

Minutes of the Sussex Bird Club
Sunday, April 19th, 2009

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Fintel. There were 32 members and 3 guests in attendance.

Bill reminded everyone that future newsletters will only be available on line unless a member specifically requests a hard copy version. So far 5 members have requested hardcopy.

Treasurer's Report:

- The treasurer's report was given by Lou Archdeacon:
- Opening balance of \$1,441.81. After dues, a donation, mailing expenses and honoraria, the closing balance is \$1,461.93.
- Current membership is at 105 members. Last year at this time it was 94.

Bill Beiser announced that there will be pontoon boat cruises at Trap Pond specifically targeting birds at 7:00AM on April 25th and May 2nd. The cost per person is \$5.00. Seating is limited to 14 people per trip. For information and reservations call 302 875-5153 or 302 875-5163. Reservations are on a first come first served basis.

Bill Stewart, Conservations Chair for the Delaware Ornithological Society then gave a presentation on the Delaware Birdathon:

- The purpose of the Birdathon is to raise funds for preservation of prime bird habitat and to support the Ashland Hawk Watch
- In the last 2 years Sussex Bird Club members have been responsible for contributions in excess of \$15,000 to the Birdathon
- Last year the Birdathon raised \$28,000 that was used to purchase 16 acres of beachfront for red knot preservation as well as support the Ashland Hawk Watch.
- Teams led by SBC's Sharon Lynn have won both of the last 2 Birdathons. Last year collecting \$4,960 and identifying 167 species
- This year's goal is \$45,000 with \$15,000 already donated from the DuPont Corporation, Astra Zeneca and private donors.
- An SBC Bird-A-Thon orientation field trip will be lead by Sharon Lynn and Bill Fintel will at Prime Hook on Saturday May 9th beginning at 7:30 am.
- Members and friends are encouraged to support the SBC team with donations and pledges!

Jean Shaw then introduced our speaker Chris Bennett for our program on the Survey of Herons and Egrets at Pea Patch Island:

- Chris has been participating in an ongoing survey of herons and egrets on Pea Patch Island since 2002
- Pea Patch Island is located in the Delaware River off Delaware City and is best known (to non birders) as the location of Fort Delaware
- The large rookery on the island is largely the result of an over zealous dredger who filled a previously marshy area with spoils from the Delaware River, creating three

adjacent mounds of spoils. These mounds ultimately became vegetated around the edges creating circles of trees and shrubs perfectly suited for a heron and egret rookery.

- No less than 10 species of herons, egrets and ibises nest in the rookery and surrounding phragmites; Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egrets, Little Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons, Black-crowned Night Herons, Yellow-crowned Night Herons, Glossy Ibises and Green Herons.
- Chris participates in 3 different surveys each year:
 - o One aerial survey in late May/early June flying 500 to 600 feet over the island
 - o A Monthly evening flight survey each month from February through August from the shore at Delaware City, and
 - o A post breeding survey in the fall when nests are counted
- Chris invited members to join the monthly evening survey at Delaware City the last Tuesday of each month from February through August, 2 hours before sunset to 1 hour after. You can help in the research or just enjoy the birds!
- The nest counts have been on the decline since the survey started, primarily for Cattle Egrets and Glossy Ibises, but may be attributed to normal fluctuations in populations. The following are nest counts taken through the survey timeframe – It should be noted that because land predators may have been using the surveyor's paths cut through the phragmites, the nest counting in the phrag was curtailed accounting for lower numbers in recent years.
- Year 2002 2003 2004 2005 2007
- Nests 2369 1832 1818 2780 1421
- Chris also presented the status of other known rookeries within the state, citing their location and sometimes their deteriorated state because of development

Chris' talk was most informative and entertaining with great slides depicting the rookery, the history of the island, great statistics resulting from the survey and an exciting look at one of the most productive rookeries along the east coast!

Respectfully submitted, Bob Edelen

Minutes of the Sussex Bird Club Meeting
Sunday, March 8th, 2009

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Fintel. There were 30 members and 1 guest in attendance

Treasurer's Report:

The treasurer's report was given by Lou Archdeacon:

Opening balance of \$1,387.81. After dues and a donation closing balance is \$1,441.81

Current membership is at 80 members

President Bill Fintel reminded everyone that SBC now has a website

www.sussexbirdclub.com Club minutes will be posted on the site. Please check the site

for updates on field trips

A reminder, because of upcoming holidays, the April and May meeting dates are changed as follows:

To avoid conflict with Easter, the April meeting will be held April 19th. Chris Bennett will be our speaker

To avoid conflict with Mother's Day, the May meeting will be held May 17th. Anthony Gonzon will speak about the Breeding bird Atlas

Sandy Spence commented on the uncontrolled growth occurring in Sussex County. Anyone interested in learning more or helping out should contact Sandy.

President Bill Fintel introduced today's speaker, George Jett.

George is a retiree from the Federal Government with a life long interest in birds and photography. His outstanding photography is published in field guides and other publications. Since retiring George has actively pursued his birding and photography hobby in the interest of bird conservation. In 2008, George undertook a challenge to photograph 300 different species of birds in the state of Maryland with a goal of raising \$10,000.00 to help protect the critically endangered Blue-Billed Curassow, a South American delicacy that is being hunted to extinction. George is teaming with the American Bird Conservancy to purchase land and promote tourism as an alternative to hunting.

George shared some of his incredible photos of birds taken during his year long pursuit. George began by setting up a network of friends and other resources to identify the location of birds particularly unusual to Maryland. When he heard of a sighting, he would go there in hopes of getting a photograph of the rare bird and along the way would capture pictures of other, more common Maryland species. Some of the more unusual birds he photographed were Rufous Hummingbird, Painted Bunting, Snowy Owl, Harlequin Ducks, Sand Hill Crane and Maryland's first Allen's Hummingbird.

George's photography was nothing less than spectacular. He ultimately photographed 307 different species and identified 316 (9 not photographed). His quest took him over 20,000 miles with expenditures over \$5,000.00. He had to be ready to go at a moments notice when a call of a rare sighting came in. George exclusively used Cannon photo equipment to capture images as far as ½ mile away. He estimated taking 40,000 to 50,000 photos, all digital and spent numerous hours using Photoshop to enhance his images. George's presentation was filled with helpful hints on photography, locating and attracting birds for the perfect shot and bird identification.

To date, George has raised \$10,005.00 for Blue-billed Curassow conservation and received numerous pledges and contributions from SBC members. He will be taking his talk on the road in hopes of getting additional support. To see some of Georges great photography, go to www.georgejett.net but be forewarned, it is addictive!

Respectfully submitted, Bob Edelen