

Obituaries

John R. (Bob) Billings

1927–2009

On August 18th, 2009, DVOC member and life-long Philadelphian Bob Billings passed away at the age of 82. In the birding world, Bob was probably best known for being the compiler of the Pennypack Valley Christmas Bird Count, a position he held from 1980 to 1995. His interest in birding dated back to 1951, when he caddied on a golf course adjacent to Tookany Creek Park. He soon obtained a field guide and a pair of binoculars, and he joined the Pennypack Bird Club in the late 1950's. With that club, he went on many local bird trips, but one in particular to the coast of New Jersey really ignited a spark in him.

He joined DVOC in 1965. Many DVOC trips were to follow, to places like Texas, Illinois, California, Arizona, and New England. In 1974 he went with DVOC members Robert H. Sehl, Gene Stern, Alfred Kronschnabel, and Phillips B. Street to Alaska. They used "Rocky's" C-47 bush plane to hop from location to location, including Nome, Fairbanks, and St. Lawrence Island, and even the Yukon.

Bob was a lab technician at Rohm & Haas for 35 years. His wife Elizabeth (Liz) was originally from British Columbia. Bob met her when she stayed at his house for two weeks in the spring of 1955. He showed her around town, and by August they were married.

In 1968, he and Liz and their seven-year-old daughter Karen drove round-trip from Philadelphia to her family's home in British Columbia, birding along the way.

He was an avid lister and kept checklists and detailed notes for his many birding trips. After his passing, DVOC Treasurer Bert Filemyr received a note from Liz and a check for \$2,000. There was a section in Bob's will where he specifically donated that amount to the club in order "to distribute the annual sum of \$200.00 to the individual, to be determined and selected at the sole discretion of the Society, who has recorded and identified the largest number of birds during each prior calendar year".

A committee was formed, and the money is being distributed according to Bob's and Liz's wishes.

Bob had many interests, including chess, European and American history, and classical and jazz music. Photographing birds was something he really enjoyed. In addition to his wife and daughter, he is survived by a granddaughter, Alexandra.

Frank Windfelder

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John Danzenbaker

1919-2008

John Danzenbaker passed away on July 14, 2008 after a short battle with pancreatic cancer. He was born in West Philadelphia in 1919 but spent most of his formative years in Havertown, PA. After attending Bucknell University for a few years, John left to do some game farming in Broad Axe and then went on to work as a factory clerk in Ambler until he was drafted into the Army in 1942.

John attended Officer Candidate School and, upon completion, was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant. He served on various assignments stateside and was deployed to the United Kingdom where he was ultimately assigned to a base in Scotland. John trained as an Infantry machine gun platoon leader, joined the 9th Infantry Division, and subsequently participated in the Normandy invasion at Utah Beach. He was

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wounded twice and returned to the States for treatment and recovery. John was awarded two Purple Hearts in recognition of his valiant war time service.

John remained in the Army until 1964. He had many assignments and served abroad in Japan, Korea, France, and Tehran. Luck was with him when he went to Orleans, France in 1955. He met his wife Sylvie there, and they married in England in 1957. John retired from the Army in 1964 and went to work for the FAA in a civilian capacity.

John's interest in birds began in 1929 when he noticed a small streaky bird in his back yard. He had no bird books or field guides, but his grandfather did have a pair of field glasses. Somehow they managed to figure out that the small streaky bird was a Song Sparrow. I guess the rest, as they say, is history. John and a favorite cousin quickly became great birding friends and when John's Uncle Norman, a New Jersey state trooper, learned of John's interest in birds, he took the family to Forsythe (Brigantine) NWR which was the beginning of John's long association with the Refuge.

From his earliest birding experiences, John developed a lifelong love of nature and birds. Although he got away from birding when he went into the Army, he began pursuing his avocation seriously when he went to work for the FAA. There John met Jim Akers who became his great birding friend. Together they birded the airfield during their lunch breaks and visited Forsythe NWR along with other New Jersey hot spots.

Jim Akers introduced John to Jim Meritt and to the DVOC. Both John and Jim Akers joined the DVOC in 1973, and after Jim Akers died, John became close friends with Jim Meritt. They continued to bird together for 35 years until John's death.

John was a tireless advocate of local conservation efforts. He participated in and compiled the Oceanville Christmas Bird Count for 30 years. He also did regular shorebird and water bird counts at Forsythe NWR as part of a continuing effort to monitor abundance

and population trends. He was a regular sight on the dikes at Forsythe with his spotting scope mounted on the car window. John was an exceptional birder and a regular presence at Cape May. He was among the first members of the Cape May Bird Observatory.

John's legacy lives on in his wife Sylvia and their sons, Mike and Jim. He introduced the boys to bird watching at an early age and instilled in them a great love and respect for the natural world. As a result, both Mike and Jim are avid and excellent birders and life members of the DVOC.

John's birding travels started with an overnight trip to Illinois for Greater Prairie Chicken. Forty years later, he'd traveled to 70 countries and achieved a world list of 7,535 species. John's list ranked among the top three in the world. His wife Sylvie often traveled with him and documented their trips in photographs.

I can't remember exactly where I first met John. I'd be willing to bet, though, that it was either on the dikes at "Brig" or somewhere at Cape May. In any case, my husband Bill and I became friendly with him and his family, and we enjoyed many hours of birding with them. We hit the New Jersey hotspots and went further afield on trips to Costa Rica, Venezuela and Kenya. We often visited them at their Linwood home and enjoyed wonderful dinners where, in season, Jersey Silver Queen corn was always on the menu. John was surely intense and passionate when it came to birds, but he was, without a doubt, one of the most affable and gracious men I've ever had the pleasure to meet. He is missed.

On May 9, 2009, the East Pool at Forsythe NWR was dedicated and renamed for John in his memory and as recognition of his long years of service to the Refuge and its programs.

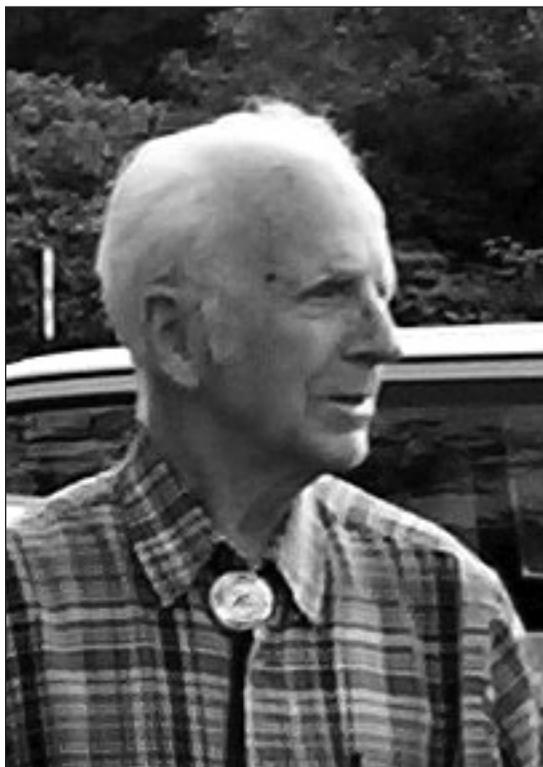
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Dr. George B. Reynard

1914-2008

With the passing of Dr. George B. Reynard on March 9, 2008, the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club lost one of its most soft-spoken, yet distinguished members. He passed at 94 and had been a strong supporter of the club for over 50 years.

Reynard is internationally renowned as a recorder of the sounds of birds from the Caribbean. This life-time hobby and passion stemmed from a DVOC program he attended shortly after he found out about the club. Dr. Peter Paul Kellogg, co-founder of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, was the speaker, and he brought with him some of the tapes of bird songs he had made during his years in the field. Reynard was hooked, and soon he was lugging his own 18 pound recorder along with him on bird walks. Reynard taped over 850 positively identified species of birds – plus several dozen "mysteries" – since the 1950s. Many of



Dr. George B. Reynard

these recordings are now part of Cornell's Laboratory of Natural Sounds.

After joining DVOC in 1949, Reynard was elected secretary, vice-president, and president, serving in the latter post in 1966-67. He twice won the club's Witmer Stone Award for articles he wrote: one on North American Rail calls and another on the Greater Antillean Pewee. The club elevated Reynard to honorary membership in 1976 and conferred on him its rare DEVOC award during the club's 1990 centennial year.

Reynard had the great good fortune of spending his working life as a botanist for Campbell Soup Company which required regular trips to the Caribbean. His employer's need for quality sources of economical tomato crops meant Reynard often had to be in the Caribbean in search of them. These trips opened the door and enabled Reynard to make major contributions to the ornithology of the Caribbean. His greatest contribution was his documenting of the bird songs of the Greater Antillean islands. Working with local experts and local helpers trained in the use of recording equipment, Reynard succeeded brilliantly.

From tapes Reynard carefully edited and then donated, Cornell's Laboratory of Ornithology was able to produce bird-song cassettes and CDs for the four major Greater Antilles islands: Caribbean Bird Songs in Puerto Rico (1969 with P. P. Kellogg); Bird Songs in Cuba (1988 with Orlando Garrido); Bird Songs in the Dominican Republic (2000); and Bird Songs in Jamaica (2000 with Robert Sutton).

Reynard's contributions to Caribbean ornithology further included: his rediscovery in 1961 of the Puerto Rican Whip-poor-will, a species believed extinct since 1888; the first breeding record of Black Rail in Panama on July 6, 1963; his recording of the rare La Selle Thrush in the mountains of Haiti in July 1961; and the discovery in Cuba in 1986 (with Les Short of NY's American Museum of Natural History) of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers within 2.5 miles

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of Ojita de Agua, a lumber camp 500 miles east of Havana (one male and possibly two females were spotted eight times).

Reynard was a full participant in DVOC activities. A frequent speaker at meetings, he often shared his bird recordings during club meetings. He contributed a number of articles to *Cassinia*, while contributing to other ornithological journals as well: *The Auk* ("Some Vocalizations of the Black, Yellow, and Virginia Rails" Vol. 91, No. 4 - 1976); and *The Wilson Bulletin* ("Taxonomic Revision of the Greater Antillean Pewee" in June 1993).

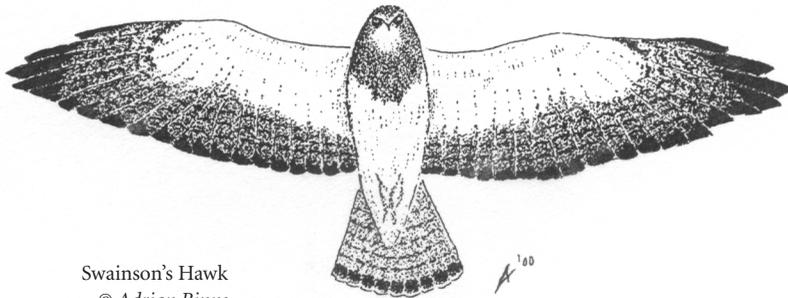
Perhaps the most important contribution that Reynard gave solely to DVOC was his three-volume "Voices of Birds and Birders," a set of audio cassettes issued during the club's 1990 centennial year. These cassettes contain the voices of over 100 club members speaking during club meetings, as well as the voices of

several special guests. Also included are over 150 bird songs and calls recorded by Reynard from all over the world.

Reynard was not only one of DVOC's most distinguished and active ornithologists, but happily for the club, he was a pleasant and humble personality as well. His laid-back style, wry sense of humor, trademark bowtie, and legendary accomplishments will forever be missed at future club meetings.

George Reynard was survived by his wife Katherine of Riverton, NJ; a son Kenneth of Denver, CO; two daughters, Nancy Winterrowd of Yardley, PA, and Elizabeth Reynard of Philadelphia PA; and four grand-children.

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Swainson's Hawk
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