

DELAWARE BIRD-A-THON



P.O. Box 4247, Greenville, DE 19807 • DelawareBirdAThon.com

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Contact: Jay Gundel at 302-658-1674
or email jay@jaygundel.com

2019 Delaware Bird-A-Thon to focus on expanding the Mispillion Harbor Reserve to help ensure a food source for tens of thousands migrating shorebirds

April 4, 2019, Greenville, DE: The final piece of the puzzle to help ensure a food source for tens-of-thousands of arctic-nesting shorebirds is at hand as this year's Delaware Bird-A-Thon focuses on protecting, preserving, and adding to the critically important habitat of Mispillion Harbor Reserve. Located on the Delaware Bay, 7 miles east of Milford, this natural habitat is like no other in the world. Here, the horseshoe crab breeds without interruption, providing the vital food source in the form of eggs to such important species of Arctic-nesting shorebirds as Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Dunlins and Short-Billed Dowitchers. Sponsored by the Delaware Ornithological Society (DOS), the 2019 Delaware Bird-A-Thon takes place May 4 through May 12, 2019, and is open to anyone, whether they are an avid birder or a not.

Through an anonymous matching-fund grant of up to \$100,000, the formidable goal of raising the necessary funds for the land acquisition is made possible. "We are fortunate to have secured this matching-fund grant which makes every dollar raised worth two dollars," said Bill Stewart, founder and organizer of the event. The success of this fund-raiser will allow DOS and The Conservation Fund to jointly purchase the property and incorporate it into the 74-acre Mispillion Harbor Reserve.

To accomplish this task, the Bird-A-Thon must have a record-breaking response in order to make this a reality. "In addition to driving more participation in this year's Bird-A-Thon, we are making special efforts to generate financial donations from individuals, corporations and organizations who value the importance of conservation in our state."

"The easiest and most enjoyable way to support DOS is through its annual Delaware Bird-A-Thon, either by participating yourself, or by pledging to someone who is," says Researcher Scott Weidensaul, author of "Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds" which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 2000.

Those interested in donating and/or participating will find more details at <https://delawarebirdathon.com>.

The media is invited to get first-hand experience of what it's like to participate in the Bird-A-Thon. Arrangements can be made to fit any schedule. Photographs and aerial video of the Mispillion Harbor Reserve are available upon request. Interviews can be arranged by contacting GStewart@JayGundel.com, 302 658-1674.

About the Delaware Bird-A-Thon

The Delaware Bird-A-Thon is a fundraiser with a concept much like a walk-a-thon. Participants sign up as many sponsors as possible, each making a pledge in a dollar amount for each bird species recorded during a single 24-hour period. Participants can bird anywhere in the State of Delaware. Prizes will be awarded in various categories, including teams for adults, youth, organizations as well as individuals. There are also classifications for carbon-free participation and a single-county challenge. Prizes for the top contestants will be awarded at the June DOS Awards Ceremony and Picnic.

About DOS

The Delaware Ornithological Society (DOS) is the area's leading organization focused on promoting the study of birds, advancing and disseminating ornithological knowledge, and facilitating the conservation of birds and their environment. In addition to the annual Delaware Bird-A-Thon, DOS sponsors many other bird-related activities and trips around the region for birders of all levels.

About The Conservation Fund

Founded in 1985, The Conservation Fund is the nation's top private environmental nonprofit organization, having helped save over 8 million acres of land valued at more than \$6.3 billion throughout the United States. The focus is on creating as many pathways as possible for people and organizations to protect their natural resources and save the places that matter most — properties with ecological, historic and/or cultural significance.



The Mispillion Harbor is a natural habitat like no other in the world. Here, horseshoe crabs come ashore like clockwork and breed without interruption between the May and June full moons. Photo credit: Greg Breeze, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Acquiring this last remaining tract of private property will complete the 74-acre Mispillion Harbor Reserve, the goal of the 2019 Delaware Bird-A-Thon. Photo credit: Andrew Martin



The red knot is one of the many migrating Arctic-nesting shorebirds that depend on horseshoe crab eggs as a vital source of nourishment for their long trip north. Photo credit: Kim Steininger

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1,932 acres of critical habitat have been preserved through the Delaware Bird-A-Thon

Since its founding in 2006, acting independently and through partnerships with various state agencies and private organizations, the funds generated by the Delaware Bird-A-Thon have made possible numerous special projects relating to bird conservation while preserving over 1,900 acres of vital habitat in Delaware.

These include:

635-acres Passmore Farm, creating a contiguous network of protected habitat totaling over 16,000 acres

17 acres of bay-shore habitat acquired at **Fowler Beach**, added to Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge

10 additional acres acquired along **Fowler Beach** in 2012 with funds from the DOS Migratory Shorebird Habitat Acquisition Fund

52 acres purchased through partnership with DNREC at **Mispillion Harbor** for Red Knot roosting areas which we hope to increase this year

194 acres purchased through partnership with DNREC of coastal freshwater marsh lands at **Thousand Acre Marsh**, creating the first public access to the marsh

Over 800 acres purchased through partnership with DNREC of tidal wetlands, forested buffers and farmland along the **Delaware Bay and St. Jones River**

140-acre Ashton Tract purchased in partnership with DNREC

Ashland Hawk Watch established in partnership with the Delaware Nature Society

Provided funding for three GPS-GSM radio transmitters for Project **SNOWstorm**, a research initiative on the Snowy Owl irruption of 2013/2014

2015 DOS Conservation Science Grant awarded to NJ Audubon for shorebird research in the Delaware Bay

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