



# Distelfink

Newsletter of the

## Baird Ornithological Club

### Fall 2021 - Our 100<sup>th</sup> year!

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#### Presidents Message by Lucy Cairns July 2021

Assuming the role of President of the BOC, as I have done this year, is a humbling experience considering the credentials and accomplishments of those preceding me in this role—beginning with Earl Poole and ending with our Immediate Past President, Tony Grimm. The Club owes Tony a huge debt of gratitude for his leadership through the first year of the pandemic and for his extensive work on behalf of our 100<sup>th</sup>-year Anniversary Celebration. Tony’s efforts were key in garnering publicity for this important club milestone in multiple local media outlets, raising the profile of our group in the

community and garnering some new members for the BOC! He also took the lead in making--and then re-making, in response to pandemic social restrictions--arrangements for our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Banquet, now scheduled for November 12. His work is not done, as he continues to serve on your Board of Directors, but hopefully he can now find time to occasionally rest on his laurels and maybe even spend more time birding.

This spring, I was concerned when we were forced to proceed with the election of new officers without a candidate for Vice President. Now I can announce, with great delight, that our present Secretary, Sheila Martin, has responded to supplication by the rest of the Board to assume the role of Acting Vice President. When the time comes for Sheila's formal election as VP, the incoming club Secretary will benefit tremendously from the initiatives Sheila has undertaken to organize our membership records and from the example of Sheila's detailed and well-organized minutes. The project Sheila carried out with our Treasurer, Charles Coleman, earlier this year to send out dues-reminder postcards was highly successful and will continue as part of her legacy. Despite the pandemic (or perhaps because of it?) membership in the BOC increased between 2020 and 2021!

Speaking of dues, you will find the **Membership Renewal Form** with this newsletter. Print it, fill it in, and send it with your check to the address given OR simply send your check in with your own note providing the information requested on the form. If you come prepared with your check and the completed form to our September meeting, you can save a stamp by handing them to Chuck in person – assuming that Nolde is not closed again due to the pandemic.

With this newsletter you will also find **the reservation form for the BOC 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet** featuring **Scott Weidensaul**. Scott will talk about his latest book, *A World on the Wing: The Global Odyssey of Migratory Birds*. As many of you know, Scott Weidensaul is a superb speaker in addition to being a world-renowned naturalist, writer, and researcher specializing in birds and their migration. I recommend reserving your seat at this event sooner rather than later, since we expect an unusually large crowd.

At the July meeting of your Board, I proposed that we expand our club's efforts to make the joy we all find in the natural world—and in birding, in particular---more accessible to groups in our community historically under-represented in birding, and that we work towards diversifying our membership. This met with an enthusiastic response and sparked a discussion of past BOC activities designed with this focus. In past years, for example, BOC members have presented programs in elementary schools in the City of Reading and have led bird walks for families in cooperation with Berks Nature. Hawk Mountain Sanctuary offers educational programs to local schools that might suggest opportunities for us. The ABA offers free membership to “Black, Latinx, and other birders who will help diversify our largely white community,” has developed a range of initiatives to engage and respond to birders from under-represented groups, and has created a ‘working group’ that meets regularly to “move forward our EDI efforts” (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion).

The BOC, of course, is not an organization on the scale of the Sanctuary or the ABA, but our members do represent a rich resource with the potential for spreading the love for birds that we share and recruiting more community members to the cause of conservation. Unfortunately, the lack of diversity reflected by our current membership could represent an obstacle to attracting new members who don't see among us people who look like they do or live in their neighborhoods. This means it is up to us to do the work of reaching out, listening, and responding if we want to be a more inclusive organization.

A query to The Nature Place about opportunities to support their birding programs was met with a prompt response from Tami Shimp describing several possibilities. The Nature Place has a

partnership with Penn State Health for a program (NatureRx) in which physicians and other clinicians prescribe time in nature to their patients. As part of this initiative, a Pediatric practice in downtown Reading is planning a series of guided nature walks in the city for next spring. BOC members might support this program by sharing their knowledge during the planning stage and acting as guides for a bird walk. Guided field walks for students from the Reading School District are planned for this fall at The Nature Place, and BOC volunteers would be welcome. Tami also suggested that the BOC and The Nature Place could schedule a guided bird walk somewhere in the city this fall, with The Nature Place promoting it to their contacts in the city.

Any BOC member who has an interest in participating in any of these proposed activities, or who has ideas of their own for outreach activities, should let me know by sending me an email ([ljanetcairns@gmail.com](mailto:ljanetcairns@gmail.com)) or speaking to me at a meeting.

Happy birding, and see you very soon at our September meeting!

Lucy Cairns, President



## The Baird Ornithological Club Celebrates 100 Years

*"There are very few counties that have the bird watching opportunities that you will find in Berks County."*

Tony Grimm and Bill Uhrich with "Pelicans", 1931 bronze by Earl Lincoln Poole located on the Reading Public Museum grounds.



### The Baird Ornithological Club Celebrates 100 Years

By Phyllis J. McLaughlin and reprinted with permission from the Wyomissing magazine

"There are very few counties that have the bird watching opportunities that you will find in Berks County." – Bill Uhrich, Baird Ornithological Club, Past President, Club Historian

The Baird

Ornithological Club is celebrating its 100th year and its rich and colorful history. The club was founded in 1921 and named to honor Spencer Fullerton Baird, the second Secretary/Director of the Smithsonian Institution and a native of Reading, PA. Wyomissing resident Tony Grimm is the current club President (*Ed. Note: Lucy Cairns is BOC President as of May 2021*). "Our club has 75 paid members who have joined through word of mouth or publicity," says Grimm. "The organization is open to all ages and levels of expertise in birdwatching. We meet September through April at Nolde Forest. The meetings are held from 7:30 to 9:30 on the second Friday of the month, and our speakers come from all over PA; some amateur and some professional, speaking on all aspects of birding."

The club is named in honor of Spencer Fullerton Baird who was born 1823 in Reading to a prominent family that moved to Carlisle in 1826, where he became recognized as a naturalist and collector of specimens. He maintained a lively correspondence with John James Audubon, famous American ornithologist, naturalist, and painter who is best known for his book *The Birds of America* and is credited with identifying 25 new species of birds during his career. Baird sent Audubon a species new

to science, a yellow-bellied flycatcher, and, in turn, Audubon named the Baird's Sparrow in his honor. The Baird's Sparrow is the last bird that was described and painted in Audubon's famous folio. Baird's extensive collections served as the basis for the American Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. He later went on to lead the U.S. Commission of Wildlife and Fisheries. Baird's tradition of scientific thought, exploration, and collecting inspired the gathering of individuals who were interested in advancing the study of birds, and in 1921, the Baird Ornithological Club of Reading was founded by Earl Lincoln Poole in Berks County.

Earle Poole, 1891–1972, an American wildlife artist, sculptor, author, and naturalist, was born in Haddonfield, NJ. He located to Berks County in 1915 to serve as a teacher at the Reading Boy's High School. Dr. Levi Mengel, who served as Director of the Reading Public Museum at the time, brought Poole on board as both an artist and a scientist, first teaching art, and later working in administration at the museum as it started to promote natural science and culture.

In 1921, Poole got together with like-minded individuals who were interested in studying birds. Prior to the introduction of optics to study birds, it was necessary for birds and animals to be shot and killed in order to study them. With the use of binoculars, Poole declared that they were not going to shoot, but observe – “we are going to study, and we are going to observe them.” The Baird Ornithological Club of Reading became official, and those first meetings consisted of drawing birds. Many specimens from Mengel's original collections can be found at the Reading Public Museum today.

In the late 1920s, Poole began to do research on the fall hawk migration at the Eckville Gap, later known as Hawk Mountain, and would often find birds that were shot to add to the museum's collection. In 1934, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Kempton, Berks County, was founded to preserve, observe, and count hawks and their migration, and today the sanctuary oversees the oldest hawk migration database in the world. Poole was one of the original directors at Hawk Mountain.

Another significant study was conducted by the Baird Club when Lake Ontelaunee was built in the late 1920s. Poole knew instinctively that the project would have an effect on the birds and their migration. Lake Ontelaunee was a very large area for birds to ride out storms, and Poole and club members would find remarkable sea birds, waterfowl, and shorebirds as part of that overland migration. They were able to learn the dynamics of migration at Lake Ontelaunee, and the club still visits weekly to update their records. These early projects initiated by Earle Poole and his club members created a solid basis from which to develop and grow as an ornithological club.

Today's Baird Ornithological Club continues its study and observation of the birds of Berks County through activities like the annual Christmas Bird Count, held between December 14–January 4 each year, educational programs, outreach, and bird walks. “The Reading contribution to the Christmas Bird Count began in 1911, and the Baird Club has taken over the annual count since the Club's founding. The Christmas Bird Counts are hugely popular around the United States,” explains Bill Uhrich, past president and historian for the Club. “Through the record-keeping, we're able to see what the birds are doing and record the species, giving us a snapshot in time. If a species is off by numbers, we research further to see if it is due to a pesticide or something else. Through the efforts of dedicated people counting birds and keeping records, we are able to create a yearly picture of the bird population in Berks County.” “There has been an uptick of interest in bird watching since the COVID pandemic began,” Grimm added, “Millions of people have purchased feeders and seed and have taken up birdwatching as something uplifting to do.” For more information on the Baird Ornithological Club visit them at [bairdornithological.club](http://bairdornithological.club) or visit them on Facebook.



## Spencer Baird Historical Marker: Lost and Never Found

New Marker Sponsored by the Baird Ornithological Club Will Take Its Place

By Bill Uhrich

It was there. And then it wasn't.

And then it became a mystery.

The state historical marker honoring the birthplace of Spencer Fullerton Baird, our Baird Ornithological Club's namesake, at the southwest corner of Fifth and Washington streets, was dedicated on Sept. 15, 1950, and remained in place until sometime in the 1990s when it apparently was removed for some street construction and subsequently lost.

I recall admiring the two markers at Baird's birthplace. The first placed by the Historical Society of Berks County, now the Berks History Center, was dedicated in 1923 for the centennial of Baird's birth and was located on the house in which he was born. When the block was redeveloped in the early 1960s and the homes torn down, the Berks marker was mounted on the side of the bank building at the site and remains there.

I often walked downtown during lunch hours and eventually noticed that the state marker was missing. When it failed to reappear, I did some digging with the help of my Reading Eagle column and some phone calls and implored city employees to search the garages and out-of-the-way storage areas for the missing marker. Their searches turned up nothing.

On Oct. 1, 2007, I covered the dedication of the new state historical marker honoring the birthplace of Reading poet Wallace Stevens at 323 N. Fifth St., and met the director of the state historical marker project. I asked her about what the process was for replacing missing markers, and she gave me some preliminary details and the pricing. I talked informally with Baird club members about replacing the marker as a club project.

I wrote about the marker again in the summer of 2015, and former Reading historic preservation specialist Michelle N. Lynch emailed that her office was contacted about removing the marker for construction shortly before she left the position in 1997.

"That Baird marker was definitely removed for sidewalk reconstruction work," she wrote. "I explained that I really had no jurisdiction over those markers, but that if the marker had to be removed to tear up the old sidewalk, it should be reinstalled with the new sidewalk. Apparently, it was never reinstalled, but where it went is a mystery."

With the approach of the Baird club's centennial this year, recent past club president Tony Grimm took up the cause of replacing the marker to honor the anniversary of the club's founding. He contacted Councilwoman Donna Reed, who initiated a new marker search of city properties that once again turned up empty. Tony spearheaded several Zoom meetings with Donna and city personnel to pave the way for the installation of a new marker, with the club and the city splitting the cost.

Amy Johnson, the current city historic preservation specialist, worked with the club to apply for the new marker. Discussions with club members centered on the fact that the older marker did not



emphasize Baird's significant role in the development of the Smithsonian Institution, our nation's foremost museum.

The old marker read:

Doctor Spencer Baird, noted naturalist, was born in this house in 1823.  
He organized U.S. Geological Survey, 1879; was U.S. Commissioner of Fisheries, 1871-1887; Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, 1878-1887. Died in Mass., 1887.

Because the city markers are smaller than highway markers and have a limit of between 35 and 40 words, Amy and club members reworked the language to read:

Spencer Fullerton Baird 1823-1887  
Birthplace; A renowned naturalist for whom many animal species are named. Influential in the development of the Smithsonian Institution, he was its first curator, 1850, and second Secretary, 1878-87. First U.S. Commissioner of Fisheries, 1871-87. Died in Woods Hole, Mass.

The state historical commission must give final approval to the marker and its language, but we look forward to rededicating the new marker this fall.

**A note from Charles Coleman about Jack Holcomb's interview with Scott Weidensaul about "A World on the Wing."**

All B.O.C. members should not miss our Centennial Banquet November 12. Our speaker, Scott Weidensaul, will speak about his new book *A World on the Wing*. He will also be glad to autograph copies of his books.

His talk will appeal to birders whose sole tool is binoculars, as well as newer birders whose sole tool is an iPhone. He will tell you about the falcon migration from Assam, India to Africa that outshined the best day of Broad-wing migration at Hawk Mountain.

Scott was born in Schuylkill Haven and was mentored in birding as a child by Hawk Mountain visits and local birders including many members of the Baird Club. We are lucky to have such a prominent birder willing to return to his first club to help us celebrate our centennial.



## Hybrid Meetings this season: In-person at Nolde Forest and via ZOOM, (However Dec., Jan. and Feb, will be Zoom only and no Zoom for the November Banquet)

By Lucy Cairns

Your Board of Directors has planned a return to in-person Friday evening programs starting in September (COVID-19 conditions allowing). You won't want to miss the September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, at which refreshments will accompany a chance for old friends to reconnect in person, new friends will be welcomed, and the program will present a panel discussion of BOC history by some of our most esteemed and knowledgeable members. Thanks to the skilled efforts of Zoom-master Mike Slater and Nolde Forest for making an internet connection available, this year we will have the capability to **offer hybrid programs: in-person meetings but with the program streamed live over Zoom for any members who wish to attend virtually** or who find it difficult to make the drive to Nolde. An exception to this rule is that we will offer the **December, January and February programs over Zoom exclusively, in view of the hazardous travel conditions that can disrupt plans at short notice in the winter.** Links to attend all meetings via Zoom will be emailed to all the members we have addresses for. If you don't receive it by 2 days before the meeting please contact Mike Slater at [paplantings@gmail.com](mailto:paplantings@gmail.com).

## BOC Meetings/Programs Fall 2021-Spring 2022

### Sep 10, 2021, 7:30pm - BOC History & Social

Our first in-person meeting in more than a year will feature a panel discussion and social as we get re-acquainted. Bill Uhrich, Joanne Kintner, and Rudy Keller will discuss BOC's century of history as members and guests enjoy light refreshments. Bring your favorite snacks to share, drinks will be provided.

### Oct 8, 2021, 7:30 pm - Birds & Wildlife of Chile (updated meeting by Zoom only)

Mike & Jan Slater, Rudy Keller, Russ Hoffman, Linda Ingram

Five BOC members and three friends traveled in November 2019 to Chile; unknowing it would be anyone's last trip for a very long time – fortunately, it was spectacular in every way! High into the imposing Andes Mountains chasing seedsnipe, finding flocks of Baird's sandpipers on the Chiloe Island coast, mesmerized by condors gliding along stone cliffs, charmed by King penguins in Patagonia, all in an ever-changing landscape. The mammals and plants will not be left out!

### Nov 12, 2021, 6:00pm - BOC Annual Banquet - held jointly with Mengel Natural History Society (no Zoom for this meeting)

Banquet guest speaker is noted author and lecturer **Scott Weidensaul**, sharing an illustrated program on his latest book "*A World on the Wing, the Global Odyssey of Migrating Birds*".

**(Print the flyer/reservation form below, or download it from website or call Charles Coleman 610-763-2548)**

### Dec 10, 2021, 7:30pm – The Real James Bond - meeting by Zoom only

Jim Wright [www.celeryfarm.net](http://www.celeryfarm.net) is the author of *The Real James Bond*, [www.realjamesbond.net](http://www.realjamesbond.net), the story of the ornithologist/author who was the victim of the greatest identity theft in history. Although Bond, who wrote the landmark *Birds of the West Indies* in 1936, is now mostly a footnote for 007 fans, he lived a life of great accomplishment. Jim's illustrated talk covers Bond's life and career, with



special mention of ornithologists who were spies, most notably the American Museum of Natural History's James Chapin.

**Jim Wright** has authored large-format books about the New Jersey Meadowlands, Hawk Mountain, and Central America's Selva Maya.

**Jan 14, 2022, 7:30pm - Migration and Overwintering Strategies of Veeries Breeding in the Mid-Atlantic Region - meeting by Zoom only** Christopher M. Heckscher, Prof. of Environmental Science & Ecology, Delaware State University and Todd J. Underwood, Prof. of Biology, Kutztown University

Veeries breed in dense, wet forests of eastern North America and are easily recognized by their distinctive song. Using the latest tracking technology suitable for small songbirds, we followed the migration of Veeries from their breeding grounds in the Mid-Atlantic Region to their overwintering sites in South America. In this lecture, we will discuss patterns of migration, hurricane avoidance, overwintering locations, and movements, and compare the overwintering locations of birds that breed at French Creek State Park in Pennsylvania to birds that breed at White Clay Creek State Park in Delaware.

**Feb 11, 2022 7:30 pm - Ecology of the Northern Clapper Rail - meeting by Zoom only**

Elisa Elizondo, University of Delaware, Ph.D. candidate

It's spring! Time to head for the coastal marshes with hopes of glimpsing elusive clapper rails (*Rallus crepitans crepitans*). The Saltmarsh Habitat Avian Research Program ([tidalmarshbirds.org](http://tidalmarshbirds.org)) is dedicated to the study of salt marsh birds and recent efforts led by Lisa Elizondo seek to uncover more information regarding this secretive species. This program will include recent data from Delaware on clapper rail nesting ecology and movement patterns, including the first chick survival data and the first GPS tag data.

**Mar 11, 2022 7:30pm - American Kestrel Conservation: Successful Partnership, PGC and the Birding Community** - Dan Mummert, PGC, Wildlife Diversity Biologist

In 2015, the American Kestrel was added to Pennsylvania's list of species of conservation concern due to a loss of nearly half their population since the mid-1960's throughout North America. In response, the PA Game Commission's southeast region created a kestrel conservation initiative that is working to learn more about their local population and help in their conservation. This presentation will discuss this program and the team effort it has been between the PGC and the birding community.

**Apr 8, 2022 7:30pm -Bill's City of Reading Big Year - Bill Uhrich**

To paraphrase Thoreau, I have traveled much in Reading. A layoff and COVID-19 isolation allowed me to explore the bird life possibilities within the city limits. We'll talk about the places, and the people, and the birds, encountered during my City of Reading Big Year Counts.

**May 13, 2022 7:30pm - Berks County Birds Photo Display by Russ Hoffman & Social Evening – (In person only, no Zoom)**

We will end the 2021-22 season with a display of Russ Hoffman's excellent framed photos of Berks County Birds. Russ will circulate through the display sharing how he captured these remarkable images as members and guests enjoy light refreshments. Bring snacks to share, drinks provided. (A bonus to the evening – the artwork is available for purchase!)

## Berks Birds Winter 2020—2021 compiled by Rudy Keller for Dec 2020 – Feb 2021

Locations: Blue Marsh L. (**BML**), E. J. Breneman Quarry (**BQ**), Hawk Mt. Sanctuary (**HMS**), L. Ontelaunee (**LO**), Pheasant Valley Farm, Robesonia (**PVF**), Reading CBC (RCBC).

Except for a storm that dropped ten inches of snow 12/17, Dec and Jan continued the trend of open, fairly mild winters. A major storm that dropped up to two feet of snow 2/1 brought much colder weather that froze waterways and kept the ground covered with snow till Mar.

Two major rarities shared headline space this winter. An imm. male **King Eider** seen at LO 1/2 (BSm) was in view for a brief ten minutes before it flew away, not to be seen again. That was enough time for the observer to capture a grainy but identifiable photo via cell phone through a scope (photo and description submitted to PORC). It was the first **King Eider** recorded in Berks, making this the only PA county to have recorded both eastern eiders. An adult male Common Eider seen at LO 3/12/98 is on the PORC provisional list.



A **Northern Wheatear**, the second in Berks and the fifth in PA, seen at Hamburg Commerce Park 12/10 (JSp) till 12/15 was a crowd pleaser, attracting dozens of birders from several states (many photos on eBird). This barren lands breeder found the highly disturbed, sparsely vegetated landscape of this golf course turned warehouse development much to its liking and might have stayed longer but for the cold front and snowstorm that froze it out. Had it flown the right way on migration from its nesting ground in eastern arctic Canada or Greenland, it might have been in N. Africa by then.

In contrast to recent winters, the persistent cold and snow of Feb delayed most waterfowl migration till Mar. **Snow Goose** flocks of a few hundred to a few thousand were reported as flyovers or field gleaners as usual. One to 3 **Cackling Geese** were occasionally seen in the large **Canada Goose**

flock wintering at BQ Dec to Feb (mobs.). A **Snow X Canada Goose** was intermittently reported at BQ 12/6 – 2/10 (JH, RK, MS). This hybrid has been reported a few times since the resurgence of Snow Geese in the 1990's. **Mute Swan** has not resurged since the culling of the flock of about 30 birds at LO several years ago. The largest group reported this winter was of about 6 birds at Bernhart's Dam near Reading in Dec and Jan (mobs.). A flock of 64 musical **Tundra Swans** in a slow glide over BML 12/28 (RK) was the largest reported this season.

One or 2 **Wood Ducks** lingered till 1/2, but 4 seen near Robesonia 2/14 (PM) were probably early migrants. BQ, reliably ice-free, is the place where uncommon ducks end up after the lakes freeze. One or a few **Northern Shovelers**, **Northern Pintails** and **Green-winged Teals** were reported there in Feb (mobs.). The season's high count of the **Gadwall** flock that winters around LO was 85 on 1/25 (RK). Among them was a **Gadwall X Mallard** drake 12/22 and 1/6 (RK), the third time that this hybrid has been reported since 2017. The winter high count of **American Wigeons** was of 22 at LO 1/30 (RK). For decades, this duck has wintered as regularly as Gadwall and once outnumbered it. Birders are more frequently identifying and reporting **American Black Duck X Mallard** hybrids, mostly drakes. One to 4 of these were reported at multiple locations, mostly among the hundreds of **Mallards** at BQ, where an adjacent homeowner feeds them corn. **American Black Duck's** decline continues – the season's high count was only 80 on the RCBC 12/20. Besides common **Ring-necked Ducks**, one to 4 **Redheads**, **Greater Scaups** and **Lesser Scaups** were among the Aythya ducks reported at BQ most of the period (mobs.). A flock of 11 **Long-tailed Ducks** stopped briefly at BML 1/2 (PJW). A few **Buffleheads** and **Common Goldeneyes** popped up on various lakes, with 10 of the latter at LO 1/28 (AW). Just before the Feb freeze, seasonal high counts of 43 **Hooded Mergansers** (AW) and 312 **Common Mergansers** (RK) were made at LO. A few **Red-breasted**

**Mergansers** have been reported every winter since at least 2010. These are often Dec migrants heading for the coast, such as 2 at LO 12/10 (PJW). Seven seen on the Schuylkill R. during the RCBC 12/20 (AZ) provided just the third record of the species on that count since 2008. One was at BQ 2/3 (JH). Many counts of the annually wintering flock of **Ruddy Ducks** at BQ ranged from a few to 47. Among them wintered 3 **Pied-billed Grebes** and one **Horned Grebe**, the latter irregular in this season.

As noted in the Fall 2020 report, the **Eurasian Collared-Dove** colony in Shartlesville seems to be growing. There were the usual reports by passing birders padding lists of one or 2 birds along Main St., but one observer found 6 on 12/22 and 11 on 1/9 (SB). Three **Rufous Hummingbirds** stayed from fall into winter, one all winter. All were banded by Sandy Lockerman. An imm. male in Exeter Twp. first seen 11/11 was last seen 12/13 (LV). A different Rufous visited the same garden last year. An adult male near Boyertown first seen 10/3 was last seen 1/7 (C&MM). There are good photos on eBird of this bird visiting a heated feeder on a snowy day. An adult female first seen near Boyertown in mid-Sep (DM) was still there in Apr 2021 (R&KW), having survived the winter by alternating between two feeders about an eighth mile apart.



**American Coots** wintering at BQ numbered two - 22, the higher counts made during the first half of the period. Three **Sandhill Cranes** migrated south over HMS 12/7 (BB). One to 5 **Killdeer** and one to 6 **Wilson's Snipe** were seen in open springs in farmland at various times during the period as usual. Two first winter **Iceland Gulls** visited BML, a light bird 1/22-27 (mobs.) and a darker bird 1/30 (RK). Up to 5 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** (a normal number) and one or 2 **Great Black-backed Gulls** (low) were occasionally seen at BML (mobs.). Most gulls left after the Feb freeze-up. The season's only reported **Red-throated Loon** was at LO 12/10,12 (RK, JV). One or 2 late migrating

**Common Loons** were at BML and LO on various dates from 12/4-14 (RK, AM, SS). There was no overwintering attempt by **Double-crested Cormorant**, last seen at LO 12/10 (RK, PJW).

Single **Northern Harriers** were reported at 15 locations on 15 dates spanning the period (mobs.).

Modern intensive agriculture provides very little vole habitat, so harriers move through farmland fairly quickly. The few maintained grasslands, such as at PVF, a gamebird farm and private hunting preserve, and some state game lands, can attract them all

*A dark first-winter Iceland Gull at Blue Marsh Lake.*

*Photo by Russ Hoffman*

winter. The snow and cold of Feb brought 2 light morph **Rough-legged Hawks** 2/13, one to Fleetwood (PH) and the other to Robesonia (BL), neither seen again. A **Snowy Owl** first seen near Topton in early Jan. (fide SSc) stayed till about mid-Feb (fide RK). It was seen and photographed by a few local birders 1/25-28, but its location was kept secret because it spent most of its time on a farm whose owner is notably hostile to any perceived trespassers, including birders. A **Short-eared Owl** was flushed by hunters at PVF (see above) 12/22 (BL). This farm has hosted these birds in previous years. A Barn Owl was seen at PVF 2/16 (BL). A **Northern Saw-whet Owl** roosted in a hemlock at a residence in Bern Twp. 12/2-9 (EB). Another was heard calling in daytime at HMS 1/20 (PH). Considering its sadly low numbers, **American Kestrel** was fairly widely reported, decreasing after the Feb snowstorm. There were



*Snowy Owl near Topton. Photo by Russ Hoffman*

scattered reports of **Merlins**, most often seen at BML as usual. Birders reported **single Peregrine Falcons** at 10 places on various dates through the winter. It is unclear if these were wandering birds or were sightings of Reading's resident pair sallying out from their urban towers into the countryside. An **Eastern Phoebe** was at Kernsville Dam and Recreation Area 12/13, 24 and 1/4 (KG). This flycatcher has been reported one or more times during each winter in eight of the last ten years.

**Black-capped Chickadees** staged their largest irruption into Berks since 2010-11. As during two previous irruptions, birds were first noticed flying southwest along the Kittatinny Ridge at HMS in early fall and were more widely reported when they started visiting feeders later in fall and early winter. Most reports were of single birds, but groups of 3-7 were reported at some feeders and in the field. There was a slight uptick in numbers on CBC's, but true numbers were probably masked by common use of designations such as "chickadee sp." or "Carolina/Black-capped" or calling all chickadees Carolina on local CBC's, as Berks is still partly in the Carolina/Black-capped Chickadee hybrid zone. This irruption was smaller than the one in 2010-11, when some feeder watchers reported groups of 10-12 birds, and flocks of similar size were found in the field during the peak of the movement. An irruption in 2007-08 was even larger than that in 2010-11. See the appropriate previous seasonal issues of Pennsylvania Birds for details. As in previous irruptions, reports tapered off in Feb and Mar as birds quietly vanished. One assumes they fly back north. A report of 104 Black-capped Chickadees migrating past Derby Hill Bird Observatory at the eastern end of L. Ontario in New York 4/7/21 may provide evidence that they actually do.

A small movement of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continued from fall, a few found on CBC's and a few more at some feeders all winter. **Tufted Titmouse** counts on the RCBC have slowly risen from 17 at the nadir in 2018, when West Nile Virus decimated the population, to 36 in 2019 and 61 in 2020. The 20-year average count on the RCBC is 186. **Gray Catbirds** were reported at four places. One at Shillington Park was monitored 12/7-23 (NW). One at Green Hills Preserve survived till at least 1/30 (RH). This species has been reported one or more times in nine of the last ten winters. After an excellent fall showing, **American Pipits** continued in smaller numbers into winter, with 35 near Fleetwood 12/21 (JSp) and 1-5 lingering at a few open springs into frozen Feb.

The northern finch superflight lightly touched Berks. Except for a few that settled in at feeders, the **Purple Finches** of fall moved on. **Common Redpolls** made their best showing since 2007-08, but numbers were small and they were seen by few birders. Most were recorded at HMS, where 50 flew by North Lookout 12/8 and a flock of 45 was seen feeding on black birch seeds deep in the forest 1/20 (PH). South of the Kittatinny Ridge, two flocks of 4 (JSp) and 5 (M-TG) were seen on field trips and two lucky feeder watchers (LC, CB) got visits from one or 2 birds, the last in Gilbertsville 2/15 (CB). The 2007-08 flight was similar in size and distribution. HMS tallied 5 **Red Crossbills** 12/5, 3 on 12/7 and 14 on 12/14. The only other report was of 2 heard at Monocacy Hill, Amity Twp. 12/22 (S&F). As often before, **Pine Siskins** were the most numerous northern finches. There were many reports of a few to 40 at feeders, with numbers highest in Dec and Jan.

The snowstorms 12/17 and 2/1 brought gratifying numbers of **Lapland Longspurs** and **Snow Buntings**. Both species were most numerous after the Feb storm, when 1-5 Lapland Longspurs were reported near Fleetwood 2/2-7 and 2-10 near PVF 2/6-13 (mobs.). Due to continuous snowcover on the fields, birds often foraged along roadsides cleared of snow, allowing very good views. The chiming twitter of Snow Buntings could be enjoyed when their flocks, sometimes numbering 40-50 birds but usually smaller, also came to roadsides. Several flights in previous years have brought hundreds of these living snowflakes. Both species were gone by mid-Feb.

The changing composition of winter sparrow populations seems to become more apparent every year as **Chipping Sparrows**, **Fox Sparrows** and **Eastern Towhees** become more regular and **American Tree sparrows** become harder to find. **Vesper Sparrows** have always been rare in winter, so one photographed at Rodale Experimental Farm 1/19 (TW) and another near Clayton 2/6 (JB) were noteworthy. This sparrow was last reported in winter in 2012. Snow cover that forced field birds to



feed conspicuously at roadsides resulted in an all time high count of 45 **Savannah Sparrows** on the RCBC 12/20. Single **Eastern Meadowlarks** were reported at three locations 12/19, 2/8 and 2/13. The other drastically declining icterid, **Rusty Blackbird**, was reported twice, a singleton on the RCBC 12/20 and 4 at Union Meadows Park, Birdsboro (currently the most reliable location to see this species) 1/16 (JT). Two **Palm Warblers** were seen along the roadside near Rodale Experimental Farm 12/18 and one nearby 12/19 (TW). A **western Palm Warbler** was photographed at Peters Creek, LO 1/31 (BSm). There are a few previous winter records of this warbler. A stressed looking **Magnolia Warbler**, the first reported in winter, was photographed near Boyertown 12/2 (BSp). It was not seen again.

OBSERVERS: Rudy Keller, [rckeller@dejazzd.com](mailto:rckeller@dejazzd.com), Ed Barrell, John Becker, Carrie Bell, Bracken Brown, Sara Busch, Linda Chowns, Kerry Grim, M-T Grob, Paul Heveran, Russ Hoffman, Jason Horn, Kate Houlne, Linda Ingram, Nathan Lewis, Brian Lineaweaver, Debra Mann, Adam Miller, Peter Montgomery, Cathy & Mike Moyer, Derek Price, Sue Schmoyer, Joan Silagy, Mike Slater, Barton Smith, Susan Smith, Jo Spilde, Bob Sprague, Stollery & Flood, Jaime Thomas, Todd Underwood, Lois Vedock, Jeff Vinosky, Ron & Karen Wagner, Todd Watkins, Nelson Weber, Peter & Jane Wolfe, Andy Wlasniewski, Matt Wlasniewski, Art Zdancewic

## **Berks Birds Spring 2021 compiled by Matt Wlasniewski** for March – May 2021

Locations: Bartram Trail (**BAT**), Berne Township, (**BT**), Blue Mountain Academy (**BMA**), Blue Marsh Lake (**BML**), Blue Marsh Lake State Hill Boat Launch (**BMLSH**), Blue Marsh Lake Sheidy Boat Launch (**BMLSBL**), Blue Marsh Stilling Basin (**BMSB**), Buxton Conservancy (**BC**), EJ Breneman's Quarry (**BQ**), French Creek State Park (**FCSP**), Gotwal's Pond (**GoP**), Green Hills Preserve (**GHP**), Hamburg Commerce Park (**HCP**), Hamburg Reservoir (**HR**), Hawk Mountain North Lookout Data (**HMNL**), Hawk Mountain South Lookout (**HMSL**), Hay Creek (**HCr**), Kaercher Creek (**KC**), Kernsville Desilting-basin Recreation Area (**KDRA**), Kutztown University (**KU**), Lake Ontelaunee (**LO**), Lake Ontelaunee Bailey's Creek (**LOBC**), Lake Ontelaunee Blue Falls (**LOBF**), Lake Ontelaunee Water Street (**LOWA**), Lake Ontelaunee West Shore Drive (**LOWS**), Lowland Road Retention Pond (**LRRP**), Monacacy Hill Recreation Area (**MHRC**), Mount Penn (**MP**), Old Topton Road (**OTP**), Peter's Creek (**PC**), Pine Swamp Road (**PSR**), School Road Pond (**SRP**), Shartlesville Farm Pond (**SFP**), State Game Lands 52 (**SGL52**), State Game Lands 106 (**SGL106**), State Game Lands 110 North Kill Gap (**SGL110**), State Game Lands 280 Brownsville (**SGL28**), Trout Run Reservoir (**TRR**).

The avian activity in Berks reflected the weak weather patterns this quarter. With the exception of **Snow Geese**, there were no large waterfowl numbers on local lakes. Passerine activity was also erratic with the absence of the friendly wind patterns that could have brought higher numbers of migrants. Local birders were spread out over the county in search of waves that didn't materialize.

On two sunny mornings, MW spotted **Greater White-fronted Geese** flying with **Snow Geese** near BML: ten on 3/9 and one on 3/11.

The first two weeks of March were the highlight of the waterfowl migration. Large **Snow Geese** flocks were seen overhead as they bypassed the local lakes with these exceptions. RK counted 30,000 at GP 3/2; 40,000 at LO 3/6 and 15,000 at SGL280 3/11.

SG counted 3,000 Snow Geese at SGL280 3/9. Four injured Snow Geese lingered at LO (MW) until they died from their wounds or the heavy automobile traffic on Route 73.



Two **Ross's Geese** were picked out of a Snow Geese flock BML 3/10 (RH). A single Cackling Goose was found 3/7 BML (JW, PW).

**Tundra Swans**, uncommon during migration, usually appear in small flocks. RK was surprised to find an exceptional 84 Tundra Swan LOWS 3/3. Six Blue-winged Teal were seen on LO 4/18 (LI). On 3/28 a pair of Blue-winged Teal spent the day at SFP (MW).

Single **Canvasback** were counted twice this quarter; 3/4 LOWS (RK) and 3/26 LO (AW). **Redhead** numbers were less with a high count of 5 on 3/6 BMLSH (DP). A common migrant, **Ring-necked Duck**, was found scattered throughout Berks; however, the 410 Ring-necked Ducks 3/19 LO (RK) was unusual.

Rain storms, even small ones, often bring coastal migrants inland to Berks lakes. DP stopped by LOWS 3/9 and found 40 **Greater Scaup** and 40 **Lesser Scaup**. **White-winged Scoter** are rare migrants but MW found three resting at LO 4/25 after a storm. A similar weather event resulted in three **Long-tailed Ducks** landing at BML 3/26 (JW, MW, PW).

**Bufflehead** were found in small numbers this migration. The largest flock was 30 at LO 3/7 (MC). At LOBC 3/3, KD noted five **Common Goldeneye**. Single Common Goldeneyes lingered at LOWS 3/3-3/6 (KD, RK).

**Common Mergansers** appear in large numbers at LO and the largest flock was 800 Common Mergansers 3/4 (RK). On 3/20, MW counted 600 Common Mergansers at LO. The uncommon **Red-breasted Merganser** was seen on two occasions: four Red-breasted Mergansers 3/20 LO (RK, MW) and three 5/10 BML (RK). The high count for Ruddy Duck was 55 at BQ 3/27 (SB). RK counted 51 3/11 BQ and 42 5/10 LO.

**Red-throated Loons** were rare and RK was fortunate to find two 5/8 LO and only one 5/10 LO. There were no large rafts of **Common Loon** to be found this migration. The highest count was 9 LO (JW, PW). KG spotted five **Pied-billed Grebes** at KC 4/12. After an overnight storm, MW found 36 **Horned Grebes** at LO 3/26.

**American Bitterns** are usually seen in singles and such was the case three times this migration: 4/5 KDRA (AM), 4/27 LOBC (KD), 5/9 SGL280 (EB). The **Great Blue Heron** heronry in the Kempton Valley was active this year with at least fifteen active nests noted 5/31 (MW). **Great Egrets** were seen at three different locations: one 3/23 LO (SF), one 5/8 SFP (MW), two 5/21 LOWA (JW, PW). The first report of **Black-crowned Night Herons** at LO's spillway was 5/14 (BB, KB).

The **Broad-wing Hawk** pair returned to HR 4/24 (MW). **Bald Eagles** established a new nest in Lobachsville 5/31 (RK). On 5/22, MW observed an adult Bald Eagle carrying what appeared to be a stick to its nest along Route 61 in Hamburg. Suddenly the stick began to wiggle vigorously as the eagle neared its nest. It was a large water snake destined to be a meal for the two eagle fledglings 5/22 (MW). Hawk Mountain's spring migration report will be included in the raptor summary report in a future Pennsylvania Birds.

KDRA continued to be the most reliable site for rail activity although it was limited this quarter. KG posted 5/8 as the last day of **Virginia Rail** activity at KDRA. Three **Sora** were active at KDRA 4/16-5/9 (KG). On 3/9, an unknown number of **Sandhill Cranes** called as they flew over Leesport (EB, KH). A lone Sandhill Crane made a one-day appearance at LRRP 5/8 (DP).

Shorebird migration was low due to dwindling suitable habitat. **Semipalmated Plovers** were sighted at LOWS 5/19 (RK) and 5/21 (JW, PW). On 5/28 AW found a single Semipalmated Plover at HCP 5/28. Two **Spotted Sandpipers** fed at HCP 5/5 (MW). Although there aren't many exposed mudflats, seven **Greater Yellowlegs** found enough to feed on 4/24 (RK). On 5/9, DP recorded **three Lesser Yellowlegs** at a rain pool on Reigel Road.

Seven **Semi-palmated Sandpipers** waded in BMSB 5/10 (EB). Six **Least Sandpipers** were seen at twice: 5/9 HCP (DP), 5/27 HCP (MW). HCP has become a reliable site for shorebirds and MW found four **Pectoral Sandpipers** there 5/27.

GoP has acquired a reputation for attracting rarities and such was the case when RK watched a **Red-necked Phalarope** nervously perform its whirling dervish routine on 5/24. Sadly, it was there only one day which has been the story for other phalarope sightings in Berks.

Ten **Bonaparte Gulls** were early arrivals at BML 3/29 (RH). The nine Bonaparte Gulls RK found at LO 5/10 arrived at the usual date. The only reported Caspian Tern sighting was on 4/29 LOBC (DB). Two **Black Terns** were seen at BMLSH 5/10 (DP). An unusual high count of 25 **Common Terns** were around for only one day 5/10 BML (RK).

The Shartlesville colony of **Eurasian Collared Doves** is slowly expanding its range eastward as single doves were found near Hamburg along Mountain Road 4/14 (KG) and on Pine Road also near Hamburg 5/11 (MWh). **Common Nighthawk** migration in Hamburg usually follows the Schuylkill River and on 5/18 five Common Nighthawks flew that path (CF, MTG, SM), KG tallied 6 Common Nighthawks at KDRA on 5/18 which is at the base of the ridge.

The **Rufous Hummingbird** that arrived at a private residence in Boyertown 10/17/2020 was last seen 4/8. This female was banded by SL. (RW). The two **Red-headed Woodpecker** nestings were both reported to be active. SF reported two Red-headed Woodpeckers on at Bastian Road 4/29 and MW reported two at the Allendale Road site 5/15.

The current **Peregrine Falcon** nesting season has taken a page out of an Agatha Christie murder mystery as territorial battles resulted in the death of two females. The breeding female was found dead near the corner of 5th Street and Penn Avenue. In an interview with the Reading Eagle, F. Arthur McMorris, Pennsylvania Game Commission's Peregrine Falcon coordinator, stated that it is likely the falcon broke its neck as it flew into a building trying to escape its pursuer. There were eggs in the basket at the time of this falcon's death.

Eight days later, another female Peregrine Falcon was found dead near Fifth Street and Penn Avenue. It was Reading's 10-year-old resident female. Two days later, a mysterious unbanded female Peregrine Falcon was seen at the nest. McMorris suggested this female falcon killed the other two. He said that nesting should continue and be successful. These territorial fights are not uncommon.

A migrating **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was spotted 5/20 GHP (CW). Nesting **Acadian Flycatchers** arrived on territory 5/14 BML (BL) and 5/19 LOWA (RK). On 5/22, Willow Flycatchers returned HCP (MW). The **Least Flycatcher** at KDRA 5/9 was assumed to be a migrant (KG).

Three **Bank Swallows** returned to their nesting site at HCr 5/8 (RH, LC, JW, PW). **Red-breasted Nuthatches** that arrived over the winter months lingered through this quarter. There were numerous reports of single Red-breasted Nuthatches throughout Berks 5/31 (MW). On 5/4, KG reported hearing a **Marsh Wren** call from the thick cattails at KDRA. This is the earliest a Marsh Wren has been reported at KDRA.

**American Pipits** were active migrants in the Berks fields. MW reported 15 American Pipits 3/20 near Lyons. KG reported 23 American Pipits 4/8 along Monument Road near Hamburg. Sixteen **Snow Buntings** were lingering in the fields along Mertz Road 3/1 (JV). *Am. Pipit photo by Peter Wolfe*





*An Ovenbird, a common breeding species in the woodlands of Pennsylvania, at Buxton Conservancy, Brecknock Twp., Berks Co.. 05/08/2021, Photo by Slater*

**throated Warbler** 4/10 Kutztown (TU), **Wilson's Warbler** 5/14 residence Hamburg (MW). The Wilson's Warbler sang from a hedge for two hours.

A **Clay-colored Sparrow**, rare in winter or migration was reported and photographed 04/28 at BML's Union Canal Connector Trail. reported **Vesper Sparrow** at KDRA 03/28. The **Grasshopper Sparrow** along Monument Road arrived 04/24 (MW). A lone Lincoln's Sparrow, same or different bird, was reported 5/2 – 5/9 in Kutztown (TU).

A cooperative **Summer Tanager** was photographed in southern Berks 4/30 (KD). A **Blue Grosbeak** arrived at Monument Road, a usual nesting area, 5/16 (KG). At Rodale Farms, **Dickcissels** were seen and heard 5/27 – 5/30 (JV, JW, PW). Eight **Bobolinks** returned to Willow Run Farm 5/12 (NW) a day before 12 Bobolinks were found in the fields along Monument Road 5/13 (MW). On 04/13, 12 **Rusty Blackbirds** called and fed along railroad tracks PC (MW).



Single **Purple Finches** were reported throughout Berks all quarter—mainly at feeders. Hawk Mountain feeders attracted 13 Purple Finch 3/28 (DP). On 3/31, JS in Bernville reported 10 Purple Finch at her feeding station. On 5/15, a lone **Evening Grosbeak** fed at Hawk Mountain's feeding station (MTG, PH, CF, BR).

*Purple finch at Green Hills Preserve by Mike Slater*

Observers: **Matt Wlasniewski**, 191 Scenic Drive, Hamburg, PA 19526, 610-463-8845, martind28@comcast.net

Ed Barrell, B Bealer, K Bealer, Dan Brennan, Sarah Busch, Lucy Cairns (LCr), Liz Cates, Michael Cox, Kevin Dougherty, John Driscoll, Cheryl Faust, Caroline Fegley (CFe), Steven Fordyce,

Steven Gautier, Laurie Goodrich & HMS Volunteers/Staff, Mary-Therese Grob, Kerry Grim, Bert Harris, Holly Hartshorne, Paul Heveran, Jason Horn, Russell Hoffman, Kate Houlne, Matt Hunter, Linda Ingram, Rudy Keller, Dave Kozlovsky, Edward Komito, Katrina Knight, Brian Lineaweaver, Sandy Lockerman, Andy Matsko, Holly Merker, Dennis Miranda, Sandra Moroney, Derek Price, Barbara Ritzheimer, Troy Sabocheck, Peter Saenger, Joan Silagy, Mike Slater (MSI), Matt Spence, Todd Underwood, Bill Uhrich, Jeff Vinosky, Ron Wagner, Ken Walsh, Nelson Weber, Matthew White

The warbler waves of yesteryear continue to be that as the anticipated arrival of the colorful birds fell short again. Birders spread throughout Berks made reports of a variety of species but usually in numbers of under five or ten. Some sightings of note were: **Prothonotary Warbler** 5/4 Wyomissing Park (LCr), **Cape May Warbler** 5/4 – 5/9 LOBC (AW, MW), **Cerulean Warbler** 5/7 BC (MSI), **Bay-breasted Warbler** 5/10 Kutztown (TU), **Yellow-**



*Magnolia Warblers were seen by many observers in Berks as usual. This male was at Buxton Conservancy, Brecknock Twp., Berks Co.. 05/08/2021, Photo by Slater*

KG  
first  
the



(MWh), Chris Whitely (CWh), Claudia Winters, Andy Wlasniewski, Jane Wolfe, Peter Wolfe, Art Zdancewic.

## **BOC Field Trips 2021 – 2022**

**Second and Fourth Tuesdays – Fall (Sept., Oct. & Nov.) and also Spring (Mar., Apr., May & June)** Location, time, and leader to be announced approximately one week beforehand. Email announcements will be sent to all members and the information will be on our website at the same time <https://bairdornithological.club/> .

### **Flash Bird Walks**

Field trips may be scheduled at short notice any time it appears conditions are right for an additional outing. Email announcements will be sent to all members and the information will be on our website at the same time <https://bairdornithological.club/> .

### **SEPTEMBER 8, 2021 (Wednesday) - Delaware Shore Refuges 6:30am**

Targeting shorebirds, waders, early waterfowl, gulls and terns, early fall songbird migrants. Meet at Target parking lot in Exeter at 6:30 a.m. Leaders will be staying over, you are on your own going home. Coordinator: Art Zdancewic 610-858-3315

### **SEPTEMBER 18, 2021 (Saturday) m OCTOBER 16 (Saturday) and November 13 – (Saturday) Mount Penn Pagoda Hawk Watch 9am – 2pm**

We will meet on the lawn, walk down the steps at the front of the Pagoda. Bring a lawn chair. Coordinator: Bill Uhrich 610-698-1575

### **OCTOBER 2, 2021 (Saturday) - Union Meadows Fall Migrants 8am**

An easy walk on wide flat trail through wooded and open field habitats seeking sparrows and other fall migrants. Meet at Union Meadows East parking lot, Trailhead for the Schuylkill River Trail, Rte.724/East Main St. in Monocacy, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. Coordinators: Rudy Keller & Linda Ingram, 610-621-7473

### **OCTOBER 24, 2021 (Sunday) - John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove 8:00am – 11:00am**

Meeting in the Center's parking lot we will bird some of the Mill Grove estate's five miles of nature trails along the Perkiomen Creek. At 10:00am the museum opens featuring excellent exhibits on all things birds and Audubon. Coordinator: Linda Ingram 610-621-7473

<https://johnjames.audubon.org/visit/directions-and-parking>

### **NOVEMBER 6, 2021 (Saturday) - Hopewell Big Woods Trail 8:00am**

Wide trail meanders through open fields bordered by woodland. Previous seasons were excellent for field and edge species. A fall walk for late migrants and wintering species.

Meet at Union Meadows East parking lot, Trailhead for the Schuylkill River Trail, Rte.724/East Main St. in Monocacy, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. (\*change of parking location for this site)

Coordinators: Linda Ingram 610-621-7473, Peter & Jane Wolfe

### **DECEMBER 19, 2021 (Sunday) - Reading Christmas Bird Count**

Compiler: Lucy Cairns 610-223-4501 [ljanetcairns@gmail.com](mailto:ljanetcairns@gmail.com)

**DECEMBER 20, 2021 (Monday) - Elverson Christmas Bird Count**

Compiler: Jim Cook 610-587-7545 cell, 610-286-5021 work, jim@elversonsupply.net

**DECEMBER 26, 2021 (Sunday) - Hamburg Christmas Bird Count**

Compiler: Laurie Goodrich 570-943-3411 ext 106

**JANUARY 1, 2022 (Saturday) - Bernville Christmas Bird Count**

Compiler: Ed Barrell 610-926-2962 ebarrell@epix.net

**JANUARY 2, 2022 (Sunday) - New Year's Weekend - Berks Drive Loop 8:00am**

Begin your year with a visit to various Berks birding spots, starting at Brenneman's Quarry. Meet at Cacoosing Meadows Park parking lot on Reedy Road at the end closest to Evan's Hill Road.

Coordinators: Jane & Peter Wolfe 484-794-3703

**FEBRUARY 27, 2022 (Sunday) - E.J. Breneman Quarry - Introduction to Wintering Waterfowl 1:00pm**

Learn to identify ducks and geese that winter in Berks County at this easily accessible site. Experienced birders with scopes will be there to help you get good looks. Parking at Cacoosing Meadows Park on Reedy Road at the end closest to Evan's Hill Road.

(Subject to weather conditions, last winter access to the parking area was limited following the big snow and freeze.) Coordinator: Linda Ingram 610-621-7473, Rudy Keller

**MARCH 26, 2022 (Saturday) - Green Hills Preserve – Wintering Birds 8am**

**Wintering birds and early spring arrivals.**

From Rte. 10, go west on Rte. 568 (Kurtz Mill Rd.), turn right onto Gunhart Rd. Parking lot is on the right. Coordinator: Art Zdancewic 610-858-3315

**March 27, 2022 (Sunday) - French Creek State Park – Woodcock Watch 6:30pm**

**American Woodcock courtship display. Meet at park office on Park Rd.**

Coordinator: Art Zdancewic 610-858-3315

**APRIL 9, 2022 (Saturday) - Tulpehocken Creek – Early Migrants 8 AM**

Look for early spring migrants. Meet at the Berks County Heritage Center side of the Red Bridge.

Coordinator: Katrina Knight, 610-372-3671

**April 24, 2022 (Sunday) - Union Meadows – Early Migrants 8 AM**

An easy walk on wide flat trail through wooded and open field habitats.

Meet at Union Meadows East parking lot, Trailhead for the Schuylkill River Trail, Rte.724/East Main St. in Monocacy, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. Coordinators: Rudy Keller & Linda Ingram, 610-621-7473

**APRIL 30, 2022 (Saturday) - Birds, Butterflies & Botany, Neversink Mountain, 10 AM (with Mengel Natural History Society)** For butterflies flying only in early spring, this is one of the few Berks County locations. Meet at S 10th & South Sts., Reading. (Park on South St.)

Coordinators: Karl Gardner, 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine, 610-777-2333.

**MAY 1, 2022 (Sunday) - SGL 106 - Pine Swamp 7 AM – Spring Migrants**

This is a great location for migrants as well as uncommon local birds like Ruffed Grouse, and Kentucky Warblers. Meet in the parking lot on the west side of Pine Swamp Rd about 1/2 mile south of Hawk Mountain Rd. Coordinator: Rudy Keller 610-845-7310



**MAY 7, 2022 (Saturday) Hay Creek 7 AM – Spring Migrants**

Easy walking in the Hay Creek Watershed and Reservoir for spring migrants. Access from Hay Creek Rd., park at south gate.

Coordinator: Sheila Martin, 610-858-6005

**MAY 14, 2022 (Saturday) Gravely Birding in the Charles Evans Cemetery, - 8am**

We will bird through Charles Evans Cemetery and stop at the graves to pay our respects and learn about naturalists such as Reading Public Museum founder Levi Mengel, entomologist Herman Strecker, and artist Conrad Roland. Meet inside the cemetery entrance off Centre Avenue in Reading. Coordinator: Bill Uhrich 610-698-1575

**JUNE 4, 2022 (Saturday) - Hopewell Big Woods Trail French Creek SP - Grassland Breeding Birds 7am**

A wide trail meanders through open fields bordered by woodland. Previous seasons were excellent for field and edge species.

Meet at Union Meadows East parking lot, Trailhead for the Schuylkill River Trail, Rte.724/East Main St. in Monocacy, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. (\*change of parking location from 2021 trip)

Coordinator: Rudy Keller, 610-845-7310 and Sheila Martin, 610-858-6005

**JUNE 11, 2022 (Saturday) - Green Hills Preserve Butterflies 10am (with Mengel Natural History Society)**

Extensive open fields and some wooded habitat. Directions: From Rte. 10, go west on Rte. 568 (Kurtz Mill Rd.) Turn right onto Gunhart Rd. Parking lot is on the right.

Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333.

**JUNE 18, 2022 (Saturday) - Nolde Forest EEC Moth Night 8:30pm (with Mengel Natural History Society)**

Leaders bait trees and hang sheets to bring in the night insects. Bring flashlight. Meet at Mansion parking lot. Coordinators: Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333, Jim Eckert 610-373-1064, and Karl Gardner 610-987-3281.

**JULY 23, 2022 (Saturday) - Kernsville Dragonflies & Damselflies 10am (with Mengel Natural History Society)**

Bartram Trail, Kernsville Recreation Area

Rte. 61 north, right on Jetson Dr. (across from Cabela's), right on Industrial Dr., left on Kernsville Dam Rd. The parking area is on the right.

Coordinators: Karl Gardner, Mike Slater 610-775-3757, and Rudy Keller 610 845-7310.

**AUGUST 6, 2022 (Saturday) - Blue Marsh Butterflies 10am (with Mengel Natural History Society) Meet at the Blue Marsh Visitor's Center off Palisades Drive. Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333**

**AUGUST 20, 2022 (Saturday) - Angelica Park Butterflies 10am (with Mengel Natural History Society)**

Meet in the parking lot adjacent to Berks Nature (the entrance is off Rt. 10, Morgantown Rd., at the big sign for Alvernia University). Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 610-777-2333

## Past Season's Field Trip Reports

### State Game Lands 106, Pine Swamp Rd. - May 2, 2021 by Rudy Keller

Seeing spring migrants was the objective of the trip, but the highlight for many of the 10 birders who attended was hearing a Ruffed Grouse drumming on the slope of the Kittatinny Ridge, the last toehold of our state bird in Berks. A Northern Harrier migrated over the ridge as noisy Blue Jay flocks moved through the forest below. We found 3 species of vireos and 12 species of warblers, with close looks at Worm-eating Warbler. One of spring's first Scarlet Tanagers smoldered among young leaves. A Red-breasted Nuthatch and a flock of 16 Purple Finches, the latter eating green seeds of elm, were wintering birds heading back north. We found well over 50 species in the ridge forest and scrub/grassland across the road, typical variety for this rich site in spring.

### Hopewell-Big Woods trail June 5, 2021 by Sheila Martin

What a gift! The Hopewell Big Woods Trail: an extension of the PA State Park system near Birdsboro/Douglasville, Robeson Township – an under-recognized, lightly-used trail into a developed grassland along an improved gravel pathway. In my opinion, this is one of the most welcoming, easiest-to-navigate, “can’t HELP but love it” beginner birding venues I’ve experienced in Berks. A favorite!

What a gift! That day – Saturday, June 5, '21: clear, breezy, rapidly-warming, when nine curious outdoor-lovers convened at 8:00 a.m. to optimize late-spring club birding amid wildflowers, a nice set-back woodland and high-volume cicada calling for a generous serving of avian greats!

Thirty-five species were observed overall, including Tree Swallow occupying post-top trailside nests. Seventeen Indigo Buntings & eight Common Yellowthroats earned major numbers; American Goldfinch, Eastern Towhee and Eastern Bluebird played supporting roles. The group enjoyed long, repeated looks at Grasshopper Sparrow, characteristically clinging sideways from dry meadow grass – then dropping down to interrupt our glee; only to reappear farther along to engrain its image & the moment in our memory.

Cedar Waxwing, Blue-winged Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Barn Swallow, jays, vireos & raptors also earn mention for the day. But I think I speak for the entire group when I say the all-around “Best Long Look/Most Popular!” sighting was of Yellow-breasted Chat; an individual who favored us with well-lit, multi-angled, bare-snap-against-sky portraits at several lingering stops. Plus, my own sentimental favorite - since it was a Lifer for this writer, was Prairie Warbler! The walk’s educational guide Rudy Keller first heard its field song, then vowed to find it for us at three total viewing moments – with close-range, mid-morning-light advantage & very cooperative individuals simply making my day!

And, the CICADAS! Many birdwalks throughout late spring were force-serenaded with their “interesting” music, whether we liked it or not! With such sighting success all along our walk, the mood of the group was so sunny & playful that someone discovered – if you cup your ears with your hands while facing the woods frontage, the cacophony actually INCREASED fourfold! If you could STAND it!



*Yellow-breasted Chat. Photo by Russ Hoffman*

Rudy's formal tutelage concluded at 10:20 a.m., about 2/3-way down the trail to the Schuylkill River Trail intersection (at the little shade tree switchback); the group returned upland in & out of light conversation and refocused sighting moments. Rudy's opinion is that - in '22, the event should begin at 7:00 a.m. to optimize avian activity. It was even suggested to stage a car shuttle at Union Meadows lot at the base of the downhill, to finish the trail yet have the convenience of a ride back up to the start. We shall see, and this would be announced.

## **B.O.C. Officers May 2021- June 2021**

- **President - – Lucy Cairns** 20 Wyomissing Ct, Wyomissing, PA 19610, 610-223-4501 - [ljanetcairns@gmail.com](mailto:ljanetcairns@gmail.com)
- **Vice-President & Secretary– Sheila Martin** 554 Mullen Hollow Road, Birdsboro PA 19508 610-858-6005 - [sheilamartin554@gmail.com](mailto:sheilamartin554@gmail.com)
- **Treasurer – Charles Coleman**, 129 Grecian Terrace, Sinking Spring, PA 19608 610-763-2548 - [coleman1801@comcast.net](mailto:coleman1801@comcast.net)
- **Past President – Tony Grimm** 1148 Old Mill Lane, Wyomissing, PA 19610 610-780-0340 - [afgrimm@aol.com](mailto:afgrimm@aol.com)

### **Members of the Board of Directors**

- **Art Zdancewic** 331 Sell Road, Mohnton, PA 19540, 610-858-3315 - [art.zdancewic@gmail.com](mailto:art.zdancewic@gmail.com)
- **Linda Ingram\*** 29 Unionville Road, Douglassville, PA 19518 - 610-326-9531 - [lindamingram29@gmail.com](mailto:lindamingram29@gmail.com)
- **Rudy Keller\*** 71 Lutz Road, Boyertown, PA 19510, 610-845-7310 [rckeller@fastmail.com](mailto:rckeller@fastmail.com)
- **Joanne Kintner** 441 Township Line Rd., Bechtelsville, PA 19505 - 610-369-1585- [jrkestrel@msn.com](mailto:jrkestrel@msn.com)
- **Mike Slater\*** 4411 New Holland Road, Mohnton, PA 19540 cell: 610-698-4031 [paplanting@gmail.com](mailto:paplanting@gmail.com)

\* **Newsletter Committee Member**

## **Dues reminder – Your BOC dues are due September 1, 2021.**

### **Please supply the information in the form below**

and mail your dues to: Charles Coleman, Treasurer, 129 Grecian Terrace  
Sinking Spring, PA 19608-1164 Contact: membership@bairdornithological.club

BOC 2020-2012 Membership Form  
Dues \$15/year (make check payable to B.O.C.)  
Payment is due in September for the year running from September through August.

Please print out this form and mail it to the address below..

Name:

Address:

email address: (required to receive electronic communications and the link to receive the digital copy of The Distelfink from BOC):

By supplying my eMail address I give my permission for BOC to contact me by email for club related announcements and newsletters.

[ ] I do not have access to or can't read an electronic version of the newsletter, please send me a quick-printed version by USPS.

Phone # (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

### **Send this form with payment to the payable to BOC and mail to:**

**Charles Coleman, Treasurer  
129 Grecian Terrace  
Sinking Spring, PA 19608-1164**

November Banquet Flyer/Reservation Form

# BAIRD ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB

## Celebrating 100 years!

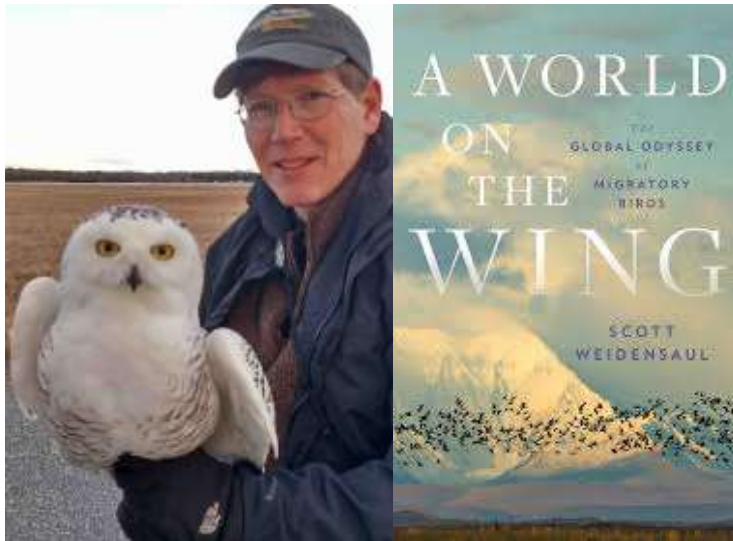
### 2021 ANNUAL BANQUET – November 12

*Held jointly with*

### MENGEL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Program:

## Author & Lecturer *Scott Weidensaul*



*“Weidensaul communicates to both the knowing birder and the layman the epic scale of what’s happening in our skies every year, the whys and hows, while offering rays of hope through the gloomy storm clouds.” NYT Book Review*

Berkshire Country Club, 1637 Bernville Rd. Reading, Pa. 19601

6:00 pm - Social hour, book signing, basket raffle, cash bar

6:30 pm - Seated Dinner, Chicken Marsala, Salad, Dessert, Coffee/Tea

\*vegetarian option available, choose option on reservation form

Cost: \$40.00 per person

*Please bring nature related items for the customary door prizes!*

**The DEADLINE for putting your reservation in the mail is OCTOBER 23, but if the 100 person limit is met earlier you will be put on a waiting list.**

Your payment, \$40 per person, check payable to BOC is your confirmation

Return form with payment, cut here \_\_\_\_\_

Send to:

**Charles Coleman, 129 Grecian Terrace, Sinking Spring PA 19608**

Questions? Call Charles Coleman: 610-763-2548

Name(s) attending:

\_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian option \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_