

# Philadelphia Larus

*Delaware Valley Ornithological Club*

Volume 32, Number 2, Summer 2005



## *From the Editor*

We have a great line-up of articles for the summer 2005 Larus-on-Line. Among our regularly occurring articles you will find:

- An interview with John Danzenbaker in the 20 Questions and Then Some series. John is a long time club member with one of the largest world lists ever recorded and I think you will find his interview very interesting.
- Our ID article for this issue is on Goldeneye identification. It was written and illustrated by Nikolas Haass.
- For our birding hotspots coverage, we have articles on 2 Mile Beach by Mike Fritz and Riverwinds by Jeff Holt.
- We have several articles relative to conservation in this issue. Paul Guris's piece on how the DVOG will use funds from this year's World Series provides additional insight into how the Conserve Wildlife Foundation will use our contributions. We also have an excellent article by JoAnn Raine on habitat for Upland Sandpipers and another article on the Navy Lakehurst Bluebirds by John Joyce, Natural/Cultural Resources Manager at Lakehurst.

In addition to all of the above, we have an article on the World Series of Birding Run, topical pieces on the Ivory-billed Woodpecker's historical range, history of the DVOG, basic settings for digiscoping, one member's impressions and experiences on her first visit to the Texas coast/Rio Grande Valley and spring migration in Southern New Jersey. The items mentioned above are only part of what's inside so grab a cool drink and enjoy.

One other thing...we had some great material relative to international birding trips that just would not fit in this issue. So we decided to produce a summer supplement that will also be posted to the DVOG website. It contains four great articles with pictures. Colin Campbell provided an excellent piece on his recent mega pelagic trip that circumnavigated the Atlantic Ocean. Anita Guris regales us with her trip report on the Junk Tours Belize adventure. Jane Henderson shares info on her very special trip to Costa Rica and Martin Selzer tantalizes us with an overview of his recent Jamaica tour.

Naomi Murphy  
Editor-in-Chief

## *On the Web*

The DVOG website ([www.dvoc.org](http://www.dvoc.org)) continues to expand and grow. It has become an important part of our club as we provide services for both members and non-members. Here are a couple of highlights of what is available on the site

- Current program/meeting information.
- Current field trip information
- Field trip reports
- Directions to field trips
- Ornithological studies presented at meetings
- What's This Quiz (in Ornithological Studies section)
- Personal Pages for club members
- Current Larus
- Larus archives
- And many, many more items of interest.

The webmaster (Bert Filemyr [afilemyr@comcast.net](mailto:afilemyr@comcast.net)) is always looking for new ideas for the site. If you have an idea or see something on another site that you feel would add to our site, please contact him.

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## From the President

The social gatherings and camaraderie that occur with other birders when out chasing a species rare to the area is one of the great joys of birding. Everyone has a common goal - to see THE bird. For some it might be a species that they have never seen before and for others it might be an opportunity to re-acquaint themselves with a species not regularly seen. Still others may just want to add another "tick" to their list.



Adrian Binns  
DVOC President

One of my pet peeves is people not telling others about their sightings while out in the field. Now I know that not everyone has the same level of knowledge. That is a fact of life, and certainly not something to hold against anyone, but there are two important objectives in the field. One is hearing a call note or song and the other is actually sighting a species. Either way, the most important thing anyone can do is to make others aware of their find or their query if there are unsure. The chances are good that there is someone at a particular gathering who will be able to help identify what has been seen or heard. There is nothing worse than finding out later that such-and-such a species was seen and you never knew about it. This seems to be an all too often occurrence. Get someone else on the bird! They might not be able to identify it, but four eyes or ears are better than two, and one hundred and eight are certainly better than six. Everyone is there in the hopes of seeing the bird - a desired species no matter how common or rare.

On a recent quest, though, people were spread out over a considerable distance, and it was hard for anyone not to know that others were there, yet when we decided to "pull the plug," we came across a birder who told about three nameless individuals he'd spoken to who said they had seen the bird twice, less than an hour previously.

No one knew about this until this person asked why these three had such huge smiles on their faces! No one spread the word. Now whether anyone believes that they actually saw THE bird is irrelevant. They obviously saw something that fit the bill, and did not share their sighting. Let us assume it was THE bird - then this is inexcusable. Let us assume that they were not fully confident in their assessment - then why not ask others? Let us assume that they are dead wrong - we are all human and every single person that has been in the field has made the same mistake and should not be ashamed, after all we are all human.

Whether you are a leader or just a participant at an event, unless others 'get on the bird' no one will ever know for sure whether that was THE bird, and in the long run everyone loses out, taking the fun out of birding.

Just grouching (yet again),  
A

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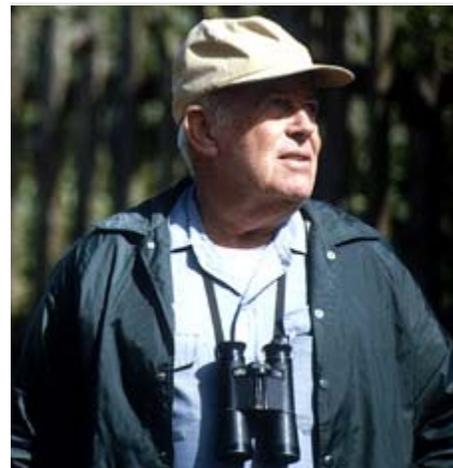
## Bird Quiz

- 1) How many birds have the name of a state as part of their common name?
- 2) Which ones are they?
- 3) Which of these birds are the official bird of the state for which they are named?

See page 29 for answers.



## 20 Questions and Then Some With John Danzenbaker



### **Give us a little background on where you grew up and what you did before you retired?**

I was born in West Philadelphia, 11 April 1919. Ten years later the family moved to Llanerch (now Havertown) PA. I graduated from Haverford Twp High School with a small scholarship to Bucknell University. I left after a year and a half to do game farming in Broad Axe, and also took a job as factory clerk for Keasbey & Mattison Asbestos Factory in Ambler, PA. I was drafted into the Army 5 February 1942. I attended Officer's Candidate School and was commissioned 2nd Lt. 12 October 1942. I had various military assignments, training troops and was sent to England, arriving on Christmas Day 1943 in Scotland. I joined 9th Infantry Division, training as Infantry machine gun platoon leader and participated in Normandy invasion D plus 4, Utah Beach, and was wounded twice and returned to the States in July 1944. After recovery, I had more infantry assignments, including Company Commander, Recruiting Officer, and in January 1947 I went to Kumamoto, Kyushu, Japan, with duties in 21st Infantry Regiment, Army of Occupation as a Troop Information and Education Officer, then to Kokura as 24th Division T I & E Officer.

Returned to States 1949 to Fort Benning GA as 3rd Infantry Division T I & E O. I was returned to Japan in 1950 when the 3rd Division was dispatched there to train raw Korean recruits enroute to landing in Wonson, Korea, participating there with Korean troops and other nations' troops for a year. My next assignment was in the Pentagon, Army Office of Chief of Information, heading The Army Newspaper Section. While there I completed my Bachelor of Science Degree requirements in night classes with University of Maryland.

Next, after completing the Advanced Infantry Officer Course at Ft. Benning, GA, I was sent to Orleans, France, (1955-1958) where I met my wife, Sylvie, whom I married in England in 1957. My next assignment was to Boston Army Base, MA as Director of Administration. There, at the Chelsea Navy Hospital, our sons Mike and Jim/Chris were born. My next assignment was to Tehran, Iran to the Army Military Assistance Advisory Group (1961-1963). My final military assignment was back at the Pentagon, OCINFO, 1963-64. I retired as Lt.Col. on 31 August 1964 and began work as a civilian with the FAA Technical Center 1 September 1964 at the Atlantic City Airport, and moved to our present home in Linwood. I retired from the FAA in 1980.

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

My "birding" started one day back about 1929, when I noticed that a sparrow in our back yard was heavily streaked. I had no bird books or field guides. My grandfather had a pair of field glasses and somehow we figured out that the streaked bird must have been a Song Sparrow and all the rest must have been House Sparrows. That was my "start".

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

I knew of no one else interested at that point. I had a favorite cousin about my age who lived in West Philadelphia and he visited us in Llanerch often and we quickly became great birding friends. He was a Boy Scout. He continued his education and became a Veterinarian, establishing his practice in Titusville, PA. His name was Dr. William Savage. Locally, my Uncle Norman DuBree, a NJ State Trooper, learning of my growing interest in birds, took me and our family to Brigantine Refuge, starting my long association there. Then, at work, at the Airport, I heard of Jim Akers who also worked there and we became great friends, frequently birding around the airfield at lunchtime and at the Refuge other times.

*J. Danzenbaker  
Kenya, 1985*  
© N. Murphy

## *20 Questions and Then Some ...cont'd*

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

It was Jim Akers who told me about Jim Meritt and the DVOC. Eventually we both became members in 1973, but distance dissuaded us from being frequent attendees at meetings.

### **Which DVOC personalities have you known the best?**

DVOC member Joel Abramson, head of Bird Bonanzas of Florida, got me started in taking birding tours in many distant places such as Costa Rica, Madagascar, Antarctica, New Caledonia, China, Argentina etc. Locally, we became friends with Bill & Naomi Murphy, Frank Windfelder. I'm not sure who are DVOC members: Bob Dodelson, Chip Krilowicz, Ward Dasey, Tom Sutherland, Jean Fuschillo, Dave Cutler, Ed Manners, Alan Brady, Armas Hill, Bill Tannery, Kate Brethwaite, Jim Dowdell, Fred Lesser. My closest DVOC friend is undoubtedly Jim Meritt with whom I keep in very close touch.

### **What is your current World List?**

My current World List is 7529.

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

Current ABA list is 787.

### **What is your current NJ List?**

NJ list is 422.

### **Do you keep an annual list? Any state lists?**

I usually keep an annual NJ list: highest was 326 but I don't remember the year.

### **It was rumored that your World List was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest at one time?**

I did have the highest World List one year, but don't remember when.

### **At what stage did you realize that your hobby had become an obsession?**

I don't consider my birding an obsession, just a hobby I truly enjoy. Regrettably, as I get older, its importance fades.

### **We know that you have birded all over the world. What has been your most memorable trip?**

I expect my most memorable birding trip was a five week tour with Ted Parker. Covering the best birding areas in Peru with a legendary leader made it outstanding.

### **How well did you know Phoebe Snetsinger?**

We went on many trips together along with Norm Chesterfield, often to South America and to Asia with Ben King. At one time the three of us had similar totals. We would work closely together and it was a blow when I heard about her accident. We were never competitive but friendly, helping each other. She was quite a lady, very diligent. We went on trips together for about 20 years. The last time I saw her was in northwest Peru and she was on a trip there as well – that was shortly before she passed away, in Nov 1999.

## 20 Questions and Then Some ...cont'd

### Which 3 of the overseas birding destinations would you recommend and why?

Recommending overseas birding destinations has to include such factors as the cost of the trip, the experience of the birder, physical requirements for the participants and time requirements.

1. The Galapagos Islands is a great trip for the opportunity to get very close to the birds, to see many birds and reptiles seen nowhere else, for the pleasant boat travel and for relatively short time and expense involved.

2. Madagascar is an incomparable birding experience. A very high percentage of the birds there are endemic, found nowhere else in the world. Five endemic FAMILIES as I recall and many animals similarly endemic...lemurs, chameleons and vegetation too. Many are also very rare. Be sure your leader is well experienced. Bret Whitney, a Field Guides leader, discovered and showed us a new species on one trip.....the Cryptic Warbler, *Cryptosylvicola randriansoloi* (last entry on page 444 of Clements Checklist).

3. Antarctica is traveling and birding in luxury. Food, comfort and leadership are usually readily available. Be sure your itinerary includes South Georgia (mine did not!). It is expensive, sometimes long, but the birding for penguins, petrels, albatrosses, skuas, cormorants is incomparable and there are seals and whales too. Mountains and icebergs make it a very scenic trip also.

### Which birding experiences stand out the most in your memory?

Two birding experiences stand out in my memory: 1. The search, even including the use of a helicopter, to find a Brown Kiwi on Stewart Island, New Zealand, and 2. the 3a.m. chase to meet our expert guide to find the very rare Kagu on New Caledonia, and having this very unusual bird responding closely and vigorously to a recording of its voice.

### What is the rarest bird you have seen?

It's difficult to say which is the rarest of the rare birds I've been privileged to see. A standout trip, my last tour to Peru, covered the northwest part of the country and it yielded a bird I don't think Ted Parker ever got to see: the extremely rare White-winged Guan.

### Which bird that you have not seen, would you most like to see?

I would have to say that there are 2 families of birds that I would most like to see, both being amongst the hardest to add to ones list - the Rockfowls (*Picathartidae*) and the Hypocolius (*Hypocoliidae*). There are only 2 species of Rockfowl, the Gray-necked Rockfowl and the White-necked Rockfowl found in central Africa. I have looked for them in Gabon, but they are very difficult to come across. The Hypocolius is the only species in its family. It is found in the Middle East in generally inaccessible (political) areas.

### What is your favorite family of birds?

The Pheasant family (*Phasianidae*) is something special. When I had my game farm we had 11 species including Swinhoe's and Mikado. We were very successful in getting them to reproduce. I saw both of these very rare endemics in Taiwan. At one time there were less than 200 Swinhoe's in the wild.

### Who has been your most frequent birding companion in New Jersey?

Jim Meritt, his health permitting, has been my most frequent birding partner in New Jersey and occasionally out of state. Before Jim Akers' untimely death, he was my most frequent companion.

### What are your favorite NJ birding spots?

My favorite birding spots in New Jersey are Forsythe (Brigantine) Refuge, Belleplain State Forest, Cape May, Dividing Creek, Barnegat Light and sometimes Lakes Bay, McNamara, and Cape May and Atlantic County Parks.



Lemur

## 20 Questions and Then Some ...cont'd

### **Has Forsythe NWR aka Brigantine changed over the years?**

Forsythe Refuge has not changed much. Some new paths have been developed which may be good but are too long for me. The new dikes in the West Pool probably divided the water and the vegetation to provide more diversification. Unfortunately, hunting for geese, ducks and deer goes on regardless of necessity or effect on wildlife, which the "refuge" is supposed to attract.

### **Your sons, Mike and Chris were on the winning DVOC World Series team in 1985. What are they up to now?**

Our sons, Mike and Jim/Chris both graduated from St. Augustine Prep, in Richland NJ and both won partial academic scholarships to Villanova University from which they both graduated with high grades. Before they left this area and were constrained by work hours, we took several family trips together. Bonaventure Island, Gaspé Peninsular, Canada; Trinidad & Tobago; Kenya & briefly into Tanzania; the Galapagos Islands; Guatemala; Colombia. They are still actively birding, but with both of them out West, Mike and his wife Lee, also a birder, live in California; and Chris was also in CA for several years, then moved to Wyoming and now has just settled in southern Washington state so we don't get to see them as often as we would like. Mike is still very actively photographing. He had a few field days with the owls in Minnesota this past winter, and the Redwing and McKay's Bunting in Washington State. You can see his photos on his website .....[www.avesphoto.com](http://www.avesphoto.com)

Chris is now on the Brunton staff, travels extensively around the country to shows, festivals and exhibitions. Both are leaders on pelagic trips and Chris is a naturalist leader on Antarctica trips with Cheeseman's Ecological Safaris. Both boys were in the Boy Scouts: Mike, Eagle, Chris Life.

### **How did you get your sons into birding?**

I think the birding must be contagious, if not hereditary. I'm very pleased, of course.

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

I would advise any new birder to keep records, use good field guide books and photos. A little family competition and helpful companionship are good. Use camera and tape when appropriate.

### **Do you have any advice to give the DVOC?**

I think the DVOC is doing fine. I wish members would share information more readily and speedily.

### **Is the Ivory-billed Woodpecker on your ABA list? In your wildest dreams, did you ever expect that this species would be re-discovered?**

No it is not, and I never saw it in Cuba either. Yes, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker rediscovery was most remarkable. I hope the bird has a mate.

### **What was the last life bird you chased, and where?**

No life birds chased recently. Cackling Goose at the Brigantine refuge was my last lifer; not chased!

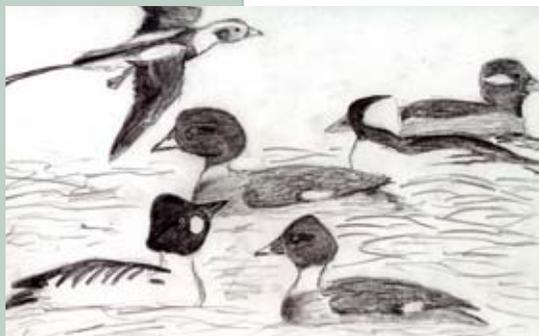
## Goldeneye Identification by Nikolas K. Haass

“See reflections on the water...” – no, I am not going to discuss Tina Turner’s/Bono’s title song to the 1995 James Bond movie “Goldeneye”, but rather the similarities and differences of female Common and Barrow’s Goldeneyes.

Barrow’s Goldeneye is a rare visitor to our region and is usually found in flocks of Common Goldeneyes, which are fairly common to common winter residents, as well as spring and fall migrants. New Jersey has 15 accepted records of Barrow’s Goldeneye as of December 31, 2004 (Jennifer Hanson, pers. comm.). Actually, the list of accepted records is longer than the number 15 would indicate since records of birds that were judged to have returned in subsequent years are not numbered as separate records. Pennsylvania has 24 accepted records, eight of which have been on the Delaware River between Bucks and Northampton counties since 1996 (Nick Pulcinella, pers. comm.).

The best place in the DVOC area to see Goldeneyes is New Jersey’s North Shore, though the rough waters there in winter make finding a Barrow’s Goldeneye in a flock of a hundred Common Goldeneyes a real challenge. The identification of adult males is straight forward, since the males of both species show quite different plumage patterns. Male Barrow’s Goldeneyes have a large white crescent in front of the eye and their upperparts appear darker due to a row of white spots instead of the Common Goldeneye’s white scapular streak. Also, the dark color of the Barrow’s Goldeneye’s back extends forward to form a vertical bar between breast and sides. However, molting males and – even more – hybrids can cause problems. First winter and molting male Common Goldeneyes sometimes show a white crescent instead of the oval spot in front of the eye. This crescent never extends above eye level, whereas the Barrow’s Goldeneye’s crescent does. Hybrids are a topic which goes beyond the purpose of this article. Here I will focus on the identification of females.

It seems to be basic knowledge that the main field mark is the amount of yellow at the bill. Unfortunately, this is a quite variable character. Adult Barrow’s Goldeneyes of the American population usually show a lot of yellow (then they are quite obvious). However, younger females show as little yellow as Common Goldeneyes. Adult female Barrow’s Goldeneyes of the Icelandic population has the same bicolored bill pattern as Common Goldeneye! On the other hand, Common Goldeneyes are sometimes marked with a yellow bill tag for research reasons, which can make them look superficially similar to a Barrow’s Goldeneye! Thus, it is always good to look at different features of the bird.



The overall appearance of the Goldeneyes is very similar, but the head shape is very different: the Barrow’s Goldeneye’s forehead is steeper and the crown is conspicuously flatter (but beware of the flatter appearing crowns of wet Common Goldeneyes immediately after diving). Most striking is the conspicuous mane-like crest at the nape, which especially shows when the bird shakes its head. Thus, a Barrow’s Goldeneye shows a more elongated head shape, whereas the Common Goldeneye shows a more triangular head shape – due to the peak in the center of the crown and a less prominent mane. Usually, Barrow’s Goldeneyes are found in flocks of Common Goldeneyes. In this case the coloration of the head plumage can also be of important help: it is obviously darker brown than in Common Goldeneyes. Next to the larger amount of yellow at the bill, the bill shape is different – it is obviously stubbier than in Common Goldeneye.

Figure legends:

Fig. 1: Pencil drawing of a scene at Conaskonk, Raritan Bay, February, 2004. Female Barrow’s Goldeneye in the center of a flying Long-tailed Duck, a pair of Buffleheads and a displaying pair of Common Goldeneyes. Note especially the differences in head and bill pattern.



Fig. 2: Gouache of a scene at Sandy Hook, January, 2005. Female Barrow’s Goldeneye with a displaying pair of Common Goldeneyes. Besides structural differences, note the coloration of the heads.

# Where to Search for an Ivory-billed Woodpecker

by Jeff Holt

The recent rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) in eastern Arkansas justifiably created a minor tsunami in the birding community. Historically, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker was considered “uncommon but widespread across lowland primary forest of the southeastern United States until midway through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.” (Fitzpatrick, 2005)

For most birders, the opportunity to explore the Cache River and White River National Wildlife Refuges for this majestic species is likely little more than a dream. Thus, I began to ponder the question, where else might the Lord God bird be found? My examination of historical records finds that distribution of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker was farther north than many birders may realize.

North of the Arkansas, in the Ozarks of Missouri, Johnson Neff notes that it “was my father’s good fortune years ago to see an Ivory-billed Woodpecker close to the location of our orchards.” (Neff, 1923) Other ornithologists have also concluded that “southern Missouri and Illinois as the northwestern extension of its former range.” (Parmalee, 1958) A discovery in 1956 of tarsometatarsal bone at a Native American archaeological site in Madison County, Illinois extends the northern range to an area east of the city of St. Louis.

The discovery of an additional metatarsal bone excavated from a site in south-central Ohio in the 1940s now pushes the Ivory-billed Woodpecker range eastward. This discovery dates from the fifteenth or sixteenth century. “The Ivory-billed Woodpecker was found years ago in Franklin County, Indiana, adjacent to the southwestern corner of Ohio, and on this basis it has been carried in the hypothetical list of birds for the latter state, on the logical assumption that formerly it must have occurred there. There have been no positive records for it, however, it appears to me that this (discovery) constitutes a definite record for the former occurrence of this bird in Ohio. It is true that the Ivory-billed was considered of some value by the Indians, who without question carried the heads and bills about, using them in medicine bundles and in other ways. It seems hardly probable, however, that the foot (which was of no particular interest) would have been taken to a locality distant from where the bird was killed.” (Wetmore, 1943)

In 1964, another burial site was excavated near Wheeling, West Virginia, where two lower bill sections of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker were found.

However, unlike the discoveries above, it was “impossible to ascertain whether these bones were from a bird taken locally, or represent a trade artifact; the early range of this species probably included sections of West Virginia although there are apparently no existing specimens or other authenticated records from this region.” (Parmalee, 1967)

Given the above evidence, one begins to wonder, could an Ivory-billed have occurred in the Delaware Valley?

In 1748, a Swedish botanist, Peter Kalm, traveled to North America where he stayed, for three years, in and around Philadelphia. Upon his return to Sweden, he published a three volume account of his travels. This was translated into English and published in London in 1770-1771 under the title *Travels into North America*. Unlike the work of more notable pioneer American ornithologists, Kalm’s work “is merely a desultory account of the different birds he observed during his sojourn, principally in the country about Philadelphia, scattered through the text of the volumes, coupled with observations borrowed from the more intelligent Swedish and English residents. The greater number of species seems altogether to have escaped his notice, probably because the plant rather than the bird was in his mind’s eye. Kalm’s observations have little scientific value, but they possess a certain freshness that commends them to every lover of the wayside.” (Trotter, 1903)

On March 11, 1749, at Raccoon, New Jersey, Kalm compiled a list of woodpeckers. “In this review of the woodpeckers by Kalm the most notable fact, which must be taken *cum grano salus*, is the occurrence of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, as far north as the Delaware Valley. Possibly the bird had been observed as a straggler (for Kalm speaks of its being only an occasional visitor) on the borders of the dense cedar swamps and pine forests of South Jersey, and this region we know is decidedly Carolinian in its faunal and floral features. At that time also a more or less unbroken woodland must have extended far up along the shores of the Delaware, quite to the site of the old Swedish village of Raccoon. But this is idle speculation, for the bird has never been authentically reported from Pennsylvania or New Jersey.” (Trotter, 1903)

Is it idle speculation? If after over a half century a bird thought to be extinct can rise from the grave, should Kalm’s observations be summarily

*Continued next page*

## Where to Search for an Ivory-billed Woodpecker...cont'd

dismissed? For myself, the next time I visit the wildlife management areas of southern New Jersey, I'll be searching for...

### Literature Cited

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## Getting Started With Digiscoping: Basic Settings

By Sandra Keller

I enjoy digiscoping, but am not one to change settings on my camera much. I have found settings that work for me in most situations and I don't really adjust them anymore. This short write-up will give those new to digiscoping, or those who haven't quite found the right settings, a starting point for those somewhat bewildering menu choices.

I have a Nikon Coolpix 4500 – so these options pertain to this particular camera. Most mid-range cameras should have all of these options; however, the actual option name used might be different. I don't know why some of these options work better for me than others, but the whole point of this short article is just to give you a starting point for setting your camera. It's up to you whether you experiment from there or not.

First, some of my best shots have actually been on auto mode with me handholding the camera against my scope's eyepiece. Usually, though, an adaptor to hold the camera firmly against the eyepiece is your best bet. How to choose an adaptor is beyond the scope of this article however. After I have taken a few shots on auto mode (just in case the bird flies!), I then attach my adaptor and hook the adaptor up to the eyepiece. Now for the settings:

**Mode: Aperture Priority** – Getting the most light is critical for digiscoping. Much is lost through the scope, so set the aperture wide open. The camera will now set the shutter-speed automatically.

**ISO Speed:** I use 200 most of the time. This is a good overall value, but if needed this is the one setting I do adjust. It's simple to adjust, no need to enter the camera's menu structure, just a button on the camera body itself. I use 400 for really low light and 100 for really bright sunny days.

**Focus Mode: Macro** – as opposed to infinity. I went back and forth on these for a bit, but have come to the conclusion that macro is the best. This setting will give a sharper image in some cases. I don't have a reason.

**Focusing Options:** Auto Focus Area Mode – set to "Manual".

**Auto Focus Mode:** Single auto focus. Just works better than "Continuous" mode.

**Focus Confirmation:** I now leave this off.

**Metering: Center-weighted:** This mode will concentrate on the center of the image – hopefully the bird – plus give consideration to the surrounding scenery. I have tried using just spot-metering but found the image was sometimes not exposed correctly on the more distant birds I was trying to photograph.



*Bald Eagles-  
aperture mode*  
© S. Keller



*Bald Eagles-  
automatic mode*  
© S. Keller



Barred Owl- aperture  
mode w/o adapter  
© S. Keller

## Getting Started With Digiscoping...cont'd

**Image Quality:** I use a setting of one below the highest quality. "Fine" on my camera. This is the best setting for speed and file size considerations.

**Image Size:** 1600 x 1200 works for me.

**Digital Telephoto:** turn it off so you don't accidentally zoom past the optical telephoto.

I just leave settings like Best Shot Selector, Image Adjustment, White Balance, etc, set to the factory defaults.

## 2005 DVOC Banquet

Michael Male and Judy Fieth are our speakers for this year's banquet. Michael and Judy have worked together on natural history films since 1980 when they met in New York City while working as freelance crew on TV documentaries and commercials. They started filming birds for a "video guide" back when VCRs were first making an appearance. Michael and Judy concentrated on warblers for the first ten years, filming a few here and there between jobs that paid the rent. By 1995, they had all of the eastern species and were able to finish their first video guide, "Watching Warblers". The success of "Watching Warblers" allowed Michael and Judy to devote more time to making bird tapes. It took only three years to film "Watching Waders" and another three years to film *both* "Watching Sparrows" and "Watching Warblers West".

Michael and Judy presented a program for DVOC last winter and, based on everything I heard that night, everyone really enjoyed it. Check out their website for more information on their excellent video guides at [www.birdfilms.com/index.html](http://www.birdfilms.com/index.html)

Specifics about the banquet:

Date: November 17

Location:

Penn's Landing Caterers  
Sheet Metal Worker's Hall  
1301 Columbus Boulevard  
Philadelphia, PA 19147

Time:

Cocktails – 6:00 p.m. (cash bar with cheese and crackers)  
Dinner – 7:00 p.m.

Website: [www.pennslandincaterers.com](http://www.pennslandincaterers.com)

Menu:

Choice of:  
Sirloin of Beef au Jus  
Sweet Thai Chili Glazed Salmon  
Vegetarian Puff Pastry filled with mushrooms and peppers

Wild Rice  
Broccoli  
Rolls  
Coffee, tea  
Sherbet

Cost: \$38.50 Per Person (includes 7% tax and all gratuities)

Parking: Free

Directions: Delaware River waterfront just south of where Washington Avenue intersects Columbus Boulevard.

## *Experiences and Impressions: A First Birding Visit to the Texas Coast & Rio Grande Valley* by Connie Goldman

In the phase of birding I find myself in, life is exciting! Having many of the basic birding lessons behind me, I am racking up fun time in the field, becoming more skilled at identification of local birds. Yet, I only recently began exploring the wider world of North American birds, so I'm still enough of a novice to be able to take birding trips that offer life sightings on a daily basis. Such was the case during my recent first trip to the Texas Rio Grande Valley. Being among those birders for whom each life sighting is a cause for celebration, accruing 35 of them over nine days made for a fairly continuous jubilation! Add to that the wonder of seeing and exploring new landscapes and habitats where distant birds thrive. Throw in the fraternal networking experiences with birders met along the way. All these taken together made for an unforgettable birding experience.

Following routes known well to birders all over the world, my companions and I began our stay in Texas with a day in Corpus Christie. Expecting Texas to be hot, I was happily surprised by the winds in this city that temper heat and make for pleasant days in early spring. My exposure to Texas birds came immediately and in the form of a grand spectacle! As we made our first official stop, looking out over Oso Bay, we were awestruck by the throngs of birds gathered there. Beach after beach was teeming with sandpipers, plovers, godwits. Terns, gulls, herons and egrets flew in all directions. Avocets, pelicans and ducks made appearances. The whistling ducks were a cheerful treat in this area, seen waddling around golf courses and lawns adjacent to the shore. They were fun lifers, being birds I had seen illustrated so often and knew I'd recognize right away. We would see the Black-bellied Whistling Duck many times as we traveled through the valley, and had chances to study them both perched and in flight.

The extravagance of our bay show was complimented by experiences at two additional gems of the coastal area. The picturesque marsh of Port Aransas Birding Center held a wide variety of water birds in separate pools, viewable from observation decks that allow looks over the phragmites. We shared our scopes there with a family of young boys, and together with them, I got a life look at a spinning Wilson's Phalarope. Spoonbills flying in, lit up pink in the evening sun, were magical! Tiny Paradise Pond hides a wonderful mangrove habitat protected by, of all things, a stockade fence. My life look at a pair of Least Grebes there was obtained while watching them build their delicate floating nest under a shady overhang. Migrating warblers flitted and teased us with brief looks from the willows surrounding the pond.

By the time we headed south on day two, we had already seen 130 species of birds! Most of these first trip birds were not skulking, nor difficult to find; Texas was offering them for the taking by anyone with the good fortune to be there to see. I was in my glory.

Driving south down well-known Route #77, the "chicken farm loop" took us through different habitat. Here I began to appreciate the 'bigness' of Texas for myself. Wide open expanses of flat fields go on as far as the eye can see. Skies are never-ending. The horizon seems half a world away. Cactus blooms in yellow or orange. And hawks abound. Our raptor sightings began to accrue. Caracaras, Harris's and Swainson's Hawks flew across our path or afforded us looks from pull-offs as they circled overhead. The fiercely beautiful appearance of the White-tailed Kite struck me as it stared from a wire perch; it will remain one of my favorite birds of the trip. A talon-vs.-talon skirmish between a Swainson's and two young Harris's Hawks fighting over a snake was an awesome scenario played out for us at Laguna Atascosa, as we drove the auto loop in this amazingly vast refuge. Graceful Scissor-tailed Flycatchers balanced on every wire along the road, providing exciting first looks and then becoming common traveling companions as we made our way through the valley.

Further south and west, near Brownsville, Texas it is hot; and without that coastal wind, even more tropical. Fields full of sunflowers are common, and a different crop of specialty birds began to be more numerous here. The Plain Chachalaca and Green Jay were sighted almost daily, the former with its characteristic squawking and the latter with its vibrant display of color. The Great Kiskadee seemed always to be saying "hip hooray, hip hip hooray," applauding us in our bird finding efforts. Now I became familiar with the challenges of myiarchus flycatcher I.D., as Ash-throated, Dusky-capped and Brown-crested all tried to look like each other. That's a challenge that will take me at least another Texas trip to fully meet! Olive Sparrow, Lesser Goldfinch and Buff-bellied Hummingbird were easier life birds to identify and list as we walked palm

## *Experiences and Impressions...cont'd*

trails and thickets in places like Sabal Palm and Frontera Audubon. A unique tick on this part of our trip was a fantastic look at Crimson Collared-Grosbeak, the rarity visiting Frontera from Mexico. As we watched this handsome maroon bird quietly eating fruit, I felt especially privileged to see it, knowing that many others with much more birding experience than I have, had only recently gotten looks.

We continued to follow the valley west and planted ourselves in McAllen for a few days before heading north again. Santa Ana offered us up Clay-colored Robin and White-faced Ibis in its Pintail Lake. Birding was quiet on our first trip through, but great groupings of trees hung with Spanish moss gave us cathedral-like natural rooms to walk through and wonder at. Our serenity revved to excitement again when a Hook-billed Kite flew over as we exited, giving us another memorable Texas raptor sighting.

Bentsen State Park is a place of tradition for many birders, who had talked of camping and birding experiences there. Changed now, due to restrictions on auto traffic and discontinuation of in-park camping, I knew I was seeing a different place from that of birders of earlier days. But our target species there did not disappoint. Elf Owls were seen from the old campground area snag at dusk, as promised; one coming out of the lower hole and one going into the upper hole, as the parents exchanged at the nest right on cue. At Anzalduas County Park, another terrific local birding spot, two birders from California directed us to the Grey Hawk on a nest. We birded with them for a while among the low trees, tracking down our Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and Tropical Parula before moving on.

A day of driving west toward Salineno and Falcon Dam was the hottest and driest. Fields of low crops, dry, expansive ranches of desert and brush, cactus and mesquite were now the predominant landscape. It's the perfect habitat for Roadrunner, a bird we watched during a wonderful feeding frenzy, as it ran in circles and snapped insects out of the air. Here we saw the Rio Grande River itself, so narrow in parts that it appeared stream-like. We joked about starting Mexico bird lists, ticking off shorebirds that foraged on the opposite side! A wonderfully cooperative Tamaulipas Crow was encountered perched on the roadside near Santa Margarita Ranch. Ringed Kingfisher appeared along the water on the approach road to Falcon Dam. Altimara Orioles were sought and found with the help of camping birders at Falcon Dam State Park; though farther west, some now prefer this alternative to Bensten's current day parking-lot-like setting for campers. Vermilion Flycatcher, elusive until now, appeared on the fence into the state park. Its red showed like cherry velvet, so much better in life than any illustration.

A birding phenomenon that struck me on this trip is the network formed by fellow birders individually visiting an area. We encountered the same individuals or small groups of birders numerous times and became familiar faces to each other. We shared information, hotspot tips, and I.D. points, and birded together at times. On a tip from our new-found California friends, we hopped over to Lomita Mission and gained the owner's permission to search the property adjacent to the Riverside Club restaurant there. It seemed that a pump of some sort on the property had been "tooting" and a Ferruginous Pygmy Owl had taken up residence, calling back to it! We located the owl, for a memorable sighting that would likely have been missed if not for the shared information. Other birders led us to the orioles; we gave information about plover I.D. to two brothers on a birding vacation together; we were led to the Grey Hawk nest. Together in Texas we birders formed a temporary community with common goals and values; we offered each other help and friendship, then all went our separate ways back home again. This supportive approach that pervades this interest of ours no matter where birders are found, makes birding all the more enjoyable.

On the way back north to end our trip, we decided to try Laguna Atascosa once more to look for the Aplomado Falcon, a bird none of us had seen yet. Official countability of this re-introduced species aside, we counted it a desired bird and agreed it was worth going for. We drove the auto loop that took us by vast thorn forest and coastal prairie lands for a second time, searching skies and likely perches for falcons. After a lengthy search on a day growing hotter and hotter, we saw a very distant bird perched in a snag, but were unable to I.D. it. A dirt maintenance road off the auto loop enticed us to get closer. We drove along the partially water-filled resaca. We stopped, repeatedly getting out putting scopes on the perched bird. Still distant, we thought we might be seeing the buffy lower abdomen and undertail from the side, but head and upper body was partially obstructed by a branch; we just couldn't get an angle to confirm definite field marks, and the bird wasn't moving to help us. And then, a wonderful thing happened; an Aplomado Falcon flew down the resaca, hunting! Our bird came off its perch to join in and was confirmed as an Aplomado also. As the two flew

*Continued next page*

## *Experiences and Impressions...cont'd*

swiftly by, a flock of about 70 Gull-billed Terns flushed up out of the shallow wet basin, creating a spectacle in the sky over the oxbow. We had our falcon and a perfectly wonderful wild Rio Grande scene to end our adventure in Texas.

South Texas is known world-wide among birders. It's a place where all committed, passionate birders go, given the opportunity. It offers specialty birds in great numbers, frequent Mexican rarities, and diverse species and habitat. It takes more than one visit to see it all. I now count myself among those who have gotten a taste of the surprising birdlife held within its windy coast, humid tropics and dry desert. I look forward to returning for more surprises.

### *Arctic Tern at Palmyra* by Frank Windfelder

As part of my ongoing Bird Census at Palmyra Cove Nature Park, I visited the site on May 25th, 2005. The weather had been dreary during the past several days, and there was intermittent rain. I knew that there would be a low tide in the cove and perhaps I could add some new birds for the census.



*Arctic Tern*  
© N. Murphy

Armed with rain gear and an umbrella, I set out for the cove, where several Forster's Terns were sitting on a log. Through my Leica spotting scope, I noticed an unusual tern in the group. I thought at first I had found the first Palmyra record for Common Tern, but I could not rule out Arctic Tern. Tom Bailey has kept a site list for years, so I immediately called him on his cell phone to give him the news.

As I continued to study the bird, I noticed that it had extremely short red legs and a short and relatively thin bill. The bill was completely red. By this time, I began to realize that I was looking at an Arctic Tern.

It was incredibly lucky that the bird began flying around, occasionally hovering to feed. I could now see that the wings were thin. The upper wings were concolor, somewhat darker than the chalk-white wings of the Forster's, but without the dark wedge usually shown by Common Tern.

Finally, I saw that the underwing had the characteristic thin dark trailing edge to the primaries. At one point, it flew overhead, and I could see the translucence in the underwing as well.

I was able to observe the bird for an hour. It alternately perched on the log and flew around. Because it was cloudy, there was no glare and I had great viewing conditions.

I later learned that there had been a fallout of Arctic Terns at several locations in New Jersey, including nearby Petty's Island, Heislerville, and Sandy Hook. I also received a phone call from Jim Zamos, who saw the Arctic tern at the same Palmyra location on the following day.

I was so happy that I had failed to add Common Tern to the Palmyra site list!

### The Hot Spot 4 By Mike Fritz

Visitors to the Wildwoods in New Jersey know that on the boardwalk there are three places called the “The Hot Spots 1-3” and as you would expect, they serve up typical boardwalk junk

food. The Wildwoods are not at all what we think of as a birding hotspot especially in the summer, but there is a place at the southern end of the island that I would call The Hot Spot 4 which offers some incredible birding year round. It’s the 2-Mile Beach Unit of the Cape May National Wildlife Refuge and, although it is technically in Lower Township and not the Wildwoods (same island though), it has been a great birding

spot for many years. Although the 2-Mile Beach Unit has been a refuge for about six years now, it is just starting to get its share of birding attention. As access to this area will only get better in the future, I wanted everyone to be aware of this under-birded spot.

Ironically part of what makes this a good birding spot is the Wildwoods themselves, as the refuge is an oasis of green among a sea of high density shore development. Migrant birds finding themselves there are unable to afford the motel rates and they naturally head for the last large undeveloped place on the island. The island affect further concentrates birds that don’t like to cross open water since all sides have large open tracts to deter crossing. The final reason, and probably the number one thing that makes 2-

mile Beach a hot birding spot is the nice mix of habitats all in close proximity to one another. The refuge has very nice examples of beach/jetty, salt marsh/mudflats, coastal scrub, deciduous woods, open ocean, and tidal ponds all in a neat little user friendly package. The refuge offers good birding year round, so I will break it up by season.

Winter is a great time to bird here and a walk along the beach to the inlet jetty can be very productive. The jetty and nearby waters often have all three species of Scoter, Red-throated and Common Loon, Long-tailed-duck, Great Cormorant, Purple Sandpiper, Bonaparte’s Gull, Gannets and Horned Grebes. If you are lucky

you may find eider, Harlequin Duck, Razorbill and maybe even a species of white-winged gull. The beach/dunes sometimes have Snow Buntings and are a reliable spot for “Ipswich” Savannah Sparrow. There are also plenty of shorebirds and loafing gulls to sort through on a walk out to the jetty which is really just over a mile walk (No, it isn’t quite two miles even if you start in Wildwood Crest!).

The refuge ponds and mudflats along Ocean Drive are also good in winter and often have pintail Gadwall, wigeon (sometimes Eurasian), Green-winged Teal (sometimes “Common” Teal), shoveler, Bufflehead, Hooded and Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Pied-

billed Grebe, American Bittern, Dunlin, both Yellowlegs, Black-bellied Plover and sometimes uncommon winter shorebirds like dowitcher or Western Sandpiper. The woods and brushy areas along the road are also worth a look for uncommon overwintering songbirds like Orange-crowned Warbler, Palm Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow and Tree Swallow. While there in winter, also check out the end of nearby (just across Ocean Drive) Two Mile Landing Road for both species of Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Be sure to scan the fish docks at the base of the toll bridge for rare gulls.

Spring offers even more good birding with a transition from wintering birds to the summer residents, but it’s migration that makes for the most interesting birding at this season. Songbirds and shorebirds are the migrants that use the refuge the most. Shorebirds are best seen along the ponds and tidal mudflats along Ocean Drive as well as on the beach and nearby rock jetty. Songbirds like the wooded edge and thickets and are best seen by walking along the entrance road and along the short trails. Be sure to park in designated spots, though, and not along the entrance road or you may risk a ticket. On good fallout days 20+ species of warblers can be seen here along with many sparrows, vireos, orioles, etc.



Two Mile Beach Sign  
© M. Fritz



Two Mile Marsh  
© M. Fritz



Two Mile Marsh  
© M. Fritz

### *Hot Spot 4....cont'd*

Summer is the least birded time at 2-Mile Beach, but some nice birds breed here and you will find southbound shorebirds in July and August. Some interesting birds that breed here are Piping Plover and American Oystercatcher and possibly Least Tern or Black Skimmer some years. Parts of the refuge beach are closed seasonally for beach nesting birds and migrant shorebirds and those areas will be posted. At present, access to the inlet jetty and southern section of beach is still possible year round by following a path behind the dunes and then following the beach. This southern section is actually US Coast Guard property so obey any posted signs and never trespass. Rules and access change frequently here so read signs carefully as it is well patrolled for security reasons. Willow Flycatcher, a very uncommon breeder in South Jersey, nests in several spots here especially along the back scrubby areas behind the ponds. The salt marsh areas and tidal ponds are also home to Willet, Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrow, Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow (uncommon), Forster's Tern, and sometimes Gadwall or Blue-winged Teal. Gull-billed Tern is often seen feeding here, but is not known to nest on the refuge.

Autumn is the best time to bird in southern New Jersey and 2-Mile Beach is no exception. Fall migration really gets going here in August and keeps going well into December. August and September are often really good for warblers and vireos especially following a cold

front and the same holds true for sparrows in October and November. Birds blown out to sea overnight by westerly winds that make it back to shore will gravitate to the habitat here, and the roadsides and paths (even the dune grass) can be loaded with exhausted birds. A common sight in September and October is a huge swirling flock of Tree Swallows that are feeding on the abundant Bay Berries along the refuge. This can be quite a spectacle and Merlins can often be seen attacking the mass of birds. Other raptors are often seen migrating down the beach front, but Peregrine Falcons are especially numerous here.

Sea duck migration really gets started in October. Huge flocks of southbound scoters, scaup and teal along with loons, gannets, terns, and gulls are passing by just offshore and frequently stop along the beach here. Parasitic Jaegers can often be seen attacking the tern flocks offshore and there is the added bonus of frequent Bottlenose Dolphin sightings close to shore from the summer months through October.

Great birding year round along with its close proximity to so many other nearby "Hot Spots" should put 2-Mile Refuge on everyone's birding itinerary. It is a fairly new refuge and many new trails and infrastructure improvements are in the works so it will only get better as access improves. A partial list of rarities seen there in recent years includes Eared Grebe, Red-necked Grebe, Manx Shearwater, Franklin's Gull, Black-headed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Common Murre, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Cave Swallow, Lark Sparrow, Painted Bunting, and many others. The list of rare birds seen at 2 Mile Refuge continues to grow as the area gets more birding coverage. What will be added next?

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### *Riverwinds* By Jeff Holt

To most Delaware Valley birders, Gloucester County, New Jersey is someplace you pass through on the way to Salem, Cumberland or Cape May Counties. With the possible exception of Glassboro Woods Wildlife Management Area, Gloucester County remains largely ignored. In William Boyle's 492 page opus, *A Guide to Bird Finding in New Jersey*, Gloucester County birding locations consume a grand total of 10 pages and of these, two of the birding spots highlighted straddle adjacent counties. Thus, as a twenty plus year resident of Gloucester County, I offer this glimpse at a relatively new and largely under birded area, easily accessible from Philadelphia.

Located along the Delaware River, the Riverwinds development is in West Deptford. This development was created by the Township in the last ten years from what had previously been largely inaccessible wetlands and old farm fields. This has been both a bad news and good news proposition. The creation of the development has had an adverse effect on bird populations. Thorofare (a section of West Deptford), was the location where the late Ed Manners routinely studied Northern Saw-whet and Long-eared Owls. Unfortunately, the development of Riverwinds has largely destroyed much of the habitat where these species traditionally wintered. The good news is that despite the loss of critical

*Continued next page*

### *Riverwinds...cont'd*

habitat, much was preserved and is now easily accessible.

Riverwinds is located less than a mile from Interstate 295. From I-295 south take exit 21. At the traffic light located at the bottom of the exit ramp, make a right onto Route 44 (Crown Point Road). At the next traffic light, Delaware Street (Wawa on your left), make a left. Follow Delaware Street straight through the next traffic light, crossing Grove Road, onto Riverwinds Drive and into the development.

From I-295 north, take exit 21 and make a left at the bottom of the exit ramp onto Delaware Street. Follow Delaware Street straight through the next traffic light, crossing Grove Road, onto Riverwinds Drive and into the development.

(See DeLorme Page 54, F3. Note that, depending on the edition of the map, the Riverwinds development may not appear.)

Shortly after you enter the development, you will see a sign and parking area on your right for the "Scenic Trail." This loop trail is approximately one mile in length and passes through a diversity of habitat. An unofficial cumulative list maintained by this author currently stands at 130 bird species observed from the trail. Following the trail clockwise from the parking lot, the first area you pass through consists largely of grass fields bordered by deciduous trees. These fields host a variety of sparrow species. White-crowned Sparrow is a winter regular. Lincoln's Sparrow has been recorded during fall migration. This is also an excellent area to witness the spring courtship display of the American Woodcock. In late spring and early summer, Northern Bobwhite can be heard calling, and if you're lucky, you might flush a small covey. The trees that border these fields annually host nesting Baltimore and Orchard Orioles. During spring and summer, it's not unusual to view both species, side by side in the same tree.

After a quarter mile or so, the trail makes a turn to the right. In front of you is a marsh which, depending on drought conditions and tide levels from the adjacent Woodbury Creek, is worth scanning for Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs as well as Spotted, Solitary and Semipalmated Sandpipers. A faint trail branches off the main trail to your left and if you follow it to the end, it allows a glimpse of the Woodbury Creek. Depending on the season and the tides, a variety of waterfowl is possible in the creek including Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal and

Common Merganser. Marsh Wren has been noted in some years along this trail. In the spring Willow Flycatcher is also possible along this branch trail.

Continuing on the main trail, after another few hundred yards, you enter the wooded section. Shortly after you enter the woods, set back from the trail on your left is small stand of large pine trees. If you scan carefully, you might catch a glimpse of the resident pair of Great Horned Owls who use these trees for their daytime roost. Along this part of the trail, both cuckoo species have been recorded. Hermit Thrush is common in winter while Wood Thrush is the summer resident. Veery is less common and Swainson's Thrush has been observed on a couple of occasions.

About halfway through the wooded section, the main trail makes a ninety degree right turn. (There is a secondary trail to the left which can also be followed to the Woodbury Creek.) A few hundred yards after you make the right turn, you will come upon a small pond on your left. Scan carefully as sometimes a Green Heron can be found feasting on the frogs and toads that inhabit the pond. Further beyond the pond is another marshy area. This spot isn't tidal, so depending on the amount of rain that the area receives, it can consist of ponds deep enough to attract dabbling ducks, mud suitable for shorebirds or it can be bone dry dirt.

Immediately following the frog pond, the trail again turns to the right. It's recommended, particularly during the height of warbler migration in the spring and fall, that you spend a few minutes at this corner scanning the trees and bushes. To date, 16 species of warblers have been recorded along the entire trail (including Tennessee and Connecticut in the fall and Orange-crowned during a CBC), but this corner tends to be the most productive.

Another few hundred yards through grass fields will return you to the parking lot. Upon exiting the parking lot, make a right (the only direction you can go) and follow Riverwinds Drive as it bends to the right towards the Community Center. This section of road is bordered on both sides by white fences and should be scanned for Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier and American Kestrel. Keep an eye out for Bald Eagle; nearby Mantua Creek hosts a nesting pair. Additionally, while to my knowledge Red-shouldered Hawk has not been recorded within the Riverwinds development proper, it is a species that could possibly be seen as it has been recorded in an area located less than a mile away on a number

## *Riverwinds...cont'd*

of occasions. (This road tends to be busy. Please pull as far to the right as possible and engage your flashers, so that people going to/from the Community Center and Golf Course can get by.) Once you reach the Community Center, obvious roads can be followed down to the Delaware River. Directly behind the Community Center is large grass field and small pond. Both are worth a scan as the occasional dabbling or diving duck can be found in the pond and Eastern Meadowlark has been observed in the field.

Before leaving Riverwinds, one additional stop is worth mentioning. Located adjacent to the Tennis Center building is a fairly large fenced in retention pond. Perhaps because of its proximity to the river and by being fenced in, it is largely undisturbed and tends to attract an interesting variety of waterfowl. Bufflehead, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup and Canvasback have all been recorded.

As a trip unto itself or as a short detour on your way to or from more illustrious birding spots, birding Riverwinds can be worthwhile endeavor.

## Conservation

### *World Series of Birding (WSB) Funds for 2005*

The Officers and Council of the DVOC

Each year, DVOC fields a team in New Jersey Audubon's World Series of Birding. The event is an organized "big day" where teams comb the best birding spots in New Jersey in an effort to identify as many species of birds in a 24 hour period as possible. While the event is a competition, its primary focus is to raise funds for a variety of conservation causes. Each team selects the cause they wish to help, and funds are raised through individual pledges made either "per bird" or as a fixed amount.

While some teams are formed to specifically support the same cause each year, DVOC's officers, council, and Conservation Committee discuss and select different local causes each year. The recipients have been quite varied over the years, but the one consistent thread is that the supported projects should support and improve the world of birding in the Delaware Valley.

This year, we are supporting two highly worthwhile causes. The primary project we are supporting is a shorebird stewardship program along the Delaware Bay sponsored by the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ (CWF), an organization dedicated to the protection and recovery of endangered species in New Jersey and affiliated with the state's Endangered and Non-game Species Program. Our target goal for this project is \$5,000, and CWF has located matching funds of up to \$4,000.

The shorebird project will provide stewards at the primary shorebird viewing areas in an effort to protect Red Knots and other shorebirds dependent upon the annual Horseshoe Crab breeding cycle, as

well seek to educate those coming to view the birds. The annual springtime shorebird phenomenon is well known to the members of the club, and is now imperiled by over harvesting of the crabs. This spectacle has been enjoyed by most of us in the past. Should it disappear, it would be both an enormous ecological and personal loss.

The secondary cause we are supporting is a grassland bird survey by National Biodiversity Parks, Inc. at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station in New Jersey. The actual survey work has been completed, and it is now time for the organization to produce a detailed written report summarizing their field work. DVOC provided \$250 as a stipend to aid the completion of this written report.

Grassland species are under increasing pressure throughout our area. Habitat loss and changes in farming practices have drastically reduced their numbers. Lakehurst Naval Air Station provides some of the best and most extensive grassland habitat around, and supports the largest populations in the region of Upland Sandpiper and Grasshopper Sparrow. The survey work and final report will document the importance of this location, and is crucial in gaining the cooperation of the U.S. Navy in future consideration of the birds' welfare.

This year, the Nikon/DVOC Lagerhead Shrikes found 222 species on the big day, enough to take first place. Many members have already pledged towards our causes, but we are still short of reaching our goal. In addition to the disappointment of providing less funding towards the conservation of the Red Knot and other shorebirds, it would especially be a shame to lose out on the matching funds currently available. We are asking for your help in meeting our goal, and hope you will support these worthwhile causes. Thank you for your generosity.

### *Habitat for Upland Sandpiper in New Jersey*

by JoAnn Raine

The large military bases in the Eastern United States often constitute the largest unbroken wild places. They are jewels of unbroken habitat, especially when connected to state forest reserves. They can provide prime breeding grounds for endangered species. Lakehurst Naval Base, located in Ocean County NJ, contains 7,500 acres of varied habitat including 2,500 acres of grasslands. Threatened grassland birds, breeding annually on the base, are: Upland Sandpiper, Grasshopper Sparrow, Horned Lark, Eastern Meadowlark and American Kestrel. The grasslands are part of, or adjacent to, various navy training and operational areas. The approximately 1.4 million acre barrens is the largest semi-wilderness area left in the Mid-Atlantic States and the naval base is part of this ecosystem.

In 1910 Dr. Witmer Stone wrote that the boundary of the coastal plain in NJ and the Piedmont “marks a great change in plant life”. He identified over 1,300 species of plants in the outer and inner coastal plain. Dr. Stone in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century reported 565 species in the Pine Barrens NJ. Dr. Jack McCormick estimated thirty years ago that there are 800 plant species in the Pine Barrens.

Upland floral diversity and community structure are often influenced by the fire cycle which may be evident at the naval base. The natural succession of the barrens where fire has been limited causes the pine tree species to be shaded out by the shade tolerant oak species. This fire related succession is due to the fact that pine seedlings cannot establish themselves in thick organic litter, but such conditions are ideal for oak seedlings. Thus in the absence of fire, with subsequent litter build up, deciduous saplings will eventually grow to shade out the pine trees causing forest succession. Inversely, frequent fires favor pine seedlings by “ashing” the litter which benefits germination of pine seeds.

This grassland like habitat quickly succeeds into secondary forest growth, shading out most of the grasses. Temporary Pine Barrens' grasslands of pre-human habitation supported the bird species of interest in this article. Fires in different places, in different years, subsequently provided at least some

grassland habitat in the barrens during any given time. Populations of grassland birds moved from suitable area to suitable area. Open grasslands, as exist on the base now, without charred and dead standing trees, may never have existed in the barrens in the past. Grasslands have been artificially produced by tree removal/grubbing to necessitate navy operations and meet runway safety regulations. There has been periodic mowing and controlled burning as part of the natural asset management program. The grasslands on the naval base are therefore a managed system.

Since the Pine Barrens now has various anthropogenic fire suppressing methods and therefore less grasslands than in the past, individual populations of grasslands birds displaced from the Lakehurst Base would likely not find suitable breeding areas in NJ. Preserved properties such as wildlife management areas and state and local parks are open to the general public and therefore support multiple use. Public access ultimately leads to the local demise of many species of plants and animals that are susceptible to vehicular traffic, human visitation, legal hunting and illegal collecting. Loss of local populations and meta-populations lead to limited gene flow between isolated populations and eventually to species extinction. The created grasslands fill the ecological niche that has become a rare community type. Suburban encroachment on the barrens, habitat destruction, human fire fighting efforts, fire break roads and increased acreage of fire-suppressing cranberry farms typify the surrounding forest. The population size of some of these species within these complex communities is unequalled anywhere else in the state. The habitat stability caused by Federal intervention and grassland management makes the base biologically irreplaceable.

The DVOIC has contributed to the National Biodiversity Parks, Inc (NBP) this year from its conservation fund. NBP does the breeding bird count on the naval base grasslands property by using volunteer birders to accumulate data via a controlled point survey.

*Material for this article was taken from unpublished writings of Mr. Fred Virrazzi who is director of the National Biodiversity Parks Inc (NBP). NBP's web site is located at <http://www.nationalbiodiversityparks.org/>.*

# The Navy Lakehurst Bluebirds

by John Joyce, Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst

Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, more abruptly known as Navy Lakehurst, serves as a research facility for carrier aircraft launch and recovery equipment. It also serves as a research facility for the production of smaller flyers: Eastern Bluebirds.

The installation occupies 7,430 acres within the million-acre Pinelands National Reserve in southern and central New Jersey. Our 4,100 acres of forest and 1,700 acres of grasslands surround two separate airfield complexes in a landscape that provides excellent habitat for bluebirds. Many of Navy Lakehurst's old fields from the airship era are now scattered with trees and shrubs, adding to already abundant edge habitats.

As Navy Lakehurst's Natural/Cultural Resources Manager, it is my duty to protect and enhance the installation's natural resources. So, in 1990, when a colleague, Bill Hanley, told me about the bluebird nest box program at nearby Collier's Mills Wildlife Management Area, we went to see it. Tom Mulvey, the program manager, showed us around. Convinced that there was room for another activity of this sort at our facility, I took note of what Tom had accomplished, did further research, and then initiated the Navy Lakehurst Eastern Bluebird nest box program in 1991. We started with 21 boxes; today, we have 93.

We typically install the boxes on a pole with its entrance hole facing the nearest cover rather than a particular direction, as some suggest. We want fledglings, which may spend their first hours on the ground, to have the shortest route to a safe harbor. We use standard square-bottom boxes and Peterson-style boxes, which have narrow bottoms designed to lessen the female's nest-building burden and conserve her energy for rearing hatchlings. To access boxes for cleaning, we've tried front, side, and top openings, as well as fold-out bottoms. Top openings are the least efficient.

While the program was intended to benefit bluebirds, other species compete for the same space. Pugnacious Tree Swallows are the second most frequent user of our boxes, often driving off bluebirds. However, we've observed several incidents of unusually aggressive bluebirds evicting established nesting Tree Swallows. House Wrens occasionally make use of a box, particularly when it's placed close to the forest edge. Early in the nesting season, Black-capped Chickadees also will compete for the nesting space.

A team of trained employee volunteers conducts weekly checks during the breeding season, tallying all nesting attempts. They track nest success by species and the number of eggs, hatchlings, and fledglings. They also note predation. Predators include Pine and Rat Snakes, raccoons, and opossums, and bees. Mice have also displaced adult bluebirds on numerous occasions. The volunteers clean the boxes after each nesting.

As the program grew so did the intensity and sophistication of our predator control efforts. At first, we used only hole guards that doubled the entrance's depth to deter avian predators. We installed umbrella-type pole guards on most boxes through the mid 1990s to exclude pole-climbing mammals. Because mice and snakes could still get through the small opening above the pole-guard mounting bracket, we developed a custom-cut cap that fits over the pole and slides down to cover the opening.

Over the past 13 years, a total of 2,804 bluebirds have fledged from Navy Lakehurst boxes. From 1998 to 2001, consecutive fledgling records were set with 251, 278, 323, and 395, with the number of boxes increasing only by five. The bluebird occupancy rate (at least one yearly nesting in a box) has averaged 69 percent of the state's 10-year average from 1991 to 2001 was only 23 percent. In 2002, the bluebird occupancy rate for our 93 boxes was an astounding 83 percent. Our data also show that 897 tree swallows and 299 house wrens fledged.

As bluebird habitat continues to disappear in the east, we at Navy Lakehurst are pleased to know that we are doing our part to help sustain the population of this adaptable little bird.

*For more information, contact John Joyce, Natural/Cultural Resources Manager, Naval Air Engineering Station Lakehurst, Code 872, Route 547, Lakehurst, New Jersey 08733, (732) 323-2911, john.joyce@navy.mil.*

## *2005 World Series of Birding Run: A Tale of Scouting, Sharing, and Chris Rock*

by Paul A. Guris, Team Captain, Nikon/DVOC Lagerhead Shrikes

All top level teams that compete in the World Series of Birding know that scouting is the key to a successful big day. You search, you check, you re-check, and you re-re-check. You note every Hairy Woodpecker, every Cerulean Warbler, every Carolina Wren, and every individual of every other species that has smoked or nearly smoked you in the past. I have done this event for 21 of the 22 years it has existed, and I have built up a storehouse of paranoia that would make Oliver Stone squirm.

Our team consists of myself and club members Mike Fritz, Eric Pilotte, and Bert Filemyr. Mike is also a long time participant and has long shared my belief that some species are simply evil, but only in some years (except for Belted Kingfisher which is always evil). Bert and Eric have only been on our team for two years each, but we have managed to brainwash them into the same state of fear and mistrust of all things feathered. For just one week each year, we trust the avian world of New Jersey about as much as a 2002 Bush administration report on Iraq's nuclear capabilities.

In the long, long ago of the WSB, circa 1980s, scouting was a furtive and solitary endeavor. Teams did not discuss where they went or what they saw. Good finds were meant to be hidden and secret, only to be uttered to your team mates, and then only if they knew the password, secret handshake, and bore the mark of your coven. It was indeed a dark time for new teams and those not experienced in the ways of both northern and southern New Jersey birding.

As time passed, however, some of the teams realized that by sharing their scouting information with other teams, all of the teams would increase their totals. On top of that, it was a great way to give to conservation without having to dig into your wallet. The web of teams willing to swap information grew.

In 2005, we witnessed a new high water mark for sharing. All I can say is thank heavens for the cell phone! Teams called each other regularly. We met in the field. We met in front of the High Point Country Inn. We even scouted together. We swapped sightings, we swapped sites, we swapped strategy, we even swapped long, sultry glances (but that's another, albeit more interesting, story). All in all, it was a vast improvement over the olden days. This sharing also allowed something new to occur; two youth teams broke 200, a feat that would have been unthinkable without this constant flow of information.

From our own team's standpoint, having all our members putting a lot of time in the field was certainly key. Eric and I scouted the whole week up north, with Eric braving the killer attack mouse in the motel. (That's a story for another time, but let's just say that if you need to clear Eric from the room, all you have to do is squeak!) My wife Anita joined us, taking a break from her team logistics duties. Mike managed to jam both scouting and work into the week, leaving sleep as a distant third in the priority list. Having help from the likes of club members Jeff Holt, Connie Goldman, Chuck Hetzel, Karl Lukens, Art McMorris, and Chris Walters was another big boost. Thanks gang! We swapped information with a number of teams, but we would particularly like to thank the Connecticut Audubon, Virginia Ornithological Society, and Cornell teams and, of course, the Nikon Space Coast Coastal Cuckoos youth team.

Finally, we unleashed Bert, who took the organization of scouting information to a new and very Zen level. Think Hairy Krishna, Tai Chi-kadee, Trans-wren-dental Meadowlarktation, and Kestrel Sutra all rolled into one. Then chant "Owa - tagoo - sightick". For those of you both old enough or young enough to remember "Alice's Restaurant", all you have to think of is "27 8x10 color glossies with circles and arrows and a paragraph on the back of each one to be used as evidence against us" ... or in this case for us. Bert actually provided pictures of the best Peregrine perches, Red-headed Woodpecker nest hole, and the Piping Plover enclosure with notations so we could find them faster. Sketches of the location and shape of the American Wigeon at Bivalve were also part of his arsenal. It was awesome!

So we've discussed the scouting, why we felt the need to do so much, how we divided the duties, who else helped us out, and how we organized the information we had. Now it's Friday before "game day". We've prepared as best you can, but when the big day comes we have to be mentally prepared to face a grueling day of sleep deprivation, fast movement, and lightning fast IDs of over 200 species. Just like getting ready for a

## 2005 World Series of Birding...cont'd

final exam, those last hours before midnight are crucial, and require a little something special (and yes, QUITE legal) to give that edge.

So what was our secret preparation this year? It can be summed up in two words; "Chris Rock". The van had a DVD player, and we had several of Chris Rock's standup comedy specials. Oh, yeah. It's tough to be uptight after watching an hour or so of classic Chris. By midnight we were wide awake, loose as a moose, endorphins soaring, and ready to, well, Rock! Boosters were required on the long run from northern Jersey down to Florence, and after nightfall near the end of the day.

Our final tally came to 222 species, enough to once again win the event and bring the cup back home to DVOC once again. For general interest, here are some facts and figures about our day:

- We birded for just under 24 hours.
- Other than a few short naps, we were awake from early Friday morning until very early Sunday morning, or about 44 hours.
- We drove just 490 miles. In the past, when you used to turn your mileage in with your counts, there were teams traveling over 600 miles!
- Our first species for the day was Eastern Screech-Owl at Great Swamp. Our last species was Black Rail at Turkey Point. Mike Fritz heard the Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow even later, but since nobody else heard it (two of us were doing the final list in the van and another didn't pick it up) it didn't make it to the list.

Be sure to check out the PowerPoint presentation that Bert gave to the club. It has maps of our route, results, and even some of his visual scouting aids. It's available on DVOC's web site. To get to the presentation:

- Go to [www.dvoc.org](http://www.dvoc.org)
- Click "World Series of Birding" on the left
- Go to "Reports by Year". Under "2005 Nikon / DVOC Report", click on "Post WSB Presentation - 5/19 DVOC Meeting"

*NOTICE: No birds, animals or participants were harmed in the making of this big day.*

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## A quest or just another boring day in Arizona?

By Adrian Binns

It was the beginning of June and a Slate-throated Redstart had been sighted in Carr Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains over the past few days. By 7am, long after daybreak, we made it into a glade along a dry stream bed surrounded by Douglas Fir and Big-tooth Maple not far off the path to Comfort Springs. By this time of morning, a sizeable crowd had already gathered and other than a few California birders, most were from Arizona. The bird was said to be "running with the redstarts," as in Painted, and we did get a few glimpses of Painteds as they worked their way through the sunlit treetops on the west side of the canyon.



*Red-faced Warbler*  
© A. Binns

Steller's Jays went quietly about their business, brilliant Western Tanagers were noisier, and the sweet whistle songs of Red-faced Warblers were all around us. After an hour or so, we spread out along the wash and everyone had a perfect window just in case our target bird put in an appearance. It was certainly very picturesque, with the exception of a few items of clothing left behind by illegals crossing these mountains, and one wondered if there really was a better place to be.

The calls of flycatchers were very evident and though Greater and Western Pewees and Dusky-caps were seldom seen, a Cordilleran did alight several times right above us.

Spotted Towhees must have been the most numerous or at least the most vocal as there was always one calling. At one point, one came within feet of me as it searched the leaf litter along with a Yellow-eyed Junco. One could follow a Red-faced Warbler as it "made the rounds," picking off insects every so often, and before you knew it, he was back again working the young firs. Isn't this one of our most beautiful birds?

## *A quest or just another boring day in Arizona?*

Other warblers also put in an appearance including: Grace's, a male Olive and a Black-throated Gray but they did not keep returning as the Red-faced did. While all this was going on, the hoarse croaks of ravens could be heard in the distance; an occasional Band-tailed Pigeon flew across the canopy; a Broad-tailed Hummingbird announced his presence with his distinctive wing buzz as he quickly darted down the ravine; a Swainson's Thrush, silent all morning, landed on a log in front of me and walked away. People kept asking, "Did you see the Swainson's?" Obviously it was not a common sight here. A Brown Creeper was visible as it climbed up a pine trunk on the slope before gliding down to the base of the next tree; Black-headed Grosbeaks teased us with brief glimpses as they tried to stay away from Western Tanagers; Bushtits, ever so noisy, worked their way across the glade and three vireos, Plumbeous, Hutton's and Warbling let us know every so often that they also lived here. One of the most astonishing sites was watching three Hepatic Tanagers chase each other continuously at high speed for five minutes.

And there he was again - the Red-faced Warbler. Since this is not a warbler that we get to see in the east, or for that matter one that was easy to see in Arizona in late summer once the breeding season was over, I was truly mesmerized by him. The bird never sat still but flitted about while working his way along twigs, branches and dense foliage, picking off bugs, caterpillars, and insects at his leisure. Life for the two of us was truly good. This all made us forget what we actually came here for, another red, white and gray bird. We never saw the Slate-throated Redstart but that did not matter. As I like to say, "This was just another boring day in Arizona".

Footnote: Sadly, the Slate-throated Redstart was found dead the next morning, apparently a victim of a Cooper's Hawk.

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## *Welcome New Members* Anita Guris, Membership Chair

Welcome New Members January – May 2005

If you believe in the law of averages, then the numbers I present here will show that our club is continuing on the path of "ultra-prolific". In 2004 we had a record number of new members – 34 in all. This year, from January until the end of May, we have already gained 14 new members. Our average remains 3 new members per month.

I would like to congratulate our general membership on spreading the word and bringing friends and family along to DVOC to help increase our numbers. I would also like to encourage you all to bring young birders to DVOC. Youth is our target...and our future. We must continue to mentor our youth birders. This was the focus of the World Series of Birding this year as well, so let's help make it happen. Remember, the reason we are here is to share the passion and encourage the science of birds.

Mary M. Belko for the Rancocas Nature Center

Mary Belko has submitted annual dues for an organization to become part of our membership. This happens to be one of our first NB4NB recipients. Membership is for the NJAS Rancocas Nature Center.

Harry McGarrity

Harry writes: I've been birding for approximately 4 years. My interest in birding started when I became curious about the birds I saw during my frequent hikes (like Pileated Woodpecker). I enjoy birding Ridley Creek State Park and Tyler Arboretum, but have recently moved to Upper Bucks County and have a new area to explore. I often bird Peace Valley Nature Center.

Brian Raicich

Brian is the Director of Environmental Education Center at the Upper Main Line YMCA. He has been a birder from his college years to present. While at Penn State University, he worked with a graduate student on three bird research projects in the field: nesting success of Eastern Towhees in a transitional forest, nest predation in a transition forest, and species diversity in deer managed and unmanaged forest plots. From those projects he learned to appreciate the great diversity of the woodland bird species in central Pennsylvania. His true interest in birding did not occur until the UMLY started to offer environmental education classes. Brian's interest grew as he became more involved with the youth and teens. Brian has birded in southeastern PA sites, New Jersey, Colorado, Montana, New Hampshire, and North Carolina's Outer Banks.

*Continued next page*

## *Welcome New Members...cont'd*

### Debbie Beer

Debbie has been birding for 5 years, mostly on weekends, as she works full-time. She monitors a bluebird trail, and has been doing that for 3 years. She also participates in the Christmas Bird Count at Valley Forge. Debbie went to New England with Adrian in 2003, and to Montauk this past January. She takes many day trips to Bombay Hook, Barnegat, Cape May, Tinicum, Island Beach State Park, etc. Active in VFAS, she serves as Publications Chairperson. Debbie lives in Springfield with her husband and dog, neither of whom are birders! Her life list at 280 and counting.

### Richard Conroy

Richard has been birding since grade school. He grew up in Bergen City, NJ. His sister has degrees in Wildlife Management, and got him interested in birding, along with his dad. Rich was a Wildlife Science major at Cook College/Rutgers University, but ended up with a degree in Journalism. He enjoys birding Fort Washington State Park, Tinicum, and occasionally Peace Valley Park.

### Robert Hynson

Rob grew up in London, England, and started birding at about age 10. He moved to St. Andrews, Scotland, for university, and has just moved to Philadelphia to work for Drexel University as a research biochemist. He also likes to golf.

### Frances Hamilton Oates

Frances is a Fellow and lifetime member of DOS. She is a bird columnist. She started birding as a child in Texas. Now she birds mostly in Chester County and Delaware.

### Shaun W. Kass

Shaun tells us that he is a recent graduate from Temple University's Ambler campus, majoring in Horticulture. He was introduced to birding when he lived in the Kitsan Peninsula of Washington state in 2002. He says he really became a birder this past winter after spending 3 weeks in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. Locally he birds the Pennypack Land Trust 2-3 times per week and birds the Wissahickon weekly.

### Eileen Krause

Eileen started birding more intensely after a trip to Belize about 10 years ago. She has been to Alaska 2 times and says it was "GREAT". Also has traveled to Louisiana with the Littoral Society. Eileen is the newly elected VP and Program Director for the Audubon Wildlife Society in Audubon, NJ. Jean Gutsmuth has been Eileen's mentor, for which she is very appreciative.

### Tim & Rainy Hartley

Tim and Rainy have been birding off and on for 20-25 years, and became more serious birders about 5 years ago.

### Samuel Perloff

Samuel has been birding mostly with his fiancée, Christina Jones, for the last year and a half or so. Samuel writes: We started birding at John Heinz NWR at Tinicum, and it is still one of our favorite places to bird. We have birded many of the hotspots in Philadelphia, Montgomery County, and Bucks County. We love to bird Cape May and are members of CMBO. Samuel's American life list is 226. He tells us that he is eager to learn more about birds and looks forward to DVOC helping him to learn and grow as a birder.

### Joe Delesantro Jr.

Joe says that he has been birding for 45 years. His parents spent many Sundays at Brigantine NWR. Joe writes: In college, I took a course in field ID, and it rekindled my interest. That's when I began a life list. In 1974, I was one of the founding members of the Atlantic Audubon Society, a chapter of NAS. I served as President, Treasurer, and on the Board of Directors until my children came along and I reduced my activity with the chapter. Joe birds mostly in South Jersey. He has participated in the WSB for 12 years.

### Bernard Morris

Bernard says he has birded for over 30 years in PA and elsewhere. He has birded with Bill & Naomi and also Adrian.

## *BIRD FACTS:*

The Bank Swallow is the only species of passerine bird known to range unmodified (without subspecies) through Eurasia and North America.

Phainopeplas are the only North American birds that nest twice in two different regions during the same season. After rearing a brood in the southwest, the birds may move westwards in search of fruit to the coastal range in California, where some subsequently rear a second brood.

While several species (such as Red-breasted Merganser and Peregrine Falcon in a stoop) are known to reach over 100mph in flight, the American Woodcock, at 5 miles per hour, is North America's slowest flying bird.

## *Citizen-Science Based Projects*

Cornell Lab of Ornithology has three very important projects underway. These projects are citizen-science based, which means they only work when everyday people get involved. Take a look at these summaries and contact the Lab if you are interested in becoming involved.

### *When are cavities a good thing?*

When they are home to our favorite birds! For 17 years, participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's The Birdhouse Network (TBN) have been collecting data on more than 40 cavity-nesting species, including chickadees, bluebirds and swallows. During spring and summer, nest boxes are routinely monitored and data collected on number of eggs, successful hatchings, predation and other aspects of breed biology. This information is vital if we are to understand why some populations are declining. We want to see more nesting success! The wildly popular Nest Box Cams will be back in place this year as well, so you can watch bird families from all over the country raise their young, from Barn Owls to Ospreys to bluebirds. To find out more or to sign up for The Birdhouse Network, visit: [www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse), email [birdhouse@cornell.edu](mailto:birdhouse@cornell.edu) or call (800) 843-2473.

### *Studying Forest Birds*

The birds in Forested Landscapes (BFL) project at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is documenting the impact of acid rain and habitat destruction on North American forest birds. Participants choose one or more species that breed in their area (48 states throughout North America) and select one or more study sites. They visit the site twice during the breeding season, look for evidence of breeding and record habitat characteristics. Project materials are available online, plus participants receive a research kit and CD to use in the field for playback. Visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/bfl](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/bfl) to find out more about the project and to sign up to participate. So far, data results from this project have been published as conservation and management guidelines for Scarlet Tanagers and forest thrushes as well as in scientific papers. You can also sign up by calling the Lab of Ornithology toll-free at (800) 843-2473

### *A "golden" Opportunity*

The Golden-winged Warbler is a high priority bird that has drawn much attention as its population status is currently unknown in most of its range. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology initiated the Golden-winged Warbler Atlas Project (GOWAP), engaging volunteer birders and professional biologists to survey known and potential breeding sites to determine the number of birds, population status, habitat and area requirements for Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers and their hybrids. Participants will receive a research kit which includes instructions, data forms, a color poster of Golden-wings, Blue-wings and their hybrids, as well as a CD that will be used in the field for playback and point counts. For information, visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/gowap](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/gowap) or call the Lab at (800) 843-2473

*The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a nonprofit membership organization whose mission is to interpret and conserve the earth's biological diversity through research, education and citizen science focused on birds.*

## DELAWARE VALLEY RARITY ROUNDUP: SPRING 2005

### Pennsylvania

Greater White-fronted Goose (3) and Barnacle Goose - at Peace Valley, Bucks Co, Mar 4-11  
Orange-crowned Warbler - Narberth, Philadelphia Co, Mar 13-15  
Swallow-Tailed Kite - along Octoraro Creek, Lancaster Co, Mar 13, a new early date by 60 days  
1<sup>st</sup> winter Harris's Sparrow - continued in Upper Bethel, Northampton Co, through Mar 20  
Eurasian Wigeon - at John Heinz NWR, Tinticum, Delaware Co, Mar 24-25  
Red-necked Grebe (2) - Churchville Reservoir, Bucks Co, March 25th.  
Ross's Goose - Green Pond, Northampton Co, Apr 8-13. Latest known date for PA

### Delaware

Greater White-fronted Goose - Brandywine, Newcastle Co, thru March 4  
Lesser Black-Backed Gull - Slaughter Beach, Sussex Co, Mar 10  
Eurasian Wigeon (5) - between Ted Harvey WMA and Port Mahon, Kent Co, Mar 12  
King Eider - Cape Henlopen, Sussex Co, Mar 13  
Northern Shrike - Prime Hook NWR, Sussex Co, Mar 15  
Ruff (4) - Bombay Hook, Kent Co, Apr 10-12  
Yellow-headed Blackbird - near New Castle, Newcastle Co, the week of May 16  
Swallow-tailed Kite - at the Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch, Sussex Co, May 16  
Curlew Sandpiper - at Ted Harvey WMA, Kent Co, May 25

### NJ

Eurasian Green-winged Teal - at Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co, the week of Mar 3  
Razorbill - Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth/Ocean Co, Mar 6  
Eurasian Wigeon - at Point Pleasant's Little Silver Lake, Ocean Co, Mar 6  
Pacific Loon - at Manasquan Inlet, Monmouth/Ocean Co, Mar 7  
Eurasian Green-winged Teal - at Lake Takanassee, Monmouth Co, Mar 12  
King Eider (Immature male) - at the Avalon Sea Watch, Cape May Co, Mar 4-12  
Thick-billed Murre - at Shark River Inlet, Monmouth Co, Mar 16  
Eurasian Green-winged Teal (2) - at Corbin City/Tuckahoe WMA, Atlantic Co, Mar 16  
Snowy Owl - Stone Harbor Point, Cape May Co, Mar 25-Apr 6  
Loggerhead Shrike - at Big Brook Preserve, Monmouth Co, Mar 22-April 7  
Wilson's Plover - Holgate, Long Beach Island, Ocean Co, Mar 26  
Painted Bunting - first found Nov 14 continued in Erma, Cape May Co, through Apr 10  
Black-necked Stilt - at Dorbrook Park, Monmouth Co, Apr 2-3  
Swallow-tailed Kite - Huber Woods, near Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, Apr 6  
Ruff - Raccoon Creek, Pedricktown, Gloucester Co, Apr 17-18  
Little Gull - Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, Apr 20  
Swallow-tailed Kite - Cape May Point and the Beanery, Cape May Co, Apr 25-26  
Little Gull (2) - Morgan (South Amboy), Middlesex Co, May 2-3  
White-faced Ibis (2) - Reeds Beach Road, Cape May Co, May 7-15  
White-faced Ibis - Turkey Point, Cumberland Co, May 8  
Painted Bunting (female) - at Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, May 9-10  
White-winged Dove - Ocean Drive, near Two Mile Landing, Cape May Co, May 10  
Wilson's Plover (female) - was present at Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, May 10-19  
American White Pelican - at Forsythe NWR, Atlantic Co, May 11  
Eurasian Collared Dove - at Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, May 12.  
Curlew Sandpiper (2) - at Nummy Island, Cape May Co, May 18-21  
Reeve - Reed's Beach Road, Cape May Co, May 18-21  
Eurasian Collared Dove - Nummy Island, Cape May Co, May 15  
Swallow-tailed Kite - was seen over Reed's Beach, Cape May Co, May 17  
Red-necked Phalarope - at Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, May 19  
Eurasian Collared-Dove - on and off at Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, May 14-24  
Black-headed Gull (2) - at Sandy Hook, Monmouth Co, May 24  
Arctic Tern - at Palmyra Cove Nature Park, Burlington Co, May 25-26

## More on the History of the DVOC By Jeff Holt

In two separate *Cassinia* articles, Edward Fingerhood and Phillips M. Street (<http://www.acnatsci.org/hosted/dvoc/History/History.htm>) offered us some background on when our club was founded and who those founding members were. What's missing, however, is the why. For what purpose was the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club established? On June 5, 1890, just four months after the club was established, a communiqué authored by Witmer Stone announced the formation of the club to the ornithological world. Written to the editors of the *Auk* (the publication of the American Ornithologists' Union), Stone's letter was published in the July-Sept., 1890 edition of that journal (*Auk* Vol. 7: 298-299). While we each have our own reasons for belonging to the club, Stone's letter gives us a glimpse as to why the original seven founding members felt the need to organize in the first place.

To the Editors of the *Auk*:  
*Dear Sirs:*

The majority of the readers of 'The Auk' have no doubt spent a good deal of time in the study of bird migration and in the systematic arrangement of their field notes with a view to reaching general facts in regard to the subject. While a single observer making careful notes for a number of years can determine many interesting facts, such as the average time of arrival and departure of the various birds at his station, and the relation of the 'migration waves' to meteorological variations; still there are many other points bearing on the subject of migration which it will be impossible to study without the assistance of other workers in the same field.

Recognizing the advantages of combined work, a number of ornithologists residing in the vicinity of Philadelphia have organized the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, for the study of the birds southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey, with especial reference to their migration in the valley of the Delaware River. The active membership of the club is limited and consists only of those who have considerable experience in field work and are known to be thoroughly reliable. An associate membership has been added to include beginners in the study who can furnish data subject to the approval of the active members, and in return can receive the benefit of their experience.

The following is a brief outline of the methods, of the work of the Club. Daily field notes are taken by the members, and recorded systematically on monthly charts. These charts are passed from one member to another and when all the data have been recorded, are reproduced by a copying process and copies furnished to each observer. In the same way it is proposed to have yearly charts on which will be recorded the first and last occurrence, arrival and departure of bulk, and other general facts relating to each species. The Club meets in Philadelphia twice a month, when all matters of importance are discussed and specimens exhibited.

Another aim of the club is to keep a complete record of all the birds which occur in southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey, and of the breeding habits of those species which remain in this district during the summer. These observations will cover a wider field than those on migration, the latter being confined to the immediate vicinity of the Delaware River south of Trenton, as it is thought that better results can be obtained by restricting the country covered by the observations to one river rather than by including other rivers or coast districts.

During the present year the Club has seven regular observers, -Wm. L. Baily at Wynnewood, PA.; Samuel N. Rhoades at Haddonfield, N.J.; J. Harris Reed at Tinicum Island, PA.; Geo. Morris at Olney, PA.; Dr. Spencer Trotter at Swarthmore, PA.; Chas. A. Voelker at Chester, PA, and Witmer Stone at Germantown, PA.

The results so far have been highly satisfactory and have surpassed our expectations. We therefore thought that by stating our methods of work other observers similarly situated might be led to 'join their forces' and gain the benefit of each others' work as we have done...

At the close of the year we hope to present to 'The Auk' an abstract of migration of 1890 as it occurred in the valley of the Delaware, with a map showing a district covered by each observer.

Witmer Stone.  
*Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA*  
*June 5, 1890*

## More on the History of the DVOC...cont'd

In comparing this letter to the club today, perhaps the most notable difference involves our present definition of the "Delaware Valley", as Stone makes no mention whatsoever to the State of Delaware. The second difference goes to Stone's data collection methodology in that today, we routinely employ single person/single site locations for migration study.

As promised, Stone did submit two items to the *Auk*, regarding the club's 1890 findings. Both appeared in the April-June, 1891 edition of the journal. The first was a letter, similar to the above, and was published under the title "Work of the Delaware Ornithological Club During 1890". (*Auk* Vol. 8:244-245) In this letter, Stone wrote that during the year, 204 species were observed, with 86 being recorded during June and July. Of the more notable "observations" (read "shot") were a Thick-billed Murre and Leach's Storm-Petrel taken from the Delaware River and Darby Creek respectively and a Bewick's Wren collected in Wynnewood. Of additional note is that Stone now indicates that the field observers had been reduced to six, but doesn't identify by name the missing observer.

The second Stone article was titled "Bird Waves and Their Graphic Representation" (*Auk* Vol. 8:194-198) and was primarily concerned with the methodology used to record migration data. In this article he indicates that daily observations were made at five stations, Trotter and Voelker being the absent club members.

In examining the above, it's interesting to note how the club has evolved, yet, at the same time, retained some of its institutions. The pace of the society has certainly changed in the last 115 years, but we still find the time to have twice monthly meetings. And while we no longer classify members by "active" or "associate", the more experienced members of our club continue to bestow the benefits of that experience on the collective membership. It is this later attribute that perhaps best defines the DVOC today and is one that should survive whatever changes may take place in the next millennium.

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## 2005 Spring Migration Report for New Jersey

by Sandra Keller

This report covers spring passerine migration for several areas of southern New Jersey - Glassboro Woods WMA in Gloucester County, Belleplain State Forest in Cape May County, various locales throughout Cumberland County and one area in northern New Jersey - Garret Mountain in Passaic County. These are areas that I hit regularly during spring migration, so I can try to gauge certain trends such whether spring migration was really late this year as believed by many birders and are the numbers of birds down as many birders believe.

Spring passerine migration has two main components: returning breeders and non-breeding migrants just passing through. I will cover returning breeders first as they are usually the first to return.

I always hear that trees and flowers are blooming late at the start of migration and that the leafing out of vegetation is really advanced towards the end of migration. Well, this year I asked a botanist friend who completely disagreed with all the blooming late and leaves out early complaints! His opinion was that everything was basically on schedule. If he is correct, late blooms and lack of insect availability would not be to blame for this year's late start to migration.

Some examples of late returnees based on my records from previous years: Pine Warblers - the first warbler back as a general rule - were not seen until March 22 at Glassboro Woods and were not back in force there until early April. This is a good two weeks later than normal. Same applied to the Pine Warblers at Belleplain. Louisiana Waterthrush was not back until March 31 at Belleplain - a few days late. I had them on April 12 at Glassboro Woods - this is actually right on time for this area. Yellow-throated Warblers were back on April 7 at Belleplain - a good nine or ten days late and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers appeared around April 5 at Glassboro Woods - about three or four days late. As a general rule this spring, birds due back in March were very late while those due back in early April were only moderately late. I have no explanation for this. Our early returning breeders generally come from the southeastern US, the Caribbean Islands, and Central America, so they wouldn't know about our cold winters and/or if trees were blooming late or early or right on time.

## 2005 Spring Migration Report for New Jersey - cont'd

By mid-April though, timing seemed to be back more or less to normal in southern New Jersey. For example, House Wren on April 17, White-eyed Vireo on April 20, Yellow Warbler down at Cape May Point on April 21 and Wood Thrush back at Belleplain on April 21, were all within a day or two of my normal date range of first records at certain areas. As a special note: this year Prothonotary Warblers were being reported well north of their normal breeding range both in NJ and PA and I noted many comments to that effect on the RBAs of various states. This may mean there was a very successful breeding year in 2004 and now these new birds need areas in which to breed. Only time will tell if this is a true range expansion or whether this species will go back to its normal range in a year or so as has happened in the past. I didn't record any other significant increases or decreases in breeders this spring except for Hooded Warbler at Glassboro Woods which was down to half of the numbers of 2004. Here again, only time will tell if this is something that needs watching or is just a one-time thing that has shown up in my count data this year.

May was normal for the last returning breeders as they were back right on time. Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Summer Tanager were all back in Cumberland County on May 4, Kentucky Warbler was back at Glassboro Woods on May 8, Eastern Pewee was back May 12 in Belleplain.

May is also the month for the non-breeding migrants; those Neotropical jewels that we only get to see in full breeding plumage and hear singing those beautiful songs at this time of year. Unfortunately, south Jersey is not the place for hard data on these species since having numbers of migrants put down is very weather and wind dependent. I was down in South Jersey often enough to realize that migrant numbers for some species were way down. Even without good migrant fallout conditions, I usually have more in the way of numbers. I completely missed some species this spring in the south like Wilson's, Bay-breasted, and Cape May Warblers. I always get at least one or two singing Cape May Warblers every spring in Belleplain but not this year. I did have some of the more common migrant warblers like Magnolia, Chestnut-sided and a lone Tennessee in Cumberland County. Was the weather to blame for the lack of spring migrants down here? I don't know – it is quite possible though. I don't believe the numbers of Cape May and Bay-breasted Warblers in the fall have declined in the past few years at Cape May Point.

But a few friends who regularly bird Garret Mountain all spring have told me that yes, numbers were down. Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrushes were late for me this year and in low numbers until I hit Garret Mountain in north Jersey. I had one Swainson's on May 9 at Belleplain and another 31 at Garret on May 27. I had no Gray-cheeked Thrushes this year until Garret on May 27 when I saw eight. I always have both species in south Jersey by mid May. What happened this spring? I don't know. But many south Jersey birders were commenting to me on the lack of thrushes. I have had thrushes at Garret in late May before but not in these numbers. Were these two thrush species delayed somewhere during their northward migration and then came through late in a big group? I can't say for sure, but I believe so. I have corresponded with two northern New Jersey birders who think dates and numbers were normal and another three who think the thrushes was late up at Garrett.

So, was migration late this year? It sure started late with the early returning breeders. But by mid-April it seems to me it was right on track in south Jersey. Numbers of non-breeding migrant species were definitely down for me in South Jersey, but I attribute this to the weather conditions, not a decline in the populations. Thrushes are usually one of the last migrants through, but this year most they were a good week late in reaching their peak. From what I experienced this spring, I have concluded that weather was what impacted the birds and resulted in the lack of numbers of certain species and was also why some species were late coming through.

## Programs

August 4 ~ Informal meeting. Various topics will be covered. Meeting will be at Palmyra Cove in Palmyra, NJ.

September 15 ~ "Surprise Speaker"- TBA

October 6~ David Brinkman, "Saw-whet Owls". David is back by popular demand with a presentation on Scott Weidensaul's Saw-whet banding operation.

October 20 ~ George Armistead, "Birding Southern Argentina: the Pampas, Patagonia, and Tierra del Fuego".

November 3 ~ Sam Fried, "Eastern Australia Birding",

November 17 ~ DVOC Banquet ~ see page 10 of this newsletter for more info.

## Field Trips

July 23 ~ Annual Picnic  
Hosted by Paul & Anita Guris. See [www.dvoc.com](http://www.dvoc.com) for details

August 20 ~ Bombay Hook NWR & Environs, Part II  
Meet at 7:30 a.m.  
Leader: Martin Selzer, (215) 233-9090

August 27 ~ Brandywine Creek State Park, DE. Meet at park nature center (see [www.dvoc.com](http://www.dvoc.com) for info) at 7:45 a.m. Leader: Andie Ednie (302) 792-9591



## DVOC Hats

We have hats with the DVOC logo (Bonaparte's Gull ~ Larus philadelphia) ~ which are available for sale at meetings.

They are available in three colors:

- Khaki with navy blue lettering
- Navy blue with Khaki lettering
- Forest green with khaki lettering

Price: \$15  
Supplies Limited!



## Officers:

- President:**  
Adrian Binns
- Vice-President:**  
Chris Walters
- Secretary:**  
Paul Guris
- Treasurer:**  
Naomi Murphy

## Council

- Art McMorris  
Bert Filemyr  
Doris McGovern  
Martin Selzer  
Jeff Holt  
Mike Lyman

## Of Note:

Doris McGovern recently received the Valley Forge Audubon Society's Conservation Award for 2005. In presenting this award the chairman, Tom Reeves, recognized Doris for her assistance with the placement and subsequent monitoring of Bluebird and Martin boxes at many locations in the Delaware Valley. Doris was also recognized for her work in placing and monitoring Prothonotary Warbler boxes in New Jersey and for her work as a coordinator for the current Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas.

Congratulations, Doris!



*Doris McGovern (left),  
Tom Reeves (right)*

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 Qioz Answers!

(from page 2)

- 1) Eleven plus 2 that formerly had a state in their name.
- 2) Arizona Woodpecker  
California Gull  
California Quail - California  
California Thrasher  
Carolina Chickadee  
Carolina Wren - South Carolina  
Connecticut Warbler  
Kentucky Warbler  
Louisiana Waterthrush  
Mississippi Kite  
Tennessee Warbler  
(Louisiana Heron) now Tri-colored Heron  
(Oregon Junco) now part of Dark-eyed Junco complex
- 3) Only two are the state birds for the states for which they are named (CA. Quail & Carolina Wren).

## 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.