This whole convention was charged with excitement. Looking down from the plane, I could make out a sea of green flowing beneath as far as the eye could see, promising hidden treasures for the birders at the ABA's 2006 Convention in Bangor, Maine. The tension was high. Would the weather cooperate? Would the birds show themselves? With new staff on board, would the convention run smoothly? Were the reports of black-fly season being over true? The answers were yes! Old friends met, and then made new ones. Laughs and stories of birding today, yesterday, and last year were shared. Hands flew up when the question, “Did anyone get any lifers?” was asked.

The sharing of experiences was common during the week. Sharing new birds; the pitch and roll of the boat on Tuesday’s pelagic trip; envying the luck of those who took the smooth pelagic trip on Thursday; ripping lobsters apart during the banquet on Friday; dreaming of new binoculars, or a scope, at the exhibitor’s tables; and delighting in the wit and wisdom of the evening’s speakers.

Maine opened its arms and welcomed the 600 ABA birders who attended the convention. A local lady was so impressed by the birders that she spent one whole day just riding the shuttle bus so she could chat with birders and share their excitement. Local businesses went out of their way to accommodate us. The Bangor Water District controlled traffic and granted us access to Flood Ponds Road, and the Baskahegan Company and the company’s Woodlands Manager, Brian Higgs, altered the work schedule of the crews in the boreal forest and even repaired the roads so our buses could travel safely. Birding on Burn Road was very good because of Baskahegan’s excellent forestry practices. A local state representative, Bob Duchesne, spent hours hiking to pin down the elusive Bicknell’s Thrush, and then helped lead a Sunday hike to search for the species. Maine Audubon representatives and other local bird experts joined with the professional birders who are so generous with their time and talents, with the result that we had more than 50 leaders to take charge of our field trips. No wonder we saw 187 species during the convention!

Since this was your convention, we have asked you to contribute to the Bangor 2006 ABA Convention Scrapbook. Please note that the entries printed here are but a smattering of submissions to the Convention Scrapbook. For the complete Scrapbook, please check out the expanded online version of this article, available as a Birding WebExtra at: <aba.org/pubs/birding/archives/vol39no1p26w1.pdf>.

— Darlene Smyth

Most non-birders, and even a few birders, would consider the 1:30 a.m. wake-up call, the 2½-hour drive, and the 1½-hour slog carrying a pack with a scope and tripod up Saddleback Mountain in eastern Maine the epitome of foolishness. Why bring a scope? The
skeptical looks were obvious, but the question unspoken. The possibility of a missed photo opportunity of such a rare species preys on your mind, so you just do it, and this time it was well worthwhile. The sighting (and photograph) of the singing Bicknell’s Thrush awash in early morning light atop a stunted evergreen made the dreams of eleven birders and two hard-working leaders come true. A most fantastic day to end a great convention. Awake with a dream, return with a memory.

— Rand Rudland
HALF MOON BAY, BRITISH COLUMBIA

There is something uniquely magical about ABA banquets. Other festivals may equal the ABAs attendance and the quality of the field trips (a few), but no one has yet to equal the experience of sitting down in a huge room with 600–700 other birders. The feeling of community, of shared interests and passions (and often, at least on some levels, of shared values), can be experienced elsewhere, but not in the critical mass in which it is expressed at an ABA Convention. For a birder—beginning or experienced, in my opinion—that feeling is worth the price of admission alone.

— Stephen Ingraham
KENNEBUNK, MAINE

On our (Thursday) Friendship V boat trip, birders and leaders alike shouted, jumped, and gestulated wildly when any hard-sought pelagic species hove into view. The ship’s speaker system blared directional information and the boat’s deck swarmed with movement as each person sought a good look. But when a fin whale briefly spouted, breached, and then dove, the entire ship and all of its occupants fell still and totally silent, breathless lest anyone miss the next far-off spouting. Were we afraid we’d scare the long-gone whale farther away if we made a sound, while we hadn’t worried about the pelagic birds, circling just off the bow? Birders make very silly whale-watchers.

— Jane Kostenko
CALIFORNIA, MARYLAND

At the end of each day, a few of us converged on Fitzgerald’s Lounge at the Holiday Inn Civic Center. Because it offered wireless internet access, a few of us invariably arrived with laptop computers in hand.

On Tuesday night, Mike Freiberg played the Superb Lyrebird video clip from David Attenborough’s Lives of Birds series, and the bartender couldn’t drag herself away from it. She was spellbound.

The next night, Sharon Stiteler and I visited the lounge and soon heard the bartender asking Sharon to play the lyrebird clip for the locals. The five faces looked entranced as the master mimic imitated camera shutters, a car alarm, and a chainsaw. It woulda been cool to know what, if anything, those locals told friends and relatives about their visit to the watering hole that night.

— Amy K. Hooper
IRVINE, CALIFORNIA

Thanks so much for the opportunity to share our birds with the PLT [Physical Limitations Track] folks. I felt a personal
ABA young birders, plus several folks who chronologically do not qualify as young birders but who also harbor no known aspirations to adulthood. **Front row** (kneeling, left to right): Alexina Scheel, Jen Brumfield, Peter Doucette, Luke Seitz. **Middle row** (left to right): Kathryn Pacheco, Derek Lovitch, Zack Barrow, David Hollie, Ethan Kistler, Ted Floyd, John Menz. **Back row** (left to right): Matt Pelikan, Mitch Walters, Adam Nisbett, Elise Becker, Jeffrey Roth, Michael Retter, Jonathan Comeau, Ian Davies, Hannah Kistler.


From this vantage point, ABA conventioneers could see Common Eiders and Black Guillemots while listening to the songs of Alder Flycatcher and Black-throated Green Warbler. Acadia National Park, Maine; 24 June 2006. © Bill Schmoker.
connection with each participant, which translated into a joyous experience for me. I have been birding long enough to prefer a modest pace over fast; long savoring looks at birds instead of quick glimpses; and most important, feeling a sense of shared joy as each participant sees every bird and has each question addressed.

— Chuck Whitney
Ellsworth, Maine

Stairway to Heaven—Or is it Hell?
A Personal Survivor Account of Pursuing the Bicknell’s Thrush

by Rhio Reigh, Willette

Why, oh why, did I sign up for the quest to get this elusive thrush, the Bicknell’s? “Only those who can run two miles in 16 minutes—or was it 14—should attempt this trek,” Ted Floyd announces the night before we are destined for our 2 a.m. torture departure. Are you kidding me? None of us can hoof it more than a casual stroll. So it’s a forced march, is it? Try to scare us off, will they? I don’t think so. I’ve been working out. I’ve been going to Curves and to Dancercise class, walking around the neighborhood and hiking. Well, sort of.

Okay, Ted Floyd, we shall see who makes it up to the top of Moose Head Mountain, formally known as Squaw Mountain. About time they changed that name, since Zena, the Warrior Princess is about to conquer this summit! A Willette, no less.

Everything started out well: light backpack, water, a few snacks, and the eager, flushed faces of 20 or so birders, including one of the original Willettes, Faye McAdams Hands! Here we go, along a lush path of trees, ferns, singing warblers, and a babbling brook. Little did I know that, later, I would be the babbler. For now, though, all was a pleasant stroll in paradise!

Then it happened. It’s what we call the vertical climb. It’s called straight up. Okay, I can do this. My heart rate increases, my pulse quickens, like a character in a cheap novel. It’s really up. See Jane go up, up, up! I think Pete Dunne can relate to this.

Well? Did she get her bird? To read the rest of Willette Rhio Reigh’s breathtaking account of her search for the elusive Bicknell’s Thrush, check out the full text of her essay at the January/February 2007 Birding WebExtra <aba.org/pubs/birding/archives/vol39no1p26w1.pdf>. In addition to containing the remainder of Rhio’s thriller, the WebExtra features nine other entries in our Convention Scrapbook.
Top: The Ludlow Griscom Award was presented to James Dinsmore (center) by Leupold representative John Riutta (right) with ABA board member Donnie Dann (left).

Middle: The Robert Ridgway Award was presented to Donald Kroodsma (center) by Zeiss representative Stephen Ingraham (left) with ABA President/CEO Dick Payne (right).

Bottom: The Chandler Robbins Award was presented to Robert Ridgely (right) by Steiner representative Rob Fancher (left) with ABA Publications Chairman John Kricher (center).