



words on
waterfowl

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

The endangered
**RED-BREASTED
GOOSE**

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on board the photo ark

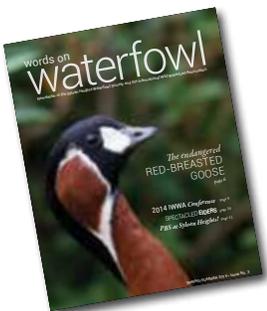


Sylvan Heights intern Catherine Waudby holds an eider for photographer Joel Sartore.

In February 2014, National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore visited Sylvan Heights to photograph birds for the Photo Ark, a project that aims to document as many species as possible before they disappear. Joel travels to zoos and aquariums around the world, photographing animals on both black and white backgrounds.

During his week at Sylvan Heights, Joel was able to add more than 130 bird species to the Ark.

For more information about the Photo Ark, please visit www.photoark.com. You can also see Joel's work in National Geographic's 125th Anniversary Photography Issue.



ON THE COVER:

The remarkable Red-breasted Goose is facing endangerment from a variety of threats to wild populations.

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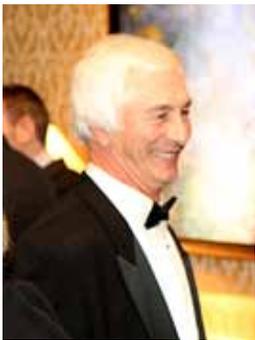
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Get park updates, event information and more. Connect with Sylvan Heights on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, and visit the IWWA's new Facebook page.



the director's report



Mike Lubbock at the Swan Gala
photo by Gary Dean

I would like to begin this report by thanking all of our guests who joined us at the Swan Gala on March 7th, 2014. The event was very well attended by friends and colleagues from all over the United States, as well as Spain, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, Singapore, and Indonesia.

Joan Embery did a wonderful job as Master of Ceremonies, directing our guest speakers throughout the event. I would like to thank her, Frank Todd, Beltran De Ceballos, Dale True, and Michael Steinhardt for giving such lively, entertaining speeches and for making me feel very humble. The following day we had informative presentations by Joan, Frank, Beltran, and Glyn Young from Durrell Conservation Center on the state of the captive breeding of the Madagascar Pochard. Arnold Schouten discusses this project further in his IWWA President's report on page 8 of this issue.

The winter seemed to go on and on this year with some extremely cold nights - one night we recorded 0 degrees Fahrenheit, a record for Scotland Neck. We relocated hundreds of our more delicate

birds that night to keep them all warm. We suffered no losses, and many birds have already started to lay now that the warmer weather has arrived. The birds often seem to have a more productive year after a cold and rough winter, so it looks like it is going to be a very good breeding season.

We introduced a wonderful new event in March called "Pig in the Park", which featured a pig cook-off, pie-eating contest, and entertainment. I would like to express my thanks to all the Friends of Sylvan Heights for organizing such a great evening.

The Landing Zone continues to be extremely popular with our guests and I really must thank all the marvelous volunteers that help each day with the running of the exhibit and making the thousands of seed sticks. We do have a wonderful core of people who give up their time for no monetary reward to help Sylvan Heights continue to grow and become better each year.

Mike Lubbock
Executive Director
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

Finding Arizona's hummingbirds

BY BRAD HAZELTON

Curator, Sylvan Heights Bird Park

I had the good fortune to be asked to travel to Arizona and collect hummingbirds for the Toledo Zoo during the last two weeks of April. This is an opportunity that is very rare in this day and age due to increased restrictions on importing and collection out of the wild. This whole process started months earlier with planning and filling out applications for state and federal permits. We received permission to collect five Magnificent Hummingbirds and 10 Costa's hummingbirds every year for the next three years. In the weeks prior to traveling, I was busy building shipping crates and traps that would be used in the collection process. We were using a trap called a Hall trap which has a circular curtain and a feeder hanging in the middle. When the trap is tripped, it drops the curtain down around the bird. In addition to these traps, we were also using mist nets which are very fine mesh nets (similar to hair nets) that are very difficult to see. They are hung around nectar flowers or across known paths of flight and the birds fly into them and are caught.

Upon arrival in Arizona, I immediately made a trip to the hardware store to buy materials for constructing temporary holding enclosures for the hummingbirds. The enclosures were 2' x 2' x 2' with two solid walls and a solid bottom and the remainder was covered with window screen. The screen provides a soft wall on which the birds cannot injure themselves while they are becoming acclimated to living in captivity.

Starting on my third day in Arizona, we began hiking through canyons that we thought would be suitable habitat and hanging feeders that we would return to trap at a later time. Ideally we wanted to be above 6,000 feet, have water nearby, and have good sources of nectar providing flowers. The first day we covered eight miles and four canyons. Since the heaviest feeding occurs right after sunrise and just before sunset, and some of the locations were a considerable distance away, we would usually leave between 3:30 and 4:30 in the morning. This meant much of our hiking was often done in the dark. Kent Bekker, a herpetologist from the Toledo zoo, was assisting me for the first six days and his best quote was, "Boy, you bird people sure start the day early." We covered a lot of ground in these first days.

My sixth day was our first day trying to trap birds and we were very fortunate to be able to trap a male. This was very exciting for us and kept us inspired through several of the following days that were not as productive. I was so excited that I managed to run a mile and a half down the mountain wearing a very heavy backpack and carrying a small bird in a bag in 18 minutes. Hummingbirds have a very high metabolic rate and when they are very active they are capable of starving to death if they don't feed every half an hour. We would attempt to feed every 15 to 20 minutes by holding the bird in hand and putting its beak into a feeder. It is so amazing to see a wild bird that was just captured and has to be feeling



Costa's Hummingbird

Alan D. Wilson/naturepicsonline.com



Magnificent Hummingbird



photo by Brad Hazelton

A Hall trap for hummingbirds (without feeder).

a lot of stress immediately begin to feed while still restrained within your hand. After placing the birds into their new enclosure, we had to monitor them continuously to make sure that they would feed on their own. Some birds would start feeding within 30 minutes of being placed into the new enclosures while other birds would have to be recaptured and fed in the hand multiple times over several hours until they started feeding on their own.

Over the next several days we managed to collect two more males and a female. During the 10 days that we were working in the mountains, we hiked more than 50.1 miles and gained over 18,450' of elevation. We enjoyed some of the most rugged – and to me, beautiful – areas in this country. We encountered a gorgeous black-tailed rattlesnake, a short horned lizard, several deer, javelin, pronghorn antelope and a very agreeable skunk. On a side note, these mountain ranges are the only places in the U.S. where jaguars are regularly photographed by concealed cameras. Multiple times when I was hiking up these mountain trails I would be momentarily blinded by a bright flash from a camera trap. The first time that it happened I thought that I had been struck by lightning. Several times we found huge cat tracks in the sand over the top of tracks that we had left on the trail the day or two before. These could have been either Jaguars, or more likely mountain lions. While I never saw any of them, I am certain that several of them saw me. I know the unlikelihood of being attacked, but this still didn't offer much consolation as I trod alone along mountain trails in the dark. I also experienced an incredible wind storm at over 7500 feet of elevation that had 24 inch diameter trees snapping off all around me. That was a day that I felt very fortunate to make it off the mountain still breathing.

My last two days were spent pulling down all of the feeders that I still had up and getting health certificates for the shipping of the birds. Overall, it was a very rewarding and successful trip. We have another trip planned for the fall, when we will try to focus more on the Costa's hummingbirds at lower elevations. It is a rare thing when as an aviculturist I get to spend two weeks studying one particular species, but in this case it was possible and very invigorating.

Scarlet Monkeyflower (*Mimulus cardinalis*) provides nectar for hummingbirds in Arizona's mountains.



photo by Brad Hazelton

Sylvan Heights educators Lee Peoples (left) and Kathleen Fleming (right).



education *update*

Sylvan Heights' education department has been growing in leaps and bounds over the last two years. The number of surrounding counties we have reached with education programs has doubled from 14 to 28, many of which are home to underserved minority and economically disadvantaged students. New programs have been developed, and are being taught this school year. Descriptions of these will soon appear on the education page of our website. These programs meet Common Core standards, and strive to meet Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, (STEM) initiatives. Frequently, collaboration with teachers allows for paralleling of classroom objectives maximizing educational enrichment in the programs Sylvan Heights offers.

Introduction to Ornithology programs for both university and continuing education students are now available. We also now offer Educational Guided Tours for high school, university students and other interested groups.

With growth comes change, and I am happy to announce the addition of our new education assistant, Kathleen Fleming. As of March 3, she comes to us with a parks and recreation degree and twelve years combined experience in Halifax county 4-H, city recreation departments and nonprofit organizations. Kathleen is also a member of our own Friends of Sylvan Heights, (FOSH), and resides in the community with her family. Spring is the busiest season for the education department, and already Kathleen has assisted with our huge volume of inquiries and in teaching our preschool through second grade students. Please, join us in welcoming Kathleen Fleming to Sylvan Heights' staff.

Lee Peoples
Education Coordinator
Sylvan Heights Bird Park



red alert

BY DUSTIN FOOTE

Assistant Curator
Sylvan Heights Bird Park

The Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) is arguably one of the most impressively plumaged waterfowl species, but it is currently under serious and misunderstood threats in the wild.

photo: Katie Gipple Lubbock

Red-breasted Geese were listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List in 2007. They are in the genus *Branta*, or true geese, and are very similar to our Atlantic Brant (*Branta bernicla*).

Sylvan Heights Bird Park (SHBP) has a long history with this species going back to Director Mike Lubbock's younger years. For those who have read Mike's new book, *The Waterfowl Man of Sylvan Heights*, you will recall Mike's experience counseling the Queen of England into successfully raising Red-breasted Geese at Buckingham Palace.

The majority of the wild Red-breasted Goose population nest in June in Russia's northern most latitudes, specifically the Taimyr, Yamal, and Gydan Peninsulas. Red-breasted geese are uniquely known for nesting near raptor eyries, or a raptor nest. These geese have been recorded near Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrines*), Snowy Owl (*Bubo scandiaca*), and Rough-legged Buzzard (*Buteo lagopus*) nests. Raptors are very territorial and drive off larger mammalian predators that would wipe out the goose or its nest. Although conflicts between the raptor and goose do arise, the geese still have higher reproductive success nesting near the raptors.

Around 90% of the wintering population is concentrated at five major sites around the Black Sea coast. Current threats to Red-breasted Geese include legal and illegal hunting, agricultural pesticides, wind farms, loss of habitat, and poisoning.

Red-breasted Geese have irregular population fluctuations. In 1960, the wild population dropped to an estimated ten thousand birds before climbing to fifty thousand in 1970, and then dropping back down to ten thousand in 1975. In 1990, the population began to climb to a high of eighty thousand individuals at the start of the 21st century. Since then, we have seen a large decline to a current population of thirty thousand birds. Conservationists are concerned about the lack of knowledge surrounding this recent massive population decline. Even if these shifts are part of natural fluctuations, the past 100 years of human activities put Red-breasted Geese at great risk of falling below an effective population during low population periods. In a broad sense, falling below effective population size is the first step in extinction.

SHBP is one of the southernmost latitudes where you will find breeding Red-breasted Geese in captivity. Breeding in the Siberian arctic during May, these geese are accustomed to over 19 hours of daylight and mild temperatures. The Sylvan Heights Breeding Center went to great lengths to breed Red-breasted Geese initially, and all progeny were kept back for the first generation. The goslings that were raised in North Carolina seemed more accustomed to our photoperiod and temperatures, and thus went on to reproduce in midsummer as adults. SHBP has recently begun construction on a large walk through aviary dedicated to breeding and displaying Red-breasted Geese. As part of the new aviary, SHBP plans to install flood lights that will allow us to lengthen the daylight period during their natural breeding season and move our Red-breasted Geese reproduction to NC's cooler spring



● Red-breasted Goose breeding range (North) and non-breeding range (South)

months. It is our hope that longer day length during our milder spring will allow us greater success in breeding and rearing this species.

When a population declines, there is a cause. Whether from habitat loss, introduced predators, hunting, or some combination, there are reasons species disappear. Our job as aviculturists is to become confident stewards of these birds, so that when the habitat becomes available or the pressures relieved we can rehabilitate these species back into the wild. As aviculturists, we are often in ideal positions to consult with conservationists, ecologists, and governments on reversing population declines. Additionally, it is our mission to educate people on this magnificent species and the pressures it faces using captive birds as ambassadors for their wild counterparts.

In the words of the acclaimed ecologist Rachel Carson, "One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, "What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?" This is one of the reasons Sylvan Heights is engaged in the plight of the Red-breasted Goose, so that future generations can observe its beauty.



Young Red-breasted Geese graze at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center.



FROM THE IWWA PRESIDENT

I would like to lead off this message with a note of “Congratulations to Mike” on the release of his new book, and from what we have heard, a very enjoyable Swan Gala celebration.

Spring is upon us and breeding season is ramping up here at home. Observing this breeding activity reminds me of a recent presentation by Dr. Glyn Young, Conservation Biologist, at Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. Glyn is a highly successful and well respected island eco-system biologist. Glyn’s slide presentation was about the endangered Madagascar Pochard. Until recently, the last reliable report of pochards present was in 1960 at the ‘stronghold’ Lake Alaotra. After a gap of over 30 years, a single male was captured live by a fisherman. An extensive survey over the following years failed to find any more birds and in 2004 it was declared ‘probably extinct’.

In 2006, 20 pochards were found by the Peregrine Foundation among small crater lakes in Northwest Madagascar. Due to the lakes’ being steeply shelved and the lack of shallow areas with adjacent good cover, ducklings are not able to adequately feed and only about 4% survive to adulthood. These lakes are in a very remote and difficult to access area. Fortunately, through very diligent efforts by several conservation organizations, Glyn and his associates managed to collect eggs, rear young, and establish a viable breeding group. The captive population of Madagascar Pochards now number about 40 birds in a well-designed and well-managed breeding center. Suitable release sites are currently being analyzed. This is a very difficult task as there are not many options for reintroduction and protection. While this is an amazing success story, the ducks are still at great risk, especially since they have been declared extinct twice.

This is one example of the great work being done globally for waterfowl and many other bird species. If you are reading this article it is likely because you enjoy waterfowl and care about their long term survival. Here at Dry Creek Waterfowl we try to raise ducks that can be of benefit to wild populations through captive breeding and research. There are many ways to help in efforts such as the Madagascar Pochard successful breeding project. One way is by attending IWWA conferences. This is our yearly opportunity to generate support for the important projects we embrace. The details of the upcoming conference in September are included in this newsletter. This year our conference includes a visit to Yellowstone National Park. This is one of the most unique, wild and beautiful of our National Parks. Please consider attending. This is not only a way of enjoying an excellent informative vacation, it is also a time to meet new friends and support IWWA’s goal of saving and protecting the waterfowl of the world.

Arnold Schouten
President

International Wild Waterfowl Association

◀ Dr. Glyn Young and Madagascar Pochard at Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.
photos contributed by Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

All Sylvan Heights and IWWA members are invited to attend the 2014 conference!

itinerary:

2014 IWWA CONFERENCE

ARRIVE IN SALT LAKE CITY ON SEPT 8th OR 9th

SEPTEMBER 9th

9:00 AM - Visit to Hogle Zoo
2:00 PM - IWWA Board Members Meeting
6:00 PM - Welcome reception/registration

SEPTEMBER 10th

9:00 AM - Tour of Tracy Aviaries
12:00 PM - Lunch at Tracy Aviaries
1:00 PM to 5:00 PM - Speaker sessions

SEPTEMBER 11th

9:00 AM - Monte L. Bean Life Science Museum
12:00 PM - Lunch
1:00 PM - Bus leaves for Yellowstone National Park

SEPTEMBER 12th

8:00 AM - 6:00 PM: Bus tours in Yellowstone National Park (lunch in park)
7:00 PM - Dinner and auction

SEPTEMBER 13th

8:00 AM - Bus leaves for Jackson Hole
5:00 PM - Bus returns to hotel
6:30 PM - Awards banquet

SEPTEMBER 14th

End of 2014 IWWA Conference
DEPART FROM WEST YELLOWSTONE AIRPORT (WYS) OR SALT LAKE CITY (SLC)
7:00 AM - Bus returns to Salt Lake City with stop at airports.

POST-CONFERENCE TOUR

SEPTEMBER 14th - Travel to Red Bluff, MT
SEPTEMBER 15th - Tour Joe Desarro's ranch and Sheila McKay's WJH Bird Resources. Overnight stay in Billings, MT
SEPTEMBER 16th - End of post-conference tour

For more information or to register, please visit www.wildwaterfowl.org

2014 **IWWA**
conference

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

september 9-14, **2014**

The Grand Tetons between Yellowstone N.P. and Jackson Hole, WY

the spectacled eider

BY MORAG JONES
Secretary, IWWA

Spectacled Eiders, first officially described in 1847 by German naturalist Johann Friedrich von Brandt, are medium-sized sea ducks, measuring about 53cm long, with an 84cm wingspan weighing a kilo and a half. Right from hatching, the feature that gives Spectacled Eiders their common name is evident – a noticeable ring around the eyes. In breeding plumage, the drake's chest and belly are mostly charcoal grey and contrast with a white back, neck, and leading part of the wing. Fine taupe green feathers with a subtle sheen adorn the front and rear of the head forming a natty little helmet and thick black lines connect the eye patches over the crown and across the cheek, giving the appearance of goggles. They differ from other eiders, and all other waterfowl for that matter, in that their feathers extend down to the nostrils on the bill. Females are superficially similar to common eiders but also sport a fawn eye patch and the feathered cere. Mature ducks are a warm dark brown strongly marked with fairly even, curved black bars and their bills take on a bluish tinge. Both sexes sport a tiny amount of blue iris.

The pair bond of Spectacled Eiders appears to form at sea in late winter. Monogamous pairs seem to maintain their bonds with behaviors similar to other eiders, calling, stretching and head tossing. Spectacled Eiders arrive along the coast of Alaska and northeastern Siberia to breed during spring, making their nests next to ponds. The duck presses a small hollow into the damp tundra, lines it with grasses and sedges and then lays 1 to 5 olive eggs. Sitting on a cup of down that she pulls from her own chest, she incubates alone for 90% of the day. Incubation is short at about 24 days. The brownish, downy chicks already show the spectacled pattern and can walk, preen, and swim in a day or so, first swimming in freshwater tundra pools. The ducklings grow at an amazing pace, reaching adult size in two months, such is the fertility of the Arctic tundra. They will fly in about 50 days and probably spend the next two to three years at sea, before returning to breed.

While on the breeding grounds, the Spectacled Eider consumes insects such as flies, midges, beetles, and their larvae; all manner of invertebrates and

Photography by
Maynard Axelson



various plant matter, such as pond weed seeds, crowberries, and moss. While foraging, these birds dabble, dive, and glean items from the surface. During molting and while wintering, they dive for snails, clams, mussels, amphipods, crabs, sand dollars, sea stars, and even small fish. Although their primary diet consists of clams.

Until fairly recently, little was known about their wintering habits. It was not until US National Biological Service staff fitted 22 Alaskan females with satellite transmitters in 1994, that wintering grounds for the world population of spectacled eiders were discovered between St. Lawrence and St. Matthews Islands in the Bering Sea. During winter and spring migration they gather in huge flocks, concentrating in relatively small areas of open water within the sea ice. These 'polynias' are semipermanent areas of open water in sea ice, sustained by wind and currents. It is thought that the entire world population winters in the same area. It is a risky strategy, but one that saves a huge amount of energy in travel. Arctic polynias support a significant ecosystem as the source of plankton, krill, and cod, and large colonies of arctic birds (including Murres, Kittiwakes, Black Guillemots, and Ross's Gulls) breed nearby. Many marine mammals (walruses, seals, whales, and polar bears) also depend on the polynias as feeding grounds and overwintering areas.

Specs are the least numerous of the four species of eider, estimated between 330,000 and 390,000 individuals. Despite the fact that the population trend appears to be decreasing, the decline is not believed to be sufficiently rapid to approach the thresholds for Vulnerable, so at present is assessed at Least Concern category on the IUCN Red List. Breeding along the coasts of northeast Siberia, Russia and east from the Leni Delta to north Alaska, they are protected in the North American part of their range. In 2000, the US Fish and Wildlife Service designated 62,386 km² of critical coastal habitat for the conservation of this species. Once a target of waterfowl hunters, sport hunting of Spectacled Eiders has been closed in Alaska since 1991. As has the practice of subsistence hunting for the bird's meat, feathers and eggs.

The Spectacled Eider is not widely represented in captivity. Delacour noted one keeper in Boiling Spring, Pennsylvania in the early sixties. A decade later, a few started to be propagated on both sides of the Atlantic. In a private collection they are truly charming and will quickly accept their keeper as one of their own, but they are not considered an easy bird. They thrive on sea duck pellets and appreciate treats of high protein puppy nuts. What they do need is clean water; plenty of it and they seem happiest in a group. And what a lovely group they make!

Note: The Alaskan population was listed as threatened in 1993 due to a huge population decline on the Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta. There has been some rebound but still breeding pairs has not yet approached peak historical population numbers.





PBS films "Nature" segment at Sylvan Heights

Filmmakers from PBS visited Sylvan Heights this spring to gather footage for an upcoming episode of the natural history series "Nature." The episode will focus on animal homes, including the unique way Hooded Mergansers utilize tree cavities as nests.

The first crew arrived in February to look for ideal filming locations and set up nest boxes with special camera access doors. Several log-style boxes were built and mounted at

the Avian Breeding Center, just in time for the Hooded Mergansers' breeding season. When the mergansers began to hatch in April, a film crew traveled back to Sylvan Heights to document the first few days of the ducklings' lives.

The episode is expected to air on PBS in 2016. Keep an eye on Sylvan Heights' Facebook page and on www.shw-park.com for more information!

thank you to our donors

Sylvan Heights Bird Park gratefully acknowledges our donors of \$500 or more since November 12, 2013 through April 30, 2014.

Julie & Ken Aldridge
Mrs. Ross Angel
Beth Bailey
Robert & Elaine Baillie
Laura Barwick
Jim Bass & Susan Christman
John Baum
Betsy & Walter Bennett
Joep Bloem & Family
Robert & Lillian Briggs
Betty Jean Byrum

Fletcher G. & Jean Carter
Christopher & Robbie Davis
Laurel Degernes
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lending a hand: volunteer programs

BY KIMBERLY BOLTINHOUSE

My name is Kimberly Boltinhouse and I majored in parks and recreation at East Carolina University. For my last semester at ECU, I had the privilege of interning at Sylvan Heights Bird Park. During my internship, my contribution to the park was to improve, promote, and assist in providing an unforgettable experience for current and future volunteers. The volunteer program was broken down into five departments that include education, gift shop, grounds, marketing, and miscellaneous. This has made it easier to place volunteers in an area that is best suitable for their interests and age group. The development of the volunteer program gave me the opportunity to see just how important it is for Sylvan Heights to utilize volunteers in every department. From helping with special events to handing out feed sticks at the Landing Zone, volunteers play a vital role in the everyday operations of the park. The benefits of volunteering at Sylvan Heights Bird Park are endless. These benefits include working in a unique setting with stunning views, creating life-long friends, and the ability to assist with the park's mission of conserving waterfowl. After working with the volunteer program, I would highly recommend members of the park and students yearning to obtain exceptional academic experience to volunteer at Sylvan Heights Bird Park!



UPCOMING EVENTS

WATERFOWL REUNION

June 14th

Special event for all members.
Meet the birds up close!

IWWA CONVENTION

Sept 9th - 14th

Yellowstone National Park, Jackson Hole, Tracy Aviaries, and more!

TRICK-OR-TWEET

October 31st

Trick-or-treat in the park at our family-friendly Halloween event.

MOONLIGHT IN THE PARK

November 15th

Delicious dinner and auction to support the birds at Sylvan Heights

FEED A TURKEY DAY

November 28th

Still feeling stuffed after Thanksgiving? Walk off your feast and feed a turkey!

12 BIRDS OF CHRISTMAS

December 1st - 31st

A holiday themed scavenger hunt in the park.

Please contact us at 252-826-3186 or info@shwpark.com for more information, or visit www.shwpark.com for a full listing of our upcoming events.

the chairman's letter

Sylvan Heights has started the year with a lot of positive momentum. Our attendance for the past year set a new record, our membership numbers continue to grow, our Gift Shop is doing a brisk business and the Landing Zone continues to amaze me with its ability to attract new visitors and bring them back time and again. Sylvan Heights General Curator Brad Hazleton brought the idea for the Landing Zone to the Park and worked like a Trojan to build it and get it up and going. His vision for how popular this exhibit would be has been realized, in spades. Kudos to you Brad!

On March 7, 2014 we celebrated the life and many amazing accomplishments of Mike Lubbock, the founder and driving force of Sylvan Heights. We did this at a most elegant event called the Swan Gala at the fabulous Umstead Hotel in Cary, N.C. The Umstead is the only Five Star hotel in North Carolina and was a fitting venue for such a special occasion. We had friends and supporters of Mike and Sylvan Heights from all over the U. S. and around the world in attendance. Over 200 of Mike's best friends came to honor the man and his lifelong dedication to the conservation of and education about the wonderful world of waterfowl. During Mike's lifetime he has made unprecedented contributions to the understanding of the needs of endangered species and how to take measures to ensure their sustainability. He is credited with helping to save a number of critically endangered waterfowl from almost certain extinction, and his work goes on. Swan Gala was an opportunity for lifelong friends to honor Mike and share their stories about his legendary accomplishments. I have attended many different social events to recognize different people for their accomplishments but, honestly, I have never attended another event where so many people seemed to enjoy the event as much as those of us who were at this special occasion. We were all there for the same reasons, to say thank you to one of the truly special, yet humble, people we have ever known. A spirit of closeness pervaded.

As we look to the future I am pleased to report to you from the Board of Directors that we see only positive signs of growth and progress for Sylvan Heights. We have an outstanding Board of talented and dedicated people who bring a range of talents to help chart the course for the organization. We meet quarterly to review our progress, to look at our financial situation and make decisions which we feel are in the best interest of Sylvan Heights. We are all nonpaid volunteers and are glad to contribute some of our time to this unique place and its mission. I certainly feel honored to serve as Chairman and feel humbled by the opportunity to work with such exceptional people as my fellow Board members, Mike, Brent and Ali Lubbock and all the incredibly talented staff at Sylvan Heights.

As you read this update I ask you to think about just what a special resource Sylvan Heights is and how important it is for you to help support our mission. If you get the Sylvan Heights Newsletter you are probably already a member of the organization and I thank you for that. If you are not a member I hope you will accept my invitation to join with us and be a part of this journey. While we are making excellent progress, we still have needs. We have been through some difficult times financially due to the Great Recession and the pains that go with building any young business. Yes, we do have to be concerned with the business needs of Sylvan Heights. We have to pay our great staff, we have utility and feed bills to pay and we have repairs and maintenance needs which never go away. I ask that you help us by providing financial support in the way that you can afford and as much as you can afford. Your investment in Sylvan Heights will help secure our future. Visit the Park as often as you can and invite your friends and neighbors to go with you. Help us spread the word about one of the most interesting and amazing places anyone will ever visit.

Don Butler
Chairman

Sylvan Heights Board of Directors





intern spotlight:

Catherine Waudby

Yorkshire, England

As I pursued my education at university I developed a keen interest in conservation and animal husbandry; and knew that after, I wanted to turn this interest into a career. So while studying zoology, I gathered as much experience as possible; working in Thailand and Borneo, Indonesia, and then at Pensthorpe Wildlife and Gardens in Norfolk, England. It was there that I learned of the internship at Sylvan Heights from the Head of Species Management, Chrissie Kelly – a long family friend of Mike and Ali's. I eagerly applied, and was accepted, and this was made possible by being awarded the Lis Glassco Hudson Memorial Grant from the International Wild Waterfowl Association.

From my very first day to my last, I have enjoyed partaking in all the different husbandry tasks. Two particular favourites of mine were preparing nest boxes and learning all the nest preferences of the different species; and also taking the young cygnets for 'swimming lessons' in the big duckery. One of my most memorable experiences at the centre was imprinting a young and quite characterful Nene called Lilo. Because she was female and the only gosling to hatch from her clutch she was perfect for imprinting, and so from the first moment she hatched we began to handle her a lot, spend lots of time with her, and take her to lunch with us where she would sit on the table on a towel and eat alongside us!

The facilities at Sylvan Heights are so unique, and I would never have been able to gain the experience I did at any centre in the UK. I not only leave Sylvan with a new found wealth of experience and knowledge, but with so many fantastic memories and friends also. I'm sad to leave, but I look forward to where my career will take me. And I know wherever I end up in aviculture it will be because of what I gained from Sylvan Heights.

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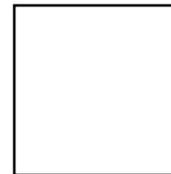
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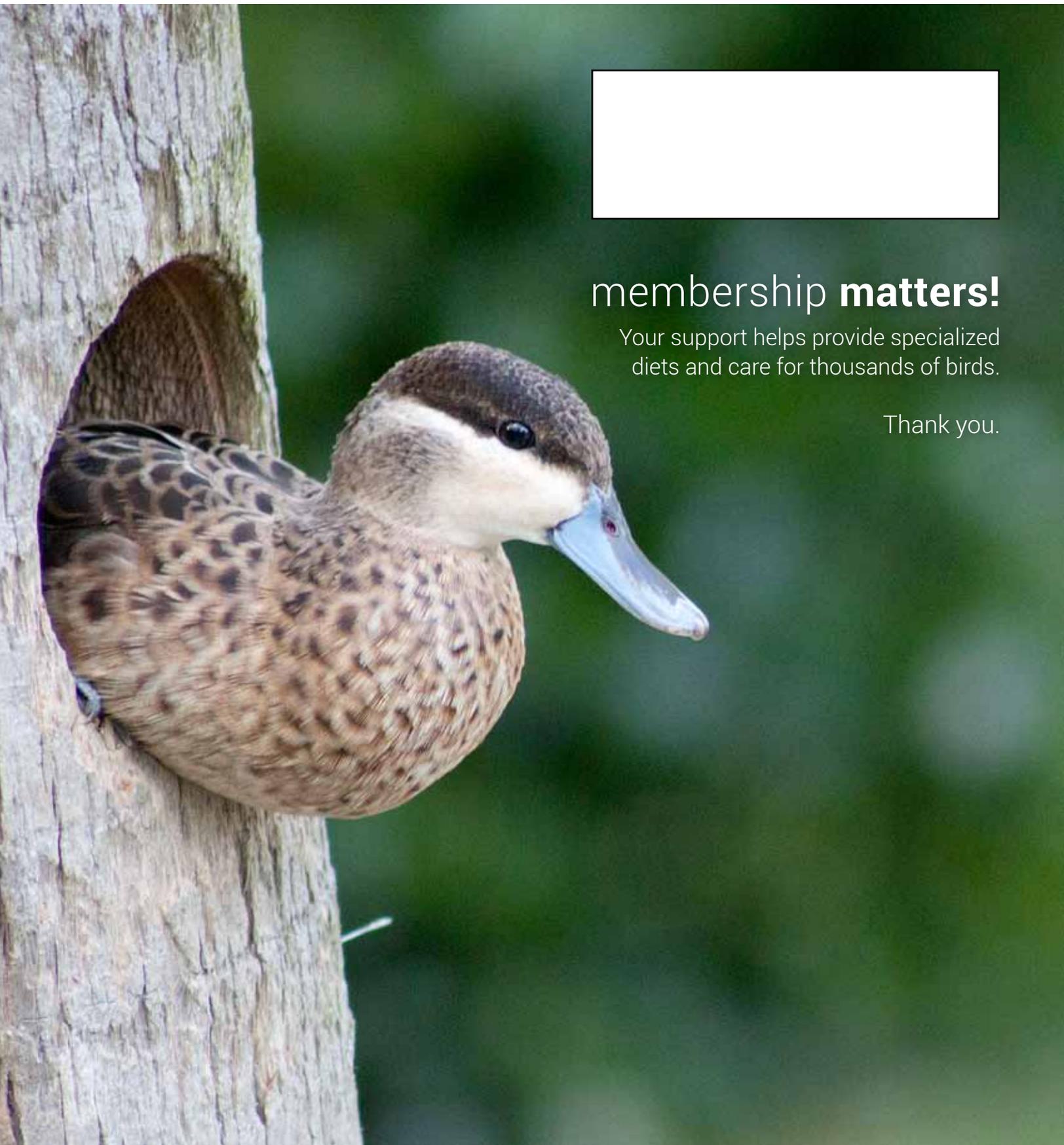
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