

words on  
**waterfowl**

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



*Green-winged Teal* page 15

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*Soaring Into Science* page 16

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An Australian Freckled Duck at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center.

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## *the* director's report

It is hard to believe that the Park has been open for 10 years, but time has gone very quickly and Sylvan Heights has come a long way since 2006. In our first year, we had 7,000 visitors and now we are heading towards 50,000, with over 1,600 supporting members. We had many concerns in the early days as to whether we would be able to achieve our dream successfully. It was the worst economic climate in the United States, but with the help of a very good core of friends who believed in our venture and came to our aid, we have managed to keep going. None of this would have happened without our dear friends Toad and Hanna Herring, co-founders of Sylvan Heights Waterfowl, and the North Carolina Zoological Society.

under the guidance of Sir Peter Scott. I was a member of the grounds staff, and would have to wear many different hats; from feeding and raising birds to taking school groups around the center. These were ground-breaking days for the Wildfowl Trust, and it is now a huge organization with many centers all over the United Kingdom. Recently, I returned to Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and was interviewed for three or four hours about my experiences as a young aviculturist working with Sir Peter, and as his Director of Aviculture in later years. One thing I came away with after the interview was how the Trust has changed since my old memories of it being a small family business. It has grown in a spectacular way and is doing fantastic work for waterfowl and wetland protection internationally, but I also noticed how hard it was for a staff of so many people to get to know each other or have the time to communicate with the many different departments. I am excited that Sylvan Heights grows in leaps and bounds, but Ali and I sincerely hope we can carry on achieving great things without losing the connection to the staff and all the friends of Sylvan Heights.

Our 10th Anniversary Celebration took place on October 15th. It was a tremendous success, and with the use of a large tent we were able to house nearly 250 guests. Our wonderful sponsors, auction donors, and bidders contributed funding towards our newest project, which you can read about on page 23. Thanks also to the Friends of Sylvan Heights, staff members, and volunteers -- they all did an astounding job led by Kathleen Fleming, Sylvan Heights Event Planner, and Claudia Harrell, our Volunteer Coordinator.

As many of you know, I am originally from England and spent my early years learning about waterfowl at the Wildfowl Trust

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



### ON THE COVER:

A Green-winged Teal displays for a female at the Sylvan Heights Avian Breeding Center. Learn more about this often overlooked species on page 15.

### CONNECT ONLINE!



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

# the curator's report

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

Photos by Katie G. Lubbock



A North American Wood Duck rests near autumn blooms.



Emerald starlings can be found in the Birds of Africa exhibit



A hamerkop soars around the park's Africa aviary.



A snowy egret shows off some frilly feathers.

I have just returned from a week in Spain visiting family and then a week in the Netherlands and Germany for the IWWA conference. We visited some of what I consider must be the best bird collections in the world. It was a great trip, but after one day back in the U.S., we were hit with Hurricane Matthew. The wind never was too high in Scotland Neck, but the rain was amazing. I am not sure how much rain we had, but I have heard estimates of around 12 inches. It was certainly the most rain that I have seen in the 10 years that I have been here. By the time I left the park at about 5:30 that evening, the ditches were full and half of the new parking lot was under water, but there had not been any significant damage.

Around 8:30 p.m., we lost power at my house and I became nervous about eggs that I had in an incubator that were not on a circuit covered by the park's generator. So I decided to go back in and move them. There were a few places on the drive back in where water was on the roadways, but nothing too serious. Upon my arrival at the park, the road from the breeding center to the park was covered for about 100 yards by around 8 inches of fast-moving water. I managed to cross it twice and took the eggs to safety. I have never seen the water cross this road before and to see it flooded as deep as it was for as far as it was made me a little nervous.

I was up before light the next morning and drove into work to check on the damage. This time, there was water crossing the road for about a quarter of a mile on the south side of Scotland Neck. Fortunately, it was not too deep or moving too fast and I managed to make it to the park where the water was no longer washing across our road. There was surprisingly little damage. There were a few small limbs and a lot of leaves down, but it really could have been so much worse and we are grateful to have escaped any major loss.

Several new species have arrived at the park this year, including Hamerkops, Emerald Starlings, and a beautiful pair of East African Crowned Cranes. Look for these birds and more in our outdoor exhibits as the weather begins to warm up this spring.

Progress on the Wings of the Tropics exhibit has been slow since I have been out of town and then dealing with the hurricane. We have finished the steel work on the main cage and are very nearly finished with the raptor exhibit steel. Now we have a lot of painting to do, as well as the installation of a lot of wire. We are still optimistic about our April opening, but we will need to continue working very steadily to make this happen. I hope all of you will enjoy seeing it finished as much as I will.



East African crowned cranes are on exhibit in the crane aviaries.



## Nature Walkway Grand Opening

Representatives from Duke Energy officially opened the Duke Energy Nature Walkway at Sylvan Heights Bird Park on September 14th. This boardwalk extends over the wetland area below the park's Eurasia Aviary, providing viewpoints for visitors and access to the wetlands for education programs. Interpretive signs and other features will be added in the near future.

The walkway has already been utilized for several education programs, including a wetland lesson during this year's Summer Camps, and in the park's new "Soaring Into Science" program (see page 16).

The Duke Energy Nature Walkway is also a great spot to view native North Carolina wildlife! Many species of songbirds have been seen and heard along the boardwalk, along with hummingbirds, wood ducks, beavers, owls, anoles, skinks, frogs, and salamanders.



## "Cheers" to Birds & Brews 2016

On June 25, 2016, Sylvan Heights Bird Park hosted the first annual "Birds and Brews". Attendees strolled through the park while sampling many varieties of local craft beers. The event sold out, with over 225 people in attendance.

Local breweries and distributors generously donated the beer for the event. Breweries included Duck-Rabbit, Nash Community College Brewing Institute, Tarboro Brewing Company, Sweet Taters and Fishing Creek Hard Cider. Carolina Eagle Distributing also provided a wide range of craft beers. Grampa's Kitchen from Littleton was onsite selling food as well as Crossdogs Rescue Ministry from Scotland Neck.

Plans are already in the works for an even bigger and better event next year which will take place on Saturday, June 24, 2017.



## Camps Encourage Summer Learning

For a third year in a row, the Education Department offered summer day camps for 4-10 year olds over a two week period in July. Campers explored the world of birds, as well as insects, reptiles, watersheds, wetlands, and recycling. Each day included instruction, physical activity, crafts, animal presentations and a tour of a portion of the park.

Camp will be offered again next summer from July 25-28th. Both the younger group and older group will have camp the same week this summer but children will be divided into two age groups for the large majority of instruction.

During summer camp, we also utilize teen volunteers. This is a great opportunity for high school students to gain skills and volunteer experience. Keep an eye out for additional information and registration forms after the first of the year for both campers and volunteers.



## Bolivian Flamingo Conservation Visit

Bolivian conservationists Sol Aguilar and Omar Rocha visited Sylvan Heights Bird Park in July to share their extensive knowledge of flamingos with park staff, and to learn flamingo rearing and incubation techniques from park curator Brad Hazelton.

The couple has studied and monitored flamingos in the high Andes for many years, and they have seen the impact of human activity, such as power lines, on breeding populations. Every summer, Omar and Sol take a group of volunteers to Laguna Colorada, a critical breeding area, to band and record as many as 1,000 flamingo chicks. Sylvan Heights Bird Park curator Brad Hazelton participated in the 2015 round-up and banding.

Rocha has formed a partnership with a zoo in La Paz, Bolivia, with the goal of establishing a protected flamingo population in captivity to help ensure the survival of these iconic birds.



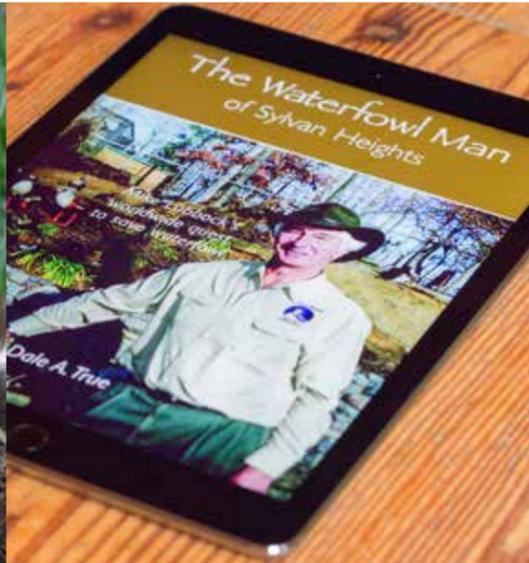
photo by Robert Kooij

## Help for Endangered Brazilian Mergansers

Sylvan Heights and the International Wild Waterfowl Association continued our involvement in the conservation of the critically endangered Brazilian merganser by contributing funds towards the construction of a new aviary and security system at Brazil's Zooparque Itatiba. The aviary will house juvenile mergansers, and the security system will allow zoo staff to monitor and protect the rare birds.

In total, \$5,320 was sent to Brazil over the past year for this important project. A portion of these funds were contributed by attendees of the Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshop held in February at Sylvan Heights Bird Park.

Robert Kooij, manager at Zooparque Itatiba, reports that the zoo's 2015 hatchlings are healthy and already beginning to fight and mate - a promising sign for the future! As riverine habitat in Brazil continues to deteriorate, this captive population may be the species' best hope for survival.



## "Waterfowl Man" e-Book Available

"The Waterfowl Man of Sylvan Heights" by Dale True is now available on Amazon.com as a Kindle e-Book, which can be read on any digital device using the Kindle app.

The book details Sylvan Heights founder Mike Lubbock's global expeditions in the pursuit of waterfowl conservation.

"It's an adventure book more than anything else," says True. "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 digital Kindle version is US \$9.99. Paperback hard copies can also be purchased on Amazon.com and at the Sylvan Heights Bird Park gift shop for \$19.95.

# research

## at Sylvan Heights Bird Park

by **Dustin Foote**  
Assistant Curator &  
Research Coordinator

Sylvan Heights Bird Park (SHBP) is home to one of the most biologically important bird collections in the world. In waterfowl alone, SHBP works with eight endangered and ten vulnerable species, with numerous threatened species. However, what separates SHBP from many other collections is sheer numbers. For example, the White-winged Wood Duck is considered one of the most endangered waterfowl in the world, with global population estimates as low as 350 individuals. At SHBP we currently have over 50 individuals, with another 25 placed in other facilities for safe guarding. There is simply nowhere else on earth where people can find such a diverse group of birds in such high numbers.

As aviculturists, it is often easy to overlook research requests when your main focus is breeding birds. Why would we want people we don't know poking and disrupting our birds? Moreover, blood samples can be invasive, shipping deceased birds to museums/universities can be expensive, and allowing people to observe breeding birds counterproductive. However, when done carefully, working with researchers can provide invaluable contributions to science. As such, one of SHBP values is its long standing tradition of working with researchers to come up with ways its collection can be used for the greater good.

Most research requests SHBP receives each year are for genetic material to aid scientists in various studies. The field of genetics has become one of today's most popular areas of research. Understanding how genes work together to direct the growth and maintenance of an organism is invaluable knowledge. DNA unites practically all living organisms on earth, so improving our understanding of genetics is beneficial for all species, especially us! SHBP participates in a wide variety of projects that all aim to improve our understanding of the natural world.

Our members are directly responsible for giving us the ability to participate in these projects. SHBP never charges researchers for samples because of its commitment to science. There is a new research section under the conservation tab of our website ([www.shwpark.com](http://www.shwpark.com)) where you can learn about projects that the park is involved with. If you are ever interested in learning more about projects or sponsoring research at SHBP, do not hesitate to email me at [aviculturist@shwpark.com](mailto:aviculturist@shwpark.com). SHBP takes its commitment to conservation and education very seriously. By working with researchers, we make sure this collection continues to not only be one of best waterfowl breeding centers in the world, but one of the most important biological collections as well.

## Project Highlights

### Curassow Population Analysis

Curassows are large forest birds native to South America. Many species are highly susceptible to human disturbance from both hunting and habitat destruction. SHBP recently sent curassow blood samples to Houston Zoo. They are working with researchers in Brazil to help identify a better system of management for captive curassow populations.

### B10K

The B10K is an international project that aims to generate representative genome sequences from all living bird species. The project will allow for the completion of a genomic tree of life for all birds, in addition to massive amounts of information that will be available to everyone. SHBP sent blood samples for several species to aid this project.

### Forensic Lab

Sylvan Heights provides specimen standards to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Forensic Laboratory. These standards are used to positively identify animals during wildlife crime investigations, such as illegal poaching of protected species.

### This wattled curassow at Sylvan Heights is helping to improve management of the U.S. captive curassow population.

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



The Avian Breeding Center recently received three pairs of black-headed ducks from Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in the UK. These birds bring much-needed new bloodlines into the U.S. captive population. We'd like to thank Phoebe Vaughan at WWT Slimbridge for facilitating this project.

## images from the avian breeding center



A red-legged seriema chick waits for its sibling to hatch.



Juvenile harlequin ducks in the duckery.



Aviculturists walk sarus crane chicks.



Breeding center staff raised four endangered Chinese mergansers.



Ross's geese were successfully bred for the first time in several years.

# 2016 iwwa conference *europe*

by ANNE LEMENAGER

Photos by Debbie Schouten, Anne Lemenager, and Maynard Axelson



When the itinerary for the 2016 conference showed up in my inbox I knew it was going to be a great experience. After all, Peter Kooij was in charge and that meant it would be amazing. With help from our hosts in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Portugal, decent weather, great organization and humor, Peter masterfully orchestrated a marvelous 10 days of fun. Kudos to Coba Kooij are in order as well.

Starting off the conference at a hotel with a bird park set the tone for the days to come. Hotel Van de Valk Avifauna was beautiful and had some nice exhibits and a good flight show with vultures. It didn't matter that it was in Dutch. The park was a place to wander and recover from the travel for most of us. A boat tour through the canals of the town provided a glimpse of the rich farmland and beauty of the Netherlands.

The reception social and dinner was like attending a reunion. We saw people we had not seen in a year or two or four. It mattered not as we knew we had the next week or so to catch up and experience new things together. Thursday brought us to Jan Harteman's school- Groenhorst College Barneveld. What a facility! The lecture hall was perfect for the talks given by Nick Tiberio on Livingston Ripley in Connecticut (site of the 2017 conference), Michele Goodman on avian vaccines, and a Skype session with Nancy Dian from Sylvan Heights. Her parents were in the lecture hall and even though it was 6 a.m in North Carolina it was great to see her and hear about her internship there. The college trains students in everything from pet store management to vet tech. Good research goes on and the school is thriving.

Friday was a travel day on the bus to Walsrode Germany and Weltvogelpark. It was a long ride through the countryside and some napped, some chatted, some soaked up the scenery, or all of the above at some point. It was a drizzly ride but once we got to the park the sun broke through and a glorious sunset and barbecue awaited us. The evening talk was by the hummingbird curator of the park and we learned about the aviary and captive breeding of these neat little birds. And thanks to the flashlight app on our phones, we made our bus drivers' curfew back to the hotel.

Saturday was spent wandering around the beautiful grounds of the huge park and enjoying all of the birds. From the shoe-billed stork, amazing ponds and aviaries with over 5,000 birds, to the flight show of raptors (it didn't matter that it was in German), macaws and crowned cranes set to music, it was a magical day. The auction was being set up and award presenters were rehearsing their presentations in preparation for the evening's banquet, auction and honoring of aviculturists and mentors of IWWA. President Arnold Schouten, Mike Lubbock and Frank Todd did the awarding (see Arnold's letter for the specifics). The auction was expertly handled by Maynard Axelson and Christopher Marler and kudos to the crew of Laurie Kristofferson, Morag Jones, Monica Olivera Hazelton, and Debbie Schouten for setting things up. Bidding was feisty to say the least. A Peter Scott tie went for \$400 Euro, and ten

calendars from the park contributed \$650 Euro, for a grand total of \$5,000 Euro raised to help the causes of the IWWA.

It was on to Verl, Germany to spend the day with Ludger and Eli Bremher and his family at Lundi Farm. I had been told by Gus Ben David, "Wait until you see Ludger's place. It's unbelievable". He was right. It is unbelievable. The grocery/produce/meat/cheese market is one thing, the aviaries, bird collection and expansive farmland is another. The combined acreage is amazing in its beauty and complexity. We marvel at how they manage it! Tours of all the aviaries took all morning but lunch for 35 of us - no problem. Fabulous fresh food and drink and fun.

We said our farewells to Ludger and the crew in the morning of Monday, October 3 and we resumed our positions on the bus for another travel day and it was off to Mons, Belgium. We were looking forward to seeing Pairi Daiza as it had been 6 years since some of us were there. It did not disappoint, as a glorious fall day gave us hours to meander around the most fabulous zoo I had ever been to. The panda exhibit was the most popular and had increased visitation to the zoo by thousands. It was field trip day for local schools and young children could be seen in their color coded vests soaking up the day. The massive and intricate exhibits are really awesome and I use that term accurately here. We all looked forward to the bird of prey flight and it was as great as we remembered. We ate dinner in the new brewery - good food and beverage and an exhausting yet exhilarating day came to a close -- as did the bar for some. *(continued next page)*

## 2016 AWARDS

### HALL OF FAME

Bill Makins

### RODNEY DAWSON AWARD

Gotz Kubler

### SOUTHWICK MEMORIAL AWARD

Pedro Melo

### CHUCK PILLING AWARD

Ludger Bremehr

### HANCOCK MEMORIAL AWARD

Brent Lubbock

Katie Gipple Lubbock

Dustin Foote

Ian Gereg

Our hosts in Belgium were Kris and Carine Carrein and from Mons we ventured to their town and then their exquisite home and the immense garden center Floralux - we are talking thousands of square feet that make IKEA and Walmart and every garden center in the U.S. look tiny. The Carrein home has gorgeous out buildings that house some of the finest avian artwork and unique skeletal exhibits of hundreds of birds. Landscaping and pond work is stunning and the comfort of the home is palpable. Their generosity is unmatched. We thank you and look forward to returning the warmth in the USA.

It was time to bid fare thee well to the UK crowd and others who would be returning home or continuing onto other adventures. Fifteen of us went to Brussels and boarded a plane to Lisbon for the post-convention experience in Portugal. The next day we met up with Pedro Melo and Beltran deCeballos at the winery in southern Portugal called LaCoalva. A fabulous

tour, a tasting, a lunch and a nap, in that order, and it was on to Pedro's farm and home. A warm place with all 3 species of pygmy geese on display (and lot of other birds) and a cork tree farm that was fascinating to learn about. Pedro was a gracious host and it was a lovely day.

Birding the countryside of south central Portugal was on the agenda for Saturday and that turned into a long bus ride and a strike out on seeing the endangered bustard. Too dry and hot where we ended up but the scenery was nice with vineyards, olive groves and unique trees. Our 2016 conference was winding down and recapping the 12 days of Europe was on our minds - It would be hard to pick a highlight. There were so many enjoyable experiences and the hospitality of our organizers and hosts along with the camaraderie of the group was outstanding. Loved it all. See you in New England in 2017 if not before.



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# from the **iwwa** president

Birds, birds, birds.....that was what we expected to see during our visit to Europe and that is exactly what we experienced. From the time we all arrived in Amsterdam until we departed from Belgium, we thoroughly enjoyed many excellent bird collections, delicious food and warm hospitality. I will leave all the fun and fine details to Anne, who has provided an overview of the conference in her well documented and entertaining account. Thank you to Peter for organizing this exceptional conference, and to our numerous hosts, especially Jan and his associates and students at Groenhorst Barneveld, Kris, Carine, Sten, Frele, and Frie, and Ludger, Eli, Lorenz and Alexander, you made us all feel so welcome and we thank you for letting us enjoy your special passions and successes.

As always during our conference we held our annual auction. Thanks to a very spirited auction and our very generous group of donors and bidders, we raised about \$5,700.00! The proceeds will go toward internships, grants, website upgrades and additional Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshops. Many thanks as well to the auctioneers, organizers and bookkeepers.

During the conference, we presented our annual awards. Pedro's award was presented to him during the post conference visit to his home in Portugal. Brent, Katie and Dustin were not able to attend our conference in Europe, but fortunately Debbie and I were able to attend the Sylvan Heights Bird Park 10th Anniversary Celebration. I was able to present their awards that evening in front of a large crowd of supporters. Also during the Celebration, I was thrilled to personally congratulate Mike, Ali and all of the people who have been so instrumental in developing Sylvan Heights Bird Park to what it is today. Ten years of dedication and hard work has continued to improve and grow this outstanding facility. Best wishes to your future plans for your growth and continued success.

Our Board has made several changes to its Directors and Officers. John Nucitelli recently retired from the Board after 23 years of service. He has been our Treasurer for 14 years, as well as our conference organizer and strong advocate for IWWA. Thank you John for all that you have done and we hope to see you and Diane at future conferences. Morag Jones has stepped down as Secretary but she will remain very active on several of our committees. Morag has done a great job preparing and posting our Board minutes. Thank you Morag and we look forward to your creative and enthusiastic contributions to the committee projects. Anne Lemenager has joined the Board in the Secretary role; Nick Tiberio and Clayton Botkin have joined as Directors. Thank you all for your participation and I look forward to working with you.

In the coming year we will be updating and redesigning the IWWA website. Among the improvements, we will be adding a History of Achievement section which will include past conferences, grants and projects and award recipients. Additionally, we will be adding an online membership payment option along with renewal notices. Please watch for our improvements and let me know if you have any suggestions or questions about the website.

IWWA has been very committed to its goals of providing internships and grants for the protection of birds both in the wild and in captivity and to continue to offer Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshops. This can only be accomplished by the support of our members. We have a large group of Life Members that became members many years ago. In the past we were able to put that Life Membership money into an interest bearing account and fund a good portion of our goals using only the interest income. Unfortunately in the last few years we have not been able to generate any interest income and have been cutting into the principal balance. As a Life Member or Annual Member we hope that you will consider donating to support our purposes and objectives. We truly appreciate any help that you can provide.

In October of 2017, we will be holding our conference in the Northeast, mostly in Connecticut and New York. We will be organizing the dates and itinerary in the coming weeks. Please watch for the details and consider attending.

*Arnold Schouten*  
**President**

International Wild Waterfowl Association



Debbie and Arnold Schouten with Don and Ann Butler

# green-winged teal by MORAG JONES

The smallest of our North American dabblers weighs in at less than 7 ounces. Large groups of teal will congregate, especially outside the breeding season. With swift and agile flight, they are a popular sporting game bird. At present, their numbers are stable, around the 3 million mark. Their preferred habitat is bog and permanent marsh or small water bodies in wooded areas. Grassy margins and herbaceous vegetation give cover and places for the ducks to nest. Typically, Green-winged Teal (*Anas carolinensis*) prefer to feed in shallow water an inch or two in depth, though they are adept at picking food off the surface or up-ending in shallow water. At a mere 14.5 inches in length, their reach is limited.

Despite their diminutive size, these ducks frequently lay more than a dozen eggs. Incubation is 21 to 23 days and the ducklings grow quickly on a diet of small molluscs, insect larvae and some plant matter. In adulthood, their diet is more vegetarian but they are true omnivores.

You will find them across the north of the continent in spring and summer, moving to the southern states for the winter period.

The drake's head is bright tan and iridescent green, their backs are typically duck brownish-gray. A patch of metallic green on the secondary wing feathers is known as the speculum and gives the bird its name. A vertical white stripe separates the gray flank and breast feathers. This white stripe is absent in the adult Eurasian Teal, which by contrast have a horizontal white stripe above the flanks. Underneath the tail is a bright yellowish buff patch surrounded by black. When a North American bird is spotted in a European group, it causes great excitement amongst birdwatchers.

Very closely related are the Cinnamon Teal and Blue-winged Teal. Similar in distribution to the Green-winged and just a little larger, the Blue-winged Teal sports a slate-blue head with a distinctive white crescent between beak and eye. At a distance his flank and breast are brown. But look closely! They have the most beautiful spotted feathers. In flight, the upper part of the inner wing, or coverts, are a powder blue in both sexes. This blue can also be seen in the Cinnamon Teal. With glossy russet plumage and bold red eye, Cinnamon are confined to the south-western states and Mexico.

All our attention here has been on the boys. Telling the females apart is a real challenge. All three species are very similar. You are most likely to come across one at a time, so it may not be much help to know that the under-tail coverts of the Green-winged Teal tend to be paler and the Blue-winged female has a white eye-ring. In the summer months after the females start to incubate, drakes will moult into an alternate or 'eclipse' plumage. This is typically cryptic and they all become little brown ducks.

With their similar plumages, the Eurasian and American Green-winged Teal were once considered as well-differentiated forms of the same species – *Anas crecca*. However, the modern use of DNA analysis has proved that they are two species, dividing at the Bering Sea.

So next time you come across a wild flock of teal in winter plumage, scan the drakes carefully to see the white stripe. Either vertical or horizontal, they are all delightful to watch.



A North American Green-winged Teal drake showing off the characteristic vertical white stripe on the flank.



photo by Toni Abernathy

# soaring into science

by LEE PEOPLES

Interpretive Naturalist & Program Director, Sylvan Heights Bird Park



photo by Toni Abernathy



Sylvan Heights is known for our mission of conservation education and unique interactive learning opportunities. We accomplish this through a variety of educational programs designed for Grades K–12, university, and lifelong learning students. Using our education birds, resources, and Sylvan Heights’ wetlands, we provide experiential learning focusing on waterfowl, diverse wetland habitats and the sustainability of limited natural resources.

As you may have read in a past newsletter, Sylvan Heights received a Student Science Enrichment Program (SSEP) grant from Burroughs-Wellcome Fund to develop and host a three-year STEM program, called Soaring into Science. Our aim is to serve 150 rising 9th graders through a collaborative partnership between Sylvan Heights Bird Park and regional charter school, KIPP: Gaston College Preparatory (KIPP: GCP). This is the first time Burroughs-Wellcome Fund has awarded a grant of this type to any organization in Halifax County. Soaring into Science engages students in an intensive two-week summer session, as well as autumn and spring Saturday academies. This program has provided the templates and resources to develop STEM hands-on activities concentrating on nature

journaling, captive and wild bird populations, wetland soil science, endangered species and habitat biodiversity.

We conceived Soaring into Science as a learning bridge program to help with the often difficult transition between middle and high school. We kicked off our inaugural class this summer with 29 students. These participants actively engaged in science pursuits through field work and hands-on studies of wetland habitats and dependent species. The students also conducted their own research -- making observations, developing hypotheses, constructing experiments and collecting data. During the last day of the summer session, students presented their findings and proposed further questions for study before an audience of their instructors, peers, and parents. Through all of this and a lot of hard work, students furthered their understanding of science and math and strengthened their observational and critical thinking skills, while developing self esteem and confidence.

Soaring into Science also includes meetings with onsite and guest scientists. Students benefitted from the insight and expertise of our breeding center staff, park staff, and

of course, our founder and lead aviculturist, Mike Lubbock. Guest scientists from the NC Museum of Natural Sciences, The Nature Conservancy and North Carolina Wesleyan College also worked with program participants. One of our program mentors was Liani Yirka, who serves as research scientist, environmental educator and accessibility & inclusion specialist at NC Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, NC. When reflecting on the program, she shared, “I have a drive and a passion for reaching our youth with science and conservation messages- you have allowed me to do that and welcomed me back and it [the Soaring into Science Program] has been the highlight of my programming this year. The KIPP students are engaged and energetic, they are challenging and motivating and really invigorating.... Both times I have visited Sylvan Heights I have left feeling restored in my educational goals, in my programming, and in my personal mission.”

Another highlight truly embraces the power of immersion in nature to transform one’s perspective of the outdoors. During the program, we were able to take 22 students in kayaks out on White’s Mill Pond. This beautiful mill-pond contains old stands of cypress and tupelo gum trees,

draped in Spanish moss, and provides important habitat for wintering waterfowl and numerous neo-tropical migratory birds. The experience was transforming for many of the youth who expressed their awe of the time on the water. Everything they had learned, experienced and seen so far, revealed new levels of wonder in each student. And kayaking helped bring all of the programming together, as each child connected to nature on their own, floating through natural areas, listening to the sounds of birds, and paddles in the water.

The Soaring into Science Program is and continues to be an amazing opportunity to equip students with science and math skills necessary for academic success, and to inspire in students, a deep appreciation of science and the natural world we share. Additionally, these students are learning and embracing the significance of their roles as environmental stewards and as scientifically literate citizens. It is only through continued member support that Sylvan Heights is able to perpetuate its experiential learning environment, natural resources, diverse bird collection, and maintain our highly qualified staff. We thank you.



**JAN HARTEMAN**

Educator at Groenhorst Barneveld  
The Netherlands

# avian alumni

## Where are our interns now?

My name is Jan Harteman, 32 years old, living in the small town of Buren, the Netherlands. Since childhood, I have kept ducks, which were at my parents' home in the first stage. Because of my enthusiasm in the early years, my parents gave me a great present at my 12th birthday: a membership to the Aviornis International magazine. Aviornis, a European equivalent of the American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society, publishes avicultural articles in its magazine and was my first opportunity to get in contact with many more bird addicts. One of them was Peter Kooy, who invited me to visit his waterfowl breeding farm in the North of Holland in the late 1990's. I was astonished by the number of ducks, geese and swans at the Kooy's farm. Never before had I seen real harlequins, pygmy geese and steamer ducks – to name a few. I knew them only from the pictures.

Since the very beginning of keeping ducks, I have loved to share my passion for these animals. Therefore, I launched a website in 1998, named Harteman Wildfowl. It was one of the first websites on waterfowl including all taxa of the world's Anseriformes. And it was my way to express myself and get in contact with many more aviculturists from around the world. It really expanded my worldview.

A few years later, I was able to keep some more ducks and geese in my aunt's garden. In 2003 my dad and I built a bigger aviary at my aunt's place, only a few streets from our home. One of the first geese I obtained were Hawaiian geese, not only because of their beauty, but also because of the successful story of conservation through avicultural efforts.

It was in the early 2000's when I first heard of Sylvan Heights. Not a bird park at the time, but a waterfowl breeding farm. It was Peter Kooy who introduced me to both Sylvan Heights and the International Wild Waterfowl Association. During my education at Groenhorst Barneveld vocational college (2003-2005) I was able to participate the Sylvan Heights Avian Husbandry & Management Program, as part of the Lis Glassco Hudson Memorial Internship, conducted in Scotland Neck. It was a wonderful time where I learned a lot about captive breeding management and imprinting birds for educational purpose. I enjoyed the many stories of avicultural history and conservation from Mike, Ali and other great people like Frank Todd and Walter Sturgeon. It truly was an immense experience. It made me think about my own future; what would be my role in aviculture and avian conservation?

To amplify my thoughts and mission I became board member of Aviornis International Netherlands in 2006. I have been responsible for maintaining the Aviornis website, designing promotionals and being the contact to zoological societies and educational institutions. Being interested in education, I applied for a job at Groenhorst Barneveld, the same college I studied at one year earlier. And I got the job! From 2006 until 2012, I was a teacher of animal husbandry, specializing in aviculture and responsible for managing the avian collection. In 2012 and 2013 I gained experience as head bird keeping at Vogelpark Avifauna, bird park in Alphen aan den Rijn, the Netherlands. I left Vogelpark Avifauna in 2013 and returned to teaching at Groenhorst Barneveld again in 2014 – I just missed teaching too much!

Since October 2014, I have been a member of the board of directors of the International Wild Waterfowl Association. In February 2016, I was able to attend the Future of Waterfowl Conservation Workshop at Sylvan Heights and gave a speech about our agricultural and avian education at Groenhorst.

It might have been this speech which convinced the other board members to organize the 2016 IWWA conference in the Netherlands. And so we did, including a visit to our college at the 29th of September. I felt honored by the visit, flattered by the compliments and inspired by the advice. And 11 years after my internship in Scotland Neck, one of my own pupils had the opportunity to do her internship at Sylvan Heights. It makes me happy to have a little influence in the Sylvan Heights Avian Husbandry & Management Program from the other side of the Atlantic. The circle is round again!

But I'm not done yet and I have a lot of things to dream about. My focus is currently on keeping endangered birds: Laysan teal, Madagascar teal, Baer's pochards and white-winged wood ducks. In the near future my family and I have plans to move to a bigger property, with just more possibilities... how it will end up? I'm not sure yet, but I feel breeding waterfowl will always stay a part of my life and a subject of my teaching. And I'm glad the Sylvan Heights family and IWWA family have had a great influence on it!

## Netherlands Training Partnership

Sylvan Heights Bird Park has been recognized as an official training partner with Groenhorst Barneveld school, a vocational college in the Netherlands that focuses on preparing its students for careers in animal husbandry.

The announcement was made in the Netherlands at the 2016 International Wild Waterfowl Association conference. Groenhorst Barneveld student Nancy Dian, a participant in

the Sylvan Heights Avian Husbandry Program, joined the conference from North Carolina via Skype to surprise Mike and Ali Lubbock with the news. Nancy is the first Groenhorst Barneveld student to study at Sylvan Heights under the new partnership.

Groenhorst Barneveld and Sylvan Heights share similar goals: to teach and encourage the next generation of aviculturists, zoo professionals, biologists, and conservationists. We look forward to this new partnership!



SYLVAN HEIGHTS BIRD PARK CELEBRATES

2006



2016



*thank you*  
for our first ten years!

We couldn't have made it this far without our members, donors, volunteers and supporters.



On October 15, 2016, Sylvan Heights Bird Park celebrated its 10th Anniversary. Thanks to the generosity of event guests and sponsors, the celebration raised more than

**\$50,000**

in support of the park's education and conservation efforts.



# park events

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



## 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!



## Oyster Roast

January 28, 2016 | 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

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



## Pig in the Park

March 18, 2017 | 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Local cooks compete to be pig cook-off champion! Sample them all and vote for your favorite, plus games, live entertainment, and birds.



## Eggstravaganza!

April 8, 2017 | 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

It's all about eggs! Stories, crafts, and an egg hunt in the park.



## Duckling Day

May 6, 2017 | 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

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



## Birds & Brews

June 24, 2017 | 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Sample local craft beers, plus live entertainment, food, and birds!



# introducing our next project.

"The Pavilion" will be a large outdoor classroom and multi-use event space.

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

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

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

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

## thank you to our donors

Sylvan Heights Bird Park gratefully acknowledges our donors of \$500 or more since April 1, 2016 through September 30, 2016.

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## 10th Anniversary Sponsors

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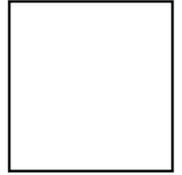
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 I pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for Sylvan Heights Bird Park. Bill me  One time.  Quarterly for one year, beginning \_\_\_\_\_  
 Or, my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is included. Or, charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my  Visa  Master Card  Amex  Discover  
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(Please send to Sylvan Heights Bird Park • PO Box 368 • Scotland Neck, NC 27874) **Thank you!**



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



## membership **matters!**

Your support gives students, aviculturists, and future conservationists an opportunity to learn about waterfowl and wetlands.

Thank you.

A blonde (or leucistic) Mandarin duck  
at Sylvan Heights Bird Park.