

Obituaries

Sandra L. Sherman (1948-2003)

The Delaware Valley Ornithological Club lost its first woman President and one of its most dedicated members when Sandra L. Sherman of Glenolden, Pennsylvania passed away on June 10, 2003. Sandy died unexpectedly of a sudden illness. She was only 54.

A life-long resident of Delaware County, Pennsylvania, Sandy graduated from Upper Darby High School and Temple University. She then began a long association with the weekly *Jewish Exponent* in Philadelphia. There she served as an increasingly accomplished copy editor for 28 years, perfecting the editorial abilities that she would put to use so well in the birding world.

Although shown the birds as she grew up, Sandy had only dabbled with watching them at bird feeders. Then, in the early 1980's, she really caught the bug and began rising before dawn for owls on Christmas Counts.

One of the first women to join DVOC in 1983, Sandy became a regular participant and activist at Club meetings. She served on Council, was made a Fellow, became a life member, and then took over and converted the Club's *Larus* into the outstanding newsletter it is today. After serving as the Club's President in 1996-1997, she redoubled her contributions, assuming the job of editor of *Cassina* from 1998 until her death.

Sandy, who never married, was active with a host of bird-related projects, not only at DVOC but throughout the Delaware Valley. Sandy loved the people she met in birding as much as the birds. Dozens of birders became like an extended family to her. She became extremely active at Cape May Bird Observatory (CMBO). For many years she volunteered as a field trip leader during New Jersey Audubon spring and fall Cape May weekends, plus helped as a field trip leader at other times of year in her volunteer capacity as a CMBO Naturalist. Sandy edited CMBO's annual journal, the *Peregrine Observer*, as well as some of Director Pete Dunne's letters to CMBO members. She looked forward to

and participated in the Cape May Christmas Counts for many years.

CMBO held a special Memorial Celebration of Sandy's life for friends and relatives at the CMBO Center for Research and Education in Goshen on June 29, 2003. Many generous donations have been made to CMBO in Sandy's memory. The New Jersey Audubon Society and CMBO have established an endowment in Sandy's name, with the donations funding an annual internship for young naturalists.

Sandy loved all birds, but raptors and shorebirds were her favorites. She journeyed to Eilat in Israel to watch the famous spring raptor migration there, and she initiated and led DVOC's annual July field trip for Delaware shorebirds. She did the World Series of Birding five times and over the years visited Trinidad & Tobago and Mexico as well as numerous North American hot spots. When the American Birding Association held a Regional Conference in Delaware in the 1990's, Sandy was there as a field guide leader showing the visitors the Delaware shorebirds and White-winged Tern.

After her departure from the *Exponent*, Sandy turned to the Birds of North America (BNA) Project at the Academy of Natural Sciences. She served there for three years editing the species accounts. As her reputation spread, both the Houghton Mifflin Company and Princeton University Press called, and she became the copy editor for Roger Tory Peterson's *Field Guide to Eastern Birds, 3d Edition*, as well as for several other publications by those well-known publishing houses. She also did copy editing for *Bird Watchers' Digest*, and was a Contributing Editor there.

In *Cassina* itself, Sandy researched and authored the fascinating article called "Tracking Stone's Tome" (*Cassina* 1998-1999: 51). This article, drawing together in masterly fashion what occurred to the original copies of Witmer Stone's classic *Bird Studies at Old Cape May*, is virtually a "Who's Who" of DVOC oral history. For these efforts, Sandy received the Club's Witmer Stone Award in 2001.

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Starting in 1998, Sandy took on yet another project, co-founding the Birding Club of Delaware County (BCDC). She served BCDC as its Program Chair from 1998 until her death. For its 5th Anniversary Dinner last April, Sandy thrilled everyone by securing David Sibley's agreement to be the event's keynote speaker. She introduced David to the crowd that dinner.

Sandy always brought a lively enthusiasm to her birding, and she loved to share it with others. She channeled this into excellent field skills. On the 2001 Glenolden Christmas Count, she found the only Blue-headed Vireo in that venerable count's 75-year history,

and then spotted a Lark Sparrow the next day on the Cape May Christmas Count. In recent years, she came to have the same enthusiasm tracking dragonflies, butterflies, and orchids. Club member Tom Reeves, describing her at Tyler Arboretum long ago, simply said "Sandy's eyes were dancing" as she picked out the birds along the trails.

Sandy, we'll miss you big-time, kiddo.

Sandy is survived by her father Irving Sherman and step-mother Nan of Delaware County, and by her brother Jeff, of Chester County, Pennsylvania.

Christopher Walters

