



# The Distelfink

## Fall 2026 Newsletter of the Baird Ornithological Club



*A Red-headed Woodpecker at Dreibelbis Farm.  
(see page 14). Photo by Alan Chelius.*

### Contents

|                                                                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Acting Vice-President's Messages By Sheila Martin and Lucy Cairns .....                       | 2  |
| Treasurer's Report by Lynn Cronomiz .....                                                     | 3  |
| Committee Reports.....                                                                        | 3  |
| Communications Committee by Lynn Cronomiz.....                                                | 3  |
| BOC Community Outreach Committee by Dan Brennan .....                                         | 3  |
| Meetings/Programs Fall 2026 - Spring 2027 .....                                               | 4  |
| BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks - Fall 2026 .....                                                | 6  |
| Hooray For the Christmas Bird Count Modernization Project!<br>By Lucy Cairns .....            | 9  |
| Berks County Bird Reports –by Rudy Keller.....                                                | 11 |
| BOC Past Trip Reports .....                                                                   | 12 |
| Hopewell Furnace National Historical Site - Saturday, May 16,<br>2026 by Sheila Martin .....  | 12 |
| Birding Locations around Berks County.....                                                    | 13 |
| Historic Dreibelbis Farm, A Birding Gem with a History by Dan<br>Brennan.....                 | 13 |
| Wiley's Bridge By Jane Wolfe.....                                                             | 15 |
| The Bairds of Newcastle-upon-Tyne Find the "Bairders" of<br>Berks County by Lucy Cairns ..... | 16 |
| ANNUAL BANQUET .....                                                                          | 18 |
| Banquet Auction .....                                                                         | 19 |
| Baird Ornithological Club, Current Officers and directors...                                  | 20 |
| BOC Membership and Renewal.....                                                               | 21 |

## Acting Vice-President's Messages By Sheila Martin and Lucy Cairns

### **"... and now, the hard part ..." by Sheila Martin**

As one-half of BOC's '26-'27 Vice-Presidential duo, I AM proud to be a part of this lively club and the many field trips, programs and conservation collaborations it sponsors annually. Lots of you have heard this "terminal intermediate, late-to-the-game" birder state that for me, birding is exhilarating and peaceful at the same time! It is a fun, engaging, important pastime to be involved in with a company of similarly minded, smart and uplifting friends.

Yet, as July's busy board of directors meeting adjourned, remarks from virtually everyone as the gavel fell were variations on the theme of "already stretched", "burned out", "cannot tack on another year of service", "who else can we call?", "who do we have for succession?" and so on – a sobering but honest view into the hearts and temperaments of those who produce much and put most of it together. Willing volunteers, but work weary indeed.

Speaking as one who has helped guide this club in several roles for 10 years, service has been a complete privilege. The BOC officers and directors have ensured that the club operates well and has a positive community impact year on year. But it is untenable to expect that the same small group of 10-15 committed people can continue to do most of the heavy lifting for a club of more than 100 members.

Over the years, BOC's mission to promote the enjoyment and conservation of birds has attracted many bright, energetic people. We all have life skills that can in some way help further that mission. This issue of The Distelfink presents several opportunities for involvement. Volunteer, or please step up with a yes if asked to contribute.

### **"Don't Miss Out" by Lucy Cairns**

Don't miss out on the rare chance to spend an evening with Scott Weidensaul at the BOC's banquet on November 6! Yes, 'the' Scott Weidensaul—native of Schuylkill County, world-renowned ornithologist and field researcher, author of over 30 books (including Pulitzer Prize finalist *Living on the Wind*), co-founder of Project SNOWSTORM and of the Northeast Motus Collaboration, co-director of Project OwlNet, director of ornithological programs for Audubon's famed Hog Island Center, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary board member, and so much more—will be our banquet speaker this year!

Scott will be speaking about his latest book, *The Return of the Oystercatcher: Saving Birds to Save the Planet* (which you will be able to purchase and have signed by the author at the banquet). Years of reading and traveling the globe went into developing this collection of inspiring stories about successful efforts in bird conservation. This excerpt from the Audubon Magazine review sums it up beautifully: "The book arrives in a dire and fast-changing moment of slashed environmental laws, gutted federal agencies, and government shutdowns that upend critical bird monitoring and conservation. And yet, inspired by the flourishing of state, private, and Tribal-led efforts to protect people and places around the world, Weidensaul still finds hope for birds."

In view of the interest that Scott's presence will generate, this November's banquet will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton in downtown Reading (with free parking in the attached garage). Still, space is limited, so if you have not yet sent your RSVP for the banquet you'd be well advised to do so now.

Berks County / WEEU treasure Jack Holcomb is not able to join us for this event, but his long-time support for the Baird club will continue to be felt as Jack promotes our activities on his Saturday morning radio show, "Jack's Backyard." Jack's importance to the local birding community extends far beyond his radio show,

spanning many decades and including close friendships with a long list of eminent birders and naturalists. Jack will be honored in his (lamented) absence at the banquet.

Speakers for the regular Friday evening club meetings at Nolde EEC have also been secured and will address topics ranging from proper bird feeder maintenance, bird banding, and the collapsing Osprey population in the Chesapeake to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary-- in the form of a showing of the documentary film, *A Sanctuary Year*. Many of the BOC's most popular outings will be available again this year, led by our extraordinary birders, with a few walks in new locations added to the menu. Be sure to mark your calendars now for the selections that spark your interest.

## **Treasurer's Report by Lynn Cronomiz**

We began the fiscal year on September 1, 2025, with a balance of \$8,640.91. This report shows the income and expenses up until July 1, 2026. Our current balance is \$7,933.65. Our largest expenses during this time are for the following donations: \$500 to the Pennsylvania Society For Ornithology; \$250 to Hawk Mt. Sanctuary for the PA Bird Atlas; \$400 to the Friends of Nolde; \$250 to Willistown Conservation Trust. All these donations are important to the club's mission to support conservation and the study of bird habitats. We have also made a \$500 deposit to reserve a room for our upcoming banquet on November 6<sup>th</sup> at the Double Tree Inn in downtown Reading, PA.

## **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**

The Outreach Committee progressed through its first full year of developing, attending and presenting programs at events representing Baird Ornithological Club (BOC). Early spring through May 2026 included challenges of addressing the organization of "Table" events and inviting BOC members to participate in bird related presentations.

Below, Lucy Cairns provides a description of the May 9, 2026 event with Berks Nature, a plan for a May 1, 2027 bird walk/talk, and an advanced eBirding program with Berks Nature.

"Chirp and Chat" was the title given by Berks Nature to a well-attended Saturday morning event on May 9th of this year. Similar to "Breakfast with Baird" in 2023, the event combined small-group bird walks with talks from several Baird Club leaders and opportunities for relaxed socializing over light breakfast fare. The 20 participants were introduced to the basics of using binoculars and bird walk etiquette before dividing up and heading out into the rich habitat around The Nature Place. As birds were encountered and identified, our guides focused attention on the behavior and habitat in an attempt to understand what needs each bird was trying to fulfill. No guessing was needed when a sharp-eyed birder spotted a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher sitting on its dainty nest on a branch directly above our path! The gnatcatcher nest, secured by a webbing of spider silk and embellished with appliques of ruffled, gray-green lichen, looked like the creation of a forest fairy. Back inside after the walk, observations were shared and the event concluded with several additional informative talks from BOC leaders.

Looking ahead to 2027, the BOC has agreed to work with Berks Nature to repeat the breakfast with walk & talk format on Saturday, May 1st – so please save the date! Also, in the works with this valued community partner are an

advanced eBirding program and a workshop on window treatments to reduce bird collisions, with dates to be announced.

Sue Wolfe came across information that provided background towards reaching out to our youth, titled *Gen Z: A New Flock of Birders*. Research by the United States Fish and Wildlife Services shows that Gen Z, age 14 to 29 years old, is using social media and/or electronics to get involved in birding!

It may be the perfect time for our BOC Community Outreach Committee to hold a workshop to train volunteers to help BOC fulfill its mission of public education about birds and the environment.

Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center is partnering with BOC to hold a workshop sharing Nolde resources for “tabling” at community, historical and environmental events, fairs, libraries and anywhere birds and nature are the focus.

Our goal is to train a group of volunteers to use Nolde resources—eggs, feathers, nests, visual artwork, etc. - that they are graciously willing to share to spark an interest in birds. There may also be activities for children. There are usually two people at an event, and tabling display materials will be in place. BOC handouts and brochures from other environmental organizations will be available for distribution.

The workshop will be held at the Nolde Forest EEC Education Building on Saturday, March 27 from 9 am to 1 pm. The date is a few months away, but please consider joining this worthwhile effort to share your love of birds with others in time for spring migration. The birds and environment truly need our help and the fact that a new generation is interested is truly encouraging. If you are interested in this effort, additional information will be posted on the BOC website.

We again expect BOC to be represented at World Migratory Bird Day in May 2027 as well as other events where we are invited to participate, provided that we have enough volunteers.

Members of the Outreach Committee are Lucy Cairns, [ljanetcairns@gmail.com](mailto:ljanetcairns@gmail.com), Sue Wolfe, [susanwolfe2012@hotmail.com](mailto:susanwolfe2012@hotmail.com), and Dan Brennan, [dbrennan50@aol.com](mailto:dbrennan50@aol.com). If you would like to learn more, volunteer or join any aspect of the Outreach Committee, please contact any of us.

## **Meetings/Programs Fall 2026 - Spring 2027**

Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the second Friday of the month in McConnell Hall at Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center, except for the January and February meetings, which are held via Zoom only.

### **Friday, September 11, 2026 (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC**

#### **“Bird Feeder Hygiene 101: how to keep birds safe at your feeders”**

Dr. Todd Underwood is a professor of biology at Kutztown University, where he teaches courses like ornithology and animal behavior. His research focuses on bird behavior and ecology. He is currently documenting the dragonflies and damselflies of Berks County. This talk will focus on diseases that can be transmitted at feeders and the latest research on effective cleaning techniques to prevent the transmission of these diseases to visiting birds.

### **Friday, October 9, 2026 (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC**

#### **“Hummingbirds I Have Banded”**

Sandy Lockerman is Pennsylvania’s most active licensed hummingbird bander. She has banded hundreds of hummingbirds, including a few western species here in Berks County. Sandy’s adventures will give us insight into the value of banding and the banding world.

**Friday, November 6, 2026 BOC Banquet at Reading Doubletree Hotel**

**Scott Weidensaul, world renowned author and birder**, will give a presentation based on his latest book, **"The Return of the Oystercatcher"**. See the banquet reservation form in this issue for details. . ***(Note this is the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month)***

**Friday, December 11, 2026 (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC**

**Joint Meeting with Mengel Natural History Society**

**"Birds and Other Nature, Near and Far"**

Armas Hill, retired nature guide for Focus on Nature Tours, was the voice of the Philadelphia Birding Hotline, a weekly telephone recording of noteworthy bird sightings that preceded eBird rare bird alerts and the internet birding listservs of the 1990's. He will have many interesting birding and nature stories to tell.

**Friday, January 8, 2027 (Zoom only)**

**"A Sanctuary Year at Hawk Mountain"**

Todd Bauman, Director of Stewardship, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary

This acclaimed and locally produced movie follows Todd's personal journey through the seasons as sanctuary steward. It captures the beauty of the sanctuary, relates its history and shows how its community of staff and volunteers contributes to the work it accomplishes.

**Friday, February 12, 2027 (Zoom only)**

**"Ospreys and Menhaden"**

Michael Academia's thesis research, conducted in Mobjack Bay, revealed that when Ospreys have access to an adequate supply of menhaden, their breeding success significantly improves. This highlights the urgent need to maintain sustainable menhaden populations for the sake of fisheries and to maintain biological balance.

**Friday, March 12, 2027 (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC**

**"Bringing Back the Purple Martin"**

Will Krohn, avian ecologist and graduate student at the University of Delaware, studies how young Purple Martins move between and select colonies for nesting. We will learn about Purple Martin life history and how recent conservation efforts are helping reverse their decline of 38% since 1970.

**Friday, April 9, 2027 (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC**

**"Philly Pigeon Tours"**

Aspen Simone and Hannah Michelle ("HM") Brower will cover ten thousand years of pigeon history, starting with their domestication followed by a long period of positive relationships that lasted through the 1960's, when people began to turn on the birds. What happened? They will talk about how our future relationship with our closest bird neighbors could be different, and why they think empathy for pigeons is surprisingly crucial during this moment in history.

**Friday, May 14, 2027, at 4 PM (in person only) at Nolde Forest EEC**

**BOC and Mengel NHS Meeting and Social Event**

***Note the early starting time.***

Join members and guests at this indoor and outdoor 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 Comm. Will display

educational material they use to introduce BOC to other organizations. Drinks, sandwiches and other light fare will be provided.

Registration is required by May 10, 2027.

Contact Liz Cates, [lizcates834@gmail.com](mailto:lizcates834@gmail.com) with the number of people in your party.

## BOC Field Trips & Bird Walks - Fall 2026

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

**The BOC will coordinate birding outings again this year,  
beginning in September, 2026 and continuing through May, 2027.**

Please direct any questions about a walk to the coordinator of that walk. If weather is a concern, check the BOC website or contact the coordinator for updates.

**“Flash Walks”** may be scheduled on short notice when conditions warrant and will be announced to members via email and the BOC website.

### **September 1, 2026 (Tuesday) - Berks County Parks, Angora Fruit Farm - 8 AM**

The target bird is the scarce Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, which has consistently been seen here the last few years. Also possible are two other flycatchers, Least and Olive-sided. Fall warblers, especially Cape May, will likely be seen. **Location: Angora Fruit Farm, Berks County Parks & Recreation, Angora Rd, Reading, PA 19606, GPS 40.3624, -75.8839.** Directions: Route 12 to Spring Valley Rd. exit. Turn right, go a short distance to McKnight's Gap Rd. on left. Follow this road uphill and down the other side to stop sign and make a right onto Angora Rd. In a short distance there is a park sign and entrance lane to the left. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

### **September 5, 2026 (Saturday) - Wyomissing Park – 8 AM**

With the Wyomissing Creek at its center, the Wyomissing Park offers a rich riparian habitat, along with a series of meadows and small wooded areas. Warbling Vireos and Baltimore Orioles are among the common birds here. A trail of 27 E. Bluebird boxes hosts Tree Swallows, Carolina Chickadees and House Wrens in addition to E. Bluebirds. The trails are gravel and level or paved. No public restrooms are available.

**Location is called “Wyomissing Creek Parking” in Google Maps.** Directions: From Penn Ave., West Reading, turn onto 5<sup>th</sup> Ave., which becomes Museum Rd. Turn right at the traffic light onto Old Mill Rd. and drive to the gravel parking lot on the left between Parkside Dr. South and Evans Ave..

(Thank you! To the Borough of Wyomissing Parks & Rec Dept. for co-sponsoring this event!)

Coordinator: Lucy Cairns, 610-223-4501.

### **September 8, 2026 (Tuesday) - Green Hills Preserve - 8 AM**

Grassland and edge habitat make this a great place to find a variety of local breeders and early fall migrants. We will explore the newly made trail to the gazebo. The trails are mowed grass with a few slight inclines.

**Location: 553 Gunhart Rd., Mohnton, PA.** Directions: Take Rt. 10 south past Penske Complex to Rt. 568. Turn right and go a short distance to right on Gunhart Rd. The Preserve sign and parking will be on the right.

Coordinator: Art Zdancewic 610-858-3315.

**September 12, 2026 (Saturday) - Berks County Parks, Grings Mill and Trails - 8 AM**

Walk upstream along the Tulpehocken Creek on an easily traversed path in search of residents and migrants that use this riparian corridor in the fall. Local Bald Eagles and migrant Ospreys are possible. This year's broods of nesting Wood Ducks should be seen.

**Location:** 2083 Tulpehocken Rd, Reading, PA 19610. Directions: East on Broadcasting Rd in Wyomissing to dead end at Tulpehocken Rd. Turn right and go ½ mile to park entrance on left. Coordinator Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

**September 15, 2026 (Tuesday) - Route 183 Hawkwatch Site - 8 AM**

Broad-winged Hawks, Ospreys, Bald Eagles, Falcons possible.

This long-known hawkwatch site has recently received regular monitoring via Hawk Mt. Sanctuary. Broad-winged Hawks are at peak migration in mid-September. Parking at the site is very limited. Carpooling is available and strongly recommended. Meet at Sheidy Boat Launch, aka Blue Marsh North Boat Launch, located on Rte. 183 a short distance after passing Old Church Rd. **GPS Location:** 40.4126, -76.0865. The hawkwatch site is located on top of the Kittatinny Ridge. If going on your own, take Rte. 183 north 3.1 miles past the intersection of I-78 and Rte. 183. A left turn lane at the top of the ridge will allow you to access the very small and uneven parking area at the PA Game Commission gate. **Watch out for fast traffic.** Bring a lawn chair and water. Location: Appalachian Trailhead Rte. 183. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman, 484-794-7053.

**September 16, 2026 (Wednesday) Blue Marsh Lake, State Hill Boat Launch Hawkwatch – 9 AM – 4 PM**

A variety of raptors may be seen at this time of year, sometimes passing at eye level, affording close-up looks. Show up anytime during the day. Bring a folding chair, food and water as desired.

Directions: Take State Hill Rd. to dead end at Brownsville Rd. Left ½ mile to State Hill Boat Launch entrance on right. Park on right at top of hill. **Location:** 585 Brownsville Rd., Sinking Spring, PA 19608.

Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

**September 19, 2026 (Saturday) - Mt. Penn Pagoda Hawkwatch - 8 AM - 2 PM**

Enjoy the beautiful view of the city while scanning for migrating raptors.

**Location:** 98 Duryea Dr, Reading, PA 19602. Directions: Meet at the Pagoda on Mt. Penn. Take Walnut St. in Reading uphill to first right after 13<sup>th</sup> St. Follow winding road to top at the Pagoda.

Coordinator: Russ Hoffman 484-794-7053.

**September 22, 2026 (Tuesday) - Hay Creek Watershed, Birdsboro end - 8 AM**

We will meet at the large parking area at the north end of the closed section of Rt. 83 and use the newly constructed footbridge to access the birding trails. This long-time favorite birding spot has an impressive list of birds at all times of the year. **Location:** The name is "Hay Creek Parking Lot" in Google maps. Directions: From the traffic light on Rte. 724 in Birdsboro, follow Furnace St. two miles to its end at the large parking area.

Coordinator: Jay Kline, 610-858-5130.

**September 26, 2026 (Saturday) – Blue Marsh L., Skinner's Loop - 8 AM**

This site at the edge of Blue Marsh L. features a mixture of open fields, woodland and riparian habitats. The walk is approximately 3 miles on mostly level terrain. The fall songbird migration should bring a diversity of species to these varied habitats. **Location:** called "Blue Marsh Lake Rd Parking" in Google Maps. Directions: Take Rte. 183 north and turn left on Old Church Rd. Cross the bridge and make the first left onto Lake Rd. Go approximately one mi. to the parking area. Coordinator: Liz Cates, 610-926-3206.

**September 29, 2026 (Tuesday) - Union Meadows Park - East- 8 AM**

An easy walk, about a mile in length, through varied habitats which often yield surprises. Connecticut Warblers and Lincoln's Sparrows are two possibilities, along with other fall migrants. Meet at Union Meadows East parking area. **Location: 100 Campell Ford Rd., Douglassville, PA 19518.** From Birdsboro, take Rte. 724 east 2 miles to park sign on left, just past Fork and Ale Restaurant. Coordinator: Jay Kline, 610-858-5130.

**September 30, 2026 (Wednesday) - Bombay Hook Natl. Wildlife Refuge - 9 AM**

Meet at the refuge headquarters visitor center. This refuge is known for getting good looks at shorebirds feeding on the mudflats. When conditions are optimal, thousands of migrating birds, including waterfowl and herons, use this refuge as a stopover on their journeys. **Location: Bombay Hook NWR, 2591 Whitehall Neck Rd., Smyrna, DE 19577.** Coordinator: Art Zdancewic, 610-858-3315.

**October 6, 2026 (Tuesday) - North Park, Kutztown - 8 AM**

A walk along the Sacony Creek to look for late fall warblers, early sparrows and kinglets. You will learn about the ongoing habitat restoration efforts in the park. If time permits, we may also walk the nearby Sacony Creek Trail. Location: Meet in the parking lot at North Park off Krumsville Rd. (Rt. 737), just north of Kutztown. **Location: Called "North Park" in Google Maps.** Go north on Krumsville Rd. (Route 737) from Kutztown and turn left immediately after passing Eagle Point Rd. on the right. The park entrance road is not marked. It will seem like you are turning into a business parking lot. Go straight over a small bridge (park sign at bridge) crossing the Sacony Creek and park in the gravel lot on the right. Coordinator: Dr. Todd Underwood, 610-301-4284.

**October 10, 2026 (Saturday) - Dreibelbis Farm - 8 AM**

This site has become popular with BOC members wanting to see Red-headed Woodpeckers, which have been nesting here recently. It is also a good place to see a variety of sparrows in the fall. The farm is a historically significant part of Berks County's past. **Location: 356 Hard Hill Rd, Hamburg, PA.** Directions: Take Rte. 222 north to the roundabout at Moselem Springs. Turn left on Rte. 662, go about a mile and make a right on Rte. 143. Travel 1.6 miles and look for the small farm sign on the left. There is a narrow country lane to the parking area. Coordinator: Dan Brennan, 484-336-0455.

**October 13, 2026 (Tuesday) - Blue Marsh L. State Hill Hawkwatch - 9 AM - 3 PM**

A variety of falcons, accipiters and buteos may pass by this location during October. Stop by any time during the day. Bring a lawn chair and snacks if desired. **Location: 585 Brownsville Rd., Sinking Spring, PA 19608.** Coordinator: Russ Hoffman, 484-794-7053.

**October 17, 2026 (Saturday) - Mt. Penn Pagoda Hawk Watch - 9 AM - 2 PM**

Almost any species of raptor might be seen from this lookout overlooking the city. Birders will be present to ID the birds that pass by. Come any time of the day and stay as long as desired. **Location: 98 Duryea Dr., Reading, PA 19602.** Coordinator: Bill Uhrich 610-698-1575

**October 20, 2026 (Tuesday) - Kernsville Dam and Recreation Area - 8 AM**

An easy walk through a wetland, woodland, and along the Schuylkill River, a significant migration corridor. Almost any seasonally appropriate species can be seen here at this time of year. Directions: **Location: "John Bartram Trail – trailhead" in google maps.** Take Rte. 61 north to Hamburg to the traffic light at Cabela's. Turn right on Jetson Dr. and then right onto Industrial Dr. Go one mile and turn left on Kernsville Dam Rd. to large parking area. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman, 484-794-7053.

**October 24, 2026 (Saturday) - Exeter Scenic River Trail, Gibraltar end - 8 AM**

This site is being developed as a recreational area by Schuylkill River Greenways. From the parking area we will walk upstream looking for fall migrants moving along the river corridor. This area has a nesting colony of Great

Blue Herons visible in spring and a pair of nesting Bald Eagles which may be seen. **Location: 1018 Gibraltar Rd, Birdsboro, PA 19508.** Directions: Access Gibraltar Rd. from Rte. 422 or Rte. 724 in Exeter and look for the parking area next to the bridge over the river. Coordinator: Russ Hoffman, 484-794-7053.

**October 25, 2026 (Sunday) - Lake Ontelaunee - 12 NOON**

A Sunday outing to avoid hunters that use the area in the fall. Meet at the dam breast on Rte. 73 and carpool to the various areas around the lake in search of waterfowl and other fall migrants. **Directions: From Rte. 61 in Leesport or from Rte. 222, travel on Rte. 73 to the parking lot at the dam breast.** Coordinator: Rudy Keller, 484-336-4155.

**October 27, 2026 (Tuesday) - French Creek State Park at Hopewell Lake - 8 AM**

We will walk along the southern edge of Hopewell Lake through the picnic area and bordering woods. Late migrants, waterfowl, and early winter birds are possible. **Location: "French Creek Hopewell Boat Launch" in Google Maps.** Directions: From Birdsboro take Rte. 345 south and turn right onto Park Rd. at the Hopewell Lake sign. Coordinator: Jay Kline, 610-858-5130.

**October 31, 2026 (Saturday) - Blue Marsh L. Stilling Basin - 8 AM**

This walk will go to Blue Marsh L. to see waterfowl and the Tulpehocken Creek to find late fall migrants. **Location: 1280 Palisades Dr., Leesport, PA.** Directions: Look for the Stilling Basin entrance sign along Palisades Dr. and drive to the parking lot at the dam. Coordinator: Liz Cates, 610-926-3206.

## Hooray For the Christmas Bird Count Modernization Project! By Lucy Cairns

Denise Muller, Holly Armbruster, and Chris Ryan dressed for the weather on Dec. 14, 2025



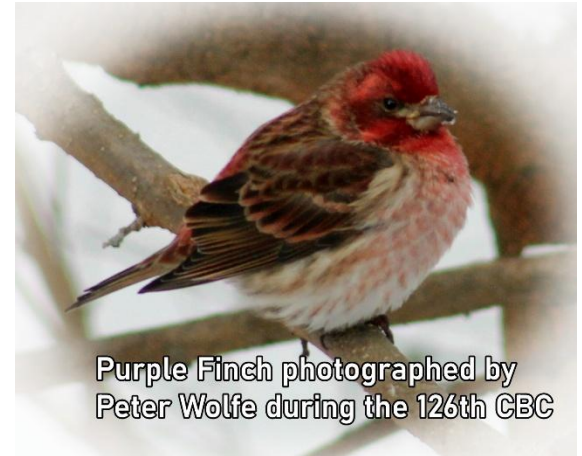
In 1900, Frank Chapman – an early officer of the Audubon Society – proposed an annual winter bird census as an alternative to the tradition of the Christmas “Side Hunt.” The “Side Hunt” consisted of groups of hunters spending the day competing to see who could return with the largest pile of fur and feathers. Over the past 126 years, the CBC has grown to include teams of birders throughout North America and is growing in popularity in Central and South America. The data amassed has proved hugely valuable in guiding bird conservation practices

For decades, the Christmas Bird Count process has been making do with disjointed and outdated systems – including a taxonomy frozen in the past. Lack of resources hobbled the Audubon CBC staff. Then, in 2025, the modernization process started rolling with some beta testing, and this year it is taking a leap into the 21<sup>st</sup> century! The new platform will sync with current bird taxonomy, offer multiple data entry pathways (including eBird importing), multilingual support (English, Spanish, and French), and a centralized participant management feature.

Access to CBC results is also receiving a huge upgrade in the form of a single, comprehensive platform where anyone can visualize, explore, and download CBC data. This platform is currently in the design phase. I am eagerly looking forward to the feature that will automatically generate unofficial count-day summaries while the results are still fresh and exciting. The ability to more easily see trends and analyze local data will lead to a better understanding of what is happening with our winter birds.

This year will be my 8<sup>th</sup> serving as compiler for the Reading CBC. The responsibilities of a compiler include:

- recruiting and organizing participants
- ensuring that all who participate follow the CBC protocols that enable valid statistical analysis of the results
- collecting, compiling, and reporting local data to Audubon
- making a summary of local observations, presented in the context of past results, available to the local birding community and local media outlets



It's a lot for one individual to take care of! To ease the burden on compilers, the Audubon CBC modernization team is recommending a division of labor between the compiler and a new role: a Community Engagement Leader (CEL). The CEL would take over promoting support for the CBC, the recruitment and organization of volunteers, and the distribution of annual reminders and updates regarding protocols to all participants.

This year I would like to begin serving as the CEL for the Reading CBC and have someone more fluent in the language of 'spreadsheet' take on the data collection and reporting. Audubon is providing ample opportunities for training on the new platform, with a series of technical training webinars beginning in September (recordings will be available) as well as its usual pre-season webinars for both compilers and participants in October and November. *If working with data is your happy place, and you would consider joining me in leading the Reading CBC, I am waiting to hear from you.*

I urge all BOC members to support the CBC through donating any amount to Audubon at <https://act.audubon.org/a/donate>. This invaluable project depends 100% on your tax-deductible contributions. Support can also come in the form of doing a count at your feeder on count day, which will be December 20 this year for the Reading circle. Your feeder must be located within the circle you will report to, and registration with the compiler in advance of count day is required.

As important as feeder counts and financial support are, the true success of a Christmas Bird Count depends on the valiant efforts of volunteers who spend the day in the field finding, identifying, and counting birds. New volunteers are needed every year to keep our teams strong, and birders of all experience levels are welcomed with open arms. Every set of eyes and ears translates into additional birds found, and for beginner birders the CBC is an intensive tutorial by the more expert birders on their team. To find the CBC circle closest to you, go to the CBC website at: <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count/join-christmas-bird-count> and click on the link to the interactive map of all CBC circles.

If you could use a break from life's stressors, come into the peace of wild things for a day of birding with a CBC team. You will learn to look forward to it every year, as I have. (Lucy Cairns)

To volunteer for the 127<sup>th</sup> CBC, contact the compiler of your choice:

**December 18 (Friday)** Elverson Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Jim Cook [jim@elversonsupply.net](mailto:jim@elversonsupply.net)

**December 20, 2026 (Sunday)** Reading Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Lucy Cairns [ljanetcairns@gmail.com](mailto:ljanetcairns@gmail.com)

**December 27, 2026 (Sunday)** Hamburg Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Laurie Goodrich [goodrich@hawkmountain.org](mailto:goodrich@hawkmountain.org)

**January 2, 2027 (Saturday)** Bernville Christmas Bird Count

Compiler: Mike Slater [paplantings@gmail.com](mailto:paplantings@gmail.com)

**Berks  
County  
Bird  
Reports –  
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.***

## BOC Past Trip Reports

### Hopewell Furnace National Historical Site - Saturday, May 16, 2026 by Sheila Martin



This is the fourth year in a row that BOC convened way down in southern Berks in reliably warm late spring weather for species rich birding at this very interesting national park, right here in our midst. What we've never been able to predict are the contrasting – and yes, downright competing – special events staged by the national park itself, on the same day! We've seen sheep shearing twice & charcoal/collier demonstrations four times. In '26, a regional triathlon had our group of 13 smiling, cheering, stepping off pathways as

needed and being generally on our best outdoors behavior while we walked along in a parallel birding universe, checking off a total of 54 species. At least that many swimmers, bikers and joggers were on the multi-use trails too.

After modestly seeing to the logistics of arrival and warmly welcoming attendees, I turned over the walk leader reins to Jason Kline. We once again found that merely lingering in the parking lot was excitingly productive as birds flew in.

Highlights along the walk included a Broad-winged Hawk in flight, carrying leaves presumably for its nest, Eastern Wood-Pewee, both Yellow-throated & Red-eyed Vireos, White-breasted Nuthatch, Baltimore Oriole, and a Spotted Sandpiper at Hopewell Lake flying toward the dam. Jason's numerous quality photographs, several of which are shown here, were posted on his shared eBird report.



*Above left a Baltimore Oriole and on the right an Eastern Pewee.  
Photos by Jay Kline.*

## Birding Locations around Berks County

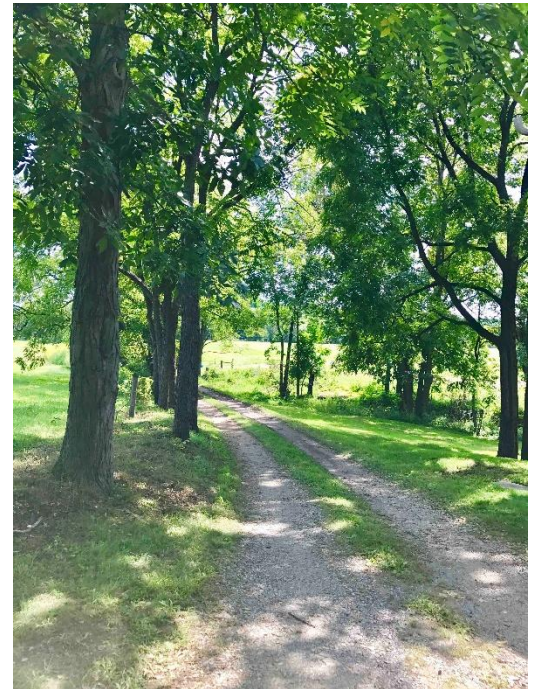


### ***Historic Dreibelbis Farm, A Birding Gem with a History by Dan Brennan***

One of the more recent BOC birding locations is the ***Historic Dreibelbis Farm*** located in Richmond Township. Just outside Virginville. The farm, founded in 1778, is the second oldest continuously family-owned farm in Berks

*The 1868 farmhouse (above) and the tree lined entry lane of Dreibelbis Farm (below right). Photo by Alan Chelius*

County. It is a preserved 180-acre farm bordering Maiden Creek. Nearby areas along Maiden Creek were home to one of the largest Native American villages within Berks County and included intersecting native Indian trails used for trading.



The current brick house was built in 1868 and holds undisturbed household contents which are on display to the public during the farm's annual festival held on the fourth Saturday in August. In

*(left)*

***A tree Swallow arriving at its nest at Dreibelbis Farm.***

***Photo by Alan Chelius***

addition to a large bank barn, there is a summer house, ice house, chicken coop and other outbuildings.

The current wildlife habitat of the farm includes organic farmland, swampland, a small pond which attracts waterfowl and amphibians, grassland, hedgerows, tree lines, mature oak, hickory, maple, sycamore and several other tree species as well as dead ash trees. Farm lanes, an old railroad bed, and pathways are throughout.

When owner Mark Dreiblebis was approached in 2024 by a BOC member regarding the possibility of holding a bird walk that June, he welcomed the request. The initial walk resulted in 50 species being identified. Subsequent springtime walks were nearly as productive. The fall walk last year produced 41 species, which included 7 species of sparrows and 4 species of woodpeckers, including the Red-Headed Woodpeckers which have become year-round residents at the farm.

Walks have included “ordinary” species such as Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, Tree and Barn Swallows, Gray Catbirds, Song Sparrows, Carolina Wrens and somewhat surprisingly, N. Flickers.

The Maiden Creek has been home to Wood Ducks, Green Herons, Spotted Sandpiper, and Great Blue Herons. Overhead we have observed Turkey and Black Vultures, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Cooper’s Hawks, Ospreys, Am. Kestrels (which utilize a nest box), Common Ravens and American Crows.

Each walk has resulted in a wide variety of bird species. The Historic Dreiblebis farm and its bird habitat has indeed been a “Gem”! BOC is thankful and looks forward to continuing the relationship that provides this opportunity.



*A Great Crested Flycatcher at Dreiblebis Farm.  
Photo by Alan Chelius*



*Looking up the Maiden Creek from Wiley's Bridge Photo by Peter Wolfe*

## Wiley's Bridge By Jane Wolfe

Have you ever been to Wiley's Bridge? Travel down the dirt road along the Maiden Creek from Lake Ontelaunee dam, past Quinta Las Cabanas (formerly Blue Falls Grove), to the parking lot beside the creek. There you will see an historic truss bridge built in 1883. You have reached Wiley's Bridge. The best part is that the bridge is closed to automobile traffic, but open for pedestrians.

From the bridge a birder can see the dam at Quinta Las Cabanas or look downstream along the Maiden Creek. We love to see a Spotted Sandpiper bobbing its way among the rocks along the shore. Ducks, geese, and herons are commonly found

here. In July of 2026, a uncommon adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was seen happily hunting crayfish in the shallow water.

Since the area is part of the Lake Ontelaunee watershed, the natural environment provides habitat for local and migratory birds. We often see and hear a resident Pileated Woodpecker. Summer residents that we have found include Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Eastern Warbling Vireo.



*A male N. Pintail (above left) and an adult Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (above right)  
Photos by Peter Wolfe*

Tree, N. Rough-winged and Barn Swallows hawk along the creek. They can easily be identified when they perch on overhead wires.

This can be a fun and successful addition to your birding destinations. If you log your birds on eBird, please use the specific hotspot.

## The Bairds of Newcastle-upon-Tyne Find the “Bairders” of Berks County by Lucy Cairns

BOC members who were active in the club in our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of 2021 may recall how the effort of a person in Berks County to report a Bald Eagle sighting led to a connection between our club and the BOC of the UK. The eagle report ended up in the inbox of Robert Godden, secretary of the Berkshire Ornithological Club in the Royal County of Berkshire, UK. Robert knew very well that a Bald Eagle sighting in the UK was vanishingly unlikely, so he did some online digging, discovered a second BOC bird club located where Bald Eagles are *not* a rarity, and began a correspondence with us.

Early this summer, the Baird Club gained a second UK connection--this one based on the Baird name rather than our club acronym. Jessica Baird, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (the northernmost city in England, bordered by Scotland to the north and the North Sea to the east), found our club while searching online for birthday gifts for her husband. Jess explained that her husband, Adam, is an avid birder whose current job is working for the National Trust as a Seabird Protection Officer. When they married just a few years ago, Adam's passion for all things bird/Baird led him to take Jessica's surname! She asked if we might be able to send her a club patch or other item bearing the Baird Club name. By chance, our June Board of Directors meeting took place just a few days later, and the request received prompt and enthusiastic approval from the board.

I leapt at the chance to put together some birthday offerings and set to unearthing all the Baird-related items I had squirreled away over the years. The final collection included: a BOC ball cap and sun-protection shirt, a window cling, two BOC business cards, our brochure listing trips and programs for the past year, the marvelous piece on BOC history that Bill Uhrich composed for our anniversary banquet in 2021, and a print-out of the Reading Eagle story about the ceremony for the unveiling of the replacement historical marker for Spencer Baird's birthplace in Reading.

These items were launched across the Atlantic on June 12, and Jessica received them just 5 days later, in plenty of time to serve as a birthday surprise for her husband! In thanking the BOC for these items, Jess asked how she could repay us. I suggested supporting our club through membership, and soon Adam Baird became a sustaining member of the BOC!

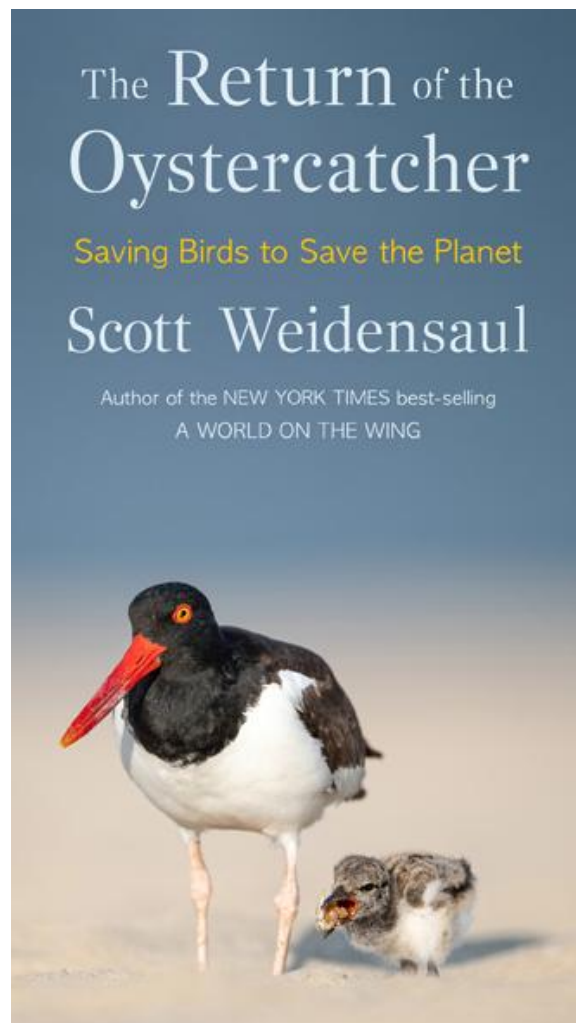
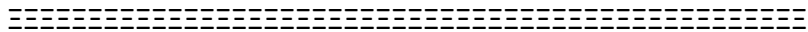
Adam sent his own thank-you a week or two later, in the form of a short video taken at his current office ('the warden's hut') at Long Nanny, an important nesting site for Arctic and Little Terns on the North Sea coast about 45 miles north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Its name derives from the small river whose estuary is included in the site, along with the surrounding wetlands and dunes. Adam explained that he became aware of Spencer Baird's importance when he became curious as to the story behind the naming of Baird's Sparrow and 'went down a bit of a rabbit hole.'

Adam is part of a National Trust team which protects nesting seabirds on the Farne Islands archipelago (just offshore of the Long Nanny site) in addition to the coastal tern colony. Adam described the Farne Islands as "one of the best seabird destinations in the whole of Europe – it's just phenomenal!" According to [birdingplaces.eu](http://birdingplaces.eu), among the approximately 200,000 seabirds that breed on these islands are 36,000 pairs of Atlantic Puffins and large numbers of Razorbills, Common Guillemots, European Shags, Kittiwakes, Common Eider, and Sandwich, Arctic, and Common Terns.

The celebrity bird of the Long Nanny tern colony is an American Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) which has been returning since 2020. It is the only adult of its species ever recorded in the UK. Black Terns stand out from other terns by virtue of their black head and body, with contrasting gray back and wings, and by including insects in their diet. It is a beauty of a bird!

At first this vagrant was christened 'Nigel,' but when the bird laid 3 eggs in 2024 a quick pivot to 'Nigella' was made! Nigella mated with an Arctic Tern this year, producing the first known hybrid chick of this kind. Sadly, the chick did not survive long, an outcome that was attributed to the fish-exclusive diet provided by the Arctic Tern father.

Adam is a ringer (UK-speak for bird bander), and has promised to keep us informed of any other unusual birds that come to his attention. He has joined the BOC Facebook group as one line of communication, and we can hope that someday before too long he and Jess will pay us a visit here to join in some Berks County birding. In the meantime, a heartfelt THANK YOU! to Jess for reaching out to us and to Adam for all he does for bird conservation – a cause which unites people across all the wide ocean.



# Baird Ornithological Club

**ANNUAL BANQUET** *held jointly with* MENGEL NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## *An Evening with Scott Weidensaul, Keynote Speaker*

*Friday November 6, 2026 - 5:30pm – 9:00pm*

**Scott Weidensaul**

*Best Selling Author*

*Presents:*

### **“The Return of the Oystercatcher”**

- ❖ Pulitzer Prize finalist “Living on the Wind”
  - ❖ And New York Times bestseller “A World on the Wing.” Plus many more.
  - ❖ Fellow of the American Ornithological Society
- Despite the challenges facing birds and our planet, there is reason for hope. In “The Return of the Oystercatcher”, best-selling author and researcher Scott Weidensaul shares inspiring stories of bird conservation successes from around the world. From restoring endangered seabirds in Hawai‘i, to protecting critical migratory habitats in Canada, these efforts demonstrate the remarkable resilience of birds and the people working to save them. Join Scott as he explores how creating a world that works for birds ultimately benefits us all—a message of optimism we can all embrace.



**Location: Doubletree by Hilton Hotel Reading, 701 Penn St. , Reading, PA 19601**

**5:30 pm** – Arrival - **FREE Parking in attached garage** | Meet & Mingle | Books for purchase and author signing  
**6:15 pm** – Banquet, Choice of Entrée, select below: Gremolata Salmon; French-Cut Chicken; or Vegan Salisbury Steak; “Gluten-Free,” Modifications Ok; house salad, dessert, soft drinks, coffee, tea, included. **Cash Bar**  
**Later** – Remarks and Keynote Speaker

**Cost: \$45.00 per person**

**Reservation Deadline is Friday, October 23, 2026**

Pay online at: <https://bairdornithological.club/boc-banquet-registration> | Or by check payable to BOC

If paying by check, send payment with this coupon to: **Lynn Cronomiz, 100 Frantz Ct., Morgantown, PA 19543**

*Questions? Call the Committee at 610-858-6005*

Names(s) attending: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Enter the number of Entrees to the left

|                                                                                   |  |                                                                            |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Gremolata Salmon (lemon herb garlic sauce w/oregano roma tomatoes & polenta cake) |  | French-Cut Chicken (artichoke & red pepper pesto w/ vegetable chaufa rice) |  |
| Vegan Salisbury Steak (olive oil mashed potatoes w/ seasonal vegetables)          |  | Check here for Gluten Free (write in your rerequests below)                |  |

## Banquet Auction

# A Gift of Birds, Art & Community

Dr. Alan and Mrs. Fran Chelius are donating **beautiful bird photographs and a one-of-a-kind quilt** to be auctioned at our November Banquet. Recently retired as a Family Practice Physician with Tower Health Family Medicine in Exeter, Alan joined the Baird Ornithological Club three years ago and enjoys participating in our bird walks. His passion for birding began in eighth grade after listening to Jack Holcomb's, "***Jack's Backyard***" radio program. Now retired, Alan and Fran enjoy birding together, especially at their second home in the Poconos. Alan captures his stunning photographs with a Nikon Z8 and 600 or 800-mm lens, using ON1 Photo RAW software to enhance his images. Fran's passion for computerized quilting brings Alan's photography to life in a unique quilt featuring many of his bird photographs. These works of art would make great holiday gifts. **We are deeply grateful to Alan and Fran for sharing their talents and giving back to our BOC community through these generous donations.**



*Barred Owls as a 16 x 20 Canvas Print*

In addition to the photographs shown here, there will be 2 additional canvas prints, three 8 x 10 images matted and presented in 11 x 14 frames, seven 8 x 10 photographs presented on 11 x 14 mattes. All proceeds will be donated to the Baird Ornithological Club.



*Reflecting Great Blue Heron as a 20 x 30 Canvas Print*

## Baird Ornithological Club, Current Officers and directors

### Officers:

**Sheila Martin**, Vice President (2026-27) and Banquet [sheilamartin554@gmail.com](mailto:sheilamartin554@gmail.com)

**Lucy Cairns**, Vice President (2026-27) and Community Outreach [ljanetcairns@gmail.com](mailto:ljanetcairns@gmail.com)

**Irene Taylor**, Secretary (2025-27) [irenetaylor625@gmail.com](mailto:irenetaylor625@gmail.com)

**Lynn Cronomiz**, Treasurer and Communications (2025-27) [Lynsekie@ptd.net](mailto:Lynsekie@ptd.net)

### Directors:

**Hannah Salvatore**, also Membership (2025-28) [hannah.salvatore@comcast.net](mailto:hannah.salvatore@comcast.net)

**Dan Brennan**, also Community Outreach (2024-27) [dbrennan50@aol.com](mailto:dbrennan50@aol.com)

**Dave Hemberger**, also Conservation (2024-27) ) [dave.hemberger@gmail.com](mailto:dave.hemberger@gmail.com)

**Sue Wolfe**, also Community Outreach (2026-29) [susanwolfe2012@hotmail.com](mailto:susanwolfe2012@hotmail.com)

**Art Zdancewic**, and Programs (2025-2027) [art.zdancewic@gmail.com](mailto:art.zdancewic@gmail.com)

### Committee Members:

**Russ Hoffman**, Field Trip Coordinator [Russhoff@yahoo.com](mailto:Russhoff@yahoo.com)

**Mike Slater**, Website manager and Distelfink Producer [paplantings@gmail.com](mailto:paplantings@gmail.com)

**Rudy Keller**, Distelfink Editor and Compiler of Seasonal Bird Reports [rckeller544@gmail.com](mailto:rckeller544@gmail.com)

**Linda Ingram** Distelfink Editor

**Hillary Chwiecko** Distelfink Copy Editor

**Liz Cates** Programs

**Carol Hullinger** Programs

## BOC Membership and Renewal

Payment is for **September BOC 2026– August 2027**

- **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