

# Birding in Bucks - Blog

Hello,

Welcome to Birding in Bucks blog – the official blog post by the Bucks County Birders club. First of all, I'd like to thank Churchville Nature Center for hosting our blog. When I spoke to Mary and Bill, they immediately loved the idea of a birding blog in their website and they got all the approvals necessary to host us. So, thank you Churchville Nature Center, Mary Penney and Bill Woodroffe for providing a space to share our interest with Bucks nature lovers.

If you are wondering who we are, we are the crazy bunch of people with binoculars, walking in the parks and the woods in search of birds, even if there is a -15F winter weather warning. If you call us bird-freaks, you are not wrong.

'Bucks County Birders' is a casual bird club in Bucks County, promoting and supporting everything that's about birds – the pleasure of birding or simple appreciation for birds and their habitat. We are interested in bird conservation, bird ecology, bird research and lately, 'inclusive birding'. The club is a loose collection of bird enthusiasts in Bucks County and vicinity with varying levels of birding experience. Some members have more than 50 years of experience in birding; some of us have just started birding after the pandemic. Quite a few of us won't sip their morning coffee without seeing a bird every day; others go out occasionally seeking the rarities. Believe me, there are 80-year-olds in our club and we also have members are under 10! But one thing that brings us all together – our love for birds!

## **About history of the club:**

The Bucks County Birders club was started mostly due to the persistence and encouragement of Alan Brady, a founding member and a driving force behind the club at that time. Ron French served as the first President. Barbara McGlaughlin was the Vice President. Judy Mirabella and George Hoffman served as first Secretary and first Treasurer respectively. It all started when Alan and others sat around the table and discuss birding after the Saturday Bird Walk in Peace Valley Nature Center. Since then, the club had great programs – the bird talk, the Saturday walks, local birding field trips, etc. The club also ran a newsletter 'Kingfisher' for several years for paid members which had been a great source of birding knowledge in the area. The club's purpose according to Judy Mirabella (first club secretary), "is to enhance and encourage the young birder's experiences and knowledge, to welcome all members no matter at what level of experience they are, and to share the appreciation of birds while having fun doing so." We are committed to that purpose over 18 years since the inception.

## **What do we do now?**

Last Tuesday of every month, we held bird talks in Peace Valley Nature Center (PVNC) until the COVID lock-down in March 2020. Now we moved to online format and continue providing quality bird-talks through a Zoom call partnering with Bucks County Audubon Society. We have a subscription-based

email group (BucksCoBirders@googlegroups.com), where members can get email alerts for any rare bird sighting in the area and regular club news. We have 450 (!) subscribed members in our email list. We also have a club Facebook page dedicated to club member musings, chats or picture sharing. Thanks to Susan Harrison, now we also have a GroupMe page for getting real-time rare bird alerts from the turbo-charged-birders on the run.

Another mission we took upon ourselves since March 2020, is to create a partnership with the like-minded organizations such as Bucks Audubon, Peace Valley Nature Center (PVNC), Churchville Nature Center (CNC) and Silver Lake Nature Center (SLNC). I like to visualize the partnership as a 'Birding Guild'. The partners list does not end here. We want to join hands with anyone who shares the same interest as ours – helping our feathered friends while enjoy watching them.

- PVNC served as a birthplace for the club and we will continue to use the facility for bird-talks once we resume in-person sessions. We are and always will be thankful to PVNC.
- Bucks Audubon is providing us Zoom platform to conduct bird talks virtually. The partnership continues to grow by the day.
- This blog page and the Saturday bird walks at Churchville are the testimony of a strong partnership with Churchville Nature Center.
- We have a few more partnership projects in the baking. We will write about them when they come out of the oven.

If you are interested in joining our club, please email us at [Bucksbirders@gmail.com](mailto:Bucksbirders@gmail.com).

### **About this blog:**

One fine morning, one of the founding members of the club August Mirabella shared us the copies of the club newsletter 'Kingfisher' to archive in the group site. After reading through the old newsletters, we longed to resurrect the newsletter but worried about sustaining it on a quarterly basis logistically and financially. So, we redirected our enthusiasm to writing a blog that fits our style and comfort - welcome to our first issue of 'Birding in Bucks Blog'. If you have a better name suggestion, please email us with your suggestion.

Here, we'll write mostly about birding, with an emphasis on Bucks County and its vicinity. We'll share some great reads, articles and experiences and we hope you'll be inspired by the stories we share.

### **About Us – BCB Office Bearers:**

In March 2020, I volunteered to 'just' handle the bird talks, when Richard and Vicky Smith decided to retire from the leadership position after leading the club for nearly 6 years. At that time, I didn't know that I was volunteering to be the president of this club. But I'm enjoying the ride so far and inspired to serve the club as President. In terms of birding, I'm a late bloomer, started birding in my 40s. My life list (total no. of birds seen to date) has just crossed 300 before the new year, just to give you a perspective! Churchville walks shaped my birding and my appreciation for the local birding scene. I learned so much from the wonderfully encouraging and knowledgeable Churchville birders. Without them, I would've been lost in the woods. Literally.

Our Vice President is Judy Foulke. A lifetime casual birdwatcher, she and husband Ken were channel surfing when they discovered "The Big Year" and birders. Life lists? Who knew? They began actively seeking birds and traveled from Maine to Florida to Texas to California to Canada and Alaska. They dreamed of breaking 500 on their life list in 2020 until COVID dashed their plans and re-introduced them to the joys of backyard birding. For the past two years, Judy has sought out speakers who graciously join us to share their knowledge and broaden our horizons.

Barbara Stollsteimer is our Secretary and Treasurer. Barbara grew up being exposed to the birds and nature in general but it wasn't until 2011 when the family watched "The Big Year" that things took off. Her son Phil (11) was hooked by the movie and asked to do a "Big Christmas Break". The rest is history. The Churchville birders took Phil under their wings and got his mother as part of the bargain. Barbara has the toughest job of handling memberships and club finance. She recently helped us to move from Yahoo to Google Groups.

Ok. That's who we are and what we do.

Roger Tory Peterson said birding is whatever you want it to be. If you watch birds while sitting an armchair, hiking up a mountain pass, strolling through a park, heading offshore by boat or canoe, or anything in between, please check out our Facebook page, join our club, and enjoy/explore birding with us. Stop by on a Saturday morning 8am (7am starting with DST) at Churchville Nature Center's parking lot. You'll know us by the binoculars hanging from our necks, the scopes balanced on our shoulders and the welcoming smiles.

Happy Birding,

Vinobha Pannerselvam

President, Bucks County Birders.

#### **Vice President's Note – Our March Virtual Bird Talk**

Each year, we look forward to March and the start of the migration season. Birds aren't the only migrators; whales, bats and butterflies are on the move. On March 23, Mark Garland will tell us about the Monarch butterflies we look forward to seeing each spring. Mark is the author of *Watching Nature: A Mid-Atlantic Natural History*, and he writes the Birders Question Mark column for *Bird Watcher's Digest*. He has served with the National Park Service, the Cape May Bird Observatory and directs the Cape May Monarch Monitoring Project. We hope you'll join us.

For more details, please contact us via [Bucksbirders@gmail.com](mailto:Bucksbirders@gmail.com).

- Judy Foulke, Vice President, BCB

**Treasurer Report:**

While 2020 had its challenges, I am happy to report that the club is on solid financial ground. We currently have 95 members and 15 of those are new. We need 92 and ½ members at the single rate of \$20 (couples get a \$5 discount) to meet our expenses in a regular year. The basic cost of running the club in a normal year is \$1850. That would include 11 speakers and a donation to Peace Valley for the use of their room. The expense for speakers has been less with the Zoom format so our account never got dangerously low as it did at the end of 2019. Our balance is in the safe zone for the year ahead at little over \$3000.

**Secretary's Note:**

We have introduced PayPal as a method of paying dues and that has worked very well. For those of you considering the use of this format, our account can be found by searching our email, [bucksbirders@gmail.com](mailto:bucksbirders@gmail.com) . You will see the familiar Kitson sketch of the Chickadee. Consider making the payment as if you are paying a friend, that way there are no fees involved. If you would like to mail me a check, I would always accept that.

Our Google group for emails has completely replaced Yahoo, not without some hiccups but you can now reach 450 birders with a single email.

I have been so impressed with the positive feedback from the birders in the county. I think we all have had a reminder of how important the birds and nature in general, is to our wellbeing.

- Barbara Stollsteimer, Secretary & Treasurer, BCB