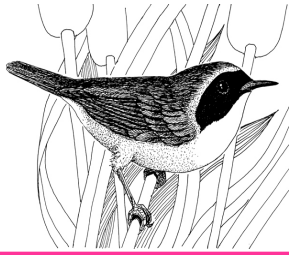


November 2011
Volume 14, Issue 2
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BIRDING CLUB

DELAWARE COUNTY

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The Birding Club of Delaware County is a birding club located in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, with the purpose of expanding individual interest in and study of wild birds.

The Birding Club of Delaware County is open to birders and bird watchers of all skill levels.

Membership is from September through August.

Meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of each month from September through June at the Marple Township Library Meeting Room. Meetings begin at 7:30PM.

Visitors are always welcome.

For additional information regarding membership, please contact John D'Amico at 610-566-1461 or email membership@bodelco.org.

Websites

BCDC: www.bodelco.org

RTPHW: www.rtphawkwatch.org

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Programs

November - February

November 9 - Emily Thomas

Effects of Oil and Gas Development on Songbird Abundance in the Eastern USA

Previous studies on the effects of forest fragmentation on songbirds show that resident and generalist species tend to benefit or adapt while forest-dwelling neotropical migrants are often displaced; however, those studies were in areas where the landscape matrix was no longer forested. The development of shallow oil and gas resources causes a different kind of forest fragmentation due to the construction of well pads, access roads, and pipelines. Yet, in these areas, the overall landscape remains forested.

Emily Thomas, a wildlife biologist with the US Forest Service and Pennsylvania State University, has done research on songbird species occupying oak and northern hardwood forests within the Allegheny National Forest. She will describe the findings of her studies of the effects of shallow oil and gas well development and the associated unique forest fragmentation.

December 14 - Darryl Speicher

Owls of Pennsylvania

Owls are uniquely adapted to life as nocturnal predators. Darryl Speicher, of the Pocono Avian Research Center, will present a program that discusses their lives, explains how to identify them and offers suggestions on where to find them.

January 11 - Lauren and Sheryl Johnson

Ornithology for Olympiads

Birders are great at identifying species, but there is so much more to birds than meets the eye. Test your knowledge of all things avian (biology, anatomy, ecology, behavior etc.) in an interactive quiz format.

As a member of the Harriton High School team, Lauren won the gold medal in Ornithology at the PA State Science Olympiad Competition in May 2011. Sheryl and Lauren have prepared this exam to be informative and fun. Don't worry: no grades will be assigned.

February 8 - Stephen Rannels

Pennsylvania Spring

Steve Rannels's "Pennsylvania Spring" is a journey through parts of Penn's Woods that starts with the first signs of spring, the Northward movement of waterfowl, through sequential changes in plant, animal and insect life. It is a calendar of a naturalist's love for spring. Steve writes, "The program will include samples from my personal library of accumulated photographs, videos and sound recordings. Be prepared to get the 'fever'!"

IMPORTANT NOTES

*Please contact the field trip leader in advance so you can be notified of any changes.
Plan to arrive 15 minutes prior to departure time.*

UPCOMING BCDC FIELD TRIPS

- Sunday, Nov.6** **Lakes of Chester County for waterfowl**
Meet at Exton Mall Boscov's lot - section G1 at 7 A.M.
Bring lunch for a day's outing
Leader: Holly Merker 610-733-4392
- Saturday, Nov.26** **Conowingo Dam**
Meet at the dam at 9 A.M.
Leader Tom Reeves (naturalist@verizon.net)
H: 610-361-8027 C: 267-879-0000
- Saturday, Dec. 10** **Brig to Barnegat - The Deathly Hollows**
Waterfowl and raptors (Snowy Owl, Ross's Goose, Guillemot in past)
Meet at Forsythe NWR (Brigantine) lot at 8 A.M.
Leader: Tom McParland - for possibly his last run of this trip
610-331-1863
- Saturday, Dec. 17** **Annual Audubon Glenolden/Delaware County Christmas Count**
Info: contact Dave Eberly (david.eberly@gmail.com) or 610-565-8484
- Sunday, Jan. 1** **Delaware birding with Al Guarente (Wheatear time?)**
Meet at Aston, PA, McDonalds @ PA 452 and I 95 at 6 A.M.
Al Guarente 610-721-3719
- Saturday, Jan. 7** **Bombay Hook NWR for waterfowl**
Meet at refuge HQ at 8:30
Leaders: Kris DeBolt C: 215-219-5637 & Peter Wade H: 610-622-5841

Please check our website at www.bcdelco.org for updates.

Field Trip Coordinators: Amy or Chris Langman, 610-566-4091

Member Profile - Bill Roche

Mariana Pesthy is compiling short interviews to introduce BCDC members to each other via our newsletter. You may be next!

On a beautiful fall day in 1999, I happened to stop at Rose Tree Park to eat lunch. After noticing two men intently peering through spotting scopes and binoculars, I approached and asked the age old question “whatcha lookin at?” A week later I attended my first BCDC meeting with Jim Lockyer and Dave Washabaugh.



Bill & Mary Jane Roche

I’ve been exposed to birds my whole life; from the tray feeder on the windowsill next to my highchair, my countless hours helping my grandfather tend to his racing pigeons, to helping my mom pluck freshly shot pheasants for the evening meal. The event that turned that exposure to love happened on another beautiful fall day. It was September 1989 in Cape May when my mother-in-law suggested a trip to the state park while our 10 month old daughter napped. After climbing (without binoculars, by the way) onto the “old” hawk watch platform, my wife and I were amazed by the spectacle of hawks, falcons and eagles streaming past us. The hook was set.

Mary Jane and I also started scuba diving at this time and traveled yearly to many islands in the Bahamas and Caribbean. We found many life birds while “off-gassing”, that is, between dives. Our love of travel has taken us to many bird-rich states and countries. Southeast Arizona is one of my favorite places to bird. The canyons, which I like to think of as “sky islands”, continuously deliver extraordinary experiences. About four years ago I was hiking alone about an hour above the top parking lot in Madera canyon when I stumbled onto a family of Elegant Trogons! Both parents were closely guiding their just-fledged youngster down the canyon. I was able to keep up with them for almost a half hour until we ran into some noisy hikers. After the hikers passed I noticed a hummingbird coming to some flowers in the dry stream-bed. After I got a couple of good looks I realized it was a Berylline Hummingbird!

Locally, I look forward every year to the Glenolden and Cape May Christmas Bird Counts, the Brigantine to Barnagat December field trip, Rose Tree Park Hawk Watch, and the World Series of Birding aka the funniest 24 hours you’ll ever spend raising money!

Beyond all of the interesting places and fascinating birds, I believe it is the camaraderie and friendships that make birding such a fulfilling endeavor.

Member Profile - Holly Merker

My passion for birds, and the natural world in general, was ignited at a young age.

Always happy to spend time outside looking for bugs, birds, or crayfish, I discovered that nature provides endless wonders that can never get boring.

My mom always kept bird feeders outside our kitchen window, along with a field guide so that we could look up anything new that appeared. I had visited Hawk Mountain a few times while growing up, and loved it. It wasn't until I was into my adult years though, that I became a birder.

We lived in Virginia Beach, VA, before moving to this area. One of the first things I did when we purchased our first home there, was to establish feeding stations around the yard. This provided me with opportunities to learn some of the birds in the area. Eventually, I joined the Virginia Beach Audubon Society, and connected with other birders in that community. When we moved, it was hard to leave behind the Turnstones, Sanderlings, and Gannets that could be found just a few steps out my front door. But, I was happy to find a different variety of birds here in Chester County.

Shortly after my family moved to Pennsylvania in 1998, I witnessed something I had never before seen: huge kettles of Broad-winged Hawks swirling over my Downingtown yard. At this point, I was instantly sold on living in Pennsylvania.

I posted about the kettles over my yard to the PABirds listserv, and received a note back from Nick Pulcinella, who told me about a local hawk watch in Media called the Rose Tree Park HawkWatch. In those early days of the hawk watch, I was delighted to find such warm and welcoming people, who invited me back to help them spot hawks-- despite the fact that my toddler sons broke one of their signs! I did go back...many times!

In fact, over a decade later, I kept going back there. And it was through the HawkWatch that I became a member of BCDC back in 1999.

To this day, I remain an active participant in efforts of the Rose Tree Park HawkWatch as a counter, compiler, and education coordinator. Each fall, RTPHW provides Delaware County students education programs focusing on raptor ID and conservation. I have the honor of teaching these programs.

The people of BCDC, and especially those of the Rose Tree Park HawkWatch crew, have played a big part in my life in the past decade. I have made some wonderful friends with the birders connected to both. Those same friends, and birding, got me through a rough period in my life. In 2002 I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Birding became my medicine and therapy, and I truly believe that it played an important part in my positive recovery and healing. My BCDC and RTPHW friends helped pull me through, and lifted me up during that time. When I look back on those days now, I feel grateful.

In addition to my weekly fall counting shifts at the hawk watch, I spend most of my birding time in Chester County. Some of my favorite birding spots close to home include Marsh Creek State Park, Church Farm/Exton Park, the Struble Trail, Chambers Lake, Struble Lake, and the Bucktoe Creek Preserve.

Outside PA, my favorite places to bird are coastal Virginia and the Pacific Northwest, particularly Oregon, where I have family. In the last year, I have traveled to the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas, and also to North Carolina, solely as birding trips.



Photo - Kathleen Crumlish

Rare Birds of Delaware County

By Al Guarente

When someone mentions Delaware County, PA to you, I bet the first thing that comes to mind is “Wow what a fabulous birding area”. Yeah, right! Unfortunately, unlike Cape May, which is located on a peninsula, Delco has no geologic features to attract migrant birds other than the Delaware River. However, over the course of years, Delaware County has had its moments. If you look over the Delco bird list you will see quite a few unexpected birds that have been recorded.

A large number of those birds have indeed been encountered along the Delaware River and particularly after a strong northeasterly or hurricane. Most recently, after the passage of Hurricane Irene, I was treated to five Royal Terns (4th county record) and an Arctic Tern (2nd county record) being propelled down river by the strong winds. These birds were forced inland by the Herculean winds and I was fortunate to discover them. Another bird that I was fortuitous enough to find on the Delaware was an Eared Grebe back in March 2007. It landed about 300 feet from me and stayed for about 30 seconds. So the river does indeed attract a few rare birds but we must be there to see them. You have to wonder how many birds we missed by not being out there to find them.



Swallow-tailed Kite has visited our county

Other commendable sightings include Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebes on both the Delaware River and Springton Reservoir. Sooty Terns were detected after Hurricane Floyd passed to our west. Little Gull is a bird that I have been perpetually trying to get in Delco and still haven't found. However, on April 29, 1993 Nick Pulcinella was able to document the first record of this gull for the county. Rare gulls are invariably something to search for along the river and in 1992 Bob Schutsky was fortunate to identify a Black-legged Kittiwake at Marcus Hook following a storm in December of that year.

Birds are also tallied in places that you wouldn't expect to find them. There is a sighting from October 1975 from the Chadds Ford area of a Northern Gannet and also one killed by a hunter in Glenolden, PA in 1961. Extraordinary birds don't always appear as single

sightings either. Nick Pulcinella had three Anhingas over his apartment in Swarthmore in 1983, and in 1988 I also had three flying over my house in Media.

Within the boundaries of the marshes at Tinicum there are records of Tri-colored Heron and White Ibis. I'm of the opinion the rarest birds found in the marshes would have to be Yellow Rail in 1977 and four Piping Plovers from 1950. The Rose Tree Hawkwatch has likewise produced its share of rarities. It has recorded Sandhill Crane, Swainson's Hawk, Mississippi and Swallow-tailed Kites and Short-eared Owls.

An additional bird I can't seem to find in the county is Eastern Whip-poor-will, but there are at least ten records from the Media and Swarthmore areas. Sometimes it's a serendipitous moment that thrills the birder. Dave Eberly was at Darlington searching for an Evening Grosbeak that was seen there the day before and instead was treated to a Northern Shrike. Many observers were able to see this rare irruptive species from the north thanks to Dave's good luck and birding skills.



Rufous Hummingbird - a rare Delco visitor

As expected, passerines make up a large portion of rarities. Boreal Chickadee, Sedge Wren, Varied Thrush, Swainson's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler and most recently (November 2010) a Townsend's Warbler have all been found in Delco. Some of the rare sparrows include Clay-colored, Lark, Nelson's, Seaside and Golden-crowned Sparrow. Winter finches add to the list. White-winged and Red Crossbills and back in the old days two records of Pine Grosbeaks from Moylan and Media.

You might find this hard to believe but November seems to bring in these unusual birds to Pennsylvania. You never know when something rare will show up, but you'll never see it if you don't get out and look. So get outside and start hunting for those first county records, but make sure you give me a call when you find one.

Bird Trivia

CBS Sports got busted for dubbing an out-of-its-range bird song into its coverage of a Colorado golf tournament in September 2000. What was the bird?

Answer: White-throated Sparrow



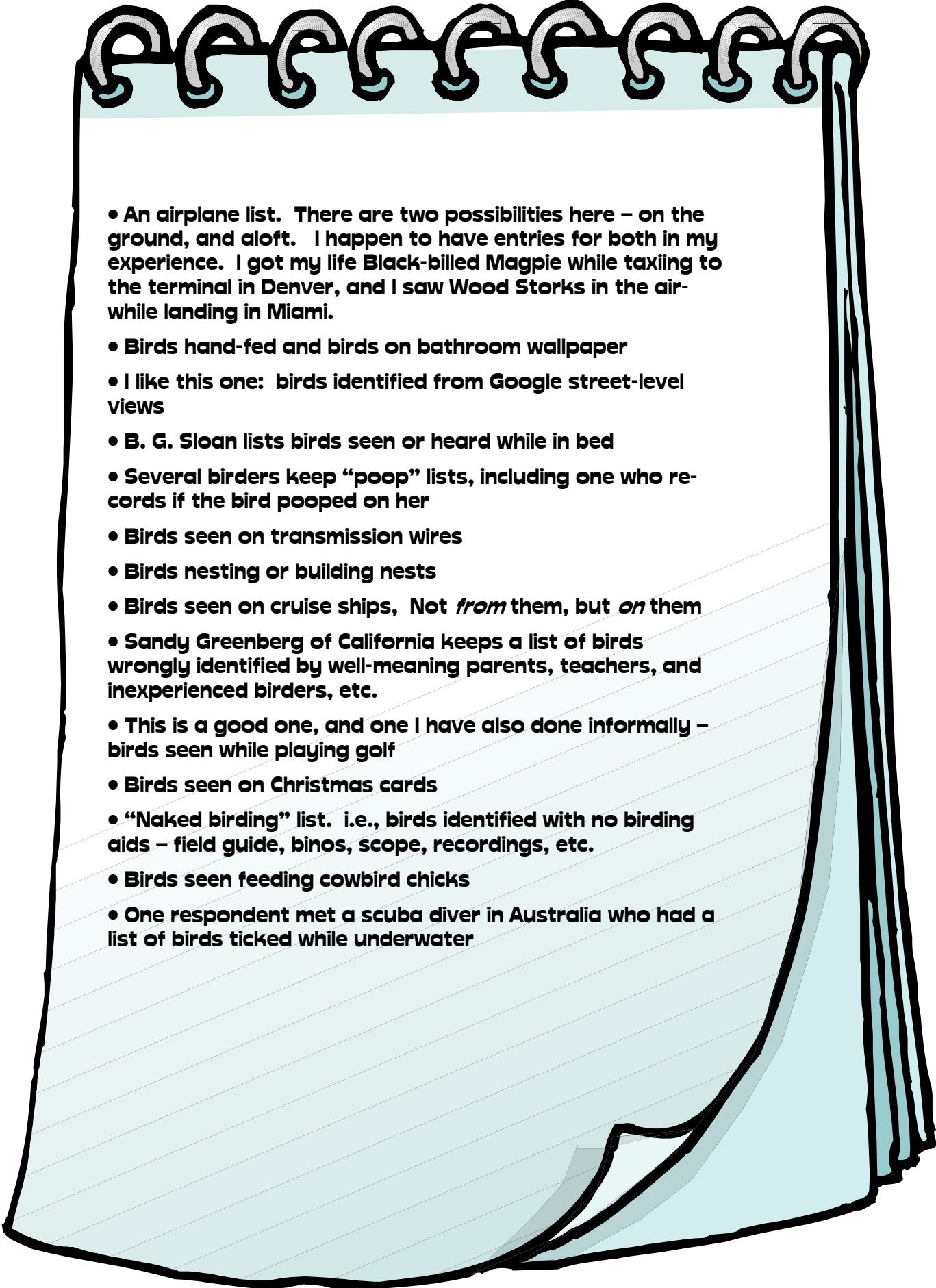
Making a list and checking it twice...

Birders are listers. At a minimum, most birders keep a life list. Many birders keep lists by country, continent, state, county, municipality, backyard, year, etc. Many also have individualized lists that they have fun keeping – like lists for particular favorite birding spots, or first bird of the new year lists.

Recently, I got to thinking about the different kind of lists birders might keep, so I enlisted the readers of the BIRDCHAT computer mailing list to submit some quirky and unusual lists they might maintain. Brother, what a response! It seems that keeping off-beat lists is as common to birders as expensive optics and sensible shoes.

Here, in no particular order, are the most interesting and humorous submissions I received. Credit is assigned to those who requested it.

- **“Movie birds” was suggested by more than one respondent**
- **Dead birds found, which leads naturally into the next list...**
- **Birds seen being eaten by other birds or other creatures**
- **Birds identified while driving at 65 mph or above**
- **Toilet list and its companion – the shower list**
- **Copulation list (the birds – not the birder). This list was submitted by more than one reader, although one person claimed to have known a rabbi who kept a list of birds he observed while *he* was engaged in the procreative act (I’m not making this up, folks)**
- **A hospital bed list**



- **An airplane list.** There are two possibilities here – on the ground, and aloft. I happen to have entries for both in my experience. I got my life Black-billed Magpie while taxiing to the terminal in Denver, and I saw Wood Storks in the air-while landing in Miami.

- **Birds hand-fed and birds on bathroom wallpaper**

- **I like this one: birds identified from Google street-level views**

- **B. G. Sloan lists birds seen or heard while in bed**

- **Several birders keep “poop” lists, including one who records if the bird pooped on her**

- **Birds seen on transmission wires**

- **Birds nesting or building nests**

- **Birds seen on cruise ships, Not *from* them, but *on* them**

- **Sandy Greenberg of California keeps a list of birds wrongly identified by well-meaning parents, teachers, and inexperienced birders, etc.**

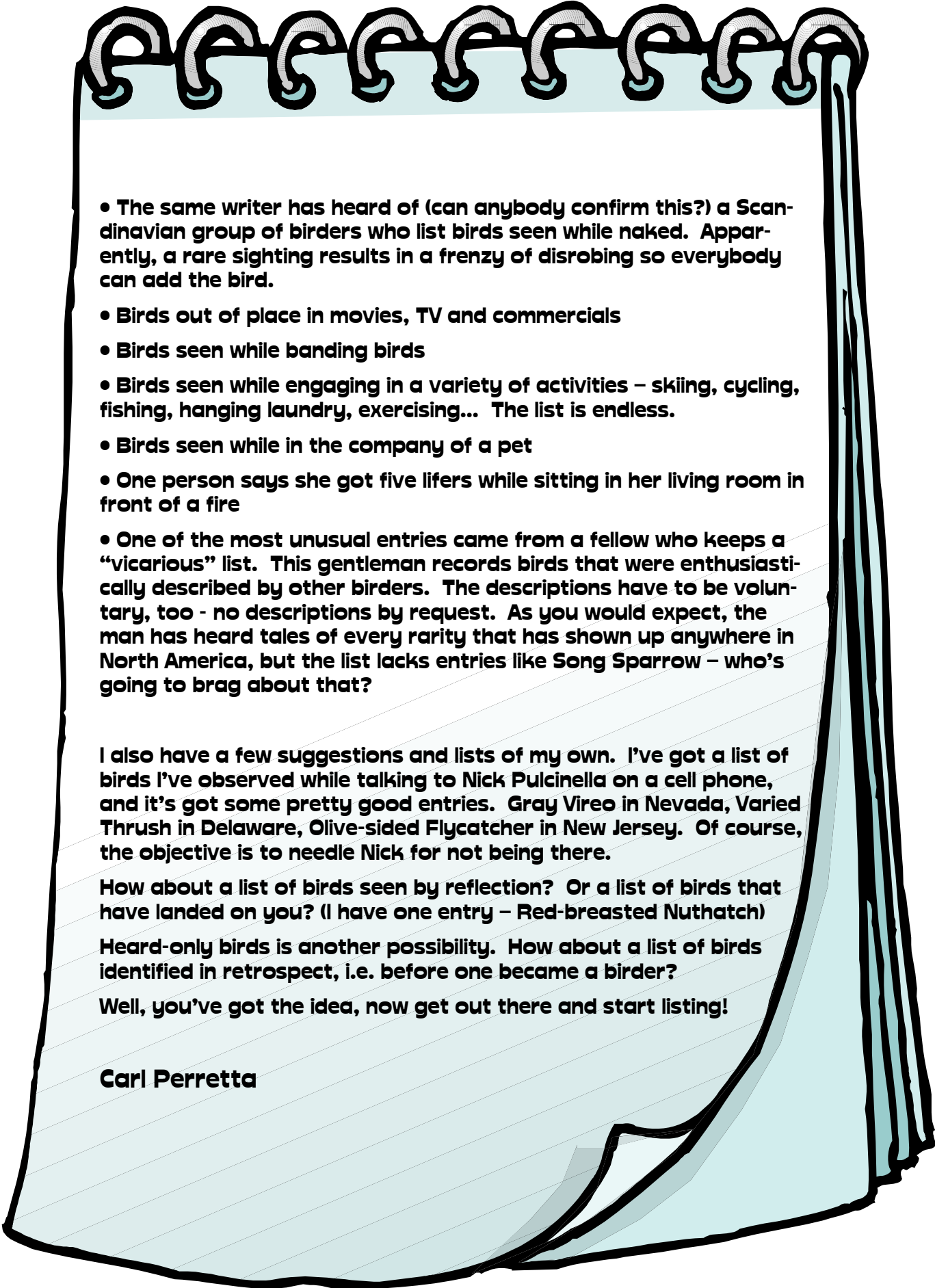
- **This is a good one, and one I have also done informally – birds seen while playing golf**

- **Birds seen on Christmas cards**

- **“Naked birding” list. i.e., birds identified with no birding aids – field guide, binos, scope, recordings, etc.**

- **Birds seen feeding cowbird chicks**

- **One respondent met a scuba diver in Australia who had a list of birds ticked while underwater**

- 
- The same writer has heard of (can anybody confirm this?) a Scandinavian group of birders who list birds seen while naked. Apparently, a rare sighting results in a frenzy of disrobing so everybody can add the bird.
 - Birds out of place in movies, TV and commercials
 - Birds seen while banding birds
 - Birds seen while engaging in a variety of activities – skiing, cycling, fishing, hanging laundry, exercising... The list is endless.
 - Birds seen while in the company of a pet
 - One person says she got five lifers while sitting in her living room in front of a fire
 - One of the most unusual entries came from a fellow who keeps a “vicarious” list. This gentleman records birds that were enthusiastically described by other birders. The descriptions have to be voluntary, too - no descriptions by request. As you would expect, the man has heard tales of every rarity that has shown up anywhere in North America, but the list lacks entries like Song Sparrow – who’s going to brag about that?

I also have a few suggestions and lists of my own. I’ve got a list of birds I’ve observed while talking to Nick Pulcinella on a cell phone, and it’s got some pretty good entries. Gray Vireo in Nevada, Varied Thrush in Delaware, Olive-sided Flycatcher in New Jersey. Of course, the objective is to needle Nick for not being there.

How about a list of birds seen by reflection? Or a list of birds that have landed on you? (I have one entry – Red-breasted Nuthatch)

Heard-only birds is another possibility. How about a list of birds identified in retrospect, i.e. before one became a birder?

Well, you’ve got the idea, now get out there and start listing!

Carl Perretta

Question: What's Birding magazine got that our newsletter hasn't?

Answer: Nothing, now that Nick Pulcinella has provided us with an ID quiz!

Get out your field guides and get to work. Answers in the next issue.



Left—Quiz bird 1

Right—Quiz bird 2



**Both photos taken in
North America**

My Favorite Wren

Sheryl Johnson

One of the nice things about birds is that you can count on them from year to year. True, plants don't move and you can count on them too, but the amazing thing is that birds fly and yet, certain species always show up at certain times. Every year in November a singing Winter Wren can be found on the Haverford College campus. Look in the vegetable garden, the overgrown meadow by the duck pond, or along the stream if you want to find it.

Wrens are noisy, especially given that they are such small birds. House Wrens will stuff sticks in every available nest box and then finally use but one, will sing incessantly, even through the duties of parenthood . . . and raise more than one brood. Carolina Wrens, their larger, louder cousins, project their clear ringing songs throughout the woods at any time of the year. Even in the middle of winter, this species will sing. Their cheery song is nice to hear when all is drab and cold.



A Winter Wren in Chicago

Winter Wrens do not nest in our immediate area, but often spend the winter here. They are smaller than either of the other two species I have mentioned; darker brown with a stubbier tail. At this time of year, if you see a small wren with a short, cocked tail, picking insects from under the leaves, it is likely to be a Winter Wren. Not only does this species forage on the ground (as well as in trees and brush), but it will also run along the ground under vegetation. In the gardens, you might mistake its rustle for that of a mouse. Shy creatures, they quickly disappear when disturbed, but seem not to mind our presence on the other side of a window and will often forage on our patio in clear view.

Winter Wrens might be endearing for their cuteness alone, but they also have a beautiful voice. The notes are clear and flutelike, not harsh in any way, and the melodious song is an extended jumble of joy. I will always remember the song cascading through the woods after Cathedral Pines (in northwestern CT) had been hit by a devastating tornado, and the huge trees had been tossed like matchsticks. Amongst all the rubble, from the ravine, came the hopeful song of a Winter Wren. Perhaps somewhere in CT or MA this past week, after the devastation of the recent snowstorm, a Winter Wren is caroling a song of hope for nearby listeners to hear. It's nice to be able to rely on the birds.

Carl Perretta's Movie Birds Quiz - The Final Installment

Many movies contain scenes which include birds. Some are even about birds. Here are five questions about bird-related movies or movie scenes. Feel free to use any resources you like to find the answers. A particularly good place to go is www.imdb.com, and www.google.com will also supply many answers. If you can't stand waiting, email me at newsletter@bcdco.org for the answers.

1. Snowplow driver Chris Elliot is accompanied in his truck by a Black-billed Magpie named Trudy as he tries to ruin the local kids' fun by keeping the roads to school open during a blizzard. Name the picture.
2. A Blue-crowned Conure was the title character of this movie starring too-cute-for-words Hallie Eisenberg. Jay Mohr did the parrot's voice.
3. The miracle of the gulls that saved the early Mormons' crops from a swarm of locusts is depicted at the end of this picture starring Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell and John Carradine.
4. A 2011 release (and bomb). Jim Carrey plays the title character whose life is turned upside-down by a home invasion of real and CGI penguins.
5. Another 2011 release. Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson compete to compile the biggest species list in a twelve month competition.

Answers to the September 2011 Quiz

1. a) Heckle and Jeckle b) Chilly Willy c) José Carioca, Donald Duck and Panchito Pistolas d) Tweety
e) Woody Woodpecker f) The Roadrunner
2. Gigi
3. Fly Away Home
4. War of the Worlds
5. Winged Migration

We welcome members' contributions to our newsletter, so if you have reports, announcements, reviews, poetry, essays, or photographs that would be of interest to our BCDC birding community, please submit them to the editor:

Carl Perretta, e-mail: newsletter@bcdco.org

The deadline for the January newsletter is Wednesday, December 28, 2011.

Club questions or suggestions? Contact Sheryl Johnson, President: sbjohnso@haverford.edu.

Suggestions for or leading of field trips? Contact Amy or Chris Langman, Field Trip Coordinator:
birdgyrl@gmail.com.

Bird sightings to report? Contact Dave Eberly, Bird Reports Editor: david.eberly@gmail.com.