



The Distelfink

Spring 2025 Newsletter of the Baird Ornithological Club

Contents

President's Message, Spring 2025, by Sheila Martin	2
Administering Our Desk by Sheila Martin.....	2
Avian flu in Berks County & what you should know about bird feeders. By Todd Underwood	3
'25-'26 BOC Board of Directors – Call for Service	4
Conservation Groups, Partnering Events	5
Meetings/Programs	6
Call For Speakers to present “shorts” at our April '25 meeting!.....	6
BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks - Fall 2024 – Spring 2025.....	6
Past Field Trip Reports	11
Berks County Birds - Summer 2024 and Fall 2024 by Rudy Keller.....	13
Highlights of the 2024 Birding Year in Berks Co., By Russell Hoffman ..	13
Unprecedented Number of Egrets at Lake Ontelaunee	16
125th Reading Christmas Bird Count. by Lucy Cairns.....	17
Bernville CBC Summary, by Mike Slater.....	19
My Elusive Oriole(s) - by Sheila Martin.....	21
Member Spotlight by Sheila Martin	22
Spotlighting Treasurer Chuck Coleman.....	27
Spotlighting Immediate Past President Lucy Cairns	23
Veery Song – by Michele Uhrich	24
City Nature Challenge 2025: Berks County, by Brian Wang	26
BOC May 7, 2025 Banquet information and reservation form	27
B.O.C. Initial & Renewal Memberships, Now at Two Levels	28
Baird Ornithological Club gratefully acknowledges our Sustaining Donors of '24-'25	28
Baird Ornithological Club, Current Officers and directors	29
BOC Membership and Renewal	29



*Hooded Oriole in Southern Mexico.
Photo by “Richard Thunen, Seattle, WA,*

President's Message, Spring 2025, by Sheila Martin

"I hate Goodbye's!" Known to be heard saying just that - when a bevy of newly-formed friends disperses after a week, 10 days, two (three?) weeks of intense destination birding, it seems also applicable, as my term as BOC's president draws to its conclusion.

I have filled the pages of this wonderful twice-yearly newsletter – our Distelfink – with many newsy points I wish, in a businesslike way, to bring to your attention, so I will direct you to the table of contents for those items of specific interest. I've been seated on Baird Ornithological Club's board of directors in one "chair" or another for nine years ('16-'17 term was my start-up) and have gained so much insight, finesse and downright **courage in serving & leading**, ironically by listening, taking action and carrying out duties while (mostly!) indoors, that the experience surely has spilled over into my outright, in-the-field birding! Oh my, I hope so!

Keeping this entry short-&-sweet, a well-preserved stash of **BOC car window stickers** has been found for member distribution and everyone's proud use of this freebie. **Baird business cards** are also pending to go into reprint, so I invite you to pipe up and ask for a handful at the next meeting or bird walk you attend this spring. I remind you that we are always looking for volunteers. Each year we need a few new members willing & able to take a turn on the board of directors. **A Shout-Out here-&-now to Dan Brennan and Dave Hemberger** for agreeing to do just that this term, proving to be valuable additions. If you are keen to share by helping lead or coordinate field trips, working on the newsletter, serving in an elected capacity or the like, see any board member shown at the back of this packet.

It's not really Goodbye, merely "Hail!" to our newest Birder-in-Chief. I look forward eagerly to staying on the board a bit longer, serving as immediate past president for two years more, focusing mostly on Programs, among other duties for the asking. Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president. It's been an honor and a pleasure.

Administering Our Desk by Sheila Martin

Having been asked to accept a board seat just two years after I first set foot into an organized ornithology club meeting, I sat meekly yet all ears in those early-for-me BOC planning/admin sessions of the '16-'17 terms onward. I gradually donned the cloak of greater understanding of how things advanced locally and were framed, via programs and outings, toward greater education for all, and ultimately, through efforts of our significant club talent, toward avian conservation here at home and around the world.

Feeling my own fledgling feathered wings start to flap, I began asking those rarified boards if there was anything like club insurance in place, recognizing that what we present to members and to the interested public, specifically during club-offered outings, does set up elements of risk, however tame, to participants. Probing those at the top about the notion of obtaining any such coverage, replies went more or less like, "Yes, indeed, that for sure is rather a good idea, but we've never delved that deeply into it, and approaching 100+ years old, fortunately, nothing of impact in that regard has ever happened."

Then, like hypothetical homeowners considering a contractor's proposal for a big renovation and the ways & means thereof, we all (figuratively) made like the British: "looked it over, had a cup of tea – and did nothing!"

Though the subject was tedious, dry and at times downright boring, I again donned this cloak of seriously looking into such matters as your new president, summer of '23. I am so very proud of the businesslike, inquisitive, well-connected & patient members of BOC's board of the past two terms, undertaking & launching

this process. First, you may have noticed a clipboarded sheet being good naturedly handed you for sign-in prior to the start of birdwalks this term. From there, having considered, researched, “done the dive” and successfully hammered out a modest, treasury affordable, annually renewable transfer-of-risk policy for Baird, this and future boards – and BOC as a whole entity – is better protected from legal exposure while serving.

Certainly Levi Mengel, Earl Poole, et al. walked in much different social & cultural times at BOC’s founding in 1921 than the (at times) more challenging, less “live & let live” social atmosphere which we experience in this century. With the framework now behind us, this board can hand over and forward a modest yet prudent peace-of-mind line item on BOC’s annual budget, having gotten this perhaps unpleasant yet well-advised piece of club administration done.

Upon installation in May ’24, our current board of officers & directors did the necessary reading of club documents to be sufficiently well-informed to serve. Reviewing our current By-Laws, our board has also started streamlining clauses, points & verbiage in this document and intends to add less formal yet equally definitive and important Standing Rules by the term’s end in May.

Please join me in congratulating this hard-working, far-sighted, committed group of Baird members in addressing these big administrative club tasks. Now, let’s go out and do some BIRDING!!

Avian flu in Berks County & what you should know about bird feeders.

By Todd Underwood

Club members have undoubtedly seen headlines and read news articles about the current avian flu, otherwise referred to as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza or the acronym HPAI, outbreak in our area. Snow Geese have been hit the hardest with several thousand deaths in the past month at quarries in Lehigh and Northampton Counties. Impacts in Berks County have not been as severe or as well publicized. There has been a small-scale outbreak at the E. J. Breneman Quarry in Spring Township, which is a favorite birding area to observe overwintering waterfowl. I visited the quarry on 18 January 2025 and spotted at least 7 dead Canada Geese that were frozen in the ice. Subsequent birders also noted dead birds with a high of 12 Canada Geese and 3 ducks dead on the ice on 26 January (Rudy Keller). These deaths were reported to the PA Game Commission’s Wildlife Health Hotline. In response to my report, the game warden responsible for the Spring Township area called me to discuss the situation. He went out to investigate and saw only a few dead geese frozen in the ice.

The game commission's current policy is that they won't take any action until there are at least 20 dead birds in one location. They will keep monitoring the situation and intervene if necessary. The Game Warden reported that he recently had to euthanize a Bald Eagle from a neighborhood in the vicinity of the E. J. Breneman Quarry. It was positive for avian flu - likely from eating dead geese. Berks County birders should watch for dead or sick birds, especially waterfowl and raptors which are most susceptible to avian flu. Birds infected with avian flu exhibit neurological problems and may have trouble walking, holding their head in a normal position, and flying.

Report dead or sick birds to the PA Game Commission (call 1-833-PGC-WILD or email pgc-wildlifehealth@pa.gov) and do not pick up the dead or sick birds yourself. Although rare, avian flu can be transmitted to humans and our pets, especially cats. Sick birds shed the virus through their feces, so avoid stepping in goose droppings when birding and don’t wear your boots inside. Clean your boots with a 10% bleach solution if you likely have come in contact with bird feces.

Because of the potential risks of avian flu to humans and domestic animals, the PA Game Commission announced on 4 February 2025 that wildlife viewing areas at Middle Creek WMA, including the Willow Point Trail and lakeside viewing areas, will be closed off to visitors and the usual March 1st opening of the wildlife

drive will likely be delayed. Plan to enjoy spring waterfowl at Lake Ontelaunee and other local bodies of water from a safe distance this year!

You may have wondered, or been asked as I have by several colleagues, whether it is safe to keep your bird feeder filled and active right now. Here is my answer to this important question. Yes, it is currently safe to continue to feed and enjoy watching birds at your feeders. Songbirds are not very susceptible to avian flu and there is no current outbreak of any other diseases among songbirds visiting feeders in our region. No wildlife or government agency has made any recommendation to take down feeders right now with one exception. The USDA recommends not feeding songbirds on your property if you have poultry. Although mortality is low in songbirds, they can shed the virus when infected and poultry are highly susceptible to avian flu.

We can still enjoy feeding birds but need to responsibly maintain our feeders to reduce the risk of transmitting disease to the visiting birds. This means cleaning feeders about once a month by scrubbing them with soap and water followed by a 10-minute soak in 10% bleach. Best to do this in a laundry room sink or a 5-gallon bucket outside and not in your kitchen sink or dishwasher. I bought a few extra feeders so I can just swap out a clean one each month in the winter and then I wash the dirty ones outside sometime when the weather is nice. In addition to cleaning feeders, seed hulls, feces, and other debris below feeders should be raked away or covered in mulch because ground feeding birds will be searching there for spilled seed. Do not use a leaf blower because this will spread any bacteria and viruses present into the air and increase your risk of being infected. Alternatively, you may consider moving feeders to different locations in your yard periodically to prevent the buildup of feces and debris on the ground in one area.

The main diseases we might have at our feeders in Berks County are mycoplasmal conjunctivitis (bad pink eye for birds) that occurs mainly in finches or salmonellosis (less common). These two diseases can spread at bird feeders. I occasionally see conjunctivitis at my home feeder in House Finches. If you see a bird with eyes nearly swollen shut or looking lethargic (doesn't fly when you get close to it), you should then clean the feeder once a week and maybe take down the feeder for a week or two.

You must also practice good personal hygiene while maintaining your feeders because people have been infected with salmonellosis after contact with bird feeders and avian flu is now a possibility. Wear long rubber gloves to clean your feeder and be sure to wash your hands well after filling and handling your feeders. With a little extra care, we can all enjoy feeding the birds without causing any harm or risking the spread of disease.

For more information about avian flu and bird feeders, visit the following websites.

<https://www.cdc.gov/bird-flu/virus-transmission/avian-in-birds.html>

www.allaboutbirds.org/news/avian-influenza-outbreak-should-you-take-down-your-bird-feeders/

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pgc/wildlife/wildlife-health/wildlife-diseases/avian-influenza.html>

www.pa.gov/agencies/pgc/about-us/contact-information/offices-and-regions/middle-creek-wildlife-management-area/snow-goose-and-waterfowl-migration-update.html

'25-'26 BOC Board of Directors – Call for Service

By mid-February, Baird's club year has well hit its stride. We've reconvened – with great pleasure – back at Nolde/McConnell Hall for monthly meetings. Enjoyed & been enlightened by compelling speakers. Raised the

bar, even, in December, with a holiday social! Have settled in well at home for wintertime Friday night Zoom meetings. Even done some easy, early, midday waterfowl-watching at Breneman's.

All might seem right with our world!

Nominations for leadership service for the ensuing term of our legendary club! It's heard spoken-of at meetings in March & April, but it really begins in February. It delivers nail-biting anxiety to your officers & board of directors. As shown plainly in the roster listing at the back of this Distelfink, '24-'25's **leadership is down-&-vacant TWO important officer positions. I cannot commend enough our present board**, which has brought to our administrative & governing success so much perspective & leadership savvy from their collective walks of life. They have heard me say that "we'll be **like warm Jello!** – flowing around slightly and together easing into the corners – to get tasks of the club done!" Which we HAVE done! But doing so for too long contributes to organizational visionary shortfall and workload burnout. For the health & continuity of any group, faces must change, chairs swap, terms of service run through, and it ever annually **becomes time to call up attentive new talent to serve.**

Several of our board members will be focused on drilling through BOC's roster in hopes of successful recruitment toward this end. A pending slate of officers must be announced at March's meeting – with additions permitted from the floor – and solidified in April to be voted on by members at that meeting, for installation at May 7th's banquet with service to begin in summer.

When YOU get the call this time, please consider saying "Yes" to this way of serving birds and their conservation. Thanks!

Conservation Groups, Partnering Events

Beginning around the December holidays, then continuing heavily through January & February, BOC sees an in-box influx of announcements of general public outreach events sponsored by various county & regional conservation groups, hoping that Baird Ornithological Club might agree to partner with them. Through tabletop displays, staffed generously by our members, volunteers engage visitors, chatting in a fun and informative way about birds, birding, ornithological study & education, and avian conservation. Coordination is now active; contact BOC's board to be a part of staffing at one of these tabletop events.

Arranged in order of calendar dates, here's a list of mostly weekend events at which Baird has been asked to participate, speaking about "All Things Birding" to the public, ultimately promoting BOC in the effort:

Saturday, April 5, 10 am – 12 noon: Girl Scout Citizen Science Day, Berks Nature/Reading Public Museum.

Saturday, April 19, 8:00 am: Collaborative BOC birdwalk with Union Township Parks & Rec; Union Meadows, as published by BOC.

Friday, April 25 - Monday, April 28: City Nature Challenge/Berks County iNaturalist posting festival.
See the article below by Bryan Wang for more information.

Saturday, April 26, 12 noon – 6:00 pm: Earth Day Berks County 55th anniversary celebration. City Park, Reading.

Saturday, May 10, 10 am – 2 pm: Middle Creek World Migratory Bird Day, at their EEC.

Requests of this type position Baird well in the eye of the general public, associating birding and ornithological education within an organized club atmosphere with who we are, what we do, & are about. In order to support these partnering opportunities, volunteers within our OWN club are essential for not only spreading our word, but also to internally spread-out club commitment and participation load.

Meetings/Programs

Friday, March 14, 2025, 7:30 pm “Birding in the Footsteps of Teddy Roosevelt” by Robert (Bob) Sprague (live, in-person at Nolde Forest EEC)

Back by popular demand, BOC again hosts Douglassville's own Robert (Bob) Sprague from his well-received October talk - where he will present tales of another of his extensive travel destinations in pursuit of birds and orchids! **“Birding in the Footsteps of Teddy Roosevelt”: Pousada Rio Roosevelt is a remote fishing camp along the river named for our 26th president.** Hidden deep within the rainforest of Brazil's Amazon Basin, the enclave is difficult to access. Once there, however, it offers an extraordinary chance to view many hundreds of tropical birds and other wildlife. Bob's talk includes photos of a newly described antwren species.

Friday, April 11, 2025: Members’ Night:

(live, in-person at Nolde Forest EEC)

~Three short presentations by BOC members! One slot is still available.

Please see the “Call For Speakers” below to participate.

Wed. evening May 7, 2025, Baird Ornithological Club/ Mengel Natural History Society Year-end joint dinner-meeting.

(Start time 5:30 pm)

- **“Let’s Work Together for the Birds”**
- Joan Maloof PhD, founder, Old-Growth Forest Network, Easton Maryland
- Where: State Hill Craft Cocktails and Kitchen, 1 Wellington Blvd, Reading PA 19610.
- Cost per person, \$40.00; see details & payment form later in this issue

Call For Speakers to present “shorts” at our April ‘25 meeting!

Have you seen something in the avian world that left you speechless? Do you have a short topic that might educate, enlighten or entertain your fellow Baird Club members? We are revitalizing the popular “Members’ Night”. BOC’s board is asking for participants to share in possibly three brief speaking segments. Do you have approximately 5 - 15 minutes to take us pictorially anywhere in the world of ornithology? As of this writing, one approximately 20-minute segment has been claimed. But there’s plenty more presentation space available for YOU to be among our speakers.

Envision your topic; budget the time and specify how much you’ll need, then stake your claim to at least 15 minutes of birding club fame! First-come/first-served. No polished speaking skill necessary. Contact board member Russ Hoffman by phone or e-mail (C: 484-794-7053, russhoff@yahoo.com) to be a part of this always entertaining, eye-opening time of self-highlighting appreciation!

BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks - Fall 2024 – Spring 2025

(Including Tuesday Bird Walks on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the month.)

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>

March 9, 2025 (Sunday)* – Spring Waterfowl - 12 Noon (rescheduled from 3/2/25)

Drive and walk around Lake Ontelaunee looking for migrating waterfowl, gulls, and late wintering birds. Experienced birders with scopes will help you get good looks. A rare Little Gull was found on this outing a few years ago. Meet at dam breast on Rt. 73 and carpool to the various areas around the lake. Info 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.**

**(We hope the lake will be open by then with many waterfowl present. No guarantees.)*

March 15, 2025 (Saturday) - Green Hills Preserve – 8 AM

Walk this easily accessed grassland and edge habitat in search of late wintering birds and early spring migrants. Possibilities include Fox Sparrow and Purple Finch. Info Art Zdancewic 610-858-3315.

Meeting Loc.: Natural Lands' Green Hills Preserve, 553 Gunhart Rd, Mohnton, PA

March 16, 2025 (Sunday) - French Creek State Park - Woodcock Stakeout – 7 PM

Watch and listen for the crepuscular American Woodcock and witness its spring courtship flight. Info Art Zdancewic 610-858-3315. **Meet at park office 843 Park Road, Elverson PA 19520.**

March 22, 2025 (Saturday) - Berks County Leisure Area – 8 AM

'Welcome Spring' Outing along the Tulpehocken Creek looking for early migrants. This walk is also the now annual 'CAKE' walk. Meander along the creek to Gring's Mill (where there are restrooms) and back to Leisure Area. Info Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

Meeting Location: Berks Leisure area at 1901 Tulpehocken Rd, Wyomissing, PA 19610

March 25, 2025 (Tuesday) – 8 AM

Flash birdwalk to be announced.

March 29, 2025 (Saturday) - Blue Marsh L. Stilling Basin – 8 AM

Meet at the Blue Marsh Lake Stilling Basin parking area at the base of the Blue Marsh Dam at **1280 Palisades Dr, Leesport, PA.** Birding route to be selected from the multiple options available at this site. Info Liz Cates 610-926-3206.

April 5, 2025 (Saturday) - Gring's Mill Spring Outing – 8 AM

This walk was well attended last year as we strolled along the Tulpehocken Cr. upstream toward the Red Bridge, getting good looks at Pine and Palm warblers as well as the striking breeding plumaged Wood Ducks. Directions: Go east on Broadcasting Rd. in Wyomissing to the dead end at the Tulpehocken Creek. Make a right and go ½ mile to parking entrance on left. Info Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

Meeting Location: Gring's Mill Recreation Area, 2083 Tulpehocken Rd, Reading, PA

April 8, 2025 (Tuesday) - Kernsville Dam Desilting Basin - 8 AM

Good time of year to search for Berks County rarities in this maturing marsh habitat that was recently created. Rails and rare sparrows are possible here. Walk the wetland trail that leads to a woodland beside the Schuylkill River. Directions: R. 61 north to traffic light turnoff for Cabela's. Make a right onto Jetson Dr. and go right again on Industrial Dr. one mile to left on Kernsville Dam Rd. to the parking area. Info Matt Wlasniewski 610-463-8845.

Meeting Location the: John Bartram Trail parking lot, Hamburg, PA 19526, 40.5624, -75.9947

April 12, 2025 (Saturday) - State Game Lands 280 - 8 AM

Walk the fields and edges of the southwest part of Blue Marsh Lake hoping to find early migrant species. This area produces impressive eBird species lists at this time of year. Directions: From the intersection of State Hill Rd. and Brownsville Rd. drive west 4 miles to a right turn on Justa Rd. Proceed ahead to dead end parking area. Info Liz Cates 610-926-3206. **Meeting Location: Justa Road 40.37066, -76.06973**

April 19, 2025 (Saturday) - Union Meadows Park - 8 AM

Join BOC members for an easy stroll through a varied habitat looking for migrant warblers, thrushes and other songbirds that travel northward along this riparian corridor. Meet at the Union Meadows East parking area 2 miles east of Birdsboro on Rt. 724. Info Linda Ingram 610-621-7473, Rudy Keller 610-845-7310.

Meeting Location: 100 Campbell Ford Road, Douglassville PA

April 22, 2025 (Tuesday) - Angora Fruit Farm – 8 AM

Enjoy spring among the apple blossoms as we look for early migrant warblers and thrushes. The orchard borders woodland where a variety of species may be found. Directions: Rte 12 bypass to Spring Valley Rd. exit. Make a right and go ¼ mile to McKnight's Gap Rd. on left. Go up hill and down the other side to stop sign. Make a right and go a short distance to the farm sign on the left. Info Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

Meeting Location: Angora Fruit Farm, Berks County Parks & Recreation, Angora Rd, Reading, PA 19606 40.3624, -75.8839

April 26, 2025 (Saturday) - Hay Creek - 8 AM

Hear and hopefully see Louisiana Waterthrush along the streams of this varied habitat that attracts many different species of birds in the spring. Meet at the parking area at the closed south end of Hay Creek Rd. Directions: From the intersection of Rts. 724 and 568 in Gibraltar, take 568 west 1.5 miles and turn left on White Bear Rd. Go 4 miles past two stop signs and turn left at the dead end. Follow Hay Creek Rd. to the parking area. Info Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

Meeting Loc.: Old 82 & Parking Area, 2000 Hay Creek Rd, Birdsboro, PA

April 26, 2025 (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 3, 2025 (Saturday)- Nolde Forest EEC – 8 AM

Meet at the Sawmill Parking Lot at Nolde Forest to hike the trails of this deciduous and coniferous forested habitat. Warblers, thrushes, flycatchers are usually found, and there is a possibility of seeing a Barred Owl. Directions: Rt. 625 South from Shillington to sign for Sawmill Parking Area on right. Info Linda Ingram 610-621-7473. **Meeting Location: 2910 New Holland Rd, Reading, PA**

May 4, 2025 (Sunday) - State Game Lands 106, Pine Swamp Rd. - 8 AM

Excellent location to find neotropical migrants at this time of year and to possibly hear Ruffed Grouse conducting their spring mating ritual. Directions: From Hawk Mt. Sanctuary, go south 4 miles to a right turn on Pine Swamp Rd. and go 1 mile to lane on the right which leads to the parking area. From Rte 143 drive 4 miles on Hawk Mt Rd. to Pine Swamp Rd. on the left. Info Rudy Keller 610-845-7310

Meeting Location: Pine Swamp RD, Kempton PA, 40.6262, -75.9520

May 6, 2025 (Tuesday) - Exeter Scenic River Trail, Gibraltar - 8 AM

Walk the riverside path to see the migrating birds that use this riparian corridor on their northbound journey. Directions: At the traffic light at Rt. 724 and Gibraltar Rd. go north across the bridge to the lane at the end of the bridge. Make left and park. Info 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**

May 10, 2025 (Saturday) - Hamburg Reservoir – 8 AM

The terrain for this walk is uphill through a forested habitat where migrating warblers, thrushes and other songbirds will be seen and heard. Directions: Rt. 61 north to light at turnoff for downtown Hamburg. Turn right and proceed to State St. in downtown Hamburg. Take a right on State St. and proceed 4 miles to a left turn on Reservoir Rd. Info Linda Ingram 610-621-7473.

Meeting Location: Pinnacle Trailhead access, 400 Reservoir Rd, Hamburg, PA

May 13, 2025 (Tuesday) -Berks Nature/The Nature Place – 8 AM

Join BOC birders as they check out this wetland habitat on a spring morning. Directions: From Lancaster Ave. take Rt. 10 (Morgantown Rd.) 1 ½ miles to the sign on right for The Nature Place and Alvernia U. Go right to the parking area. Info Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053. **Meeting Location: 575 St Bernardine St, Reading, PA 19607**



*Male Canada Warbler.
Photo by Brian Lineaweaver*

May 17, 2025 (Saturday) - Hopewell Furnace NHS – 8 AM

A new BOC favorite in its 3rd year, 2025's walk at Hopewell Furnace is moved back one week. E. Towhees, Baltimore Orioles (reliable); spring migrants & shorebirds likely at dam. Allow 2+ hrs. Coordinator: Sheila Martin 610-858-6005

Directions: Disregard HFNHS gate; still closed at 8a.m. Use 23 Clement Brooke Lane, Elverson 19520 exactly for GPS; turn at gravel driveway to their secondary/handicapped lot; orange cone indicates. Limited to ~8 spaces; if full, use grass expanse at start of driveway. Port-a-johns "iffy".

May 18 (Sunday) – Great Marsh Bird Walk

– Meet to carpool 8 am or meet at Great Marsh at 9 am

Join BOC birders at the private property known as the Great Marsh in Chester County, only a few miles from Berks, for a spring walk. The property consists of grassy footpaths, marshes and small ponds where both migrants and summer nesters can be found. The terrain is level and the possibly 2-mile walk is easy although may be wet depending on the weather. The property is located at 28 Moore's Rd., Elverson 19520 for GPS. Directions: Rte. 176 to Morgantown, left on Rte. 23 to a right on Rte. 401, to Moore's Rd on the right. The meeting time at the site is 9 AM. Carpooling will be available at Flying Hills in the deli (now closed) parking area. Information and to arrange transportation: Russ Hoffman, 484-794-7053.

May 24, 2025 (Saturday) - Hopewell Big Woods Trail – 8 AM

A downhill walk on an easy trail through grassland bordered by woodland. Great place for special birds in Berks. Birds seen here in previous years include Yellow-breasted Chat, Blue Grosbeak, Grasshopper Sparrow, Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers. Directions: Park at the parking area for Union Meadows East, 2 miles east of Birdsboro. We will carpool up Center Rd. to the Big Woods Trailhead and bird downhill to the Union Meadows parking lot. 7473 **Meeting Location: 100 Campbell Ford Road, Douglassville PA** Alternatively: Turn right off Rt. 724 on Center Rd. and go uphill to parking on left if you prefer to park on your own and walk back uphill. Info Irene Taylor 610-856-1116, Rudy Keller 610-845-7310.



A Yellow-breasted Chat seen along the Hopewell Big Woods Trail, Spring 2024.

Photo by Russ Hoffman



May 31, 2025 (Saturday) - Dreibelbis Farm – 8 AM

After last year's very successful BOC outing here, we will be exploring this historic area again. Hopefully the Red-headed Woodpeckers are here nesting again this year. Direction: Rte 222 north to roundabout at Moselem Springs. Go left on Rt. 662 about a mile to Rt. 143. Make a right on Rt. 143 and go 1.6 miles to Dreibelbis Farm sign on left. This is a field lane. Proceed on lane to house and park. Info Dan Brennan 484-336-0455. **Location: 356 Hard Hill Rd, Hamburg, PA**

A Red-headed woodpecker at Dreilbilbis Farm.

Photo by Russ Hoffman

June 7, 2025 (Saturday) Green Hills Preserve “Butterfly Identification Walk” -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 14, 2025 (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. Our 2nd year at this location with different dragonflies. We'll be looking for Tiger Spiketails, Prince Baskettails and Gray Petaltails plus other species not seen on our walks at Kernsville. 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**

July 12, 2025 (Saturday) “Moth Night at Nolde Forest EEC” - 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 a 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 19, 2025 (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 2, 2025 (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 16, 2025 (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 Field Trip Reports

Green Hills Preserve September 7, 2024 by Art Zdancewic

On Saturday September 7th at 8 in the morning, the sky was overcast and the day was already humid. Ten birders assembled for a walk at Green Hills preserve. The group spent almost two and a half hours walking this warm weather grass preserve and identified 30 species of birds. Raptors were well represented – we saw Red-shouldered, Red-tailed and Cooper’s Hawks, as well as one of the breeding Am. Kestrels. The highlights of small birds were 2 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and a Yellow-throated Vireo. I believe the participants enjoyed their walk but were glad to get back to conditioned air.

Old Dreibelbis Farm – Sept. 10, 2024 by Irene Taylor

Tuesday, September 10th was sunny, cool and clear, perfect for a visit to the historic Dreibelbis Farm. Rudy Keller, along with farm owner Mark Dreibelbis, led 8 birders around the beautifully preserved grounds. Mark explained that the farm has been in his family and under continuous operation for the better part of 200 years. The highlight of our visit, in addition to seeing such a well-loved and maintained property, was the colony of red-headed woodpeckers residing in the tall trees around the farmhouse. In all, we saw 43 bird species, 2 white-tailed deer, and 1 garter snake. Not bad for a morning outing! The checklist can be viewed at eBird.org.



Field trip participants learning about the history of the Old Dreibelbis Farm. Photo by Irene Taylor

Hopewell Big Woods Trail – September 26, 2024 by Irene Taylor

Saturday, September 26th was variably cloudy with a moderate northwest wind. The BOC bird walk started at the Big Woods Trail but was moved downhill to Union Meadows Park, due to the number of pheasant hunters along the BWT. Rudy Keller led 11 birders on a pleasant walk on the Thun Trail, originating at Union Meadows. We saw a total of 39 species including 3 stocked ring-neck pheasants on the BWT, as well as 15 purple finches, a palm warbler, 5 yellow-rumped warblers and many others. The checklist is available at eBird.org

First Day of Birding 2025 by Jane and Peter Wolfe

8 AM, Wednesday, January 1, 2025 Art Z, Dan B, Liz C, Hannah S, Irene T, Rudy K, Deanne J, Linda I, Jason K (with his camera) met Peter and Jane W. at E J Breneman Quarry. These eleven intrepid birders were eager to begin their lists for the New Year. The weather cooperated, about 47° F, clear, no fog, rain, or snow. Hidden among the many Canada Geese and Mallards was 1 Cackling Goose, small with a short bill. Also 1 female Canvasback, 5 American Coots, 2 Northern Pintail, 1 Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Ducks, Redheads, and Ruddy Ducks revealed themselves. A Belted Kingfisher flew by, better heard than seen.

From Breneman's, we drove to Blue Marsh Lake. There was nothing at State Hill Boat Launch or the Stilling Basin. Our next stop was Dry Brooks Day Use Area where we saw the usual Ring-billed Gulls and a few Herring Gulls. A Bald Eagle and 3 Common Mergansers flew over. Eastern Bluebirds were dropping from the trees to grab food on the ground. Peter and Jane had filled the feeders at the Sensory Trail so the usual House Finches, Tufted Titmice, White-breasted Nuthatches, Carolina Chickadees, 1 Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpeckers, and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were enjoying their seeds and suet.

Time for a quick break in the parking lot and there we had a surprise. Jason shared his homemade Butternut Squash bread with everyone. Delicious! Thank you Jason!

Our last stop was past Bright School Road at the end of Snyder School Road. We parked in a muddy lot and walked what used to be a macadam road. Disappointment reigned as we only saw a few Juncos. We turned around and headed back to our cars. Down by the creek, a hunter was walking with his dog. He must have pushed some birds up to us because suddenly we saw Golden-crowned Kinglets, Field Sparrows, White-throated Sparrows, Song Sparrows, and what has become the rare American Tree Sparrow. And so our New Year's Day birding adventure ended on a very happy note totaling 49 species

Berks County Birds - Summer 2024 and Fall 2024 by Rudy Keller

Berks Bird reports are now being published as soon as they are written and made available on [the B.O.C. website](#).

Highlights of the 2024 Birding Year in Berks Co., By Russell Hoffman

The year 2024 was about average for several bird species seen in Berks County. The total of 247 species was five less than the 25-year average, however there were some exciting and unusual sightings documented by local birders.

One of the most exciting events occurred in mid-April on the campus of Kutztown University. Entomology professor Greg Setliff was taking his class on a walk around campus when he noticed a strange bird skulking among the reeds in a marshy retention basin. He contacted Dr. Todd Underwood, a colleague and birder, and they refound the bird and identified it as a King Rail. Rails are birds that spend their lives in salt and freshwater marshes throughout the US but are infrequently seen. This was the first sighting of this bird in Berks this century.



King Rail 5 26 April 2024 KU campus -Todd underwood

Blue Marsh Lake and Lake Ontelaunee are the best places to find gulls and terns in Berks County. At Blue Marsh beach Ring-billed Gulls number in the thousands in winter. Occasionally rare species show up. In 2024

an Iceland Gull was found in the beginning of the year. Tropical Storm Debby passed to the west of Berks in early August. Two rare gulls appeared at Blue Marsh beach after the storm. An immature Laughing Gull, a stray from the Atlantic coast, was seen there by Peter and Jane Wolfe. On August 8th at Blue Marsh Lake an even rarer gull flew in from out west, a Franklin's Gull, and it was photographed by both Russell Hoffman and John Ruggles. It was only the fourth Franklin's Gull ever recorded in Berks. Around the same time Matt Wlasniewski watched two Black Terns flying low over L. Ontelaunee. This small tern nests on inland waters of the USA & Canada and has declined in population.

Egrets and ibises are wading birds found in marshes and other wetlands. Most years Great Egrets are found singly or in small numbers in Berks. This made the sighting of 135 Great Egrets at L. Ontelaunee by Rudy Keller in July extraordinary.



*Adult Franklin's Gull at Blue Marsh Lake
by Russ Hoffman*



Snowy Egret at Lake Ontelaunee by Russ Hoffman

Tropical Storm Debby brought the year's only Snowy Egret to Blue Marsh L. in early August. Debby also brought a flock of seven Glossy Ibis to a wetland near Old Morlatton Village, where they were seen by Linda Ingram and photographed by Brian Lineaweaver and others. This ibis mostly lives and breeds in Florida and along the southern coast but often strays north. Western Cattle Egret is named for its habit of following cows to catch insects stirred up by their movements. Cassidy Horst photographed a Western Cattle Egret in November among cows on her farm near Tipton. Years can go by between visits by this egret to Berks.

In recent years Rufous Hummingbirds from the northwestern US have been showing up in the eastern US in fall and sometimes staying into winter. This phenomenon is not fully understood and when they appear an effort is made to band them so they can possibly be tracked.

Adult female Rufous Hummingbirds showed up at the feeders of Linda Ingram and Rudy Keller in October. Both were captured, banded and released by licensed hummingbird bander Sandy Lockerman. One stayed until December 26 and the other into the new year.



The female Rufous Hummingbird at Linda Ingram's feeder in Douglas Twp., Berks Co. Photo by Russ Hoffman

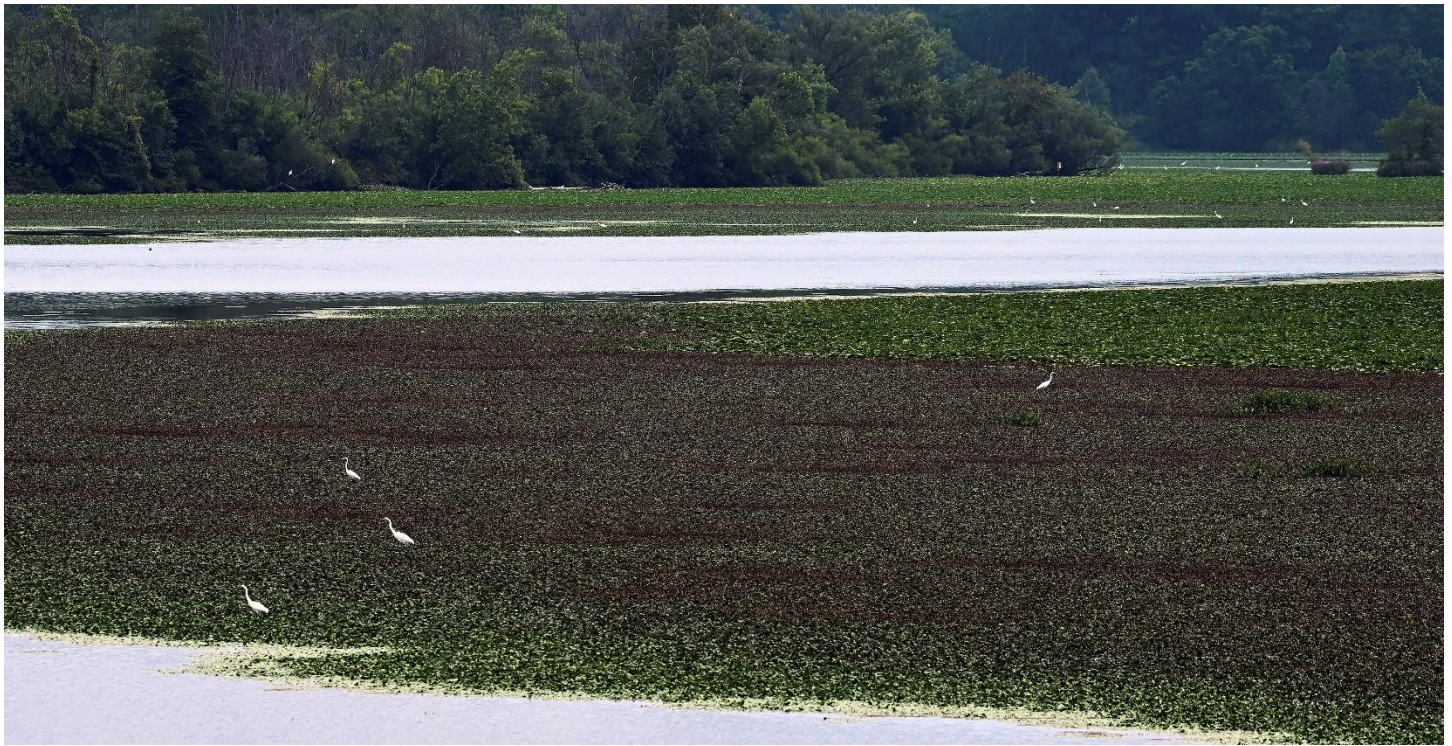
Wood warblers are small colorful birds of about 50 species found in the western hemisphere. In Berks County 35 species may occur during a year, about half to nest and the rest as migrants. Notable migrants in 2024 were a Golden-winged Warbler seen by M. Goitia and a Prothonotary Warbler seen by Linda Ingram in May. Cerulean Warbler, named for the male's striking blue color, is a rare nester on the Kittatinny Ridge in Berks. The few found in 2024 included one well photographed by Brian Lineaweaver.

Finding a rare bird is often a matter of attentiveness coupled with luck. Both worked for Andrew Price when he spotted a Yellow-headed Blackbird from the western US flying with a flock of common Red-winged Blackbirds at Wyomissing Park November 9. Finding and identifying rare and uncommon birds is the exciting challenge that keeps birders out in all kinds of weather hoping to find the next species to be added to the list of 340 species seen so far in Berks County.

Unprecedented Number of Egrets at Lake Ontelaunee

By Bill Uhrich BUHRICH@READINGEAGLE.COM

This article was first Published in the Reading Eagle and is published with permission.



Great Egrets at Lake Ontelaunee Photo by Bill Uhrich, BUHRICH@READINGEAGLE.COM

An unprecedented number of great egrets — large, white wading birds from the South — have descended upon Lake Ontelaunee within the past week. Rudy Keller of District Township, who compiles the Berks bird records for the local Baird Ornithological Club and for the state ornithological committee, has been birding at the lake since the 1960s and has never encountered a concentration of these waders of this magnitude before. “It’s the biggest movement I’ve ever seen here,” Keller said after he drove around the lake and tallied 134 of the waders, many of which can be seen from the West Shore Drive bridge, now known as the Graffiti Bridge. “I mean, you can go to Bombay Hook (in Smyrna, Del.) and get tired of counting egrets as you go around the dikes,” he continued, “but I’ve never outside coastal areas seen a concentration this big here inland, certainly not here in Berks County.”

Mid-July is typically the time when egrets that nest in colonies in the South will disperse and wander north, what’s called a post-breeding dispersal, Keller said. Great egrets can show up anywhere along the Schuylkill River, streams and even small farm ponds. Keller found one at Gotwal’s Pond in Oley on Wednesday. Ed Barrell of Bern Township found several great egrets in the last week at Blue Marsh, but not in the numbers at Lake Ontelaunee. “I was out kayaking and found the egrets in some of the backwater areas,” Barrell said. “They tend not to like Blue Marsh because of the boating.”

Boating is not allowed at Lake Ontelaunee.



*An immature Little Blue Heron at Lake Ontelaunee.
Photo By Bill Uhrich BUHRICH@READINGEAGLE.COM*

and black legs of the great egret, which is the general size of a great blue heron.

The number of great egrets has been building all week. Historically, the great egret was first recorded in Berks along Maiden Creek in 1920, found again in 1923 and 1925 and has been seen in the county every year since. This, according to records kept by the Baird club, but not in numbers approaching this occurrence. One high count of 49 occurred at the lake on Sept. 16, 1995, when the water level was low due to drought conditions. The conditions at Lake Ontelaunee right now, particularly along the west shore, are conducive to attracting these long-legged wading birds, Keller said. An invasive aquatic plant and native lily pads have created a matting that the birds can walk on, but the water is also shallow at that spot due to silt that has accumulated at the head of the lake, Keller noted. Great egrets in post-breeding dispersal usually stay through the late summer with birds occasionally remaining into October, he said. "They're probably scattered all over the place in Berks, as they usually are," Keller said, "but that number at the lake is enormous, in my experience, certainly. "It's like looking over the Everglades."

125th Reading Christmas Bird Count. by Lucy Cairns



*Amanda Stofko, Karen and Bryan Wang, Crystal and Matt Shirk, and Anna Laughlin at the Berks Leisure Area
While participating in the Reading Christmas Bird Count photo by Lucy Cairns*

For the fourth year in a row, field observers for the Reading CBC ventured outside on a mid-December Sunday into a landscape completely devoid of snow. Morning temperatures were in the low 20's but, mercifully, there was no wind. Clouds hid the sun for all but a few brief breaks, so birds that flash blue in the sun

appeared drab. On the other hand, the reds of cardinals and woodpeckers stood out vividly against the browns and greys of the winter landscape.

Eleven new field observers swelled our ranks to 61 (another record high), largely thanks to personal invitations from current participants. I think we have seen a bit of a snowball effect in recent years, as more people have discovered the rewards—and the fun—being part of the CBC and have recruited their friends and family. Keep it up! The number of feeder counts submitted increased to 14, from just 9 last year. Feeder checklists are important for obtaining a more accurate count of our urban and suburban birds, so to all those many BOC members who feed their yard birds—please consider participating next year.

Combining the yard counts with field observations, our volunteers counted 23,622 birds of 81 species in the Reading circle on December 15. The 81st species was thanks to Jacob Socolar's encounter with a Pine Warbler in the Ontelaunee sector. Although there have been a few reports of a Pine Warbler in Berks County in December over the years, this was the first time that one occurred on the Reading CBC, and it merited a 'rare bird report' to the Audubon regional CBC editor. Exactly three weeks later, on January 5, Mark Chestnut found and photographed a Pine Warbler in the same location! Mark, who serves as team leader for the Ontelaunee sector, commented that this was almost certainly the very same bird reported by Jacob. A record high number of Pine Warblers was reported across PA in last year's CBC (19 in 11 different counts). Perhaps this year will see a repeat.

Up until last year, there were 3 species that appeared on every Reading count: American Crow, Dark-eyed Junco, and American Tree Sparrow. Tree sparrow numbers dwindled, and last year this bird was missing from our count for the first time. This year, just 10 were found. The 124th CBC regional editor for NJ and PA, William J. Boyle, Jr., commented in his regional summary for last year that "The total of 1,345 American Tree Sparrows was the lowest total in many decades as this species continues to winter farther west."

The number of American Crows (181) was an increase compared to last year but remained below the recent 10-year average. In contrast, the trend towards higher numbers of Common Ravens on our count continued, with 24 found. Over the past twelve years, the number of these birds has climbed out of the single digits just three times, all in the past six years. For PA as a whole, Boyle's summary for last year included: "For the fifth year in a row, Common Raven hit a record high, with 1,023 birds reported from 77 of the 87 CBCs."

In the raptor category, Bill Uhrich succeeded again in finding the Peregrine pair that make the City of Reading their home, and Doug Wood's team in the Lower Oley sector found a third Peregrine near the Oley Quarry. After a relatively low 38 Red-tailed Hawks found last year, their number rebounded to 58. American Kestrel numbers remained low, at just 9 birds.

Recovery of Tufted Titmouse numbers from the crash of six years ago has continued, jumping from 106 last year to 147 this year (an improvement not entirely due to the five additional feeder counts). Chickadees, which experienced a similar nosedive in numbers, have enjoyed a stable recovery.

The 125th Reading CBC documented record high numbers of Bald Eagles (18), Red-bellied Woodpeckers (172), Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (53), and Pileated Woodpeckers (21). A count of 35 Hairy Woodpeckers was one of our higher counts of this species, and Northern Flicker numbers (73) are on an upward trend and remain above the recent 10-year average.

A few species found this year that occur only intermittently, and in low numbers, in the Reading CBC included 1 Red-headed Woodpecker (Alsace sector), 1 Wilson's Snipe (Oley sector), and 1 Eastern Phoebe (Wyomissing sector).



FBelted Kingfisher at the Wyomissing Pool on the Reading Christmas Bird Count. Photo by Lucy Cairns

My personal favorite find this year was a Belted Kingfisher perched on the lifeguard's seat at the West Reading Playground pool, looking out over the empty pool with an expression you'd expect to see on an actual lifeguard yelling at misbehaving kids!

I have now served as compiler for the Reading CBC for six years. It is a challenge to promptly gather, compile, and report our data during the busy holiday season!

Following all the protocols, this chore is made much easier by the attention of our 15 Team Leaders. The usual birding trip does not require the same documentation efforts, but these efforts are vital to the data crunching, that will allow a meaningful comparison over the 125 years of this community science project. Hannah Salvatore's assistance as a co-compiler has also been invaluable! In addition to the satisfaction of contributing to one of the most valuable resources for bird conservation, by participating in the CBC I have made some fabulous new friends, had a wide variety of memorable bird encounters, and learned a tremendous amount about the bird life of Berks County. I encourage anyone with an interest in volunteering for the CBC next year to contact me or enter 'join the Christmas Bird Count' into your browser in early November to find the Audubon web pages with the info you would need.

A Bernville CBC Summary. by Mike Slater

A Report on the 40th Bernville Christmas Bird Count held 1/4/2025

Count statistics:

- 29 participants
- 76 species, a little above our average of 73 species.
- 36,878 individual birds (over ½ of those were Snow Geese)

New High counts

- | | |
|---|---|
| • 19,725 Snow Geese (old record was 14,878) | • 25 Common Raven (old record was 21) |
| • 28 Bald Eagles (old record was 19) | • 8 Winter Wren (old record was 7) |
| • Short-eared Owl was seen this year, only the 2 nd time one has been seen on the Bernville CBC. | • 427 American Pipit (old record was 75!) |
| | • 532 Red-winged Blackbird (old record was 283) |

Record low counts

- “0” - Great-horned Owls (Avg. =13 and we had a record high of 57 in 1992, but last year only one was heard.) *
- 3 White-crowned Sparrows was a tie for the low record. This species has been seen on all 40 counts.
- 85 Song Sparrows was nearly a record low. We just slightly beat 2018’s count of 74. The average is 238.

A few species were well above average including:

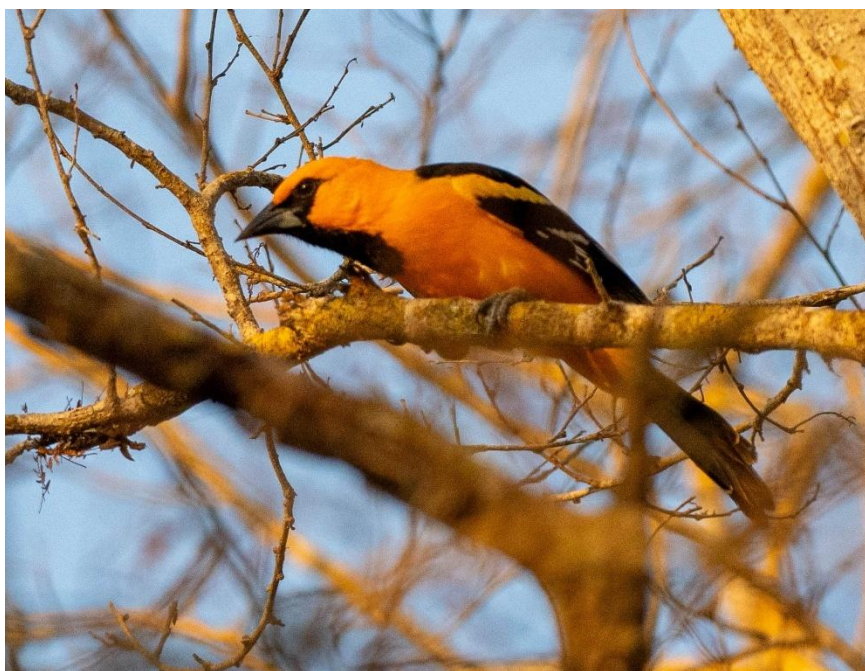
- Cackling Goose 1. This is only the 3rd time one has been identified on the count.
- Common Goldeneye 1. This was only the 5th time this species has been reported on the count.
- Am. Wigeon 2. This species has only been found on 14 out of 40 Bernville CBCs.
- Ring-necked Duck 1. This species has only been found on 14 out of 40 Bernville CBCs.
- Eurasian Collared Dove 1. This species has only been found this year and the previous 2 counts for 3 out of 40 counts.
- Turkey Vultures 201 [avg. 69]
- Cooper’s Hawk 7 [avg. 5]
- Short-eared Owl 1. This is only the 3rd time seen on the count.
- Merlin 1. This species has only been reported on 19 out of 40 counts.
- Hermit Thrush 14 was the 2nd highest total for this CBC, just below the record of 15 counted on 12/26/2020, but one above the count of 13 seen 1/1/2022.
- Dark-eyed Junco 1121 [avg. 767]
- Savannah Sparrow 1 seen at the game farm near Robesonia was a very good find, but it may now be a “regular” as this is the 4th year in a row one has been found.

Many species were about ½ of average or below, including:

- Mallard 97 [avg. 364]
- Mourning Doves 156 [avg. 751]
- Am. Kestrel 18 [avg. 36]
- Total of all chickadees (Carolina + Black-capped + Chickadee sp.) was 69 [avg. 145]
- Golden-crowned Kinglet 8 [avg. 15]
- Brown Creeper 3 [avg. 7]
- European Starling 2444 [avg. 3479]
- Northern Mockingbird 42 [avg. 74]
- Am. Robin 124 [avg. 263]
- Cedar Waxwing 9 [avg. 103]
- House Sparrow 267 [avg. 588]
- House Finch 206 [avg. 588]
- Am. Goldfinch 41 [avg. 112]
- Field Sparrow 6 [avg. 15]
- 3 White-crowned Sparrows counted was enough to keep this open country species on the list of species seen on all 40 Bernville CBCs. The last big tally was 53 on 1/5/2013. The average for this species that used to be abundant is 165.
- Swamp Sparrow 2 [avg. 10]
- Brown-headed Cowbird 8 [avg. 63]

Continuing trends:

- 31 species that have been reported on all 40 of the Bernville CBCs
- *The Great Horned Owl was the only species we lost this year. *Is this a real decline or just less effort at early morning owling (plus the windy conditions this year)? Maybe we need to make a stronger effort at finding owls next year.*



*Altamira Oriole in Southern Mexico.
Photo by "Richard Thunen, Seattle, WA,
Eagle Eye Tours, Windermere, B.C. Canada*

April '17. Braving a cloudy, raw day on the advice of BOC "masters" to "better get it while the getting was good" just one day before my very first destination birding tour in mid-March (Platte River NE, Cranes & Chickens), I signed the guest book, tee'd up with binoculars on that feeder across the way holding so much potential, such a rarity it was, even in its home country of Mexico – and I waited.

I guess I just ran out of body heat, patience, time, or all three, but I bowed out after a good long time of nothingness with the lost little anomalous bird. But I vowed, in my fledgling birding career, that someday I would see that species live in the wild, AND/or so many other Orioles waiting to be bagged!

I've just returned from somewhat suburban but mostly rural southern Mexico – in provinces of Oaxaca, Chiapas & Tabasco – and have added nicely to my Life List array of North American Oriole species. Attaining Hooded (see picture page 1) , Black-vented and Streak-backed Oriole species while journeying, I've proudly beefed

*Right - Black-vented Oriole in Southern Mexico.
Photo by "Richard Thunen, Seattle, WA,
Eagle Eye Tours, Windermere, B.C. Canada*

My Elusive Oriole(s) by Sheila Martin

Winter 2017 was when North American ornithology records got tipped sideways – actually, well over onto their EAR! – when Black-backed Oriole (*Icterus abeillei*) caused quite a commotion at a modest residential feeder in Sinking Spring, Berks County, being first identified as such on February 2nd of that year – and deciding to STAY the balance of the season, feasting on birdseed, green grapes, other luscious fare - until its eventual departure in early



up my Life List position in their regard, along with Orchard, Baltimore, Bullock's and Altamira.

Impelling me onward in the field to make more of these western hemisphere beauties Lifers, Scott's, Black-cowled, Bar-winged, Yellow-tailed, Yellow-backed, Orange, Spot-breasted and, yes, the elusive gem, Black-backed Oriole have still eluded me! Then, when I'm really splitting hairs, I shall also go charging after (Eurasian) Golden Oriole, in Europe's springtime!

When you've got 10 extra minutes – which will likely stretch to a half hour! – sign on to E-bird and check out images of all these lovelies. Shown here are shots from one of my Southern Mexico trip's colleagues; credits to Richard for special field memories of terrific individuals in the Oriole family! Go Birding!

Member Spotlight by Sheila Martin

Spotlighting Treasurer Chuck Coleman

BOC Treasurer (Charles) Chuck Coleman has served our club faithfully and with diligence in this elected capacity – since 2011! He's a great listener as board-consideration topics have been discussed and dispatched over 13 years (Oh My!!), keeping Baird's administrative concerns up-to-date, and he lends a perspective to our century-plus organization which only a long-tenured participant can share.

At 2025's mid-year board meeting, Chuck shared his desire to step aside from this officer position, as nominations get underway and a slate of new officer prospects is announced and considered. He generously states that he'll still allow his name to be placed on the slate, continuing on as a Director nominee.

On behalf of our officers, board and the entire membership of BOC, I sincerely thank Chuck for his many years of service, for maintaining good books and seeing to all things "Payable" & "Receivable".





Spotlighting Immediate Past President Lucy Cairns

Baird's own incomparable Lucy Cairns has now seen her way through many years of board leadership, beginning as most do in a Director role, then moving along in the incremental officer chairs – each with a two-year term - of vice president, president and now concluding with immediate past president. Lucy has been visible, strong & upbeat at BOC's helm, guiding us carefully through the

challenges we all remember in the depths – and the rising out of – Covid's grip and functional limitations. Most recently, she's jumped marvelously into the role of Reading Christmas Bird Count Compiler – a post which she acknowledges she will retain, once no longer a board participant.

On behalf of our officers, board and the entire membership of BOC, I sincerely thank Lucy as well for her strong guiding hand of leadership, adding appreciation for her sparkling info-sharing, repartee & wit in all of her BOC outreach as well.

Veery Song – by Michele Uhrich

Late morning, walking
in this world
until some new thing stops me.
It is distant.

So much is in the way.

The ovenbird's fussing
occupies the air.

Plus all the looking --
gold finch I follow easily
in and out of pines,
the showy orchis a smudge
of lavender on white,
and a lady slipper's tendrils
that nearly touch the ground.

Insistent new thing, so fine
I need to part these curtains,
stop breathing,
listen

as I've listened for the owl's
buried sound.

I pick up somewhere deep
within the song --

dusky, wet, and cold
despite the sun I'm standing in.

The piping is a thin singing saw,
looping notes that slide and tap my skull,
an effervescence
that dissolves like sugar.



I tuck my head and try
to stay immersed,
strain my ear for the last few drops
to store inside
where they will resurrect –
I don't know when, but they surely will --
as an unexpected answer.



City Nature Challenge 2025: Berks County, by Brian Wang

Join City Nature Challenge, an annual event in which communities across the globe collaborate and compete to view and document their local biodiversity! CNC is a new way for Berks County to spread excitement about nature, build community, and have fun!

What is City Nature Challenge? In City Nature Challenge (CNC), we will encourage as many people as possible to go outside and take pictures of plants, animals, and fungi using iNaturalist, a mobile app that teaches you about the creatures you're looking at. Any such "observations" taken between April 25 and April 28, 2025 will count for CNC. During that weekend and through the following week, nature enthusiasts and experts will identify and verify what was observed.

To support Berks County's involvement, we will be holding "learn iNaturalist" events in the spring and encourage participation during the CNC weekend with several "bioblitz" nature survey events. We will also host an "identification party" and a post-CNC celebration.

How can I join? First, to get updates about our events, fill out this form: <https://tinyurl.com/cncberks25-mail>. Then follow us on Facebook at <facebook.com/cncberks> and on Instagram @cncberks.

Can I become more involved? Help us help our community observe, identify, and connect with nature! We will be enthusiastically grateful if you participate in a CNC event or two (or three or four...). Please invite, beg, cajole, or coerce your friends to join, too. All that's needed is a smartphone and a willingness to learn iNaturalist and capture observations of nature—and it is a community-building effort, so the more, the merrier.

If you're willing to share your expertise and love of nature on a deeper level, we will need people at our observation events to help participants learn to use iNaturalist and perhaps to show and tell a little bit about the plants and animals that people find. We will offer training for this at Berks Nature on the morning of April 12, 2025

We will also need people with knowledge of local birds(!), plants, insects, fungi, herps, aquatic life... to identify the many species we anticipate our CNC participants will observe. We'll offer training and a fun atmosphere for doing that with an iNat ID party on April 27 at Penn State Berks.

I've got more questions. Who do I contact?

eMail Bryan Wang at citynaturechallengeberks@gmail.com.

Who's responsible for City Nature Challenge? City Nature Challenge is organized by the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. CNC Berks County is being coordinated by Bryan Wang at Penn State Berks, in conversation with Berks Nature. Event hosts include Berks Nature, Mengel Natural History Society, Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center, Earth Day Berks County, the City of Reading, Rock Hollow Woods Environmental Learning Center, Penn State Berks, and Berks County Parks and Recreation Department.

Baird Ornithological Club

Held jointly with the MENGEL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

ANNUAL BANQUET: Wednesday, May 7, 2025

Program:

Dr. Joan Maloof, PhD

Founder of Old-Growth Forest Network

Presents:

“Let’s Work Together for the Birds”

- ❖ Emphasis on Pennsylvania’s important role
- ❖ Forest bird life & the work of Old-Growth Forest Network
- ❖ Background of successional habitat; how it leads to forest fragmentation
- ❖ Numerous color photographs and a lively pace



Joan Maloof is a PhD ecologist who has been speaking out for decades about why we should be preserving our oldest forests. A Delaware native, she is the founder of the national Old-Growth Forest Network and a professor emeritus in biology at Salisbury University. Maloof is a frequent guest on podcasts and radio programs, and her work has been written about in various magazines

and newspapers including the Baltimore Sun and the Washington Post. Maloof is the author of numerous research articles and the author of five books about trees and forests including *Teaching the Trees: Lessons from the Forest* and *Nature’s Temples: A Natural History of Old-Growth Forests*.

Location: State Hill Craft Cocktails & Kitchen, 1 Wellington Blvd., Reading, PA 19610

5:30 pm - Social hour, Charcuterie station, Book signing, Cash bar, and Raffle sale.

6:15 pm – Banquet, “*Deluxe Continental American Buffet*” – a delicious “something-for-everybody” chafing dish array. **NO NEED to “Pick One” this year!** Denver Steak, two Chicken offerings, Seared Halibut, Vegetable side dishes, which will respect most all dietary specifics; soft drinks, coffee, tea & dessert.

Later - Opening remarks, Introduction of Speaker and closing topics.

Cost: \$40.00 per person

Reservation Deadline is **Monday, April 21**

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 the Committee at 610-582-3401

Names(s) attending: _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ Your Phone # _____ E-mail _____

___ Check here if you have a special dietary requirement (Vegetarian items are included in the buffet). Your need is _____

B.O.C. Initial & Renewal Memberships, Now at Two Levels

Whether joining initially as a Baird member, or renewing annually, a **new category of dues - Sustaining Member** - was added last year to help our club support programs and activities, and as a gesture demonstrating appreciation of birds, nature, the environment, conservation and natural areas generally, through elevated financial support. Recognition will be shown in our newsletter.

- **Regular Membership Dues - \$15/ year /per person**
- **Sustaining Membership Dues - \$25 or more/ year / per person**

Baird Ornithological Club gratefully acknowledges our Sustaining Donors of '24-'25

Christine A. Basso	Karl Gardner	Tom & Amy Reinsel
Lucy J. Cairns	Sean Grace	Hannah Salvatore
Liz Cates	Mr. & Mrs. Tony Grimm	Susan Smith
Alan & Frances Chelius	Joan Marie Hanley	John Spitko Jr.
Hillary Ann Chwiecko	Dave Hemberger	Irene Taylor
Jim & Janet Colflesh	Jim Henning	Jacqueline Trate
Kathleen B. Conrad	Rachael Hill	Todd Underwood
Steven Conrad	Russ Hoffman	Bryan & Karen Wang
Lynn Cronomiz	Patti Hutchinson	Nelson & Grace Weber
Tracy Daly	Linda M. Ingram	George Wert
Tony Damore	Rudy Keller	Susan Wolfe
Patrick Dignan	Joanne Kintner	Karin Wulkowicz
Suzie Dillman	Mary Ellen Mahan	Sue Yoder
Jim Duplak	Sheila A. Martin	
Linda & Robert Feldman	Phil Phucas	

Baird Ornithological Club, Current Officers and directors

Sheila Martin President (2023-25) sheilamartin554@gmail.com
Vice President (office vacant)
Secretary (office vacant)
Charles Coleman Treasurer (2023-25) coleman1801@comcast.net
Lucy Cairns, Immediate Past President (2023-25) ljanetcairns@gmail.com

Directors:

Russell Hoffman (2022-25) Russhoff@yahoo.com and Field Trip Coordinator
Hannah Salvatore (2022-25) hannah.salvatore@comcast.net and Membership Coordinator
Lynn Cronomiz (2023-26) Lynsekie@ptd.net and Social Media Coordinator
Irene Taylor (2023-26) iltaylor@dejazzd.com
Dan Brennan (2024-27) dbrennan50@aol.com
David Hemberger (2024-27) dave.hemberger@gmail.com

Linda Ingram Newsletter Coordinator lindamingram29@gmail.com

Rudy Keller Newsletter Editor and
Avian Report Compiler for the Summer & Winter Seasons rckeller@dejazzd.com

Mike Slater paplantings@gmail.com Website manager and newsletter composer

BOC Membership and Renewal

- Payment is for **September 2025 – August 2025**

- **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: _____

Email address: _____

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.

[] 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 BOC Treasurer: **Charles Coleman, 129 Grecian Terrace, Sinking Spring, PA 19608-1164** coleman1801@comcast.net