



The Distelfink

Spring 2024 Newsletter of the Baird Ornithological Club

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A Tropical Kingbird was found on a farm near Fleetwood in late November. See Russ Hoffman’s Rare birds in Berks report on page 4. Photo by Russ Hoffman.

President's Message by Sheila Martin

Welcome to Baird Ornithological Club's spring 2024 issue - offering many updates, reports, event schedules, plus extraordinary color photos submitted by passionate photographers! Herein you'll find mentions of our sustaining donors, our annual meeting & banquet on May 10, 2024, and our need to hear you say, "Yes!" to service on BOC's board of directors for '24-'25, as nominating season gets underway. Your officers and board of directors worked hard in the now-seemingly-distant nine-months' past of June '23 to not only ensure a robust club outdoor program, but also to administer dues & the ongoing, more-administrative sides of an active club's oversight.

"Zoom meetings during the winter months have been well-supported, where - in the opening moments of those sessions, I intentionally bring online head counts to everyone's attention, driving home how our club flexes, appreciating the numbers we're still reaching during the year's darkest months. By way of Zoom, a comfortable, popular-yet-hard-to-shake-off post-Covid tendency, showings have been consistent to what we'd achieved in the past at McConnell Hall - and this year, at Albright Science Hall. We are very appreciative of Ian Cost for facilitating the invitation to meet at Albright College this term, bringing birding programs and club community "home", whether in-person or remotely. March's meeting had to be reformatted - remaining on Zoom for one more month before returning onsite/in-person to Albright in April. Once we are back there, if you still wish to opt to a real-time remote link, request streaming contact access from Ian.

bairdornsec@gmail.com

Mid-February is when birding intensifies across North America, and BOC's field trip list lays out an enticing menu of most-weekly, well-established venues. Pick long-time favorites and try some of the new listings too! Check - and keep on checking - www.bairdornithological.club - for expansive offerings of spring bird walks which hopefully suit the availability of many, members & the public alike. There too, click on the latest e-bird reports for Berks County, seeing posts too, more photos and flash-&-Tuesday bird walks possibly not yet published. Mentioning just a few of my favorites, check out March 24 at French Creek State Park: the Sunday evening Woodcock Watch at 7:00pm EDT for some brief, buzzy, big-eyed-bird frenzy. Or, Sunday, April 21's Union Meadows/Early Migrants walk at 8:00am; another of my inked-in Must-Do's, lured by maddeningly animated Ruby-crowned Kinglets in oh-so-close, chest-high trailside shrubs!

Late winter is also the time when BOC is contacted for collaborative participation in springtime public events staged all over Berks County, its townships & beyond - with respected, long-allied nature-partnering interests like Mengel, Nolde, Hawk Mountain, Jim Dietrich, Middle Creek, French Creek, Hopewell Furnace, and more. As of this writing, Baird Ornithological Club's Ian Cost is slated for a fascinating, free-yet-reserved talk at Berks Nature on the topic of The Color Of Birds: What Colors Mean and How Birds Hide in Plain Sight on Wednesday, March 13 at 6:00 pm; plus BOC will have an



BOC President Sheila Martin outstanding in a field

ornithology display at Berks County Conservation District's spring fair/seedling sale on May 4 starting at 11:00am at the Ag Center. Keep watching Facebook and our website's Blog & Bird Walk Info click for added activity – where your help might be needed.

The 3rd Pennsylvania Bird Atlas will be the most important truly ornithological initiative which Baird – as a club – can engage in, for the next five years, (per December's Dr. Wilson). Sign-in participation is now live. In your In Box, dated January 26 (you saved it, right?!) find Ian's all-members e-blast offering further understanding of this expansive, immersive project with weblinks he curated - which I personally found to be easy reading and quite clarifying.

I continue in tremendous pride of our club, its elected leaders, volunteer speakers and illustrious veteran field coordinators – in the tools BOC offers members of all ages, tenures & levels of commitment – of close-to-home outdoor involvement & continuing education of birds & birding worldwide, its inherent science & beauty, as well as the compelling concern of bird welfare on Planet Earth, felt by us all. Thanks very much for allowing me to serve this year!

BOC Leadership Opportunities Starting Summer 2024.

- by Sheila Martin

Dear Member - **The Board of Directors Needs Help!**

Dear Member - HELP WANTED!

Baird Ornithological Club's nominating committee (specifically) – and our club (generally) – need your serious consideration and “Yes” – asking you to accept a board position, the candidate slate of which is being formulated now, to be filled & elected with an April ballot, for service in '24-'25.

We're lucky to have a mostly-still-sitting board of officers & directors, but three board positions are available: one about to be vacated through completion of term, another which, awkwardly, had not been filled with this term's election, and the office of secretary, due to an amicable resignation at end of this term, which this board graciously & gratefully accepted.

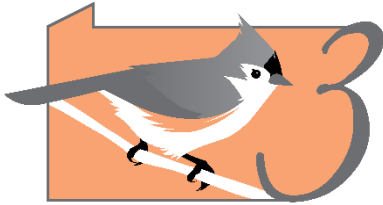
Please consider giving back to the club and paying forward what satisfaction we all undeniably experience through birding in all its aspects and reach in our lives – by serving on the board.

My 8 years serving on the board have not only been enlightening & academically focusing, but enjoyable too. Being part of it all amid the current, ongoing changes in birding science in PA – and seeing the club grow, not just coasting with the status quo, has been rewarding for me. For this to continue, we need you.

Prior to this Distelfink issue, you received an e-mail with summary descriptions of officer & board duties, masterfully penned by IPP Lucy Cairns while as president last spring. Please contact Lucy at ljanetcairns@gmail.com or her cell 610-223-4501 – OR me directly at H: 610-582-3401, C: 610-858-6005 or sheilamartin554@gmail.com after mid-March.

First-call slate of nominations will be at the March 8th meeting, then repeated with any additions onto that slate in April – with elections at that meeting, and installation at our annual meeting/banquet on May 10th, 2024.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration – and your “Yes!” .



3RD PA Bird Atlas is starting!

By Rudy Keller and Ian Cost

The most important thing we BOC members can do for the next five years to help conserve birds in Berks County is to participate in the third PA Bird Atlas. To begin the work of bird conservation, we need to know where each species is and how common or uncommon it is, especially during the breeding season. To find that out on a finely detailed scale, the state's map has been divided into small blocks, with the goal of learning which species live in each block. That's where we come in. [A handbook for atlasers is available here on the PA Bird Atlas website.](#)

This atlas will be conducted via eBird observations. By entering our bird lists with breeding codes on the [PA Bird Atlas portal](#) or with the eBird app on your smart phone with the PA Bird Atlas portal selected as we bird in any block, we can begin to fill in the blanks in our knowledge of bird distribution. At our December 2023 meeting, ([video here](#)) Andy Wilson gave an overview presentation of what the atlas does, how it is conducted (including a graphic explanation of blocks) and how birders can help.

BOC secretary Ian Cost sent the following winter email message to members providing very useful links that will further explain how to participate. [\(A Quick Start Guide for eBird and the PA Bird Atlas is here\)](#)

" Hello Members,

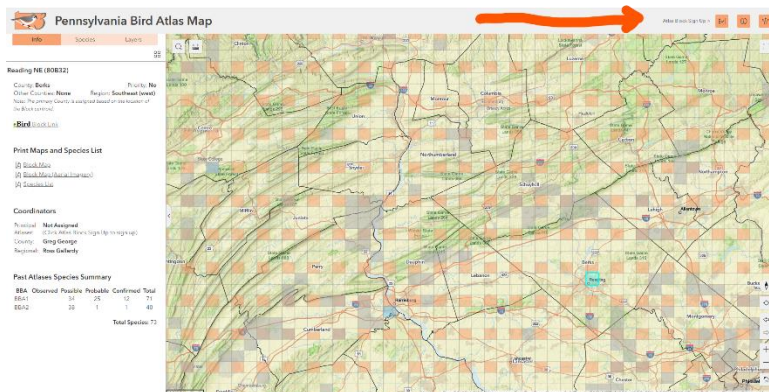
We recently received a message from Greg George, Berks County Coordinator for the PA Bird Atlas, that the block signup list is now live.

If you'd like to see more information on the atlas, please see this page from the game commission and please note that eBird does have a [homepage for the atlas at this link.](#)

[Information on birding blocks within the state can be found here.](#)

Signing up to be a principal birder in a block of the state can be done through [this link to "live" bird atlas.](#)

If you would like to sign up as the principal birder for a block, zoom into the map on this last link, select a block. Then you may use the button shown below (follow the arrow) to sign up to be the principal birder for that block."



Be aware: You may only sign up for up to 5 blocks in one region, and 10 blocks total across the state, at a time

Each block has aerial maps, species lists, and a topographic satellite map associated with it to help you orient yourself. These are on the left side of the screen above.

Ian Cost,

After digesting all that information, go out birding with the atlas in mind.

Rare Birds found in Berks County, PA in 2023, by Russ Hoffman

2023 was a year for rare Birds in Berks County. Berks County birding enthusiasts were successful in finding 249 species of birds in the county in 2023. This is three short of the 20-year average of species seen. The sightings can be sorted into categories. Species seen only a few times in the recorded history of Berks birding would be considered rare in the county.

Species seen every few years are listed as casual. Birders had sightings of species that fit into both categories.

Rare in Berks 2023:

In this category, a **Swallow-tailed Kite** was seen by Kate Harms on May 9 north of Reading. Ten days later another was photographed in Moselem Springs by me. This is a striking bird with black and white plumage and a deeply forked tail. The bird normally occurs in southern Florida and along the Gulf coast. There were three of these birds seen here in 1995 in southern Berks, but only twice since. (see photo on page one of the previous, Fall 2023, Distelfink)



American White Pelican. Photo by Russ Hoffman

In June, a kayaker at Blue Marsh noticed a large white bird sitting on the lake. He was able to identify it as an **American White Pelican**. It is the first time it has been seen in Berks County. The bird was photographed and seen again at Breneman's Quarry in Spring Township by several birders.

Troy Herrel, a member of the Hawk Mountain staff, saw a **LeConte's Sparrow** at the Kempton Community Center in October. This bird has only been seen a few times in the county.

A first for the county was a **Tropical Kingbird** (*picture on page 1*) that showed up in the vicinity of the Weber family's Willow Run Farm near Fleetwood in early November. Nelson and Grace Weber are local birders and members of the Baird Ornithological Club, and Nelson's brother Lin and daughter are owners of the farm where the bird was first seen. With the help of Nelson and Grace's son Drew, who is employed at the Cornell Ornithology Lab, they were able to get a recording of the bird's vocalizations and identify it as a Tropical Kingbird. (To separate it from the visually similar Couch's Kingbird.)

This bird is common in Central and South America but is rarely seen in the U.S. in the Southwest. The Webers were gracious hosts and welcomed many visitors to the farm to see this rarity.

In late December, Bill Uhrich was walking along the Schuylkill River near RACC looking for an unusually late warbler, an **American Redstart** that he had seen



on the Reading Christmas Bird Count. What he

Male American Redstart. Photo by Russ Hoffman

found instead was the first record of an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in Berks County, a bird of the Southwest USA. Flycatchers



Ash-throated Flycatcher along the Schuylkill River in Reading. Photo by Russ Hoffman

usually leave the U.S in winter due to the lack of insects that they feed on. A few birders got to see this bird during the last days of 2023, a fitting end to the birding year 2023 in Berks County.

Every year Berks birders find interesting and exciting species of birds in the county as they pursue their passion for adventure and new experiences. While these sightings are not considered rare, the birds are not seen every year in Berks and the documentation of their presence adds to the history of bird life in our area.



Orange-crowned Warbler.

Photo by Russ Hoffman

Early in the year, on Jan. 9, an **Orange-crowned Warbler** (left) was photographed in the area of the Blue Marsh Lake Dry Brooks boat launch. This infrequently seen bird was found again late in the year in the same area by members of the Weber family.

On the same day in the same place, a **clay-colored sparrow** (right) was seen and photographed, a handsome bird not found every year in the county.



Clay-colored Sparrow. Photo by Russ Hoffman

In May, L. Ingram heard a reverberating warbler song along the Schuylkill River Trail at Morlatton Village in Douglass Township that she recognized as a **Prothonotary Warbler**. The bird was confirmed by a photograph the following day. This warbler is fairly common south of Pennsylvania but not seen every year in Berks.

Also in May, two of the more elusive flycatchers were seen at Angora Fruit Farm. T. Underwood found a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (below)** and many birders saw an **Olive-sided Flycatcher (right)**.



Yellow-bellied flycatcher. Photo by Russ Hoffman



Olive-sided flycatcher. Photo by Russ Hoffman

In mid-July, J. and L. Spilde discovered a **Laughing Gull** at Blue Marsh Lake. While this gull is common along the

Atlantic Coast, it rarely wanders inland and is scarce in Berks County.

K. Grim heard and saw the secretive **Marsh Wren** in September at Kernsville Stilling Basin. The wren's loud chatter is easily heard and recognized as it skulks among the cattails.

Long time birder J. Silagy was surprised to see a raft of gooselike birds called **Brant** on Blue Marsh Lake at the end of October. Brant are smaller than Canada Geese and sport a thin, white necklace. They can be quite common near the Atlantic Coast but rarely are found inland as far as Berks County.

In December, R. Keller was checking Breneman's Quarry with a spotting scope looking for visiting waterfowl and spotted a small white goose. He was able to identify the bird as a **Ross's Goose**. These geese are fairly common in the western U. S. but scarce in the east.

Some other noteworthy sightings were reported in 2023 but did not get listed in the eBird database. A **Roseate Spoonbill** was seen and photographed along the Tulpehocken Creek in the Gring's Mill area. This is a bird that rarely wanders north from the extreme southern part of the country.

An experienced bird counter at Hawk Mountain watched a **Wood Stork** sail by on the Berks County side of the lookout. This is another bird of the deep South, but it is more prone to wander.



*A Ross's Goose flying with 2 Canada Geese.
Photo by Russ Hoffman*

Overall, the 2023 birding year was exceptional. Local birders were able to add interesting species to their Berks County life list. We look forward to 2024 with anticipation of new and exciting experiences.

The local Baird Ornithological Club is the second-oldest club of its kind in Pennsylvania and is open to the public. Check out the website, <https://bairdornithological.club>, for more information.

Russ Hoffman is a longtime member of the Baird Ornithological Club and has photographed birds throughout the world.

124rd Reading Christmas Bird Count Wrap-up - Lucy Cairns

Comments and Comparisons

The 124th Reading CBC took place on December 17, a mild day during a mild early winter season with no snow on the ground and no ice on the water. The day began very grey and gloomy, with low clouds and a fine mist. The sun remained hidden all day, turning the dimming switch down on plumage color. However, the predicted rain held off until afternoon and was very light in most places, so we had that to be thankful for. By the end of the day, 80 species of birds and almost 20,000 individual birds had been counted. Close to 65% of the individual birds consisted of Canada Geese, European Starlings, American Robins, and Rock Pigeons (in declining order of abundance).

Importantly, the number of field observers remained strong at 53, thanks to eight new volunteers, a group that included both highly skilled, experienced birders and a few novice enthusiasts. The number of feeder counts submitted, on the other hand, shrank from 19 last year to just 8, which may have suppressed this year's numbers of common feeder birds a bit when compared with last year.

The American Tree Sparrow disappeared from the Reading count for the first time in its 124-year history. During the first Reading count, on December 25, 1911, 20 Tree Sparrows were found along the Wyomissing Creek! The two other birds that have appeared in every Reading count—American Crow and Dark-eyed Junco—were found this year, but in numbers below average compared to the last 10 years.

The good news includes the continuing recovery of the Tufted Titmouse and chickadees from the drastic decline of 2018. Despite the smaller number of feeder counts contributed this year, numbers of titmice were stable and chickadees increased compared to last year. Of note, whereas last year we had an unusually high number of Black-capped Chickadees reported, this year we had none.

Bald Eagles added up to 15, the highest number since they climbed out of the single digits in 2020. Other high numbers were 27 Hermit Thrush and an all-time high of 168 Carolina Wrens. Thanks to an experienced CBC-er new to our circle, Jacob Socolar, Saw-whet Owls were documented for the first time since 2012. This is a bird documented on only eight of the Reading counts, and the 2 found by Jacob match the previous high number.

The woodpeckers as a group continue to do well, and this year 2 Red-headed Woodpeckers were found in Alsace by Alison Fetterman and Jim Eckert. Since 2012, this bird has been found on the Reading count only twice, and a single bird each time. The number of Northern Flickers found—65—is above the 10-year average.

Among the non-eagle raptors, Bill Uhrich found both City of Reading Peregrine Falcons this year, and Kestrels held steady at 9. Numbers of Red-tailed hawks and accipiters were stable. (All comparisons are to the previous 10 counts.)

The most unusual bird was a Lincoln's Sparrow, found by Rudy Keller. A search of the CBC database indicates that this is the first record of Lincoln's Sparrow in the Reading count. This sparrow breeds in the northern tundra and winters far to the west and south of Pennsylvania. The description on the Cornell Lab's All About Birds website includes: "The dainty Lincoln's Sparrow has a talent for concealing itself. It sneaks around on the ground..." which makes it all the more remarkable that one showed itself to Rudy. Birds found during count week (the 3 days just before and just after count day), but not on count day, were some Lapland Longspurs, Snow Buntings, a Greater White-fronted Goose, and a group of Cackling Geese.

I counted in my usual territory this year—a portion of the Wyomissing Park, the Reading Public Museum grounds, and a few other smaller spots. One high moment came while walking a path along the Wyomissing Creek. A member of my party noticed a Winter Wren skipping under and over the blanket of dead leaves along the path. All wrens are cute, but the Winter Wren epitomizes cuteness, with its tiny round body and little tail cocked straight up. This bird was so intent on its foraging that it paid no mind to the group of humans staring at it with rapt adoration from just a few feet away.

Later, when Holly Armbuster and I were the only members of our group who had not had to resume their usual routines, we were up on the parking lot of the Granite Point building to count the Rock Pigeons and starlings who usually line the utility wires along State Hill Rd. Well, except for a small flock of starlings those birds had found a less exposed spot to spend a very damp afternoon, so for a few minutes we were disappointed. Then Holly suggested we drive all the way around the office building, and I reluctantly agreed. As we pulled around to the side overlooking the Wyomissing Family Restaurant and Bakery, Holly saw a bird fly to a utility wire almost at eye level with us. It was a gorgeous male American Kestrel with a dead vole in its talons! The average adult Kestrel weighs a hair over 4 oz, while the voles common in southeastern PA weigh roughly 1-1.5 oz, so this Kestrel had quite a feast in its grip! It noticed us watching it (I think raptors always see us before we see them), but allowed us to observe it enjoying its meal for so long that we finally tore ourselves away.

The Christmas Bird Count is all about collecting data to help guide bird conservation efforts, when all is said and done, but it is much more than the numbers. It is a welcome excuse, during the hectic run-up to the holiday season, to spend a day outside in the company of others who find their lives immeasurably enriched by paying attention to and being amazed by birds. Participation is free and novice birders are teamed up with experienced leaders for a day of discovery and service to our avian friends. Anyone with an interest should google 'join the Christmas Bird Count' in early December to find Audubon's website for the count and all the information needed.

124rd Bernville Christmas Bird Count Wrap-up – Mike Slater

The Bernville CBC was held on 01-04-2024. All the water was open, nothing was frozen and no snow on the ground. Cloudy all day with a few snow squalls in the afternoon. Many of the birds with low numbers this year are commonly seen at bird feeding stations. Many of the observers this year noticed that most feeders they normally see birds at were empty this year. Many people

may not have been feeding yet because we have had a mild weather with no snow yet.

Note: The numbers in brackets [x/39] are the number of counts out of 39 total counts on which this species has been observed on the Bernville CBC.

3 Snow Goose, low but not recorded every year. [22/39]
798 Canada Goose, below our average of 1784. [39/39]

2 American Wigeon, only seen 1 year out of 3. [11/39]
4 Am. Black Duck, below our average of 12. [35/39]
197 Mallard, below our average of 368. [39/39]
1 Common Loon was only the 3rd occurrence on the count. [3/39]
8 Great Blue Heron was average. [39/39]
39 Black Vultures were above the average of 25, but well shy of the record of 169 in Jan. 2015. [22/39]
140 Turkey Vultures was above the average of 67, but also shy of the record 262 in January 2019. [29/39]
3 Northern Harriers was slightly below the average of 5. [29/39]
3 Sharp-shinned Hawks reported was half of our average of 6. [39/39]
6 Cooper's Hawks reported was above our average of 4. [36/39]
22 Bald Eagles seen was a new record high, beating the old record of 14 seen on Dec. 31, 2018. [19/39]
6 Red-shouldered Hawks seen was also a new record, beating the old record of 4 seen in 2018. [10/39]
71 Red-tailed hawks was below our average of 86. [39/39]
1865 Ring-billed Gulls was below the average of 4483. [38/39]
150 Herring Gulls was slightly below the average of 177. [36/39]
1 Iceland Gull at the Dry Brooks Beach made for the 7th appearance on the count. [7/39]
1 Lesser Black-backed Gull was right on the average. [20/39]
3 Great Black-backed Gulls were found far away from the beach at the northern edge of the circle and was an average #. [19/39]
11 Eurasian Collared Doves in Shartlesville was a new high, beating the old record of one seen last year. [2/39]
647 Rock Pigeons was a little below average. [38/39] (Was there a data entry error one year???)
237 Mourning Doves was well below the average of 764. [39/39]
16 Eastern Screech Owls was slightly above average. [38/39]
1 Great Horned Owl was well below the average of 14, but relatively little owling was done this year. [39/39]
9 Belted Kingfishers was average. [39/39]
2 Red-headed Woodpeckers was just below last year's record of three! [10/39]
86 Red-bellied Woodpeckers was above the average of 59, but nowhere near the count record of 106. [39/39]
10 Yellow-bellied sapsuckers was above the average of 4, but below the all-time high of 14. [37/39]

53 Downy Woodpeckers was below the average of 87. [39/39]
10 Hairy Woodpeckers was almost up to the average of 12. [39/39]
30 Northern Flickers was above the average of 15, but not close to the record of 74. [21/39]
2 Pileated Woodpeckers was right on the average. [27/39]
14 American Kestrels was below the average of 36 and well below the January 3, 1993 record of 83. [39/39]
2 Merlins was double the count average of 1. [16/39]
140 Blue Jays was just about the average of 143. [39/39]
280 American Crows was well below the average of 571 and far below the record of 1873 counted on 1/3/2009. [39/39]
1 Fish Crow was below the average of 25. [21/39]
21 Common Ravens was a new record, beating the old record of 6 counted 12/26/2020. [10/39]
34 Horned Larks was far below the count average of 477 and this is undoubtedly due to the lack of snow cover combined with the increasing use of winter cover crops by farmers, which makes them harder to see. [39/39]
55 Carolina Chickadees was a very high count but not quite up to the record 77 seen on 1/1/2017. They were not reported in the first 7 years of the count and then one was found 1/3/1993 and then only rarely until 12/25/2015 when the count jumped from less than 10 to 42. This may have been due to confusion in chickadee identification as Carolina Chickadees replaced Black-capped as the breeding species in the area. [13/39] No **Black-capped Chickadees** were found this year.
26 Tufted Titmice counted is still below our average of 111 and below last years count of 42. [39/39]
1 Red-breasted Nuthatch seen by one of our feeder watchers was a good find in this non-irruption year. [29/39]
61 White-breasted Nuthatches just about reached our average of 67. [39/39]
6 Brown Creepers was only 1 below the count average of 7. [39/39]
3 Winter Wrens was above the count average of 1 and this may be due to newly accessible habitat in the recently created William Penn State Forest near Wernersville. [14/39]
91 Carolina Wrens was an above average count, but not up to the 118 seen last year or the record of 129 counted 12/28/2019. [39/39]
14 Golden-crowned Kinglets was one shy of the average of 15. [39/39]
5 Ruby-crowned Kinglets was above the average of 3. [32/39]

131 Eastern Bluebirds was just a little below the average of 148. [39/39]

9 Hermit Thrush was more than double the count average of 4, but less the record high count of 15. [31/39]

718 American Robins was more than triple the average count of 251, but well below the record of 1854 counted on 12/26/2015. [39/39] (Note: some years almost no Robins were counted, notably 1/1/1989 when only ONE was counted!)

1 Gray Catbird was right on the average for this species, which doesn't winter in our area in any numbers. [20/39]

41 Northern Mockingbirds was just over half the average count of 75. [39/39]

5452 European Starlings was below the average count of 6506. [37/39]

57 Cedar Waxwings was about 1/2 of the average count of 104, somewhat surprising in this winter when berries seemed to be plentiful. [36/39]

1 Cape May Warbler seen by Ed Barrell and Irene Taylor was obviously a first for the count. This bird should be in the tropics by now, but recent warm autumns and early winters have caused several warblers to hang around in Berks County, including the Wilson's Warbler seen at a feeder on this count last winter. [1/39]

6 Yellow-rumped Warblers was one more than the count average of 5. [32/39]

7 Chipping Sparrows seen in one flock was a new all time high, beating the old record of 3! [8/39]

19 Field Sparrows was higher than the average of 15, but well short of the record 71 reported on 1/3/1988. [38/39]

407 Dark-eyed Juncos was just over half of the count average of 777 and below the high count of 1966. [39/39]

4 White-crowned Sparrows was not quite a record low count; that was 3 seen on the 12/30/2017 count. [39/39]

469 White-throated Sparrows was below the average of 680. [39/39]

There were no **(0) American Tree Sparrows** reported this year. [36/39]

1 Savannah Sparrow was reported, which is our average. The record high is 8. As with the Horned Larks, this may be partly due to the lack of snow which allows them to roam (and hide) anywhere in the farm fields. [15/39]

110 Song Sparrows were reported, less than half the count average of 242. This may also have been due to the mild weather preceding the count, which gave these seed eaters the freedom to range widely through the "weedy" fields and forest edges looking for seeds to eat. [39/39]

2 Swamp Sparrows was well below the average of 11. [36/39]

142 Northern Cardinals was below the average of 204. [39/39]

2 Red-winged Blackbirds was below the average of 22, but the 4 'Blackbird sp.' reported may have been Red-wings. [27/39]

20 Brown-headed Cowbirds was less than 1/3 of the count average of 64. [30/39]

210 House Finches was almost exactly 1/2 of the count average 411. [39/39]

2 Purple Finches were a nice find for this species, which isn't seen many years. [26/39]

3 Pine Siskins convincingly reported by a feeder counter were a very nice find, as this species seems to be staying farther north for this winter. [11/39]

308 House Sparrows was also below the average of 595, but well above the low count of 62. [39/39]

Elverson Christmas Bird Count: A firsthand Experience – Sheila Martin

Friday, December 22, 2023

I'd been hearing about "Christmas Bird Count" ever since first joining birding clubs, listening intently (then letting it lapse); trying to grasp the Why, the How, the Who does it for What purpose? – the deeper rationale of it all, as a totally uninitiated birder on in my sixth decade! After years of club involvement and service – plus now, as president, I decided it was time to let my birdwalk experience and strengthening ID skills be the "rubber meeting the road". Time to put my "money where my mouth was". In this, my 10th year as a BOC member, I finally volunteered in December 2023 for a Berks County CBC circle, my choice being that of Elverson, near my residence! Knowing that county compiler Lucy Cairns had the Reading circle well-honed and staffed, I felt free to lend my services, however modest, to this circle, which straddles the Berks/Chester County lines, with Mr. Jim Cook of Elverson as circle compiler.

This area includes two incredibly strong, birdy-through-all-seasons spots: the well-known and highly visible Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site plus French Creek State Park. Mr. Jared Brandt of FCSP – whom many

of us met 'way back in June '22 joining us for BOC's now-popular, annual Big Woods Trail walk (where Prairie Warbler has taken the outing blue ribbon for the past two years!) – assigned himself to two locales around that park; at Scott's Run Lake for an hour & forty minutes with 16 species/93 birds, then on to Hopewell's Fire Tower locale for forty-five minutes, counting 26 birds among 6 species. Jared's highlight of note were four Hermit Thrushes; yet he also ticked off Pileated Woodpecker, Belted Kingfisher & Northern Flicker.

Meanwhile, I worked with Ms. Alissa Kane, Park Guide at HFNHS for an hour-&-a-half portion of the almost three hours she mentally committed in time at the outset – afterward with park associate Nick Shollenberger shoring up the duo after I left ranks due to the cold! (Next year I know to dress in layers from head-to-toe; not just snuggies at torso & feet!) And – yes indeed, there WILL be a “next year” for me! I was wow'd by the sheer NUMBERS of birds in some of our species noted, plus the general breadth of species still hanging around which - to my still-intermediate awareness, would have been dismissed as “long-gone!” The three of us at Hopewell tallied 270 total birds among 18 species, having a highly irregular day in how high the numbers were for Am. Robins (85!), Cedar Waxwings(24!) & Eur. Starlings(55!)

Of both counts combined from both parks however, the popular “handsome group” favorite was a nice Blue Jay total; so pleased to see them gracing us with their presence, so late in the season. Consider joining the Elverson count circle many months from now, at '24's end - at the bottom tip of Berks at the start of winter, in a reliably vibrant bird habitat!

BOC Meetings/Programs – Spring 2024

March 8, 2024, 7:00 pm **NOW BY ZOOM ONLY** the link will be emailed to all members

“A Defense of the Unholy Trio” – Bernard “Billy” Brown, nature writer for Grid magazine, co-host of the Urban Wildlife Podcast, and cofounder of local nature hub PhillyNature.org. Pigeons, starlings, and house sparrows are the most abundant and easily observed birds in urban settings. They can be entertaining to watch and listen to. Give them a chance, and you might even appreciate their beauty. Nature writer Billy Brown discusses their history, their place in the urban food web, and why he recommends that beginning birders start with the most disrespected birds in the Philly region.

April 12, 2024, 7:30 pm in person at Albright College and streaming.

(Directions and info for attending the meeting at Albright College are below)

“Birding PA State Parks” – Chris Kemmerer, PA DCNR. Pennsylvania has one of the largest state park systems in the country. With 124 parks across 64 counties, the system includes geographic wonders, prominent moments in American history, old growth forests, tidal waterways, and Great Lakes access. This diversity is also represented in the flora and fauna that call our Pennsylvania State Parks home. Join Chris Kemmerer, Education and Interpretation Chief for Pennsylvania State Parks, on a tour of the best birding spots in PA's state parks.



A Blue-headed vireo incubating eggs in Rickett's Glen State Park. Photo by Mike Slater

May 10, 2024, Our “Annual Event” held jointly with the Mengel Natural History Society.

“pOrnithology: The Birds and the Birds and the Bees” – George Armistead

Location: The Peanut Bar

A review of interesting and unusual courtship and reproductive habits of birds, littered with copious innuendo and anthropomorphism to keep the concepts firmly in perspective.

(Details on the Banquet Flyer at the end of this newsletter.)

Our temporary move: April 2024 in-person meeting location to Albright College!

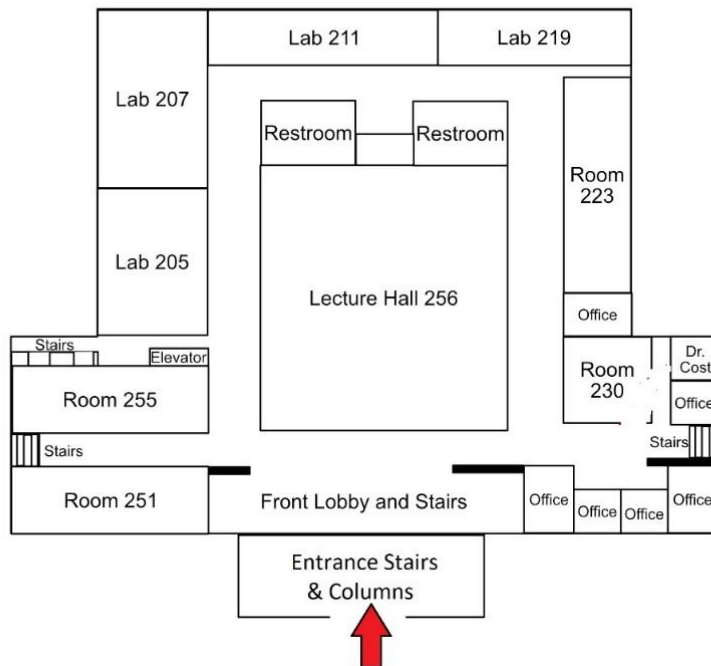
Informed of an uncertain construction schedule of Nolde’s McConnell Hall this fall, at Nolde Forest’s suggestion & with their blessing, B.O.C. will be guests of Albright College for months where we meet in-person in ’23-’24, e.g. September-November then again in May Find extensive, detailed info elsewhere on this change – but boiled-down locators are “13th & Bern Streets” or “1650 Palm Street”, Reading. Maps & even a walking video are shown. Basically, one is “crossing thru” campus with some elevation gain toward Science Hall, then to Lecture Hall 256, ultimately to one’s seat. Check it out at your convenience! Kudos to Ian Cost for smoothly seeing to this offering.

Albright College Information for our meetings this coming season

Dear Baird Birding Friends -

Please read on carefully to park, navigate your way and find the meeting - and your seat! – for our in-person B.O.C Friday night meeting in September, October, November, March and April:

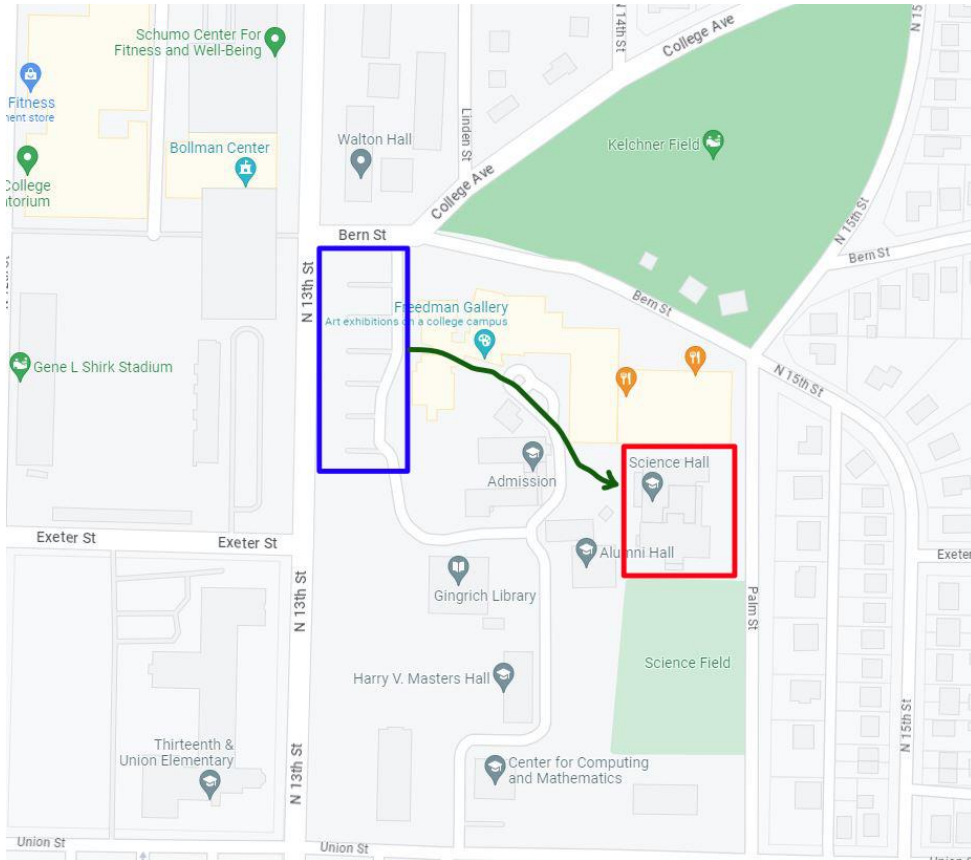
B.O.C. will meet in **Lecture Hall 256**; an Interior Map of Science Hall indicates a floor plan so that you can find the large Front Lobby (foyer) and our room.



You can use the Visitor Parking located at the **corners of 13th and Bern Streets in Reading**. This is shown in the **blue rectangle** in the images below. Alternatively, if you have mobility concerns and do not want to walk up a hill with long, spread-out steps, you may park on Palm Street alongside/parallel to the **red square** marking Science Hall, with fewer steps. **Use 1650 Palm Street, Reading** as a GPS address All are welcome! Parking is also usually available in the evenings on Palm St. right beside Science Hall.

COVID Policy - your Board of Directors asks:

If you are feeling ill, have recently been exposed to COVID, or are



awaiting the results of a test for COVID-19, please stay home.

Consider wearing a mask if you wish to minimize your risk for contracting the virus. A highly effective mask (N95, KN95, or KF94) is recommended.

BOC Field Trips/Bird Walks – Spring/Summer 2024**

GPS addresses/coordinates are included as given by Google Maps.

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/> More Tuesday Bird Walks (2nd & 4th Tuesdays) will be planned, **Spring 2024 Tuesday walks** Some are listed below, additional bird walks may also be scheduled and be announced on the B.O.C. [Blog/Birdwalk info](#) and on the [Field Trips web page](#).

March 3, 2024 (Sunday) L. Ontelaunee. Introduction to Spring Waterfowl -12 Noon

Meet at dam breast on Rte. 73 to carpool to the different areas of the lake. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. Experienced birders with scopes will be there to help you get good looks. Coordinator Rudy Keller 610-845-7310 **Meeting Location: at the west end of the dam on Rt. 73 between Rts. 61 and 222, Lake Shore Dr, Shoemakersville, PA 19555.**

Tuesday walk at Berks Leisure Area March 19, 2024 (Tuesday) – 8:00 am 1stDay of Spring Walk
Celebrate the early arrival of spring with BOC members and walk along the Tulpehocken Cr. looking for early harbingers of the season. Also, this is the time for the now annual "cake" get-together, as previous attendees will remember. Meet at the Berks Leisure Area parking lot. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman, 484-794-7053.
Directions: Exit Rt. 12 at Paper Mill Rd., turn right on Broadcasting Rd. and go east to Tulpehocken Rd. Make right and go 1 mile to sign on left and park. **Meeting Loc.: 1901 Tulpehocken Rd, Wyomissing, PA 19610**

March 23, 2024 (Saturday) Green Hills Preserve – Wintering Birds -8:00 am
Wintering birds and early spring arrivals in managed grassland and edge habitats. 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 **Meeting Loc.: Natural Lands' Green Hills Preserve, 553 Gunhart Rd, Mohnton, PA**

March 24, 2024 (Sunday) French Creek State Park – Woodcock Watch -7:00 pm
American Woodcock courtship display. Coordinator: Art Zdancewic 610-858-3315
Meet at park office 843 Park Road, Elverson PA 19520.

April 6, 2024 (Saturday) Gring's Mill - Spring Walk for Early Migrants –8:00 am
Meet at the Gring's Mill Recreation Area. Dir. East on Broadcasting Rd to end. Make right 1/2 mile to entrance on left. Coordinator and for more information Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.
Meeting Location: Gring's Mill Recreation Area, 2083 Tulpehocken Rd, Reading, PA 19610

April 9, 2024 (Tuesday) Kernsville Dam & Recreation Area - Rail and Bittern Walk - 8:00 am
Join BOC birders and search for these secretive and elusive birds in the recently enhanced wetlands of the Kernsville desilting basin. Previously seen here at this time of year were Sora, Virginia Rail and both Bitterns. The habitat also transitions to river woodlands, so a variety of species is possible. Coordinator: Matt Wlaniewski, 484-577-3530. Directions: Rte 61 north to the light at Cabella's in Hamburg. Make a right onto Jetson Dr. and another onto Industrial Dr. Go 1 mile to Kernsville Dam Rd. and make left and go to the parking lot. **Meeting Location at the big parking Lot: John Bartram Trail, Hamburg, PA 19526, 40.56242, -75.99471**

April 13, 2024 (Saturday) State Game Lands 280 Spring Outing -8:00 am
Walk the fields and edges of Blue Marsh Lake looking for migrant and resident birds. Coordinator Brian Lineaweaver. Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053
Meeting Location: 40.37066, -76.06973 Directions: State Hill Rd. to Brownsville Rd. Make left and travel 4 miles to Justa Rd. Take right and go to end and park.

April 21, 2024 (Sunday) Union Meadows - Early Migrants -8:00 am
Spring migrants including early warblers. An easy walk on a wide flat trail through wooded and open field habitats. Meet at Union Meadows East parking lot, Schuylkill River Trail, Rte.724/East Main St. in Monocacy, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. Coordinators: Rudy Keller 610-845-7310 Linda Ingram 610-621-7473 **Meeting loc.: Union Meadows East parking lot, 100 Campbell Ford Road, Douglassville PA**

April 27, 2024 (Saturday) Hay Creek Watershed -8:00 am
Walk the Hay Creek Watershed in search of spring warblers, including La. Waterthrush, nesting raptors and possibly nesting Bank Swallows. Meet at the closed south end on Hay Creek Rd. From traffic light at Rtes. 568 and 724 in Gibraltar, take 568 west approximately 1.5 miles and turn left on White Bear Rd. Drive 4 miles through 2 stop signs and turn left on Hay Creek Rd. Drive to the dead end and park on the shoulder Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053, **Meeting Location: Old 82 & Parking Area, 2000 Hay Creek Rd, Birdsboro, PA 19508**

April 27, 2024 (Saturday) Butterflies & Botany, Neversink Mountain -10:00 am (with Mengel Natural History Society) For butterflies flying only in early spring, this is one of the few accessible Berks County locations. Meet at S 10th & South ST., Reading. (Park on South St.) Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281, Ryan Woolwine 484-883-6461. **Meeting Location: 999-975 South St, Reading, PA 19602. 40.326248, -75.918611**

May 4, 2024 (Saturday) Nolde Forest Spring Walk -8:00 am

Join BOC members for a walk to search for spring migrants including Louisiana Waterthrush, other warblers, and Acadian Flycatcher. Maybe also catch sight of a Barred Owl which usually nests here. We will meet at the Sawmill Parking Area just off Rt. 625, south on Rt. 625 from Shillington to sign for Sawmill Parking. Coordinator: Linda Ingram 610-621-7473 **Meeting Location: 2910 New Holland Rd, Reading, PA 19607**

May 5, 2024 (Sunday) State Game Lands 106, Pine Swamp Rd. -8:00 am

Excellent location for neotropical migrants and one of the few Berks County locations where Ruffed Grouse is possible. From Hawk Mt. Sanctuary go south on Hawk Mt. Rd. 4 miles and turn right on Pine Swamp Rd. Drive 1 mile to parking area on right. From Rte 143, turn left on Hawk Mt. Rd. and drive 4 miles to Pine Swamp Rd. (left turn) then 2 miles to parking lot on left. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053, Rudy Keller 610-845-7310 **Meeting Location: Pine Swamp RD, Kempton PA, 19529, 40.6262, -75.9520**

May 7, 2024 (Tuesday) Angora Fruit Farm, Berks County Parks - 7:30 am

A good time in a good habitat for migrating spring warblers. The orchard borders a mature woodland which is ideal for a variety of spring migrants. The meeting time is at 7:30 but late arrivers can catch up since the birding area is compact. In the last ten years, 124 bird species have been seen here according to eBird postings. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman - 484-794-7053. Directions: Rte. 12 bypass to Spring Valley Rd. exit. Make right and drive 1/4 mile to Midnight's Gap Rd. Make left and continue uphill and down the other side of hill to Angora Rd. Go right and immediately left to park. **Meeting Location: Angora Rd, Reading, PA 19606 , 40.36232, -75.88390**

May 11, 2024 (Saturday) Hopewell Furnace NHS – Spring Migrants & Breeding Birds -8:00 am

This revived venue was a hit with walkers last spring! Eastern Towhees & Baltimore Orioles reliable; spring migrants, shorebirds, maybe. Coordinator: Sheila Martin 610-858-6005 **Disregard the nat'l park gates; still closed at our arrival time. Use 23 Clement Brooke Ln, Elverson 19520 This exact GPS is to their secondary handicapped lot, at historic "boarding house"&"tenant house #3". Orange cones ID lane. Limited to ~10 spaces. Restrooms might not be open yet for the season..**

May 18, 2024 (Saturday) Exeter Scenic River Trail at Trout Run Park -7:00 am

Spring migrants & breeders along the Schuylkill River. Park anywhere on both sides of the road. Coordinator Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053 **Meeting Location: just before the Exeter Twp. Yard Waste Composting area next to Trout Run Park, 914-920 East Neversink Rd, Reading, PA**

June 1, 2024 (Saturday) Hopewell Big Woods Trail -7:00 am Breeding birds of grassland & edge habitats. A wide trail meanders through open fields. Yellow-breasted Chat, breeding warblers and Willow Flycatcher are reliable. Since birds and their behaviors are easy to see in this open habitat, we will watch for breeding behaviors and learn how to enter them in the PA Bird Atlas. Meet at the trailhead adjacent to Union Township maintenance building. **Meeting Location: 165 Center Road, Douglassville Coordinators: Rudy Keller 610-845-7310 & Irene Taylor 610-856-1116.**

June 8, 2024 (Saturday) Green Hills Preserve Butterflies -10:00am (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, Ryan Woolwine 484-883-6461 **Meeting Location: Natural Lands' Green Hills Preserve, 553 Gunhart Rd, Mohnton, PA**

June 22, 2024 (Saturday) Dragonflies & Damselflies at Hay Creek-Birdsboro Reservoir-10am (with Mengel Natural History Society) Coordinators: Mike Slater paplantings@gmail.com, Todd Underwood underwoo@kutztown.edu & Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 A new Location with different dragonflies. We'll be looking for Tiger Spiketails, Prince Baskettails and Gray Petaltails plus other species not seen on our walks before!

Meet at the closed south end on Hay Creek Rd. directions as for the April 27 bird walk. **Meeting Location: Old 82 & Parking Area, 2000 Hay Creek Rd, Birdsboro, PA**

June 29, 2024 (Saturday) Nolde Forest EEC Moth Night -8:30 pm to ? (with Mengel Natural History Society) – With UV lights and trees baited rotten fruit//beer night insects show up for viewing. Bring flashlight. Meet at Mansion parking lot. Coordinators: Ryan Woolwine 484-883-6461, Jim Eckert 610-373-1064, Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 **Meeting Location: 3025 New Holland Rd, Reading, PA**

July 20, 2024 (Saturday) Wildflowers and Pollinators at Union Meadows West -10:00 am (with Mengel Natural History Society) A meandering path through this pollinator meadow provides good access for observing a variety of butterflies and bee species. Directions: Route 724 (East Main St., Birdsboro) (turn opposite St. Michael's Cemetery) Park in the ball field parking lot. Coordinators: Mike Slater paplantings@gmail.com, Linda Ingram (610-621-7473) **Meeting Location: 980 E Main St, Birdsboro, PA 19508**

August 3, 2024 (Saturday) Blue Marsh Butterflies -10:00 am (with Mengel Natural History Society) Coordinators: Karl Gardner 610-987-3281 and Ryan Woolwine 484-883-6461 **Meeting Location: Blue Marsh Visitor's Center, 1268 Palisades Dr, Leesport, PA 19533**

August 17, 2024 (Saturday) Angelica Park Butterflies -10:00 am (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, Ryan Woolwine 484-883-6461 **Meeting Location: Berks Nature Angelica Creek Park, 575 St Bernardine St, Reading**

**(GPS addresses are included as given by Google Maps)*

Past Season's Field Trip Reports

Old Morlatton Village, Schuylkill R. Trail – September 5, 2023 – Russ Hoffman

Four BOC members were joined by three first time participants for the first walk of the fall season. At 4 pm the temperature was still in the upper nineties, so it was good that the trail is mostly under the tree canopy, which made it somewhat bearable. Although the heat kept the birds in their secret nooks on a day like this, we still managed to see 26 species. Also, we were able to answer the question: What do eagles do on a day when the heat is extreme? The eagle we saw was sitting in the middle of the river for the entire time we were there (more than an hour).



A Bald Eagle cooling off in the Schuylkill River. Photo by Russ Hoffman

Angora Fruit Farm - September 12, 2023 – Irene Taylor

September 12th was a beautiful late summer day, cool and crisp with a brilliant blue sky. A group of BOC members enjoyed a lovely walk around the Angora Fruit Farm grounds, ably led by Russ Hoffman. We saw a total of 28 species, including great looks at several Cape May Warblers feasting on Devil's Walking Stick (a.k.a. Japanese Angelica Tree, *Aralia elata*) berries, numerous bluebirds, blue jays and flickers, and a variety of other birds detailed on the eBird checklist. The checklist also includes Russ' terrific photo of a female Cape May warbler.



A Merlin at Bombay Hook. Photo by Russ Hoffman

and 220 American Avocets. But the highlights for the day were 2 American White Pelicans, flying low over our cars, white plumage with black wingtips and huge yellow bills very apparent, two perched Merlins and the Western Sandpiper that 3 birders got to see later in the day. The eBird checklist details all 58 species and includes a number of Russ Hoffman's terrific photos.

BOMBAY HOOK NWR - September 27, 2023 – Irene Taylor

September 27th, after heavy rain storms overnight, was overcast and damp with a moderate northeast wind, not too promising for birding. However, 5 BOC birders who made the trip to Delaware were rewarded with a banner day! We saw a respectable 58 species, among them were approximately 104 Blue-winged Teal, 320 Northern Shovelers, 450 Green-winged Teal



A Western Sandpiper at Bombay Hook. Photo by Russ Hoffman

State Hill Hawk Watch by Russ Hoffman

The fall State Hill, Blue Marsh L. hawk watch consisted of one day each in Sept., Oct., and Nov. Although it was not a great year for numbers of hawks here, the participants were treated to many good looks at the raptors that passed by. The best day for Broadwings was Sept. 17, when the count was 25 during the 6 hours of counting. Bald Eagle sightings were also a highlight as they were counted in all three months. While local eagles cannot be ruled out, there was enough diversity in the plumages to know some were passing through. Also, many of the eagle sightings were close up as they checked out the lake for a possible meal. Good looks at passing accipiters occurred on all three days of the watch. Other sightings of note included Osprey, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, and Northern Harrier. Spending so much time at one place gives you an idea of what is taking place during the season. Although we did not count them, the number of Chimney Swifts going past was probably in the thousands. Other numerous migrants were Tree, Barn, and N. Rough-winged Swallows, Blue Jays and blackbirds of various species.

Hopewell Big Woods Trail – November 5, 2023 – Rudy Keller

Birds are not always the highlight of a birdwalk. Our group of eight had been alerted in the parking lot to be on the lookout for a stray husky and her litter. Not more than a quarter mile down the trail, a piteously yelping husky pup emerged from the tall grass covered with seeds and glad to see friendly people. Nan Kennedy scooped it up and walked it back to the parking lot, where a dog rescue volunteer waited. Seeds from the pup's fur stuck like velcro to Nan's fleece jacket, becoming a more or less permanent souvenir of the occasion. We continued on our walk, but the 27 bird species were a bit of an anti-climax.

Berks County Birds, June-July 2023 compiled by Rudy Keller

Abbreviations: Blue Marsh L. (BML), Blue Mt. Academy (BMA), E. J. Breneman Quarry (BQ), French Creek SP (FCSP), Hamburg Reservoir (HRes), Kittatinny Ridge (KR), L. Ontelaunee (LO), Rodale Experimental Farm, Maxatawny Twp. (Rodale).

A non-birding kayaker found Berks County's first **Am. White Pelican** on BML early on the morning of 6/16. Word spread on social media and many birders saw and photographed the white giant at BML and later at nearby BQ. It was last seen at BQ early on 6/18 (JB).

Three overwintering duck species were tardy in leaving this year. Two **Am. Wigeons** were still at BQ 6/18 (JB). An imm. male **Ruddy Duck** lingered at BQ till at least 7/8 (RK). Two **Ring-necked Ducks** were at BMA 6/5 & 8 (DK, JS), one of them staying till 7/10 (DK). Over decades, Ring-necked Duck has been the most likely non-breeding duck to stay for part or all of the summer. A **Hooded Merganser** hen was seen with ducklings in a riverine swamp near Old Morlatton Village in May (LI). **Common Mergansers** again nested along the Manatawny Cr. in Amity Twp. (RS). Both divers have become well established as breeders.

A **N. Bobwhite**, an escapee first reported in early spring, was seen near Gring's Mill 6/9 (PJW). Three **Wild Turkey** hens leading 30 poults presented a vivid example of breeding success as they crossed Sell Rd. in southern Berks 6/22 (AZ). Two hens with 12 poults were seen near Shoemakersville 7/15 & 21 (MW). Single turkeys were reported at many other places. **Ruffed Grouse** persists on the KR, where one was seen at HRes 6/15 (KG). It is unusual for **Eurasian Collared-Doves** to be seen outside Shartlesville, but this summer one was seen to the west at Camp Swatara with three **Mourning Doves** 7/20 (EH). There were several drive-by viewings of one to four ECDO perched on utility wires along Main St. in Shartlesville during the period. No nest or dependent young of this dove have yet been found at this colony.

One or two **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were intermittently heard at all the usual places, but this was the first summer since 2015 during which **no Black-billed Cuckoo** was reported. An anomalous **Common Nighthawk**, maybe a late migrant, was seen at 1:15 p.m. in Fleetwood 6/20 (DK). **Whip-poor-wills** still sing through summer nights on the KR. Two were heard near Port Clinton 6/8 (DB) and as many as four were enjoyed by evening birders at Northkill Gap well into Aug.

Two **Am. Avocets**, apparently finding no suitable place to land, spent much of the afternoon of 7/16 flying back and forth around LO (LI, TL, BL, PJW; photos). Refueling on their northbound flight were 5-8 **Semi-palmated Plovers** at BMA 6/5-7 (DK, JR, AW, MW). Southbound **Least Sandpipers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Solitary Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs and Lesser Yellowlegs** appeared as usual in small numbers in Jul and increased in Aug (m.ob.). Presumably breeding **Spotted Sandpipers** were reported at about 10 places, one to three birds per location. Courtship behavior and territorial chases were sometimes noted.

Two late migrating **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at BML 7/16 (BL, et al.; photos). A coastal storm pushed an adult **Laughing Gull** inland to BML 7/16 (JS; photo). The usual small group (< 12) of **Ring-billed Gulls** scavenged

the beach at BML all summer. A **Common Tern** at BML 6/8-10 (BL, JR, PJW; photo) stayed long enough to give several birders good looks. One to six non-breeding **Double-crested Cormorants**, annually summering birds, were occasionally reported at BQ, BML, LO and on the Schuylkill R. through Jul.

Every year starting in late May or Jun, local birders see adult **Black-crowned Night-Herons** at LO or BML and wonder where they might be nesting. No rookery has been found since 2014, but reports of juveniles in summer give hope that the 'Quok' may still breed in Berks. This year, there were about 10 reports of juveniles, all singletons, between 7/17 and 8/23, probably including multiple sightings of some individuals. Most were seen with one to four adults at various places around LO and BML, but one juvenile was seen alone at School Rd. pond, Fleetwood 8/15-23 (RK). Perhaps the coming bird atlas will raise interest in finding a rookery.

The coming atlas may also confirm or debunk the perception that **Red-shouldered Hawk** (and **Barred Owl**) have increased as breeders since the last atlas. There were five reports of the hawk and several of the owl in the wooded hills of eastern Berks this season, more than usual. The more secretive **Broad-winged Hawk** was reported singly at the usual places: Piedmont forest around FCSP, the oak forested KR, and the wooded hills of eastern Berks. **Red-headed Woodpecker** was confirmed breeding at three locations including Bastian Rd., Bowers (SFo), a nesting site active for decades. Singletons were seen at several other probable breeding locations. The only reported **Barn Owl** was seen by chance when it flushed from a farm and was chased by an **Am. Kestrel** and other birds into a field in Heidelberg Twp. 6/26 (Anon). Perhaps the easiest way to confirm breeding by **Am. Kestrels** is to watch for adults accompanied by fledged young on roadside utility wires in Jul. Ten such family groups, numbering three to six birds each, were reported at 10 farmland locations across the county this Jul, a very encouraging breeding outcome for this declining falcon.

Blue-headed Vireos reported in non-breeding habitat at BML 6/1 (JS) and Heidelberg Twp. 6/14 (BL) belong in the late migrant group. Single birds reported on the KR at Northkill Gap 6/5 (BL) and 6/10 (SF) and three at HRes 6/9 (KG), where annually found in summer, were in hemlock breeding habitat. Early nesting **Horned Larks** are inconspicuous by Jun, but likely breeders were seen or heard on various dates in the limestone farm belt of the Great Valley that extends across central Berks. There are many **Purple Martin** colonies on farms in the Great Valley, but none documented by their owners or by birders except on drive-by counts. A colony at Fleetwood Mennonite School had about 50 birds 6/30 (Anon). Our only known **Bank Swallow** colony at Haines & Kibblehouse Quarry near Birdsboro got little attention. Four birds were seen there 6/7 (TU) and nine on 6/11 (AW). The perception that the two **Cliff Swallow** colonies at LO (now 57 years old) are declining was reinforced by a count of only 20 birds at each of the bridges in mid-Jun (RK). As recently as 2017, the count for both bridges was 140. The only other colony reported to be active (there were once five) was the small one at the bridge on Old Church Rd, BML, where just four birds were seen 6/17 (EB).

There have been many reports over the years of **White-throated Sparrows** lingering into Jun. This year's bird was singing in a rhododendron thicket at HRes 6/9 (KG). The grassland sparrow trio continues to be well reported in Berks farmland. Up to six **Grasshopper Sparrows** were counted in the Monument Rd., Hamburg hay fields in Jun (KG). As many as eight **Savannah Sparrows** were found in the shaggy pastures at Rodale, with several breeding confirmations. **Vesper Sparrow**, often the under-reported member of the trio, was cited seven times on seven farms. **Swamp Sparrow**, an uncommon and thinly distributed breeder, was reported twice in suitable breeding habitat. One was in a wetland along Ammon Rd. near FCSP 7/18 (S&F) and two were at Hamburg Commerce Park basins 7/24 (SH).

One to four **Yellow-breasted Chats** pleased birders with their antics in Jun along the Big Woods Trail, FCSP, where everyone goes to see them. One was reported at Green Hills Preserve 6/24 (AZ). **Bobolinks** and **E. Meadowlarks** persist in pockets of habitat that may sustain breeding, but reported numbers are small (mostly

one to three birds per location, sometimes more of Bobolinks), and breeding outcomes are largely unknown. However, small groups can reproduce, evidenced by breeding confirmation (via CF) of Bobolink at Goose Run Park near Pottstown, where only two or three birds were present (NW, JT).

Yet more additions to the lengthy list of tardy migrants of 2023 are a **Magnolia Warbler** and a **Canada Warbler** at Hay Cr. 6/3 (BL), a **Blackpoll Warbler** at FCSP 6/4 (CL) and another at Hay Cr. 6/13 (BL). A **Blackburnian Warbler** at HRes 6/13 (KG), though singing in hemlocks, probably should also be part of this group. Counts of seven **Worm-eating Warblers** on the rocky slopes of Neversink Mt., Reading 6/11 (CL) and five at Northkill Gap on the KR 6/10 (SF), indicated healthy breeding populations. **Kentucky Warbler**, often confined to one or two locations, was reported at five this summer. Three were previously occupied sites, but birds on the Appalachian Trail near Rt. 183 on 6/3 (RW) and at Bear Creek Resort in eastern Berks 7/15 (AR) were on new territory. **Hooded Warbler's** winning streak continues. Its stronghold is the large, mature Piedmont forest around FCSP, where 17 were counted in an old burn area on the Berks/Chester line 7/28 (PW), and 13 at neighboring Hopewell Furnace Natl. Historic Site 7/13 (PW). Up to 10 were counted at HRes on the KR in Jun (KG). About three were at each of two sites in the more fragmented woods of the eastern Berks hills in Jun (RK). **Blue-winged Warbler**, **Chestnut-sided Warbler** and **Prairie Warbler**, all of which need some form of early successional habitat, were reported at only one or two sites each. Our KR specialty warblers are **Black-throated Blue Warbler** and **Black-throated Green Warbler**. Singing BTBW were at three places in Jun (DB, KG, BL), more than usual. The slightly more common BTGW was at about four places, including HMS, but seems to be best established in the hemlock/rhododendron ravine at HRes, where 2-4 males can be found annually (KG).

One or two **Blue Grosbeaks** were reported at each of 11 locations, which is about standard. **Dickcissels** returned to Rodale's rotationally grazed pastures for the eighth consecutive year, first seen 5/20 and last reported 7/30 (m.ob.). As in previous years, birders mostly reported one, sometimes two, males singing tirelessly from roadside utility wires. No female was reported till 7/30, when a male and female were photographed while perched near each other on a fence. There was no breeding confirmation. Dickcissels were reported on none of the other farms that had intermittently attracted them in the past.

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Berks County Birds, Fall 2023 compiled by Matt Wlasniewski August – November, 2023

Locations: Angora Fruit Farm (AFF), Berne Township (BT), Bernhardt's Dam (BD), 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), EJ Breneman Quarry (BQ), French Creek State Park (FCSP), Gotwal's Pond (GP), Hamburg Commerce Park (HCP), Hamburg Reservoir (HR), Hawk Mountain North Lookout Data (HMNL), Hawk Mountain South Lookout (HMSL), 183 Hawk Watch (HW), Hay Creek (HC), Kaercher Creek (KC), Kernsville Dam 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), Mount Penn (MP), Northkill Gap (NG), Peter's Creek (PC), Pine Swamp Road (PSR), Rodale Experimental Farm (REF), 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 (SGL280), State Hill Hawk Watch (SHHW), Willow Run Farm Fleetwood (WRFF).

Above average rainfall in both August and September resulted in scattered numbers of passerine migrants and several unproductive days at Berks raptor migration sites. The Atlantic hurricane season was overly active; however, due to the effects of El Nino weather patterns, the named storms had little effect inland. The persistent large fires in the northwestern Canadian forests were thought to have impact on migration routes, which resulted in some unusual birds throughout the county.

Waterfowl movement was relatively light this quarter. **Snow Goose** activity was not significant at hawk watches or lakes. A surprising find at LO 11/29 (RK) were two adult and two immature Ross's Geese that were likely a family unit. Reports of immature **Ross's Geese** are rare in the East and previously unknown in Berks. Off-ridge numbers of **Brant** are rare and in small numbers if found on the two large lakes in Berks. The 116 Brant that made a brief appearance at BML10/30 (AP, JS, BW, KW) were definitely unusual. The only report of off-ridge Tundra Swans were 12 that stopped at BML 11/10 (JW, PW).

Bay ducks were slim this quarter. Eight **Black Scoter** 11/1 at LO (RK) and twenty-five **Bufflehead** 11/2 at BML (JSp) took refuge during stormy weather. An annual but rare **Red-necked Grebe** was a storm surprise at LO 11/2 (AP).

Eurasian Collared-Doves were consistently present in the area of First Street in Shartlesville, usually in small numbers. **Common Nighthawk** numbers seemed above average in several locations. These totals were reported at three sites on 8/26: 48 at HMNL, 52 in Hamburg along the Schuylkill River (MW) and a notable 145 at KDRA (KG). **Eastern Whip-poor-will** continued to be active in August with 4 heard 8/1 at SGL110 (RK) and a lone "whip" called 8/9 in District Twp. (RK). JS was astounded 8/31 when a "whip" flew over her Bern Township residence. KG witnessed a remarkable migration event when 745 **Chimney Swifts** passed over KDRA 8/28.

Since the draining and reseeding of the impoundment at KCP, shorebird sightings have shifted to new venues. Fleetwood's SRP maintains a small feeding area for shorebirds with a good variety of species but not in great numbers. Two **American Golden-Plovers** at SRP 9/10 (RK) were reduced to one 9/28 (JR). JSp found one **Semipalmated Plover** 8/12 SRP. A small wetland near a commercial pumpkin crop on Krause Road provided a short-term feeding area for a **Short-billed Dowitcher** 8/22 (BL). A rare fall migrant **Stilt Sandpiper** lingered 8/26 to 10/5 at BD (m.ob.) On 9/3, MW watched two Stilt Sandpipers at SRP. Dunlin are usually found in scattered rain pools. From 10/30 to 11/12, **Dunlin** numbers varied from 1-3 at SRP (m. ob.). On 10/31, JR happened upon 3 Dunlin at BML. The farm pond on Zweizig Road, Hamburg is often covered in a thick growth of algae. A lone **Baird's Sandpiper** was seen balancing on the algae covering 8/18-8/20 (JR, AW, MW). On 8/22, another Baird's Sandpiper found more suitable feeding at BD (BL). One of the rarest migrant shorebirds, a **White-rumped Sandpiper** was seen at SRP 9/26 (RK) and 10/13 (JW, PW). One to three **Semipalmated Sandpipers** were found 8/5 to 9/28 at SRP (m. ob.).

The raft of 116 **Brant** at BML 10/30 was more unusual than first thought. Mixed in with the Brant were five or six **Black Guillemot** (BW, KW, RW). The Black Guillemot swam through the Brant making it difficult to get a sure count. Although the birds were not photographed, a rare bird report was filed with PA Birds. If this report is accepted, this will definitely be a new species for Berks County and perhaps Pennsylvania. The raft of Brant was harassed by **American Herring Gulls** which flushed the Black Guillemot. They were not relocated and were deemed to be misplaced by the stormy weather.

An unusually high number of 13 **Bonaparte Gulls** were seen at LO 11/7 (JSp). **Caspian Terns** are irregular visitors to Berks lakes. Three sightings were reported: one at LO 8/21 (RK), five at BML 8/26 (RH) and one at LO 8/29 (MW). An increasingly rare **Black Tern** made an even rarer 8/18 visit to BML (AP). RH, on one of his frequent visits to BML, photographed a **Common Tern** 10/7.

Anhingas are unusual migrants at HMNL. They are usually observed high above the rocky outcrop in the middle of a hot hazy autumn day. On 9/14, an Anhinga appeared over the lookout and circled in a thermal until it was out of sight (HMNL).

A **Common Loon** gave some good looks 11/29 at LOWS (RF, DG). **Black-crowned Night Herons'** preferred fishing ground is LO, so an adult Black-crowned Night Heron seemed out of place at SRP 8/14-8/23 (m. obs.). Five Black-crowned Night Herons seemed to be at home at LOBF 8/12 (JSp). On 8/17, MW watched an adult Black-Crowned Night Heron trying to fish in the spillway below LO dam. A light fishing line dangled from its bill with the hook imbedded in its lower mandible. The heron did not appear to be suffering but its fishing was not successful. In July, MW spent an hour trying to rescue a **Green Heron** that was hanging above an LO cove at the fishermen's pull-off. A long piece of fishing line was wrapped around one wing. The bird must have been spinning above the water for hours. That spot is a favorite for local fishermen, but it is covered with litter and discarded fishing lines. MW was able to snag the line, bring the Green Heron to shore and remove the fishing line. A single immature **Little Blue Heron** found SRP to its liking and remained there 8/22-8/31 (m. obs.). The pond at the Zweizig Farm was a quiet place for a Little Blue Heron 8/15 (MW).

While birders were enjoying the exotic **Tropical Kingbird** 11/6 – 12/1 at WRFF, a **Western Cattle Egret** appeared in a neighboring pasture 11/17-11/24 (MSc). The small egret was difficult to spot as it fed around the cattle and behind the tall grasses. **Great Egrets** were reported throughout Berks 8/1-9/25 (m. obs.).

A **Wood Stork**, a first for Hawk Mountain's records, appeared near the Donat 8/31 (PH), then passed by HMNL on its journey south. A rare bird report was filed with PA Birds. It was a quiet August day at HMNL and the few visitors were given a special treat for enduring the August heat with the staff and counters. The only previous Berks Co. record is of a bird found dead in Albany Twp. in 1921.

A self-proclaimed casual birder spotted a **Roseate Spoonbill** as she walked her dog along the Tulpehocken Creek near Reading 10/15 (anon.). She first saw the Roseate Spoonbill as it appeared to be napping in a tree. It quietly dropped down to the creek bank, after which the surprised birder walked on but not before taking several photographs which have been sent to PA Birds. After she realized how unique her sighting was, the birder notified some birding friends but the Roseate Spoonbill could not be located that day or the next. If accepted by PORC, the sighting is a first for Berks.

August 31 was a day for unusual sightings at HMNL. **Sandhill Cranes** make appearances each fall but usually as single birds. A high count of five Sandhill Cranes appeared above the ridge 8/31 (HMNL) and continued down the ridge to the south.

A summary of the 2023 Raptor Count Season at HMNL will be published in a future edition of PA Birds. Highlights for the season are: a new record of 619 **Bald Eagles**, five **American Goshawks**, 7,365 **Broadwings** and first **Golden Eagle** on 10/15. The wrap up for the season will address totals for each species and the effects of numerous rainy days and the fires in western Canada forests. Locally, Broadwings wandered away from the ridges on 9/18 when MW counted 130 in a kettle over Hamburg. For the past four years, reports have been made of albino/leucistic **Red-tailed Hawks** in the West Leesport countryside. On 11/7-9, MW observed a leucistic Red-tailed Hawk along River Road south of Hamburg. A local farmer reported he has seen this beautiful hawk several times over the summer.

Northern **Saw-whet Owl** banding was active at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary this fall. A summary report will be issued in a future PA Birds. An off-ridge Northern Saw-whet Owl was heard at SGL106 11/20 (AP) and near a Bern Township residence 11/1 (JS). On 9/11, a **Great Horned Owl** delighted a Bern Township homeowner with its serenade in her backyard (JS).

An **Olive-sided Flycatcher** was very cooperative as it hawked insects from its snag perch at AFF 8/21 – 8/29 (m.obs.). Nearby, a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** also delighted birders as it fed in its favorite apple tree at AFF 8/24-8/28 (m.obs.). SGL 280 proved to be suitable habitat for these flycatchers: **Acadian Flycatcher** 8/27 (BL) and **Alder Flycatcher** 8/14 (BL). **Least Flycatcher** sightings were numerous during migration with no dedication seen to staying on the ridges 8/1 – 10/3 (m.obs.).

The numerous reports of vagrant western kingbirds and flycatchers were a source of envy for Berks birders. That is until November 6 when NW followed up on the report of a strange yellow bird hanging around farm buildings on Pleasant Hill Road, Fleetwood. With cooperation of the land owner, NW was able to see the **Tropical Kingbird** that was feeding off the insects clinging to the silos around the barnyard. Permission was obtained for birders to park in the nearby Walnuttown Mennonite Church if their hours of worship were honored. It is pleasant to report that there were no reports of bad birder behavior and because of that, access was given for closer observation. Needless to say, hundreds of birders were able to photograph the bird. A rare bird report was filed with PORC along with confirmation via audio recording. The Tropical Kingbird was last reported December 2 as temperature dropped and insect life dwindled.

Philadelphia Vireos were reported 9/09-9/16 at MP and the Reading Pagoda (JSo). A daily ritual of **Fish Crow** movement from daily feeding grounds to their evening roosts near the Schuylkill River continued 8/20-9/16 (MW). The daily count numbered 200 to 300 Fish Crows.

Purple Finch were reported 8/1 – 11/30 throughout Berks (m.obs.). Three **White-winged Crossbills** flew by HMNL 11/6 (TH). **Pine Siskins** were the most numerous of the winter finches. High daily counts at HMLS were: 181 on 11/2 and 164 on 11/6 (TH). Early **Snow Bunting** reports were from the fields surrounding Lyons and Fleetwood 11/13 (JY) and 11/18 (DB).

The fields of the Kempton Valley proved excellent feeding areas once the crops were harvested. On 10/25, TH found a **Clay-colored Sparrow** that tarried there for a couple of days. A **Vesper Sparrow** kept the Clay-colored Sparrow company 10/25 (TH). A second record for Berks County, a **Leconte's Sparrow** was found at Kempton Community Park grassland 10/25 (TH - photo) and found and photographed again 10/27 (JH, DDR). **Lincoln's Sparrows** made many appearances in Berks 9/8 – 11/1 (m.obs.). Two Lincoln's Sparrows were reported on two occasions: 9/17 at KDRA (KG) and 9/19 at KDRA (AW).

Fall warbler migration at HMNL was sporadic due to weather conditions and wind direction and velocity. September 4 and 5 were excellent morning flight days. On 9/4, fifteen species of warblers passed the lookout. That afternoon, 82 **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** buzzed the lookout (HMNL). On 9/5, 122 **Cape May Warblers** were tallied at HMNL. On 11/25, the much sought-for **Orange-crowned Warbler** appeared at BML (DW, GW, NW). The rare **Connecticut Warbler** was found at Union Meadows Park 10/3 (PWe, JWe). Another fall warbler jewel, the **Wilson's Warbler**, cooperated for (JSp) on 9/29 at Bastian Road, Lyons.

Note: This is my last quarterly report for PA Birds and the Distelfink. I have every issue of PA Birds including the very first and have always thought we have a fantastic journal. Publishing each issue requires hundreds of hours of labor from bird walks to the printing of each journal. It's been hard work but I've been

proud to contribute to this fine publication. Thanks to all the Berks birders who have given me their observations over the years.

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Birding in Monterey, California – Peter & Jane Wolfe

Photos by Peter Wolfe

A birding trip to sunny California with Road Scholar, November 26 to December 1, 2023, sounded good to us so we signed up. The San Jose Airport proved to be very convenient for this trip.

Our first day in CA on our own we enjoyed the Monterey Aquarium. From The Old St Angela Inn Bed and



Breakfast in Pacific Grove, a quiet suburb of Monterey, we walked on the Monterey Bay Coastal Trail to the Aquarium. The Pacific Ocean crashed onto rocks due to the King Tide. What a sight! A highlight at the Aquarium was meeting a 17 year old Laysan Albatross who could not survive in the wild due to a broken wing.



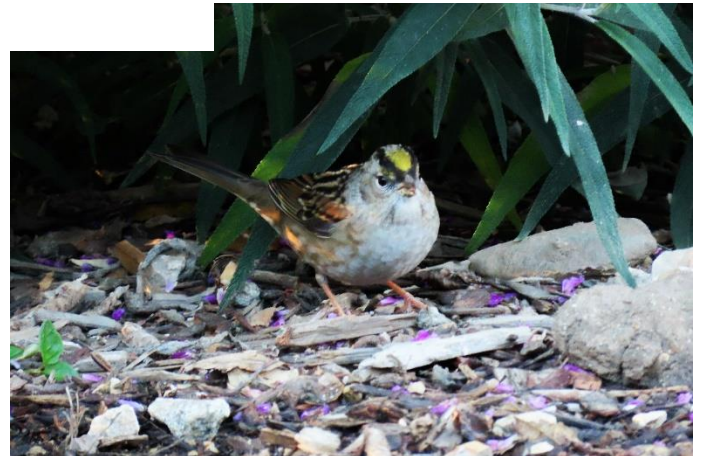
1 Whimbrel (left) and Long-billed Curlew (right)

For the Road Scholar trip, we stayed at Hidden Valley Music Seminars in Carmel Valley. A comfortable bus carried the 14 people in our group with our guide Steve Johnston. At Point Lobos State Natural Reserve we found Townsend's Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler Audubon's (with the yellow throat), Western Gull (pink legs), Heermann's Gull, Brandt's Cormorant, Black Turnstone, Black Oystercatcher, and Brown Pelican.

The next day, we parked in a development on Holman Road,

with the homeowner's permission. Here we saw California Scrub-Jay, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Western Bluebird, Oak Titmouse, Golden-crowned Sparrow (our only lifer) and White-crowned Sparrow, California Towhee, and Acorn Woodpecker. A group of Bushtit were busy in a bush.

We drove the impressive 17 Mile Road, stopping at Pebble Beach Golf Club. On the grass were 8 Greater White-fronted Geese. At the marina pier, an Osprey stood on top of a sailboat mast, oblivious to everything happening below. We also saw Double-crested Cormorant, Short-billed (Mew) Gull, Black Turnstone, Eared Grebe, and Bufflehead. During a photo-op at The Lone Cypress, whale spouts were seen far out in the ocean. Next stops were Bird Rock Vista Point, Asilomar State Beach, and Quail Lodge Golf Club. Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, 4 Sanderlings, Hooded Merganser, Ring-necked Duck, and Black Phoebe were added to our list.



Golden-crowned sparrow

Docents Deb and Jackie opened the Discovery Center at Palo Corona Regional Park just for us. There we examined a display explaining El Nino (warmer) and La Nina (cooler) water in the Pacific Ocean, and an example of Tule Boat built of bundles of tule reeds. Walking the grounds, we saw Chestnut-backed Chickadee, American Robin, American Crow, Common Raven, Lesser Goldfinch, and Nuttall's Woodpecker.

On a free afternoon, one of our group, Anne from Alaska, accompanied Peter and Jane to Cachagua Community Park along the Carmel River Riparian Corridor. We enjoyed great views of some of the western birds and added Brown Creeper to our list.

Our last full day with Road Scholar, we started at Salinas River State beach, then Moss Landing Harbor, to Jetty Rd including Moss Landing State Beach and Moss Landing Wildlife Area. We were happy to see Snowy Egret, Great Egret, Willet, Greater Yellowlegs, Black-necked Stilt, White-tailed Kite, Ruddy Duck, Common

Goldeneye, Surf Scoter, Clark's Grebe, Pacific Loon, and Common Loon. Our final stop was at Elkhorn Slough, formerly a cattle ranch with the old barns still standing. Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, 300 Least Sandpipers, and Black-bellied Plover were seen here.

Dec 1 after adding Spotted Towhee, Steller's Jay, Anna's Hummingbird, and Red-shouldered Hawk to the list, we said goodbye to our Road Scholar friends, and headed to Pinnacles National Park. We parked at Chaparral Parking Area on the west side, walked a short distance into the park where to our great excitement we observed 5 California Condors flying above with Turkey Vultures. At least 40 California Quail flushed as we headed back to our car. A fitting ending to a great trip! Trip total was 98 species.



White-tailed Kite

BAIRD ORNITHOLOGICAL CLUB ANNUAL BANQUET May 10, 2024

Held jointly with the **MENGEL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY**



Program: George L. Armistead
Founder and Guide of [Hillstar Nature](#)

Presents:

“pOrnithology: The Birds, and the Birds & the Bees”

- ❖ A PG-rated talk with an R-rated title
- ❖ A highlight reel of interesting reproductive-related behavior
- ❖ Copious innuendo to keep the concepts grounded firmly in subjectivity
- ❖ Even a little science thrown in too!

George Armistead, a birder since the age of nine years old, has a long history in connecting people with nature through guided trips and expedition travel. Leading field trips since his teenage years he began guiding tours professionally in 2002. After 20 years of developing and guiding tours to dozens of countries across all seven continents, he formed [Hillstar Nature](#) with the goal of bringing together a team who can provide fulfilling and authentic wildlife experiences.



Location: **The Peanut Bar**, 332 Penn St. Reading, PA 19602

5:30 pm - Social hour, book signing, cash bar

6:00 pm – Chicken Marsala (boneless, skinless breast sautéed with shallots & mushrooms, finished with a Marsala wine sauce, served over pasta) OR Lemon Parmesan Flounder (fillet of flounder dusted with breadcrumbs, parmesan cheese, finished with lemon and butter), Salad, Dessert, Coffee/Tea. Vegetarian and Gluten Free options are available, indicate on the reservation form below.

Cost: \$40.00 per person

Reservation Deadline is **Thursday April 18**

Pay online at: <https://bairdornithological.club/boc-banquet-registration>

Or by check payable to **BOC**

Send with payment to: **Charles Coleman, 129 Grecian Terrace, Sinking Spring PA 19608**

Questions? Call Charles Coleman 610-763-2548

Names(s) attending: _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Your Phone # _____

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Gluten Free option # (Selected by Restaurant) _____

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Avian Report Compiler for the Fall and Spring season - open

BOC MEMBERSHIP and Renewal

- Payment is for **September 2023 – August 2024**

- **Regular Membership Dues \$15/ year** /per person
- **Sustaining Membership Dues \$25 or more/ year** / per person
(This recently established category helps us support our programs and activities and will be recognized in our newsletter.)

Now we have two ways to join or renew your B.O.C. membership!

- **We will still happily take a check and the completed membership form (below) or**
- **you can do it online though our website** at <https://bairdornithological.club/join-or-pay-dues-online> in two easy steps! **1) Use the button to pay with a credit card or Paypal.** Pay the appropriate amount and **step 2) Fill out the online information form and submit it.** *By joining or renewing online you give your permission for BOC to contact you by email for club related announcements and newsletters.*

If paying by mail, please print out this form and mail it to the address below.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

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Note: An email address is required if you want to receive electronic communications and the link to receive the digital copy of The Distelfink from BOC and links for when the club's meetings are held via Zoom in the winter. By supplying my email address, I give my permission for BOC to contact me by email for club related announcements and newsletters.

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