

words on  
**waterfowl**

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



*the future of*  
waterfowl  
conservation  
*workshop*

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SPRING/SUMMER 2016 • Issue No. 7

An Australian pink-eared duck watches over her new duckling at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center.



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## the director's report

During my career, I have seen many changes in aviculture and the role it plays in conservation. My first experience with this important connection between aviculture and wild populations of endangered birds was in 1962, when I helped send 49 captive raised Nene back to a dwindling wild population in Hawaii. Aviculture has come a long way since those days. Now, birds are bred, hatched and reared far more effectively, as a result of improved incubators and nutrition.

Since those early years, I have been involved with several species that have become extremely rare. One of my biggest goals for Sylvan Heights has always been to help prevent the extinction of endangered waterfowl by propagating strong, healthy captive populations. Should the worst happen and those critically endangered birds disappear from the wild, these captive breeding populations could mean the difference between total extinction and the hope of recovery. Many species are losing their habitat, and this makes returning birds to the wild a big challenge – if they have no habitat to return to, they obviously will not survive. So, we have to work with the countries where these species are found and encourage them to protect their wetlands for the birds.

Currently, Sylvan Heights and the IWWA are very much involved in the recovery of the critically endangered Brazilian Merganser, which is facing the same habitat loss situation as so

many other endangered species. To build a strong captive population, Brazilian conservation groups are monitoring nests and bringing a few eggs into captivity, where they are hatched and reared at Zooparque Itatiba under the management of Robert Kooy. There are now four very viable pairs at his facility. Once the pairs begin breeding, the idea is to re-introduce the offspring to a few areas where the Brazilian Merganser once lived, and are now under better protection than they were historically. Sylvan Heights and the IWWA are helping Robert in any way we can. Our current project is to provide him with funding for satellite transmitters to help track adult pairs of mergansers in the wild.

Sylvan Heights also has an important role to play in the education of the next generation of conservationists. It was so nice to see so many enthusiastic young people at the Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshop in February, which you will read more about elsewhere in this issue. All of these individuals want to be involved in saving waterfowl. I was very proud of the Sylvan Heights staff for organizing such a wonderful and important meeting.

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



### ON THE COVER:

Attendees of the Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshop at Sylvan Heights were treated to the sight of wild tundra swans (*Cygnus columbianus*) flying over a North Carolina wildlife refuge. (page 9)

### CONNECT ONLINE!



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

# the curator's report

by **BRAD HAZELTON**  
General Curator, Sylvan Heights Bird Park



Black-necked Stilt



Argentine Ruddy Ducks compete for a female in the South America aviary



Under construction: Native Nature Walkway



Black-necked Stilt nest

We've hit the ground running this spring as an unusually warm winter has allowed us to keep moving forward with improvements here at the park. The new Nature Playground is designed to get children closer to nature with its underground tunnel, sand pit, and swinging bridge. Already, hundreds of school-children have had the opportunity to enjoy it while keeping our education staff busy.

In March, visitors also had the opportunity to begin using our newly expanded parking lot. We are very grateful to Tom Hickam and Gary Allsbrook for all their work preparing the area for our park guests. The new lot makes it much easier for school buses to safely park and unload the students.

In the park, below the goose pens that run along the bottom of our Eurasian and North American aviaries, we have another new project underway. The "Native Nature Walkway" has been designed to give our visitors an up-close experience with native plants and wildlife as they follow our boardwalk through the swamp. Contractor Ed Myrick is hard at work with his crew to make this new addition open to park visitors by this summer.

If you've visited the park recently, you'll have also noticed that the construction of our new Wings of the Tropics exhibit is progressing nicely. I must thank my staff for all their hard work getting the building in working order and we are now shifting our focus to the outside aviaries. We hope you are as excited as we are about this new exhibit, and we thank you for your understanding with all the construction materials within eyeshot.

On the bird side of things, we are especially proud to have bred Southern Lapwings this year for the first time. This South American species is most common in the Rio de la Plata Basin, but has begun to spread into Central America and the Caribbean in recent years. Along similar lines, our Black-Necked Stilts in the North America aviaries have been very busy defending nest areas and have started laying eggs.

We anticipate a good breeding season this year, and we encourage you all to come out and visit the park to enjoy the birds and see our work in progress.



Southern Lapwing chick - a first at Sylvan Heights Bird Park.



## New Daily Event: Keeper Talks

Park visitors can now meet a bird keeper and learn even more about Sylvan Heights' resident birds during our new daily "Keeper Talks". At 1:15 p.m. each day, an aviculturist from the park or Avian Breeding Center will give a short presentation at various locations around the park, followed by an opportunity for guests to ask questions about the animals, the park, or even what it's like to be a bird keeper.

Current Keeper Talk topics include whooping cranes, hornbills, parrots, Hawaiian geese, and hawks, although the topics may change depending on the season and nesting activity around the park.

Speakers from Sylvan Heights Bird Park include Dustin Foote (Assistant Curator), Amanda Dougherty (Aviculturist), Nick Nees (Aviculturist), and Morgan Earley (Bird Keeper), as well as aviculturists Kat Lewandowski and Taylor Silcox from the Avian Breeding Center.

## Natural Playspace Opens

On Thursday, March 31st, the Natural Playspace officially opened after much anticipation. The much needed additional play area was made possible by a generous \$4,000 grant from Halifax EMC's Halifax Helps Program.

The entire project was completed in house by staff and volunteers. Staff from the Lowe's in Tarboro even came out one day to help with construction. The new playground encourages imaginative, less structured play in children. Any amount of increased time outdoors provides benefits for someone's body, mind and spirit as they are exploring.

The Natural Playspace has a swinging bridge, a mole hill to run through, balance elements and a sand pit. In the short time that it has been open to the public, teachers and parents have reported how much the children have enjoyed it.

## Parking Expansion Completed

In the last issue of *Words on Waterfowl*, we asked for your help in purchasing ten acres of land adjacent to the park to ensure that Sylvan Heights has room to grow in the future. Thanks to the generous response of our members and supporters, we are pleased to announce that the land was officially purchased at the beginning of 2016.

With an ever-increasing number of guests and school groups visiting Sylvan Heights, we had an urgent need to expand our available parking to accommodate all of the school buses, tour buses, and family vehicles that come to us during our busy spring and summer season. In March 2016, the two acres of land closest to the Visitor Center were converted to a gravel parking lot with designated bus parking spaces, effectively doubling our existing parking and diverting traffic from large school groups away from the main entrance. We hope that this will create a much more relaxed and pleasant first impression of the park!

## Wood Ducks in IMAX Feature

The birds of Sylvan Heights will be featured in an upcoming giant screen documentary called *Pondemonium*, which will be shown at science museums and other facilities with IMAX theaters.

A crew from Archipelago Films spent several weeks at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center filming a sequence about North American Wood Ducks. The film crew set up natural log nest sites, monitored the nests with live web cams, and filmed all aspects of nesting, incubation, and hatching.

According to the filmmakers, the documentary is about "the hidden lives of plants and animals that live around a typical suburban home...it is intended to inspire people with the wonders of nature that exist all around us and the importance of local ecosystems for our health and well being."

*Pondemonium* is scheduled to be released in 2017.

## WRAL Films at Sylvan Heights

A member of the Sylvan Heights feathered family is the new mascot for WRAL TV in Raleigh! During their transition to NBC, WRAL visited Sylvan Heights to film an advertisement starring "Willow", a hand raised peacock. The ad first aired during the 2016 Super Bowl, and features narration by Sylvan Heights Director Mike Lubbock. WRAL also ran several short promotional ads starring Willow on their social media pages during the week leading up to the Super Bowl.

Willow the peacock was raised by Ella, a 13-year-old volunteer at Sylvan Heights. Ella and Willow were also featured on an episode of *The Tar Heel Traveler* in February.

In April 2016, WRAL produced Sylvan Heights Bird Park's first ever television advertisement. The 30 second commercial now airs regularly, and we hope it will help boost park visitation from the Raleigh area.

## Eurasian Eagle Owl Chicks Hatch

The pair of Eurasian Eagle Owls in the lower section of the park have successfully hatched two chicks (called "owlets") this year. Park aviculturists have been hand-raising the owlets in order to acclimate them to human interaction. Hand-raised owls can make excellent ambassador animals in educational programs, and once fully grown, these two birds will hopefully inspire many students with their impressive wingspans and large talons.

Hand-raising owlets requires frequent feeding each day, as well as careful monitoring of their growth and health. The young birds even spend lunch time in the staff break room, socializing with as many different people as possible.

These two owlets have already made their television debut, appearing on morning news programs with their keepers on WITN in Greenville, NC and WNCN in Raleigh, NC.

# from the **iwwa** president

I hope this newsletter finds you enjoying springtime and all the amazing bird activity that comes with each breeding season.

This year, at the end of February, the Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshop took place at Sylvan Heights Bird Park. The decision to put on this Workshop was unanimously approved during the IWWA Board meeting last October. The IWWA Board felt it extremely important to encourage continuing interest and knowledge about the waterfowl of the world. I feel that those goals were accomplished beyond our expectations. In just a few short months, Brent Lubbock, Katie Lubbock, Dustin Foote and Ian Gereg put together an outstanding event. This was a collaborative effort by IWWA and SHBP with amazing support from many individuals and organizations. You will see a complete list of the Workshop supporters in this newsletter. The conference organizing group could not have done a better job with scheduling, logistical support, providing printed material and engaging the group. All of the presenters were well prepared and shared a wealth of knowledge and information. During our next Board meeting in September, we will be discussing opportunities for making this a regularly scheduled event.

Speaking of September, we will be traveling to Europe for our annual waterfowl conference. Arrival and departure flights will be through Amsterdam. The Board meeting and welcome reception will take place on September 28th. During the conference we will visit the school where Jan Harteman teaches, as well as Walsrode, home of Weltvogelpark, Ludger and Elizabeth Bremehr's collection, Pairi Daiza Zoo (Paradise Park) and Kris and Carine Carrein's bird collection and garden business. The conference will conclude on October 5th, however for those interested in continuing on, there will be a post conference trip to Portugal. We will fly to Lisbon and visit Pedro Mello

and see his collection of green pygmy geese. Additionally, we will visit the Zoo, the City of Lisbon and Nature reserve. Following the post conference, flights can be taken back to Amsterdam for connections to international destinations. There are also some international flight connections available out of Lisbon. This is an excellent opportunity to experience some of Europe's finest bird collections. It is also an opportunity to learn more about IWWA and support our fund raising goals that support internship programs, conservation projects and aviculture workshops.

You will be receiving conference information via a post office mailing sometime in early June. Please check our website as well at that time if you are interested in additional conference information and registration.

Finally, thank you to all who responded to our third Captive Waterfowl Survey. In this newsletter you will see Ian's article about our recent Waterfowl Survey along with the survey results. The results can also be viewed on the IWWA website, [wildwaterfowl.org](http://wildwaterfowl.org), along with the other two surveys. The survey results have guided us toward selection of the next group of ducks and geese that will be imported from Europe and placed in a breeding program in order to ensure a continued presence in North America.

I hope to see you at the conference in September.

*Arnold Schouten*  
**President**

International Wild Waterfowl Association



*future of*  
waterfowl  
conservation  
*workshop*

february 26-28, 2016



2016  
**IWWA**  
*conference*

NETHERLANDS • BELGIUM  
GERMANY • PORTUGAL

*September 28th - October 5th*

Lisbon, Portugal

photo by Miguel Vieira



# *the future of* waterfowl conservation

Sylvan Heights Bird Park and the International Wild Waterfowl Association's mission of educating the next generation of waterfowl conservationists continued this February as the park hosted the inaugural "Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshop", with the goal of providing a professional network for the next generation of waterfowl conservationists, aviculturists, and biologists.

More than 70 delegates from around the world met in Scotland Neck, North Carolina to receive updates about important waterfowl conservation projects, discuss captive propagation techniques, learn about veterinary care from experienced avian vets, and evaluate the best ways to educate students and the public about waterfowl husbandry and conservation.

Attendees traveled from a variety of countries, including the Netherlands, England, Portugal, Brazil, Canada, and much of the United States. Many renowned institutions were represented, including Sea World San Diego, Toledo Zoo, the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Alaska SeaLife Cen-

ter, North Carolina State University, Pensthorpe Conservation Trust, Woodland Park Zoo, Pinola Conservancy, Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy, Zooparque Itatiba, National Aviary, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Oregon Zoo, Akron Zoo, USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Fort Worth Zoo, Minnesota Zoo, and many others. Both public and private avicultural institutions were well represented, and much of the discussion focused on improved collaboration and communication between both sectors.

Guest speakers presented their work with critically endangered species, such as the Brazilian Merganser, Baer's Pochard, and Chinese Merganser. A biologist from the Alaska SeaLife Center reported on the facility's progress with re-introducing dwindling populations of Steller's Eiders to the Alaskan tundra. Veterinarians educated the group about issues concerning waterfowl diseases, injuries, and nutrition, while educators from the Netherlands spoke about exciting vocational programs for aspiring aviculturists and biologists.

The idea for this event arose from the need to include younger aviculture and conservation professionals in workshops and conventions, and bridge the gap between both older and younger generations, as well as public and private institutions.

Sylvan Heights Bird Park and the International Wild Waterfowl Association (IWWA) recognized that many young waterfowl enthusiasts often can't afford to travel to conventions, so travel grants, funded by several generous sponsors, were issued to participants to help offset the cost of airfare, lodging, and meals. "We wanted to make this event as accessible as possible for young professionals", says Brent Lubbock, Director of Development at Sylvan Heights. Sylvan Heights staff and volunteers even pitched in by offering guest rooms in their homes for attendees, and providing free transportation to and from RDU airport. "I'm not sure this type of event could be so successful anywhere else", commented one attendee. "The amount of support Sylvan Heights has from their volunteers, staff, and the community is amazing".

The diverse waterfowl collection at Sylvan Heights Bird Park, coupled with Eastern North Carolina's large flocks of wintering waterfowl, provided the perfect backdrop for the workshop. Attendees were treated to the sight of thousands of wild tundra swans flying in to roost in Halifax County at sunset, as well as a trip to Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge to see wild ducks, geese, and swans before they migrate north for the spring breeding season.

Sylvan Heights Bird Park and the IWWA hope that this event will spark conversation and collaboration between the many talented, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic young people working for the benefit of waterfowl all over the globe.

***Sylvan Heights and the IWWA thank the following for their support of the 2016 FWC Workshop: Pinola Aviary, East Carolina University, American Pheasant & Waterfowl Society, Weltvogelpark Walsrode, Mazuri, Reser's Fine Foods, and Friends of Sylvan Heights.***

# the IWWA captive waterfowl survey

The IWWA recently completed its third Captive Waterfowl Survey, an endeavor undertaken every five years to gain a better understanding of waterfowl numbers and trends in North American collections.

The first survey, conducted in 2005, was initiated after members voiced concerns about particular species vanishing from waterfowl collections in the United States and Canada. Paper surveys were sent to zoos and private collections in an effort to determine the number of individual birds available for breeding for each of the waterfowl species of concern. After the results were analyzed, actions were taken to boost captive population numbers for species that were critically low, including the importation of several rare species from Europe to North America in 2007.

The imported birds were propagated at the Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Breeding Center, and the offspring distributed to qualified public and private facilities throughout North America in an effort to further increase their numbers and create a self-sustaining population. IWWA's efforts resulted in the introduction or reinvigoration of Scaly-sided Merganser, Baer's Pochard, Pink-eared Duck, and Pacific Black Duck populations. A similar species-specific survey was conducted in 2010, from which IWWA was able to target species that needed greater attention to maintain healthy captive populations for breeding.



In 2015 the survey was brought online where a greater number of respondents could be reached. Freed from the burden of multiple sheets of paper, the survey was expanded to include nearly all species of wild waterfowl to gain a greater understanding of the status of most species in zoological collections. In total 183 public and 140 private waterfowl owners from across the United States and Canada responded, a major increase from previous surveys. Results from the 2015 survey were generally encouraging, especially when interpreted as indicating we have at least and possibly many more than what was reported for some species. Many species appeared to be in better standing than previously thought, though concerns persist regarding the breeding potential and genetic diversity of several populations. Work needs to continue to ensure that the bloodlines available for captive breeding remain strong. To that end the IWWA Board of Directors has utilized the survey results to target several species with low or genetically weak populations for an upcoming importation of waterfowl from Europe. These species include Ashy-headed and Ruddy-headed Geese, Patagonian Crested Duck and Chilean Teal.

IWWA would like to thank all who took the time to respond to the 2015 Captive Waterfowl Survey. The results are very important to all of us who care about maintaining healthy captive populations of waterfowl. The complete results are available for review on the IWWA website.

by Ian Gereg  
2015 Captive Waterfowl  
Survey Coordinator

View complete survey results at  
[www.wildwaterfowl.org](http://www.wildwaterfowl.org)

◀ The IWWA Captive Waterfowl Survey helps to identify species that are becoming scarce in captive populations, like this Ashy-headed Goose.

photo by Joel Sartore  
[www.photoark.com](http://www.photoark.com)

## what is duck down?

Down feathers are soft, finely textured feathers that form the innermost layer closest to a duck's body. These feathers have one main purpose: insulation. Have you ever seen a duck fluff up its feathers in cold weather? That duck is trapping as much warm air as possible around its body, and the soft down feathers help hold onto that warmth.

During the breeding season, nesting females use down in a different way. When a hen begins incubating her eggs, she will pluck down feathers from her breast and form a soft layer around the nest. The layer of down helps keep the temperature around the eggs consistent, and prevents them from cooling too much when the hen has to leave the nest. Usually, the female will take a break from incubating her eggs in the morning or the evening so she can feed and bathe. In fact, seeing a hen taking a bath is a good indication for aviculturists that she has just come off her nest. That is the best time for us to do nest inspections, as we can check for fertility and bad eggs without disturbing the hen.

The color and consistency of down also varies between species. Ducks such as Garganey, Long-tailed Ducks, and Eiders nest in the open, so their down is the same color as their surroundings, and is often mixed with natural

grasses. Aviculturists must be careful not to tread on them when looking for nests! The down of the Australian Pink-eared Duck is very thick and oily, and hard to pull apart. We believe their down is like this because the female might have to travel some distance to find food, so the eggs must be well-insulated while she is away. It's also possible that if the down is difficult to pull apart, it may deter some predators from eating the eggs.

Some waterfowl do not line their nests with down at all. Whistling ducks are one of these exceptions, and the reason is that both male and female whistling ducks take turns incubating eggs. Since an adult bird is on the nest at all times, there is no reason for a down lining to keep the eggs warm.

Humans have found many uses for down, especially that of the Eider duck. Eider down is soft, dense, and warm, and is prized as stuffing for pillows and quilts. At one time, eider populations were threatened by humans taking down from active nests. Now, eider down collection is highly regulated, and populations are protected and encouraged to nest in certain regions so that the down can be collected later. This way, both humans and eiders benefit.

Nick Hill  
Curator

Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center



A female North American Wood Duck lines her nest with soft, insulating down feathers.

# education update

by LEE PEOPLES

Interpretive Naturalist & Program Director, Sylvan Heights Bird Park

Here at Sylvan Heights, we utilize wetlands, park exhibits, and our education animals to provide hands-on learning opportunities. In order to further engage our students in these natural areas, we have initiated a three part wetland restoration and observation project. Through this work, we are developing a Native Nature Walkway with an Observation Overlook, restoring natural wetlands by eliminating invasive plants & replanting native species, and developing signage that explains the values and structure of a forested wetland system.

We are building access to a one-acre wetland area that is an excellent living laboratory for conducting our Wetland Ecology & Biology education programs. During the past 4 years, we have consistently grown our education activities and demand for our programs has exceeded the capacity of our existing wetland access points. This site will have an ADA-approved board walk leading to an observation platform. Visitors will observe a natural wetland area and an exhibit featuring a “pocket wetland” demonstrating filtration. Several access points along the Native Nature Walkway will allow students to conduct water quality testing & take surveys of invertebrate organisms.

The Native Nature Walkway will also provide visitors the rare opportunity to experience a wetland up close and



learn the role wetland habitats serve and how these support more than 75% of North America’s endangered species. Nearby in an existing beaver pond, additional signage will enhance the public’s understanding of the value and role of beavers as a keystone species. Native species of plants and animals will be featured using signs with information, graphics and photos explaining how wetlands benefit water quality, wildlife habitat & biodiversity.

Thanks to the amazing help of AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) this past fall, wetland restoration has been initiated and their work has cleared the viewing areas. In April, we began construction on the walkway. To date, we have raised necessary funding from Duke Energy, Dominion and private donations for this project. We are meeting many of our mission objectives by providing education about wetlands, waterfowl and the important role many species serve in ecosystems, engaging visitors in conservation and preservation of habitat, interpreting and building strong traditions and history related to waterfowl in North Carolina.

With your support of Sylvan Heights and projects like these, we are able to positively impact the environmental understanding and stewardship ethic of current and future generations.

## Duke Energy Funds Expansion of Sylvan Heights Education Programs & Exhibits

In March 2016, Duke Energy presented Sylvan Heights Bird Park with a \$50,000 grant to help expand our educational exhibits and programs. With our attendance reaching record-breaking numbers so far this year, this couldn’t have come at a better time. Sylvan Heights thanks Duke Energy for their generous gift.



A park volunteer teaches young visitors about wetland biology



Students meet an American alligator up close.

## education events

### SUMMER DAY CAMPS

JULY 12-15: 4-6 years old  
JULY 26-29: 7-10 years old

### SUPERHERO & FAIRY TALE LUNCH

JULY 23

### SPOOKTACULAR SPECIES

OCTOBER 22

Reservations required. For more information, please visit:

[www.shwpark.com](http://www.shwpark.com)



GET THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE EDUCATION TEAM!

[facebook.com/SylvanHeightsEd](https://facebook.com/SylvanHeightsEd)

**KABRYN MATTISON**

Bali Starling Researcher  
Nusa Penida, Indonesia

# avian alumni

Where are our interns now?



photo by  
Benjamin Dunn

We all have moments that define us, that change the course of our lives forever. It is no question that for me the choice to work at Sylvan Heights was one of those decisions. During my time working at Sylvan Heights, I learned invaluable lessons about conservation. I saw the dedication and hard work that goes into keeping such a large scale project alive and thriving. Working hands on with Mike Lubbock and Nick Hill continuously left me inspired to strive towards their level of confidence and ease with the birds and to foster that instinctual connection I have always felt with animals. No matter how tired I was, there was no loss of romanticism every time I would hear a crane call in the distance, care for a baby flamingo, or have a crested jay tell me “Hello.” The work, though difficult, pushed me to give more of myself for the care of the birds. It gave me the real world confidence and experience I needed to do my own conservation research in the field abroad. Through my time at Sylvan Heights, I was able to learn about avian behavior and care not just in a classroom, but from the birds themselves, and the wonderful aviculturists taking care of them.

My passion for avian conservation is one of the reasons why I went on to pursue independent research of the critically endangered Bali Starling (*Leucopsar rothschildi*) on the island of Nusa Penida in Indonesia. From November 2015 to February 2016, I conducted a population assessment of the Bali Starling using previous counts as a guideline. A primarily Hindu island, Nusa Penida is home to a unique agreement called an “awig-awig” that places responsibility for the conservation of the Bali Starling in the hands of the local people. Deemed



Bali Starling

a success internationally, I hoped to return to Nusa Penida to find a booming Bali Starling population. Unfortunately, I found a steep population decline, which seems to be most likely due to illegal poaching for Indonesia’s booming bird trade. My findings have been reviewed by NGOs that work with the Bali Starling in the hopes a new and more effective effort to aid the Bali Starling will begin. With population amounts on Nusa Penida currently estimated at less than 15 birds, the time for action is now.

Since I have left Sylvan Heights, the staff have still remained such a wonderful part of my life, always offering support, checking in, and eagerly fostering connections between myself and other conservationists. I am currently living and working in Fremantle, Australia and hope to continue my work in conservation, focusing my efforts in research and education. I am so incredibly proud of the work Sylvan Heights is doing and cannot wait until the next time I can make it back!

## Update from Sumatra: white-winged wood ducks

Editor’s Note: In issue 5 of *Words on Waterfowl*, we highlighted the perilous status of White-winged Wood Ducks and the efforts of zoological institutions to maintain a viable captive population as these birds continue to disappear from the wild. Sylvan Heights Bird Park recently received this update on wild populations in Sumatra, which further emphasizes the danger this species faces.

### Summary of Study of White-winged Wood Duck in Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia

Study conducted by Claire Oelrichs (Save Indonesian Endangered Species Fund), Dicky Tri Sutanto (Way Kambas National Park) and Hari Ganoeng (Ecolodges Indonesia), with financial support from US Fish and Wildlife Service Asian Elephant Conservation Fund, the Oriental Bird Club and Save Indonesian Endangered Species Fund.

The east coast of Sumatra consists of a continuous wetland system stretching from north to south. These wetlands are of considerable ecological significance for their biodiversity and are of international importance as waterbird habitat. Up and down the East coast of Sumatra, wetlands are being burned, drained and developed, biodiversity is disappearing and protected areas are under threat.

We conducted a long-term action research study of the endangered White-winged Wood Duck *Asarcornis* (prev. *Cairina*) *scutulata* in Way Kambas National Park, situated on the Eastern flood plains of the large island of Sumatra, in Indo-

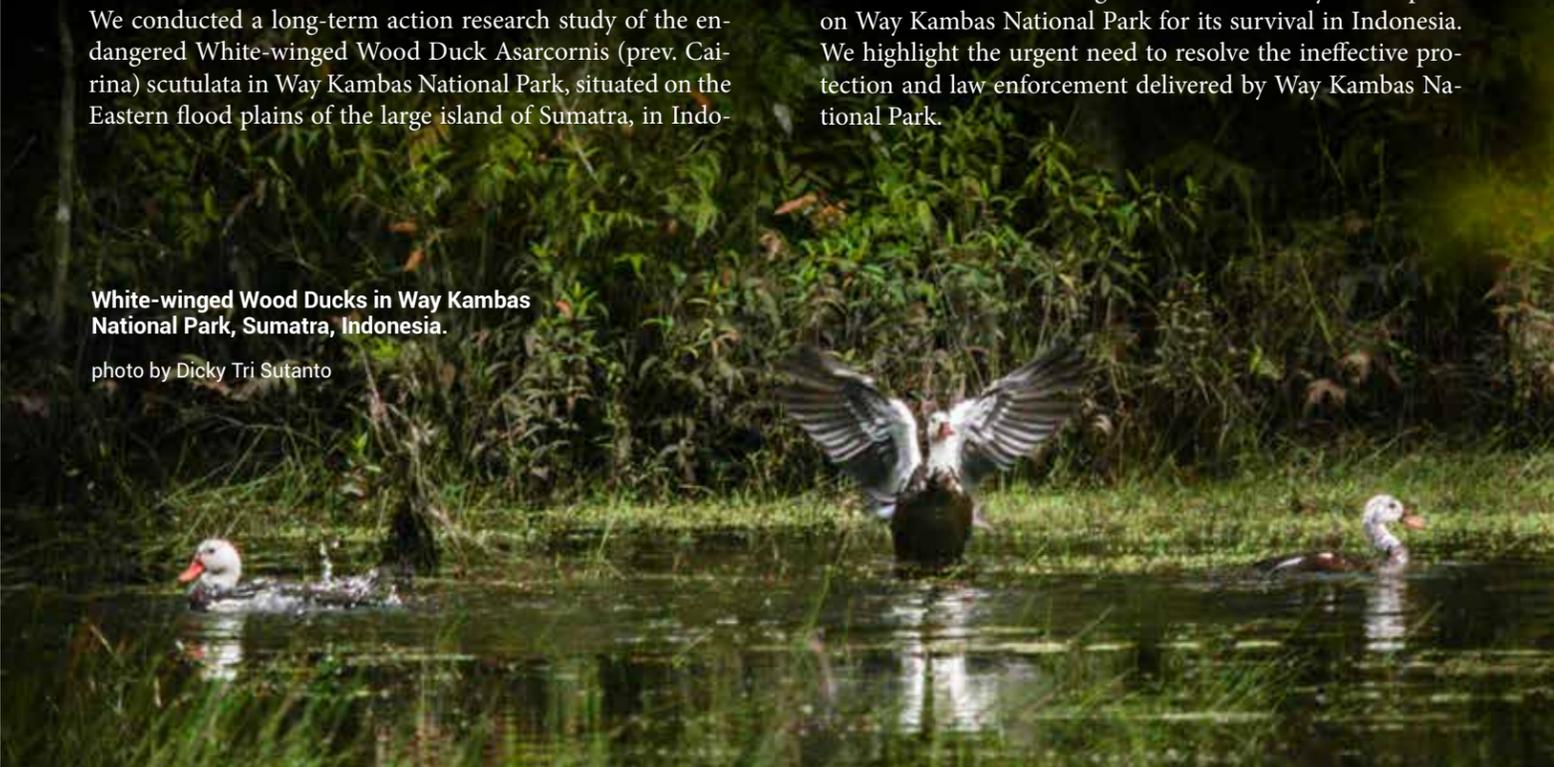
### White-winged Wood Ducks in Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra, Indonesia.

photo by Dicky Tri Sutanto

nesia. Studies of White-winged Wood Duck populations in Way Kambas National Park show an increasingly vulnerable population, hanging on with few breeding pairs and poor survival rate. The park is under-protected and the habitat is in decline due to forest fire and rampant illegal activities and, ducks foraging in farmlands surrounding the park are vulnerable to hunting for human ingestion.

Researchers monitored populations, mapped habitats, and assessed and responded to threats to the Duck. Over six expeditions conducted between 2009 and 2015, White-winged Wood Ducks were counted and habitats mapped. During these expeditions accompanying forest police evicted illegal trespassers and destroyed their tools and infrastructures. An education campaign, regarding significance of the wetlands and endangered birds, was delivered to park staff and villagers. During 2015 to 2016 ducks were monitored in the areas surrounding the park, threats were assessed, and a second education campaign directed at villagers and park staff was delivered.

Our results record highly impacted environments, and show that to survive in Way Kambas National Park the White-winged Wood Duck must battle rapacious human hunters, who capture ducks to eat, damage the habitat, and by relentless fishing out-compete ducks for food. Due to environmental degradation along the East coast of Sumatra, the Sumatran variant of White-winged Wood Duck, may well depend on Way Kambas National Park for its survival in Indonesia. We highlight the urgent need to resolve the ineffective protection and law enforcement delivered by Way Kambas National Park.



# park events

view full event details and ticket info at [www.shwpark.com](http://www.shwpark.com)



MEMBER EVENT

## Waterfowl Reunion

June 18, 2016 | 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

All Sylvan Heights members are invited to meet the educational program birds, see the new hatchlings, and enjoy complimentary refreshments, plus a few other surprises!



## Birds & Brews

June 25, 2016 | 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

All-you-can-sample craft beer from local brewers, plus live music by the Martin County Ramblers, games, and more. Food will be available for purchase from local food trucks.



## 10th Anniversary

October 15, 2016 | 6 p.m.

We're celebrating a decade of ducks! Join us for cocktails, food, entertainment, and an auction to support Sylvan Heights Bird Park on its 10th anniversary.



## Trick-or-Tweet

October 31, 2016 | 5 p.m.-6 p.m.

Costumed characters will be handing out candy at Sylvan Heights Bird Park during our family-friendly Halloween event!



## 12 Birds of Christmas

December 1-31, 2016 | 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Challenge yourself with a holiday-themed scavenger hunt in the park. If you really don't know what a partridge in a pear tree looks like, visit Sylvan Heights and find out!



## Breakfast With Santa

December 3, 2016 | 9 a.m. or 10 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. Seatings at 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.

# Sylvan Heights Bird Park celebrates 10 years

In October 2006, Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Park and Eco-Center officially opened its doors for the first time. In that initial year, the park consisted of only five waterfowl aviaries, plus a few exotic birds. The flamingo exhibit, tree house, and Landing Zone had not been built, we had fewer than 10 employees, and seeing 50 visitors in one day was considered "really busy"!

In the past decade, Sylvan Heights has experienced a tremendous amount of growth and change. Now, the park routinely sees more than 500 visitors and students per day. We've added several native nature areas, expanded the playground and parking, paved the walkways, and added major new exhibits, which currently house more than 2,000 birds from around the world. In fact, while waterfowl conservation remains our focus, the park began exhibiting so many other bird species that we changed the name to "Sylvan Heights Bird Park" in 2011. We have more than doubled the size of our staff, and have a wonderful group of dedicated volunteers that help us with anything from making seed sticks for the Landing Zone to preparing food for our events.

In October 2016, we will be celebrating our 10th Anniversary, and we couldn't have made it this far without you, our members and supporters. Any time you visit the park with your friends and family, donate to our projects, share our social media posts, renew your membership, attend park events, or tell other people about us, you are helping us continue our mission of conservation, education, and providing a world-class attraction in Eastern North Carolina. All of us at Sylvan Heights thank you for your support, and invite you to celebrate with us at our 10th Anniversary fundraiser on October 15th!



## thank you to our donors

Sylvan Heights Bird Park gratefully acknowledges our donors of \$500 or more since October 1, 2015 through March 31, 2016.

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"Go Mix" WZRN & WZRU  
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Kay & Mike Winn

## HERE'S TO ANOTHER 10 YEARS!

Help Sylvan Heights Bird Park reach its 20th anniversary! All of your contributions help fund our waterfowl conservation and education programs, and provide food and care for the more than 2,000 birds that call the park home.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Sylvan Heights Bird Park. Bill me  One time.  Quarterly for one year, beginning \_\_\_\_\_

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

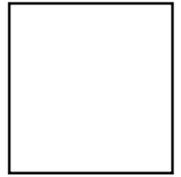
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(Please send to Sylvan Heights Bird Park • PO Box 368 • Scotland Neck, NC 27874) **Thank you!**



INTERNATIONAL  
**WILD WATERFOWL**  
ASSOCIATION  
wildwaterfowl.org



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



## membership **matters!**

Your support allows park visitors to meet  
the world's wonderful waterfowl.

Thank you.



A male Smew (*Mergellus albellus*)  
in breeding plumage.