we spotted both the grosbeak and the robin, but both sightings much less than the 'sanitized' look that we hoped for. We then



*Blue Bunting (right)*  
© L. Master

managed to get out of the area just before the gate was locked, something another pair of birders failed to accomplish, and we watched to see that they were rescued by a friendly grounds-keeper who unlocked the gate and let them out. That night at dinner we ran into two of the "Mango Guards" we had left and they assured us that they stayed until almost dark and the bird never appeared.



*Clay-colored Robin*  
(right) © H. Rufe

Thursday morning, the 27<sup>th</sup>, we headed right back to the Mango site, but did not feel obligated to contribute another twenty bucks to the cause, having been short-changed the previous day. We waited again with other birders to no avail until we left for Frontera Audubon for a better look at the grosbeak and robin. This time we were much more fortunate, as the Crimson-collared Grosbeak came to a feeder several times and provided excellent opportunities for photographs. Similarly, the White-throated Robin was found curiously just outside the preserve in a grassy area where it foraged for fully half an hour, sometimes with a Clay-colored Robin as a companion, and also afforded many photo ops. In the preserve, we found a Summer Tanager, Tropical Parula, Black-headed Grosbeak, White-tipped Doves, ubiquitous Green Jays, Pyrrhuloxia, a Tropical Parula, cooperative Wilson's Warbler and Ovenbirds, as well as numerous other birds. With two LIFE BIRDS!! safely photographed and tucked away, we headed down to Santa Ana to search for the Blue Bunting. There were no reports of it having been seen that day, but the male Rose-throated Becard was seen, and wonder of wonders, there were now three White-throated Robins being seen at Santa Ana as well as at Frontera.

While searching we ran into Jim Stasz and Ed Boyd, both former DVOC members, now relocated to Maryland. We coordinated walkie-talkies with them and exchanged cell phone numbers as we spread out to cover more ground in our search for the Bunting, all without success. The Blue Bunting was not seen by anyone at Santa Ana that day. Was this the Mango experience all over again?

We decided to devote Friday morning, the 28<sup>th</sup> to searching for the Golden-crowned Warbler. One was seen at Los Ebanos Nature Preserve about two weeks previously, but a more recent report from about three days before had been made from Chachalaca Bend Bed and Breakfast, only about five miles from the Los Ebanos Preserve. At the B and B we met the owner, who showed us around the very lovely and birdy grounds and invited us to make ourselves at home. The place obviously caters to birders as well as wedding receptions; although she acknowledged to us that most birders are too cheap to pay their kind of rates. (\$165 - \$365 a night) We settled in at a bird blind overlooking a re-circulating small stream which was visited by all kinds of birds from Chachalacas to Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Our list there included Black-crested Titmouse, Wilson's, Palm, Yellow-rumped and Black-throated Green Warblers, and Ovenbird, as well as all the more common birds such as White-eyed Vireo, Green Jay, Inca and White-tipped Doves, and Long-billed Thrasher, but no Golden-crowned Warbler.

Shortly after noon we went back to Santa Ana to search some more for the Blue Bunting. We discovered it had been seen well on the early morning bird walk, so we began canvassing that same general location. No bunting; but we did encounter Harrisburg's Ramsey Koury, a birding friend from Attu and several other birding ventures.

The search group in the area waxed and waned as hopeful birders appeared and moved on discouraged. A walkie-talkie call alerted us that the male becard had been spotted and several of us went to see that bird high in a tree just behind the Visitor's Center. Larry Master, whom we would meet again later, was there photographing that bird, and he provided his photos for inclusion in this article.



*Rose-throated Becard*  
(right)  
© L. Master

*Continued on page 12*

## RIO GRANDE VALLEY RARITIES

*Continued from page 11*

Finally, after several hours of searching, another birder who had been part of the waxing and waning group of birders searching the area, came running over (no walkie-talkie) to tell us he had just seen the Blue Bunting off



*Summer Tanager  
(above)*

© H. Rufe

the concrete trail behind the photography blind overlooking the lake. We all hurried to the area and after only a few minutes of searching found the bird in fairly heavy cover working the bottom sides of leaves, contrary to the information we had previously, that the bird fed on the Blue Mist flower seeds. The Blue Bunting male is a spectacular bird and when seen in sunlight is certainly one of the most striking birds one will ever see. None of the field guides begins to do it justice. I was not able to get any photos of it, but Larry Master, standing next to me, was kind enough to send me a copy of his shot which I have attached to this article. We called Ed Boyd and Jim Stasz by cell phone to let them know of our sighting and discovered that they were on South Padre Island waiting for a boat trip to see the Mangrove Warbler, a trip that was subsequently cancelled because of high winds. That evening we celebrated LIFE BIRD #3 and then checked the internet on the computer in the motel lobby. Good news, a Golden-crowned Warbler had been found around noon that day in Brownsville, at Texas Southernmost College (indeed, a life college for us) at the southern most point of Brownsville near the International Bridge. We called Ed and Jim and passed this

information on to them.

Saturday morning, the 29<sup>th</sup>, with a noon flight back to Florida imminent, rain expected, and the prospects of finding the warbler forty miles away in Brownsville seeming pretty remote, as there were no other reports except the one on the internet, we decided to make one more effort for the Mango. After about forty five minutes of watching the same cast of characters we had seen in the same yard before, and the rain now coming down, we decided to go to another nearby fee-based backyard known as 'Alan Williams Yard' where two female Crimson-collared Grosbeaks and a female Rose-throated Becard had been seen regularly. Just as we got to the car, at about 8:30 a.m. our cell phone rang and Ed Boyd reported he and Jim had found the Golden-crowned Warbler in Brownsville, following the directions we had given them. We drove down Route 83 from McAllen to Brownsville, often exceeding 90 miles an hour (happily the statute of limitations has expired for my admission of this infraction) while Ed and Jim 'babysat' the bird for us. As we approached the location we saw Jim standing out on the street corner waiting to flag us down, and Ed took us right to the bird where we had, as Alan Brady would say, 'crippling views' of a gorgeous Golden-crowned Warbler. LIFE BIRD!! #4 was seen before the rain arrived in Brownsville, and even though we went stalking through some high grass we did not encounter any chiggers. And we still made it back in the rain to McAllen for our flight out.



Upon arrival back in Florida we discovered on the internet that the Green-breasted Mango returned to its favorite feeding spot later that very afternoon after a three day absence. A couple of days later we learned that two more LIFE BIRDS had been discovered in the Rio Grande Valley: a

Roadside Hawk up in San Ygnacio (and now two more, one at Santa Ana and another at a location known as Cannon Road) and a Streaked-back Oriole at Brazos Bend State Park. And then we discovered that the rarest bird in North America, albeit a one day wonder, was a Redwing at Peace Valley Park, eight miles from our Perkasio, PA home. But still nothing worth chasing in Florida.

*White-throated  
Rogin (left)*

© H. Rufe

## 2005 World Series of Birding by N. Murphy

The World Series of Birding (WSB) is right around the corner. In about six or seven short weeks the DVOC team, the Lagerhead Shrikes, will once again take up the challenge of this grueling competition. They have become a well oiled machine, experts at the game of “hit and run” and highly skilled at the art of scouting and planning. The route is well established and one can be forgiven for maybe thinking that, since that’s the case, it is simply a matter of getting out and birding on the day of the event. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The “Shrikes” begin scouting all along the route weeks before the big day. Scouting efforts intensify and, during the week before the WSB, team members practically put their personal lives on hold and spend every available hour in the field. The effort that they put forth is nothing short of awesome and, hey, they’ve also won five out of the last six years. So we can feel happy and proud about that, right? Well, right. But we can’t just leave it at that. We all have a part to play in this effort and it’s our turn now.

Each year the DVOC targets a worthwhile local cause to support with monies raised through WSB pledges from our members. This year we have committed \$5,000 to the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey to help educate locals and visitors to the Delaware Bay area about the plight of migrating shorebirds.

We know that the Delaware Bay is home to the world’s largest population of Horseshoe Crabs

and that migrating shorebirds, exhausted and starving after their trans-oceanic migration, arrive on the bay shore to feed on fat-rich horseshoe crab eggs. This food source is critical to the birds since it allows them to restore fat reserves and to continue their migration to the breeding grounds in the Arctic. Over a million shorebirds, including Red Knots, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones and Semipalmated Sandpipers stage along the Delaware Bay each spring. This includes 90% of the western hemisphere’s Red Knot population.

In recent years, Horseshoe Crabs have been seriously over harvested and the decline in eggs has caused a corresponding and drastic decline in shorebird populations along the Delaware Bay. The situation is particularly dire for the Red Knots which have declined from 51,000 in 2000 to 13,000 in 2004. Even the birds that have managed to find food have suffered since they cannot put on enough weight to fly to the breeding grounds and nest successfully.

If those of us who care about these things don’t support the effort, we face the possibility of losing the entire western hemisphere Red Knot population. This is a critically important effort and we need your contributions to meet our commitment of \$5,000 to the Conserve Wildlife Foundation. You can contribute a set amount, or you can pledge an amount per bird. Either way is fine. Just, please, contribute. All contributions are welcome. Use the WSB pledge form that is included with this issue of the *Larus* and be as generous as you can.

### *Waterthrush ID* Continued from page 5

that Louisiana shows versus the small thin dark streaks that most Northern’s show. Northern’s also have stronger breast markings that are sharply defined and well organized while on Louisiana’s they tend to be sparser, blurrier and not as organized across the breast.

Jizz can also play an important part in separating these two species as tail movements often differ. Though both species constantly bob their tails, Northern’s usually move theirs up and down rapidly while Louisiana’s tend to move theirs more slowly and in a more side-to-side, semicircular, pattern.

Be sure to check out the color of the legs in the springtime. Louisiana’s are brighter, a ‘bubble gum’ pink while Northern’s tend to be duller. Sometimes it is not quite as easy as this, but by using a combination of ID marks, one should be able to put a name to the waterthrushes. For further information about these species be sure to check out the Ornithological Studies page on our website, [www.dvoc.org](http://www.dvoc.org).

## Field Trips

April 2, 2005 – Southwest New Jersey (Pedricktown & Mannington Marsh)

Leader: Frank Windfelder  
(215) 673-0240

May 6 - 8, 2005 – Birding Southern Delaware & Maryland

Leader: Colin Campbell

May 8, 2005 - Ft. Washington State Park, Montgomery County, PA

Leader: Bill Murphy  
(215) 885-2488

May 15, 2005 – Hawkin Rd & Brightview Farm, Burlington CO., N.J. FARM,

Leader: Don Jones  
(609) 859-0281

May 21, 2005 · Ridley Creek State Park

Leader: Art McMorris  
(610) 664-2174

May 22, 2005 - Carpenter's Woods, Philadelphia, PA.

Leader: Erica Brendel  
(215)-844-3456

May 28, 2005- Peregrine Watch

Leader: Matt Sharp (215) 299-1069

June 18, 2005 – Pennypack Trust, Montgomery CO.

Leaders: JoAnn Raine  
(215) 659-3921 and  
Chuck Hetzel

June, 2005 (Dates to be announced)

- A weekend trip to bird the W.

Pennsylvania Grasslands

Leader: Chris Walters  
(215) 642-6862 and  
Rick Mellon

**For more info go to  
[www.dvoc.org](http://www.dvoc.org)**

## Rarity Round-Up: Winter 2005

### Pennsylvania

Gray Kingbird - a 1<sup>st</sup> for PA in Pomeroy, Chester Co Dec 13-23\*

MacGillivray's Warbler – in Maxatawny, Berks Co 12/18-20

Varied Thrush - at Middle Creek WMA, Lancaster Co. 1/31-2/6

Redwing - a 1<sup>st</sup> for PA and 3<sup>rd</sup> for the United States was a one-day wonder Feb 5 at Peace Valley Park, Doylestown, Bucks Co

Painted Bunting - at Churchville, Bucks Co throughout Feb

*Of Note:* 21 Northern Rough-winged Swallows Jan 8 at the NE Sewage Treatment Plant in Phila Co.

### Delaware

Black Guillemot - a 1<sup>st</sup> for DE was at Indian River Inlet, Sussex County Jan 29-Feb 12

Gyrfalcon - Feb 15-24 around Bombay Hook, Port Mahon Little Creek, Kent Co.

### New Jersey

Allen's Hummingbird – Villas, Cape May Co Nov 3-Dec 19\*

Western Grebe - at Raritan Bay from November through Jan 3

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher- Dec 19-20 on the Assunpink CBC, Monmouth Co Townsend

Solitaire – at Manahawkin, Ocean Co Nov 29-Dec 18\*

Eared Grebe - 2 at Lakes Bay, Atlantic Co Dec 4-24

Common Murre - Island Beach SP, Ocean Co Jan 9

Western Tanager – Since Jan in Absecon, Atlantic Co. Continues to be seen.

Painted Bunting – at Erma, Cape May Co Beg Jan-Feb 20; 1 of several reported

Pacific Loon - Holgate Dec 30; Manasquan Inlet Feb 22

Ash-throated Flycatcher - Cape May, Cape May Co Nov 29-Dec 19\*

Dovekie - one on the Jan 2 Barnegat CBC

Gyr Falcon - was video taped near Mannington Marsh, Salem Co on Feb 12, having been seen the day before. It is presumed to be the same one that was seen in Delaware

Eurasian Green-winged Teal – Tuckahoe WMA, Atlantic Co Feb 16

White-winged Dove - in Margate, Atlantic Co on February 25

\* A very, very cold arctic front (the first of the season) came through the night of December 19 and this passage coincided with lots of half-hardy birds being killed. It was the late day noted for these birds as well as the MD Calliope and VA Black-chinned Hummingbirds.

## BIRD FACT

### Wingspan is shorter than the body length in some North American species

Some species of birds have a wingspan that is greater than their body length. Here in North America, we have 3 species that have a shorter wingspan than the length of their body, as do the males of another 2 species - one of which is a vagrant. Can you name them?

Test your skills! List as many species with wingspans shorter than the length of their bodies as you can.

Answers are on page 21.

## Programs

April 7, 2005, 7:30 pm  
6:30 pm-7:30 pm  
Insider's view of the Library at the Academy of Natural Sciences. Limited to 25 members. Robert McCracken ("Bob") Peck, Senior Fellow and Librarian of the Academy will be our speaker of the evening.  
Ornithological Studies - Palmyra Bird Census 2005 - Frank Windfelder

April 21, 2005, 7:30 pm  
Paul Tebbel and Michael Forsberg—"Sandhill Cranes: Understanding Crane Communication".

May 5, 2005, 7:30 pm  
Dr. Aliza Baltz, "Report on Zoo's Micronesian Kingfisher Success and Other Captive Breeding Bird Programs".  
Ornithological Studies - Peregrine Falcon Head Patterns - Connie Goldman

May 19, 2005, 7:30 pm  
Dr. Robert Curry, "Conservation Ecology of Island-Endemics: the Mimids—Mockingbirds and their Allies".  
Ornithological Studies - Kermadec Petrels in the Atlantic - Paul Guris

June 2, 2005, 7:30 pm  
Dr. Clemency Fisher, "Australian Birds in Philadelphia and Other Unexpected Places: A Tribute to John Gould's Assistant, John Gilbert".  
Report on Big Day Runs

**For more info go to  
[www.dvoc.org](http://www.dvoc.org)**

*Bosque del Apache*  
(right- both photos)  
© N. Murphy

## New Mexico and Bosque del Apache Field Trip

by Martin Selzer

In addition to the traditional weekend trips to Montauk, New England in winter and Colin's Pocomoke Adventure, DVOC has recently undertaken some trips further afield: two trips to Niagara Falls to study gulls, a Bicknell's Thrush trip to the Adirondacks, the Himalayan Snowcock trip and this summer's Churchill and Manitoba trip. In keeping with these trips as well as the long history of DVOC adventures to all corners of North, Central and South America, 18 club members traveled to New Mexico in December, 2004.

Each year, the Rio Grande Valley of central and southern New Mexico plays host to a wonderful mix of wintering bird species. Tens of thousands of geese, ducks, and cranes descend on famous Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, and Caballo and Elephant Butte Reservoirs. In some years, sparrows cover the desert grasslands and riparian thickets while raptors abound, drawn by the abundant prey. In addition, many southwestern specialties are resident and easily located at this time of year. A final birding highlight of our trip was to be our visit to Sandia Crest for rosy-finches.

The trip started in at Albuquerque Airport where Bert Filemyr, Tom Reeves, Bill and Naomi Murphy, Colin Campbell, Don and Jayne Jones, Connie Goldman, Deborah Danila and Doris Santos arrived first and were waiting for me, Dennis and Anna Bert, Dennis Brennan and Fran Hovey to arrive on our flight. We collected baggage and picked up our vans, got Steve Leibhaber and Nancy Cooke who'd arrived the day before and started birding. An afternoon of birding the Rio Grande Nature Center and Petroglyphs National Monument got the trip off to a good start.

Rosy-finches at the feeders at the Sandia Crest House would be the primary target of the following morning's visit, and one of this trip's *inside* the Sandia Crest House.

We spent the better parts of three days at Bosque del Apache, driving the autoroute and walking some of the trails. This is one of the better-known refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge system and a favorite with photographers because of the spectacle of Sandhill Cranes and waterfowl that winter there. Couple this congregation of cranes and geese with a dawn fly-out and dusk fly-in, along with the wonderful winter's light on the surrounding mountains and you have a splendid Kodak moment. The fly-out and fly-in is a breathtaking collage of sight and sound as the cranes bugled and the geese honked. Whether you witness this at sunrise or sunset, the backdrop to these birds is an ever-changing mix of red, pink, mauve and blue. It is a wonderful refuge, and we would have liked to spend more time there, but we had other areas to visit.



species of ducks and geese, and four species of grebes. In the various riparian areas we found Bridled



We spent the next three days birding the reservoirs and riparian areas of the southern Rio Grande Valley in search of southwestern specialties and wintering species. Whether we were tracking down Black-throated and Sage Sparrows in the creosote dominated grasslands of Elephant Butte, or birding the riparian areas of Percha Dam and Caballo Lake State Parks, we kept our eyes and ears open for new species. The reservoirs held scattered pockets of waterfowl that enabled us to reach 24

*continued on page 16*

## *Athos I Oil Spill Update*

*Continued from page 9*

and make recoveries of the oiled birds that are still being found up and down the river and bay.

The John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum served as the main command center for FWS components during this most recent event. All the impacted wildlife was brought there before being sent to Tri-State Bird Rescue in Delaware. Those that did not survive were

kept for possible forensic evidence.

Each morning, teams at Heinz met to coordinate efforts while Natural Resource Damage Assessment teams met to assess environmental impacts. Volunteers went out on the Heinz Refuge each day to look for impacted wildlife on site. Fortunately,

because of an early response in setting up booms on Darby Creek at its confluence with the Delaware River, no appreciable oil came upstream into the refuge itself. In spite of this, a few spots of oil were seen and a few slightly oiled gulls were observed. An additional boom was put around the water control structure on the Dike Road which allows water in and out of the 145 acre East Im-

poundment.

Throughout this incredibly complex and busy event, the refuge continued to serve its public mandates with various programs, weekend guided walks, and open doors at the Cusano Environmental Education Center.

The dozens of dedicated folks who worked the wildlife recovery through the FWS and all its partner agencies are gone now. But the Heinz Refuge played a key role, and may still be the focal point in addressing the natural resource impacts and long-term consequences resulting from the oil spill.

Only time will tell what the short and long term affects of this spill will turn out to be. Many are concerned about the overall health of the river and bay and what may be ahead for the returning horseshoe crabs and shorebirds this spring, as well as all the other players in the Delaware Estuary which is a complicated and delicate ecosystem.

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*“The spill eventually affected approximately 57 miles of shoreline..”*

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## *New Mexico and Bosque del Apache*

*continued page 15*

Titmouse, Verdin, Phainopepla, woodpeckers and more sparrows. Along Animas Creek we eventually coaxed a Western Screech-owl into view while two others called just out of sight. Our last two days back in the Albuquerque area gave us second and third chances at Pyrrhuloxia, Cactus Wren, Curve-billed and Crissal Thrashers and a trip up to the Santa Fe Ski Basin for Gray and Stellar’s Jays and Clark’s Nutcrackers.

Everyone took home some great memories from this adventure – Rosy-finches at Sandia Crest, birding in the fresh falling snow at Bosque, the fly-in and fly-out at Bosque, all those Ferruginous Hawks, all those Scaled Quail, the blue Ross’s Goose, the Western Screech-owl along Animas Creek, birding the Santa Fe Ski Basin and seeing the Thayer’s Gull at the Cochite Dam spillway. For a detailed trip report, list of species observed and pictures please go to <http://www.acnatsci.org/hosted/dvoc/FieldTrips/FieldTrips2004/BDA/Index.htm>



*Western Screech Owl (left)*  
© N Murphy

## 20 Questions with Al Kronschnable *continued from page 7*

### Which other DVOC'ers stand out most in your memory?

There have been so many memorable DVOC'ers over the years, but to I have to say – Bob Sehl, Ernest Choate, Phil Street and Alan Brady stand out the most.

### What has been the biggest change in bird life since you joined the DVOC?

When I started birding in the 1950's you had to go to the Pocomoke to see Mockingbirds, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Blue Grosbeaks, Boat-tailed Grackles and Chuck-wills-widows. Today they can be found in the Delaware Valley and Cape May.

### Are there any changes you would like to see DVOC institute?

No. I think all programs in the DVOC are excellent and well organized.

### What advice would you give present and future DVOC officers?

Keep up the good work

### Which DVOC field trips have you enjoyed the most and why?

Pocomoke in the spring and New England in the winter, because no matter how bad the weather, the birding was always good.

## Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust

by Paul Driver

**Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust (PERT)**, also known as Pennypack Watershed, is 720 acres of meadows and woodland along the Pennypack Creek in Huntingdon Valley, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Over 150 species of birds have been recorded, including Western Kingbird, Northern Shrike, Dickcissel and Lapland Longspur.



The fields of 160-acre Raytharn Farm, added to the preserve in 1997, are being restored with native grasses. In winter they hold flocks of Savannah and American Tree Sparrows, and numerous small rodents which attract Northern Harriers, Short-eared Owls and, last winter (2003-4), Rough-legged Hawks. The grasslands have hosted an immature Northern Shrike twice in the last five years.

Bobolinks are regular in migration, and Eastern Meadowlarks are present throughout the winter. As the grassland habitat establishes itself, it should be just a matter of time before grassland species stay to breed.

Songbird migration is best along Pennypack Creek north of Paper Mill Bridge. A walk along the railroad tracks between the Paper Mill Road and Creek Road bridges is recommended in spring. The Webb Walk, which passes through a swampy area beside the creek, is often very productive. Another good area is the damp woodland north of Creek Road Bridge. Mourning Warbler is regular in spring in thick vegetation anywhere along the creek. Close to the main entrance off Edge Hill Road there is a warbler hotspot that can be good when the early morning sun first lights up the vegetation.

In fall, areas of goldenrod and brambles are good for Fox and Lincoln's Sparrow, and Orange-crowned

*continued on page 18*

*Barred Owl (left)*  
© PERT

## PERT

### *continued page 17*

Warbler is possible. Rusty Blackbirds are regular beside the large pond in migration. Red-breasted Nuthatches are annual in the conifers near the main entrance during winter and in recent years a Barred Owl seems to have favored this area.

Over sixty species have been confirmed to breed. Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Warbling Vireo and Veery nest in the woodlands alongside the creek. Eastern Phoebes and Northern Rough-winged Swallows breed under the bridges and Belted Kingfisher in the creek banks. The Management Area, an area of scrubland, has hosted Yellow-breasted Chat and Willow Flycatcher during the breeding season and Blue Grosbeak bred here recently. American Redstart and Scarlet Tanager are regular breeders in the woodlands. Several pairs of Eastern Bluebird use the bird boxes along the trails. The large pond has breeding Wood Duck and American Kestrels use a bird box in the grassland area. Until recently, a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks nested every year on the preserve, but one of them succumbed in the spring of 2004 and they have not been seen since. Northern Parula has been heard singing at the Creek Road entrance in June in two recent years, leading to speculation that it may breed.



*Northern Shrike (left)*  
© PERT

For directions and further information visit the preserve's website at <http://www.libertynet.org/pert/>.

## *The Passing of a Member* by N. Murphy

I recently received a letter from the widow of one of our long time members, E. Wayne Marshall. Mrs. Marshall indicated that Wayne passed away in 2004. A quick check of the database indicated that he'd been a member of the DVOC since 1933.

I thought that, after 72 years of membership, it would be great to have a proper obituary for Wayne in the upcoming *Cassinia*, however, to date, I have not been able to get in touch with any members who knew him well. Alan Brady says he knew him from doing the Cape May Christmas Bird count many years ago.

If anyone has additional information to share about Wayne, please send it to me at [ndmurphy3@hotmail.com](mailto:ndmurphy3@hotmail.com).

## *Ontario 2005 Continued from page 8*

home. The Brantford airport is a reliable spot for Gray Partridges. In this case "reliable" means you might see the partridges on about 50 percent of your trips there. When we got to the airport area, Karl quickly spotted the partridges sitting in the snow. The good news was is that we could see them, the bad news was that only their heads were visible above the snow. Partial views are better than no views at all. We did cruise the local roads hoping to see a group walking about but could not find more. At 3:00, we decided to leave the area and head to our last stop, Niagara Falls.

Arriving at 4:30, we used the last hour of daylight to view the Niagara River from Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Sir Adam Beck Power Plant Overlook. Several stops rewarded us with Long-tailed Ducks, Canvasbacks, Buffleheads, Iceland Gulls and at least one Glaucous Gull. A great way to end our birding day.

We cleared the border back into the US at 5:30 and began the drive home. After an uneventful drive, we arrived back in the Philadelphia area about 12:30 am.

# Welcome New Members Anita Guris, Membership Chair

2004 was another prolific year for membership. I would like to remind all members that what makes DVOC an exceptional club is its participating and active membership. I encourage you all to take an active role in DVOC and make it “your” club.

We welcomed 32 new members in total in 2004, and we are now presenting a brief bio of each new member in *Larus*. In the interest of time and space, the following is a list of new members who joined in 2004, along with bios of those new members from the last quarter of 2004 and the first two months of 2005. This is a new addition to *Larus* and will be updated quarterly. If I have inadvertently left anyone out, I apologize and ask you to please bring it to my attention so I can correct it in the next issue of *Larus*. Please join me in welcoming our newest members to DVOC.

Welcome to DVOC and keep sharing the passion and encouraging the science of birds.

## First 3 quarters of 2004

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Robin Mattison – Philadelphia, PA	Christian Lewis Keidel - Devon, PA
Walter Mychalus – Phoenixville, PA	Frances Parkinson Keyes Keidel - Devon, PA
Fran Hovey - Philadelphia, PA	Gerri Peevers – Narberth, PA
Arnella Trent – Annapolis, MD	Deborah Danila – Schwenksville, PA
LaVerne A. Lee – Philadelphia, PA	Linda Rowan – Bristol, PA
Jim Molyneaux - Newtown Square, PA	Chris Hugosson – Jeffersonville, PA
Ralph Hoppel - East Norristown, PA	Jen Johnson – Hummelstown, PA
Robert O. Horton - East Windsor, NJ	Steve Kacir – Croydon, PA
Y.Y. Huang – Voorhees, NJ	Michelle Frankel - Philadelphia, PA
Jane Huang – Voorhees, NJ	Bill Reaume – Philadelphia, PA
Ray (Butch) Lishman - Milford Square, PA	Karl Lukens - Cape May, NJ
Nikolas Haass – Philadelphia, PA	Mary Watkins - New Britain, PA

## Last Quarter of 2004

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### **Eric J. Schenkel, MD**

Eric writes: I have been birding since age 10. Although I live in the Lehigh Valley (which is a wonderful place to bird), I want to expand my horizons by joining your organization. My most recent birding trips were Alaska and Costa Rica.

### **Tim McFadden**

Tim writes: I have been birding since I was 10 years old - 31 years!! My father was a birder and introduced birding to me. I am a member of CMBO, Pennypack Bird Club, and BCDC (past member). Locally I like to bird Pennypack Park & Trust, Churchville, Tinicum, Cape May, Palmyra & Taylor, and Forsythe, just to name a few.

### **Kurt A. Schwarz**

Kurt writes: I began birding in 1987, and took it up very seriously in 1995. While most of my birding is here in Maryland, I make several trips per year to Delaware, and bird in Bucks County, PA when visiting my mother. I have also enjoyed the Middle Creek Wildlife area near Lancaster. What really got me started was finding a club of other people who also chased birds. I have recently completed my term as President of the Howard County chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society and taken up the post of Conservation Director.

*Continued on page 20*

## Welcome New Members

### Jeff Hawk

Jeff writes: I have been birding off and on since the early 1980s. I like to bird Trenton Marsh, Princeton Woods, Assunpink WMA, and Hamilton Veterans Park. I am a former DVOC member and I would like to join again. I participate in the Trenton Marsh CBC. I have 308 species on my NJ life list and am going for more. Mostly, I need pelagic birds and hope to get out on the ocean again soon.

### William J. Keim

Bill writes: I have been birding off and on for 45 years, although my knowledge has grown most rapidly in the past 4 years after I joined a club (DOS) and began to learn from others. Having just moved to Bucks County a few months ago, I have been birding here in Mercer County, NJ, Hawk Mountain, Cape May, etc.

### Andrew Bernick

Andrew writes: I am a doctoral student in Ecology, Evolutionary Biology, and Behavior at the City University of New York, and also a recent transplant to the Philadelphia area. I started birding as an undergrad in Rhode Island in 1990, and have since worked on various research projects in avian ecology in Rhode Island, Fire Island, NY, New York City, and Antarctica. My thesis research is an investigation of nocturnal foraging ecology of wading birds (specifically Black-Crowned Night Herons) in urban habitats. Although I've only lived in PA for a little more than a month, I've come to enjoy observing birds at Tinicum, Palmyra, and on the Bartram family grounds. I've also had more opportunity to visit Brigantine, Cape May, and Island Beach State Park.

### Barbara A. Hiebsch

Barbara writes: I grew up with Valley Forge Park as my playground. I always loved to walk through woods and fields. As I matured, my friends and I naturally continued to walk in the woods to have our philosophical talks. Eventually I got curious of bird songs, later the birds, and on and on. I've been birding approximately 11 years. I am retired, so I bird mostly PA, DE, and Cumberland and Cape May counties. I enjoy the Wissahickon, Peace Valley, Pennypack Trust, Green Lane, Ridley Creek State Park, and basically anywhere there are birds.

*Continued from page 19*

### Lucy Siegfried

Lucy writes: I joined "continuation of learning in retirement" birding class at Delaware Valley College 3 years ago and got "hooked". I am still a "novice", but enjoy each adventure to Bombay Hook, Brigantine, and Peace Valley. A special experience this year was the banding of Ruddy Turnstones and Sawwhet Owls!

### Andrew R. Curtis (Lifetime Membership)

Andy says: I have - been birding for over 12 years, mostly in the fall and winter months, due to my first love and career in Herpetology. I got started in birding because you can't always find snakes! It gave me something else to look for when enjoying the outdoors. I participated in my first CBC as a junior in high school, and continue to enjoy birding. My life list looks a bit odd, since in the spring and summer I am mostly interested in looking for herps. As a result, I have few spring warblers on my list. I enjoy the whole outdoors and am an avid fisherman and hunter, as well as an all-around naturalist.

## First Quarter 2005

### Ashley Hazen (student member)

Ashley has been involved with birding since elementary school. She has served as the ornithological coordinator participating in CBC's on the Upper Mainline YMCA property. She also is a member of the YMCA's ESC World Series high school team the last two years. She has attended DVOC field trips and the Delaware County Bird Count. Ashley is a sophomore at Westtown School. She has birded many south-eastern PA sites, Southern NJ sites, Colorado, and Hawaii.

### Brian Quindlen (student member)

Brian is also a member of the Upper Mainline YMCA and participates in CBC's and many of the Y's birding related projects. Brian is an instructor at the Environmental Education Center; he has led many owl and bird walks. Although only 17, he has the unique ability to share his knowledge of the environment with children and convey it through teaching. He has co-captained the last two years for the WSB high school team. Brian is a junior at Great Valley High School. He has birded in Southeastern PA, New Jersey, Colorado, Florida, and Hawaii.

## Avalon surveys *continued from page 2*

Maximum numbers of shorebirds observed on the beach at Avalon were on October 2 and 12 with a total of 4,829 and 5,672 respectively. Species highs included: 1,998 Semipalmated Plover and 3,750 Sanderling (reflecting a 45% spike due an influx of juveniles) on August 11, 290 peeps on 10/12,

2,390 Dunlin on 10/12 and 225 Black-bellied Plover on 10/12. The 45% spike in juvenile Sanderlings on 8/11 just may contradict reports of breeding failure in the summer of 2004.

Interestingly, juvenile Sanderlings first appeared on 9/4 and on that date, and again on 9/14, they made up 3% of the total flock. On 10/12, no juveniles were found on the survey and it is unknown if they just moved on or if their plumage faded due to wear in just 10 days. Mud loving birds such as dowitchers,

godwits, oystercatchers, Willets, Whimbrels, and yellowlegs tend to shy away from the sand beach.

In the spring, we will continue our shorebird counts at beaches of southern Avalon. We will try to verify and measure the movements of these birds from beach to mudflats and back again. Which wetland mudflats are favored for their foraging will be an important discovery. We want to keep an eye on breeding birds on the beaches there, and possibly extend this to the muddy wetlands as well. Last year, oystercatchers, Piping Plover and possibly Willets were beach breeders here. Interestingly Woodcock were heard back in the dune scrub near 56<sup>th</sup> Street last spring.

Static shorebird populations may be confused by migratory movements in the area. Disruptions by free running dogs, human activities or even predatory raptors on the hunt can change the whole picture. Measures to minimize these disruptions to shorebird life will be addressed by the DEP and the Borough of Avalon this year.



*Photo - Shorebirds  
Kitts Hummock, DE.  
© N Murphy*

### Officers:

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**DVOC** is an organization for birders and bird enthusiasts in the Delaware Valley region.

Anyone with an interest in birds is invited to attend functions of the DVOC.

Follow the link to "Membership Information" on our website for more information on how to join the DVOC.

[www.dvoc.org](http://www.dvoc.org)

### *Bird Fact Answers!*

(from page 14)

Western Grebe 25"/24"

Clark's Grebe 25"/24"

Ring-necked Pheasant 35"/31" male

Greater Roadrunner 23"/22"

Fork-tailed Flycatcher 16"/14" male

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 15"/15" male

### *Need to update your contact info???*

Have you moved? Or changed your email address or phone number? If so, please let us know! Send along any updates to Naomi Murphy at [ndmurphy3@hotmail.com](mailto:ndmurphy3@hotmail.com).

### Larus Committee:

Naomi Murphy

Jane Henderson

Martin Selzer

Larus is published quarterly. Deadlines for submission are March 10, June 10, September 10 and November 20.