

words on waterfowl

Newsletter of the Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Society and the International Wild Waterfowl Association



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FALL/WINTER 2017 • Issue No. 10



Victoria Crowned Pigeon (*Goura victoria*)
at Sylvan Heights Bird Park.

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the director's report

Mike Lubbock
Executive Director
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

Sylvan Heights Bird Park has now been in operation for 11 years. Brad Hazelton has been the General Curator since the park opened, and his expertise and vision have been instrumental in our growth. Brad was recently offered the chance to return to his home state of Texas to become the Curator of Birds at Fort Worth Zoo, and he is going to return to his roots. We are greatly going to miss him, his wife Monica, and children, Noah, Joshua, and Naomi, who, at the age of 13, has become an integral part of the volunteer staff on Saturdays. With Brad leaving, his former Assistant Curator, Dustin Foote, will assume the role as General Curator, and Nick Nees, Senior Aviculturist, will become Assistant Curator. Brad has done a tremendous job passing on his expertise and we have great confidence that that Dustin, Nick, and aviculturist Morgan Earley will continue to do so in the future.

On a very sad note, Bill "Toad" Herring passed away in August. Toad, along with his wife Hanna, was a co-founder of Sylvan Heights, and if it had not been for them Sylvan Heights Bird Park would never have happened. They were instrumental in getting Ali and I to move to Scotland Neck over 30 years ago.

Toad was very proud of the Bird Park, seeing it develop to where we are now. He had seen us struggling over the years but was delighted to know, before he died, that the Park had proved to be a success.

Aside from this sad loss, 2017 has been a wonderful year for us, with visitation still increasing in leaps and bounds, and the new exhibits being enjoyed by our many visitors. Now, we are turning our focus to enlarge and improve the holding capacity for our guests in the shape of a Pavilion and expansion of the Gift Shop. The construction has started for the Pavilion thanks to the Southern Bank Foundation. This structure will accommodate 250-300 people and will enable us to have more education programs and larger events. We still need to generate more funding for the Pavilion and are applying for various grants to achieve this but all and any support is welcome. Please see the last page in this magazine for information on how you can help.

We thank all of you as members for supporting us and hope you can all keep visiting us as we continually change and grow.



ON THE COVER

A Flying Steamer Duck (*Tachyeres patachonicus*) gives a warning call at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center. Learn more about this notoriously feisty group of ducks on page 10.

CONNECT ONLINE!



Get park updates, event information and more. Connect with Sylvan Heights and the IWWA on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or YouTube.



the curator's report

by **BRAD HAZELTON**

General Curator, Sylvan Heights Bird Park

Photos by Katie G. Lubbock

It is hard to believe it is already Fall again and another summer has come and gone. It is great to see how well the “Wings of the Tropics” has been received. We continue to hear wonderful comments about it and if you have not seen it yet, we encourage you to do so. The breeding season has gone well and now we find ourselves beginning to prepare for another winter. While there will still be many species on exhibit through the winter, there are always a few sensitive species that we must move to warmer areas off exhibit. I always feel like this is balanced out for the visitors since this is the best time of the year to see all of the waterfowl in their fresh and beautiful nuptial plumage.

We have begun work on our newest project which will be a new events pavilion down next to the tree house and the outdoor restrooms. When completed, this will be a venue for bird shows, special events, and education programs, as well as rental space for weddings, parties and class reunions. Currently, the site has been leveled and a concrete floor has been poured over the site.

This will allow us to place a tent over the floor and use it for special events and rentals while we are continuing to fundraise for the remainder of the structure. See the last page in this magazine to find out how you can help us finish this project.

We have also been working on a new Saddle-billed Stork exhibit that will be down below the South American exhibit. This may seem like an odd place to put an African species, but it will allow us to utilize an already existing winter space in the ibis shelter. We have already removed several trees and stumps and we have poured the concrete pool, as well as another concrete pool that will be in an adjoining aviary. The next step will be building the fence, putting on the netting and building a visitors viewing deck.

One thing about working here at Sylvan Heights is that it is never boring and you never know what is right around the corner. Change seems to be an inevitable part of our business and my

next announcement is no exception to this. It is with both sadness and excitement that I must tell you all that I have accepted the position of Curator of Birds at the Fort Worth Zoo once again. I have very much enjoyed my time here at Sylvan Heights and I am exceedingly proud of what we have accomplished here over the last 11 years. I will be forever indebted to Mike and Ali for the love and knowledge that they have shared with me over these years and this has in no way been an easy decision to make. That being said, the park is in a very good place right now and I feel that both mine and Monica's families are in need of our assistance in Texas. I am sure that Dustin and the rest of the staff here will fill my shoes just fine and take the park to new and greater places. I look forward to continuing to work with Sylvan Heights and if there is any way that I can help in the future I would be eager to do so.



Thank you, Brad!

On behalf of the entire Sylvan Heights Board of Directors I want to express our sincere gratitude to Brad Hazelton for his dedication, hard work, vision and the many talents he has brought to us over the past decade. His tireless commitment to Sylvan Heights has played a huge part in our success and the furtherance of our mission to save endangered species, habitat conservation and education. His contributions have been many and exhibits like the Landing Zone, Wings of the Tropics and the Flamingo exhibits will long stand as tributes to his talents.

While we are sad to see Brad leave us we are excited that he has embraced the opportunity for him and his family to return to his native Texas and become Curator of Birds at the Fort Worth Zoo. We know that he will do a great job there.

Brad, we will miss you but you will always be part of our Sylvan Heights extended family and we look forward to staying touch with you.

Don Butler, Chair
Sylvan Heights Board of Directors





Roseate Spoonbill Hatches at Park

This summer, Sylvan Heights aviculturists hand-raised a Roseate Spoonbill chick for the first time, a task that required around-the-clock feeding and care.

Native to wetland areas of South America, Central America, and the southern U.S, this bizarre and beautiful species uses its large, spatulate bill to sift small fish and insects from shallow water. Although their color might indicate otherwise, they are actually not related to flamingos. Instead, they are in the same family as ibis.

The Roseate Spoonbill chick is now fully grown and has joined the rest of the spoonbill flock in the park's South America aviary. We'd like to thank the Museum of Life and Science in Durham, NC for helping us get the food we needed to keep this chick healthy and growing.

Sunny Summer Blooms

Sylvan Heights Bird Park's entrance was transformed into a cheerful field of yellow this summer when approximately 180,000 flowers in our four-acre sunflower garden bloomed. Visitors could walk through the field and pick their own blooms for a \$1 donation per stem, and beautiful pre-cut arrangements were available in the gift shop. Photographers also took advantage of the sunny backdrop for some unique family portraits.

The field will be left standing throughout the fall and winter to provide food for migrating and wintering birds.

We'd like to thank the following local farmers and volunteers for their time and donations towards the sunflower field: Halifax County Cooperative Extension, Shields Fertilizer Company, Wilson Farms, Arthur Whitehead, Matt Whitehead, and Tom Hickam.

Annual Fundraiser for the Birds

On October 14, 2017, Sylvan Heights Bird Park celebrated its 11th anniversary with this year's annual fundraiser, "Moonlight Takes Flight". Presented by the Friends of Sylvan Heights (FOSH), the event celebrated "The Year of the Peacock" with colorful peacock-themed decorations. A silent auction featured beautiful bird artwork, fine dining gift certificates, and outdoor adventures. Guests sampled a variety of cuisines presented by local restaurants and caterers, and dinner was followed by an exciting live auction in which bidders had the opportunity to win a North Carolina bear-watching safari experience, an original painting of flamingos at Sylvan Heights Bird Park, and a one-week stay on the beautiful Isle of Islay in Scotland, along with many other great items.

We thank our amazing volunteers and event organizers, event sponsors, caterers, auction donors, and bidders. We'd also like to thank Hobgood Academy classes of '96, '97, and '98 for celebrating their class reunion with us that evening!

Ashley Hamlet Joins Sylvan Heights Staff

Although this is meant to be my introduction as a staff member at Sylvan Heights, it could also be considered an "Alumni Update". I joined the Sylvan Heights staff as the Education Coordinator in May of this year, but my experiences with this organization began as a college intern in 2010. Since then, I have volunteered at the avian breeding center, and at the park caring for the birds, leading guided tours, and assisting in education programs.

Sylvan Heights has grown and changed so much over the years that I have been a part of the organization. Some things, however, remain the same. The drive to become a world-class facility, the dedication to avian conservation, and the hospitable front-porch attitude which makes people from all walks of life feel right at home. The Sylvan Heights education team has laid a great foundation that I hope to build upon as we continue to welcome growing numbers of students and lifelong learners. Sylvan Heights provided me with my first introduction into environmental education and I am excited to put my passion to good use in the education department.

New Gift Shop Items & Holiday Sale

Hello Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Society Members! Just wanted to do a quick update on the gift shop. If you're looking for some unique, special, one-of-a-kind gifts, please come and visit us and see our selection of items made by local artists here in North Carolina. You can choose from wood burned art pieces, to earrings, to bird treasure bottles and wood bird house ornaments. We also have some new merchandise in as well.

From November 27th through December 19th, we'll also be having a holiday and Fall clearance sale. Take advantage of your member discount and sale prices to get some great deals on holiday gift items! So on your next visit stop by and check out all the new and exciting gift ideas we have in the gift shop.

Thank you,

Tasha Davis
Retail Manager
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

Wild Birds Nest and Rest at Park

Sylvan Heights Bird Park is home to hundreds of species from all over the globe, but many of North Carolina's native birds also find refuge here throughout the year.

The restored wetland that borders the lower edge of the park has been attracting an increasing number of resident and migratory wild birds. Many arrive during the spring and summer to nest and rear young. This year, a pair of Prothonotary Warblers nested in a hollow log in the North America Aviary (pictured above), while White-eyed Vireos raised their chicks near the Australia Aviary. Indigo Buntings, Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks, and many others were also spotted in the park.

Some species, like Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, are attracted to the wetlands during their fall migration, when large swaths of late-blooming Orange Jewelweed provide fuel for their southbound journey. Other birds find shelter and food in the park during the winter, such as Yellow-rumped Warblers, Cedar Waxwings, and Dark-eyed Juncos.

aviculture techniques: shorebirds

Sylvan Heights Bird Park works with over 10 species of shorebirds and raises more shorebird chicks than almost any other facility in North America. Shorebirds are extremely active and interface well with waterfowl.

We try to get at least half way through incubation underneath the hen, though this varies depending on species and nest location. Once the weather warms up, the snakes seem to have an affinity for small shorebird eggs, so we have put Black-necked Stilt, Pied Avocet, and Masked Lapwing eggs at day 0 in artificial incubators and have been successful hatching them (day 0 refers to the first day an egg begins incubation). However, we prefer pulling eggs at half incubation as even the best artificial incubators can't compete with the real hen. Most shorebirds lay 4 eggs over the course of a week, and do not start incubation until the final egg is laid.

We incubate at 99.5F and approximately 50% humidity. Many shorebird species take between 25-28 days to incubate. We find the eggs often take over 48 hours to hatch once externally pipped (this refers to the first time a chick breaks through the outer shell; many birds hatch in under 24 hours).

The chicks are moved into an indoor dry brooder with hardware cloth on the floor. Bar mat is placed on one end of the brooder under a 250 watt heat bulb. We do not have a specific temperature we aim for, but instead check the activity level of the chicks. We want them to be active and foraging, and to not be directly under the bulb or pressed to the sides of the brooder. A shallow lunch tray is placed on the non matted side of the brooder with water dripping into it. (Our system allows the water to fall through the hardware cloth into a drain). This tray is where we place Mazuri Micropellet, live blood worms, finely diced greens for attraction. We also toss micropellet over the bar mat, once we are comfortable with them eating we move the dry pellet to a ceramic bowl. The birds are given bloodworms and micro pellet in their lunch

trays in the morning and evenings. If they are relying too much on the bloodworms, we will compensate with a noon feeding as well. Juvenile birds seem much easier to wean onto the pellet than youngsters so we prefer to just offer all the blood worms they want at first. Brooders are cleaned daily.

Weather permitting, we move our shorebirds to an outdoor aviary between days 7-10 after hatch. A large but shallow feeding pool is located in each aviary. The aviary is open on all sides, though it is in a protected area. On one side is a lean-to type structure with a heat lamp where we place a ceramic bowl with food. At this stage we still feed micro pellet and bloodworms and begin adding Mazuri Seaduck once the birds start feathering up. The blood worms and a handful of micropellet is tossed into the feeding pool, these pools also have flow through system so there is no stagnant water.

We transition from the micropellet to a seaduck pellet at this stage. Starting with just a handful of seaduck, then a 50/50 mix, and by the time the birds can fly, they get 100% seaduck pellet. We discontinue feeding bloodworms once the birds are feathered up.

The floor of the outdoor aviary is sand, and is cleaned as needed. Depending on the number of chicks this could be daily or weekly. We do not have a problem raising mixed species, though when problems do arise stilts seem to be the culprit. Avocets and most of the lapwings are very non-aggressive. We get some early aggression when older groups are moved around, but most of the time they have it sorted within the hour and coexist peacefully afterwards.

Shorebirds are extremely unique and despite having very diverse members, much of their husbandry care is very similar. Our system works well for us, and we strive to work with other facilities to improve their protocols and ours. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

by **DUSTIN FOOTE**

Assistant Curator
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

A Black-necked Stilt scrapes out a shallow nest in the park's North America aviary.

photo by Katie G. Lubbock



2018
waterfowl
conservation
workshop



OCTOBER 25-27, 2018
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Created in 2016 by Sylvan Heights Bird Park and the International Wild Waterfowl Association, the Waterfowl Conservation Workshop is a seminar for zoo and wildlife professionals and students. The workshop provides a unique forum for the discussion of waterfowl husbandry, conservation, research, veterinary care, and other topics.

The 2018 Waterfowl Conservation Workshop will consist of two days of presentations and discussion at East Carolina University's Heart Institute in Greenville, North Carolina, and one day of practical, hands-on workshops at Sylvan Heights Bird Park. We will also offer optional post-workshop tours and activities!

REGISTRATION BEGINS IN JANUARY 2018!
www.waterfowlconservation.org



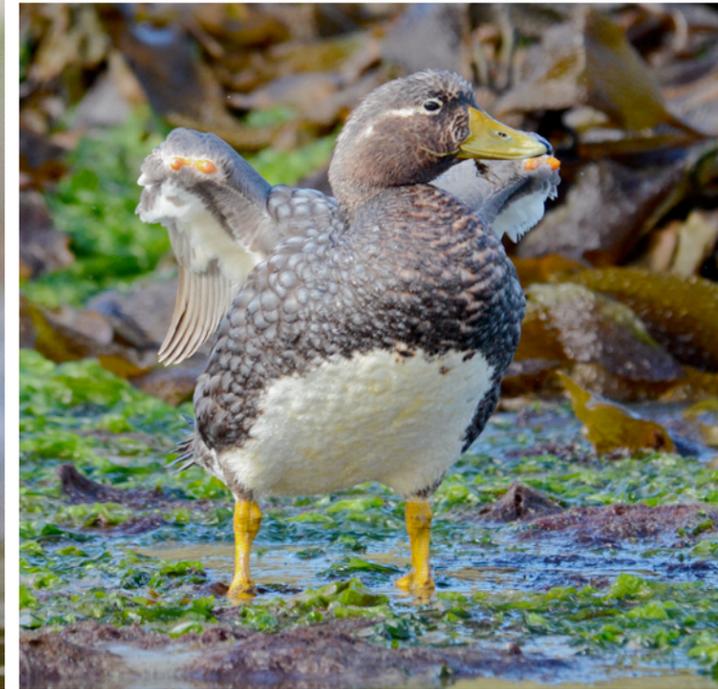
steamer ducks

by MORAG JONES

Photos by Frank S. Todd
and Katie G. Lubbock



*“Once described as
a cross between a
battleship and a pair
of pliers.”*



If you love a duck with attitude, look no further. These guys are big and brutal, the drakes frequently weigh 10 to 13 pounds. The name suggests their habit of thrashing over the surface like a paddle steamer, often at considerable speed when they are escaping danger or fighting with each other. Three of the four races are flightless.

From the southern end of Chile and Argentina, they have little need to fly. They do not migrate and have few predators in their home habitat. The diminutive Andean Culpeo fox might fancy a duck dinner but at a similar weight, he generally has the sense to steer clear. Sea lions of course will take them, given the opportunity. They are principally a marine bird, with oversized feet.

Steamer ducks feed on a variety of small marine animals living on the seabed. They will upend to feed in very shallow water, but mainly they dive to secure their prey. Mussels are a firm favourite and they have no trouble if they take in salt water. Like other sea ducks, they have a large gland above and between the eyes which filters excess salt from the blood. The resulting concentrated salt is expelled through the nostrils.

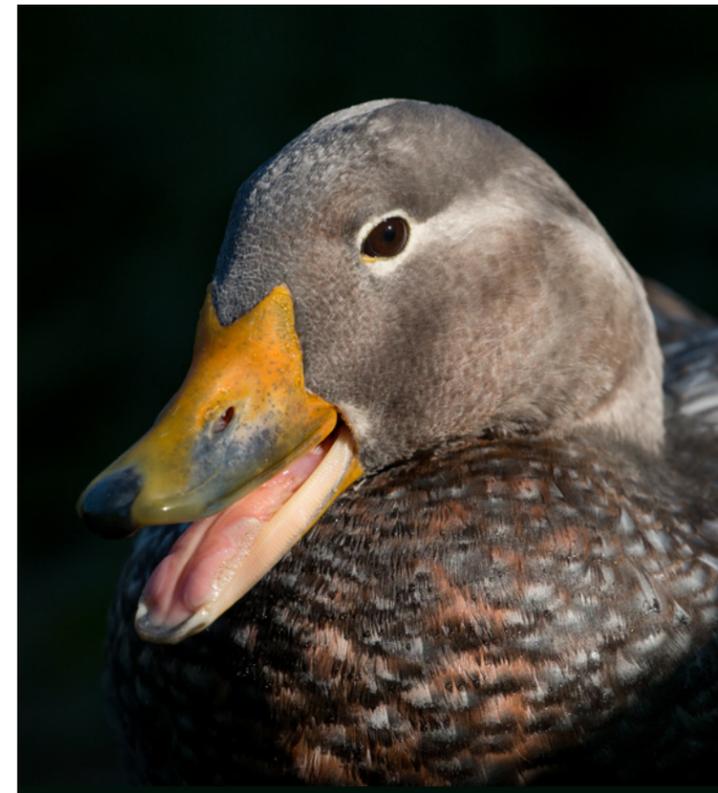
The Falkland Island Steamer duck is known locally as the “Logger Duck”. In global terms, it is a pretty rare, around 16,000 pairs exclusively living on the Falkland Islands. The White-headed Steamer duck, or Chubut Steamer is even fewer in number. An isolated population around 10,000 pairs makes its home in the Chubut and Santa Cruz provinces of Argentina. The Magellanic Steamer duck of the west coast of Chile is by far the most numerous, with ten times that number. These three groups are allopatric, meaning their ranges do not overlap. The Flying Steamer duck does overlap all three territories and is the only one to be found regularly away from the coast on inland waters.

You might wonder why these charismatic birds are not often seen with other birds in our collection. The Sylvan Heights birds are the Flying Steamer Duck, *Tachyeres patachonicus*. So they can, but they rarely do, fly. They much prefer to steam, run or dive to get out of trouble. All four races of steamer ducks are pugnacious. They rarely tolerate intruders of any species into their territory. This has devastating consequences even in the wild. Murder for no real apparent reason is occasionally seen. Some studies suggest that this behaviour is part of the pair-bonding

ritual. There are well-documented cases of steamer ducks in captivity killing much bigger birds such as swans if they are too close. In fact they were once described by a battered and bruised keeper at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust as a cross between a battleship and a pair of pliers.

The steamer duck is very vulnerable to coastal pollution. Like all waterfowl, it is at risk from oil pollution, which clogs the feathers and destroys their waterproofing. Sediments deposited from sewage outfalls, or peat run-off from the land can smother shellfish beds on which they feed. For the time being, the White-headed Steamer duck is classified as “Vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List. It is now thought to be experiencing a continuing decline owing to declines in habitat quality, and probable decreases in survival and breeding success.

Maybe these massive ducks do not conform to our human idea of morality. But they are nevertheless a fascinating branch of the waterfowl family and surely deserve to be protected.



the basics of bird photography

With colorful plumage and comical behavior, birds are popular subjects for photographers of any skill level. Sylvan Heights Bird Park provides unparalleled opportunities to get nose-to-beak with some of the world's most spectacular species, but whether you're photographing the park's feathered residents or the birds in your own backyard, there are a few basic tips to keep in mind to get the most out of your bird images. You don't need expensive equipment to put some of these tips into practice – try them out with your smart phone next time you visit Sylvan Heights!

by **KATIE G. LUBBOCK**

Photographer & Graphic Designer
Sylvan Heights Bird Park



Wild Ruby-throated Hummingbirds stop over in the park's gardens and wetlands during their fall migration.



A pair of Wood Ducks compete for a favorite perch in the park's North America Aviary.

Tip #1: Patience pays off

Choose a location and give the birds some time to adjust to your presence and resume their normal behavior. Some may even approach you! The birds at Sylvan Heights are accustomed to visitors, so it may only take a few minutes before they begin preening, bathing, and displaying. Plan to stay in that location for at least 20 minutes and photograph the avian events that unfold in front of you. Wild birds generally require much more patience and caution to avoid causing them undue stress. Whether you're in an aviary or in the wild, always respect the birds' space and never try to chase, catch, or otherwise manipulate the birds to get the shot you want.

Tip #2: Get a "bird's-eye" view

Wildlife images are often much more engaging when you place the audience at eye-level in the world of the subject. For waterfowl, this means getting as low as possible – less than 12" from the ground is best, if you can manage it. This ultra-low perspective has the added benefit of revealing large, beautiful reflections of your subject on the water. For perching birds, try holding your camera above you to get a higher perspective, or wait until a bird perches in the right position for a great eye-level shot.

Tip #3: Timing is everything

Consider doing most of your bird photography in the morning and late afternoon, when the birds are more active and the lighting less harsh. You'll definitely want to avoid mid-day sunshine when taking images of certain species like Snowy Egrets, swans, or Scarlet Ibis at Sylvan Heights. Their bright plumage will reflect light back into your lens and you may end up with a photo of a bird-shaped blob of white or red! Stormy or overcast weather often provides ideal conditions for photographing white birds like swans and egrets. Don't forget to also consider the time of year when planning your images

and your trip to Sylvan Heights. If it's waterfowl photos you're after, the ducks look their best between October and May when they're sporting crisp breeding attire (many molt into a drab eclipse plumage during the summer). For the best chance of photographing the birds' nesting and breeding behavior, aim for late winter and spring. Late spring and summer are the best times to see young birds around the park, and if you visit during the months of August and September, you may catch a glimpse of our bird keepers leading crane chicks on their daily walks.

Tip #4: A little background

You're photographing a beautiful bird, so give it a worthy background! Try to position yourself so that fences or other unnatural structures are absent or blurred in the distance behind your subject. Plants, rocks, logs, and natural materials make much more aesthetically appealing backdrops for nature photographs.

Tip #5: Action!

Photographers with DSLRs and fast lenses will have the advantage when it comes to catching sharp images of birds flying, displaying, or bathing, but that doesn't mean smart phone photographers can't get in on the action, too. Use your phone's burst mode to capture a series of fast action shots, and don't forget about video! For an even more dramatic effect, switch your phone's camera to slow motion mode and capture a really unique perspective of bird behavior.

Finally, while photographing birds can be a fun challenge, don't forget to put your camera down every now and then and enjoy the scene in front of you. Birds perform many complex interactions and behaviors -- observing and understanding their patterns will help you capture better images in the future.



from the **iwwa** presidents

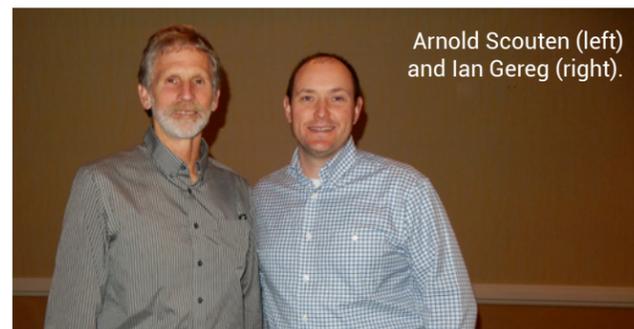
We just returned home from another exceptional IWWA conference. You will read the details in Anne's overview which is always complete, entertaining, and interesting. As always, it was good to see old friends and to make new friends. We enjoyed wonderful visits to Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy and Michael and Judy Steinhardt's. The hospitality extended to us from all of our hosts and staff was outstanding and most appreciated. We had special visits during the post-conference tour to the Bronx Zoo and Central Park Zoo. The staff welcomed us and took extra time to show us the highlights. I am very thankful to everyone who helped make this conference so memorable.

During the annual board meeting, Ian Gereg was nominated as President. I look forward to his leadership in making the IWWA an even better association and know that he will do an excellent job. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Board members and members for their support, and for giving me the opportunity to be President for the last 5 years.

IWWA has an almost 60 year history of successes working with waterfowl both in captivity and in the wild. I look forward to seeing new and continued successes in the years to come.

Arnold Schouten
Outgoing President

International Wild Waterfowl Association



Arnold Schouten (left) and Ian Gereg (right).

Dear IWWA and Sylvan Heights Bird Park Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to lead the International Wild Waterfowl Association. As a lifelong aviculturist and waterfowl enthusiast I am honored to have been selected for the role and look forward to perpetuating the important work the organization has been a part of for six decades. I have big shoes to fill; our outgoing President Arnold Schouten has done a tremendous job shepherding our organization through the challenges all not-for-profit and membership-based organizations face today. Thank you Arnold for your commitment to the Association over the past five plus years as President and I look forward to our continued collaborations on behalf of waterfowl and the IWWA.

While we are a small group, our members are the most passionate and knowledgeable about waterfowl husbandry, captive-breeding efforts and conservation in the world and our achievements show it. Since its inception over sixty years ago the IWWA and its members have been involved in a wide array of projects benefiting waterfowl and wetlands across the globe. Many of our successful efforts have gone uncelebrated and we must keep working to ensure a wider audience appreciates not only the beauty, mystery and importance of wild waterfowl but also understands the connection between dedicated waterfowl keepers and aficionados and the preservation of many species in the wild.

Like the birds themselves, our organization faces pressures from a changing world. Staying active and relevant in the age of social media and increasing competition for the public's limited attention are amongst our most immediate challenges. With the help of the IWWA Board, members, and supporters I am optimistic that both our organization and the waterfowl we care so deeply about will have a bright and prosperous future.

Ian Gereg
Incoming President

International Wild Waterfowl Association

2017 **iwwa** conference

Connecticut & New York

Last fall when we were in Belgium, Arnold Schouten asked me what the weather would be like in New England in the third week in October. Well...anything from a howling 3 day Nor'easter to perfectly clear and warm. Or somewhere in between. Apparently the order went in for clear and warm and it was received and delivered by the IWWA weather gods. And so the 2017 conference in Connecticut and New York began on October 18 with temps in the 70's.

The board meeting was productive and thanks to Arnold Schouten for 5 years of great leadership. As an indicator of the influx of technology into the world, Skype was deployed to have Jan Harteman join us from the Netherlands. Time zones were taken into consideration as the meeting ended at around

5 - or 10 pm in the Netherlands. The social and meet and greet was next and there were new attendees and returning friends from around the globe all enjoying the night.

Thursday morning the bus greeted us and loaded up for the ride from Hartford to Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy in Litchfield. All of the ladies on the trip were treated to a hand sewn tote bag from Mary Popple - a much appreciated effort on her part and an advertisement for the auction item of one of her quilts. Incredible talent! The fall foliage has just started to turn as the back roads were loaded into the bus' GPS and we were headed for 55 Duckpond Rd. We were greeted by the staff at the 55 acre sanctuary - and IWWA board member Nick Tiberio. As taken from their website, www.lrwc.net, Livingston

by ANNE LEMENAGER

Photos by Anne Lemenager,
Maynard Axelson, & Debbie Schouten





Ripley is one of the pre-eminent facilities for breeding rare and endangered waterfowl. LRWC's programs integrate research, education, and conservation action for waterfowl and wetland habitats. It was a gorgeous day for wandering around the place and soaking in the bird life and sun. The afternoon was spent listening to top notch presentations. Kelly Kubic updated us on waterfowl research specific to Connecticut including surveys on habitat, population, Wood Duck box assessment, marsh acquisition and restoration, wintering Black Ducks, Mute Swans, and Canada Geese. Ian Gereg, IWWA's new president, updated us on the status of waterfowl collections in zoos. There is a definite drop in numbers of ducks on display in zoos and through a survey of AZA members and IWWA people hopefully a species survival plan can be adopted. Dr. Rob Bierregaard shifted gears from birds who live on water to birds who need water for fishing and survival with his presentation of his research on Ospreys and migration. Stay tuned for the spring of 2018 publishing of his children's book, "Belle's Journey" about the life of one of his tagged birds. His web site is also excellent - www.ospreytrax.com. Satellite tagging and GPS monitoring is invaluable to that project and Dr. Michele Goodman finished up the session with an update on the sea duck population data from transmitters. Three species of scoters and Long-tailed Ducks were fitted with transmitters and the slide presentation showed the process of tagging and interesting mapping of population trends. This information is useful for wind farm studies. Michele also had interesting information on the Welfleet virus syndrome which is affecting eiders on the coast of Massachusetts.

It was a race to get back to Hartford in time to set up for the auction and dinner. But Maynard Axelson, Laurie

Christofferson, Lynn Dye and myself pulled it off - hopefully without annoying the eager onlookers too much! We knew it would be a good night when auctioneer Phil Stanton started off the bidding with the Mary Popple quilt which is now in San Diego with Jerry Jennings. All told, cashiers Ali Lubbock, Lynn Dye and Debbie Schouten tallied over \$7,000 for the organization. Excellent job on the auction, Maynard!

The highlight of the conference, in my opinion anyway, was the day spent at the spectacular estate of Michael and Judy Steinhardt in Mt. Kisco, New York. We hiked all over the property and at every turn the attention to bird life and horticulture was incredible. Their passion for the property is infectious. It was a picture perfect fall day including the fly over of a raven chasing an adult bald eagle against the clear blue sky at lunch. Our gratitude for their hospitality is heartfelt. I could spend a week there and not take everything in. Pictures really couldn't do it justice but the IWWA Facebook page has a lot of them to share.

The evening event was anticipated with a mix of sadness and humor as we honored our beloved Frank Todd. Joan Embery shared her tribute to Frank, which she also gave at his memorial at Sea World in California. It was a perfect show indeed, and others shared their memories of Frank and his adventures and accomplishments. His mischievous and bird loving spirit is with us all.

I think I have mentioned the fabulous weather enough but one of the drawbacks of the warmth was the lack of birds out on the water - which was sort of the purpose of our scheduled cruise out into Long Island Sound from Norwalk. Flat, calm,

and clear visibility was the scene and a few Brant and Canada Geese were noted as binocs and scopes were used to see more - and to identify the fish that the dozens of boats were hauling in. Lunch and a tour through the Norwalk Aquarium preceded the ride back to the hotel to get ready for the final banquet and awards. Arnold updated the crowd on the board meeting news and was given a standing ovation for his work as President. See his letter to everyone in this issue of Words on Waterfowl.

Some of the attendees were headed off in the middle of the night or early in the morning to the zoo, so farewells and until next time conversations were had. The rest of us piled into our cars or took Uber rides and headed to the Bronx Zoo. We met up with the Curator of Birds and were given a bit of history of the place and a behind the scenes look at the exhibits. It was a Sunday so we expected a lot of families to be there. The zoo had a month long promotion going on as well, and every child that came dressed in costume for Halloween was admitted free of charge. Lots of superhero kids running around for sure!

We all dined at the restaurant and bar at the Doubletree and it was another night of farewells as 12 of us were heading home on Monday morning. The rest stayed on and Ubered their way into Central Park for a day at the zoo. It was an excellent conference full of learning and camaraderie and new friends and I have to add that the other possible weather forecast for the third week in October was for 3 days of wind and rain. It waited to arrive in New England and on the Vineyard as soon as we got home.

Looking forward to North Carolina in 2018 - see you then if not before.

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breeding center news

Crested Screamers hatch for the first time in the center's history

This season has been particularly exciting for the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center, as we have successfully bred Crested Screamers for the first time. Screamers are named for their ear piercing screech. They make lots of different noises, from bill clicking to deep drumming, but their screams are the most audible from a distance. These birds are native to swamplands of South America and have lots of adaptations to this habitat. While adults are about 3 feet tall, they are incredibly buoyant due to many tiny air pockets just under their skin. This makes them, as our curator Nick Hill says, “spongey”, and they make a crinkling noise when held due to the air leaving these little pockets. Screamers have hollow bones throughout their entire body to keep their weight down so they can still achieve flight at their size. Sporting 4 gigantic spurs, they are highly dangerous as adults if threatened. On each wing

there is a sharp curved spur that can be up to 2” long, along with a slightly smaller spur a little closer to the wing tip. Amazingly enough, they have been known to battle each other for territories and sometimes lose their spurs in battle, regrowing them later. After establishing territories, parents go through a great deal of work when it comes to nesting. They build large nests of piled up sticks, reeds and other miscellaneous weeds. Often adults will weed the area where they are nesting, plucking unwanted vegetation from the ground and flinging it away. Both the male and the female take part in nest building, as well as incubating and raising the young ones. Screamer clutches range in size from 2 to 7 eggs that are milky white in color. While screamers are not waterfowl, they are considered one of the predecessors to the modern day Anseriformes, which is part of the reason they hold a special place in our collection.

by **TAYLOR SILCOX**

Aviculturist, Sylvan Heights
Avian Breeding Center



Crested Screamer Chick

photo by Katie G. Lubbock

swan songs & other waterfowl stories

by **NICK HILL**

Curator, Sylvan Heights
Avian Breeding Center

When you visit Sylvan Heights, you will see many birds from around the world. As you walk around the park looking at the birds you may marvel at their beauty, be intrigued about where they come from, take interest in their biology, and wonder if they are endangered or rare. But there's another aspect to consider on your journey around the park. Man has been coexisting with waterfowl for millennia, and over the years, ducks, geese, and swans have been the focus of many myths, legends, sayings, and more recently, have become famous in literature and on the silver screen. Here are just a few that I have put together for your enjoyment.



The Love Ducks of Korea and China

In Korea and China, Mandarin Ducks are known as “love ducks”. They are the symbol of love, marriage, and good luck. On a couple's wedding day, they would be presented with a pair of china or wooden Mandarin Duck figures, or even a picture. In the old days, the couple would be presented with a real live pair of ducks.

It is sometimes said in China and Korea that if you don't yet have a partner, having a picture of Mandarin Ducks may speed up the process of finding your soul mate. The Chinese saying “they're like two Mandarin Ducks playing in water” is sometimes used to describe a loving couple.

Donald Duck's Cricket Origin

In 1934, Mr. Walt Disney was looking to create a character that was more mischievous than Mickey Mouse. It is said that Mr. Disney was reading the paper one day and saw an article about Donald Bradman, the legendary Australian cricket player (pictured above), who was touring America with his cricket team at the time. The headline read “Donald Bradman Out for a Duck”, and Mr. Disney had found the name for his new ill-tempered character. (The phrase “out for a duck” means to score zero runs in cricket, and is an abbreviation of the original phrase “out for a duck's egg”, because the “0” on the scoreboard looks like a duck's egg.)

Swan Songs and Other Myths

In Scotland and Ireland, swans were thought to house the souls of the dead, and therefore it was unlucky to harm them. The phrase “swan song” refers to an ancient legend that swans, being mostly silent their entire lives, sing a beautiful song just before they die. In Irish and Welsh mythology, swans are also linked with storms. It is said that a swan's eggs only hatch in thunder and lightning, and if a swan rests with its head draped over its wings, a storm is brewing.

Black swans have inspired many myths in Australian folklore, but when this species was first brought to Europe in the 17th century, the surprised Europeans associated them with witchcraft.



soaring into science

by LEE PEOPLES

Interpretive Naturalist & Program Director
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

The second year of Soaring into Science has escalated to new heights with two sessions of camp this past summer for new KIPP GCP students. The three year project generously sponsored by Burroughs Wellcome Fund continues to increase the efficacy of environmental education as Sylvan Heights develops in depth hands-on learning opportunities and creative nature immersion experiences. Rising 8th & 9th graders conducted biodiversity studies of wetland flora and fauna using compasses and metric tape measures. Experiential learning was expanded in this activity as students delineated plots spanning both terrestrial & aquatic habitats, catalogued all living things found using identification keys, testing their hypotheses regarding species abundance and which groups were dominant. Math and graphing skills were enhanced as this year's KIPP teacher, Erin O'Connor assisted students in analyses of wetland eutrophication studies encompassing effects of varying levels of introduced nitrates and phosphates. Ms. O'Connor was also instrumental in revising instruction such that students initiated each research activity with a hypothesis and developed feasible ways to measure

outcomes using the scientific method. This approach allowed students to practice these skills, increasing competency while gaining confidence in presenting their research project to parents and peers.

Combined use of binoculars, spotting scope and Cornell University's free Merlin app on iPads helped students identify wild birds. Along the Roanoke Canal trail, just two miles south of the KIPP school, we had the rare opportunity to compare & contrast the indigo bunting and blue grosbeak, similar species confusing to novice birders. We even saw a painted bunting, a beautifully colored bird not typically seen in our area! When comparing their school science classroom to these experiences, students expressed that learning at SISP camp was better because there is more freedom, hands-on experience, fewer students and more independent learning in this environment; which clearly influenced their enthusiasm about participating in science-related learning. When asked in a focus group interview about what had been the most interesting aspects of their experiences

so far, students stated, "Felt free out in the wilderness- it triggered my senses." and another, "It is guided but we are really on our own. Self-learning and exploring on our own is great."

In addition to SISP goals of increasing student competency and enthusiasm for science, Sylvan Heights also fulfilled the third goal of increasing student interest in science careers by providing many opportunities for student interaction with both park staff and guest scientists.

Additional mentoring and guidance was provided by Susan Christman, who is a NC Certified Environmental Educator. During both years of SISP, she volunteered her time and insight guiding students through hands-on learning. On behalf of Sylvan Heights Bird Park, we are happy and honored to announce Susan Christman will carry on the torch for experiential environmental learning as she begins instruction and planning for our upcoming SISP fall and spring academies!

park events

view full event details and ticket info at www.shwpark.com



Mattamuskeet Birding

January 6, 2018 | 7 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Start the new year off right with a birding trip to the Mattamuskeet and Pocosin National Wildlife Refuges!



Oyster Roast

January 27, 2018 | 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

It's an evening of oysters at Sylvan Heights Bird Park! Your ticket includes oysters, shrimp, beer and wine, and live entertainment. Proceeds support the park's education and conservation programs.



Birds, Brews, & BBQ

March 17th, 2018 | 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.

This year, we're combining our BBQ cook-off and beer tasting event into one big celebration! Join us to sample and vote for your favorite BBQ from local cooks, taste local craft beers, plus enjoy games, entertainment, and birds!



NC Science Festival

April 2018

Join us throughout the month of April for special events celebrating science! Visit shwpark.com for event dates and details.



Duckling Day

May 5, 2018 | 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Aviculturist-level members and higher are invited for breakfast and a tour of the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center!



Members' Day

June 2, 2018 | 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

A special event for Sylvan Heights members only! Educational programs, live animal encounters, activities, and a light breakfast in the Visitor Center.



progress on the pavilion

Our large outdoor classroom and multi-use event space is under construction, but we need your help to finish this important project.

As attendance, field trips, and event bookings continue to increase at Sylvan Heights Bird Park, it is apparent that we are outgrowing the capacity of our Visitor Center! Our current major construction project will give us room to grow by providing a beautiful outdoor setting for educational programs, park events, family reunions, parties, weddings -- even movie nights!

The Pavilion will be located in the wooded area behind the park's South America aviary (near the treehouse), and will comfortably accommodate large school groups and events. The Pavilion

will also be available to rent on evenings and weekends, providing a world-class event space for the community and generating additional revenue to benefit education and conservation programs at Sylvan Heights Bird Park.

If you would like to help us complete this project, please consider making a donation using the form below. You can also donate online at www.shwpark.com, or call the park at (252) 826-3186 for more information. Sylvan Heights is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and donations are tax-deductible.

thank you to our donors

Sylvan Heights Bird Park gratefully acknowledges our donors of \$500 or more since April 1, 2017 through September 30, 2017.

- | | | | |
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(Please send to Sylvan Heights Bird Park • PO Box 368 • Scotland Neck, NC 27874) **Thank you!**



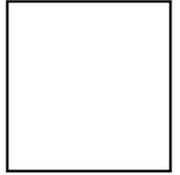
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North American Wood Duck
(*Aix sponsa*)