



Philadelphia Larus

Vol. 31 No. 2

Autumn 2004

From the President's Desk

As our hobby of birding evolves, it is natural that there is an ever-changing revolving door of products to keep us interested. In an effort to continue to promote our passion, there is no better way for us to do this than by getting new people involved in the field.

While we as a club cannot reach every new potential birder, there are organizations in our area that have programs specifically designed for beginner birders of all ages.

This spring, five of us were lucky enough to place first in the World Series of Birding, and as a prize we were awarded a scope and tripod - each! Now while most of us have this type of equipment there are only so many of a particular piece of equipment that one can use or have, though those that have a bumper sticker that states *The One with the most Toys in the end Wins*, would undoubtedly dispute that. As a team we decided that others here in the Delaware Valley would be best served with this optical equipment. Paul Guris, along with our World Series sponsor Nikon Sports Optics, is spearheading an optics drive that will benefit a number of people new to our hobby through various area organizations in particular nature centers.

The proceeds from the sale of some of this optical equipment will be going towards purchasing Nikon optics wholesale. In this special deal with Nikon we will be able to provide a pair of very suitable binoculars for small kids (7x21) for \$35 and for adults (7x35) at \$80 a pair, allowing us to purchase many

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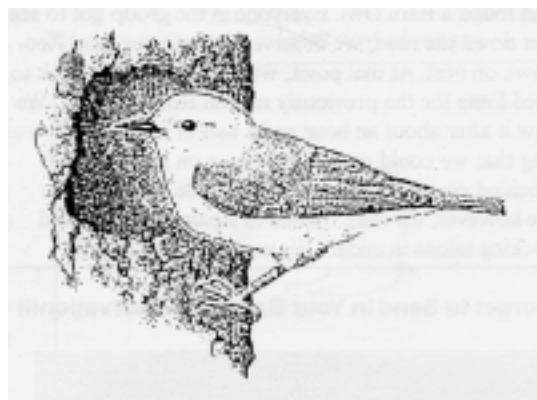
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Highlights from the 2004 Bear Swamp Journal

By Augie Sexauer

If we but take the time, the flow of life in Bear Swamp can delight us in many ways. The first couple of weeks in April were spent clearing trails and checking conditions of nest boxes before the highly anticipated arrival of the Prothonotary Warblers. This is the time of year when I get overly anxious for the first sight of this beautiful migrant that travels from so far.

On April 10, Don Jones, Al Driscoll and I encountered a flock of Rusty Blackbirds at the bridge where we meet. While checking boxes we recorded the first Louisiana Waterthrush. On April 17 Emily Kingsbury and Susan Slim heard the first Prothonotary of the season. On the same day while checking more boxes we found that Box #4's pole had rusted and the box was lying in the mud, quite waterlogged but intact. It was cleaned and laid out on the bank to dry out.



Prothonotary Warbler © Adrian Binns

On April 21, after replacing Box #4 with a new pole, I climbed up on the bank and looked back. Immediately there was a beautiful male Golden Swamp Warbler perched on the roof of the box less than 10 feet away. (I sometimes use the name Golden Swamp Warbler as it is the only way to describe the brilliant color of the male.) The bird may have been watching me as I erected the box and, as he was not singing, I did not know he was in the area. This made his sudden appearance on the box all the more striking.

He was a very vibrant young, unbanded male who proceeded to examine the box very thoroughly, leaning over the edge of the roof, while checking all sides. He then entered the box and, after a short while, flew off downstream, leaving me with many questions. What made him come in so quickly when I was so

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Field Trips

Annual Pedricktown Field Trip April 3rd, 2004

Frank Windfelder (abridged by J. Henderson)

I arrived at the Pedricktown Causeway at the ungodly hour of 4:45 AM. I waited with my umbrella for other birders to arrive, but at last I was joined by a small party. The rain finally stopped as we watched a pair of Blue-winged Teal in a nearby pond. We joined the main group at 7:00 AM, having added many more species, including Wilson's Snipe and Great Egret. We looked diligently for Ross's Goose at Featherbed Lane, but we were unsuccessful. Our next stop was Compromise Road, where Chris Walters spotted a flying Sandhill Crane, giving us our first highlight of the day. Then the "gray ghost", a male Northern Harrier, drifted by. At Mannington Marsh we had Little Blue Heron, Pied-billed Grebe, Eurasian Wigeon, and Wood Duck. A flock of Glossy Ibis decorated a nearby rise, and Doug Wechsler spotted an early Rough-winged Swallow. We ran into a splinter group of DVOC members led by Tom Bailey. He and his accomplices, Don Jones and Al Driscoll, had just seen 3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls and an Iceland Gull in a large mixed flock of gulls back on Compromise Road. Armed with reinforcements, we headed south through the town of Salem to a place where Bald Eagles were nesting on a transmission tower. These were the first of at least 10 eagles we saw that day. We added numbers of White-crowned Sparrows and Wilson's Snipe at a farm. We continued to a spot where Sandra Keller had found a Barn Owl. Everyone in the group got to see it. Further down the road, we observed both Osprey and Red-tailed Hawk on nest. At that point, we decided to head back to Featherbed Lane for the previously missed Ross's Goose. We finally saw it after about an hour and a half of searching. It was frustrating that we could not get everyone on the bird, as it dodged behind countless Snow Geese. While searching for the goose however, we were treated to a pair of young Bald Eagles locking talons in midair. We never did find a Ruff.

Don't Forget to Send in Your Banquet Reservation!!!



Black-footed Albatross © Jane Henderson

Correction

In the front page article about Dave Cutler in the Spring 2004 issue of Larus, there is a photo from about 1940 of a group of birders with dead alcids at the beach. The article IDs these people incorrectly. The person identified as Sidney Margolis was actually Ed Finkel (both DVOC members). Sidney Margolis took the photo.

Mon, Sept. 13, 2004: "Manayunk Swift Roost."

Meet at the Dobson School at Umbria Street and Hermitage Lane at 7:00 PM to watch swifts swirl down the chimney to roost for the night.
Leader: Jane Henderson. 215-836-1965

Sat, Sept. 18, 2004: "Fall Birding at the Bailey Tract" Palmyra Cove Nature Park, NJ. Fall warblers, including possibly Connecticut. Meet at 7:00 AM at car park Leader:

Sun., Sept. 19, 2004: "Hawk Mountain, PA." Peak time for Broad-wing migration. Meet at Visitors Center at 8:00 AM. Bring lunch. Entrance fee for non-members. Leader: Adrian Binns

Sat, Oct. 2 or 9, 2004: "Tuckerton Marshes, NJ" for Sharp-tailed Sparrows. Bring Wellies or other high boots. Meet at end of Seven Bridges Road 7:30 AM. Leader: Frank Windfelder

Sun, Oct. 3, 2004: "Fall Birding at the Bailey Tract."

See Ward Dasey info for Sept. 18 field trip.

Sat or Sun, Nov. 6 or 7, 2004: "Bake Oven Knob." For raptors. Possible Golden Eagle and Goshawk. A decision on which day should have the best conditions will be made the week prior. Meet at parking lot at 8:30 AM.

Leaders: Frank Windfelder (see above), Bill Murphy
Chris Walters

Sat, Nov. 6, 2004: "Saw-whet Owl Banding at Hidden Valley, PA" Join Scott Weidensaul at his banding station along the Kittatinny Ridge on Second Mountain in Schuylkill County during the peak of Saw-whet migration. Meet at the banding station at 6:30 PM Dress warmly. Expect to be out till 11 PM. Limited to 15 participants.
Leader: Adrian Binns

Sun, Nov. 28, 2004: "Roosevelt Park, PA" Bird this 348 acre park for wide range of species including waterfowl, raptors, songbirds. Meet at 8:00 AM at southwest corner of Broad and Pattison. Go in the second entrance on Pattison.
Leader: Keith Russell

Meetings / Programs

DVOC Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first and third Thursdays of the month at the Academy of Natural Sciences, 19th and Benjamin Franklin Parkway, Philadelphia. Guests are always welcome.

Thurs, Sept. 23, 2004: Nate Rice: “Bird Studies in Central Africa.” Nate will speak about his work in Equatorial Guinea, living in tents in the mountains, collecting specimens. He will bring over 200 specimens collected on these expeditions.

Thurs, Oct. 7, 2004: Dina Fonseca: “How Birds and Mosquitos Intersect.” Dina is an expert on mosquitoes and mosquito borne diseases. She will share with us her research on avian malaria and its effect on Hawaiian Honeycreepers.

Thurs, Oct. 21, 2004: Book Auction. The late Sandy Sherman’s large collection will be among the items auctioned off. Go to the website below for complete list of items.

<http://www.dvoc.org/Misc/BookAuction2004.htm>

Thurs, Nov. 4, 2004: Frank Windfelder and JoAnn Raine: “Birding South Texas.” A winter trip to the Eden of the Rio Grande.

Thurs, Nov. 18, 2004: Annual Banquet. Carl Safina: “The Eye of the Albatross.” What it is like to travel with the greatest flying creatures on earth.

Thurs, Dec. 2, 2004: Michael Male and Judy Feith: “Time with Birds: Filming Birds Over 15 Years.” They are famous for creating the videos “Watching Warblers” and “Watching Sparrows.”

Thurs, Dec. 16, 2004: Pat Sutton: “How to Spot an Owl.” Pat is one of the greatest owl-finders around. She has, in fact, “written the book” on the subject.

NOTES:

George Reynard sent this notice to Larus:
Scott McConnell is writing a story about our 2nd DVOC President, Witmer Stone. McConnell wants input from DVOCers giving anything of interest about Stone: Stories, actions, things happening at meetings, etc. Contributors must be OLD-TIMERS. Send stories to:
Scott McConnell
6107 W. 20th St.

Stillwater, OK 74074

Colin Campbell wants to purchase one issue of *Cassinia*

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Vol 48 (XLVIII) 1964 in good condition. Thanks.
302 792 2506

Annual Awards nominations

The nominating subcommittees are looking for suggestions for the following awards that are to be presented at the Annual Banquet on November 18. Awards are based upon a list of suitable candidates and not necessarily issued every year. Your help in making timely suggestions is most welcome.

The **Potter Award** is awarded to “a member or members of the DVOC who have made an outstanding contribution to field ornithology”. Contact Doris McGovern

The **Witmer Stone Award** is awarded to “one or more DVOC members for the best publication which embodies the results of ornithological research not undertaken in the course of professional duties”. Contact: Colin Campbell

The Conservation Award. “This honor shall be given to any persons that are nonmembers and not necessarily a part of the birding community, in recognition of work done, that has contributed to the overall welfare of the birding community”. Contact Art McMorris

Previous winners are listed at www.dvoc.org



Please submit announcements, pieces to be considered for publication, schedules and other information for *Philadelphia Larus* to:

Jane Henderson

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

DVOC Website Address:
www.dvoc.org

Deadline for Christmas Count *Larus*: November 1, 2004

President, cont'd

binoculars for distribution which in turn will be used by various kids including the boy scouts, tiny tots World Series as well as beginner adult programs.

By donating, we continue to grow our hobby as well as derive pleasure from giving something back to the birding community. As the leading birding club in the area, the DVOG should be at the forefront of this initiative, so I am asking you to aid the program by either (1) making a donation. This could be for the purchase of one kids pair at \$35; or half an adult pair at \$40 or a very generous donation of \$80 for the complete purchase of an adult pair. Or (2), donate an old pair of optics that you may not be using any more, preferably one that is in good shape (remember people need to be able to see the bird through them!).

If you should make a financial donation, please indicate that this is for the DVOG Binocular Program. If you decide to donate an old pair of optics, Paul or I would be glad to receive them from you at a meeting.

Here's hoping to see you at a meeting or on a field trip soon,

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Wanted: Volunteers to join Committees

Committees make up the backbone of a club, and the DVOG is no exception having at least 16 committees. The club membership has expanded in recent years and I would like to see a lot more of the membership involved in the running of the club. Council discusses and occasionally has to vote on ideas that are brought forward by the various committees. Committee chairpersons are always looking for additional people to help out by providing additional input, as well as at times much needed support. Ideally I would like to see three people on each committee. The more volunteers that we have, it goes without saying, the better the club will be represented. As we move the club forward, there are a number of committees that would welcome your support....Conservation; Larus; Membership; Promotions; Stone Award; Potter Award; Conservation Award. I invite you to be actively involved with our wonderful club and hope that some of you will fill some of these positions. A

A Trip to Martha's Place

By Jeff Holt (abridged by J. Henderson)

On Sunday, August 8, 2004, Vern Laux, a Martha's Vineyard birder, was investigating the open fields of the Edgartown Katama airfield and spied what he first thought to be a Mississippi Kite. Something about the way the bird was perched bothered Laux. On Tuesday the 11th, Laux e-mailed a photo of the bird to Harvard ornithologist Jeremiah Trimble. What Laux had found was a Red-footed Falcon. A bird that breeds in Eastern Europe and winters in Africa had made its way to the Western Hemisphere for the first time. The North American birding community wasn't about to allow the Martha's Vineyard folks to enjoy the remaining days of summer in peace.

On Wednesday morning, I fired up the computer and moved to the birding sites where Paul Guris had posted information alerting Delaware Valley birders about the falcon. I didn't drop everything and race out the door, but a nagging feeling began in my gut. Since I hadn't eaten, I was pretty sure it wasn't indigestion.

Throughout the day, more & more reports on the Falcon were being posted. I knew that this was a "twitch" that had to be seriously considered.

Around 8:00, I mentioned to Scott Henderson that
Colin

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Bear Swamp, cont'd from Page 1

close? Was he a bird fledged from one of our boxes last year? I like to think so! Note: this box did not show any sign of a nest this year. Such is the flow of life.

As the season progressed, and we monitored the boxes each week, we delighted in many memorable sightings as the stream and life within the wooded swamp flowed steadily on, always changing. On a club trip, we caught sight of a Black-and-white Warbler carrying deer hair. This led to the discovery of his nest on the ground beside the trail. Another time we enjoyed a close look at a Yellow-billed Cuckoo preening in the early morning sunlight. Also a Hooded Warbler's nest with four young was found. There were many more sightings too numerous to mention.

July 7 was our last check of the 12 nest boxes. Final results: 10 nest starts, 2 were second broods; 43 eggs laid, 30 young fledged. This was much better than the previous three years.

We were fortunate that the nesting season was over when the thousand year storm hit this area on July 12. There was very little damage long Little Creek and Miry Run thanks to the vast 3000 acre heavily wooded forest that comprises Bear Swamp. This area was able to absorb the sudden impact of 13 inches of rain in one day. Bear Swamp is a great living example of why we need to protect the natural environment. The water did flow very high in both streams, but only one box was lost on Little Creek, and on box on Miry Run was lifted off its pole and recovered downstream. I estimated the water to be five feet higher than normal.

Proposals for 2005 World Series of Birding Donations Horseshoe Crabs, Shorebirds, and the Delaware Bayshore

In past years, the funds raised by DVOC's World Series of Birding team, the Nikon / DVOC Lagerhead Shrikes, have gone to a number of good projects. This year, Council and others have expressed an interest in supporting the work of those individuals and/or organizations dedicated to the protection of the horseshoe crabs, and attendant shorebirds, along the shores of the Delaware Bay.

In an effort to locate those projects where DVOC can make a real impact, we have contacted Eric Stiles, the Vice President for Conservation and Stewardship for New Jersey Audubon. Eric has been involved with numerous individuals and organizations working towards protection of this local treasure. Conversations with Eric have revealed three distinct areas where our donations could be put to use:

Science and Research: The full story of the interaction between shorebirds and horseshoe crabs is still not known. One project involving research involves the continuation and expansion of David Mizrahi's work concerning Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers. His initial work appears to show that the Semipalmated Sandpiper is quite dependent upon the horseshoe crabs for nesting success, while Least Sandpipers are less impacted. This particular project uses Federal funds, which have matching requirements, so our donations could go a long way.

An important monitoring project that must continue is the measuring of horseshoe crab egg densities on the breeding beaches. This project has been ongoing for many years, and is vital to quantifying the impact of overfishing on the crabs and on the food available to shorebirds. The project, however, does not have guaranteed funding.

Advocacy: It's unfortunate, but politics often trumps science. So how do we get our voices heard over sometimes very well funded industry groups? One project that New Jersey Audubon is trying to get off the ground is an on-line system that allows concerned birders to send hard-copy FAXes on timely issues. Technically, E-mails would alert people to a pressing issue. An on-line system would allow them to customize a form letter, or create their own letter, and have it FAXed to the appropriate agency. The first use of this system would be a campaign to list the Red Knot as an endangered species, an outcome that could would change the entire conservation game-plan.

Education: We discussed two projects. The first project is the creation of a guide to viewing shorebirds along the Delaware Bay. Apparently the information for the New Jersey side of the bay is well in hand, but more input on areas, access, platforms, and the like is needed for Delaware. In addition, the book guide must be written, printed, and distributed. Our donation would go towards the creation and printing of this bookdocument, and club members would be asked to share their expertise on the best shorebird areas in Delaware.

Another route for education support would require further input from the individuals deeply involved in education today. We would ask for a proposal from New Jersey (contacting Kathy Clark) and Delaware (contacting Karen Cunningham) for how they would use \$2,500 each for education purposes. These proposals would spell out actual deliverables, and the outcomes expected from them.

What Now?: Eric Stiles has graciously offered to be involved with us every step of the way, and clearly understands the club's focus for donations; we want the cause(s) to be local, and we want our donation to make a visible impact. The choice to be made now is which of the three areas listed above do we wish to support. Once we have focused on the topic where we would like most to be involved, specific requests for proposal would be sent to the individuals in charge.

Falcon, from Page 4

Campbell was leaving that night for Massachusetts. After a thoughtful pause, he replied "We should go up"! I suggested that we leave immediately, pausing only long enough to grab our binoculars. Scott quashed my suggestion, offering instead to leave Thursday afternoon.

On Thursday morning, the birding websites were atwitter. Luminaries such as David Sibley had seen the bird the day before. The bird was still present as of 9:15 that morning. Vineyard locals were providing information on how to reach the island and use public transportation to get to the airport. The media had picked up on the story; the *NY Times* ran a front page story. It was decided that Scott would meet me at my house at 1:00 and we'd be off.

After filling the car in Woodbury, NJ with the essential equipment, the chase began. The drive north went as well as could be expected. We rolled into beautiful downtown Falmouth on Cape Cod around 8:30. We found a motel and checked in. We had dinner at an Irish Pub.

We awoke shortly after 5:00 to a monsoon. A quick stop for coffee, and we arrived at the parking lot in time to catch the first shuttle bus from Falmouth to Woods Hole and the ferry to Martha's Vineyard. By the time we boarded the 7:00 ferry for the island, the rain had stopped, but heavy fog and clouds did not bode well. The ride to the island took about half an hour where we bonded with others on the same quest. As we disembarked, the fog lifted, the clouds broke up and the day turned glorious with sun, low humidity and reasonable temperatures.

We met with Bob of Able Taxi who implored us to use his service as he knew where the bird was. He took us right to the airport where we immediately saw scopes trained on grayish object sitting atop a runway sign.

While we were watching the bird, approximately 250 people came by. The majority were hardcore birders. But there was also a significant mix of non-birders, locals and vacationers who had read about the phenomenon and wanted to see first hand what the fuss was about. They would hang behind the line of scopes until someone offered them a glimpse. Without exception, each and everyone was awed by the falcon and the spectacle he had caused. During the entire time we were on the Vineyard and the Cape, total strangers would walk up, see our binoculars, and ask, "Have you seen the bird?" The non-birders we encountered seemed genuinely interested on how the Falcon came to be on the island, when he would leave and where he would go. This unexpected visitor may do more to increase local public awareness of the natural environment than 100 shows on the Animal Planet television station.

By late morning, we decided it was time to head home. After another taxi ride from the airport to the ferry terminal and a ferry ride back to the mainland, we were able to start our drive home at noon. We rolled into Woodbury at 8:00. 31 hours, 770 miles driven, 20 miles by ferry and 16 miles by taxi resulted in ceremonial shots

The Once and Future Larus: Changes Effective January 1, 2005

By Naomi Murphy

Times change, and nowhere is this more evident than in the area of communication. From the oldest methods of putting pictographs on cave walls and passing oral messages from generation to generation, people have found increasingly sophisticated ways to communicate.

Recent advances in computers, satellites, the Internet and fiber optics have extended our communication capabilities beyond what most of us would have believed possible twenty-five years ago.

The DVOC has excellent communication vehicles which include *Philadelphia Larus*, the website and *Cassinia*. The ongoing challenge that we face in these days of increasing costs is balancing resources so that we can continue to deliver quality services, programs, newsletters and journals to our members.

The costs of production and mailing of paper copies of *Larus* to all members continue to increase. Council is asking members who are willing and able to download the newsletter from the DVOC website (www.dvoc.org) in lieu of having a paper copy mailed to them. If you are interested in giving this a try, please contact Naomi Murphy or Jane Henderson.

Each issue of the newsletter will be published to the website in portable document format (PDF). Our webmaster, Bert Filemyr, is already archiving (<http://www.acnatsci.org/hosted/dvoc/Publications/Larus/Larus.htm>) older issues so that everyone can access them on-line as far back as December 2000. And all you need to open and read a PDF document is Adobe Acrobat Reader which can be downloaded free from the Adobe website at (www.adobe.com).

Downloading *Larus* is a fairly straightforward process and I suggest that those of us with the capability give electronic delivery a try for the December 2004 issue.

The intent of these changes is to save the club some money in these times of increasing expenses and to move us all a little further along the information highway. It may also help us to attract new members. All of these are good reasons, so we really hope you will give this a try.

of Yukon Jack consumed and Red-Footed Falcon was officially ticked on our respective life lists.

I've purposely elected not to offer a description of the Falcon, as others far better versed than I have already written extensively about the bird. Furthermore, plenty of photographs have been published of the bird, and so, I'll leave it to you to decide if the twitch was worth it. Suffice it to say, that both the adventure and the goal lived up to my expectations.

Ed. note: More details of Jeff's Falcon Story can be found at <http://www.dvoc.org/Publications/Larus/2004Fall/HoltFalcon.htm>