CONTENTS

4 From the President
World Series of Birding and the DVOC
conservation efforts for 2008

5 How Not to Buy Optics by Pete Dunne

8 The Return of the Hummingbird by
Steve Kacir

11 Three Tringas: Separating Wood Sandpi-
per, Solitary Sandpiper and Lesser Yellow-
legs by Adrian Binns

14 A Twitching Story by Colin Campbell

17 Trash Talking - 19th Century Style by
Jeff Holt

19 Q&A Tony Croasdale ...Then and Now

25 Membership Update by Connie
Goldman

29 Saw-whet Owl Conservation Effort—
donations needed!

Prothonotary Warbler © N Murphy 2008
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**DVOC** is an organization for birders and bird enthusiasts in the Delaware Valley region. Anyone with an interest in birds is invited to attend our functions.

Visit our website at [www.dvoc.org](http://www.dvoc.org). Interested in becoming a member? Follow the link to "Membership Information" for everything you need to know about how to join the club.

**Larus Committee**
Editor—Jason Loghry
Layout—Naomi Murphy

*Cover:*
Upland Sandpiper © 2008 N. Murphy
Larus Philadelphia graphic (above) © 2008 Josh Robeson
Summer is on its way, and I sit here looking back at a fantastic spring. Migration was good, Worm-eating Warbler was a new yard bird, and my pelagic trips from the Outer Banks found some great birds and cetaceans. But the high point for me was being part of DVOC, taking back the top spot in the World Series of Birding. For those few of you unfamiliar with this event, it is a grueling 24 hour test of New Jersey birding knowledge, route discipline, bird identification skills, one's ability to handle sleep deprivation, and a team's ability not to get on each others nerves to the point of violence. It is also an incredible fundraiser for a wide variety of causes, raising over $600,000 a year for conservation.

I'm the captain of the current DVOC team, which is generously sponsored and supported by Nikon Sport Optics. (As a side note, Nikon has also been generous in their support for the New Bins for New Birders project.) Along with team/club members Mike Fritz, Bert Filemyr, and Eric Pilotte, we looked, listened, drove, walked, scratched, and clawed our way to the top spot, and for the 7th time brought home the trophy. But while that is all well and good, what we really wish to stress is the fact that this event is the major source of conservation and research funds for the club.

The funds raised have allowed us to support a wide variety of causes, from small projects like an Osprey nesting platform in NJ to larger ones such as funding a Red Knot project along the Delaware Bay shore, providing funds for habitat restoration at the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust, support for protection of a Great Blue Heron rookery in Montgomery County, PA, and providing the stipends that allow for summer interns at the Ornithology Department in the Academy of Natural Sciences.

This year, thanks to the work of our Conservation Committee and its able leader Debbie Beer, we have a list of projects of various sizes where we can make a difference. First, we are looking to provide funds for the purchase of mist nets to be used in two banding projects, one run by our own Tom Bailey, and the other by Hannah Struthers. Second, due to the success of our efforts last year, we will be providing a stipend for a second summer intern for the Academy. This is in addition to one intern already provided for by last year's funds. The remainder of the funds will be used to support the Saw-whet Owl Banding Project run by Scott Weidensaul and the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. A number of you have participated in the annual club field trip and have seen the research first hand, and know that some great data has been collected.

I speak for the entire team when I say that I hope you will be generous in your pledges. Just because the event is over doesn't mean that it's too late to give. These are all good causes where reasonable amounts of money can make a large difference. A pledge form is available in this newsletter and on our website.

Thanks to all who have already given, and thanks in advance to those who will add their support.
How Not to Buy Optics
by Pete Dunne, Director, Cape May Bird Observatory

There are hundreds of articles online or in print that tell incipient buyers how to purchase binoculars and spotting scopes (heck, I’ve written eight or one hundred and ninety myself). They commonly focus (pun, pun) on choosing the right power, the right weight, the need for close focusing instruments... this is boiler plate information. Anybody who can read a brochure can arm themselves with this information. Heck, I’ve got a book that’s got a whole chapter directed to this stuff. But there are very few articles that focus on the common mistakes that optics buyers make and more importantly, how to avoid them.

So here, for Larus readers, are some of the common mistakes that inexperienced (and even some experienced) birders and binocular buyers make:

1. You listened to an expert.

That’s right. Don’t believe everything you hear; don’t believe everything you read. I always make it a point to read articles offering optical buying tips to birders. It is a rare article that doesn’t have some misconception tucked into the text — and some counsel “experts” give is downright heretical. This includes optics tests and reviews. For several years a highly regarded magazine (that conducts periodic products tests) touted the merits of the Kowa TSN-821 spotting scope. It was best in show, optically, so it earned their top rating. People used to call us at Cape May Birding Observatory (CMBO) to order one. “Sorry,” we’d say, “we don’t sell them.” The reason we didn’t sell them is because when they fell over, the polycarb body would snap (usually around the eye piece), or the prisms would dislodge and rattle around inside. Unfortunately, ruggedness was not a question addressed by the reviewers. And nobody has ever made a spotting scope that doesn’t fall. Oh, in regards to Kowa? For the record, their new TSN-881 scope not only offers an absolutely stellar image, its metal wrapped; and can take a fall.

2. You bought the binocular your birding friend uses.

They might be your friend but he or she isn’t you. There is no universal best binocular. There is no binocular that works for every person. There is only one test of a binocular. You bring them to your eyes. You see things quickly and easily. Bing! It’s really that simple. It’s supposed to be that easy. But I’ve seen people who have come into CMBO to buy $1,800 binoculars and walked out with $400 binoculars. The lower priced glass simply worked better for them.

3. Closely related to Point #2.

To be certain you buy the binocular that works best for you, try a number of makes and models. Go to a store that specializes in meeting the needs of birders. Try out a bunch of instruments. You’ll want a sales person who knows their product line and who really wants to meet your needs. Pick a day when they can give you their undivided attention (i.e., avoid Saturday or the annual optics sale). Try calling and setting up an appointment or asking when they are likely to be most free to offer you their undivided attention. Tell the salesperson your price range. $100-500 is low end. $500-800 is mid-range. Alpha birding binoculars range from $800 up to $2,100. A good basic spotting scope with eyepiece and decent tripod
is going to cost $800-1000 dollars. At $3,000 you are getting top of the line stuff (until the new Leica scope comes out and you can add another $1,000). Once you find your champion, a glass you like and that likes you back, ask to see something similar but less expensive and also something priced in the nosebleed section. If the less expensive glass offers comparable performance, you’re in luck. If the merits of the high end instrument are too seductive to ignore, bite the bullet and buy up, or Wait! Don’t settle. Wait and save for the glass you really want. I have never met a person who bought an Alpha birding instrument and regretted their purchase. I’ve met scores of birders who settled for less and then came back one or two years later and purchased the glass they wanted in the first place.

4. You thought it was all about power.

Power, or magnification, is the easiest consideration to understand and the least consequential in terms of getting a good image. While increased magnification will give you a bigger image, it does not greatly improve your ability to perceive detail. What you gain in image size you lose to image quality negating hand shake. You say you have steady hands, so you can hold a 10x. I’m sure you do. You’ll hold a 7x or 8x steadier. Don’t think of buying a 10x unless you are willing to spend well over $1,000. And while I’m talking about power, never buy a “zoom” binocular. It’s a gimmick. Also, stabilized binoculars might be useful if you have a severe hand tremor, but for the price of one of those battery-operated stabilized binoculars, you can buy a real nice birding binocular instead.

5. You shopped price and bought online.

Shopping online is a great way to get information. It’s a landmine strewn landscape if you plan to buy a binocular. Unless you know precisely what you want, and what you want is what an online store is selling (and pushing), you stand a very good chance of being unhappy with your purchase; i.e., it’s not what you wanted, or all you wanted, or exactly what you wanted. Look, the plain truth is that the retail markup on binoculars is disgustingly low — between 18 percent and 23 percent for most instruments including (in fact, particularly) high end. To be both competitive and to remain authorized dealers, most vendors sell at or near the MAP price (minimum advertised price). If you see a price that is below MAP, the needle on your consumer-beware meter better be twitching.

Can you find great deals online? Yes; sometimes. Manufacturers often dump older products to make room for newer, improved instruments. Some of these deals really are just that! But once again, buyer: beware! Do your homework. Know what you want. Don’t let yourself be misdirected to “another, comparable product.” Know the dealer and know what the return policy is and...

6. You figured that all binoculars are the same.

Realize that there is variation in every binocular — even between the barrels of the same instrument. I’ve seen $1,500-2,000 spotting scopes where changing an eye-
How Not to Buy Optics… continued

piece between the expensive and less expensive models made the less expensive instrument the superior performer. I’ve seen $1,600 binoculars with one barrel magnifying at 7x and the other at 8x. I’ve seen $1,800 instruments where the right barrel wouldn’t focus closer than 30 feet (but the left would go to 8). I’ve seen instruments with paint flecks stuck on prisms, thumb prints visible on internal elements, and screws rattling around inside of barrels. Last fall, I had a major donor to CMBO walk in to buy a Swarovski 8x32 EL (a very nice; very expensive glass). I checked them out. I gave them a thumbs-up. Then just for grins, just before turning them over to her waiting hands, gave the glass a shake. The prism system detached inside the glass! Thoroughly check and test the instrument you buy. Ask the store salesperson to check them, too. Shake.

7. You didn’t trust your eyes.

There is only one real test of a binocular. You bring them to your eyes. You see things quickly and easily. “Wait,” you’re thinking. “Didn’t he say this before?” Yes I did. And if it is the only piece of wisdom you take away from this article then it was worth writing.
The snow melts. The winds shift. The days lengthen, and the Delaware Valley warms. As winter’s grip loosens, the landscape saturates with the colors of regenerating foliage. Flowers bloom, attracting growing numbers of insects. Those insects, in turn, provide food for our spring migrants, which bring even more color to the vernal landscape. Both the flowers and the insects attract migrating Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Their vibrant colors and powerful personalities remain with us through the spring and into the fall. Their secretive natures and diminutive size make studying Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in the field challenging. This is especially true during the nesting period when they may act in an even more clandestine manner. In contrast, attracting hummingbirds to your property provides an opportunity to gain an extensive familiarity with their lives. Perhaps this dichotomy of an almost personal relationship with such an aloof species is what makes attracting hummingbirds to our yards and feeders such a passion for birders.

Planting nectar-producing flowers is a sure-fire way to bring hummingbirds to your yard. Many flowers and flowering plants are effective at catching the eye of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. A few species that appeal to the hummingbird palate include Bee Balm, Cardinal Flower, Jewelweed, Wild Geranium, Butterfly Weed, milkweeds, mints, sages, Phlox, Trumpet Vine, Blueberry and Black Locust. Attracting hummingbirds with sugar water in vials or hummingbird feeders is also effective. To prepare a sugar solution, there are only a few strict rules. Only white sugar should be used. It is very important to only use sugar and not honey, molasses, artificial sweeteners or other substitutions. Adding other components can risk the health of the very birds you are trying to attract. The concentration of the sugar is also important. Using too much sugar can cause dehydration and damage the hummingbird’s liver. A preparation of one part sugar to four parts water is the recommended hummingbird food. In practical terms, dissolve one cup of sugar in four cups of water to prepare the food. Some sources recommend boiling the water before adding the sugar. This is not necessary. However, boiling first may extend the life of sugar water when it is stored in a refrigerator.

The sugar solution in the feeder should be changed regularly. In hot weather, the solution will need to be changed every 3-4 days at best. In cooler weather, the sugar water can be left out for a week. Always monitor the feeders, and discard any sugar water that has developed mold or discolora-
tion. Clean the feeders themselves with soap and water before refilling them. If you own more feeders than you plan on placing in your yard, you can also cycle a feeder out for cleaning and replace it with one that has been cleaned and allowed to dry completely. Another excellent way to bring hummingbirds to your yard is by providing dripping water or sprays that the hummingbirds can fly through for bathing.

In the Delaware Valley, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are a common and widespread migrant and summer resident. Birders encounter this species as a casual migrant from early to mid April. The chances of finding a Ruby-throated Hummingbird from mid-April through mid-September are quite good in appropriate habitat. Their numbers reach peak levels during mid-May through mid-June and August through early September. After early September, the level of incidence of this species tapers off through the month, becoming a regular accidental species through October. Occasionally, winter records have occurred into December. What this means for attracting hummingbirds is that feeders can be put out as early as April (possibly late March for those hoping for record-breaking early arrivals). Remember to leave your feeder out into December or later to attract late Ruby-throated Hummingbirds as well as the Western species such as Rufous, Black-Chinned, Calliope, Broad-tailed and Allen’s Hummingbirds. However, keeping the feeder up late in the year may require vigilance to prevent the sugar water from freezing and cracking the feeder. In addition, once a late hummingbird is attracted, you will need to actively monitor your feeder to ensure that the bird has thawed food available for the duration of its stay.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds breed in late May through July. With the Delaware and Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlases (BBA) projects overlapping this year, birders in these states should consider adding to the wealth of knowledge being generated by the BBA projects. Both atlases would welcome records of observations of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and their breeding behavior this year. In each case, observers may input their own observations or provide the information to a Block Owner, Compiler or Coordinator. Both atlases have websites with additional information.

PA BBA:  
http://www.carnegiemnh.org/atlas/index.htm

DE BBA:  
http://www-fw.delaware.gov/BBA

The atlases use safe dates to define when an individual of a species is more likely to be an actual breeding bird than
a migrant or a bird undergoing post-breeding dispersal. These safe dates are conservative estimates, and actual breeding may take place before, during and after the safe date periods. The safe dates for Ruby-throated Hummingbird in PA start on June 1 and end with July 15; the safe dates for the DE BBA begin on May 25 and end on July 5. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds use a variety of habitats for breeding, including open woodlands and edges. They often nest near streams and other bodies of water. These small birds can be difficult to find away from feeders during the breeding season. If you live in Delaware or Pennsylvania, any sighting in safe dates is notable and should be entered for the appropriate BBA. Birds attracted to feeders often display additional breeding behaviors, such as courtship displays, territoriality, nest building and even mating. All such behaviors can be entered into the PA BBA regardless of safe dates. For the DE BBA, those behaviors that confirm breeding can be entered regardless of safe dates, though the other behaviors can only be entered when observed during the safe dates. Additional information on what behaviors can be used to confirm breeding is available at both atlases’ websites.

After you start watching your visiting hummingbirds for breeding behavior, you may be surprised at what you can observe in your backyard and while birding. You’ll notice breeding behaviors in other species as well. Your observations will benefit either atlas, and perhaps take your birding to a new level. After a time, you may find yourself noticing breeding behaviors as easily as you might identify feeder birds or pick up on a familiar song. All it takes is some sugar water or some decorative plants to attract the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, one of the Delaware Valley’s biggest personalities in a decorative diminutive package. The rewards of observing these secretive birds up close are many, and providing such observations to the BBA projects may benefit both the birds and their habitat. Keep your eyes open and your feeders filled, and consider sharing your observations. Finally, don’t forget to leave your feeders up after the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have migrated out of the region: a late Ruby-throat or a Western species might be your reward.
Surely, though there have been a few east coast records, Wood Sandpiper (found in Eurasia and Africa) is a species that is overlooked and it is easy to see why. With the May 2008 find of a Wood Sandpiper at Prime Hook NWR, a first record for Delaware, we go through some of the identification marks to look out for and separate it from two similar looking and acting birds, Solitary Sandpiper, and Lesser Yellowlegs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Wood Sandpiper</th>
<th>Solitary Sandpiper</th>
<th>Lesser Yellowlegs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(T. glareola)</td>
<td>(T. solitaria)</td>
<td>(T. flavipes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L 8 ½”</td>
<td>WS 22½”</td>
<td>L 8 ½” WS 23”</td>
<td>L 10” WS 25½”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Though similar in size and pattern to a Solitary Sandpiper, the structure is far more like a small or juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs though more compact; less attenuated than either Lesser Yellowlegs or Solitary Sandpiper</td>
<td>Slightly smaller than Wood Sandpiper</td>
<td>Has a longer neck, bill and wings than Wood Sandpiper as well as being larger and greyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back color</td>
<td>Overall browner than Lesser Yellowlegs with larger pale spots on back</td>
<td>Darker back with small white spots</td>
<td>Greyer with small white spots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jizz</td>
<td>Bobs rear end / tail similar to Spotted Sandpiper though slower and not as frequently, and bobs forehead like Lesser Yellowlegs</td>
<td>Frequently bobs upper parts</td>
<td>Occasionally forages moving its bill from side to side, much like an avocet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supercilium</td>
<td>Has a prominent and more contrasting supercilium that extends well</td>
<td>Shows a bold white eye ring</td>
<td>Short supercilium (more of a whitish lore) that does not extend behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>Shows a distinct cap, due to prominent supercilium</td>
<td>Lacks the distinct cap that Wood shows</td>
<td>Lacks the distinct cap that Wood shows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Has a two-toned bill; blackish distal half and olive-green base</td>
<td>Usually slightly decurved, little longer than Wood Sandpiper</td>
<td>All dark (black) bill with only a hint of yellow-brown at the base. Thinner and longer than Solitary or Wood Sandpiper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wing tip projection</td>
<td>Tip of wings and tail are roughly the same</td>
<td>Usually tips of wings fall short of the tip of the tail</td>
<td>Wings extend (well) beyond the tail at rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary projection</td>
<td>Short primary projection</td>
<td>Dark, more solid coarsely streaked</td>
<td>Long primary projection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>Loosely or diffused streaking and barring</td>
<td>Diffused pattern; grayish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legs and color</td>
<td>Yellowish-green legs; longer legged than Solitary</td>
<td>Greenish</td>
<td>Proportionally longer and yellower legs than Wood Sandpiper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rump and tail</td>
<td>White rump patch and barred tail</td>
<td>Dark rump and central tail; outer tail feather white with black barring</td>
<td>White rump patch and barred tail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwing color</td>
<td>Pale</td>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>Pale to light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight</td>
<td>Compact</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less compact long with longer neck, legs and wings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call</td>
<td>3 notes, “gip-gip-gip,” similar to Greater Yellowlegs but weaker</td>
<td>“tewit-tewt”</td>
<td>High pitched “tew,” sometimes 2-4 notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once upon a time, a little Jacana found itself being blown way north of its usual homeland in Mexico. Eventually it found solace in the company of American Coots at a pond in the Dave White Municipal Golf Course in Casa Grande, Arizona. Despite the lack of lily pads, the local food tasted just fine and once it had learned to duck the overshooting golf balls on the ninth tee, it settled in for a long stay. The golfers, most of whom were at least septuagenarians and short-sighted, dismissed this odd bird as a weirdo. But somehow the word slowly got out to the birding community and the little Northern Jacana became a star, with people from all parts of the country coming to marvel at the beautiful colors and huge toes of this diminutive water bird.

I was one of those people. Although the bird was first reported in early November, my take on twitching distant rare birds is that there must be two needed birds close together to make it worth while. In that way, if I miss one, I’m still happy! However, as one amasses more and more, the chances of two rarities occurring together diminish. The long-staying Crescent-chested Warbler in Madera Canyon and the spasmodic reports of a wintering Aztec Thrush in the same canyon, made me wonder why I had left it until the end of January before heading southwest. The early morning flight from Philadelphia to Phoenix left me plenty of time to find the golf course about 30 miles south of Sky Harbor Airport and, after getting permission from the pro shop, browsing the three ponds on the back nine for the Jacana. My previous twitch to this part of the World (for an Aztec Thrush and Rufous-capped Warbler) was unsuccessful, so I was mightily relieved when the Jacana flew out from under some waterside shrubbery and proceeded to walk round the pond like a skinny model on the catwalk.

Elated, I headed for my home-away-from-home, Bill and Joyce Stocku’s house in Hereford, with magnificent views of the Huachucha Mountains and a backyard desert bird feeding station second to none. Bill, a long time DVOC member, pretends to enjoy visits from birders from his old club and the rambunctious golden retriever, Cassin, certainly does. The next day, Bill and I headed over to Madera Canyon and set off up the Old Baldy Trail. The weather was beautiful with a clear blue sky and very little wind; perfect for finding forest birds. We had taken a lei-
suresurely start, had stopped to see and hear two Townsend’s Solitaires, and were checking all the fruiting madrone trees up the trail for odd thrushes — all were Hermits — when the first of the birders came down the trail with a negative warbler report; then a second, with a down-turned mouth. We continued, admiring an Arizona Woodpecker and a Hutton’s Vireo, and it was another 40 minutes before other birders came down from above... but these all had smiley faces! Yes, the warbler was showing well and close for half an hour up past the ‘switchbacks’! Our pace quickened. We joined the residual birders at the spot to learn that it had been last seen 20 minutes earlier. Three hours later we left disappointed. I left to make the long trek back to Phoenix to pick up Rob Hynson at the airport at 10:30 PM (why can’t everyone be retired?) and then find accommodation en route so that Rob could see the Jacana in the morning. Horrors! The full impact of the Superbowl in Phoenix three days later hit me — a motel room in Casa Grande was going for $225 a night! Fortunately I had time to shop around and eventually found a seedy place where the lady wanted cash as she was quitting the next day. It was $55. We only needed it from arrival at midnight to 6:30 AM when we departed to await the dawn and the Jacana. That one duly ticked off, we headed once more to Madera and the trail, this time not stopping to check all the Hermit Thrushes. At the spot we found DVOC member Bill Tannery, but not the warbler. It wasn’t reported all day, despite two dozen birders searching. We took consolation in Bill’s wine cellar.

The next day dawned beautiful again but the three of us were already back on the road for try #3 as the sun rose. As we reached the switchbacks this time — and encountered DVOC member Andy Urquhart and his sister — there was intense excitement and anticipation as a local birder and guide, Melody Kohl, told us that the bird had been seen just five minutes ago. Missed by twenty minutes two days ago, five minutes today, I thought, well, it is getting closer! After ten minutes of agonizing silence, one of the assembled two dozen birders caught a glimpse of the wee beast high in a tree and pandemonium broke out. “Six feet from the top, right hand side.” “Just flew left.” “Wow, look at that supercilium!” “Where is
it now?” (Panic-stricken.) “Anyone NOT seen it yet? Get over here!” “Just got the crescent.” Etc. High fives, backslaps, and huge exhalations of held breath rent the air. The tiny Crescent-chested Warbler flew off leaving a large band of insanely grinning people being given a wide berth by passing hikers.
While visiting the Stark Museum of Art in Orange, Texas, Bert Filemyr and I had the opportunity to examine a unique copy of John James Audubon’s *Bird of America*. Amongst the Stark Museum’s extensive Audubon collection is a well worn Volume 1 of Audubon’s signature work. Accompanying this volume was a letter authored by C.L. Bachman, a descendent of Rev. John Bachman. (The Bachman family was closely associated with the Audubon family. Audubon’s sons, Victor Gifford and John Woodhouse, both married Bachman’s daughters. Maria Martin, the sister-in-law of John Bachman, was one of the background flora painters who contributed to *Birds of America*.) In this note, it is alleged that the prints contained in the volume in question were “peculiarly clear-cut.” containing the “first impression struck from the copper plates” and that this volume was used by Audubon as a sample during his sales excursions around England and to Europe. Subsequent studies by Audubon scholars have reliably determined that these assertions are impossible. What can be accurately stated regarding the provenance of this volume is that at one time, it was owned by John Bachman, being a gift from Audubon. It is the simple written exchange between Audubon and Bachman involving this gift that gives context to the title of this article.

In late 1833 or early 1834, Audubon sent this volume to Bachman in South Carolina. Upon its safe arrival, Bachman wrote to

(The Bachman copy of Volume 1 of *Birds of America* owned by The Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas.)
Audubon: “Your elegantly bound volume is here – what will you give me for it? I suppose you will wish to borrow it when you again travel through the U.S. I will send it to you for $10 per month.”

In response, on April 5, 1834, Audubon wrote back: “You have the superb bound Book – Have you? – I am heartily glad of it and must beg of you to accept it from your old friend in part atonement for the troubles I have given you and the leatherrings which you may yet receive at my hands at Chess!!”

Clearly, trash-talking amongst friends isn’t the invention of the 20th century schoolyard basketball players.

DVOC Field Trips

As usual, the DVOC has a full slate of great field trips. So get out and take advantage of these great opportunities to learn more about birds and birding locales.

http://www.dvoc.org/FieldTrips/FieldTrips2008/FieldTrips2008.htm

Keep Your Contact Info Updated!

Have your moved, gotten a new phone number or new email address lately? If so, please send these changes to Bert Filemyr at afilemyr@comcast.net

DVOC Meeting Schedule

The Club already has some excellent speakers scheduled for the upcoming season and more are being added all the time. You also might want to check out the informal summer meetings which are getting better and better. For the most current information, check the DVOC website (link below) often...and come down to the meetings. We have something for everyone. The formal program is always edifying and the Ornithological Studies portion will help you to hone your bird knowledge and field skills.

http://www.dvoc.org/MeetingsPrograms/MeetingsPrograms2008/Programs2008.htm
With tattoos and dreadlocks, Tony joined the club in 2005 and instantly fit in. As part of a younger generation of birders, he has the energy, enthusiasm, and drive to spread the message of birding and habitat conservation to the next generation. If you have recently visited John Heinz NWR at Tinicum, you have probably encountered Tony and his infectious personality.

THEN

At what age did you first begin birding and what was the “spark” bird that tweaked your interest?

I started birding at nine or ten. Growing up I did a lot of hunting, fishing, and camping with my family. My father brought me to the Pennypack Environmental Center where Pete Kurtz told me about Belted Kingfishers and that they live in the park. I asked my father if we could go look for one and a few days later we went on our first mission to find a specific bird, and we succeeded. That was the first time I went birding.

You have had a somewhat unconventional appearance with dreadlocks and tattoos. Is there a statement behind the tattoos (many of which illustrate nature)?

That's a funny tie-in as my father and I are planning to get matching kingfisher tattoos soon. My father has tattoos and my uncle is extensively tattooed, so it was just something I grew up with and knew I would do when I was old enough as my two most important male role models had been them. Most of my ink is dinosaurs (or dinosaur bones) or art from punk bands. I have a Swallow-tailed Kite that was taken from the Great Florida Birding Trail logo. I plan to get many bird tattoos on the open space I have left. These will be in color. As for a message, my punk-related tattoos include symbols of anarchism and representations of class struggle.

What type of band were you in? What was your role and what was the message?

I sang in a hardcore punk band called R.A.M.B.O. We were part of
what is known as the D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself) anarcho-punk community. I never got into the nihilistic part of punk. The punk I was involved with was either openly political-anarchist and/or intentional about no division between audience and performer and as much community participation as possible in the production of records, concerts, touring, media, etc. The music we played was very fast and angry sounding but with melody. We used satire, humor, and sarcasm as well as lots of stage theatrics. We were environmentally conscience, proponents of anarchism extolled the virtues of atheism. We liked to not be dogmatic and lead by example. We toured in a vegetable oil fueled van, sold non-sweatshop t-shirts, and always played all-ages shows in independent venues.

Birding does not seem to be the first thing that comes to mind when you mention a punk rocker. How did this come about?

For me, punk was an outgrowth of birding more or less. I grew up loving nature. When I got into birding and got to about twelve, I started to realize that the government and society were poor stewards of the environment, to say the least. Also, growing up in inner-city Philadelphia as a sensitive nature lover, I was a misfit. When I found out there was music, a political ideology, and counter culture that spoke to these issues, it provided me with likeminded peers. Not that I had other punk birders but they didn’t ridicule me for it and were supportive when I got back into it later.

You traveled the world extensively with your band. What was your favorite country and why?

The band played in 38 or so countries. We toured Europe twice, Asia twice, Australia and U.S. / Canada three times. I have also been to Peru and Belize on my own. What country is my favorite is hard to say as I have had very different reasons to like a country. I love Thailand, the birding, food, and culture is fantastic; this is my first suggestion for someone wanting some place to travel to. I loved the birding in Sri Lanka and Belize. For playing
live music, nothing beats Germany or Indonesia.

*How did you juggle birding while touring with your band?*

Since I booked our tours myself, or in the case of Asia worked out the logistics, I’d figure nature oriented activities into the schedule. All of my band mates were outdoorsy folks and were into the trips. We’d go camping at least once during U.S. tours. In Asia and Australia we usually only played on weekends. I arranged to fly into Japan a week early on our last Asia tour so I could bird Hokkaido to see the eagles and cranes. On that last tour, we hired a guide in Vietnam for two days and did a safari in Sri Lanka. Sometimes I’d play a show like in Singapore, crash out after the gig, sleep a few hours, and wake up at dawn to take a cab to the nearest nature reserve.

*If there was one bird that you have seen that you could tell everyone about, what would it be?*

Look more closely at Song Sparrows, they are gorgeous. It’s hard to pick one bird so I’ll give you two; *Marvelous Spatuletail* (N. Peru) and *Steller’s Sea Eagle* (N. Japan) have been the two birds I really went out of the way to see and in my opinion are the most impressive of their respective families. I will say that hornbills are maybe my favorite group of birds. Parasitic Jaeger may be my favorite bird in action especially when it’s attacking terns.

**NOW**

*What made you decide to join the DVOC?*

I had run into Dennis Brennan at Tinicum and Palmyra Cove with a DVOC field trip in the fall of 2004 and liked his vibe. My good buddy Andy Bernick and I looked up the DVOC online and figured it was time to check it out. After going to a few meetings and enjoying the presentations and humor and seeing how friendly and unpretentious the folks were at Frank Windfelder’s Tuckerton trip, we decided this club was for us.
Who were birding mentors?

I got into birding at the same time as my parents or as they say I got them into it, and I, even back then, got way more into it. More or less I was self-taught. It wasn't until I got back into birding hardcore in my mid-twenties and met Andy Bernick, Steve Kacir, and Rob Hynson, that my birding really started to go to that next level with their input. Spending a few days with Paul Guris in the Jersey Sky lands really helped my ear birding. Bert Filemyr helped me immensely with planning for the World Series of Birding.

What got you involved in the World Series of Birding?

I asked several teams if they wanted to use a vegetable oil powered vehicle (diesel Mercedes E300) in the WSB if I provided it. None of the teams I approached wanted to do it, so I figured I would start a team to do just that. I wanted to make a statement about birders’ use of fossil fuels and demonstrate a viable alternative. I asked my best birding buddies and they all said yes. I wanted to raise funds for the environmental center in Indonesian Borneo that I had visited while on tour there. I wrote a few letters trying to get a corporate sponsor and was surprised to get two responses. We agreed to work with Kowa and they have been great. In fact, this year Kowa's sales manager and renowned birder Jim Danzenbaker (and fellow DVOC member) joined our team – Team Bristlehead. The first year we got 179 species using the E300 but we found it to be too noisy for competitive birding by ear. This year we changed to a quieter Toyota Camry hybrid which we were not allowed to take off road, so for our time off road in the Great Swamp we utilized a vegetable powered mini school bus that was painted flat black with painted flames on the hood. We got 196 species which was good for 10th place!

How successful do you feel musicians such as Bono, Sting, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, and Pearl Jam have been placing conservation issues in front of a large and generally younger audience? What more can influential celebrities do?
Have they? It's hard for me to say as I had been involved with such an insular counter culture for over a decade where politics are so radical and overt and little attention is paid to mainstream media. While I am a fan of music, I'm not a fan of pop culture and isolated myself in the punk world for so long that I'm out of touch. I was in a world where people I knew were tree sitting and people who I probably knew were burning dealership lots full of SUVs and new developments in critical habitat. I think there needs to be pop stars telling people to recycle and stop climate change as well as radical environmentalists destroying stuff. What celebrities need to do is donate the vast amount of their fortune to worthy causes. The disparity of wealth is this country is one of the biggest problems and celebrities should take the lead in giving back the money pilfered from the working class.

*Servicing as an intern at John Heinz NWR at Tinicum, can you describe your job description and what you like most about it?*

It's strange because my appointment here is funded by Ameri-corps VISTA, which is basically the stateside counterpart to the Peace Corps. VISTA's main mission is to fight poverty. It is sort of a strange match being I'm stationed at a wildlife refuge. What I try to do is public outreach and try to get inner-city schools out to the refuge and guide them when they do. I have also created and collaborated on several interpretive exhibits. I'm developing a John Heinz NWR poster that will feature an illustrated scene of the refuge chock full of organisms with a key for identification. This poster will be mass produced and given out free to area schools and be available for sale at the refuge gift shop. I have held several public events and walks and whenever I've done promotion outside the usual refuge channels I've gotten a tremendous response, sometimes more people than I can handle!

*For someone who called themselves an anarchist to now work for the federal government, it seems a radical turn. Have your views changed as you get older?*

I still consider myself to be an anarchist. Anarchism will probably never truly exist; it is something you strive for. I think of something Aldo Leopold said, "We shall never achieve harmony with
land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations, the important thing is not to achieve but to strive.” I think if you truly believe the goodness of humanity that you can believe that someday people will be able to peacefully coexist with each other and nature because that is what everyone will want to do. Even if it's not realistic that's what I want. I don't think working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service as working for the man, it's working for the people, working for the wildlife. Life involves compromise and for me working for a public institution of what’s supposed to be a democratic system is much more in line with my beliefs than a lot of other things I could be doing. The other thing to consider is that this is what I enjoy doing and an opportunity I didn't want to turn down.

What would you like to see the DVOC accomplish in the coming year?

I think the DVOC fulfills its mission perfectly. I would like to see birders more politically active but that is not DVOC's primary focus. The website is unbelievable, the fieldtrips fantastic, and the membership full of expertise, camaraderie, and openness to newcomers. I just hope the DVOC continues to maintain what it already is.

Once you get your driver's license, which vehicle will we see you birding in?

Probably taking turns driving my girlfriend's Saturn or other friend's cars on road trips. I doubt I'll be in position to own my own vehicle for some time. When I do, I'll find the most fuel efficient used car available.
Fuel is expensive, wallets are tight, lives are so busy. And yet, people continue to invest in DVOC membership, field trips and other activities. With its high dividends in ornithological information, field birding experience and birder-to-birder camaraderie, DVOC provides a value far exceeding its cost! Since our last Larus-on-Line was issued, 22 new members have joined us! Look for them at a meeting or in the field and join me in welcoming them all to DVOC!

Cheryl Zang
West Chester, PA

"I have been birding for about 18 years, though I feel like a newbie right now since I have not birded much in the past several years. I love the natural world and have visited and birded Yellowstone, Glacier, Acadia National Park as well SE Arizona and New Mexico. I also like local birding spots like Cape May, Bombay Hook."

Leigh Ashbrook
Conshohocken, PA

"I began birding when I was in college, mentored by Jean Jones, Ruth Zumeta, Alice Fasy and Edie Klausner of the Wyncote Bird Club. After a several years' hiatus from birding when I was raising my children, I returned to birding with a focus on teaching my 1st and 2nd grade students about birds. Currently I am an environmental educator at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education and am trying to revitalize the SCEE bird club, a very small group that likes to stay local. Some of my favorite birding spots are the Wissahickon Valley, Tinitcum, Forsythe Refuge and SCEE. I would love to return to Big Bend National Park in Texas, New Mexico, and Alaska to continue birding adventures there."

Ann Scott
Telford, PA

"I never met a birder until 1998. That person was Ruth Pfeffer, whose enthusiasm and ability to teach beginning birders set me on the path that became my passion. In these 9 years I am in the field as often as possible. I have birded PA, NJ and DE regularly. Also I am fortunate to have a "group of friends" who travel and bird across the U.S. My husband and I have taken birding trips to Costa Rica (3 times), Canada, Panama and western US. I lead bird walks in the spring and fall. Also for the last two years I have compiled at the Militia Hill Hawk Watch. I have just begun the Cornell Home Study Ornithology Course. I consider myself an intermediate birder who wants to improve my skills, but also to learn more about bird biology, habitats, and conservation. DVOC seems like the natural place to meet skilled and knowledgeable birders and to continue my birding education."

Susan Killeen
Pottstown, PA

I have always liked watching and feeding birds but it was not until 1997 when I actually began to "go birding." I was on assignment in Norway, and found myself hiking near Oslo on the weekends. That was not so exciting, so I bought a pair of Swifts, a Norwegian Fugler guide, brought along my dad's old Peterson guide and started to identify what I saw on my long hikes and trips to the fjords. Then I started to bird on my business trips to the UK or Raleigh NC, and began to go out with 'real birders' who taught me what to look and listen for. I knew I was hooked when I planned a vacation to Maine just to see the puffins. My goals: to see 100 species in my yard in a year and to match all of the birds that my dad ticked
Membership Update—Summer 2008...continued

off in his 1956 Peterson guide.

Sarah Besdany
Philadelphia, PA

A few years ago, I happened upon a bird banding station while I was vacationing in S. Alabama. After a few hours listening to Bob and Martha Sargent, the coordinators of this banding station, and seeing the beautiful birds, I was hooked. I've been back to visit that banding station the past three years. Locally, I bird at Tinicum, Carpenter's Woods and the Penny-pack Environmental Trust. I've also birded spots in southern NJ. Just a few months ago I went birding in Arizona and saw 13 species of hummingbird, a definite highlight of the trip!

Charles S Danila
Philadelphia, PA

"I am very interested in birds of all kinds, but love owls. I have helped with the Saw-whet Owl research program sponsored by the Ned Smith Center. I also go on birding trips with my daughters, Connie Goldman and Deborah Danila."

Peter Burns
Erdenheim, PA

Peter's brief application indicates affiliations ("Wyncote Audubon, Wissahickon Valley Watershed"). He's states he's been birding since the 1970's in eastern North America, Arizona, Latin America.

In snooping for more info, (just because he was so brief), Martin Selzer, Jane Henderson and Andy Fayer are acquaintances. Peter had done CBC's and other winter censuses, spends time at Militia Hill Hawk Watch, and has partici- pated in DVOC field trips.

Erin Quinn
Cherry Hill, NJ

"I attend Temple University where I am studying geography and working toward a minor in environmental studies. I was introduced to birding through Jason Loghry and Tony Croasdale. I am fascinated with migratory patterns and observing bird habitats. I would like to further my geographic knowledge through birding. I've been birding Tinicum, Cape May and parts of South Jersey."

Jason Loghry
Philadelphia, PA

"I was fortunate enough to grow up in Rockport, Texas amongst a community of enthusiastic birders and naturalists. After graduating from the University of Texas at Austin, I slowly studied birds on my own. It wasn't until I moved to Philadelphia that I got serious. I met other birders who not only have an interest in birding, but are also interested in sharing their acute knowledge of birds. With these friends, I almost feel at home. I plan to continue my independent studies in ornithology and hope to some day offer my own observations to future conservationists and birders alike. I sincerely hope to become a member of the DVOC."

Stewart Beltz
Melrose Park, PA

"My youthful interest in birding has been rekindled by my son Jack's recent and passionate discovery of birding. My earliest memories date back to the Washington Crossing Bird Banding Station in the 60's and the fascinating lectures and live bird releases held there. To-
Membership Update—Summer 2008...continued

day, Jack has started a life list and accumulated 100 birds in 12 months. We have had memorable trips to Blackwater, Cape May and Hawk Mountain. Favorite sightings include Pileated Woodpecker, American Coot, Northern Pintail, Bald Eagles, Golden Eagle, Cedar Waxwing, Brown-headed Nuthatch, American Woodcock courting rituals and Saw-whet Owl banding.”

**Todd Fellenbaum**  
Philadelphia, PA

"I started birding at a young age in Lancaster, PA about 20 years ago. After a 15 year hiatus, I resumed my passion three years ago, and have been going strong since then. I have birded around the country and more recently, internationally."

**Gregg Gorton**  
Narberth, PA


**Mark S. Cary**  
Wallingford, PA

"I've been birding only a year, but have a long background in behavioral evolution theory. Am currently editor of "Marsh Musings," the Friends of Heinz Refuge newsletter. I work as a Penn Med School biostatistician."

**Howard Goldfine**  
Merion Station, PA

"I have been birding for over 40 years, mostly in the Philadelphia area, in Maine, and the Delmarva peninsula. I have also done some birding in Europe, New Zealand and Australia. Locally, I am a member of the Lower Merion Conservancy and have participated in its bird walks and in their spring and winter bird counts."

**Kathleen Klusman**  
Warwick, PA

"I have always enjoyed nature and the outdoors. As a kid I often got lost for hours in the woods along the Wissahickon Creek. When my kids came along we took walks along Creek Rd at the Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust (PERT). At home, we entertained ourselves with the visitors to our backyard bird feeder. Then a few years ago for Mother's Day my children gave me a special gift. It was a bird walk with Ruth Pfeffer along Forbidden Drive. Her enthusiasm for birding was very contagious. I knew I had to find a way to pursue my new found interest. Then one evening when I was walking at the Pennypack Trust, I picked up their latest activity schedule. The following Saturday they were having a bird walk. So I went and met JoAnn Raine the leader and a small group for a walk at the PERT. What luck ...JoAnn is the perfect mentor. I was hooked on birding. It is a great way to be outdoors and I have yet to meet a birder I don't like."

**Garr Novick**  
Cherry Hill, NJ

"Took a course in ornithology with Dr Bohar, University of New Hampshire as an undergrad and have been birding leisurely ever
since. Every spring and fall I visit the Jersey shore, Delaware Bay, and view migration. My life list is about 300 species. I’ve been a member of NJ Audubon and CMBO for years and look forward to joining DVOC and going on many outings."

**Vanessa Schnauffer**
Riverside, NJ

"I bird where the birds are. Was in Belleplain this spring, recently visited Cape May, etc. I have birded with Dan Murray and John Danzenbaker and they recommended that I join DVOC."

**Barbara Thorp**
Philadelphia, PA

"I began birding in the '70's on Block Island with the Mass Audubon for fall migration. After a long absence due to raising children, backpacking with the Sierra Club and road tour biking, I returned to birding several years ago only to find that my ID mechanisms were in need of urgent updating. So, I've joined with like friends and I'm working hard on those skills of sound/birdsongs, behavior and habitat to allow me to be a participant on our bird outings in the Delaware Valley and beyond."

**Josh Robeson**
Philadelphia, PA

I got into birding, camping and hiking with my parents at a young age. I was raised to respect nature and also a utilitarian knowledge of flora and fauna. Since then, my interest in biology and ecology has matured. In the near future I plan to go back to school for a degree in conservation biology or ecological sciences. I have been birding in Peru and Kenya.

**Elizabeth (Beth) Hunter**
Ambler, PA

"I have been around birdwatcher die-hards, like my step-father, since childhood and have always been familiar with birds. I got more into bird watching on and off through adult life but now I'm trying to get really better at it. I have also taken up digiscoping. I have a BS in Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University and plan to have a bird blog up and running in next two weeks. I will send out an e-mail to folks when it's decent for viewing."

**Merideth Meuller**
Egg Harbor, NJ

I moved down to Little Egg Harbor from Basking Ridge, where I was on staff for NJ Audubon in Bernardsville. I've been birding for 17 years and I'm looking for friends to bird Brig and surrounds!

**Lori Litchman**
Philadelphia, PA

My love of nature started in childhood, growing up in the Pocono Mountains. I spend a lot of time walking along the Wissahickon Creek and have just discovered the John Heinz Wildlife Refuge. I found my way to birding by doing research on some nature writing. I’m new to birding, but would love to explore more.
Donate for Saw-Whet Owl Conservation Efforts
By Debbie Beer, Conservation Chair

Each year DVOC pledges support to a local conservation project, with funds raised from our record-setting World Series of Birding (WSB) team, the Nikon/DVOC Lagerhead Shrikes.

This year, 2008, DVOC is thrilled to support the Saw-Whet Owl Banding Project on the Kittatinny Mountain Ridge, headed by Scott Weidensaul and run through the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Dauphin County, PA (www.nedsmithcenter.org). Project highlights include the following:

— The project operates with an all-volunteer crew comprised of project leader Scott Weidensaul, 18 licensed subpermittee banders, and 85 crew members, all of whom in aggregate contribute about 6,000 person-hours a year. Many DVOC members are involved in this Saw-Whet Owl banding project, in different capacities.

— 2008 marks the 12th year of banding Saw-Whets at three banding sites in Schuylkill, upper Dauphin, and southern Cumberland counties.

— The season runs from October 1st through the first week of December, seven
nights a week from dusk until midnight.

— The number of owls banded varies from year to year with the population cycle, but ranges from 200 to almost 900. Last year, 2007, was a record-breaking year for Saw-Whet Owl banding.

— For eight years, project volunteers have been using radio-telemetry to study saw-whet roost habits and habitat selection, and working with Dr. Karl Kleiner of York College (one of the banders) on an on-going genetics study. In addition, they collaborate with Dr. Sarah Morris of Canisius College, Buffalo NY, on data analysis.

— Scott’s Saw-Whet Owl banding project is run on a “shoestring” budget. This year, 2008, they would like to replace old Polaroid cameras with digital cameras, an expense hopefully covered by the support of DVOC.
Additional conservation funds raised by the WSB will support a second ornithological intern at the Academy of Natural Sciences, as well as purchasing mist nets for banders, Tom Bailey and Hannah Struthers.

It’s not too late to send in your conservation donations in support of Scott Weidensaul’s excellent Saw-Whet Owl banding project this year. The Nikon/DVOC Lagerhead Shrikes have done their part, finding 229 species and winning first place in the 2008 World Series of Birding. Now we need everyone’s support of their efforts, in the form of generous donations.

Please be generous, and spread the word to friends and colleagues. Send a check payable to "DVOC" to Bert Filemyr, DVOC Treasurer, 1314 Lenore Road, Meadowbrook, PA 19046. Contributions are tax-deductible since the DVOC is a 501(c)(3) organization.