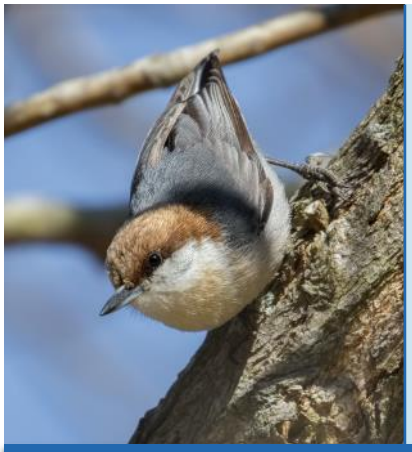

NEWSLETTER OF THE DELAWARE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The flyer

Volume 52 | Number 4 December 2020

Letter FROM THE PRESIDENT

As if 2020 were not bad enough, now we must endure an invasion! Luckily, this is the kind of invasion that birders hope for – a winter finch invasion. For those who do not know, in most years winter finches remain in the boreal regions, but every few years food crops fail, driving the birds south.

The first wave to hit consisted of Pine Siskins, which appeared in unprecedented numbers across the country. Hundreds of ravenous Siskins descended on feeders and people even started complaining about how often they had to refill their feeders!

This was followed by the appearance of the winter finch that Delaware birders dream about. Everyone's dreams came true when spectacular Evening Grosbeaks started appearing at feeders across the state. It has been many years since this bird has been seen in numbers in Delaware. While still scarce, the ones that have appeared have provided a life bird for many and have caused others (me!) to be glued to their windows hoping for some to appear at their feeder.

There have also been reports of Red Crossbills, Common Redpoll, many Purple Finches and Red-breasted Nuthatches. And as of this writing it is only November so winter could be epic. Christmas Count compilers have their fingers crossed.

This will be the last printed Flyer that DOS produces. We understand that many people enjoy and depend on the printed edition. However, we also recognize that there is a much larger and growing number of people who use their phone as their primary device. The PDF version of the Flyer is hard to read on a phone so many people are unable to read the flyer. We are converting to a phone-compatible electronic Flyer so those people can enjoy it. This new flyer can be read on any device: phone, tablet, or computer. We hope you enjoy it and believe we will be able to reach many more people with this format.

- Mike Moore, DOS President

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Follow DOS on Facebook!

Jim White receives the 2020 DOS Conservation Award!

Jim was presented this award during our November meeting. Read more on pages 10 & 11.

Pine siskin by Katie Bird.

DEC 2020 | VOLUME 52 | NUMBER 4

Delaware Ornithological Society

ELECTED OFFICERS

President Michael Moore
Vice President Mike Hudson
Treasurer Jim Lewis
Secretary Holly Merker
Council 2021 Kate Hackett
Council 2022 John Skibicki
Council 2023 Scott Northey

COMMITTEES

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

Conservation
Matthew Sarver

Membership
Meghann Matwichuk

Field Trips
Carolyn D'Amico

Christmas Bird Count
Jim White

Programs
Anthony Gonzon

Citizen Science
Anthony Gonzon

Delaware Records
Frank Rohrbacher

Hawk watch
Sally O'Byrne

Webmaster
Andrew Homsey

Delaware Bird Records Committee
Frank Rohrbacher

Youth Birding
Jessica Shahan

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

ONLINE
DOSbirds.org

FACEBOOK
@DOSbirds

Next Meeting:
Wednesday,
Dec 16th

"By DOS, for DOS!"

NOTE:

This meeting will be hosted online using ZOOM. Please visit the DOS website or Facebook for details on accessing the meeting.

Join us for our annual tradition, "By DOS for DOS", where the members are the invited guest speakers!

Join us for a series of mini-presentations, each one from a DOS member. Learn about how weather impacts migration, the joy of a good yard list, and revisit some of Delaware's most memorable birding moments!

A Zoom link will be provided at least a week before the meeting.

Monthly Meetings:

Currently we are meeting virtually to abide by government recommendations. During the health emergency, all DOS monthly meetings will be held remotely on Zoom, the computer conference software. Participate in the meeting on your computer, tablet or even phone from the safety of your home. Details will be sent to all members about how to join the meeting. Non-members also welcome.

Front Page Header: Brown-headed nuthatch by Mike Moore.
Header Photo: Canvasback by Mike Moore.

DOS Commitment to Inclusion

DOS Council is pleased to share our newly adopted statement of inclusivity with you. Since this statement was developed with DOS's long-held mission in mind, both are printed below:

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.

Inclusivity Statement:
The Delaware Ornithological Society is committed to attracting and engaging a diverse membership that encourages people of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, physical abilities, religions, political beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds to embrace birding, nature, and conservation.

By prioritizing inclusivity and celebrating diversity as strength, DOS endeavors to promote a greater understanding of nature and of each other. Appreciating nature is very personal and DOS believes those who love birds will work to protect them and their habitats. Therefore it is imperative to the organization's mission that DOS strives to include every person and every community in our efforts to have a healthy natural world.

Putting these ideals in action must be deliberative -- inclusivity doesn't happen by itself. DOS commits to taking actions that will translate our words into positive change, including inviting, involving, and welcoming all people without discrimination into our organization.

DOS Council believes that diversification of our membership is important for many reasons, including the sustainability of our organization. We look forward to developing activities and initiatives that will appeal to diverse participants and support those who seek to enjoy the many rewarding activities related to birding in Delaware.

We would love to hear from our membership: What kinds of activities would you like to see DOS support to engage a broader audience? Are there specific communities you would like to help DOS serve? There are many possibilities, and we need your help to put them into action! Please reach out to membership@dosbirds.org and let us know what you think!

Save the Dates for DOS Meetings:

Wed, December 16
Wed, January 20
Wed, February 17

Membership Header: Wood duck fledglings by Kim Steininger
Sanderling by Mike Moore.

Member Spotlight: Mike Moore

In 2019, Mike Moore joined DOS Council as our first Citizen Science Chair. He's since stepped up to take on the role of DOS President and has accomplished much during the first months of his tenure. Mike is a retired Biology professor who has worked at Arizona State University and the University of Delaware, before retiring in 2019. He worked at the Manomet Bird Observatory in Massachusetts while in college and completed a PhD in Zoology at the University of Washington on White-crowned Sparrow breeding behavior and endocrinology.

Mike has published nearly 100 papers in scientific journals on birds and lizards. Now that he's retired, he spends his time birding, dragon hunting (looking for dragonflies) and working on various web development projects related to citizen science.

How long have you been a DOS member? I joined DOS when I moved to Delaware from Arizona in 2009. The first birder I met here was Frank Rohrbacher who advised me to become a life member of DOS as soon as possible and that is what I did. Being a life member is a great way to support the organization and I love never having to worry about paying dues.

What is the best thing about being a part of DOS? The people. It has been a great way to connect with others and become part of the birding community in Delaware.

Do you have a 'spark' bird? It was a foggy morning when I was 11 years old. I was in my bedroom and heard a loud noise. I looked out the window and there on a pine tree 10 feet away was a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers hammering loudly. I had no idea that such a

creature existed and that it lived in my backyard. I became determined to find out more about the birds around me.

What is your favorite bird and why? The Blue Jay has always been my favorite bird for its combination of personality, beauty, and intelligence. We take them for granted but they are unique and complex birds. They have a language with a vocabulary of at least 50

Membership Header: Wood duck fledglings by Kim Steininger.
Pileated woodpecker and blue jay by Mike Moore

words. They also have a complex, cooperative society. For example, they work together to drive owls from their territory. I used to live near a spot where Long-eared Owls roosted and always found the owl with the help of mobbing Blue Jays. Once the owl had enough, it would fly off into the forest. The jays would then fan out as a group and search the forest, calling to each other periodically. Once a jay relocated the owl, it would start screaming and I would run to the spot to get another look at the owl. This was repeated until the owl left that group's territory. Finally, Blue Jays have unique breeding behavior. We think of them as noisy and conspicuous but during the breeding season they become completely silent and almost are almost invisible. This is the opposite of most birds which are most conspicuous when they are breeding.

Do you have a favorite birding patch? Here in Delaware, it is the recently opened Ashton Tract of the Augustine Wildlife Management Area. It is a short drive for me, has a great variety of birds and habitats and already an impressive list of rarities including Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Little Egret, Clay-colored Sparrow, Sandhill Crane, White Pelican, Ruff, Eurasian Green-winged Teal and others.

Do you have a favorite book about birds? The book Wild America by Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher. Fisher was a British naturalist who made his first trip to the US in 1953. He joined Peterson as they made a continent spanning trip to see as much of America's birdlife as possible. Essentially it was the first Big Year. You get to see all of America's greatest birding hotspots as they existed in 1953 through the eyes of two great naturalists.

When is your favorite time of year to bird? As I have written in the Flyer, October and November are rarity season and I love looking

for and chasing rarities. I also love the identification challenges presented by fall warblers and sparrows. The weather is often great and there are few bugs. What's not to love?

Do you have a favorite 'type' of birding? (e.g. hawk watching, backyard birding, shore-birding, etc.) My favorite birding by far is pelagic birding. The common birds you see on a pelagic trip, like shearwaters, storm-petrels and jaegers, are very different from birds you normally see from land. But what really makes it exciting is the possibility that something

(Continued on page 12)

Above right: Mike Moore holding a dragonfly.

Hawk Watch Season Round Up

Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch (CHHW)

The 2020 season is now over, and the raptors that passed over the dunes at Cape Henlopen are now at their favorite wintering locations. Some presumably no further south than the Carolinas and some hunting the plains of Patagonia or the coasts of Venezuela. Both Delaware birders and wildlife biologists have learned much about raptor migration since the advent of the two hawk watches in Delaware. Delaware birders' knowledge of raptors has grown exponentially, both in identification skills and Delaware's importance in their migration.

The Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch has existed since 1995, but the fall season has been co-sponsored by DOS and Delaware's DFW since 2008, and has had professional, consistent, protocoled observations since that time. Cape Henlopen's observations have taught us quite a few things - the species of birds that prefer a coastal route, the ages of birds that tend to use the coast; and comparing the two Delaware hawk watches has allowed us to trace a coastal versus Piedmont route. The CHHW has also taught us how few birds travel directly from Cape May to Cape Henlopen even though that may be the intuitive route to us humans.

Yearly trends, decade-long trends, and multi-decade trends teach us much about bird populations. Without long term raptor monitoring, conservation scientists wouldn't

have known the extent of the DDT devastation, and we wouldn't have been able to document the remarkable comeback of Peregrines, Ospreys, and Bald Eagles. Today's monitoring at Cape Henlopen by Jen Ottinger will document current raptor population health as Delaware experiences climate change in the coming decades.

The work at the Cape Henlopen hawk watch has been a gift to Delaware birders for all it has taught us. Delaware hawk watch volunteers have helped be a part of an international initiative. And Delaware's Fish and Wildlife biologists will have this local information available to them when decisions need to be made now and in the future. Thanks to all DOS members who have been part of the Cape Henlopen hawk watch - See you in September 2021!

- Sally O'Byrne & Jen Ottinger

(Continued on page 7)

Header: Cape Henlopen Hawk Watch by Anthony Gonzon.
Left: Jen Ottinger, Right: David Brown.

Ashland Hawk Watch (AHW)

The Ashland Hawk Watch completed its fourteenth season at the end of November. The season started with low Broad-winged Hawk numbers but improved from there. Northern Harriers had the highest total in 10 years. Falcon totals were up for all three species. Bald Eagle and Turkey Vulture numbers were high again.

One of my personal highlights of the season was seeing multiple flocks of Evening Grosbeaks fly past the hawk watch and having so many Pine Siskins at the feeders. Thanks to all the volunteers and visitors who helped make it a great season!

- David Brown

Two bald eagles fight mid-air over the Ashland Hawk Watch on 7 November 2020.

Top: Bald eagles by David Brown.
Bottom: Red-tailed hawk by Michael Moore.

Red Knot Youth Birders

WANTED:
Functional Binoculars

The Red Knot Youth Birders are looking for donations of gently used, functional binoculars for use in upcoming youth birding programs. Having access to binoculars helps youth birders get up close and personal with birds, which fosters an even greater love of birding in the future. Any brands or models are appreciated, but optics must be able to focus clearly and be scratch-free. Please email redknotyouthbirders@gmail.com to arrange for donation."

Binoculars by Katie Bird.

Have you updated your DOS email preferences?

Be sure to double check your email settings as we transition to a totally digital Flyer. Make sure you're signed up to receive your monthly DOS news! Check them by logging in to your DOS account and navigate to "Update My Profile" in the drop down menu. Click "Submit" to save changes.

Bird ID Pop Quiz! What species are these? See the answer on page 15. Photo by Katie Bird.

Do you have a good quiz photo? Send it to flyer@dosbirds.org.

Christmas Bird Count Schedule

It has been a tough year to say the least, but we do have something to look forward to – the DOS Christmas Bird Counts. Thanks to our amazing compilers we are going ahead with all six counts. We will be following social distance protocols set forth by National Audubon during the counts. Count compilers will inform their participants about these protocols. However, if you are interested go to the Audubon CBC web page for details.

The Delaware Ornithological Society sponsors six counts– Wilmington, Middletown, Bombay Hook, Rehoboth, Cape Henlopen/Prime Hook and Milford. All 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.

The counts are free to all participants.

Wilmington –19 December 2020 – Compiler Jim White hylajwhite@aol.com

Bombay Hook – 20 December 2020 – Compiler Andy Ednie ednieap@verizon.net

Rehoboth –2 January 2021 – Compiler Sally O'Byrne salobyrne@gmail.com

Cape Henlopen/Prime Hook- 3 January 2021 - Compiler Bruce Peterjohn bpeterjohn@verizon.net

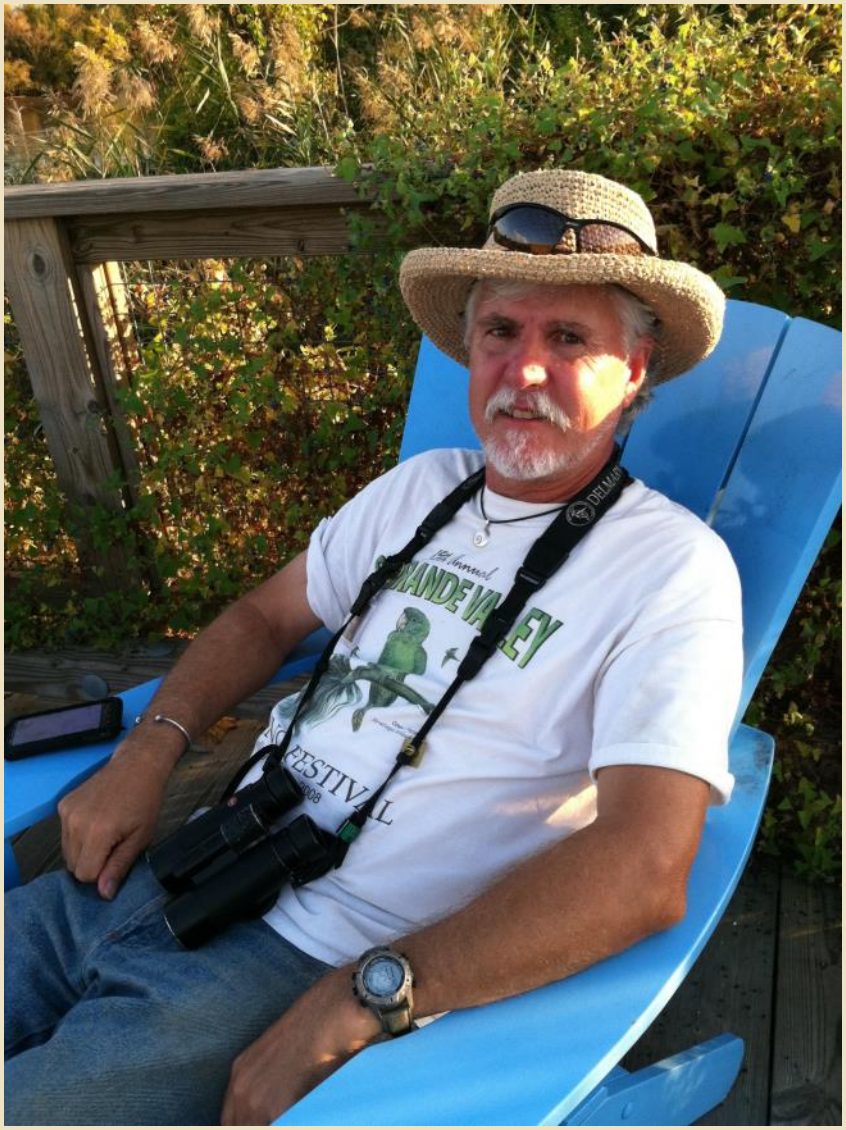
Milford – 26 December 2020 – Compiler Chris Bennett CPB2564@gmail.com

Middletown – 27 December 2021 – Compiler Anthony Gonzon atgonzon@verizon.net

Jim White, DOS Christmas Count Coordinator HylaJWhite@aol.com

Red knot header by Jean Woods.
Long-tailed ducks and purple sandpiper by Mike Moore.

2020 Conservation Award: Jim White



The DOS Conservation Committee recognizes a person or group annually who has made a significant contribution to the furtherance of environmental conservation in Delaware. This year we are pleased to announce this overdue award to Jim White in recognition of his outstanding leadership and contributions to conservation in Delaware.

Jim has been an active member of DOS for nearly 40 years, serving as President 1998/99, coordinating the annual Christmas Bird Counts for many years, serving on the Delaware Records Committee, and leading field trips including the ever-popular Owl Trip each February. He is known to many of us for his vast knowledge of natural history, particularly herps (amphibians and reptiles) and birds, and was co-author of Amphibians and Reptiles of Delmarva (along with Amy W. White). However, Jim's positive impact on conservation of natural resources in the region extends far beyond this.

For the past 30 years Jim has headed up the Delaware Nature Society's (DNS) department of Land and Biodiversity Management. He oversees the management of over 1500 acres of land in a wide variety of habitats, focusing efforts on preserving biodiversity and making land management decisions based on best management practices. Under Jim's oversight, DNS created a Land and Biodiversity Committee made up of land managers from Longwood Gardens, Winterthur Museum, Mount Cuba Center, Flint Woods Preserve, the Brandywine Conservancy, Delaware Wildlands, and Delaware State Parks. Through that committee, information and knowledge is shared, resulting in each of those institutions

Above left: Jim at the Big Sit at DEEC in 2015.

revising their land management plans to include natural lands. His work has vastly increased natural land management actions and knowledge throughout the state of Delaware and in nearby states.

Jim also represents DNS on several of the Governor's conservation councils and commissions, including the Natural Areas Advisory Council, State Parks Advisory Council, and the Native Species Commission, which he chairs. He continues to be a voice for conservation of Delaware's biodiversity and has worked for birder and wildlife enthusiast access throughout Delaware.

- Sally O'Byrne, on behalf of the DOS Conservation Committee

Above right: Jim on a winter raptor survey.

Member Spotlight Continued

(Continued from page 5)

impossibly rare from another hemisphere is just over the next wave. I have been lucky enough to see some pretty rare birds on pelagic trips like Cook's Petrel and Trindade Petrel, but it is the possibility that makes the trips so exciting. Sadly, I no longer have the stamina for 12 hours on a small boat, but I have lots of great memories of past trips.

What's the farthest you've traveled to bird or see a particular bird? I assume you mean the craziest one-day trip. Probably when I was 17 and living in SE Massachusetts. A Hawk Owl turned up in far northern New Hampshire. I drove up in the family car with a birding friend to see it (still the only Hawk Owl I have ever seen). After we got our fill of the Hawk Owl, my friend suggested we drive to far NW Massachusetts to see the Great Gray Owl that had been present there most of the winter. We had both seen it already, but who gets tired of Great Gray Owl? So, we traveled there and found the Great Gray, ticking both these rare boreal owls in one day. The next morning, I discovered my father had been checking the odometer whenever I borrowed the car when he asked, "Did you really drive 550 miles yesterday?" However, I did not get into too much trouble, because I think he realized if that was the worst thing his 17-year old son did, then he was pretty lucky.

Share a favorite bird fact. When I was an intern at Manomet Bird Observatory in Massachusetts in the 1970's, I learned about Blackpoll Warbler migration. When we banded Blackpolls in the spring, they were near the end of their migration and weighed about 12 grams. In the fall, we would catch birds weighing nearly 30 grams! That is about 8 grams of bird and 22 grams of fat. When held for banding, they felt like little bags of Jello. They need this fat to fuel their incredible fall migratory flight. They leave New England and fly nonstop to northern South America which means about 72 hours (3 days!) of nonstop flight by a small bird over the ocean. When they arrive in South America, they have burned all this fat and weigh about 8 grams. I wish I could lose three times my body weight in fat in 3 days! ■

Above left: Profile of Mike Moore.

More Conservation News

Bill Stewart Memorial Fund Seeks Contributions

DOS has established a fund in memory of our previous President and Conservation Chair Bill Stewart. This Fund will be used in support of young birder education, including scholarship opportunities. Thanks to an anonymous gift and proceeds from this year's fall Bird-A-Thon, the fund currently stands at over $35,000, well on the way to an initial goal of $50,000. If you would like to contribute to this fund in memory of Bill, please send a donation with "Bill Stewart Memorial Fund" in the note.

DOS Submits Comments to Senate Hearing on the Endangered Species Act

In October, DOS was asked by Senator Carper, the ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, to comment on proposed changes to the Endangered Species Act. Our letter to the Committee supported the status quo of the ESA and expressed opposition to proposed changes that would preclude timely judicial review of delisting decisions, among other problematic provisions. We instead asked the Committee to support efforts to fully fund species conservation prior to the need for ESA listing, specifically the bipartisan Recovering America's Wildlife Act. For a copy of the full letter, please contact conservation@dosbirds.org.

DOS Migratory Shorebird License Plates Coming Soon!

DOS Conservation Committee is pleased to report that Governor Carney has signed into Law the Bill authorizing the Delaware DMV to work with us to create a Migratory Shorebird license plate. We are in design discussions now with DMV and hope to have the plate available in spring 2021! Proceeds from the plate will support DOS's habitat conservation work!

- Matt Sarver, Conservation Committee Chair

Get Out and Bird!

DOS Guide to Delaware Birding Locations

eBird Hotspots

Remember to bird safely and follow local health regulations. When in doubt, bird alone or with people from your household, avoid crowds, and wear a mask!

Header: Little blue heron by Jean Woods.
Great egret by Sandy Roe.

Backyard Birding Challenge

The Backyard Birding Challenge is going strong! Check out the current leaderboard below. You can still join in on the fun! Learn more here.

Yard leaders DELAWARE 2020

Rankings as of Nov 13, 2020.

Time period: Life | Year | Month

Ranked by: Complete checklists | Species

		COMPLETE CHECKLISTS	SPECIES OBSERVED	LAST SPECIES ADDED
1.	**Aaron Reb** Reb yard C 1, US-Delaware	176	157	Nov 5, 2020: Vesper Sparrow (Pooecetes gramineus)
2.	**Sharon Lynn** Lynn Yard B, US-Delaware	223	144	Nov 7, 2020: Fox Sparrow (Passerella iliaca)
3.	**Michael Moore** Moore Backyard B, US-Delaware	97	132	Nov 4, 2020: Evening Grosbeak (Coccothraustes vespertinus)
4.	**Bob Edelen** Harbeson Yard, US-Delaware	113	124	Nov 4, 2020: Brown Creeper (Certhia americana)
5.	**Kelley Nunn** Delaire, US-Delaware	102	121	Oct 19, 2020: Gray-cheeked Thrush (Catharus minimus)
6.	**Keenan Yakola** Ockels Farm, US-Delaware	28	118	May 15, 2020: Gray-cheeked Thrush (Catharus minimus)
7.	**Andrew Dunn** Dunn Yard C, US-Delaware	43	116	Nov 5, 2020: Black Vulture (Coragyps atratus)
8.	**Hannah Greenberg** delaire, US-Delaware	66	114	Oct 19, 2020: Gray-cheeked Thrush (Catharus minimus), Pine Siskin (Spinus pinus)
9.	**Gary Griffith** Pecksniff Yard List, US-Delaware	277	107	Nov 2, 2020: Evening Grosbeak (Coccothraustes vespertinus)
10.	**WHIM Rowe** Rowe Yard C, US-Delaware	52	106	Oct 24, 2020: Pine Siskin (Spinus pinus)

Header: Laughing gull by Katie Bird.

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Bird Photo ID Pop Quiz answer (see photo on page 8): Evening Grosbeaks. Note the large bright white wing patches and yellow of the males. The females are more drab and gray. These winter finches are fond of platform feeders and sunflower seed. Keep your eyes out for them during this irruption season!

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

It's easy! Just send them to flyer 'at' dosbirds.org. Please include your full name for the credit.

In the coming issues we need pictures of our members birding during quarantine, migrants, and/or yard bird highlights!

Thanks!

Purple gallinule by Chris Bennett; long-tailed duck by Mike Moore; winter wren by Jim White; blue-winged teal by Hank Davis.

DELAWARE
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 4247
WILMINGTON DE 19807

DELAWARE
ORNITHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

2020 - 2021 Membership Renewal

(Honorary & Life Members need not renew.)

Name(s): _____

_____

Please fill out and send with a check to:
Delaware Ornithological Society P.O.
Box 4247, Wilmington, DE 19807

Fill in below only if new or changed:

Address: _____

_____

_____

Email ☐ _____

☐ _____

For households with more than one email address, check the box next to each email you wish to receive correspondence.

Annual Dues

☐ Student	$12.50
☐ Individual	$25.00
☐ Household	$37.50
☐ Kestrel	$50.00
☐ Black-necked Stilt	$100.00
(Includes DOS cap)	
☐ Peregrine $200.00	
(Includes DOS cap and strap)	
☐ Life	$500.00