

Delaware Audubon Journal

Vol. XXVIII No. 1
January-February 2006

DEAR MEMBERS:

The *Delaware Audubon Journal*, as reflected in its name, has historically been a journal in format. Over the years it has been a source of national and local news; a venue for people to share their experiences with, and great love of, nature; an addresser of environmental issues; and a provider of helpful eco-hints, book reviews, and notices of upcoming events.

After serving as Editor of the *Delaware Audubon Journal* for over 20 years and Co-editor with Mary Leah Christmas for the past three years, I have notified the Board of Directors that I am stepping down from that position so that the next generation of members may step forward and carry on the work of your Society. In this, my last issue, Mary Leah and I are exploring a direction the *Journal* may take in the future. As we stand at this crossroads perhaps it is time to retire the idea of a "journal" and look for a different way to report to our readers.

You will notice that the appearance of this issue is different. This new format will give you an idea of what a no-frills, bulletin-style newsletter might look like. Pages are laid out for economy of both space and production costs. Articles are no longer grouped by subject matter, and there are no decorative features such as topic headings and clip art. The free exchange of ideas has always been the backbone of

Delaware Audubon. Your answers to the following questions will help the Board make decisions concerning the future of the *Delaware Audubon Journal*.

In addition to timely, primary news articles:

- Do you want National Audubon news in every issue?
- Have you found the "Calendar of Events" feature useful? If so, should it be in the newsletter or on our website only?
- Have you found the "Books of Interest" column helpful to you in selecting books to read or to give as gifts?
- Are you willing to go to the Internet for the rest of a story or for more in-depth information if web addresses are provided?
- Should names and contact information for all Board Members and Committee Chairs be included in every issue?

Economies:

- Should the *Journal* continue to be mailed to Delaware Audubon members and other like-minded organizations as well as to all State and Federal legislators, or should it be mailed to Delaware Audubon members only?
- How do you prefer to obtain general information, timely updates, and calls to action? A printed newsletter mailed four to six times a year? A newsletter available only on our website?

Email notices from a listserv?
Other?

What are your ideas?

As Delaware Audubon members your input on these questions will be greatly appreciated. Please e-mail <dasmail@delawareaudubon.org> or call 302-428-3959 with your comments.

Ann Rydgren
Co-Editor

HURRICANE KATRINA: NATIONAL AUDUBON RESPONDS

Apart from the human toll, Hurricane Katrina caused unprecedented environmental devastation in the Gulf Coast communities of Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana. As a result, National Audubon is collaborating with other conservation and environmental groups, federal, state and local government agencies and other stakeholders to recommend new directions for coastal wetlands management as well as for the overall Mississippi River system.

National Audubon believes Congress and the Administration must respond in a way that protects New Orleans and other coastal communities from the next hurricane. Clearly, we must proceed with appropriate efforts to improve

Katrina continued on page 3

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As winter arrives and the price of fuel begins to rise, we need to take stock of our own actions and attempt to reduce the demand for oil and natural gas. This will help mitigate the pressures to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to drilling, or for BP to create a terminal for LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) in the Delaware River.

I worked for Columbia Gas in Wilmington in the 1980s for almost 10 years. We had co-created the LNG facility at Cove Point, MD, in the late 1970s believing that LNG was a long-term source of supply for managing peak demand. However, deregulation of the industry during the Reagan Administration made LNG too costly for peak usage, so the facility never achieved the production levels originally planned. A history of the facility can be found at:

<<http://www.dom.com/about/gas-transmission/covepoint/history.jsp>>.

Times have changed, and high fuel costs now make LNG an attractive resource. Cove Point is thriving, and BP desires a similar LNG terminal across from Claymont at Logan Township. The main issue for LNG is simply one of site management: Cove Point is a more remote location from population centers than Logan Township. BP understandably seeks to minimize shipping costs by siting the offloading terminal adjacent to the processing facilities, but it seems to me that the optimal solution is one that sites such facilities away from heavily populated or environmentally-sensitive locations.

In the meantime, as individuals we can reduce the demand for oil and gas simply by changing how we manage our households. A good list of action items can be found at:
<<http://www.delmarva.com/home/education/conserving/>>. Conservation first and foremost begins in the home.

Mark Martell

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We can receive contributions through your United Way payroll deduction designation. Our United Way designation number is 9017.

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Delaware Audubon Society 2005-2006 Officers & Committees

If there are any issues that you think Audubon should address that you feel strongly about, please write Issues, P.O. Box 1713, Wilmington, DE 19899, or call the office at 302-428-3959. Chairpersons can always be reached through the office answering machine, 302-428-3959.

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levees and other flood control infrastructure protecting major population centers. It is equally clear that we must accelerate efforts to restore the barrier islands and coastal wetlands of the Delta of the Mississippi River that serve as our natural hurricane protection system for New Orleans, other coastal communities, oil and gas infrastructure, and Mississippi River navigation.

For details of National Audubon's five-point plan, see <http://www.audubon.org/campaign/Mississippi/Mississippi.html>.

FIELD TRIP REPORT: BOMBAY HOOK

We had waited for the rain to stop all week and worried about today, Sunday, wondering what kind of weather we would have. It was a great day with bright sunshine and a little wind, but we had wonderful birds and everyone got good looks at them. Bombay Hook is always a good place to see birds of all species.

We had a small group of people, seven in all. This is an ideal size to be able to view and talk to. The highlights of the birds were Avocets, Marbled Godwits, and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. We must have had 50 or more Yellow-rumped Warblers. The cool wind and storms must have driven the birds down from the North, as we hit a big pocket of birds. We had a total of 35 species.

We look forward to next month at Conowingo Dam to see as many Bald Eagles and water birds we can.

Peggy Jahn
Field Trip Chair

GRASS DALE SUMMARY 2004

- Delaware Audubon made 13 visits to Grass Dale in 2004 for a total of 85+ person-hours.
- We increased the catalog of flora and fauna by two insects and four birds. It now totals 140 bird, 84 plant, 50 insect, 16 mammal, 10 amphibian, 1 minnow, 1 crustacean species, 1 invertebrate and 1 fungus.
- The number of Purple Loosestrife plants has increased from two plants in 2003 to 66 in 2004.
- Species or sub-species noted for the first time in 2004 are: Ladybird Beetle, Viceroy Butterfly, Pied-billed Grebe, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Purple Finch, and Bufflehead. The highest number of bird species seen in one data-collecting period in mid-June was 49.
- Bayberry bushes in the Sector 4 field (originally a field of Multiflora Rose and then a meadow of Goldenrod) are being overrun by the invasive shrub, *Elaeagnus umbulata*, a.k.a. Autumn Olive.
- Wildlife continues to use this site at a very high level.

We greatly appreciate the cooperation of Superintendent Becky Webb and her staff at Fort Delaware-Fort DuPont State Park in giving us every possible assistance for this long-term project.

Special thanks are due to Peggy Jahn and Andy Urquhart for their time and perseverance during all kinds of weather to collect data for this project and to Dave Brannan for his determination in getting such excellent pictures of the flora and fauna at Grass Dale. Thanks also to John Savage for all his help in fine-tuning the Access database.

Complete data is available on CD by request.

Ann Rydgren, Project Manager
Adopt-A-Wetland Grass Dale Project

NEST BOX REPORT 2005

BLUE BIRDS

- Nemours Golf Course: 39 young fledged Bluebirds, 4 Tree Swallows.
- DuPont Country Club: The course was closed this year for renovations which are now complete and the Bluebird boxes are back in place for next Spring.
- Christiana Hospital: 4 boxes which were all Tree Swallows.
- MBNA Deerfield Golf Course: Total of 67 young fledged Bluebirds, 10 House Wrens, 18 Tree Swallows. We lost 17 young due to snake predation which we have taken care of with post guards.
- Buena Vista: A good year with 24 young Bluebirds fledged, 10 House Wrens and 8 Tree Swallows.

PURPLE MARTINS:

- Peggy Jahn's yard: 37 young fledged.
- Artesian Water Company: 79 young fledged.
- University of Delaware: No count.

Peggy Jahn, Manager
Nest Box Project

PIPING PLOVER REPORT 2005

"This was quite a successful year for Delaware's Piping Plovers," according to Marnie Pepper, wildlife biologist with DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife. "We had eight breeding pairs, a record number, and fledged 12 chicks."

Six nests, containing a total of 23 eggs, survived to hatch and fledge young. Of these, 12 chicks survived to fledging (4 at Gordons Pond and 8 at the Point).

Nine of the 15 nests (many were re-nest attempts) at Cape Henlopen State Park in 2005 did not survive to hatch. Five were washed out, one depredated, and three were abandoned.

Piping Plovers return to Delaware in March or early April and build their nests in the sand between the dunes and the water. This practice puts them in danger from beachgoers, pets, and predators. Both eggs and young are so well camouflaged that they are in danger of being stepped on or otherwise disturbed by humans. Off-road vehicles also can degrade their habitat and destroy their nests. Unusually high tides can wash away their shallow nests.

For more information about Piping Plovers and the *Piping Plover Suite*, a musical composition for concert and symphonic orchestras, go to <www.delawareaudubon.org>.

DEERFIELD GOLF COURSE ADDED TO WHITE CLAY CREEK STATE PARK

On September 30, 2005, the State purchased MBNA's Deerfield Golf and

Tennis Club and added it to White Clay Creek State Park. This beautiful, 145-acre property along Thompson Station Road near Newark is surrounded by parkland on three sides and at one point approaches very close to the creek itself. The Division plans to continue operating it as a public golf and tennis club with a beautiful restaurant and facility for banquets and special events.

Currently the course and facilities are being maintained in usable condition until a management contract is reached. A request for proposals from concessionaires has been published in *The News Journal*. Several years ago, Peggy and Fred Jahn of Delaware Audubon established a successful Bluebird nestbox trail on the property, and we hope that activity will continue under the new management.

The acquisition was promoted by the strong advocacy efforts of many local environmental and conservation organizations, including Delaware Audubon. Representative Joe Miro and Senator Liane Sorenson, in whose districts the property lies, played key leadership roles in the legislature, with strong support from many other legislators. Governor Minner's leadership was also critical to this outcome. Members are encouraged to thank the Governor and their legislators for preserving this beautiful property.

Dorothy Miller
Andy Urquhart

SITE SEEING

This column will suggest Internet websites that may be of interest to readers.

If you have a favorite that you think will interest others, please send the address to:

<dasmal@delawareaudubon.org>
or call us at 302-428-3959.

This is a link to video shot by cameras carried by a Golden Eagle. <<http://media.animal.discovery.com/convergence/spyonthewild/birdtech/birdtech.html>>

FROM THE CONSERVATION CHAIR

It seems these days that we find too few things to celebrate; however, I am pleased to report two successes. First, the National Audubon Society and their supporting state chapters, along with numerous other local and national environmental organizations, stopped an effort by Congress to include a provision in the Budget Reconciliation Act that would have opened up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil and gas drilling. Although this coalition effort was successful in having it stripped from the House bill, a similar provision was included in the Senate bill, which means we will have to redouble our efforts to make sure that the House-Senate Conference Committee does not approve the proposal. It is unfortunate that we have to work so hard to defeat something that is so obviously wrong-headed. I am pleased to report that no member of the Delaware Congressional delegation voted to support drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

We also can celebrate a victory for the threatened Red Knot. Delaware and New Jersey fisheries officials agreed in early November on a proposal that would ban for two years the harvest of horseshoe crabs in state waters. This includes the Delaware Bay and portions of the Atlantic Ocean close to shore. Atlantic States Marine Fisheries

Commissioners (ASMFC) settled on two options: the Delaware-New Jersey harvest ban and a restriction on out-of-state fishermen landing Delaware Bay crabs in states where harvests would still be allowed. The commission will likely make a final decision on the ban early next year. Delaware and New Jersey also have to change state regulations to comply with the regional mandate. Officials in both states concluded that an outright ban on harvesting the crabs is critical to protecting and rebuilding the crab populations and to ensure the survival of the Red Knot. Delaware Audubon appreciates the efforts of New Jersey DEP Commissioner Brad Campbell and DNREC Secretary Hughes in working out this agreement. We plan to follow the ASMFC decision and DNREC regulation development process closely to ensure the successful restoration of the migratory Red Knot population in the Delaware Bay flyway.

Delaware Audubon has also been following a development at the Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge. The controversy at Prime Hook began when the Refuge Manager decided to allow approximately 150 acres of refuge land that had been part of a three-year research project to be taken out of grassland and early successional habitat and put back into agricultural production. This decision was made without public notice or input. Some of the local farmers are former owners of land acquired by the refuge. Over the years, they have leased some of these refuge lands for agricultural production. They appear to believe that they have a "right" to do this for as long as they want, based on what they believe were promises made to them when the refuge acquired their land, although these promises are found nowhere in writing.

They also maintain that these agricultural crops (primarily corn and soybeans) are essential foodstuffs for migrating waterfowl and other wildlife, although none of these farmers provides food plots on the acres they cultivate. They harvest their crops in late September and October, well before migratory waterfowl pass through the refuge in mid-November. Their actions appear to contradict their own statements.

The question comes down to this: Should the Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge be operated to support public uses or should a few local farmers continue to use it for private economic gain, simply because they have been allowed to do so for so many years? Do they have a legal "right" to farm these public lands? Does the public have to wait until the refuge develops and implements a Comprehensive Conservation Plan, which, by the Refuge Manager's own words, could take years? Or should a Compatibility Determination be conducted to determine whether agricultural production supports the priority uses set forth in the NWR Improvement Act?

Delaware Audubon has requested information from the Prime Hook Refuge Manager to help us determine whether the Refuge is being operated in compliance within the letter and spirit of Federal law.

So let's take a moment to celebrate "the wins" and to re-energize ourselves for the new challenges that await us.

Nick DiPasquale

BLUEBIRD BOXES

To help you appreciate and understand nature, Delaware Audubon has available by order well-constructed pine nest-boxes with a shingle roof, a wire mesh insert for insect protection, and an easy front opening. Designed by Warren Lauder, this box has proven to be one of the best. Nest boxes should go up in February before Bluebirds return to nest.

Help Delaware Audubon and help the Bluebirds come back. Priced at \$25, we are sure you will be pleased with this box. Order now for yourself and your friends.

Please arrange for pick-up when you call Fred Jahn, 302-378-6474. For New Castle County only, home delivery is available for an additional \$5. Otherwise, nest boxes must be picked up at the Jahns' home in Middletown.

JOKES & ANECDOTES

FUN WITH ALPHA CODES

Titmouse sings Mozart?
Cosi fan TUTI

Ahab pursues elusive Bluebird?
MOBL Dick

Arctic Loon sings folk?
ARLO Guthrie

TV's mime duo of the 1970s?
Shields and YNAL

Bunting sings country?
REBU McEntire

Have a joke or brief anecdote of interest to Delaware Audubon members? Send your submissions to <dasmal@delawareaudubon.org> for possible use in a future issue of the Journal. Be sure to include "Jokes & Anecdotes" in the Subject line.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 17-20

Great Backyard Bird Count.

Enter your sightings online through BirdSource at <www.birdsource.org/gbbc>, a joint National Audubon/Cornell Lab of Ornithology project.

I want Audubon to sponsor a program on

_____ [topic] in my area.

Name/Address: _____

Phone: _____

ZIP Code: _____

Send to: Program, Delaware Audubon Society, P.O. Box 1713, Wilmington, DE 19899 or email Subject Line: Programs to <dasmal@delawareaudubon.org>.

SILENT AUCTION ALERT

It's not too soon to start looking around for Silent Auction items. All Delaware Audubon members are on the auction committee. We need your help! In past years, many of you have made this important and entertaining Audubon fundraiser a success.

Please help by making a donation of merchandise or services for the auction. Merchants are usually happy to donate a gift certificate or an item to our auction. Restaurants, theaters, concerts, movies, food, art, crafts, and plants are all popular.

Be creative and donate your particular skills or a special, guided field trip. Please call John Knox, 302-428-3959, by February 15 and leave a message to make arrangements for your donations.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Join the fun! Meet new people! Do a great thing!

We need help in the following areas. We need you!

- **Wildflowers:**
Wildflower enthusiast for special area in Dover.
- **Welcome Wagon:**
Fun-loving, creative person needed to recruit and integrate new members.
- **Needed:**
Someone with a "Type A" personality and marketing experience who is willing to help the environment in Delaware through member recruitment, targeted marketing and advertising for our annual birdseed sale, general member solicitation, and expanding our annual appeal.
- **Conservation Committee:** Needs members to divide up the work. Please help!

If you are interested in helping, please call 302-428-3959 and leave a message.

BIRD SEED THANK YOU

Thanks to everyone who purchased birdseed! Our annual birdseed sale was a great success thanks to the hard work of Tom and Tabitha Shuey and their crew of bag handlers and paper shufflers: Mark Martell, Mark Kamalski, Mike Warner, John Knox, Claire and Gail Shuey, Ann Rydgren, Cori and Stephi Rydgren, Jeff and Nathan Snook, and C. J. Brown.

BOOKS OF INTEREST

Teaching the Trees: Lessons from the Forest

by Joan Maloof

University of Georgia Press, 2005 hardcover; \$24.95. 156 pp. + xvi.

This elegant volume is part bio-lesson and part meditation. Leading the tour is Dr. Joan Maloof who reveals the "magical web of relationships" to be found in an old-growth, deciduous forest, from the canopy overhead on down into the layers of leaf mold underfoot. The 18th-century woodcut illustrations, quotations from Henry David Thoreau, and poetry excerpts from Rainer Maria Rilke, Lao Tsu, Li Po, and e. e. cummings heighten the reflective mood.

The author is a teacher of biology and environmental studies at Salisbury University in Salisbury, MD. While not a book specifically about Delmarva—it is not intended to be—*Teaching the Trees* contains references to Eastern Shore Maryland as well as a quotation from a 1797 Delaware resident.

Maloof writes, "There is so much left to learn about the living things here, I often wonder why we spend so much time and energy looking for life elsewhere in the universe." Aptly stated; and her book is a welcoming woodland path into those worlds just beyond our own backyards.

MLC

“A DELAWARE RECORD?”

I feed birds throughout the year. I just like the action in my yard. My feeders are carefully positioned on a wire supported by poles at distances established by experience. I hang feeders at 7 feet from the nearest pole or support, never having seen a squirrel leap horizontally more than that distance...until today.

Whether “Bob” had been practicing in my absence or whether he’s an Olympian moving into my area having conquered all other local jumping records, he today leapt a horizontal 85 inches from a supporting pole onto my Droll Yankees peanut feeder, thereby avoiding the DY \$40 squirrel-proof polycarbonate dome above. I saw it, I did not believe what I saw, I measured it (vidi, un-vidi, yeah-vidi). I allowed Bob, christened after my childhood hero, [Olympic long-jump record holder] Bob Beamon, a few moments of peanut heaven before trying to catch him. Well, I don’t normally do this but I had to establish if he was on drugs—after all, it’s only a few days since the Tour de France finished. I failed of course. Although it was late in the day and the breeze was freshening, I don’t think he was wind-assisted. So, I’m claiming this 7-foot, 1-inch horizontal leap as a Delaware squirrel record...unless...you know better.

Colin Campbell
New Castle County

Dear Colin:
Move to Sussex County. Squirrels grow bigger and more athletic down here. Eight feet is what our champion squirrel jumped horizontally.... I measured the distance, then moved the feeder to 9 feet, and that has

never been bested...or even attempted that I have witnessed.
Bill Fintel

Dear Colin:
“Bob” may have the New Castle County record, but he’s just a beginner compared to the Sussex County record. One of the many squirrels in our backyard cleared 102” from a fence to a bird feeder we thought was placed too far away for him to reach....
Liz Dumont

Source: DE-Birds Listserv and emails. Reprinted with permission.

Colin Campbell is a Past President, DVOC; Fellow, DVOC; and Recipient of the Witmer Stone Award 1995, 2000, 2003.

Bill Fintel is a Founder, Past President, and Member of the Sussex Bird Club.

Liz Dumont is also a Member of the Sussex Bird Club.

BIRD TALES

“GYRFALCON, BOAT, BIRDERS, CORNELL”

**2/18/05
Great Backyard Bird Count,
Day 1**

As I type this, people who know a lot about birds are staked out at points from Bombay Hook to Port Mahon. They are following with their scopes the daily routine—toothbrushing, breakfast cereal preference, choice of reading material (last Friday’s *Baffin Island Gazette**)—of a Gyrfalcon. This large Arctic resident is the first to be observed in Delaware since 1974 and is expected to be entered into the record books with the banging of a gavel by officials up north. By up north, I mean the Delaware Records

Committee, not Parliament in Ottawa.

Due to the uneven weight distribution caused by this gathering of birders, Delaware is listing to starboard and at risk of capsizing into the bay. The fact that I am sitting here at home and leaving the matter to the experts may explain why, until 10:00 am, I was the lone Great Backyard Bird Count reporter for the entire state. Only then did someone from Wilmington weigh in. It’s now 11:00 am, and the two of us are still the only ones ballasting this side of the boat. 11:30 check: There is now a report from Sussex, making exactly one red pinhead per county visible on the online Delaware report map.

Well, this red pinhead (sounds like a kind of duck) had only nine species to report today; but no sooner had I submitted my count than a swarm of European Starlings, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Common Grackles arrived in our yard. Now, I know full well the scholarly heads at Cornell are not sobbing into their handkerchiefs for having missed receiving word of a bunch of so-called “trash” birds, but this is one of those bad news/good news situations. The bad news is, this swarm was likely flushed from the coastal areas by that other swarm gazing upon the Gyrfalcon, and feeling rather peeved about it. The good news is, this shifting of weight has returned our ship of state to its upright and seaworthy position. Who says “trash” birds aren’t good for anything?

Big bird, **B.I.G.* newspaper.

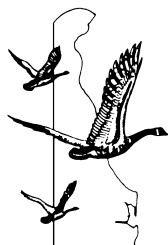
Mary Leah Christmas

EDITOR'S CORNER

In our informal Squirrel Olympics ("A Delaware Record?"), Sussex County wins the gold, New Castle County the silver, and Kent County the bronze by default. Bill Fintel has kept the data from his yard "so that I could give people concrete information when asked about squirrels and feeder placement."

He continues, "I have also found that 99.95% of gray squirrels are unwilling to hand-over-hand down a wire supporting a feeder between two trees (or a tree and a house) if the wire is 22 gauge or smaller." He adds, "I have had 100% success with commercial squirrel baffles placed on a pole below a feeder if the 9+ foot horizontal jumping distance is maintained."

MLC



Delaware Audubon Society
P.O. Box 1713
Wilmington, DE 19899

DATED MATERIAL



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INTRODUCTORY MEMBERSHIP OFFER

For \$20.00 Receive Membership to
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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Referred By _____ Date _____

Please make all checks payable to: National Audubon Society

Send this application and your check to:

Delaware Audubon Society

P.O. Box 1713, Wilmington, DE 19899

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