

Volume 51 | Number 5



FEBRUARY 2020



Letter from the president

On September 19, the journal Science released a report entitled "Decline of the North American Avifauna," which documented a loss of nearly one-third of all North American birds since 1970¹. The report has been widely publicized by advocacy organizations and research partners like American Bird Conservancy and The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and even became the subject of a widely-shared op-ed in the New York Times that same day. Phrases like "Staggering losses", "a full-blown crisis" and "an unravelling ecosystem" abounded. Infographics showing declining curves and images of fractured grassland birds dissipating into the ether flooded social media.

Although the contents of the report confirmed many birders' suspicions of a deeply troubled ecosystem, the widening circle of awareness sparks a measure of hope. The same social media streams passing along the tragic news of three billion lost birds also contained many suggestions for action alongside the #BringBirdsBack. hashtag Even though I do not work in a lab or at a nature center, I had colleagues stopping me in the hallways to tell me how shocked they were to hear this news, and what steps they were planning to take to help.

One of seven actions promoted in the wake of the report includes the directive to "Do Citizen Science". Indeed, citizen science efforts played a role in the creation of the report itself -- observation data combined with data collected using weather radar allowed scientists to arrive at their population estimates for hundreds of species across North America. Birders have long been compiling carefully documented lists of species encountered, and innovative tools like eBird have allowed for wide scale aggregation of these observa-

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tions. Adam Smith, a study coauthor and biostatistician for Environment and Climate Change Canada, elaborates: "It's safe to say that in the natural world, birds are the best studied

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Follow DOS on Facebook!

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THANK YOU for renewing!!!

We appreciate all of you who have renewed you memberships. Memberships are the main source of revenue for the society and we depend on renewals to keep everything running smoothly.

Perhaps you're one our members who forgot to renew in the bustle of the holidays? It's not too late! See Page 5 for details on how to renew.

Happy 2020 everyone! Ian Stewart, DOS Membership Committee



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Delaware Ornithological Society

ELECTED OFFICERS

President	Meghann Matwichuk
Vice President	Anthony Gonzon
Treasurer	Jim Lewis
Secretary	Holly Merker
Council 2020	Carolyn D'Amico
Council 2021	Kate Hackett
Council 2022	John Skibicki

COMMITTEES

Publications Committee Jean Woods, Chair vacant, Flyer Editor Gene Hess, Delaware Ornithologist Editor

Conservation Matthew Sarver Membership lan Stewart

Christmas Bird

Count

Jim White

Citizen Science

Michael Moore

Field Trips Amy O'Neil Kathleen O'Neil

Programs Anthony Gonzon

Delaware Records Frank Rohrbacher

Webmaster Andrew Homsey



Delaware Bird Records Committee Frank Rohrbacher

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Delaware Ornithological Society is the promotion of bird watching and the study of birds, the advancement and dissemination of ornithological knowledge, and the conservation of birds and their environment.

Flyer Inquiries: flyer 'at' DOSbirds.org



FACEBOOK @DOSbirds



Wednesday, February 19 Birding South Florida with Chris Bennett 7 PM - 9:30 PM

South Florida has long been a magnet for birders. From the Gulf coast to the Keys, from cypress swamp to sawgrass prairie the southern end of the Florida Peninsula is home to wide array of subtropical animals and plants found nowhere else in North America. A visit there in winter also offers muchneeded relief from our normally bitter mid-Atlantic weather. Chris has been birding South Florida for years, even spending time working there. In this presentation learn about some of the great birds that make south Florida a birding destination for many! Learn about the area's unique sub-tropical ecosystems, some of the world-renowned as well as lesser known birding hotspots, and how eBird is an indispensable tool in planning a south Florida birding adventure.



Wednesday, March 18 Northern Bobwhite: A Species on the Edge 7 PM - 9:30 PM

Northern Bobwhite were once A common species that, for a multitude of reasons, has nearly disappeared from the Delaware landscape. The Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife is working to protect and restore one of the remaining wild quail populations in the state through monitoring and habitat management. New habitat management efforts have benefited this species and will hopefully help them rebound to improve their population throughout Delaware.

Craig Rhoads is the Program Manager for Habitat Conservation and Management with the Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife and is charged with overseeing the maintenance and operations of over 60,000 acres of State Wildlife Area. He received his BS in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from West Virginia University and MS in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Delaware and has worked with the Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife since 2006.

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 DOS Vice President, Anthony Gonzon at atgonzon@verizon.net.



Front Page Photo: White-throated Sparrow. Field Trip photos: Derek Stoner & Amy O'Neil.

(Continued from page 1)

group of wild life species. The data that exist for birds are just so incredible, from 50 years of the North American Breeding Bird Survey and the Christmas Bird Counters from 100 years ago, on to the eBirders of today."²

Not all species are suffering precipitous declines. Raptors, waterfowl, and game birds have expanded their populations. This too points to the importance of efforts by citizen scientists, even before the term was widely adopted to describe the behavior of observant birders. Conservation efforts initiated when population declines were identified by birders, hunters and scientists spurred actions to protect habitat and reduce pesticide use, allowing these species to begin to rebound.

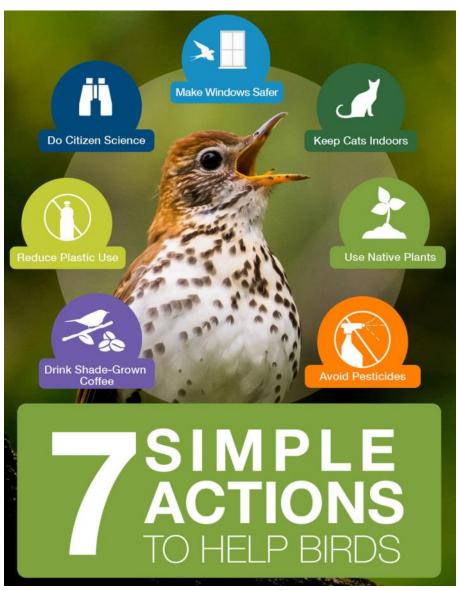
Thanks to our members' participation, DOS has a long track record of contributing towards citizen science initiatives:

- Coordinating Christmas Bird Counts throughout the state each year, mobilizing volunteers to census birds
- Organizing dozens of field trips annually across the region, producing eBird lists documenting sightings
- Facilitating two hawk watches at Ashland Nature Center and Cape Henlopen, contributing daily reports to the Hawk Migration Association of North America during migration
- Supporting Cornell's NestWatch program, offering training to volunteers who monitor songbird nest boxes during breeding season and submit their observations

Any birdwatcher knows that our avian neighbors are inextricably linked to their ecosystems and the other creatures who reside there. Tools like iNaturalist and programs like Herp-Mapper, discussed at a Spring 2019 DOS meeting, allow birders to contribute data on other animals and insects they encounter while birding. We invite you to engage in these and other efforts to help track our local and migrating bird populations – your data can direct efforts to help struggling populations.

If you are passionate about the power of these observations and their contribution to our scientific understanding, please consider joining our newly-formed Citizen Science Committee. Led by Michael Moore, retired Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Delaware, this Committee will be meeting to discuss how we can best leverage DOS members' birding activities to ensure that our avian neighbors are well-documented. Perhaps you have ideas for new projects, or simply a desire to ensure that our current efforts continue. Reach out to meghann.matwichuk 'at' gmail.com to volunteer!

Meghann Matwichuk, DOS President



DOS Needs You!

Volunteers are needed in the following areas:

- DOS Flyer editor Help keep our members up to date with what's going on in the Society. Experience with graphic layout, editing, & proofing helpful. Contact Jean Woods, jwoods65 'at' verizon.net.
- Breeding Bird Atlas fundraising Work is well advanced in writing up the results of the second Delaware Breeding Bird Atlas Project. Volunteers are needed to help raise funds to defray publication costs. Contact Jean Woods, jwoods65 'at' verizon.net.
- DOS Table at the April 4, Outdoor Activities Rally at the Roberts Farm (near Odessa) - 1-2 people to staff the table and talk to event attendees. Contact Ian Stewart, istew 'at' udel.edu.
- DOS Table at the Tri-State Bird Rescue Open House on May 3, 11 am to 4 pm. Contact Ian Stewart, istew 'at' udel.edu.
- The Citizen Science Committee is looking for ideas and members. Contact Meghann Matwichuk, meghann.matwichuk 'at' gmail.com.

Thanks to those of you who already volunteer with DOS!

¹ https://science.sciencemag.org/content/early/2019/09/18/ science.aaw1313

² Axelson, Gustave. "Vanishing: More Than 1 in 4 Birds Has Disappeared in the Last 50 Years", 9/19/19. https:// www.allaboutbirds.org/vanishing-1-in-4-birds-gone/



All members and guests are welcome! Only trips that are noted are restricted to DOS mem-bers, 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 loca-tions. 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), our Facebook page, or the DEBirds

Listserv in case of trip changes, cancellations, or trip additions.



Sea Watch II SAT 8 February Delaware Seashore SP Leaders: Anthony Gonzon & Chris Bennett

Join Anthony and Chris on the second of three Sea Watches to ID and document seabirds such as Northern Gannet, scoters, loons, gulls, & cormorants, plus find a rarity or two. This is a great way to learn your seabirds! Dress warmly. Limited walking on soft sand to get to viewing spot on beach. Portable toilets available at IRI. Half day. Meet at the Delaware Seashore State Park lot on the south side of Indian River Inlet along the ocean (Southeast Day Use Area) at 8 AM.



New Castle County Waterfowl Extravaganza SAT 14 March 7:30 am Location TBD Leader: Anthony Gonzon

Benefiting from overwintering and staging waterfowl from the southern regions, New Castle County can host heavy concentrations of ducks and other waterfowl in early March. Join in the fun as we experience this spectacle in both private and public habitats to enjoy some amazing views of what promises to be a memorable birding experience! Half day. Sign up with Anthony at atgonzon 'at' Verizon.net.

How many birds can you find?

23rd Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

birdcount.org



Sea Watch III SAT 28 March Delaware Seashore SP Leaders: Anthony Gonzon & Chris Bennett

Join Anthony and Chris for the last Sea Watch of the year to ID and document seabirds such as Northern Gannet, scoters, loons, gulls, & cormorants, plus maybe find a rarity or two. Great opportunity to learn and practice identifying seabirds in flight. Limited walking on soft sand to get to viewing spot on beach. Portable toilets available. DE state park fee in effect. Half day. Meet at the Delaware Seashore State Park lot on the south side of Indian River Inlet along the ocean (Southeast Day Use Area) at 8 AM.



DOS Membership News!

Membership Renewal

We are thrilled to see so many new people and their families joining DOS but the only way the society will grow is if our current members renew. **If you still haven't renewed your DOS membership for 2019-2020 please do so** as we depend on your dues to keep our society running smoothly. You can pay in person at our monthly indoor meetings using cash, check or a credit card, or you can mail in a check (payable to 'DOS') to DOS, PO Box 4247, Wilmington DE 19807.

Alternatively you can renew your membership online using our new <u>membership management system</u>. Your email address should already be in our system so if you click 'Forgot Username or password' and enter your email address you should get an email allowing you to reset both. Once you are logged into your account you can renew using the drop down menu in the 'Memberships' tab o the left hand column. Any problems just drop me a line at istew 'at' udel.edu and we will figure it out.

If you're still awash with post-Holiday Cheer please consider renewing at a higher membership level. If you renew at the Black-necked Stilt (\$100) or Peregrine (\$200) levels you qualify for a free DOS cap or binocular strap! And if you're feeling especially munificent, how about taking the plunge and joining the hallowed ranks of our DOS Life Members (\$500)? This comes with a free cap and strap and means you never have to worry about dues payments or be troubled with reminder e-mails for the rest of your life!

Ian Stewart, DOS Membership Committee

Call for Fellows and Honorary Members

It's that time of year again when we start accepting nominations for DOS Fellows and Honorary Members! Nominations for either category can be submitted to me at istew 'at' udel.edu.

Nominees for DOS Fellow must be active members of at least two years standing who have made a significant contribution to the affairs of the Society, preferably as a Committee or Council member, and/or to the ornithology of the greater Delaware area. Nominees for Honorary Membership should be of national prominence in the field of ornithology or a closely related field and have been of service to the Society.



Carolyn A. & family, Townsend DE

Karen B. & family, Newark DE

> Mary B., Newark DE

Cynthia B. & family, Landenberg PA

Peggy C., Pt Pleasant Beach NJ

Nancy D. & family, Laurel DE

Bernard F., Silver Springs MD

Kyle G. & family, Newark DE

Jessica H., Pt Pleasant Beach NJ

Patricia J-H. & family, Newark DE Sally & Dave L., Hockessin DE

Bob M. & family, Wilmington DE

Brian M. & family, Dover DE

Janet & Jon P., Georgetown DE

> Ann P., Dover DE

Hazel & Bob S., Milford DE

Shamus W., West Chester PA

Kathleen J., Wilmington DE

Lori S., Greenville DE

> Cynthia W, Bear DE

Deborah W., Greenwood DE



Did you miss the Christmas Bird Count roundup at the January meeting? Unfortunately, the chili and other goodies are all gone but the presentations are now all posted on the DOS website: Click this <u>link</u>. Enjoy!



Conservation Science Grants-Apply Now



DOS CONSERVATION SCIENCE GRANTS

The Delaware Ornithological Society (DOS) Conservation Science Grants support innovative investigations into bird conservation challenges. DOS encourages projects with a strong emphasis on species and habitat conservation and management.

We also are interested in projects that greatly enhance our understanding of the conservation requirements of bird

species of conservation concern. To be eligible for funding, projects must be located within the state of Delaware or within the Delaware Estuary in Pennsylvania or New Jersey (see <u>www.delawareestuary.org/interactive-estuary-map/</u>). Projects in adjacent areas with results that are transferable to this focus area may be considered at the discretion of the committee (please contact us before submitting). Grants are reviewed annually by a grant review committee appointed by the DOS Conservation Chair.

This grant program is funded using a portion of the money raised by the Delaware Bird-a-Thon.

ELIGIBILITY — Open to non-profit organizations; university -affiliated researchers, including graduate students; and to qualified unaffiliated researchers.

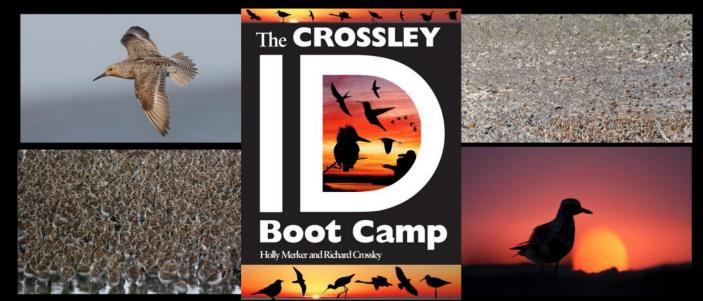
SIZE OF GRANTS — Not to exceed \$3,000

TIMELINE — Applications must be received by March 15, 2020.

HOW TO APPLY — Application materials can be found at https://www.dosbirds.org/dos-conservation-science-grants/

The Shorebird ID Boot Camp . May 19-21. 2020. Lewes

Join us for a couple days of intensive shorebird ID training, where we'll get down and dirty with the birds in the sand. Learn to ID shorebirds like you've always wanted to. This unique opportunity is brought to you by Richard Crossley, co-author of *The Shorebird Guide*, and educator and professional birding guide, Holly Merker. For more information visit: <u>https://www.thecrossleyidbootcamp.com/shorebird-id-boot-camp</u>



The Delaware Bay is the epicenter of shorebird migration along the eastern seaboard in late May. Witness unparalleled spectacles of bird migration. Learn new techniques for ID \$525 double occupancy / \$625 single – pricing includes lodging, meals, and instruction



Sorting it Out -Public Lands in Delaware

With all the great wild places and open spaces in Delaware, choosing where to go birding on a given day can be a tough but fun decision. Trying to figure out what fee you might need to pay shouldn't be as difficult. This guide might help you understand the different areas in Delaware and the fees involved. By Lisa Smith

Delaware State Parks

Delaware has 17 state parks, and many of them are great birding sites, like Delaware Seashore (this includes Indian River Inlet and Burton's Island), Cape Henlopen, Brandywine Creek, Trap Pond, Killens Pond, Lums Pond, Bellevue, and White Clay Creek. Delaware state parks are managed by DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation.

For a list of the parks with links to each site, click <u>here</u>.

Fees are in effect at the Delaware state parks from March 1- November 30. Fees vary based on the park location and whether your vehicle is registered in Delaware or is out of state.

If you frequently find yourself at a Delaware state park, you might want to <u>purchase an annual pass</u> so you don't have to fiddle with the fee envelopes at each park.

Delaware State Parks

We're saving a place for you

National Wildlife Refuges

Delaware has two national wildlife refuges: Bombay Hook and Prime Hook, and they are managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). They charge \$4 per car per day, year round.

<u>Buy a duck stamp</u> for \$25 and enjoy free entry into ANY national wildlife refuge. Duck stamps are issued annually in June and are good for one year. Purchase of the duck stamp also helps support habitat conservation.

Even better, we encourage birders to <u>purchase through</u> <u>the American Birding Association</u> so that the impact birders have on conservation can be measured through these stamp sales.

Nearby refuges include John Heinz (PA), Blackwater (MD), Eastern Neck (MD), and Edwin B. Forsythe (NJ). Use your duck stamp to visit all of them!



State Wildlife Areas.

Neither parks nor refuges, these are, as the name implies, wildlife areas managed by the state of Delaware (DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife). They are multi-use areas, so hunting, birding, and hiking may occur in these areas.

If you want to go birding in a State Wildlife Area, you must <u>purchase a Conservation Access Pass</u> for your vehicle. They are available as annual passes (July 1 through June 30) or as 3-day passes (good for three consecutive days). Fees vary by vehicle registration (DE versus out of state).

Popular State Wildlife Areas for birding include Augustine Wildlife Area (including Ashton Tract & Port Penn tract), Little Creek, Ted Harvey, Woodland Beach, and Cedar Swamp.

A Conservation Access Pass is *not required* to access the C&D Canal Conservation Area, including the Michael N. Castle Trail.



Other popular birding places:

State Forests are managed by the Forest Service in Delaware's Department of Agriculture. There is **no fee** for entry into state forests. Blackbird State Forest and Redden State Forest are great birding spots.

County parks generally do not require a fee for entry. Popular county parks for birding include Middle Run Valley and Iron Hill.

Charles E. Price Memorial Park at Levels Road is owned and managed by the town of Middletown. There is **no fee** for entry at this park.

Ashland Nature Center and the **DuPont Environmental Education Center** at the Russell W. Peterson Urban Wildlife Refuge on Wilmington's Riverfront are both managed by Delaware Nature Society. There is no fee to walk on the trails, but <u>membership to DNS</u> is strongly encouraged to support maintaining these wild areas.

DuPont Nature Center at Mispillion Harbor Reserve is owned and managed by DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife. There is **no fee** to visit the nature center or to bird around it.





Delaware has two hawk watches, and the difference in the birds that are counted reflect the geography of their locations. Cape Henlopen is located on the coast at the confluence of the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic ocean and captures the birds that are migrating down the coast, either across the Delaware Bay from New Jersey or that are traveling south along the Delaware Bay shoreline. The Ashland hawk watch is a Piedmont site and the birds tend to follow the ridge lines of the piedmont hills that are oriented NW/SE. To generalize, the birds of the Piedmont include more buteos and the birds of the Coast include more falcons and Ospreys.

This year, there were some changes from the average flights of the past decade. Ashland had the lowest Broadwing Hawk flight ever local birders waited in vain for that perfect September day when massive kettles of Broadwings would fly over. In the end, only 627 were counted, vastly lower than the average of 5,697. Cape Henlopen has never had a large Broadwing flight, but this year only recorded 2 for the season. It appeared that this year, the Broadwings chose to fly further to the west - the Midwest flight was strong.

Ashland made up for the their low

Broadwing count, however, by having their largest vulture flight; Black Vultures numbered 2885, well above the seasonal average of 715 and 9,357 Turkey Vultures were counted, blasting their average of 1.675. In fact, over half of all the season's migrants were Turkey Vultures. Cape Henlopen had a Turkey Vulture count of 1209, which is about the average, so

the big flight appeared to be a Piedmont phenomena. Vultures are notoriously difficult to count, since it can be hard to tell which ones are migrating. However, both site counters have years of experience at their sites, and are confident now in judging which vultures are simply hanging around and which ones are moving.

2019 was a slow raptor year for Cape Henlopen, and it had the lowest number (5,934) of seasonal migrants ever recorded. Of the 16 species counted, 4 species composed 72.0 % of all raptors recorded: Osprey (31.4%,n=1,832), Turkey Vulture (20.7%, n=1,209), Sharp-shinned Hawk (12.4%, n=723) and Bald Eagle (7.5%, n=435). The lower count was probably due to weather patterns. It

> unseasonably was warm in September and October, so raptors further North didn't feel the push to move south for prey. In addition, along the coast many of the autumn days were dominated by east, south, southeast, or southwest winds, and a few days of very high wind - all those conditions not conducive for mi

gration. Later in the season when the days were cooler, Delaware had several days of heavy rain in October and November.



Ashland had a total of 18,041 migrants counted, which is the second highest count in the 13 years of counting - quite remarkable since Broadwings usually make up the highest number, and this year they had very few. Of the 14 species counted, seven species were below average and seven species above.

Many many thanks to both of our superb site counters; Jen Ottinger at Cape Henlopen and David Brown at Ashland. Both are welcoming and share their knowledge generously, and both are extremely skilled at identifying birds flying past. Many thanks as well to the many volunteers who give their time, good eyes, and good company; a special shout-out to Sue Gruver who has been steadfast in her dedication to the Cape Henlopen Hawkwatch.



Sally O'Byrne

Hawk watch coordinator, DOS

Jen Ottinger

Cape Henlopen Hawkwatch counter/ compiler

David Brown

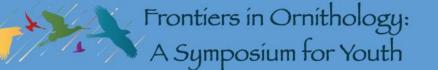
Ashland Hawkwatch counter/ compiler



Thank you for your support!

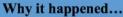
DOS Council wanted to share with our members the following 'thank you' from our friends with the Frontiers in Ornithology Symposium, who held their first gathering for youths interested in careers in conservation and ornithology last September at Ashland Nature Center in Hockessin, Delaware. Thanks to our members' support, DOS was able to play a key role as the lead sponsoring organization for this successful event. Additionally, DOS members (including co-founders Holly Merker and Bill Stewart as well as many of the Symposium's volunteers) helped plan the event and made sure all went off without a hitch. With your continued support, we look forward to helping with this important effort in 2020 and into the future!

For an update on plans for the 2020 symposium (including an announcement of the Delaware-based Keynote speaker!), be sure to check the Frontiers website: <u>https://www.frontiers-in-ornithology.org/</u>



How it started...

As with many great visions that come to fruition, Frontiers in Ornithology was hatched on a cocktail napkin one evening during the 2018 American Birding Expo. The founding members happened to cross paths at the event and discovered we share a common passion to encourage and help future conservationists take flight.



There are many enthusiastic and motivated youth and young adults across the nation looking for opportunities that will enable them to make future contributions in conservation science. More than 125 youth (and supportive parents/mentors) from 14 states attended the symposium in 2019.

What made it possible...

The symposium became a reality due to the thirty-five sponsors, 18 speakers, and over twenty volunteers that understand the importance of investing in the next generation. We could not have done it with out your generous contributions and

willingness to share your time and talent with symposium participants.





We hope you will consider sponsoring the next symposium scheduled for September 26, 2020 at the Ashland Nature Center.



Would you like to see your photo in *The Flyer*?

It's easy! Just send them to flyer 'at' dosbirds.org. Make sure you include your full name so we can credit you.

Now that the days are getting longer we're looking for some spring birds.

Thanks!



DELAWARE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 4247 WILMINGTON DE 19807



Join Joe in Southeast Arizona!

Southeast Arizona Birding & Wildlife May 2 - 10, 2020

During this trip, we will be visiting one of my favorite places on earth...the "Sky Islands" of southeastern Arizona, in search of birds and wildlife. The mountains rise above the desert floor, each life-zone brimming with life. This trip will be much like visiting Mexico, the Rocky Mountains, and Canada all in one small area. Enjoy fascinating saguaro cactus desert, mountain forests cloaked in pine and oak, desert grasslands and streams. I look forward to returning for the 5th time to this wonderful area where I spent a year of my life as a child, and the location where my interest in nature became an obsession. Come be inspired with me. - *Joe Sebastiani, Tour Leader and Ashland Nature Center Manager*



Find out more at: <u>www.delawarenaturesociety.org/</u> <u>activities/eco-tours/</u>

Wild Birds Unlimited —Your backyard bird feeding specialist—



DOS Members Receive 10% Off Non bird food Items Every Day! *

*Sale price can not be used on optics or gift cards. No other discounts will be applied. Not good on previous purchases.



Wild Birds Unlimited is now recycling their plastic seed bags!

By working with non-profit Eco Plastic Products of Delaware, WBU seed bags can be recycled and remade into park benches and picnic tables.

> Lancaster Pike & Yorklyn Road Hockessin, DE (302) 239 - 9071 www.wbu.com/hockessin