



The Distelfink

Spring 2026 Newsletter

of the

Baird Ornithological Club



A For Sparrow at French Creek State Park.

Photo by Jay Kline

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Acting Vice-President's Message By Art Zdancewic

March is my favorite spring month. It has the promise of warmth and change. I've seen Song Sparrows singing their full song. I've heard and briefly seen Am. Woodcock doing their display. Another birding cycle is beginning and I'm looking forward to enjoying the change.

Talking of change, our club was presented with a unique opportunity of hosting a presentation by Scott Weidensaul, a world-renowned birder, author and researcher. We accepted. He will speak to us on November 6th, 2026. We are in the process of booking a venue for this event and I encourage you to put the date on your "must attend" calendar. I've seen him present several times and thoroughly enjoyed and learned each time. Scott has been a longtime friend of BOC and has presented some of our most memorable banquet programs. His November presentation will serve as the 2026-27 BOC banquet program.

The November presentation has allowed the club to do something a bit different for the May 8th meeting. Instead of a banquet we will have a social meeting from 4 pm to 7 pm at Nolde Forest, our usual meeting location. BOC and Mengel Natural History Soc. will have displays. We'll have short birding walks, binocular use training and show how the club participates in outdoor events at other locations. Mengel will do something similar. The idea is to encourage members to bring guests. I will bring my grandchildren. We will provide drinks and light sandwiches or salads. Registration by May 4th will be required to allow for food purchase. Registration information can be found in the events calendar in this newsletter.

Linda Ingram and I have acted as co-vice presidents for this BOC year. Our term is ending in May. Read Sheila Martin's nominating committee report to learn who will fill these positions in the coming BOC year. Your club needs Baird Ornithological Club members to join the board and especially people willing to run the meetings. There are active committees in place to alleviate the president's responsibilities. This committee system has been working very well. However, we need members to step up and volunteer for these positions. Younger members could help us transition into a club for the 21st century. I think that we all value the social connections and birding knowledge BOC provides. Please step up and help us continue to provide them.



A sure sign of Spring: A Brown booby family with a chick. Photo by Art Zdancewic

Listening to Our Members: Highlights from the Fall 2025 BOC Survey

By Dave Hemberger

This past fall, the Baird Ornithological Club Board developed and distributed a membership survey to help guide the future direction of the Club. The Board's goal was to better understand member interests, priorities, and ideas, and to help shape BOC in a manner consistent with the preferences of its membership. The survey included questions spanning many aspects of Club operations, and member responses were viewed as an important tool to assist the Board as we move forward.

The survey was sent to approximately 100 members, and the Board was pleased to receive responses from 43 members—a participation rate that compares very favorably with that of similar volunteer organizations. We sincerely appreciate the time, thought, and care of members devoted to sharing their perspectives.

Overall, the results provided both affirmation and helpful guidance. Members expressed strong support for continuing the annual BOC banquet, with broad agreement that it remains a valued social and educational event. Many respondents indicated flexibility regarding the day of the week, noting that a Sunday through Thursday evening would be acceptable if scheduled well in advance. Input on ticket pricing suggests a preference for keeping costs within a moderate range, helping ensure the event remains accessible to as many members as possible.

There was also strong interest in expanding social opportunities beyond the banquet. Many members expressed enthusiasm for a daytime outdoor social gathering, reflecting a desire for more informal ways to connect with fellow birders.

With respect to regular programming, most respondents indicated satisfaction with Friday evening meetings, while acknowledging that scheduling constraints—such as work, family obligations, health concerns, or night driving—can limit participation for some members. Comments suggested that flexibility, advance notice, and occasional alternative formats (such as daytime or virtual options) may help broaden participation.

Members expressed strong support for resuming modest fundraising activities at monthly meetings, such as those used in the past, and emphasized that these efforts will help sustain the Club while requiring minimal effort from participants. Communication preferences were clear: email remains the primary way members wish to receive BOC news and updates, with the Club website serving as a secondary resource.

The survey also highlighted opportunities for deeper member involvement. Several members indicated interest in serving on standing committees or helping with outreach efforts, including serving as volunteer presenters using prepared materials supplied by the Club. About half of survey respondents expressed interest in participating in an annual birding tour—typically a multi-day experience, suggesting this could be a worthwhile opportunity to explore in the future.

Members provided thoughtful and wide-ranging suggestions for meeting topics, field trip destinations, and the use of surplus funds should they be available. Common themes included support for conservation and habitat projects (particularly those with a local focus), youth education and outreach, and keeping

participation costs reasonable. Many members also expressed appreciation for the quality and variety of existing programs and field trips, noting that BOC already offers a strong foundation on which to build.

The Board is grateful to all who participated in the survey and shared their ideas. The feedback affirms much of what BOC already does well, while also offering valuable insight into how the Club can remain responsive, inclusive, and forward-looking. We are confident that the organization will benefit from member input as we plan programs and initiatives in the months ahead.

BOC Financial Update

Treasurer's Report By Lynn Cronomiz

Baird Ornithological Club General Ledger
Fiscal Year 2024-09-01 to 2025-08-31

BUSINESS CHECKING ...4391	amount	balance
9/1/2024 Beginning Fiscal Year Balance		8864.67
9/3/2024 PAYPAL TRANSFER 240901 1036646246591 BAIRD ORNITHO	23.79	8888.46
9/3/2024 DEPOSIT	50	8938.46
10/1/2024 PAYPAL TRANSFER 241001 1037281159841 BAIRD ORNITHO	833.57	9772.03
10/15/2024 CHECK 2104 Robert Sragup	-150	9622.03
10/16/2024 DEPOSIT	160	9782.03
10/22/2024 CHECK 2360 Dr. Jennifer Vehliry	-150	9632.03
11/1/2024 PAYPAL TRANSFER 241101 1037941848037 BAIRD ORNITHO	95.15	9727.18
11/1/2024 DEPOSIT	305	10032.18
11/4/2024 CHECK 2102 Sheila Martin Printing exp.	-188.91	9843.27
11/13/2024 DEPOSIT	80	9923.27
12/2/2024 PAYPAL TRANSFER 241201 1038624560011 BAIRD ORNITHO	227.22	10150.49
12/16/2024 CHECK 2107 Robert Slater - website	-165.24	9985.25
12/18/2024 DEPOSIT	175	10160.25
1/2/2025 PayPal Transfer	169.93	10330.18
1/14/2025 Deposit	20	10350.18
1/30/2025 Check #2103 Joe Sebastiani	-75	10275.18
2/3/2025 PayPal Transfer	47.09	10322.27
2/13/2025 Check #2105 PPF friends of nolde	-200	10122.27
2/18/2025 Deposit	15	10137.27
2/26/2025 Check #2361 Dr. David Yeany	-200	9937.27
3/3/2025 PayPal Transfer	85.93	10023.2
3/18/2025 Deposit	455	10478.2
3/21/2025 Deposit	90	10568.2
3/24/2025 Check #2111 Native Orchid Center Grant -honorarium	-150	10418.2
3/25/2025 Check #2112 Sheila Marting - expense	-93.78	10324.42
4/1/2025 PayPal Transfer	413.61	10738.03
5/1/2025 PayPal Transfer	306.84	11044.87
5/6/2025 Bank Withdrawal	-50	10994.87
5/6/2025 Deposit	880	11874.87
5/9/2025 Deposit	270	12144.87
5/9/2025 Check #2114 Joa Maloof	-525	11619.87
5/12/2025 Check #2119 Kouzina RG LLC - banquet	-2331	9288.87
5/19/2025 Check #2121 US Liability Insurance Co.	-395	8893.87
5/22/2025 Check #2120 Sheila Martin - banquet expense	-266.26	8627.61
6/2/2025 PayPal Transfer	52.43	8680.04
7/1/2025 PayPal Transfer	14.08	8694.12
7/8/2025 Deposit	15	8709.12
7/16/2025 Check #2364 Lynn Cronomiz artistic checks	-60.58	8648.54
8/1/2025 PayPal Transfer	9.22	8657.76
8/26/2025 Check #2365 Rebekah Sheeler field trip expense	-16.85	8640.91
Ending Fiscal Year Balance		8640.91
Balance On 8-31-2025	8640.91	
Balance On 9/1/2024	8864.67	
	-223.76	

We began the fiscal year on September 1, 2024, with a balance of \$8,864.67 and concluded the fiscal year on August 31, 2025, with a balance of \$8,640.91. Our largest expenses were associated with the May banquet and the addition of liability insurance. The Board determined that securing liability insurance was an important step in protecting the Club. Additionally, the Club made a \$200 donation to Friends of Nolde Forest, which supports the educational, recreational, and historical programming at the Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center. The BOC balance sheet for fiscal year 2024 – 2025 can be viewed at left.

Committee Reports Club News – Newly Created Committees at Work

Communications Committee

By Lynn Cronomiz

The Communications Committee keeps the Club informed through the Baird website, Facebook page, and mass email blasts to dues-paying members. Any changes to field trips should be communicated by text to Lynn Cronomiz at 610-462-9912 to initiate the notification process.

BOC Community Outreach Committee

By Dan Brennan

Birding ‘Big Day’ with Baird: October 11, 2025

Berks County Parks & Recreation Department and the BOC co-hosted an event at the Grings Mill Barn featuring a stunning exhibit of bird photography by multiple photographers, several table displays, and a guided bird walk along the Tulpehocken. The initial impetus for this event originated with BOC member Jim Colfresh, who organized the photography exhibit and helped coordinate with Lisa Gauker (Recreation and Special Events Supervisor for the Berks County Parks & Rec. Dept.). Sue Wolfe put together an attractive and informative table display, and Lucy Cairns led the walk. Lisa Gauker has expressed a wish to plan for a similar event in the fall of 2026.

Warblers and Wildflowers Walk: May 3, 2026 - 8:00 a.m.

The BOC received a subsequent request from Lisa Gauker to provide one or more guides for the bird walk portion of an event to be held at the Angora Fruit Farm, 502 Angora Rd., Reading. After obtaining two “maybe” and two “definite” responses from Baird members asked to act as guides, we confirmed our participation in this event. See BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks for details.

Birding Breakfast: Morning Chirp and Chat, May 9, 2026. Starts 8:30 a.m. Bird Walks 9:00 a.m.

Community partner Berks Nature invited BOC members to share their enthusiasm for and knowledge of bird life with members of the public on a spring morning. Community Outreach Committee members consulted with Berks Nature staff on the format for this event and worked to recruit speakers and bird walk guides from the BOC membership. Similar to the ‘Birding with Baird’ event in 2023, indoor presentations will be combined with small-group guided bird walks and opportunities for making new personal connections. See BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks for details.

World Migratory Bird Day: Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, May 9, 2026

BOC has committed to return this year for the celebration of World Migratory Bird Day. We’ll join other participants in promoting an awareness of birds and their annual migratory journeys as they return to their breeding areas. We will also promote an awareness of Baird Ornithological Club activities that include monthly programs as well as Field Trips and Bird Walks. See BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks for details.

Reading Public Museum: Members of BOC’s Community Outreach Committee met with Reading Public Museum’s Director of family programs last Fall to learn how BOC may be able to integrate with the museum in future programs, primarily those that are focused on family educational events. We hope to keep an active and open line of communication throughout the year.

At many BOC events, a table display or exhibit is used to inform participants about the club and provide information on various bird-related topics. Currently the club has exhibits about **1) Baird Ornithological Club**, **2) Birds of Farm and Field – An Historical View**, and **3) Bird Migration in PA**. Also planned are several new exhibits on various topics such as “How You Can Help the Birds”, “Planting Natives to Benefit Birds” and another which is planned to target students and spark their interest in birds and the natural world. BOC volunteers will staff the exhibits, inform individuals about the club as well as answer general questions about birds and other club activities. If you are interested in helping to create educational exhibits or want to help present outreach events, contact Dan Brennan, dbrennan50@aol.com

Meetings/Programs Fall 2025 - Spring 2026

Friday, March 13, 2026 at Nolde Forest EEC

“Ornithotherapy – The Power of Birding,” Holly Merker, professional birding guide, award winning author, podcaster and leading reviewer for PA eBird. We explored ways in which our connection to birds and nature enhances our well-being and overall health.

(Recording available, contact Mike Slater paplantings@gmail.com)

Friday, April 10, 2026 (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC

“Maurice Broun vs. Earl Poole, the Prequel,” Bill Uhrich, Reading Eagle writer and photographer and BOC historian.

Bill last contrasted the styles of these two birding luminaries in 2024. This time he digs into the details of their earliest known associations. Come enjoy the dramatic retelling of the cordial yet competitive relationship between these two men.

Friday, May 8, 2026 (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC

BOC and Mengel NHS Meeting and Social Event

Join members and guests at this indoor and outdoor evening social event. There will be guided bird and nature walks on the Nolde trails. Binoculars and training in their use will be available. The Outreach Committee will display the educational materials they use to introduce BOC to other organizations. Drinks, sandwiches and other light fare will be provided.

Registration is required by May 4, 2026.

Contact Art Zdancewic, art.zdancewic@gmail.com

with the number of people in your party.

BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks - Fall 2025 – Spring 2026

(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 1, 2026 (Sunday) - Lake Ontelaunee – Waterfowl and Late Winter Birds - 12 Noon

We will carpool to various points around the lake and, weather permitting, take a walk to the more remote parts of this habitat. Migrating ducks may be numerous and we will take the time to help everyone identify them through scopes. **Meeting Location: at the west end of the dam on Rt. 73 between Routes 61 and 222. (Lake Shore Dr, Shoemakersville, PA 19555. GPS: 40.447, -75.933.** Directions: Meet at the Lake Ontelaunee dam breast parking lot on Rte. 73. Coordinator: Rudy Keller 484-336-4155

March 28, 2026 (Saturday) - Schuylkill River Trail, Gibraltar End - 8 AM

Easily seen Bald Eagles have been nesting in this area, and a Great Blue Heron colony can be observed before the foliage appears. Meet at the newly created Reeser's Landing. **Location: 1018 Gibraltar Rd, Birdsboro, PA 19508.** Directions: From traffic light in Gibraltar, go north across bridge to first left. Parking on left. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053

April 4, 2026 (Saturday) - Grings Mill - 8 AM

With good weather, we might see early Palm and Pine Warblers on this popular walk. Wood Ducks, Common Mergansers and resident birds of riparian habitat will be found. **Location: 2083 Tulpehocken Rd, Reading, PA 19610.** Directions: Take Broadcasting Rd. in Wyomissing east to dead end at Tulpehocken Rd. Go right ½ mile to parking on left. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053

April 7, (Tuesday) - Kernsville Dam and Recreation Area – 8 AM

Sora, Virginia Rail and bitterns may be found along with other spring migrants. The trail winds through the marsh and enters a woodland along the Schuylkill River. **Meeting Location: The parking lot for the John Bartram Trail, Hamburg, PA 19526, 40.5624, -75.9947.** Directions: Take Rt. 61 north to traffic light for Cabela's in Hamburg. Make a right on Jetson Dr. and another right on Industrial Rd. Go 1 mile to Kernsville Dam Rd. on left. Parking will be on the right. Coordinator: Matt Wlaniewski 484-577-3530

April 11, 2026 (Saturday) - State Game Lands 280 - 8 AM

Varied habitats including grassland/meadow, hedgerows, woodlots and waterways at the perimeter of Blue Marsh Lake should yield some interesting migrants and residents, including Osprey. **Meeting Location: Justa Road 40.37066, -76.06973.** Directions: Take State Hill R. to dead end at Brownsville Rd. Make a left and travel 4 miles to Justa Rd on right. Make right and go to dead end. Coordinator: Liz Cates 610-926-3206

April 18, 2026 (Saturday) - Union Meadows East - 8 AM

An easy walk on a flat gravel trail that circles through meadows, brush and riparian woods along the Schuylkill River. Great place to see early migrating warblers, thrushes, sparrows and many other songbirds. Rusty Blackbird has consistently been found here in late winter and spring. Walks here typically record high species

counts. **Location:** 100 Campbell Ford Rd, Douglasville, PA. Directions: Take Rt. 724 east from Birdsboro 2 miles to park sign on left just past Fork and Ale Restaurant. Coordinator: Jay Kline 610-858-5130

April 21, 2026 (Tuesday) – Berks County Parks, Angora Fruit Farm - 8 AM

The abandoned orchard and bordering woods often yield close-up views and photos of warblers and other spring arrivals. **Location:** Angora Fruit Farm, Berks County Parks & Recreation, Angora Rd, Reading, PA 19606, **GPS 40.3624, -75.8839**. Directions: Take Rt. 12 east to Spring Valley Rd. exit. Turn right, go ½ mile and turn left on McKnight's Gap Rd. Follow the road uphill and down the other side to stop sign and turn right on Angora Rd. Go right one block to park sign and entrance lane on left. Coordinator Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053

April 28, 2026 (Tuesday) - Hay Creek Watershed - 8 AM

Along with spring warblers that may be encountered here, breeders like Louisiana Waterthrush, Worm-eating Warbler, Am. Redstart and Acadian Flycatcher are usually seen. Berks County's only known breeding colony of Bank Swallows is in the neighboring quarry, but the birds are difficult to see. **Location:** Old 82 Parking Area: 2000 Hay Creek Rd, Birdsboro, PA. Directions: From the intersection of Rts. 724 and 568 in Gibraltar, take Rt. 568 west about 1.5 miles. Make a left onto White Bear Rd. and go past 2 stop signs (4 miles) to the dead end at Hay Creek Rd. Turn left and follow Hay Creek RD to its end. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053

May 2, 2026 (Saturday) - Nolde Forest EEC - 8 AM

This forest is a good place to see spring woodland birds, and as a bonus we may get a good look at a Barred Owl. This owl nests here and both adults and nestlings have been seen in recent years. This venue is hilly but paved in most of the areas that we walk. **Location:** Nolde Forest Sawmill Parking Area, 3025 New Holland Rd, Reading, PA 19607. Directions: From the intersection of Rts. 724 and 625 in Shillington, go south to the sign for the Sawmill Parking Area on the right. Coordinator: Linda Ingram 610-621-7473

May 5, 2026 (Tuesday) - Hamburg Reservoir - 8 AM

This venue requires the ability to walk uphill for about a mile on a gravel road at a leisurely pace. We will bird the woodland edge below and around the reservoir. It is possible to get good looks at warblers along the sunlit edge of the forest here in May. **Location:** Pinnacle Access of the Appalachian Trail, 400 Reservoir Rd, Hamburg, PA 19526. Directions: Take Rte. 61 north to the turnoff to downtown Hamburg. Proceed to State St. and make a right. Go 4 miles and make a left on Reservoir Rd. just past Edenburg. **The street sign is easy to miss.** Go straight ahead to the parking area. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053

May 9, 2026 (Saturday) - Hopewell Big Woods Trail - 7 AM

Note the earlier than usual starting time for this downhill walk through grassland and edge habitats on a well-maintained trail. This is the easiest place in Berks County to see Yellow-breasted Chat. Prairie and Blue-winged Warblers breed here, and Grasshopper Sparrow and Blue Grosbeak, along with many other migrants and breeders, are possible. Most birds can easily be seen, and this walk can produce some of the highest species counts of the year. **Location:** 165 Center Road, Douglassville, PA. Directions: Take Rt. 724 east 1.5 miles from Birdsboro and turn right on Center Rd. Coordinator: Jason Kline 610-858-5130

May 16, 2026 (Saturday) - Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site - 8 AM

We usually see breeding species like Ovenbird, Hooded Warbler, N. Parula and Am. Redstart, along with Wood Thrush, Veery and others. Red-headed Woodpeckers were here last year. **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. Coordinator: Sheila Martin 610-858-6005

May 30, 2026 (Saturday) - Historic Dreibelbis Farm - 8 AM

This last scheduled walk of the BOC birding year has become popular with our members due to the interesting history of the property and its good variety of nesting birds, including Red-headed Woodpeckers, Am. Kestrels, flycatchers, swallows, and bluebirds. **Location: 356 Hard Hill Rd, Hamburg, PA.** Directions: Take Rt. 222 north to the roundabout at Moselem Springs. Take 3rd exit from circle west on Rt. 662. Go about a mile and make a right on Rt. 143. Travel 1.6 miles and turn left at the farm sign into the lane. Coordinator: Dan Brennan 484-336-0455

126th Reading CBC – comments and comparison by Lucy Cairns

The most remarkable thing about the 126th CBC, in my opinion, is that it happened. In the seven years since I became compiler, the weather has been variably cold, windy, and rainy, but never so potentially dangerous that I considered cancelling the count—until this year. Snow fell during the night before our December 14 count day, with accumulations of 2 – 5” or more around the county, resulting in poor road conditions in the morning. The forecast for count day included freezing temperatures falling steadily through the day, made more dangerous by winds of close to 20mph with higher gusts. On the day before the count, I polled my team leaders to ask if any thought we should cancel. Not one said yes, so we went ahead and did our best in the service of bird conservation.

Our best was not too shabby! Forty-four field observers spent a total of 46.5 hours counting birds on foot, covering 43.5 miles. For comparison, 61 field observers spent 77.5 hours covering 63.25 miles on foot last year. Time spent counting from vehicles, on the other hand, was unchanged from last year at 29.5 hours. Due to some unpassable roads, however, 55 fewer miles were driven. Twelve feeder counts were contributed, two less than last year.

Just like people when severe winter weather hits, many bird species were harder to find and fewer were out and about. Combined with the reduction in effort we were able to muster, it was no surprise that fewer birds than usual were counted. However, the 75 species of birds found was just a small drop from recent totals.

Species found in numbers lower than in any of the past 10 counts included the Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Downy Woodpecker, American Crow, Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, and Black Vulture. The Bald Eagle count of 8 was the first time its number had fallen to single digits since 2019, reversing a trend. The 22 Red-tailed Hawks, 60 Eastern Bluebirds, and 15 Northern Mockingbirds found were all less than half the average numbers counted over the past 10 years. The Black Vulture number of 12 was far below the next-lowest count of 31 during the same period. Turkey Vulture numbers, on the other hand, were only a little less than the recent average. For the first time in more than 10 years, not a single White-crowned Sparrow was found. The American Tree Sparrow held on by a thread, with a single individual found in the Leesport sector.

Our overall numbers received a big boost from the high number of Snow Geese counted – 7,024. The Snow Goose and Canada Goose numbers combined accounted for over half of the individual bird totals. Although 28 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker count was a big decline from our record high of 53 last year, the number remained above the 10-year average, and the number of Red-bellied Woodpeckers was only slightly depressed. A count of 26 Northern Flickers represents less than half the number counted in the past two years, and the 4 Pileated Woodpeckers found is less than any year since 2019.

A paltry 70 American Crows were found—the lowest count in the past 10 years—contrasting with the second-highest count of Common Ravens in the same period: 20.

Bill Uhrich found the two City of Reading Peregrine Falcons again this year and deserves some sort of award—or a new pair of winter boots—for covering more territory by foot (10 miles) than any other volunteer. A third Peregrine was found by the team covering the Lower Oley sector.

If the gradual recovery of our local Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Chickadee populations from the crash of 2018 is continuing, you would not know it from the December 14 count. Only 58 titmice and 93 Carolina Chickadees were found, compared to counts of 147 and 219, respectively, in last year's CBC.

There were a few additional high numbers. Eight Red-breasted Nuthatches represented a 10-year high, as did 1200 Horned Larks found in the Fleetwood, Oley, and Lower Oley sectors, and the 1437 Dark-eyed Juncos counted.

For the second time in the history of the Reading CBC, for a second year in a row, a Pine Warbler put in an appearance. This bird had been coming to a BOC member's suet feeder almost daily since December 11 and was still coming as of December 30. Other unusual birds for our count included 5 Rusty Blackbirds, 5 American Pipits, a Gray Catbird, and a Lapland Longspur spotted by Rudy Keller in a flock of Horned Larks feeding on weed seeds in a field.

It's tempting to be discouraged when your CBC counts are depressed by adverse conditions. Birds bring us joy, and the more birds the better on any given day—not just the CBC! But I find comfort in focusing on the fact that the value CBC data provides for understanding and tracking bird populations is exactly the same regardless of the number of birds found, as long as the volunteers follow the protocols and put forth their best effort. Participants in the 126th Reading CBC went above and beyond, in difficult, risky conditions, to produce another in a very long string of successful counts. If birds could clap hands, I know they would be giving a standing ovation.

**Berks County Birds –
Fall 2025 by Rudy Keller**
Now available on
[the B.O.C. website.](#)

*A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Angora
Fruit Farm. For details see the bird
report at the above link,*

Photo by Russ Hoffman.



**Photos from members of birds
seen on our Field trips**



*A Male Canvasback at Brenneman's Quarry.
Photo by Russ Hoffman*



*A Pair of mallards in flight at FCSP.
Photo by Jay Kline*



*A Northern
Mockingbird at
Union Meadows
Photo by Jay Kline*



(Above)

*A Northern Parula
Warbler at Union
Meadows.*

Photo by Jay Kline

(right)

*A male Purple
Finch at FCSP.
Photo by Jay Kline*



BOC Past Trip Reports

Dreibelbis Farm, Virginville, October 11, 2025

By Rudy Keller

Our decision to schedule an October walk focused on sparrows at this farm paid off. Dozens of sparrows glimpsed in the dense old field and wetland habitats went unidentified. Still, our group of 13 birders listed eight species, including three Lincoln's Sparrows, a Savannah Sparrow and five Swamp Sparrows. We watched two Red-headed Woodpeckers harvest acorns from a red oak and carry them to a cache in a dead ash tree. Our list of 41 species included a good mix of resident and migrant birds. We will return next October.

Union Meadows, Douglassville, September 27, 2025

By Jay Kline

Migration was in full swing during this walk, where our group of 12 birders were immediately greeted by a Red Breasted Nuthatch and a mixed flock of warblers at the start of the loop. More groups of warblers continued to appear along the first leg of the loop between the fields and vernal pools. Northern Parulas were the most numerous, alongside Magnolia Warblers, Black Throated Green Warblers, and the ever-vocal Common Yellowthroats. A lone American Redstart and a very secretive Chestnut Sided Warbler were also briefly seen. Throughout the walk large groups of migrating Bluejays streamed overhead, the final count reaching nearly 200. As the habitat changed to more wooded paths we encountered a few other interesting species such as Swainson's Thrushes, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, and everyone got great views of a very accommodating Pileated Woodpecker that landed on a tree near the edge of the path. It was a very lively morning, ending with a total species count of 40.

Hopewell Lake Loop, French Creek State Park, October 28, 2025

By Jay Kline

This was our first outing at Hopewell Lake. The weather had gotten cold early this year, but we had 9 birds who braved the windy low 30's morning, with very little sun. Most of the foliage had already fallen by this point. Our first good sightings were from the fishing pier, with Ring Necked Ducks, a Ruddy Duck, Mallards and a lot of Canada Geese. Activity really picked up upon reaching the dam breast, with groups of sparrows moving about the large bushes below it, the highlight of the group being a Fox Sparrow that many got to see. After crossing the dam, the weather began to warm and more birds emerged including Purple Finch foraging among Honeysuckle berries, 3 very skulky Hermit Thrush, and a large flock of Cedar Waxwings. A wrong turn got us off track for a few minutes but did lead to another Fox Sparrow. Everyone was eager to warm up by the end, but we had a modest 34 species despite the initial chilly conditions.

Christmas Bird Counts affected by adverse weather in Berks. The Hamburg count celebrates its 60th anniversary. By Bill Uhrich

Participants in the recent Reading Christmas Bird Count awoke on the morning of Dec. 14 to a glistening winter wonderland of windswept misery.

"The most remarkable thing about the count is that it happened," compiler Lucy Cairns of Wyomissing writes in her message to the counters. "In the seven years since I became compiler, the weather has been variably cold, windy, and rainy, but never so potentially dangerous that I considered cancelling the count — until this year." ...

Continue **reading the full Article at the link below**

<https://www.readingeagle.com/2026/01/28/christmas-bird-counts-affected-by-adverse-weather-in-berks/>

Berks birders find 244 species during 2025 by Russ Hoffman

Gulls at Blue Marsh Lake have been the highlight of the birding year.

The past year was a below average one for bird species seen in Berks County as 244 were documented, which is eight species less than the 25-year average. In addition, only a few rare or unusual birds made an appearance.

The search for new species to be added to the historical account of birds in Berks is what motivates local birders to scour the hinterlands to find and confirm the first record of a bird species. Probably the most unusual happening was the appearance of five white pelicans at Lake Ontelaunee in June.

Continue reading the full Article at the link below

<https://www.readingeagle.com/2026/02/08/berks-birders-find-244-species-during-2025/>



Breneman's Quarry on the sunny afternoon of our field trip.

Photo by Linda Ingram

Winter Waterfowl at E. J. Breneman Quarry – February 21, 2026

By Sue Wolfe

After weeks of single-digit weather and another storm predicted for the following day, this field trip was rescheduled a day earlier to Saturday, which was an absolutely glorious day. Sunshine with a high near 50°F. and no wind brought 32 participants to see a good variety of birds.

The ubiquitous Canada Geese were grouped against the remaining ice at the far end of the quarry, but with scopes provided by BOC members, participants were able to see Pied-billed Grebe, Am. Coot, Mallard, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Redhead, Common & Hooded Mergansers, Gadwall and Ruddy Ducks, even one with a bit of the gorgeous blue bill indicative of the breeding season. A male Canvasback, new to a few birders, was the highlight among the ducks. Keen-eyed birders picked out a Cackling Goose and a rare Greater White-fronted Goose among the many Canadas.

American and Fish Crows and four Common Ravens flew overhead, and a Belted Kingfisher was heard by the creek near the parking lot.

Time to Clean Your Bird Feeders – an update on use and maintenance of feeders

By Todd Underwood

At the December BOC meeting, we had some discussion about the need to clean bird feeders and how often this should be done. I just finished writing a detailed factsheet for the Ornithological Council (a consortium of ornithological societies) about proper use and maintenance of bird feeders. So, this is the perfect time to share some important information with BOC members. The full factsheet includes references to the scientific literature supporting the recommendations for feeder use and cleaning (see Ornithological Council website link below). Here, I share the short version of the formal recommendations with you, although some of them you likely already know.

To keep birds safe while visiting your yard, you should keep cats indoors and protect birds from window collisions. Cats kill billions of birds and small

mammals every year, which is not likely news to avid birders. However, cats are susceptible to avian flu, and the American Veterinary Association recommends keeping them indoors to reduce risks associated with avian flu. This new information might help you convince some cat lovers to keep their pets indoors. Window collisions also kill billions of birds each year, even at your home, so you should take steps to prevent these collisions. Birds see the reflections of habitat and sky in your windows and collide with them accidentally. The easiest way to prevent these collisions is to install screens over windows or to apply a pattern of stickers to your windows. The sticker pattern must be spaced closely enough together (2"x2" on center is ideal), so that the birds can see the whole window. There are many commercial and DIY options available (see American Bird Conservancy website link below). At minimum, treat the windows of your house facing your bird feeder



Todd Underwood with a clean bird feeder!

and monitor the remaining windows for bird collisions. Any windows that receive future collisions should be treated as well.

Bird feeders do transmit diseases, such as salmonellosis and conjunctivitis, or even parasites, such as trichomoniasis. We can still enjoy feeding birds but need to responsibly maintain our feeders to reduce the risk of transmitting disease to the visiting birds. Be sure to use feeders that protect seed from moisture, don't allow the accumulation of feces, and easily come apart for thorough cleaning. The Droll Yankee brand makes an excellent ring-pull tube feeder that comes completely apart without any tools and is almost indestructible from squirrel damage. For seed feeders, empty out any seeds that get wet or appear to have fungal growth. For nectar feeders (spring will eventually arrive!) change the sugar solution daily in hot weather or every 2-3 days in cooler weather to prevent microbial growth. Seed feeders should be cleaned at least once a month, and nectar feeders should be cleaned once a week.

To clean feeders, use a brush and/or sponge to scrub them thoroughly with liquid dish soap and water followed by a 10-minute soak in 10% bleach. Rinse feeders with water and let air dry. Do not clean your feeders in food prep areas, such as your kitchen, due to the risk of cross contamination and getting yourself sick. It is best practice to clean feeders in a laundry room sink or a 5-gallon bucket outside, 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.

You must also practice good personal hygiene while maintaining your feeders. 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 detailed information about proper use and maintenance of your bird feeder, download the Ornithological Council's factsheet or stay tuned for my presentation on feeder maintenance at a BOC meeting in fall 2026.

Relevant Links

American Bird Conservancy's - Solutions for Homes [to prevent bird window collisions]
www.abcbirds.org/strategies/solutions-for-homes/

Ornithological Council's factsheet on Proper Use and Cleaning of Wild Bird Feeders <https://birdnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Bird-Feeder-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Report of the Nominating Committee By Sheila Martin

There being no candidate for President, we proposed at the March 13, 2026 meeting of the BOC that Lucy Cairns and Sheila Martin replace Art Zdancewic and Linda Ingram as co-Vice Presidents for the 2026 – 2027 term.

The following officers and directors will continue to serve in their present roles:

Irene Taylor, Director and Recording Secretary

Lynn Cronomiz, Director and Treasurer

Dan Brennan, Director and Chair of the Outreach Committee, assisted by Susan Wolfe

Dave Hemberger, Director and Chair of the Conservation Committee

Russ Hoffman, Director and Chair of the Field Trip Committee, assisted by Jason Kline and Rudy Keller

Hannah Salvatore, Director and member, with Lynn Cronomiz, of the Communications Committee

Art Zdancewic, stepping down as co-Vice President, will serve as Director and member, with Liz Cates, Sheila Martin and Mike Slater, of the Program Committee

Linda Ingram, Mike Slater, Hillary Chwiecko and Rudy Keller will edit and produce The Distelfink.

Candidates for all elective offices will be confirmed by voice vote of BOC members present at the April 10, 2026 meeting of the BOC at Nolde Forest EEC.

Additional nominations will be accepted from members from the floor of the meeting.

Sustaining Donors of '25-'26

Baird Ornithological Club

gratefully acknowledges our

Sustaining Donors of '25-'26

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Susan Wolfe
Sue Yoder
Deb Yohn
Art Zdancewic
Tory Zimmerman

Baird Ornithological Club, Current Officers and directors

Officers:

Art Zdancewic, Vice President and Programs (2025-2026) art.zdancewic@gmail.com

Linda Ingram, Vice President and Newsletter Coordinator (2025-2026)

lindamingram29@gmail.com

Irene Taylor, Secretary (2025-27) iltaylor@dejazzd.com

Lynn Cronomiz, Treasurer and Communications (2025-2027) Lynsekie@ptd.net

Sheila Martin, Imm. Past President, Director (2025-2027) sheilamartin554@gmail.com

Directors:

Russell Hoffman, also Field Trip Coordinator (2025-28) Russhoff@yahoo.com

Hannah Salvatore, also Membership (2025-28) hannah.salvatore@comcast.net

Dan Brennan, also Outreach (2024-27) dbrennan50@aol.com

David Hemberger, also Conservation (2024-27) dave.hemberger@gmail.com

Charles Coleman, (2025-28) coleman1801@comcast.net

Committee members:

Rudy Keller, Newsletter Editor and Avian Report Compiler for the Summer & Winter Seasons

rckeller@dejazzd.com

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

BOC Membership and Renewal

Payment is for **September BOC 2025 – August 2026**

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

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) Enter the appropriate amount

and click either "Donate with PayPal" or "Donate with Debit or Credit Card".

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 this form and mail it to the address below.

Name(s):

Address:

Email address: _____

Phone # : _____

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.

Send this form with payment to the BOC Treasurer:

Lynn Cronomiz,
100 Frantz Court,
Morgantown PA 19543