

# words on waterfowl

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



*A safe haven for*  
**BAER'S  
POCHARD** page 4

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## NEW BOOK ARRIVING IN 2014



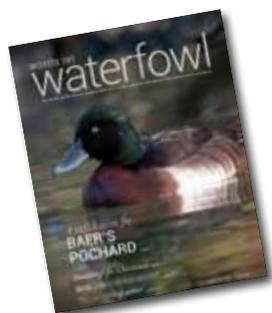
Photo by Marcy True

### the waterfowl man of sylvan heights

The long-awaited memoirs of Sylvan Heights founder Mike Lubbock is nearing completion. The book is titled *The Waterfowl Man of Sylvan Heights*. It traces Mike Lubbock's life with birds from his birthplace in Southwest England, through his years with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, ending with the founding of Sylvan Heights. Co-author Dale True has invested four years of research, writing and editing in the manuscript, which is in the final stages of preparation before going into print early next year.

"It's an adventure book more than anything else. Mike's story is told through the many thrilling expeditions he made to collect birds and eggs in the most remote places on earth. The reader will experience the excitement and dangers Mike faced as he traveled the world to preserve waterfowl."

*The Waterfowl Man of Sylvan Heights* will be available in the gift shop of Sylvan Heights Bird Park as well as the park's website.



#### ON THE COVER:

The critically endangered Baer's Pochard may be scarce in the wild, but the species is beginning to thrive in captive collections.

(Page 4)

#### CONNECT ONLINE!



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



The Scarlet Ibis at Sylvan Heights will soon have a new home for winter.

## the director's report

In this issue of Words on Waterfowl, you will find several stories from past Sylvan Heights Avian Husbandry interns. The Avian Husbandry internship program is an integral part of our mission here at Sylvan Heights. Coupled with support from the IWWA, we are providing hands-on training for the next generation of aviculturists and conservationists. In the past year, we hosted international participants from the United Kingdom and Germany, as well as U.S. interns from Nashville Zoo, Denver Zoo, Busch Gardens, Virginia Aquarium, Sea World San Diego, Central Park Zoo, Toledo Zoo, Zoo Atlanta, Los Angeles Zoo, St. Louis Zoo, San Antonio Zoo, North Carolina Aquarium, and Akron Zoo. We also had college interns from Cornell University, NC Wesleyan College, East Carolina University, NC State, Wright State University Ohio, and Virginia Tech. Towards the end of this issue, you will find an opportunity to sponsor an Avian Husbandry intern for the 2014 season, which will allow a student to learn about aviculture with their expenses covered on an as-needed basis. We thank all of the generous individuals who contributed to this program last year.

Other generous contributions include a grant from DeLeon Carter Foundation to help build a winter quarters for the Scarlet Ibis and Roseate Spoonbills. This will allow us to keep them on display all year round when weather permits. Also, we received a grant from Duke Energy that has enabled us to give free or reduced admission to school children from socioeconomically challenged areas.

We would like to acknowledge three of our employees that have moved on to further their careers. Nathan Bawtinhimer had been Assistant Curator at the Breeding Center for the past 3 years, having initially started with an internship. Nathan, his wife Claire (a former intern and employee at the Park) and son Lee have moved to Alaska, and Nathan now works at the Alaska SeaLife Center, putting his skills to use raising Stellers Eiders and other sea ducks. Brian Beckum, Breeding Center employee, has also moved on and back to his original roots in Biochemistry working for DSM in Greenville, NC. We wish them well and thank them for all their hard work.

This year, we were pleased to see nearly a 70 percent increase in visitation during our peak season, with many visitors from all over the country and abroad returning to enjoy the Landing Zone, the park and the relatively mild summer weather.

Next year I celebrate my 70th birthday and the launching of a book authored by Dale True, the originator of our first website. Dale has had full access to all my 50-odd years of travel journals. We are launching the book during the Swan Gala at the Umstead Hotel in Raleigh on March 7th. More information about this event will be provided in the coming months. We hope many of you will be able to attend.

*Mike Lubbock*  
**Executive Director**  
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

## Baer's Pochard

*Aythya baeri*

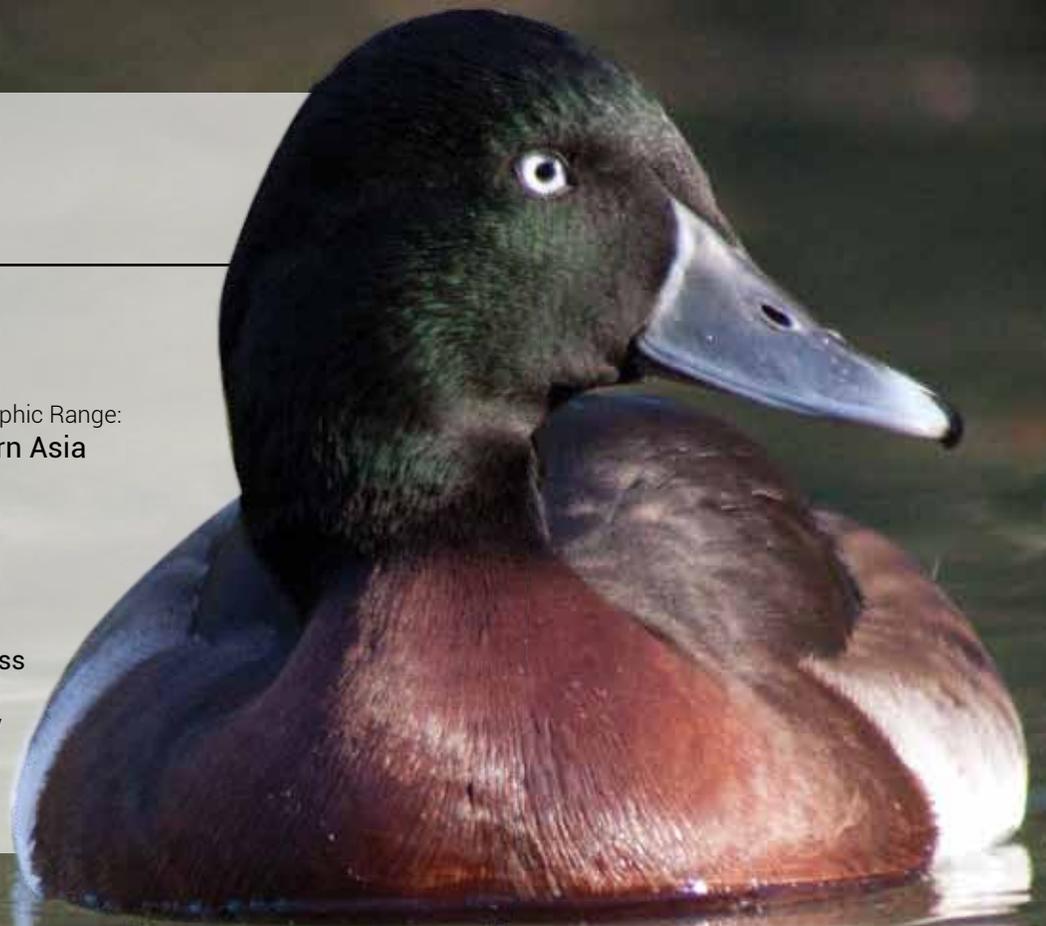


Geographic Range:  
Eastern Asia

Status: Critically Endangered

Threats: Hunting and habitat loss

Population size: unknown, likely  
less than 1,000 wild birds.



Things aren't getting any easier for Baer's Pochard in the wild. The species was listed as endangered in 2008, but populations continued to decrease so drastically that it was uplisted to critically endangered in 2012. This year, there has been no known nesting activity by wild Baer's Pochard. While the reason for the rapid decline isn't entirely known, hunting and habitat loss are high on the list of suspected causes.

In 2004, the International Wild Waterfowl Association became aware of the perilous situation the Baer's Pochard was facing. Not only were wild numbers decreasing, but very few existed in captivity within United States and European avicultural collections. The IWWA imported three pairs of Baer's Pochard from Europe to Sylvan Heights Waterfowl in 2007, and additional pairs were imported by Louisiana's Pinola Preserve in 2010. From these imported pairs, there are now 93 Baer's Pochard in United States avicultural facilities.

While conservation of wild populations should always be a priority, a strong captive population could mean the difference between worldwide extinction and saving a species on the brink of disaster. Sylvan Heights and the IWWA will continue to focus on providing a safe haven for Baer's Pochard should the unthinkable happen in the wild.

*A safe haven for*  
**BAER'S  
POCHARD**

# endangered waterfowl worldwide

In 2013, seventeen species of waterfowl were listed as endangered or critically endangered worldwide. Sylvan Heights Waterfowl, the International Wild Waterfowl Association, and many other avicultural organizations are working to establish and maintain genetically healthy captive populations, in the hope that these birds may one day help restore wild populations. Currently, widespread destruction of wetland habitat stands in the way of many species restoration efforts, but increased education about the value of wetlands and wildlife could change the future for these birds.



## Madagascar Teal (*Anas bernieri*)

**Geographic range:** Western Madagascar

**Status:** Endangered

**Threats:** Hunting and habitat loss

**Wild status:** Estimated at 1500-2500 individuals.

**Captive conservation efforts:** Sylvan Heights is part of an international network of avicultural facilities attempting to establish and maintain a healthy population of Madagascar Teal in captivity.



## Brazilian Merganser (*Mergus octosetaceus*)

**Geographic range:** Central Brazil

**Status:** Critically Endangered

**Threats:** River pollution

**Wild status:** Unknown, estimated at 250 individuals in 1992.

**Captive conservation efforts:** In 2011, a captive rearing facility was established at Criadouro Pocos de Caldas in Minas Gerais, Brazil, and several young birds have been successfully reared. Terra Brasilis, a Brazilian conservation organization, is monitoring wild populations, and has received financial support from the IWWA.



Photo by Robert Kooy



## White-winged Duck (*Cairina scutulata*)

**Geographic range:** Southeast Asia

**Status:** Endangered

**Threats:** Hunting and habitat loss

**Wild status:** Estimated at 350 - 1,500 individuals.

**Captive conservation efforts:** Backed by grants from the IWWA, Sylvan Heights Waterfowl has established a large captive population of White-winged Ducks in the United States. The birds are loaned to zoos and skilled aviculturists in an effort to increase their numbers and offset limited genetic diversity within the captive population.



Species data gathered from: IUCN 2013. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2013.1. <<http://www.iucnredlist.org>>. Accessed on 18 November 2013.

# *the* curator's report

*For this issue of the Park's newsletter, I was asked to share how I started working with birds and came to work at Sylvan Heights Bird Park.*

In my early teens, my dad and I used to go to a trade days that included livestock in Weatherford, Texas. It was called First Monday and took place on the weekend prior to the first Monday of every month. One of those weekends, I took my savings and bought a goat for \$17.50 and took her home. One day a friend of my dad's came to visit in his restored 1937 Studebaker. After coming in and visiting, he took us outside to show off his car. Much to my horror, my goat was standing on top of the front fender. Needless to say, the goat went back to the First Monday the very next month, where I traded it for seven chickens. Thus began my path to aviculture.

In high school I tried out for the livestock judging team, but it was full so the Ag teacher offered to start a poultry judging team. My team members changed over the years, but all four years our team went to the state finals. During this time, I also kept various types of pheasants and quail that I acquired at the First Monday.

My intention after high school was to go into veterinary medicine, but due to my financial situation and less than stellar grades, I soon realized that wouldn't be possible. I had several jobs in the agriculture field, but I knew I wanted to be a zookeeper. So one day, I decided to go to the Fort Worth Zoo and try to get a job. After visiting several exhibits, I bumped into a bird keeper and told him of my interest in working with birds there at the zoo. For whatever reason, he took the time to introduce me to the assistant bird curator who told me there were currently no positions available. He hoped to have one open soon, though, and took down my contact information. Many keepers at this time would try to get into the bird department in the hopes of transferring to mammals. But I was able to convince him of my sincerity in working with birds.

Six months later, I was informed of a position for which I could apply. Another six months passed before I was given a full-time position as an entry-level keeper in 1990. (The zoo at that time was city run, which is why it took so long to create and fill positions.) After another year and a half, we had a new assistant curator, Lis Glassco, who told me about a friend of hers in North Carolina with an amazing bird collection called Sylvan Heights in Scotland Neck. She also mentioned they had a year-long curatorial internship, which sparked my interest and I applied for it. She told me years later that she never thought I'd leave Texas to take that position. When I told my curator of my intentions to go to Sylvan Heights, he said, "I don't see what you could learn there that you can't learn here." But, boy, was he mistaken. I nearly starved to



death working that year at Sylvan Heights' Breeding Center, but I consider that move to be one of the best decisions of my life.

After my year at Sylvan Heights was over, I applied for and returned to Fort Worth as a bird supervisor. Seven years passed before I was promoted to Curator of the bird collection. Mike Lubbock and I continued to work together on projects and trade birds over the years. Shortly before the new Sylvan Heights Bird Park opened in 2006, I received a call to see if I was interested in a position running the park's bird collection. A few months before, I had made the comment that I felt I would retire from the Fort Worth Zoo, but when the opportunity arose to work with this amazing collection, I knew I couldn't turn it down. The last seven years have been filled with a whole lot of work, and immense satisfaction. And I feel my time here has been well spent.

I am frequently asked by young people how you get a job in a zoo, and I can tell you that there are many people with four-year degrees applying for entry-level keeper positions. While I feel a formal education is important, it is equally important to have practical experience. This experience may come from keeping your own birds, volunteering, or internships, but whatever the case may be, this practical experience will help you stand out among other applicants.

*Brad Hazelton*  
**General Curator**  
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

# ducklings *for christmas*

## *winter nesters*

**HAWAII**  
Nene

**AFRICA**  
White-backed Duck  
Hartlaub's Duck

**SOUTH AMERICA**  
Black-necked Swans  
Coscoroba Swans

**AUSTRALIA**  
Australian Shelducks  
Black Swans  
Cereopsis Goose  
Pink-eared Duck

Here at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center, our breeding “season” never really stops. Birds from the southern hemisphere have their seasons round the other way from ours, as their summer begins when we enter our winter. Waterfowl from South America, Australia, Africa, and even Hawaii often insist on breeding at the same time all of the northern birds are hunkering down for the cold weather! Of course, this can create challenges for the aviculturist. An un-incubated egg in a nest is susceptible to freezing on a cold winter night. To get around this, we will remove the eggs from the nest and move them to a warm building. In their place, we put wooden dummy eggs in the nest to convince the laying hen that her eggs are still there. When the overnight temperatures rise, or when the hen begins to incubate and protect the nest, we will return her real eggs. An even more serious problem can occur if a hen becomes “egg-bound”, or is unable to pass an egg. This happens more frequently in cold weather, but fortunately, it is easy to fix if noticed in time. By placing the egg-bound hen indoors under a heat lamp, her body warms and her muscles relax, allowing her to lay the egg.

Despite the challenges of cold-weather breeders, we raise many of these species each year. If you visit the park this holiday season, you may even see Black Swans with newly hatched cygnets!

**Nick Hill, Curator**  
Sylvan Heights Breeding Center

*Australian Shelducks*



# YELLOWSTONE national park



## FROM THE IWWA PRESIDENT



We have just returned from the annual IWWA conference. A write-up of the enjoyable memories from our time spent in Louisiana and Texas is included in this issue. Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's conference such a success. Plans are already in the works for next year.

We will be heading to Yellowstone and Jackson Hole along with other attractions next September. Please watch for details of the 2014 conference highlights in upcoming newsletters and on the IWWA website.

During this year's Board meeting we elected two new directors, Jerry Jennings and Jacob Kraemer. They will be offering their experience, talent and creativity in their new positions on the Board. The only grant request received this year was from Sylvan Heights Waterfowl (SHW) for IWWA's continued support of the White-winged Wood Duck project. IWWA has been a longtime supporter of this very important captive breeding program which maintains a population of birds that may one day save an almost extinct wild population.

This year, thanks to generous auction donations and competitive bidding along with good raffle items, the IWWA raised approximately \$4,430. These funds will go toward future projects for the preservation of waterfowl both in captivity and in the wild. A recent example of our conservation efforts is highlighted on page 4 of this issue: the Baer's Pochard. The day may come when supplementing wild populations with these captive birds will save them from extinction. The IWWA will continue to monitor wild populations and supplement captive populations as funds and availability allow.

As I write this President's report, I realize that this is the second joint newsletter following the formation of the Sylvan Heights/IWWA alliance. The alliance has provided both organizations with the opportunity to provide an excellent informative newsletter. I hope that each of you enjoy this latest newsletter and continue to offer your support for our common goal of maintaining healthy numbers of waterfowl in captivity and in the wild for future generations. Please email me at [arndeb@olypen.com](mailto:arndeb@olypen.com) with any comments or suggestions.

*Arnold Schouten*  
**President**

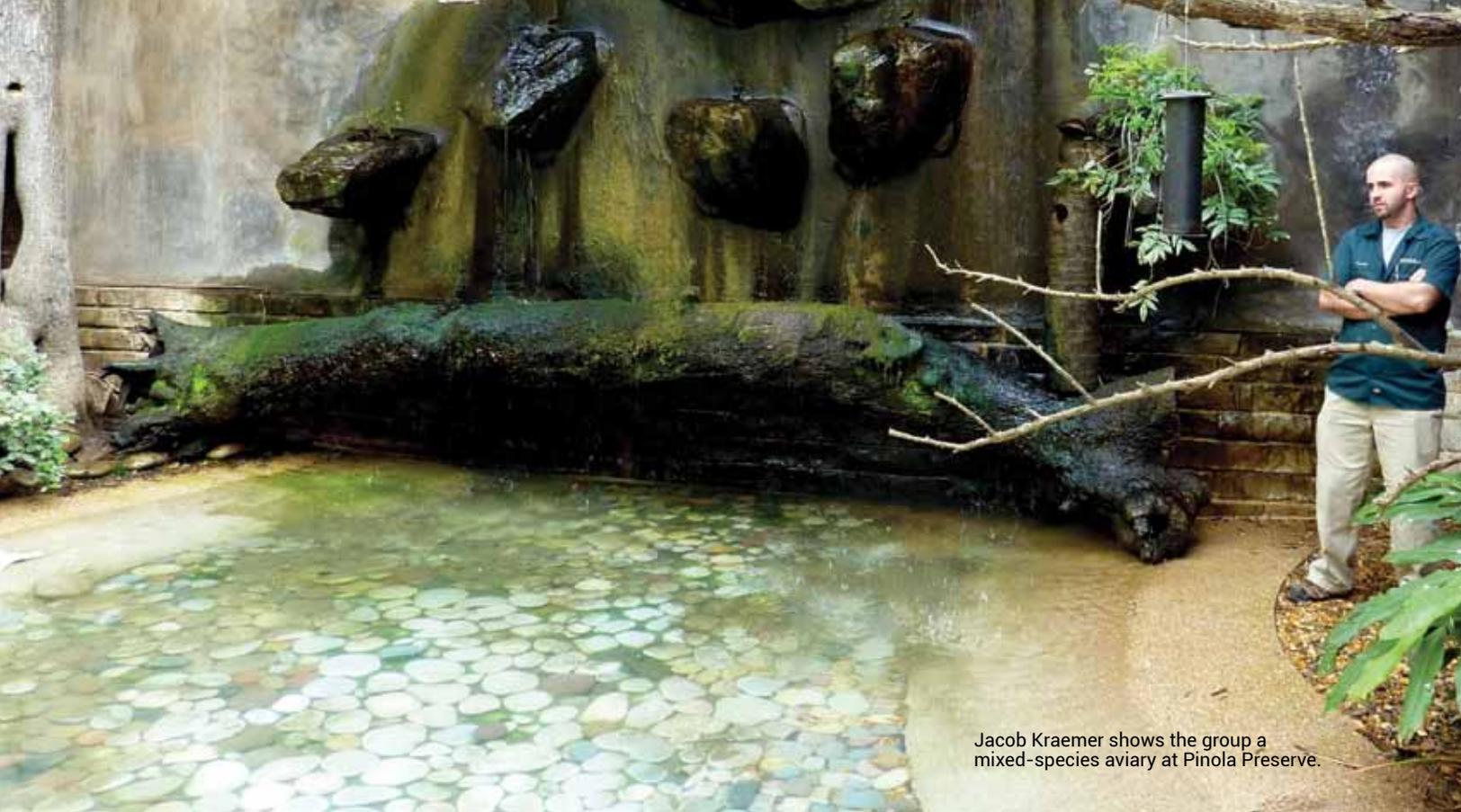
International Wild Waterfowl Association

# 2014 IWWA conference

yellowstone • jackson hole • tracy aviaries  
monte l. bean life science museum

## september 10-15, 2014

visit [www.wildwaterfowl.org](http://www.wildwaterfowl.org) for more information



Jacob Kraemer shows the group a mixed-species aviary at Pinola Preserve.

# Louisiana & Texas

## 2013 IWWA CONFERENCE

BY ANNIE LEMENAGER

Sam's Town Casino, nestled on the Red River in Shreveport Louisiana, was the starting point for this year's conference hosted and organized by Jacob Kraemer, Paul Dickson, the staffs at Caldwell Zoo, Dallas World Aquarium, Fort Worth Zoo, and the IWWA board (special kudos to John Nuticcelli).

As members from all over the USA and Canada as well as England trickled in, the opening social was a time to reunite and look forward to the next 4 days together. The weather forecast was iffy at best and the itinerary was deftly adapted to make the best of the pending rain and promise of sun later in the day. We dodged the torrents and flooding that occurred north and south of us and spent Thursday morning at the Red River National Wildlife Refuge listening to Paul Dickson, our gracious host and owner of Pinola, talk about his experiences at his facility which has over 300 species of birds and over 1000 birds in his aviaries. His mission is to spread the joy of birds whether wild or captive. He has had success in breeding Ross' geese in captivity in Louisiana by adapting the circadian and circannual rhythms of the birds. It was a fascinating lecture using a synchronization with migration and manipulating the breeding cycle with light, temperature and food.

Pat Stinson spoke next and he is the manager of Red River National Wildlife Refuge, a 13,000 acre tract. There are other large tracts along the river that are managed to develop farming, hunting, fishing, and enjoyment of acreage. He also talked about problems with the Chinese tallow tree and pig eradication. One of the missions of the reserve and his staff is to develop a program on how private land owners can understand waterfowl so they can create the habitat for the birds to thrive and then have a stock to hunt. The Mississippi flyway and central flyway merge in this area. *(continued next page)*

### 2013-2014 IWWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Arnold Schouten**  
President

**Edward Asper**  
1st Vice President

**Peter Kooy**  
2nd Vice President

**John Nuccitelli**  
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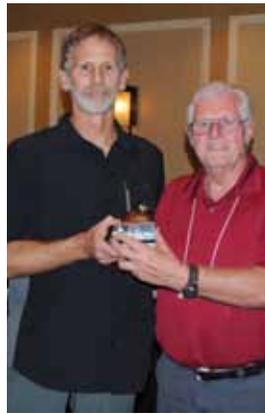
**Morag Jones**  
Secretary

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Maynard Axelson  
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Ian Gereg  
Brad Hazelton  
Jerry Jennings  
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Jeff Sailer  
Walter Sturgeon  
Frank Todd  
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Nancy Collins  
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## 2013 IWVA AWARDS

### CONSERVATION AWARD

Paul Dickson

### MCQUADE MEMORIAL AWARD

Edward Giles

### SERVICE AWARD

Ed Asper

### SERVICE AWARD

Glen Smart

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We spent the afternoon with Paul at Pinola which is simply extraordinary. His staff of 12 keeps things in terrific shape. The aviaries have a diverse collection of birds and the most impressive spot is sitting on the terrace watching waterfowl and shore birds and passerines from all over the world. Paul's knowledge of birds and enthusiasm for teaching us all about them is wonderful. The sun broke through while we were there and we came back the next morning. Some folks went back to the aviaries, some went to watch the bison get their morning feed, and some of us trekked through the managed wetlands and mucked up our shoes with muddy clay that was pretty thick but it was worth it. Wild gadwall, teal, wood ducks, pied billed grebes, egrets, a kingfisher, a shoveler, and hundreds of other birds were enjoying the sunshine after the rainfall and Paul taught us all about managing the proper planting of a variety of feed sources for the birds along the edge of the wetlands.

We bid Paul adieu at around 10:30 and motored to Tyler, Texas to have a sandwich and tour the Caldwell Zoo. The zoo was neat and tidy and we were given a tour behind the scenes where we saw the intricacies of keeping a zoo running. It was a beautiful warm day and the visit broke up the drive to Dallas nicely.

After settling into the Crowne Plaza in downtown Dallas folks scattered for dinner and drinks. Saturday morning we walked the 3 blocks to the Dallas World Aquarium. It is an impressive place with a nice combination of aquatic life, little primates and lots of different birds. The engineering of the building is amazing and it is a must see if anyone is in Dallas.

We had lunch there and listened to great lectures. Dr. Alicia Berlin presented an excellent slide show/talk on her research on sea ducks and aviculture. She has worked with all 3 species of scoters, longtail ducks and ruddy ducks in the Chesapeake Bay area. She also has been monitoring the migration patterns of these birds via satellite transmitters. This information is key for wind farm location studies. Her main goal now is to coordinate collaboration with Federal, State and Local organizations to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

TOP: Paul Dickson of Pinola Preserve explains healthy wetlands.  
LEFT: A large aviary at Pinola Preserve  
BELOW: IWVA members enjoy an afternoon at Pinola Preserve



Michele Goodman, also known as Ian Gereg's wife, is currently working on her Doctorate at Penn in avian veterinary medicine. Her presentation was geared to all of the folks in the organization who have birds: Waterfowl Parasitology and corresponding treatments. It was an excellent eye opener for all of us who care about the health of our birds and animals. Her email address is Michele@webbedfootwildlife.org and she would be happy to share her knowledge with any of us.

Ian Gereg is working on a new project that involves developing a field guide for waterfowl egg identification with corresponding chicks. He feels that this is a part of the life cycle of waterfowl that is lacking documentation and is looking for help in putting this together. He needs photos of eggs and ducklings and if you want to communicate with him about this endeavor, contact him at ian.gereg@gmail.com

Saturday night was dinner and auction time. Lynn Dye, Sheila Baird, and Ali Lubbock had things well organized and Sir Christopher Marler and Maynard Axelsson shared the auctioneering. Morag Jones summoned her latent show girl talent and was instrumental in having the auction raise over \$4,000 for the conservation programs of IWWA. The raffle was also successful – thanks to Lynn and her knack for gentle persuasion.

Sunday was our last day of touring and we escaped the Dallas Cowboy and Nascar fans to see the Fort Worth Zoo. It is a well designed zoo with an excellent reptile and amphibian house. The raptor exhibit is good and the baby elephants were entertaining us with their play. Part of the zoo is designed to teach visitors about the different habitats and wildlife in all of Texas – a large task to say the least. Again, the weather was perfect for wandering around and enjoying the animals.

Thankfully the Cowboys defeated the Minnesota Vikings in the last seconds of their NFL game and the drive back to Dallas was shared with happy motorists. It was time to get ready for the banquet and to say our farewells.

IWWA President Arnold Schouten spoke of the anniversary of the alliance of the IWWA and Sylvan Heights Bird Park and we were all happy to see Don Butler, Sylvan Heights Board Chair, enjoy the entire convention. As the evening wore on, folks were bidding each other adieu and looking forward to getting together again in September, if not before. As always, it was a great time to be together, have fun, and learn.

*IWWA photos courtesy Walt Sturgeon, Debbie Schouten, and Monica Olivera Hazelton*

TOP: Pinola Preserve wetlands. BELOW: 2013 IWWA conference attendees.





# the complex *feather*

by **Dustin Foote, Assistant Curator**  
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

**F**eathers are one of the defining characteristics that unify all birds and are important in flight, thermal regulation, waterproofing, communication, and protection. Feathers come in all shapes, styles, and sizes depending on their use. At first glance they might seem very simple, but in reality feathers are an extremely complex structure.

Generally, there are three energetically demanding events in a bird's year: reproduction, molt, and migration. All three of these events are tied to the life of a feather, with birds growing new feathers for both the breeding season and migration.

There are two basic types of feathers: **pennaceous feathers** which have a central vane allowing them to be stiff, and **down feathers** that lack a vane. Additionally, some birds have a third type feather called a **filoplume** which is hair-like. Vaned feathers are composed of a main shaft known as a **rachis**. Each shaft has a complex network of barbs and barbules that are attached by small hooks called **barbicels**. This allows feathers to be extremely light, but still structurally strong when cutting through the air. This sounds complicated, but think about how Velcro works. Velcro uses the same network of small hooks for sticking together making it strong but light.

All vaned feathers are controlled by specialized muscles that allow birds to alter their arrangement. This is important in thermal regulation as it permits birds to control the amount of air between their skin and outer protective feathers. This is the same concept that we employ in down coats, trapping a layer of air between our skin, down feathers, and an outer protective layer. Sylvan's ducks use this air layer for buoyancy as well. Diving ducks contract their feather muscles prior to diving, reducing their buoyancy and allowing them to swim under water.

Birds must spend time preening their feathers every day to keep them in good shape. Here at Sylvan, preening is an activity we look for in healthy birds. At the base of the tail there is an oil gland known as the **uropygial gland**. During preening, this oil is applied to each feather and is important in structural integrity and waterproofing.

There are two ways feathers get their color: pigmentation or structural. Pigments are responsible for black, brown, and yellow, red, and some green colors. Structural color comes from the refraction of light on microscopic structures and arrangements within the feather. Blues and iridescence are usually structural colors, such as in the peacock's tail feather (left). Birds get their colorful plumage from some combination of pigments and structure.

Feathers are truly an amazing feat of avian engineering. Now that you know a little bit more about their complexity you can start to truly appreciate the striking plumage of many birds.



**Nancy Winslow**  
President, FOSH

# friends of sylvan heights

The Friends of Sylvan Heights (FOSH) continues its mission of “raising funds, awareness and support of Sylvan Heights Bird Park”. FOSH volunteers meet regularly to work on projects from making thousands of seed sticks for the Landing Zone and planning fundraising events to helping fill gaps in many areas around the Park. The 4th annual Moonlight in the Park dinner/auction is FOSH’s biggest fundraiser of the year. This year’s event was the biggest yet with a sell-out crowd, outstanding auction items and a night of great fun, food and festivities.

FOSH is expanding the spring fundraising event to include a pig cook-off with a wine and beer tasting. Guests will be able to sample several micro beers produced in the area as well as a variety of North Carolina wines from some of the many outstanding state wineries. Mark your calendar for March 15, 2014 and plan to attend the cook-off. Hope to see you there.

SAVE THE DATE  
— FOR A VERY SPECIAL EVENT —  
CELEBRATING  
*Sylvan Heights Bird Park*

## The Swan Gala

*March 7, 2014*  
DINNER & GALA AT THE  
**UMSTEAD**  
HOTEL & SPA  
*Cary, North Carolina*

*March 8, 2014*  
GROUP BUS TOUR TO  
**SYLVAN HEIGHTS**  
BIRD PARK  
*Scotland Neck, North Carolina*

## thank you to our donors

*Sylvan Heights Bird Park gratefully acknowledges our donors of \$500 or more since June 1, 2013 through November 12, 2013.*

Anonymous  
Beth Bailey  
Cynthia Barger  
Sandra E. Barnes  
Jim Bass & Susan Christman  
Marty Dickens  
Elizabeth M. Foreman  
“Go Mix” WAGO & WZGO  
“Go Mix” WZRN & WZRU  
L.C. Hamilton  
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Fred Morris  
NC Department of Justice  
Adah Shields  
Southern Industrial Constructions Inc  
Southland Charitable Trust  
Myrna M. Wade  
Robert R. Waters  
Westmoreland Partners  
Skip Valentine

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 12 BIRDS OF CHRISTMAS

**December 1st - 31st**

Can you find all 12 birds? Try our holiday themed game.

### ROMANCE IN THE PARK

**February 14th**

Bring your Valentine for dinner and dancing!

### THE SWAN GALA

**March 7th and 8th**

A very special event celebrating Sylvan Heights at the Umstead in Cary, NC.

### SPRING COOK-OFF

**March 15th**

Show off your best recipe or just come out to taste some great food!

### DUCKLING DAY

**May 17th**

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

### WATERFOWL REUNION

**June 14th**

All members are invited to join us for refreshments and an up-close encounter with some of the birds of Sylvan Heights.

Please contact us at 252-826-3186 or [info@shwpark.com](mailto:info@shwpark.com) for more information, or visit [www.shwpark.com](http://www.shwpark.com) for a full listing of our upcoming events.

# AVIAN HUSBANDRY INTERNS STUDY **brazilian mergansers**



## BY VIRGINIE LAMBERTUCCI

2012 Sylvan Heights Avian Husbandry Intern

A deep interest in nature has always navigated my educational decisions. After completing my BSc Veterinary Science I later secured an Aviculture Warden placement at the London Wetland Centre for the summer of 2011, caring for a diverse collection of rare and endangered waterfowl, where I heard about the Avian Husbandry Internship at Sylvan Heights.

Flavia Ribeiro studied BSc Biological Science at Pontificia Universidade Catolica de Minas Gerais, Brazil. She started to work with the Brazilian Merganser conservation project in 2005, with The Terra Brasilis Institute, and has extensive experience locating and monitoring this species. After meeting Mike Lubbock in Brazil, he invited her to participate in the Sylvan Heights Avian Husbandry Program, because he understands the importance of this project.

We were both awarded the IWWA Lis Glassco Hudson grant, enabling us to take the time and cover the cost necessary to travel to North Carolina to complete these internships. Flavia and I worked closely together, and after returning home from America, we kept in touch and often contacted each other regarding progress with work and the project. She invited me to travel to Brazil and learn more about the Terra Brasilis Project during the 2013 breeding season.

The Terra Brasilis Institute is a local conservation organization which is passionate about conserving the cerrado habitat in and around the Serra da Canastra National Park, and the mergansers that live there. Our field research focused mostly around Serra da Canastra Na-

tional Park, Minas Gerais where the species has a stronghold. Every day, we would spend many hours looking for new nest sites, which involved rowing various stretches of the São Francisco River and Santo Antônio River. On one occasion we were required to candle eggs from a natural nest of which the female had already started incubating the clutch, in order to determine when they will hatch so the team could document the chicks fledging. The following week this clutch hatched and fledged the nest right on schedule.

Working together both at Sylvan Heights and in the field on this project was very important as I was able to explain many important factors to Flavia and in turn learn a great deal more about this species. We greatly value the time spent working with another professional in the same field.

Flavia would like to complete her master's degree in Ecology with Brazilian Merganser breeding biology, in order to contribute to the conservation of this critically endangered species. Learning about other species of mergansers at Sylvan Heights was a valued experience for Flavia, in order for her to gain a greater perspective of the species as a whole and allowed her to make comparisons between their morphology and breeding behavior.

I also hope to complete a master's degree in Conservation Science, and specialize in the conservation and protection of waterfowl and wetlands.

**M**y first experience with Sylvan Heights was a field trip I took last fall with my Vertebrate Zoology class from North Carolina Wesleyan College. I was immediately impressed with the facilities and with the passion and hard work of the staff in their commitment to the birds as well as conservation efforts. At the end of the tour I was excited to learn of the volunteer and internship opportunities at the park and thought it would be a great way to gather career experience and work as part of a passionate and committed team. I was lucky enough to gain a three month internship at Sylvan Heights Breeding Center and was later awarded the Lis Glassco Hudson Memorial Grant.

Having no previous experience with waterfowl, but a lifelong interest in birds, I jumped into my first day learning the different species of birds on my feed and predator proofing pens. I was soon helping move birds around, worming geese, checking nest boxes and getting into the everyday routine of avian husbandry. A favorite activity of mine was “egging”, in which I would go around to each nest box in a pen and check to see if a female had laid any eggs and if so how many.

I had the opportunity to imprint a chatty Bar-headed goose named Beatrice. Beatrice has truly been my best experience at Sylvan. A few days after she hatched in the Eurasia aviary, I began imprinting the little downy ball of fuzz by taking her for short walks and talking to her in “goose chat”. As she got bigger, I would take her for walks in the park to meet the visitors and when it came time for her to learn to fly I rode my bicycle at full speed with her running behind as fast as she could. Beatrice has made lots of new friends on her walks around the park and will soon be an ambassador for Sylvan Heights as part of the education program.

My experience at Sylvan Heights has been truly wonderful; I could not have chosen a better way to spend my summer. I was able to work with people from many different zoos from across the country who came to train under the Avian Husbandry and Management Program, as well as many other young people, like myself, who were also doing internships or were part of Sylvan Heights staff. Having the chance to share in their experiences has been very helpful to me in trying to define my career path and that is the greatest benefit I've gained from my time at Sylvan.

# intern spotlight:

## Molly Satterwhite

Rocky Mount, North Carolina



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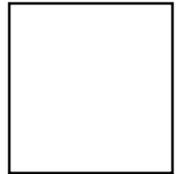
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