

# Birding

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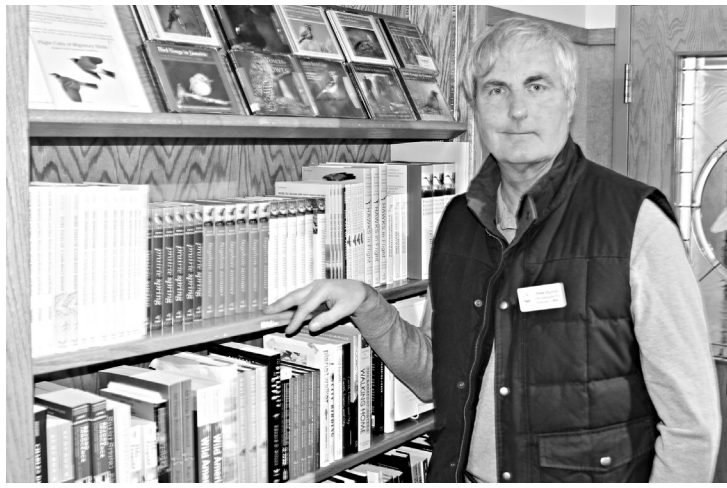
friends who came here from Alaska," he said. According to Dunne, if you visit the hawk observatory at Cape May Point State Park at the end of September, you might hear at least six languages being spoken, including Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, German, Israeli, and British English. He said people visit Cape May from all over the world to see birds in large numbers.

"People love to see mass numbers of anything, and we have so many mass spectacles here," Dunne said.

Dunne said when he talks about Cape May, he is really including the entire Delaware Shore, which is an important part of that great migration path that ends in Cape May Point. Here people see bird and butterfly migrations, as well as horseshoe crab nesting and red knots that feed on their eggs. According to Dunne, you don't even have to go as far as the Delaware Bay to see natural spectacles. "Stop, look, and listen in your own back yard. You have a Natural Geographic special in your backyard every day," he said.

Dunne said the difference between Cape May and another natural spectacle, the Grand Canyon for example, is the temporal factor of Cape May's natural wonder

"It's not here just in September or with the wind... it's easy overlook a warbler fallout (when there are no birds one day and the area is thick with them the next). They don't see the relation between cold fronts and (fall-



Above left, former Cape May Bird Observatory director Pete Dunne standing by a shelf full of books he's authored on birding. Above right, Dunne on the observation deck at the CMBO's Cape May Court House location, with Mike Crewe, Nature Store Manager at the CMBO Cape May Point location.



Christopher South/Cape May Star and Wave

## People have pushed nature into a corner

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT – Cape May County has many miles of sandy beaches – about 47 miles – and less than two miles protected.

"And these two are under attack from people who live nearby," said Mike Crewe, the Cape May Bird Observatory's Nature Store Manager.

Crewe has been involved in education programs with the CMBO, including

walks and workshops. "The workshops are more intensive than walks. They go into greater detail, they are more for the hardened birder," he said.

Crewe spent most of life dealing with birds, but a lot of his work in other areas has been more about ecology. He has a lot of concern about his adopted home – Cape May.

"We see deviations all the time in Cape May County. Decisions mainly based on no information...that there's

nothing there," he said. "People are looking to make money off property. People look at land and see square footage, not ecological systems."

Crewe said locally we have lost the high marsh habitat.

"We've gotten into managing populations because we pushed them into a corner. A lot of people think our hobbies and pastimes are equal to nature," he said. "I think we've been looking at the situation through rose tinted spectacles."

outs," he said. Dunne said each fall there is also a migration of birders to Cape May. He said birding attracts a certain type of person, who contributes to the local economy, and businesses would do well to learn how to market to them.

"Birding is a tribal society," Dunne said. "How do you market to them? You become one of them. They have their own standards, their own language, they are intelligent, well-educated, genial, honest..." Dunne said.

To illustrate how honest

birders are, Dunne pointed to people attending a recent optics sale at the CMBO's annual optics sale in Goshen. "There are opticals (binoculars, telescopes) worth \$2,000 and people take them out the back door to try them out... and no one is worried they

won't bring them back," he said.

Dunne said the annual optics sale started with a spring-cleaning project. He said the CMBO was formed in the style of a British bird observatory, which is actually an institution focused on bird

study. Companies would send them optics, asking them to test them out, but they weren't asked to send them back.

"We ended up with a closet full. I said, 'We should sell these'," he said.

Dunne said optics were originally scientific tools before they became tools for bird watchers.

"This is what I like to do," Dunne said, indicating the optics being sold at the CMBO, "to give people the tools, to empower people to engage the world."

Dunne said, in retrospect, it was natural that birding would become a popular pastime. He said in the post World War II era the human world and the natural world overlapped with the development of something called "the suburbs." In 1946 there was a bird watching festival held in Cape May. Still, even by 1975, Dunne said people didn't expect birding would take off. He said when he became the director of the CMBO in 1978 he had no business model for the observatory.

"I didn't have a brilliant business plan. The opportunity just came up and pecked me on the ass," he said.

"Increasingly the bird observatory building is about retail and to fund research," said Mike Crewe, the CMBO Nature Store Manager. "We sell optical devices, books, T-shirts, and help with walks and programs. A lot of it is done at the Nature Center of Cape May, which is not part of the bird observatory, but is part of Audubon."

# Access

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built by African-American mason Hezekiah Green. The Center for Community Arts confirmed the garage is part of their African-American Heritage Walking Tour.

Donato said the certificate of appropriateness, approved in revue by the Historic Preservation Commission (not the full body of the HPC) did not include an application to the Zoning Board to modify the use variance and site plan previously granted.

In December 1994, the Zoning Board of Adjustment passed

Resolution 12-14-94, which

says "The applicant must prepare and present an access agreement for the adjacent owner of Block 1079, Lot 2, to be provided to the satisfaction of the City Attorney and the Board Engineer..."

The access agreement is quoted in a letter from the law firm of Serber Konschak LLP, dated Jan. 23, and signed by William R. Serber, Esq., saying, "This agreement shall be for a term of 15 years, starting with the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the bank intended to be located upon the property."

Brown was notified by certified letter dated June 21, 2011 that the Access Agreement

had expired. In December 2013 Sturdy offered a three-year modification and extension of the Access Agreement. Brown rejected the offer and it was rescinded.

Donato responded to Serber's letter saying Brown was a "novice business woman" when she signed the agreement and at the time didn't understand the ramifications of future elimination of access to the property.

"I didn't know if I would still be in business in five years," Brown said.

Donato wrote that continued access to Brown's property was incorporated into the Zoning Board's use variance and site plan granted

for Sturdy Savings. She said it was not up to the bank to unilaterally alter the variance and site plan.

"Continued access between the properties is a necessity to maintain Antoinette's as a viable part of the historic and business community of Cape May," she wrote.

Reeves said Sturdy Savings was not attempting to take anything from Antoinette's but to recover part of their own property. He said the bank had no intended use for the property they were attempting to reclaim, but the bank believes there is some liability in continuing to allow the property as an ingress/egress for a neighboring busi-

ness.

Brown has received support for her cause from the Cape May Historic Accommodations group. CMHA president Jan Pask wrote a letter dated Sept. 17, 2013 to Reeves, in which she credited Sturdy Savings for its many contributions to Cape May organizations, but added that closing the access to Antoinette's parking would do irrevocable harm to Brown's business.

Former Cape May councilwoman Laura Calnan is also a former HPC member. She said before the bank was constructed the plans went to the HPC, the Planning Board and the Zoning Board, which

resulted in the creation of a buffer zone between the properties and the Access Agreement.

"What concerns me is they (the city) think they can issue a fence permit without possibly going through the right process. By putting back where they (the bank) think they can put it changes the whole setback, buffer zone, and exit/entrance between bank and Antoinette's," she said.

Calnan said the Zoning Board should review the proposed changes.

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# Free

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can be self-sustaining having no impact on local taxpayers. Mayor Ed Mahaney concurred.

"During the last two months, the city has looked at possible ramifications of this ordinance because we have the only Beach Utility in the state of New Jersey and we want to make it self-liquidating, which it must be..." Mahaney said. "We are very confident, even if we are oversubscribed, which we hope we will be, that we have the capability of doing this.

It's important to honor our current military members and our veterans."

Joe Griffies, a Vietnam veteran from Rio Grande, said the program means more than just free tags to former and present military servicemen. He said a high number of veterans deal with mental and physical anguish following their combat experience, no matter what conflict they were involved in. He said depression is very common among these veterans, but decisions like these let them know the American people are still here for them and giving support.

"I think what you are doing is not to save the veterans \$25 or \$30 on a beach tag," Griffies said. "It's that veteran who's walking down the beach 10 years after he gets discharged and says,

'Somebody cares.'"

Capt. Todd Prestidge, commanding officer of the U. S. Coast Guard Training Center-Cape May, also attended the meeting and during public comment expressed appreciation for council's decision and state legislators for putting the law into effect.

"Thank you on behalf of the 1,000 active duty members who come to work everyday at the Training Center. Thank you on behalf of the veterans that call Cape May home," he said to council. "It's an extremely important thing that you're doing and we sincerely appreciate it."

Special patriotic-style tags with an American flag theme have been designed and will be available in City Hall after the ordinance takes effect. The tags will also be available to active duty military

spouses and their children over the age of 12, according to the state law. Free tags are specifically for veterans, but not their families. Mahaney noted the New Jersey National Guard and Air National Guard are eligible for the free tags as well.

Councilman William Murray, a Navy veteran who introduced the ordinance and brought it before council said he was thrilled to see the ordinance adopted.

"I want to thank the mayor, council and the City of Cape May for this honor, for all the veterans who preceded me and all the veterans and active duty folks who came after me. In recognition of their service and sacrifices, it's a very important ordinance to introduce," he said.

## Clark addresses credit card purchase

By CAIN CHAMBERLIN  
Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP – Deputy Mayor Norris Clark responded to accusations made by Councilman Erik Simonsen at the last Lower

Township Council meeting, who claimed Clark illegally spent nearly \$500 promoting the township's Facebook page.

At the March 17 meeting, Simonsen said Clark used his personal credit card to pay the amount and was reimbursed by the township. He questioned Clark's actions, saying he had no knowledge of the transaction because council never discussed it.

"There's still something disconcerting about someone on council using a credit card to pay for something we didn't vote on. That bothers me," Simonsen said at the previous meeting. "Spending \$500 of taxpayer's money that no one else knows about, that's a problem. The bottom line is, you can't do it. It's illegal."

Clark was absent from the meeting when Simonsen made his allegations, attending a conference in British Columbia, Canada.

Township Manager Mike Voll said Clark had to use his personal credit card, as Facebook would not accept the township's check. The township does not have its own credit card. Voll later told the Star and Wave, the township will be getting a

**FRANK THEATRES**

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