



The flyer



Volume 48 | Number 4

DECEMBER 2016



erupt into flight and honkingly swirl overhead! Try duplicating that experience in June!

For me, December birding is more about the spectacles than the species. One of Delaware's best known birding qualities is its ability to produce spectacles in Fall, Winter, and Spring; shorebirds, waterfowl and the quintessential horse-shoe crab-shorebird magic. Whether you travel to your local or favorite body of water, be it reservoir, lake, inland bay, back bays, coastal impoundments, or the ocean, the abundance of waterfowl in December is mesmerizing and oftentimes unbelievable. During the last waning days of December past, I experienced the largest raft of snow geese that I had ever seen. Making it even more spectacular were the 1000's of geese pouring in adding to the enormity of the raft.....quietly floating a hundred yards offshore in the Atlantic Ocean.....at sunset.....with Cape Henlopen as their backdrop!

With the owls, the frosty mornings, CBC's, and the waterfowl spectacles, we now know it's December. Seriously.

Pretty much no other month is quite like our Decembers.

Good birding and Happy Holidays to All,

Bill Stewart, *DOS President*

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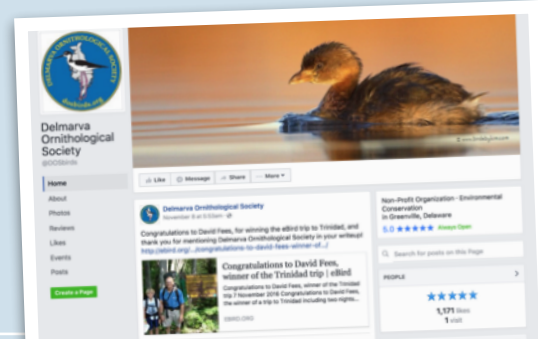
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Do You Love Birds & Facebook? DOS is looking for a new Facebook Manager!

We're searching for someone who can post weekly updates. If you think you would be a good fit for this position, we want to hear from you!

To Inquire, Contact Us At: flyer@dosbirds.org





Delmarva Ornithological Society

ELECTED OFFICERS

President Bill Stewart
Vice President Anthony Gonzon
Treasurer Jim Lewis
Secretary Holly Merker
Council 2017 Lisa Smith
Council 2018 Joe Sebastiani
Council 2019 Kim Steinger
Flyer Editor Kelley Nunn

COMMITTEES

Publications Committee

Jean Woods, *Chair*
 Kelley Nunn, *Flyer Editor*
 Hannah Greenberg, *Flyer Co-Editor*
 Gene Hess, *Delmarva Ornithologist Editor*

Conservation

Matthew Sarver

Membership

Ian Stewart

Field Trips

Amy O'Neil
 Parker O'Neil

Programs

Anthony Gonzon

Outreach & Publicity

Derek Stoner

Hawkwatch

Sally O'Byrne

Spring Round-up

Chris Bennett

CBC

Jim White

Webmaster

Andrew Homsey

Delaware Records

Frank Rohrbacher

MISSION STATEMENT

The object and purpose of this Society shall be the promotion of the study of birds, the advancement and diffusion of ornithological knowledge, and the conservation of birds and their environment.

Flyer Inquiries: flyer@DOSbirds.org



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MONTHLY Meetings

Wednesday, Dec. 21st

For DOS by DOS: A Night of
Shared Stores & Experiences
with DOS Members

Wednesday, Jan. 18th

2016 State of the Birds -
A Presidential Address
with Bill Stewart

Take a break from the hectic holiday rush and join DOS for an evening where the membership takes the spotlight! We have invited DOS members to come and share short 10 - 15 minute presentations talking about all things birds and birding!

If you would like to be a presenter, please contact Anthony Gonzon at atgonzon@verizon.net no later than Dec 5. Please provide a brief description of your talk and a relevant photo. We will have time for 4-5 speakers, so sign up early!!

Because it is the holiday season, we also invite members to bring a special dish or dessert to share. Catch up with fellow members and send 2016 out in style!

Based upon the most recent studies and scientific-based publications, our birds are more and more challenged for survival as each year turns. Bill will spend the evening reviewing and discussing some of the findings, both from the most challenging and distressing species, and also to the good news makers.

Bill Stewart is the Director of Conservation and Community along with Young Birder Program Coordinator for the American Birding Association. A passionate birder for over 37 years, Bill is currently serving as the President of the Delmarva Ornithological Society. Previously, Bill served as the Conservation Chair for DOS and is the founder and coordinator of the Delaware Bird-A-Thon, the Wilmington Peregrine Falcon Webcam Project, and the Lights Out! Wilmington initiative. Most recently, Bill was awarded the 2014 Rosalie Edge Conservation Award from the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club. In his free time, Bill likes to spend time with his five children, grandson, and do a little surfing.

Anthony Gonzon, *DOS Vice President*

Monthly Meetings:

Meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month from September through May at Ashland Nature Center in Hockessin, DE. Social hour and refreshments are at 7:00pm, followed by the meeting and presentations at 7:30pm. If you'd like to bring snacks to share or contribute photographs to the pre-meeting slideshow, please contact our meeting hostess, Kelley Nunn at: kelley.nunn@gmail.com.





DOS Membership News: Call For Nominations, New Life Members, And More!

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR DOS FELLOWS & HONORARY MEMBERS!

It's that time of year again when we start accepting nominations for DOS Fellows and Honorary Members - check out your Membership Directory to see the honor roll of previous awardees!

DOS FELLOWS must have made a significant contribution to the affairs of the Society, preferably as a Committee or Council member, and/or must have made a significant contribution to the ornithology of the Delmarva Peninsula or nearby area.

HONORARY MEMBERS should have national prominence in the field of ornithology or a closely related field and have been of service to the Society, or the area's birds for an extended period of time. Nominations for either category can be submitted to me at istew@udel.edu.

NEW DOS LIFE MEMBERS!

There is no better way to show your long-term commitment to our society than to become a Life Member, and we are very happy to welcome the following to the ranks:



New DOS Life Members, **THANK YOU!**

Sara MacLellan
Lincoln University, PA

John Frink & Dr. Erica Miller
Newark, DE

Dr. Alan B. Palmer
West Chester, PA

Dr Palmer was kind enough to note with his new subscription "As a long time member, probably over 40 years, I am proud of the organization and what it has accomplished."

Header Photo: Wood Duck Fledglings by Kim Steininger

*"As a longtime member, probably over 40 years,
I am proud of the organization and
what it has accomplished!"*

- Dr. Palmer, New DOS Life Member

Remember that anyone who joins the hallowed ranks of the DOS Life Members gets a free DOS cap and one of our lucky DOS binocular straps, and also qualifies for a personalized birding tour of one or more of Delaware's hotspots by one of our council members. Wouldn't you like to be King or Queen for a day?! Even if you have already joined for the year, but the Christmas spirit persuades you to upgrade, just let us know and we will subtract what you've already paid from the Life Member dues (\$500). Thank you!

DELMARVA ORNITHOLOGIST & RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

If you didn't receive a copy of this year's *Delmarva Ornithologist* journal with your December Flyer there is no need for tears. To reduce costs, the journal was only mailed out to people who have renewed their DOS subscription for the 2016-17 season, so if you would like a copy of this neat collection of interesting articles about local birds, simply renew your membership and I will be happy to send you one!

To renew your membership either mail in a check, hand over a check or cash at the December meeting, or renew using PayPal or a credit card through our web site (<http://www.dosbirds.org/join>). If you're already a member of DOS and you'd like to renew your membership, navigate to the DOS website and click on the user icon to the left of the search icon (pictured above in the square red box), enter your email and password, and then select "renew" from the menu on the subsequent page. You can either renew at the same membership level, or upgrade! From there, you'll be asked to checkout securely through PayPal. If you're interested in becoming a new member, you can sign up by clicking the word "join" at the top right corner of the DOS website, which will allow you to select your desired membership level.

Merry Christmas to all, and I wish you good birding in 2017!

Ian Stewart, *DOS Membership Chair*



UPCOMING *Field Trips*

All members and guests are welcome! Only trips that are noted are restricted to DOS members, due to space limitations. Participation in field trips is at your own risk. Please help our leaders and our environment by carpooling, especially on trips which include several locations. Half day trips will usually end before lunchtime unless otherwise noted. Please feel free to contact trip leaders if you have any questions. **Please Note:** Check our website (www.dosbirds.org), *The Flyer*, or the DEBirds Listserv in case of trip changes, cancellations, or trip additions.

*** = Locations Requiring Entrance Fees**
DD = Delaware Dunlins Recommended

Forster's Tern by Kelley Nunn



Sea Watch II

SAT • 10 December • Indian River Inlet

Leader: Anthony Gonzon & Chris Bennett

Join Anthony and Chris to ID and document seabirds such as Northern Gannet, scoters, loons, gulls, & cormorants, plus find a rarity or two. Check the forecast and dress appropriately. Meet at the Delaware Seashore State Park lot on the south side of the Indian River Inlet along the ocean at 8AM.

Trip At Indian River Inlet by Hannah Greenberg



List Head Start

SAT • 7 January • Multiple Sites

Leaders: Frank Rohrbacher

Join Frank to get an early start on your 2017 list! Visit various Delaware sites in the race to find as many year birds as possible. Full day. Meet Frank at the Park & Ride at Rte 299 & Rte 1 in Middletown, opposite Wawa at 7:30AM.



Midwinter Bird Walk

WED • 18 January • Alapocas Run SP

Leaders: Sally O'Byrne

Come out and get to know some of the birds that are at home in the woods & fields during winter! Meet Sally O'Byrne at the Blue Ball Barn, near the traffic circle on Rte. 141 at 8:30AM.

Long-tailed Ducks by Anthony Gonzon



Sea Watch III

SAT • 21 January • Indian River Inlet

Leader: Anthony Gonzon & Chris Bennett

Join Anthony and Chris to ID and document seabirds such as Northern Gannet, scoters, loons, gulls, & cormorants, plus find a rarity or two. Check the forecast and dress appropriately. Meet at the Delaware Seashore State Park lot on the south side of the Indian River Inlet along the ocean at 8AM.



All members and guests are welcome! Only trips that are noted are restricted to DOS members, due to space limitations. Participation in field trips is at your own risk. Please help our leaders and our environment by carpooling, especially on trips which include several locations. Half day trips will usually end before lunchtime unless otherwise noted. Please feel free to contact trip leaders if you have any questions. **Please Note:** Check our website (www.dosbirds.org), *The Flyer*, or the DEBirds Listserv in case of trip changes, cancellations, or trip additions.

*** = Locations Requiring Entrance Fees**

DD = Delaware Dunlins Recommended

DATE	EVENT	LEADER
SUN 2/5/2017 8:00a-7:00p	Owl Trip	Jim White
SAT 2/18/2017 8:00a-12:00p	Sea Watch IV	Anthony Gonzon & Chris Bennett
SUN 3/5/2017 8:00a-12:00p	Bayshore Wildlife Areas: Woodland Beach to Ted Harvey	Chris Bennett
SAT 3/11/2017 7:00a-2:00p	Stone Harbor/Avalon NJ	Bill Stewart
SAT 3/18/2017 8:00a-12:00p	Sea Watch V	Anthony Gonzon & Chris Bennett
SUN 3/19/2017 7:30a-11:30a	Marina Park & Susquehanna River, Port Deposit, MD	Joe Sebastiani
SAT 3/25/2017 1:00p-3:00p	Collection Study: Shorebird Workshop	Jean Woods
SAT 4/8/2017 7:00a	Ashton-Cooper Cross - Warren Tracts DNREC SWA	John Janowski
SUN 4/23/2017 8:00a-12:00p	Nanticoke Watershed	Anthony Gonzon & Eric Braun
TUE 4/25/2017 5:30p	NestWatch Training Workshop: Finding & Monitoring Bird Nests	Joe Sebastiani
SAT 5/6/2017 8:00a-12:00p	Birding with Mason & Dixon on WCC Preserve's Penn-Del Trail	Ian Stewart
SAT 5/6/2017 10:00p-1:00a	Rail Trip	Andy Ednie
TUE 5/9/2017 7:00a	Alapocas Woods	Sally O'Byrne
SUN 5/14/2016 8:00a	Mother's Day Walk at White Clay Creek SP	Bill Stewart, Judy Montgomery, Derek Stoner
SAT 5/20/2017 7:30a-12:00p	Bird Walk & Nest Box Checking at Coverdale	Ian Stewart
SAT 6/3/2017	Dragon Run Canoe/Kayak Adventure	Sally O'Byrne
SAT 6/10/2017 7:30a	Assawoman State Wildlife Area	John Janowski
SAT 6/17/2017 7:30a-11:00a	Fair Hill NRMA, Maryland	Bill Stewart
SAT 6/24/2017 8:30a-11:00a	Summer Beginner Bird Walk	Joe Sebastiani
SAT 7/22/2017 8:00a	Delaware Shorebirds	Bob Rufe
SAT 8/19/2017	Shorebird ID Workshop	Andy Urquhart & Eric Braun
SUN 8/20/2017 7:30a	More Delaware Shorebirds	Frank Rohrbacher
WED 9/6/2017 7:30a	Ashland Walk	Jim White
SAT 9/9/2017	Cape May	Derek Stoner & Judy Montgomery



MEMBER *Spotlight*

Get To Know Your DE Birder: Andy Urquhart

Name: Andy Urquhart

Hometown: I grew up in St. Albans, VT and lived in various locations over the years. I moved to Delaware in 1983 and lived there until I moved to Oxford, PA last year.

Occupation: I was a PhD engineer/scientist/manager. I retired in 1998 wanting to do volunteer work, which, although I did several different things, was particularly focused on my role as a co-founder and then president for many years of the Friends of White Clay Creek State Park.

Favorite Delaware birding site: I have many favorites – White Clay, Middle Run, Prime Hook, Cape Henlopen, Indian River Inlet, etc. - however, pressed to pick just one, it would have to be Bombay Hook.

Favorite type of Delaware birding: I particularly enjoy the challenging groups – shorebirds, fall warblers, sparrows, etc.

Most awesome Delaware bird sighting: That would have to be the European Golden Plover I found several years ago in Wick's potato field across Route 9 from Bombay Hook. At the time it was only the

second record for the lower 48 states.

Number 1 “bogey bird” in Delaware: I can't think of one. I guess I've been at it long enough to have seen most of the special birds that have shown up here. Also, I don't keep a state list, so I'm not obsessed with seeing every bird in Delaware.

What single thing would you do to improve birding in Delaware? I would consolidate or cross-reference all the different reporting platforms – DE-Birds, Facebook, e-bird, DE RBA – so that it would be easy to find out what was being seen in the state. This would also be especially helpful for visitors.

What is your funniest or most unusual Delaware birding incident? If I can answer a slightly different question, I would say that probably my most meaningful experience has been teaching the DOS/Bombay Hook Shorebird ID Workshop. Eric Braun has been my



Andy Urquhart

co-leader for many years. I hope we have been able to turn some people on to shorebirds as an interesting and beautiful group of birds.

Ian Stewart, *DOS Membership Chair*



WHAT'S THIS *Bird?*

What's This Bird?

Photo Taken In North America In
September | Possible Choices:

- A. Wood Thrush
- B. American Robin
- C. Hermit Thrush
- D. Swainson's Thrush
- E. Townsend's Solitaire
- F. Sage Thrasher

**For the answer, check under the
Field Trip Schedule on *Flyer* Page 9!**

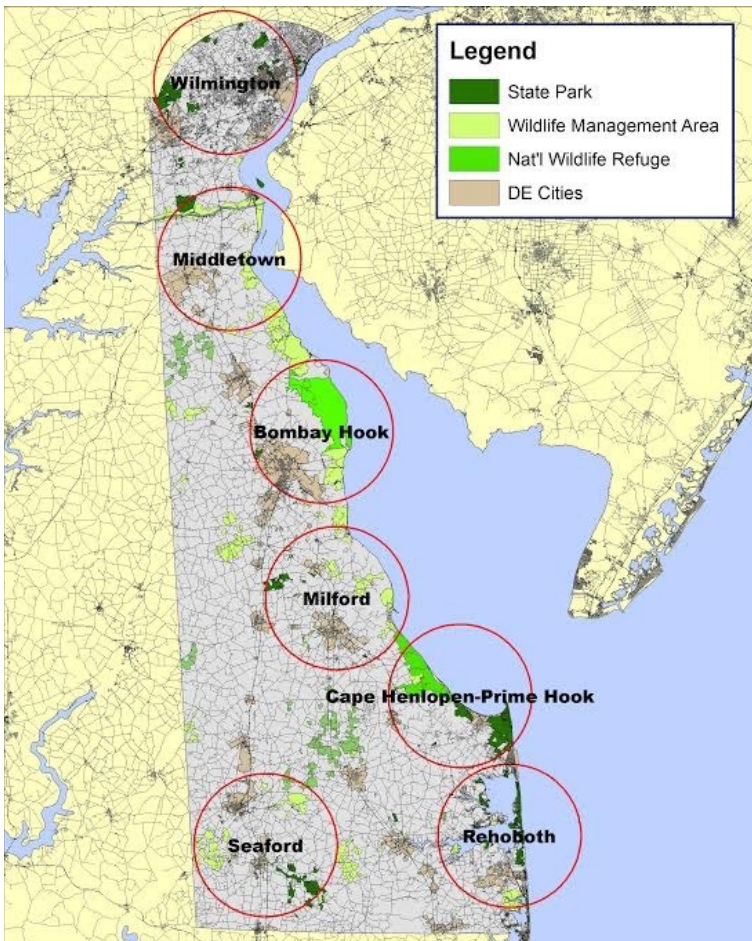
Thank you to DOS Member Nick Pulcinella for contributing another 'What's This Bird?' photo quiz!

CHRISTMAS BIRD *Counts!*



Send Us Your CBC Photos!

Email us at: Flyer@DOSBirds.org



Get Ready, CBC Season Is Coming!

The brisk north winds are starting to blow through and the long, dark, dreary days of winter will soon be upon us. But don't despair, the one good thing about winter - Christmas Bird Counts have been scheduled. The DOS sponsors five counts: Wilmington, Middletown, Bombay Hook, Rehoboth and Cape Henlopen/Prime Hook. All of the counts are looking for birders to participate. Contact the appropriate count compiler if you are interested in joining any or all of this year's Christmas counts. New birders are always welcome - just bring snacks and good cheer for the veterans.

The counts are free to all participants.

Jim White, *DOS Christmas Count Coordinator* (302) 593-9622

- 1 WILMINGTON - 17 DEC 2016**
Compiler: Jim White
Contact: (302) 593 - 9622
 or hylajwhite@aol.com
- 2 BOMBAY HOOK - 18 DEC 2016**
Compiler: Andy Ednie
Contact: (302) 792 - 9591
 or ednieap@verizon.net
- 3 MIDDLETOWN - 29 DEC 2016**
Compiler: Anthony Gonzon
Contact: (302) 598 - 5893
 or atgonzon@verizon.net
- 4 REHOBOTH - 31 DEC 2016**
Compiler: Sally O'Byrne
Contact: (302) 945 - 3236
 or salobyrne@gmail.com
- 5 CAPE HENLOPEN - 1 JAN 2017**
Compiler: Frank Rohrbacker
Contact: (302) 475 - 5771
 or rohrbaf@aol.com



White-crowned Sparrow by Mike Hudson



Canvasbacks by Mike Hudson



Fox Sparrow by Holly Merker



Yellow-headed Blackbird by Holly Merker

Get Out and Bird in November!

There is still plenty of time to play the game of “Find the ___ in the flock of ___.” Yellow-headed Blackbirds,

Ross’s Goose, Cackling Goose, and odd gulls, finches, and sparrows will continue through the winter. Keep your eye out for that one bird that doesn’t quite look like the others in the flock, like a Greater White-fronted Goose in a flock of Canadas.

In the yard and at the feeders:

Have you had a Red-breasted Nuthatch in your yard yet? Seems like everyone has! Purple Finches are being seen in numerous locations, and Pine Siskins can’t be far behind! Solitary Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Brown Creepers may also be seen skulking up and down tree trunks or at suet feeders at this time of year. Fox, Lincoln’s, and Vesper sparrow have all been

seen recently in the area. Will any Clay-colored sparrows turn up this winter? Get out and look!!!

On or around the water: It’s the season for wintering waterfowl! Inland freshwater ponds and reservoirs are great spots for Ring-necked ducks, Gadwall, Common and Hooded Mergansers, Red-head, and American Wigeon. Along the coast and brackish back bays, look for Atlantic Brant, Common and Red-throated Loons, Red-breasted Mergansers, Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneye, scoters, and grebes. As long as mild weather continues, you may see American Bitterns in marshy areas.

In the air: Alas, the hawk watches are over for the season. But keep your eyes to the skies—this is the time of year when

Rough-legged Hawks are occasionally reported, and Golden Eagles are still moving through. Winter is when you will see the highest numbers of Northern Harriers in this region. Look for their graceful, buoyant flight (and telltale white rump) as they float over marshy or grassland habitat looking for their next meal. Short-eared Owls can be found in the same habitat as harriers; look for them at dusk and dawn.

Listen for: If a flock of geese flew overhead and you couldn’t see them, would you be able to tell if they were Canada geese or Snow geese? Try learning the difference in their calls. Also, winter is a great time to find a “birding by ear” app that you like. Study up over the winter—spring will be here before you know it!

Lisa Smith, *DOS Council*



American Wigeon by Mike Hudson

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What's This Bird Photo Quiz Answer: American Robin

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Osprey by Holly Merker

Cape Henlopen by Kelley Nunn

CAPE HENLOPEN HAWK WATCH

Why do a long-term count of raptors? How many years does a Hawk Watch site need to be active to truly reflect what is going on with the migrants?

The Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch (CHHW) has data posted on the HMANA website dating to 2002, but it has hosted a professional full time counter since 2008. Since the hours of observation greatly increased and have been relatively stable since 2008, let's look at these years. Since 2008 the number of raptors seen has varied widely, from a low of 8428 (2012) to a high of 32,267 raptors seen in 2010. In fact, none of the past 5 years have matched the first 3 in terms of raptor numbers. How can there be such a difference in such a short period of time? Can it be due to weather, winds, counter abilities, some catastrophic event or something we haven't yet figured out?

In fact, 8 years is not enough time to get the full picture, but it is long enough to allow us to ask pertinent questions. What percentage of East Coast raptors fly down the coast and over Cape Henlopen and why do they take this route? Do raptors choose ridge lines or coasts or a simple Southern flight because of weath-

er conditions, food sources, or an internal compass? How much does a bountiful breeding year affect flight over one area vs. another? The true picture of raptor health and distribution requires input from all the surrounding hawk watches. We don't really know how many years of observation are required, but our yearly counting continues to build our knowledge.

This year (through October), the CHHW numbers are tracking about the same as 2015, which is below the total average. Ospreys have been seen in good numbers; the highest since that crazy high year 2010. Sharp-shinned hawks about about half of the usual numbers, and the Merlin and Peregrine numbers are above last year, but still below average.

November is the month where the weather can be very cold and windy, but that can also be when the late season, more unusual species such as Rough-legged Hawk and Golden Eagles fly over. Non-raptor migration over the ocean picks up and we see gannets, terns, eiders, ducks, and swans from our perch at the Hawkwatch platform. CHHW has also had rarities such as Red-necked Grebe and Western Grebe, Lapland Longspur, Cave Swallow, Red Crossbill, and Evening Grosbeaks in this latter part of the season.

Please come out and lend your eyes to the search for birds that are passing by. As we collect raptor data each year, we learn more about the mechanics and reasons for migration, and of course, we learn more about all that we don't know about the natural world.

Jen Ottinger, *2016 Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch Coordinator* & Sally O'Byrne, *Hawk Watch Oversight Committee*

ASHLAND HAWK WATCH

As I write this report, it is still early November, and we are only just starting to get a few painfully chilly, windy days. The anticipation of what rare bird will fly by next is really starting to ramp up. We are now up to 8 Golden Eagles migrating past the hill, with one spectacular sighting by Kim Steininger the first week-end of November. A group of birds was spotted, most noticeably, one of our now infamous Common Ravens. The raven seemed to be harassing a Bald Eagle and a Turkey Vulture, but upon closer inspection, that Turkey Vulture turned into an immature Golden Eagle! What an amazing combination of birds, and one I'm sure not many have had the luck of seeing together! We hope for many more to come, and I hope that you all have had the chance to witness the amazing migration spectacle up on the beautiful hill this fall.

One of the great things about the hill is that we not only get raptor migration, but we also get to witness passerine species move through. With the finch irruption, we've been treated to visits from many of these special migrants! Purple Finches have been common, almost outnumbering the House Finches. Black-capped Chickadees have been seen quite regularly, and Pine

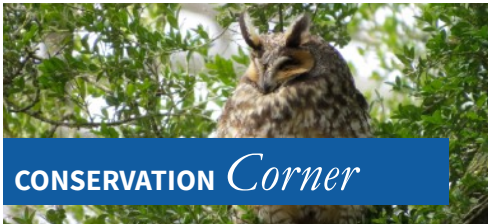
Red-shouldered Hawk by Derek Stoner



Siskins are making an appearance as well. I can only hope that by the time you are reading this, that we have had some incredible bird pop up, like an Evening Grosbeak or Red Crossbill. One can dream, right?

I want to give a very large thank you to all of the volunteers who have spent their time with me up on the hill so far, and who have weathered the intense sun in September, and sat with me in freezing cold weather in November. It certainly has been worth it and has helped make this migration season one of the best up on the Ashland Hawk Watch Hill!

Hannah Greenberg, *Ashland Hawk Watch Coordinator*



CONSERVATION *Corner*

DOS Conservation Updates!

DOS CONSERVATION AWARD

The DOS Conservation Committee is currently seeking nominations for the DOS Conservation Award. This award recognizes an individual or organization's outstanding contributions to the conservation of birds and their habitat in Delaware. Any DOS member may submit a nomination by preparing a one-page or less statement in support of the nominee and submitting it to Matt Sarver, Conservation Chair (mjsarver@gmail.com). The Conservation Committee will consider nominations at its December meeting.

IMPORTANT WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BILL IN PROGRESS

DOS is supporting House Bill 5650, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. This bill proposes to provide states with \$1.3 billion annually to implement State Wildlife Action Plans as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish and Wildlife Resources. Please consider encouraging your Representative to support this legislation. It is hoped that it will be reintroduced early in the next session.

DOS CONSERVATION SCIENCE GRANTS

For the second year, DOS will be offering a small grants program open to qualifying projects that address issues of applied ecology and bird conservation on the Delmarva Peninsula. A request for proposals will be sent out soon. If you know of anyone who may be interested in learning more about this program, please direct them to contact the Conservation Chair, Matt Sarver.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEMBER RECRUITMENT

The DOS Conservation Committee is actively seeking DOS Members who are interested in joining the committee and helping with several project-oriented tasks, including web page updates, tracking active conservation issues, etc. Please let Matt know if you are interested (mjsarver@gmail.com).

Matt Sarver, *DOS Conservation Chair*



DELMARVA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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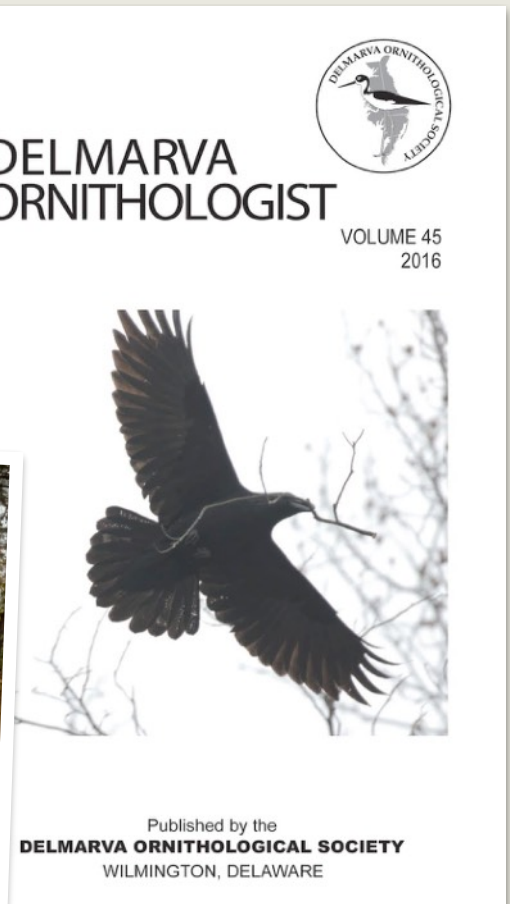


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Photos by Derek Stoner & Anthony Gonzon