

words on
waterfowl

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



wings over water

The birds of Sylvan Heights will appear in a new IMAX feature

WILD ANCESTORS
2019 IWWA Conference

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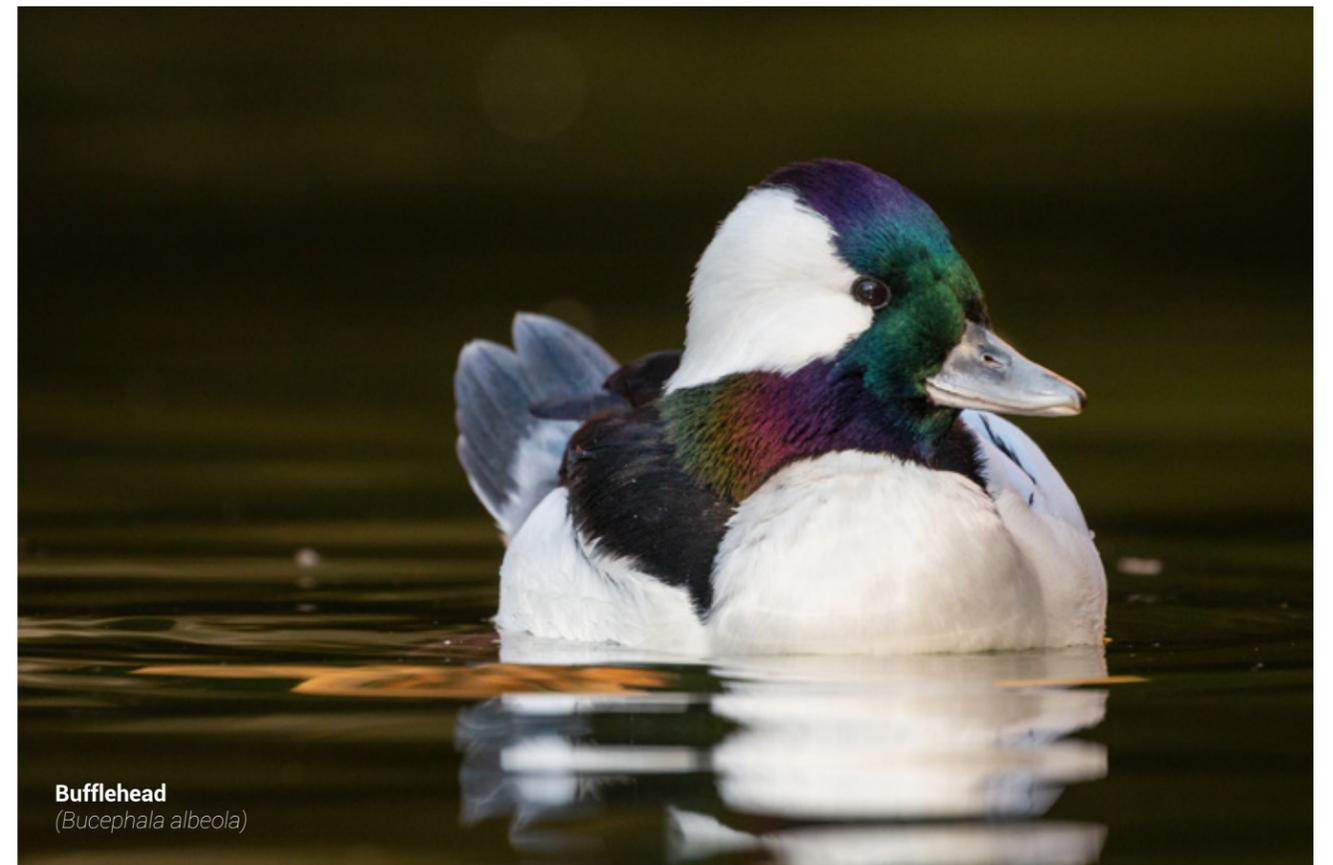


Northern Bobwhite
(*Colinus virginianus*)

K.G. Lubbock

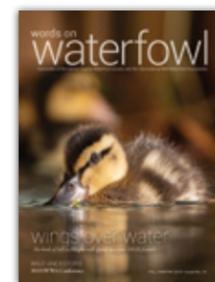
IN THIS ISSUE

- 4. The Director's Report
- 5. Park News & Updates
- 6. The Curator's Report
- 8. Leaping Onto the Giant Screen
- 12. Flamingo Frenzy
- 14. DIY Wildlife Conservation
- 20. Wild Ancestors
- 22. The Year of the Crane
- 25. Remembering Nancy Collins
- 26. Park Events



Bufflehead
(*Bucephala albeola*)

K.G. Lubbock



ON THE COVER

A Mallard duckling poses for the camera during a filming session for *Wings Over Water* at Sylvan Heights (see page 8).

CONNECT ONLINE!



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

the director's report

Mike Lubbock
Executive Director
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

We are always proud to report the achievements of our former interns, students, and colleagues. Jessica Meir, a research scientist who conducted studies on Bar-headed Geese at Sylvan Heights in 2010 and 2011, became part of the first all-female spacewalk team on the International Space Station in early October. We are so extremely proud of her and feel sure her next goal will be to walk on the Moon! One evening, we all waved to her as the ISS flew over North Carolina. It was quite a wonderful feeling knowing someone inside this glowing light as it flew around the earth.

Our Annual Fundraiser on October 13th was a tremendous success thanks to all our staff, members of FOSH (Friends of Sylvan Heights), and our Board of Directors. Donations of time, auction items, and organization by our wonderful team made everything flow beautifully, and we raised over \$50,000 (and had great fun too). Special thanks go to the auctioneering skills of Parker Phillips and the auction managing skills of Suzanne Ellis. We now have a new Event Coordinator, Karen Parker. This was her first event and we welcome her on board. Toad Hall has been such a great asset to the park that Karen immediately followed the next two weeks with two weddings and a reception.

An unavoidable aspect of working with live animals is assisting them when their natural life comes to an end. Our deceased birds are available to any institution for future research, and this year, they were received by the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. The Curator of Ornithology, Dr. David W. Steadman, drove up to Sylvan Heights and returned with, to quote, "What a treasure-trove! 30 species for which we don't have a standard museum specimen, and seven species where we don't have a skeleton. Very important additions to our holdings". The birds of Sylvan Heights help to educate many students during their life, and while losing a bird is never easy, we are pleased that they will continue to be of educational value long after their death.

This year, the Avian Breeding Center imported three pairs of Green Pygmy Geese. The import was made possible with the support of Michael Steinhardt, an advisory member on the Sylvan Heights Board of Directors. These Green Pygmy Geese are the only ones in North America at present, and hopefully we will raise some in the coming year. We also imported new bloodlines for the African White-backed Duck, which will help strengthen the captive population for this species.



Green Pygmy Goose
(*Nettapus pulchellus*)

K.G. Lubbock

park news & updates



New Aviary for Seriemas & Waterfowl

In July, the park's pair of Red-legged Seriemas moved into their beautiful new habitat located next to the South America aviary. The area consists of an upper section for the Seriemas, and a lower section, which features fascinating South American waterfowl species like Flying Steamer Ducks, Andean Geese, and Upland Geese.

Red-legged Seriemas are tall, predatory birds of South American grasslands and open woodland. They are skilled at hunting and dispatching small rodents, lizards, and snakes, but will also forage on grains, fruits, and insects.

With bright red legs and bills, these birds are hard to miss, but their loud, barking call makes them even more conspicuous. The pair at Sylvan Heights can be heard from more than a mile away!

Both new habitats are landscaped to mimic the birds' natural habitat, and to provide enrichment and roosting areas.



Park Staff Assists With Bat Surveys

In June, members of the Sylvan Heights staff volunteered with the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission to participate in the NABat project surveying local bat populations in Hertford County. The NABat program utilizes recordings of ultrasonic echolocation calls as a noninvasive strategy to identify bats in a particular location. The bats are detected using a small ultrasonic recording device that plugs into smartphone or tablet and is attached to the roof of a vehicle. When the recording device is paired with the free app, users are able to listen to, record, and identify the different species detected.

The summer survey took place June-July in 31 counties across the North Carolina. With the help of volunteers, biologists are able to take a comprehensive look at bat populations in our state. The survey allows biologists to measure changes in parameters such as species distribution, habitat usage, and migration. With bat populations continuing to decline across the United States due to disease, pesticide usage, and habitat loss, monitoring projects such as the NABat survey will continue to play a vital role in conservation.



Bird Banners in Scotland Neck

Visitors to Sylvan Heights Bird Park are now guided to the park's entrance by a series of light pole banners on Main Street and Highway 258 in Scotland Neck.

Funded by Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau and installed by the Town of Scotland Neck, the banners feature colorful portraits of the birds of Sylvan Heights. Closer to the park's entrance road, the banners read "Follow Me to Sylvan Heights Bird Park".

Sylvan Heights Bird Park thanks Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Town of Scotland Neck for coordinating the installation of these banners. We appreciate the additional visibility they will bring to the park for Scotland Neck's visitors and residents!

For more news & updates:





the curator's report

by **DUSTIN FOOTE**
General Curator, Sylvan Heights Bird Park

Photos by K.G. Lubbock

"Conservation" is a big word.

As our members, you are helping to support conservation of some of the world's rarest waterfowl. At Sylvan Heights, our main focus in conservation is twofold; sustainable captive populations of birds, and education. There are many other ways we contribute to conservation, such as reintroductions and research*, however the core of what we do is sustainability and education.

Our education footprint is broad; K-12, undergraduate, graduate, and professional students all have opportunities for formal programs at Sylvan Heights. While I consider these critical components of our mission, I believe that informal education is paramount. People want to save what they care about, what they know, what they are invested in. By providing an environment where our visitors can simply have fun, we hope to engage people and make them think twice about their decisions and impact on the natural world. As a child, structured field trips to the zoo can be great. However, at the end of the day, you are one of 200 other children, running around excited because you are not sitting in school. While still important, this may or may not engage you. Now, imagine you are at the zoo and a keeper pulls you and your family behind scenes for a few moments. You get to experience a small part of the keeper's routine in an audience of you. The effect can be profound. These "defining moments" are at the heart of our informal education. At Sylvan Heights, we seek not only to formally educate, but to engage our visitors in birds and the natural world.

What about sustainability? At Sylvan Heights, our directors have a different opinion of what sustainable means. While some facilities have one or two birds, we have always believed in maintaining large populations of the species we focus on. For waterfowl, there are many species where Sylvan Heights holds more individuals than all other facilities combined in North America. Our commitment to sustainability

is just one of the many reasons we are excited to announce that Pandemonium Aviaries has decided to trust us with its collection of birds. Established in 1996, Pandemonium shares our belief in maintaining large populations of rare and endangered birds such as Green-naped Pheasant Pigeons, Plum-headed Parakeets, and Nicobar Pigeons. Founder Michele Raffin has spent the past few years looking for a facility to care for her birds so she can focus her efforts on advocating for conservation policy changes.

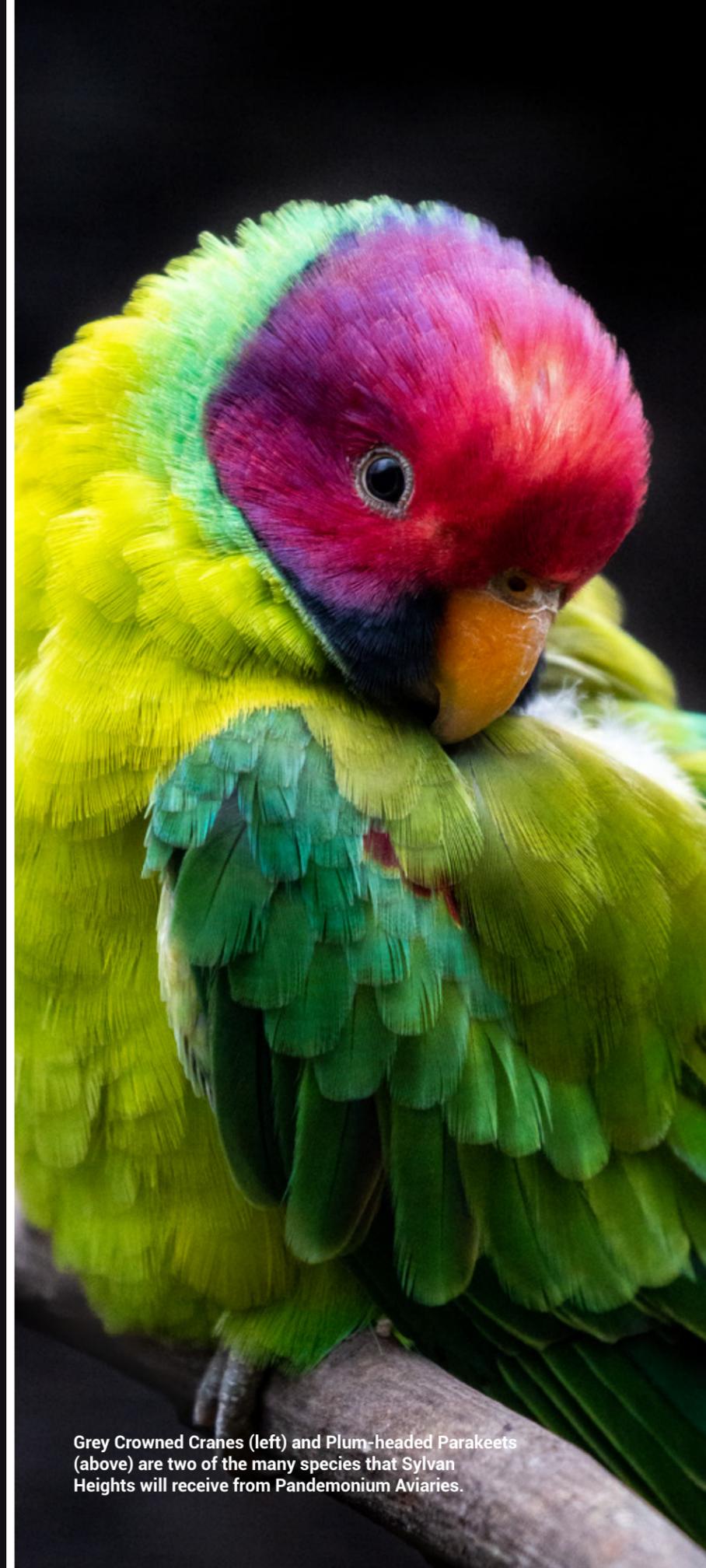
In order to provide for Pandemonium's birds, Sylvan Heights staff have focused on several additions to the park. Due to the generosity of Michele and her Board of Directors, Sylvan Heights is working with A thru Z Consulting, a professional zoo exhibit company, to build a large walk-through aviary focusing on species from New Guinea and the South Pacific. While Sylvan has always done aviary construction in-house, our staff is excited for visitors to experience a different style of aviary. A thru Z's expertise brings new materials and designs that have previously not been seen at Sylvan Heights. We look forward to opening this exhibit in 2020.

In order to continue working with the species Pandemonium has focused on, Sylvan Heights is constructing an off-exhibit breeding center at the park. Unlike the current breeding center, this building will be focused on non-waterfowl. For our avicultural members who have experienced behind-the-scenes tours during Duckling Day at the current Breeding Center, we plan to include this new building in future Duckling Days!

We hope you are as excited as us about these new chapters at Sylvan Heights. As our members, you are not only supporting us, but the conservation of birds and our natural world. Our commitment to sustainability and education will only be strengthened when Pandemonium's birds arrive this spring.

*If you would like to know more about our reintroduction or research efforts, please email or write me at:

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PhD Candidate, East Carolina University
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Grey Crowned Cranes (left) and Plum-headed Parakeets (above) are two of the many species that Sylvan Heights will receive from Pandemonium Aviaries.

leaping onto the GIANT SCREEN

by KATIE LUBBOCK



{ The birds of Sylvan Heights will appear in a new IMAX feature by Archipelago Films. }

Sylvan Heights Bird Park is assisting New York-based production company Archipelago Films with an exciting new feature titled *Wings Over Water*. Susan Todd, Producer and Director at Archipelago Films, explains that *Wings Over Water* will be a 3D/Giant Screen film about the magic and mystery of migratory birds and the wetlands they depend on. "To tell the story, we will follow three North American birds--the yellow warbler, the sandhill crane, and the mallard--on their first annual migration from their breeding grounds in the prairie pothole wetlands of the central US and Canada to their winter homes across the continent", says Todd. "Along the way, we will experience the triumphs and perils of migration first hand. We will meet scientists who use cutting-edge technologies to understand these epic journeys, dedicated conservationists, and locals who each year welcome the return of the birds." The film will highlight the importance of the Prairie Pothole Region, a 275,000-square mile nursery for the majority of North America's water birds.

Narrated by Academy Award-Nominated actor Michael Keaton (of *Birdman* and *Batman*), *Wings Over Water* will play at educational IMAX and Giant Screen theaters internationally. The film is being funded by the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation, who hopes to use it to increase support for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. *Wings Over Water* is also receiving support from Delta Waterfowl and Ducks Unlimited.

Mallards and Sandhill Cranes raised at Sylvan Heights will have a starring role in stunning close-up footage that illustrates natural behaviors, and enhances the story of the wild birds featured in the film.

Avian trainer Juan Romero arrived at Sylvan Heights in June, and is working as the on-site caretaker for the birds, ensuring that the young ducks and cranes are healthy and safe during filming sessions. Part of Romero's daily schedule involves acclimating the birds to humans and the various equipment used during shoots.

"To get all the birds ready for the film, we started working with them at an early age", explains Romero. "We first had the birds imprint on me, and when they were old enough, we started an exercise routine of regular walks. This part was very important, because I made sure they walked by people, vehicles, other animals, open fields, water and forest. By introducing the birds to all different scenarios, we guarantee that they will be comfortable anywhere we will go to film."

"Once they were old enough and began testing their wings, we started the second phase of the work, which is training. We began with crate training, so the birds can always be comfortable inside their crates during transport, and can be released from the crate with no stress."



Director Andrew Young films a scene for *Wings Over Water* at Sylvan Heights.

leaping onto the
GIANT SCREEN

"We then introduce target training, where the birds can be familiarized with a visual signal, like a red disc, and sound signals, like a whistle and horn. This is how I communicate with the birds so they can see and hear where I am."

Romero is an alumni of the Sylvan Heights Avian Husbandry Program and worked for several years at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center before accepting keeper positions at the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York, and the Toledo Zoo in Ohio. He also established Animalia 365, an organization that aims to create connections between people and the natural world through a unique up close and personal experience.

The team behind *Wings Over Water* are Academy Award Nominated filmmakers Susan Todd and Andrew Young. Their last 3D/IMAX film, *Backyard Wilderness*, swept the 2018 Giant Screen Cinema Awards, winning Best Film, Best Cinematography, Best Visual Effects and Best Lifelong Learning. *Backyard Wilderness* is currently playing in over 30 cities worldwide (www.backyardwildernessfilm.com).



Avian trainer Juan Romero prepares a flock of young Mallards for *Wings Over Water*



Letters from Avian Alumni

Zeek Craven

Seattle, WA
Sylvan Heights Avian Intern, Summer 2019

When I graduated from university in May of 2019, I knew that I wanted to work with waterfowl. I'd done my best to learn as much as I could about the various species of waterfowl, and how they operate as species, and I was truly fascinated by them. I had gained some experience working hands on with them, but I wanted more. As I looked around for the best place to work with waterfowl, all signs kept pointing to Sylvan Heights Bird Park. I'd been to visit once before, and the things that had stuck out to me were the sheer number and variety of birds, and the fact that it was so so far away from any kind of major civilization. I looked into summer opportunities and saw two-week courses in avian husbandry and management, which sounded awesome, but seemed to be primarily for bird keepers who had significant experience already working with birds. I

wasn't sure how I, a recent college graduate with above average waterfowl ID skills and not much else, was going to fit in to that environment. Turns out, I fit in quite well.

I'd started to pack up my college dorm in preparation to move out when I got an offer from SHBP not just for two weeks, but to come down for the whole summer to learn and work. This was fantastic, because not only was it a great opportunity to learn about, and work with hundreds of birds, I also had no plans for my summer, so this worked nicely. I accepted and spent the summer of 2019 having more fun and learning more than I ever thought possible. The opportunity to get real hands on experience with birds I never expected to see in real life, much less work with, was truly extraordinary. It's one thing to look at pictures of ducks and learn about what makes each species unique, but it's another thing entirely to walk into a pen of comb ducks, and ID the Old World species from New World species while they're all running around.

The experiences I had at Sylvan Heights were incredible, and I cherish every moment I spent there. The small facility and staff were incredibly welcoming, and every person taught me

so much. I'm excited to go forward with my career with the confidence in the knowledge I received from the Sylvan Heights family. I'd like to thank every person, dog, and bird that made my summer there the best summer of my life, and I can't wait to go back.

Katie Phillips

Roanoke Rapids, NC
Sylvan Heights Avian Intern, Summer 2019

As I sit here reflecting my time spent as an intern at Sylvan Heights, I can't help but feel a slurry of emotions. I'm excited that I successfully completed my Avian Husbandry and Management certification—it was one of the hardest things I have ever accomplished. I had to push myself to the limits many days and endure being hot, filthy, and tired; yet, the hard work was rewarding and is one of my proudest accomplishments to

date. I would have moved mountains to see the waterfowl happy and healthy and I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

I also can't help but feel a bit sad as I said farewell to my fellow coworkers for the past eight weeks. I feel like the Sylvan Heights crew became a second family to me. Their willingness to welcome and accept newcomers quickly helped me overcome my nervousness and shyness about being in a new and unfamiliar place and helped me step out of my comfort zone to make friends while learning the ropes of an aviculturist. I would highly recommend this internship to anyone who wants to gain experience working with birds or wildlife, it's the opportunity of a lifetime. Thank you, Mike and Ali, for allowing me to go on this journey with Sylvan Heights and thank you to the breeding center staff for training and guiding me along the way. In the words of Nick Hill (the curator at the breeding center), "It's not goodbye, just cheerio for now."



FLAMINGO *frenzy*

This year, visitors to Sylvan Heights Bird Park got an up-close view of the nesting cycle of flamingos. A record number of American and Chilean flamingos built nests and hatched chicks in the Multinational, South America, and Landing Zone aviaries.

Both male and female flamingos take turns caring for their chick, protecting it from the weather and feeding it a nutritious liquid from their upper digestive tract called "crop milk". Flamingo chicks become quite mobile by about 5 - 10 days old, and generally leave the nest mound after that time. The parent flamingos continue to feed their chick for 2.5 to 3 months, until it is able to eat on its own.

K.G. Lubbock



DIY *wildlife conservation*

by **NICK HILL**
Curator, Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center

We're often asked by park visitors if the endangered birds raised here at Sylvan Heights will be released back into the wild. We would always like for the answer to be "yes", but as you might imagine, this subject is incredibly complex. Unfortunately, many of the species we propagate here at Sylvan Heights can't safely be reintroduced into the wild for the very same reason they became endangered: the environment they need to survive just doesn't exist anymore. One of the main barriers to reintroducing

endangered species to their native range is the lack of suitable habitat, and more often than not, human activity is to blame. Pollution, urban development, and many other factors contribute to species declines, but the good news is that the solution doesn't rest solely in the hands of conservation organizations. There are many simple things you can do at home to help reduce your impact on the environment and help conserve the amazing wildlife that's right in your backyard.

*Don't ask what the countryside can do for you,
ask what you can do for the countryside!*

Don't be trashy

Littering is a direct contributor to wildlife mortality. When humans throw trash out of their vehicles onto roadsides, it washes directly into local waterways, where wildlife can mistake it for food or become entangled. Dispose of trash in proper receptacles, and reuse or recycle as much as you can. Balloons may be festive, but avoid releasing them during celebrations. Deflated Mylar and latex balloons are easily ingested by birds and other aquatic animals, often resulting in death. Instead, choose wildlife-friendly alternatives like bubbles, flowers, or a memorial tree to commemorate someone.

Plastic is not so fantastic

If you haven't already done so, consider switching from single-use plastic shopping bags to reusable bags. Plastic shopping bags are messy, wasteful, and dangerous to wildlife. Reusable bags are inexpensive, sturdy, and easy to use (the hardest part is remembering to bring them in the store with you). Since 2015, six countries have placed a tax on single-use plastic bags, which has reduced use in those countries by 80% - a relief for wildlife and landfills!

Share your space

Creating habitat for native species in your backyard is easy and fun! Include native perennial plants in your garden to attract pollinators like bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds (milkweed is especially beneficial to Monarch butterflies). Install nesting or roosting spots, like bat boxes, bluebird nest boxes, and Wood Duck nest boxes if you have a pond or wetland on your property. Some people are even starting to think about wildlife during the construction of their homes by including built-in beehives and installing nest sites for Swifts under archways and eaves.

Not a fan of yard work? Good news! You can help wildlife by not mowing your lawn or raking leaves. Tall grasses and leaf litter provide food sources and shelter for birds and other animals. Also, avoid applying pesticides and chemicals in your garden, as storm runoff can carry these chemicals into waterways.

These are just a few ways we can all help wildlife. If enough people around the world do their part to take care of their local environment, habitat destruction could be halted or even reversed, and endangered species may one day return to their native ranges.

Like many migratory birds, Prothonotary Warblers rely on healthy wetlands to survive and raise young.

K.G. Lubbock



from the **iwwa** president

Dear IWWA and Sylvan Heights members,

I recently returned from IWWA's annual convention, held this year in Italy, Austria and Germany. First off, a huge thank you goes to Peter Kooij for arranging an exciting and unforgettable itinerary, to our hosts who opened their impressive collections to us, and to the forty-five waterfowl aficionados who made the trip so enjoyable.

At our annual board meeting in Milan, three new IWWA board members were elected: Matt Smith from British Columbia, Canada, Shelan Sekora from Alberta, Canada and Bill Robles from Louisiana, USA. Each of our new directors brings with them unique skills and talents that will help advance IWWA's mission, and share our passion for waterfowl. At the meeting we also mourned the loss of two of IWWA's honorary directors, Nancy Collins and Christopher Marler. Both Nancy and Chris were avid waterfowl enthusiasts, pioneers in successful avian husbandry and of course, great friends to many of us. They will be sorely missed.

IWWA's Conservation and Grants committee had an especially hard job this year selecting grant awardees. After reviewing a new record in the number of applicants,

the committee selected projects to build traveling Red-breasted Goose conservation exhibits in Bulgaria, and to create the first comprehensive White-winged Wood Duck conservation program in Assam, India. In addition, the committee approved the ongoing support of Sylvan Heights' White-winged Wood Duck husbandry program. Stay tuned for grant recipient updates in upcoming WOW issues.

2020 will be a big year for IWWA. In February, the third Waterfowl Conservation Workshop will be held in Barneveld, Netherlands, and we have selected Quebec, Canada for our annual convention next October. More details on the workshop can be found at waterfowlconservation.org and on the convention at wildwaterfowl.org. I hope to see you in the Netherlands, Quebec, or both!

Ian Gereq

President, International Wild Waterfowl Association



Hottentot Teal
(*Anas hottentota*)

K.G. Lubbock



IWWA conference 2019

Article and photos by
ANNE WHITING

When Peter Kooij organizes a conference, one knows that it will be a life experience worth the price of admission, as it were. So it was on to Italy, Germany and Austria for the 60th IWWA anniversary tour without hesitation and with anticipation of seeing beautiful things, continuing friendships, learning a lot and perhaps consuming fine food and beverages. We started in Milan. Some of the members showed up a day or two early and took the train into the city and wandered around the duomo and plazas. The weather was lovely and 31 of us were at the Hotel Villa Milpensa for dinner on the 29th. The board meeting was held on the afternoon of the 30th and by the time that was over, the rest of the weary travelers had arrived, making it a total of 45. Reunions and introductions happened at the social, and during dinner we heard reflections from Ali Lubbock on Nancy Collins and Morag Jones on Christopher Marler. Both of those people are missed by all. On Tuesday, the 41 of us plus the Dutch car behind us rolled out of the Villa Malpensa onto our journey to Enrico Albertini's farm. He has a waterfowl collection, but the most impressive part of his lovely estate was his collection of owls and other birds of prey from all over Europe, Asia and Africa. Stunning birds in fine feather. Our first lunch out at a restaurant was an indication of the possible (probable) increase in waist lines that this trip would result in. 3 hours and 5 courses later - plus several magnums of wine - we were



on our way to our hotel on the lake. We bumped dinner back an hour and convened in a conference room to hear Don Butler teach us about his pheasant collection. Then it was time to have dinner - buffet - prosciutto, risotto, pasta, salads, breads, cheeses, and then there was the dessert buffet.

Wednesday brought clouds and rain but the bus ride to Udine was about 3 hours long so that was good timing. Lunch in a tiny home restaurant and again...4 or 5 courses later and 2 hours of caloric intake it was on to a reserve with storks and ibis and ponds filled with birds. All part of a project to increase the stork population in that part of Europe. The sun came out and we wound our way to the castle and winery of Giuseppe and Paolo Tedesco - sunny and warm and amazing. We were running out of time for our driver Fabio and his bus logs, and our dinner out with 2 long tables of 25 was done in 70 minutes flat. Impressive!

Off to Grado on Thursday - a port/fishing/yachting town on the northeast coast of Italy. Bulgaria to the east, Austria to the North. A charter boat took us through the hundreds of small islands and habitat with loads of birds around. Captain Paulo navigated the shallow channels effortlessly as some of us watched the fathometer. After the galley crew dished out plates of calamari and frites for us all, the sun came out as we reached our destination which was the private 150 acre island and bird collection of Giuseppe Tedesco - yes, the same man whose father bought the castle winery. His grandfather bought the island in the 1950's. Giuseppe had about 60 species of waterfowl and waders in aviaries. There were full-winged Greylag Geese, Barnacle Geese, Snow Geese and a couple of Bar-headed Geese all flying around. A marvelous way to spend a day. We bussed back to the hotel and out to a local restaurant in Udine. Forty-five of us...one menu in English. Lots of translator apps on phones tried, but Fabio, our bus driver, took the lead and the wait staff did their best, and 2 hours later, most of us had something we think we ordered. But it was excellent food!

Friday was moving day - a long but beautiful bus ride through the Alps to Salzburg, Austria. The scenery was amazing and if you could master a moment of shuteye in the tunnels through the mountains, it was perfect. Our lunch stop was in Lundau - a ski resort town. A gondola ride up to the lodge restaurant 2400 meters high was stunning. No acrophobia here. Schnitzel and frites or beef with horseradish sauce and a beer were followed by a crepe with ice cream inside. Several renditions of the soundtrack from the Sound of Music were recorded. That night after dinner we learned all about Australia and waterfowl and conservation. James Goodrich, President of the Pheasant and Waterfowl Society of Australia found us on our website, joined up and won the farthest traveled award - just beating out the crews from Washington State and Western Canada. His passion is parrots and macaws but he also has a nice collection of waterfowl. We learned a lot about aviculture and the climate issues affecting Australia and it was a great lecture. Learn more at www.pwsa.org.au. After James' talk we went back to school with Hans Dekker and Bert Bleijer from AERES MBO Barneveld - the host facility for the upcoming Waterfowl Conservation Workshop in February. Hans talked about the program and then Bert had us divide into groups for a pop quiz on bird identification - songs, feathers, eyes and then impressionistic art. His questions were faster than the internet speed of phones and Google and web searches for answers. None of us passed the quiz and all decided that it was fun, yet going back to school is not on our bucket list.



Salzburg is known for music and rain - 220 days a year. The odds were good that umbrellas and foul weather gear would be in order for the trip to see the countryside and 2 small but impeccable collections of waterfowl. Some decided that their day would best be spent improving the economy of the city and getting the auction items and space in order. We divided into 2 groups and spent about an hour and a half at each collection with lunch in between. The afternoon visits were dry and almost warm. Thanks to our hosts Mr. Wimmer and Mr. Fellner for the tour and lovely setting. Dinner and then it was time to raise money for IWWA. The auction was Maynard Axelson at his best and 7,000 euro was raised. That will be \$7700 dollars for the grant line item in the budget. Thanks to all who donated items, bid on items and ran the show. Morag Jones and her flamingo T-shirt show was the highlight.

Sunday the sun rose and was visible in Salzburg while we all wandered around the city before boarding the bus at 1:00 to drive the Cham, Germany. Again, gorgeous farm land and hills and villages - a hint of fall foliage with tilled land and huge pines and yellow fields of safflower or some sort of yellow cover crop. Our hotel in the town was apparently the hub of activity as dance classes were being held at one end and a tuba band was practicing at the other end. Dinner was a Bavarian buffet and after dinner lectures, the first was from Ian Gereg on his trip to Papua New Guinea to find the Salvadori's Duck. That trip was amazing and his photos of the bird were perfect...and the only ones in the world. We did get the technology set up necessary to watch Joel Sartore and his photo Ark show that Don Butler arranged especially for IWWA. Can't compare anything to those photos. A lot of the shots were of Don and Ann's birds and those of Sylvan Heights. Stunning. Monday brought a chill in the air and a short ride to 2 collections belonging

to Petra and Heinz Gruber and Matthias Gruber and Karl Buchler. One home had every possible space manicured and decorated and a fine collection of ducks. Petra and Heinz had more land and large aviaries and each one was loaded with Harlequin Ducks, ponds and shrubs and evergreens in addition to about 60 species of waterfowl and waders. All birds were in impeccable feather. A typical lunch of pretzels, roast ham/liverwurst, whole grain sweet mustard and local bier followed by Christmas cake was enjoyed by all. IWWA is starting to stand for Increased Weight Will Accrue. Soon to be called International Weight Watchers Association. Later, talks on tagging migratory Canada Geese by Andy Ocampo and a crane slide show by Walter Sturgeon followed by Lyle Van Norman with a reminder about California laws and the decline in bird shows and breeding and its impact on private collections.

It was back on the road from Germany to Vienna. A 2-hour break from the bus was had at the Zoo Schmiding and its amazing museum of artifacts from all over the world and an evolutionary educational tour by Dr. Wolfgang Artmann. We got to Vienna, did a quick unpack and change and met for the (long) walk to dinner and concert of Mozart and Strauss. Good food and music and dance and the cab ride back to the hotel saved ourselves for more walking on Wednesday. We said goodbye to some friends who were on their way home before heading to the Spanish Riding Academy to see the Lipizzaner horses train and then hopped on a train back and wandered around the zoo. A relaxing dinner at the hotel and farewells to the rest of the group, along with the thoughts of plane travel in all directions was in order. So we said Auf Wiedersehen to Austria and friends and will be saying Bonjour and Bienvenue in Canada in a year's time. As I age, those years fly by. Again, thank you, Peter Kooij for all your planning and hosting. It was excellent. About that diet...on it!

wild ancestors

A look at the family history of our domestic waterfowl

by MORAG JONES | British Waterfowl Association

Photo by K.G. Lubbock



Domestic ducks and geese are delightful birds, and can give their owners much pleasure and enjoyment. They are hardy, very easy to keep, and become trusting and responsive, particularly with children. There are a wide variety of domestic duck breeds, from the smallest Call Duck, no larger than a pigeon, to the big majestic Aylesbury. Geese are useful as friends, guards and lawnmowers, but require a larger enclosure than most ducks. All waterfowl should be protected from predators but only need simple housing. Keeping pure breeds of ducks and geese gives us the opportunity to take part in preserving some of our traditional breeds. After all, it is no more effort to keep good examples of a breed than poor ones!

Our domestic ducks and geese (there are no domestic swans) have been selectively bred for meat, eggs or exhibition purposes. It is widely considered that all domestic ducks, with the exception of the Muscovy, have been bred from the Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). Even in the wild Mallard, there is some variation in shape, size, temperament and plumage. We have exploited these traits through selective breeding to develop duck breeds for all purposes. Perhaps most widespread and numerous of all ducks, the Mallard succeeds by its ability to adapt to areas that humans use. Though principally of the Northern Hemisphere, the Mallard has been introduced to many countries south of the Equator, including South Africa, Mauritius, Australia and New Zealand.

The magnificent Muscovy (*Cairina moschata domestica*) is a heavy species of duck that originates from Central and South America. Historically, it was placed in the group known as the Perching Ducks. Both sexes have bare red facial patches and develop wart-like 'caruncles' as they age, especially the drakes. With an erectile fore-crown crest and these sometimes-sinister lumps and bumps, they can look rather fierce. Despite this, they have calm temperaments when domesticated; the Muscovy is prized as a broody. She will put her heart and soul into defending 'her' young of course. Exhibition Muscovies have nine colour classes in the UK, but in the United States they are hugely popular and there are many more.

Most European breeds of geese are descended from the wild Greylag (*Anser anser*), which breeds in the north, nesting on moorlands, in marshes and around lakes and on coastal islands. Wintering birds migrate south to semi-aquatic habitats, estuaries, marshes and flooded fields, feeding on grass and often consuming agricultural crops. The plumage pattern is very clear to see and is familiar to domestic goose enthusiasts. Paintings of birds resembling the Greylag and also the Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) have been found on Ancient Egyptian tombs.

Tall and elegant, the wild Swan Goose (*Anser cygnoid*) comes from central Asia, from Siberia to Mongolia and northern China. It is almost entirely vegetarian, eating sedges, along with other grasses in the summer. Their bills are not really adapted for grazing very short turf, but more for grass that can be sheared off with a sideways motion. The Swan Goose has been domesticated for several thousand years in China, prized as an egg-layer. The domestic breeds known as African and Chinese geese are descended from the Swan Goose. These breeds in their 'wild type' plumage look similar to the Greylag descendants, but their bills tend to be longer and wedge-shaped. A large bill knob, barely perceptible in their wild ancestors, is a key part of the exhibition breed standard for the African and the Chinese Goose.

The domestic geese originating from the Greylag, and those descended from the Swan Goose do interbreed. These crosses have produced the different breeds of Russian geese such as the Tula, Asamas and Kholmogory, plus the beautiful Blue Steinbacher Goose.

year of the
crane



Sylvan Heights Bird Park's Annual Fundraiser highlighted the cranes of the world while supporting the park's education and conservation programs.

Red-crowned Cranes in Hokkaido, Japan | Katie Lubbock

year of the *crane*

Sylvan Heights Bird Park hosted its annual fundraiser on October 12th, and this year's event was all about cranes. These graceful birds were featured throughout the evening with fun facts and trivia, crane-themed décor, and a visit from some of the park's resident birds.

Event guests were treated to a variety of cuisines while bidding on live and silent auction items, which included a trip to Venice and Tuscany, a tree house camping adventure on the Cashie River, tickets to the Biltmore Estate, several exclusive dining experiences, and unique art pieces. All proceeds from the event will support Sylvan Heights Bird Park's conservation and education programs, and the results of the annual fundraiser have a significant impact for the park. "This is our biggest event of the year, and we really rely on the generosity of our supporters during the fundraiser to help keep our programs going," says Brent Lubbock, Director of Operations & Development at Sylvan Heights. "Event guests are directly

contributing to the birds, and to the thousands of students that will visit over the coming year to learn about science, nature, and the importance of conservation".

During the event, park officials announced plans for new crane habitats, which will provide a home for stunning six-foot-tall Sarus Cranes, as well as Whooping Cranes, one of the rarest birds on Earth. Construction of these new aviaries will begin in 2020, and the habitats include additional space to house other critically endangered crane species in the future.

Sylvan Heights Bird Park would like to thank everyone who purchased tickets, sponsored a table, bid on auction items, donated, volunteered, or otherwise supported this year's annual fundraiser. The generosity of these individuals and businesses resulted in \$54,000 raised in support of the park's conservation and education programs.



Nancy Collins, "The Ruddy Duck Queen"

by Ali Lubbock

In July this year, we lost our very dear friend, Nancy Collins, from Medina, Ohio. Many of you may not have heard of her, but she was an aviculturist famed for raising North American Ruddy Ducks and teaching many others in the aviculture world how to do so.

Nancy also anonymously helped with the founding of Sylvan Heights Bird Park. She created a Charitable Lead Trust through the North Carolina Zoological Society that generates annual funding for Sylvan Heights Bird Park to continue operating. Although she wished for her donations to remain anonymous during her lifetime, she agreed that we could dedicate our Visitor Center building in her memory once she was no longer with us.

On November 2nd, Sylvan Heights Bird Park dedicated the Nancy Collins Visitor Center, with all her family, her dearest friends, board members, and staff of Sylvan Heights present for the unveiling of her portrait by local artist Dorothy McLennan. A Ruddy Duck brooch is proudly pinned to her jacket in the portrait. Nancy was my dearest friend and I will miss her but her presence will always be felt here in the Visitor Center, overlooking the Multinational pond with her beloved Ruddy Ducks.



K.G. Lubbock

park events

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



Breakfast With Santa

December 7, 2019 | 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Join Santa for breakfast at the park! Plenty of holiday activities for children, plus a chance to meet and take photos with Santa.



Oyster Roast

January 18, 2020 | 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 14, 2020 | 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.

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 2020

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



Duckling Day

May 2, 2020 | 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!



Sponsor An Event!

www.shwpark.com or 252.826.3186

You or your business can sponsor an event at Sylvan Heights! Benefits include recognition on promotional materials and recognition at the event, event tickets, and reserved tables!



careers start here

Each year, Sylvan Heights Bird Park trains dozens of aspiring biologists, zookeepers, and aviculturists from around the world to help prepare them for careers in wildlife conservation. However, the park also serves our local communities as a place for students to gain work experience, build real-world skills, and even start their first paid job.

In many cases, Sylvan Heights Bird Park relies on volunteer support during the peak summer season, but we are growing fast! This year, we are asking for your help to sponsor paid summer jobs at Sylvan Heights for local high school students in Halifax County, NC. During the summer of 2020, up to six students will have the opportunity to assist visitors in the Landing Zone and help maintain the park grounds while learning valuable skills in customer service and reliability, preparing them for future employment in the field of their choice.

If you would like to help a student gain skills that will launch their careers, please consider making a donation below. Thank you for your support!

thank you to our donors

Sylvan Heights Bird Park gratefully acknowledges our donors of \$500 or more since April 1, 2019 through September 30, 2019.

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Sponsor a student

Your donation will help us provide summer job opportunities at Sylvan Heights Bird Park for up to six high school students from Halifax County.

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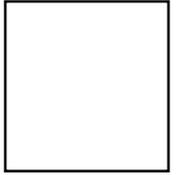
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Or, my gift of \$ _____ is included. Or, charge \$ _____ to my Visa Master Card Amex Discover

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



500 Sylvan Heights Park Way • PO Drawer 368 • Scotland Neck, NC 27874



Common Goldeneye
(*Bucephala clangula*)

K.G. Lubbock